



"THE LONG RAINS"

By

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First Draft
September 29, 1995

These are the seasons of emotion
And like the winds they rise and fall...
Upon us all a little rain
must fall.

If it keeps on rainin',
the levee's gonna break.

- Led Zeppelin

FADE IN:

The banks of the Mississippi river are being washed away in great muddy chunks, the water level rising. An endless downpour of Biblical proportions ceaselessly rages across the state.

NICK TRUE (V.O.)

The rains kept comin down. Day and night, without end. Like a bottomless bucket of water God was pouring down onto all our heads, to remind us who we were, and who He was. I'm not God fearing or religious by nature, but when you see the rain come down like that for ten days straight, you start to wonder...

CLOSE: On a levee, dangerously close to being swamped with the rising river. The river swells. The levee won't hold. The murky water is rising, waves raging, threatening to breach.

NICK TRUE (V.O.)

...Start to wonder what you were put on Earth for. What you're here to do. What your place is.

CLOSE: On a two foot by one foot window, reinforced glass, two inches thick, unbreakable. Through the glass, looking outside, we can see the RAIN pouring down along a distant barbed wire fence. A GUARD TOWER is visible through the downpour.

NICK TRUE (V.O.)

People round here call them The Long Rains. It was during the rains that I came to this place. Last time they were here was seven years ago. Now, they're back. Seven years... Then, I was out there, in the world, not wonderin' about my place in it. Now I'm in here, wonderin' about my place in a world I'm not even in anymore. Life's funny and cruel like that...

THE SOUND OF NICK'S CELL DOOR rolling back and CLANKING into the wall breaks his reverie.

GUARD

Prisoners to the rails!

NICK steps out of his cell, sees SIXTY OTHER PRISONERS on his block doing the same, a long line of men without a future grabbing the metal rail that runs before the cells on the second floor.

Instinctively, Nick turns and bolts back into his cell. He grabs a small photo taped to his wall. A pretty young woman smiles in the wallet-sized picture.

GUARD

Come on! Grab the rails!

Nick shoves the photo into his prison-issue pocket and steps back out onto the walkway. He grabs the metal bar with his big hands and looks out over --

THE PRISON COURTYARD. Hundreds of prisoners are filing out, a row directly across from him, a row above his head on the third floor, and the men on the ground floor. The sound of Prisoner's voices become a pulsating chatter.

NICK TRUE (V.O.)

I guess the penitentiary isn't hell, but it sure ain't anything close to heaven. It's purgatory for me; a waiting period between two worlds -- the world I left, and the world I'll return to in 10 years, 3 months and 14 days. The world will probably be the same. But I'll be different.

Nick leans over the rail to see SIX GUARDS holding shotguns to their chests, sloshing through six inches of water on the cement penitentiary floor.

The Guards take position as FIFTEEN MORE GUARDS rush from a secure area, holding armfuls of ankle chains.

HEAD GUARD

Listen up! I said, LISTEN UP!

(the prisoners quiet down)

The Mississippi levees are starting to give with the rainstorm. As y'all can see, I'm standing in six

HEAD GUARD (CONT.)

inches of stinking river water, and soon this ground floor is gonna be infested with leeches and rats the size of house cats.

The Prisoners CHEER at this, whooping it up, the cry rising, shaking the walls. Nick looks at his cellmates impassively, although we can see he is excited by the change of pace.

He looks down as his ankles are RATCHETED by a nervous LITTLE GUARD. Nick's chain is hooked up to the TWO PRISONERS on either side of him. Each man looks down at his chained ankles, then to the chain that binds them all together, then into each other's eyes.

HEAD GUARD

(yelling to be heard)

State Law says we can't keep you in your cell during a flood, so we're gonna sandbag the mess hall and the kitchen, and stay in there until the rain stops.

The Prisoners react to the news with jeers and boos.

NICK nods at the man next to him, a tall, skinny black guy they call PREACHER WILLIE. Preacher is a bit slow, but holds himself proud and tall at all times. He holds a tattered, leather-bound Bible in one hand, which never leaves his grasp. Preacher Willie gives Nick a cautious nod.

NICK

Looks like we're stuck with each other, huh boys.

On Nick's right is TEE-VEE, aka TEDDY VICTOR, a fireplug of a man. Tee-Vee looks like he woke up from a bad nightmare, his hair is stuck to his head in a sweaty mop. His muscular shoulders shiver uncontrollably.

TEE-VEE

As if I don't see enough of your ugly face, True.

NICK

Get up on the wrong side, Tee-Vee?

TEE-VEE
Is there any other side?
(shakes his head at his
ankle chain)
Got us hooked up like cattle...
Jesus Christ.

PREACHER WILLIE
Don't take the Lord's Name, Tee-Vee.

TEE-VEE
(leans past Nick)
Man, shut up! So sick of that Bible
shit.

PREACHER WILLIE
I'm serious, boy. Don't do it.

TEE-VEE
Jesus Fucking Camel-Riding Christ
Smoking a Big Fat Fucking Doobie.
How's that?

Preacher Willie shakes his head, sad for Tee-Vee.

PREACHER WILLIE
The Lord tests me.

HEAD GUARD
This is for your own good, so no
trouble. Move out in an orderly
fashion! 'Less you want rats
swimmin all over you by midnight.

ON THE GROUND FLOOR - the Prisoners, ratcheted together in
groups of threes, are shuffling toward the end of the
hallway, a bottleneck forming. The men grumble as their
feet slosh through the muck.

EXT. FENCED CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The sounds of Prisoners' chains clinking reaches our ears
over the sound of the downpour. Legs, chained together and
covered in blue denim, shuffle through a foot of water.

PAN UP to see fifty prisoners, three abreast, bottlenecked
in a seventy-foot long, fenced-in corridor leading from the
cement and steel MAIN HALL to the MESS HALL.

The Prisoners are getting no protection from the rain, which simply cuts and drives in sideways through the metal fence, the length of corrugated tin roofing over the heads of the men offering no cover.

Nick, Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie are crammed together in the corridor. You can smell the stale, humid sweat of the men, overpowering, the damp, warm rain only making things worse.

TEE-VEE

Feel like fuckin' Moses, man.

PREACHER WILLIE

It's Noah, you dumb hillbilly.
Don't talk about the Bible unless
you know about the Bible.

TEE-VEE

Noah, Moses, who the fuck cares, you
fucking retard!

PREACHER WILLIE

I'm not retarded!

TEE-VEE

Fuck off, retard!
(to the front of the line)
HEY LET'S GET THIS LINE MOVIN'!

The other prisoner's take up Tee-Vee's cry. The grab fistfuls of fence on either side of them in the tight corridor, shaking and rattling it like caged animals.

The overhead lights abruptly flicker and DIM. Then they GO OFF COMPLETELY. The hum of the power dying all around the prison is audible. Now, there is only the rain.

Nick looks back at the main building -- lights out. Looks at the guard tower, sees the lights still on. Then, they wink out as well. Total blackout.

AT THE MESS HALL ENTRANCE - the EMERGENCY SYSTEMS automatically close the electronic doors. They slam shut on the prisoners waiting to get inside.

AT THE MAIN HALL - these doors roll shut and lock as well. Ka-chunk.

The fifty men are trapped in the tight corridor. It's dark, it's raining hard, the water is now moving up to their shins -- it's goddammed miserable.

TEE-VEE

(smile)

Blackout!

A GUARD at the front of the line, pale-faced, turns and faces a line of angry prisoners.

PRISONER

Hey, open the fucking door, man!
We're drowning out here!

The other prisoners shout. Open the door! Open the door!

GUARD

I can't! They lock automatically
during a power outage.

TEE-VEE

(shouts back)

Let me pick the lock, man!

Everyone laughs. Someone says "you could do it, too, Tee-Vee."

NICK

(mostly to himself)

Flooding must've gotten into the
backup generator.

TEE-VEE

(can't hear him over
the downpour)

What?!

NICK

No power! Electric fences are out!

Nick gestures through the fenced-corridor, out beyond the yard, to the ring of three, 25-foot cyclone fences, the middle fence normally carrying a lethal voltage of electricity.

The rain continues to pelt the men. The water is rising and the men can't take it anymore. It's torture, it's claustrophobia. It's purely primal, and they begin to rock the fence back and forth with growing hysteria.

Tee-Vee is enjoying himself, rocking the fence with all his fireplug might. Even Preacher Willie is rocking the fence, the look in his eyes far away, past the yard, past the guardpost and past the triple-row of razor-wire topped cyclone fencing.

Nick is looking at the same thing.

NICK (V.O.)

Mob mentality's a funny thing. You see ten guys looting a store, carrying off a television or a stereo, and before you know it, you got a television in your hands, too.

Some of the Prisoners are instigators, howling as they rock the fence, and some are truly frightened. The need to escape this watery, fence-grave is now immediate.

A GUARD waves his shotgun at the sea of blue denim and tattooed muscle.

GUARD

Stop it! STOP IT!

The fence is groaning, starting to give. Posts along the fence corridor come up out of the dirt, giving way.

GUARD

I'll FIRE! I'LL FIRE!

PRISONER

(laughs in his face)

You can't stop us you dipshit!

The Guard doesn't know what to do. He sees fifty unstoppable men and a collapsing fence.

PRISONER

(wildly)

YOU CAN'T STOP US!

The Guard instinctively HITS the Prisoner in the mouth with the butt of the shotgun. The Prisoner goes down in a spray of blood.

The Guard instantly realizes this was a mistake, as several angry Prisoners tumble into him, wrenching the shotgun from

his grasp. They kick and beat the guard until he falls onto his back, holding his hands up in defense --

GUARD
(face bloody)
Noo!

BOOM! someone blasts the Guard with the shotgun, a meaty chunk of his stomach bursting inward.

The Prisoners stop at the sound. Everyone looks over to see the Guard try to stand, a marionette without strings, holding his stomach in, blood pouring from his mouth.

BOOM! the Prisoner blasts him again, and the Guard goes down on his back. The rising water completely covers him.

In the small window in the closed door to the Mess Hall, frantic Guard's faces fill the frame, shouting. Their voices are lost as --

THE CORRIDOR FENCE is ripped from its roots, and goes down completely. Splashing in the water, the fence is like the glorious opening of a swollen dam, loosing a barrage of men from the floodgates.

NICK, TEE-VEE AND PREACHER WILLIE take off together, running in unison like the contestants of a strange potato sack race. The other 50 howling prisoners are all around them, wildly running across the flat grounds of the prison yard.

Many groups of three go down for the lack of coordination, the chains a definite challenge to the non-athlete. One group gets the hang of things and takes off like they were born to run this race. They make an Olympic record to the first high perimeter fence.

Nick runs, animal-free, through the downpour, the inky black night covering the men like a shield. The Guard Tower is a foggy memory somewhere in the rainstorm. There is the CRACK! of a rifle shot.

ON THE GUARD TOWER -

The GUARD is shooting wildly into the mass of prisoners below, shadowed bodies rushing across the prison yard like muddy ghouls rising from their graves.

A GROUP OF PRISONERS fall, one man taking a bullet and howling, his face splashing into the twelve inches of

rainwater. The other two men chained to him pick up the bleeding man and carry him toward the fences.

ON THE FIRST FENCE - Three sets of hands grab the slick metal.

Nick looks at the men chained on either side of him. He sees two sets of hopeful eyes burning back at him.

NICK

Let's do it.

With a grin, Tee-Vee climbs after Nick, who sets the pace. Preacher Willie shoves the Bible into his back pocket, his lanky frame climbing after them.

FROM THE TOP OF THE FENCE - the three men's faces come up toward us out of the gloom of the rainstorm, pelting their eyes with large raindrops. They blink back the sting of the hot August rain.

The fence is alive with inmates, all trying to coordinate themselves in the climb to freedom.

CRACK! a rifle shot. Nick sees a group above and to the right tumble from the fence, the wounded man taking them all with him. Three bodies land hard in the soppy marsh that was once the prison yard.

Nick, Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie are at the top. Nick carefully grabs the top of the razor wire.

This is the extremely tricky part. Nick is in the middle, and has the disadvantage of having both his legs chained to the men, as opposed to their one leg chained to Nick.

NICK

Get your free leg over first, then
bring me over with you.

CRACK! another rifle shot, close, and a man's scream rings out. LIGHTING CRACKS after the gunshot, and for a moment, Nick and crew are illuminated bright as day on the top of the fence. Nick can see the Guard turning his rifle toward them when the world is plunged into darkness again --

NICK

(only a second to spare)
Go!

They lift their chained leg, Nick doing a gymnastic L-sit on the top of the fence, lifting his legs over, his hands straining to support his weight. His arm muscles strain to hold his body in the odd position.

But they do it like a practiced team, the men working together so well that they make it look easy. Both legs are now over the top of the wire and --

Tee-Vee loses his grip, hand shredding on the wire, as he DROPS.

NICK

Shit!

CRACK! goes the gunshot, PINGING! off the fence right behind Nick's head as Tee-Vee's weight yanks them off the fence.

Three bodies plunge into the foot-deep water below, breaking the 25 foot fall. Nick grunts as the wind is knocked out of him.

TEE-VEE

(palm bloody)

Cut my fucking hand!

Nick stands, spits rainwater. Shakes his head, gets his bearings back. He sees two more fences through the gloom.

NICK

Come on!

And they're up again, running for the fence. Hands grab metal, pull upward, feet following, higher and higher over the top and --

DROPPING AGAIN, splash! splash! splash! into the marshy ground below. They see a glorious sight --

NICK

One fence to go! One little goddam fence, now who's with me?!

They race for the fence, laughing wildly, running as if their feet weren't chained at all, as if they were born to run with chains on, were faster for it.

They make the fence as rain pours down on them in a glorious spray, taste of freedom meeting their lips with every drop.

FROM THE TOP OF THE LAST FENCE - We see that Nick's group is the only team that has made it this far. It's simply an impossible task to ask three men of varying sizes, chained at the feet, to coordinate an effort over three 25 foot fences topped with razor wire.

And yet...here they are, mounting the last fence. Climbing for their lives. Not looking back, not caring if the rifle sight finds them right now. This is the moment to live.

NICK

Swing your leg...now!

The men do, Nick doing his incredible acrobatics again -- then the hands release, and the men drop side by side, landing with athletic grace.

ON THE PRISON BEHIND THEM -

The shouts of the chained prisoners reaches Nick as the men are rounded up by a fresh batch of guards. They're the only ones who made it.

Nick picks up Preacher Willie, who limps slightly.

NICK

You okay?

PREACHER WILLIE

(grinning broadly)

Let's get the hell outta here!

TEE-VEE

Now you're talking, Preacher!

The men run, legs taking quick, short steps, sloshing in the rising water, making for a black unknown, for a landscape covered by floodwaters, for a future as murky as the swollen Mississippi river.

SLOW FADE.

THE SOUNDS OF THE CHAINS

comes out of the darkness. Three pairs of legs slog through the floodwaters toward us. At first, all we can see are glittering silver chains catching moonlight. Still, it rains.

Then we see the three fugitives. Tired, muddy, wild.

NICK (V.O.)

I didn't have time to think, like a lot of things in this world. You wake up one morning, and you're married. Or you got a kid, or you're an old man. Or you're in the Joint.... But this sweet moment of freedom reminded me for the first time in seven years that I was a human being. And realizing this was almost as good as jumping the fences that kept me back from the world for so long.

It's too dark to see, and the men run side by side, trying to find a road, dry ground anywhere.

NICK

(apprehensive)

Hear that?

A roaring sound reaches the men, they stop dead. The ground shakes with a RUMBLING, like an immense, alien machine raging through the night, harvesting any humans up with metal churning spikes, pulverizing them for meat.

Tee-Vee turns and shouts --

TEE-VEE

Oh, JESUS!

The men turn in time to see a four-foot wall of RAGING WATER coming straight at them, blasting over them, taking them down.

FLASH FLOOD.

Nick goes under, struggles in the tangles of the chain, trying to find out which way is up. The current drags the men, spinning them end over end like socks in a Maytag.

Nick's head breaks the surface of the floodwaters. He yanks Preacher Willie up, the man spitting a great mouthful of water with an inhuman cough. Tee-Vee pops up next to Nick like a cork.

TEE-VEE

I CAN'T SWIM!

Tee-Vee hands onto Nick's shoulders like a schoolgirl. Nick tries to stand up, but both men are falling all over him.

NICK

Just -- just get offa me!

Nick can't support the weight and they all go down again. This time they go under for a long, long time. The flood races across the expanse of land in a swift, great river, a river with no banks or boundaries. The men are lost in its enormity.

A HAND GRABS a tree. Nick pulls his body against the trunk, all white-foam with rushing water breaching around it. He grunts against the amazingly fast current.

Behind him, two heads are breaching the surface of the water like massive stones in a river. Tee-Vee struggles to get to the tree, Preacher right behind him, gasping for air.

The tree is their salvation, keeping them from the chaotic ride of the flash flood and the unknown destination of the vile water. They do not let go.

TEE-VEE

This is fuckin great! I can't swim and I'm out here chained to two people I don't even like, holding on to the one fucking tree in this whole field. I keep swallowing mouthfuls of leeches and rats the size of house cats and -- fuck!

NICK

Enjoy your freedom while it lasts.

Nick hangs onto the tree as the water rages past them.

CUT TO:

EXT. DARK LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

Nick's eyes are shut as he lies on his back, a serene look on his face. Rain patters down on his face as the beginning of a smile touches his lips.

The flash flood has ended, and we get the sense they've been on the run for miles, making time with their legs chained together.

NICK (V.O.)

Preacher Willie says this is God's work, letting us go. Maybe he's right. It took an act of God to get me out, but I knew the rest was up to me.

Nick doesn't pay attention to the SOUND of a roaring beast coming out of the night, getting closer. The ground VIBRATES with the sound of its approach.

TEE-VEE

You sure about this?

Tee-Vee's voice is shaking. We see his head pop up, a few feet from Nick's. On the other side of Nick is Preacher, all three men lying flat on their backs, the chains spread out as far as they'll go.

NICK

If it doesn't work, you two will be free, and I'll be dead. So you got nothin to lose, Teddy.

TEE-VEE

Don't call me that, you sonofabitch!

NICK

Teddy!

Tee-Vee sits up, but shouts in terror and lies back down again as --

A TRAIN BEARS DOWN RIGHT AT THEM, the headlight beaming Nick's body. The horn blares in the night, the wheels chugging along fast over the rain-slick tracks.

We see what Nick has done: he's lying IN THE MIDDLE of the train tracks, Preacher and Tee-Vee on either side, the leg chains of each man draped over the tracks, feet a (hopefully) safe distance from the tracks.

Nick is the only one in any real danger, although all three men are going to have a terrifying experience.

WHOOOOMMMM! the train howls.

TEE-VEE

(closes his eyes)

Ohhhh-shiiit!

Nick keeps his eyes closed, a grin on his lips.

NICK (V.O.)

There's something liberating knowing you're about to die. You actually feel happy. There's no fear, only the expectation of the moment when life changes to death. What will that feel like? What will it be like?... I already knew that answer. I found out the day they closed the cell doors on me.

