

Myrl Streep

THE RIVER WILD

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. MONTANA GAS STATION/AUTOMATIC CAR WASH - DAY

Rugged mountains rise dramatically behind a small, Montana town. A pretty college STUDENT tops off the gas tank to her Bronco.

A man's head rises over the car's red roof: shifty eyes, handsome features, all trouble -- WADE, late 20's. He's wearing blue jeans, a workshirt and boots.

He taps the University of Montana "GRIZ" decal on the back window.

WADE
(big smile)

Freshman?

The girl's a little taken aback. Wade folds his arms in a friendly way.

STUDENT
Sophomore.

WADE
History, right?

STUDENT
Art.
(she peers at him)
Have we, ah-

WADE
Just now.
(sticks out his hand)
Name's Wade. How'd you do
on finals?

STUDENT
Okay, I guess. You?

Wade tilts his hand: so-so.

STUDENT
What's your major?

WADE
Library Science.
(grins)
Boring, right.

The girl smiles back.

STUDENT
I didn't say that.

WADE
Listen, I need to ask a favor.
My car broke down about a half
mile up the road. I was hoping
you could help me jump start it.
I got cables.

The student returns the hose to the pump.

STUDENT
Sure. After the wash okay?

WADE
Great.

Wade climbs in the passenger side. The student climbs in and drives around back.

BEHIND THE STATION

She pulls up to the mouth of a do-it-yourself car wash, feeds a dollar into a machine, and waits for the security arm to lift. When it does, she drives forward onto the guide tracks. COUNTRY & WESTERN MUSIC plays on her car radio.

FROM THE FRONT OF THE CAR WASH

We watch the car ease into position between the giant pompon cleaners at each side and overhead. Above the facility a sign advertizes DEBBIE'S GAS & WASH: BEST SHINE IN MONTANA.

INT. CAR - DAY

We see the car wash signal light flash red. The side scrubbing pompoms spring to life. Water PISSES DOWN on the top of the Bronco. The student feels suddenly nervous to be close quartered with a stranger. She smiles uneasily. Wade smiles back.

EXT. CAR WASH - DAY

A pair of boots suddenly appears near the front of the wash. The person wearing them steps inside, and disappears behind the swirling brushes.

INT. CAR - DAY

All we see and hear is the SLOSH of soapy water and the SLAP & RUMBLE of the pompoms against glass and metal. The pompoms finally whirl to a slow stop and arch back out of the way. The light now flashes green.

EXT. CAR WASH - DAY

The red Bronco pulls out, slippery clean, with Wade at the wheel and another man, beside him. He's TERRY (20's), sweet face, large body, hands the size of baseball mitts. Shotgun is Terry's seat in life; someone else is always driving.

The girl's nowhere to be seen. The car eases into traffic and heads off.

INT. CAR - DAY

The student's face stares up from the back seat floor. Her eyes are frozen forever, marking the moment of death with a look somewhere between horror and surprise.

The radio buttons get punched four or five times until a CLASSICAL composition pops on -- replacing the C&W music.

WADE (v.o.)
I think we just redefined clean
get-away.

The girl's head jiggles slightly as the car gathers speed.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP ON:

EXT. CHARLES RIVER, CAMBRIDGE/BOSTON - DUSK

A one man shell slices through the still, black water and passes under a bridge with the letters BOSTON UNIVERSITY painted on the stone arches.

The river widens beyond. A dozen catboats raise their colored spinakers and head on a downwind leg. A pair of eight-man shells race along the Cambridge side. A balmy, summer's night on the Charles.

WE FIND --

GAIL MACDONALD, late 30's jogging along the Boston side of the river.

Gail's a lawyer and a mother, Montana raised. Everything about her is direct, friendly and fresh-faced. She can turn heads in a cocktail dress, but she's happier holding a fly rod. Right now she's wearing running shorts and a T-shirt with a huge brown trout on the front.

A shirtless, muscular JOGGER passes her going in the opposite direction. He checks her out, then circles back to overtake her.

JOGGER

I've never seen you running out here before.

GAIL

Almost every day.

JOGGER

I'm always looking for new running partners. Name's Don.

GAIL

Gail. Problem is I run at all different times...whenever I can fit it in.

JOGGER

(all smiles)

I'm flexible.

GAIL

It wouldn't work.

