

MOJAVE

by William Monahan

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HENCEFORTH PICTURES

ON BLACK

A low ominous note, warming up the sound. Then

FADE UP ON

EXT. A WALLED COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. DAWN. VARIOUS

THE MAIN HOUSE stands above a white rampart-like terrace, above a drained pool. We hold on it. It seems uninhabited. In the foreground, a broken deck chair lies in the drained pool.

A TENNIS COURT lies covered with dust and littered with abandoned balls, and blown-down palm fronds. The NET lies draped and tangled on the cracked playing surface.

THE GARDENS, leaf-covered brick paths lead beneath overgrown avocado trees. It is a maze, the lower garden, a labyrinth.

[The property is big, nice: but it was bought from a distressed owner. We'll see the second house, the garages later].

A BUST OF SOMEONE stands in the arched opening of an outdoor oven - but the face is turned aside, looking at a crumpled beer can.

A FOUNTAIN, with two basins draining into one, partially concealed by ivy, shows a head of the Roman god JANUS, water falling from each mouth.

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE. CONTINUOUS. VARIOUS

Establish various angles on empty white rooms (apart from the one in which the action will begin). There is no furniture. Nothing in one bedroom but an ANTIQUE CRIB. Nothing in the kitchen but a KETTLE AND A CUP, some EMPTY WINE BOTTLES.

EXT. THE COMPOUND. CONTINUOUS

Re-establish the MAIN HOUSE house from its eastern angle with the windows catching the morning sun, *hold*, and

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE GREAT ROOM. CONTINUOUS

THOMAS, whose face gives nothing away, stands at a wall of eastern windows, pulling on his old blue shirt, the same blue as the later title card.

He's about 33, intelligent, privileged, effective, abrupt, more like a rocker than anything else, but there's a lot we'll find out about him later. All we know about him now is that he is looking, with head cocked, at:

THOMAS IMPLIED POV:

THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN, set on its weird hill across the Cahuenga Pass.

THOMAS seems to have complicated feelings about that. He looks back over his left shoulder, as if at a sound. He moves as he characteristically will: thinking, processing, then leaving the shot abruptly, this time...

SNATCHING UP

HIS OLD BOOTS.

GO WIDE as we see THOMAS about to leave the GREAT ROOM, in which there is nothing but a MATTRESS, and on that MATTRESS...the single bit of furniture in the newly bought house...

We see A SLEEPING GIRL, lying face down, one arm trailing on the floor. (At this point we should be slightly concerned that she is a corpse). THOMAS returns to the bed and removes his watch, an OMEGA, from her slack wrist.

THOMAS, now in the doorway to a hall, looks back at the girl, and then shoves off.

INT. A GREEN DECO BATHROOM. MOMENTS LATER

THOMAS splashes water on his face, runs it through his hair, and drinks tap water from his palm. He dries his face, puts aside the towel. He puts on his watch. THOMAS gives himself one last look in the mirror, and goes. In the SOAP DISH we see a WEDDING RING.

INT. GREAT ROOM. CONTINUOUS

THOMAS enters, moving quietly, moving like Thomas does, marking everything, moving through space like a man in a thriller long before we have a thriller. He regards the room as he regards everything - with a complex, uncertain look - ("buyer's remorse" might scratch the surface of this man's existential situation) and then crosses quietly towards toward the mantle, where he grabs his MOBILE PHONE, his SUNGLASSES, his MONEYCLIP WALLET - and is gone. [When Thomas is out, from a situation, or a shot, he's out, and camera movement will increase his velocity].

INT. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

On a counter we haven't yet seen, THOMAS rummages through some heaped, unlooked-at MAIL, FED-EX WALLETS...disregarded FLOWERS, a GIFT BOX OF WINE from Wally's...and finds some SKY BLUE STATIONERY CARDS. He grabs a card from the stack and with a FOUNTAIN PEN quickly writes a note we cannot read, and then folds the card double and puts it under the base of a GOLDEN STATUETTE, which is some sort of award in the form of a rampant eagle, now with the folded blue card (the color of his shirt and the later Mojave title) now beneath it.

THOMAS turns and goes, and we CHASE HIM until blocked by the glass-paneled door he closes behind him. From our fixed (frustrated?) position we see him walk off and away under an arbor, through a litter of fallen red bougainvillea flowers, and off down the long terrace path. Bougainvillea flowers fall.

INT. GREAT ROOM. CONTINUOUS

We see that the sleeping woman in the thrashed bed (MILLY) has opened her eyes in the empty room. She is very beautiful. (We will find out later that she's very clever). She looks around incuriously. She knows, after a moment, where she is. Whether she remembers getting there or not is another story.

MILLY'S POV:

WINE GLASSES on the floor.

After looking around indifferently for the man she had expected to wake up with, she reaches for a SLEEP MASK and puts it on and turns her head back into the pillow.

EXT. COMPOUND. CONTINUOUS

THOMAS comes out of the "tunnel" beside a guest house, through a wooden gate, and as we TRACK with him, coming around to the other side, he moves along past one garage - which is stacked with recently arrived crates and boxes

REVERSE SHOT FROM WITHIN showing THE MOVING THOMAS, looking complicatedly in at his arrived stuff) and then he turns into the next garage, which contains an old, faded CLASSIC CONVERTIBLE. He gets in, starts it, reduces the choke, and he reverses fast out of the garage, curving around to face the OPENING GATE.

He sits for a moment considering...

THEN he slams the car into gear and blows through the gate, turning right and out of sight up the hill. THE GATE closes as the sound of the car fades.

REVERSE ON THE GATE to show a Sotheby's SIGN that reads "SOLD!"

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD. DAWN

THOMAS driving, TOP SHOT, road grain unrolling beneath the car.

Then in the WIDE on the moving car we see that it is unmistakably a Sunday morning on the Sunset Strip - PAPER CUPS and SMASHED GLASS in the gutters, BLOWING TRASH.

THOMAS is driving through what might seem the end of the world, except for - back on THOMAS - a CRIMSON NEWSPAPER VAN going past on his left unscrolling WORDS as he stops at the lights on DOHENY DRIVE.

Come around on him as he sits in his car and watches:

THOMAS' POV:

THE TRAFFIC LIGHT, showing red on its swaying mount.

THOMAS looks at his phone on the seat beside him. Makes a decision. He picks up the phone and speed-dials. Immediately on the phone being answered:

THOMAS
I need the truck.

THE STREETLIGHT changes to GREEN above Sunset and Doheny and as THOMAS drives forward we

CUT TO:

EXT. A DESERT FREEWAY. MORNING

We come up out of a ditch to reveal a desert freeway. A stripped down, stock-tired desert expedition BRONCO, driven by THOMAS, is roaring down an empty highway. The sun is still coming up from the east - the direction in which Thomas is driving. Onto THOMAS from CHASE CAR. Thomas is now well into the middle of the desert nowhere east of San Bernardino. He is not listening to music: he is not doing anything but driving - not enjoying it, but doing it, and doing it dangerously fast. As the CHASE CAR shot transitions to REAR MOUNT, THOMAS'S flying hair.

EXT. DESERT ROADS. VARIOUS

We see the BRONCO running the highway through various desert locations. We have the sense - in the way Thomas shifts, and guns the car - of an urgent escape.

[RIGHT MOUNT:] THOMAS looks down at his PHONE bouncing on the passenger seat.

DETAIL:

The light on it is blinking.

THOMAS ignores it, downshifts for torque, and drives on.

EXT./INT. DESERT GAS AND RETRIEVAL STATION. DAY

We are at a low angle and pivot and pan right as THE BRONCO pulls off into, and its parabola reveals, an old pre-war GAS STATION AND SHOP COMPLEX, which is also a desert retrieval facility with, behind chain link, various wrecked cars and stacked 4WD desert rigs which have come to grief in the Mojave.

THOMAS pulls up under the peeling concrete awning, gets out and briskly takes down his JERRY CANS - to fill them with gas...and his blue WATER JUGS, to fill them with water.

An OLD TIMER, the desert rat proprietor, watches him through a window obscured by hand-lettered signs. THOMAS grabs down the fuel nozzle, gets a nod from the OLD-TIMER and begins gassing a JERRY CAN.

MOMENTS LATER

THOMAS lashes the last of the water jugs onto the rack with paracord that he cuts, after rummaging for the knife in the desert gear in the back of the BRONCO, with a SWITCHBLADE STILETTO. After he cuts the cord he puts the SWITCHBLADE into his right front pocket. He looks around and sees:

AN OLD MAN sleeping with his dog under a thin blanket on a filthy mattress against the chainlink of the retrieval yard. Wired to the chainlink above the sleeping vagrant is a sign which reads "DESERT RETRIEVAL".

THOMAS looks away from the vagrant and to the shop and walks out of shot.

THROUGH DUSTY WINDOW OF SHOP:

THOMAS walks towards the shop, and in through the old screen door.

[Repeat of right pan established at opening of sequence]. The OLD-TIMER, bent over the counter under his various signs ("OUR CREDIT MANAGER IS HELEN WAITE. IF YOU WANT CREDIT GO TO HELEN WAITE."), looks at THOMAS. THOMAS looks at the OLD-TIMER. Then moves on. Not a greeting out of either of them. THE OLD-TIMER watches as THOMAS moves off down the lane of dusty goods, snatching up a basket, and then collecting and shoving into his basket...

DETAILS OF GRABS:

WOODEN MATCHES, and then CANNED GOODS like SPAM and BEANS and VIENNA SAUSAGES...and TWO BOTTLES OF WHISKEY...which are

MOMENTS LATER

Plumped down on the COUNTER with the other stuff, now including TWO GALLON JUGS of potable water.

The OLD-TIMER looks at THOMAS.

THOMAS looks at the OLD-TIMER.

The OLD-TIMER gives up on conversation begins ringing it all up at his ancient TILL.

THOMAS, waiting, looks at a display of CRUDE FLYERS featuring a mega-towtruck dragging a BRONCO out of a ditch. The flyer reads:

"FULL RECOVERY SERVICES. INQUIRE"

THOMAS takes a flyer.

The OLD-TIMER looks at THOMAS.

THOMAS looks through his sunglasses at the OLD-TIMER.

THE OLD-TIMER looks at the TWO WHISKEY BOTTLES waiting to be rung up and gives up on the idea of conversation.

OLD-TIMER

I don't want to talk either.

That's all right with THOMAS, who cuts a sunglassed look to the right as the till is rung as we

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT ACCESS ROAD. DAY

And after an establishing shot, MAIN TITLES begin. The first card: blue-painted wood with the letters MOJAVE cut out to reveal blowing sand, horizon and sky.

As TITLES run, THOMAS is driving far too fast, rooster-tailing dust, vibrating in his seat, his face already a mask of white dust.

We are on A BROKEN GRAVEL ROAD, with some asphalt washouts, that leads into the Mojave.

He shifts, drives, slews around corners...

And then arrows off into the distance, leaving us WIDE on the desert.

EXT. BELOW A SAND RIDGE. DAY

We're dutched and looking up towards the top of a sand ridge, where the BRONCO suddenly appears, and stops.

EXT. TOP OF A SAND RIDGE. DAY

THOMAS, with his dust-whitened face, shuts off the BRONCO, and stands up on the seat, grabbing the top of the windshield, to stare off over the windshield into the eastern distance.

REVERSE to REVEAL

THOMAS' POV:

A DEAD INLAND SEA

A vast alkali lake, below sea level, utterly empty in a shell of vast mountains. If it's nowhere that THOMAS is looking for, this is it.

THOMAS stares out into the desert then...

THROUGH WINDSHIELD

Drops back into the drivers seat, restarts the BRONCO, and continues over the sand ridge, and guns it through soft sand down the sand ridge.

EXT. THE ALKALI LAKE. DAY (MOVING, FAST)

If THOMAS was driving fast before, it's nothing to what he's doing now, pushing the BRONCO hard, fast, shifting down to get a scream and torque out of it, because to slow down would be to sink into the mud beneath the soda crust. The BRONCO already looks prehistoric...

EXT. THE ALKALI LAKE CAIRN. MOMENTS LATER

From the position of a cairn of stones made by travellers at the center of the lake we see THOMAS coming on in the BRONCO, roaring. He rolls up to our position and we MOVE around the BRONCO, we see him switch it off, get out, walk around to grab a bottle of whiskey out of the back of the BRONCO, and we see him UNCAP THE WHISKEY as he completes his walk around the BRONCO, climbs up on the hood, and, after looking around in awe, takes a drink, now at the dead center of the alkali wasteland.

THOMAS'S POV (VARIOUS):

MIRAGES, DUST-DEVILS

And we now, as we regard the various desert distances, and when we reverse on the BRONCO itself, have shifted to the Lawrence lens.

THOMAS lies back on the alkali-spattered hood of the BRONCO, takes another drink, closes his eyes, and then for reasons best known to himself:

THOMAS
(whether he says it or
not)
Fuck it.

He lies with his head turned aside and watches a biblical devil of alkali dust move across the distance like a tornado; and then as he looks up parched into the sun we

CUT TO:

EXT. THE OPEN DESERT. CONTINUOUS

A MASSIVE WIDE from a mountain to the north. Thomas' BRONCO is no more than a glint of sun and a fleck of blue, in the absolute center of nowhere.

INT. THE BRONCO. SUNSET

We follow a power cord down from the power port to Thomas' unregarded MOBILE PHONE blinking on the floorboards of the passenger footwell. It is now lying in dust, covered in dust. It hardly looks serviceable, the faceplate smashed. A call comes up silently: a +44 number. London.

EXT. THE FIRST CAMP. CONTINUOUS

We are on a shoulder of high ground on the Old Government Road, the original way west to California, abandoned in the 1860s. Thomas has pulled some gear out of the BRONCO and laid the makings of a fire, and a MAP held down by a rock snaps in the wind, but he sits now on the ground doing nothing, staring off into:

THOMAS'S POV:

THE BLOOD RED WEST

THOMAS watches on as:

THE SUN sinks beneath the western hills.

THOMAS uncaps his bottle of whiskey, drinks some, then puts it down as if the desert itself is taking over whatever he expected the whiskey to do. He caps the whiskey...

DETAIL:

Sets the bottle deliberately aside on a rock...

And lies back on his blanket. As he rolls over to face the lens, we see, as far as we can see anything in him, that whatever hell of guilt or indecision he's been in he's still in it. In the position of a sleeper he lies with opened eyes.

We show a wide of the BRONCO and the camp against the red West before we, with music

OLD-STYLE DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. METH COUNTRY. THE NEXT DAY (VARIOUS)

THOMAS is driving on a rutted sand road in dead ranch country, former ranch country that now even appears to be former meth country, former everything, former dugouts, former fences, former tanks and windmills, former school bus shot full of holes. It's hard to tell, as THOMAS moves through it in the BRONCO, whether this country is totally abandoned or secretly inhabited.

EXT. METH COUNTRY. LATER THAT DAY

THOMAS has stopped to rest at the site of a house of which only the chimney remains, standing in the middle of nowhere, and he stretches his legs, drinking water, looking around.

He looks around at:

THE RUINED CHIMNEY AND HEARTH, with the words 'ES AQUI' sprayed on it.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. A FIRE BURNING IN THE OLD HEARTH. NIGHT

FIRE and tilt to reveal smoke coming out of the chimney and pouring into the starry sky.

THOMAS is heating opened cans of food in the coals, burning his fingers as he shifts them around.

He sits, expels a breath, and he has begun, under the desert stars, to look about as contented as a man can be.

THE FULL MOON rises, crowning over a smoky ridgeline...

THOMAS watches, then, with the MOON filling the entire screen...

ON SOUND, COYOTES start their chorus. Hundreds of them... everywhere.

THOMAS listens, now eating, spooning food into his mouth.

ON SOUND:

A closer scuffle....

A shadow moves beyond sagebrush...

THOMAS watches, and we see that he's set his KNIFE open beside him on the sand.

THOMAS

Come on.

No takers from the COYOTES beyond the firelight. We see their eyes reflecting the firelight. The more distant coyotes continue to howl. A COYOTE splits fast.

THOMAS throws or flips his full bottle and it SMASHES in the hearth, in the flames.

A CLOSER ANGLE:

The liquor explodes into fire.

As the light from the fire plays on his face, we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A RAVINE. DAY

We are moving on a PICKUP TRUCK, an old one, that has rolled into a ravine, and not too long ago. Oil and coolant drip from the engine. We move on to reveal:

THOMAS standing at the top of the ravine.

He comes down and with him we see that the truck has been stripped of everything useful: tires gone, battery gone, distributor gone. In the dry brush all around the truck are blowing scraps of PACKAGING from various kinds of cold medicine, and, weirdly unexplained, A MAN'S SHOE, a zippered dress boot of the kind worn by old men. Then THOMAS sees SCUFFLE MARKS in the sand, and as we TILT up from that, onto a rock-face, a spatter of what could be, what might be, dried BLOOD. He goes slightly down the ravine and begins to hear...

