

THE LONG WALK

Directed by Francis Lawrence

Screenplay by JT Mollner

Based on the novel by Stephen King

"I would encourage every American to walk as often as possible. It's more than healthy; it's fun."

-John F. Kennedy

1 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - MORNING 1
POV FRONT OF VEHICLE: A one-lane road, *DRIVING THROUGH WOODS*.
WIDE TO REVEAL THE CAR: A BLUE, mid 60s FORD FALCON with chipped paint and rusty wheel bearings.

2 INT. FORD FALCON - MORNING 2
RAYMOND GARRATY(18) sits in the passenger seat wearing an army fatigue jacket.
A woman in her 50's drives. She's prematurely aged and her eyes are wandering. This is GINNIE Garraty, Raymond's mother.
Her son fiddles with a CANTEEN and stuffs cellophane-wrapped SNACKS into a distressed waxed-canvas BACKPACK. There's a *staticky broadcast* coming from the CAR RADIO:

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
...till the first steps of the 19th annual Long Walk, where there is only one winner- the young man who is the last standing. As always, this year's contest will feature the best and bravest of America's youth, with one lucky Walker representing each of the 50 states. The walker from the home state this year is Raymond Garraty. The Major will preside over the proceedings which will once again begin at the northern most point of the County, and continue-

CLICK! Ginnie shuts off the radio. There's an awkward silence in the car. *Then finally:*

GINNIE
Baby. Listen...

They meet eyes.

GINNIE (CONT'D)

I love you. There's still time to
change your mind-

GARRATY

The back-out date was yesterday.

GINNIE

They'd understand, Ray. I know they
would. The Major-

GARRATY

You *know* what The Major would do.

A single TEAR DROP rolls down his Mother's cheek.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

It was my idea, Mom. Not yours.
this way is the best way. It's the
only way.

GINNIE

I still don't understand why you
need to do this. If your father was
here-

GARRATY

But he isn't.

3 EXT. PARKING LOT - GUARD GATE - MOMENTS LATER

3

There are two GUARDS at the entrance driveway: both
expressionless young men in matching uniforms. Ginnie *rolls*
down the WINDOW.

GUARD

ID card, please.

She hands him a BLUE PLASTIC CARD. He scans it with a
PORTABLE COMPUTER DEVICE.

4 EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

4

Garraty exits the car. He pulls the cellophane-wrapped SNACKS
out of his pack, stuffs them into his COAT POCKETS.

Ginnie gets out, looks at him, curious.

GARRATY

I think it might get too heavy.

He pulls a BASEBALL out of the bag, stuffs it into one of the pockets.

GINNIE

You brought *the* baseball?

GARRATY

(emotional)

I.. I just-

GINNIE

Come here, Baby.

She *grabs* him and *squeezes* him tightly. She hands him something wrapped in ALUMINUM FOIL.

GINNIE (CONT'D)

I made them last night. Oatmeal chocolate chip. Your favorite.

He smiles and chokes up.

GINNIE (CONT'D)

I love you, Ray. Be a good boy.

She grips him tightly again, *KISSES* him all over his face in an explosion of *reflexive emotion; this is her only son*.

When she's finished, the two of them stare at each other one last time; Ray's expression a mix of deep sadness and a touch of embarrassment (*are there other boys watching him?*). He tries his best to keep from totally losing it:

GARRATY

I love you *better*, Mom.

We can tell it's a thing they say to each other.

She smiles, knowingly.

GINNIE

No you don't. And that's a fact.

He turns and begins to walk away-

She reaches out and *CLUTCHES* his wrist, almost violently. He turns back to her.

GARRATY

Mom, I-

GINNIE

Ray, I can't.

She clutches him harder, refusing to let go.

GINNIE (CONT'D)

I can't.

She pulls him to her and EMBRACES him again, squeezing for dear life and crying onto his shoulder.

Finally, she detaches... *and forces herself back into the vehicle.*

She reluctantly puts the car into gear, *staring out the window at him* as it rolls ahead. Garraty doesn't move from his spot. He raises his hand in a lame attempt at a final goodbye.

Nearby, a mid 1960's PLYMOUTH STATION WAGON leaves another kid behind. This is PETER MCVRIES: He has a BAD SCAR along one cheek, but is easy-on-the-eyes.

The two of them silently acknowledge each other and make their way toward an OPENING in the surrounding GATE; the road and starting line is on the other side of it. Two more GUARDS stand here and are *checking bags*.

Garraty hands them his BACKPACK and so does McVries. As they search:

GARRATY

I'm Ray Garraty.

MCVRIES

Peter McVries.

GARRATY

You ready?

MCVRIES

A little jumpy, but maybe it's good. What do you weigh?

They both collect their things after they've been cleared, *continue through the gate.*

GARRATY

One seventy eight.

MCVRIES

I'm one sixty five. They say heavier guys get tired quicker.

5 EXT. OPEN ROAD - STARTING AREA - CONTINUOUS

5

The BOYS congregate near a STARTING LINE on the roadside. There are at least 50, all styled in a way that somewhat indicates the mid 1960s.

Garraty and McVries pass a *redhead with a plaid shirt tied around his waist*; this is PATRICK. He's walking without looking, distracted by a pornographic magazine that's opened in his hands: *HOOTER HEAVEN*.

The two of them sit down in the shade. A tall, extremely fit kid stands nearby: This is STEBBINS. He *eats* a JELLY SANDWICH.

GARRATY

Look at Superman over there.

MCVRIES

Fuck. He's built.

GARRATY

Not an ounce of fat. Going to be tough to beat.

There are two others sitting next to them, also on their BAGS: HANK OLSON; A crafty-looking kid with messy hair, and ARTHUR BAKER, who has a prominent silver CRUCIFIX hanging around his neck.

OLSON

(to Baker)

I'm not fucking hurrying. Why should I? If I get warned, so what? You adjust, that's all. Adjustment is the key. Remember where you heard it first.

He notices McVries and Garraty listening, says to them:

OLSON (CONT'D)

More lambs to the slaughter! Hank Olson's the name. Walking's my game.

GARRATY

Raymond Garraty. You can call me Ray.

MCVRIES

Peter McVries. You can call me McVries.

BAKER
(with a southern accent)
I'm Art Baker.

MCVRIES
Fucking terrifying, isn't it?

BAKER
Trying not to think about it. Just
want to walk and make some friends.

Garraty notices a kid pacing just a few feet away from them.
He's got a thin, pale face and looks young - *really young*.
This is CURLY.

GARRATY
You alright over there?

Curly stops in his tracks and takes a moment to register the
comment.

CURLY
Me?

GARRATY
Yeah. You're pacing. You okay?

CURLY
Just getting warmed up.

Curly looks scared shitless.

MCVRIES
You'll have a few hundred miles to
get warmed up when we start. What's
your name?

CURLY
Curly.

GARRATY
How old are you, Curly?

CURLY
18?

OLSON
He lied to qualify. You can tell.
Doesn't look a day over 16.

(MORE)

OLSON (CONT'D)

He has no idea what he's doing. Now me, I know *exactly* what I'm doing. Have to be aggressive. I did my research on The Major. He says to win this thing, you've gotta be *raring to rip!* That's me. I'm *raring to rip!*

MCVRIES

Raring to rip!

McVries *winks* at Garraty, making secret-fun of Olson.

An intense looking boy sits cross-legged on the road, *stretching his neck*. This is GARY BARKOVITCH. He cuts in.

BARKOVITCH

Raring to rip?

He laughs, hoping the others will join him but nobody does.

BARKOVITCH (CONT'D)

You sound like my fucking Grandma. Right boys?

No response from the rest of them.

BARKOVITCH (CONT'D)

(embarrassed)

I was just messing around.

He pulls a CANNED FRUIT COCKTAIL out of his bag and opens it, begins shoveling large mouthfuls out of it with a METAL SPOON.

Stebbins finishes a sandwich, balls up the foil, tosses it onto the shoulder of the road. *VEINS IN HIS ARM BULGE AS HE DOES IT - the guy looks like a pro athlete.*

OLSON

Don't be a litter bug.

STEBBINS

Does it even matter?

GARRATY

Hey, what's your name?

STEBBINS

Stebbins.

OLSON

You some kind of fitness nut?

Stebbins looks in a different direction and ignores him.

MCVRIES

I don't think he wants to talk anymore.

OLSON

Fine by me, but he still shouldn't litter.

There's a buck-toothed teenager sitting cross-legged on ground next to Stebbins. His name is RANK. He's in his own world, meticulously folding a bright GREEN PIECE OF PAPER into... *something, intensely focused.* ORIGAMI.

OLSON (CONT'D)

See that spot right there on the marker post?

The TREE BRANCHES in the breeze make *moving shadow patterns* on the post. There's one DARK SPOT that doesn't move...

OLSON (CONT'D)

That's from The Long Walk the year before last. Kid got so scared he just froze up at nine O' clock.

MCVRIES

Fuck. I remember watching that. The guy from Nevada, right?

OLSON

Yeah. Took his three warnings 30 seconds later they gave him his ticket.

GARRATY

Why would you remind us of something like that right now?

MCVRIES

I've only known you for a few minutes Olson, but I'm fairly certain you're a fucking asshole.

BAKER

Here he comes.

A DUN-COLORED JEEP approaches.

HARKNESS

That's the Major!

Harkness is a gangly boy with a CREWCUT wearing HORN RIMMED prescription GLASSES. He begins to *shake*, either out of fear or excitement. He carries a pen and a notepad.

Behind the group of young men, *four TREAD-EQUIPPED VEHICLES APPROACH*. They have VIDEO CAMERAS WITH GIANT LENSES and FLOOD LIGHTS (turned off) *mounted* to their fronts and backs. These are HALFTRACKS: part armored combat vehicle, part tank.

SPEAKERS jut off the sides and SOLDIERS in MILITARY FATIGUES sit on each deck as they roll in.

The JEEP drives up to the stone marker and *stops*. The driver's side door *opens*...

GROUND LEVEL, ON A PERFECTLY CLEAN BLACK COMBAT BOOT STEPPING OUT OF THE JEEP... THEN ANOTHER. TRACK WITH THE TWO BOOTS... They take slow, deliberate steps before stopping.

BOOM UP TO REVEAL... **THE MAJOR**. He's a tall, serious man with a deep tan and simple khakis. A PISTOL is *strapped* to his SAM BROWNE BELT and he's wearing opaque REFLECTOR GLASSES and holding a CLIP BOARD.

THE MAJOR

Sit down, Boys. Keep Hint Thirteen in mind.

OLSON

(quietly, to the others)
Conserve energy whenever possible.

MCVRIES

Shut it, Olson. We all read the rule book.

BACK ON THE MAJOR - MONTAGE

THE MAJOR

When I call your name, step forward and take your tags. Put them around your neck and then go back to your place until I instruct otherwise. Do this smartly please.
(He looks down at the clipboard)
Ewing. Number 1.

A scared kid with a nervous smile walks up. The Major hands him a METAL CHAIN (necklace) with a connected NUMBER PLATE that looks like an oversized dog tag. EWING puts it on...
DISSOLVE TO:

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

Smith, Patrick. Number 4.

Patrick approaches, folds HOOTER HEAVEN in half and jams it in his back pocket. He smiles at The Major... *DISSOLVE TO:*

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

Barkovitch. Number 5.

Barkovitch approaches The Major and grabs the tag. He's having trouble making eye contact and is visibly intimidated. He puts the chain around his neck... *DISSOLVE TO:*

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
Baker, Arthur. Number 6.

Baker walks up with deceptive leisure, takes his NECKLACE. He doubles it up on his neck with the CRUCIFIX. The Major gives him a *thumbs up*.... *DISSOLVE TO:*

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
McVries. Number 23.

McVries takes his tag, nods at The Major awkwardly and gets an encouraging pat on the back in return... *DISSOLVE TO:*

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
Stebbins. Number 38.

He gets his chain and looks directly at The Major with palpable reverence and *AWE*... *DISSOLVE TO:*

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
Garraty. 47.

Garraty approaches, head down. He takes the tag. *The Major stares...* for a moment it seems like he might recognize(?) him, like he's trying to *place him*. Garraty notices and shrinks from it, tries his best to be invisible.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
Good luck, Son.

Finally, Ray can't help but look; he gets caught up in his eyes for a moment and looks (almost) like he's going to respond, then turns, *WALKS AWAY*.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
Parker, Collie. 48.

PARKER is a burly, tough looking guy. He salutes The Major, takes his number. The Major salutes him back... *DISSOLVE TO:*

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
Zuck. Number 50. And that'll be it.

ZUCK takes his tag and flashes a proud, cheesy smile.

The *SOLDIERS* grab *RUCKSACKS* from the vehicles and infiltrate the crowd of boys.

They distribute WRIST-TACHOMETERS with multiple gauges: **MPH** (**speed**), **MILEAGE**, and one that simply says **WARNINGS:0**.

The other two pass out light LEATHER BELTS with what look like HOLSTERS all around them; *very narrow holsters.*

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

Boys, it takes heavy, heavy sac to sign up for this contest. And you've all got it. You're *men* now. As you all know, our country has been in a period of financial struggle since The War, and we did the very first Long Walk all those years ago to inspire, and to reintegrate the value of *work ethic*. Each year, after the event, there's a spike in production. We have the means to return to our former glory. The infrastructure is in place for success. We have given the workers the tools. But our problem now is an epidemic of laziness. Not with *all*, but with *many*. You boys are the answer. *The Long Walk* is the answer. You are proof to those in the farms, factories and fields that if they have sac, work hard, and strive for greatness, then they alone can put an end to their financial woes. When this is broadcast for *all* of the states, your inspiration will continue to elevate our Gross National Product. We will be number one in the world once again!

The boys *cheer*. He reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out a pack of LUCKY STRIKE CIGARETTES, puts one in his mouth. He *lights* it with a ZIPPO, takes a drag.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

I look at each and every one of you and I see *hope*. You are the future. You are the reminder for every-day people that *anyone* can do *anything* if they want it bad enough. And work hard enough.

Garraty is eyeing him, gritting his teeth. There's a strange aggression that we haven't seen until now: *palpable disdain*. A *SOLDIER* fits his wrist for the tachometer, but all the while he never takes his eyes off of The Major.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

Now I'm not going to go through the whole rulebook, but it boils down to this: walk until there's only one of you left. Maintain a speed of three miles per hour. If you fall below the speed, you get a warning. If you can't make speed within ten seconds you get an additional warning. After three warnings, you get *your ticket*. Walk an hour at speed, *one warning is erased*, and so on. If you leave the pavement, you'll get *your ticket* without warnings. Boys, you'll walk as long as you can, but the body may refuse to listen. For some, your heart will stop. For others, a blood vessel will burst in your brain. Some will hemorrhage from organs and blood will flow suddenly and freely. You will see every type of expiration if you make it far enough. The goal is to last the longest. There's one winner and no finish line.

Olson is *stretching* like an athlete readying for a sporting event, yanking his arms vigorously across his chest, bending forward to touch his toes. All this at the same time as he *CHEWS GUM vigorously* and blows intermittent pink BUBBLES.

McVries *tinkers with his clothing almost obsessively; tying and retying his shoes.*

Richard Harkness is *chewing his pen* now. A soldier hands him TUBES OF FOOD (**Tuna Surprise, chicken concentrate, spamalicious**).

Baker *kisses* the CRUCIFIX that hangs from his neck and follows with the *sign of the cross*.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

If you *do* get your ticket, take it with dignity, honor, and pride.

Stebbins has squished the TINFOIL from a sandwich into a tight ball and is *rolling it between his palms methodically*.

One of them stuffs a TRANSISTOR RADIO into his PACK. This is TRESSLER.

Barkovitch is tinkering with a MEDALLION.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

*Any of you can win! Any of you can
do it if you walk long and steady
enough. If you refuse to give up.
Now Boys, who's set to fucking win?*

*It's a question, but they're not sure if they're supposed to
answer... a low rumbling in the crowd.*

McVries looks over to Garraty; he's *glaring at the Major now with one eye closed* (like he's peering through a camera viewfinder), *mumbling something incoherent under his breath.*

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

I said who's ready to *fucking* win?!

His fist *rises* and the boys stand, *ERUPTING IN CHEERS!*
Garraty stands but *GIVES NO APPLAUSE.* *Neither does Stebbins.*

MCVRIES

Damn, Garraty. I can't tell whether you want to fuck him or fight him.

THE MAJOR

Alright, fellows. Line up by fives, please. No particular order.

The boys do as he says. Once they're formed into the ten rows, there's an eerie, anticipatory quiet among them.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

I give my congratulations to the winner among your number, and my acknowledgments of valor to the losers. Luck to all. And remember, *any* of you can win.

GARRATY

Sure. But he left out the most important part: *All* of us can't.

THE MAJOR RAISES A .38 REVOLVER...

Garraty watches closely- BAM! He *flinches at the report,* then walks.

Rank leaves the completed ORIGAMI on the ground at the starting line... a GREEN CHICKEN.

Garraty looks at his WRIST DEVICE: **3.2 MPH.**

McVries walks as well, but can't take his eyes off The Major and the gun.

WIDE OF THE GROUP; GARRATY AND MCVRIES AT CENTER. *The HIGHWAY is cleared for them like a parade.*

The STARTING POST drops from sight as the golden, mid-morning SUN cuts through the PROCESSION.

CU GARRATY'S FACE, then MCVRIES, then OLSON, then BAKER.

Garraty looks down at his SHOES as they meet the pavement with each step: DANNER HIKERS in fairly good shape.

The road is TREE LINED on both sides. A FULL SIZE TANK blocks the road and forces them to change course. Garraty *stares at it in awe* as they pass. *

6 EXT. OPEN ROAD - LAKE - MOMENTS LATER

6

They all move together, keeping pace and (mostly) tightly packed) in this early stage of The Walk. Sun rays glitter off the smooth surface of a LAKE as the pass by; a pair of crows cut across the sky above.

The continue past the lake and the road becomes a series of continuous rolling hills. A LARGE DECOMPOSING DEAD COW is splayed out on the side of the road. There are flies buzzing around it.

Tressler *fumbles with his radio dial* - still only *STATIC*.

The rolling hills become an expanse of LONELY ROAD with parallel WATER CANALS on both sides of it - a seemingly endless DUAL MOAT.

7 EXT. OPEN ROAD - SMALL VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

7

They pass through a SMALL VILLAGE. The buildings are creepily empty; it's a *ghost town*. It's quiet except for the incessant barking and growling of a mangy, haggard DOG, chained to a post in a lot full of old rusty appliances and junk heaps.

Garraty looks at it all with a strange sadness. They come upon a CROSSROADS and he clocks two POLICEMAN manning the (mostly deserted) intersection. The cops *salute* the Walkers as they pass. Most salute them back. Barkovitch *FLIPS THEM OFF*.

GARRATY

(to McVries and Olson)

Why don't they let people watch the start of The Long Walk?

BARKOVITCH

Spoils the Walkers concentration. The Major has said it's very important to concentrate on calmness at the beginning. He doesn't allow spectators until the final stretch. Except the locals.

Garraty turns to see #5: BARKOVITCH.

GARRATY

How do they know when it's the final stretch?

STEBBINS

The final stretch never changes much. Sure, it fluctuates by 10 or so miles, but humans are humans. It's very predictable. And he won't allow those distractions till there are only a few of us left.

BARKOVITCH

I agree with The Major. Excitement, crowds. That's for the end.

A HALFTRACK rolls up as he talks, tracks with him. One of the CAMERAS is right on them.

OLSON

Smile, you're on candid camera.

MCVRIES

Those aren't very candid. If I spit at it will it go away?

The LENS on its side makes a buzzing noise as it ZOOMS in and then pivots to Garraty when he talks.

GARRATY

Fucking creepy.

BARKOVITCH

Stop worrying about things you can't control and make a plan. Now cameras and the TV. If you make it to the end, the crowds. Right now we need focus.

OLSON

All I'm focused on is picking them up and laying them down.

He's still *chewing as he talks* - the WAD OF GUM seems as big as cud the way he's jawing at it.