Nick suddenly DISAPPEARS under the snarling, monstrous locomotive, speeding down the tracks, racing into darkness.

TEE-VEE rolls from the tracks, his leg chain severed. Free, he whirls back to see -- A WALL OF boxcars racing past, the wind blowing damp hair around his head in swirls.

PREACHER WILLIE - is up, too, watching under the train for any sign of Nick. But it's impossible to see anything.

The train goes on forever, and it seems less and less likely that a man could fit under the fast moving cars.

The final car races past without flourish, the train disappearing as quickly as it had come. Nick sits up with a smile on his face.

He claps with joy, laughs long and hard, falling backward, holding his freed legs up at the sky, then rolling forward and doing a handstand.

NICK

Ah-ha hahaaaaa!

The rings of the leg chains glimmer around his ankles, but the thick metal chains are severed. Nick leaps from his hands to his feet in a graceful move.

He looks off at the receding train, disappearing into the dark night and the pounding rain.

CUT TO:

EXT. MISSISSIPPI COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The rain keeps coming down, a torrential monsoon. The land looks like a dark painting whose colors run after being soaked with a garden hose.

AN ABANDONED BARN - barely standing, is the only cover for miles around. Long depleted farmland lies all around.

INT. THE BARN - NIGHT

Preacher Willie is trying to read in the dim light, his Bible waterlogged. His lips move as he reads silently.

The barn gives the three convicts shelter. But not much. It's cold, wet, and they're soaked to the bone.

Tee-Vee is playing with the chains on his ankles, idly, looking out at the rain.

TEE-VEE

Might as well read to us, Willie.

PREACHER WILLIE

(surprised)

You never cared for my readin' before.

TEE-VEE

I still don't. I'm just cold and tired, and I wanna here something else than the damn rain.

PREACHER WILLIE

I'll read to you on a condition.

TEE-VEE

Condition my ass! Read!

PREACHER WILLIE

Promise never to take the Lord's name again.

TEE-VEE

Shit, whatever.

PREACHER WILLIE

You got to promise, Teddy.

TEE-VEE
Don't fuckin call me that!

Preacher Willie returns to his book. Doesn't read aloud. Stubbornly clams up. Tee-Vee shakes his head, frustrated.

TEE-VEE
Nick, what do you think?

Nick stares out at the rain, lost in thought.

NICK
'Bout what?

TEE-VEE
About us sittin out here! About us being fugitives, man. What the fuck d'you think I'm talking about?

NICK
Figure we stay here till dawn. Maybe the rain'll stop by then.

TEE-VEE
(looks out at the downpour)
Likely story.

NICK
...We'll just see what happens, okay?

Tee-Vee looks at Nick, decides he knows what he's doing. Nods and lies back, trying to get comfortable.

NICK (V.O.)
I hadn't thought much about what I was gonna do. But then, sittin' in that barn, I realized I knew all along what I was gonna do...

Nick reaches down and puts his fingers into the puddle. He pulls up a handful of grass, rubs it between his fingers.

NICK (V.O.)
They don't give guys like me second chances. They lock guys like me up and forget about 'em.... An opportunity to set things right wasn't part of the deal when they locked me away. But here I was...

Tee-Vee can't stand the rain anymore, and he sits up.

TEE-VEE

All right, Preacher, I promise.

Preacher Willie looks at Tee-Vee critically.

TEE-VEE

Come on, I said I promise! Now
read... please.

PREACHER WILLIE

(decides Tee-Vee is sincere)
...And God said unto Noah, The end
of all flesh is come before me; for
the earth is filled with violence
through them...

The rain keeps coming down, and we PULL BACK from the barn,
losing Preacher Willie's voice in the rainstorm. But we can
still make out Nick, watching through the distance.

PREACHER WILLIE

...and, behold, I will destroy them
with the earth...

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A COURTROOM - THE PAST

A very different Nick True stands in a suit and tie as the
JURY FOREMAN prepares to read the sentence. Nick is the
Defendant. His eyes are dead scared as he glances over his
shoulder at --

THE WOMAN IN HIS JAIL CELL PHOTO. She holds a handkerchief
to her lips, holding back tears. Nick winks at her, trying
to be brave, but he swallows hard.

Nick's eyes move across the gallery, resting on the smug
face of T.C. MALLOY. Malloy has a Sheriff's uniform on, and
stares back at Nick with contempt.

JURY FOREMAN

...We have, your honor.

The words snap Nick's head back around, facing forward.

JUDGE

Will you read the verdict to the court.

JURY FOREMAN

(reads)

We find the defendant, Nicholas True...

Nick swallows; the woman nearly shrieks into her handkerchief, T.C. Malloy leans forward --

JURY FOREMAN

-- guilty as charged...

Nick collapses into his seat, his legs giving out. The woman shouts in physical anguish as Malloy's grin widens...

CUT TO:

EXT. SWOLLEN RIVERBANK - MORNING

Sandbags are being massed, ten feet high, along the riverbank. Dozens of workers and volunteers continue to make the sandbags on site, using gravel and mud. The heavy bags are passed in a fireman's carry to the front lines of the improvised levee. The rain is still coming down cats and dogs.

WATCHING

from a distance are Nick, Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie, all huddled behind a wooden fence. They are on the outskirts of a VERY SMALL TOWN.

A horse noses up against Tee-Vee, who swats it away.

TEE-VEE

Get that animal away from me!

Preacher Willie shoves Tee-Vee and holds the horse's head.

PREACHER WILLIE

Don't treat an animal like that.

(to the horse)

Shh...baby. There, he's just a foolish boy. Yeah.

The horse seems to like Preacher Willie.

TEE-VEE

Great, we're in a field covered with horseshit. Now what?

NICK

Anyone ever tell you have a bad attitude? Maybe I should just leave you here.

PREACHER WILLIE

(pats the horse)

I tend to agree with you.

TEE-VEE

(to Preacher)

Shut up, retard! No one's talkin to you!

NICK

(grabs Tee-Vee)

Hey! You call him that again and you'll need a glass by your bedside to put your teeth into every night!

TEE-VEE

(meek bow)

Okay. I'll be on my best behavior from now on. Happy?

(false proper accent)

Now, please, sir, would you mind terribly to tell me where we're gonna get something to eat?

Nick sees a pickup truck full of men arriving to the gravel bed. An ORGANIZER hands the men rain ponchos and shovels.

Nick can see volunteer workers taking a break near a truck which is dispensing food and coffee.

CUT TO:

A PONCHO BEING HANDED -

to Nick. He nods at the Organizer and puts it on.

NICK

And my two friends are volunteering.

ORGANIZER

Appreciate it. More the merrier.

The Organizer barely glances at them. He hands over two more ponchos.

ORGANIZER

What we need most right now is sandbags. If you fellas want to help with those shovels over there.

He motions to a bunch of shovels. Nick walks over, grabs one, Tee-Vee behind him. Preacher Willie puts his poncho on, tries to tie it around his waist. Can't get it right.

PREACHER WILLIE

Darn thing.

ORGANIZER

Here, lemmie help you with that.

The Organizer shows him how to tie the poncho as --

NICK SEES a STATE TROOPER car pull up to the site. Tires crunch soggy gravel. Tee-Vee gets spooked, turns and almost runs, but Nick's restraining hand stops him in his tracks.

NICK

Easy. They ain't here for us.

Tee-Vee sees two TROOPERS getting out of the car. They leave the motor running, the doors open, as they saunter over to the Organizer.

TROOPER #1

(sarcastic)

Beautiful morning, huh Bill?

ORGANIZER

(finishes tying the poncho)

You said it.

Bill, the Organizer, notices something. A silver metal clasp peeking out from under Preacher Willie's pant leg.

Bill the Organizer's eyes meet Preacher Willie's. Preacher can't hide what he is, and Bill sees this immediately, putting two and two together. Preacher grabs a shovel casually, his eyes letting the Organizer know that he'll use it if necessary.

Nick and Tee-Vee watch this, helplessly, fifteen paces away. Nick holds the shovel, hefts it in his hands as --

TROOPER #2 saunters toward them, shielding his face from the rain with his wide-brim hat.

Trooper #1 comes right over to Bill the Organizer.

TROOPER #1
National Guard told us to clear you
guys outta here. It's not safe
anymore.

Bill's eyes are still looking at Preacher Willie's. The electricity of a coming confrontation is in the air.

TROOPER #1
We gotta pack it up before this
whole levee breaks.

Trooper #2 is right next to Nick and Tee-Vee, staring up at the mountain of sandbags on the bank of the river.

Bill can't hold back any longer. He jumps back, accusing finger pointing at Preacher Willie --

BILL
Harry, get your gun out! This guy's
a conv--

BING! Bill's mouth shuts with a decisive clank as Preacher Willie swings the shovel in a swift arc. Teeth fly as --

TROOPER #1
(reaching for his gun)
What the FUCK--

Preacher Willie is too swift -- he swings again, WHU-BING! the Trooper's temple blossoms red as he falls ass over teakettle right into six inches of dirty water.

For a guy who's supposed to be slow witted, Preacher Willie sure knows how to kick ass.

Trooper #2 can't believe his eyes. Young and inexperienced, he has trouble unholstering his gun, and merely shouts --

TROOPER #2
Just hold it right there --
GODDAMMIT!

He never hears Nick's shovel whistling through the air and CRACKING HIM ACROSS the back of the head.

His wide brimmed Stetson flies from his skull as the surprised rookie plummets to the gravel, knocked ice-cold, not even able to put his hands out to break his fall. He gets a faceful of gravel.

Now they've got the attention of several men working the sandbag line. No one knows exactly what the fuck just happened, and no one is sure what to do.

Dumbfounded faces stare back at Nick as he ditches his shovel, grabs Trooper #2's pistol, along with the keys from his pocket. He unlocks the State Trooper car.

PREACHER WILLIE

I'm sorry, fellas. I know I did a wrong thing --

NICK

Get in!

PREACHER WILLIE

I didn't want to hurt him!

NICK

Get in!

Preacher Willie jumps in the passenger seat, 6'5" frame almost too gangly for the car. His legs are up near his chest.

Tee-Vee ditches his shovel, takes a fleeting look back at the men watching from the levee. One of them calls out --

WORKER

Hey! Stop, you guys!

TEE-VEE

(yelling back)

Special Deputies! This a secret mission!

He gets in the back seat, snickering. Nick GUNS the gas before Tee-Vee can close the door, and the Trooper car is hauling ass backward down the narrow gravel road.

THE TIRES

spit four-inches of floodwater as Nick finds the main road and CRANKS THE WHEEL, sending the car in a perfect 180 degree turn.

Nick hits the windshield wipers as the road lays out before him. He FLOORS IT.

Tee-Vee lets loose a war-whoop as Nick takes the Trooper car up to seventy on the slick two-lane road.

TEE-VEE

Hit the siren, hit the siren!

Nick obliges Tee-Vee, finds the siren. WHOOOO! WHOOOO!

Tee-Vee is laughing his head off as Nick barrels on through the rainstorm. WHOOO! WHOOOOO!

Preacher Willie turns around and sees --

ANOTHER STATE TROOPER CAR behind them, right on their ass, siren blaring. Preacher Willie taps Nick's arm. Nick checks the rear-view.

NICK

Get the shotgun.

Preacher Willie struggles with the shotgun, locked in the mount between them.

PREACHER WILLIE

It's --

(he can't think
of the right words)

-- it's tied down!

The sound of the Trooper's loudspeaker reaches them.

TROOPER LOUDSPEAKER

Pull over! PULL OVER!

NICK

Tee-Vee, how do we pick this fucking lock?!

Tee-Vee turns from the back window. He licks his lips and peers through the grating separating him and the front section of the car.

TEE-VEE
Get something out of the glove
compartment. Anything.

Preacher Willie finds a flashlight, paper, a ball point pen.

TEE-VEE
Take the pen! The pen!

PREACHER WILLIE
What am I gonna do with it?

TEE-VEE
Okay, just jam it as hard as you can
in the lock. Use the butt of the
pistol as a hammer. You gotta drive
it in there like a screwdriver,
break all the insides.

Nick hands over the pistol.

NICK
Better not fucking shoot me.

Nick is still racing through the dense rain like an Indy-500
driver. Visibility is about one hundred feet ahead and
behind, not much time to stop if --

NICK
HOLY SHIT!

A BIG RIG is jackknifed in front of them, appearing out of
the gloom like a dying dragon, lying across the road. A
haul of cattle are in the back section, braying in the rain,
seeing two State Trooper cars careening out of the dense
gloom. One of them "mooos" a warning, but it's futile.

NICK keeps his cool, tapping the brakes once, twice, and
wrenching the wheel to the left, heading for the cab of the
big rig.

PREACHER WILLIE
(murmurs)
-- walk through the valley of the...

He blocks his eyes at what must be the inevitable impact.

Nick grazes the front grille of the truck, PING! --
careening off the left side of the road, tires spinning on

mud and grass. The back of the car fishtails dangerously, but Nick stays in control somehow.

Tee-Vee is hanging on for dear life, sliding around the slick, uncomfortable plastic seat.

The other Trooper Car flies completely off the road, tires spinning sideways, spitting dirt and mud in an amazing fifteen foot vertical spray.

The Trooper finally can't hold the turn, and the car goes into a crazy session of doughnut blowing, spinning around and around in faster circles.

Nick looks in the rear view mirror as he gets back on the highway, smug grin on his face.

Preacher Willie holds the shotgun up, now free.

PREACHER WILLIE

It's untied!

He hands Nick's pistol back, checks the action of the shotgun. Preacher Willie may carry a bible, but he knows his way around a shotgun.

TEE-VEE

Where are we goin?

NICK

Think I know?

TEE-VEE

You got a plan, Nick. You always got a plan.

Nick eyes the road in his rear-view mirror, thinking.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PENITENTIARY - DAY

A helicopter waits outside the grounds, sleek and black in the rain. A line of a dozen trooper cars wait for drivers, looking menacing just sitting there, brooding.

AT THE TRIPLE FENCE PERIMETER

We meet, for the first time, an intense individual. CHARLES O'KEEFE, State Cop. Big as an ox, solid as a bull, his

uniform looks too constricting, like his muscles are dying for a breath of fresh air.

He looks up at the fence where the three convicts climbed.

O'KEEFE

They climbed this, all three of them
-- with leg irons on?

His two right-hand men, BEARMEYER and SCHMIDT, both college dropouts who wished they could've beat up everyone in their high school class and are now making up for that loss, flank their boss like bookends.

BEARMEYER

That's what the warden says.

SCHMIDT

Pretty amazing, really.

O'KEEFE

(sharp glance at Schmidt)
Why's that?

SCHMIDT

I mean -- three guys all chained together, climbing over razor wire -
- well, it must be kind of difficult, don't you think?

(O'Keefe stares)

Just doesn't seem like something convicts would do. Not many are that smart, are they? I mean, we're not talking Albert Einstein here, and yet evidence would suggest that they climbed this fence.

BEARMEYER

Schmidt, you just said so much, but not one word mattered.

O'Keefe shakes his head and looks down at the prison folders of the three fugitives.

SCHMIDT

(trying to score points)
They can't go far, anyway.

O'KEEFE

Why's that?

SCHMIDT

(now nervous)

Because -- they're chained at the ankles, and we haven't had flooding like this in seven years. I don't think it's ideal weather to be making a jailbreak. Do you?...

He trails off as O'Keefe walks away from him. Schmidt looks over at Bearmeyer, hoping for a sympathetic eye. Bearmeyer shakes his head disdainfully. Schmidt shrugs helplessly.

An EXCITED TROOPER runs up to them.

EXCITED TROOPER

O'Keefe, three guys just knocked the shit outta two Troopers and stole their car outside Aberdeen.

SCHMIDT

(assuming control)

Our guys?

EXCITED TROOPER

(ignores Schmidt)

Two white guys and a tall black guy, all wearing blue denim.

O'KEEFE

Our guys. Get that chopper in the air.

They are moving as one unit, everyone running for cars and helicopter, taking up the pursuit despite the rain.

CUT TO:

FOUR INCHES OF WATER

Spraying from the tires of the hydroplaning State Trooper car, Nick at the wheel.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI HIGHWAY - DAY

The bitch-miserable day continues, the storm unending, dark clouds low enough to nearly touch the roof of the car.

The car blasts alongside a branch of the Mississippi, a half mile across. Hundreds of workers stand up from their

sandbagging along the muddy banks to watch the screaming trooper car fly by at eighty per.

Lights strobing, siren wailing, the car is followed by TWO MORE TROOPERS, in tight pursuit.

Nick is simply a better driver than the cops. He wheels the car around slow-moving traffic with incredible ease, leaving the other Trooper cars constantly slowing to avoid accidents, then gunning their engines to keep up.

INSIDE THE CAR -

Tee-Vee is watching out the back window.

TEE-VEE

Well, Nick, at least I had a helluva ride!

NICK

(jaw set)
We're not through yet.

PREACHER WILLIE

(earnestly)
I don't wanna die.

NICK

(glances at him)
...You're not gonna die.

PREACHER WILLIE

I'm just not ready yet, that's all.

NICK

Buckle up, Willie.

Preacher Willie buckles up. His face is sweaty and scared.

CRACK -- WHAP! the sound of a GUNSHOT is followed instantly by the sound of impact on the bullet-resistant back windshield. The sound roars through the car.

TEE-VEE

(ducking)
Christ! They're shootin at us!

CRACK! - WHAP! - and the windshield spiderwebs a bit more.

TEE-VEE

Jees-sus!

Preacher Willie whirls around with the shotgun.

TEE-VEE

(thinks Willie's going to
shoot him for saying Jesus)

I didn't mean to! Shit, Preacher!

But Preacher Willie isn't paying attention to him. He eyes the cop's fender, not ten yards back. Rolls down his window. Leans out, shotgun pointing back and --

BOOOOM! - fire barks from the muzzle. A direct hit, punching a serious divot in the cop's windshield. Glass sprays everywhere.

IN THE TROOPER CAR -

The COP tries to control the car, but he can't see out the splintered windshield, the shotgun blast rattling him --

The wheel is WRENCHED out of his grasp, tires hydroplaning off the road, through dirt and mud at 70 miles per hour --

ON THE EMBANKMENT -

STATE WORKERS drop their sandbags and BOLT as a madman in a Trooper car comes spinning right at them, tires belching mud.

POV/STATE WORKER -

we see the steel reinforced grille of the Trooper car blasting up the steep bank, a forty degree angle, coming right at us, even as we leap out of the way --

WHOOMPPP! the Trooper car bazookas through the sandbags, gravel and dirt exploding in a corona of mud, as the car blasts high into the air and --

mmmmmmmmZZZZHHHH! the engine growls, wheels spinning in mid-air, the stunned cop still flooring the gas pedal.

ON THE RIVER - madly churning, waves clashing, the swift current doesn't slow for a moment as the State Trooper car SPLASHES into the turbulent water.