ON SOUND:

An intense buzzing of flies coming from a cove in the ravine, beyond a shoulder of rock.

THOMAS forces himself to move on and sees:

[REVERSE on THOMAS and what he sees, not a human corpse that one feared but:]

THE BLOODY FLY-COVERED ANTLERS of a BUTCHERED MULE DEER.

THOMAS backs off, and heads off down the ravine. He passes the truck and climbs the ravine wall.

INT. THE BRONCO. MOMENTS LATER

THOMAS swings into the driver's seat, still looking around. He turns on the CB for the first time.

Barely audible through static:

DESERT RAT VOICE 1
You out there?

THOMAS listens. A long beat during which THOMAS starts the BRONCO, and then:

DESERT RAT 2
I'm always out there.

DESERT RAT 1
I gotcha...I saw some little green
men over by the washes...

THOMAS has engaged the gears and is now driving, through
JOSHUA trees, and we are on him from the passenger side.

DESERT RAT 2
I gotcha.

DESERT RAT 1
Federales.

THOMAS, driving, turns off the CB radio. Doesn't want to know
about it. He drives on through the JOSHUA FOREST and we watch
him into the distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE THIRD CAMP. JOSHUA FOREST. NIGHT

We're deep into Joshua trees, with the weird trees (VARIOUS
ANGLES) throwing weird shadows from the fire. THOMAS is by
the fire, lying on his blanket, staring into the flames.

THE FIRE. We watch the FLAMES take their various shapes.

THOMAS, in the desert, starts to light a cigarette and then
he throws the pack into a fire as well. We see the Marlboro
pack burn.

THOMAS lies back on his blanket in the desert, now looking at
the STARS.

An incredible sight of silent lipidity. The full heaventree.

THOMAS
All right...all right.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A CANYON. DAY

CRANE UP over a ridge line to reveal various distances and
then tilt down to sharply reveal A CANYON, with the sound of
the BRONCO rising, rising, getting closer until we cut fast
to:

Dust flying past the windshield in a driver POV and then we are on THOMAS, wrenching the wheel, snarling, driving too fast...far too fast...

Barely avoiding canyon walls...

Bouncing in the seat of the BRONCO...and we are with him on his sunglassed face and looking through his windshield when he makes a turn into the sun and the SUN FLARES in his eyes and in the dust on the windshield...

Blinding him, and before we can even sense what's happening...

THE BRONCO, roaring, topples off the washed out road, still going forward at fifty miles an hour, falling eight or ten feet to crash on its side, dirt and stones blowing past the CAMERA.

THOMAS clinging to the wheel and the rearview mirror, trying to keep his body in the shaking tub of the BRONCO...

Finally the BRONCO stops, stalled engine ticking.

THOMAS, his sunglasses lost, bleeding from a stone chip cut, hangs in his harness, then unbuckles himself from the seatbelt.

He crawls out of the wreck and gets on his feet. He looks at the wreck, walking around, and we stay on him until we need to come around to his POV of

A WHEEL sheared completely off, the axle snapped.

THOMAS, blood in his hairline, trickling down his face...

THOMAS

Good.

THOMAS, after noticing his PHONE completely smashed, gets a bottle of water from the BAGGAGE AND GEAR strewn all over the crash site, uncaps it, squats to drink, and looks around at:

NOTHING.

A CANYON, NOWHERE.

THOMAS sits, drinks, covered with blood and dust.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Good.

A crackling noise and as his eyes come up and he lowers the water bottle we see that...

SMOKE is coming out of the engine compartment of the BRONCO.

THOMAS goes and wrests the hood open and sees:

ACID spilling from the unmoored battery, cooking the wires and rubber engine hoses and components.

THOMAS doesn't look perturbed. He looks, if anything, totally into it. He smiles, as if he were saying "Good" again.

MOMENTS LATER (VARIOUS, FAST):

His hands retrieve things from the BRONCO - SLEEPING BAG, PACK, WATER, a FILTRATION PUMP, MAP, an ARMY COMPASS, PARACORD, a KNIFE...the makings of a walk-out pack.

And moments later we

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WASHED OUT CANYON AND RIDGELINE. DAY

THOMAS, with a pack on his back, has scaled the canyon wall to the west. (He can be thought, when we next reverse, of climbing into an approximation of the original establishing shot of the canyon).

EXT. CANYON RIDGELINE. DAY

He gets up to the ridgeline, looks back and down, and then opens his compass. He takes a clear sighting cross-country, references it to the wind-snapped map: then moves on off across country, and we pan him towards a landscape of hills of loose rock and hold until he is a very small figure and we go to:

BLACK

EXT. THE VALLEY OF THE RUINED FORT. DAY

FADE UP(as if it is the beginning of a new film):

On a wide, rocky valley in the Mojave. No one, nothing, for all the miles that we can see.

EXT. NEAR A RUINED FORT. DAY

An ancient collapsed blockhouse of dry-fitted stone stands on a promontory against the sky.

Moving along the stones below a firing embrasure we see a carving that says "Jim 1857" and another that says "Too meny Indins".

THOMAS'S GEAR is laid against and below a rock face marked with ANCIENT INDIAN PETROGLYPHS. The petroglyphs show the worship of the sun, but (as we motor along them) not only that; they also show war, sex, agriculture, all the things that humans get up to, and we land on a glyph of TWO MOJAVE WARRIORS, facing each other, each armed with a shield and warclub, under a rudimentary sun.

ANOTHER ANGLE shows us that THOMAS isn't looking, it's only his gear here, near the ruin of the fort, and we

CUT TO:

EXT. A WOODED STREAM BED BELOW THE FORT. CONTINUOUS

We follow the water, from across the water, to THOMAS, down in a rocky defile overshadowed by ancient cottonwoods, pumping water through a FILTER DEVICE into a jug. He fills the jug and then opens a packet and puts in a WATER PURIFICATION TABLET and shakes the jug. It's quite possible that he's never been happier. At least he's competent in the wilderness, grateful for the shade, and has no worries at all. He sits for a moment in the shade. BIRDS flicker through the meshed branches. But a waterhole is nowhere to camp. Close on JUG as he grabs up the JUG and we pan off THOMAS as he climbs up the defile.

EXT. THE CAMP AT THE PETROGLYPHS. SUNSET

THOMAS is back with his stuff, checking his gear, obsessively reminding himself of what he's got, as is usual in these situations. He lays it all out on a rock ledge...WATER, MATCHES, DEAD CELL PHONE, MILSPEC GPS UNIT, SWITCHBLADE KNIFE. Then he sits, still profoundly ok with his situation. He reaches for his MAP at his side, looks at his map and makes a mark on it with a pencil. He looks around at the empty hills, shrewdly.

THOMAS' POV:

Nothing but empty wilderness.

LATER

STICKS are piled for a fire, and THOMAS lights a WATERPROOF MATCH and touches it to a crumpled bit of paper under his kindling.

The paper catches, the twigs catch, he adds sticks, then sits back and watches. Again he monitors the distance, but this time...

HE STARES...

At a distance....

On a ridgeline....

Between THOMAS and the sun...

A FIGURE.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

A figure backlit by the sunset stands atop the horizon of a flinty hill. It's a MALE FIGURE, in what appears to be blowing rags, unsteady as solar flares, holding a RIFLE, at about 300 yards from THOMAS, and more than that in elevation.

THOMAS watches from his seated position, then, slowly, stands up to look.

The unsteady FIGURE, miraging in the heat, stands there atop the ridgeline, miraging, unmiraging...for a long beat, and then the FIGURE sits down, the RIFLE across his knees.

As the two men stare at each other across the interval of distance...

The SUN goes down beyond the ridgeline, and darkness pours across the valley...

Sweeping across THOMAS and plunging him into the dark, transforming his eyes, in this instantaneous falling of night, into those of a watching animal. He continues to watch, a glitter of trickster consideration in his eyes, a readiness in his calculating face, as we

CUT TO:

EXT. HILL ACROSS FROM THE FORT CAMP. NIGHT

We are at the POV position of the FIGURE, looking down into the valley, as a tiny fire is lit and catches strongly below at THOMAS'S camp, the fire dancing at the center of its shifting pool of light.

THE FIGURE MOVES THROUGH THE SHOT and descends the hill, carrying the rifle in a trailing position in its right hand.

OLD BOOTS walk securely on slipping flints, a hand wrapped in a bandage holds a rifle with its action wrapped with a rag. Accoutrements (tied on mess gear, etc.) clank.

From a lower position, we are passed by the shadowy figure, and then PAN the figure down towards the firelight.

EXT. THE FORT CAMP. LATER

MACRO:

COFFEE percolates into the tiny glass bell atop the pot.

Go WIDER to reveal:

The COFFEEPOT boiling on a stone inside the coals of the fire.

THE FIRELIGHT lights up the PETROGLYPHS. We are on an as yet unseen sequence that shows war, men shot full of arrows. We TRACK around off the petroglyphs and reverse until we are WIDE, looking west towards the hill beyond the fire and the boiling pot on a flat stone, and from beyond the fire we see...

The FIGURE coming hesitantly from the dark, then stopping, looking into...

FIGURE'S POV (a slow left to right sweep):

THE CAMP lit by the fire, with THOMAS nowhere to be seen.

THE FIGURE comes slightly forward. We are on BOOTS and frayed trouser-legs. The BOOTS stop. The rifle butt comes down to rest in the sand and then we see the figure's (JACK) face as it comes into firelight. THOMAS' age, calculating. An Old Testament face, like something from the bible, and a little like the young Melville in the 1840s. Hands completely covered with rings. Kit tied to his pack straps. Nothing impractical. It's only the expression that is briefly mental.

JACK (O.S.)
You were here before.

He looks around...

ON THE CAMP. No answer. NO THOMAS whatsoever. We go on JACK, taking a step forward, then stopping, cautiously, seeming as afraid of murder and surprise as any other man.

JACK (CONT'D)
(to the surrounding
darkness)
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

If your problem's the rifle, I understand that, brother.

NO answer. JACK, low shot, bends and carefully leans the RIFLE, an old WINCHESTER, with a wind-fluttered bandanna tied around its action, against a boulder or ledge some distance from the fire. Then he moves into the camp away from his rifle and stands by the fire, looking around.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'll wait.

JACK sits down and looks at the boiling COFFEE POT. Leaning forward, he moves it slightly out of the fire with a stick. He hears a crunch of gravel, but does not fully turn around to look as...

THOMAS re-enters the camp, with JACK's rifle. He moves around to the other side of the fire, holding the rifle comfortably. The two men stare at each other. JACK remains seated.

JACK (CONT'D)

I was going to ask if you needed assistance, brother.

THOMAS walks around the fire and leans the rifle aside, against the PETROGLYPH WALL.

JACK's eyes swerve at the rifle, calculating his distance to the rifle...

And THOMAS notices, but...

Neither of them say anything.

THOMAS gestures...You want coffee, have it. JACK, intelligent eyes, unhooks a TIN CUP from his apparatus, pours coffee. He sits back with the cup in his hands before he says, in some way believably...

JACK (CONT'D)

I'd *kill* for some milk.

THOMAS looks at him. Long silence. The fire crackles. Thomas sits down, and as he does we might notice that some big sharp flints are stacked by his right hand.

JACK (CONT'D)

Who are you?

THOMAS doesn't bother to answer this question, which he appears to find curious.

JACK (CONT'D)

The Greek questions, brother — the essentials. Where are you from? Where are you going? Who are you?

After a beat:

THOMAS

Nobody in particular.

JACK

Anybody in general, brother?

THOMAS watches JACK. [THIS MEANS A SHOT.]

JACK (CONT'D)

That's the crux of it, brother. Politics, brother. One system says you're anybody. Another system says you're...nobody. You everybody, anybody, or nobody, brother. That's politics. Cosmologies, cosmogonies, points of view. Inca explanations of the sun, brother.

THOMAS looks at him. JACK prods the fire with a stick while looking aside at THOMAS' GEAR.

JACK (CONT'D)

You're not a talker, I can see that. I like that. You meet people out here and they tell you what they *think* they are. Where they think from, where they...mean to go...or where they *meant* to go...

THOMAS alerts to this, sharply.

JACK (CONT'D)

They tell you what they think they are. They tell you what they *think* is their information. Or what they want to believe is their information — what they want to believe and have believed. Human condition, brother. You know you meet a guy and he says "I have a child, I have a beautiful home", right, he tells you that, and maybe he thinks its true, but because I think about things, which is what desert is all about, right, is that why you're out here?

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

I think "In what sense does he have either thing? He has a house and a child? Guy says that to you? Bank has the house and his wife has the child. You see if she doesn't.

He finishes his coffee.

JACK (CONT'D)

Bank has the house, brother. Even if you paid the bank, don't pay your taxes, brother, then you see who owns your house. You rent it from the government?

THOMAS

This happen to you?

JACK recognizes an opponent. Then smiles.

JACK

Nothing's that easy, brother. That's Ahab's leg, brother. That's story conference shit. I'd believe Ahab if he had two legs and just wanted the whale for reasons he couldn't explain. The missing leg, man, it's like the executive's wife thought of that and sent the poor asshole into a story conference with the missing leg idea. I call it bullshit. You see he's after the whale cos the whale ate his fuckin' leg. Mars a fine work of ambiguity.

THOMAS

You know about that sort of thing?

JACK

(a beat, then, unreliably)

No.

The men look at each other. JACK starts to roll a cigarette from loose tobacco.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm into motiveless malignity, brother. I'm a Shakespeare man.

THOMAS

Congratulations.

JACK looks at him.

JACK

Let's talk about the desert. Jesus came out here. Had an existential conversation with himself. Famously. You know. "Is it worth it to be what I am." That's why he went out there. You know. To be or not to be.

THOMAS registers this, as well he might.

JACK (CONT'D)

And then he had a conversation with an aspect of himself which for argument's sake we'll call...the Devil.

He continues to roll the cigarette.

JACK (CONT'D)

You can have the world, brother, the Devil said, or you can have the cross. So here we are.

THOMAS

You proposing you're an aspect of me?

JACK

We can run with that.
(licks cigarette, lights it)
You want to sell your soul?

THOMAS

What you got?

JACK

Women? Money? Fame?

THOMAS smiles slightly. The answer would be no.

JACK (CONT'D)

I got poverty and obscurity if you want that. I got plenty of that. I have a *surplus*, brother. Why you in the desert, brother. Did you come out here to die?

THOMAS looks at him, hard.

JACK (CONT'D)

I got that, too.

THOMAS

Do you?

JACK

That's what I do, brother. I fall upon travelers. Robbery's contextual brother. It's biblical brother. Guys go into the desert. They're fallen upon by thieves.

THOMAS stares at him. Long, long, beat. Fire crackles.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm only fucking with you. We were just trying it on, man. It's just *ideas*, brother. I want to thank you for the coffee, get my rifle, and go. You're not much of a conversationalist. I think you want to be alone.

Another long beat. THOMAS examines JACK, the situation. And he isn't visibly afraid in the least and Jack begins to be the one who may be very slightly alarmed.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm gonna stand up and get my rifle.

They both stand up at once. They are the same size.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm gonna get my rifle.

THOMAS shakes his head.

JACK (CONT'D)

(meaning anything but:
also as if fascinated,
hurt)

I was just fucking with you, brother...You're stealing my gear, brother?

THOMAS

You're not getting the rifle.

JACK

I could have laid out there and shot you.

THOMAS

Yeah but then you couldn't have pretended to be the Devil.

JACK
I'll give you the shells. Then I
walk out.

THOMAS
No.

JACK realizes that it's on.

JACK
I'm going to have to take out my
knife.

JACK reaches into his coat for a Bowie but stops with the big knife poised as he realizes THOMAS has a knife as well - the switchblade, and he's ready to fight.

JACK (CONT'D)
Whoa now look here now brother...

As THOMAS circles to get more between Jack and the RIFLE, he snatches up one of the big sharp flints.

JACK (CONT'D)
This is no place to be cut,
brother...No place to be hurt. You
want to be the alpha dog you be the
alpha dog...You know in your head
you got it all wrong...

But he lunges with the knife, and THOMAS cracks him with the flint and puts him down with a scalp wound. The BOWIE bounces into the fire and its wooden handle begins to burn. JACK reaches, scrambles for it, for it but can't get it. THOMAS in a blood frenzy kicks JACK in the ribs, grabs him by the hair, and starts to stab him...then doesn't. JACK stares in wonder and terror through a sheet of blood. He watches THOMAS walking fast towards...

THE RIFLE.

THOMAS snatches it up.

JACK not quite on his feet, looks up at THOMAS, now not daring to rise as THOMAS walks forward with the rifle.