BARKOVITCH

I'm Gary Barkovitch by the way. My home is Washington.

MCVRIES

I'm Clark Kent. My home is
Smallville.

BARKOVITCH

Make fun all you want. At least I
have a plan.

*McVries speeds up, breaks away. Garraty does the same and
stays with him. McVries notices:*

MCVRIES

You and me, huh?

GARRATY

Better to have a friend, right?

MCVRIES

Sure, Compadre. But don't get *too*
clingy. It's a turnoff.

There's an old FORD PICKUP parked beside the road. A WOMAN
jumps from it, *cries out:*

WOMAN

Percy! Percy!

Garraty notices she's yelling to #31: PERCY GRIMES and he's
embarrassed for him. The boy *blushes and waves* meekly at her,
hurries on. A moment later, the woman tries to *RUN ONTO THE
ROAD*. A POLICEMAN *restrains* her gently.

POLICEMAN

Come on, Lady. You know you're not
allowed here. You don't want to get
him disqualified now, do you?

*Garraty has a visible reverence for the bizarre politeness of
the interaction.*

Then McVries says quietly:

MCVRIES

You know I've been thinking after
looking at the others, you and I
actually don't have bad chances.

GARRATY

Two percent isn't exactly good.

8

EX. OPEN ROAD - POTATOES AND BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

8

The pines begin to break and they come upon rectangular
FIELDS with the earth *freshly turned*.

MCVRIES

Potatoes, they tell me.

GARRATY

Best in the world.

BAKER

You from here?

GARRATY

Yeah. Downstate.

MCVRIES

So you're the one.

BAKER

The one *what?*

MCVRIES

Mr. Garraty here is the Walker from
the home state.

They round a curve and and make their way toward a BRIDGE
that crosses a RIVER.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

WARNING! WARNING 38!

The sound is BLARING, DISTORTED and GRATING. It's a cold,
unfeeling voice with dire urgency but no emotion.
Garraty and McVries look around: Stebbins.

OLSON

(Chewing his gum)

That's smart. The guy takes a
warning while he's still fresh and
gets an idea of where the limit is.

MCVRIES

Seems pretty fucking dumb to me.

OLSON

He'll have no problem walking an
hour without getting a fresh
warning this early, then he'll lose
the old one. Good strategy.

Stebbins hangs near the back, separate from the others. He
pulls another JELLY SANDWICH out of his pocket, *bites*.

GARRATY

Think it's good strategy to stuff
your face with that many jelly
sandwiches this early?

They ascend the expansive BRIDGE and begin to make their way
over the RIVER.

Olson *BLOWS A BUBBLE - POP!* He spits the pink wad of gum into
his hand, *puts it in his POCKET.*

McVries sees him do it.

MCVRIES

What the fuck, Olson?

OLSON

What? Gum ain't biodegradable. I'd
rather have sticky pockets that
litter all over the place.

GARRATY

You do realize this whole Goddamned
road is a big piece of litter,
don't you?

MCVRIES

He's right.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning number 5!

BARKOVITCH

I've got a stone in my shoe!

Barkovitch stops completely, *sits down and takes off his shoe.*

A *SOLDIER* drops off the *HALFTRACK* and approaches him, RAISES HIS CARBINE RIFLE and *points it at his head.* Barkovitch sees it, but somehow isn't fazed.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Second warning, 5.

Barkovitch *shakes a tiny pebble out of his shoe calmly.*

The pack has moved past him and he is all alone now.

Another SOLDIER dismounts, RAISES HIS RIFLE, points it at him. The Halftrack *stops, waits.* Olson, McVries, Garraty and Baker are all *walking backwards so they can watch.*

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (CONT'D)
Third warning, 5. Final warning.

Barkovitch remains sitting, tying his shoe.

OLSON
That dumb shit is *really* going to get his ticket.

But then he *gets up* (pauses to brush some road-dirt from the knees of his pants) and breaks into a trot. He catches up to the group, settles into his pace. The Soldiers *LOWER THEIR WEAPONS* and get back on the armored vehicles.

BARKOVITCH
See? I just got myself a rest. It's all in my plan.

OLSON
All I see that you got is three warnings. For your lousy minute and a half you got to walk three... fucking... hours. And why you need a rest anyway? We just started.

COLLIE PARKER
Better not trip, Fucko.

BARKOVITCH
We'll see who gets a ticket first, you or me. It's all in my plan.

OLSON
Your plan and the stuff that comes out of my asshole bear a suspicious resemblance.

McVries *loves it.* With a snort, Barkovitch *strides past them.*

Rank pulls up along side Garraty and McVries. He's folding another ORIGAMI as he walks. This one is a PURPLE BUTTERFLY.

BAKER

(To Garraty, McVries, and
Olson)

What do you guys think about the
wish? And the big prize? I can't
stop thinking about all that money.

GARRATY

Rich men don't enter the Kingdom of
Heaven.

OLSON

Hallelujah! There will be
refreshments after the meeting.

BAKER

You a religious fella?

GARRATY

Not particularly. But I'm no money
freak.

Garraty fiddles with the BASEBALL

BAKER

Well I *am* a religious fella...

He motions to THE CROSS on his neck proudly.

BAKER (CONT'D)

...And still ain't ashamed to say
I'm here for the money. It's easy
to bad-mouth money when you didn't
grow up dirt poor in Baton Rouge.
And believe me, being dirt poor in
Baton Rouge ain't no picnic. It's
one big fat sweaty hog-fest. The
hell are you doing here if you
don't care about the money?

GARRATY

Listen, I get it. I wouldn't mind
having some money. But there are
more important things. This walk
doesn't matter. The prize certainly
doesn't matter.

MCVRIES

Oh, what a golden flood of
bullshit.

GARRATY

When the system backs people into a corner, points to an escape hatch and says '*that's* the only way out' Of course we are all going to try to go through it. We've been set up up to believe it's the *only* way; the honorable way. The Major talks about bravery, but he's full of shit.

(MORE)

GARRATY (CONT'D)

Even though only fifty of us get picked in the lottery, *all* the boys in this country put in for it when they make qualifying age. I'm not exaggerating. *Everyone* puts in, even though it's not required.

BEAT

GARRATY (CONT'D)

And what does that tell you?

MCVRIES

What?

GARRATY

Nobody signs up for this. Not *really*.

STEBBINS

It's not smart to say bad things about The Long Walk. That's dissent, and it's punishable by-

GARRATY

Arrest me.

McVries smiles. *He's totally sold on Garraty now.*

MCVRIES

You've got a point, Garraty. They say we have a choice to sign up for the lottery, but do any of you know anyone, *ever*, who hasn't?

The boys are silent.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

But I don't agree with you about money. Baker's right. It may not be *the* most important thing, but it's pretty fucking high up there. And the right person can do a hell of a lot of good with the right amount of money.

GARRATY

Yeah, but how many people do you know with a lot of money who are doing a hell of a lot of good? It's a myth.

BEAT

MCVRIES

It won't be a myth when I win.
Because that's exactly what I want
it for.

Garraty really likes him for saying it. *They have a moment.*

McVries fumbles in his pocket for a pack of LUCKY STRIKES.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Smoke?

Garraty shakes his head.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Neither do I. Figured I'd learn.

McVries finds a BOOK OF MATCHES and *lights up*, takes a drag,
coughs as he exhales...

OLSON

Hint ten: Save your wind. If you
smoke ordinarily, try not to smoke
on The Long Walk.

McVries takes another *drag* from the cigarette in defiance,
exhales, coughs like crazy.

GARRATY

It's crap, isn't it?

He laughs and nods.

BAKER

Don't waste it. Give it to me.

McVries passes it to Baker and he takes a drag like an old
pro.

GARRATY

Religious fella smokes cigarettes?

BAKER

Ain't nothing about tobacco in the
bible!

Richard Harkness squeezes in between them.

HARKNESS

I'm Harkness. You're number 47.
Raymond Garraty, right?

GARRATY

That's right.

Harkness writes in his notebook as he walks. He *bumps* into Collie Parker:

COLLIE PARKER

Watch where the fuck you're going,
you fucking dip shit.

Garraty *barely suppresses a smile.*

Collie tries to keep up the tough guy act, but *can't help smiling a little himself too.* He recovers from it quickly.

HARKNESS

I suppose you're wondering why I'm writing down everyone's name and number.

MCVRIES

Actually no, I wasn't wondering.

BAKER

Cause you're with the squads.

HARKNESS

No, I'm going to write a book. Think about it. A book about The Long Walk from an insider's point of view would make me rich.

MCVRIES

If you win, you won't need a book to make you rich.

HARKNESS

Well, I guess not. But it would still make one heck of an interesting book, I think.

They walk by a deserted WHITE CHURCH, empty and eerie in its complete isolation. On the steps of it, Garraty clocks ONE OLD LADY standing frozenly in a *black dress, half-hidden in the shadow of the doorway*; neither waving, nor speaking, nor smiling. She wears a large RING with a purple stone and a tarnished CAMEO at her throat. He locks eyes with her, unable to break away; like staring into the face of impending death.

He finally shakes the chill, nudges McVries, *MOTIONS TO HER. He's equally creeped out-*

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)

Warning! Warning 7!

Garraty and the others turn to see who's getting the warning: It's Curly (the pacer, who they think lied about his age). He's up near the front of the pack. His lean and earnest face is set in lines of terrific concentration as he stares at his RIGHT LEG, *favoring it.*

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Warning! Warning 7! Second warning!

He tries to *force himself* faster.

CURLY

I've got a fucking charley horse!
It ain't no fair if you got a
charley horse!

He's fallen so far back he's next to Garraty now. The SOLDIERS on the upper deck of the HALFTRACK RAISE their heavy caliber CARBINE RIFLES, point them at Curly. The side camera pivots toward him. The CHURCH drifts further into the background as they walk, and the woman is still UNMOVING - a *dark statue*.

CURLY (CONT'D)

Thank fucking God. Thank fucking
God she's loosening now!

GARRATY

Real good, Curly. Just take it
easy. Keep it slow but just fast
enough. And steady.

CURLY

Yeah, that's fuckin' right. *Steady*.
I got it. I think I fucking got it.

GARRATY

Some water'll help with a cramp
like that too. But not too much.

Curly takes a pull from his CANTEEN. Limping, he makes his way down the road trying to keep up with Garraty. Suddenly, he SCREAMS. He's DOUBLED OVER, holding his leg. Somehow he is still walking, *but much too slowly*. The halftrack *decelerates* and the SOLDIERS on the upper deck dismount.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)

Warning! Warning 7! *Third warning!*

MCVRIES

He's gonna get his ticket. Poor
fucking kid. I bet he's 15.

Garraty shakes his head in disbelieving agreement. The soldiers RAISE THEIR GUNS again (like *well trained Doberman Pinschers*). The WALKERS GASP, in almost exact unison... *as if they didn't know this was going to happen*. SNAP! SNAP! The SAFETIES CLICK OFF... Walkers scatter. Curly is suddenly *alone* on the sun-washed road. Garraty and McVries are looking back to see...

CURLY

It ain't fair. It ain't fuckin-

BAM! BAM!... Carbines fire- (*They're really fucking loud*)

His FACE *DISAPPEARS* in a hammer-smash of BLOOD, BRAINS, and FLYING SKULL FRAGMENTS. The rest of him *falls forward* onto the pavement of like a sack of shit... THWOP! *Stillness now*. The outline of the CHURCH (now far off in the distance) has become a small, but ominous frame for the scene of death.

Curly got his ticket.

MCVRIES

(looks away, disgusted)

Fuck.

Emotions *swell up* in Garraty. His face turns red and his eyes instantly wet. He *heaves*, VOMITS. He wipes his mouth. All of them are hit hard by what they've just seen; the reality of it finally setting in.

Garraty actually *STOPS* walking. So does McVries, and Baker.

BAKER

Garraty, you okay?

MCVRIES

Take a breath, Compadre-

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning number 47! Number six! Number 23!

MCVRIES

Come on, guys. Let's move.

They get it together and walk on. Garraty turns, looks at Curly again. Stebbins *steps over the BODY*. His FOOT *slides* in the BLOOD; he takes a *bite of his jelly Sandwich(!)*.

GARRATY

Fuck you, Stebbins. You sick piece of shit. I hope you get it next!

Stebbins grins. McVries rests a hand on Garraty's shoulder.

MCVRIES

It'll get easier, Ray.

GARRATY

That's what worries me the most.

TITLE CARD:

THE LONG WALK

Prelap:

THE MAJOR

Boys! You've popped your cherries!
Now, you've truly started The Walk.

10 EXT. OPEN ROAD - SUNFLOWER FIELDS - AFTERNOON

10

The hottest hour of the day is upon The Walkers. Garraty checks his tachometer for distance: **MILE 33**.

There are majestic FIELDS OF SUNFLOWERS on all sides of them now, as far as their eyes can see.

THE DUN COLORED JEEP is *PARKED* in the CENTER OF THE ROAD, a SOLDIER in the driver's seat. The Major stands in the passenger seat.

BAM! He shoots the pistol.

It's followed by a rumble from above. They look overhead and marvel at a giant MURMURATION of European STARLINGS.

THE MAJOR

(through a megaphone)

One of our comrades has fallen. Let us remember him fondly and celebrate his bravery. He died for us. There will be many more, but none quite as glory-filled as the very first. Or the very last. Today we walk for Curly! Let me hear it, Boys!

VARIOUS WALKERS

For Curly!

THE MAJOR

Goddamn right.

The group parts in the middle and FLOWS around the Jeep like a school of fish. Garraty stares at The Major... daggers.

MCVRIES

What is it?

GARRATY

A load of horseshit is what it is.

McVries laughs. Garraty doesn't.

MCVRIES

Shower before the shower?

McVries walks backward, *unzips* his PANTS, begins to *pee*.
Garraty looks ahead: There's a dark grey STORM-FRONT coming
that looks so deep, so tangled... it almost seems malignant.
He takes a swig from his CANTEEN, finishes:

GARRATY

Canteen! 47 calling for a canteen!

A SOLDIER jumps down from the half-track, blank face, no emotion. He *trades* Garraty a FULL CANTEEN for an EMPTY ONE. Garraty clips it to his belt. As the soldier turns, Garraty *touches* the CARBINE slung over his back. McVries notices.

MCVRIES

Why'd you do that?

GARRATY

Like knocking on wood maybe?

MCVRIES

You're a dear boy, Ray.

11 EXT. OPEN ROAD - GHOST TOWN - AFTERNOON

11

There's a stupendous CRACK of THUNDER as they enter another GHOST TOWN. They pass an ABANDONED CAR, rusted and gutted. There are a group of CHILDREN playing in it, pretending to drive.

Garraty puts on his COAT, turns up the collar. *The rain begins as trickling* but quickly becomes a DOWNPOUR. Garraty notices STEBBINS protecting the last half of his JELLY SANDWICH. Harkness carefully *STOWS HIS NOTEBOOK IN A BAGGIE*.

Barkovitch has the MEDALLION in his hand again. He *PUTS ON A YELLOW VINYL RAIN-HAT* and peers out from beneath it like a *truculent* lighthouse keeper.

GARRATY

Whatever.

Zuck is walking strangely... his SHOES are *untied; both of them*. Collie Parker notices.

COLLIE PARKER

Hey Zuck, you better tie those fucking shoes.

ZUCK

Nice try, asshole. I'm not falling for that shit and getting a warning.

COLLIE PARKER

It's your right to be a fucking moron.

MCVRIES
(to Garraty)
Getting tired?

GARRATY
No. I've been tired for quite a
while now. You mean you're *not*?

MCVRIES
Listen, Ray. Like The Major said,
there's no finish line. That's the
big mind-fuck for me in this race.
Would you agree?

GARRATY
I wouldn't disagree. It's just, I'm
already feeling it and I'm not sure
how I can make it longer than-

MCVRIES
See, that's the problem. That's how
everyone's thinking. We have to
think differently. We don't think
about the end.

(MORE)

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

We think about making it to the next *moment*. To a certain town, or through a certain forest, or just to the next meal. Got it?

GARRATY

So what do we think about *now*?

MCVRIES

That's easy. Right now we just get through this rain. That's it.

Garraty buys in.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Garraty, that speech you made back there about The Long Walk... about how nobody really volunteers.

GARRATY

Yeah?

MCVRIES

Where'd it come from?

GARRATY

My Dad.

McVries looks at him hard, for a long while.

MCVRIES

Your dad is one smart motherfucker.

GARRATY

Yeah. I agree.

MCVRIES

(Smiling wide)

Just go on dancing like this with me forever, Compadre, and I'll never tire. We'll scrape our shoes on the stars, and hang upside down from the moon.

Ray smiles, enjoying Pete's lyrical optimism.

GARRATY

You some kind of poet?

MCVRIES

In the old times I would have liked to have been a song writer. But it isn't those times so I'm stuck riffing for you.

A guy named PEARSON appears next to Garraty. He wears JEANS that are *too big for him*, a bowling shirt, and HORN RIMMED GLASSES with thick lenses.

PEARSON

Hey bud, I'm Pearson. You're
Garraty, right?

GARRATY

Yeah.

PEARSON

Lookee over there. She wants to
diddle your thingy.

In front of a CORNER-STORE there's a TEENAGE GIRL *waving* and
holding up a giant magic-marker *SIGN*:

GO-GO-GARRATY #47!

I LOVE YOU RAY!

"OUR VERY OWN"

BAKER

Why don't you go get a kiss, Ray?
But keep it clean.

Baker means it, and Garraty thinks about it. But he knows
better. He turns red, waves and smiles at her.

OLSON

Lucky bastard! I thought spectators
weren't allowed.

MCVRIES

They're residents. That's private
property. Don't be such a sourpuss,
Olson. Let the kid have his moment.

OLSON

Private property my ass.

MCVRIES

I'm not fucking around. It still
exists up here, in a few places.

Garraty swells with pride, adrenalized, starts to walk *fast*.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Ray, what's your hurry?

GARRATY

Oh shit, you're right. Hint six:
slow and easy does it. Thanks.

MCVRIES

Don't thank me too much. I like you
and it's obvious you're a big hit
with the ladies, but if you fall
over, I won't pick you up.

BAKER

But we are all in this together. No harm in keeping each other amused.

MCVRIES

You know what? I take it back. They say you shouldn't make friends on The Long Walk, but fuck it. I sorta like you three. Even *you*, Olson.

OLSON

Fuck off.

MCVRIES

I'm serious. A short friendship is better than *no* friendship, right?

BAKER

That's what I've been saying!

MCVRIES

Let's be Musketeers.

OLSON

How the fuck can we be Musketeers? There's four of us.

MCVRIES

We'll make an exception. We stick together until we're all that's left. How about that? All for one!

BAKER, OLSON, GARRATY

And one for all!

The RAIN comes down even harder, like it's rooting for them.

BARKOVITCH

You sound like a bunch of queers.

MCVRIES

Are you offering up blowjobs, Barkovitch?

BARKOVITCH

Eat my meat, sicko.

Olson stuffs a piece of GUM in his mouth, chaws on it like a cow again.

GARRATY

Is that a new one or the same piece from your pocket?

Olson doesn't acknowledge the question.

OLSON

(with sudden panic)

My legs feel funny. Like the
muscles are all turning... baggy.

MCVRIES

Relax. It happened to me a couple hours ago. It passes off.

Olson *blows a bubble* and keeps walking.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

WARNING! NUMBER 1!

BAKER

That's Ewing. From Alabama. I met him at the starting area. Moving fast. He's pretty far up there.

BARKOVITCH

He's shaking and shit. Looks like there's something fucking wrong with him. bet he lied on his medical.

MCVRIES

Shut your mouth, Barkovitch.

BARKOVITCH

Just saying it like it is.

OLSON

Hint three, make sure to disclose all existing health conditions.

BARKOVITCH

What the hell can you expect from a dumb hick anyway?

BAKER

I'm not a violent guy, but move away or I'll poke you.

MCVRIES

Go peddle your papers, little man.

Barkovitch speeds off with a sinister smirk.

GARRATY

He's some hot ticket.

