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THE BLOODSHOT RAINBOW

A Travis McGee Adventure

Starring

Sam Elliott

Based on the Books of John McDonald

Screenplay by

Alan Sharp

REVISED FIRST DRAFT

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'You will not find it down in any map;
true places never are.'

Moby Dick

FADE IN:

EXT. OCEAN - MORNING

A black ship on a silver sea, the CAMERA in a wide descending spiral brings it CLOSER and CLOSER until we can see the man at the helm and the name of the craft. "The Busted Flush," a solid looking, ketch rigged vessel. TITLES OVER this shot.

EXT. THE BUSTED FLUSH - MORNING

The man steering is TRAVIS McGEE. He is a big man, over six foot and tanned, with thick dark hair and a heavy matching moustache. The body is brown and solidly muscled, he holds his course with an air of composure, leaning easily into the dip and lurch of the ketch in the steady troughs of sea.

Close to the face has more ascetic than athlete, the eyes are dark and wary and the mouth is inscrutable under the moustache. But this morning he is a well man doing what he wills.

The man who comes up the companion way from the cabin is equally cheerful about his lot although a vastly different entity. Almost as broad as tall and wide as high he rolls up on deck bearing two vast ham and egg sandwiches and mugs of coffee. Brings the tray to McGee with a flourish. McGee nods and smiles at the abundance and his face loses a decade and its intensity and seems a good looking pleasant item, a normal outdoorsy guy.

McGEE

Hey there, Meyer, what's this you got...

MEYER

Compliments of the Earl of Sandwich...

McGEE

Think I'm going to have to put her on auto to deal with this little beauty...

And he adjusts the automatic pilot and settles down in the corner of the cockpit, taking up his task with two hands.

For a while the ketch rolls on and the friends deal with their breakfast. McGee looks up at the rigging, listening to the strain and groan of the ship.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEYER

You like her, don't you...

Mouth engaged, McGee nods, then.

McGEE

I like her fine...

MEYER

I think she sails like I run, slow and relentless.

McGEE

She moves better than you, Meyer, but it's true, she ain't elegant.

MEYER

So you're going to sail her round the world without me, Travis.

McGEE

Never said so. You're welcome aboard.

MEYER

No, I think I'll just catch you up at selected watering spots along the way. After three days out of sight of land I'm reminded of Samuel Johnson's remark...

McGEE

'To go to sea is to go to jail with a chance of being drowned.'

Meyer looks a little put out at being deprived of his quote.

MEYER

I didn't know you were familiar with Johnson.

McGee grins, stands up to the helm again.

McGEE

No but I'm familiar with you. I guess I know all your stories and all your punch lines by now, Meyer.

MEYER

Somebody said to me the real reason a man has affairs is so he can get to tell all his stories again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGee smiles, gazing away forward to where land is scadding.

McGEE

Reason a fellow has affairs is because he didn't learn the time before.

MEYER

Didn't learn what?

McGEE

That what he's looking for isn't out there.

MEYER

'You will not find it down in any map. True places never are.'

McGee grins fondly at his friend.

McGEE

Yeah, something like that.

MEYER

... and where is it pray tell.

EXT. BUSTED FLUSH - DAY

The ketch is approaching landfall, a weathered jetty stabbing out to sea with a slipway and a shed behind it. There is a boat in the shed being caulked and the general debris of a boatyard in evidence. On the end of the jetty is the figure of a MAN watching them come in. McGee and Meyer have lowered the sails and Meyer is in the bows, hoisting a bucket on a line out of the sea, sluicing down the deck. It is he who sees the Man on the jetty, a tall gaunt grey figure, holding out his horny hands for the line. Meyer registers him, the faintly ominous loom of him, the weathered face and the stare of his pale washed out eyes.

Meyer looks back at McGee, asking:

MEYER

Recognize the ancient mariner.

McGee focuses on the figure as they come alongside. The Man on the jetty takes Meyer's line, ties up expertly, goes astern for the rear line. McGee cuts the engine, looks at the Man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE
... Thanks for the hands... don't
I know you someplace?

VAN HARDER (MAN)
John Van Harder. I brought your
boat up from Istamorada long time
since...

McGEE
Hell so you did.

Holds out a hand. They shake.

McGEE
(continuing)
... What you doing this end of
the world?

VAN HARDER
Same as the rest of us. Following
the dollar.

Meyer has come up with his duffel. He nods to McGee
and Van Harder.

MEYER
I'll see you tonight, Travis.

McGEE
Great, thanks, Meyer --

Then looks beyond him to where a young GIRL, perhaps
thirteen, a lumpy-looking kid wearing overalls and a
sweater has come aboard carrying a bucket and a scrub-
bing broom.

McGEE
(continuing)
-- Heh, Glad, you're looking to
make bucks, huh --

GLAD (GIRL)
I'm saving... same deal.

McGEE
You're going to scrub her and
shake her.

GLAD
Same deal.

MEYER
How much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLAD

Five bucks...

VAN HARDER

Five dollars to scrub a deck...

Glad stares at him coldly.

GLAD

Why are you butting in.

McGee leads Van Harder back to the cabin away from Glad's wrath.

McGEE

Settle it with my economist friend...

Meyer looks at him and then at Glad as McGee and Van Harder go below.

MEYER

How about six.

She studies him a moment.

GLAD

You're an economist.

MEYER

My particular system never caught on.

GLAD

I like it... six is good... I do good work.

And she goes to the side and slings her bucket over, pulls it up, sluices the foredeck after checking the forehatch is closed.

Meyer goes back, looks into the cabin.

INT. CABIN - DAY

The cabin is strewn with the debris of the top. Pans and mugs, food and cutlery on the table and in the sink. McGee is in the process of clearing up. Van Harder is sitting at the table, clearly in mid-story. He stops when Meyer appears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEYER

I got her for six.

McGEE

Heh, great, Meyer.

MEYER

But she does good work.

And as he speaks water comes splashing through the transom in the cabin. McGee leaps to close it. When he looks back, Meyer is gone. His FEET CAN BE HEARD going ashore. McGee grins.

VAN HARDER

I would pay her two. No more.

McGEE

Go on, what were you saying...

VAN HARDER

I've been off the booze close on fifteen years, ever since I got born again. Hasn't been no trouble neither, mean I ain't straining at the leash for a drink...

McGee glances at him, sees the lack of any kind of hype in his manner.

VAN HARDER

(continuing)

... I been working for this fella Hubbard Lawless for six year. Warn't much to it but I did it. Skippered his 55-foot cruiser, kept up the maintenance. Good job even if I never did see more'n half a mile from shore. Nice enough man to work for, for a millionaire.

McGEE

Santa Barbara fella, right...

VAN HARDER

Out of San Francisco. Money from way back. Anyway about four months ago he wanted to take the boat up the coast. Just came up, short notice.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN HARDER (CONT'D)

There was him and a fella name of Tuckerman, John Tuckerman, more like walk around man but a nice big fella and one of the best fisherman I ever saw. Fish just loved him to catch them.

McGEE

Yeah...

Prodding him a little. He responds by picking up the tempo. Above them the SOUND OF GLAD AT WORK SCRUBBING the deck.

VAN HARDER

Right from the start it was a funny business. He brought women on board. Weren't locals. Looked like, well looked like tarts. He never did that before. They proceeded to get drunk below. Tuckerman brought me up mine...

McGEE

You were drinking.

VAN HARDER

One, same as always. I always have the one, just t'show who's skipper, you know. Last thing I remember was a rainbow, out to sea, going bloodshot before my eyes...

And McGee has stoped cleaning up now, sits down opposite.

McGEE

Yeah, go on.

VAN HARDER

Next thing I know I'm being taken off the 'Delilah,' that's the name of his boat, on a stretcher feelin' like the little end o'nothin' whittled to a point.

McGEE

And Lawless.

Van Harder stares at him, his eyes haunted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN HARDER

Gone. Seems weather came up, he fell overboard and drowned. Tuckerman brought her in. They found me guilty of negligence and took away my license. Took away my honor too, McGee. I want you to get it back for me.

McGee takes a deep breath. Thinks a minute.

McGEE

I need you to tell your story again, John. To somebody else.

VAN HARDER

It's you I want, Mister McGee. It's what I've heard you do. If somebody loses something valuable you'll try to get it back for half its worth.

McGEE

Well those were the old days, John.

VAN HARDER

These are my old days. I need this bad else maybe I'm done for.

And he is now quite openly, desperate. McGee nods.

McGEE

I want you to tell it to my friend, Meyers. Okay. Just tell him it all and answer any questions. Then I'll tell you if I can help.

Van Harder sits a minute, shrugs.

VAN HARDER

If that's how it has to be.

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

McGee's place is a loft area above the boat shed, a long, single space with partitioned areas to separate the bedroom from the kitchen from sitting area. McGee and Meyer sit in front of the Franklin stove at one end, Meyer almost flat on his back in a big over-stuffed leather chair and ottoman. McGee sits up, leaning into his friend's words.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEYER

If his story is true, then some other things must be true. One, that Hubbard Lawless benefitted from being presumed drowned or John Tuckerman benefitted from not having Van Harder around when he did whatever he did. Either way there'll be lines trailing and a smart fella like you might get hooked by one.

McGEE

You advising me to take Van Harder on.

MEYER

Naw, you already decided that. You're just a knight in tarnished armour, McGee. People like you bring people like Van Harder like candles bring moths.

McGee gets up and walks to the window, looks down at the Busted Flush. There are lights in the cabin. Meyer studies him at the window.

MEYER

(continuing)

I think the sooner you take off around the world single-handed the sooner you'll get to the real case.

McGee turns round, looks at his friend.

McGEE

I can count on your company on this one.

MEYER

I've got till Tuesday. After that you're on your own.

McGEE

Appreciate it.

EXT. JETTY - NIGHT

McGee walks down the jetty, goes aboard the Busted Flush. Goes below.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Van Harder is sitting up in one of the berths reading a Navigation Manual. He looks up.

McGEE

You all right here for the night?

VAN HARDER

Surely am. I like your boat.
You going to sail her someplace?

McGEE

Aiming to. John, I'll go up to
Santa Barbara. Ask around. See
what adds up.

Van Harder's face lights up and in that moment it can be seen the strain he has been under.

VAN HARDER

The Lord be praised. He sent me
to you. Two months I just festered
and then I had a dream about you,
'cept you didn't have no moustache
and there was that red rainbow
again...

And he breaks off, realizing he is close to rambling.

VAN HARDER

(continuing)

... I been figuring how to pay you.

McGEE

That's all right, John...

VAN HARDER

I aim to make it all right. I
know I asked you to get me my
honor back. Well, that's not
something you can have half of.
But to get that back you'd have
to get me cleared.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAN HARDER (CONT'D)

That way I'd get my license back. Figure that me being fifty-seven, maybe I could work ten more years like I'm doing. That'd be around 40,000 dollars. How 'bout if I paid you ten of them. Be in installments, every pay day...

McGEE

We can work something out, John.

VAN HARDER

Can't get my honor back with one hand and take it away with the other. Either it's a deal or it ain't.

McGee nods, seeing how it is, hearing the intensity of this big, wronged man.

McGEE

It's a deal.

VAN HARDER

And here's my hand on it.

And they shake.

INT. TRUCK - MEYER AND McGEE - DAY

latter driving.

MEYER

The departed left a wife, Delilah, no children and an insurance policy for slightly more than a million dollars.

McGEE

What's the status on that?

MEYER

My friend on the vine tells me much unhappiness is in the hearts of the policy carriers. Wailing and gnashing of teeth are heard in the high rises.

McGEE

I hope when it comes insurance companies are the first to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEYER

'It.' What 'it'?....

McGee glances at him, says no more. Meyer goes on in his mock solemn tone.