BACK IN NICK'S CAR -

Tee-Vee slams the back seat with his palm, howling, as he sees the State Trooper going under the water, lost in the strong current.

TEE-VEE

Oooh! Hole in one!

Preacher Willie has a satisfied look on his face.

NICK

Didn't know you had it in you,
Preacher Willie. Thought you were a
pacifist.

PREACHER WILLIE

(as if explaining to a child)

"All they that take the sword shall
perish with the sword."

TEE-VEE

Amen.

BACK ON THE LEVEE -

where the cop car breached it. The sandbag fortress has given way. Thousands of gallons of water fight each other to get through this gap in the barrier.

Now the whole barrier is giving way, row upon row of sandbags folding over with the force of the rising river.

Man and animal flee before the tidal wave, weeks of prevention now obliterated by an ounce of disease.

Water explodes down the incline, tons of it, and the highway is immediately flooded, cutting off --

THE LONG LINE OF O'KEEFE'S STATE TROOPERS.

Fifteen Trooper cars in tandem, racing a quarter mile back from Nick's car, all see the liquid roadblock coming right at them.

Everyone HITS THE BRAKES as the floodwaters rage down the slope of the river. Fenders smack together as cars spin out of control, trying to stop.

There's no way anyone's getting through that watery barrier, but still, some joker has to try it.

BEARMEYER AND SCHMIDT - are hauling ass, not slowing for the tidal wave. Bearmeyer is behind the wheel, Schmidt eyeing the water from the passenger seat -

SCHMIDT
(face gone white)
Uhhh...

He eyes the wave coming head on -- it's a game of chicken, but the water sure isn't gonna move at the last second.

BEARMEYER
(white-knuckling the wheel)
Come on!

He floors it as the car is ENGULFED IN A SEVEN FOOT WAVE.

LESSON #1: When a solid object hits a liquid object at a great enough velocity, that liquid object takes on characteristics of a solid.

And it is exactly this little backwoods physics lesson that Bearmeyer and Schmidt learn at this instant.

BACK IN NICK'S CAR -

He turns around in the seat to take a look at the destruction in their wake. He sees some asshole try to drive through a seven foot wave. He smiles as --

WHOP-WHOP-WHOP,

-- his smile fades. Now they've got trouble.

THE HELICOPTER bursts out of the low cloud cover.

NICK
We must be important for this.

PREACHER WILLIE
(looking out the window)
Wow.

NICK
Whattya see?

PREACHER WILLIE
Just never been chased by a helicopter before.

ON THE ROAD - it's a long stretch of rainy nothing, perfectly straight highway, one lane in either direction. A backroads beltway boring straight into submerged farmland.

THE HELICOPTER'S rotors are spitting rainwater as a SHARPSHOOTER leans out the cargo door, getting his rifle nice and snug in the crook of his arm.

O'Keefe makes a spinning motion with his fingers to the shooter -- hit the tires. The shooter nods. Gets the scope up to his eye and tries to steady himself long enough to take the shot.

CRACK! first shot. Plunk! it hits water and asphalt inches behind the speeding left tire of the car.

NICK'S EYES flash from the rear-view mirror to the road ahead. He doesn't know what the hell he's gonna do here, but he knows they're sitting ducks waiting for a big, fat hunter to take a potshot at them.

Then he sees THE BRIDGE.

Up ahead there is a turnoff and an underpass. A smart guy would take the underpass and shake the chopper for an instant or two, getting enough time for Preacher Willie to take a shot with the scatter gun.

But he's not a smart guy. He's an instinctive son of a bitch, and he nails the brakes as best he can, keeping the hydroplaning car in control.

TEE-VEE

What the fuck are you DOING?!

THE CHOPPER slows with the Trooper car, and the sniper's got a clear shot, but --

CRACK! he shoots just as Nick spins the wheels for the overpass. The bullet goes wide as the Trooper car climbs the incline, takes a roaring left turn, tires spinning futilely, finally finding traction and --

BLAZING FOR THE BRIDGE.

It's one of those old, rusty, heavy fuckers. Green paint has peeled away long ago, leaving red metal to the elements. It spans the 1/4 mile stretch of river.

YELLOW SIGNS

read "BRIDGE CLOSED DUE TO FLOODING." But this doesn't stop Nick. Preacher Willie clutches the shotgun tight in his hands as the wooden signs bust and splinter before his eyes, cascading over the back of the car like driftwood.

THE CHOPPER has to take a tight serpentining turn, the pilot for the briefest of instants not knowing whether to go right or left and almost nailing the bridge with his indecision.

O'KEEFE

taps the sniper and makes a motion with his hand -- slitting his own throat. The message is clear. Fuck the tires. Shoot to kill.

The sharpshooter leans out as far as he can, chopper keeping pace with the speeding Trooper car.

IN THE CAR -

they're all looking over at the rifle poised to blow them away, the black-clad sharpshooter ready to kill.

NICK

(to himself)

I'm not going back. I'm not going back. This is a preordained, heaven-sent jailbreak, and no fucking asshole with a gun is gonna tell me that I'm GOING BACK TO THE PEN --

CRACK! he can't finish as the right wheel BLOWS with the bullet's impact. The guy finally hit the tire! Nick tries to control the car, but it's hopeless at this speed.

NICK'S POV - the image is from a sickening dream -- one moment the bridge's metal girders fill the windshield, the next it's straight road and the horizon, then more girders, then straight road -- spinning out of control --

THE CAR -

decides that now, yes, it would like to head straight for some impervious metal fucking girders.

NICK

HANG ON!

The car smashes into the girders, ROCKING THE MEN inside. Tee-Vee grunting as he's tossed into the wire mesh separating the front and back seats --

PREACHER WILLIE feels his head smashing against the passenger window and lets us know that it hurts.

NICK STILL HAS A HOLD OF THE WHEEL as he sees the car SQUEEZE through two iron bridge supports --

His ribs smash into the wheel -- CRACK! he grunts in pain as something inside him gives.

THE CAR SLINGSHOTS through the gap in the iron bars, a hundred-to-one shot, an impossibility --

But it happens. The car is airborne. The river is below, the sky is above, and it's hard to tell which one is more turbulent. They're both gray and pissed off.

Nick sees the river coming up fast in the windshield as the car somersaults. He gets a glimpse of a sky filled with a hovering chopper and then --

WHOOOOMM! the car blasts into the river, the roof of the car slapping muddy water. It's like a giant turtle being tossed onto its back from a great height.

NICK
(howls with the impact)
Urrggghh!

They can't believe it. They're in the river.

TEE-VEE
I can't believe it! We're in the
fucking river!

The car is swept by the current, fast, but still somehow stays afloat. But not for long.

Nick sees Preacher Willie's terrified eyes. Their heads are pressed to the roof at crazy angles, gravity a cruel friend to a man upside down on top of a river. Nick wheezes for breath, feels his chest and winces at whatever ribs he's cracked.

Preacher Willie takes out his bible, kisses the cover, and puts it in his waistband. Several cubic tons of raging muddy water stare back at him through the windshield.

TEE-VEE

Nick, I can't swim! What about me?!

Nick turns, sees Tee-Vee's wide eyes, his face pressed up against the mesh, fingers white through gaps in the wire.

TEE-VEE

(spittle flying)

I CAN'T SWIM!

ON THE CAR -

being pulled downriver very fast by an incredibly wild current. The belly of the car, four wheels spinning uselessly, stare up at the angry sky.

NICK (V.O.)

I realized that this was one of those moments my Pop told me about. A moment in a man's life where he's gotta make a choice... Can you justify saving somebody like Tee-Vee here? I didn't particularly like him. Didn't care about him one way or the other. But, I didn't know what choice to make, just didn't know. And that's probably why I tried to save him. Cause I just don't know the answer to things like that.

Nick sees the muddy water rising.

NICK

Okay, okay! Calm the hell down!
We're all gonna open the doors
together. At the same time.

Preacher Willie goes for the door.

NICK

(grabbing him)

Not yet, you stupid asshole!

Preacher's eyes are scared. He averts Nick's stare.

NICK

When I say, we're going into the river. Tee-Vee, you hang onto this car as long as you can, then you get your fingers on the back of my shirt.

TEE-VEE

(getting hysterical)

How you gonna save me? You don't know what the hell you're doing!

NICK

Yes I do -- I was in the Navy, now shut up.

TEE-VEE

You never told me that!

NICK

Well, it's true. I trained to get through worse shit than this.

Muddy water is still rising, halfway up the windows, spraying in through the cracks.

NICK

Don't fight me, or I'll let you drown, so help me --

TEE-VEE

I won't, I won't --

NICK

-- God.

TEE-VEE

I won't fight you, I won't!

NICK

We'll make for the close side. Okay?
(they nod)

On three -- you're gonna have to push like a sonofabitch. That water is gonna fill your lungs, but don't fucking panic! You panic, you die!

Three pairs of eyes meet each other as the muddy water sprays their faces, fills up the roof at their heads.

NICK

One --

Three hands grab door handles,

NICK

Two --

muddy water rises higher, the trooper car going down,

NICK

THREE!

They PUSH the doors open, water BLASTING them like a wall of wet cement. Preacher Willie struggles with his lanky, long arms, the water eclipsing his head. In a moment, he is lost from sight.

Nick is upside-down with tons of water rushing in to kill him, and he's trying to go against the grain. He grunts as he's sprayed with a firehose-blast of riverwater.

AND HE'S OUT, hand grabbing the car door as the river threatens to rip him away and send him spinning to the muddy bottom. No rapids were ever this mean in Mississippi.

IN THE CHOPPER -

O'Keefe is watching through binoculars as the Trooper car's belly finally goes under, axles and tires disappearing with a sprayback of air.

He can see no survivors. The point in the river the car disappeared into is lost from sight. O'Keefe curses. He scans the river with the binocs, but all he sees is mud and death.

ON NICK

Underwater, he keeps his cool, but this is madness. Chaos within madness. You can't tell which way is up in this washing machine. Finally, he lets go of the car as it sinks under him like a dying whale, and --

HIS HEAD breaks the surface, mouth in a great O, gasping for air. His arms wheel for balance in the muddy water, moving his body along like a freight train on tracks of ice.

Something THUDS against his head. Nick pivots, grabs in the water and hauls out --

TEE-VEE, gasping for air, coughing water right into Nick's face. He's thrashing in the water. Nick can tell immediately this isn't gonna work. They'll both drown.

TEE-VEE

AHHH! Help me!

He thrashes, a fist clubbing Nick's head, sending him tumbling under the water. They both go down, the muddy tons dragging them down to certain death.

NICK is underwater, legs kicking, trying to steady the shorter man. Tee-Vee thrashes like a crazy horse. Nick pulls them both BACK UP --

where they grab a quick breath. But Tee-Vee is panicking, and hits Nick again. Nick's mouth is bleeding now. They both go under again, for the last time...

ON THE RIVER

Nick and Tee-Vee are nowhere to be seen. The rapids clash and foam as waves slap together in chaotic order.

UNDERWATER

Nick floats downward, air rushing out of him, no longer able to stay afloat. Tee-Vee's got him in a death grip, air rushing out his lungs in a paranoid attempt to shout for help here, under the river.

NICK (V.O.)

They say your life flashes before your eyes at a time like this. All I could think of is that I didn't want to die... But I wasn't just a no-good con making a getaway so he could live to plague society another day. No. I just thought of myself as a guy trying to live his life, who got sidetracked a bit...

DISSOLVE TO:

A SERIES OF IMAGES FROM NICK'S DYING MIND...

...the scenes play out in random order, the way someone's mind might recall things as he was drowning...

A ROOM.

A BED in the room.

TWO OBJECTS, tossed on the bed. A pair of leather gloves.
An automatic pistol.

TWO PEOPLE fall on the bed, arms intertwined. One of them
is Nick True. Seven years younger, and much happier. He
kisses a blond woman ferociously.

He pulls back and looks at her. We see her face, and then--

THE FLASHING IMAGE OF A PHOTO

being snatched off Nick's prison wall from the beginning of
the film. He hastily shoves the photo of the woman in his
pocket as --

THE PHOTO NOW FLOATS

free of Nick's pocket, underwater --

AND THEN WE FLASH

to the Woman, now in A COURTROOM, sobbing as Nick's verdict
is read.

NICK BEING LED AWAY

from the courtroom in manacles. The Woman shrieking,
crying, trying to get at Nick, to touch him one last time.
Nick is doing the same, burly court guards holding him back
as --

T.C. Malloy, a Sheriff, looks at the woman with a harsh,
penetrating stare. Her eyes meet Malloy's, and she turns
away, hiding her eyes, as Nick is pulled from the courtroom,
kicking and screaming...

NICK BEING

led from a prison bus into the PENITENTIARY for the first
time, a rainstorm raging down upon him.

THE SCREEN BLAZES WHITE AS -

Nick sits in his cell, official DIVORCE PAPERS held
listlessly in his hands, his eyes far off.

AND THEN WE ARE BACK --

IN NICK'S ROOM. Nick staring into the eyes of the Woman.

NICK

(sudden thought)

Do you wanna marry me?

WOMAN

(shows him a wedding ring)

Too late.

NICK

What's he like?

WOMAN

Tall. Rugged, like a mountain climber. Dark eyes that look right into you. Gives me a chill to think about it.

NICK

But he's not too bright, though.

WOMAN

No, he's got a first class mind --

NICK

Attracts you, doesn't it?

WOMAN

(continuing)

And he's got a voracious sexual appetite.

NICK

I've got competition.

WOMAN

You do...

(kisses him, then stops)

He does have one drawback.

NICK

(kisses her neck)

Mmm? What's that?

WOMAN

(seriously)

A self destructive streak.

Nick stops kissing her. Looks down into her eyes. He can see she's worried.

NICK

Nothing's gonna happen to me, Jenny.

She's reassured by his voice, but only for a moment.

WOMAN/JENNY

You don't have to do this.

NICK

(easy laugh)

That's why I love you. You worry about me.

JENNY

If I didn't, who would? Not you, that's for sure, Nicholas.

The Woman is JENNY TRUE, Nick's wife. She's beautiful. Too beautiful for rural Mississippi. Too beautiful maybe for even the wild, handsome Nick.

NICK

I'll be careful. You know me.

There is a silence between them, broken by the sounds of --

GUNFIRE

ripping into the ceiling. But it's not the ceiling in Nick's bedroom. It's the ceiling of --

A BANK.

Nick is now waving a smoking machine gun, wearing leather gloves, black coveralls and a MICHAEL MEYERS "Halloween" mask. Frightened customers and employees hit the polished bank floor.

NICK

(authoritative shout)

Everyone relax and no one gets their head blown off!

BACK TO:

THE RIVER -

where Nick continues to go down, no longer struggling, his feet kicking feebly.

BACK TO:

THE BEDROOM

where Jenny and Nick are still locked in their embrace. She's still looking up at him with worried eyes.

JENNY

(insistent)

Be careful.

NICK

I will.

Now, there is a new sound. The sound of --

A MANHOLE BEING OPENED. Nick climbs up out of the manhole, wearing an orange helmet and the uniform of a Southern Bell repairman. He replaces a sleek hand saw onto his tool belt.

EXT. MEDIUM SIZED CITY - DAY

The open manhole is surrounded by a Southern Bell safety lattice and warning signs.

He replaces the manhole cover, folds up the street lattice and safety signs. Takes everything.

CUT TO:

A PADLOCK BEING SAWED APART WITH THE SLEEK HANDSAW.

ZZZzzzz! Nick stops the diamond-tipped blade and -- Clunk! the lock falls to the ground. Standing on a street corner, Nick opens the doors of A TELEPHONE REPAIR BOX.

Pedestrians pay Nick no mind as he carefully SNIPS two wires within the hundreds of jumbled wires within the repair box.

Nick takes an orange repair phone off his utility belt, hooks the wires from the phone into a specific area in the complex panel. Dials a number on the back of the phone.

INT. A BANK - CONTINUOUS

A bank MANAGER is irritated by Nick's phone call.

MANAGER

(agitated)

Again? This is the fourth time this month! Can't you people get it right?

INTERCUT - WITH NICK at the phone repair box.

NICK

I understand your frustration, Mr. Phillips, but as I said, the lightning storm last week sent a lot of our silent alarm accounts haywire. Minuteman Security Service wants to test all our clients to ensure their safety, and --

MANAGER

(busy and tired)

Okay, okay, okay. What do you want me to do this time?

NICK

Simply, sir, we'd like you to activate your silent alarm. It would be a great help to us, and it's in the bank's best interest.

MANAGER

(heavy sigh)

All right. Give me the code and the password.

NICK

(reciting from memory)

The code is V3505 4502 2B. The password is CHRYSLER.

MANAGER

(nods, impatient)

Bingo. One moment.

THE MANAGER sets the phone down, goes to the long line of teller windows and lets himself in through the locked access door. Puts the keys in his pocket, comes to the first window and reaches under the counter.

PUDGY FINGERS find the alarm. They PRESS THE BUTTON.

ON NICK - waiting for the Manager, keeping his eyes peeled for anyone watching. A COP CAR drives right by, behind him, but keeps going. Nick watches the car with the eyes in the back of his head, leery.

INSIDE THE BANK -

THE MANAGER is back on the phone again.

MANAGER

Did you get that?

NICK

(appropriate pause)

Hmmm. Yes sir, coming through loud and clear. We'll tell the police it's a false alarm. Thanks for your cooperation.

The Manager hangs up, shakes his head, as if the interruption was just another link in a chain of ineptitude.

BACK TO:

THE REPAIR BOX

where Nick closes the metal doors of the box, and slaps on a NEW PADLOCK. Clicks the lock into place and goes to --

THE OPEN BACK DOORS OF A TRUCK.

We don't see the rest of the truck yet, that comes later. Nick places gives the handsaw and equipment to --

ANOTHER MAN. Who looks much like Nick. He's got the same wiry build and intense eyes. He wears black coveralls, zipper up the front, and a tattoo on his arm that says: KILL 'EM ALL, LET GOD SORT 'EM OUT.

His name is FRANK TRUE. If you asked Frank which he'd like to do more, take on three guys at once in a street brawl or listen to the soundtrack from "South Pacific," he'd pick the street brawl.

And if you asked Frank whether he'd like to street brawl or have sex with Nicolette Sheridan, he might just pick the street brawl.

Nick climbs up into THE BACK OF THE TRUCK. It's empty, save for metal benches bolted into the truck, and a locked crate. Frank unlocks the crate and withdraws two MACHINE GUNS.

Nick changes his clothes. He's got his back to us, and puts the black coveralls over his new outfit. Now he looks just like Frank.

Frank takes two canvas carrying bags from the crate. Puts a machine gun inside each bag and closes the clasps.

NICK AND FRANK -

Frank hands Nick a bag. They look at each other and, without a word, head out the BACK DOORS OF THE TRUCK.

ON A STREETCORNER

Nick looks at his watch. Then his eyes take in --

DOWNTOWN.

No one knows what they're up to. Everyone going about their business. No sounds of police, either.

FRANK

(looking at his watch)

Four minutes since you called.

(grin)

You did it. They're deaf and mute.