JOGGER

(determined)

Why not?

GAIL

It just wouldn't...but maybe we'll run into each other.

She starts to veer toward a foot bridge over Storror Drive.

GAIL

This is where I get off.

JOGGER

(shouts)

Why wouldn't it work?

She holds up her left hand -- the one with her wedding ring, as she hits the bridge.

Don jogs on, along the Lagoon.

When Gail gets to the top of the bridge she slows to a walk. She pretends to stretch -- but her eyes are on Don as he runs along the water, kicking it out. Gail admires his form for a few moments before walking off.

INT. MACDONALD BEACON STREET CONDOMINIUM - NIGHT

IN THE DINING ROOM

A fork TINKLES a wine glass.

The MacDonald's, Tom and Gail, are hosting their friends, Jim and Peter, in their fashionable Beacon Street home. The Charles River is visible through a sweep of glass.

JIM LADAGE stands to make a toast. He's prosperous looking, mid-30's, a lawyer who loves the outdoors. He lifts his Waterford wine goblet to a seated Gail.

JIM

First, a toast to our fearless leader -- my partner and the best white water lawyer in Beantown.

Gail smiles modestly, but she's distracted because her husband Tom is cupping a portable phone to his ear in a corner of the room, poking at a tableful of his students' models.

ANGLE TOM

TOM

...Look, when I'm done, this project's going to make Trump Tower seem like This Old House...

BACK TO SCENE

Gail shoots him an annoyed look, draws a finger across her neck.

Tom holds the receiver away from his ear and rolls his eyes.

It's not his fault he's an architect in demand, as well as a part time Harvard professor. People look to him to pronounce: in articles and at lectures. But in the bright light of fame, the shadow of neglect always falls on someone. At 40, TOM MACDONALD doesn't even know he treats his clients like family and his family like help.

Jim plucks an old black and white photograph from the wall and shows it to the table.

It's a picture of Gail as a young girl, dressed in jeans and t-shirt, holding a trout, squealing -- because her father, a handsome, weathered rancher in a cowboy hat is tugging on her pigtails.

JIM

This, ladies and gentlemen,
is a Big Sky girl who was born to
catch fish.

He returns the photo to its place.

JIM

And next time we meet, we'll be
gathered around a fire 2000 miles
from Boston, looking at the Montana
stars, listening to the River Wild
instead of the River Charles --
eating pan-blackened trout.

GAIL

(razzes)

The kiss of death. Now we'll
never catch a fish.

JIM

There's where you're wrong, because
for the first time ever we'll be
packing our own secret weapon.

With a clap on the shoulder, he hands off the toast to PETER THOMA, his fishing partner and fellow aging preppie.

Peter takes down a second photograph as Tom hangs up the phone and reclaims his seat with an apologetic smile.

It's a picture of Tom, age seven, with his father, at a Harvard reunion. Both are wearing white ducks and T-shirts with a large letter "H" and the words "Tenth Reunion." The two stand stiffly side by side, not touching.

PETER

This may not look like the portrait
of a young trout stalker...until
you realize the "H" is not for
Harvard, but for Hemingway.

(a beat)

Tom...as a first time fisherman,
and a brave man...let me say
the trout won't stand a chance.

JIM

Here, here!

PETER

No, no! To there, there! To the River Wild! And even though we get a day's head start, Jim and I promise we'll leave you guys a few trout.

Jim and Peter guzzle with gusto. Gail eyes Tom over the top of her wine glass -- gauging his reaction. He returns her look with a polite sip and a forced smile.

The phone RINGS. Tom stares at it -- but a look from Gail indicates answering it would shorten his life.

LATER - IN A BEDROOM

Gail tiptoes over to check on their nine-year-old son, ROARKE. He's asleep, covered by various fishing and outdoor magazines.

Pennants and posters suggest a healthy mix of local heroes and interests: Larry Bird, Roger Clemens, rock stars, watercolors of freshwater fishing scenes.

Gail collects the magazines and kisses the boy. When she adjusts his covers, something flops beneath the blanket near Roarke's feet. More flops. The orange tail of MAGGIE, the family golden retriever appears -- at first the tip, then more and more. Gail smiles.

GAIL

Good night to you, too, Mags.

IN THE DINING ROOM

The guests have left, the table's been cleared.