JACK (CONT'D)
Brother...is it too late to say
you've got it wrong?

THOMAS swings the rifle like an axe.

JACK spins into the dust with his head split open.

THOMAS steps forward, looking down.

BLACK

EXT. THE CAMP FIRE. NIGHT. LATER

JACK lies on his back in the dark. Moonlit, waxen, black blood glinting wet in his hair. Unconscious.

THOMAS inspects the rifle. He notices, and it confuses him, that the bandana tied around the rifle's action goes THROUGH the lever. He has to untie the rag before he can work the action...and when he works the action...no shell ejects. He looks up at the unconscious man in some alarm. The rifle did not have one in the pipe. THOMAS looks at the rifle and then at JACK with confusion. He works the action again and now a SHELL pops out into the dust, a .44. He loads it back into the rifle. He inspects the stock and sees that it is carved with neat Xs to the number of seven. He looks over at JACK.

THOMAS, holding the rifle in his right hand feels for a pulse in JACK's neck with his left. Holds his palm above his mouth and nose. JACK is breathing. THOMAS searches through JACK's coat, finds six or seven loose RIFLE SHELLS, straightens, and puts them in his coat pocket. He stares down at JACK lying there bleeding for a moment more and then walks out of the dutched low shot.

A moment later

A CANTEEN lands on the stones near JACK with a clank and a slosh.

THOMAS, with his pack and the rifle, looks at JACK one last time and then goes off into the night.

ECU:

The BOWIE KNIFE, hilt burnt off, glows red in the coals of the fire.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE OPEN DESERT. DAWN

Full on LAWRENCE sunrise.

EXT. THE DESERT. DAY

We come off a strangely human rock formation, an accidental Easter Island head, a Henry Moore, and discover THOMAS moving on across the desert, through soft sand hills and other rock formations, carrying the rifle, his pack.

He trudges on through the wasteland, not looking back, not yet.

LATER

He has stopped to take a compass bearing. He takes his sighting, relates it to the map, then as he is folding the map away, looks back to see...

A FIGURE a mile behind him, moving over a shoulder of hill, and then plunging out of sight.

It's JACK, tracking, following.

THOMAS, cool, not very concerned - he has the rifle - moves on.

LATER

THOMAS is now moving up a slope made entirely of stone, not of sand, so that he leaves no tracks, looking back in the direction from which he came.

THE CHASE THROUGH BROKEN COUNTRY (VARIOUS, MONTAGE)

Struggling in the sun, and over terrible terrain, nearly every time THOMAS looks back he sees a figure coming toward him - though getting no closer.

THOMAS stops to try a shot at JACK, but he can't bring himself to do it. He moves on.

THOMAS is increasingly exhausted, struggling now down a hill, then up a sharp slope. He drinks. He looks up at the SUN. It's noon, it's bad. He struggles on.

INT. A CAVE OR MINE. DAY

We are shooting from inside a cave, or a hole, with nothing but blue sky visible. It's only when a human figure appears that we know where the horizon is. THOMAS enters the cave. It's big, with clean white sand for a floor. He falls on his face, exhausted, uncaps his water, and drinks. He racks a shell into the rifle. Then he lies on his back, feet and rifle barrel pointing towards the cave mouth. He closes his eyes, and we go, with him to

BLACK

BLACK...

And then as we hear a scuffle,

THOMAS wakes and grabs the rifle up...

A FIGURE is at the CAVE MOUTH...

THOMAS fires.

THE FIGURE clutches its throat like JFK in the flary light and instantly falls away to the left from the cave mouth. We have seen no detail of the figure to reveal anything other than the fact it is male.

THOMAS, stunned by what he has done, not knowing if he has hit the figure or not, gets to his feet, and cautiously goes out of the cave, to find...

EXT. THE SLOPE OUTSIDE THE CAVE. CONTINUOUS

A fallen man, chest rising and falling, THOMAS standing above him looking down. We hear the sound of a man breathing his last, then and there.

THOMAS steps closer, closer, and we see what he is looking down at:

A PARK SERVICE RANGER, shot through the neck and spine, and very dead, with a still-spreading red halo of blood.

THOMAS stares down with horror. He looks downslope, where a PARK SERVICE TRUCK idles with crackling radio.

THOMAS now looks up at the extremity of horror and sees:

JACK on the opposite ridgeline, in much the same position as when he was first seen at the fort camp- watching, coat windblown. It's almost a duplicate shot, except that

THOMAS...

[Now in an almost duplicate shot from JACK's POV]

Is the man holding the rifle.

The two men stare at each other. Then THOMAS walks a few steps forward with the rifle.

JACK begin to run upslope to get over the ridgeline.

THOMAS rushes forward, flings himself into a prone firing position, flips up the rear sight with some expertise, levers the rifle, aims, and as he fires...

ON THE OPPOSITE SLOPE...

The bullet misses JACK by inches, blowing gravel into the air, as JACK cartwheels over the ridge to safety...

THOMAS, with no target left, gets to his feet...and then looks around, in the direction of the innocent man he has killed. Wind batters his hair and clothing as he takes on the death, and its dilemma.

JACK (O.S.)
(shouting)
You're fucked, brother!

INTERCUT:

JACK is lying in cover, somewhere.

JACK
(shouting)
You're fucked, brother!

THOMAS twists away from the echoing voice, and stands above the dead park ranger, looking down.

FLIES walk on the dead man's face.

THOMAS stares at the corpse, with its halo of blood, its holstered pistol.

He squats, sits, thinks. He looks up at the sun, and then at the corpse.

Then he does the following in sequence: he shucks all the shells out of the rifle, puts them in his pocket, takes up a handful of sand and scrubs the rifle down with it, while holding the rifle with his bandanna, then pours canteen water over the rifle and wipes it down again. Using the bandana he throws the rifle (we see it spinning in the air) far, far, into a LOW RAVINE (we see the rifle spinning towards us) where it (reverse again)...

SMASHES on a rock, the stock splintering.

THOMAS turns away from the ravine, cold-faced now, and using a stick to unsnap the ranger's holster, takes the REVOLVER out of the PARK RANGER'S HOLSTER. It's a big .45.

He cracks it open, checks the load: and we see...

DETAIL:

A full six. THOMAS sticks the gun in his pack, looks down again at the dead ranger, and leaves the ditched upshot to which we have returned.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LAVA/SUGAR SAND DESERT NEAR KELBAKER ROAD. MAGIC HOUR

THOMAS, trudging, remorseful, determined, is at the end of his physical ability, coming out of a region of sugar sand, black lava ridges. He stops as he sees the ROAD before him...then moves on towards it.

LATER

THOMAS stands on the road, watching:

THOMAS'S POV (VERY DISTANT):

A BIG ORE MINING TRUCK is coming along, wreathed in dust, a mirage using the Lawrence lens.

THOMAS steps out into the road, and raises his hand.

EXT. BARSTOW MAIN DRAG. NIGHT

THE ORE TRUCK pulls off, revealing THOMAS standing outside of a chain drugstore. He goes into the store. He has passed, and noticed, a newspaper box which contains a paper which reads NATURALIST FOUND DEAD IN MOJAVE, showing a photograph of a smiling nun-like scientist.

THOMAS pushes through the glass doors which are a plate of reflections.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARSTOW METH MOTEL. NIGHT

We're outside the worst meth hotel in the world, shooting wide. Some ruined California paradise. Crying babies, the pickup trucks of the divorced laborers, people in permanent residence

INT. BARSTOW METH MOTEL ROOM. CONTINUOUS

As the sound of a crying baby and the TV next door carries over we discover THOMAS sitting on the bed in a pair of dimestore flip-flops, dimestore sweats, dimestore t-shirt. He is sitting and looking at the "DESERT RECOVERY" card. He puts it in his pocket. He seems in a trance. But then moves.

Into a plastic bag from the chain drugstore he puts his desert clothes, his boots, the loose RIFLE SHELLS, the REVOLVER.

He ties up the EVIDENCE BAG.

He goes into the bathroom, and drinks cup after cup of tap water. Then he goes and looks at:

NEWSPAPERS.

It is evidence of a desert-wide killing spree. We see newsprint very closely...

TRACKING ALONG LINES ECU:

"shot while watching television"

"series of murders"

".44 Rifle"

"a botanist, Ms. Hannaford's body was found..."

"Mr Frederick, an Annapolis graduate, retired from the Navy in..."

INTERCUT THOMAS'S face.

And finally:

"Mojave"

"Mojave"

"Mojave"

THOMAS balls the papers up wildly and shoves them into the trash. He goes and stands by the TELEPHONE. Then he sits on the bed.

Then he does nothing. He considers his position.

EXT. BARSTOW METH MOTEL. NIGHT. LATER

The strangest vehicle pulls into the meth hotel: a big polished black towncar.

A METH MOM stares from an open doorway, as

THOMAS comes out of his motel room, and not waiting for the DRIVER to come around to get his door, gets into the back of the car.

The DRIVER looks around at the meth motel, and gets hastily into the car.

INT. TOWN CAR. CONTINUOUS

After a long beat of driving and looking in the rear view window at his passenger:

DRIVER

Never been out here.

THOMAS sits back, and then:

THOMAS

Me either.

The car pulls off through the glow of the busted neon lights, as the METH MOM watches it go.

INT. THE TOWN CAR. NIGHT (MOVING)

THOMAS sits in the back of the TOWN CAR. Light moves over his face. His face is expressionless. He has done what he has done what he has done.

EXT. THE DESERT. NIGHT

JACK is moving fast in broken boots, scrambling over a ridgeline, disappearing into the dark like an animal.

EXT. THE CANYON. NIGHT

JACK's boots scramble down a shale heap, and he arrives at...THE WRECKED BRONCO. He rummages a WATER BOTTLE from the wreck, rips the top off, drinks like a mad person. Grabs more water...then rummages in the glove compartment of the wrecked car, and produces, and looks at by the light of a Zippo, the REGISTRATION.

We do not know what the registration says, but we know, by the way that Jack sits down, and laughs, and raises his water bottle to drink, that it's far from over.

JACK

That was a good one, brother. That was a good one.

EXT. THE INTERSTATE. NIGHT

THE TOWN CAR flashes west, passing under a sign that says "LOS ANGELES".

INT. THE TOWN CAR. CONTINUOUS

THOMAS sits, being conveyed to Los Angeles.

BLACK

[HOLD ON BLACK SIGNIFYING END OF ACT THREE OF FIVE]

EXT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. DAWN

We establish with a shot across the drained pool. It is dawn, as when the picture started, exactly the same shot with which the picture started.

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER

THOMAS uses his key on the glass door and enters. He puts the EVIDENCE BAG on the table. He picks up the folded sky blue note, and we finally see what he wrote on it:

DETAIL (THOMAS' handwriting):

"I have to go to the desert".

THOMAS looks at this:

And then as he looks at the other side of the card.

DETAIL:

A QUESTION MARK WITH A HEART UNDER IT AND AN X, REMINISCENT OF HIEROGLYPHS.

He puts the card down slowly, and leaves the shot.

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. HALLWAY OUTSIDE
BEDROOM. DAWN

He pushes open the bedroom door and...of course no one is there. He walks into the room, picks up the CHAMPAGNE BOTTLE off the mantle, shakes it, and drinks what's left, processing where he is, where he has been, what is happening. He goes to the window and of course he sees what he sees:

THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN.

THOMAS

All right.

He turns out of the shot.

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. A DECO BATHROOM.
MORNING

He's in an old forties mega-shower in the green glass bathroom. Desert dust pouring off him and down the drain, dried blood running from cuts and abrasions on his arms. He's exhausted. He leans his head against the wall and lets the water run.

LATER

He looks at himself in the mirror. No conclusions. JACK was right: he's not a man who gives a lot away. He leaves the mirror empty of his reflection.

EXT. A DESERT ROAD NEAR THE DUNES. DAY

JACK is walking along, hurt. He hears a sound, and turns to see...

A SMALL WRECKED PICKUP CAMPER, coming through dust.

He steps into the road and raises his hand. The car stops. JACK goes to the driver's window. A METH HEAD COUPLE goggles out at him, then the BIG BEARDED DRIVER (the worst and scariest looking guy in the world) guns the gas and gets out of there.

JACK walks on, laughing, towards the glittering FREEWAY in the distance.

EXT. A COMPOUND. THE PORCH. MORNING

THOMAS sits at a dusty table, the phone in front of him, a snapping paper of phone numbers. He dials. Someone picks up.

THOMAS

What happens in court is a story.
It isn't the truth.

INTERCUT: THOMAS' LAWYER, in a bedroom, getting ready to play tennis.

LAWYER

What prevails is whatever fictional narrative makes the most sense to the lowest common denominator, in the most obvious terms.

THOMAS

Like Ahab's leg.

LAWYER

What?

A beat. Then exasperated:

THOMAS

What I'm saying, what I know, what I'm asking, is that truth doesn't matter...

LAWYER

(with some alert processing going on, though lacing his tennis shoes)

Not in law, no.

If it's complicated it's to be avoided. Juries don't do complicated.

THOMAS

(bitterly)

So if something is complicated you are not morally required to tell the truth, is that right?

PUSHING IN on suddenly interested (and very intelligent) LAWYER:

LAWYER

In what I believe to be the context of this conversation, it is sensible to avoid being connected to anything that would be difficult to explain.

(a beat)

What are we talking about?

THOMAS
I'll call you later.

The LAWYER listens to the dead line and then hangs up, picks up his racket, leaves the shot, going off to play tennis.

INT. THE KITCHEN OF THE HOUSE. DAY

Dressed now, shaved, THOMAS places the EVIDENCE BAG (containing the Winchester shells, the loaded park service revolver, the boots) into an old cracked LEATHER DUFFEL. He puts sunglasses on. He exits the main house.

EXT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. CONTINUOUS

He crosses the property, past the empty pool, and goes into the guest house, which is not at the moment a guest house but...

INT. EDITORIAL. DAY. CONTINUOUS

An editing facility. The main room, with a fireplace, contains three work stations streaming with video. THOMAS, ignoring the assistants who have gone to their feet, stares at, onscreen, a FROZEN IMAGE OF THE WOMAN FROM THE FIRST SCENE. She is standing in the desert, dressed 1969, looking like Monica Vitti. THOMAS looks elsewhere. (As do we, because we never linger on the industry stuff). TWO GIRLS have stood up from their desks in the next room over: it is very much officer-on-deck. An ASSISTANT (EDDY) bolts obsequiously up from his station. Another assistant (BOB) remains coolly at his desk, stoned off his ass, looking at images of the blue Bronco.

EDDY
Hey!
(the awkward and unnatural
First Assistant)
Do you want some coffee?

THOMAS just looks at him blankly, then turns to Bob, who has dragged off his headphones.

THOMAS
(handing over recovery
service flyer)
I wrecked the truck. Have somebody
get it.

EDDY

(ad lib)

You wrecked the truck? What truck?
How'd you wreck it? Are you all
right? [Etc.]

THOMAS

(now ignoring Eddy totally
and talking to Bob)

It's in the desert. The GPS
coordinates are on the back.

BOB

(stoned)

Sure.

BOB moves off immediately to the phone at his desk. THOMAS keeps moving.

EDDY

Wow are you okay? What kind of
accident was it? Are you all right?
[Etc., ad libs, ignored].

THOMAS ignoring him, as well as ignoring two FEMALE ASSISTANTS who have come to their feet in the administrative section (the dining room), has already disappeared out the front door.

The EDITOR, a harrassed fat man, appears at the top of the stairs.

EDITOR

Was he just here?

INT. GARAGE. MOMENTS LATER

THOMAS puts the EVIDENCE BAG and PAPERS onto the passenger seat of the CONVERTIBLE, gets in, and reverses out of the garage, watched by a GARDENER, who stands with a dribbling hose.

GARDENER

Hello Señor. When the family come?

THOMAS, after looking at the GARDENER, drives out through the gates without answering.

THE GARDENER goes back to his watering.

GARDENER (CONT'D)

Ok...

EXT. NICHOLS CANYON. DAY

THOMAS drives slowly past what we will later know as MILLY'S HOUSE, and sees that there are TWO PAPARAZZI staking out her front door from across the road. He drives past, ignored by the PAPARAZZO.

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE OVERLOOK. DAY

THOMAS'S CAR pulls up on the verge of the road. He gets out, and walks to the precipitous drop into a wooded canyon. He digs in his shirt pocket and begins tossing the .44 Winchester cartridges, one by one, and then the last of them, into the canyon below. He sits down, and looks at the last shell. Then he throws it after the rest. Then he stares into the light. He stands, dusts himself off, and then heads back to his car. We move with him, on his troubled, then determined face.