MEYER

You're at a very delicate stage of your life, Travis. You are passing into middle age. Don't mistake the chemical convulsions in your body for an awareness of external reality. That way lies unsufferable pomposity.

McGEE

You telling me things ain't on the slide, Meyer?

MEYER

Things are always on the slide. It's called change, previously known as progress. Don't concern yourself with such matters. Concentrate on the windmill at hand.

McGee grins at his friend's rebuke. They drive on.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

McGee's truck is parked outside the San Cardone Police Department. Meyer is behind the wheel, McGee by the door.

McGEE

I'm going to talk to Sam, see what he'll let fall. You go on get us checked in someplace. Start asking. I'll see you in the Belle Vista at six.

MEYER

Don't be surprised if Sheriff Hagerman isn't delighted at your visit. There have been a lot of Hubbard Lawless seekers through these portals in the last few months.

McGEE

Hell, Sam and I go way back.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

McGee is seated facing SHERIFF HAGERMAN who is a compact, dark-haired man with cold watchful eyes and a smile that works off a separate battery. He is watching McGee with no special affection.

HAGERMAN

Well, Travis, I recommend you go way back to Ventura and leave these matters alone. None of your business.

McGEE

Come on, Sam. I've got a client.

HAGERMAN

You got no client because you got no license. What you got is a hard luck story for which you are a well known fool.

McGEE

So, I'm trying to help somebody. That a crime?

HAGERMAN

It's getting there.

McGEE

You're sore at me because I quit the D.A.'s office. Like I deserted the Army.

HAGERMAN

Bull pockey. I just can't stand amateurs.

McGEE

You think I'm an amateur, Sam...

HAGERMAN

You're worse. You're a professional amateur...

He breaks off to light up another cigarette.

McGEE

Just tell me what happened. How come Van Harder got busted?

HAGERMAN

Because of a well known, well liked, much needed businessman...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAGERMAN (CONT'D)

... and socialite in these parts
went missing off his own boat and
his skipper got brought ashore dead
drunk on a stretcher.

McGEE

You're sure he was drunk?

HAGERMAN

He looked drunk, smelled drunk,
talked drunk and walked drunk.
He used to be a drunk...

McGEE

Fifteen years ago.

HAGERMAN

So when he went on a binge it was
a doozey.

McGEE

So Van Harder killed Hubbard
Lawless. That what you're telling
me...

Hagerman shrugs, sits back. McGee leans into him.

McGEE

(continuing)

... that's what it comes down
to. You fly in a plane and the
pilot falls face first on the
controls, reeking of booze, that's
what you'd call it.

Hagerman waves away some smoke from in front of his face.

HAGERMAN

I'm not called upon to call it
anything, McGee. That's your
preoccupation. Putting labels
on things, labels that always
make you out better than them.

McGEE

Come on, Sam, I didn't have the
temperament for the job. It was
too... too...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAGERMAN

'Corrupt,' 'self serving,'
'hypocritical.' Too real is what
it was. You're a big overgrown
kid, McGee. Because you didn't
make up the rules you don't want
to play.

McGEE

Tell me you have no doubts that
Van Harder didn't get set up and
I'll leave you be, Sam.

Hagerman eyes him a moment, then flatly:

HAGERMAN

Don't you have to be someplace?

McGee takes a breath, shrugs, assuming he is being sent
packing.

McGEE

Sure. I'm meeting Meyer at the
Belle Vista.

HAGERMAN

I'll give you a ride.

And he gets up from behind his desk and McGee gets up
too. Hagerman takes something out of the desk drawer,
puts it in his pocket. They go out.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Hagerman driving. McGee watches out of the window.
Hagerman talks in a musing kind of tone.

HAGERMAN

Now most people have this picture
of Santa Barbara as a kind of
colleggy, beachy, laid back town,
half seaside resort, half hippie
heaven. Well, that ain't quite
the way of it. That's the icing.
The cake is bedrock redneck with
pockets of rich rich ore...

McGee is listening but not looking. Hagerman doesn't
glance at him but continues:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAGERMAN

(continuing)

... Hubbard Lawless was one of those pockets. Only he ran out --

McGee glances across.

HAGERMAN

(continuing)

--- in more ways than one. When Hub went missing there was a lot of grief. A lot of people were looking to old Hub to deliver.

McGEE

How about women? The ones on the cruise?

HAGERMAN

L.A. ladies, flown up for the scene. Walkons. We checked them out. But there was another woman. She's gone too.

McGEE

So you know it was a fix.

HAGERMAN

About a month after he went overboard it all began to wash up. His finances were in shreds, he had scraped up about four hundred thousand in cash and it was missing...

McGEE

It took a month for the penny to drop.

HAGERMAN

Travis, we're talking money politics. That's a dark and winding road. Lawless was tied in to very heavy people. They control the flow. That's how long they mulled it over before they let it come out.

McGEE

So where is he ---

Hagerman fishes out an envelope from his pocket. Hands it across. McGee looks inside. There is a single slide. McGee squints at it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAGERMAN

The insurance company came up with this. Amazing how much activity a million dollars can generate...

His voice bitter, almost amused. And McGee is looking at a slide of a woman, clearly a tourist, posing for a picture. Behind her, but in sharp focus, is a man pouring a beer, laughing at a very pretty blonde. The locale is Mexican.

HAGERMAN

(continuing)

... They ran circulars out to people who'd been in Guadalajara over the period Lawless disappeared. Got their names from the airlines, bending a few laws on the way. The guy pouring the beer is Lawless, no question.

McGEE

When was it taken?

HAGERMAN

The couple who sent in the picture were there two weeks. This shot was taken either at the beginning or the end of their holiday. Hubbard disappeared in the middle of it but he'd been to Guadalajara the week before. The insurance people are trying to make out he was setting up his getaway. Maybe even considering plastic surgery.

McGEE

Getting kind of fancy, aren't they. The guy split with how much, 400,000 dollars. For that he'd change his face.

HAGERMAN

We don't know quite what Lawless got away with. Maybe he changed his face so somebody else wouldn't.

And McGee thinks on, nods.

McGEE

So what are you doing about it?

HAGERMAN

Come on, Travis.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAGERMAN (CONT'D)
We're local law. Wherever Hub is
he's in another league. The
insurance company'll get him a
lot faster than we will.

McGEE
What about Van Harder? He just
stays on hold?

HAGERMAN
Maybe he just got hit like a dog
crossing the street.

He pulls over to the curb. Look at McGee whose face
is clenched in anger.

HAGERMAN
(continuing)
Travis, things aren't the way
they are because somebody tossed
a coin and it came down tails.
They're that way because most
everybody wants them that way.

McGEE
I know the song, Sam. I just
can't sing it.

HAGERMAN
Yeah, well, so does John Tuckerman
and neither can he...

He looks at McGee levelly, his eyes cold but his manner
reasonable.

HAGERMAN
(continuing)
... Do what you have to do, Travis,
but don't mess with the rules.
Know what I'm saying.

McGEE
Sure. Thanks, Sam.

HAGERMAN
No thanks called for. I haven't
told you anything Meyer won't be
repeating shortly.

And McGee gets out and Hagerman drives away.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

McGee watches him go. Then he looks around. There is a nice evening light and the people are brown and pretty. It looks like a nice world. McGee heads across the street to the Belle Vista.

INT. BELLE VISTA - EVENING

The bar is long, shiny and crowded. It's Happy Hour and the hair is shinier, the lipstick glossier, the laughter fresher than it will be again today. Alcohol, tobacco and musk make the air a jungle of aromas and the denizens go through their rituals as though they were fresh minted.

McGee and Meyer are in a booth, a little apart from the throng, watching it with the detachment of the disenchanted.

A handsome brown-skinned California girl smiles at McGee as she passes the booth. He raises his glass in salute but gives no come-all-ye. Meyer smiles.

MEYER

A veritable cornucopia...

He glances at McGee who sits frowning at his drink.

MEYER

(continuing)

Lighten up, McGee. It's the Happy Hour.

McGEE

Goddamn it, Meyer, Sam Hagerman just as much as told me Van Harder got set up and there's nothing we can do about it...

MEYER

Maybe there isn't...

McGEE

Hagerman isn't a goon. He's a good man, he's a good cop. If he's shrugging his shoulders, things are worse than I thought.

MEYER

Isn't that what you keep telling me.

McGEE

This Tuckerman must know the truth.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE (CONT'D)

How come these heavy money people haven't squeezed him dry?

MEYER

Maybe they don't want Lawless found. Maybe they've found him. Maybe they sent him away. Maybe they're leaving him for a real two-fisted ombudsman like Travis McGee...

McGEE

All right, Meyer, quit dazzling yourself.

Meyer grins.

MEYER

Tuckerman's holed up in a beach house thirty miles north of here. He's living with some Amazonian lady who threw an insurance investigator out a couple of weeks back. And when I say 'threw out,' the guy broke his collar bone, so you may get some action.

McGEE

We'll go up tomorrow morning.

MEYER

Not I. I'm required at the office.

McGREE

You said Tuesday.

MEYER

I lied. Also I think you should see Mrs. Lawless first.

McGEE

Why? Tuckerman must know the story.

MEYER

There's more than one story, Travis.

The brown-skinned girl goes past again, smiling still. Meyer edges himself out of his niche.

MEYER

(continuing)

... Delilah Lawless. I mean the name alone is worth a visit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And he prepares to follow the girl.

McGEE
Where are you going?

MEYER
I think that girl is infatuated with this booth. She probably experienced her first Harvey Wallbanger here. I feel that gives me a thin but sufficient entre....

And he follows his prey.

McGee smiles, dowses it in his drink then gets up, leaves, going in the opposite direction.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

McGee comes driving up in his pickup, up to a large white colonnaded house, set in a considerable expanse of lawn. He parks and goes to the front door. Rings.

After a moment, the door is opened by a MEXICAN MAID.

McGEE
(in Spanish)
Hello, is the lady of the house in?
My name is McGee, I called her a little time ago.

MAID
(in Spanish)
Come in please. I will tell her.

McGee goes inside.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

He is led in to a high ceilinged room leading on to a garden at the side. The room is cleared to make way for a spectacular garage sale. There are tables stacked with fishing rods, rackets of various persuasions, half a dozen guns, skis, camping gear, clothing, shoes, boots, the whole range of the well-to-do consumer's compulsion.

McGee walks up and down the tables, looking, hefting the tackle, feeling the texture. He is so engrossed when DELILAH LAWLESS comes into the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She is a slender, tall woman with a fall of straight hair, once black, now silver grained. She has on a purple caftan, her feet are bare and she has a silver band around her forehead. She is strikingly handsome and in her early fifties and when she speaks her accent, beneath countless layers, is English.

DELILAH

How fetchingly forward you are,
Mr. McGee. Scarcely ten minutes
have elapsed.

McGEE

I'm on the prod, ma'am.

She laughs, a theatrical, but well executed sound.

DELILAH

'On the prod' come now. No one
says that without meaning to amuse.

McGEE

Well, as long as I succeeded.
Quite a collection you have.

DELILAH

Hubbard did not stint his material
needs. Anything you are particularly
interested in?

McGEE

Couple of nice rods there. But I
have a couple of nice rods.

They walk down the tables again.

DELILAH

What are you 'on the prod' about?

McGEE

A man called John Van Harder.

DELILAH

Ah yes, Van Harder. I never liked
him.

McGEE

Oh, why was that, ma'am...

DELILAH

Don't call me 'ma'am' again.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELILAH (CONT'D)

I didn't like Van Harder because he didn't like me. I'm a pagan. He's a Christian. An old enmity lay between us.

McGEE

Do you think he got drunk and caused your husband's death?

DELILAH

I'm not able to answer that. I don't know.