NICK

(nods, satisfied)

Ready?

FRANK

Born ready.

They turn from the corner and walk toward --

THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF MISSISSIPPI. Imposing stone facade glaring down at the two men as they approach.

Nick peers through the FRONT WINDOWS of the bank.

Sees a clock that reads: 5:59. The bank is closing. There are still fifteen customers inside.

Nick's eyes scan the place critically, looking for anything amiss. He accidentally makes eye contact with A YOUNG SECURITY GUARD.

INT. THE BANK - CONT.

The Young Security Guard sees two men in the doorway, peering inside, wearing black coveralls, duffel bags in their hands. It doesn't look like a delivery of flowers. These guys look serious.

The Security Guard waves over AN OLDER SECURITY GUARD.

YOUNG GUARD
(points to Nick and Frank)
Clyde. Take a look at this.

CLYDE, the older Guard who can only think of quittin' time, shuffles over to the Young Guard.

CLYDE
So?

YOUNG GUARD
(annoyed at Clyde's work ethic)
Well, this may be only my first month here, but I'd say those boys are fixin' to rob the bank.

CLYDE
(squints at Frank)
You're nuts.

YOUNG GUARD
Am I?

He sees Nick and Frank, in unison, put Michael Meyers masks over their heads. They charge through the glass doors, slamming them shut --

CLYDE CAN'T BELIEVE HIS EYES. Never in his ten years has someone ripped this place off. He's so scared he can't even get his hand on the butt of his revolver.

He doesn't have time as the Young Security Guard SLAMS the butt of a gun into the back of Clyde's head. Clyde goes down, thankful to be unconscious. He wouldn't have offered much resistance, anyway.

Nick and Frank open their bags, pulling out the machine guns in unison, still striding purposefully forward.

They BLAST THE CEILING with a ten round burst, tile raining down on absolutely terrified customers.

The Young Security Guard, named VIC, runs past Nick and Frank, keys jangling. He LOCKS THE FRONT doors, takes a quick look both ways down the sidewalk, and moves two STANDING BILLBOARDS in front of the glass doors.

To anyone outside, it looks like the bank is advertising for savings accounts. The real purpose is to block the view of a robbery in progress.

NICK
(to the people)
Everyone relax and no one gets their
head blown off!

Nick BLASTS the ceiling again. Everyone hits the deck, screaming. Men cower, women whimper. Tellers wince and the Manager crawls under his desk.

A FEMALE TELLER ducking under the counter, mutters --

FEMALE TELLER
Fuck this.

-- and reaches up and hits the SILENT SECURITY ALARM BUTTON. Twice, three times, just to be sure.

THE MANAGER - feels Nick grabbing him by his pant belt, pulling him out from under his desk. Nick looks terrifying in his mask. He shoves the gun in the Manager's pudgy face.

NICK
The safe, in sixty seconds, or you
die.

He means it. The Manager moves quickly.

INSIDE THE SAFE

Nick has the Manager carrying the two duffel bags. The Manager sets them down before --

THE SAFE -- still open on a time lock. The Manager unlocks a large portion of the vault, hands shaking with fear. He

starts filling the bags with bills wrapped in paper bands denoting varied worth. Most read: \$500.

Nick KICKS the Manager on his fat ass with a size eleven work boot. The Manager looks up from the floor with terrified eyes.

NICK

What the fuck are you doing?

MANAGER

(stutters)

Giving you the money.

NICK

(menacing whisper)

I want the money that came in two days ago. The money that comes once a year on the way to St. Louis.

MANAGER

(perplexed)

What?

NICK

The \$4.5 million in The Chamber.

He motions with the gun to a section of gleaming iron bars within the safe. The Chamber. Behind the bars is a single locked cabinet. The Manager looks at the bars, then swallows, hard. Looks back at the barrel of the machine gun. The Manager's "ignorant" act is over. He sees that Nick knows what he's doing.

CUT TO:

TWO DUFFEL BAGS being stuffed with bills, Nick and the Manager placing huge stacks of \$20s, wrapped in fresh paper bands that read: \$10,000. There are 450 packets to place in the bags. It takes agonizingly long, although the real time elapsed is merely half a minute.

THE LOBBY -

Frank is holding vigil over the frightened customers. Vic, in his security uniform, watches over the employees. Frank whirls in time to catch --

A DUFFEL BAG.

FRANK

Heavy.

We can tell he's smiling through his Michael Meyers mask.

NICK

(to the people)

Listen up! Everyone duck their heads for five minutes. Anyone look up, anyone peek -- they get shot.

FRANK

Anyone talk they get shot.

The people are scared. They do exactly what the two men say. Everyone looks at the tile floor.

Nick and Frank take off their masks. They unzip their coveralls and peel them off, revealing BRINKS SECURITY UNIFORMS.

Vic reaches into a desk, tosses them both a Brinks Cap, which he had waiting. Nick and Frank put on the caps.

Nick and Frank size each other up. They look like Brinks guys, right down to the holstered guns.

FRANK

(cool as ever)

Let's roll.

They turn to leave. Vic follows them, holstering his gun when --

BOOM! a shot rings out, people scream, Nick and Frank whirl, guns drawn, not knowing what the fuck happened as --

VIC goes down, shot in the upper back, disbelief all over his face. Frank spots, of all people --

CLYDE. The stupid old bastard shot Vic in the back, his eyes still half shut from being knocked cold. Clyde sees Frank and Nick, and aims his quivering gun toward them.

Frank and Nick unload at the same time, hitting Clyde in the chest and neck. Blood sprays in the air like Old Faithful. Clyde's eternal soul is already standing before St. Peter before his body can hit the linoleum.

The silence after the carnage is deafening. Nick can't believe the shit that just went down. Frank recovers faster. He runs to Vic, rolls him over.

Vic is trying to speak. His mouth is full of blood. Vic grimaces, spits out the blood.

VIC
(groaning)
I can do it.

FRANK
You sure?

Vic nods, and, incredibly, tries to stand. Frank helps him, careful not to get Vic's blood on the Brink's uniform.

Frank watches Vic, critically, and we can almost read his thoughts: would it be best to put Vic down like a lame horse than have him jeopardize everything right now?

Vic straightens up. Nods to Frank and walks under his own power toward the door.

Nick turns with them, follows. Sees the blossoming bloodstain on Vic's right shoulder, above the heart. It can't feel pleasant.

Nick and Frank move the advertisements from the door. Vic leans over and, in extreme pain, unlocks the front doors.

Without looking down the sidewalk, Frank and Nick head purposefully for --

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BANK - CONT.

-- THE TRUCK, which we now see is AN AUTHENTIC ARMORED TRUCK, signs on the side read: BRINKS SECURITY.

They look like two guys transporting money from the bank, plain and simple. No one gives them a second glance.

Vic follows behind, looking simply like a bank security guard escorting the Brink's guys. No one turns around to see a huge bloodstain on his back.

Frank climbs in the truck, takes the duffel bags and locks them in a cabinet.

Nick helps Vic up into the truck. Vic staggers in, face pale, blood seeping between his lips. He sits heavily on a bench, wincing in pain.

VIC
(to himself)
I can make it.

BACK IN THE BANK -

the fat Manager looks around, sees the men have left. He reaches for the phone on his desk, pulls it down and yanks the receiver up to his ear. Clicks the carriage. The phone is dead. He tries one line after the other.

MANAGER
Dammit!

IN THE TRUCK -

Frank nods to Nick, who locks the back door on the two men. Nick takes one last look around the bank. Just another summer day as far as everyone else is concerned. No alarms, no sirens.

INT. TRUCK, NICK DRIVING - DAY

He cruises down a well-planned series of side streets, none of them downtown thoroughfare, none of them congested with rush hour traffic.

THE TRUCK makes its way over a bridge, heading into a residential part of town.

IN THE BACK -

Vic is choking on the floor of the truck. But not on his own blood. The wound in his back may have been fatal at some point, but what is definitely killing him now is --

FRANK - leaning his forearm into Vic's throat. Vic's bulging eyes try to make sense of what's going on. He shakes his head, tries to speak, but nothing comes out. Frank is brutally finishing what Clyde started.

DISSOLVE TO:

NICK DRIVING -

Listening to the chatter of a POLICE RADIO on the seat beside him.

Through the windshield, we see the Brink's truck is no longer in the city. Countryside flashes by as the day turns to night.

Nick pulls the truck over by a GARBAGE DUMP. Steps out of the truck, quickly moves around, casing the area. It's deserted.

He PEELS OFF the phony Brinks Security stickers, using his fingernails to get them off. They peel away easily.

Nick takes off all identifying markings. Wads the stickers up and tosses them down into the dump.

Nick reaches in a briefcase, unrolls new stickers. Quickly places them on each side of the truck. The stickers read: BORDEN'S ICE CREAM.

If anyone bothered to look closely at the Ice Cream truck, they might wonder why Borden's is using converted armored cars to deliver Ice Cream. But it's less conspicuous in the country than a Brinks Truck.

Satisfied, Nick hops back inside.

IN THE TRUCK, MOVING

The police radio is still chattering. Now he hears something about the bank.

POLICE RADIO

...two suspects, no description, uh,
about one hour ago. All units be
advised for any suspicious
vehicles...

Nick grins as he realizes the police haven't got squat.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

We're now entering farmland. Smallsville. Shitkicker-berg. The Borden's truck passes pastures, cows. Desolation.

Nick guides the truck into a dense wooded area. Stops the truck. Gets out and heads around back.

INT. THE BACK OF THE TRUCK - NIGHT

the doors swing open, Nick standing there, silhouetted by the moon.

NICK
Vic?

FRANK
Nope.

REVERSE: Frank comes into the light, shaking his head.

FRANK
Died before my eyes, Nick. There was nothing I could do.

Nick's eyes find Vic, on the floor, in a pool of blood, eyes shut forever.

NICK
Shit. This never should've happened.

FRANK
Easy, Nick. We made it this far.

NICK
(runs fingers through his hair)
Okay, I'll take care of him.

FRANK
You sure? About everything?

NICK
You go to work and clock in... We stick with the plan.

Frank hops out of the truck. He now wears the wardrobe of a FACTORY WORKER. Greasy pants and a white button down shirt cut off at the biceps, left ragged, exposing Frank's tattoo and muscular arms.

Frank moves to a CAR, waiting in the trees, hidden. He glances at his watch.

FRANK
Friday night?

NICK
(preoccupied with Vic)
Yeah. Ten o'clock.

FRANK
Okay.
(turns back)
Maybe I should help you.

NICK
The less you know, the better. If
we blew it somewhere we don't know
about, then we'll be picked up. And
if you know where the money is, we
both lose it. Right?

FRANK
(reluctant)
Right.

Frank gets in the hidden CAMERO and guns the engine. Backs
the car onto the road and peels off.

CUT TO:

THE TRUCK AT THE EDGE OF A PRECIPICE.

EXT. LIMESTONE QUARRY - NIGHT

Long since abandoned, the wide quarry is filled forty feet
deep with water. A small lake in the middle of nowhere.

Nick is in his street clothes, smoking a cigarette, living
the moment of victory. It's bittersweet. Vic is dead in
the back, and it spoils things.

Nick lets the cigarette trail down the side of the quarry
wall, the ember burning all the way down. It finally hisses
as it hits the dark water, and dies.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE RIVER - PRESENT - DAY

NICK comes back up, breaching the surface, pissed and still
wanting to live. He COLD COCKS TEE-VEE. Whap! Fist
hitting flesh in the water, a sound like no other.

Tee-Vee is out cold with a mere whimper. He gets Tee-Vee in
a Lifeguard's carry and tries to keep them both afloat.

PREACHER WILLIE - is actually faring quite well, his lithe, long body seemingly made for the water. He swims hard, heading for the bank, miles away in the rough waves.

NICK - swims with his back to the current, dragging Tee-Vee toward the muddy bank, still so far away. He doesn't see --

ANOTHER BRIDGE, coming up fast, the rough water being sucked around the huge concrete pilings like an enormous set of identical whirlpools.

Nick tries to steer away from the piling, which he seems destined to smash into head-on at ten knots.

The water SUCKS Nick and Tee-Vee around the piling, barely missing it, the men riding the wave like some villainous amusement park ride.

Nick paddles in the muddy rapids, heads for an outcropping of mud and trees, jutting out into the swift river.

PREACHER WILLIE - ahead of the men, grabs an overhanging tree branch. He pulls himself onto the muddy bank as water rushes over his head and arms. Spitting mud, Preacher Willie climbs onto the bank.

NICK AND TEE-VEE - are coming right at the bank, but they're gonna miss it. Preacher Willie sees them and sticks his hand out over the river, as far as it'll go.

Nick sees Preacher, mud-streaked, looking like a primordial beast, hanging onto the tree with one powerful arm and stretching out the other.

Nick reaches out with one desperate hand and -- SLAP! flesh meets flesh, black meets white in the brown river, and PREACHER WILLIE PULLS.

Nick almost loses his grasp on Tee-Vee, but manages to hold onto the little cinder-block of a man. Preacher pulls, Nick holds on, and all three men make it onto the muddy bank.

Nick drags Tee-Vee with him, getting him to higher ground. The whole bank threatens to be washed away. Preacher scrambles up the side of the muddy bank, legs sinking up his ankles, then knees. He pulls out his legs with a slurping sound every time he moves. It's slow going.

Nick slaps Tee-Vee's face. Tee-Vee gurgles, comes to, looks around with wild eyes.

TEE-VEE

Jesus! Jesus, we made it!

NICK

You nearly killed me you dumb asshole.

They climb up the mud to the top of the riverbank. The churning water under the men is a constant reminder of nature's fury -- one slip and they're back in the washing machine.

NICK'S POV - climbing up over the bank, he sees over the wall of sandbags to see --

Nothing. Empty land, flooded. Getting worse. Soon this whole countryside is going to be under a foot of water. Two feet. Maybe more if the rain doesn't let up.

WHAP! WHAP! WHAP!

Nick hears the sound coming out of the low clouds.

NICK

Get over the edge! Come on!

INT. THE HELICOPTER - CONT.

O'Keefe is still searching with his binoculars. The pilot is making a cursory sweep of the river, but his heart isn't in it. No one could survive that car crash.

O'Keefe sees the muddy bank where Preacher Willie saved Nick and Tee-Vee.

POV - O'KEEFE - focusing the binoculars. Nothing but mud.

O'KEEFE

(to the pilot)

Keep going!

ON THE GROUND - Nick and the others are eating mud on the other side of the sandbags, camouflaged. Nick watches the belly of the chopper head away, into an unending rainshower.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHEAP ROADSIDE MOTEL - NIGHT

Headlights wash over the flat land as a car WHOOSHES by, driving past a ROW OF MOTELS and a TRAILER PARK.

The winking neon sign of the SLEEP 'N GO MOTEL is on its last leg. Mosquitoes buzz around a blue zapper, flashing as the bugs meet fiery death.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONT.

A MAN lies on a bed, a gag in his mouth. He's frightened, looking up at --

A WOMAN IN BLACK LEATHER. A dominatrix with a whip.

WOMAN

You little filthy piggie.

She cracks the whip. CRACK! The Man on the bed whimpers. His hands and feet are tied to the bedposts, and he's completely naked save for a LARGE DIAPER.

WOMAN

You are such a dirty little pig.

You should be punished.

(the man nods)

You need punishment little piglet?

(he nods again)

Hmmm. Okay, piggy --

Creak!

POV/DOMINATRIX - she turns to see a mud-soaked TEE-VEE standing in the doorway, a rusty nail in his hand, improvising as a lock pick.

Behind him is a tall black guy with a bible in his hand, and behind him is another guy, very harsh looking. They're covered from head to toe with mud.

DOMATRIX

(to the man on the bed, confused)

It's gonna cost more if your friends wanna join in.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MOTEL ROOM - LATER

TEE-VEE eats from a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken, staring intently at something. Preacher Willie eats spoonfuls of mashed potatoes as --

THE MOTEL ROOM DOOR OPENS, and a freshly showered Nick enters the room, wearing some of the man's clothes from the ransacked suitcase in the corner.

He tosses each man a beer from a six pack of Old Milwaukee. Takes a look at what the men are so intent on.

REVERSE - They've tied the Dominatrix onto the man wearing the diaper. Cheeks pressed together like lovers, they try to speak through gags. Both struggle against their binds, furious at the humiliation they are being subjected to.

On the table next to Tee-Vee is a bunch of soda pop cans, an empty pizza box, and three sets of silver ankle chains, the locks picked by Tee-Vee. They've been here awhile.

Preacher Willie and Tee-Vee are showered, cleaned up and shaved, looking much better. They too wear some of the salesman's clothes. Preacher is a little tall for them, but they'll do. It's hard to tell they're convicts.

Preacher's feet are only covered in socks, his large feet too big for the salesman's extra shoes.

NICK

Present for you, Preacher.

He tosses Preacher Willie a shoebox. Preacher looks up at Nick, surprised.

NICK

Go on, open it.

Preacher pulls out a pair of size twelve and a half Nike's. He marvels at the fancy white shoes, a smile spreading across his face. He holds them up to the light.

PREACHER WILLIE

Where'd you get 'em?

NICK

Store.

TEE-VEE
At this hour?

NICK
(dry)
They opened special for me.

Preacher Willie looks almost close to tears as he slips his feet into the shoes.

PREACHER WILLIE
(completely sincere)
This is a great day.

He sighs with their comfort. To you and me they're just a pair of shoes. But to a man who's been wearing prison-issue shoes for the last ten years, they're heaven.

Preacher can't seem to get the shoelaces tied. He's having trouble, and is obviously frustrated.

TEE-VEE
(sighs, puts down his beer)
Here, lemmie help you.

He kneels down and ties the Preacher's shoes for him. Preacher Willie is still smiling at the gift.

Nick takes a piece of fried chicken and digs in as he walks up to the two guests on the bed.

NICK
(to the hostages)
Just a few more hours, then we'll go... Oh, by the way, bud, your brakes are a little squeaky.

Tee-Vee laughs at this as he finishes tying Preacher's shoes. Preacher Willie eats mashed potatoes, eyeballing the shoes at the end of his legs from every angle as he chews.

NICK
(counts the salesman's cash in his pocket)
Sixty three bucks left.

TEE-VEE
Any ideas?

CUT TO:

INT. DARK HOUSE - DAWN

A bedroom, decorated without much imagination. A phone on a nightstand.

Ring...ring. A big-knuckled hand reaches up, grabs the phone. The hand moves out of frame. A tired, scratchy voice rumbles through the dark room.

VOICE

Yeah?...

He clears his throat. Listens.

VOICE

What?

(now very interested)

Right, right...shit. I'll be there in an hour.

The hand comes back up, hangs up the phone. The man sits up, rubbing his eyes. It's T.C. Malloy.

MALLOY

(can't believe it)

Shit.

A WOMAN'S voice rises up from the bed.

MRS. MALLOY

(grumpy)

What the hell is it?

MALLOY

True busted out of prison.

MRS. MALLOY

You gotta be kidding me.