EXT. FRANKLIN NEAR THE 101. LOS ANGELES. DAY

THOMAS, motoring slowly down Franklin, rummaging in his bag, steers under the 101 overpass, where he flips his BOOTS from the desert out of the car. BUMS from a BUM ENCAMPMENT scramble for the boots. More evidence gone. THOMAS drives on, utterly without affect, through Los Angeles.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD AT OLD THEATER. DAY

As THOMAS turns onto Hollywood Boulevard east of Gower we hear chanting, drumming. He passes an OCCUPY HOLLYWOOD ENCAMPMENT outside a closed theater. Protesters rush his car at the traffic light, ad-libbing bullshit, and then when the light changes he accelerates through them.

EXT./INT. THE SUNSET TOWER. LOS ANGELES. DAY

THOMAS pulls up at the Sunset Tower and a valet comes out to get his car.

VALET

Welcome back, sir.

THOMAS grabs his bag and disk and papers and goes up the steps into the hotel and we track with him to the desk.

TARQUIN

Hello, sir.
 (handing over mail,
 packages)
 (MORE)

TARQUIN (CONT'D)

I know you're busy but have you had
a chance to look at...

THOMAS

(over his shoulder,
walking away, not unkind)

No.

THE DESK MAN gives up philosophically. THOMAS gets to the elevator and punches the button.

INT. THE SUNSET TOWER. ERROL FLYNN SUITE. DAY

THOMAS sits, looking at the PISTOL as it lays on the coffee table. He thinks, and suddenly bolts up.

MOMENTS LATER

Using a Leatherman, THOMAS is unscrewing a plate on the bottom of the television.

He reveals a RECESS in the structure into which the PARK SERVICE REVOLVER just fits.

He replaces the plate, then flips up the television, revealing:

CAINE in GET CARTER, raising the shotgun for a final blow.

CAINE

Goodbye, Eric!

THOMAS switches this off, and looks a last time at the TV with the gun in it, and turns away.

INT. THE SUNSET TOWER. THE ERROL FLYNN SUITE. NIGHT

The RED MESSAGE LIGHT is flashing on the desk phone ignored.

THOMAS sits watching the news. There's nothing about the desert, nothing at all. There's something about an endangered snail, and then a cut away to a breaking car chase in Los Angeles, helicopter footage of a fucked runner.

THOMAS takes his glass of whiskey and goes out onto the terrace through the blowing curtains. He stands there drinking and looking out over Los Angeles. He's very good at this, there's no doubt. He's cool.

ON SOUND, the phone rings. He looks around, and then goes inside the suite, leaving us pushing out to the LIGHTS OF LOS ANGELES to hold on a spectacular view before we go to

BLACK

EXT. LOS ANGELES. DAWN TO MORNING. VARIOUS

Another Los Angeles sunrise. The city coming to life. VARIOUS. The "OCCUPY HOLLYWOOD" encampment is waking up, too, beginning to drum. Sunglassed primal drummers.

EXT. COMPOUND. MORNING. CONTINUOUS

THOMAS sits, and then lies back by the broken chair, among palm fronds. He's a murderer, dealing with it. He gets up and notices: THE GARDENER standing looking at him from the edge pool above, holding a rake and bucket.

GARDENER

I want to thank you Mister Thomas for making me still have the job even though you have bought the house.

THOMAS, in sunglasses.

THOMAS

That's all right.

GARDENER

This house is lucky for you.

THOMAS

Yeah I hope so, yeah. Thank you.

The gardener points at editorial.

GARDENER

What are they doing?

THOMAS

Oh, it's a movie.

EXT. COMPOUND. MORNING

The ASSISTANTS are arriving. People are getting out of cars in the driveway. BOB has a toppling Starbucks tray.

INT. EDITORIAL BIG SUITE. DAY (FULL DARK)

THOMAS sits in a big chair watching footage MOS of a conversation. He doesn't like it. But mainly he isn't paying attention.

EDITOR (O.S.)
I have three different versions of
the sky replacement.

THOMAS
(out of it)
Sky replacement.

EDITOR
Sky replacement.

THOMAS leaves.

EXT. COMPOUND. THE POOL AREA. DAY

THE POOL is being filled, WATER swirling up, filled with particles and debris which are being skimmed up immediately by the POOL MAN. THOMAS sits at a table, holding a WATER BOTTLE, with his LAWYER. The LAWYER looks at him for a good long time.

LAWYER
So what is it.

Nothing from THOMAS.

LAWYER (CONT'D)
You want to talk, you don't want to
talk, I'm here.

THOMAS takes a while to speak. Then, not looking at the lawyer...

THOMAS
You ever read Conrad?

LAWYER
What are his credits?

THOMAS gives up. BOB puts down a shaking tray of lunch and coffee. When he goes:

THOMAS
Thanks.

BOB is startled by even being noticed.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
(to BOB)
I had a Scrooge experience. Sort of
a Christmas Carol.
(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You know, people change in stories,
that sort of thing? D'you know the
poulterers in the next street?

BOB

(as piping Dickensian lad)
I should hope I do, sir!

THOMAS

Go and bring me the largest pile of
heroin they've got.

BOB

Cool. If you guys, ah...

BOTH MEN look at him, irritated.

BOB (CONT'D)

Cool.

Bob goes.

LAWYER

Is this anything to do with
your...domestic, ah...

(not noticing THOMAS
shaking his head)

Look, you're entitled to be happy.
But, in California, you're not
entitled to have any money left.

THOMAS

I can live just the same on half my
money as all of it.

LAWYER

It doesn't mean she's entitled.

THOMAS

I say who's entitled.

(a beat)

That's not why we're here. There's
nothing...don't even...

LAWYER

Why are we here?

THOMAS for the first time loses his cool:

THOMAS

Say this. Say you hit someone with
a car. And no one saw it... No one
was there. Or maybe someone was
there ...

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 but they could never say anything
 ... because if they did say
 something, they and not you would
 be found guilty. Because they're
 the wrong...kind of witness.
 Absolutely...the wrong kind...

LAWYER
 In some circumstances one could
 call it ideal.

THOMAS
 But what if you're....obligated...

He thinks it through.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 Outside the law, there's still...

He means, right and wrong.

LAWYER
 Are we talking about exposure.

THOMAS
Don't talk to me about exposure.

LAWYER
 I'm an officer of the court. You
 know that.

THOMAS
 Are you, all the time?

Off this, after a long uncomfortable beat:

LAWYER
 What happened in the desert?

Long, long, long pause. THOMAS finally takes the door he's
 going to take, forever, the thing he's going to say, forever:

THOMAS
Nothing.

THE LAWYER looks at THOMAS. But THOMAS has made his decision.

EXT. THE DESERT SHOOTING SITE OUTSIDE THE CAVE. DAY

SHERIFFS and PARK RANGERS are quartering the area. There is a
 cry as a YOUNG DEPUTY raises his arm and finds...

THE SHATTERED RIFLE.

YOUNG DEPUTY

Rifle!

MOMENTS LATER:

AN OLDER DEPUTY comes downslope, slipping on the rubble.

THE RIFLE, as his shadow moves over it.

He bends down, face to the ground, and peers into the muzzle of the canted barrel.

OLDER DEPUTY

It's a .44. .44 may not have killed Reynaldo but a .44 killed everybody else we got dead.

THE YOUNG DEPUTY nods. The OLDER DEPUTY crouches.

OLDER DEPUTY (CONT'D)

(to all parties)

Piece of stock missing...look around for that piece of stock.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BLVD NEAR N CROFT AVE. DAY

We're shooting along to the EMSER TILE SIGN in the distance. We're near N Croft Ave, and a lot of gay guys resting between nonexistent TV jobs are busy walking to and from the gym and getting coffee and walking their dogs.

A BUS pulls away from a stop, and sitting on a bench, in his desert gear, dried blood still in his hair, is

JACK.

A little piece of tape put on where the rifle butt split his forehead, and now wearing small round sunglasses, and he's cut off most of his beard, but otherwise exactly as we saw him last. In his hands is the

MISSING PIECE OF GUNSTOCK, with the Xs on it.

He puts the gunstock away in his coat and rests, stretching out his broken boots: and he's cool: as at home in LA as anywhere else.

GAY WEIGHT-LIFTERS walk past. He is whistling. He sits on and then notices...

A LITTLE WHITE DOG sniffing at his dusty, bloody, boots.

JACK, the sunlight making him look skeptical, looks up at:

A BALD MAN WITH INTERESTING SPECTACLES, cruising JACK, and cruising hard.

BALD MAN
You new in town?

JACK squints up through the sun, and after a long moment, smiles.

JACK
Yes, brother. Just fell off the
turnip truck.
(stands up)
Are you a social worker?

BALD MAN
Yes.

JACK
I'll get my things.

CUT TO:

EXT. A HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD MOTEL. DAY. LATER

We are first on the WHITE DOG yapping ceaselessly and soundlessly in the back of a black Mercedes SLK parked in shade. We CRANE UP to the second floor balcony and PUSH IN ON and dissolve through a closed ROOM DOOR to reveal that...

INT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD MOTEL ROOM. CONTINUOUS

The BALD MAN lies dead, beaten, strangled, eyes bulging, half on and half off the bed, his INTERESTING SPECTACLES askew. He is fully clothed.

Near him on the coverlet lies a Rite-Aid bag, spilling toiletries.

We move off the TOILETRIES and through the bathroom door to JACK. JACK has cut his beard to stubble with scissors and is now cutting his hair.

LATER

A RAZOR being rinsed. JACK is shaving. He looks up at the mirror and we see what he sees: a handsome, perfectly urban face, unrecognizable from the desert rat he has been. He cleans up well. He could be anybody.

HAIR flushes down the toilet.

LATER

Now wearing the now-stripped-and-flipped dead man's black t-shirt and jeans, JACK picks up a jacket, takes out the wallet, and looks through the cards, interestedly. One of them is a BLACK AMEX. One of them reads PRODUCERS GUILD OF AMERICA. He puts the wallet in his pocket, and looks at the corpse. He grabs a very large black DUFFEL, puts it on the bed beside the dead man, and unzips it. He grabs up the INTERESTING SPECTACLES and puts them in the bag, then reaches with both strong hands for the corpse.

EXT. A STREET IN THE BIRDS. DAY

JACK is driving, looking for house numbers. The DOG beside him on the seat.

JACK

(to unresponsive dog)

What do you mean you don't know where you live? Well, you shouldn't drink. Trust me, brother. You black out and the next time you go to change a tire there's a severed head in the trunk and nine times out of ten you don't know who it belongs to. It's no way to be. Ah, here we are.

The car rolls into the drive and then runs quickly through the automatically opening garage door.

INT. THE BALD PRODUCER'S HOUSE. DAY. VARIOUS

JACK, the little dog dancing after him, is drinking a beer, and exploring a gay palace. He presses a button on a remote and CURTAINS sweep open revealing a garden and pool. JACK looks around, pleased.

LATER

JACK goes through into the bedroom. He sits on the bed, opens a bedside drawer and raises an eyebrow. He hoists out a giant wobbling DILDO, then fastidiously puts it away.

He goes to the closet and searches with satisfaction through a decent wardrobe of clothing.

LATER

He switches on a light. The bathroom. Marble luxury. Weird towel hooks that look like torture implements. As he turns off the light we

CUT TO:

INT. THE BALD PRODUCER'S HOUSE. THE BEDROOM. LATER

JACK opens a drawer and lifts a lime-green SPEEDO out of a drawer. He looks at it.

EXT. THE BALD PRODUCER'S HOUSE. DAY

Wearing the SPEEDO, JACK is now by the pool, in a chaise lounge, reading the trades, holding a drink with an umbrella in it.

He looks up from his magazine, to see that...

THE MAID has arrived, framed in the open mega slider. She looks very nice and working for her employer she has become used to almost everything.

MAID
Señor is somewhere?

JACK
No está en casa.
(takes a drink, and after
a beat:)
He's in France.

She's dealt with things like this before.

MAID
O-kay.

She drifts off. JACK goes back to his reading, but glances over at...

NEARBY:

THE LITTLE WHITE DOG is scratching at a freshly filled GRAVE.

EXT. MILLY'S RENTAL HOUSE. NICHOLS CANYON. MAGIC HOUR

ESTABLISH the paparazzi-besieged house of MILLY.

THOMAS drives past - not interrupting the pap's steady predatorial stare - burbles in the ROADSTER around the corner, parks some distance past the garden wall,

Then comes back on foot, grabs the top of the wall, and jumps over, unseen.

EXT. MILLY'S RENTAL HOUSE. THE GARDEN. DARKER IN THE GARDEN SHADE. CONTINUOUS

[TRACKING]

THOMAS walks along through the pool area, past windows, looking into various rooms, until he comes to a KITCHEN WINDOW, through which he sees MILLY finishing making tea. He leaves the now static shot, moving in the direction he came in, and now we TRACK BACK as MILLY carries her tea through various rooms until she enters...

INT. MILLY'S RENTAL HOUSE. THE LIVING ROOM. EVENING

Stopping in the door she sees THOMAS sitting in a chair. She looks at him without saying anything.

She exits into another room. After a moment, spent looking at a particular work of art, THOMAS follows her.

INT. THE BALD PRODUCER'S HOUSE. THE OFFICE. DAY

JACK sits with his hands spread flat at a huge desk with nothing on it but a desktop computer monitor. It has asked him for a code. He sits and thinks, looking at the screen. The DOG is on the desk, looking at him.

JACK
What do you think, brother?

The DOG says nothing.

The CURSOR blinks.

Suddenly, JACK reaches to the left and pulls the DESK LEAF completely out of the desk, and turns it over, revealing a taped down LIST OF CODES...to everything... including, we see in detail...(RUNNING DOWN THE LIST):

"GUN SAFE"

JACK likes that.

INTERCUT:

SHOT FROM INTERIOR OF SAFE

AS JACK opens it and finds not only a BROWNING PISTOL, but a fat envelope of CASH.

Turning away from the safe, to DOG, who is watching him adoringly:

JACK (CONT'D)
I'm the man who broke the bank,
brother.

INTERCUT:

THOMAS and MILLY rounding on each other in silence, then making love.

LATER AT DESK:

JACK unfolds the registration near the BROWNING and the stacked CASH, and (we are on his typing rather than the screen, the internet on film is boring and old hat) ...

JACK (CONT'D)
(to the dog)
The internet is a pain in the ass,
brother. One can't give it too
large a place in one's life. It is
merely a *tool*.

Executes a search for a name (unseen)...

PICTURES come up (as JACK cocks his head) of SANJEEV, a producer, in various circumstances: film premieres, party shots, a head shot in a Variety article, smiling unreliably, and in a second picture we see a picture of THOMAS standing with SANJEEV and not looking too pleased with it though SANJEEV has a greasy, possessive smile and an arm around a scowling THOMAS. JACK looks with interest.

JACK (CONT'D)
You're *famous*, brother?

He types in a new search (offscreen) and we see:

PICTURES of THOMAS in various circumstances, including standing in North Face gear and looking through an Arri viewfinder. Others of him pointing, on a set with MILLY directing a film set in 1969...in the desert.

JACK (CONT'D)
Oh, brother. What have we *here*.

MOMENTS LATER

We are looking at a GOOGLE EARTH shot of the COMPOUND where the film opened. We zoom in, clicking in. JACK'S eyes take it all in.

INT. THE BALD PRODUCER'S HOME. THE SCREENING ROOM. LATER

JACK is drinking prosecco and watching YOUTUBE VIDEOS on a very, very large screen. We are looking at THOMAS being interviewed for the South Bank program or something like that - and he's into it:

THOMAS

You know...people talk as if it's suddenly all this but you have to remember I've been famous one way or another *since I was twenty-five...*

JUMP CUT TO A LATER POINT IN THE INTERVIEW WHILE STILL ONSCREEN:

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You get *tired*. You want to be like Byron, go to Greece. Run guns in Africa.

JACK

(imitating THOMAS' voice perfectly)
'*Run guns in Africa.*'

JUMP CUT CLOSER

THOMAS

When you get what you want...the question is what do you want?

JACK

(perfect imitation)
'When you get what you want the question is what do you want?'

THOMAS

You end up financing this Satyricon of other people.

JUMP CUT CLOSER

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You know, ambition can take you towards things you never wanted to win. Because you're just a bag of chemicals.

JACK cocks his head, listening. Repeating throughout everything THOMAS says, *becoming* him.

CLOSER ON VIDEO THOMAS: interview nakedness.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You want to go to the desert...just
lose yourself, you really do...

INT. THE BALD PRODUCER'S HOME. THE OFFICE. LATER

JACK has packed a bag of clothing. He comes in with it, puts it down, and puts in the gun and the packet of money, zips it.

JACK

(to dog)

I have to make other arrangements,
brother. I trust you understand.

CUT TO:

EXT. A BOULEVARD. NIGHT

THE DOG has been left on the sidewalk with a hundred dollar bill tied to his collar.

