

LETHAL WEAPON 5: **BODY COUNT**

by Shane Black & Charles Mondry

NEW YORK CITY, December 22:

The NEON SPRAWL of Times Square positively screams Christmas. Sky-high SPARKLE. Soothing or blinding, take your pick. But hurry: only THREE SHOPPING DAYS left.

The CAMERA glides high above the rooftops, accompanied by a Velvet Revolver cover of *Jingle Bell Rock*. Now we SWOOP LOW -- past concrete chasms, down, down... To STREET level. 68th and York, where --

SANTA'S RUNNING LATE. Exits his gleaming black LIMO flanked by six BODYGUARDS -- barking through his beard into a CELL PHONE:

"Got no Goddamn time for this, Paulie. What..? NO. I don't give a shit, we got deliveries! Oh, great, now I'm late for this retarded kids thing."

Santa and his armed retinue enter SLOAN-KETTERING Hospital. In truth? We're watching DON LORENZO MANZETTI, capo di tutti capa of the Manzetti crime family. Putting in his community time. We get a kick, watching badass Santa.

SERIES OF SHOTS: We see kids hop in his lap. Maybe one kid YANKS his beard, a BODYGUARD reflexively goes for his gun. Don Manzetti waves him off. ROLL CREDITS over this.

SKIP AHEAD. End of a long day. The Manzetti limo pulls past a gate, to a carriage circle flanking a huge MANSION. The Hamptons. Peaceful. Quiet. Windows glowing with a warm yellow light. Smoke curling from the chimney...

Back at the ENTRANCE GATE. Pause... A SECOND VEHICLE appears at the security gatehouse:

A tinted window rolls down. A MAN smiles: "Hi! We're here to kill Don Manzetti, is he in?" The bewildered guard regards the speaker like he just grew a tail -- then proceeds to sprout a neat third eye himself. Dies.

The woods explode with movement.

FIGURES materialize from NOWHERE. Erupting from the snow. Cammy make-up. Scoped rifles, fat shiny handguns. Winter fatigues.

The Don's bodyguards are candy.

They go down, one-through-six, adding their sad crimson SPRITZES to the snow. It takes seconds. More than five, less than ten. Now, only Don Lorenzo is left... utterly VULNERABLE. Santa garb disshelved, beard hanging off one ear, cowering. Staring at the ice capade of CORPSES.

It was just that quick.

A shadow falls over him. The man who blew away the guard. For the record, meet R. SOMERSET JOPLIN. Paid warrior. He says nothing at first. Merely extends one hand. Drops something. It flutters to the snow --

A BUSINESS CARD. Manzetti regards it with bulging eyes:

Bodyguards Shoot Second

On the other side, a PHONE number.

Dogs bark. Alarms sound. Joplin SMILES... turns. "You've a beautiful home, Don Manzetti. Worth protecting."

Walks away into the gray twilight. Past the splayed dead. Says over his shoulder: "Call us if you have an opening... or six. And Merry Christmas."

Manzetti looks down again at the business card, mumbles absently: "Merry Christmas...."

Pull up and away, as, in retrospect, we recognize the preceding for exactly what it was... a JOB APPLICATION.

CUT TO: THE AFTERMATH.

Police cars, flashers turning. Cops, freezing their asses off, waiting for their boss to show: "Where the hell's Sgt. Murtaugh..?"

Just then, an ND cruiser slews to a halt. A BIG MAN steps from the car. Black, solid frame. Clearly the man in charge -- Thing is, he's young. 28 years old, tops.

Not the Murtaugh we envisioned; even so, an unmistakable touch of his FATHER in the way he moves. Meet NICK Murtaugh: Sergeant, NYPD. He crosses to the cops, collar turned up against the bitter chill --

An officer flags him: "Nick, we got another one. This time it's the *Manzetti* family."

Nick takes in the carnage. Shakes his head. Still working on his own catch-phrase, he opts for: "Gonna be a long night...." He doesn't know how right he is.

With that, we shift gears, moving swiftly to:

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA:

DETECTIVE MARTIN RIGGS doesn't know it, but he picked a bad week to quit smoking.

Then again, it's his birthday, give or take a day, and he's not expecting trouble. What he's expecting is a nice, peaceful BATH -- slim chance. 13 YEARS since we last saw him, and he looks a changed man: Fat, bearded and happy. Okay, not fat; SOFT.

The door bursts open and IN STREAMS his family. Swell. Riggs groans, throws a towel over himself, surrounded by:

LORNA: Roughly fifty, now. And beside her, someone NEW. New to us, anyhow -- Riggs' son, MARTIN, JUNIOR. Age 12.

They sing a version of Happy Birthday that frightens nearby horses. Hugs all around. There's something almost *unsettling* about how normal all this is. Where's our RIGGS?

ENCINO, CALIFORNIA: Riggs reports to work fashionably late, not that anyone notices -- work's a lot calmer (and his pond a lot smaller) since last we saw him.

He's been offered a promotion. Full-time desk job, no fieldwork; plus a 30% hike in pay.

Except he won't take it. Keeps putting it off, losing the paperwork... And he's been flat-out lying to his wife: "I keep bucking for it, honey. Maybe next year they'll cave."

It's not like they couldn't use the extra money, in fact they probably NEED that money --

But Riggs needs to not be old.

From the station, he goes to his regular AA MEETING, where, for the millionth time he intones: "My name is Martin and I'm an alcoholic."

We're treated to another glimpse of a revised Riggs. He talks about FEELINGS, for God's sake. About being restless lately. Irritable.

His sponsor says it's a mid-life crisis, hey, it'll pass (in the film's TRAILER, this line would almost certainly be followed by shots of Riggs killing half of all the bad guys in New York.)

Night, now, as he walks home. Past TV's flickering in suburban windows. Christmas lights... Passes a newsstand.

Looks both ways, hurriedly purchases a pack of CIGARETTES. Like a teenager getting a condom. Almost gets caught:

His SON, coming out of the local video store. They keep walking, when an odd encounter takes place. We won't know it right then, but it will change the course of Riggs' life. On the sidewalk, crouched Chinese-style (or Vietnamese, for that matter) is a man, 50 or 60-ish. Homeless? We think so. Straggly hair and beard.

His gaze direct, undiminished. Points to Riggs' Special Forces TATTOO. "Semper fi, bro," he rasps. "Got a smoke?"

To his son's surprise, Riggs does. Offers the man the whole pack. "Keep 'em." The man bristles: "Only asked for one, friend. Don't need more 'n that." He fumbles with them, hands the box back. Says:

"You were there?"

Yes, says Riggs. The man nods -- goes on to say no one cares. That to most people, *if it happened over there, it didn't happen* (a very important signature phrase for this film -- mark it.)

He regards Riggs with his Burberry sweater, AA big book and preppy-looking kid. Smiles sadly.

"This isn't you," he says simply. Riggs is caught off guard. "It's not who you are. I know it. You know it." Riggs mutters a brief "Semper Fi," and hustles his son away.

NOTE: During the encounter, we notice the stranger darting furtive looks up and down the street. A crazy tic, perhaps; thinks himself under scrutiny. Paranoid.

At any rate, as RIGGS vanishes round the corner, WE STAY WITH THE OLD MAN. Watch as he struggles to his feet.

He shambles across a parking lot -- stops beside a dented '78 CAPRIS. Huh. Seems he has a car. Takes out his keys. Pauses. Casts his gaze down the street RIGGS took... Eyes hollow and sad.

Makes a snap decision. Pockets the keys. Walks after Riggs and the boy. Can just see them in the distance. He crosses the street, past a Christmas tree lot...

They come for him.

TWO MEN. Military bearing, brush-cut hair. Appear from nowhere, DRAG our guy into the trees. One of them's got a SYRINGE. Grab and jab, piece of cake --

They get a surprise.

Our "ghost" GALVANIZES. Ratty hair and all. Comes shockingly to life, and he's SCARY. Ducking, weaving. Launching death-strike blows. Like he's got a demon inside him. Like he's RIGGS.

Except here's the thing, he's NOT. On a good day, maybe, but those days are long-ago.

They're on him. As they hit him with the NEEDLE we CUT TO:

MURTAUGH RESIDENCE - TOLUCA LAKE, CALIFORNIA

Sergeant ROGER MURTAUGH, LAPD (retired) really ought to be enjoying his retirement. Instead, he's checking the police band scanner, playing poker with his cop cronies. Holding forth about cops on TV. Yadda, yadda.

All this boredom goes south in a hurry, however -- when his GRANDDAUGHTER visits.

SHYA MURTAUGH is five, and Roger is her favorite. We see Murtaugh being silly with her. Looking for his contact lenses, checks the CAT. Groans: "The CAT's got 'em in his eyes again! He's always wearing my contact lenses! C'mere, kitty. HEY. Where you going, mister--?" He picks up a toaster. "Grampa, that isn't a cat!" "Well help me, I can't see!" And so on.

THE PHONE RINGS. He scoops it up and it's LORNA. She tells him Riggs has been acting a little squirrely lately, she's frankly worried. He calms her down as, in the b.g.--

Young SHYA explores the cabinets behind the CHRISTMAS TREE. Pokes to the back, where she NOTICES something. Years old, grimed with dirt --

Riggs' BULLET still has the red ribbon around it. Dormant. Waiting in that lonely cupboard (we remember it from LW1.)

Something about it delights her, enough to snatch it up. She giggles... Decides, using kid's logic, that it would be fun to throw it in the FIRE.

Murtaugh turns just in time to see the toss. Drops the phone. Calls Shya's name, LUNGES--! Drags her to the floor as ka-pow..! the bullet ignites. A LAMP explodes into fragments. Rains down on them.

An omen? For us, maybe. He lies there clutching the little girl, shaking. The bullet was 18 years old... dusty, forgotten... waiting for the fire to revive it.

THE RIGGS' RESIDENCE. Riggs, coming in the door, grabs up the mail. Bills and more bills... Some marked FINAL NOTICE. He sighs... Then something catches his eye:

A POSTCARD (the Christmas tree at ROCKEFELLER CENTER). Riggs tries to read the back, squints. Lorna appears magically, sticks glasses on his nose... Riggs scowls, but now he can read it: It's from NICK.

Bad news. Riggs' dog, Sam, is sick. He'll have to be put down. Not something you share before X-mas -- but he wanted Riggs to know.

LATER, A HOLIDAY PARTY in progress... Cop friends, neighbors -- drinking too much eggnog, telling boring stories about their kids...

Riggs, still troubled by the strange old man. Wanders the party, out of place in his own house... In his own skin.

Abruptly hears screams of AGONY. Walks into the family room, sees his son and the neighbor's kid SLAUGHTERING people left and right.

It is, of course, a VIDEO GAME. Incredibly realistic push-button warfare. Something about it pushes Riggs' buttons. He wants it off, unhappy about the casual violence.

"But it's REALISTIC," comes the defense.

"It's *not* realistic," says Riggs a bit too savagely. Stalks away. Later he tells Lorna that nowadays, his *son* would make a better soldier than he would. All the tech shit. Killing's like a GAME now. Mostly? Riggs just feels old.

He sneaks off, abandoning the laughter and people. Climbs into a dark attic. Something's gnawing at him.

He snaps on a light. Among the cobwebs and dust, finds an old scrap book... From his war days... His days as a Special Forces soldier in Vietnam. Flips through the pages... And *damn* if he doesn't come face-to-face with --

THE HOMELESS MAN. Only he's younger here. Much younger, and tough as nails. Not to mention, he's grinning like an idiot. The photo's signed: *To Marty, heartbreaker, lifetaker -- Billy Vickers.*"

Riggs blinks -- Can that old, beaten GHOST on the street really be the same as this shiny young patriot..?

Absently, he takes out his pack of smokes... Knocks out a cigarette when *something else* pops out along with it -- it's a scrap of paper, rolled like a scroll. Riggs unfurls it... Can't believe what it says:

... MURTAUGH IN TROUBLE...

Jesus. Riggs can worry about the hows and whys later. Right now, he drops everything. Sprints out the door, snatches up his cell phone... CUT TO:

MURTAUGH'S HOUSE. Roger sits, uneasy in his easy chair. Clock ticking. He stares at the bullet-shredded lamp poking out of the trash. Thinks about what Lorna said: *Riggs is in trouble.* He makes a decision. Gets up, grabbing his coat.

BACK WITH RIGGS, driving, a demon on the road, dialing Roger... Goddamnit, no answer. Just as MURTAUGH is clipping along in his car, dialing Riggs -- then, *screeeeech-!*

Both men slam the brakes, passing each other in the street..! Their cars slew to a sideways stop. Each jumps out. Speaks over the ROOF of his car.

"Jesus, Roger. What the hell's going on? I thought you were in trouble." "Me?" Murtaugh asks, "I'm in trouble? I thought you were." Both confused -- but mostly just grinning. Glad to see each other.

Before they can sort anything out, Riggs gets a SQUAWK on his radio. He takes the call. Possible 187... Something about it Riggs might want to see.

Riggs says, "Hey, whatcha doin' tonight? Let's check out this dead body, I'll buy you dinner." It is a sad testimony to the state of Murtaugh's life that he does... CUT TO:

THE HOMELESS MAN -- blissfully dead in a motel bed. Cause of death, a mystery. And that's not all. The M.E. thinks the guy was too well-groomed to be a vagrant.

Plus, he had cash. A lot of it, in his pocket. Not to mention car keys. But no wallet, no ID. And the tips of his fingers have been seared away; prints gone. The man's a ghost... Virtually impossible to identify.