McGEE

Do you think your husband is dead?

DELILAH

Do you think I would sell his clothes if he weren't?

McGEE

Sure I do.

She looks at him, summoning up a haughty expression of affront. Then she laughs at her own shtick.

DELILAH

Sure I would... but he's dead. I know that for sure.

McGEE

How do you know?

Her expression grows serious. She stops, looks at the collection of ex-belongings.

DELILAH

I knew Hubbard Lawless over twenty years. I was the older woman who initiated him into many things. That's what I am on this plane. An initiator...

And she glances at him, challenging him to find her eccentric. McGee waits, listening, responsive and she takes some kind of re-assurance from this non-judgmental quality in the man.

DELILAH

(continuing)

... I saw him make his first million...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELILAH (CONT'D)

... and I saw him lose it. I saw him through his first affair and I saw him through his other little vices. And then I lost him. You only get so long.

McGEE

What did you lose him to?

DELILAH

Oh, his age, his goddamn middle life menopausal angst. There was another woman of course, a Kraut with a burnished body and insides of gold and mercury, by all accounts, where he tried to mine immortality, or his mid-thirties, at least. I think he planned to run away with her to a life of unceasing orgasm and minimal thought. But it didn't work out because he's dead.

McGEE

How do you know?

DELILAH

I can feel it --

And she almost punches herself in the stomach and all at once her pain is very evident.

DELILAH

(continuing)

... I can feel he's not there and he used to be, burning in the pit of me and it's out, whatever it was, and I didn't put it out. He's dead, Mr. McGee.

McGee allows a long pause to gauze over this openness.

McGEE

People don't think so.

DELILAH

Tell me about it. The insurance company won't pay their debt, the bastards. I'm not just cleaning out an emotional attic here. I'm paying the goddamn packs of howling bills... Listen, McGee. You're working for Van Harder.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELILAH (CONT'D)

He claims he was framed, right...
that implies Hubbard set it up,
skipped out, is shackled up
somewhere. Right?

McGee nods.

DELILAH

(continuing)

... how much is he paying you?

McGEE

Well, that's something we're
negotiating.

DELILAH

I'll match it. You prove what you
want about Van Harder, but if you
turn up evidence that Hubbard is
dead, I'll pay you whatever he is
paying you. How's that?

McGEE

It's not necessary.

DELILAH

Alright, but I'll pay it just the
same. What else do you want to
know?

McGEE

John Tuckerman.

DELILAH

He and Hubbard went to school
together. John isn't stupid but
he's not all together centered.
He loved Hubbard like a dog.
Only he's a man. And give
Hubbard Lawless his due, he
never used him or abused him.
John was Hub's best shot at
a relationship, poor son of a
bitch.

McGEE

Would you say that Tuckerman
knows the way of it?

DELILAH

I don't know.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELILAH (CONT'D)

He was part of it. Whatever it was. I don't know if he was all of it though.

McGee nods, he picks up a rod, feels its balance, mock casts.

McGEE

Nice rod.

DELILAH

If you're going to see John, take it for him. He's a great fisherman.

McGEE

So I hear.

He stands looking at her, the rod trembling in his hand.

McGEE

(continuing)

... you glad about Hubbard being gone...

And he has a way of asking, as if more than anything he genuinely wanted to know. And she hears the question, and hearing it, answers.

DELILAH

Getting gladder every day. Been a hard decade, Mr. McGee...

And McGee nods, hearing her openness.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

A long shelf of beach. McGee comes rolling up it in the truck. Someways back from the curve of the dunes stands a house. McGee stops, gets out, walks up onto the dunes and towards the house.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

It's a strange looking, cubic mushroom sort of a house with no downstairs, the second floor being on stilts. There is a battered Volkswagen and a big spongy looking Cadillac Coupe de Ville parked underneath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A set of steps leads up to the deck. McGee starts up.
From above comes a voice.

GRETEL

Heh there...

A quiet, unaccusatory voice, neutral but not welcoming.
It stops McGee two stairs up. He looks and sees her,
leaning over the edge of the deck, a coffee mug in her
hand. She is a big woman, broad shouldered with a face
that once might be mistaken for a man's but only once.

McGEE

Hey, there, my name if McGee...
John Tuckerman around?

GRETEL

Depends. What do you want to talk
to him about?

McGEE

John Van Harder.

A beat.

GRETEL

You mean you want to talk about
Hubbard Lawless.

McGEE

His name will come up I'm pretty
sure.

And this tone, slightly mocking but light causes her to
pause. She moves to the head of the stairs.

GRETEL

Been an awful lot of people
asking him about Lawless.

McGEE

They do have cause.

And again the reasonability makes its case in her mind.
She comes down the steps to look at him, this big man
standing squinting up at her.

GRETEL

He's said it all many many times.
And it's always the same. He is
like a stuck record... he doesn't
need to go over it again...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And then, almost at his level, only one step up, she asks him:

GRETEL

(continuing)

Do you know what I'm saying?

McGee gets the attempt at communication in her eyes.

McGEE

I'm just coming into this thing, feeling my way, asking Van Harder questions.

GRETEL

Harder and Van Harder...

Delivered not so much deadpan as without any kind of coloring, as if it were not a pun almost.

GRETEL

(continuing)

... John's up the beach. You can't miss him...

McGee nods, steps down to the sand.

GRETEL

(continuing)

... You're what, Mr. McGee? I mean what class of intruder are you?

McGEE

I'm trying to get Van Harder's license back. He lost his license over all this.

She nods.

GRETEL

Sounds like he came out real well only losing a license...

And again there is no shading, just the thought, naked.

McGEE

Happened his self-respect was stapled on to it. Man's a sailor. This thing said he was a bad sailor. Different things hold us up. Do you know what I'm saying...

Asking her the same question. She hears him, turns and goes back up the stairs. McGee turns and starts up the beach.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

McGee walking up the beach. Someways ahead, at a point where the dunes are heaped higher, there is the figure of a MAN, a tall man, surf casting.

McGee walks up to him. He casts powerfully and well, throwing the bait way out over the surf and reeling it in. He doesn't look around until he has reeled in his last cast. Then he looks at McGee full on.

He's big with a kind of long limber body and a face of almost childlike openness. His eyes look intensely, but with a kind of unseeing fixity.

TUCKERMAN (MAN)

Hey there, how's it going?

McGEE

Pretty good. With you?

TUCKERMAN

They're out there but I can't bring them in.

Looking out to sea and preparing to cast again.

McGEE

What are you using...

TUCKERMAN

Mullet. Fish to catch fish. That's all them devils do, eat each other night and day, day and night. Ever think of it going on?

He glances at McGee who nods.

McGEE

Has crossed my mind. Can't seem to get on a real intimate basis with a fish, though...

Tuckerman looks at him, grins, nods boyishly.

TUCKERMAN

Hell no, they're before our time.

And he casts, far out into the water.

EXT. DECK - DAY

Gretel watching up the beach through a telescope. She can see the two men at the ocean's edge.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

McGee is in an old beat-up armchair, drinking a beer. Gretel sits on the deck. Tuckerman is standing at the edge of the deck, practicing casting with the rod McGee has brought him. He is oddly animated, almost excited, talking and eating, reeling in and casting again.

TUCKERMAN

You would have had to know Hub to understand all this. Hub had it up here...

(he taps his temple)

... Hub used to say it was all in the mind. After you've thought a thing the rest is just an echo he'd say...

McGEE

So he thought of this idea to disappear...

Tuckerman turns, grinning, then sees Gretel watching him.

TUCKERMAN

Gretel wants me to stop talking about Hub. Don't you Gretel.

GRETEL

I just wish if he was coming back for you he'd get here...

And Tuckerman flashes McGee a look and then stares at Gretel.

TUCKERMAN

Cut that out. That's no way to talk. You know nothing about it.

McGEE

But you do. And for your own good reasons you're not saying.

TUCKERMAN

I've said plenty. I've told my story and they've written it down and played it back and minced it up and it comes out the same every time. Hubbard got lost off the Delilah. Big sea got him, took him over...

He looks out to sea, his face wild for a moment, then he looks back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUCKERMAN

(continuing)

... They've all tried, the Sheriff,
the insurance and those biggies that
live in hundred room houses, but I
remember what I want...

And he checks to see if this turn of phrase has
caught McGee's attention.

McGEE

How about Van Harder. What did
you put in his drink.

Tuckerman replies to this straight as if the question
had only one meaning.

TUCKERMAN

Bourbon and water, long, no ice.
Hub called it Van Harder's Nail.
He liked to hammer one in just
to feel the pain, Hub used to say.

And his voice caresses the recollection.

McGEE

Let Van Harder off the hook, John.
If Lawless is dead it doesn't
matter.

TUCKERMAN

Sure it matters, sure it does.
Think the insurance is going to
pay up if I say we spiked Van
Harder's booze? They're not
paying up way it is now. I say
that they'll never pay.

McGEE

That's because they think Lawless
is South of the Border playing
rich gringo games with his lady
love.

Tuckerman stares at McGee, laughs, wildly, excitedly.

TUCKERMAN

And they hate that. They hate to
think that old Hub got away from
them and their deals and their
games and their cheating and greed.
They hate to see somebody get away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE

And you, John, you glad he's gone...

And Tuckerman seems almost to have run into a wall. Stands, motionless a moment. Then he looks at the rod in his hand as though it had just caught his attention.

TUCKERMAN

Good rod, this. Hub used it to catch a big bluefin once. Gave him a helluva pull. He got it in real cautious, took him an hour. Couldn't've done it any better myself...

Then he looks at Gretel, his eyes pleading.

TUCKERMAN

(continuing)
... I don't want to talk about it any more...

GRETEL

He doesn't want...

McGEE

I heard him. I'm abusing your hospitality. I'm sorry.

Tuckerman eyes him a moment, then quite calmly:

TUCKERMAN

You would have liked Hub.

And he turns and goes into the house. McGee and Gretel sit a minute. She gets up, starts to collect the plates.

GRETEL

Beginning to get the picture?

Her voice just short of accusatory, that flat ask of hers. McGee nods.

McGEE

How long have you two been together?

GRETEL

Long time. He's my brother.

And it only dawns on McGee then that he is relieved and pleased and sundry other things by this. She sees some of this in his face, goes on, crossing to take the fish off the grill.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRETEL

(continuing)

... He needs looking after. He goes up and down a lot of times in a week...

She puts a fillet of fish on a plate, hands it to him.

GRETEL

(continuing)

It's kind of my line. I work in a holistic health place outside of San Francisco. A lot of our clients are hanging on by their teeth...

(she turns to face him, her plate in hand)

... I tried to get John to come up there but he wouldn't.

(she takes a forkful of fish)

... He's waiting for Hubbard to come and get him. He fishes out on that point every day but he isn't interested in fish. That's why they don't bite. He's waiting to see a sail coming up the coast.

McGee nods, stands up.

GRETEL

(continuing)

... You taking off...

McGEE

Going down to sleep in my truck.

GRETEL

I'll walk you down... if you don't mind.

McGee grins.

McGEE

I could live with that.

And they go down off the deck together, a matching pair.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

McGee and Gretel sit on opposite sides of the cab, backs against the door. Emmy Lou Harris' voice dies away, leaving the ocean to applaud.

He hands across the bottle of Cuerva Gold and she takes a pull from the neck.

McGEE

... Apart from working at this place, what's it called...

GRETEL

Bonnie Brae...

McGEE

What do you do?

GRETEL

Well, I do various. I can teach school and I can cook short orders. I'm good around horses and I can sail a boat. My Spanish is passable and I can run the mile in 4.20. How about you?

McGEE

On the horses, the boat and the Spanish I can stay with you. The rest I'm trailing.

GRETEL

You're a private investigator.