MCVRIES

Don't let him get under your skin. Just concentrate on walking him into the ground.

GARRATY

Okay coach.

MCVRIES

You're gonna win this one for the Gipper, my boy. First, though, we have to get through this rain-

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

WARNING NUMBER 1! SECOND WARNING!

Suddenly, about 20 feet ahead of Garraty and McVries, they see EWING on the ground, having a *CONVULSION*...

His body begins to *snap* and *jackknife* viciously. A disturbing *GARGLING NOISE* comes from deep in his throat; a mindless, sheep-like sound. Garraty hurries past him, and one of the *fluttering* hands bounces against his shoe...

GARRATY

(visibly nauseated)

Oh god. I wish they'd just end it.

McVries shakes his head, equally repulsed.

Ewing's EYES are rolled up to the *whites*; there are splotches of foam splattered on his lips and chin.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

WARNING! THIRD WARNING NUMBER 1!

BARKOVITCH

Told you, fuckers.

Two SOLDIERS dismount, point their GUNS down at Ewing-

POP! POP! *One in the MOUTH, one in the HEART*...
The convulsions cease.

MCVRIES

Odds just went up, Compadre.
One in forty eight.

Garraty and McVries just keep moving, one step at a time...

They cross a damaged section of asphalt. Zuck *trips on his SHOELACES, falls*.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning number 50!

Garraty notices that it's Zuck. He gets up quickly and walks, but his pants are ripped and his KNEE is *GUSHING BLOOD*.

ZUCK
 (grabbing onto his leg)
 Fuck! Fuck fuck!

COLLIE PARKER
 You may be pretty but you're sure-
 as-shit fucking stupid.

Zuck ignores him, stumbles on best he can (*wincing*).

12

EXT. OPEN ROAD - DAM - LATE AFTERNOON

12

The Walkers are *crossing the TOP OF A DAM*.

THE RAIN HAS SUBSIDED. Garraty turns to McVries and *smiles at him - they made it!*

They walk past an abandoned SERVICE BUILDING. Wedged into one of its corners is a giant BEEHIVE. Bees swarm and the WALKERS *fan them away* as they pass.

A BUMBLE BEE buzzes between the two of them. Garraty *jerks and jumps*. The bee settles on McVries's HAND. Instead of shaking it off, he lifts it up toward his face, *takes a look*.

GARRATY
 You nuts? Get that thing off you.

MCVRIES
 Look at the little guy. He's adorable.

GARRATY
 Fuck that.

McVries marvels at the bee for a while longer, then finally, (very gently), opens his fingers and says:

MCVRIES
 Be free, my friend. Thanks for saying hello.

It leaves his hand, *circles his head once as if to say goodbye*, and *flies away*-

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
 Warning 50! Second Warning!

Collie Parker drops back from the front, *BREAKS IN*:

COLLIE PARKER

That guy Zuck is fucked. The one who tripped on his fucking shoelaces. I think he needs stitches. Look at that...

TINY DARK SPOTS on the road.

HARKNESS

Well that sure ain't molasses!

GARRATY

Holy shit.

The small spots turn into a MINI-RIVER OF DEEP-RED OOZE that weaves back and forth across the DAM'S cement pathway. When they catch up to ZUCK, he's limping, and Garraty can see his right pants-leg caked with dried blood.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning 50! Third warning!

The Soldiers point their guns at him. Suddenly *HE BEGINS TO SPRINT. HE RUNS AHEAD OF THE GROUP* and disappears in front of the LEADING HALFTRACK. None of the boys say a word. Finally, after what seems like a long time, the *HALFTRACK STOPS...*

THERE IS A SINGLE, SHARP REPORT... POP!

When Garraty and his group finally pass the vehicle, they see *ZUCK, FACEDOWN IN THE CENTER OF THE PATH (the intensity of the rifle caused his feet to leave his shoes)*. A POOL OF BLOOD around his head is growing. The Walkers flow around him, all of them somber.

13 EXT. OPEN ROAD - RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - LATE AFTERNOON 13

DEW DROPS ON THE GRASS...

The boys enter frame and drift through a rundown, residential neighborhood. *Little homes and little yards.*

A group of SMALL BOYS watch them from a RUSTY FENCE.

A street CAT *missing* both of its EYES sits atop a mailbox.

A WOMAN is by herself on a folding chair in a field, tracking them (expressionless, Stepford-like) as they pass.

Four VERY OLD PEOPLE watch from their own chairs on a porch.

GARRATY

Probably a nice place to live.

MCVRIES

God spare me nice places to live.
You know, if I get out of this, I'm
gonna fornicate until my cock turns
blue. I've never been so horny in
my life as I am right this minute.

GARRATY

You mean it?

MCVRIES

I do. Isn't that strange? I could
even get horny for you, Ray, if you
didn't have such bad BO.

*Garraty laughs. He's got the BASEBALL in his hand again,
rotating it habitually, running his fingers along the seams.*

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Long Dong Silver, that's me. I'll
fuck my way across the seven seas.

OLSON

Sinbad is the seven seas guy.
Sinbad the Sailer.

MCVRIES

You think that shit-ass has walked
off his warnings yet?

BAKER

He must have. It's been over three-

BARKOVITCH

Yes I'm clean on warnings, fuckwad!

McVries is taking bites of something soft and chewy.

BAKER

What is that?

MCVRIES

Raw ground venison. Good energy.

BAKER

You're off your trolley. You'll
puke all over the place.

OLSON

Why not a regular burger at least?

MCVRIES

The way they treat cows in those
Squad-Farms.

(MORE)

MCVRIES ((CONT'D))

I don't want any part of it. Been hunting my own meat since I was a kid. Any takers?

GARRATY

Sure, I'll try a bite.

McVries passes him the chunk. Garraty *chews it*.

OLSON

(chewing his gum)

I don't eat raw meat. It'll give you worms.

MCVRIES

Is that still the same piece of fucking gum?

OLSON

Are there really different pieces of gum? Isn't it all the same piece when it really comes down to it?

BAKER

(grossed out)

Absolutely not.

OLSON

Either way I wouldn't eat that raw shit.

MCVRIES

In France, they call it steak tar tar. It's a delicacy.

OLSON

In France they ain't so smart.

GARRATY

Yeah, Renoir and Camus were idiots.

OLSON

I don't know about any of that. I do know they eat the legs of frogs over there and that's fucking disgusting.

Olson laughs but then winces, loses his balance.

BAKER

You okay?

OLSON

It's that jelly leg thing. It went away for a while but I'm feeling it again all of a sudden. I just can't seem to figure out what to adjust.

McVries rolls his eyes- *adjustments*.

BAKER

Maybe stop talking so much.

GARRATY

What's your speed?

Olson looks at his wrist gauge:

OLSON

3.4

GARRATY

Shave .3. Let's *all* do it.

OLSON

Wow, I really feel the difference.

MCVRIES

So do I.

BAKER

Me too.

OLSON

(smiling)

See? Adjustment. That's the key.
What did I tell you?

MCVRIES

(In fun)

Shut up, Olson.

GARRATY

We shouldn't hang here for long.
It's too close and if we doze...

They all know what he's inferring.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

But we *can* do it for just a little
while and then bump back up. Hey
Pete, tell us about the scar.

MCVRIES

Baker's right. It's best to keep
quiet for a while.

They take the hint. Nobody presses.

Garraty eats from a TUBE OF CONCENTRATES: (*Tuna Surprise!*).
When it's empty, he chucks it onto the side of the road.

OLSON

Don't be a litter bug, Garraty. Bad
for the ozone layer.

Olson says it robotically as he *pulls the wad of BUBBLEGUM out of his mouth and stuffs it in his pocket*. He attempts to pull a TUBE OF CONCENTRATES from his own belt (*BOLOGNA DREAM*) but *fumbles* the SNACK and *drops* it accidentally. For a moment, it seems like he's going to take his chances slowing to pick it up, but he pushes forward, stealing the odd desperate glance back at the food... *fuck*.

GARRATY

You'll get more rations.

OLSON

But that was it for me today. I'm allergic to spam so I gave them away. Shit. I'm so hungry.

GARRATY LOOKS AT THE POCKETS OF HIS OWN BELT: ONE TUBE OF SPAM CONCENTRATE AND ONE TUBE OF CHEESE.

He pauses for a beat to think about it before finally *giving* away the CHEESE. Olson takes it *slowly* (with a blend of shame and gratitude) and eats it. McVries has been keeping a close eye on the exchange. He looks at Garraty and says subtly:

MCVRIES

Musketeer.

A moment-

BARKOVITCH (O.S.)

That's actually your Goddamn name?!

Garraty and McVries turn to see what the commotion is. Just a few feet behind them, Barkovitch is *berating* Rank.

BARKOVITCH (CONT'D)

Rank? That's your *name*? Your Momma must hate your guts, you stinky little shit.

Rank takes a *SWING* at him-

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning number 19!

The punch misses Barkovitch and he doesn't break stride. He simply lowers his head and *ducks* under it, goes on yelling.

BARKOVITCH

Come on, you sonofabitch! I'll dance on your fucking grave. Come on, Dumbo, pick up your feet. Don't make it too Goddamn easy for me!

In the front yard of a house, there are five PEOPLE standing creepily in shadow, watching the spectacle from a distance. 3 of them are GROWN ADULTS, and 2 are smaller and appear to be YOUNG CHILDREN.

Rank *throws* another *PUNCH*. Barkovitch nimbly steps around it, but *trips over* Collie Parker who's on the other side of him.

COLLIE PARKER

Get out of here, loud mouth. Before
I pull your fucking nose off and
make you fucking eat it.

Parker breaks away. Both Rank and Barkovitch get warnings:

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning number 5! Warning!
Second warning number 19!

The soldiers watch the two of them carefully. Rank walks
faster, spooked, ignoring Barkovitch.

BARKOVITCH

Little fucking sissy boy playing
with your little fucking paper
animals.

RANK

Fuck you.

BARKOVITCH

Your mother sucks big fat cock on
42nd street, Rank!

With that, Rank turns and *CHARGES HIM*.

MCVRIES

Don't take the bait, Rank. Don't
let him fucking kill you!

GARRATY

Break it up!

But Rank goes for him with his head down, bellowing.
Barkovitch *sidesteps* him. Rank *stumbles*, *pinwheels* across the
shoulder and falls *FLAT ONTO HIS FACE*.

BARKOVITCH

Come on, Dumbo! Get up!

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

WARNING! WARNING 19! THIRD WARNING!

Barkovitch's expression becomes instantly *fearful*:

BARKOVITCH

(with some desperation)
Dumbo, *get the fuck up!*

He finally *does* get up, but only onto his knees. Also, he's
teetering (*the face-plant damn near knocked him out*).

Barkovitch keeps walking but veers his head back frantically and often - *he's in a sort of panic.*

MCVRIES

(To Garraty)

Shit. Is he going to fucking walk
or what?

But it's too late-

POP! (*from the Carbine*) *right through the back of the skull*
(*He goes limp instantly*)...

Barkovitch *starts* with the death shot. *This isn't what he expected.* He says something under his breath; a frustrated *self-reprimand.*

Rank's hand opens and an almost-finished ORIGAMI (that he's been clutching) falls out of it, onto the road: It's RED, and looks to be forming the shape of a HEART.

BAKER

Barkovitch, may the lord have mercy
on your soul. Now you're a
murderer!

BARKOVITCH

It was his own damn fault! You saw
him! He swung first! Rule 8!

No one says anything.

BARKOVITCH (CONT'D)

Parker, you saw it. Tell them! You
and I are the same, Brother. We
might be hot heads, but we don't-

COLLIE PARKER

I'm nothing like you, Motherfucker.
Say it again, you'll be chewing
concrete.

BARKOVITCH

Come on, Parker!

COLLIE PARKER

What part of *I'll pull your nose*
off and make you fucking eat it did
you not understand back there?

This makes Barkovitch's blood boil.

BARKOVITCH

Go fuck yourselves. All of you.
None of you have any idea. No
fucking clue!

He's almost in tears he's so emotional.

MCVRIES

Go back and dance on him. Entertain us. Boogie on his back a little.

BARKOVITCH

Your mother sucks fat cock on 42nd street too, Scarface.

McVries puts his hand on his scar and rubs...

MCVRIES

Can't wait to see your brains all over the road, Barkovitch. I'll cheer when it happens, you murdering little bastard.

Barkovitch *curls his lip in contempt* and breaks off toward the other side of the pack. We're alone with him now.

Nobody notices, but he *HITS HIMSELF in the face*, twice. Closed fist.

14 EXT. OPEN ROAD - CEMETERY TOWN - LATE AFTERNOON/SUNSET 14

They enter the another small (mostly abandoned) TOWN. At the edge of it, they pass a broken down CEMETERY; its headstones are premonitory outlines at the edge of the road. There is a DEAD BIRD stuck in the BARBWIRE that lines the top of the fence surrounding the graveyard. The deep-red of sunset is more ominous than beautiful.

they pass an OLD GAS STATION. Two PEOPLE stoically watch from beside one of the pumps.

Garraty looks down at his FEET as he steps through a shallow puddle with a rainbow-colored, petrol-infused surface. His SHOES are worn now, really showing the wear and tear of the walk so far.

HARKNESS

Hey Ray, have you had to poop yet?

GARRATY

I'm rationing. Hoping to avoid it.

STEBBINS

(appearing out of nowhere)

You won't avoid it, unless you wash out quick. The last 20 *always* have to. It's all on record.

HARKNESS

There's something bad happening a few layers up and I'm not even sure if I should put it in my book because it's so gross it may kill the commerciality of it.

GARRATY

The commerciality?

HARKNESS

Yeah that's the overall sales potential. The-

GARRATY

I know what it is, Man.

HARKNESS

Oh, okay. Well, word's been coming down the line, this guy, Ronald, 45. He's up a few and got diarrhea. Real bad. I'm pretty sure it's true. He's getting warnings-

And then they see him: A young man up ahead, being passed on both sides: RONALD. He's walking *strangely* and *holding* his PANTS up (*just at the knees*) at the same time. His BARE ASS is exposed. Garraty *watches* (sickened and saddened) as he SQUATS and UNLOADS. He makes a sort of *YELP* as he does it.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
Warning! Warning number 45!

RONALD
Oh damn!

Ronald leaves a STEAMY MESS on the road and continues shuffling forward, the waistline of his pants spattered with excrement. Collie Parker (watching on with disgust and even some *tough* pity) yells at him:

COLLIE PARKER
Hey idiot! Pull up your fucking pants and walk. Just let it roll down your fucking legs. Better to be dirty than fucking dead.

But Ronald either doesn't listen or doesn't hear, because he SQUATS again... UNLOADS... *CRIES OUT*.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
Warning! Warning 45! Second Warning

RONALD
Damn. Oh damn!

Ronald likes that word...

HARKNESS
He'll go next.

GARRATY
Shut up! Can't you just shut up?

Harkness doesn't reply; looks *ashamed*.

They come upon A DILAPIDATED RESTAURANT. *There are dim lights inside, but no people.*

Ronald tries to continue on, ambling awkwardly ahead. Two SOLDIERS *dismount* the halftrack and scope him; one in front and one behind. The walkers *scatter*.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
Warning 45! Third Warning!

Finally, Ronald *half-squats*, *HALF-FALLS*. The soldier raises the CARBINE, *squeezes the trigger...*

BAM! *Once in the ass...* BAM! *Again in the chest.* Ronald *rolls over* and grimaces at the stars; blood and bile creeping from the corners of his mouth... his EYES go *dead*.

Garraty looks away from the grisly scene and realizes he's totally alone. *

Silence. He closes his eyes... *

14A EXT. OPEN ROAD - BRIDGE OVER STREAM - DUSK

14A

They walk under a string of MERCURY STREET LIGHTS that flicker on as dusk becomes night,

Up ahead, two HEADLIGHTS beam, unmoving. As they near, the hazy outline of the JEEP comes into view. On top of it is the unmistakable shape of THE MAJOR.

Garraty watches Harkness as he stretches the elastic band of a HEADLAMP around his head, *clicks it on.* *

A FLOOD LIGHT *POWERS UP* on the nearby HALFTRACK. It shines directly at Garraty and *blinds him* for a moment. He shields his eyes. The other halftracks power up their lights as well and pools of hot white *illuminate walkers* as they move. *

The Major speaks through a BULLHORN:

THE MAJOR

I'm proud of you, Boys. You have sac! Swing it heavy as you cover these miles! Heavy and long! Where else in the world could you have this opportunity? *Nowhere* is the answer. Win that prize. Your first night is almost upon you. For some, it'll be your last. But remember, with determination, pride, and ambition, you *will* see the dawn. A toast to you at dinner time.

He pours a shot of WHISKEY into a distressed TIN CUP, *slugs it down. The Musketeers pass by.*

GARRATY

(under is breath)
Die, motherfucker.

MCVRIES

What did you say?

He looks to McVries as though he's been *caught in something.*

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

You okay, Compadre?

GARRATY

It's just... The Major...

MCVRIES

What about The Major?

GARRATY

I'm *going* to tell you. But not yet.

MCVRIES

Intriguing. Maybe even enough to put a little more gas in my tank. How long I have to wait?

GARRATY

Tomorrow morning. I'll tell you then.

MCVRIES

Okay, *sold*. then that'll be our new milestone. Let's just make it till the morning.

Garraty reaches deep into his pockets, pulls out the TINFOIL PACKAGE his mom gave him in the parking lot. He *opens it*, slowly, to find TWO COOKIES (*oatmeal chocolate chip, just like she said*). Garraty smiles and tears up as he takes a bite, closes his eyes...

PRELAP: Solo FEMALE VOICE, *singing*...

15 INT. GARRATY HOME - KITCHEN - (THE PAST) - EARLY EVENING 15

The kitchen TABLE and CHAIRS are stained KNOTTY PINE. *THE DREAMY LIGHT OF DUSK* pours through the windows. There's a *HEAVENLY FEELING*; saturated colors... *this is a better time*.

GINNIE GARRATY'S face is *angelic and vibrant*; lit like a 1950's movie star - *GLOWING*. This is a starkly different version of the woman we met in the opening. She's *singing* an Irish lullaby (**MOLLY MALONE**) as she circles the table, playfully.

RAYMOND GARRATY is at the table, drinking from a glass bottle of MOXIE SODA; he's the same guy we're used to but a few years younger (15) and totally clean cut.

His father, WILLIAM GARRATY (a handsome man with a beard, salt & pepper pompadour, OVERALLS) *cooks dinner* at the stove.

There's a WOODEN BOWL of salad on the dinner table already.

GINNIE

(singing)

*In Dublin's fair city, where the
girls are so pretty, I first set my
eyes on sweet Molly Malone, as she
wheeled her wheelbarrow, through
streets broad and narrow, crying
'Cockles and mussels, alive alive
oh!'. . .*

She pauses for a moment to sit down at the table with her son, sips from a glass of RED WINE and smiles.

GARRATY

Don't stop, Mom. I love it when you sing.

WILLIAM

(beaming)

So do I.

They both mean it; *there's love in this house.*

GINNIE

*...Alive, alive oh. Alive, alive
Oh. Crying, "Cockles and mussels
alive, alive oh.. She was a
fishmonger, and sure 'twas no
wonder, for so were her father and
mother before...*

WILLIAM walks to the table with two plates of SPAGHETTI, *sets them down.* He puts an arm around his wife, *kisses her gently on the cheek as she sings-*

PRELAP:

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)

Warning! Warning 47!

16

EXT. OPEN ROAD - THE HILL - NIGHT

16

Garraty *opens his eyes abruptly.* McVries is *elbowing* him in the ribs. The two of them are *DIRTIER.* There's so much red in their eyes, even the darkness won't conceal it.

MCVRIES

That's you, Boy! Rise and shine.

GARRATY

What time is it?

MCVRIES

Three forty five.

GARRATY

But I've been-

MCVRIES

Dozing for hours.

Garraty *slaps* himself across the cheek.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Your mind using the old escape hatch. Don't you wish your feet could?

There's a STATICKY OLD SONG playing on a RADIO. It goes in and out and comes from TRESSLER, who is walking nearby; he finally got a little reception.