"His name was Billy Vickers," Riggs says. "I knew him -- from the war. Looking like this, must be a disguise of some kind." "But why?" Murtaugh wants to know as they head outside to search the man's '78 CAPRIS before the police tow it: "You talk to him? What'd he say..?"

"It's not what he said," Riggs replies, taking out Vickers' message, "it's what he gave me." 30 yards downrange, the police TOW TRUCK lurches forward:

KA-BOOM--! Vickers' CAR EVAPORATES. Blows to pieces. Flying glass and metal. The chassis engulfed in fire. Shockwaves slam Riggs and Murtaugh -- blow them off their feet. FIRE, raging skyward.

Chaos. Shouts and cries. The two men struggle upright, watching the flames dance: "What the hell, Riggs... I'm supposed to *know* this guy?"

"He said you were in trouble," replies Riggs. Roger reiterates, I'm NOT in trouble, I'm *retired*, for Chrissake. Just then, his cellphone RINGS. He answers --

His life promptly goes to shit. "It's Nick," he tells Riggs. "He's just been arrested." Stares at the note:

MURTAUGH IN TROUBLE

Not Roger. Other Murtaugh. NEW YORK Murtaugh.

Looks like our guys have a date in New York City. It doesn't sound like a good time. The city, currently in the throes of one of its hairiest WINTERS in decades...

Roger breaks the news to Trish: he's going back east to sort this out. Outwardly he's strong; inwardly? A wreck. Never, NEVER wanted his son to be a cop. Now this.

Riggs doesn't want LORNA to worry. Tells her he's going to New York with Roger -- but mostly to put his dog down. Throws some shit in a duffle bag, heads out.

Stops in the drive. Looks back at his suburban home. Toys, littering the lawn. Christmas lights strung across the eaves -- first glance, it could be Murtaugh's house from the previous movies.

Riggs doesn't believe in ESP. Even so, his expression CLOUDS, briefly. A flicker of foreboding. A sense he may not see this home again. CUT TO:

NEW YORK CITY, December 23

A pair of six-foot SORE THUMBS in cashmere coats would be less conspicuous than Riggs and Murtaugh at New York's JFK AIRPORT. Both swaddled in winter clothes. Silly wool hats.

It's jammed. Especially noticeable are RETURNING SERVICEMEN, home from the war. Tears. Reunions.

On an overhead TV, a VIDEO CLIP reminds us nothing's over. A young U.S. SOLDIER kneels. Gun to his head, held by a known terrorist. The kid stammers through broken lips, a coerced decree -- death to America this Christmas, etc.

Riggs pulls out his cigarettes. Murtaugh, surprised -- you still smoke? Riggs exposes one with an INK DOT on it. "Last cigarette I'll ever smoke. It's a way of quitting. Read about it."

"Seems to be working," grumbles Murtaugh. "Why don't you smoke it? Get it over with." Riggs smiles, replaces it in the pack: "I'll know when. Meantime, quit busting my chops."

They exit the terminal into minus-ten weather, plus windchill. "At least Vickers got to die in nice weather," grouses Murtaugh.

"Been thinking about that," says Riggs, hailing a cab. He's puzzled by a couple things: how'd Billy Vickers hook up with Nick, that's one; Dunno -- shrugs Murtaugh, we'll know that when we find out what Nick was into. What's two?

"Two," says Riggs, "Nick gets in trouble, and Billy comes to me? After all these years? Why?"

Murtaugh snorts: "Talked to Nick for more'n five seconds." Off Riggs' blank look: "Are you serious? You're all my Goddamn son ever talked about. You didn't know that?"

We realize Murtaugh's a bit STUNG by this. His son became a cop, not so much because of him -- but because of RIGGS.

They grab a cab, head for midtown, intent on seeing Nick in his holding cell. That's where they hit the first of many roadblocks:

MIDTOWN MANHATTAN, 73rd Precinct.

NICK'S UNAVAILABLE. He's still being processed, not just by NYPD, but by the Feds -- Our guys can't see him yet. Murtaugh, boiling...

That's when we meet Nick's PARTNER... A suave, slightly tousled cop name of TIM McTAGGART. At odds with his movie-star looks is his nickname: "Two-Buck Tim," refers to the fact that he's CHEAP. Hates to eat a meal over two dollars ("Frugal Tim" just didn't have the right ring to it).

He's grudgingly willing to fill them in on Nick. Unfortunately, he's in a big fucking hurry. A bust in Queens. Says if they ride along, he'll brief them en route.

He doesn't bear good news. As he hits the siren, blowing out of the garage, he says Nick has been implicated in the smuggling of Iraqi ANTIQUITIES. Mob's hip-deep in it, and Nick's accused of taking kickbacks. Abetting smugglers.

A big deal, since the lion's share of the loot from smuggled artifacts finds its way to al Qaeda. Helping to finance terror.

"Who put Nick onto the smuggling? How'd he get on that case?" asks Murtaugh.

Hard to say, says Two-Buck. Nick was part of an anti-mob task force. "Then one day? He meets someone, some chick lawyer: Very mysterious, no names, I never even meet her. All I know is, she's an expert on civil rights."

"She fed him a major lead. Something that went beyond his initial investigation. Suddenly, he's staying late, working weekends -- not 100% work, I'm sure they were boinking -- Then boom, he gets popped. Can't help thinking, if he did something wrong? He did it for her."

Riggs and Murtaugh try the brothers-in-blue gambit: we're cops, let us help. Hearing this, McTaggart boils over. Notices Riggs carries a GUN -- promptly relieves him of it. Instructs them both that in New York, not only are they NOT cops, they have no jurisdiction, whatsoever. NONE.

He reiterates that NICK is likely guilty; they want to help, they can hire some Goddamn good lawyers. We sense that for him it's a personal betrayal. He trusted Nick.

Riggs tries to shake it off... asks where the hell they're going, anyhow. McTaggart grunts: "Looks like we finally got the Grinch." Huh..?

QUEENS

THE GRINCH is the nickname for a local crook who's been a thorn in the side of local law. He does just what the name

implies -- steals people's Christmas. Takes the tree, the gifts, the food -- spirits it all away. In his wake -- howling kids, despair. Real prick, this guy.

Except this time the cops got a break. While committing a burglary, the Grinch caught a load of BIRDSHOT from an angry citizen. The BLOOD TRAIL took police to a witness, then a truck... now a specific HOUSE.

McTAGGART squeals to a halt outside the three story Colonial on Farrington Avenue. Stay out of the way, he warns our guys. The cops take down the door, rush inside.

Shit. *Nothing*. The blood trail goes out the BACK DOOR.

As everyone hurries out, Riggs and Murtaugh enter... Gape, slackjawed. Room after room, FILLED floor to ceiling with gifts. Toys, games, fishing rods. TREES, festooned with lights. 30, all told. What an ASSHOLE.

Riggs, antsy. Wanders the house. Reflexively checking for evidence. Casually darts a look under the bed --

THERE'S A MAN THERE. With a gun. Riggs swears, recoils--!

Too late. THE GRINCH comes swarming out from under the bed. Fires a warning shot. Jams A GUN TO RIGGS' NECK.

The guy marches Riggs outside. Chaos. Shouted orders. Cops face off with the Grinch. We saw this in LW1 -- now here we are again, Riggs a blink away from death.

Two unwary COPS emerge from the house. By chance, they're carrying some of the stolen PRESENTS. The GRINCH's face contorts. "Put those back, THOSE ARE MINE!"

Then his eyes abruptly CLEAR. He seems to comprehend his situation. He BOLTS. Blind panic.

Lurches into the street -- where he's promptly TAKEN OUT by a speeding VW. BLACK ICE, no chance of stopping. BAM--! Grinch, flung. Gun goes sailing.

And just that quick, it's all over. COPS rush forward. RIGGS, rubbing his neck. He locks eyes with MURTAUGH. A silent exchange occurs. Riggs doesn't do fear well. It's new to him.

What's not new is SHAME, and he feels it in spades. Feels like a coward.

McTAGGART collects our two guys. "We can't find the gun. Arms wide." Riggs complies. Same with Murtaugh. Nothing.

McTaggart curses, yells, "Find the Goddamn GUN, before the neighborhood KIDS get it!"

As he stalks away, Riggs moves his FOOT fractionally. He's standing on the thing. Beretta .9 mm, his fave. Crushed into the snow. Riggs quickly pockets it, no one the wiser.

"THE TOMBS" (MANHATTAN DETENTION COMPLEX).

Riggs and Murtaugh are finally taken to see NICK.

It'd be a happier reunion if Nick wasn't cuffed and numbered. Orange jumpsuit. He looks scared. With good reason -- the criminal charges are, apparently, the least of his problems.

He's emphatic. He wants Riggs and his father to go home. No, says Roger. Not gonna happen. No how, no way. So Nick may as well fill them in on this whole mob business. Let them get to setting things straight.

Nick swallows. Shakes his head: "If I tell you, *you're* in danger. This thing, Dad... it's bigger than the mob --"

... And that's it. Those words. That's all he manages before the door BANGS OPEN, and he's spirited away by guards. He calls to Riggs: "Don't forgot about Sam, huh..? He's at my place. I couldn't save him."

Then, boom. Nick's gone. Roger, incredulous. These men just walked away with his only SON. Takes Riggs aside. What the hell's happening here? Roger is ready to tear the place apart brick by brick --

Until the head of HOMELAND SECURITY walks in.

STEWART BRYSON, 56, is head of the nation's top security post and fourth in line to succeed the President -- he's got the being an asshole part down. Offers a curt apology for Nick's abrupt departure, but the case has just been transferred from NYPD to his jurisdiction.

NICK is now forbidden to speak with *anyone* because of the security risk it may pose. That's for starters; in addition, he'll not be permitted a lawyer, and can be held indefinitely without being charged. He's under investigation for aiding terrorists, remember..?

It's now a federal beef -- a matter of national security.

RIGGS is fit to be tied, and nearly has to be. Murtaugh restrains him -- "Riggs, come on, we've got work to do." McTAGGART weighs in, and they both wrestle Riggs out the door. At which time, our buddy Bryson calmly places a phone call: "He was just here. What do you want me to do?"

A CAR PARKED OUTSIDE THE HOLDING FACILITY.

R. SOMERSET JOPLIN is poised behind the wheel. "Nothing. It's already been addressed," he assures Bryson. Watches intently as RIGGS and MURTAUGH exit the building, talking heatedly with McTAGGART. Glances down --

On his handheld PDA, an IMAGE. Grainy, distorted. A young, spit-in-the-wind version of MARTIN RIGGS smiles out at us. Fatigues. Dog tags.

In town six hours, our guys have already attracted a fan club...

BROOKLYN

Riggs and Murtaugh, trying to pick up the pieces. Nick was investigating the mob's smuggling operation. Swell. Where does Billy Vickers come in? An old soldier... A young cop. Doesn't add up.

They start at the only place they can: Nick's place in Brooklyn. Brick row house, a tad shabby. See? says Murtaugh. Nick's clean, he wouldn't take a nickel if it stuck to his shoe.

They roll up in NICK'S car. Riggs starts to jimmy the door. Murtaugh shakes his head. Has the key; they slip inside. Pause. Silence. Riggs does a quick check, gun out. Whistles soft and low --

SAM THE DOG is dimly aware of the sound. In the next room, it penetrates the fog of age, cuts across years and miles:

His old friend has returned. The master's come home.

Riggs is frozen, chest hitching as Sam limps into view. The dog can barely walk. Nothing works --

Except the tail, that still works.

Riggs engulfs him in a bear hug. Never more than here do we feel the lunatic passage of TIME. It strikes to Riggs' core. Shaken, he joins Murtaugh as they SEARCH the house.

Looking for something, anything. A clue. A place to start. In addition, Riggs' eye strays time and again to SAM, who sprawls, listless. Hasn't touched his dog food. He sighs: "Roger, it's time."

Murtaugh nods. "I saw a vet bill. Had an address --"

"No vet," says Riggs.

He's emphatic: he'll handle it himself. He departs, taking Sam. Murtaugh stays behind. Sinks in a chair. Surveys the trappings of his son's life. Awards, commendations.

Tough to look at. He draws a ragged breath, stands -- opens the fridge: two beers. Head of lettuce. Shakes his head. Stares at the fridge PHOTOGRAPHS... Gets angry.

His CELL RINGS -- TRISH in California. She's losing it: I can't take this, Roger. Get our baby back.

"He'll be home for Christmas," says Murtaugh. CUT TO:

3:00 p.m. -- RIGGS, driving. BLUBBERING like a baby as he whispers softly to the dog, stuffs him with McNuggets -- Sam's favorite. Spots a scenic PARK: wooded slopes, a frozen pond. He pulls over. It'll do.

The air, biting cold. Snow threatens. Riggs selects a shallow depression, next to the pond. Deserted except for a forlorn snowman. SAM, fading fast. Riggs perches beside him, strokes his fur.

Lays out a BLANKET. Takes the Grinch's Beretta. Racks the slide. Deep breath... Lifts the dog's head (a moment of bizarre comedy, perhaps, as he puts the gun to the dog's chin, then thinks twice -- is head shape a factor? Should he put it in the mouth?) It's all crazy. Sam, lax and still. Riggs kisses him, puts the gun to his head --

Sam makes a low *chuffing* sound in his throat.