McGEE

I get into other people's problems.

GRETEL

You don't have enough of your own.

McGEE

Meyer says that's how I keep mine at bay.

GRETEL

Who's Meyer?

McGEE

He's my anchor and my computer and my friend. You'll meet him.

GRETEL

I will...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRETEL (CONT'D)
(passes the bottle)
... how come?

McGEE
Well that's maybe presumptuous of
me. I'd like you to meet him.

He drinks to her and their meeting. She inclines her
head at his reaching out, asks, changing the tone:

GRETEL
What did you think of John?

McGEE
I think he's disassociated. Lousy
word, but it fits. He needs all
the help he can get...

She stares at this bleak answer. He goes on:

McGEE
(continuing)
... Do you think Lawless is dead?

GRETEL
I don't know...

McGEE
Don't tell me anything you don't
want to. You have obligations.
I don't.

GRETEL
I think Hubbard set it up and John
helped him. They dosed Van Harder
and Hubbard went over the side and
swam ashore. It was off the point
there, that much I know. I think
the woman was waiting...

McGEE
Who was she...

GRETEL
A Swedish girl called Brigit.
Apparently a looker. John hated
her. And she him.

McGEE
Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRETEL

Jealousy over Hubbard. That's what I assume. John says she was after his money. I think they drove to Mexico there and then. John kept the boat out all night, said he couldn't bring it in on his own, the weather was bad.

McGEE

So you don't think Lawless drowned coming ashore.

GRETEL

Brigit would have still been around.

McGEE

Could she have split with the money when Hubbard didn't show up?

GRETEL

I guess. In which case there is a very well-off blonde number at large.

McGEE

So you think Hubbard Lawless ran out on John.

GRETEL

I know that's what John is scared to think.

McGEE

I've got a picture of Hubbard drinking beer in Guadalajara...

He fishes a viewer out of the glove compartment, tosses it over to her. She looks at it, looks at him.

GRETEL

When was this taken?

McGEE

Well, there's some doubt about that, but the insurance company thinks it's after the event.

She looks at him to see if he is adducing this opinion as persuasive. McGee shrugs admittance of the prejudice involved.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE
(continuing)
Show it to John, ask him what he
thinks...

And she studies him.

GRETEL
Don't you think that's a little
drastic?

McGEE
No more drastic than fishing for
the love of your life using Mullet
as bait...

And this nails her with its near brutal directness.

GRETEL
Can... can I trust you, Travis?

He looks at her a moment.

McGEE
With your life.

Said lightly, but meant. She opens the door, gets out,
taking the viewer with her.

She walks round to his side. He rolls the window down.
Looks up backwards at her.

GRETEL
Sweet dreams.

McGEE
Yeah. Can I get a cup of coffee
in the morning?

GRETEL
I'm up by six...

Walking away, McGee shakes his head.

McGEE
Good for you...

And he lies, stretched out on the seat, listening to
the ocean.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Gretel comes up onto the deck. Goes into the house.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Gretel goes to her room. Stops, seeing the light under Tuckerman's door. She crosses, knocks lightly, opens the door.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Tuckerman is sitting up in bed. He is looking at a scrapbook. He looks up, sees Gretel, closes the book, almost guiltily. Gretel stands in the doorway.

TUCKERMAN

That fella gone?

GRETEL

He'll be back in the morning, John...

Tuckerman nods, looks at his book, opens it.

We see what he is looking at. It's he and Lawless, holding up a trophy fish between them. It's a big 7x10 glossy.

GRETEL (V.O.)

(continuing)

... He might be somebody to talk to, John.

Tuckerman snaps the book shut, sitting up.

TUCKERMAN

I've done all my talking to him.

Gretel tosses him the viewer, forcing a reaction catch.

GRETEL

Anyway you say...

And she goes, closing the door behind her. Tuckerman stares after her, then looks at the viewer in his hand. Presses the light button, sees the image. His reaction is a flinch of distress.

INT. TRUCK - MORNING

McGee wakes up in the front seat. He is in a sleeping bag. He sits up, rolls down the window, takes in a long haul of morning air. On the hood there is a large thermos flask. He reaches out, fetches it in, then looks up the beach.

EXT. BEACH - HIS POV - MORNING

Away in the distance is the tiny figure of a man fishing, out on the point.

BACK TO SCENE

McGee fills himself a cup of coffee, sips it, watching Tuckerman.

Then, glancing in the wing mirror, he sees Gretel come running up the beach, skirting the ocean edge, running with long, fluent strides. She comes up, passes the truck, glancing over but not stopping. McGee SOUNDS THE HORN, a quick blare. She waves, beckoning him out and keeps going. McGee puts down the coffee cup, gets out, wearing only trunks, starts after her.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Tuckerman reels in. There is nothing on his hook. Looks down the beach. The two running figures come towards him, the distance making their progress seem very gradual. He casts again, his face strained and UNFOCUSSED.

Gretel comes to a point, with McGee still half a dozen strides behind her, where she swerves abruptly into the ocean. McGee stops, labouring hard, walks slowly in after her. Gretel plunges in, comes up and walks back out. McGee kneels down, lets the wave souse him.

They look at each other, grinning.

GRETEL

Morning.

McGEE

Morning.

She extends a hand, pulls him to his feet.

EXT. DECK - DAY

Gretel and McGee on the deck. McGee is looking at Tuckerman's scrapbook. Gretel is making a salad. She looks up the beach to where Tuckerman is still fishing.

McGee looks up from the book.

McGEE

Did you know Hubbard Lawless?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRETEL

I've met him half a dozen times maybe, but John never liked me being around too much. I was a little weird for that world.

McGEE

In what way weird?

GRETEL

Oh you know, vegetables, yoga, the I Ching, good vibes, anti-war, those old cliches.

She glances at him.

GRETEL

(continuing)

Hubbard Lawless was everything I don't like. I'm glad he's gone, wherever he's gone to. I'd just like John to let it go. He's a lovely man, my brother, and I miss him.

And she turns away quickly, suddenly emotional. Looks up the beach.

There is no sign of Tuckerman. Gretel goes to the telescope standing at the corner of the deck. Looks through it. Then she turns.

GRETEL

(continuing)

I'm going up the beach.

McGEE

I'll come with you.

Starting to get up, but she restrains him with the tips of her fingers on his bare shoulder.

GRETEL

I want to talk to him. I want to get him off this beach. Will you help me?

McGEE

I'll help you anyway I can.

GRETEL

Thanks. I appreciate it.

And she goes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGee tries to watch her go down onto the beach, starts running. He stands looking after her. Then he looks down at the scrapbook in his hand. There is a picture of Gretel and Tuckerman standing together, arms around each other, smiling. It looks like a lovely day where they are.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Gretel comes running up to the point. There is no sign of Tuckerman. A line of footsteps go back up towards the dunes, disappears in the soft sand. Gretel follows them, calls out his name.

EXT. DECK - DAY

McGee comes out of the house, having showered and dressed. He looks up the beach. Can see nothing. He goes to the telescope, looks through it.

TELESCOPE POV - BEACH

It PANS UP from the point to the crest of the dunes, BACK, THEN CHECKS, GOES BACK to examine something half hidden behind a dune of sand.

McGEE'S FACE

as he identifies it.

TELESCOPE POV

It is Gretel, lying face down, only her legs visible.

McGEE

turns and runs.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

McGee running up the beach. He is going flat out, his face stretched by more than effort.

ANGLE FROM ABOVE

where Gretel is lying. McGee coming, pounding up through the soft sand towards her. We hear the HISS OF A REEL and then McGee's voice:

McGEE (V.O.)

Gretel... Gretel...

BACK TO SCENE

McGee drops to his knees beside her. Turns her over, his face fearing the worst.

Gretel has a bad bruise on the side of her face, on front of her ear, and her mouth is bleeding. She is breathing, begins to groan.

McGEE

Gretel, what happened...

And then there is a SOUND that makes him look up, the thin slice of line released, and he sees Tuckerman on the crest of the dune, casting down at him and almost at the same moment the hook on the line bites on his back, pulls tight, causing him to cry out in agony.

Tuckerman reels him in up the slope. McGee has no choice but to go, the pain of the hook makes an alternative unthinkable.

McGee tries to hold the line, but it is too thin, cutting into his hand. He tries to get his knife out of his pocket, but when he manages, just as he is opening the blade, a savage jerk on the line causes him to drop it and go scrambling up towards his tormentor, trying to take the strain off the hook.

TUCKERMAN'S POV

We see McGee's approach.

BACK TO SCENE

TUCKERMAN

He's big, Hub, he's a whopper.
Don't give him slack, don't let
him turn on loose line, he'll
break it like a thread... he's
big, Hub, he's all of 200 pounds
and he's a fighter... bring him,
Hub, bring him to you...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And McGee is about 20 feet down the dune. He looks up and makes a sudden burst of speed up the slope, trying to close on Tuckerman. Tuckerman yells in a kind of manic delight:

TUCKERMAN

(continuing)

... He's a big one, he's coming in, keep the line tight, Hub, keep it tight and I'll gaffe him...

And he reaches out and picks up a shovel that is stuck in the sand behind him, and as McGee closes he swings on him. McGee lunges away from the blow and the hook bites again. Tuckerman swings again and this time McGee gets a hold of the shovel, starts to wrestle it away. Tuckerman panics, releases the shovel and tries to reel him in. McGee swings, hitting him across the elbow with the flat of the blade, breaking Tuckerman's arm and wringing a scream from him. Tuckerman drops the rod, goes staggering, then falls down the slope.

McGee stands on the crest of the dune looking after him. Then he looks down the landward side of the dune.

Below him, half buried in the sand, is a jeep. In it, sitting upright, a long time dead, are two figures. McGee doesn't have to go closer to know who he has found.

He turns to see their killer, one arm hanging useless by his side, running towards the point of land.

McGee starts down the slope after him. Then the jerk of the hook stops him. He takes the line, bites through it. Is about to go on when Gretel calls to him.

GRETEL

Travis...

He looks across. She is getting to her feet, unsteadily. He goes to her.

McGEE

Lawless and the girl... they're...

GRETEL

I know, I found him digging them out...

McGee looks after Tuckerman, who is at the end of the point.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE

He's hurt, I think his arm's
broken...

And she holds him back.

GRETEL

Let him go...

McGee looks at her, then back to where Tuckerman
plunges into the ocean, starts swimming a heavy, one-
armed crawl out into the deep water.

McGEE

He'll drown...

GRETEL

Let him go, Travis... please.

And at the look on her face, he relaxes, puts his arms
around her. They watch Tuckerman swim on out.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Meyer is with Hagerman. Hagerman looks exasperated.

HAGERMAN

So now McGee is shackled up with
Ms. Tuckerman and her brother is
missing.

MEYER

Sheriff, you've got Hubbard
Lawless and his unfortunate lady
friend and four hundred thousand
dollars in boodle, all compliments
of McGee. You don't really think
he's holding out on Tuckerman...

HAGERMAN

It makes the case hard to close.
We'll never know how it came down,
why he killed them...

MEYER

Bad. It came down bad. Love,
money, jealousy. Always makes
the same cake no matter how you
mix it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAGERMAN

Great. I'll put that in my report.
It'll go down real well with the
Commissioner.

Meyer gets up, preparing to leave.

MEYER

And don't forget to put in a good
word for Travis. It never hurts.

HAGERMAN

Do me a favor, Meyer, and persuade
that man to stick to sport fishing.
Elsewise, he'll get himself hurt.

INT. MCGEE'S LOFT - DAY

McGee is sitting at the kitchen table. He has a large
dressing on his back. He is playing with a three-prong
marlin hook, an ugly-looking piece of hardware. Van
Harder sits opposite him.