EXT. A CASH MACHINE IN THE ENTRANCE TO A COFFEESHOP. NIGHT

It's a hip place, the Bourgeois Pig. No camera on the machine. JACK gets as much money as he can in one go, and then slides the card again.

INT. MILLY'S RENTAL HOUSE. THE MASTER BEDROOM. NIGHT

THOMAS and MILLY are lying beside each other. THOMAS is staring into space. MILLY sits up and reaches for her glass, a cigarette. THOMAS watches her absently. She drifts into the other room. We hear her pee O.S. Very domestic. THOMAS impulsively grabs some Chinese food and eats it, ramming it into his mouth. He hasn't eaten since the desert.

MILLY (O.S.)

Freddy's been ringing the phone off
the hook...and you never know when
he's going to turn up. I mean we
know he's a psycho...

THOMAS

He's nothing as a psycho. Trust me.

ANGLE ON MILLY IN BATHROOM:

MILLY
(reaching for toilet
paper)
Well the problem is that he has
money. Money makes you dangerous.

THOMAS
We've all got money.

MILLY wipes.

MILLY
It makes you unpredictable.

MILLY flushes, goes and washes her hands, looks at herself in
the mirror, then MILLY stands in the bathroom door looking at
Thomas.

MILLY (CONT'D)
Do you know that normal people buy
air tickets way ahead?

She gets into bed.

MILLY (CONT'D)
And they're very serious about
being in one place or another. They
think it means something, to be in
one place or another, whereas we
never even know where we are.

THOMAS
I know where I am.

MILLY
Did you expect this?

THOMAS looks at her, stressed, because he's drifted into
thinking of his situation.

THOMAS
What?

MILLY
Being rich. Being here.

THOMAS
Yeah, I did. What I didn't know is
that I wouldn't like it.

MILLY
Would you rather be poor and
unrequited?

He looks at her.

MILLY (CONT'D)
And not fucking a film star?

THOMAS leans in close to her and whispers:

THOMAS
Film stars are normal women.

MILLY
Have you told your wife?

THOMAS turns and looks at her, hand on the jamb of the
bathroom door. He doesn't answer. He goes into the bathroom.

MILLY (CONT'D)
Thought not.

She lies back. Then calls out:

MILLY (CONT'D)
I'll go back to the psychotic.

ANGLE ON THOMAS IN THE BATHROOM:

THOMAS washes his face, then raises it and looks at it in the
mirror.

MILLY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'd hate to get killed by my ex-
boyfriend if you're not even going
to tell your wife.

THOMAS pulls open the glass medicine cabinet door, wiping his
face away. He sorts through MEDICATION BOTTLES and grabs a
small handful of Valium and takes them. There's another
bottle of Vicodin. He takes a few of those.

THOMAS
(calling off)
That time you had to get cash. A
lot of cash. When what's his name
hit someone with your car. Who was
it that did it? The geezer that got
the money.

MILLY in bed could care less.

MILLY

Prince what's his face. Prince fuck
fuck something or other from
Lichtenstein. Why?

THOMAS

Nothing.

THOMAS reaches, and switches off the light. He goes back into the lighted bedroom and sees that MILLY has her black sleep mask on. He goes to the French doors and looks out at the pool, the uplighted trees, Los Angeles.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIRFAX NEAR CANTER'S. NIGHT

JACK is continuing his progress among cash machines. He is moving through the hipster crowd, 2AM, happy as a man has ever been. A DRUNK WOMAN grabs his arm.

DRUNK WOMAN

Are you...

JACK

I am whoever you want, darling. I
am. I have hid from mortal man:
Proteus is my Sacristan. You don't
have such a thing as a couch for a
brother in need of one, do you?

EXT. LOS ANGELES. DAWN

A big shot from the hills.

INT. MILLY'S RENTAL HOUSE. THE MASTER BEDROOM. DAWN

THOMAS wakes up. There's a NOTE on his chest. He reads it. We don't. Now it is her that's gone off and left a note.

He sits up, incredibly isolated, and goes and parting the curtains carefully looks out the pap location, and sees only one...

The usual persistent

SOLITARY PAPAARAZZO.

THOMAS lets the curtains fall.

THOMAS
Get a fucking life, mate.

He heads off to the shower, muttering:

THOMAS (CONT'D)
If you do, I will.

He crushes the note and drops it in the trash.

EXT. MILLY'S RENTAL HOUSE. MORNING

THE SOLITARY PAP stares mutely at the house, his telephoto lens like an erection.

LATER

THOMAS drops down from the wall onto the verge of grass and goes quickly along to his car, unseen.

EXT. A CANYON. DAY

THOMAS is driving.

THOMAS
(speaking into a mobile)
Yes I fucked up the car. I know
it's a production car. It got shot
out three months ago.
(listens)
No, I don't want your "notes".

He stops the call.

EXT. A COURTYARD RESTAURANT IN SANTA MONICA. CONTINUOUS

SANJEEV hangs up his phone. He shakes his head sorrowfully.

SANJEEV
Your client. Your client. He don't
let my company help him.

AGENT
You don't have a company.

Holds up SANJEEV's CELL PHONE.

AGENT (CONT'D)
This is your company.

Holds up SANJEEV's OTHER CELL PHONE.

AGENT (CONT'D)

This is your personal life.

Watching SANJEEV from the mezzanine above, we see:

JACK, wearing sunglasses, chewing gum.

SANJEEV

Well we got another issue with your boy. He's banging the talent.

AGENT

Is that a problem?

SANJEEV thinks.

SANJEEV

Not financially, no.

INT. A "LITTLE THEATER". NIGHT

CLOSE ON MILLY'S FACE...

As ARIEL retreats into the wings, and MILLY awakes, in stage makeup, as MIRANDA.

PROSPERO

Awake, dear heart, awake! Thou hast slept well; Awake!

MIRANDA

The strangeness of your story put Heaviness in me.

PROSPERO

Shake it off. Come on; we'll visit Caliban my slave, who never yields us kind answer.

MIRANDA

'Tis a villain, sir, I do not love to look on.

THOMAS is watching from the audience, near the front. Agitated.

PROSPERO

But, as 'tis, We cannot miss him: he does make our fire, Fetch in our wood; and serves in offices That profit us.

As CALIBAN idly enters...

PROSPERO (CONT'D)

What ho! Slave! Caliban!
Thou earth, thou! Speak!

JACK

(sitting in back, and
quietly simultaneous with
the stage Caliban)

'There's wood enough within.'

The SERIOUS THEATERGOER next to him shushes him and he smiles at her brilliantly.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sorry, brother.

The scene plays out on stage as in the Oxford version. When Prospero says "Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself/Upon thy wicked dam, come forth!" and CALIBAN emerges into the light, THOMAS is on his feet heading out of the theater.

JACK marks THOMAS passing immediately by his right shoulder.

MILLY/MIRANDA in her glittering makeup sees him go.

EXT. A "LITTLE THEATER". BATHROOM. NIGHT

THOMAS cools his head on the tiles for a minute, and then goes to the urinal and begins to piss. He does not notice the man who comes in and urinates beside him. Not looking at the other man, as one doesn't, he finishes, flushes, washes his hands, and goes. A full-on Hitchcockian comic/suspense ballet of male bathroom inattention, which leaves...

JACK washing his hands alone in the bathroom and smiling.

EXT. A "LITTLE THEATER". NIGHT

A HIPSTER is waiting outside the theater smoking a cigarette.

THOMAS

Tell her I had to leave, all right?

HIPSTER

Yeah all right.

THOMAS goes along to his car and gets into it.

THE SOLITARY PAPAARAZZO watches.

INT. A "LITTLE THEATER". NIGHT

JACK has re-entered the theater and watches as MILLY/MIRANDA and company play out Act I Scene II. We should fear for MILLY as JACK watches.

The HIPSTER comes up to him.

HIPSTER

Are you coming to the party after?

JACK

(taking the flyer for it
and smiling brilliantly)

Unsure, brother. Unsure. Life is all about choices. Eat a peach, disturb the universe, wind your watch, run for president, you've got to figure it out. My advice to you is to get cracking.

He walks aft jauntily.

EXT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. NIGHT (VARIOUS)

HOLD ON THE HOUSE, establishing its night presence, silence. Then we track past the windows looking into the empty rooms until we land on THOMAS in the living room.

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. NIGHT

THOMAS gets up from the couch, goes to a folding table that's been brought in, refills his tumbler of red wine, and switches on a tube radio. Human voices come out.

He runs through pre-sets, and settles on jazz, old Herbie Hancock.

THOMAS is sitting on it, drinking red wine from a tumbler, flipping his car keys. A little STACK of the usual stuff on an arm of the couch: GATE CLICKER, PHONE, PRODUCTION PHONE, REELS, SCRIPTS. As he looks at them we see...

A FIGURE.

JACK.

Standing at the window behind him. Then not.

With his drink, THOMAS wanders through the house, and every shot indicates that he is being watched.

INT. AN OFFICE ROOM. NIGHT

He looks in to room we haven't seen before: and it should be a surprise: a full on writing desk, with typewriter, laptop, a mess of untouched work. He turns away.

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. VARIOUS

He goes down into the kitchen, and out through the (open) doors onto the terrace. He goes to the terrace wall, and drinks his drink, looking around at

The lights of houses on the hills. Fairyland. The Amalfi Coast of Sicily, without water.

THOMAS drinks and as he does he hears:

ON SOUND:

The light clank of a gate, a scuffle on pavement.

He moves closer to the wall and along it, to get an

ANGLE ON

THE TENNIS COURT BELOW

A FIGURE is moving fast across the tennis court left to right and moves out of sight into the garden.

THOMAS' POV:

A sequence of motion sensor lights come on, as if someone is moving through the lower level, fast.

THOMAS chases after the figure, with no hesitation.

EXT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. A LOWER GARDEN. NIGHT

This is no chase sequence once THOMAS is below. It is a stalking sequence: THOMAS looking carefully at vacated spaces, blowing leaves, SECURITY lights switching on and off as the wind blows. On paths. Uneven footing. Suspense.

LATER

THOMAS comes to a table under a swaying light near the TENNIS COURT. On the table lies an object he identifies:

A SLIVER OF BROKEN RIFLE STOCK, carved with Xs.

THOMAS stands and looks at it. He knows that the game is on. He picks up the fragment of wood.

He backs away...backs away...

And then moves off fast.

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. EDITORIAL. NIGHT

THOMAS uses a key and moves through editorial, switching lights on. Then stands on a balcony and looks out over the grounds.

THOMAS' POV:

As the wind comes up, hard, and blowing leaves trigger motion sensor lights.

THOMAS turns out of shot.

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. A ROOM BELOW EDITORIAL. NIGHT.

Bob's wearing headphones, completely lost in a cloud of bong smoke. He sleeps in a little room downstairs. THOMAS tears open his door and BOB looks up, Captain Beefheart leaking out of his headphones.

THOMAS
Someone's been on the property

Long beat.

BOB
What property?

This not being worth answering:

THOMAS
Make sure the place is locked down.

BOB
It's always locked up.

THOMAS pauses, going.

THOMAS
And get a girlfriend.

THOMAS shuts the door.

EXT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. EDITORIAL FRONT DOOR.
NIGHT

THOMAS tries the door: locked: alarm light winking. He grabs his phone out of his satchel.

THOMAS
Sanjeev, you all right?

INTERCUT: SANJEEV sits up alarmed.

SANJEEV
Why wouldn't I be all right?

THOMAS
I had somebody on my property.

INTERCUT:

SANJEEV
(with an idiot caginess)
Why would that mean I have somebody
on mine?

THOMAS
I'm just...It doesn't. I'm just
saying we have to camera the place.

At mention of expense, SANJEEV nearly thromboses.

SANJEEV
That's your house.

THOMAS
It's your machines and digital
material.

SANJEEV takes that on successfully.

THOMAS is looking around the spooky property.

SANJEEV
I'm into something right now. We'll
talk later.

The connection is dead.

THOMAS puts the phone in his satchel, and walks through a gate into the broad driveway. Wind is blowing, trees are thrashing. Hiding places everywhere - here, there, there.

THOMAS spends more time checking things out, switching on garage lights, looking around at the blowing wild palms.

THOMAS

It was you who walked into the wrong fucking camp, *brother*. It was you.

JACK is around a corner, listening.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD AND THE SUNSET TOWER. NIGHT

THOMAS is motoring along the strip, and turns into the entrance to the hotel. As he gets out of the car a POMPOUS SECURITY GUY (whose rush to the car we have followed in an individual shot) steps up to him.

POMPOUS SECURITY GUY

(blocking THOMAS)

And how may we assist you this evening, sir.

THOMAS

You can valet the car.

POMPOUS SECURITY GUY

I'm not the valet, sir.

THOMAS

I assume you *know* one?

MELENDEZ, the manager, intervenes, and leads the POMPOUS SECURITY GUY away by the elbow...as THOMAS goes up the stairs.

MELENDEZ

This is a guest. He is on the list. Do you know what list I mean?

POMPOUS SECURITY GUY

The one that doesn't exist?

Melendez

Yes.

INT. THE SUNSET TOWER. CONTINUOUS

THOMAS crosses the lobby, cutting looks right and left through overdressed "event" extras, to the elevators, boards. We board with him and rise to the penthouse, and then go along to the door and into the suite, swinging around on THOMAS as he senses that someone has been in the room. Curtains blow.

INT. THE SUNSET TOWER. THE ERROL FLYNN SUITE. NIGHT. VARIOUS

MILLY is in the bath, switching between songs on her IPOD. THOMAS looks in at her, unobserved by her. Then closes the door.

THOMAS is undoing the baseplate on the television. And within moments we see that the gap where he hid the pistol is...empty. He steps back. He stares.

MILLY

What are you doing to the television?

THOMAS at her and does not answer.

THOMAS

How long have you been here?

MILLY

Hours...

THOMAS turns out of the room.

MOMENTS LATER

THOMAS is on the phone, on the terrace.

THOMAS

(into phone)

Yeah, this is...yeah it's me...yeah I'm all right...Look...Did you change my television? The thing is, it was, ah, set up, sort of calibrated, sort of set up in a certain way, and I really need that particular...television. That particular one.

(listens: takes it on board)

You didn't. You're sure you didn't...Thanks. All right.

At bay. But he's not done yet.

He grabs his MOBILE.

INTERCUT: SANJEEV'S BEDROOM

SANJEEV

Are you doing blow? Are you getting moody? Why do you want a piece?

The GIRLS raise their eyebrows at each other. One mimes a gun with her finger. Pow.

THOMAS

Because I live in the Hollywood Hills and I don't want the Manson Family dropping by for dinner.

(pushing at a headache)

Did you get your Bronco back?

SANJEEV

Yeah, the fucking wheel's off. As advertised. AND the registration's gone, so because you lost that, the fuckers down the place will make me, fuck me, go through all sorts of...of...hoops and...er...ladders. What did you do with the registration?

THOMAS

(genuinely confused)

Nothing. I never touched it. It was there.

INTERCUT (flashback): JACK taking the registration out of the wrecked BRONCO.

SANJEEV

Tell me something, buddy. If you're involved with that Milly, Millicent, Malificent, or whatever the fuck her name is, well... I need to be in front of it. My company...

THOMAS

(looking through the blowing curtains at MILLY now watching TV)

You don't have a company.

SANJEEV takes it on like crucifixion. SANJEEV is a patient man.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You certainly don't have a publicist. "Dierdree" is still waiting for Hedda Hopper to return her calls. She thinks you ask for publicity. Never grasped that you grant it.

SANJEEV

Look, I am sick of you making Deirdree cry. I won't 'ave it. I'm into something right now buddy, I got to go.

(to prostitute)

I've got a great deal of stress in my neck.

PROSTITUTE

Do you want a massage, baby?

SANJEEV

Nah I want some more of this food and then I want a blowjob.

THOMAS shuts off the phone.

MILLY is standing in the doorway looking at him.

THOMAS

Was there anybody in here?

A long comic beat:

MILLY

In what sense.

THOMAS gives up. She goes into the bedroom and begins to get high.

THOMAS

You have to go to the Chateau.

MILLY

What if I just pick what I want to do and do that?

THOMAS has nothing to say. She walks past him.

THOMAS

There's a guy...the internet guy. I have a stalker.

MILLY stares at him from the door.

MILLY

I have twenty seven discounting the professionals. I'm the world's girlfriend. But not yours.

THOMAS

What?

MILLY
Am I your girlfriend.

He doesn't answer.

She closes the door.

THOMAS
All right...

CUT TO:

EXT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. DAY

A FREIGHT CARRIER TRUCK is unloading a huge shipment of massive wooden boxes marked with customs stamps. This is international house moving.

WRAPPED FURNITURE. CHILDREN'S BICYCLES looking as if they've been wrapped up by a spider. And then, importantly:

A MOTORCYCLE. A BIG BMW GSA, still with the UK plate. Rolled down off the truck and wheeled into the garage beside the CONVERTIBLE.