"Boy... Boy, I'm so sorry..." He stops. Sam's ears, PRICKED. A moment ago this dog couldn't hear Riggs, but clearly now he's sensing something. The dog LURCHES to its feet. Growling. What the hell? Riggs spins, gun tracking.

A canine BLUR passes over him.

SAM hits running. Darts into the brush, elicits a human SQUAWK, a frantic STRUGGLE --

What the fuck? A MAN staggers into view. We've never seen this guy. He's savagely SHAKING his leg, screaming -- SAM has a jawlock.

The man's got a gun.

He's come here for RIGGS.

We've scarcely time to register this, then the guy SLAMS the dog's head. Cracks it. Spins toward Riggs --

RIGGS fires, *bam--!* MISSES. First shot, wide. Riggs only feet away... How could he miss? Fuck it, that's what the other fourteen bullets are for. *Bam--!* That's better. THROAT, blown to tatters. One down. Riggs lunges, rolls--

Holy shit. There are TWO MORE.

(OKAY, HOLD UP -- A couple of things about the GUNFIGHT that ensues: first, this hitman may well be the *first person Riggs has killed* since Wah Sing Ku (Jet Li) in LW4. He's been living IN PEACE for 12 long years.

He's slower. His eyesight's going, he didn't bring his GLASSES. Add to this a case of the jitters, you get a ragged scene. Breathless and AWKWARD.)

At any rate, he takes them down. Takes cover behind the SNOWMAN as it's chopped to bits. Peeks out: HITMAN #2, crossing the ICE. Raising a SHOTGUN --

Riggs is quicker -- bullet takes the guy in the shoulder. The SHOTGUN sags, discharges INTO THE ICE: he literally vanishes. The ice collapsing underfoot, like the earth had sucked him under. Two down.

HITMAN #3 PLOWS into him. ROCKS him. Riggs' GUN, jarred loose. It skitters away, PLUNK-! drops through the hole in the ice. Riggs, pissed. Launches a death-strike --

Too slow. The fucker spins, slams him against the SNOWMAN. Throttles him. Riggs, dying. Pinned against the snowman, he plucks the carrot nose: CUTS THE GUY'S THROAT with it. Snarls. Leaves it in an eye socket.

(Potential groaner for Mel -- "good for your eyesight.")

Or maybe Riggs isn't talking. Crawls to SAM. Cradles the dog. Sam waited patiently. Now, in Riggs' arms, he dies. His tail makes a happy thump. Sam had one last thing to do for his master before he died. He did it.

Riggs sucks wind. Dead landscape, all around. It starts to snow. He rifles a dead guy's pockets. Keys, money clip. No weapon. Pockets the stash.

His CELL rings: LORNA in L.A. She asks after Nick, then starts talking about something banal -- the new wallpaper. How does peach grab him..?

Riggs searches the other corpse. Grabs *that* guy's gun -- no luck. It took a hit, it's fucking deformed.

"You sound weird, Martin? Everything all right there?"

Riggs exhales raggedly. Can't stop shaking.

"My dog died," he says simply.

Hangs up, stumbles to his feet. Hefts Sam and RUNS for the car, struck with a thought -- if these guys came here, gunning for *him*..?

RIGGS, DRIVING... Racing back. Weaponless. No luck raising Murtaugh on his cell. He pulls up short of Nick's house. Approaches on foot. Creeps through the neighbor's yard -- hunkers down beneath Nick's WINDOW.

Frowns -- something is HAPPENING inside. Riggs draws a breath, steadies himself --

He's grabbed from behind. Headlock; a hand over his mouth, Riggs spins--! It's ROGER. Murtaugh puts his fingers to his lips. *Shhhh...* Gestures for Riggs to take a look:

NICK'S HOUSE is being ransacked... turned upside down. Thorough job of it, too: drawers dumped, rugs tossed. Cushions knifed. And the man responsible..?

Nick's partner: TIM McTAGGART, no less. And he doesn't look happy... He continues his frantic search. Comes across a dime and two pennies in the crack of an easy-chair. Oh, good. He pockets the coins (This is Two-Buck Tim we're talking about here.) But then the search resumes.

Tim clearly can't find what he's after. Swears. About to give up when the PHONE RINGS. Once, twice... Nick's MACHINE picks up. McTaggart grabs up the receiver.

Trouble is, from where our guys are hiding, they can't hear much of what's said. Only the gist: Two-Buck has just arranged a meet. He starts for the door -- stops abruptly.

Crosses back to the answer machine, furtively removes the miniature TAPE. Pockets it. Riggs shakes his head: damn, they just can't get a break. And with that, off drives McTaggart in his own car.

Riggs grabs Murtaugh; they don't have much time... He hustles him inside Nick's. Murtaugh doesn't get it. What's Riggs got in mind..?

Riggs scoops up the phone, punches in *69 to call back whoever was just talking to Two-Buck Tim... A bartender answers. Tells Riggs he's reached a payphone. Riggs scribbles the address, says, hey, man -- did you just call me?

No, the man replies, wasn't him -- but he overheard the young lady who did. Said her name was Lisa McBain. She headed for the powder room: "You want I should have her call you again?" No, Riggs says. We'll be right there.

LEAVING BROOKLYN: Riggs and Murtaugh point their car at the B.Q.E. and goose it. Heading downtown to crash McTaggart's mysterious date when, inexplicably, Riggs CRANKS THE WHEEL. Veers off.

"What's up?" asks Murtaugh. "Pit stop," replies Riggs. "Won't take but a second."

AMBUSH PARK: we know it, it's where Riggs dispatched the hitmen. Already dusted with a layer of snow. Here Riggs bid farewell to his GUN; here he hopes to find another.

He's got the hitman's CAR KEYS. Now our guys cruise the perimeter, Riggs agitatedly punching the car-finder button...

Bingo. A LONE CAR, ticket on the windshield. It lights up like it's supposed to. Riggs pulls over. Gets out, crosses to the hitters' car, opens it. Tosses front and backseat. Emits a low whistle --

"Holy shit. Who says there's no Santa Claus?"

He opens a worn leather CASE... makes a sound, half-bark, half-GIGGLE. For there, disassembled, lies the most beautiful long rifle this side of Bragg.

And it's scoped. Riggs, like a kid with his new toy. Pulls a box of ammunition -- makes him even *happier*.

Come on, says Murtaugh. Gotta go. Aw, please, just lemme check the trunk, says Riggs. Blows on his hands, like a gambler shooting craps. Keys the lock. Opens the LID --

Says, "Fuck me," or the PG-13 equivalent.

The trunk is full of GIRL.

Twenty-two, give or take. Long-stemmed. Olive-complected. Riggs and Murtaugh GAPE. Utterly thrown.

For a girl who's confined and dehydrated and very likely drugged-up and/or oxygen-starved? She's pretty much their type.

They haul her out. Free her hands and feet, get circulation going. She's wracked with shivers. They bundle her into Nick's car, heater on HIGH.

That's when it gets weird. Her first words are: "This is Nick's car." Followed by, "Oh, God, is he okay?"

She knows NICK..? Our guys are floored. As Murtaugh steers west through sudden snow flurries, we elicit the following information:

First, she can't *speak* very well, she's been drugged. Riggs produces a VIAL he found in the trunk -- a GHB derivative similar to truth serum. The difference? It retroactively ERASES MEMORY. Last 18 to 24 hours, gone.

Its use by professional interrogators in Guantanamo Bay is documented -- also its frequent use by the CIA.

The upshot is, she has no memory of her ordeal. As to the rest, her name is LISA and she's Nick's GIRLFRIEND.

"Do you know a Tim McTaggart?" asks a suspicious Murtaugh.

"Never met him, but he's Nick's best friend."

"Oh, is he now..?" grates Riggs. "So how come he tossed Nick's place, then went to meet some creepy chick named Lisa McBain?"

Pause. She looks at them like two retarded folk.

Um, I'm Lisa McBain."

The hits just keep on coming. Riggs sighs:

"You didn't... just call Nick's phone? Speak to McTaggart..?"

"Sure. I do most of my errands while IN THE TRUNK."

Oh, shit. Not only have they misjudged McTaggart, but it appears he's been SET UP. Maybe for a HIT. MURTAUGH stomps the accelerator.

The snow continues to fall.

THE G-SPOT BAR (ON EAST 59TH)

If you think you're above making jokes about how hard this place is to find, Two-buck Tim isn't...

He slouches in a dark corner booth with an attractive brunette, also calling herself LISA MCBAIN.

Yogi Berra once said: "This bar's too crowded, that's why no one ever comes here." The G-Spot, people don't come 'cause it sucks. A real dive. The drinks are watered down and still the floor is sticky --

As the two converse, three things quickly become apparent:

- 1.) Two-Buck is actually trying to help Nick;
- 2.) Apart from being told to contact McBain, he's JUST AS CONFUSED by what's going on as we are; and finally --
- 3.) The fake Lisa McBain is rapidly tumbling to this fact: McTaggart knows nothing. We notice that she procures more data from him than he does from her -- to the point where even Two-Buck senses something fishy. Also, he could get stuck with the check.

IT'S THEN RIGGS AND MURTAUGH ARRIVE...

They squeal to stop outside. The real Lisa McBain is told sit tight. Wait here. No telling what will go down.

And with that, they head in cautiously... Take a quick look around. This place isn't big, but it's tricky to search without making a scene... They sidle up to the bar instead. The barkeep comes for their orders, Riggs whispers:

"Hey, on the phone just a moment ago? That was me, remember? Mind pointing out the little lady you mentioned?"

THE FAKE LISA MCBAIN, MEANWHILE -- Has learned all she needs from Two-Buck... As she puts it so eloquently: "You don't know shit. I'm going for a tinkle." She gets up --

And, as if the cast isn't big enough, in wanders the REAL Lisa McBain. Still dazed, there IS actually part of "stay in the car" that she didn't understand.

What happens next happens quickly:

Our barkeep, apparently deciding Riggs just likes whispering from time to time, loudly blurts out: "Lisa? Yo! Lisa McBain? You still here?"

At which point, both Lisas answer, turning to stare at each other face-to-face... Whoops.

Fake Lisa realizes the jig's up: and being a good sport, pulls a GUN. No hesitation. Aims --

MURTAUGH DIVES. Tackles the real Lisa from behind as BAM-!

The dark bar erupts with a bright muzzle flash. A mirror EXPLODES into shards. Fake Lisa sprints for the back hallway.

TWO-BUCK, confused, leaps to his feet. Decides explanations can wait. He and Riggs go barreling AFTER her -- Riggs huffing, wheezing, as the girl BURSTS through the back door, into daylight --

Unfortunately, the backdoor opens onto:

FIFTH AVENUE

And today, like no other day, the street's a zoo of HOLIDAY SHOPPERS. Mobbing Bergdorf-Goodman, Tiffany's. A long line of KIDS, waiting for Santa, snakes around FAO Schwartz.

Fake Lisa THRASHES her way through the crowd -- waving a gun. Creating chaos, panic...

What transpires next is fast and frenzied -- for the sake of this treatment, we showcase the essential beats:

FAKE LISA RUNS, taking pot-shots at our guys...

One nails the four-story, glass CUBE that houses the APPLE STORE. AN AVALANCHE OF SHARDS tumbles down like a waterfall. Nearly crushes Riggs. SOUND, DEAFENING.

It SPOOKS a HORSE pulling a buggy. The horse bolts. Throwing its driver, as it gallops into traffic.

And now everyone's running. A CRUSH OF BODIES. Trying to get clear. Mothers grab kids.

RIGGS, just trying not to lose sight of the girl... Except he DOES -- Next thing he knows..?

TWO-BUCK'S got a gun to his head. Fake Lisa, wild-eyed, desperate... People back away, leave a clearing around her.

Riggs knows exactly how McTaggart feels. He was just here, this exact situation... At the Grinch's.

Riggs tosses his gun away, puts up his hands, defenseless. Even pulls off his coat and shirt in the FREEZING CHILL.

He wants to prove there's nothing up his sleeve. But more than that? He didn't like that he was scared at the Grinch's...

He overcompensates... Stands here, practically naked. But what does he DO, you ask..?

Thing is, for awhile longer at least, we are seeing the new, improved Riggs... He TALKS.

And what he has to say is pretty wise... We've heard him say some of this stuff before... At his AA meeting. About what it takes to come out of this alive --

By the look on Fake Lisa's face, it might even be getting through to her. That's when we first become aware of:

R. SOMERSET JOPLIN, bodyguard extraordinaire, with his boss, Don Manzetti, watching from a nearby RESTAURANT.

Jcplin walks off, abandoning Manzetti to his spaghetti.

Riggs, meanwhile, is still talking... About FORGIVENESS, even for one's enemies. Teeth chattering, face turning blue. But it's working.

Fake Lisa is crying... Weeping her eyes out, wracking tears. She's one screwed-up chick, but Riggs says he gets it, knows how she feels (though we may have our doubts).

Then, it's happening... she's lowering the gun... Giving herself up... Two-buck closes his eyes. Relieved.

Looks like everything's going to be -- *BLAM-BLAM!*

Two shots rings out. Fake Lisa collapses. Smacks the frozen pavement forehead first... DEAD. *What the fuck..?*

Everyone turns to see: Joplin, of course. He smiles, beaming. Might as well be blowing smoke from the barrel...

Riggs is livid. Can't believe it: Couldn't he see she was lowering the gun?? She was giving herself up!

Joplin says he didn't see it that way. Just trying to protect a fellow citizen. Usually he even charges for his services... Today, it was a freebie, courtesy of Don Manzetti.