Malloy gets out of bed, leaving a grumpy Mrs. Malloy behind.

MALLOY

Two days ago.

EXT. MALLOY'S HOUSE - MORNING

A TOWN OF MASSEY Sheriff's car sits in front of a large, rambling house. A fenced-in stable with two horses running on lush grass graces the area to the left of the house.

There is a long driveway, and no neighbors as far as the eye can see. A satellite dish rises on the back yard.

Malloy comes out of the house in his Sheriff's uniform, turns his hat brim down to keep the rain out of his face. He passes a twenty-foot speedboat behind the garage on a trailer hitch. Sips a cup of coffee as he gets in the police car.

EXT. TOWN OF MASSEY - MORNING

Malloy drives through the farming community of Massey, heading toward a small downtown area. The Sheriff's car splashes through large puddles in the road, windshield wipers are on high.

Malloy has a radio on his car, tuned to the weather.

RADIO

The flooding is getting much, much worse as rain continues to pound the Southeast. Much of Alabama is in serious trouble, and flooding is moving West, into Mississippi. There is a report already coming in of three flood related deaths...

MALLOY

Great.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERIFF'S STATION - MORNING

We are watching the front of the Sheriff's Station through a rain spattered windshield. Pedestrians walking along Main Street hold umbrellas before them in a futile gesture to keep the rain off.

There is a rush on the local grocery store, most of the town frantically getting ready for the coming flood. The hardware store is deluged with pickup trucks loading canvas sacks and gravel into flatbeds.

T.C. Malloy's Sheriff car pulls down the street in front of us. Malloy parks, gets out of the car.

REVERSE ANGLE

To show Nick sitting behind the wheel of the salesman's T-Bird, parked. He stares at Malloy as the Sheriff disappears inside the station.

TEE-VEE

What are we doin' here, man?

NICK

You don't have to stay.

TEE-VEE

(sees Nick's icy gaze)

Nothin' else to do.

Preacher Willie stays politely quiet. Nick's watches the Sheriff's station, waiting.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - THE PAST - NIGHT

Nick checks the bullets in his automatic pistol. Shoves it in the back of his waistband, shoulders on a leather jacket.

Jenny watches him from a chair in the kitchen. She's eating waffles even though it's eight at night.

JENNY

(re: gun)

You really need that?

Nick raises his eyebrows at her, gives her a look.

JENNY

It's just Frank, Nick... Isn't it?

NICK

(grabs car keys)

Yeah, it is, but I like to be prepared.

JENNY

You're not telling me something. I know you.

NICK

I know you do. But I'm telling you everything, okay, hon?

She picks at her waffle listlessly. He grabs half a waffle with his fingers, shoves it in his mouth. She slaps his hand. He grins and sits on her lap.

JENNY

You fat pig! You're crushing me.

NICK

(mouth full)

Pucker up, buttercup!

JENNY

I'm gonna be a cripple, goddamit.

He kisses her with syrupy lips. She shoves him away.

JENNY

(still laughing)

You're all sticky. Get the hell outta here.

Nick jumps up, having erased his wife's fears. He opens the front screen door and starts to head out, but something makes him stop. He looks over his shoulder.

NICK'S POV - he takes a last look at her like it's really his last look at her. She's sitting in his shitty kitchen with the floor sloping to one side, an old table with a crooked leg, plate of waffles in front of her, hair up on her head, her wearing a white t-shirt, watching him go.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick comes out of the house.

POV - SOMEONE IN A CAR

Watches as Nick walks by a rickety garage, separate from the rest of the house, and gets in his car.

REVERSE ANGLE -

From across the road, Nick is being watched by T.C. Malloy. Malloy's eyes travel from Nick's car to --

THE FRONT WINDOW OF NICK'S HOUSE.

Where Jenny is watching Nick go away.

INT. THE HOUSE - CONT.

Jenny sees the Mustang drive off. She rubs her arms as if to ward off a chill. Then her eyes find the Sheriff's car, sitting dark and unmoving under a large elm tree. She can see T.C. Malloy looking back at her. She does nothing, her facial expression remaining calm.

MALLOY sees Jenny looking back at him. He starts up the car and takes off after Nick, headlights off.

EXT. DARK ROAD - NIGHT

Nick is driving under a cluster of trees which canopy the country road like an umbrella of green.

Next to the road is a large creek, running in a winding, twisting path.

ANGLE ON ROAD - As the Mustang passes us with a rumble. Moments later the dark Sheriff's car whooshes by.

EXT. CREEK CLEARING - NIGHT

Frank is here, sitting on the hot hood of his Camero. He checks his handgun, chambering a round, replacing it in the front of his Levi's and covering it with a work shirt.

He sits under a very distinctive looking elm tree that hangs out over a deep part of the creek. The tree is gigantic, great branches covering the entire clearing. Someone has tied a rope swing on a branch, and many summers have been spent swinging into the creek.

But those summers are gone. Now it's Frank and Nick and stolen money, and a few handguns.

Frank sees headlights. Hears an engine. The Mustang rumbles into the clearing. Frank shields his eyes from the piercing light of the headlights. Nick kills the lights and sees Frank on the hood of the Camero.

IN THE CAR -

Nick lets loose a long sigh. Reaches over on his seat and picks up a heavy duffel bag, one of the bags from the robbery.

NICK'S BOOTS

crunch over small stones and gravel as he makes his way to his brother. IN FRAME is the handbag with the money. The crickets are deafening, the air full of summer fireflies.

Nick tosses the bag through the air toward Frank. It lands in Frank's arms with a heavy thud.

FRANK

It went okay?

NICK

Yeah. No problem.

Frank smiles, hefts the weight of the bag.

FRANK

(quick laugh)

What're you gonna do with your half?

Nick puts a foot on the fender of the Camero.

NICK

You know, that's a damn good question. You'd think I'd have a million ideas, but I just haven't thought of any.

FRANK

Hmm.

They are silent, the bag on the car between them. Neither of them is talking about the real subject between them.

NICK

Guess we should be careful.

FRANK

(guarded)

Yeah. Just like we said. No spending sprees.

NICK

Dead giveaway.

FRANK

I've been thinking...

He jumps from the Camero and lands with a thud in his cowboy boots. Frank is bigger and more imposing than Nick. Nick watches Frank carefully, although he's not making it look that way. There is electricity in the air between them.

FRANK

...thinkin' I'm gonna go away.

NICK

(beat)

Where?

FRANK

(with a flourish)

Spain.

NICK

Spain?

FRANK

(darkens)

What's funny?

NICK

Just can't imagine you in Spain,
that's all.

FRANK

(not appreciating Nick's humor)

Well, that's a starting point
anyway.

NICK

(stops laughing)

With Vic gone, I guess you'll be
able to spend more time abroad.

FRANK

(lets that slide)

Yeah.

NICK

I mean, we each get more, now, huh?
Not such a bad thing. Too bad for
Vic, but then, that's the risk in a
deal like this.

Frank says nothing. Stands in front of Nick and stares into him, trying to see where Nick's leading.

NICK

I suppose -- I mean, I just suppose,
I haven't really thought much about
it -- that you could have a great
time in Spain with the whole take.

Nick pats the bag, looks right at Frank. His hand rests on the bag. There is a long, long silence.

FRANK

What the fuck's that s'posed to
mean?

NICK

(shrugs, stays cool)
I don't know, Frank... I think maybe
you'd like my cut, too.

FRANK

I what?

NICK

You killed Vic, Frank.

The only sound is the crickets. Frank's eyes seem to register Nick's words, but can't believe them. Suddenly furious, Frank starts for Nick.

FRANK

The fuck you say!

Nick's gun is out in an instant, pointed right between Frank's eyes.

FRANK

Jesus!

(jumps back)

Nick, we're brothers! What the hell
are you doin'?

NICK

That's right. We're brothers. And
brothers don't need guns, do they?

Nick reaches into Frank's waistband and pulls out the pistol. Frank knows he's busted. Nick keeps his distance.

FRANK

You're my little brother, you stupid
fuck!

NICK

Then why do you need a gun?

FRANK

I'm careful, you know that.
(can't think of anything)
I'm just careful.

NICK

It's all yours, if you want it.

Nick motions to the bag. Frank eyes Nick, then the bag.

NICK

(shouts)
Open it!

Frank jumps at Nick's shout. He takes a step to the bag, keeping his eye on Nick's gun. He opens the bag.

INSIDE - two Yellow Pages phone books look up Frank.

FRANK

What the fuck?

NICK

(shakes his head)
Frank, Frank, Frank... What am I
gonna do with you?

(beat)
You forget that I know about men
getting killed, Frank. Vic died too
quickly, and he had bruises on his
neck. I checked.

(Frank watches him)
You killed him. And you were gonna
kill me tonight, weren't you?

Frank is still holding the bag, seething with rage. Being outsmarted by his little brother isn't good for Frank's temper.

NICK

I always knew you had your dark
side, Frank, but then, don't we all?
Only yours is really dark, isn't it?
Pitch fucking black, and I think I'm
staring right into that black hole
right now.

Frank doesn't try to hide who is anymore. His eyes tell us everything Nick says is true.

NICK

Let me tell you what happens now.
You go back to your stupid job and
so do I. You don't get that money,
Frank. You never get it. I'm the
only one who knows where it is, and
you'll never find it. Not in a
million years, brother.

He says the last word like it's a filthy curse.

FRANK

You're so smart. Aren't you,
brother?

Nick doesn't have time to answer as Frank HURLS the bag at him. Nick is hit full force, staggers back, gun deflected toward the sky. Frank rushes him, tackling Nick. They go down in a heap. The gun flies from Nick's hand.

WHAP! Frank's fist drives into Nick's nose. Blood spurts out immediately. WHAP - WHUMP, Frank hits him again, fast in the face then in the gut.

Nick pistons his knee into Frank's crotch.

FRANK

AAAHHHH!

Frank is tossed off. Nick stands and drives the point of his boot into Frank's ribs. CRACK! there goes a rib. Frank cries out as Nick kicks again, but --

Frank catches Nick's boot, twists and brings him down like a calf about to be hog-tied. Frank reaches over in the dirt--

ON FRANK'S HAND

desperately searching in the dirt and gravel. Fingers finally tickle the butt of Nick's gun.

HIS HAND IS CRUSHED, as a big black boot comes down on his fingers. Frank cries out, looking up at the muzzle of --

T.C. MALLOY'S MAGNUM. Frank and Nick stop fighting, looking up at Malloy.

MALLOY

Hello, boys.

CUT TO:

INT. MASSEY SHERIFF'S STATION - PRESENT - DAY

A DEPUTY named DEJAQUE hangs up the phone as Malloy stands over him.

DEJAQUE

State Cops think True could be
headin' back to Massey.

Malloy nods slowly and turns away, thinking.

DEJAQUE

I tend to agree.
(tactful beat)
True hates you.

MALLOY

All I ever did was arrest him.

DEJAQUE

You done a little more than that,
T.C.

Malloy looks up at DeJaque, sharply. DeJaque holds his gaze evenly until Malloy nods.

MALLOY

Yeah, maybe so.

DEJAQUE

Hell, he's probably stuck in some
tree somewhere a hundred miles away,
hidin' from the flood.

Malloy heads for his desk.

MALLOY

You get those sandbags?

DEJAQUE

(frustrated)
Terry says he ran out. I couldn't
get anything out of that bastard.

MALLOY

Fuck him! One place that needs to
stay dry is the Sheriff's station!

Malloy grabs his hat, pissed, and passes a few startled
Deputies on his way out of the cramped station.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERIFF'S STATION - CONT.

ON NICK, sitting in the T-Bird, watching the Police station.

Tee-Vee is staying quiet, not wanting to anger Nick again.
The salesman's clothes look all wrong on him.

They've been sitting here for awhile, Nick doing a long,
slow burn as his mind drifts in and out of memories long
since pushed under black dirt.

OUT THE WINDSHIELD -

Like chariots of light and hope, two ARMORED CARS pull right
down Main Street, escorted by a STATE POLICE CAR.

TEE-VEE

(singsong)

Do you see what I see?

The Armored Cars turn a corner, double park at SOUTHEAST
SAVINGS BANK. Two State Police officers get out of their
cars, go around to the Armored Cars and stand vigil.

NICK STARES AT THE TRUCK, leading us back to --

EXT. THE QUARRY - NIGHT, THE PAST

THE ARMORED TRUCK -

is now rolling fast toward the edge of the quarry. Nick
JUMPS from the driver's seat, landing in a run on the ground
as the truck continues on for the edge of the quarry.

OVER THE EDGE

the tonnage of metal moans once as spinning wheels find
nothing but air. The truck falls, dull metal reflecting
moonlight as it plunges toward the glassy black lake of the
quarry and --

SPLASHES! into the water with an earth shattering sound.
But there's no one around to hear it.

Nick watches down at the truck as it gurgles, glug, glug,
and begins to sink. There's one dead man and \$4.5 million
dollars in the back of that truck.

EXT. NEAR THE QUARRY - NIGHT

Nick gets in a Mustang, hidden in the trees. With a roar of
the tires on gravel, he's gone into the night....

BACK TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SHERIFF'S STATION - PRESENT DAY

Nick still eyeing the armored cars, his mind entrenched in
the past.

A SMALL CROWD -

Watches with interest despite the downpour as Armed Guards
carry large bags of cash from the back of the truck.

TEE-VEE

Wonder what's going on.

NICK

Could be they were delivering the
money somewhere big, and couldn't
get through for the flooding.

TEE-VEE

(nods)

Drop it off here to keep it safe.

PREACHER WILLIE

Must be a lot for two cars.

TEE-VEE

I think we're all on the same
wavelength here.

Nick looks back at him, critically.

NICK

Just what we need, a bank robbery to
advertise where we are, and then no
way to get within fifty miles 'cause
of the floods.

Tee-Vee frowns. He's got his eyes locked on those bags being pulled from the trucks. Bag after bag. Despite himself, Nick is interested. But he loses interest quickly as he sees --

AT THE SHERIFF'S STATION -

T.C. Malloy comes stalking back out, holding his hat toward the rain. He makes a beeline across a muddy, waterlogged main street toward the HARDWARE STORE.

NICK checks the bullets in his pistol. Opens the car door, shoving the gun in his waistband.

TEE-VEE

Where you goin'?

NICK

Gonna see an old friend.

Nick slams the door. The rain soaks him immediately. He walks through puddles, not caring, fifty feet behind Sheriff Malloy's back.

Nick's eyes could start the town on fire right now. He's been waiting for this moment for seven years. He gets closer to the Sheriff, the butt of the gun rubbing up against his tight belly, pleading with him to take it out and blast him.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - CONT.

Nick walks in the mobbed store, as Massey townsfolk grab the last four shovels, fighting over them. A WOMAN is arguing with AN EMPLOYEE at the counter.

WOMAN

I ordered this stuff last week --

EMPLOYEE

It's gone. Gone, do you understand!

WOMAN

Without those bags we'll lose the house, the barn --

EMPLOYEE

You wanna go in the back and see?!
There's nothin' left.

The Employee shouts at all the customers:

EMPLOYEE

We have no more sandbags! No more!

The store is in an uproar. It's turning into a mob scene.

Nick walks along the aisle, keeping an eye on T.C. Malloy, who kicks in the office door and confronts the OWNER of the store. He can hear Malloy shouting from here.

NICK'S POV - his eyes travel from the office -- where Malloy seems to have convinced the owner to give him whatever the fuck he wants -- to the Woman, who is now scattering a box of road flares off the counter in anger.

EMPLOYEE

Great! Thanks a lot and come again!

The Woman brushes by Nick, making brief eye contact.

WOMAN

I hope this place drowns!

She disappears out the door into the rain as --

T.C. MALLOY walks along the aisle adjacent to Nick, his arms full of canvas for sandbags. Nick keeps his eyes on Malloy, waiting for the right moment.

EXT. BY THE CREEK - THE PAST - NIGHT

T.C. Malloy has his gun on Nick and Frank, who stand next to each other with a defiant look on their faces. Blood is running from Nick's nose.

T.C. MALLOY

You boys robbed that bank in Jackson.

Frank and Nick say nothing.

T.C. MALLOY

And you were gonna split up the money tonight.

FRANK

What money?

T.C. MALLOY

The money you got hidden...Nick.

Nick says nothing, but is now genuinely surprised at how much T.C. Malloy knows.

T.C. MALLOY

But bank robbery's nothing, Nick.
You got murder to worry about.

NICK

Murder?

T.C. MALLOY

For killing your brother.

FRANK

What?!

Without hesitation, Malloy points Nick's gun at Frank, and FIRES. Frank is blown backward, blood spurting from his chest. He falls down an embankment and lands in a creek. He does not move again.

Nick's eyes are wide with disbelief. He whirls back at Malloy, staring into the barrel of his own gun in the Sheriff's hands.

MALLOY

You're going upriver. Brother.

EXT. THE HARDWARE STORE - PRESENT DAY

Nick is ten paces behind the Sheriff. He splashes through puddles, stolen salesman's clothes sodden with rain. Nick reaches into his waistband, hand on the butt of the gun.

Nick slows as his eyes take in several things at once:

- Ten State Trooper cars are creeping into town, from all different streets and angles, closing the place off;
- Five Troopers stand by the stolen white Thunderbird, looking into the car;
- Preacher Willie and Tee-Vee casually make their way across the street toward Nick; the Troopers haven't spotted them yet.

Nick knows his moment of revenge is gone. Malloy is so close, it seems as if Nick is going to shoot him anyway, Troopers or no Troopers.

ON MALLOY -

He sees the commotion of the Troopers, his eyes finding O'KEEFE, who is standing on the steps in a rain slicker, waiting for Malloy. Malloy doesn't notice that the man who is going to kill him walking ten feet behind him.

But Nick has turned back and walked away before O'Keefe or Malloy can spot him.

MALLOY

(to O'Keefe)

What's going on? Who're you?

Next to O'Keefe is Bearmeyer, wearing a neck brace, and Schmidt, trying to look official.

O'KEEFE

O'Keefe, State Police. I'm here for Nick True.

Malloy sizes O'Keefe up. O'Keefe stares back. Malloy heads up the steps past O'Keefe, arms full of canvas bags.

MALLOY

(grudgingly)

Guess you should come inside.

O'KEEFE

You know you got a car that was stolen by True sitting not twenty yards from your station?

Malloy stops dead, turns and takes in the sight of the white T-Bird.

MALLOY

Say what?

O'KEEFE

I think, Sheriff Malloy, Nick True is coming back to kill you. And he's in town right now. So, whether we go inside or stay out here makes no difference to me. It's not me he's trying to kill.

Malloy tries to stare down O'Keefe, but there is fear in his eyes that he can't hide.

BACK TO:

NICK - who is now walking with Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie. They keep their heads down, desperately looking for a way out of the mess of State Troopers.

TEE-VEE

(quietly)

We saw them Troopers comin' in from everywhere all of a sudden, so we got the hell outta the car.

PREACHER WILLIE

I can't go back there. I'll make a stand if I have to.

NICK

No one's going back. There's a way out of this.