PEARSON

I don't understand how either of you have been able to sleep. I've been over there.

Pearson points in an arbitrary direction.

PEARSON (CONT'D)

Tried not to talk to anyone. Thought it would help me conserve energy and it did. But it also started messing with my mind. Plus I just can't sleep.

GARRATY

You will. When you're not even trying. It's weird how it happens.

Pearson is WHEEZING between words.

MCVRIES

You're breathing strange. You okay?

PEARSON

I feel like we're on an upslope. I didn't think there were hills here. My asthma can act up, but it doesn't get that bad.

GARRATY

I hate to break it to you, Pearson, but there are bigger hills than this.

PEARSON

Fuck. Really? I heard-

GARRATY

You heard wrong.

They go on, quiet for a time. And then:

MCVRIES

Ray, it's morning. Tell me?

GARRATY

Real morning, Pete. Breakfast time.
This is the middle of the fucking
night as far as I'm concerned.

MCVRIES

You know *I* was sleeping too. Isn't
it crazy we can do that?

GARRATY

I was even dreaming.

MCVRIES

Yeah? What about? Good stuff?

GARRATY

My mom. She used to sing me this
Irish lullaby.

From far behind them, THE LOUD SPEAKER gives a *WARNING*; the
words are unintelligible, *but they all know the sound.*

MCVRIES

(Ignoring the warning)
That's good, Ray. Those are the
things we've got to hold onto.

(MORE)

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

They'll get us through.

POP! POP!.... there are *FLASHES* off in the *distance*. Far enough behind them, *Someone gets their ticket*.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Tell me about your mom. What's her name?

GARRATY

Mom.

MCVRIES

Fuck off, you know what I mean.

GARRATY

Ginnie.

MCVRIES

Jenny?

GARRATY

No, Ginn-ie, kind of like a the stuff they make a martini with.

PEARSON

Is she hot?

There's a disturbing WHISTLING sound every time Pearsons takes a breath.

MCVRIES

Shut it, Pearson. Break off and go chew on your foot.

OLSON

Fuck yeah she's hot. I saw her at the drop off.

MCVRIES

What the fuck, Olson? That's not cool.

PEARSON

Why you gotta be so sensitive? We're just joshing. What else is there to do?

Pearson backs down, shuffles away. So does Olson.

GARRATY

She won't sing the lullaby anymore. But I really miss her. I never thought I could miss her this much.

MCVRIES

You'll have to *win* to see her, Ray.

GARRATY

They'll let her watch in Freeport,
since we live there. I've got to at
least make it that far.

MCVRIES

You have a girl?

GARRATY

Yeah, but then it was best that I
didn't anymore. Especially doing
this. So that was that.

MCVRIES

That's too bad. But smart.

GARRATY

How about you, Pete? Got a girl?

McVries keeps eye contact with Garraty. Finally, with an
indecipherable grin, he says:

MCVRIES

No, Ray. No I don't.

GARRATY

How many are gone? Do you know?

MCVRIES

Last I heard, fifteen.

Garraty begins *taking his jacket off*, then stops-

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)

Warning 47! Second warning!

It takes Garraty a moment to realize it's him...
Did he really slow down that much?

He looks around: McVries is still there. Olson, Baker and Harkness have reappeared. They're *staring at him*. Olson has a particularly disturbing look on his face... to Garraty he almost looks *hungry*:

GARRATY

See anything green?

Olson's eyes slide away, *awkwardly*. Garraty accelerates and *TRIPS, cuts his leg, springs up almost instantly*. But still-

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning 47! Third warning!

GARRATY

Fuck! Fuck!

MCVRIES

Just three hours, Ray. Make it that far and your slate is clean. Just-

GARRATY

Shut up! Stop pretending like you don't want me to get my ticket. Stop pretending like you all don't want me face down with a hole in the back of my head!

MCVRIES

Sure, it would increase my odds. But right now I'd rather have a friend. I mean it.

Garraty pauses for a beat, but then *BLASTS FORWARD, cuts to the other side*.

There is black, heavy forest on both sides of the road. the mild fog is just enough to make the BEAMS from the VEHICLE FLOODLIGHTS clearly defined and hyperreal, like lasers in a sci-fi movie.

The road dips gently around a curve.

Garraty looks at the device on his wrist: **3.3 MPH...** When he looks up there's A MASSIVE HILL ahead; the road climbs so steep, so abrupt, and so high, the top isn't even visible.

GARRATY

Fuck. Fuck fuck fuck.

A ROAD SIGN APPEARS: **STEEP GRADE TRUCKS USE LOW GEAR.**
Audible GROANS from the rest of them when they see it.

BARKOVITCH (O.S.)

Step into it, brothers! Who wants
to race me to the top?

COLLIE PARKER (O.S.)

Shut your mouth you fucking freak!

BARKOVITCH (O.S.)

Make me, Dumbo! Come and make me!

Garraty *STARTS UP THE HILL.* A HALFTRACK pulls up alongside him... vultures preparing for him to drop. He keeps his head down and his feet steady. He has to focus. No room for error. Not anymore.

He notices his SHOES now... they don't look new anymore like in the beginning. They like like he's been wearing them for years; scuffed and black, the soles flimsy and fragile.

STEBBINS appears next to him:

STEBBINS

A lot of you are going to die on
this hill. Maybe more than half. It
happened once seven years ago.
Twenty eight in total.

He floats away after he says it. Garraty wonders for a moment if he dreamt the encounter. He slaps himself in the face to be sure, looks at the device:

3.1 MPH... not fast enough. He digs deep... **3.2 MPH... 3.4 MPH...** Better. *Much better.*

His breath comes in labored, dog-like pants.

The HALFTRACK makes a sputtering sound as it chugs along. He's walking with frustration- *How the hell did he let himself get into this position with three warnings? Fuck-*

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning 46!

There it is. He knew this would- But, no. He's 47, not 46. Who's 46? Olson. He can tell because of the beam of the HEADLAMP. Not his problem.

Garraty picks them up and puts them down, keeps pressing up the hill. The road CURVES and CLIMBS; no sign of relenting. He takes deep GULPS of air and looks down at his wrist:

3.0 MPH Shit.

The SOLDIERS RAISE THEIR GUNS, *point them at him...*

He grunts as he picks up the pace...

3.1 MPH... 3.2 MPH

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Warning! Warning 14!

Near the front, there is a boy with long hair *sitting* in the ROAD. He has a TRACK SUIT on. His name is LARSON and there's a HEAVY STREAM OF BLOOD flowing from his right EAR.

LARSON
I'm going to rest a while, okay?

He says it to *no one* with a *trusting, shellshocked smile.*

LARSON (CONT'D)
I can't walk anymore right now,
okay?

A SOLDIER jumps down from the halftrack with his rifle.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
Warning 14! Second warning!

LARSON
Listen, I'll catch up. I'm just
resting. A guy can't walk all the
time. Not *all* the time. Can he?

Garraty walks by him. Larson wipes the blood from his head with the sleeve of his track suit before he speaks:

LARSON (CONT'D)
Hey, you're the one from *here*,
right? I'm from Arizona. We haven't
had a chance to talk yet.

GARRATY
Get up, Man.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
Warning 14! Third Warning!

He leaves him behind and walks faster...

LARSON (O.S.)
Hey! Hey just a second. Don't do
that. I'll get up. Hey, don't! D-

POP! POP! Gunshots behind Garraty. More *FLASHES*. He stares at his *FEET* again, all his concentration on getting to the top.

Way up ahead *SOMEONE* utters a high, *GOBBLING SCREAM*. The rifles *CRASH* in unison.

BAKER (O.S.)

Barkovitch. That was Barkovitch.
I'm sure it was.

BARKOVITCH (O.S.)

Wrong, redneck! One hundred percent
dead wrong!

He hears the voices but doesn't acknowledge them. Garraty ventures a *look* up from the *PAVEMENT*: He can see the...

TOP OF THE HILL, Just barely. *Fuck-* it looks to him like a hundred miles.

Off to his right, he sees *HARKNESS* huffing his way up the hill, *struggling*.

Garraty looks back down at his feet... one step at a time. *

He lifts his head and notices flood lights up in front of him, blasting at him from a halftrack up ahead... *

He sees a *PERSON(?)* silhouetted in shadow and backlit by the beams. He looks closer to see if it's real and *yes*, it's...
THE WOMAN IN BLACK from the church steps, *unmoving*, but
pointing at him, like an accusatory statue. *It can't be! But it is-* *

He looks back down at his feet, then up again- *

The *FIGURE IS GONE*... *

He must really be losing it. No time to think about it now... *

He presses onward. *

ON PEARSON NOW, HURTING... WHEEZING LOUDLY. He doesn't look good. Sweat streams down his bright red face. His *GLASSES* are opaque with frost. He *DROPS his STUFFED ANIMAL* and doesn't even notice. *

RACK FOCUS TO GARRATY JUST A FEW ROWS BEHIND HIM...

RACK BACK TO PEARSON.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)

Warning! Warning 8!

PEARSON *pulls* his GLASSES off and begins to HYPERVENTILATE. An *ASTHMA ATTACK*... His MOUTH opens and *FREEZES* there. His EYES grow WIDE, and a *pained*, unbelieving expression overtakes his face...

*

He gasps for air desperately and then, *COLLAPSES!* He falls out of frame.

Before another warning can be issued, Pearson's limp BODY *tumbles backward*, down the hill...

*HE ROLLS RIGHT INTO A **WALKER** BEHIND HIM*, Who goes down hard and draws a warning:

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (CONT'D)
Warning! Warning 32!

And then:

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (CONT'D)
Warning! Warning 8! Second Warning!

GARRATY SEES THE WALKERS IN FRONT HIM FALLING BACKWARD; he *shifts* to the left and DODGES them, just barely.

SERIES OF SHOTS IN **SLOW MOTION** (MOS):

- #8... PEARSON, *SHOT IN THE BACK AS HE TUMBLES.*

-#10 THE WALKER WHO PEARSON FELL INTO STUMBLES BACKWARD DOWN THE STEEP HILL... *SHOT TWICE IN THE CHEST (HE FALLS).*

-#13, AN OVERWEIGHT BOY WITH A FLAT TOP WEARING BLUE DENIM OVERALLS *LOOKS AT SOMETHING OFF-CAMERA, WITH TERRIFIED EYES... SHOT IN THE FOREHEAD (HE TEETERS FOR A MOMENT)-*

-#40, A ZIT-FACED 18 YEAR OLD RAISES HIS HANDS IN FRONT OF HIS FACE DESPERATELY... (THE SCREEN BECOMES A GIANT FLASH).

-#11, A SPINDLY, BRUISED AND DIRTY 18 YEAR OLD WEARING NO SHIRT AND RIPPED, WET JEANS *RUNS BACK DOWN THE HILL, GETS SHOT, AND FALLS INTO...*

...-#21, WHO'S IN A BOMBER JACKET. THE TWO OF THEM FALL INTO ONE OTHER. A MESS OF 3 TANGLED ON THE GROUND, STRUGGLING TO GET UP, BUT EACH OF THEM MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE OTHER. *THEY NEVER EVEN SEE IT COMING - BAM! BAM! BAM!*

17

EXT. OPEN ROAD - HILLTOP - MOMENTS LATER

17

SMACK! Garraty slaps himself across the face. He looks bad; glossy skin, bloodshot, puffy eyes, white crust at the corners of his lips.

McVries is next to him again and looks a little better, but not much.

MCVRIES

You alright?

GARRATY

Not really. I feel faint.

They're still climbing. Garraty looks down at the wrist device: **3.0 MPH, WARNINGS:3**

GARRATY (CONT'D)

Fuck. Not good enough.

Off in the distance *behind them we HEAR (O.S.)...*

-INTERMITTENT WARNINGS FROM THE LOUD SPEAKER
-GUNSHOTS
-SCREAMS

MCVRIES

Compadre. You can do this. Pour
your canteen over your head.

Garraty does it, and it seems to work...

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

There you go, just keep putting one
in front of the other. Now refill.

GARRATY

Canteen! 47!

A SOLDIER *hands him* a FRESH CANTEEN. Garraty snatches it from
him. The Soldier's expressionless, marble EYES size him up-

GARRATY (CONT'D)

Get away. You get paid to shoot me,
not look at me.

The soldier goes away with no change of expression.

MCVRIES

Ray.

McVries *motions up ahead with his eyes: THE TOP. They walk
faster, and then... THEY MAKE IT. The road crests, levels
off. Relief! Instantly easier.*

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Careful. Don't slow down. It's easy
to do. You'll catch your breath.

GARRATY

Pete, the way I talked to you back
there-

MCVRIES

Forget it.

GARRATY

No, I owe you an apology. I...

And then just like that, Garraty BREAKS DOWN *sobbing. A rush
of raw emotion. McVries puts his arm around him.*

MCVRIES

It's okay. Let it out, but don't be
a dumb fuck. Keep the pace.

GARRATY

The others. Are they...?

MCVRIES

Musketeers are up ahead.

He points to them.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

I wish I hadn't been so harsh on Pearson. He wasn't a bad kid.

GARRATY

You couldn't have known.

MCVRIES

That's the thing, Ray. We should always assume it's the last time. Unless it's Barkovitch.

18

EXT. OPEN ROAD - FARMLAND - EARLY MORNING

18

There is a fiery band on the horizon; it reflects warmly off of Garraty's face. The land is FLAT here and the road is straight with fields and farmlands on both sides.

There's a rutted DIRT ROAD that branches off the main drag. A FARMER (an old man with a deeply seamed brow, overalls and a straw hat) and his FARMER WIFE (a hatchet-faced woman in a bulky cloth coat) stand at the intersection with their teenage DAUGHTER (mopey eyes, matted dark hair and a NIGHTGOWN).

SMOKE rises around them (*slowly, surreal*) from a small CROP BURN, as though they're *standing watch at the gates of Hell*.

MCVRIES

All he needs... is a pitchfork.

Garraty looks down at his wrist device- **WARNINGS: 2**

GARRATY

Talk to me. I'm fading.

MCVRIES

Do you think you'll win, Ray?

GARRATY

I... I *need* to.

MCVRIES

We *all* need to.

GARRATY

To stay alive, yes. But I need to for other reasons.

MCVRIES

Okay. But do you think you *will*.

GARRATY

No. No, I... no. How about yourself?

MCVRIES

I stopped thinking I had any real chance around eleven last night. I had an idea that when the first guy fell off, they'd aim the guns at him and pull the triggers and little pieces of paper with the word bang on them would pop out, and the Major would say April Fools and we'd all go home. Do you get what I'm saying?

GARRATY

Yes.

MCVRIES

It took me a while to realize the real gut truth of it: Walk or die. Simple as that. Not survival of the physically fittest. If it was, I'd have a fair chance. But there are Mothers who can lift fucking cars if their kids are pinned underneath. The brain, Garraty. It isn't man or God, it's something in the brain. I don't have that. I don't want to beat people that badly. And I think... when I get tired enough... I think I'll just sit down.

McVries cuts the seriousness and smiles.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

I'll outlast Barkovitch, though. I can do that at least.

He takes a drink of water, munches down a stick of CHEESE.

GARRATY

Yes. We both can. How many you think? Back there?

MCVRIES

Word came up 14. 18 left I think. It's thinning, Ray. More than five percent chance now.

19

EXT. OPEN ROAD - VALLEY - MORNING

19

They're on the DOWNSLOPE of a hill, approaching a TOWN nestled on the floor of a VALLEY. Charcoal clouds *billow* from SMOKESTACKS up ahead and a distant TRAIN cuts the landscape.

Garraty checks the gadget on his wrist: **3.2 MPH, MILE 89, WARNINGS:0...** *Finally.* His spirits lift.

MCVRIES

(to Garraty)

Did you lose the warnings?

GARRATY

(smiling)

Damn right I did.

McVries pulls a TOOTHBRUSH out of his pocket and dry-brushes.

MCVRIES

Ray, it's true morning.

They are alone and Garraty is about to tell him, but then Collie Parker rides up and a Halftrack *swoops in close, its VIDEO CAMERA honed in on them.*

GARRATY

Give me a minute, okay?

COLLIE PARKER

What a dipshit state this is.
Fucking trees and one horse towns
everyplace. Is there a city in the
whole fucking place?

GARRATY

We're funny up here. We think it's
nice to breathe real air instead of
smog.

COLLIE PARKER

Ain't no smog in Sioux Falls, you
fucking hick.

GARRATY

No smog but a lot of hot air.

COLLIE PARKER

If we was home I'd twist your
fucking balls for that.

GARRATY

You know, Barkovitch was right. You
are a little like him.

COLLIE PARKER

Take it back or I won't just twist
your fucking balls, I'll rip them
off and make you eat them.

GARRATY

Better than my nose. At least I'll
keep my good looks.

MCVRIES

Now boys, why don't you settle this
like gentlemen? First one to get
his head blown off has to buy the
other one a beer.

GARRATY

I hate beer.

COLLIE PARKER

You fucking bumpkin.

He walks away.

MCVRIES

He's buggy. You seem buggy too,
Garraty. Is everyone buggy this
morning? I bet Olson's got bugs
too.

Olson is just up ahead of them, next to Baker.

MCVRIES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Olson! Hey Hank!

BAKER

Why don't you leave him alone? He
had a rough night. He's not doing
well.

McVries bursts out in laughter.

MCVRIES

Had a rough night? Really? That's a funny because mine was just great. Hey Hank! Wanna go for a walk!

OLSON

(in a mutter)
Go to hell.

MCVRIES

(cupping his ear)
What? What did you say boo?!

OLSON

Hell. I said.. go... to... *Hell*.

McVries nods wisely, tires of baiting him.

Olson goes back to looking at his feet. He's SHELL-SHOCKED. Not like he was before the hill. Something is *really off*.

GARRATY

Not a morning person?

MCVRIES

Just keeping it interesting.

There are two SMALL BOYS on BICYCLES rolling slowly along the side of the road, *tracking something*.

Garraty *clocks* what they're looking at and realizes it's HARKNESS: He's LOST HIS LEFT SHOE and is limping in his stocking foot.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)

Warning! Warning 49!

His face is fire-engine red. His mouth hangs agape in a wet, sloppy O. The halftrack *FILMS HIS PAINED FACE AS HE WALKS*.

HARKNESS

I've got a cramp in my foot! Oh God it's all twisted up.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)

Warning! Second warning 49!

He *trips*, gets back up immediately but-

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S) (CONT'D)

Warning! Third warning 49!

Harkness limps faster. *The BOYS on the BIKES pedal along, watching with grim anticipation.*

MCVRIES

(to Garraty)

Don't look. It's too late for him.

The HALF-TRACK is close by and has a clear shot, just feet away from Harkness. The CARBINES come slowly down from high port and *find him...* A long, terrible silence. He picks up his pace and they *go up*. Moments later the GUNS LOWER again, *take aim...* Then go back up again. Harkness's *breathing is hurried and wet*. The two Boys still keep pace on their bikes.

BAKER

(to the kids)

Get out of here! You don't want to see this. Scat!

GARRATY

Let him alone!

They look at Baker and Garraty with a flat curiosity and keep tracking him, undeterred. The CARBINES stay up for a steady while and Harkness seems to be doing okay.

Garraty is not facing Harkness, but he screams out to him as he walks:

GARRATY (CONT'D)

Harkness, come on man! One step at a time. Just take it one-

BAM! Garraty's body jerks as though *he's* been shot.

MCVRIES

Let it go, Ray. Don't look back.

But he can't help it. He turns to look at Harkness:

He's still standing upright, but *wobbling...* a bloody BULLET HOLE through the NOTEBOOK he's clutching. There are SHARDS of FLUTTERING PAPER in the air from the pages... *confetti*.

He looks down, dazed, and realizes one HAND has been SHOT OFF. In shock, he *drops the book* and GRABS onto his arm...

Harkness LOOKS sadly towards the Musketeers ahead of him with a blank stare that indicates more confusion than fear-

BAM! SHOT THROUGH THE FACE; the entire eye and top half of his nose replaced by a BLOODY CRATER; so wide and wet that it looks almost like an open MOUTH... *Harkness falls.*

BAKER

Dear God.