Riggs goes nose-to-nose with him... Helluva coincidence, he says, you and Manzetti having lunch next door.

"He likes the shrimp," says Joplin. Riggs and Murtaugh seethe. Cops first and last, they know damn well when someone's been shot -- and when they've been SILENCED.

It's TWO-BUCK TIM McTAGGART who finally arrests Joplin, none-too-gently. Joplin seems amused by it.

FIFTH AVENUE, 3:00 p.m. -- AFTERMATH...

As McTaggart's prisoner is shoved into a squad car, Two-Buck himself takes Murtaugh and Riggs aside:

He tells them to get the real Lisa to a SAFEHOUSE, known only to him. He can't say more.

It has to do with Nick... That's reason enough, of course.

RIGGS, MURTAUGH AND LISA, DRIVING...

With Lisa's help, our guys try to piece this together:

Nick Murtaugh, investigating mob smuggling of Iraqi antiquities; Billy Vickers, an old soldier. The arrows keep pointing back to the war. How about you, Lisa, they ask. This make any sense to you?

Lisa tries to help -- her memory's still futzed, but she's sparking to the things they're saying:

Especially the war stuff.

In addition to being Nick's squeeze, she tells them, she's an ACLU LAWYER, a damned good one. Says she's been looking into civil rights abuses in Northern Iraq -- mostly by American war contractors. Private soldiers.

"Who are these private soldiers?" asks Riggs.

The worst of the worst, she says. Employees of STARKWEATHER, USA. She fills in some blanks:

We learn that in each year following 9/11, the U.S. government ponied up tens of BILLIONS to private "contractors," soldiers whose exploits are strictly off the books. Mercenaries, to put it bluntly.

These men are guilty of hideous crimes -- for which they can't be tried. Our government's granted them immunity.

"I don't get it," Riggs says, "What do these guys have to do with Nick's investigation?" Good question. Scary answer:

Quite simply, Starkweather is now teamed WITH the MOB -- Smuggling. Bodyguarding. Murder for hire.

And the mob stuff's just the tip of the iceberg. Seems she found a WHISTLEBLOWER. A fed-up ex-Starkweather man. Ready to talk.

"He told me the mob's small potatoes," she says. "It's... It's..."

"Bigger than the mob?" suggests Murtaugh (quoting his son).

Riggs, annoyed -- Can we get to the big potatoes please?

That's just it. She doesn't have the SPECIFICS. Or maybe she forgot them. She does remember talking to her whistleblower:

"He wanted out. Said these guys were too far gone. Over there, they were like gods -- no restrictions. Wandering the country, killing on a whim. Legally untouchable." The worst part? America's apathy. People here, she says, it's like... like they've got this attitude, *if it happened over there, it didn't happen.*

Riggs perks up. The phrase triggers him. He reaches in his pocket. Extracts the creased, age-faded photo of Billy Vickers. "Is this your source?" Wow, she says. That could be his son. Riggs and Murtaugh exchange looks: it's him.

Now her memory gets fuzzy. She was supposed to **get something, some evidence Vickers had. Get it, and give it to Nick.** She can't remember if she ever took possession of it.

What she does know..? With the cessation of hostilities overseas, Starkweather USA is facing a sudden and devastating UNEMPLOYMENT problem.

Swell. What a sorry bunch. A past-it LA detective, a retired grandfather and a mentally defective witness.

"Let's check out Lisa's apartment," says Riggs. Maybe jog her memory." CUT TO:

JERSEY CITY, ACROSS THE RIVER: LISA McBAIN occupies a three-story walk up overlooking the river. The wind howls off the water. Whips SNOW into frenzied loops.

RIGGS volunteers as watchdog. While the older man goes upstairs with Lisa, he'll stay behind and watch the door.

That's when RIGGS (always happy to rob a corpse) produces the fake Lisa's GUN. Turns it butt-first, offers it to ROGER. "Just in case."

Murtaugh stares, conflicted; hasn't held a gun in over ten years. "Take it," says Riggs.

The weapon changes hands. That accomplished, the two head inside, leaving Riggs on guard duty. Hunched in his coat, shivering. SNOW, everywhere. Glances around, alert for trouble...

There's a liquor store on Lisa's street level.

Riggs' eye, drawn repeatedly to the shiny Christmas displays. Gift packages of Scotch, Bourbon... Canadian Mist, his favorite.

It wouldn't hurt to have a look, would it? You know, a test of sorts. So damn COLD outside. He can watch from just inside the door, surely. Out of the wind.

Steels himself. Harmless, he thinks, and crosses the threshold.

Two minutes later he's holding a pint bottle.

It's paid for.

Trembling, he secrets it in his overcoat POCKET. No one will ever know. Just a back-up. Just in case of trouble. He looks outside --

Draws a sharp breath. FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW. Crossing toward the LOBBY of Lisa's building. While he was fucking off, someone got by.

He BOLTS OUTSIDE. Arms pumping. Through the vestibule. Pounds up the stairs, face a snarling rictus -- Sees A MAN outside Lisa's DOOR, spins him round, SLAMS him against the wall--!

Riggs' BOTTLE OF BOURBON falls out. Lands, *clunk!*

And meanwhile it's a false alarm. The guy's there to fix the radiator. The ruckus summons MURTAUGH and LISA, they appear in the doorway...

Riggs reaches down, scoops up the bottle. "Here, you dropped this," he says, eyes locked on the repairmen's. Imploring him.

Pause. "Uh... sure. Sure thing. Thanks."

The guy takes the bottle. Riggs turns away. For the record? There are discrete stages in the downward slide of an alcoholic. Warning signs.

One of the first is lying to your best friend.

Also for the record, LISA'S APARTMENT had previously been searched. Her books, notebooks, clothes -- all packed in Lisa's own SUITCASES and spirited away. They can only hope Lisa's EVIDENCE wasn't inside that luggage.

MURTAUGH tells Riggs, you go to the station house and check in with McTaggart, while I get the girl to the safehouse. Perhaps this assigning of duties relates to his seeing Riggs with that BOTTLE.

MIDTOWN, 73rd Precinct: Arresting Joplin, it seems, was not McTaggart's crowning moment. Two-Buck is on the receiving end of a major dressing-down from his captain. There's talk of a harassment suit. Even police brutality. "You wanna go down with Nick? Be my guest -- *but don't involve the department.*"

McTAGGART, incredulous. This is nuts. Joplin *shot* someone. During the *day*. On the *street*.

RIGGS arrives just in time to see a stunned Tim exit the captain's office. How bad? asks Riggs. I've been taken off the case, says Tim. SUSPENDED without pay. He's still in a state of shock... Can this get any worse?

It can. Just then JOPLIN appears. Shrugging into his coat. Trotting briskly down the stairs from holding. He pauses to smile at Two-Buck:

"I wish I could stay," he says, "But there's a glass of 20 year-old scotch with my name on it." He appears to notice Riggs for the first time: "Ah! Merry Christmas, sir. My best to you and your family. Marty Jr. and -- oh, I'm terrible with names. Lorna, is it..?"

No way. He did not just say that.

Riggs considers dispatching him on the spot. Instead, he watches the guy WALK... After a harrowing 71 minutes in custody. "I think we bit off too much here," says McTaggart.

"Or he did," says Riggs.

RIGGS' CELL RINGS. It's MURTAUGH, and he doesn't waste words: "Get over here, Martin. There's something you better see." Off we go.

McTAGGART'S BROOKLYN SAFE HOUSE

(Note: as we'll see later, this is a CONVERTED LOFT IN GREENPOINT, an industrial area near the river -- tall skylight, factory floors. McTaggart divorced his rich wife. Took her to the cleaners.)

Midnight finds all four of them hunched over the kitchen table... What they're seeing doesn't make a lot of sense:

TODAY'S NEWSPAPER, afternoon edition. In the *World* section, a headline reads:

CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER FOUND DEAD IN IRAQ

Below it, a PHOTOGRAPH of a woman. "It's not my good side," says a visibly upset Lisa McBain --

For it is unquestionably HER.

The ARTICLE reports she was killed by hostile fire while on a routine fact-finding trip that Starkweather itself commissioned.

Lisa, shaken. To any of the paper's more than 100,000 subscribers, she's now an *Iraq casualty*. The only reason she's around to dispute it..?

Is that Riggs and Murtaugh pulled her out of that TRUNK.

It's STARKWEATHER, she says. They've found a perfect murder method. See, a major reason our government hires contract soldiers is that they *don't appear on any U.S. death toll*. They simply aren't counted --

That's why we hire them: zero body count.

So, all Starkweather has to do to declare someone dead..?
Is issue a PRESS RELEASE.

It all tracks: the people who searched Lisa's apartment, they weren't interested in the stuff *INSIDE* the suitcases. *They just wanted her suitcases.* To make it seem like she took a trip.

Riggs smiles grimly. Lisa, found dead in Iraq; no one cares, no investigation: *If it happened over there, it didn't happen...* that haunting phrase again.

They wonder how many other times in the past this sort of thing "didn't happen." Jesus, says Murtaugh -- I thought being a cop in LA was bad; what was Nick into here..?

THE ADMIRAL HOUSE, GOVERNOR'S ISLAND

Built in 1843, this landmark mansion is JUDE STARKWEATHER'S pride and joy.

Located on the Statue of Liberty's doorstep, with MANHATTAN adazzle in the distance, it's the perfect venue to host his yearly fundraiser: an ELEGANT BLACK-TIE AFFAIR.

Even the VICE-PRESIDENT is here -- chatting up the owner of the world's largest private army...

And it isn't just small-talk either, uh-uh. Starkweather's got a surprise coming. Our nation's streets are about to become a lot safer. He has INTEL not even the CIA has --

Because his boys are there -- On the front lines. At one time, mercenaries had a bad name, but now..?

"Now," the Vice-Prez chimes in, "You get what you pay for."

Jude Starkweather smiles. Couldn't have said it better himself... It's then he's interrupted; urgent business.

He excuses himself, leaving the partying. Heads down to:

A BOAT STABLE AND PRIVATE DOCKS. A launch purrs up, as a pair of mercs hop out -- present their boss with an early Christmas gift from Homeland Security:

NICK MURTAUGH. As in Iraq, there's no need for troublesome paperwork. Homeland's getting grumpy, he's told. No more favors.

Starkweather LAUGHS. Orders Nick to the interrogation room. High time they found out what he knows. CUT BACK TO:

GREENPOINT SAFE HOUSE, 12:08 a.m. It's now officially December 24. Christmas Eve. You can tell, because our guys are so fucking happy about it.

RIGGS and McTAGGART sourly peruse New York PHONE BOOKS, making call after call.

MURTAUGH dons his coat -- with Riggs and Two-Buck here, he can move Lisa's VAN. Get it out of sight.

"See if you can fix my CD player," says Lisa, without looking up. "Get us some pizza," adds McTaggart. Roger scowls: "You want I should tie a broom to my ass, sweep up on the out?" He exits into the freezing cold.

RIGGS abruptly holds up a finger for quiet. Says: "Yes, hello..? Sorry for calling this late. You are the wife of William Michael Vickers?"

"Yes," comes a tired, strained voice. INTERCUT: We see a once-pretty face, now haggard... dark circles, sallow skin. Meet FRANCINE VICKERS, nee Aldritch.

Riggs says he knew Billy in southeast Asia. She becomes bitter. Says Billy never really came home. She needed a good husband. He needed a war. After enlisting with Starkweather, he was reported dead in Afghanistan in 2005.

"That was the last you heard of him?"

"Yes, you son of a bitch."

She doesn't like soldiers. Riggs hangs up. Dead end.

Or not. See, as the phone call ends, we stay with FRANCINE, her side of the call --

WIDEN to reveal her in an INTERROGATION chair. Harsh overhead light. The dark circles aren't from fatigue. She's been BEATEN.

Her PHONE, snatched away: A soldier in STARKWEATHER uniform. And he's in a good mood -- it so happens Riggs' call interrupted their interrogation. He says to his back-up: "Nice. Did we get a fix?"

The OTHER SOLDIER looks up from an electronics package; flashes him a thumbs-up. "Tell Joplin."

Across the room..? A bruised and bloody NICK MURTAUGH struggles against his bonds like a madman --

The dogs are about to be loosed in Greenpoint.

INTERROGATION BLOCK -- STARKWEATHER, USA. 12:15 a.m. Nick Murtaugh, being half marched, half dragged to his cell.

Cleverly, he gets away by escaping.

Just kidding, the point is, he pretends to be more wasted than he really is, or some such ruse --

Acquires a gun in the process. And takes off, running like the devil... After all, his dad's life is at stake.

Bursts out of the Starkweather BUILDING. Onto a riverside WHARF --

It's minus 10, he's wracked with shivers... UP AHEAD, a guy getting in a car. Nick PLOWS into him--! Sends him sprawling. Gets in. Keys the ignition. PUNCHES IT --

Behind him, GUNSHOTS.

Two STARKWEATHER MEN, on foot. Closing fast. Nick slews crazily on the ice, looking for a DRY PATCH.

BULLETS SHATTER the glass, puncture the door frame. Nick VEERS OFF--! Slides. Strikes a loading dock --

IMPACT. Spray of glass. The HOOD shears off, goes flying. Tires SPIN, useless. STEAM, hissing..!

And that horrible continuous *Hooooooooooooooooonnnnnnnnnkk*.