MCGEE

Now I know we agreed on a fee for
this whole business, John, but
fact is I don't want it...

VAN HARDER

A deal's a deal, Mr. McGee.

MCGEE

I already got paid by Mrs. Lawless.

VAN HARDER

That don't signify me not paying
you.

MCGEE

Well, thing is, John, I found
something, something real valuable.
A lady. So I owe you, and that's
the truth.

Van Harder looks at him a moment. Then he nods.

VAN HARDER

And I owe you. Anytime I can
help, you just call on me.

And they shake hands.

EXT. THE BUSTED FLUSH - DAY

Gretel is at the helm. The side of her face is still marked, discolored from the blow. The ketch is cruising offshore under mainsail. McGee is forward, tying down the foresail. He comes back down the ketch, grins at her.

McGEE

Hungry...

GRETEL

What have you got...

McGEE

Ever eat raw fish with lime squeezed over...

GRETEL

Sashimi...

McGEE

More or less. Put her on auto, come on down.

He goes below. Gretel sets the automatic pilot.

INT. CABIN - DAY

McGee slicing fish. Gretel opening beer. McGee looks over at her.

McGEE

How about sailing round the world with me?

She looks over, smiles, a little lopsidedly.

GRETEL

I've had worse offers. When do you leave?

McGEE

About forty thousand dollars from now. Boat needs a lot of deep sea gear.

They touch bottles, drink. She looks at him, suddenly shy, uncertain.

GRETEL

You sure you're not just taking pity on me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE

I'm taking pity on Travis McGee.
I think we'd do good together,
Gretel.

And she nods and puts her mouth up to his. They kiss.

A MONTAGE OF McGEE AND GRETEL

aboard the "Busted Flush," sailing north. We see them together sailing the boat, their mutual, coordinated competence; sitting together in the cockpit singing, two not especially tuneful but somehow harmonious voices. (They are singing the Emmylou song we heard earlier.) Finally we see the "Busted Flush," sailing along, the decks empty and on the track, the unmistakable SOUND OF THEIR LOVEMAKING in the form of the opening movement of the unaccompanied BACH CELLO SUITE NO. 1 (believe me, it's worth a thousand pictures). The sequence ends with them coming in under the Golden Gate Bridge into San Francisco Bay, their THEME SONG ON THE TRACK.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

McGee, Meyer and Gretel are having dinner.

They are on the dessert, pears Helene and a bottle of port. They look like three well-pleased people.

MEYER

My God, McGee, the woman can really,
actually, from scratch, cook.

McGee is looking extremely at ease, nods.

McGEE

Her accomplishments are many and
varied, Meyer, and not least of
them is that she sings worse than
I do...

Gretel smiles, pours herself some more port.

GRETEL

This port is good...

MEYER

Sings worse than you do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE

And doesn't care. We sing duets.

MEYER

I'll be gone soon. You can indulge to your heart's content then. Yes it is good, isn't it. So you're going to go back to work on your fat farm.

GRETEL

Yeah. I like it and the money's good, and now I've got something to save for I can make it last for six more months.

MEYER

I've heard of Bonnie Brae. Isn't it one of those places that's also pushing a spiritual message, or is more like Esalen... group encounter.

GRETEL

Well, yeah, there is some of that, but that's optional. We get some strange customers. Particularly the ones who come for the sleep cure.

MEYER

I'm fascinated by that. How long do they put them out for?

GRETEL

Two weeks is about the limit, but they wake them up twice a day, give them liquids, vitamins. They don't lose much weight while they're asleep, but when the cure is over, they go out and burn off pounds. People who've got some big project they've got to get on use it. It charges them up for a hundred percent effort.

MEYER

I think I'll try it one of these days... but for the moment I'm going to continue with the once-a-night routine...

He stands up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEYER

(continuing)

... Very great pleasure to meet
you. He didn't exaggerate anything.
Glad you came aboard.

GRETEL

So am I.

They smile at each other, genuinely pleased. Meyer
goes up on deck. McGee follows him.

EXT. BUSTED FLUSH - NIGHT

The city lies shrouded behind them, the FOG HORNS
PLAINT out in the bay. McGee walks Meyer to the plank.

MEYER

You did good, Travis. She's a
beauty.

McGEE

Yeah... I'm scared already. She's
too good for me.

Meyer gives him a look.

MEYER

Try to resist the temptation to
think everything into the toilet,
McGee. There's a good lad... See
you in the morning.

McGEE

I'm going to take her up to Bonnie
Brae. We should be ready to sail
by noon.

MEYER

Whatever...

And he touches McGee lightly, affectionately, on the
arm. Leaves.

INT. STATEROOM - NIGHT

In the functional spare stateroom McGee and Gretel are
in bed, sitting up. The FOG HORNS SOUND outside. They
lie together, at ease.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRETEL

Really think we could sail this
round the world?

McGEE

If the last half hour was anything
to go by, I think we could do just
about anything.

She smiles, turns.

GRETEL

Did the ship move for you?

He grins at her tender mockery. They kiss.

GRETEL

(continuing)

Tell me where we'll go...

McGEE

You will not find it down in any
map. True places never are...

And she is pierced through by him, by his devout,
loving eyes. A little shiver runs through her. She
reaches out to him.

GRETEL

What's happening, Travis?

McGEE

Love, I think.

And they kiss again, hungrily holding to each other.

EXT. BUSTED FLUSH - NIGHT

The city shrouded in fog, the melancholy THROB OF THE
HORNS and the impassioned dance of the CELLO. The
effect is of longing and passion and irreducible sad-
ness.

EXT. BONNIE BRAE - MORNING

A taxi pulls up in front of the main building, a kind
of mock-Tudor construction in spacious, kempt lawns.

McGee and Gretel get out. They go inside, McGee carry-
ing her suitcase.

INT. RECEPTION - DAY

The MANAGER is behind the reception desk. He looks up, sees Gretel.

MANAGER

Well thanks for small mercies.
I thought you'd never get back.

GRETEL

Sounding good for a raise. This
is Travis McGee. David Rooseman,
the Manager...

They exchange hellos.

GRETEL

(continuing)

... Is Mr. Hizer still with us?

MANAGER

Hizer. Yes, in cottage eleven.

GRETEL

Still Rip Van Winkling?

MANAGER

He's got three more days.

GRETEL

Okay, I'm just going to put my
stuff away, I'll only be fifteen
minutes.

And she goes, McGee with her.

MANAGER

You can take the ten o'clock run
then...

GRETEL

Can do...

EXT. GROUNDS - DAY

They walk along between the neat, spaced-out cottages.
Gretel heads for Number Eleven.

GRETEL

I want to have a look at this guy
in number eleven.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE

Okay...

GRETEL

Oh, I just saw him come in as I was leaving. Something about him, thought I knew him.

They reach Number Eleven. Gretel takes a quick look around. Opens the door, indicates to McGee to follow her. Goes inside. McGee, a little uncertain, steps in behind her.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

It is dim in the cottage with the drapes drawn. There is a figure asleep on a bed in the bedroom. Gretel goes over and looks at him.

He is a big man, heaped high under the sheet, with a round, almost babyish, face, slackened in sleep. Gretel looks down at him a moment, then nods.

GRETEL

Brother Titus, I'd recognize that beautiful blubber anywhere.

She turns away. To McGee she says:

GRETEL

(continuing)

... Yeah, that's him alright.

And they leave -- The CAMERA STAYS ON the sleeping man. Then, as the door closes, it PANS TO where, above the bed, there is a lamp fixture and attached to it, carefully concealed but VISIBLE TO THE CAMERA, is a small microphone.

EXT. GROUNDS - DAY

They are walking. He no longer has the suitcase.

GRETEL

I met him, oh six, seven years ago.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRETEL (CONT'D)

I was married to a man called Billy Danreuther, and his sister, Mitzy, got mixed up with some kind of Moonie sect, only they were called the Church of Something, began with an 'A.' Anyway, it was up north of here, up in the hills near Ukiah. Billy tried to get to see her. We went up but they wouldn't let her come down and they kept us standing at the gate till finally this guy, called himself Brother Titus, came down. He said Mitzy had given up her earthly family, changed her name. She was now Sister Aquila. Didn't want to know. He just stood on the other side of this fence and told us we could forget her. She belonged to the Church... Church of the Apocalypse.

McGEE

Church of the Apocalypse. What happened?

GRETEL

Oh, Billy threatened this and that but in the end we went away. He and I split up pretty soon afterwards, but as far as I know, he never did get to see her. I think maybe I'll ask him when he wakes up.

They come to the main building.

GRETEL

(continuing)

Okay, I got to go run some fatties into the ground.

McGEE

I'll get home in about four days.
I'll call you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRETEL

I'll be here saving my pennies for
sonar equipment and anti-barnacle
compound. And thinking about you.
I want to thank you...

He kisses her silent.

McGEE

You've thanked me. I love you.

GRETEL

I love you...

She smiles.

GRETEL

(continuing)

... It gets easier to say,
doesn't it.

And they smile at each other and she goes in and McGee
watches her a moment, then goes on his way.

EXT. BUSTED FLUSH - A SHORT MONTAGE - EVENING

conveying the time involved in sailing south. It ends
as McGee and Meyer are making port, coming into the
jetty. It is a fine, clear evening and the sun has
just set.

EXT. JETTY - EVENING

They have tied up and come ashore. Walk down the
jetty.

McGEE

You've got time to have a drink?

MEYER

Only one...

INT. LOFT - EVENING

McGee and Meyer come in.

CONTINUED:

McGee is carrying a package, wrapped in brown paper and tied purposefully with string. He sits down at the table. Meyer heads for the refrigerator, fetches out the gin bottle. McGee cuts the string, opens the package. In a heavy oak box is a sextant, old and gleaming. There's a note with it. 'Happy landfall. J.V.H.' McGee looks at it, openly moved.

McGEE

Well, look at that...

Meyer comes over with a drink, touches the instrument. The TELEPHONE RINGS. McGee gets up, drink in hand, goes to answer it.

McGEE

(continuing)

McGee here... I just got in...

And then, glass at his mouth, his expression changes. Meyer, examining the sextant, looks around, sees his face.

McGEE

(continuing)

... I'll be there...

And there is no doubt that it is urgent.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Gretel lies on the bed, barely recognizable as the woman we last saw. Her face is gaunt, a ghastly yellow pallor and she is barely conscious.

McGee is with her, stricken at her appearance. A NURSE in the room with them cautions him.

NURSE

Don't touch her, Mr. McGee. We really don't know if she is contagious or not...

But McGee has taken her hand, strokes her forehead. She is dry, hot, her lips are cracked and her breath fetid. McGee tries to see her in her dulled, lackluster eyes.

McGEE

Oh, my darling girl, what is it.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A DOCTOR is talking to Meyer.

DOCTOR

She was brought in two days ago, 56 hours to be exact. She has deteriorated drastically in that time, without remission.

MEYER

You don't know what is wrong.

DOCTOR

The primary symptoms are high temperature, attendant dehydration, diarrhea, nausea and, now, internal bleeding and falling blood pressure. She's only intermittently conscious and her memory is affected. She doesn't know her name or where she is.

MEYER

Who brought her in?

DOCTOR

Staff from the place she works, the Bonnie Brae Health Resort. She complained of feeling bad in the morning and later in the day she fainted. We have, and still are, running tests on everything we can think of. Nothing identifiable.

MEYER

Is she going to die?

The Doctor pauses, then --

DOCTOR

Yes, I think she is.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

McGee is still with her. She looks dreadful. Her face is sunken and her eyes roll up and back. McGee is sponging her face and throat, talking to her. He looks terribly strained himself.

McGEE

Talk to me. Talk to me, Gretel.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE (CONT'D)

Tell me what's happening. What
is this, how can this be...