Nick's eyes scan the busy streets, full of townspeople trying to get supplies home before the floods. The rain is relentless. His eyes come to rest on --

THE WOMAN FROM THE HARDWARE STORE.

She's loading canned food into the back of a white pickup truck with a covered back canopy. As she closes the back gate of the truck she looks down to see --

A GUN STICKING INTO HER RIBS.

She looks up and sees Nick staring at her.

NICK

No noise, or I blow your heart into the street.

She sees he's serious. Their eyes meet for a long moment, and there is immediate electricity. She's not afraid of him, and he's not going to kill her.

NICK

What's your name?

WOMAN
(nervous beat)
Carolina.

NICK
Is that really your name?

CAROLINA
Wanna see my driver's license?

NICK
Well, Carolina, I'm your cousin Nick
from Mobile, and these two --
(he gestures to Tee-Vee and Willie)
-- are my friends who you hired to
protect your house from the flood.

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie climb in the back, lay low.
Nick closes the back and gently takes Carolina by the arm.

NICK
You open the door, I climb across
the seat, and you drive. You try to
run I'll shoot you in the back. And
I can hit anything, lady.

CAROLINA
(angry, not scared)
Carolina.

NICK
Open the door, Carolina.

Nick sees no one in town is paying attention to them.

NICK
Let's go.

Carolina starts the truck, puts it in drive and heads down
Main street. She passes a State Trooper car, and it seems
for a moment as if she's going to do something stupid. But
Nick's gun in her side is a reminder.

The truck moves slowly out of town, headed for farmlands.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - DAY

O'Keefe and Malloy are having an unfriendly meeting, State
Cops and Massey cops mixing with grim stares in the small
Sheriff's station.

O'KEEFE

You know, it's a funny thing.
Looking at this file here, a few
things just don't add up.

O'Keefe, standing before an open filing cabinet, reads from
the Nick True file.

MALLOY

(instant dislike)

Those files are confidential.

O'KEEFE

They're important to understand the
mind I'm up against. Where's he
gonna go? Who's he gonna see? Does
he have an old girlfriend, a wife?
...You know, these cons, they're
predictable. I don't mean stupid,
necessarily, just predictable. The
urge to come home is just too great
to pass up, no matter how many times
they tell themselves that it's the
last place they'll go if they break
outta the joint.

(beat)

Now, Nicholas True, he's smart.
Says here he's smart, right here in
the file. Just listen to this:

(he reads)

Graduated from Massey High with
straight A's, captain of the
football team, all American boy.
Joins the Navy, gets into the
prestigious SEAL program. So far,
so good. But he gets dishonorably
discharged from the Navy. Something
about missing money in a safe at a
Navy base. He comes back to his
home town of Massey, where he gets a
really shitty job at a factory.
Lays low for two years. Then, of
all things, kills his brother, after
allegedly robbing a bank in Jackson.

(closes the file, looks at Malloy)

He was too smart for Massey. Too
smart for the Navy, for sure. So
I'm wondering. Why does he risk
being caught coming back here? It

O'KEEFE (CONT.)

doesn't add up. He must have it in for you bad, Malloy.

(Malloy says nothing)
What'd you do to him?

MALLOY

Arrested him. Put him away, where he belongs.

O'KEEFE

Before we came here we stopped by your house. Wanted to make sure True hadn't killed you already.

MALLOY

(hides his surprise)
So?

O'KEEFE

Nice house, Malloy. Really nice. Wasn't it, fellas?

O'Keefe looks at Schmidt and Bearmeyer.

SCHMIDT

Yeah. Horses, satellite dish --

BEARMEYER

A boat, too.

O'KEEFE

Nice, very nice. Especially on a Sheriff's salary...

(uncomfortable tension in the room. He opens the file again)
Says here, the money Nick True was suspected of stealing, the \$4.5 million, was never, ever found. Poof. Gone.

MALLOY

(darkens considerably)
O'Keefe, you are out of line. You imply anything like that again in my own station, my own town -- I'm gonna put you down like a dog.

O'Keefe smiles, puts the file back in the cabinet. Slides the cabinet drawer shut, the sound reminiscent of prison bars clanking closed.

O'KEEFE

Just so we understand each other, Malloy. I've never, ever, lost an escaped prisoner. In my ten years I've caught 14 of them. You know why? Because I can outthink them. I know what they're going to do before they do it. Because I get in their heads, learn as much as I can about them.

(taps the file meaningfully)
Nick True is no different. He and those two blockheads he's got with him will all be going back to a federal institution. If not, they'll be going to a cemetery in a pine box.

EXT. A LARGE FARMHOUSE - DAY

A two-story house with a large barn off to the side sits amidst the continual rain, looking somber and sad -- not a home to look forward to when coming home.

INT. THE FARMHOUSE - DAY

Carolina and her FATHER, a salt-of-the-earth farmer in his early sixties named TOM AMUNDSON, sit at the dining room table.

Tee-Vee sits on the kitchen counter, Preacher Willie standing nearby eating from a jar of Oreos and taking big sips from a carton of milk.

Nick moves the curtains of the kitchen window with his gun to take a look at the long road leading up to the house.

He moves around the room, opening cupboards, picking things up, putting them down. Carolina and Amundson watch him.

Nick stops on a framed picture of a WOMAN, standing by the barn outside. She looks like an older version of Carolina.

Next to it is a placard reading: WINNER, MISSISSIPPI POETRY COMPETITION, 1991.

NICK
Who's the poet?

Stubborn silence from Amundson and Carolina.

NICK
(points to the photo)
Maybe it's her? Maybe she's in town
right now, mmm?
(still, silence. Amundson
bites his tongue)
'Cause if she is, it's best to tell
me now before she sneaks up on me --

CAROLINA
She's dead!

Nick is taken aback. Carolina's eyes are hard.

CAROLINA
My mother's dead. Okay?

NICK
Sorry... didn't realize.
(peers at Carolina)
You're the poet.
(dead silence, he shrugs)
...Like I said, this is just one of
those things. Wrong place, wrong
time. Believe or not, but I'm sorry
about all this --

AMUNDSON
(dawning recognition)
You're True. Nick True.

Amundson sizes Nick up. Looks from him to the faces of the
other two convicts.

AMUNDSON
A bank robber and a murderer of his
own brother...
(Nick makes no reply)
No one wants you here. You
shouldn't have come back.

NICK
I don't want to be here, either.

AMUNDSON

Then go. Leave us alone. We done nothin' to you.

NICK

I'll leave soon enough.

CAROLINA

My father's right. Just take our truck and leave, if that's what you want.

NICK

You have no idea what I want.

CAROLINA

I don't care. This is our home. You think you can just take us prisoner in our own home --

NICK

Be quiet!

He slams his palm down on the table. She jumps at the fury in his voice. But he's not angry with her. He's angry at something else, at unfinished business.

NICK

If we leave town now, cops will be on us so fast, we'll be back in prison by sunup.

CAROLINA

Good...

(her eyes pass over them)

Look at you all. You get out of jail and what's the first thing you do? Get some guns and take good people hostage. You're low-life.

(to Nick)

You don't even have the character to rise above what people expect you to do. You're a crook, and you're gonna stay a crook until they kill you. And they will kill you.

She sits back in her chair, finished. Nick tries to shake off her words. Tee-Vee sighs in the background.

TEE-VEE

Nick, she's got a point. What the hell are we doin' here? I mean, you come right back to your hometown, how stupid is that? That's the first fuckin' place the cops look. Now it's just a matter of time before I get caught and thrown back in the slammer.

Nick looks at Tee-Vee, then at Preacher Willie. He can see in their eyes that they think he's screwed them over.

NICK

You wanna know why we're here?
(they both stare
back at him, waiting)
Four and a half million dollars,
that's why.

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie share a look.

PREACHER WILLIE

(mouth full of Oreos)
What're you talkin' about?

NICK

Stashed away for seven years.
That's why I'm here. You help me,
we each get a cut. Three ways.
(they listen intently)
If you guys don't want any part in
it, we can get in the truck with
sixty-seven bucks to our name and
get shot to hell. What'll it be?

The men contemplate Nick's words. They both shrug.

TEE-VEE

Might as well stick around, I guess.

PREACHER WILLIE

(nods)
I'm in no big hurry, Nick.

Amundson stands up, brushes past Nick's gun and goes to the kitchen window. Sees the rain pounding his farmland. There is a puddle the size of a lake in his cornfield.

AMUNDSON

(to Nick)

I've worked all my life on this land. I don't intend to have you take that privilege away from me. I have to go out there and sandbag. So I'm going out there. If you want to stop me, you'll have to shoot me in the back.

Amundson goes to the kitchen door. Tee-Vee eyes Nick, who eyes Carolina. Amundson's hand is on the doorknob.

NICK

(to Carolina)

I thought you didn't have sandbags.

It takes her a moment to realize where he overheard this information. Now she remembers him from the hardware store.

CAROLINA

We have some. We need more.

EXT. THE BARN - DAY

Two stacks of sandbags sit next to a pile of gravel and shovels. Everyone is in the barn. Nick goes to the pile of bags, runs his hand on the canvas. Then looks back out at the house. Back to the bags.

NICK

Not enough to save the house.

(Amundson realizes he's right)

You could keep the barn dry, though.

AMUNDSON

S'pose I could.

NICK

You'll need help.

Carolina watches in wonder as Nick takes out his gun and places it on a toolbench next to Amundson. Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie tense up, waiting to see what happens.

NICK

We need to stay for a day, maybe two. We'll work for our keep. Now, I can't keep my eye on you 24 hours a day, so our relationship will have

NICK (CONT.)

to be based on mutual trust. I don't want to turn around and see you swinging a shovel at my head.

(Amundson eyes the gun)

So you decide right now. Pick up that gun and use it, or trust that we aren't gonna hurt you, and let us stay.

Amundson looks at Carolina. She sees the gun, so close. The only sound is the rain pecking at the roof like a flock of angry birds.

Amundson picks up a shovel.

AMUNDSON

Let's get to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BARN - CONT.

Nick and Carolina getting into her truck as Amundson, Preacher Willie and Tee-Vee work at filling up the sandbags.

Tee-Vee watches the truck pull away down the muddy driveway. He grumbles as he shovels gravel into a bag.

TEE-VEE

Why's he get to go out and we gotta work?

PREACHER WILLIE

You want your cut?

TEE-VEE

Yeah.

PREACHER WILLIE

Then you work.

Amundson watches the men out of the corner of his eye, wary.

AMUNDSON'S POV - Nick's gun is still sitting on the workbench. So close, gleaming black. His eyes travel to the two convicts, who aren't paying much attention to him.

CUT TO:

INT. CAROLINA'S TRUCK - DAY

She keeps one eye on the wet road and one eye on Nick, sitting next to her. Nick is jumpy.

CAROLINA
Why are you here?

NICK
I told you.

CAROLINA
I heard what you told those two. I know better.

NICK
You're so insightful, you tell me.

CAROLINA
(looks him over)
...I'm not sure. But it's more than the money. What is it? A girl?
(sarcastic)
What's your story? Are you a decent man who's been dealt a rough blow by society? Callous skinned, but with a soft heart underneath? Am I supposed to feel sorry for your tragic situation?

NICK
I was never dealt anything. I never asked anybody to feel sorry for me.

CAROLINA
(mocking)
Did the jury really make a mistake?

NICK
Just drive. You're getting on my nerves.

CAROLINA
Come on, I want to know. Are you innocent? Prove me wrong.

NICK
No! I'm not! I'm guilty. Okay?
What the hell do you want from me?

CAROLINA

(looking out the windshield)
I want to know you're not gonna kill
us.

NICK

I won't. But just keep in mind, if
I don't come back to that house --
they're gonna kill your father.

Carolina seeks Nick's cold eyes staring into her. He means
it. She drives on through the driving rain, the water
rising in great pools on the road.

EXT. THE BARN - CONT.

The entire field is starting to flood. Tee-Vee and Preacher
Willie grab filled sandbags, carry them to a growing
gauntlet of bags creating a perimeter around the barn.

TEE-VEE

How do we even know there's money?
Huh, Preacher?

PREACHER WILLIE

Nick's a good man. He wouldn't lie.

TEE-VEE

Good man?! Jesus H. Christ, you are
one simple bastard! The guy is in
prison for killing his brother,
numbnuts!

PREACHER WILLIE

(places the sandbag, sighs)
I know things about people. You
care only about yourself.

TEE-VEE

Well, that's a helluva thing to say.

IN THE BARN - Amundson waits for the two men to grab a
sandbag. He reaches for one himself, waits until their
backs are turned, then reaches for the gun.

Preacher Willie and Tee-Vee walk out of the barn, not seeing
Amundson put the gun in the waistband of his pants.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICK'S OLD HOUSE - DAY

The windows are now boarded up, no one having lived in the rickety shack for seven years.

IN THE TRUCK - Nick looks at the house for a long time, memories flooding back.

EXT. THE GARAGE - DAY

Carolina's truck is pulled behind the garage, hidden from the road. She waits behind the wheel, watching the hole in the garage where Nick kicked his way inside.

INT. THE GARAGE - DAY

Nick is using a crowbar to pry up a cement slab on the floor of the long abandoned garage. The cement comes up and topples over to the side. There is a dark hole here.

Nick puts his hands inside, grabs something heavy and pulls it out.

It's a large silver SCUBA tank. Nick checks the gauge of the tank, reaches in and pulls out a duffel bag, stuffed with equipment. He looks at his arms and sees they are covered with spiders. Nick brushes them off with a disgusted grunt, then stomps on them with his boot.

EXT. THE QUARRY - DAY

Carolina's truck is parked at the cliff where Nick pushed off the Brink's truck.

AT THE WATERSIDE -

Carolina watches Nick with surprised amusement as the convict straps on the SCUBA tank, tests the flow of oxygen with the mouthpiece. He reaches in the duffel bag, takes out a mask and puts it on.

Nick pulls a heavy ARCAIR-3000 Underwater Blow Torch, as thick as a man's thigh. He shoulders the strap of the blow torch. Nick looks out over the quarry water, jumping with the rain as if thousands of insects are dancing on the surface.

CAROLINA
(looking at Nick)
I didn't expect this from...

NICK
(without malice)
From what? A dumb convict?

CAROLINA
...You could say that.

NICK
Didn't expect poets in Mississippi.

Carolina watches as Nick wades into the quarry water, then disappears as the stone shelf ends and deep water begins. She sees his bubbles trail toward the center of the water.

UNDERWATER -

It is completely black. Nick strikes up the ARCAIR underwater torch. Bright white glow sends shadows chasing each other in ghostly patterns in this dark world.

Nick swims downward, heading deeper and deeper, the world blacker and blacker. The torch bleeds off a small circle of light, but not much.

SOMETHING APPEARS out of the darkness. Nick swims toward the underwater behemoth. His light reveals --

THE BRINK'S TRUCK, lying on its side like a dead elephant carcass.

THE TORCH - burns into the LOCK of the back door of the Brink's truck. Sparks flare and die in the water as Nick cuts a neat hole in the metal. Finished, he turns the blow torch's stream down and pulls open the heavy door.

It clanks open with a muffled, underwater sound. Nick turns to head into the dark maw of the truck when --

A HUMAN FACE APPEARS FROM THE DARKNESS.

Arms reach for Nick; a bloated, eyeless head wanting to kiss him. Nick pushes back instinctively, his hand going right through the soft, mushy-rotted tissue of VIC, long since pickled in this truck.

Vic's flesh peels off with Nick's touch, floats around the truck like clumps of soggy bread.

Nick controls his breathing, fright dissipating, as he pushes Vic aside and heads into the truck.

INT. TRUCK - UNDERWATER

Nick finds the storage box, sees the heavy lock and starts up the blow torch again. But he sees it's unnecessary as he realizes --

THE LOCK HAS ALREADY BEEN CUT. Nick drops the torch, frantically wrenches open the lid to the storage box.

IN THE BOX -

Nick finds -- nothing. Empty. No duffel bags full of money.

ON NICK -

His eyes wide in the mask as he realizes in an instant what has happened since he was sent to prison.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BARN - CONT.

Preacher Willie and Tee-Vee are cold, miserable, and arguing.

TEE-VEE

What we should do is stop following Mr. Cool all over Mississippi. We should stake out for ourselves.

PREACHER WILLIE

Are you gonna be the brains of this outfit? 'Cause if you are, I might as well turn myself in right now.

TEE-VEE

(stops cold)

Hey...

(Preacher Willie turns)

Fuck you, nigger.

Preacher Willie drops his sandbag in mid-stride. He leans back and delivers a home-run punch to Tee-Vee's chin. The fireplug of a man splashes into a mud puddle, but is up as fast a mountain cat. He goes low for Preacher Willie, tackling him at the knees, taking the lanky man down.

Tee-Vee is atop Preacher Willie, pounding a fist the size of a canned ham into the man's gut, over and over.

Grunting in pain, the simple-but-violently-gifted Preacher Willie brings a sharp elbow up to Tee-Vee's nose, drawing blood and a squeal from Tee-Vee.

TEE-VEE
Fucking nigger!

Tee-Vee staggers back to his feet, not able to deflect another blue ribbon roundhouse from Preacher Willie. He may talk pacifism, but he preaches old fashion ass-whippins.

AMUNDSON
Hey.

Amundson has been watching this pathetic exchange, but has now emerged from the barn with Nick's gun. They don't notice or hear, intent on clobbering each other.

AMUNDSON
Hey!

They finally stop, look up at the man, and the gun in his hand. As the gun barrel stares at them, they forget about beating each other to a pulp.

INT. THE TRUCK, MOVING - DAY

Nick is soaking wet, staring out the window of the truck as Carolina steals glances at him.

Nick watches the soggy countryside pass by his window.

CAROLINA
(stops the car)
Shit.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD - a completely washed out road lies ahead. There's no way to get through this veritable lake, which has appeared since they went to the quarry.

NICK
Go around it.

CAROLINA
How? It's everywhere.

NICK
(points to a not
yet-flooded farm)
Over there.

EXT. FARMLAND - DAY

Carolina drives the truck across soggy farmland, slowly making her way across the land.

A PASTURE

Where cows watch with bovine curiosity as the mud-spattered truck comes through their grazing field.

Nick stares back at a cow, who seems to be giving Nick a look of disdain.

INT. CAROLINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick comes in the kitchen, soggy and pissed off, Carolina behind him.

REVERSE ANGLE -

Amundson stands behind Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie, who sit at the kitchen table, mud-spattered. Amundson holds the gun on the two humiliated men.

AMUNDSON
You okay, Carolina?

CAROLINA
(calmly imploring)
Father, put the gun down.

AMUNDSON
Are you nuts?
(points the gun at Nick)
We're getting out of here, honey.

TEE-VEE
Nice goin', Nick. Left your gun where the old geezer could get it. Now I gotta go back to jail, where I'll probably work latrine duty for the rest of my life.

AMUNDSON
Shut up! All of you.

TEE-VEE

Oh, you shut up, gramps.

Amundson clanks Tee-Vee on the back of his head with the pistol.