The GUARDS rush to the car. *Hooooooooooooooooonnnnnnnkkkk...!* Shit, they hope he's not dead. Round the vehicle --

Barely have time to register NICK'S THUMB resting on the horn, when the detective's gun KICKS TWICE. Blows them down.

"You watch... too many movies..." he mutters. Tries the car again. Uh-uh, fucked. Gets out and RUNS.

At which point, we inexplicably JUMP to:

MURTAUGH RESIDENCE - CALIFORNIA, 9:20 p.m.(PST) Diminutive SHYA MURTAUGH loves to answer the phone. She ought really to be in bed, but she can't resist.

She scoops up the phone: "Hello..?"

INTERCUT: NICK -- Breathless, desperate. Is Trish there? She informs him that Grandma's next-door. *Listen*, this is very important, he says. I don't have much time. You need to *get Grandpa's phone number*.

"I got a new rocket ship," she says.

"That... that's great, SHYA, LISTEN. Get the number. Tell Grandpa, *they're coming for him* -- Understand? Those exact words, *they're coming for him*.

"Okay. Knock, Knock."

What the fuck..?

"You're supposed to say, who's th--"

"*Goddammit, Shya, just hurry up and DO IT.*"

He hangs up, having no idea of the outcome.

And for the record, when we say 'hangs up,' what we actually mean is he's SEIZED FROM BEHIND. Thrown to the snow. Out comes a SYRINGE --

GREENPOINT, 12:32 a.m.

MURTAUGH pulls Lisa McBain's VAN to a halt on a steep hillside, several blocks up from the river.

He huddles in the warm van. RADIO going. Punches in the CD. It comes right back out. Murtaugh shakes his head, was he really gonna fix the damn thing?

Nah, he's putting off WALKING BACK to the house. On the RADIO, STORM WARNINGS... Increasing snow. A BLIZZARD. Up and down the coast.

AT THE SAFE HOUSE. Riggs steps outside. Looks both ways... then catches himself being furtive. Laughs. He can light a cigarette if he wants to. He walks the perimeter.

It occurs to him, he's utterly unsupervised. No wife, eyeballing him. He can ENJOY his smoke. Do as he pleases.

Take a walk, smoke... cheerfully juggle this fifth of BOURBON, the one he lifted from the safe house...

He holds it up. Unscrews the lid, ritualistically. Sniffs it. Fascinated by his own recklessness --

The safe house DOOR OPENS, and there's McTAGGART. He starts to say something, then sees the LIQUOR.

He's heard about Riggs' drinking problem... Says it's the wrong fucking time for him to crawl into a bottle --

Or maybe it's not... Maybe Riggs is past it. Not up to the task. If so, he better stand the fuck DOWN and let the younger cop run the show.

Riggs looks ready to break his neck. Then decides maybe McTaggart has a point... But he's not about to let him know that. They face off, and meanwhile --

IT BEGINS: Sidestreet, nearby -- A big SWAT-style wagon pulls off the river road. Glides to the curb, far from the streetlamp.

WRAITHS emerge, girding themselves, checking weapons. It looks, for all the world, like a SWAT TAKE-DOWN.

Right. At lunch? One of these guys wasn't feeling well; threw up a SWAT guy he had for breakfast.

HILLSIDE -- WITH MURTAUGH, WALKING BACK. Hunkered inside his coat, shivering. HIS CELL RINGS. He answers --

It's his GRANDDAUGHTER. He does a mental calculation: why isn't she in bed? She had to answer the phone, she tells him. Hey, Grampa, I saw a dog on TV that looks like Daddy! Blah blah...

Murtaugh, half tuned-out. Until, almost as an afterthought, she supplies: "Oh, NICK called."

Roger stops dead.

He forces himself to speak calmly: You sure, honey? Nick? When did Nick call? Did he say where he was?

Uh-uh, she says -- but he left a message. Roger, frantic. Tell me, he says. Every word.

"I can't. Nick used a bad word."

You want to throttle the kid. *Spit it out!* She does, but it's wrong -- "Nick said something's coming." Murtaugh, LOSING it. FINALLY, she corrects herself:

They're coming for you. Does that mean anything, Grampa..?

Murtaugh starts to run. One foot in front of the other. Feet slapping pavement. Eyes dead ahead. Frantically phoning RIGGS --

He's four blocks out.

SAFE HOUSE - WITH McTAGGART, RIGGS & LISA:

McTAGGART's on Riggs' cell, trying to locate NICK. Fucking maddening -- No one can tell him where Nick was TAKEN.

The phone BEEPS. He ignores it. This Nick thing is upsetting.

RIGGS idly toys with the faded snapshot of Billy Vickers. Staring maybe, through a dark looking-glass at himself.

LISA shuttles round, sprucing up. If they're gonna have Christmas here, so be it. A free spirit, this one. Also quite cavalier about changing CLOTHES: tends to flounce in and out of them with no thought to who's in the room.

Then -- it happens. Riggs notices it first.

Sits up. His eyes flick to the window. He goes very quiet, very... still. Ears pricked.

Either Santa's early, or someone's out there.

WITH ROGER -- TWO BLOCKS OUT: Legs scissoring. Eating up ground. It's a good, solid pace --

He doubles it. Pulling out a gun. The gun he swore he wouldn't need to use...

SAFEHOUSE, WITH RIGGS -- He crosses to the window, speaks calmly: "Front door, kitchen door. Any other way in?"

McTaggart, puzzled: "We're hanging off the hillside. Why?" Riggs nods, says, "Take Lisa in the bedroom. Stay down."

To his credit, McTaggart starts to move. Half of him thinks this lunatic is having a war flashback. If so?

It's a very VIVID flashback.

FIRST, THE GRENADES

Punch through the window. No warning. FLASH-BANGS.
Standard attack procedure: blind, deafen.;

It all goes south in a hurry.

RIGGS doesn't miss a beat -- moves like a cricket ace,
scoops one up. Heaves it aside. IT BLOWS. Concussive
force. Plaster rains down. Riggs lunges for the other
one, it's rolling toward LISA --

It goes off practically in his face. FLINGS him backward.
Knocks him flat. Riggs is shell-shocked. Semi-conscious.

WHILE ALL AROUND HIM: Starkweather's crack SOLDIERS hit the
safe house. The idea of the scene is that ONLY AMIDST this
chaos, to a soundtrack of SCREAMS, gunshots --

Only here can Riggs really WAKE UP. Not only that --

He wakes up different.

See, inside the blast-induced coma, he seeks a friend, any
friend. To help him survive.

The DEMON will be his friend.

It's slept dormant inside Riggs. Years, now... He'd almost
forgotten its face.

He clasps its hand, and time slips away. He's back. His
friend whispering to him again. The good lies.

A RUSH OF SOUND, as Riggs crosses the waking threshold and
sits up, bloody yet alive -- bloody and *therefore* alive.
He smiles.

And the Demon smiles, too -- because here's the kicker:

It doesn't know Riggs got old.

CHAOS ENSUES.

Our people are hopeless, completely outgunned. We see
McTAGGART giving it the old college try, to no avail.

He's in the process of getting killed. KNIFE, inches from
his eye... Then, just as suddenly, he's falling FREE. He
hits the floor. Looks up --

In time to see Riggs discard this latest VICTIM.

What happens next happens quickly, and is transcribed accordingly. What's impressive..? Is not the ACTION, per se -- but rather the SPEED at which Riggs processes events in DEMON MODE.

It's been said of him before, but it bears repeating: He is not flashy. Rather, he is like a sledge-hammer hitting an egg. He does not knock people down. Does not injure them.

He simply kills them. The whole room. Everyone standing. Mercs try to draw their guns -- and suddenly their hands are shattered wrecks. While elsewhere --

MURTAUGH has his own troubles. Here he comes, huffing and wheezing. Powers forward, leaps--! From the HILLSIDE to the safehouse ROOF.

FLOATING THROUGH SPACE...

In mid-air, he remembers he's a 65 year-old MAN. Touches down, ooof--! Sprawls flat. His bum knee seizes up. He swears. Grits his teeth.

Combat-crawls... Reaches roof's edge, looks down:

HIS POV -- SOLDIERS

Darting from tree to tree. He cracks his neck. Aims, FIRES--! Kills one. Then is punished: the roof ERUPTS in chops and splinters--! He takes HEAVY FIRE.

The idea is, we intercut, Riggs and Murtaugh, Murtaugh and Riggs, until there's just ONE BEAT left. Inside the house. A MERC's got McTAGGART dead to rights, when:

"Hey. Up HERE."

All heads snap upward -- It's MURTAUGH, on the roof. At the big SKY-LIGHT, waving. REACTION, IMMEDIATE. The killer jerks the GUN skyward. Triggers both barrels.

Murtaugh FLINGS himself aside..! THE BLAST explodes upward, into the night -- the killer gets a very bad feeling. From his own shotgun blast, the sky-light COLLAPSES inward. Rains down.

Knife-edged pieces. Big. Small. CHOPPING at him --

Don't look, Two-Buck tells Lisa, as the guy SHRIEKS. Jitters in a circle, gun going off randomly. BANG. McTAGGART blows him backward into a planter.

Kills him. Practically an act of mercy.

And before it's all over, the safehouse is on fire. Plumes of black smoke rising... Our guys scramble clear, choking. Coughing. They are tired, bleeding. Fucked up --

But... most importantly, alive.

AFTERMATH - STUNNED SURVIVORS

In the distance, the safehouse burns... A beautiful orange glow against the low, gloomy snow-clouds.

TWO-BUCK, in Lisa's van, careens to a stop beside Murtaugh and Lisa. Immediately sets to work, swapping license plates with a nearby car. While --

Murtaugh is on his cell. Trying to figure out whether he can learn anything more from his granddaughter:

"Shya, honey, try to remember. What else did Nick say? Were there any noises in the background? Machines..? Anything?"

The questions are going nowhere fast... Until Riggs shows up with someone new to interrogate:

"Hey, hey," he announces: "Look what the cat drug in.."

And unceremoniously dumps a STARKWEATHER MERC at Murtaugh's feet. Guy's still alive; one of their attackers from moments ago.

Murtaugh is skeptical: "He won't talk. These guys, they won't take a leak unless they're under orders."

Riggs smiles: He has a plan. CUT TO:

LISA'S VAN, DRIVING

Our unconscious MERC, in back; jostled, bounced. He finally opens his eyes to see:

Lisa McBain, tied up beside him -- a captive... Huh? What just happened..? Plus, at the front of the van, THREE OF HIS STARKWEATHER COMPANIONS.

One of them turns... it's RIGGS -- garbed now, all spiffy, in a SWAT uniform:

"Girl's secure," he tells the merc, "We're taking her to a safehouse. But we got orders to drop you first. Where's your remote?"

The real merc blinks... A pause, then: "Hey, you're those guys we were supposed to kill."

Riggs and Murtaugh, deflated. Master plan, in tatters. "Didn't I tell you?" Murtaugh says to Riggs. "I told you it was a dumb idea." Riggs rolls his eyes, "Yeah, yeah. Well, worth a shot."

Riggs opts for *PLAN B*... beat on him until he talks. Even LISA gets into the spirit: "Let me try." She grabs a pair of scissors from her purse.

The van hits a bump; she nearly castrates the guy. Whoops. Not what she intended. Murtaugh and Riggs stare: Isn't she a lawyer for the ACLU?

But hey, the guy IS talking... Even manages to provide an address before he faints. CUT TO:

CUT TO: THE TREASURE BOXX: ADULT NOVELTIES (BRONX)

Shitty part of town. A warehouse-outlet, the place looks closed... Maybe permanently. Is this the right place?

Riggs picks the lock. They sweep in, guns drawn.

INSIDE, just what the sign says: Toys. For adults (cheesy Christmas decorations notwithstanding). Even if you're not into this sort of thing, you gotta stop and whistle. The selection; it's that vast...

Just then, they hear screams of AGONY. Like people being SLAUGHTERED. Nick..? Jesus. We hope not.

Riggs, snaps into action. Sprints. On the wall, a SHADOW. Figure with a GUN -- Riggs grabs the fucker. Spins him around...

A KID. A pimply-faced kid. He's all alone, playing that same goddamn VIDEO-GAME Riggs' kid was playing at the beginning of the movie.

Riggs lets out a ragged breath; he almost killed him. The kid, not exactly grateful. He just closed up, and Riggs fucked his game.

Riggs thinks it over. The kid can't be involved. Does him a favor. Says: you're done with work... Go home. Don't come back. Ever.

As he splits, we hear MURTAUGH shout from the back:
Something Riggs needs to see.

HE'S FOUND A CACHE OF WEAPONS. Crates and crates of them.
Far as the eye can see. Mortars, RPGs, machine-guns -- if
it can incinerate you, it's here.

A separate WAREHOUSE, hidden behind a trapdoor.

Riggs absently grabs a RPG-29 Vampir (hand-held antitank
handgrenade launcher) from a crate. Mumbles something
about its sticky trigger mechanism.

Murtaugh is shocked: "You've seen one before?"

"Sure," says Riggs. "A second ago. On that Goddamn video
game everyone's playing."

What's clear is, the stakes just got higher. This is big.
Really big. Suddenly a thought occurs:

Starkweather, USA -- if they can be linked to this
warehouse..? They're done. Game over. I mean, Christ,
it's a fucking ARMS DEPOT in the heart of the city.

Pretty damning, one would think -- One would be wrong.

TWO-BUCK TIM hangs up the phone; a friend in the department
did some checking. Starkweather has a *special government*
charter to possess this stuff. NO NYPD JURISDICTION.