And suddenly she is looking at him, an interstice of
consciousness, recognizing him. Her lips move. He
bends to her, flinching at the stench.

GRETEL

McGee...

McGEE

Yes.

GRETEL

I woke the beast...

Her voice faint, cracked, awful sounding and it doesn't
register for a moment, then:

McGEE

Woke who... What do you mean...

She stares up at him, beginning to cloud over.

McGEE

(continuing)

... Speak to me... Gretel.

GRETEL

Brother Titus...

And behind the door opens and the Doctor comes in.
McGee is trying to hold Gretel back, prevent her slip-
ping back into her fevered cave.

DOCTOR

We have to take Mrs. Danreuther
up for some tests, Mr. McGee...

McGee looks at him, almost deranged.

McGEE

Save her, do you hear me. Save
her.

And they are wheeling in a trolley and the nurses are
moving her off the bed.

DOCTOR

We are doing everything we can,
Mr. McGee.

And they wheel her out, leaving only a large discolored
patch on the sheet. McGee stands, stricken.

EXT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

McGee and Meyer come out into the cool morning light. Meyer has McGee's arm, is almost supporting him. McGee has been crying; he looks aged, glazed. Meyer hails a cab. They get in.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Meyer sits watching McGee who is lying on the bed. McGee stares in front of him, unblinking.

MEYER

They had no idea what it was. It was virulent, unremitting. She was strong, healthy, but it just ate her up.

McGEE

Shut up.

Meyer pays no attention, goes on, calmly.

MEYER

She's dead, Travis. Something came along and killed her. That's the fact that you have to let in.

McGEE

Not something. Someone.

Meyer looks at him, concern showing.

MEYER

What does that mean?

McGEE

She only spoke to me once in all that time. She said, 'I woke the beast,' and then she said, 'Brother Titus.'

Meyer takes a deep breath. McGee stares at him.

McGEE

(continuing)

... She said she woke the beast.

MEYER

That is a very hallucinatory kind of remark, Travis. From what I can gather Gretel was not lucid for the last 24 hours of her life...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE

How goddam lucid do you need it to be. She named him, Brother Titus, she said his name.

MEYER

In the condition she was in...

But McGee leaps up, raging.

McGEE

The condition she was in was dying. She didn't say 'Help me' or 'I'm frightened' or 'I love you' or 'Am I going to be all right'?... She said...

MEYER

I know what she said. McGee, you have to realize that to deal with your pain you are inventing a culprit. It's an automatic transference of...

McGee is standing over him, almost shouting.

McGEE

I don't want to hear that psychoanalytic crap. I know what I know... Get out, do you hear me. Out...

Meyer shrugs, gets up and goes to the door.

MEYER

All right, Travis. I'll be back.

And he leaves the room. McGee stares after him a minute and then, seized by a spasm of grief, he leans heavily against the door and a low, tremble groan breaks from him.

EXT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Meyer stands listening, his face twisted in empathy. After a long painful moment, he walks away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

McGee is working out savagely, hoisting himself up and down in a sustained series of press-ups. When his arms give out he collapses, turns over immediately and begins sit-ups.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Meyer and the Doctor.

DOCTOR

The autopsy revealed massive deterioration of the pancreas and total renal failure. It identified no positive cause.

MEYER

What natural causes have similar symptoms?

DOCTOR

A number of things have some of these factors; Legionnaire's Disease, so called, would give you the fever, dehydration and, to some extent, the pancreas symptoms, but not the internal bleeding and renal collapse.

MEYER

What about toxic shock?

DOCTOR

This would be the most pronounced pathological instance of it I ever heard of. This was a big, strong, healthy woman the day before, from what I understand.

MEYER

What if, by toxic shock, I meant the shock to the system occasioned by the presence of an extremely toxic substance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Doctor looks at him, his manner assuming a patina of professional caution.

DOCTOR

Well, in my opinion...

Meyer puts a hand on his arm.

MEYER

I can see litigation reflexes, Doctor. They are not necessary. Wouldn't you say that however it got there, a poisonous entity destroyed Gretel Danreuther's life support system?

DOCTOR

A poisonous entity... That is a kind of overall term, Mr...

MEYER

Doctor Meyer...

DOCTOR

Oh, Doctor Meyer.

MEYER

Don't worry. My field of ignorance is different from yours. Thanks for your help.

And he goes, leaving the Doctor standing there.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

McGee stands in the bathroom under the shower, his face upraised to the beating of the water. It is cold and his face and body are braced against it. After a moment he turns it off. Stands immobile. Slowly a low moan seeps out of him and he leans his head against the tiled wall.

EXT. BONNIE BRAE HEALTH FARM - DAY

Meyer drives up to the building, a low ranch-style complex in spacious grounds.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

McGee in front of the mirror. He is looking at himself with a dark, devouring stare. He starts to shave his moustache off.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Meyer is with the HEALTH FARM MANAGER who is looking slightly nervous under the probing he is being exposed to.

MANAGER

Now look, Dr. Meyer, we are terribly, terribly sorry about Gretel, but for you to say that we are responsible...

MEYER

Nobody is holding you responsible. It's really a question of the facility being quarantined...

MANAGER

Quarantined... for how long.

MEYER

As long as it takes to determine whether or not what we have here is Legionnaire's Disease.

And panic flashes on the Manager's face.

MANAGER

Legionnaire's Disease...

MEYER

I believe you have a number of people here taking what is commonly called the sleep cure.

MANAGER

Well, we have two...

MEYER

I'd like a chance to examine them first. You have medical records for them, I presume.

MANAGER

Yes, yes, of course...

He turns to a filing cabinet.

MEYER

Anyone who was taking the sleep cure while Ms. Danreuther was here who has now left?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANAGER

Mr. Hizer has gone. He left the day after Gretel was taken ill.

MEYER

We may need to follow him up. You have an address?

The Manager turns with two folders in his hand.

MANAGER

I'm afraid Mr. Hizer left the country. He was on his way to Europe. Here are the folders on the others.

MEYER

Can I see Mr. Hizer's folder as well, please...

Already beginning to scan the ones he has been given. The Manager is completely intimidated by the performance. Goes back to the filing cabinet.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Clean shaven, McGee is cutting his own hair, cropping it down to a brutal marine crew cut. When he has finished he takes an old Florida drivers license out of his pocket, props it up on the shelf. In it a crew cut McGee wearing rimless glasses and bearing the name, Eugene Morton Fillmore, stares back.

McGee fishes out a pair of wire-rimmed glasses, puts them on. Looks at himself in the mirror.

Behind him the door opens and Meyer comes into the bathroom. Sees McGee, his face momentarily expresses surprise.

MEYER

Looks like samurai time...

McGee looks round at him. There is something chilling in his face now, a kind of single-focus, a hint of madness.

INT. CAR - DAY

Meyer is driving. McGee sits against the door, staring down the road.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEYER

Markov was a Bulgarian who was killed in London by, probably by the KGB. Somebody stuck him in the leg with the end of an umbrella. On the umbrella was a toxic substance that caused him to undergo exactly the same symptoms as Gretel...

McGEE

The KGB... What would Gretel have to do with the KGB?

MEYER

Nothing probably. It's one of those very exotic murder systems that's filtered out into the marketplace. Hizer, or Brother Titus, left very little information behind him but he was there when Gretel got back and he left when she went into hospital. Claimed he was going to Europe.

McGEE

He's up in these hills. I know it.

MEYER

Would you like to tell me how you know it, Travis?

He hits himself in the stomach making Meyer wince.

McGEE

I know it in here. I know this is bad and I know it's here and I know I'm going to find it.

MEYER

What do you want me to do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE

Nothing. I'm going down a hole.
Don't know when I'll be up.
I'll call in if I need help. You
can let me out here...

Meyer looks at the empty stretch of road they are on.

MEYER

Here... Why here?

McGEE

Why not? Pull over.

Meyer pulls over, stops. He looks at McGee who is
hauling his duffel bag out of the back. His face is
concerned.

MEYER

... There has to be more to this
than revenge. Revenge isn't
going to do anything for you or
for her.

McGee stares at him. There is torment in his eyes.

McGEE

... She was a lovely being, Meyer,
and they wasted her life. I don't
know who 'they' are yet but I'm
going to find out.

Meyer nods, hearing the certainty in McGee's voice.
He puts out his hand. They shake.

MEYER

You look out now. Hear me.

And McGee nods and then gets out, slings his duffel and
starts walking. Meyer drives on. McGee makes no
sign, just tramps on down the road, duffel over one
shoulder. Meyer watches him in the rearview mirror.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

McGee is being questioned by a HIGHWAY PATROLMAN who has his ID in his hand, a driver's license, Marine discharge papers, a social security card, a couple of photographs. The contents of his duffel are spread on the top of the hood.

PATROLMAN

So where you say you're headed?

McGEE

Lookin' for some kind religious bunch that hang out up in these hills. Church of the Apocalypse or something....

The Patrolman looks at him dubiously, gives him his documents back.

PATROLMAN

You don't look the religious type.

McGEE

My daughter she run off when I was in the service. Wife don't give a damn, she's glad t'git rid of her. So I'm lookin', heard tell from a friend of hers she'd took up with some sect or other.

PATROLMAN

Well there's a few in these parts. What did you call this one?

McGEE

Church of the...

He fishes out a piece of paper and his glasses, reads.

McGEE

(continuing)

Apo-cal-ypse...

The Patrolman nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PATROLMAN

Yeah, they were around. Had a spread up in the hills in back of Ukiah. Lot of land. Beats me where they get the bucks.

McGEE

Got girls like my Linda out beggin' for it. Can I go?

PATROLMAN

Sure...

McGee starts to gather up his belongings watched by the Patrolman.

PATROLMAN

(continuing)

... you were in 'Nam.

McGee grunts an affirmative.

PATROLMAN

(continuing)

Reason I joined the Highway Patrol was so I wouldn't have to go.

McGee looks at him, hoists his duffel.

McGEE

We wouldn't've won even if you'd showed up. The smart money was always on the gooks.

And he starts off down the road.

PATROLMAN

Hope you find your daughter.

McGEE

I will...

Without looking round.

EXT. BACK ROADS - DAY

McGee comes walking up to a mesh and tubular gate. There is an eight-foot mesh fence stretching up and down the roadside as far as the eye can see. The country is rugged rolling hills, heavy with scrub oak and laced with small, steep-sided ravines.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The gate has a sign, red on white. Church of the Apocalypse. Private Property. No Trespassing.

There is no one in sight, no buildings. A track runs away from the gate into the hills. McGee stands a moment then he walks back up the road to where a tree grows beside the fence. He throws his duffel over and starts to climb the tree.

EXT. DIRT TRACK - DAY

McGee comes walking up the track. The road is out of sight, and the fence. He has a view across a jumble of hills. There is nothing else in sight. He walks on to the best vantage spot and sets down his duffel, scans the terrain. He can make out the dirt road winding through the hills. McGee starts out across country, moving fast but keeping undercover. SHOTS of him moving, keeping the road in sight but remaining concealed.

EXT. GROUP OF BUILDINGS - DAY

McGee is above a group of buildings, a Quanset hut, a mobile home up on concrete blocks and several small wooden sheds.

There are a number of people on the open ground between the huts. Three men and two women. They are all dressed in fatigues and are carrying suitcases. They seem to be going through some kind of a drill. They walk side by side in pairs, the other man, a bulky black calls out an order and they form a small, shoulder to shoulder, quadrangle, opening their cases and bringing out automatic weapons which they proceed to mock fire while performing a slow revolving retreat to a point where another order causes them to replace their weapons and run to where the black stands, facing them.

It is all at some distance, the faces are indistinct but the drill is unmistakable. McGee, hunched down behind a tree trunk watches. He is shocked at the voice behind him.