Baker makes the SIGN OF THE CROSS, *kisses his necklace.*

PERCY

I don't like it!

He screams it out reactively like a crazy person. Percy hasn't spoken at all. The emphatic, guttural yelp shocks them all nearly as much as Harkness's demise.

The Boys on the bikes freeze up; jaws on the ground as they stare at the body, trying to process what they've just seen.

GARRATY

Fuck off, you little shits! Shame
on you!

The kids look at Garraty when he says it, but with no change of expression.

STEBBINS

You're too emotional, Garraty.
That'll get you in the end.

Stebbins *SNEEZES*.

PERCY

I don't like it! Don't like it!
Don't like it! I don't like it!

He cries out so *loud and fast* that it sounds almost involuntary - like Tourette Syndrome.

STEBBINS

He'll be next, or soon. I can tell
when someone's losing it.

MCVRIES

You barely talk, but when you do
it's just total fucking garbage.

Stebbins shrugs and pulls a KEYCHAIN out of his pocket with a RABBIT'S FOOT attached. He kisses it.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

What the fuck is that?

Stebbins smiles slyly like some kind of evil genius.

STEBBINS

It's my friend. My salvation.

He *winks* and breaks off from them.

MCVRIES

(To Garraty)
And to think that cold fucker'll
likely win the whole Goddamn thing.
(shaking his head)
Harkness. Poor Ol' Harkness.

BARKOVITCH

Why don't you write him a poem?!

MCVRIES

Shut up, killer.

BARKOVITCH

I ain't no killer and I don't want
to hear that I am even one more
fucking time or I'll-

MCVRIES

You'll what?

BARKOVITCH

I'll dance on your grave, Scarface.

A CHORUS of *ANGRY SHOUTS* silence him.

Garraty just walks and shakes his head. His face is purple
with anger. He takes a guzzle from his canteen.

MCVRIES

You okay?

GARRATY

Better than Harkness.

MCVRIES

And that's a good thing. Remember
it. We can't have it both ways.

BEAT

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Olson!

Up ahead, he responds without looking back.

OLSON

What?

MCVRIES

I'm sorry for busting your balls.

OLSON

Fuck off.

MCVRIES

I'm serious. I woke up on the *wrong
side of the road*. I shouldn't have
been such an ass. Life is short.
Especially for us.

OLSON

Whatever.

Olson says it blankly, in a daze.

MCVRIES

Oh well, Musketeer. I tried.

20

EXT. OPEN ROAD - 100 MILES TOWN - AFTERNOON

20

THE MAJOR'S JEEP is leading the procession through another
(mostly deserted) TOWN slowly (at the speed of the Walkers).
He's standing again, holding the MEGAPHONE proud.

THE MAJOR

Give yourselves due kudos, Boys.
Let's hear it! You've made it 100
Miles. That's a Goddamn
accomplishment!

Two STATE POLICE monitor the boundaries.

There's a SIGN on the side of a building that proclaims:

**100 MILES!! CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE JEFFERSON PLANTATION
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE! CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S "CENTURY
CLUB" LONG WALKERS!!**

A sick looking HORSE is unattended, loose, *munching on*
GARBAGE under the sign.

A ONE LEGGED KID stands with a crutch in the doorway of the
building, watching them.

BAKER

Can't believe there aren't more
people here.

STEBBINS

Odds are you'll never see a crowd.
Nothing big allowed till the end.

Stebbins SNEEZES and then has a COUGHING FIT, *spits*. He uses
the Rabbit's Foot to wipe his nose.

BAKER

Sounds more like *you* may never see
a crowd.

GARRATY

You getting sick?

STEBBINS

Allergies. I get them every spring.

BAM! A shot from The Major's .38:

THE MAJOR

You're more than half way there,
Boys. Keep on. The prize awaits!

He lowers the gun and holsters it, posts up on the side of
the road. A SOLDIER hands him a coffee. He sips from the
steaming cup, lights a CIGARETTE.

BAKER

How the heck does he look so fresh?
Is he even human?

GARRATY

I doubt it.

STEBBINS

It's not a trick. The Major sleeps
at night, after dinner. He even
showers.

BAKER

That's not fair.

BARKOVITCH

Yes it is, Loser. The Major has earned the right.

STEBBINS

It's not about fair.

They pass an OLD ABANDONED HOTEL. An OLD MAN leans up against it, glaring at the Walkers, mumbling something unintelligible. Collie Parker *clocks him* and waves and *smiles, totally out of character.*

COLLIE PARKER

Howaya, Father Fuckhead, you goddamn bag! Your face and my ass, what a match!

They pass a DINER (VIRGINIA'S SLOPPY JOE HOUSE) empty except for an OLD COUPLE eating at a counter by the window, watching them, and a WAITER just behind. Garraty looks inside as they pass, envious.

In the reflection of the window, Garraty sees *PERCY MAKING A MOVE OFF THE ROAD*, toward THE DINER.

When he gets to the door, he *looks back quickly toward the road - CAUGHT.*

POP! POP! POP POP! The Soldiers *OPEN FIRE* and *THE FRONT WINDOWS SHATTER*(the sound is *BOOMING*).

Percy is *RIDDLED WITH BULLETS* but he doesn't fall at first. Instead he turns around with a bizarre look of surprise...

POP! Hit in the chest. *Percy drops, slumps over the CROSSBAR.*

THE MAJOR

Damnit, That's not what we like to see, Boys. Many of you... *most* of you, will die on this road. Whether you win or lose, the important thing is to do it with *honor*. Don't be a coward. Don't scurry off like a little rat. Remember your sac. Remember!

Garraty is walking backward now. McVries does the same; both of them fascinated with this new kind of *warning-less execution*.

21

EXT. OPEN ROAD - SWAMP - AFTERNOON

21

The road is visible for perhaps 10 miles; it slides down a long slope and runs in flat zigzags through a SWAMP. Then FAR AHEAD it *climbs again*, fading into the white afternoon haze.

They pass a MEMORIAL on the side of the road: 3 HANDMADE CROSSES stick out of the dirt.

Garraty is breathing hard and drenched in heavy perspiration; he looks like he's about to pass out.

GARRATY

Not sure, but this might be Hainseville. Truckers graveyard. Hell in the winter time.

BAKER

Shoot, I'd kill for some shade.

They're all so *sweaty* now that it looks like they've just come out of a pool. *They begin the descent...*

BAKER (CONT'D)

If I win this, I might be tempted to use my wish for a foot massage right there on the road.

GARRATY

You serious?

Olson is *CHEWING* again. It's beginning to look like a chore.

BAKER

Of course not. I'm going to ask for them to have one of those space rockets take me to the moon. Always wanted to go to the moon.

GARRATY

You know, that's not a bad wish. Did you hear about the guy who asked for a pet elephant?

BAKER

Yeah! And he got it! They brought it out with a saddle and he rode it home. They really *will* give you anything you want. That's why I'm asking to go to the moon.

OLSON

I don't care about the moon!

BEAT

They haven't heard from Olson in a while. The outburst shocks them.

MCVRIES

There you are, Olson. Thought we'd lost you.

OLSON

(defensive)
I'm fine!

BAKER

Sure, buddy. We know you are.

But Baker is lying.

OLSON

The moon doesn't look much different than the desert and I've been to the desert. I'm going to wish for ten naked ladies.

MCVRIES

What the fuck would you do with ten naked ladies, Olson?

OLSON

You said you were going to be nice.

GARRATY

That's not a very smart wish.

OLSON

How is that not a smart wish? You gay or something?

GARRATY

Olson, after the wish, you get a gazillion dollars.

((MORE))

GARRATY ((CONT'D))

You'll be so rich can pay ten naked ladies to come to your house any time you want. Your wish should be for something you can't buy.

OLSON

I don't want to have to pay for my ladies. That's gross.

MCVRIES

You realize when you make the wish, *someone's* going to have to pay the ten ladies to get naked for you?

OLSON

Wow. I never thought about that.

BAKER

What would you wish for, McVries?

MCVRIES

I had a wish ready for so long.
Years actually. but I've changed my
mind over the last couple days.

He looks at each of them.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

I'm going to wish that from now on,
The Long Walk has two winners.
Because at least next time everyone
can hold onto some hope that one of
their friends might make it.

OLSON

They'll never allow it.

MCVRIES

Well, hell if I won't try.

GARRATY

That's beautiful, Pete.

McVries laughs, assuming Garraty is razzing him.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

No, I mean it. It's really Goddamn
beautiful.

OLSON

I still think ten naked ladies is a
no brainer. How bout you, Garraty?

GARRATY

It's like a birthday wish. I don't
want to say. Might jinx it.

McVries smiles covertly.

BAKER

Oh, come on? The chances it's going
to be you or any of us is slim to
none. What's the harm?

GARRATY

The chances are getting better and
better actually. And I'm feeling
pretty good this afternoon. How
many are left? You know?

McVries raises his voice...

MCVRIES

Guys, let's count off starting in the front... from one.

There's a little *who-does-he-think-he-is* grumbling at first, but then their voices start yelling out:

VARIOUS WALKERS

1... 2... 3... 4... 5... 6... 7...
8... 9... 10... 11... 12... 13

BAKER

There's 15. Stebbins and Barkovitch didn't call out.

GARRATY

Those are no longer bad odds.

OLSON

(As he chews, dryly)
This isn't enjoyable at all anymore. There's no fucking flavor.

MCVRIES

Fuck, Olson. That's *really* the same piece of gum?

Olson shrugs. Even though he's conversing again, there's a *BLANK DELIRIOUSNESS* in his interactions.

OLSON

What can I say, I'm fucking superstitious. I feel like I'll last as long as it does. We have to make it *together*. Me and the gum.

He tries to blow a bubble but it won't work anymore.

GARRATY

That's fucking disgusting.

BAKER

Don't change the subject, Garraty. Come on, give us a nibble. You're not in it for the money, so what the hell are you in it for?

OLSON

Twenty naked ladies?

GARRATY

All I can say is that I want my wish to change things. Maybe make this whole thing stop altogether.

OLSON

You can't wish things that cause disruption in the state's policies or procedures. That's rule number-

GARRATY

I'm not going to ask for anything to be changed. My wish, if I get it, may cause it to, indirectly.

McVries eyes him, remembering the secret he was promised.

BARKOVITCH

An Anti-Walker who wants to win The Walk. That's rich! You're about as dumb as a rock, Garraty. A whiny little bitch if I've ever seen one.

MCVRIES

Scot, Killer. This isn't your circle. Flap your jaw to an idiot who will listen.

BARKOVITCH
Fuck off, all y'all.

BAKER
(To Garraty)
You should be careful saying that
kind of stuff out loud. They'll
squad you for it.

GARRATY
I know. My dad was squaded.

MCVRIES
Fuck, Ray. I'm sorry. He still in?

Ray doesn't answer the question, but he says to Baker:

GARRATY
I figure at this point I can say
anything I like. Soon I'm either
going to be the winner or I'm going
to be dead.

MCVRIES
He's right. Fuck The Long Walk!
Fuck The Major!

Collie Parker is off to the other side but jumps in:

COLLIE PARKER
Fuck the Walk! Fuck the Major!

BAKER
Fuck the walk!

OLSON
Guys-

MCVRIES
Don't be a pussy, Olson.

STEBBINS
The Major isn't a smart target.

MCVRIES
What's he gonna do, Stebbins? Shoot
me? Fuck the Long Walk! Fuck the
Major! Fuck him *hard*!

The sentiment *FUCK THE LONG WALK* echoes throughout the crowd.
They cheer. Olson *comes around*, puts his fist in the air:

OLSON

Fuck... the Long Walk!

He says it tiredly, but gets it out.

MCVRIES

And fuck the Soldiers!

Tressler *fires up the RADIO*: Finally, perfect clarity.
MUSIC BLASTS: **LATE 60s VIETNAM ERA ROCK&ROLL**

The SOLDIERS on the halftracks have no reactions. Garraty isn't joining in much, but he's looking around, happy with what he started. *He shares a wordless exchange with McVries; a warm, proud moment between just the two of them.*

21A EXT. OPEN ROAD - BLACK FOREST - NIGHT

21A

The only sounds now are the footsteps of the boys on the pavement and the odd HOOT of an OWL in the trees. It's deep night.

Garraty (sleepy, yawning) is walking directly behind McVries, his HANDS ON HIS SHOULDERS, making sure he keeps at minimum speed as he sleeps. Finally, he says:

GARRATY

(in a whisper)

Hey Pete.

MCVRIES *WAKES UP*, looks around, wipes sleep out of his eyes.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

You mind switching off for a while?
I'm fading.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

Sure, Compadre. Did you make me
coffee?

They switch positions and Garraty *closes his eyes* as McVries pushes him along.

22 EXT. OPEN ROAD - ABANDONED TOWN - MORNING

22

Another GHOST TOWN. There's not much to this one except an abandoned MECHANIC SHOP and a RUN DOWN MOTEL.

A TIRED WOMAN sits on an old suitcase near a row of PHONE BOOTHS, watches the boys pass by.

MCVRIES

Canteen! Number 23! And rations!

GARRATY

Canteen! Number 47! And rations!

Two SOLDIERS dismount the halftrack and give both of them NEW CANTEENS. They slip EIGHT TUBES of CONCENTRATES into their BELTS.

Baker gets an *abrupt* and *uncomfortable* look on his face. He slows down and drops back just a bit, then cuts past Garraty, drops his pants and SQUATS.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning number 6!

Garraty and the boys pass him. Barkovitch *HOLDS HIS NOSE* theatrically. Baker visibly struggles and *PUSHES*.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (CONT'D)

Warning! Second warning 6!

About twenty seconds later he *catches back up* to Garraty and McVries, badly out of breath and *cinching his pants*.

BAKER

Fastest crap I ever took.

MCVRIES

You should have brought an issue of The New Yorker with you.

BAKER

Never could go long without a crap.
Some guys, they crap once a week.
I'm a once-a-day man. If I don't
crap once a day, I take a laxative.

OLSON

Laxatives... will ruin your
intestines.

Olson's chewing again.

GARRATY

You just said crap three times.

BAKER

It's always sounded a little less
bad to me than the S word.

MCVRIES

I've never heard about anything in
the bible forbidding the word
'shit'. How about you, Ray?

GARRATY

Not me.

BAKER

It's not because there's a rule,
it's just the general idea behind-

MCVRIES

Can you break away, Baker? You
stink. Not your fault you didn't
have time to wipe but we shouldn't
all be punished for it.

The boys chuckle. Baker and Olson naturally drift away.
McVries lowers his voice, makes a clandestine appeal.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Ray, we're alone. What do you say?

GARRATY

It's gotta stay between us, Pete.

MCVRIES

You have my word, Compadre. And
that means something.

GARRATY

My dad...

Garraty's eyes go somewhere else; someplace *sad and distant*.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

My dad was my hero. He exposed me to things that could have gotten him jailed. Books by Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Oscar Wilde, Camus, Mark twain. He Played me *music*. He wanted me to know the old ways. He thought he was being careful. But then the bad day came...

23

INT. GARRATY HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING (THE PAST)

23

RAY GARRATY(age 15) and his mother, GINNIE GARRATY, sit at the kitchen table, plates of SPAGHETTI and DRINKS in front of them. *This is the idyllic scene Garraty was dreaming about before...*

WILLIAM approaches the table with his own plate as his wife continues to sing...

GINNIE

*...Alive, alive oh. Alive, alive
Oh. Crying, "Cockles and mussels
alive, alive oh-*

...He sits down, the BASEBALL is on the table. He rolls it gently with his hand as she sings, passes it back and forth to Ray.

CRASH! Off screen. Three SOLDIERS (with rifles slung to their backs) burst into the kitchen. One of the soldiers DETAINS Ginnie. One does the same to young Ray. Another throws the DINING ROOM TABLE on its side and drags his Father out...

The BASEBALL bounces onto the floor.

24

EXT. GARRATY HOME - FRONT YARD - EVENING

24

A bland suburban street, with small, identical track homes. A massive INDUSTRIAL PLANT looms in the background, spewing BLACK SMOKE.

THE MAJOR is on the lawn. A soldier *throws* William at his feet. The other soldiers keep tight grips on mother and son; each of them *FIGHTING BACK*, squirming in dark anticipation.

GINNIE

Please don't take him. Please! He says things he doesn't mean.

THE MAJOR

Mr. William Garraty. You've been accused and convicted in the system's internal court for high crimes of dissent. Your sentence is level one: either lifetime service to the squads inside a national detention center or immediate deactivation. It's your decision. Do you pledge allegiance to the state, the system, and the squads here and now, on this lawn before your family? There's still time to be an example for your son. Still time for you to make the honorable choice.

He *meets eyes* with RAY; *winks a secret wink* and flashes just a hint of a smile(?) before turning back to the Major.

WILLIAM

Thank you, Major, for giving me this opportunity to be an example to my son. You're right, there *is* still time.

William *stands*. The Major nods, satisfied with himself... But then William smiles (*a big, rebellious, dangerous smile*), and he says:

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

No, Sir. I will pledge no such allegiance.

Mrs. Garraty understands-

GINNIE

No!

GARRATY

Dad!

William is totally at peace;

He turns his head just *slightly*, to see his wife. He mouths "*I love you*" and she *breaks into tears*.

WILLIAM

Never forget who you are, Ray.

The Major draws a PISTOL from his belt holster.

THE MAJOR

Luck to you, Mr. Garraty. May God show mercy.

He points the barrel of the GUN at his FOREHEAD, *pulls the trigger-* BAM! One loud *shot*; an instant cloud of RED MIST... the father's eyes go lifeless. The mother collapses. Young Ray looks on, disbelieving. The Major walks to him, *gentle and fatherly*...

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

May this moment be a lesson to you, Son. Your father could have stayed with you, but he chose to go. As you grow, make your mother proud. Your father is an example of what *not* to be. You must *contribute*. You mustn't be a snag in the spokes.

(MORE)

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

We *must* keep the wheels turning.
It's a tragedy of his own doing.

25 EXT. OPEN ROAD - GRASSLANDS - AFTERNOON (BACK TO THE PRESENT)

A long, FLAT (seemingly endless) COUNTRY ROAD; the grassy fields on each side are speckled with COWS. There are TEARS in Garraty's eyes as he finishes the story.

MCVRIES

Oh God. I'm so sorry.

GARRATY

It's okay. I'm okay.

MCVRIES

No, Ray. It's not okay.

Garraty looks around and clocks the HALFTTRACKS; all across the road and out of view of them.

GARRATY

(whispering)

You're right. And that's why I'm going to kill him.

BEAT

MCVRIES

No.

GARRATY

Yes.

MCVRIES

How? You can't wish him dead. Rule-

GARRATY

But I *have* a wish. A wish that'll give me the ability to do it once I'm the winner. Once I'm close enough to him.

Garraty pauses for a beat as TRESSLER walks by them fast, giggling. He FLINGS HIS RED CONVERSE ALL-STARS off between steps.

After he passes, Ray makes sure nobody's listening to them, and the cameras are still far off. *HE CUPS HIS HAND AND PRESSES IT UP TO MCVRIES'S EAR, SAYS SOMETHING.*

MCVRIES

And they'd have to give it to you.

GARRATY

Yes they would. That's how I do it.

MCVRIES

But you have to win first.

GARRATY

Yes. But I'll tell you this, Pete. There's nobody here who wants it more than I do. *Nobody.*

MCVRIES

I won't argue that, Compadre.

GARRATY

My Dad was good, and he was true, and he was willing to sacrifice *everything* in order to teach me the old ways. This is my chance to change things, just like my Dad wanted to. My chance to cut off the head of the dragon.

MCVRIES

Garraty, do you have any idea how fucking hard it is to kill a man? I've killed a deer and that's hard enough. Killing a man is only easy for... a certain type of person.

GARRATY

I'll *become* that type of person.

MCVRIES

That would be sad. Those kind of people can't see the beauty in the world.

GARRATY

What beauty?