TEE-VEE

Ow!... Bastard!

(Tee-Vee rubs his head)

At least I'll get a hot shower.

Nick regards the gun coolly. He takes a step forward.

AMUNDSON

Stop, True. Right there.

(Nick stops)

You cut the phone line. That was smart. They were right about you. Smart.

NICK

(stepping closer)

Yeah, they were right.

AMUNDSON

Stop, son, or I'll blow you in half. I was in Korea, and I killed my share of gooks. And I'll kill you just as easy.

NICK

Okay, you win... Kill me.

He steps forward again, his hands raised. Amundson stares at Nick, finger tightening on the trigger. He doesn't like the look in Nick's eyes.

AMUNDSON

Stop, or I will.

NICK

(looking at Carolina
as he says this)

Kill me. It won't matter. Just another convict killed trying to escape. Just another guy who lived wild and died hard. Just another piece of Mississippi trash who got what he deserved.

Nick is stepping closer, closer, coming right for the gun. Amundson will have no choice in a moment, nowhere else to turn in the cramped kitchen.

CAROLINA

Nick, don't!

Amundson's eyes leave Nick, look at his daughter with betrayal. Nick turns to her for a moment, sees something in her eyes that almost keeps him from committing suicide.

Then he walks purposefully into the gun.

AMUNDSON

I warned you.

Amundson pulls the trigger. Click. Click, click, click.

Nick pulls his hand out of his pocket, shows Amundson a handful of bullets.

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie sigh in relief as Nick pulls the gun from the stunned grasp of Amundson.

AMUNDSON

Son of a bitch.

Nick clicks the bullet back into the gun's magazine, the sound loud in the small kitchen. His mouth is fixed in a cruel downward arc. His eyes are cold. Nick slides the automatic back, chambering a round.

NICK

I said our relationship should be based on trust. Now we trust each other.

Amundson thinks he's going to get blasted. But Nick shoves the gun into the front of his waistband.

NICK

Better get those sandbags in place.

Amundson walks by him, contempt on his face. He stops at Carolina, meets her gaze, gives her a look of disappointment and walks out into the rain.

NICK

Amundson.

He turns at the door. Nick holds up the keys to the truck.

NICK
Don't even think about it.

Amundson takes in a great breath of air and lets it slide through clenched teeth. His reaction lets us know that's exactly what he was going to do.

Nick moves to a cupboard, finds a full bottle of whiskey. Rips the cap off. Takes a long, hungry swallow.

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie watch Nick with actual, tangible dread. He is very frightening at this moment.

NICK
What are you two lookin' at? Go help him.

They get up from the table and head outside without comment.

Nick takes another gulp of the whiskey. Carolina watches him for a moment.

NICK
Gonna recite me one of your poems?
Get the hell outta here.

She doesn't leave until she decides to leave. And then, it's with a look of bitter scorn at Nick. Nick stares after her, pulls from the bottle again.

EXT. THE TOWN OF MASSEY - DAY

The flood has come, like a promised nightmare that visits in the middle of a long, troubled sleep. When it arrives, it is with shocking speed and intensity.

Shop Owners are trying in vain to shore up the floodwaters from their stores. The muddy water rushes down the streets, a gulf of destruction heading for the heart of Massey.

AT THE SHERIFF'S STATION -

O'Keefe watches, frowning, through the glass doors from inside the station as Malloy's men sandbag the top steps of the station. Its high perch will probably save it from the flood, but with the water rising as fast as it is, no one can be sure where it will end.

INSIDE - O'Keefe stops DeJaque, covered with mud, as he's heading back out the front doors.

O'KEEFE
Where's Malloy?

DEJAQUE
Went to get his wife. Should be
back--
(looks off)
There he is now.

POV/O'KEEFE - watching Malloy pull up in a big truck with knobby tires, his speedboat on a trailer hooked to the back of the truck.

Malloy parks the truck in the rising water. Jumps out his door, lands in three and a half feet of muddy mush. Wades to the other side of the car and obediently opens his wife's door. He waves her down to him, and she falls into his outstretched arms, not wanting to get wet.

O'Keefe sees her face, but cannot know who it is. But we do.

It's JENNY TRUE. Nick's wife. The one who cried for him in the courtroom seven years ago.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE TOWN, LATER - DAY

Those who've stayed behind are not having good luck. The water is hip-high and rising. The hardware store OWNER watches, helplessly, as his flimsy wall of sandbags are overturned by the force of the water. Brown floodwaters gush into his shop immediately, raging through doors that were never meant to be watertight.

AN OLD MAN AND A DOG cruise by the hardware store in a canoe. This is the first indication of what will become a more popular mode of transportation in the coming hours around Massey.

EXT. THE BARN - DAY

Night is coming, and the barn is being fortified with sandbags. They've made a double-wall of bags, shoulder high, holding back the coming tide, rising by the minute.

Tee-Vee, Preacher Willie, and Amundson sweat despite the downpour, putting more and more bags onto the places that need fortifying. They shore up the bags with haybails, creating a stronger foundation, block by block.

Carolina is wading back to the sandbag fortress from the house. She carries a pillowcase full of canned food and bottled water. She hands the bag over the wall of sandbags to Amundson.

Carolina looks up to see --

NICK, watching, the bottle of Jack Daniels half gone, the pistol in his other hand as he stands on the second floor of the barn. He takes a drink of the whiskey and stares back at her, his look challenging.

CAROLINA meets her Father's gaze as she turns to go back to the house.

INT. THE BARN - CONT.

They're out of sandbags. Amundson and Preacher Willie carry a haybail between them, head out to the still growing wall of defense.

Tee-Vee looks for anything to throw up onto the sandbags. He comes across a box of tools, a bunch of old wood, a crate of blasting caps and a box of --

TEE-VEE

Holy mother...

Amundson comes back in and sees Tee-Vee.

AMUNDSON

Don't touch that.

TEE-VEE

(looking into the box)

Whattya' doing with this, old man?

We see there are about 40 sticks of DYNAMITE in the crate.

AMUNDSON

I was blasting some rock that was in two new acres I got before the rains come. Okay with you?

TEE-VEE

Sure, old man, sure.

Amundson carefully puts the dynamite on a high shelf. His eyes look up to see Nick, staring down at him with a blank expression on his face.

Nick has taken down an old rowboat from hooks in the ceiling, and now sits heavily on a wooden seat. He looks like a man stranded at sea. Nick rocks the boat gently against the wooden tier of the second floor, looking at the people below with a mindless gaze.

Carolina appears next to Amundson, completely soaked. She tosses down a bundle of towels and blankets.

CAROLINA

(to Nick, without looking up)
Is that what you're gonna do? Sit
up there and get drunk and pout
about your money?

Amundson tries to pull her away, but she stands firm.

CAROLINA

You want to die, is that it? Things
didn't work out for you and now
you'd feel better with a bullet in
your head? Why don't you do it now
and save us a lot of trouble? Well,
Nick?

AMUNDSON

Carolina, come on.

CAROLINA

(to Nick)
You've never had a hard day's work
in your life, and you're bitter
about not having the money from
robbing a bank. Why don't you try
living like an honest man for once?
Why don't you do that -- and if you
can't, put that gun in your mouth
and pull the trigger.

Nick stares down at her. Tips the bottle back and finishes the J.D. Tosses the bottle against a wall with a viscous throw, where it shatters. Nick holds the gun up, and for a moment all is still in the barn.

NICK

(drunk)

An honest man? What do you know about it? You wanna rehabilitate me?

Amundson holds Carolina's arm, ready to pull her to safety, as Nick holds the gun high. He points it at his head, slowly.

NICK

This is rehabilitation. This is how honest men fix guys like me. It's easy. It's quick. And good people are now safe from bad men.

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie stare up at Nick as he burrows the point of the gun into his temple. Carolina nearly calls out, wondering if she pushed him too far.

Slowly, Nick pulls the gun away, his head hanging low. Then he abruptly points the gun at the ceiling and FIRES!

Carolina shouts in surprise. Nick FIRES AGAIN!, and now he shoots in rapid succession, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! the sound deafening in the barn.

Bullets blast through the ceiling until the clip is empty. His finger keeps clicking the trigger on a spent chamber.

Nick finally falls backward into the rowboat. The gun clatters out of his hand. He passes out.

INT. THE BARN - NIGHT

It's pitch black out, the rain still coming down in buckets.

TEE-VEE

It's never gonna end.

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie lay back against two haybails. They each have their own blankets wrapped around their legs.

Preacher is trying to read his Bible in the dim light. Tee-Vee keeps stealing glances over at the book, trying to read unobtrusively.

Amundson has a small Coleman stove going, and he brings over two cups of hot soup to the men.

AMUNDSON

Eat this.

The men take it, hungry, and sip the hot soup that nearly burns their tongues.

CAROLINA

Say "thank you."

The men look at her, not comprehending. Then they look at each other. They've been so used to getting chow without saying thank you to anyone. Now the concept seems strange.

TEE-VEE
(earnestly)
Thank you.

PREACHER WILLIE
(earnestly)
Thank you.

Carolina looks at the mound of folded blankets on the floor. She picks two up, heads for the ladder to the upper level.

AMUNDSON

Carolina.
(she looks down at him)
Be careful.

ON THE SECOND FLOOR -

Carolina comes to the rowboat. Nick is lying in the bottom, curled up like an infant. His legs are sticking under the seats of the boat, his arms under his head.

Carolina spreads the blanket over him, not wanting to wake Nick. When he doesn't stir at all, she worries less about disturbing him, and tucks the blanket around his tall body. He's out for the night, that's for sure.

Nick moans once and mutters something in his sleep.

NICK

...Jenny.

Carolina looks at him, how vulnerable he is right now. She could bash his head in, take a shovel and smash the other two convicts. She probably could.

Instead, she reaches down and puts her palm on Nick's clammy forehead. He shudders. His hand reaches up and finds hers, although he's still in a deep sleep. She tries to pull her hand away, but his grasp is tight.

She sits on the seat of the boat and holds Nick's hand as he wallows in some alcohol affected dream state, lost.

EXT. THE TOWN - DAY

A motorboat chugs slowly by, a farmer at the helm. He passes a tree, sticking up out of the water. Steers the boat around something curious:

THE TOP OF A FLAGPOLE.

The town is completely submerged in floodwaters.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BARN - DAY

Thank God this barn rests on a small hill, or it too would be submerged. From a long shot, we see it is the only dry land for miles.

Amundson walks out of the barn, squints up at the sky. Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie join him. It has stopped raining. The sun breaks through the dark clouds for the first time in weeks.

PREACHER WILLIE

Thank God.

Amundson looks in horror over the wall of sandbags, down the small hill at his house. Only the chimney sticks slightly above the still floodwaters.

There is a SOUND of a motorboat, coming closer. Amundson looks off over the sandbags, across the new lake.

Amundson turns around, sees Preacher Willie and Tee-Vee staring at him, wondering what he's going to do.

AMUNDSON

Get in the barn.

They hustle inside, past Carolina, the MOTOR coming closer.

CAROLINA

What is it?

AMUNDSON

Don't know.

Then they see T.C. MALLOY'S MOTORBOAT, chugging slowly and carefully across the lake.

MALLOY

Hello, Tom!

AMUNDSON

Sheriff?

Malloy steers the boat closer. In the boat behind him is O'Keefe, Bearmeyer and Schmidt, armed with shotguns. Malloy cuts the engine and lets the boat drift, careful not to make the water slosh over the sandbags.

MALLOY

Looks like you did a job here.

Hello, Carolina.

(she gives him a curt nod)

How you doin' out here?

AMUNDSON

We'll make it, long as it stops raining.

MALLOY

They say the President's gonna declare a state of emergency. The National Guard should come around today, hopefully, tomorrow at the latest, pick you up if you need it.

(Amundson nods)

...Tom, we're lookin' for some men.

O'Keefe watches Amundson carefully. Carolina glances at her father, wondering what he's going to do.

IN THE BARN -

Preacher Willie and Tee-Vee watch through a crack in the wooden barn.

UPSTAIRS - Nick has his eyes cracked open half a notch, hearing the voices, not sure if they're part of his dream.

NICK

(croaks)

Malloy.

BACK OUTSIDE - O'Keefe is making a careful visual inspection of the barn.

O'KEEFE

I'm looking for an escaped prisoner.
Nick True. And two others.

MALLOY

We're making a house to house
search, but there ain't many houses
to search. The town is flooded.

O'KEEFE

Seen anyone?

Amundson looks down at his boots, makes an agonizing
decision.

AMUNDSON

(shakes his head)

No.

MALLOY

Sure?

AMUNDSON

(grumpy)

I've been too busy fighting this
storm to notice anything. They
could've come through my kitchen and
I wouldn't notice.

O'Keefe stares at Amundson for a long, uncomfortable beat.
Amundson stares back, not easily rattled. Carolina tries to
keep her expression neutral.

MALLOY

How 'bout you, Carolina? See
anything in town, maybe?

CAROLINA

No, nothing.

Malloy nods, starts the engine of the boat.

MALLOY

Okay. If you do, be careful. True
is a killer.

The speedboat chugs off, heading toward the next chimney, miles away.

IN THE BARN - Nick sits up in his rowboat, stunned by what he's heard.

INT. BARN - LATER

Nick is sleeping again in the rowboat upstairs.

Preacher Willie and Tee-Vee sit by a small fire Amundson has made, over which coffee is brewing. The sounds of the night are still drowned out by the noise of rain coming down.

Amundson hands Tee-Vee and Preacher a cup of coffee. They nod their thanks.

TEE-VEE

Sir?

(Amundson looks up at him)

You could've turned us in...

AMUNDSON

Yeah.

TEE-VEE

...Why didn't you?

Amundson looks at Carolina, sips his coffee, then back at the two convicts.

AMUNDSON

Hard to say.... I know if my wife was here, she would've wanted me to do what I did. She used to say once you stop believing in people, you stop being a person....

(shrugs, he's not sure why)

Every man deserves another shot. A second chance.

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie wait for more. But that's it. Preacher Willie nods and sips his coffee.

PREACHER WILLIE

We won't bother you people any more.

CAROLINA

Where will you go?

PREACHER WILLIE
(looks at Tee-Vee)
I don't know.

CAROLINA
(to Tee-Vee)
How about you?

TEE-VEE
Been so concerned with staying
afloat and not gettin' caught --
guess I didn't think about it.

CAROLINA
What about turning yourself in?

Tee-Vee looks at her sharply.

TEE-VEE
No way.

CAROLINA
Why not?

Tee-Vee tries to be polite, but he can't. He tosses his
coffee into some hay.

TEE-VEE
I beg your pardon, miss, but you
have no idea what it's like for a
man to be locked in a cell so small
that an animal couldn't live in it.
(he softens)
A man can go crazy living there.

The barn is silent. There is tension in the air, now.
Carolina looks down at her feet, rests her head on her
knees.

PREACHER WILLIE
It's worse than hell.

The silence is suddenly broken as a large BARN OWL flaps
into the barn, wings pushing air around with a great WHOOSH.

They all look up at the owl as it perches on the rowboat
above Nick's head.

NICK'S POV -

his eyes slowly open to see the Owl, looking down on him with stern eyes. The owl emits a sound: "whoooo!"

Nick isn't sure what to make of it. He just stares at the bird.

PREACHER WILLIE

An omen.

TEE-VEE

Good or bad?

PREACHER WILLIE

I don't know. My momma would say that when something like this happened. "An omen."

The sound of the owl fills the barn as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BARN - DAWN

The sun is rising over the still-high waters. And there isn't a cloud in sight. For the first time in weeks, the sun shines down on Mississippi.

INT. THE BARN - DAWN

Nick is the only one awake. He has an intense look on his face as he uses matches to MELT CANDLE WAX into a tin container. He mixes SUGAR into the wax.

Carolina awakens, looks at Nick, risen from the dead.

Nick rolls what looks like long pieces of twine into the candle wax, making sure to completely coat it. She sees he's made three of these waxed twines, hanging to dry.

LATER IN THE MORNING:

Now everyone is awake, watching Nick. He uses plastic wrap to bundle two bunches of dynamite, ten sticks a bundle. Amundson watches, very uncomfortable.

AMUNDSON

You know what the hell you're doing?

Nick gives him a look. Amundson stays quiet.

CUT TO:

Nick preparing something with three RAINCOATS. He ties off the sleeves very tightly. He's made a sort of bag out of the raincoats.

Nick goes out of the barn and dips one of the raincoats into the water. Pulls it out, full, with a grunt. The water doesn't drip through the raincoat's sealed sleeves. It works -- whatever it's supposed to be.

Satisfied, Nick throws the coats onto the supplies.

TEE-VEE

Nick, you sure about this?

NICK

(beat, then he nods)

Never been so sure about something
in my life.

CUT TO:

CAROLINA -

looking out over the sandbags at the water.

WHOOSH! Nick's head breaks the surface of the cold water. He carries something with him and pushes it up to Carolina. It's the SCUBA tank, along with his gear. Carolina and Preacher Willie grab for the gear over the sandbag wall.

Nick climbs a ladder which straddles the wall of sandbags. He comes over, soaking wet.

NICK

(to Tee-Vee)

Get the rowboat out here.

Tee-Vee goes inside. Preacher Willie moves to help him.

CAROLINA

Nick, listen to me. You've got a
choice. Don't waste it.

NICK

What choice?

CAROLINA

You do this and you'll end up right back in jail. Or dead.

NICK

(shrugs)

Maybe. What does it matter?

CAROLINA

(infuriated)

What does it matter?! What matters is you have a second chance! You don't have to make the same mistakes again.

Nick whirls on her.

NICK

What do you think I am, huh? I'm a convict! I robbed a bank, I killed my own brother. Whatever romantic notions you have about my plight -- forget 'em. When you're in jail, all you think about is surviving the day, and the next, and the next.

(turns back to attend
to the supplies)

And that's what I'm doing now.

Carolina steps closer to him. He takes a step back. She moves closer again, looking into his eyes. He is confused.

CAROLINA

You're not who you say you are. I know you aren't. You talk like that, but you don't really believe it.

He tries to shrug her insight off.

NICK

You think a guy like me can get a second chance? Doing what? Bussing tables? I'll be a short order cook with a phony name, moving from town to town all the time, worried that somebody's gonna bust down the door at any second and arrest me.

(beat)

That's not for me.

CAROLINA
It's honest, at least.

NICK
(laughs)
Honest! What do you know? You're a naive poet living out here in the middle of nothing. So called honest people steal money all day long and call it "business."

Carolina grabs Nick's hand, pulls it close to her, and puts it on her cheek. He is surprised, and at a loss for words. He tries to yank his hand away, but she pulls harder, pressing it to her skin.

CAROLINA
You feel that? That's the touch of another person.
(she caresses his hand)
This is what life's about. It's about caring and feeling, Nick. Don't tell me they've locked you away so long you've forgotten that.

He tries to speak, but can't.

NICK
(not convincing)
I care about a lot of things.

CAROLINA
About what?
(no answer)
Look at you. Is your heart so far gone you can't feel the touch of someone who cares?