THOMAS sits on the bench in front of editorial bungalow looking at the stuff. Then he gets to his feet and stands looking at it: the entire contents of a UK house have arrived.

BOB steps into the shot of THOMAS.

BOB
Does all of this go into the house?

THOMAS looks. It's complicated.

THOMAS
...Put it into the garage.

BOB
But then who will take it into the house if your family comes? I mean when they do.

THOMAS
You.

BOB looks as agreeable to that as anything else.

BOB

Cool.

CUT TO:

EXT. A STREET IN SANTA MONICA. DAY

SANJEEV comes out of a restaurant and gets into his car, a big one with a driver. As it pulls off...

JACK, sunglassed, follows in the SLK. He punches the music from the producer's iPod and sings along.

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. THE EDITOR'S ROOM. DAY

Near the administrative area, Bob catches Thomas.

BOB

Do you want to give up the hotel?

THOMAS thinks about it: (and the gun in the TV base).

THOMAS

(to Bob)

Get me Sanjeev on the phone, will you?

He looks at ASSISTANTS. He sits down. They're terrified.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

What are your names?

ASSISTANTS

Agnes. Roberta.

A long beat. Slowly, and Caine:

THOMAS

Which of you... is the one... that can't make a cup of tea.

They look at each other.

BOB hands THOMAS a phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. PCH. DAY

SANJEEV'S driver car is pelting along, driven by MAL.

SANJEEV
Yeah what is it, buddy.

Listens.

SANJEEV (CONT'D)
I know you said you want a gun.
What you mean get you a fucking
gun? You'd get drunk and fucking
use it on me. Or on Deirdree.
(listens)
Who do you think I know can get you
a fucking gun? What sort of
associations, in your mind, do you
think I have.
(listens)
Well I was a coke dealer, yeah.
(listens)
All right. I'll make a call.

He rings off and sits. Then to driver:

SANJEEV (CONT'D)
It appears that the more things
change, Mal, the more they stay the
same.

MAL
Ain't that the truth.

SANJEEV
Fuck me.

EXT. THE CHATEAU MARMONT TERRACE. DAY

MILLY is reading a script. A shadow falls across the page.

JACK smiles down at her.

JACK
I saw your Miranda. The Tempest.
Marvelous. I'm Jack.

MILLY
Sorry Jack, I'm already in a
disturbing relationship.

JACK
I can't join you for a minute?

MILLY
No.

JACK
I'm a producer.

MILLY
Congratulations.

JACK
I have a part for you.

MILLY
Oh, that's just biology.

Jack realizes with true pleasure that he's outclassed.

MILLY (CONT'D)
Look. You're waiting for me to exhibit interest of a kind I don't have or to make a mistake of the kind I don't make.

JACK
(producing LEICA looted from house in the Birds)
Can I get a picture of us together?

MILLY
They don't allow photography.

FAT ACQUAINTANCE OF MILLY
Is everything all right?

JACK
Maybe you want to fuck off.
(to MILLY, as the ACQUAINTANCE goes)
Is Thomas coming? Your, ah, *friend*?

MILLY
I just don't know who you're talking about.

JACK
I had a friend give me these. He's in the media. He's a very medium medium. But he is in the media.

He spreads out pictures of MILLY and THOMAS. MILLY shoves the pictures back.

MILLY
I work with him, what's your point?

JACK

Well. You have a boyfriend. Here's one of him. He has a wife, too. Just like Thomas has one. That makes four people in a blind menage. And every single one of them is rich.

MILLY

That's not the same as having anything to lose.

JACK

It's not you who tells me what is.

MILLY

I'm afraid it is. There's no privacy any more and no one expects it. Now fuck off.

JACK is taken aback. TWO LARGE SECURITY GUYS approach. JACK smiles, and goes.

JACK

That woman's a keeper. But he isn't predictable. You can't tell what that man wants.

INT. THE SUNSET TOWER. THE ELEVATOR AND LOBBY. NIGHT

THOMAS rides down and exits the elevators into the lobby, presumably to return to the compound, or to MILLY. As he moves to the doors he sees...

JACK.

JACK wears a good dark suit and a collarless white shirt and looks slightly clerical. He smiles.

JACK

Let's have a drink, brother.

THOMAS looks at him.

JACK (CONT'D)

You'll have to buy. They might know the owner of the cards I've got. I'm reserving my cash for exigencies.

THOMAS

Is it on you?

JACK
 (innocence)
 What?

THOMAS
Is it on you.

JACK
 No idea, brother, what you might mean.

THOMAS grimly leads the way into the bar and then fluidly and without comment is noticed and led to a corner table, JACK trailing, watching the VIP treatment and amused by it. MENUS are offered.

THOMAS
 Just drinks.

The MAITRE D' goes away. THOMAS and JACK stare at each other.

TARQUIN
 My name is Tarquin, I'll be your server.

JACK
 I'm sure that some entity other than yourself, Tarquin, will be the judge of that, but in my present mood, which is just terrific...

(THOMAS is irritated by this)

I accept "service" as your intention. What I wonder, is if you know it's your obligation.

(a huge reassuring smile)

We'll have water, brother. We're parched.

(looks at THOMAS, who is not interested in this bullshit, and staring at Jack steadily)

We've been in the desert.

TARQUIN
 Still or sparkling?

JACK
 Gas, brother. Con gas. The bubbles.

TARQUIN goes.

JACK (CONT'D)

I was different in the desert. Admittedly. A shave sets you up. I had a bad day, brother. A strategem failed. If I had any interest in your happiness I'd tell you to marry her.

THOMAS

Don't you go near anyone I know.

JACK

How've you been, brother? Apart from killing Mexican-American fathers of six and leaving me to take the fall for it?

THOMAS puts the piece of broken gunstock on the table and pushes it towards JACK.

THOMAS

I'm not your brother, and I've been doing all right.

JACK

I haven't. I'm the 99 percent.

THOMAS has no patience.

JACK (CONT'D)

Only financially, of course. IQ, brother, remains at John Stuart Mill level.

(a beat)

Look, there's not a man out there who wouldn't have shot that poor fuckin' federale. Not a person alive with a fragment of brain would have reported it, either. In your situation. You were being chased by me. I mean, obviously. It could have been me at the mouth of the cave. If the parkie hadn't come by, it would have been me, and I would have killed you. I'm going to kill you. And you need it. Justice, brother, needs to be served. You shot a poor bastard in the desert but no you can't tell anybody. Because you've got to be Elvis Beatle. You're just controlling your own biography. You can't be confused with the *facts*. Certain disastrous facts.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
Certain realities. Bad press for
the show. So you cover it up. At
expense of a human life.

He puts a sugar cube between his teeth. Then takes it on his
tongue. Eats it.

JACK (CONT'D)
Wicked, man. So here we are. What
do we do next?

THOMAS
What do you want? A hundred grand?
Ticket to Mexico?

JACK
In a negotiation, brother, never be
the first man to mention a number.
What do I want? I want what you
want. My *life*. My *freedom*. My
ability to be things. To do things.
I don't want to be defined by
that...sequence of accidents any
more than you do. I want to move
on. Only one of us are going to get
that.

(a beat)
You're thinking you should have
killed me. Yes, you should have.
Brother. You need to understand
that I would have made you get down
on your knees and I would have
fucking executed you. My intention
was to take your identity for a bit
but I had no idea it was all this,
all this. Are you glad you went to
the desert, brother? Did you really
need it?

THOMAS
I can always go to the cops, and
tell them everything.

JACK
No can do, brother. You can't. It's
too late. You've done felonies. You
covered up an act for which you
should have presented yourself to
the nearest policeman. You'd do
time. You won't do that. Your show.
What you are. All done.

(laughing)
You'd have to say you were
psychologically unequal -

THOMAS looks away, bitterly, at the truth...

JACK (CONT'D)

Unequal, brother - to your duties as a good green card holder...a good citizen. You'd have to apologize in public on the Shame Tour...whoops, I shot a fucking cop...sorry...please still let me make ten million a year...you'd have to admit to *deficiencies* - and this is the funny part - deficiencies that you don't really have! I mean I don't think you could admit to the ones you do have. I try to imagine you going anywhere and saying you're a normal human being who made normal human mistakes, to extricate yourself from what you're in, and I just know it's not going to happen. So which of us, brother, is the sociopath? How many people did you kill to get on your hill.

THOMAS

It's not my fault that I can do things and that you can't.

JACK

Are you saying I can't?

THOMAS

I just said that you can't and I don't even know if you exist as I understand existence.

JACK

We still have to see who met the wrong guy in the desert. Which sociopath met the wrong one. Brother. It's running fifty-fifty. Remember that. I had an idea today. About the denouement. When I found the revolver, brother. The revolver. But we'll talk about that later.

WATER is put on the table. Poured. JACK, recovering, reaches, takes a 20 from THOMAS' MONEY CLIP, which is on the table, and hands it to TARQUIN.

JACK (CONT'D)

Thank you for your service.

TARQUIN goes away looking odd, folding the money away.

JACK takes the rest of THOMAS' CASH and returns the money clip.

THOMAS

If you're so clever - why'd you take the gun?

JACK

What?

THOMAS

Now, you have the pistol belonging to the dead ranger...and the broken piece of the rifle...and I still never met you before this very minute. When you sat down.

JACK

(nervous)

Oh yeah? Then why am I here?

THOMAS

Or, here's the alternate version. You found the registration of the Bronco I wrecked. Which you did do.

(Jack concedes it, proudly)

You came into the camp to kill me. Because that's what you do. But I got the better of you. Which is the truth. Brother.

(this incenses Jack, who takes a drink of water)

But when I walked out of the camp...I left the rifle.

JACK

(getting into it)

Yeah? With shells or without shells.

THOMAS

I'd have never left it *with* shells. But you must have had more in your clothes. I left you with a canteen of water.

JACK

Bullshit you did.

THOMAS

Oh I did. And the last I saw of you, you had the rifle and were tracking me. But I got to the road. I may have heard two shots at some point. Very distant. I thought it was a hunter. I caught a truck. Never saw you again until now. I had no idea about seven murders in the Mojave. I'm a busy man. A family man. And who exactly are you?

JACK realizes that this plays. And badly for him.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It plays, doesn't it. It would prevail. Now you, genius, you try to tell a cop that you found that parkie's pistol in the base of a television in a room in a high security hotel.

Realizing he's trapped:

JACK

Don't you fucking...

THOMAS

You recognized me. You stalked me. You can't sell a story, brother, in which someone else is the villain. What you have to worry about is what seems to be. Not what is. What seems to be, "brother", is what I've done for a living since I was eighteen, so don't you come late to the game and play with me with what appears to be.

JACK

The pity of it is I never intended to be a murderer for very much longer. It was kinda, you know, Leopold-Loeb. And now despite my best intentions to change, to sort of *flower* as a human being, finally make my mark, you've got me - or one of my identities, brother, to tell you the absolute truth - in a multi-state manhunt for you shooting a little green man with my rifle. So: here it is, brother. Here's my situation.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

I have no more life. Ever. This is it. This situation we're in. Me, you. LA. If I let it go, brother - the game, brother - I fall, into extinction itself, brother.

THOMAS

You've failed as an artist in some way, yeah?

JACK

What the fuck did you say to me?

THOMAS

The truth, Charlie. Manson. Give my love to the rest of the Family out in Bonkersland. And get the fuck out of Los Angeles. Or I will kill you.

THOMAS gets up, and heads out of the restaurant.

JACK

Bonkers? Moi?

JACK sits on. We motor down to show that ON HIS LAP, beneath the table, is the GUN.

JACK (CONT'D)

Bonkers?

INT./EXT. THE SUNSET TOWER. A RESTROOM. MOMENTS LATER

THOMAS is indeed urinating. He leans against the sink and then moves decisively.

INT. THE SUNSET TOWER. THE RESTAURANT. NIGHT

Now motor UP FROM THE GUN to reveal JACK doing the Charlie Chaplin thing with forks and bread rolls while singing in a low gravelly pirate voice...

JACK

I'm the Easter Bunny's
daughter...I'm the Easter Bunny's
daughter...

EXT. THE SUNSET TOWER. THE LOBBY. CONTINUOUS

THOMAS, moving through the lobby, makes a signal to a man behind the desk, MELENDEZ, who comes out.

THOMAS

Mr Melendez, may I count on your absolute discretion?

MELENDEZ

If I didn't have absolute discretion I wouldn't have a hotel.

THOMAS

I need you to call the police about a person who is presently in your restaurant, but to not tell the police who asked you to call them.

Melendez' whole job consists of getting it.

MELENDEZ

(smoothly)

A man came up to me in the lobby. It wasn't a guest. I've never seen him before.

THOMAS

The man who is seated at the corner table just told me that he is armed and wanted by the police for the murders in the Mojave. You can add to the police that he has been harassing guests.

AS MELENDEZ gets it, as well as 5 hundred dollar bills:

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I'll be leaving now. And I haven't been in.

MELENDEZ

Haven't seen you for days.

We follow THOMAS out. He hands off the ticket for his car. Breathes in: breathes out: looks back at the hotel.

INT. THE SUNSET TOWER. THE RESTAURANT. NIGHT

JACK sits on at the table, fidgeting, nervous, furious.

JACK

What the fuck do you know...Fuck you...

After maneuvering the GUN into a COMPUTER BAG which he leaves unzipped...

JACK GETS UP..

And things begin to strike him, as he walks, as not quite right...

JACK'S POV:

Staff averting their eyes...

A curious absence of guests....

He walks faster, into the lobby, pulling out his valet ticket.

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD. NIGHT

THOMAS is driving, having done what he's done.

EXT. THE SUNSET TOWER. NIGHT

JACK gives his TICKET to the VALET and the VALET moves off with it.

JACK notices...

JACK'S POV:

THE POMPOUS SECURITY MAN is using a light wand to keep other cars from pulling in to the entrance.

It's like the split second before Dillinger was shot.

JACK dodges right.

LIGHTS crack on from UNMARKED CARS. The POMPOUS SECURITY MAN steps in front of JACK, but his TASER has gone wrong like something in a Freudian sex nightmare. The cables shoot onto the ground. JACK shoots him through the brain.

THE TICKET falls to the ground, and

JACK races to snatch it up, but it's no good...

COPS are running at him, and he dodges through bushes, falls,

Runs down a set of open service stairs and...

LAUNCHES himself over a parapet behind the hotel.

He falls twenty-odd feet to a graveled apartment roof, and then as a

HELICOPTER LIGHT ignites the whole area...

He rolls off the roof and falls...

Hitting the top of a chain link fence which tears his hands and chest violently, ruining an eye...

But he kicks through a glass door and enters the rear of the apartment building and runs through the hall towards the front.

THE HELICOPTER ROARS overhead, its searchlight flaring.

IN THE APARTMENT, A MAN opens a door to go and see what the fuss is about and sees...

JACK, streaming blood, leveling the gun.

JACK

Get back in. Go on.

THE MAN does, and JACK follows him.

CUT TO:

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. NIGHT

OPEN ON A TV IMAGE:

A NEWSCASTER is talking, before an old mug shot of a high school JACK.

NEWSCASTER

A man suspected of being the murderer of a park ranger in the Mojave National Preserve, and of several other murders in San Bernardino County, was nearly apprehended last night, in, of all places, an exclusive Sunset Strip hotel...And a valet ticket led to new insight into a disappearance in Los Angeles. Let's go to Marv Mandleson in Beverly hills.

THOMAS is sitting in editorial, watching. He clicks off the TV as...

BOB comes in, carrying all of THOMAS' gear from the hotel.

BOB

You're checked out.

THOMAS

Great, thanks.

BOB

Did you hear about that guy?

THOMAS, drinking whiskey. His throat clicks.

THOMAS

What guy?

BOB

This dude from the desert who's killed about fifty people. He was in the hotel.

THOMAS

You don't say.

BOB

Yeah, he was in the hotel, and then somehow he got away from the cops, and killed this old dude, and they figure how he got away is he put on the old dude's coat and hat, while a helicopter was up in the air, and took the old dude's dog for a walk, which is fucking outstanding, really.

THOMAS raises a whiskey glass to his lips.

THOMAS

Did they find the dog?

BOB

That's like the whole story, man. The dog. They found him tied to some railings. But the dude was gone.

THOMAS

The guards are on tonight, yeah?

BOB

Yeah. And the family's in this weekend?

EXT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. NIGHT

A SECURITY CAR is parked right in front of the house.

A GUARD with a dog walks his rounds through the garden.

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. THE KITCHEN. NIGHT

MILLY is cooking pasta.

MILLY

I suppose I'd better enjoy this house while I can.

THOMAS looks at her, says nothing.