Matter of fact, cops can't even get a warrant to search
here without applying to CONGRESS. The upshot? Our guys
are the only ones breaking the law. By trespassing.
Well, shit.

So it's with incredibly bad timing that Lisa McBain comes
racing up, excited. She's found the infamous smuggled
Iraqi ANTIQUITIES. They're here. In containers from
import companies with ties to various crime families.

That's why Starkweather is in bed with organized crime.
They need the mob infrastructure to run this smuggling
operation. "Do you know what this means?" she asks. "We
got 'em!"

Riggs shoots Two-Tuck Tim a look: want to tell her? "Let's
let her enjoy the moment a bit longer," he replies.

Lisa is confused: "What? Don't we got 'em?"

Then here come the sirens. Time to beat a hasty retreat.
But not before they take a few goodies for later. CUT TO:

LISA'S VAN, DRIVING

The mood is decidedly sober. They thought they had Starkweather. They got dick. "Cheer up," says Lisa McBain. Puts on CHRISTMAS MUSIC -- "There. How's that?"

Groans all around: "I thought your CD player was broken," mutters Tim.

Sergeant Murtaugh fixed it, she says. Murtaugh shakes his head: "Didn't fix nothin'."

Huh, says Lisa. Maybe it was just the one CD.

A red flag goes up in Riggs' head. He's remembering a pack of CIGARETTES in California -- how Vickers could give you something, you didn't even know you had it.

Was Vickers ever inside the van, he asks?

Then she remembers: yes, he was. They spoke briefly while driving -- but he didn't give her anything --

"I wanna see that CD," says Riggs.

He's betting the CD in Lisa's player is actually a CD ROM. That's why it wouldn't play. It's the missing EVIDENCE. The key to ALL of this.

They need a computer to PLAY the thing. Murtaugh glances out the window at QUEENS, going by. It looks familiar. He smiles: "Hey, you know who lives around here..?" CUT TO:

THE GRINCH'S HOUSE. Still cordoned off by yellow CRIME SCENE tape. Seemingly deserted. DAWN is breaking as they roll up in the van.

Riggs wastes no time. Jumps out, hits running. "Keep it fired up," he says. "This'll just take a second."

Riggs, alone, picks his way past the yellow police tape, casually slips in through the busted FRONT DOOR...

Finds the place just the way we left it. Gifts everywhere. Stockings. Christmas trees...

Bingo. THE GRINCH'S COMPUTER.

Riggs glances out the window. Gives the rest of our guys, waiting in the van, a thumbs-up -- sets to work:

Taps a key. AN IMAGE POPS UP on the computer screen:

GRAINY VIDEOTAPE: shot through a window. Kids discovering their presents gone, bawling their eyes out. A voice: "*No joy in Who-ville!*"

Riggs rolls his eyes: The Grinch. What an asshole. He ejects the CD. Pops in the one from Lisa's van...

An altogether sicker brand of HORROR-SHOW begins:

A VIDEO CLIP -- a young U.S. SOLDIER kneels. Gun to his head, held by a known terrorist. The kid stammers, a coerced vow: death to America this Christmas.

Riggs has seen this before... And so have we:

At the airport, on TV. Only instead of ending as it did previously, *this* version continues. Plays out, unedited... Delivers A **SURPRISE**:

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: There's also a gun to the *terrorist's* head... He's actually being FORCED to threaten the kneeling US soldier.

A VOICE, then; the man with the second gun -- we recognize it: "Okay," he says. "That's enough. We're good."

And then we see him, the man himself: JOPLIN.

This video, this threat. It's all been staged. A FAKE.

In fact, the kneeling US soldier actually begins to LAUGH, BUSTING UP as he stands. He spits in the terrorist's face.

Another surprise: we catch sight, briefly, of someone in the background. ANOTHER SOLDIER. Out of focus... Until he steps forward, and hail, hail, the gang's all here: BILLY VICKERS. Unmistakeable.

The VIDEO abruptly goes to SNOW.

Riggs just keeps staring at the screen... Holy shit. What the hell does it mean? What's Starkweather, USA planning?

All Riggs does know is this; he's sitting on a secret -- one Starkweather will kill to hush up.

Too bad he's no clue whom to trust in all this, whom to give it to... And just when you thought things couldn't get worse?

Time to think again. Riggs glances out the window in time to see: NYPD POLICE CRUISERS -- they SCREECH to a stop from both sides of the street, boxing in the van.

Murtaugh, Two-Buck Tim, and Lisa pile out. Make a break. They're armed -- but these are COPS. Nick or no Nick -- our guys don't kill police officers. They are taken into CUSTODY in short order... Shit.

Meanwhile, **INSIDE**: the house is being searched room-to-room... No sign of Riggs, anywhere. Back door is open.

The police take the chase outside... CUT TO:

A HUGE PILE OF CHRISTMAS GIFTS... It begins to stir. Coming alive... Riggs' head appears, poking from the heap.

As he crawls out, **INTERCUT**:

JOPLIN. His boys monitoring the police -- they tell him the score: Riggs is still loose, is still trouble.

Joplin nods: "Okay. Time we turn up the heat." An interesting phrase to use -- especially in this weather...

BACK TO RIGGS

Standing on a hillside above the Grinch's... He curses, has to watch his friends being ushered into police cars.

His cellphone RINGS, jarring him: New York number. That's funny. Caller ID says: **Bodyguards Shoot Second...**

Even funnier.

It's Joplin, of course. He re-introduces himself to Riggs. Informs him they've been keeping tabs on him...

Riggs realizes suddenly that Joplin's actually been using them, hoping he'd be led to the evidence.

Joplin now believes Riggs has it... Riggs plays dumb -- that is, until Joplin proposes a trade: The CD-ROM for Nick.

For Riggs, this comes as a bit of a shock. Last he heard, Homeland Security was shuffling Nick around.

"Where do I go?" asks Riggs. "How do I find you?"

Don't worry, comes the reply. We've been tracking your cell: "I'm right behind you." Riggs spins -- PPFFFTT-!

A dart catches him on the neck... THE WORLD GOES BLACK.

"THE TOMBS" (MANHATTAN DETENTION COMPLEX).

Depressing. Concrete walls. Everything a jail should be. It's Roger Murtaugh's second visit in as many days --

The first time here, he saw his son taken from him. Now he sits, defeated; awaiting interrogation. Steels himself as BRYSON, of Homeland Security, strides in -- looking as dickish and slimy as ever.

STARKWEATHER WORLD HEADQUARTERS (LOWER MANHATTAN)

Riggs, eyes blurry -- they come to focus on:

THE LAP OF LUXURY... This is Jude Starkweather's PRIVATE PENTHOUSE on the top floor of his corporate offices.

Beyond the picture-windows, New York harbor is an empty blackness, stretching out forever.

Riggs struggles against his bonds. Tries to stand. Ends up falling right back on his ass.

The dry laugh belongs to Joplin. He sits at the bar, like a gunslinger -- his "spurs" up, cooling his heels.

But snaps right to attention, when:

JUDE STARKWEATHER himself strolls in. Greets Riggs amiably. He's civil; he offers Riggs a drink.

"I don't want a drink," comes Riggs' vicious reply. Starkweather smiles: "You will." He proceeds to talk calmly, persuasively. Almost a RECRUITMENT speech.

Soldiers, Starkweather says, are just like garbagemen. Normal folks don't care or appreciate the things we do. They don't want to know what it takes to kill, or face our fears -- they just want to be safe. And if you admit to folks you had to become Frankenstein to make them safe -- suddenly they'll kick YOU to the curb, next to their nice suburban, middle-class homes.

His company is different; appreciates Riggs and his type -- while simultaneously affording Americans the kind of protection they would rather not know about.

The problem is, they need a FREE HAND. The ability to work within America. Where the enemy is...

Then he drops the bomb: What they're after is nothing less than the same immunity here in the U.S. that Congress granted them in Iraq. To pursue our aims, he says, we need to be above the law. Untouchable.

"Right," Riggs scoffs. "Great aims. Helping the mob smuggle shit, so you can finance hit teams to take out anyone who looks at 'em cross-eyed. Turn the country into a police state. Wow. Can I name a hospital after you?"

Starkweather's smile is stretched thin. He assures Riggs it's a small price (or a price, at any rate) to pay for the security people NEED.

People will go along -- but first, America again needs to be reminded there's an enemy -- and that it takes people like us to stop them:

"Like a terrorist act? Don't want to wait for a real one, so you're staging one of your own?"

Starkweather shrugs. A little assassination attempt, conducted by a known enemy of the United States, wouldn't be the end of the world...

Especially if the target happens to be a pain in the ass. The remedy is to be swift and IMMEDIATE (as in *tonight*) to head off the target's planned legal action against Starkweather.

Of course, he wants it to go smoothly. SO, just where is the CD ROM Riggs promised them -- Seems Riggs didn't have it on him when he was captured.

Riggs says he wants to see Nick.

That's when Starkweather introduces his beautiful Vietnamese wife, PHONG... An expert on torture.

She has Nick in tow -- beaten, bloody, cut-up.

Not only will she torture Riggs, but if he's intent on being a soldier, he can watch Nick be tortured, too.

She gives Riggs a taste (something real and from the war; maybe we can ask McCain). Riggs SCREAMS-!

Starkweather smiles, proudly: "Welcome home, soldier."

"THE TOMBS" (MANHATTAN DETENTION COMPLEX).

Bryson, angry, spitting -- pacing like a caged tiger, tries to find out what, if anything, Murtaugh knows.

He informs Murtaugh that not only does his son's life depend on his answers, but RIGGS' life, too.

This is too much for Roger... He breaks into an impassioned plea: Does Bryson understand who he's in league with? Starkweather's private mercs, they have no constraints, kill in cold blood. Good people are dying. They have to be STOPPED.

"I wish I could stop them," Bryson replies simply.

Murtaugh just stares at him. Asks him to repeat that.

And hold on to your hats, Ladies and Gentlemen, because it's now we learn -- to Murtaugh's astonishment, as well as our own -- we've totally misjudged the situation:

Bryson is a good guy.

The trouble, Bryson says, is that stopping Starkweather's activities is next-to impossible:

Jude Starkweather has important and powerful friends at the highest levels of government... Not to mention, he knows a few dirty secrets better left in the middle east.

"In other words," Murtaugh concludes, "He's blackmailing the government."

Bryson nods; his hands are tied. Or HAVE been -- this last bit with NICK was too much. The last straw. "Tomorrow," he says, "I go against my boss's orders."

Tomorrow morning, Bryson will issue a warrant -- raid the WAREHOUSE, the one we saw earlier. Confiscate the smuggled antiquities and SEIZE ALL WEAPONS. "Then I go to the Hill, and try to cut these guys off at the knees. Kill their charter."

Swell, says Murtaugh. That's *tomorrow* -- it doesn't help Nick tonight. I'm doing what I can legally, says Bryson.

He shrugs: "That being said, nobody would investigate too hard if, say, Starkweather himself were found dead."

Murtaugh, baffled. "I'm in here. What do you propose?"

"I propose you hurry," he adds, "I don't think your son has much time."

Bryson walks out, leaving the door open behind him.

That's when Murtaugh notices the card on the table in front of him. It has an address. He grabs it and goes.

Storm front, moving in. Temperature dropping fast.

THE RESCUE -- MIDTOWN MANHATTAN, 8:00 p.m.

ROGER MURTAUGH could use a drink. We come upon him, huffing against the driving SNOW. He hunkers over to a low stone WALL nearby -- spares a glance over the edge:

Mother Mercy. It's THIRTY STORIES, straight down. Promptly PULL BACK to reveal, he's on a skyscraper ROOFTOP. The CHASM between buildings, DIZZING. Spectacular.

TWO-BUCK TIM joins him at roof's edge. Peering to the ADJOINING ROOF...

The roof of the STARKWEATHER, USA building.

THE BLIZZARD has hit, as predicted. It's all McTaggart and Roger can do not to get BLOWN off the skyscraper.

MURTAUGH, incidentally, a sight to see. White khakis, white parka. Rifle across his back. Holstered Beretta. Every inch the soldier he once was. It occurs to him it's a shitty night for sightseeing. But then, that's the idea:

The BLIZZARD... It's the only edge they have to get past the best and most-heavily armed security money can buy.

This place is a fortress. Tonight, they'll need a miracle.

ROOFTOP, STARKWEATHER BUILDING: THREE STARKWEATHER MERCS are busy securing Jude's private HELICOPTER. The wind makes it difficult, HOWLING against them. All three, tied to the building; bungee cords, carabineers. STORM, raging.

BACK WITH MURTAUGH, McTAGGART. Two-Buck lowers field glasses, shouts to be heard: "Fuck me. They got grenades on their belts. Real grenades." In the middle of Manhattan. Unbelievable. Murtaugh sighs: let's get to it.

Brave words. Unfortunately, the problem with "getting to it" is just that -- GETTING TO IT. The two buildings separated by a 40-foot CHASM. Fortunately, our boys have been busy:

Virtually every skyscraper in Manhattan shares a common landmark -- namely, a rooftop WATER TOWER. 30 to 60 feet high; perched atop a latticework of STRUTS.

Some situated mid-roof; others, off to one side -- Still others, like the one on this building, at the ROOF'S EDGE.

Murtaugh and Two-buck are counting on the WIND for help. See, using plastique they swiped from Starkweather's ARMS CACHE, they've rigged the outer struts to BLOW.