NICK
(bitter)
What do you care about me? What could you possibly care about someone like me?

She looks into his eyes, then at the water all around them.

CAROLINA
Your heart is like this clearing. You put up your sandbags and your

CAROLINA (CONT.)

haybails and your reinforcements.
And you keep all the feelings out,
dammed up.

(frantically trying to get through)
Someday that dam is gonna break, and
your heart will drown.

AT THE BARN -

Amundson is helping with the rowboat, and now sees Nick and Carolina, standing close together.

NICK sees the look in her eyes. For a moment, he leans toward her to kiss her. She expects it, wants it... but he breaks away, letting go of her hand.

The moment is lost. He walks by her, toward the rowboat. Preacher Willie and Tee-Vee pretend not to have seen as they load up Nick's gear into the boat.

Carolina stands there alone, unable to stop the inevitable.

CUT TO:

THE ROWBOAT being lifted over the sandbags. They place it on the water, Preacher Willie holding onto the stern. He is the first to climb up the ladder and into the boat.

Tee-Vee tentatively climbs up, gets in the unsteady boat. Nick turns around, faces Amundson.

NICK

Thank you.

AMUNDSON

You helped save my barn. You earned
your keep, Mr. True.

Carolina steps up and looks at Nick critically.

CAROLINA

You have a second chance, Nick.

Nick looks into her eyes, then back at the rowboat, making his decision. Without answering her, he turns away and climbs up the ladder. They help him into the boat.

POV - NICK

as Preacher Willie rows the boat away from the stronghold of sandbags, Amundson and Carolina dwindle. No one waves goodbye. It is a silent, final parting of ways.

ON NICK

watching Carolina. It looks as if he's almost going to tell Preacher Willie to turn the boat around, head back to that young, beautiful woman. But he doesn't. He lets his second chance slip away.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WATER - DAY

Preacher Willie steers the rowboat past the tops of telephone poles, sticking up out of the brown water.

They follow the line of telephone poles into town.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE TOWN - DAY

The only visible buildings are the third floor of city hall and the third floor of the Sheriff's station.

The town is alive with all kinds of boats -- canoes, rowboats, small trawlers with outboards. All are puttering from place to place, rescuing people from rooftops, taking them somewhere safe.

Nick and the others pass through this odd congregation, blending in, looking like any other displaced member of the town of Massey.

A FLAGPOLE -

sticks up ahead. Nick points it out to Preacher.

NICK

That's the bank.

CUT TO:

TEE-VEE

as he ties a rope on the flagpole. Nick prepares his gear. Makes sure they haven't been spotted. He sees, too close

for comfort, THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE SHERIFF'S STATION. It's 100 yards away, windows pointed right at them.

Nick goes over the side of the boat, almost shouting with the surprise of the cold water. Tee-Vee slides the SCUBA tank in the water. Nick straps it on.

CUT TO:

UNDERWATER -

Nick swims down to street level, the entire town a bizarre sight submerged underwater. It's surreal, almost peaceful. Nick passes cars still parked on Main Street, waiting for aquatic drivers.

He comes face to face with the submerged facade of the SOUTHEAST SAVINGS BANK.

CUT TO:

A BRICK WALL, UNDERWATER.

Nick places a dynamite bundle at the base of the back wall of the bank. He lights up the ARCAIR blow torch and holds it to the end of the homemade underwater wicks. The wick starts to burn.

Nick swims, fast, away from the dynamite. But it's like moving in slow motion. He swims around the corner of the bank.

INT. SOUTHEAST SAVINGS BANK VAULT - DAY

Within the airtight, sealed safe vault, all is dry and secure. Then ---

BOOOOMMM!

The back wall of the vault explodes inward, followed by a tidal wave of water, cascading into the vault. Tons of bubbling, agitated water fills the room.

ON THE SURFACE -

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie hold on as the rowboat is ROCKED violently, water around them alive with bubbles gurgling to the surface.

IN THE VAULT -

Nick is inside, holding the torch up for light, looking at a floor covered with the bags they saw being unloaded from the armored cars.

CUT TO:

NICK FILLING A MAKESHIFT balloon (fashioned from the rainslickers he was testing before), with the air from his regulator.

The raincoat fills with oxygen, and begins to rise.

The coat takes with it two BAGS OF CASH, tied to the sleeves of the coat. Nick watches the bag rise up toward the bottom of the rowboat, far above.

ON THE SURFACE:

The coat bursts to the surface, and Tee-Vee immediately leans out of the boat to grab it, fear of drowning forgotten as he reels in the booty.

He and Preacher Willie pull the coat into the rowboat. They pull the two bags tied to the coat in, too. Tee-Vee takes a knife and slices through the top of the heavy bag.

Preacher Willie and Tee-Vee stare in at neatly stacked piles of cash in the special square-shaped bag.

CUT TO:

INT. THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE SHERIFF'S STATION - CONT.

Bearmeyer is trying to drink a Mr. Pibbs with his neckbrace on. He looks bored and pissed in the mostly empty room. Jenny Malloy files her nails in a chair in the corner. Windows act as moorings for boats, and remain half open.

Bearmeyer's eye is caught by two men in a rowboat one hundred yards away. A tall black man and a short white one are pulling something into the rowboat.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONT.

Nick fills another raincoat with oxygen. The coat is half filled when his oxygen begins to sputter in the regulator. He shakes the canister on his back. The oxygen slowly fills the coat. Two more bags are headed up top.

There isn't enough air for the rest of the bags. But Nick hasn't gotten a small load up there by any stretch of the imagination. Four bags should be plenty.

Nick swims away from the bank, leaving the site of what is probably the first underwater bank heist in history.

EXT. THE SURFACE - CONT.

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie are laughing as they pull the next raincoat into the boat. They struggle with the last two heavy bags of cash.

Then Nick's masked face appears from the gloom. He holds onto the side of the rowboat, grinning at the two happy faces looking back at him.

TEE-VEE

You are a fucking genius, Nick!

PREACHER WILLIE

(holding up a bag)

I second that.

Tee-Vee holds his hand out to Nick, begins pulling Nick up and over the edge of the boat. But Nick STOPS COLD.

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie, their backs turned with the job of bringing the money aboard, never saw or heard --

T.C. MALLOY -

in his speedboat, creeping up behind them. On deck is O'Keefe and Schmidt. Everyone has their guns pointed at the three men.

Time freezes.

Nick is still halfway in the water, Tee-Vee holding Nick's arm, Preacher Willie stunned silent. They are all looking at the long arm of the law, reaching for them out here on this depressing floodwater.

O'KEEFE

First man who moves wins a bullet.

The boat slides right up alongside the rowboat. Guns are looming down at them. Malloy kills the motor, trains his gun on Nick and smiles.

MALLOY

Old habits die hard, huh, True?

NICK

Sure do, Malloy, seeing as you're here to take my money again.

O'Keefe's eyes momentarily look at Malloy on that statement. Malloy snorts derisively.

Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie glance at each other. They don't know what to do, but they're caught cold.

TEE-VEE

(defeated)

It was fun while it lasted, Nick.

Preacher Willie has a calm, however prophetic look in his eyes. He mutters something to himself as one of his hands slowly travels down toward one of his pockets.

PREACHER WILLIE

"We must die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again."

Nick and Tee-Vee see what Preacher Willie is doing, but they're too late to stop him.

TEE-VEE

Preacher, no!

Preacher Willie reaches quickly into his front pant pocket and pulls something out as --

What happens next takes an eternity --

Tee-Vee reaches for Preacher Willie to stop him as --

A BULLET RIPS INTO PREACHER WILLIE. O'Keefe's gun smoking with the report.

Preacher Willie is thrown overboard, the Bible he intentionally reached for which was mistaken for a weapon flapping open, revealing blood-spattered pages. He and the Good Book go into the water as --

Tee-Vee, in motion to reach Willie, lets go of Nick, blocking T.C. Malloy's opportunity and --

TEE-VEE takes the bullet meant for Nick, right in the chest. Tee-Vee makes a gurgling, pathetic grunt, as he falls in a heap onto the bags of money.

Nick submerges, quickly sliding beneath the water, as --

O'KEEFE AND MALLOY UNLOAD at the ripples where Nick went down.

Abruptly, all is still again....

O'Keefe has his gun trained on the water. He sees --

PREACHER WILLIE, floating face down, blood swirling around his body in a cruel blossom.

Tee-Vee lies in the rowboat, mouth agape, eyes open in an eternal stare at the cash that lies before his face.

ON THE WATER -

Nick's MASK floats to the surface. Bobs there for a moment. O'Keefe and Malloy wait for more to come up. Nothing...

O'Keefe holsters his gun. Malloy is still pointing at the water, a desperate look on his face.

MALLOY

Did we get him?

(O'Keefe doesn't
bother to answer)

Did we get him?!

O'Keefe looks at the two dead cons on the water. Sees the Bible bobbing next to Preacher Willie. Disgusted with the entire mess, he turns away from Malloy.

O'KEEFE

I don't know.

CUT TO:

EXT. THIRD FLOOR OF THE SHERIFF'S STATION - DAY

Malloy's boat has towed the rowboat to the windows of the third floor. The boat is moored there, the bodies of Tee-Vee and Preacher Willie lying side by side.

The lawmen are grabbing the bags of money from the boat, bringing them inside the safety of the Sheriff's station.

INT. THE SHERIFF'S STATION - CONT.

An odd sight graces the mostly submerged Sheriff's station: the staircase down to the second and first floors disappears into a pool of black floodwater.

The third floor is a large, open space with many desks and corkboards on the wall. There are no private offices. The windows all look out at the flooded town. A 7-Up machine graces the corner next to the coffee pot.

Malloy is pacing in a corner. Staring at him with what looks like disgust is Jenny Malloy.

Schmidt and Bearmeyer pull the rest of the money into the room.

O'KEEFE
(to Bearmeyer)
Put the money in the corner, where
Malloy can't get to it.

Malloy whirls. Jenny stops chewing gum.

CUT TO:

NEARLY TOTAL BLACKNESS

we don't know where we are, but we know it's underwater. We see a fist SMASH THROUGH a glass case. The hand reaches into the case and removes a SHOTGUN. Bleeding from a cut the glass inflicted, the hand reaches in and takes out a box of shells from the case.

BACK TO:

THE THIRD FLOOR

Where Malloy is in O'Keefe's face. The State Trooper does not flinch or budge.

MALLOY
Repeat what you said, you bastard.

Bearmeyer and Schmidt watch from the 7-Up machine.

MALLOY
Repeat that, you sonofabitch!

ANGLE ON THE STAIRCASE -

There is a bubble from the black water. Then another.

BACK ON THE ARGUING COPS.

O'KEEFE

(almost a whisper)

You took True's stolen money, didn't you? You're no better than the man I'm after.

MALLOY

I told you once before I'd put you down if you made a comment like that.

No one, except for Jenny Malloy, sees the person entering the room. Her eyes widen at what must be the most incredible sight in her life.

Nick comes walking up the submerged stairs, like a creature from some black lagoon. He must've broken the second floor window and hidden there, breathing the last of the oxygen.

Now Nick walks into the third floor, dripping wet, a shotgun in his hands, pilfered from the submerged weapons room.

The entire room falls silent as Nick takes in the scene:

Bearmeyer and Schmidt, wide eyed, staring at him;

O'Keefe and Malloy, equally stunned, watching Nick stride into the room, shoes sloshing with water;

And Jenny, who looks like the life was just drained out of her as her ex-husband appears.

NICK

(to O'Keefe)

You killed my friend.

Nick cocks the shotgun, and points it at O'Keefe. The big man shows a brief moment of fear, tries to control it.

O'KEEFE

Don't be a fool, True.

NICK

Shut up.
(to Malloy)
Move away.

Malloy looks at O'Keefe, then slowly moves to the center of the room, standing away from everyone. His hands are itching to pull out his revolver.

Nick waves the shotgun at Schmidt.

NICK

You. Put the cash in that boat.

Schmidt looks at O'Keefe for guidance. Nick's shotgun points everywhere, and now is trained on Schmidt's face.

NICK

Do it!

O'Keefe nods to Schmidt. Schmidt ducks under a half-open window, tosses a sack of cash into the speedboat. He does the same with the other three sacks.

NICK glances out the window, sees the keys in the speedboat.

He motions Bearmeyer and Schmidt to move over by O'Keefe. Now everyone is in a neat little semi-circle. Nick's shotgun covers them all, and his back is to the half-open window and the speedboat.

NICK

(without looking at her)
Hi, honey.

Jenny stands up, one hand discretely inside her purse on the table.

JENNY

Nick, baby. Oh, it's so good to see you.

NICK

Good to see you, too, honey. Or should I call you Mrs. Malloy?

JENNY

Nick, sweetheart, I can explain.
Let me just --

NICK
(viscous)
SHUT UP!

He swings the shotgun at her. She stops cold, her lip quivering. Malloy reaches for his gun.

NICK
(swinging the shotgun back)
Do it you fuck! Do it so I can blow
your spine all over this room.

T.C. Malloy stops dead. It is very tense in the room. Everyone's wondering who's gonna get blasted first. Because the look on Nick's face is serious, and somebody's gotta die.

NICK
(to O'Keefe)
She's the only one I told. The only
one I told where the money was
hidden. The only one I could trust.

O'Keefe glances at Jenny. Her hand is still in the purse.

NICK
I thought she loved me. But she's a
cold, cold woman.

JENNY
Nick, that's not --

NICK
She was having an affair with
loverboy here. She told him where
I'd be meeting my brother.
(Jenny's mouth
opens and closes)
So they set me up for murder. Who's
gonna take a murderer's word over a
Sheriff's? Case closed. Money's
never recovered. And the loverboy
lives happily ever after with the
fairy princess.

MALLOY
(to O'Keefe)
You gonna listen to this lying con?!

Malloy is itching to get at that gun. O'Keefe is very interested in Nick's story.

NICK

Take a look at that boat of his.
Where does he get it on a Sheriff's
salary of \$31,400 a year? Probably
got a lot of other toys too.

The room is silent.

O'KEEFE

(calmly)
Okay, True. I believe you.

MALLOY

(freaks)
What?!

O'KEEFE

I've seen his house, True, and
you're right. He's got a satellite
dish, two horses, that yacht out
there, and a few cars.

(Nick still holds the shotgun on them)
Now, don't you think it's time to
put the gun down, and let the law
take care of them?

He motions to Jenny and Malloy. Nick listens to O'Keefe,
but can't hear reason through his rage.

NICK

You're a hell of an actress, Jenny.

JENNY

But I really love you, Nick. I do.

MALLOY

Shut up, you bitch!

JENNY

He made me do it, Nick. T.C. told
me he'd kill me, and kill you unless
I told him where you were meeting
Frank. I thought he was just gonna
arrest you, I swear.

Her voice is sweet and soothing, and her performance is so
convincing that Nick is starting to wonder if it is a

performance. His grip, for the slightest moment, relaxes on the shotgun.

And that's all Jenny needs.

Her hand flashes out of the purse with A NICKEL PLATED .45 and --

MALLOY

(sees her)

NOO!

Nick tries to move, but --

BOOM! Jenny nails Nick from across the room, blood spraying from his neck. Nick grunts in pain as --

O'KEEFE DRAWS HIS GUN, lightning quick, and BAM! he plugs Jenny before she can shoot again --

Jenny squeals like an insane pig, the sound reverberating in the small room as she spits blood, pitches forward with a massive hole in her chest from O'Keefe's .38

MALLOY has his gun out --

MALLOY

Mother fucker!

BOOM! he blasts O'Keefe, right in the face. O'Keefe is blown backward, staggering past the stunned and frozen Bearmeyer and Schmidt. O'Keefe tumbles down the steps like a spastic marionette, face awash with blood, disappearing into the black water with a splash.

Nick, blood spraying from his neck, gets up on one knee, using the shotgun for balance, as --

Malloy whirls on him, gun raised --

MALLOY

TRUE!

BOOOOM! Malloy fires, but Nick BLASTS HIM TO HELL with the shotgun. KA-WHOOOM! goes the double barrels.

Malloy is blasted out a window, nearly cut in half, blood spattering the walls all around him as his body sprays through shattering glass. He lands in the water on his back.

In a haunting, horrifying death, Malloy's eyes are still open and very much alive as his gaze meets Nick's through the broken window. Malloy slowly sinks in the black water, and doesn't have the strength to swim as his life ebbs.

MALLOY
(strangled gurgle)
He-hheeeelp!

He spits blood as the water engulfs his face, his mouth upturned trying to breathe in air as he sinks slowly under. His nose disappears under the surface. Bubbles rise as the Sheriff goes under for good.

ON NICK - Trying to stand, he's got Malloy's bullet in his gut. He points the shotgun at the terrified Bearmeyer and Schmidt, who both hit the deck, hands on the back of their heads in submission.

Nick turns away, painfully goes to the window, sees the speedboat parked outside. He clamps a blood-soaked hand to the wound in his neck. Blood squirts through his fingers, and he clamps down harder.

Nick climbs out the window, barely able to summon the strength. He groans in pain as he puts one foot into the speedboat. Then the other. The shotgun drops from his grasp and plunks into the water between the building and the boat.

Nick stands at the wheel of the boat. He tries to breathe, but the shot in his gut is making him faint. He slumps over the wheel, smearing the dash of the boat with blood so dark it's nearly black.

He still has the hand clamped to his neck, the blood seeping through his fingers in an unstaunchable flow.

Nick somehow starts the engine of the boat. He shoves the motor into gear and pulls away from the Sheriff's station.

Delirious, Nick steers the boat in a circle, back toward the telltale path of the telephone poles.

EXT. ON THE FLOODED TOWN - CONT.

NICK'S POV - a sickening mirage of people in boats staring at his bloodied form as he drives the boat past them, motoring out of town, using the telephone poles as guidance.

EXT. THE BARN - DAY

Carolina and Amundson are fortifying the sandbags. She stops as she hears the sound of a boat engine. Carolina stands, turns and almost cries out as she sees --

Nick, from far off, at the wheel of the speedboat. It slowly motors toward the barn. Amundson joins her as the boat comes closer.

CAROLINA
(hopeful, but still can't
believe it)
He changed his mind. He's coming
back.

IN THE BOAT

Nick is pale white, blood everywhere except in his veins. The boat's white interior looks like it's been freshly painted red.

Nick collapses against the wheel, propping himself up, eyes barely staying open with the pain and loss of blood.

NICK'S POV - he looks down, sees the bag of cash at his feet, blood in a pool around it.

Nick looks up to see the familiar barn, and Carolina waving to him from behind the sandbags.

OVERHEAD

We see a land flooded with water, treetops poking through the surface. The area where the barn lies is the only safe harbor for miles.

The boat gently comes to a stop against the sandbags. Carolina and Amundson reach for it to keep it from floating away. Neither one of them can see yet that Nick has fallen to the floor of the boat in a pool of his own blood. One hand clutches to a ragged wound in his neck, and one hand rests on the bag of money by his side.

FADE OUT.