MILLY (CONT'D)

A man at the Chateau said he was a man you met in the desert. Is he your stalker?

THOMAS

(frightened)
What did he do?

MILLY

He came up to my table and talked shit. Security took him out.

THOMAS

I don't know anybody from the desert. Listen. This place is dangerous.

MILLY

Everyone says Hollywood is dangerous. You are the one who said what was wrong with Fitzgerald is that he couldn't write screenplays.

THOMAS

That's not what I mean.

MILLY

(talking over him)
He had only one story and two characters. That is not a foundation for a proper dramatist.

THOMAS

I need you to go home.

MILLY

I need you to get out of your marriage before it kills you as an artist.

MILLY, very much a woman who has laid her cards on the table, is not amused by his lack of reaction.

MILLY (CONT'D)
 What happened in the desert?

THOMAS
 A situation happened. I survived.
 Someone else didn't.

MILLY
 I hope you don't think this sort of
 thing makes a man less attractive.

EXT. SANJEEV'S HOUSE IN LOS ANGELES. NIGHT

A HAND pounds on the door. SANJEEV answers, wearing nothing but a clutched up towel.

SANJEEV
 Yeah?

JACK advances with a HAMMER.

JACK
 Relax, brother. It's just a little
 speak. Who do you love, brother.

CUT TO:

INT. A COMPOUND HOLLYWOOD HILLS. THE BEDROOM. MORNING

THOMAS is sleeping, still in the clothes he was wearing earlier. He is wakened by a tremendous pounding on the door. He goes through the house and through the glass door sees a bleak-looking BOB standing with...

TWO DETECTIVES.

THOMAS
 Can I help you?

BEAUMONT
 I'm detective Beaumont. This is
 Detective Fletcher. May we come in?

CUT TO:

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. THE DINING ROOM. DAY

BEAUMONT, FLETCHER, and THOMAS sit around the big table.

BEAUMONT (CONT'D)
 Nice place.

THOMAS

Thanks. I haven't really moved in yet. Can I ask...

BEAUMONT

You married, sir?

We hear MILLY singing in the shower.

THOMAS

No. Yes. My wife and child are in England.

FLETCHER

Why are they in England?

THOMAS

...They're English.

A long crazy beat. The detectives look at each other to verify they're not being fucked with and then deciding that everything's all right.

BEAUMONT

OK, your security people have verified that you were on the property all night, after the arrival of a Miss -

THOMAS flushes. Then:

THOMAS

Yes.

DETECTIVE BEAUMONT

Ralli. My mother's name was Biancaleone. That means white lion.

THOMAS

It does.

DETECTIVE BEAUMONT

Miss Ralli has an Italian name but she is what.

THOMAS

...She's English.

DETECTIVE BEAUMONT

Why is everybody in Los Angeles English?

THOMAS

Money.

BEAUMONT

So since you were here and there are cameras, verification, we're not going to beat around the bush, and I'm going to tell you, as both Detective Fletcher and myself look at you for your reaction, the unfortunate news that your partner Mr Davenport is dead.

THOMAS

Dead?

BEAUMONT

Murdered.

(flips through notebook)

At about 10PM last night, according to his cell records, Mr Davenport ordered a delivery of Chinese food and a prostitute. The prostitute arrived after the Chinese food. When the prostitute arrived, she found the front door to the residence open and Mr Davenport just inside the door, dead of what appears to be massive blunt force trauma. It seems that Mr Davenport answered the door in a towel. Our people think that Mr Davenport did not suffer defensive wounds because he was trying to keep his towel up. Defending yourself naked is very problematic.

FLETCHER

There's the whole concept of girding your loins. A naked man tends to protect his unit, rather than, as in this case, his head.

BOB, shaking, puts down coffees. THOMAS looks at him as usual.

BEAUMONT

Mister Davenport's house was ransacked, and his safe was found to be open. Do you know if Mister Davenport kept large amounts of cash?

THOMAS

I have no knowledge of that, but I think that I would not be surprised if he did.

BEAUMONT
Firearms or drugs?

THOMAS
(thinking about his own
drugs and firearms)
I never saw him with either... You
should understand that I didn't
know him socially.

BEAUMONT
Did you ever say to Mister
Davenport,
(reading)
"I will kill you, you fucking
cocksucker."

THOMAS
Well. Yeah.

FLETCHER
Why?

THOMAS
He was a producer.

FLETCHER
Did you hate him?

THOMAS
No, I liked him.

INT. LITTLE DOM'S RESTAURANT. SIDEWALK. DAY

THOMAS is sitting with agent and lawyer.

THOMAS
So I have to shut down post.

AGENT
You have to shut down post.

LAWYER
The estate's position is they want
a shutdown.

THOMAS
Who are his heirs?

AGENT

He has one kid. He used to own a juice bar but he disappeared at Burning Man no one has seen him for about five months.

THOMAS

So that's who owns my movie? A disappeared juice bar landlord?

AGENT

Essentially, yes.

THOMAS

Can I keep post open with my own money?

AGENT and LAWYER look at each other. The answer is obviously no.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. EDITORIAL. MORNING.
VARIOUS

AVID MACHINES and other equipment are being carted out of the guest house/editorial by men from a seizure firm. THOMAS sits on a bench in front of a stuccoed white wall, dully watching it all carted away.

ESTATE LAWYER

I have to be absolutely sure that you do not have a cut, nor any footage whatsoever, of the film.

THOMAS

I do not have anything of the sort.

ESTATE LAWYER

If this property was searched? If I seized your personal hard drives?

THOMAS

You know what I want you to do? I want you to do is to spend a lot of money doing that and then find out I don't have anything.

ESTATE LAYER

Well if you're not going to be helpful...

(she sits down beside him)

(MORE)

ESTATE LAYER (CONT'D)

By any chance, do you know who Mr Davenport's investors were?

THOMAS

No, I don't. But I suggest that you probably don't want to hold back their money unreasonably. And they cannot get money unless I finish what you've just taken away.

ESTATE LAWYER

I'll take that on board.

She clicks away on her heels.

THOMAS sits on. BOB stands there, and then at a wave, sits beside him.

BOB

Can I still stay in the downstairs room?

THOMAS nods.

After a long beat:

BOB (CONT'D)

Cool.

(a beat)

Family still coming?

THOMAS looks at him.

LATER

THE GATE opens to let the TWO EQUIPMENT VANS out. As it does, we see:

THE SOLITARY PAPARAZZO, standing there with his camera.

BOB and THOMAS is still on the bench.

THOMAS

What the fuck is he doing here?

He walks forward.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Listen, what are you doing? She's not here. She's not coming here.

THE LONE PAP stands his vigil. THOMAS gives up.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 (to BOB)
 Close the gate, close the gate.

BOB
 CLOSE THE GATE!
 (as THOMAS looks at him)
 Sorry, I thought it was funny.

EDDY comes out with a box of his personal things.

EDDY
 Hey I really wanted to say how much
 I enjoyed...and I how much I
 learned...and...

To BOB, as THOMAS is gone...

EDDY (CONT'D)
 That dude is insufficiently social.
 I mean, what's his problem?

BOB considers.

BOB
 He thinks you're an asshole.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. A TABLE BY THE POOL.
 DAY

THOMAS drinks white wine and reads all the coverage, in all the papers, of SANJEEV's murder. Pictures of SANJEEV, smiling in his usual state of loathesome social discomfort and gross fiscal unreliability.

Pictures are also present of the BALD MAN WITH INTERESTING SPECTACLES

THOMAS takes on the enormity of what Jack has done.

EXT./INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. SUNSET

THOMAS is on the terrace drinking white wine and looking out over the canyon. Lights just starting to come on. He moves into the house, and moves through, switching on his own lights as he goes. In the bedroom he switches on the lights and reveals:

JACK.

JACK advances swinging a length of firewood. THOMAS gets an arm up to block but he can't block the next one, and goes down, dazed. The two men face each other like animals. THOMAS starts to move and is struck again.

JACK

Not the head, brother. Not the head. Not too much in the head. You need to go to the bank.

JACK hits him again.

JACK (CONT'D)

I need to tell you something.

THOMAS looks at him. He drags his arm across his bleeding forehead. JACK walks around looking down at him.

JACK (CONT'D)

I never killed anybody.

(he looks up)

Before. I only killed people... *after* I met you. Fuck, if I'd known who you were I'd have tried to get a *job*. I mean the rifle was *used*, the *rifle* did do all that shit, can't get around that, but that was...Ed. Ed used to rob the meth camps, man, just sad sacks of shit out there, in the desert. Ed, I wouldn't call him my friend. He was my...enabler. The support unit, brother. The grocery bag. All artists have them. Like your wife, the one you're cheating on, who helped you, so forth? That was Ed. To me.

THOMAS

No one ever helped me.

JACK

Ed was a capitalist also. The nth degree of self-sufficiency. Ed was all fucked up. Ed went out of the desert. Did shit. Came back to the camp. Meat, fuel, liquor, a new car boosted out of Salton Sea. I mean I, I, I, the *entity* known as me, at that time, I was just a middle class person on a slummy vacation. But Ed was the real deal. Got sleeved in jail.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
Unemployably tattooed. Ed brought
in what we needed.

THOMAS
You just kept the house nice for
him?

JACK swings the axe handle and hits THOMAS in the gut.

JACK
When I want your opinion I will
fucking beat it out of you and I
will get the one I want to hear.
(beating him)
You're not my fucking biographer.
There will be no more biography.
What we say we are - is what we
are.
(grabs Thomas by the hair)
I need you to understand your
present situation. The present
power structure. Do you understand
the present power structure?

THOMAS
You and Ed out there. I bet it was
just like a Sam Shepard play. You
and "Ed."

JACK
Oh, don't belittle it. Ed was like
the Medici. A patron, brother.
There was no flower of decency in
him, though, brother. He was on his
own fuckin' agenda. You know. Yokel
narcissism, ignorance, cowboy
myths, the idea that uneducated
laborers have some virtue not
possessed by those in the cities...
All this conceit was not improved
by meth, brother. After he started
killing people I knew that we, I,
the two entities in the form that
they were then, ah, were dealing
with a bit of a *situation*. You
know, I wasn't just an antinomian
youth staying in an Airstream with
a meth cooker I got to know when I
was in school.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

You know, it was, when you're working, as I was, I was working on a big novel, valiantly engaging in a dead form...and other polymathic activities, that take dedication brother and removal from the world realization...you know what I'm talking about...*that you have an exterior life*. That will be... judged. What's happening around you...is cobwebs. People are cobwebs.

THOMAS has sat up and is looking at him.

THOMAS

I know it well enough.

JACK

You know, some asshole welding car parts together out in an old airplane hanger up in death valley, brother, he's not wondering where the beans and smokes come from as long as they *come*, you know, what did Shaw say, Shaw said the true artist would let his grandmother drudge for his living at seventy.

THOMAS

Ninety.

JACK

It's not the time to one-up me on the quotes, man.

(a beat)

To hark back to what you suggested earlier. Ed out in the desert was by this point dangerous, total Colonel Kurtz mental, and he came to me, he came to me, and said that he'd realized something about himself. Out in the desert. I knew instantaneously that it was going to be something inconvenient. He told me about the people he'd killed. And he showed me... souvenirs. He showed me the Xs on his rifle. So I did a moral act.

THOMAS

What was that?

JACK

I killed him, brother. I burned him in the desert.

(a beat, reconsidering)

No, I didn't kill him. Exactly. I told him what was real and what was not. You see because he didn't know. And I told him, "Brother, you've made me an accessory when I'm just trying to live my life." I was just trying to fucking live, man, I was an innocent, a holy innocent, still trying to do a novel to impress an old girlfriend. And I was contaminated by a criminal just because I needed a bag of rice and some cigarettes... By murder. And now my name will never be my own again. Sound familiar? Sound familiar? Understand the *optics*?

THOMAS nods.

JACK (CONT'D)

Course you do. Copybook blotted forever. Can't have that. So with Ed it was like when in the old days the other officers gave you a bottle and a handgun when you had forfeited the name of gentleman. You want me to do that. Don't you. You want me to recognize my position, and do myself in.

THOMAS

I just want you to go away.

JACK

There was no gun involved though...not with Ed. When I say I killed him the thing is what I did was I got him crying about what his mother would think and he went off in his truck and in a motel he drank two whole bottles of Jim Beam...pills...no more Ed.

THOMAS

Why don't you do it yourself.

JACK

I will if you will.

(on receiving no answer)

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Now, I was clean, Ed was dead, dead was Ed, there was no connection to me. I could have done anything, brother. I could have gone home to mother. But it was all desert for me by them. And I didn't know who was Ed...and who was me. And I started to think: Maybe I need to be someplace. I'm not right. Maybe I'm Ed. Maybe there never was an Ed. Maybe Ed was what I was sometimes so the other me...could live. And you sit there looking at me all just one person. All just one person who's always got what he wanted. And that's the way you were looking at me in the desert. I mean, you're dangerous, you're clever, I know you're dangerous, I know all your working class hero shit, but you're also...a person...who's...one person. I'm walking out after Ed was burned, if that's what you could call it, you could also call it recognized and dealt with...and I see your camp. And I go into your camp. But do I say to you "I need to be some place, I'm not right, help me to find my way out of the desert, get me to a fuckin' hospital", do I do that? No. I became the other guy.

THOMAS

You don't have to be.

JACK

Would you ever say you needed help?

THOMAS

No.

JACK

Even if you did.

THOMAS

It's not in me.

JACK

You're a superstar. That's right you are. All this. And what are you if I put a bullet through your head?

THOMAS
 (blood in his teeth)
 That how you want to go out?

JACK cocks his head. Interested.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 Real quandary for a megalomaniac,
 innit. You're nobody or anybody, is
 this the 'somebody' you want to be?
Brother?

JACK uncocks his piece.

JACK
 Well you're going out as the guy
 who murdered your pal Sanjeev. As
 soon as I pick up the phone and
 say. *Did* manage to think of that.
 (he throws an envelope on
 the floor)
 Hair. Blood. Maybe I already put
 some around the place. On your
 clothes. Maybe I didn't. There's a
 hammer somewhere. Everything you
 need on it for mitochondrial DNA.
 Brains, brother. But I wouldn't
 have killed him unless he had said
 something.

THOMAS
 What did he say?

JACK
 He said...the most unreasonable
 thing...*that we could work it out.*

He raises the big pistol.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Aren't you going to tell me like
 everybody does that you're a
 married man, that you've got kids,
 people that love you, that you
 love. Aren't you going to say all
 that? Offer me money, say you're
 not going to call the cops? Aren't
 you going to do any of that?

THOMAS
 I thought you never killed anybody.

JACK thinks about that.

JACK

Well. Rashomon, isn't it.

He hits THOMAS with the PISTOL, savagely.

THOMAS goes down, and JACK grabs him by the front of the shirt.

JACK (CONT'D)

Now I could kill you right now, and that's one end. But this started in the desert, brother, and it will end there. It will end there. Do you understand, brother. You're gonna have another crack at me and there's nothing you can do because you're well-fucked brother.

Shaking THOMAS into semi-consciousness:

THOMAS

Manson, you, in the restaurant, called me fucking "Manson"? I read when I was two, man. I read when I was two. And what the fuck did they do for me. My mother was a whore, married to my uncle. This motherfucking castle is like a fucking jungle. Hamlet, man. He couldn't do it. He couldn't kill the king at his prayers. Couldn't kill him at his prayers. But you can. I can.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

What can I do to make this stop?

JACK

(a beat)

Give me back my childhood? No, that's Michael Jackson. I never meant it to be here. I meant it to be in the desert. That's where it plays out. In the desert. What you can do is play the game to the end. It's never gonna be cops, brother. They can't do the math, brother. This is it: us.

JACK hits him in the head harder than ever with the PISTOL.

EXT. NEAR OCCUPY HOLLYWOOD ENCAMPMENT. LOS ANGELES

THOMAS lies in Jack's bloody scarecrow preacher suit on the pavement. He wakes looks around. We hear police radio. He taps the front of his coat and realizes that he has the HAMMER that killed SANJEEV, the worst thing he could have. He crawls towards a sewer drain and pushes the hammer in (we hear the splash), and then gets to his feet and staggers off, away from the MOTORCYCLE POLICEMEN now rousting the bum camp. He walks, walks faster, comes out into streetlight, smiling bitterly, and then as we stop our move he plunges out of the shot.

EXT. COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOD HILLS. NIGHT

THOMAS goes into the POOL HOUSE, switches on the lights, then turns and looks at a CHIMENEA. He strips off Jack's suit and stuffs it into the CHIMENEA, then squirts it down with starter fluid and lights it. The clothes go up in smoke. He adds sticks of wood. Then staggers into the pool house bathroom and turns the water on in the shower. He stands there, blood and filth washing off.

LATER

He floats in the lighted pool, staring at the sky.