Tom peers at the architectural models -- each one labeled with a different student's name. He pulls back a tiny swing rope that's part of a playground complex in one design and lets it fly.

Gail steps into the dining room and watches him for a moment.

GAIL

You hate going on this trip, don't you?

TOM

I'm going, aren't I?

GAIL

The question is, are you going to make it miserable for everyone else? Because if you are, I'd rather not go.

Tom picks up a second model, inspects it briefly, and sets it down.

TOM

I'm sure I'll be fine once we start singing Kumbaya.

GAIL

Tom, your son wants to go fishing! Your only son. Is that too much to ask? To take him on a seven day fishing trip?!

TOM

(heated)

So, where are we going? Fishing! With our son, and your friends to your old river to do something you love to do.

GAIL

(glares at him)

What's bugging you?

TOM

What's bugging me is you guys all know how to fish, I don't. You guys love sleeping on the ground, I don't. You guys probably know how to make soup out of bark...

(a shrug)

Sorry, but making a fool out of myself is not my idea of fun. Especially when I've got a dozen models to grade, two articles that should have been written a month ago, and a pain-in-the-ass client who thinks blueprints are the product of spontaneous generation.

Roarke appears sleepy-eyed in the doorway to the living room, unseen by his parents -- awakened by their raised voices.

GAIL

Tom, Roarke's going to be grown
up and gone before we know it.
Don't you want him to see at least
one surface without graffiti on it?

Tom picks up another model and holds it this way, then that.
Gail struggles to control her anger.

GAIL

We need more of you in our lives.
Do you hear me, Tom? Roarke does...
and I do.

(this is hard)

Four months is a long time without
making love...

(sadly)

...spontaneous, or otherwise.

Tom suddenly stares past Gail, his face tense. Gail turns to
follow his gaze...her face sinks.

Roarke peers at his parents through sad eyes -- a kid who's
overheard too many fights.

EXT. REMOTE RAILROAD TRACKS, MONTANA - DAY ONE

Wade and Terry stand atop a railroad bridge in the middle of
nowhere, looking down a shale-coated slope at the River Wild,
a hundred feet below. Downstream, in the distance, the
ribbon of blue is swallowed up by an endless vista of green
mountains.

WADE

There she blows.

TERRY

I don't know that this is such
a good idea...

(nervous)

You know? Whole lot of nothing
out there.

WADE

Exactly why we're going. At least
I am...partner. Suit yourself.

He leaps from the edge of the tracks onto the loose shale.
He lands some twenty feet down the embankment, regains his
balance, and bounds ten feet farther down.

Terry watches him with a faceful of indecision. Overhead, a commercial jet carves its flight through a cloudless blue sky.

Terry looks up wistfully, and spots the jet's silver glint. He looks at the distant mountains once more, then at Wade, growing smaller and smaller on the slope below.

He takes a bottle of bug repellent from his pocket, squirts some in his hand and rubs it on his neck and face. Then he takes a breath, and jumps.

EXT. BOZEMAN, MONTANA AIRPORT - DAY

The jet touches down and races past a small, modern airport. A sign reads: GALLATIN FIELD, BOZEMAN, MONTANA. WELCOME TO BIG SKY COUNTRY.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

CLOSE ON a dog's face, through the bars of a travel cage. Sad, brown eyes, a golden muzzle.

The cage slides down a gentle incline and comes to a stop. Roarke presses his face to the bars.

ROARKE

Maggie. Good dog, Mags. You okay?

Maggie barks a 10-4. Tom lifts the cage onto the floor and opens the door. The golden retriever bounds out and knocks the boy to the ground. She's trembling with joy, slathering him with licks. Her tail's a blur.

EXT. OUTFITTER'S SHOP - LIVINGSTON, MONTANA - DAY

A handful of drift boats and rubber rafts are lined up in the lot out front. A giant, carved trout leaps above the building's roof.

Tom, at the wheel of a rented jeep, picks his spot and pulls out into traffic. He's towing a trailer with an Avon raft.

EXT. MONTANA HIGHWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

The Bridger Mountains to the west, the Crazy Mountains to the east, the road running like a north-south arrow through catt..a and brush country. Antelope graze off to one side.

Tom's jeep & trailer is the only rig in sight. It WOOSHES by an abandoned ranch house.