MCVRIES

The sky, the trees, the birds. Fuck, everything, Man. And know what else? Us. We're real friends, aren't we?

GARRATY

Sure, but what's it matter?

MCVRIES

It *all* matters, Ray. Whether we have three hours, three days, or three decades; *this* moment matters.

GARRATY

This moment matters.

MCVRIES

Goddamn right, Musketeer.

GARRATY

But once this moment is over, I'm still going to kill him.

MCVRIES

Fair enough. But realize, even if you pull it off, they'll kill you.

GARRATY

You don't know that. I'll be the winner. It's uncharted territory.

MCVRIES

Does your Mom know?

GARRATY

Of course not.

MCVRIES

So what about *her*?

GARRATY

This is bigger than Mom and me.

In a FIELD, a family of five is picnicking: MOTHER, FATHER, BOY, GIRL, WHITE HAIRED GRANDMOTHER. Parked beside them is a beat up pick up truck filled with (what looks like) all of their belongings. *They watch The WALKERS*

GARRATY (CONT'D)

Look at that bunch of fucking pigs.

MCVRIES

You'd be doing the same thing.

The Grandmother waves solemnly, eats a SANDWICH-

GARRATY

The hell I would. Stuff my face while a bunch of starving-

MCVRIES

Hardly starving, Ray. We've got our rations.

GARRATY

You just don't want to admit those people are animals. They want to see *someone's* brains on the road. They'd just as soon see yours.

MCVRIES

You choose what to see. Look harder. That's a family. They love each other. You can't blame them for being conditioned to think this is okay just like we have.

BEAT

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Even though your wish is Goddamned crazy, you may be the only one of us here for the right reasons. But I'll tell you, it means *nothing* if you don't believe in that family over there. If you don't think they're worth being reached, sit down right now and let them fill you with bullets, because vengeance alone isn't enough.

This affects Garraty. There's a shift in him: *is this path the right one?*

They pass Patrick. They haven't seen him since the starting line. He still has the crumpled porn mag stuffed into his back pocket, but he doesn't look very good. He's moving just barely at speed and *LIMPING*. They both clock him as they pass.

Garraty looks ahead: Up in the distance, beyond scattered rainclouds, between the foothills and the descending sun...

A RAINBOW

Full, vibrant and glorious. It's like a miracle.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

There. That's something to be grateful for.

He *POINTS* to the colorful contradiction in the distance. They admire it together.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

I never had a brother. You?

Garraty shakes his head *no, smiles back.*

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

You want to walk with me a while?

GARRATY

Sure, Pete.

26

EXT. OPEN ROAD - HIGHWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

26

The ROAD EXPANDS and becomes a WIDE, MULTI-LANE HIGHWAY; the biggest they've been on yet.

PATRICK

My feet!

Garraty turns and sees Patrick (porn mag guy). He's screaming out as he walks. McVries cracks a tube of CHICKEN CONCENTRATES.

MCVRIES

Aren't you eating anything?

GARRATY

I'm making myself wait. Just a little longer. Till dusk.

MCVRIES

The old self discipline bit?

PATRICK (O.S.)

My feet!

They try their best to ignore the wailing.

MCVRIES

You know, if I had a dollar... *just* a dollar, mind you, I think I'd put it on you, Garraty. I think you've got a chance to win this thing.

GARRATY

Putting the whammy on me?

MCVRIES

The what?

GARRATY

The whammy. Like telling a pitcher
he's got a no hitter going.

As if on cue, he pulls his baseball out, winds up like he's
about to throw it.

MCVRIES

Maybe I am. But most likely I just
mean it. I think you can do this.

GARRATY

And what about you?

McVries puts his HANDS out in front of him. They're *shaking*
very slightly. He frowns at them with a distracted sort of
concentration. It's a half-lunatic gaze...

MCVRIES

I hope Barkovitch buys out soon.

All of a sudden, Patrick again-

PATRICK

Don't hurt me! Please don't!

He is *STOPPED* in the middle of the road.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! First Warning 4!

Garraty turns and watches him *RACE TOWARD THE HALFTRACK*, his
tears cutting runnels through the sweaty dirt on his face. He
tries to *SCALE THE FRONT CORNER OF THE TANK*. The Musketeers
are all eyeing him now.

PATRICK

I can't... please... my mother... I
can't... don't... my feet!

COLLIE PARKER

Poor fucker. I wish he'd get one of
those fucking guns and ram it up
that soldier's ugly fucking mouth.

The Soldier *HITS HIM IN THE FACE WITH the RIFLE BUTT*, Patrick
drops to the ground.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning 4! Second Warning!

He tries to get back up, but the *TREADS OF THE HALFTRACK RUN
OVER HIM...*

Garraty and McVries watch in horror as his LEGS AND FEET are flattened by *THE DRIVE AND IDLER WHEELS*. There's a crunching sound, and a wet grinding....

BLOOD SPRAYS.

Garraty looks away and *PUTS HIS HANDS OVER HIS EARS*. McVries keeps his eyes locked for just a moment longer in morbid fascination, but then PATRICK SCREAMS OUT AGAIN and he turns, shaken, *COVERING HIS EARS* as well.

Patrick is still on the road, *BOTH LEGS MISSING* from the knees down. He *SCREAMS* again; a high note sharp enough to shatter glass.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (CONT'D)
Warning 4! Third and Final Warning!

PATRICK
My feeeeeeeee-!

OLSON
Why doesn't he stop that?

The others *CRANK THEIR NECKS TO GET A GOOD LOOK*: Number 4's *FEET AND CALVES ARE GONE*; only a *red jelly-like mess on the ground where they used to be*. Garraty doesn't look back this time (he's seen enough).

OLSON (CONT'D)
(chewing)
Oh Jesus.

BAKER
I want to go home. Oh Christ, do I ever want to go home.

COLLIE PARKER
Well shit. It's not going to be him then, I guess. Maybe someone'll fucking get it done.

BAM! One shot through the forehead for Patrick and it's over. Garraty lets his hands down from his ears slowly.

The Boy's walk on in silence.

Finally, Olson *SPITS his gum out* and looks horrified.

OLSON
Fuck. Fuck. That's the last of it. It just disintegrated down to one little piece.

MCVRIES
I've got some Bazooka, Olson. You want it?

OLSON

You don't fucking get it. I can't
replace it. I have a bad feeling.

McVries fans his face. Then TRESSLER comes up beside him and
makes a bizarre *swallowing* noise.

MCVRIES

The fuck was that?

TRESSLER CRIES OUT; no words just a garbled gagging sound that's almost a scream.

Then he *RIPS HIS CLOTHES OFF* (one article at a time); first his *SHIRT*, followed by his *PANTS* and *UNDERWEAR*. He keeps walking, fully naked. His ringlet-curly hair is matted and wet, up in a bundle; a bird's nest atop his head.

GARRATY

The radio guy.

MCVRIES

Tressler. I even talked to him a little last night. From the Alaska territory. He had clothes on then.

Tressler is a combination of *see-through-pale* and *lobster red*; his pupils are blank and his body stumbles forward on loose legs, overtaken by madness, or heatstroke, or both. Finally, his *EYES ROLL BACK IN HIS HEAD* and he *DROPS* to the pavement quickly, unconscious. Barkovitch steps over him and gloats. The Musketeers keep walking as they hear behind them:

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)

Warning! Third warning 24!

POP!... POP! They flinch with each gunshot.

27

EXT. OPEN ROAD - FOREST - NIGHT

27

There are *WOODS* on both sides of the road. *LIGHT FOG* and thick darkness is cut by *BROAD BEAMS* from the *HALFTRACK FLOODS*. Garraty isn't with his musketeers. They are scattered, isolated. He's *dozing and walking* like a zombie. Long shadows drift across wet ground.

Stebbins is close by and having another *COUGHING FIT*. He's torn off a piece of his shirt and is now using it as a *HANKY*. Suddenly, perfect-Stebbins doesn't look so hot.

GARRATY

You okay?

STEBBINS

Just allergies. I'm great. Feel like I could walk forever.

Garraty looks down at his feet. Stebbins is wearing a pair of soft looking *MOCCASINS*. His shoes are tucked into his shirt.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

I'm saving the tennis shoes. Just in case. But I think the Mocs will finish it.

A big *SNEEZE*. He wipes his nose with the hanky.

He dangles the RABBIT'S FOOT, jiggles it.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Don't you wish you had one of these?

GARRATY

Not really.

STEBBINS

Yes you do. One day you'll understand. The rabbit is all that matters.

GARRATY

Sure, Man. Whatever.

STEBBINS

Looking forward to seeing your loved ones?

GARRATY

My mom? Yes I am.

STEBBINS

And she still lives here?

GARRATY

Yes, of course. We both live here. Or else she wouldn't be allowed.

STEBBINS

That's convenient.

GARRATY

The fuck you mean by that?

STEBBINS

What happens after you see your mother?

GARRATY

Happens? Keep walking down the road I guess. Unless you are considerate enough to buy out by then.

STEBBINS

Oh, I don't think so.

He smiles remotely. Garraty doesn't understand why Stebbins is even talking to him but stays engaged out of curiosity.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Are you sure you won't be walked out? After you see her?

GARRATY

I don't know why I bother talking to you. It's like talking to smoke.

STEBBINS

Are you tired, Garraty?

GARRATY

Yeah, I'm tired.

STEBBINS

Exhausted?

GARRATY

Getting there.

Stebbins COUGHS, clears his throat, *blows his nose*.

STEBBINS

No, you're not exhausted yet.

He jerks a thumb at OLSON.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

That's exhausted. He's almost through now.

Olson looks *BAD. Really bad*. Garraty is just noticing for the first time; his SKIN has gone scaly with dehydration, his EYES sunk into hollowed sockets; his HAIR flies aimlessly on his skull like wind-driven cornsilk. The BEAM from his headlamp is dull now (batteries), and jittering loosely with each step he takes.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

He's shit himself. You smell that? Even *I* can.

GARRATY

What are you driving at?

STEBBINS

Ask your hick friend, Art Baker. A mule doesn't like to plow. But it likes carrots. Watch *Olson*. He doesn't quite know it yet, but he's lost his appetite for the carrot. You can learn from Olson.

Garraty looks at mysterious Stebbins closely, not sure how seriously to take him. Stebbins *LAUGHS OUT LOUD*. A laugh rich and full that makes the other Walkers turn their heads.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Go on. Go talk to him, Garraty. And if he won't talk, just get up close and have a look. It's never too late to learn.

Garraty swallows, *creeped out*.

GARRATY

Is it a very important lesson?

Stebbins *CATCHES GARRATY'S WRIST* in a strong grip-

STEBBINS

The most important lesson you'll ever learn, maybe. The secret of life over death. Reduce that equation and you can afford to die, Garraty. You can spend your life like a drunkard on a spree.

Stebbins *DROPS HIS HAND, dismisses him, clatters out another cough, and goes back into his introspective standard. Garraty massages his wrist as he walks away from him, over to Olson.*

GARRATY

Olson? Olson can you talk?

Olson sweeps onward, his face turned into the darkness. Garraty is sweating, as is Olson. Tiny vapors of steam rise from their wet clothes.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

Olson, talk to me.

Olson's eyes move jerkily in their sockets, as if long rusted and in need of oil. His mouth falls open with a nearly audible clunk. Garraty puts a hand on him.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

Please. Try hard.

OLSON

Go... God... God's garden-

GARRATY

God's garden. What about God's garden, Olson?

He looks at Garraty, sadly.

OLSON

It's full. Of. Weeds.

Olson *rips* his HEADLAMP off and *slings it to the ground.*

Garraty can't say anything. His eyes are soldered to the shadowed ruin that is his friend's face. Olson dips his head down, then lifts it up all the way, strangely, and widens his eyes, looks deep into Garraty. Then (without hesitation) *he walks off, toward the HALF-TRACK...*

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
Warning! Warning 46!

Olson doesn't slow (*there's a ruinous dignity about him*).
*HE PUTS HIS HANDS ONTO THE HALFTRACK AND BEGINS TO CLAMBER
PAINFULLY UP THE SIDE.* Baker and McVries wake up:

BAKER
Olson! What are you doing?!

GARRATY
Olson, no!

The SOLDIERS bring their GUNS around in perfect, three-part harmony. Olson *grabs the barrel of the closest* and *yanks it* out of the robotic hands that hold it... *it clatters off* into the street-

COLLIE PARKER
Get it! Get that fucker!

MCVRIES
(screaming savagely)
Get 'em! Get 'em Olson! Kill 'em!
Kill 'em!

BAM! There's a *FLASH* from one of the other gun barrels. Garraty's eyes widen: He sees Olson's shirt ripple as the bullet enters his belly, then exits out his back.

The *IMPACT* of the HEAVY CALIBER SLUG *SENDS OLSON FLYING OFF THE HALFTRACK*. He lands spread-eagled on his back like a man nailed to a cross; one side of his BELLY *black and shredded ruin*.

Olson sits up (hands on his stomach) and stares calmly at the poised SOLDIERS on the upper deck. They stare back.

GARRATY
Fuck.

TWO OF THE HALFTRACKS GET CLOSER TO HIM.

MCVRIES
(sobbing)
You bastards! You fucking bastards!

Parker shakes his head, *disappointed*.

COLLIE PARKER

Not this time either. Poor fuck.

Garraty watches through building tears as Olson stands, WALKS. The SOLDIERS on the halftrack have their GUNS trained on him but don't shoot; they almost seem (morbidly) curious(?). Behind Garraty, Stebbins *laughs softly*.

Slowly, reflectively, Olson *gains his feet*, hands crossed on his belly. He seems to sniff the air for guidance, then turns slowly in the direction of the walk and staggers along(!).
GARRATY STARES ON IN HORROR.

STEBBINS

They gut-shot him. They'll do that.
It's deliberate. To discourage
anyone else from trying the old
Charge of the Light Brigade number.

GARRATY

Get away from me! Or I'll knock
your fucking block off.

BAKER

Put him out of it! For Christ's
sake put him out of it.

McVries still sobs as he walks. Stebbins drops back a little and laughs quietly between *SNEEZES*.

Olson stumbles along, hands on his gut, as though he's trying to physically hold it in place, *GASPING FOR BREATH AS HE WALKS*. Finally, he stops, bends over and *THROWS UP A HUGE GLUT OF BLOOD AND BILE...*

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! Another volley of bullets drives him flat again.

Baker turns to Garraty with his hands cupped over his mouth. His face is white and cheesy; his eyes bulging.

BAKER (CONT'D)

Oh God, Ray. Oh Jesus.

Baker *VOMITS THROUGH HIS FINGERS*.

Olson *FALLS TO HIS KNEES...*

Baker *LOSES IT*, begins to cry: He runs *BACKWARD* over to Olson, crouches beside him, puts his arms around him, and holds his tired, hysterical face against his chest.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
Warning! Warning number 6!

MCVRIES
Get up, Art! You can't help him.
For fuck sake get up, Musketeer!

GARRATY
There's nothing left to do!

He detaches, walking backward just fast enough to avoid a second warning. He catches up to the group.

BAKER
It's not fair! It's just not fair!

There's a sticky smear of Olson's blood on his cheekbone. The three of them (Garraty, McVries, Baker) walk backward, in lock-step, watching Olson...

HE RAISES A HAND UP TO THE SKY. Trembling, he *shouts*...

OLSON
I did it wrong!

...He shrivels slowly back onto the ground like fast-wilting flower, and bleeds out

MCVRIES
Farewell Musketeer.

The three of them turn around in unison and continue on...

28

EXT. OPEN ROAD - MILL/SLAUGHTERHOUSE - DAY

28

THE FINAL SIX: Garraty, McVries, Baker, Parker, Stebbins, Barkovitch

ON GARRATY'S WRIST TACHOMETER: **3.2 MPH MILE 214 WARNINGS:0**

There's an OLD MILL just off the road.

Garraty turns his canteen over his head, leans back until his neck pops. He looks his ever-more-haggard companions:

McVries has a heavy scrub of BEARD now. He takes a bite from a SALAMI stick and chews it slowly, tiredly.

Baker's T-Shirt (that used to be white) is now a sweat stained rust color, with a loose, frayed neck. His pimples have spread and his face is a big, oily-red mess.

Parker is wet with sweat but has a fresher look about him than the others.

Stebbins sounds *VERY SICK; hacking and sneezing* consistently.

The darkness around Barkovitch's eyes has taken an entirely different form; now encircling them completely and creating deep, hollow, raccoon-like pits within the sockets. He's *scooping bites* out of a FULL CAN OF SPAM with his SPOON languidly.

COLLIE PARKER

I wish he shot one of those fuckers, but I still can't get over the pure fucking idiocy of Olson.

MCVRIES

How about you get his name out of your mouth, Parker. He knew he was finished, so he made a play. He didn't go quietly and I respect the hell out of him for that.

COLLIE PARKER

You have me all fucking wrong, McVries. I respect *that* as well.

MCVRIES

So what about it?

COLLIE PARKER

The fucking wife. He was married.

GARRATY

That's bullshit.

COLLIE PARKER

You didn't fucking know? It's true.

MCVRIES

I don't believe it.

COLLIE PARKER

He told a few of us at the drop off, got a lot of ball busting for it. He's the only one. The only one with a fucking wife. And get this shit - her name is Clementine.

STEBBINS

Like the orange.

COLLIE PARKER

Or the fucking song.

GARRATY

Wait, the "ten naked ladies" guy is married?

BAKER

(defensive)

He was just messing around. Trying to sound cool.

MCVRIES

You knew?

Baker doesn't say anything but by his expression they can tell that he did.

BARKOVITCH

Dumb idiot got what he deserved.

McVries glares at him but doesn't say anything.

MCVRIES
Why would he do that?

COLLIE PARKER
I'll tell you why. He really thought he could fucking win. He had a system. Adjustments. Rarin' to rip.

MCVRIES
We've got to make a promise. Whoever wins has to do something, for his wife.

Garraty lights up.

GARRATY
You're right, Pete.

COLLIE PARKER
Do what? I'm not the fuckwad who decided to widow a-

GARRATY
Money. Something. Just to make sure she's taken care of.

COLLIE PARKER
Sounds like some fucking bleeding heart bullshit to me.

MCVRIES
Come on, Parker. I know you've got a heart in there.

Parker mulls it over and finally puts his hand out to McVries. They *shake on it*.

COLLIE PARKER
Don't say I never fucking did anything for you, McVries.

MCVRIES
That's my guy. Tell me something, will you?

Collie listens...

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Her name really Clementine?

COLLIE PARKER
Dead fucking serious. No shit.

GARRATY
You're in, right Baker?

BAKER
Of course.

McVries looks back to Barkovitch.

Barkovitch pauses his eating and looks down at the SPAM:

BARKOVITCH
Did you get in my bag last night?

He's wild-eyed when he says it.

MCVRIES
What the fuck?

BARKOVITCH
The can was cracked open and it
tastes off. Did you put something
in it.

McVries ignores it; Barkovitch sounds slightly mad.

MCVRIES
Doesn't matter. We don't need you
anyway, Killer. Because you're not
going to win.

He *throws* the CAN OF SPAM onto the ground and stuffs the
SPOON into his pocket.

BARKOVITCH
Suck my fat donkey dick.

Garraty looks to Stebbins. He's BLOWING HIS NOSE and even
shivering a little now. He tilts his head toward the boys and
flashes a sort of sinister grin.

STEBBINS
Why not? Go team.

MCVRIES
You don't look so good.

Stebbins expands on his grin, *COUGHS*.

STEBBINS

It's a hell of a thing. Haven't been sick in 10 years and my body decides to do it during this exact window of days. Like a cruel joke.

MCVRIES

It's called irony.

Stebbins *SNEEZES*, *blows his nose loudly* on his hanky.

STEBBINS

I know what irony is. And I'll still win it.

Stebbins cuts away to the side of the road, *LAUGHING AND COUGHING SIMULTANEOUSLY*. Parker, Baker and McVries speed up, take the front. Garraty and Barkovitch fall back just a bit.

BARKOVITCH

Why didn't you guys ask me? I wanted to be asked. You didn't hear me say no, did you?