Murtaugh's eyes, steely and cold, commands: "Do it."

McTaggart looks out over the city. For a BRIEF MOMENT, a faraway WINDOW is visible. A family, sitting down to a nice Christmas dinner -- he blows the struts.

The TOWER goes over sideways, a vanquished GIANT. Slowly, at first. Then with dreadful speed. THUNDERS DOWN onto the STARKWEATHER building. Creating havoc, but more importantly --

Forming a BRIDGE between the two buildings. The TANK ruptures, spills its contents down the SIDE of the building: all 10,000 gallons of it. A RAGING WATERFALL.

Our GUYS, up and moving. No hesitation. Between them and the STARKWEATHER BUILDING now exists a treacherous 40-foot TUNNEL composed of criss-crossing STRUTS. Slicked with ice. 30-story downside. They clamber across, meanwhile --

STARKWEATHER PENTHOUSE - SAME TIME. Riggs' groans as something terrible is done to him. PHONG steps back: "Where's my CD, Officer..?"

Riggs nods. He's had enough. "Gave it... to a friend..." he rasps. "Call her. Call JENNY... she's at eight-six-seven... five-three-oh-nine." Phong, triumphant -- then she catches on. Goes to PUNISH him, pulls up SHORT --

As, to her consternation, A WALL OF WATER thunders by outside the WINDOW. What on earth..?

The distraction, all Riggs needs: he dispatches (tastefully) with our mistress of pain, Phong... And ESCAPES, Nick in tow.

BATTLE OF THE BUILDING. Murtaugh and McTaggart make the crossing. Take on the three MERCS we saw on copter duty. And keep going... Taking down the door. Two cops, young and old, in they go --

Chaos reigns. *Lethal Weapon* meets *Diehard* as Murtaugh and Two-Buck Tim fight their way down toward Riggs -- while Riggs and Nick struggle UP toward them.

And when they finally meet, not only does Roger Murtaugh see his son at long last -- he sees the COP his son's become. NICK, handling himself like an expert, taking the point. Moving, covering, shooting.

Amidst all the craziness, Roger surprises himself with a GRIN: He's PROUD to see his son in action.

Then, it's over. Back to business. The gun-battle raging until, all together -- they burst forth onto the ROOF. Go running for the makeshift BRIDGE. McTaggart's out front, MURTAUGH calls to him: "GO! Get across, we'll cover you. Then you cover US."

Tim launches himself off the roof, 30 floors up. Into the ice-slicked metal SUPERSTRUCTURE. Starts across --

He's midway when the structure BUCKLES. SHRIEK of tortured metal -- It snaps. McTaggart's side COLLAPSES downward.

Arcing through space... He jumps clear, just in time -- Manages to catch hold of the FIRE ESCAPE of the adjacent building. Opposite STARKWEATHER.

The TOWER PLUMMETS down and away. Tim hugs the fire escape. SIRENS, now, in the distance. Police and fire units, responding.

McTaggart, on the fire escape, four stories below roof level. Waves across the gap at Murtaugh et al. "Go," yells Riggs. "Take it all the way down."

A good-sounding plan, to be sure --

Except at that moment the WALL near Two-Buck is PEPPERED BY RIFLE FIRE. McTaggart dives flat.

STARKWEATHER ROOF -- RIGGS peers over the edge. Directly below him, three floors down -- ARMED MERCS fire out WINDOWS of the Starkweather Building. Across the gap at TIM. Pinning him down.

RIGGS wants to draw fire away from McTaggart. But how?

The unlikely solution presents itself in the form of a six-foot plus MERC. One of the COPTER guys, it seems, was down, but not entirely OUT -- he tackles RIGGS.

They struggle on the icy roof. Treacherously close to the edge, yadda, yadda... The upshot? Remember how these MERCS were all hooked up with bungees and carabiners?

Well, here's what happens. Riggs manages to break the MERC'S NECK. No problem. Tosses the beefy fucker off the roof, good riddance to bad rubbish --

PROBLEM.

A coil of BUNGEE CORD starts paying out an alarming rate. Goes whipping away into the night. No biggie, until Riggs' sixth sense makes him glance down --

His LEG, SNARED. Encircled by the cord. No time to react: Riggs is unceremoniously whisked *off the roof*.

Okay, here's the fun part. STARKWEATHER occupies an older, Gothic-type skyscraper; the kind with *protuberances*. At roof level -- flagpoles, gargoyles, etc.

Riggs and the merc get HUNG UP. Topple past on opposite sides of, say, a stone GARGOYLE. The ROPE between them ENSNARING said gargoyle.

SO NOW: They both jerk, suddenly stopped, *ka-chuk--!* Dangle, high above Manhattan. Not quite SIDE BY SIDE, though, see --

The MERC WEIGHS MORE. Since the stone gargoyle is now a fulcrum, he slides farther down, as Riggs is yanked correspondingly UPWARD --

They come to rest, then. The end position of our dead Merc? Right above the WINDOWS where his BUDDIES are shooting across at McTaggart.

RIGGS is lighter. He dangles in space, uprange from his heavier pal. A difference of, say, 20 feet. Nothing to grab hold of, too ICY --

Riggs has an idea.

Snaps his head UPWARD. Sees a panicked MURTAUGH at roof's edge, and calls to him: "Roger, throw me something heavy."

Murtaugh snatches a bag of plaster. Wrestles it to the edge, DROPS it! Here it comes. Riggs CATCHES IT --

He now weighs MORE than dead MERC guy.

Physics, altered. Riggs DESCENDS. Our dead MERC, hoisted UPWARD... until they are exactly LEVEL --

At which point, Riggs DROPS the heavy BAG.

Then, it's simple: before gravity can reassert itself, he reaches out, nice as you please --

Yanks the pins on both the dead guy's GRENADES.

Then goes sliding back up, bye-bye... Dead MERC, going DOWN... Comes to a stop at his former position:

Promptly EXPLODES. Takes out the windows. Shreds the GUNNERS. FIREBALL, climbing.

ALL ICE, seared away instantly. Riggs clutches the GARGOYLE. Also? He's kind of on fire. He leaps to the penthouse BALCONY. Crashes through a pane of glass. Staggers inside. Drops, rolls, SNUFFS the fire --

Gets up. Smoke and STEAM, pouring off him. A DEMON.

A side of beef with a GUN comes running in. Looks sort of familiar -- that's it: we saw him in L.A. "I killed your pal Vickers," he boasts. Riggs kills him. Snaps his neck, says: "I forgive you." Discards the corpse.

STREET LEVEL - OUTSIDE STARKWEATHER BUILDING: Some other business we should mention: During the preceding action, we saw a shaken JUDE STARKWEATHER exit the building.

He was nearly DECAPITATED by the bag of PLASTER which Riggs dropped from high above. NOW: he spins, staggers toward his waiting sedan.

Also, LISA McBAIN has not been idle. Earlier, as Murtaugh and McTaggart headed for the roof to "inspect" it, she was citing FIRE SAFETY LAW to the puzzled security guard. NOW she rushes outside to bring the VAN around --

STARKWEATHER sees her. Exiting the building next door. They both freeze. Ten feet apart.

Lisa studies the man behind all the ATROCITIES she's brought to light. Tries to appear disarming as she reaches for her can of MACE. *Just run away!* we want to shout. She snarls, comes at him --

He shoots her dead.

The look on her face, one of comic surprise. She folds to the pavement as he darts inside the CAR. That's one bit of business. Here's another:

STARKWEATHER BUILDING - ROOF. MURTAUGH makes a snap decision: if they're gonna get out, it's gonna be through the building. Now that he's a pro at blowing up water towers, Murtaugh decides one more won't hurt.

He and Nick BLOW THE TANK atop Starkweather, USA. It floods the building, floor by floor. ONE KILLER gets the drop on Riggs -- only to be WIPED AWAY by surging water.

At any rate, our guys make it out... Nick and Riggs: safe, unsound. Unfortunately, everyone gets a nasty surprise upon exiting.

STARKWEATHER BUILDING - STREET LEVEL. This street has been on the receiving end of 20,000 gallons of water, give or take. It's FROZEN OVER.

LISA McBAIN is a part of the ice. Beautiful eyes, dulled by a rime of frost. Trapped like Han Solo in carbonite. Grotesquely beautiful.

Nick, beside himself. Determined to make someone pay. Unfortunately, his vow of vengeance is interrupted by:

A STARKWEATHER VAN. It ROARS from a parking structure... Nearly runs our heroes down. They dive aside --

And the van keeps going -- SCREECHING OFF through the snow, in a really big hurry. Obviously late for something.

Riggs can guess what. He checks the time, curses -- night's almost over:

THE ASSASSINATION.

It's happening... This very minute, it's going down. No time to lose. Catching that van may be their only chance to learn who and where the target is.

Riggs turns to Nick, says, wanna even the score? Here's how: go get the CD ROM I hid. Get it to Bryson at Homeland Security. Take Two-Buck. Do it fast, watch your back.

All the while, Riggs and Roger are moving. Climbing into Lisa's van. Riggs guns the engine. TIRES slipping, SLUICING over the ice.

"You up for this?" asks Riggs. "Not especially," replies Murtaugh. Riggs shrugs: "Well, shit. Were we ever?"

The tires catch suddenly, and the van seems to ROCKET away.

And at the end of the day..? Here we are -- just our two old guys, tired. Battered... Back on the job. CUT TO:

A VAN CHASE THROUGH LOWER MANHATTAN.

The BLIZZARD works overtime. SWEEPING snow into a blinding curtain... The STARKWEATHER VAN vanishes and reappears.

This pursuit may not be high-speed, but it sure the hell isn't short on destruction. The problem..? Keeping the damn vehicles on the ROAD.

They race through the icy streets, careening and sliding -- Clipping parked cars. Mailboxes. Jumping the curbs.

And then, just that quick, it's OVER. The STARKWEATHER VAN is gone. The windshield clears -- no van.

Their only lead. Swallowed up by the snow.

Riggs SLAMS on the brakes. No way. Not this close, not now. He REVERSES... In a hurry. The Starkweather people must've peeled off, back behind them.

Suddenly, Murtaugh shouts, "Wait! Riggs, there -- is that them? That's the van!"

And it certainly looks like it. Headlights doused. Masquerading as a parked car. Riggs and Murtaugh hop out, and -- *BLAM-BLAM-!*

The van's driver FIRES, as he leaps out. His shots go wide. Riggs' don't. The driver, SPUN--! Collapses.

Murtaugh yanks open the back of the van, gun up. Ready for anything -- except perhaps, what he GETS:

A MAN falls out, on top of him.

Roger stumbles back, off-balance. Now, here's the kicker: The dude's ALREADY DEAD.

Been dead, in fact. It's the well-known TERRORIST, the one from the VIDEO. Ready-made for FRAMING.

Obviously, this is Jude Starkweather's "patsy."

The BODY jostles Roger's arm, his gun discharges. *BLAM-!* The bullet enters the van. Rips into the BACK OF A CHAIR, facing a CONSOLE right out of a VIDEO GAME.

Someone is sitting in the chair. We hear a GROAN, breath hitching. FINGERS, still working the controls --

Murtaugh stalks toward him, gun out. Says whoever you are, you're under arrest. He swivels the chair around:

Holy shit. It's the PIMPLY-FACE KID from the porn shop. The one Riggs told to go home.

Which, in a manner of speaking, he is... Life draining out of him. Murtaugh feels horrible. Wants to get help, quick...

As Riggs comes running up, tells Murtaugh passersby saw something strange: A moment ago, SOMETHING was launched from this van -- it looked like a toy.

"A toy," the kid mocks, laughing: "A UAV, a toy?"

The little shit wants to live long enough to see their faces when "the toy" reaches its target. On his face, pure spite, hatred for the established order. With a last-ditch effort, he stabs a BUTTON.

Smiles. There: people will die. Real people.

How, exactly? There's no way to ask him. The kid is dead. "UAV," he said. Shit. They've heard this term before, in the news: Unmanned Aerial Vehicles --

They exchange a look: Drones? Armed DRONES..? Jesus.

Obviously, one is AWAY... Hurrying toward its victim, the kid must have switched it from remote guidance to a preset DEFAULT TARGET. GOLIS navigation, active. But where the hell is it going?

They scan the CONSOLE. A maze of technology... They don't even read Tom Clancy. They're fucked. No way to know how to turn it off, or whether it's even POSSIBLE.

One thing they can get their mind around, though: the VIDEO MONITOR. Clearly a P.O.V. video feed -- *from the drone*.

ONSCREEN: We chart its progress. SNOW, obscuring the lens. The ground falls away behind... Gradually, implacably --

Whatever propels this thing, it doesn't move fast.

Riggs and Murtaugh have the same thought: Riggs, he'll have to shoot it DOWN.

Riggs grabs Murtaugh's rifle -- about to jump in the front of the van, when he notices:

TEENAGERS, opening a storage shed, dragging out skis and sleighs. Among their winter equipment:

A SNOWMOBILE.

Riggs smiles -- stopping an assassination might just be fun, after all.

NOTE: Throughout the following, the high-tech ought really be COUNTERED at every turn by a clumsier HUMAN element. These are COPS. This is freaky to them. That being said:

RIGGS blasts through Washington Square Park, eyes turned SKYWARD. Looking for the thing, the whatcha-macall-it. Doesn't even know what it fucking looks like.

MURTAUGH, meanwhile, coordinates from the VAN -- he's got the DRONE's POV. Simply relates what he's seeing ONSCREEN.