NICK

Put your hands around that tree,
mother...

And the muzzle of an automatic rifle is pushed against the back of his head. Slowly McGee reaches out, embraces the tree.

EXT. TREE - DAY

McGee is handcuffed around the tree, his face hard up against the trunk. From this position he has a limited POV. Into it, moving in a slow, menacing circle are six people, four men and two women, all in fatigues, carrying weapons and all looking at him with a bleak malevolence. For the most part the dialogue is OFF CAMERA as they discuss what to do with him.

CHUCK

Let's waste him now...

And there is the metallic shuffle of a round being jacked home.

AQUILA

We should wait for Brother Titus.

NICK

Waste him now'n we don't have to tell him.

VINCENT

That ain't smart.

CHUCK

So what we gonna do with him.

McGEE

Heh now, fellas, wait on. I'm just lookin' for my daughter, Linda Fillmore.

VINCENT

Shut your mouth.

SAMMY

Yeah, waste him. I don't want somebody around right now, it's distracting...

And somebody lays a muzzle behind McGee's ear.

AQUILA

Brother Titus may want to question him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NENA

I'll question him. What do you want him to tell you.

VINCENT

Okay, shut up and take him down to the shed...

There is a chorus of disapproval from the three men. Vincent, in McGee's vision, swings 'round.

VINCENT

(continuing)

... Can it, take him down.

He looks at McGee, his face black and without compassion.

VINCENT

(continuing)

... You hear this. One problem you cause that'll be one too many. You hear me.

McGee nods as best he can.

EXT. HUTS - DAY

The six of them come down with McGee. They have handcuffed his ankle to his wrist and he has to walk bent over, hobble hopping among them. They lead him to a small wooden hut, open the door and push him in.

INT. HUT - DAY

McGee lies on the floor. Slowly he gets himself up. There is an old, very dirty mattress in a corner. He crawls over, sits on it, his back to the wall, begins doing deep breathing exercises to calm his pounding heart.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HUT - NIGHT

McGee is in the same position. FOOTSTEPS approach, the door opens and Nena stands there. In one hand she has a Dixie full of something hot, in the other an automatic pistol. She watches McGee carefully, bends down, puts the Dixie on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE

Heh now, sister, what is all this.

NENA

I'm not your sister..

And she goes.

McGee goes over, picks up the Dixie, goes back to his corner. There is no spoon. He starts to drink down the stew but it is too hot and he puts it down, waits for it to cool.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HUT - MORNING

McGee is asleep in the corner. He wakes to the SOUND OF FEET outside, SHOUTED WORDS OF COMMAND. He gets up, stiff and sore, goes to the small, meshed-over window. He can glimpse at an oblique angle the same drill as he witnessed before he was captured. He watches a minute and then he starts to kick on the wall, shouting out.

With moments, the door opens and Vincent and Sammy are there, weapons in hand.

McGEE

What's going on here, how come
you got me chained up this way...

Vincent kicks his unhandcuffed leg out from under him.

VINCENT

Another word, one more word, any
word, anytime, and you're terminal.

And McGee looks up at him, seeing clearly he means it.

VINCENT

(continuing)

You don't like being chained up.
We'll give you some exercise.
Only no talking. Got that.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

All six of them are there and McGee. Vincent has all the weapons.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT

Okay, only one weapon is loaded.
The rest are blanks...

(to McGee)

... You better hide good and you
better be lucky as well. Not
that five to one aren't good
odds. Now get moving.

And McGee after a pause sets off down into the ravine. Vincent hands out the weapons. They all look at them wondering if they have the loaded one. It is quite clear that Sammy, Chuck and Nick hope they do. Aquila's face registers a controlled, disguised concern.

A sequences of McGee running and hiding from the others who spread out to hunt him. It is hard, cruel country and McGee is run ragged as he tries to keep out of range. Finally he is cornered by Sammy who unloads on him, McGee diving frantically for cover but Sammy's weapon only contains blanks. One after the other they get in shots. It is Nena who has the loaded gun. She FIRES at him as he breaks cover to try and cross a ridge. With the earth exploding around him, he dives behind a rock, he's there gasping for air, fear plain in his face.

EXT. HUTS - DAY

The six coming back, McGee with them. He is so exhausted there is no need to handcuff him. He is led to his hut, locked in.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

McGee sprawled in the corner. The door opens. It is Aquila with his food. He sits up, aching and sore. She puts the food down, backs up. Stands a minute, watching him. McGee looks at her.

McGEE

Don't suppose you know my daughter.
Big girl, sandy hair, gap in her
teeth at the front. Linda Fillmore.

AQUILA

If she's with the church she won't
be called Linda anymore and chances
are she won't want to see you --
You did well today.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE
You mean I was lucky.

AQUILA
That too...

McGEE
When does Brother Thomas get
here.

AQUILA
Brother Titus. Soon. I have
to go.

McGEE
What's your name.

AQUILA
Sister Aquila...

And she goes, closing the door. McGee stares after
her, stricken at her name, his face drawn and darkened
by beard and strain.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Meyer is reviewing back issues of the New York Times
on a microfilm screen. We see the subject he is
studying is articles on the Church of the Apocalypse.

A library assistant comes up and puts down another
collection of possible sources. Meyer looks up,
abstracted. Sees her.

MEYER
Thank you...

Goes back to his task.

INT. TELEPHONE BOOTH - DAY

Meyer in the hallway of the library.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEYER

I'm only asking you to run a check, Sheriff. Never know what you'll turn up that interests you. I'll be by tomorrow to look it over.

INTERCUT WITH:

HAGERMAN

on the other end.

HAGERMAN

Where is McGee. What's he got himself into.

MEYER (V.O.)

It has to do with the girl he met. John Tuckerman's sister. She died in, well very odd circumstances.

Hagerman sits a moment.

HAGERMAN

He brought those two a whole bunch of luck didn't he.

Meyer, reacting.

HAGERMAN (V.O.)

Okay, I'll run it. Church of the Apocalypse. Robert Nizer, see what we bring in.

MEYER

Thanks. Appreciate it.

And he puts the phone down, his face sombre.

EXT. THE HUTS - EVENING

A dark Econoline van comes slowly up to the huts. Stops outside the trailer. The six of them are there. The man who gets out we recognize as BROTHER TITUS. He goes into the trailer after meeting the group.

INTERIOR HUT - NIGHT

McGee sits in the corner. He looks rough, a little wild in the eye. FOOTSTEPS come towards the hut. He gathers himself together, remaining against the wall, but coiled now.

The door opens. It is Aquila. She is carrying a basin and she has a towel over her arm. Something slackens in McGee when he sees her. She steps in the hut, closes the door behind her.

AQUILA

You can clean up. You're going to see Brother Titus.

She puts the basin down in front of him. Hands him soap and a razor. McGee starts to wash his face. She watches him. After a moment she says:

AQUILA

(continuing)

Don't try and fool him. He knows things you think are secret. He is very close to Mother Sophia.

McGEE

Who's she?

AQUILA

She is the head of the Church.

McGEE

Church with a woman leader. That's pretty liberated.

AQUILA

She is more than a woman. She is an ascended Being.

McGee grunts, starts to shave. Looks at her:

McGEE

You ever killed anybody?

AQUILA

No... But I can. I have been trained. All that is needed is the will...

McGEE

That's what you think till you get to look in their eyes...

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Brother Titus is listening to their conversation on a small amplifier box. Vincent is with him.

McGEE (V.O.)

... Still didn't look to me like you had to aim too much in that little drill you were doing, where the four of you open up at one time. Where was that going to happen.

AQUILA (V.O.)

It is necessary. Mother Sophia explained it. It will be an act of Holy Terror against this corrupt, exploitationist society.

Brother Titus TURNS DOWN the VOLUME. The conversation is being recorded. He looks at Vincent.

BROTHER TITUS

We'll have to check Eugene Fillmore out before we know just what is the best thing to do with him.

VINCENT

I'm more worried about Sister Aquila than him. I don't think she has what it takes.

BROTHER TITUS

She is a protege of Mother Sophia's.

VINCENT

I know she is, but the others aren't happy about her...

Brother Titus nods, reaches out, TURNS UP the VOLUME again.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

McGee is shaved and clean. He sits against the wall. Aquila is sitting opposite.

AQUILA

I can stay with you tonight if you want.

McGEE

How come a girl like you is doing this sort of thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AQUILA

Obedience is everything. Blessed are the obedient. Do you want me to stay? I have no disease...

McGee looks at her crouched there, her pale intense face. He opens his arms and she comes over and sits down with him. He holds her, more like a father than a lover.

McGEE

Why did you come to me -- won't this get you in trouble?

AQUILA

I don't like the others. They're all... they all want to kill.

McGEE

Why are you with them? Isn't there something else you can do in the Church?

AQUILA

Mother Sophia wants me to prove that I have the will to act. I will return to her after this...

McGEE

What is 'this'...

AQUILA

I can't tell you...

McGEE

It's in a crowd, isn't it...

She puts her head against his chest.

McGEE

(continuing)

... There's people all around. You fire in all directions, you kill a lot of people. It's in a shopping mall...

She holds herself still against him. He goes on.

McGEE

(continuing)

... a busy street... a terminal...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And she tightens. He senses it.

McGEE
(continuing)
... an airline terminal.

And again she responds.

McGEE
(continuing)
... An airline terminal. That'll
do it, no mistake.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Brother Titus is alone. He sits, listening to the
BROADCAST.

AQUILA (V.O.)
But you can't understand any of
this if you don't know Mother
Sophia. She could explain it
so it would all make sense.

McGEE (V.O.)
How do I get to meet her.

AQUILA (V.O.)
I don't know when she will next
appear. I just know that when
she does it will be the most
wonderful day of my life.

Brother Titus switches off, sits back, deliberates.

EXT. THE HUTS - MORNING

Vincent brings McGee across to the trailer. He knocks
on the door, then opens it and McGee goes in, Vincent
behind him.

INT. TRAILER - MORNING

Brother Titus turns to look at him. For a moment it
almost seems as if he might know McGee. Then he
comes, a big, big man but moving lightly, almost
elegantly, across.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROTHER TITUS

Eugene. You've had an enforced stay among us. How are you feeling.

McGee shrugs.

McGEE

I just come lookin' for my daughter, Linda.

BROTHER TITUS

Well, she's not here, you can see that. Now what are we to do with you. I mean, you must realize that what we're doing here is not to be broadcast.

McGEE

I don't care what you're doin'. Robbin' a bank by the looks of it.

BROTHER TITUS

No, we are planning to kill as many people as we can in Los Angeles International Airport...

McGee looks at him, simulating shocked astonishment.

BROTHER TITUS

(continuing)

... Let me explain this to you. Listen carefully, for your life, which is of no concern to me, is in great danger. We are living in remarkable times. As the century draws to its close, great catastrophes are imminent. These catastrophes are known by a name, the Apocalypse. It is the task of our Church to aid in the coming of this event. The act we are planning is the first of a great many such instances of Holy Terror. Do you understand me.

McGEE

Well, I get your drift. You're gonna stir things up.

BROTHER TITUS

Exactly. Your choice is to help us or to be killed here and now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGee looks at him and then at Vincent.

McGEE

That's my choice. Easy enough
so far.

BROTHER TITUS

Your choices with us will always
be that simple. There is only
one condition to be met. To
gain a place you must first
create a place...

He looks at Vincent.

BROTHER TITUS

(continuing)

... Brother Vincent, who is your
weakest link.

VINCENT

Sister Aquila, Brother Titus.

Brother Titus looks at McGee.

BROTHER TITUS

Very well. You can have Sister
Aquila's place if you can kill
her.