GARRATY

No. No I didn't.

Barkovitch is looking bad all of a sudden... even worse than the rest of them. A desperate smile appears on his face. *He wobbles and grabs Garraty's sleeve.*

BARKOVITCH

Listen, I got off on the wrong foot with you guys. I didn't mean to. Shit, I'm a good enough guy when you get to know me. I never had much of a crowd in school. Always getting off on the wrong foot. But fuck, man, a guy has to have a couple of friends in a thing like this, right? That Rank, he started it. He wanted to tear my ass. I didn't mean for him to croak. That wasn't my fault. Right Garraty?

GARRATY

So what is it anyway? You want to go along with the deal?

BARKOVITCH

Sure, sure.

His *HAND TIGHTENS CONVULSIVELY* on Garraty's sleeve, pulling it like an emergency-stop cord on a bus.

BARKOVITCH (CONT'D)

I'll send her enough bread to keep her in clover the rest of her life. But tell McVries too, will you?

GARRATY

Okay.

BARKOVITCH

A guy's got to have a crowd, you know? Some friends. Who wants to die hated? If you got to die.

He pulls the *MEDALLION* out of his pocket, motions like he's going to maybe *show it(?)* To Garraty, but stops.

BARKOVITCH (CONT'D)

And we all have to. Right? Even if it doesn't happen here, it's going to happen one day. And that's why all of it's fucked! Nothing's fair. Nothing.

Garraty yanks his sleeve back and pulls away from Barkovitch, who continues to talk (maybe to himself) and then to *CRY OUT LOUD* (like a baby) for no obvious reason. Nobody says anything. Garraty pairs off with McVries.

MCVRIES

Barkovitch is going over the high side, isn't he?

GARRATY

Yes, I think so.

BARKOVITCH

(wild)

Are you fucking talking about me over there? I didn't do it! What the fuck are you saying about me?

MCVRIES

I don't even want to see it
anymore.

BARKOVITCH

See what?! What don't you want to
see?

Barkovitch *cries louder - HUGE, GUTTURAL SOBS... then sudden
LOUD SCREAMING...* like a pained animal. He now looks less
like a man and more like some rotten, dead, walking *THING*
straight out of a George Romero film. Fever-sweat is pouring
from him in buckets and his eyes are wild and bugging.

BARKOVITCH (CONT'D)

Don't hate me! Why do you want to
hate me? I don't want to die
anymore than you do. What do you
want? Do you want me to be sorry?
I'll be sorry! I'm sorry!

Garraty turns back to look at him. McVries does not.

They pass a PEN full of live HORSES.

MCVRIES

(in a whisper)
I'm sorry.

BARKOVITCH

No you're not! I know you hate me.
I know you do!

GARRATY

It's okay, Gary. It's okay. Just
calm down. We're your friends.
We're going to be your friends,
okay?

He softens for a moment...

BARKOVITCH

My friends?

MCVRIES

Sure.

...Then loses it again. Barkovitch throws his *YELLOW HAT* to
the ground. *Collie Parker and Stebbins trample it.*

BARKOVITCH

Not yet, whores! I ain't gone yet!
Not fucking yet!

His voice keeps climbing, like a fire whistle gone insane, then only *crying...*

As Barkovitch becomes louder, he stirs the HORSES... they begin to *NEIGH* and *WHINE*.

Suddenly, Barkovitch reaches into his pocket and pulls out the small, metal SPOON...

His hand goes up to his neck. He pushes the blunt edge of the scoop in DEEPLY, until it outlines one edge of the trachea, then pierces the surface of the skin...

He continues to PUSH until HIS FLESH BREAKS OPEN completely...

*BLOOD OOZES, and then- He **PULLS IT OUT and SMASHES IT BACK IN...** over and over again until his neck is a gaping, bloody mess.*

The HORSES are WAILING... kicking and going crazy in the pen.

BAKER
 (dry heaving)
 My Jesus!

The rest of them scatter away from him. Barkovitch goes on *SCREAMING AND GOBBLING AND CLAWING AND WALKING*, his feral face turned up toward the sky...

BLOOD SPILLS FROM HIS OPEN NECK. Then the fire whistle sound fails, and Barkovitch falls.

POP POP! POP! They shoot him. Nobody hears any warnings.

Barkovitch falls to the ground, limp and dead instantly; his hand drops the MEDALLION, now spattered with droplets of blood: *There's a tiny cartoon cat on it.*

29

EXT. OPEN ROAD - OPEN FIELD - NIGHT

29

The boys walk silently, THE FIVE OF THEM. The only sound other than footsteps is *WHEEZING AND COUGHING* from Stebbins, who walks on his own, in the back. The road cuts in hard, snaky curves through the fog along an OPEN FIELD...

Garraty is dozing and so are the other Musketeers.

On the side of the road (*luminous in the dense black of night*) are two ABANDONED VEHICLES, both completely *AFLAME*. *The remaining walkers all notice, but none of them comment. None are surprised.* Apocalyptic FIRE is perfectly fitting at this stage of the game.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, COLLIE PARKER (of all people!) Begins to sing... softly (*surprisingly sweet*), and earnest.

COLLIE PARKER
*...In a cavern, in a canyon
 excavating for a mine, dwell a
 miner forty-niner, and his daughter
 Clementine...*

McVries lights up, grins big and picks it up...

MCVRIES
*...Oh My darling, oh my darling, oh
 my darling Clementine, though art
 lost and gone forever, dreadful
 sorry Clementine.*

Parker smiles back at him, continues on...

COLLIE PARKER
...Like she was and like a fairy...

GARRATY

(Beaming)

...And her shoes were number nine!

The rest of them join in:

EVERYONE

*...Herring boxes without topses,
sandals were for Clementine. Drove
she ducklings to the water, every
morning just at nine!...*

30

EXT. OPEN ROAD - WOODS OUTSIDE TOWN - LATE NIGHT

30

Woods are all around. There's the soft, warm GLOW of a TOWN way off in the distance ahead.

There are remnants of an old SMASHED BIKE in the middle of the road.

Garraty hears a voice beside him:

COLLIE PARKER

We're fucking close, right? To your mom?

He's surprised that Parker is talking to him and thrown off even more by his calm tone.

GARRATY

Almost. It won't be long now.

COLLIE PARKER

You're one lucky sonofabitch, Garraty. You're gonna see your mother. Who the hell am I gonna see between now and the end? No one but the fucking pigs who come to stare. I'm homesick. And honestly... fucking scared.

GARRATY

I'm scared too. We're all far from home. The road keeps us away. I may see her, but I can't hug her, not really.

COLLIE PARKER

Fucking easy for you to talk. This is your home state. You're the only one who gets to see family, and hug or no fucking hug, you're going to see her just the same.

MCVRIES

Maybe that'll make it worse.

COLLIE PARKER

What are you fucking butting in for? Really want to die on that hill, Man? This guy's the only local. The only one who gets to see his family. Can't you just fucking agree that it's an advantage?

MCVRIES

No. I can't. I think he's got it tougher than either of us. I think it'll throw him off.

COLLIE PARKER

Oh fuck off. You're both crazy. I'm getting out of here.

Parker puts on some speed and disappears into the fog ahead.

GARRATY

What's his problem?

MCVRIES

He thinks we're queer for each other.

GARRATY

He *what*?

MCVRIES

He's not such a bad guy. Maybe he's even half right.

Garraty's suddenly uncomfortable - *what's he supposed to say?*

GARRATY

What the fuck?

MCVRIES

Oh shut up. Where do you get off with all the self-righteous shit? I'm not even going to make it any easier by telling you know if I'm joking.

McVries follows Parker into the fog and disappears.

31 EXT. OPEN ROAD - TOWNSHIP - MORNING

31

They are entering a town... early 20th century buildings in shadow, a little ways off the road.

The same FIVE are left. They all look like SPOILED MEAT: bruised, mopey eyes, and thin, burnt skin under their loose, torn, and heavily soiled clothing.

THE MAJOR leads the pack in his Jeep. A SOLDIER drives and he stands in the vehicle, biting from a SANDWICH and toasting the Walkers. He swills once again from his TIN CUP, winces.

GARRATY

Pete, how many miles?

McVries's face is a *furry skull*, eyes glittering feverishly.

MCVRIES

(looks at his wrist)

Mile 286. Day 4. Good morning. We live to fight another day.

He doesn't sound like he has much fight left.

Baker is on the other side of McVries. His eyes are deep YELLOW; *jaundiced*.

Garraty *lurches* forward, off balance.

GARRATY

My damn shoe-heel came off.

BAKER

Get rid of them both. The nails will start poking through. You work harder when you're off balance.

Garraty kicks off one shoe.

GARRATY

Goddamnit.

He does the same with the other and continues on *SWOLLEN, MANGLED, BLOOD-SOAKED KNOBS* that were once feet.

Garraty begins to recognize his surroundings. A YOUNG MAN in a car on the side of the road tracks the walkers, another car with a FAMILY OF FOUR is right beside it - all watching solemnly, but for the most part his hometown is a ghost town now, just like the others.

A HALFTRACK changes course and *reveals: GINNIE GARRATY,* wearing a black coat and *WAVING A YELLOW SCARF* to try and get his attention. She's standing in front of an OLD STONE POST OFFICE. *Garraty limps to the side of the road and keeps pace.*

GARRATY (CONT'D)

Mom! I love you!

His MOTHER *sees him* and her expression turns from hope to *HORROR:* he's a shell of the boy she's used to seeing.

GINNIE

Oh Ray. My Baby. Your feet-

She smiles and tries to conceal the shock, but it's not possible. Her eyes fill with tears and she becomes the face of pity and fear.

He reaches to her and she reaches back, but then *stops herself.* She wants so badly to touch him, but realizes *the result would likely be fatal.*

GINNIE (CONT'D)

Keep going, Baby. Go! I love you.
Come home to me-

The HALFTRACK blocks his path and makes it so he can't quite get to her. His chance is over... he has to keep walking.

McVries is beside him as they continue on.

Garraty looks back and keeps his eyes locked with hers as she waves. Something hits him as he sees her; a deep *regret.* The whole thing suddenly means nothing. All he wants to do is be with his mother.

Emotion overtakes him. Garraty bursts into a shambling, pigeon-toed *RUN, BACK TOWARD THE SIDELINES(!)* where she stands; *his ripped socks flap at swollen feet.*

GARRATY

Mama!

An ARM grabs Garraty's and pulls him back-

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
Warning! Warning 47!

MCVRIES
You can't go backwards, Ray.

His Mother sees what he's doing, cries out-

GINNIE

No, Ray! Stop! Don't do it!

McVries's lips are against Garraty's ear and he's *SHOUTING*.

GARRATY

Let me go.

MCVRIES

I won't let you kill yourself, Ray.

GINNIE

(she's crying)

I love you, Ray. I love you *better!*
but you have to turn around. Go!
Keep walking!

He keeps on toward her, McVries still beside him.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Second warning 47! Second
warning 23!

He is *so close*. His mother *reaches out to him; THEIR HANDS FINALLY TOUCH. HE GRIPS AND HOLDS ON...*

GARRATY

(with ferocious sincerity)

I'm sorry, Mom. I'm *so* sorry. I was
wrong. I made a mistake. I never
should have done this. I just want
to be home-

His *MOM LETS GO OF HIM* and makes *shooing gestures*.

GINNIE

You must go, Ray. Go! I love you so
much-

The *HALFTRACK* slows to a complete stop and 2 *SOLDIERS* jump
off of it. The approach him with *CARBINES RAISED and POINTED*.

MCVRIES

(screaming over the noise
into his ear)

Man, you must really hate her. What
do you want? To die knowing she's
stinking with your blood? For
Christ's sake, come on!

Tears are streaming down his mother's face.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
Warning! Third warning 47! Third
warning 23!

He lets McVries *PULL HIM AWAY, down the road...*

MCVRIES
You're so close, Ray. Remember the
face of your father. Think about-

GARRATY
I don't care about any of that
anymore! I just want to hold her.
and *rest. I need rest!*

He *BREAKS DOWN SOBBING.*

MCVRIES
If you have to do it, do it around
the next corner, you cheap shit.

GARRATY
What have I done, Pete? All I want
to do is be home with her and I had
the choice. I had the fucking
choice. I've made an awful mistake.

MCVRIES
Maybe, but we're in it now. So get
your shit together.

GARRATY
Alright. Alright. Let me loose
before you break my collarbone.

McVries lets him go wearily.

Garraty *WIPES HIS NOSE AS HE CONTINUES TO SOB, his traitorous
feet carrying him along as they walk out of town...*

MCVRIES
You still want to know how I got
the scar?

GARRATY
Sure.

MCVRIES
I know you think *this* is bad.
You've been walking almost 3 days.
But compadre, I've been walking my
whole life.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

My parents both died in the Big War when I was little, and the damndest thing is, I don't remember anything about them.

GARRATY

Not at all?

He shakes his head.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

MCVRIES

A drunk uncle took me in. He kicked the shit out of me and died in a pool of puke when I was ten. After that, I met other kids sort of like me. They had parents who didn't give a shit and didn't pay attention. I lived on couches and in basements. Slept in fields and ditches. It took me years to finally get caught by the state.

GARRATY

Is it as bad as they say?

MCVRIES

Sure, but nothing was worse than how I was living. Picking fights, stealing shit, picking more

(MORE)

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

fights...

He trails off and goes somewhere else for a moment. Garraty lets him. He finally comes back.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Then one day, I picked on the wrong guy. A guy who knew his way around a hunting knife. He cut me good... all over.

McVries lifts his shirt to show a FOUR INCH SCAR up the side of his torso. Then he *POINTS TO THE SCAR ON HIS FACE*.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

There are more I won't show you.

GARRATY

Fuck, man.

MCVRIES

Fuck is right. He left me for dead. I woke up in the hospital and you know what, Compadre? I wasn't even upset about it. Because I knew it wasn't *his* fault. It was *mine*. And it was then I told myself I'd always try and add something light to all the fucking darkness. Cause what's the point of a second chance if not?

GARRATY

I don't know if I have it in me, Pete. But I'm glad you do. I'd probably be dead already if you didn't.

MCVRIES

I try, Ray. I try real Goddamned hard to do it. That's why I came into this thing. I don't have much to lose and I have everything to gain.

(MORE)

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

I want to get that prize so I can do something good in this fucked up world. Maybe help some kids who are like I was.

McVries looks at Garraty for a long while, carefully considering how much to share. Finally:

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Know what would have saved me?

GARRATY

What?

MCVRIES

A brother.

Garraty eyes him closely. McVries stares back at him.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Ray, I've already gotten something out of this I never thought I'd have. I could die happy.

BEAT

Garraty understands what he's saying and it moves him. *He acknowledges it.*

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

I never had family. *If* somehow you make it. *IF*. You should consider choosing love. You should consider taking the prize and going home to your Mom. Because, Ray, you're a good kid and you fucking deserve it.

32

EXT. OPEN ROAD - EXPANSIVE FIELD - DAY

32

The pack of five make their way along the road. They pass a RED CAR resting on its side in a field riddled with weeds.

STEBBINS

We've all got to get together on something.

Stebbins *CHOKES ON PHLEGM* at the end of his sentence and *COUGHS HARD*. It's wet and ominously rumbly; a *death rattle*.

MCVRIES

What?

STEBBINS

We've got to make an agreement from here on out. No help for anyone. Do it on your own or don't do it.

GARRATY

That sounds pretty heartless.

STEBBINS

It's gotten to be a pretty heartless situation.

Stebbins wipes thick, sticky GOOP from both of his eyes; the whites are *AFLAME WITH BRIGHT, SICKLY RED*.

MCVRIES

He's right. I hate to say it, but he's goddamn right. I'm in.

COLLIE PARKER

Count me fucking in.

GARRATY

But, Pete, I owe-

MCVRIES

No, Ray. You don't owe me anything and I don't want it. Now *agree*. It's better for all of us.

GARRATY

Alright.

BAKER

But what about the Musketeers?

STEBBINS

Fuck your Musketeers. Like McVries said, it's better for all of us.

Stebbins *HACKS UP A GLOB OF SOMETHING GREEN AND GELATINOUS*, wipes fever-sweat from his brow. Nobody responds to him.

Baker *wipes his nose*, looks at his finger: BLOOD.

BAKER

Damnit I ain't had a nosebleed in-

STEBBINS

We don't care about your nose,
Baker. We all have our problems.

Stebbins spits again, coughs. He's visibly SHIVERING.

MCVRIES

You have a fever, Stebbins?

STEBBINS

I'm fine! You'd love it if I
wasn't, but I'm *fine*. And that's
not good for you. I promise.

COLLIE PARKER (O.S.)

Awe fuck it.

MCVRIES

What?

They turn to see Collie Parker *CHARGING* The *HALFTRACK*. He scales it quickly and GRABS THE GUN BARREL from a SOLDIER.

POP POP! It fires into the air as he struggles for it.

Parker gets control of the gun and BUTTS THE GUARD in the face... he *falls off the HALFTRACK-*

POP! *Collie shoots him, and stands atop of the HALFTRACK, RIFLE IN HIS HANDS, MOMENTARILY VICTORIOUS...*

THE SOLDIER is on the ground with a HOLE IN HIS HEAD (*dead!*).

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Fuck yes. He actually did it. The crazy bastard did it.

COLLIE PARKER

(screaming)

Goddamn motherfuckers!

The other soldiers have jumped from the halftrack.

COLLIE PARKER (CONT'D)

(to the walkers)

Come on, guys! Come on, we can fuckin-

BAM! *SHOT IN THE GUT* by one of the SOLDIERS.

MCVRIES

Parker! Oh no Parker!

Parker GOES TO HIS KNEES, his GUTS all over his torn khaki shirt and blue jeans. He looks down...

COLLIE PARKER

God. Fucking. Damn.

He knows he doesn't want to go down like OLSON. In an instant, he makes a decision:

PARKER *flips the rifle around and shoves the barrel under his chin-* BAM! He puts himself out before they can watch him bleed to death.

STEBBINS

Caught them asleep at the switch. Even knocked one off. That hasn't happened for 16 years.

MCVRIES

I wish old Parker could have gotten
a few more of them.

GARRATY

(to Stebbins)

How the fuck do you know that?

For a moment it looks like Stebbins is opening his mouth to answer, but instead he *COUGHS SO HARD HE VOMITS*. He *rips another piece of his shirt off to make a fresh HANKY, wipes his lips off with it and blows his nose.*

GARRATY (CONT'D)

Baker?

He hasn't talked in a while, and now *HIS NOSE IS BLEEDING BADLY*. He doesn't answer.

The road takes them around a banked curve and then sinks between two sloping green hills.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

When do we see crowds?

STEBBINS

They allow them when there's two.
The real diehards. The one's who
walk with us.

GARRATY

Sick fucks.

MCVRIES

Means that's when they know we're
almost dead.

STEBBINS

When they know *you're* almost dead.

GARRATY

You've got balls, Stebbins. Talking
that way and looking the way you
do.

Stebbins has another COUGHING FIT that turns to laughter.

STEBBINS

Sac, you mean. I've got Sac! Plus,
it's just a cold. Could be worse.

MCVRIES

You're a cockroach.

33

EXT. OPEN ROAD - WILDERNESS - SUNSET/DUSK

33

They trudge along. The road WINDS THROUGH DEEP WOODS like a snake. *It begins to RAIN AGAIN*.

They pass a section of CHARRED, DEAD TREES... there are BLUE BIRDS fluttering amongst them, bringing a strange beauty juxtaposed with the devastation.

Garraty takes it all in as he walks. The boys are quiet and there's a peaceful stillness in the air except for occasional chirping from the forest.

BAKER

Garraty.

Ray snaps out of it.

BAKER (CONT'D)

Garraty. My nose won't stop
bleeding.

He says it in a benign, unknowing way (*it's much worse than
he thinks*):

Garraty looks at Baker - his NOSE is GUSHING BLOOD; HIS
CHEEKS AND NECK LATHERED WITH GORE.

BAKER (CONT'D)

It's not bad, is it?