"Riggs! I see a STREET. Passing over a street... Trees... Snow..."

Wow. Trees AND snow? marvels Riggs. This oughtta be easy. Slams the dashboard. God, this isn't working --

"Yo! Get out of the park," he tells Riggs. "I'm looking at downtown."

That's better. Up ahead, the boundary WALL: Riggs powers forward, goes airborne--! Over the top. Touches down, WHUMP--! Careens across 5TH AVENUE.

Murtaugh says: "Some kind of gymnasium going past. Like a high school, maybe. See anything?"

TEENAGERS, walking. Carrying books. RIGGS CUTS THE WHEEL. Flings himself around the bend. Blare of HORNS--!

Veering in and out of traffic. Finally, Murtaugh yells: "Martin! I see YOU." You sure? says Riggs. "Dammit, Martin, I'm looking at you from the air!"

Riggs SLEWS to a halt. Looks round frantically. "Shit, cochise, I don't see anything." You HAVE to, says Murtaugh. It's gotta be right there.

He sees it, then.

Hard to discern, through the blowing SNOW -- a blurred outline. Roughly six feet long. Like a little IMP, it hovers into view... passes merrily overhead, hi everyone -- disappears round a corner.

"Roger, you gotta be fucking kidding me." says Riggs.
He'd laugh out loud, if the thing weren't a TARGETED BOMB.

Just knock it the fuck DOWN, says Murtaugh. Can do. Riggs
throttles up. Goes careening off down the boulevard --

"Third Avenue, Rog. Heading toward the East River." They
talk targets: What's on Third? asks Murtaugh. No, What's
on second, *Who's* on third, says Riggs. No one's laughing.
"Approaching 41st Street," says Riggs. "What's there?"

THE U.N. Building -- three blocks over, says Murtaugh.
"Grand Central Station up ahead," supplies Riggs. DRONE,
still moving.

Other nearby possibles: Empire State Building, CHRYSLER
Building... Rockefeller Center. Damn, what *isn't* a target?

Something catches Riggs' eye, then. In the snowmobile's
side mirror: A SEDAN, driving way too fast. Add to that
the STARKWEATHER logo on the side? Trouble.

INT. SEDAN: JOPLIN's at the wheel. How'd he learn to drive
like this? In the middle east, a serious ICE SHORTAGE.
Doesn't seem to bother him. He drives FAST, with feverish
intensity. Lowers the window --

Hefts a Browning Hi-Power AUTOMATIC.

MURTAUGH, PANICKED: Riggs, he says, he's *tracking you* on
your cell phone, like before. GET RID OF IT. "Can't do
that, Cochise. Gotta follow the birdie."

He swerves around a TRUCK. At which point, Murtaugh says,
"Oh, shit. I *know*. I know where it's going." Don't keep
it to yourself, suggests Riggs. Then, the bombshell:

The DRONE is going for the HOMELAND SECURITY BUILDING.
For Bryson, himself...

It makes a sick kind of sense. After all, what better way
to show our nation its vulnerability than to have a
"foreign" power take out the head of Homeland Security?

Worst than that, though..? Murtaugh just sent his SON
directly into the line of fire.

He transfers to the DRIVER'S seat and peels out,
frantically phoning to warn Homeland.

RIGGS BLOWS BY CAMERA: SLALOMS back and forth. The gun KICKS in Joplin's hand. Again. Again. Blows chunks out of the landscape, inches from our boy. This isn't going well.

RIGGS makes a snap decision. Rounds a corner. Sees the SUBWAY STAIRS, drifted over with snow. Twists the handlebars, doing forty, rockets down the stairs -- BELOW GROUND.

Up above, JOPLIN blows by. Where'd he go..? Looks in the rear view --

THERE. Riggs explodes up a second staircase -- onto the street. BEHIND JOPLIN.

Now it's his turn. He raises a purloined Starkweather FIREARM, takes dead aim:

BLAM-BLAM--! Blows the back tire. The SEDAN slews sideways. UPENDS. Tumbles. Once, twice, three times. Comes down, PANCAKED.

There, done. Riggs stashes the weapon. Sails past -- he's three blocks from Homeland.

WITH MURTAUGH: Also swerving in and out, in the stolen Starkweather VAN. On the phone to Homeland: "Tell Bryson to get OUT OF HIS OFFICE. Tell him, stay away from the WINDOW!"

"All right, sir, we'll deal with that momentarily. Your name, please?"

"Are you *listening*? Stewart Bryson, TELL HIM."

"Sir, here at Homeland Security we take threats very seriously. Let me put you on hold --"

Basically, what would really happen.

HOMELAND: BRYSON'S OFFICE -- He's there with NICK and McTAGGART when the word comes through: There's been a threat. At which point, he does what you, I, what *anyone* would do -- lock himself in.

OUTSIDE, IN THE STORM: The drone approaches at ground level. Hovers ten feet from the glass wall -- begins to ASCEND. Floor by floor, up the side of the building.

WITH RIGGS: He ditches the snowmobile. Leaps onto a CAR in traffic, from there to a TRUCK (shouts, protests--!) Finally, to the FIRE ESCAPE of a building. ASCENDS, on the double. Murtaugh's rifle still slung over his shoulder.

WITH MURTAUGH: Frustrated, desperate, he hangs up with Homeland. Calls NICK'S NUMBER.

RIGGS: He HALTS, high above the street. Unlimbers the RIFLE. Drops to a combat crouch --

BRYSON'S OFFICE: Nick gets the call: *Stay away from the window.* He SPINS, gun clearing leather --

As OUTSIDE THE GLASS, the drone floats into view. Hovers in the howling storm. Incongruous. Insane.

MURTAUGH, watching the monitor: He cries out as his SON appears, framed in ghoulish green NIGHT VISION --

RIGGS, NICK and McTAGGART all fire. The DRONE takes multiple hits. The WINDOW COLLAPSES, the storm rages into Bryson's office, and still they KEEP SHOOTING.

The contraption pitches and yaws, crazily. Rotates, damaged -- Fires its payload. WRONG DIRECTION. A scarlet finger, down to the waterfront. DETONATION, SKY-HIGH. Debris, SHOWERED over the frozen river.

The crippled drone LANDS in the middle of 3rd avenue. RIGGS drops to the ground. Never breaks stride. Wades past incredulous onlookers. Grabs a HOCKEY STICK off a nearby kid --

Proceeds to beat the fucking thing to death. That's what he thinks of push-button warfare. Tosses aside the hockey stick, says, "You lose."

BACK WITH MURTAUGH

His monitor's gone to SNOW (just what he needed, more snow.) He POUNDS on the goddamn thing, irritated. Has no idea what's happening... Riggs..?! Nick..?!

Then it occurs to him; this is a good thing -- snow is good: Snow means no more drone.

Hears RIGGS' VOICE finally over his cell: Everybody's okay. The drone DOWN. Everything is FINE.

Murtaugh LAUGHS, relieved... Thanking sweet Bejesus. Then, something catches his attention --

OVER THE VAN'S SHORTWAVE -- It's Starkweather HIMSELF, talking to his men: He's making a run for it, headed for the airport. He's on the FERRY from Governor's Island.

RIGGS, meanwhile, still talking. Asking Murtaugh to pick them all up, grab some rum-less Eggnog. Murtaugh says yeah, sure thing, on his way; just -- one quick stop first.

RIGGS, ON THIRD AVENUE

Actually, sitting now on the smashed drone. He tells Murtaugh, okay, hurry up, he's freezing his ass off here. SLUMPS, exhausted. Looks out over the flaming river. Absently fishes out a cigarette, lights up.

Frowns: how do you like that? On the filter end of the smoke, a tiny INK DOT. He smiles wryly. Guess I just quit, he thinks. Inhales a deep drag --

THE SHOT takes him high in the chest.

Out of nowhere. SPINS him. Knocks him sideways. BYSTANDERS, screaming--! Riggs falls behind a CAR. Examines the bleeding WOUND. Looks up:

JOPLIN comes striding. Beaten, bloody. One arm dangles, useless. At the end of the other, a GUN.

RIGGS swears savagely: He never reloaded. Now has no choice but to RUN AWAY.

Flees down steps to the SUBWAY. Seeks cover. He's dialling ROGER for help, when BANG--! The wall spits dust, inches from his head. He lunges..!

DOWN. Onto the subway tracks. Staggers on. Into the blackened TUNNEL.

JOPLIN, INCIDENTALLY, has got his little handheld GPS. He marks Riggs' position. Braces himself. One... Two...

THREE. Leaps to the tracks. Unloads SHOT AFTER SHOT into the tunnel. Muzzle Flash, BLINDING. A WITHERING fire.

Of course, succeeds in blowing Riggs' CELL PHONE to bits.

RIGGS tackles him from behind. Takes him down. Joplin kicks free. They roll to their feet --

Shit. Joplin still has the GUN. Riggs plan, useless.

They square off. Bloody. Half-frozen. Two soldiers.

Whaddaya, say, says Riggs. Wanna take on a real badass? "You're shot," points out Joplin. "Yeah, and your arm's broke, dummy. Let's dance."

Pause... Joplin smiles. The guy has balls, gotta give him that. He nods, slowly. Oblivious to his aching arm.

Sets down the gun. "Sure," he says, "Let's da--"

Riggs whips out the KNIFE in his back pocket and flings it overhand. Leaves it in Joplin's throat.

The merc staggers in a circle. His look to Riggs, an accusation -- a look of BETRAYAL.

Then he drops dead. Riggs exhales. Outside, the wind moans and sighs. He stumbles forward, looks down. Yep, that's a dead guy.

Tells the corpse he's very sorry, that was totally unfair, please accept his AA amends. It's just, you see, he's gotten so very old, he knew he'd LOSE. And see, he now has a family. Can't be written off. His body counts.

And oh yeah, he says, fuck you -- and spits on the corpse. Turns. Starts the endless walk back to the street.

BATTERY PARK FERRY TERMINAL

A FERRY heaves to: practically empty on a snowy, cold night like this. Christmas Eve. Not a creature stirring, except for maybe the odd fugitive fleeing justice --

JUDE STARKWEATHER sits in the back of his sleek SEDAN. A merc DRIVER at the wheel. They pull out of the terminal.

MURTAUGH is waiting for them.

Fifty yards away. Standing in the street. Something very *familiar* about this standoff.

The driver sees him, snarls. Punches the gas. Murtaugh holds his ground. Scowls. Stretches. Cracks his neck. Shifts from foot to foot, steadying himself.

MURTAUGH says, "No way you live. No way."

He cross-draws with lightning swiftness. BAM-! BAM-! BAM-!
Begins to EMPTY his gun at the approaching car.

One thing Murtaugh didn't count on:

Starkweather's sedan is BULLET-PROOF.

The bullets simply deflect, bouncing everywhere. One rebounds, nearly kills Murtaugh... The SEDAN comes barreling in. Doing fifty.

Murtaugh has only one shot left. Suddenly, an idea occurs. The sedan is bullet-proof... The tires aren't.

BAM-! He takes the front one out. The SEDAN swerves. Murtaugh steps out of the way. Deadly calm.

As the SEDAN careens past -- takes out A FIRE HYDRANT. SKY-HIGH GEYSER of water, the car plows on. Hits a wall, wham--! Comes to rest.

Murtaugh, in no hurry, checks the clip of his gun. Empty. Doesn't miss a beat. Keeps walking. Toward the wrecked car.

STARKWEATHER sits up. Takes a breath. Fucked-up. Bleeding. Looks out the window, through the spouting water. Jumps a foot --

BECAUSE THERE'S MURTAUGH, beside the car. Eyes pitiless. Cold. He raises his empty handgun. Points it at Starkweather through the window...

Everything about him says, "It's loaded. I'm going to shoot."

STARKWEATHER FREAKS. Grabs one of the RIFLES piled on the seat beside him: An AK-47... He aims... The merc driver realizes what's about to happen, shouts, "No!!!!"

STARKWEATHER PULLS THE TRIGGER--!

Later, Murtaugh will say he didn't enjoy watching a man fire a twenty-shot burst into bulletproof glass --

But he'll say it was interesting.

The RICOCHETS, like a swarm of BEES that chop Starkweather to bits. Blood leaves a froth. Like MILK leaves a film on a soda glass --

Then just that quick, the windows go PURE WHITE from the bullets. Turn opaque, and we can see nothing.

Murtaugh smiles. The hammer falls on an empty chamber. CLICK. Murtaugh says "Bang." Lowers the gun and walks away.

EPILOGUE:

As promised, NICK is home for Christmas. Along with the whole Goddamn crew from the 80's and 90's. Rianne and husband Butters swap stories with Leo Getz. Lorna has constructed a memorial to SAM THE DOG.

RIGGS, full of GIFTS for little SHYA Murtaugh: tea party plates, fairy unicorns. She takes one look, scowls, "I'm too old for this shit."

OUTSIDE: Riggs and Murtaugh stroll in the crisp twilight. Talk fishing. No heroes here. Just two men who've been beaten and tortured a bit more than the average Joe.

A VET stands outside the 7-11, eyes them warily. Riggs flashes his tattoo. Hands him a five. Merry Christmas.

"You were there?" he asks. Yeah, says Riggs. I was there. The guy shakes his head: "Seems like a bad dream."

Yeah, agrees Riggs, except it wasn't. It happened. And most important for people to remember -- It MATTERED.

With a mutual "Semper Fi," they part.

FADE OUT.