And we get McGee's reaction.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Everyone is there except Brother Titus. Aquila is
frightened but is keeping a grip on herself. Vincent
points down to a wooded gully.

VINCENT

One of you take the top, the other
the bottom. When I blow the whistle
you start. If either of you break
cover we get to shoot. Clear...

McGee and Aquila watch each other, nod.

VINCENT

(continuing)

Okay, choose your weapons. Left
hand or right. You first, Sister.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Aquila looks at him, then back to McGee.

AQUILA

Left.

Vincent brings his hand from behind his back. It contains a fragmentation grenade. He lobbs it to her.

VINCENT

This is yours, Eugene...

And he reveals a stiletto in an ankle case. Throws it over. McGee catches it.

VINCENT

(continuing)

... You got fifteen minutes.
After that we come looking. Got
it. Which end of the gully do
you want, Eugene?

McGee glances down, points downhill. Vincent jerks his head and with one last glance at Aquila he is off down the slope. Aquila goes in the opposite direction.

EXT. GULLY - DAY

McGee reaches cover and immediately starts up the gully, crossing it and going up the other side. He goes as fast as he can for a time and then stops, finds a place of concealment, gets down.

EXT. GULLY - DAY

Aquila comes down into the gully. She has the grenade in her right hand. She crouches a moment and then starts looking around, moving down the slope, her left forefinger hooked in the grenade pin.

EXT. GULLY - DAY

McGee waits and watches. After a moment he sees Aquila coming forward, scrutinizing every spot of cover. He moves back, stays down. Aquila comes on, getting closer and closer. She passes McGee's hiding place some ten yards away, going on down the gully.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGee rises slowly from his hiding place, starts to stalk her. In one hand he has the stiletto, in the other a rock. He is slowly gaining on her when he breaks a twig underfoot. Aquila turns at once, sees him. They look at each other for a second. Aquila's hand tightens and she prepares to pull the pin. McGee looking at her from a distance of fifteen yards or so.

McGEE

Mitzy... Mitzy Danreuther...

And the shock on Aquila's face tells him he is right. She pulls the pin from the grenade, stands there, with the bomb in her hand. McGee throws himself to the ground.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

The others, watching, hear and see the EXPLOSION. There is a little buzz among them, mainly of relief. Only Vincent shows no response.

CHUCK

All right, Aquila.

NENA

She got him...

And then up from the gully comes McGee. Vincent looks at them.

VINCENT

Okay, now we got one that's expendable.

INT. QUANSET HUT - DAY

The six of them are in the hut. They are getting ready to move out. They all act towards McGee now with cordiality as though they were old time buddies. McGee sits at the table while the others pack up their gear. Vincent comes over, sits with him.

VINCENT

You were in 'Nam...

McGEE

Two tours. I got a purple heart in the butt.

VINCENT

What's that recent one on your back?

McGEE

Bar fight. Can't quit old habits. Where did you guys learn your stuff?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT

Brother Charles there, he was with the IRA for three years. Sammy and Nick were trained by the Bader Meinhof group. Nena is PLO.

McGEE

And you?

VINCENT

I'm a local boy. I was a Panther and then I joined the SLA till I figured what chickenshits they were. I'm looking to see some movement. I think I'm with the right people. Now you are strictly on probation, Eugene. I'll be watching you and so will the others. You do good and things will go real smooth for you. Elsewise it's gonna be sudden dark. Know what I mean.

And McGee only nods. Brother Titus comes in. They all turn to him.

BROTHER TITUS

All right. It's time to go.

And they file out, carrying their duffel.

EXT. QUANSET HUT - DAY

They all get into the van. Then Brother Titus gets in and they drive away.

INT. VAN - DAY

Brother Titus is driving. The others are seated in the bench seats. Titus hands Vincent an envelope.

BROTHER TITUS

Each of you will take one capsule.
Each of you will be responsible
for making sure your neighbor
swallows them.

Vincent passes them out, ostentatiously swallowing his own and paying special attention to McGee until his is downed. They all settle back in their seats.

Brother Titus searches in the glove compartment until he finds a CASSETTE. He puts it in. The interior of the van is filled with a SOUND pitched somewhere between a heartbeat and the ocean.

Slowly the group begins to sink into a kind of comatose, semi-consciousness.

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME SCENE (LATER)

They are all sprawled in their seats. The SOUND DIES AWAY and a Woman's Voice is heard, a deep, rich reassuring voice.

MOTHER SOPHIA (V.O.)

Listen my children. I have these words to say. They are not my words but the words that are written. Many are called but few are chosen. You are among that few... You are chosen and from you will come great deeds. The signs are clear, the time is now, the planet has come to the end of its cycle and rebirth is at hand. Just as you must be reborn, so must this Earth. It will be a painful rebirth for humans are wedded to pain. But beyond pain lies peace and it is to that peace all our acts are dedicated. I love you. Each and every one of you, and I love those who must die and so must you. Out of all of our agonies will come that peace that passeth all understanding.

And the CAMERA PANS on the receptive, drugged faces.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

The van is driving down Interstate 5. It is before the sun has risen and the air is grey from recent rain. There is a strange, other worldly sense, the long swath of road, the pylons marching two by two, great iron men and maids.

INT. VAN - MORNING

In the interior everyone is still asleep. The van drones on. McGee is lying on his back. A spasm of anxiety ripples across his face. We catch a SUBLIMINAL GLIMPSE of his dream. In silence we see the people in an airline terminal being cut down by gunfire, men, women, children, glass shattering, blood, panic. McGee awakens, staring at the ceiling, shocked, only half aware of where he is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He sits up. The great bulk of Brother Titus is there at the wheel. He sees McGee.

BROTHER TITUS

Good morning, Brother Eugene... I always like to see who is first awake.

McGee gets to his feet, moves through the bodies, sits in the passenger seat. He is still half in the dream state. He looks out of the window. The pylons stand against the skyline on one side, on the other a vast stockyard sprawls, thick with beasts.

BROTHER TITUS

(continuing)

Look there, Brother Eugene. There is something that we accept without thought. A great concentration camp for beasts. Are we not such hypocrites that we can have such a thing in plain sight and never see it.

McGee looks at the stockyards. Then away to the other side to the pylons. They are like men and women, a tall procession of stately walkers. He sees them suddenly, clearly and his eye focuses, pulling them into closeup, and he sees himself and Gretel, walking side by side in a flash cut. The din of beasts in panic fills his mind, the tumult of his emotions.

BROTHER TITUS

(continuing)

I have a feeling about you, Brother Eugene...

McGee is staring at the pylons. He turns to Brother Titus.

BROTHER TITUS

(continuing)

... I have a feeling you were sent to us.

Rising above the stockyards a rainbow arches from earth to heaven. McGee sees it and something snaps in him.

McGEE

You killed my woman. Didn't you? She saw you when you were taking the sleep cure and you killed her. Isn't that true?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And Brother Titus stares at him, a flash of panic in his eyes. He reaches down and presses a button and an ALARM GOES OFF in the truck. McGee wrenches the wheel over and the van lurches off the highway and across the median as the others come awake.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

The van crossing the road and continuing on over the northbound lanes, across the verge and down into the stockyard fence.

INT. VAN - MORNING

McGee has the wheel hard over and Brother Titus is beating him about the head and shoulders, screaming orders to his scrambled disciples in the back.

BROTHER TITUS

Waste this mother... take him out.

Vincent has hauled a machine pistol out of a recess when the van ploughs into the fence and goes over on its side.

Brother Titus is flung against the window with a sickening impact.

EXT. STOCKYARD - MORNING

The van over on its side. McGee, bleeding from a cut on his forehead, clambers out of the door, leaps down in front of the van.

Brother Titus is crumpled against the windscreen. Even through its opaque, shattered surface it is clear that he is dead. A BURST OF FIRING from inside the van EXPLODES the windscreen outward.

McGee runs through the broken fence into the stockyard where the animals startled by the crash and now the gunfire are milling about in panic.

McGee runs among them as Vincent and then Sammy and Chuck crawl out of the van. They all have weapons.

They see him, give chase.

EXT. STOCKYARD - MORNING

McGee among the cattle, avoiding being crushed as he tries to escape his pursuers. They come after him, FIRING at any chance they get. The cattle become panic-stricken, their fear spreading throughout the herd.

McGee narrowly avoids being trampled as he doubles around to come up behind Sammy.

He drives into him from behind, sending him flying. Before he can rise again he is run down by a surge of crazed animals.

McGee retrieves his weapon, a lightweight submachine gun. He rolls out of the way of more charging cattle. Through the dust and the milling shapes he can see the legs of one of his pursuers. He moves towards them. Suddenly a space opens up. Chuck sees him but a fraction too late. The BURST OF FIRE sends him sprawling.

Almost at once McGee is knocked down, losing a grip of the weapon.

He lies, stunned for a moment, cattle churning around him. When he looks up Vincent has spotted him and is trying to get to him through the press. McGee gets himself up and when the opportunity presents itself he lunges forward but Vincent has the drop on him and is about to shoot when he is bumped from behind and comes toppling down, almost on top of McGee.

They fight viciously on the ground and Vincent slowly gets the upper hand, strangling McGee beneath him. But as McGee is losing consciousness and Vincent's face is fading and receding above him the pressure is released and Vincent falls over, screaming and holding his side where he has been speared by a horn.

McGee staggers to his feet, his vision obscured by blood. He stands among the bellowing beasts and in his sight the rainbow is stained bloody red. He screams his anguish and anger and release.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A cluster of police cars, ambulances and parked sight-seers. McGee is sat in a police car, holding a pad to the cut on his forehead. The POLICE RADIO BLATS away. Hagerman comes through the crowd, is directed to where McGee is, comes up, looks in. McGee looks up at him, recognizing him in some dim, disassociated way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAGERMAN

You're causing a lot of trouble,
Travis. Want to tell me about
it.

McGee looks at him, shrugs. Hagerman holds the door
open for him. McGee gets out.

They walk through the crowd, away from them, up onto
a slight eminence looking over the stockyards.
Hagerman looks at him curiously.

HAGERMAN

(continuing)

Meyer got me to run a trace on
this Church of the Apocalypse you
got mixed up with. They've quite
an operation...

McGee says nothing, only stands and stares out across
the sea of beasts. Hagerman grows impatient.

HAGERMAN

(continuing)

So spit it out, McGee. What's
going on.

McGee looks at him, his face bleak.

McGEE

That's what's going on, Sheriff.

And he jerks his head towards the stockyards. Hagerman
looks, sees only the cattle, nothing more, no symbol,
no metaphor. McGee sees his incomprehension.

McGEE

(continuing)

Think maybe one day we'll see what
murderous beasts we are.

And Hagerman has no response and McGee looks away
from him, his face remote, locked in.

EXT. JETTY - MORNING

McGee comes down the jetty. Meyer is with him. On the
"Busted Flush" Glad is just finishing her chores.

MEYER

You sure you don't want me along.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McGEE

I'll be fine. Be back in a couple of days. Just going to cruise around out there, let things settle down... thing of it is, I still can't accept that she's dead.

MEYER

You did more than anybody could have hoped, Travis. You avenged her. You saved a lot of innocent lives.

McGee looks at him, his face still taut with pain.

McGEE

I got a glimpse of the darkness, Meyer. It took Gretel's dying to show it to me. I never really understood what it was I did before, what it was I should do or what I hoped for...

They look at each other and suddenly they embrace, hugging each other close. Glad comes off the boat with her bucket and brushes. She looks at them, scowls:

GLAD

I hate to break you guys up, but one of you owes me six bucks.

And they release each other. McGee gives her a five, Meyer searches out some change. McGee goes aboard and Meyer casts off bow and stern.

Then he and Glad watch as he STARTS the ENGINE and takes her out to sea.

FADE OUT.

THE END