GARRATY

(lying)

No. Not too bad.

STEBBINS

That's an internal hemorrhage.
Pretty common. His body is just...
bleeding out.

GARRATY

Go fuck yourself.

MCVRIES

I liked it better when you kept
your fucking mouth shut, Stebbins.

BAKER

The rain feels so warm. I know it's
only rain, though, right? *

GARRATY

Right.

BAKER

I wish I had some ice to put on it.

He *ZIG ZAGS DRUNKENLY ACROSS THE ROAD.*

BAKER (CONT'D)

Ray? Pete? I'm going to die now. *

GARRATY

Walk a little longer, Art. Okay?

BAKER

No, I can't.

GARRATY

Please? *

McVries watches him sadly. He knows Baker has to die because
he already looks dead, so he doesn't argue. *

BAKER

I really can't. I'm sorry.

GARRATY

It's okay. *

MCVRIES

Don't feel bad, Art. You did your
best. And you made it a long way. *

BAKER
I did. Didn't I?

*
*

MCVRIES
Sure did, and you even made some
friends.

*
*
*

Baker smiles sweetly at McVries because he knows its true.

*

BAKER
Will you guys do something for me?

*

GARRATY
Anything.

MCVRIES
Aye, Musketeer.

*
*

Baker sluggishly removes the CRUCIFIX from his neck.

BAKER
Will you give this to my Grandma if
you make it?

GARRATY
Of course.

*

Garraty puts the cross in his jacket pocket.

BAKER
Also, don't watch them do it.
Promise me that?

GARRATY
I promise.

McVries nods in agreement.

*
*

BAKER

Thanks. Both of you. *

Ray begins to *WEEP UNCONTROLLABLY*.Baker sticks his hand out blindly. *Garraty shakes it*. McVries does the same. *

GARRATY

You've been a good friend, Art.

MCVRIES *

Truly. *

And then Baker *walks backward, in the opposite direction*.

Garraty and McVries keep their promise and don't look back- *

POP! *A shot in the distance behind them*. Neither flinch.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

I can't do it. I just *can't*.
Know what I want more than
anything?

GARRATY

What's that?

MCVRIES

(without even a hint of a
smile)
An Orange Julius.

34

EXT. OPEN ROAD - STEEL BRIDGE - NIGHT

34

The THREE of them amble along laboriously. The RAIN falls constant and monotonous.

They are crossing a COVERED BARRED BRIDGE with sparse patches of civilization all around them that doesn't quite constitute a TOWN.

McVries is a hollow-eyed, sickly version of the Wolf-Man.

Stebbins is wheezing and *shivering* between mucus-coughs.

Garraty is an oily, yellow skeleton.

CU DEVICE SCREENS (ALL 3 IN SERIES):

3.0... 2.9... 3.0 300 MI WARNINGS: 0

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning 23!

MCVRIES
(Like a drunk)
Suck my cock, bastards!

Stebbins chuckles.

GARRATY
Were you just talking about me?

Garraty says it with a hint of psychosis... (*What could they possibly be talking about?*). *These are the end times.*

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE
Warning! Warning 47! Warning!
Warning 38!

MCVRIES
What would happen if we all just
slowed at the exact same time?

Stebbins *SNORTS, HOCKS AND SPITS*. He *coughs and clears his throat* before speaking, but it doesn't help; his voice is so hoarse now that it's barely recognizable.

STEBBINS
They've got it down to a science.
Increments. There's no way any
three humans could measure
exactness like these instruments.

A separate HALFTRACK is assigned to each of them now.

GARRATY
(wild with paranoia)
What did you say? Something about
me, Pete? Why are you talking to
him so much? *Are you turning on me?*

MCVRIES
No. I'm keeping him busy jawing so
you can sneak across the finish
line, Musketeer.

STEBBINS
You know, there was a time when I
would have been offended by that.

GARRATY
Why is it you didn't talk for the
first 100 miles, but now you can't
keep your mouth shut?

STEBBINS

I wasn't lonely back then. Or sick.

THE DUN COLORED JEEP sits on the side of the road. THE MAJOR in passenger seat, one of his BLACK BOOTS propped up on the DASHBOARD, a Lucky Strike in one hand and the MEGAPHONE in the other. He takes drags and says:

THE MAJOR

You're in the home stretch! For better or for worse, there's going to be wheat... and there's going to be... chaff. You choose, Boys. Remember. You choose!

GARRATY

Fuck you! Shut up and suck a dick, you fucking Lotus Eater!

Stebbins appears horrified when he says it.

McVries *BREAKS OUT IN LAUGHTER.*

The Major takes a long pause and finally says excitedly:

THE MAJOR

That's the spirit, my Boy! That's the killer *fucking* instinct. Take no prisoners, flex that sac and go get the prize!

STEBBINS

You're lucky. We're the first walkers to get this far in 17 years. Congratulations, Monkeys. He must be feeling generous.

GARRATY

How do you know so much about The Long Walk?

STEBBINS

It's all on record. Ever read a book? It's not too hard.

GARRATY

I don't believe you.

STEBBINS

(Another coughing fit)
And why would that matter one bit to me?

MCVRIES

Cut the bullshit, Stebbins. It's almost over. What's your deal?

STEBBINS

Why am I here or why do I walk?

GARRATY

Still, like talking to fucking *air*.

Finally, Stebbins pulls his RABBIT'S FOOT out and holds it by the chain. *He swings it slowly back and forth like a pendulum.*

STEBBINS

I'm the rabbit. You've seen them. The little gray mechanical rabbits that the greyhounds chase at the dog races. No matter how fast the dogs run, they can never quite catch the rabbit. Because the rabbit isn't flesh and blood.

His pale blue eyes stare into the falling rain. *They have the disturbing shimmer of serious illness.*

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

He changed me into a rabbit. Remember the one in Alice in Wonderland? But maybe you're right, Garraty. Time to stop being rabbits and pigs and sheep but be people. Even if we can only rise to the level of whoremasters and perverts. How come I know so much about The Long Walk? I know all about The Long Walk. The Major is my father.

He drops the RABBIT'S FOOT to the ground in front of him and *STEPS ON IT intentionally, leaves it there.*

MCVRIES

Holy shit. Is it true?

McVries runs his tongue over cracked lips.

Garraty is *stunned*

STEBBINS

I'm his Bastard. I didn't think he knew I was his son. That was where I made my mistake. He's got dozens of us. I wanted to spring it on him when I won.

(MORE)

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

For my wish I was going to ask to
be taken into my father's house. To
be invited for tea.

He laughs dryly and sadly, *COUGHS UP SOME MORE GREEN PHLEGM.*

MCVRIES

But he knew *everything?*

STEBBINS

He made me his rabbit. And I guess it worked. We've come this far and it has never been done. But turns out, the rabbit is flesh and blood. I walk. I even talk. And I suppose if this doesn't end soon, I'll be crawling on my belly like a reptile, choking on my own mucus.

Both Garraty and McVries (at least in this one brief moment) feel pity for him.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Will it rain all night, Garraty?

GARRATY

Yeah, I think. It looks that way.

STEBBINS

I think so too.

MCVRIES

Well, come on in out of the rain.

They walk on, *somehow in step*, certainly for the last time.

THE MAJOR appears and WALKS along with the halftrack, silent... his hands clasped behind his back.

Stebbins *COUGHS and chokes*.

STEBBINS

Fuck.

McVries gets close enough to *put a hand on Stebbins shoulder*, he *RIPS A PIECE OF HIS OWN SLEEVE OFF...*

MCVRIES

Stebbins. It's okay. It's okay.
Here, take this.

Stebbins turns and looks at McVries with huge floating, jaundiced eyes that see nothing for a moment. McVries hands him the *MAKESHIFT HANDKERCHIEF*.

STEBBINS

Thank you. Thank you.

Stebbins takes it and *wipes his face, blows his nose*. *There's a RIVER OF SNOT ON HIS UPPER LIP*. He *SNEEZES* and brown-green *OOZE* spurts from his nostrils onto Pete's face.

He *reaches and claws* at McVries's SHIRT, *pulling it open*. McVries WHEEZES, and says hoarsely but emphatically:

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Fuck.

He *FALLS DOWN*.

McVries stumbles past, flashing a glazed, half-confused glance at him on the ground before shambling forward.

Garraty follows close behind, stepping over Stebbins's legs with a lack of recognition and emotion that seems less out of vitriol and more out of dire exhaustion.

STEBBINS lays on his back and looks somewhat content(?) for the first time, relaxing there and looking up at the sky.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning 38!

Stebbins sits up just enough to look at directly at THE MAJOR: He *SMILES at him*.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE (CONT'D)

Warning 38! Second warning!

He puts his HANDS OUT and meets eyes with the GUARDS.

STEBBINS

Well? Let's go.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Third warning 38! Final warning!

He MOTIONS them over to him with his hands: *bring it on...*

THEY DO-

POP POP!

Up ahead, They limp along. Neither of them turn or react. *All that is over*. Finally, after a long silence:

GARRATY

Pete.

MCVRIES

Yeah?

GARRATY

Fifty percent chance now.

35

EXT. OPEN ROAD - TRAIN TRESTLE - NIGHT

35

The two of them. Rain keeps coming heavily. They are in an INDUSTRIAL area (brick and cement buildings all around them). The road dips UNDER A TRAIN TRESTLE.

2 HALFTRACKS left, one for each of them.

McVries hacks and spits.

POV MCVRIES: up ahead, he sees A DARK, *WEEPING FIGURE*, *BECKONING HIM*. *It looks somehow familiar...*

MCVRIES

Ray-

He tries to get his attention, to show him THE FIGURE. But when he looks back... it's gone.

GARRATY

What?

MCVRIES

Tell a story, Ray. To keep our
minds off our troubles.

The two of them look like *OLD, DECREPIT MEN*.

GARRATY

Alright. Once upon a time-

MCVRIES

Hey kids at home! Who wants to hear
a fucking fairy story?!

GARRATY

You'll hear what I want to tell
you! You want to hear it or no?

McVries stumbles drunkenly against Garraty.

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Warning 23! Warning 47!

MCVRIES

Fairy story is fine. I was just
busting balls.

GARRATY

Once upon a time there was a Magic
Chicken in an enchanted forest who
needed to go on a sacred quest...

36

EXT. OPEN ROAD - CITY - NIGHT

36

Garraty and McVries wander along shabbily like the undead.

They enter a CITY; large BRICK OFFICE BUILDINGS and APARTMENT
DWELLINGS all around.

There's finally a CROWD waiting for them here, contained by
rope and stanchions on each side of the road.

The MAJOR *WALKS ALONG THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, FIRES his .38
into the air!*

THE MAJOR

This is when it really begins, Men!
Luck to you both and may the best
Walker prevail.

He *UNHOOKS* A STRAND OF ROPE and the CROWD floods out of it, FOLDS IN and moves steadily en masse with The Walkers. Garraty *clocks them*, disgusted. McVries looks at them for a moment too, but is blank and expressionless.

There are two POLICE VEHICLES driving slowly in front of them, leading the final two in this final stretch. Garraty notices McVries's head has dropped. *HE'S WALKING AT THE GAWKING CROWD. The Halftrack follows him.*

GARRATY

Hey! Hey Pete! *Pete!*

He darts to McVries, grabs his shoulders, sets him straight. *McVries looks up sleepily and smiles (the old slanted smile!)*

MCVRIES

No, Compadre. Time to sit down.

Acceptance in Pete's eyes. *Panic in his friend's.*

GARRATY

No! No Way!

McVries looks at him for a moment, then smiles again. He *SITS DOWN*, cross-legged on the pavement like a world-beaten monk. The scar on his cheek is a white slash in the darkness.

MCVRIES

It's okay, Ray. It's okay. One of us has to.

Garraty grabs him and tries to PICK HIM UP but it's near impossible. Two SOLDIERS *DISMOUNT THE HALFTRACK*, raise their CARBINES. Garraty *yanks at McVries*, can't lift him.

GARRATY

Come on, Musketeer.

McVries wriggles away from him.

MCVRIES

Go. Win this one for the gipper, my boy. Remember? Win it for your Dad.

GARRATY

None of that matters anymore! I don't care about-

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Second warning 23! Second warning 47!

McVries smiles tiredly. *Garraty begins to cry.*

MCVRIES

Do me a favor, though. When you get him, remember the family at the picnic. Remember the old lady stuffing her face. You've got to see the beauty, Ray. Or else it's all for nothing.

Garraty freezes while he says it, *to listen.*

For a beat, it looks like he's going to let him go. But then:

GARRATY

No!-

MCVRIES

Fuck off, Ray! Get away from me!

Garraty finds something *deep within himself (something he didn't even know was left)...*

He LIFTS MCVRIES OFF OF THE GROUND in one powerful, undeniable move.

McVries has no choice but to be *swept up, and onto his FEET.*

Garraty *HOLDS HIM TIGHTLY, IN A FULL EMBRACE. The boys are FACE TO FACE:*

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

What do you think you're doing, you dumb shit?

GARRATY

Being a brother...

He drags him along as he walks.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

...to *my* brother.

This hits McVries... *hard.*

LOUD SPEAKER VOICE

Warning! Third warning 23! Third warning 47!

MCVRIES

You're going to win this, Compadre. It's better now than later.

GARRATY

Thanks, Pete...

There are tears streaming down Garraty's face now, and he's sobbing like a baby.

GARRATY (CONT'D)

...But no. It's me, Musketeer. I'm the one who needs to sit down. I can't see it. I can't see the beauty.

MCVRIES

Ray-

GARRATY

But *you* can.

And with that, Garraty CRIES OUT (*a shrill, painful cry*) and *SHOVES* him forward, hoping that the sheer force will instigate *walking* rather than a fall...

The *CROWD EXPLODES IN APPLAUSE!* It *WORKS!* McVries is *walking*. At least for now... Stumbling along like a mad, wind-up-toy. His legs somehow working, but his upper body completely limp.

CU ON MCVRIES: *He smiles big, walks forward...*

MCVRIES

(playfully)

Damn you, Garraty. You stole my thunder. Okay, okay. I'll walk with you a little more.

THUD! McVries hears something drop to the ground behind him. His expression changes:

HE TURNS (*KNOWINGLY*) TO LOOK BEHIND HIM-

GARRATY ON THE PAVEMENT, *CRAWLING SLOWLY, LOOKING AT MCVRIES.*

MCVRIES (CONT'D)

Ray! Oh God no, Ray!

McVries slows... Garraty waves him on and mouths:

GARRATY

Go, Musketeer.

There's no other way; THE SOLDIERS HAVE THEIR WEAPONS AIMED.

McVries walks slowly backward, not taking his eyes away from Garraty.

POP! A *soldier* shoots.

MCVRIES

No!

There's A *BULLET HOLE IN HIS BACK*; he can't move his legs. He's pulling himself along with his arms, trying to get up, but it doesn't matter- *he's used up his warnings...*

GARRATY IS GETTING HIS TICKET.

THE MAJOR *emerges from the crowd* and walks to the side of Garraty, who's now surrounded by soldiers.

McVries *STOPS* and *SO DOES THE CROWD*. *Nobody seems to care if he walks anymore.*

The SOLDIER closest to Garraty *HANDS HIS CARBINE* ceremoniously to THE MAJOR (they've done this before). He raises the rifle, *POINTS IT AT HIS HEAD...*

THE MAJOR

Luck to you, Mr. Garraty. May God reward your bravery.

MCVRIES

(Crying now)

Ray!

Ray lifts his head one last time. He *SMILES*.

GARRATY

Pete, it's going to be okay. I see it... *I can see it now!*

Garraty closes his eyes, at peace (*he's ready*).

MCVRIES

Musketeer.

BAM! The Major pulls the trigger-

A *SHOT IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD*. His face *flops onto pavement*.

The sound of the crowd is *APOCALYPTIC*.

McVries *CRIES UNCONTROLLABLY*, falls to his knees.

THE RAIN IS COMING DOWN STEADILY and the CROWD is *still*. McVries hangs his head, bulge-eyed, jaw agape.

POP! POP! POP! Suddenly FIREWORKS EXPLODE above; brilliant and glorious RED creeping across the night-sky like giant flaming spiders...

PETER MCVRIES IS THE WINNER.

Between cracks of the fireworks and the patter of rain, McVries hears the beginnings the music(?) from the crowd. At first it is disorganized and dissonant, but it soon coheres into the great chorus of a massive, A CAPPELLA CHOIR...

THE CROWD

(singing)

Oh beautiful, for spacious skies,
for amber waves of grain. For
purple mountain majesties above the
fruited plain...

The song CONTINUES (surreal and beautiful)...

In his crouch, he turns to see that same FAMILIAR DARK FIGURE in the distance, up the road, *beckoning*. He rises and walks toward it.

From out of nowhere THE MAJOR steps in and cuts him off with TWO SOLDIERS, salutes him. McVries looks confused (*almost offended*) that his walk is interrupted. *THE RAIN KEEPS ON.*

MCVRIES

I have to get... up there. I have
to walk.

THE MAJOR

You're finished walking, Son.

PO! POP! The *FIREWORKS*... hyper-color and majestic above.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

You can sit down, Son. And you may
ask for your wish. After the wish,
there's much more. More than you
could ever imagine.

MCVRIES

I want to... walk.

THE MAJOR

Peter McVries. Our champion. What's
your wish?

He looks at the Major for a long while... Then, finally, *THE OLD MCVRIES RETURNS* (*just a little*).

MCVRIES

I wish...

THE MAJOR

Yes?

MCVRIES

I want a carbine.

THE MAJOR

You'll have one.

MCVRIES

I want *that* carbine. To give to my children one day.

McVries points to the SOLDIER to the left of The Major and the RIFLE. The SOLDIER looks to The Major, as if to ask...

THE MAJOR

Give him his wish. He's one of us.

He smiles like a proud father. The SOLDIER unslings the weapon and passes it to McVries...

McVries (*in an instant*) RAISES THE GUN and POINTS THE CARBINE AT THE MAJOR, eyes him through the sight. The SOLDIERS begin to raise their rifles...

MCVRIES

(aiming carefully)

Don't or I'll shoot before I drop.

THE CROWD ABRUPTLY STOPS SINGING "GOD BLESS AMERICA".

The CAMERAS TURN AWAY FROM THEM, POWER DOWN.
The Major smiles.

THE MAJOR

That's alright, Son. You've had a thrill and that's okay. It was your *wish*. No harm done. Not yet. Put the gun down. The world is waiting for you. All the riches you'll ever want. Don't throw it away.

McVries trembles as he squeezes the trigger....

POP! POP! POP!... MORE FIREWORKS. McVries loosens his grip...

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

You don't understand, Son. I'm not *it*. I'm not what you want to kill. I'm not *it*.

McVries *TIGHTENS HIS GRIP AGAIN. The rain pours.*

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)

There'll just be another. There's
always another.

McVries thinks on it, hesitates... then:

Fuck it.

MCVRIES

But you're a good place to start.
This is for Ray.

ON MCVRIES...

BAM! **HE SHOOTS**- The bullet goes through the MAJOR'S CHEST. He clutches it and looks down, disbelieving.

BAM! *Once more, right through the heart. He wobbles and DROPS.*

There is an *audible gasp* from the crowd, then nothing except the sound of rain patter on the pavement....

The soldiers lower their weapons.

McVries stares off, expressionless, *DROPS THE CARBINE.*

Beyond the crowd, past the jeep, *further down the road*, he sees THE DARK FIGURE from before: It has no face, no definitive shape, but still, it *BECKONS HIM*. The Figure is backlit by floods from the lead military vehicle.

McVries *WANDERS TOWARDS THE FIGURE, trance-like, compelled.*

With each step he takes, The Figure seems to get further away... *further down the road.*

He looks down at his wrist device: **2.8 MPH**

McVries picks up the pace; his perpetual forward stare unwavering; his eyes locked in on *the thing* up ahead.

He looks down: **3.1 MPH...** *That's it. Perfect.*

He continues on, into the darkness, wild-eyed and determined. He's back *in it* now, walking again... *back where he knows he belongs-*

CUT TO BLACK

THE END