STARS, as in the desert.

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE. NIGHT

THOMAS enters his "office room" and immediately sees:

A SHEET OF PAPER in the typewriter. He goes and reels it up and looks at it.

IT READS: DESERT, BROTHER.

And gives GPS coordinates.

INT. COMPOUND. DAY

THOMAS spreads open a map of the California desert. He puts down the GPS coordinates beside the map, then tracks them in, and marks the spot with an X. Then he crumples the map. We know he's not going to go out to the desert. He's done.

THOMAS'S PHONE rings.

He looks at it.

DETAIL:

A LONDON NUMBER. +44 something. Ringing on and on.

THOMAS presses "DECLINE".

MOMENTS LATER

THOMAS, in a motorcycle suit, grabs up the MAP, and pockets the gun. He leaves the original GPS coordinates paper on the table and goes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KORAKIA PENSIONE. PALM SPRINGS. DAY

Establish the desert garden.

INT. A REST AREA BY THE DESERT HIGHWAY. DAY

THOMAS sits irresolutely at a table with his map, his GPS, his automatic pistol, sorting his things. He puts the coordinates into the GPS. He stuffs the folded map into his pocket and the gun into the pistol pocket on the left side of his riding suit - decided.

EXT. THE DESERT. MAGIC HOUR. VARIOUS

THE MOTORCYCLE is on its center stand below a rock outcrop.

THOMAS, looking at a portable GPS unit and carrying a leather satchel, works his way down a wash, and then climbs the side of the ravine, and then a ridgeline beyond.

EXT. THE DESERT. THE TOP OF A RIDGELINE. MAGIC HOUR. MOMENTS LATER

THOMAS comes into view and from his vantage point we stare down with him upon:

A METH CAMP IN A LITTLE VALLEY.

Backed up against the rocky hill opposite is a complex of buildings and vehicles. An Airstream trailer sits furthest back, with an awning in front of it, and a table under a hanging oil lamp under the awning. The Airstream sits at the end of a "courtyard" formed by two old school buses.

Other vehicles and desert wreckage, pulled engines, etc., are scattered here and there in the dead brush.

THOMAS swallows, dry, and prepares to settle in until night. He takes off his satchel and gets a bottle of water out of it. He has almost taken a sip when we hear: a heavy ratcheting.

CLICK.

And then, as THOMAS turns - and as we hear the second click of a thumbed-back hammer - we are on:

The huge bore of a double-barreled coach gun.

Behind the gun is JACK, having come, it seems, from nowhere. Stones rattle downslope as JACK comes closer.

JACK
You armed, brother?

THOMAS nods, and takes the automatic pistol out of his coat. He puts it aside on a flat rock.

JACK squats confidently, gets comfortable, and asks a question which has plagued but certainly interests him.

JACK (CONT'D)
Do you know yet which of us is the bad guy?

THOMAS nods.

THOMAS
You.

A long interval. Wind.

JACK begins to object but thinks about this for a long time, looking off across the desert.

JACK
Hard to give up. Life. I was once at sea, though, 500 miles offshore. I was delivering a boat back from Bermuda. I used to do that to have money to write. And I came up on my watch and I saw the waves, the black waves, higher than buildings, and I started to laugh.

Looks at THOMAS.

JACK (CONT'D)
Everybody else was covered with puke and crawling on the cabin sole but I did my job.
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Me and one other guy. That's how people divide. By what you do when it comes to it. Like you at the campfire. You know it's come to it now. I thought I was meant for great things. And now it's all this.

THOMAS nods.

THOMAS

I know.

JACK

Anything I was or thought I was or that I was doesn't matter any more. By the way, there was an Ed. He was the killer. I was just confused.

(no answer from THOMAS)

Why did you come?

THOMAS

Because you won't stop.

JACK

Then you should have taken your chance with the pistol, brother. Because who says I'm not going to get biblical. And visit unto the generations.

(a beat, stands)

Get walking. Up and over the ridge and down to the camp.

THOMAS doesn't move, though he looks in the indicated direction, and then back at JACK.

JACK (CONT'D)

(lifts coach gun)

I don't want to kill you here, and drag you somewhere else - but I will.

THOMAS gets up, and goes up the hill.

JACK, holding the coach gun on THOMAS, grabs up the automatic pistol and follows, up over the ridge line. Both men disappear in the flaring light.

EXT. DOWNSLOPE TO THE CAMP. LIGHT FALLING. CONTINUOUS

THOMAS walks ahead of JACK through the wrecked cars and general garbage and the rusted hulk of a Model T shot full of holes.

JACK

Stop.

THOMAS stops, and turns. Is this where he is going to be killed? But JACK, six feet back, is aiming neither the shotgun nor the pistol.

JACK (CONT'D)

"Public life is an afterlife". Who said that?

THOMAS

I did.

JACK

So, you're already dead. From publication. Relax, brother. You haven't been yourself for years.

JACK stuffs the pistol into his waistband, raises the coach gun, and advances with it leveled at THOMAS.

JACK (CONT'D)

That's why you went to the desert.

THOMAS nods.

JACK (CONT'D)

(indicating shotgun)

Every psychoanalyst should have one of these. Don't you think?

THOMAS stares into the gun barrels without affect.

JACK (CONT'D)

You don't want to live and I can't. That's interesting.

THOMAS

Who ever said I didn't want to live?

He presses THOMAS' chin with the shotgun barrels.

JACK

I know you're lethal, brother. You're a man in full, brother.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

The courtier's eye, the scholars
tongue, the very glass of fashion.
It's like bagging a fucking tiger.

(a beat, squats)

Now you and I are going to do
something we really should have
started with...We're going to have
a drink, and talk about how to
settle this. What you can settle
with an insane person I'm not
really sure...but, now as night
falls, let's have a drink.

Off THOMAS' look we

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DESERT. UNDER THE AIRSTREAM AWNING. NIGHT

THOMAS sits at the scarred table under the oil lamp that
swings in the wind under the battered awning, palms on the
table. From the Airstream comes some music. JACK comes out
with a bottle, glasses, and the park officer's revolver stuck
in his belt. He sits down opposite THOMAS. He puts the
revolver on the table, out of THOMAS'S reach.

JACK

Remember that? The gun you took off
the dead parkie?

THOMAS nods.

JACK (CONT'D)

Who would have thought of the
television stand? You're a natural,
brother. A natural. But I used to
hide my weed in the same place. At
my mother's house. Before I killed
her.

THOMAS says nothing as JACK cracks a new bottle of whiskey.

JACK (CONT'D)

It's brand new. Sealed and bonded.
It ain't poison.

Raises his glass.

JACK (CONT'D)

To the grand adventure.

THOMAS

What's that?

A long beat. Then:

JACK

Death. Death, and its raven wing.
There's a fucker walking around
here with a hook and an hourglass
brother. The gentleman himself. At
least he hasn't got a fistful of
cancer.

JACK drinks, with relish. Thomas doesn't drink.

JACK (CONT'D)

Didn't I tell you about the
denouement?

JACK reaches into his pocket puts six revolver shells on the
table. One, two, three, four, five, six. THOMAS looks up from
the REVOLVER SHELLS to JACK'S face. JACK picks up ONE SHELL,
puts it into the park officer's revolver, snaps it shut.

Recognition in THOMAS's face.

JACK spins the cylinder and puts the pistol on the table and
then beside it:

MACRO:

A DOUBLE EAGLE GOLD PIECE.

JACK (CONT'D)

Gold, brother. I found it at the
bottom of a wash. It was just
there. My lucky coin, on a lucky
day.

Pours more liquor.

JACK (CONT'D)

How many lucky days you think I've
had?

THOMAS

You're not going to tell me about
your childhood are you?

JACK

I was a good kid, brother. Never
cheated. Never stole. Never told a
lie.

THOMAS

What happened?

JACK
Desert. You open to some
intellectual bullshit?

THOMAS
If you need to get into it.

JACK
Do you believe in the duality of
man?

THOMAS
No. I believe in infinite
complexity.

JACK grins.

JACK
How many more is that than duality?

THOMAS
A lot.

JACK
I may have suggested now and again
that I have made a choice to be
wicked...But I never did. I did it
because I couldn't help it.

THE MOON is rising.

JACK (CONT'D)
I have done things that are...
unimaginable.

He slightly moves the COIN, the REVOLVER.

JACK (CONT'D)
I was never going to go to someone
and say...what I was. Do you think
I want to go around with a head
full of fuckin' lithium? Metal
salts. In this? You said I failed
as an artist. I failed...I need you
to understand this...through
capacity. Not incapacity. There's
too much up here going on. I went
through to other languages.
Uncommunicable things. And there
was no point.

THOMAS nods, understanding.

JACK (CONT'D)
Look at the gun. Look at the coin.
You equal to it?

THOMAS nods, palms on table.

JACK pours them each another drink. Then spins the cylinder and pushes the big REVOLVER further into the middle of the table. He picks up the coin.

JACK (CONT'D)
Inspect the coin. It has two sides.
One side's the woman. One side's
the eagle. Freedom. Now what do you
pick?

THOMAS
You be the eagle.

JACK
It lands on the table, heads or
tails, and that's the man who goes
first. You'll do it?

THOMAS
I already told you I'll fucking do
it.

JACK
If I flip this coin and it comes
down heads, you'll put the gun to
your head and pull the trigger?

THOMAS
Don't ask me again.

JACK picks up the COIN.

As JACK flips the COIN high into the lamp light, as it is still rising and spinning in the lamplight, half cranked...

THOMAS seizes the REVOLVER up from the table and as we go to

WIDE

Stands and shoots JACK directly through the sternum. JACK topples over backwards in his chair.

THE COIN strikes the boards of the table and bounces, spins, and lands on...

TAILS.

JACK lies speechless, breathless, dying in the swaying lamp light and dust.

Swaying LAMP from JACK'S POV on the ground.

THOMAS moves into shot stands over him.

JACK lies convulsing with blood coming out of his mouth.

THOMAS moves the AUTOMATIC out of JACK's reach: but JACK is dying, helpless.

THOMAS sits down in a chair and watches JACK die. To occupy himself he breaks open the REVOLVER. In the lamp light he sees, to his astonishment:

SIX BRASS SHELLS in the cylinder. Not the one we thought Jack put in.

THOMAS looks up in wonder and admiration at the trick.

JACK
(chuckling blood)
What does the coin say?

THOMAS
Doesn't matter now.

JACK
You never would have gotten the gun. I would have picked it up to hand it to you, I would have shot you in the face, brother, and burned you in the desert. What are you going to do?

THOMAS
I'm going to burn you in the desert.

He stands, with the revolver, and pops the cylinder back in.

JACK
Can I have a drink of water?

THOMAS
No.

He stands and shoots JACK through the body again.

JACK dies in the dust and swaying lamp light.

THOMAS sits and looks around at the desert.

INT. THE AIRSTREAM. NIGHT. LATER

JACK'S BODY, face covered by a cloth, lies on the unmade bed, laid out neatly, as if for a funeral, which is the case. His arms are folded across his chest. In his hands, the PISTOL.

THE interior of the TRAILER is scrupulously neat, organized like a ship's cabin. We motor along the SPINES of BOOKS. And then go to:

A COPY OF MONTAIGNE, as THOMAS flips through heavily underlined and annotated pages.

THOMAS'S face, as he throws the book aside, seated at the DESK, where there is a fat notebook, an old typewriter. THOMAS leafs through the notebook...

Filled with neat non-gibberish...

And then looks at a PILE OF MANUSCRIPT, single spaced, and from THOMAS'S point of view, not bad. He stares across at JACK, holding MSS in his hands.

He puts the manuscript down. He spills the SHELLS from his hand and puts them on the table. The used one. The five unfired ones.

After a moment, he takes up one shell, and puts it in his shirt pocket.

MOMENTS LATER

GASOLINE is splashed on JACK. On the MSS. On the BOOKS.

THOMAS, as the

INTERCUT: GENERATOR labors

And the lights flicker, stroboscopically, on the corpse, and where it used to live, is wetting down the entire room with gasoline.

THOMAS puts a paper cup on the table, in a nest of tinder, and fills it with gasoline. He puts a long taper candle in the cup of gasoline, and, with his Zippo, lights it.

He turns on the PROPANE stove. Unlighted.

DETAIL: CANDLE FLAME, its progress towards the gasoline.

As the LIGHTS continue to flicker,

THOMAS, after a last look, leaves the trailer.

EXT. THE AIRSTREAM. CONTINUOUS

THOMAS' hand switches off the generator. He walks away from the airstream, now lit from within by only the incendiary device.

He walks on out into the desert, exhausted. He looks east and sees...

THOMAS' POV:

THE BEGINNINGS OF DAWN, beyond desert mountains.

He climbs up the hill, and vanishes over the crest.

INT. THE AIRSTREAM. CONTINUOUS

We are on the INCENDIARY DEVICE, MACRO, as the candle flame burns down to the fuel. The explosion of fire takes us to:

THE COIN, FLARING IN THE LIGHT

Then:

A HUGE SHOT OF THE SALTON SEA.

Sea birds, dead towns, unforgiving light.

EXT. THE SALTON SEA. MORNING

THOMAS'S MOTORCYCLE is on its kickstand.

FOOTPRINTS lead off to a spit of derelict township where THOMAS sits on a wrecked old bench, looking out through the blinding light at the Salton Sea.

SEAGULLS, crazily in the desert, fight for food.

THOMAS flips the bullet, flips it, flips it, then puts it back in his shirt. He gets up in the wind, looks out over the sea, then turns out of the shot, heading back to his bike.

We fade to black and then ON SOUND hear...

EXT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. DAY

A game of tennis being played. Pock pock. Pock. Pock pock.

THOMAS, still in his filthy riding suit, is on the kitchen terrace, listening, and watching...unobserved as...

THOMAS'S WIFE, an ideogrammatic blonde Englishwoman with the sort of accent that renders "perfect" as "parfect", returns service to a GIRLFRIEND. Various details of the women talking and playing, mostly adlib but:

WIFE
 (collecting balls)
 The thing is if you're in LA, be in
 LA.

She notices THOMAS above.

WIFE (CONT'D)
 Take it for what it is and it's all
 right.

BACKLIT, THOMAS raises his right hand in greeting, then

UP ON THE TERRACE

Turns to see...

His DAUGHTER staring at him. She's barefoot and holds a pinwheel.

He sits down on a bench, and looks at her.

DAUGHTER
 I haven't seen you for so many
 days.

He sits there.

THOMAS
 I've been working.

He opens his murderer's arms. She leaps into them.

The WIFE comes onto the terrace, sweating from tennis. THOMAS stands and looks at her. They hold their stare. Finally he nods. We

CUT TO:

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. THE DINING ROOM.
 NIGHT

A full dinner laid on, candles. The family sits. And it's a game of marital subtleties:

WIFE
 Will we be seeing anything of
 Milly?

THOMAS, eating.

THOMAS
No. I don't think so.

His wife eats.

WIFE
That's too bad.

DAUGHTER
Where were you lost, Dad?

THOMAS comes back to himself. With energy:

THOMAS
I was lost in the desert,
sweetheart.

DAUGHTER
Wasn't it hot?

THOMAS
It was very hot.

DAUGHTER
You needed water!

THOMAS nods.

THOMAS
I did.

DAUGHTER
Did you have a compass?

THOMAS
I did. It's over there. Do you want
to see it?

DAUGHTER nods.

THOMAS goes and gets the ARMY COMPASS off the shelf where he
put it.

He gives it (MACRO) to his daughter. She opens it up. MACRO
on the dial. Then she looks up with a question:

DAUGHTER
Which way is home?

THOMAS reaches for his wine. Blood red.

Thomas
 (recovering)
 Well, it depends.

THE WIFE lights candles on the table. THOMAS watches.

THE CANDLE, burning on the dinner table, and then...

INT. THE AIRSTREAM. NIGHT

The FIRE spreading through the Airstream, consuming everything, consuming BOOKS, MANUSCRIPT, FURNITURE...and JACK.

EXT. BURNED OUT CAMP SITE. DAY

POLICE and FIRE MARSHALS are looking through the wreckage, the blackened hull of the AIRSTREAM, the blown-up meth facility. An OFFICER lets out a cry and...

A GLOVED HAND pulls the REVOLVER out of the wreckage. DETAILS as it is thrown on a table, and then BAGGED.

As a SHERIFF holds up the bag we

CUT TO:

INT. A COMPOUND IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS. NIGHT

THOMAS, lying in bed with his child, reading. In a bed full of storybooks.

THOMAS
 The villagers pushed and the monster fell screaming into the pit of fire. And the last anyone heard from him was "What about my good qualities?"

He looks.

The child is asleep.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 I made that last bit up.

THOMAS gets up and leaves the room, looking back at the child. Then he switches off the light and we go to

BLACK.