ROARKE (v.o.)
Wow! Look at the antelope.
Mom, you see that?
(holy cow)
Dad, look at the bear!!

TOM (v.o.)
(gulp)
What bear?

ROARKE (V.O.)
Gotcha!

INT. JEEP - LATE AFTERNOON

Tom silently counts to ten. Gail turns to Roarke in the back seat. He's grinning madly, one arm slung around Maggie's neck.

GAIL
(fighting laughter)
Excuse me, but we're trying
to make this a fun trip for
some of us who aren't so
familiar with the outdoors.

She turns and forces her head out the open window. Then she cracks up.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

The jeep passes a sign: TWO ELKS - 1 mile.

INT. JEEP -DAY

GAIL
Almost there, gang.

TOM
Excited to be home?

GAIL
(beams)
It's been four years.

ROARKE
Is it prettier than Boston, Mom?

GAIL
You'll see. The house isn't
much, but it's got the prettiest
view in the whole damn world.

EXT. TWO ELKS - DAY

Tom, Roarke and Gail stand in front of their rental rig,
beside a small, wooden house, staring blankly at something.

THEIR POV

In the foreground a sign says: RANCH LAND TO SUBDIVIDE. 11
ACRE RANCHETTES. NOTHING DOWN, \$149.PER MONTH.

In the distance, two bulldozers plow access roads and sewer
trenches across a meadow of wild flowers. A cow and her calf
scramble to get out of the way. Jagged mountains rise
beyond.

THE FAMILY

Gail's stunned. She can't get out a word. Tom seems unable
to lend any comfort. Roarke takes his mother's hand.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO WHITE SULPHUR CAMPGROUND - SUNSET

The jeep slows down to RATTLE across a cattle guard. A sign
says WHITE SULPHUR CAMPGROUND, TWO MILES. Pavement gives way
to dirt. The River Wild's barely discernible in the
distance, a silver thread in a rolling landscape. The first
shapes and hues of a spectacular sunset hover above.

EXT. WHITE SULPHUR CAMPGROUND - SUNSET

The jeep pulls up beside the Wild; at this point, just a
slow, gentle river, twenty or so yards across.

Maggie leaps out of the back window, and begins bounding up
and down the river bank, BARKING deliriously. Tom, Gail and
Roarke, step out to take in the kaleidoscope of colors now
filling the sky.

Gail walks to the river's edge. She unties one sneaker,
pulls off her sock and dips a foot in the river.

GAIL
This is what it all used to be like.
(smitten)
Would you look at that sky!

TOM
(grins)
Yeah, nature imitating art.

They watch Roarke steer Maggie's eyes toward a trout that's dimpled the surface ten yards offshore.

ROARKE & MAGGIE

ROARKE
Get that fish, girl!

Maggie BARKS.

ROARKE
Maggie, the trout!
(he points)
C'mon, you're a retriever.

The pooch looks at Roarke, licks his face: what?

TOM & GAIL

GAIL
It's more important to me than ever that Roarke learn about the outdoors. Things are changing, Tom. Moving too fast.
(determined)
I don't want us to spend our lives chasing billable hours and missing all the moments.

TOM
(defensive)
There's nothing wrong with wanting to be the best at what you do, Gail. That's how I was raised.

GAIL
I'm talking about putting things in the proper perspective... finding time for the people who should mean the most to you.

Tom takes in the incredible vista.

TOM
It is beautiful.

GAIL
It only gets better. You'll see.

She looks downriver. It seems to draw her.

GAIL

The moments, Tom...that's what
I'm talking about...like Peter
and Jim sitting around their
campfire right now, ten miles in.

EXT. CAMPSITE MILE TEN - RIVER WILD - NIGHT ONE

Flames from a campfire flicker in a black void. Blues
and reds. CRACKLE, POP. A warm, beckoning image.

The river can be heard in the background, RUSHING, constant.
Peter and Jim sit around the fire, sipping tequila from tin
cups. Their orange two-man tent is visible behind them.

A FOOTSTEP

In the dark. Ominous. One boot, then another. The first
pair of boots is joined by a second. CRUNCH, CRUNCH, over
dry leaves and twigs. They take a few steps and stop.

AROUND THE FIRE

Peter swings his head toward the noise.

PETER

You hear that?

JIM

(unconcerned)

Could be anything.

(a grin)

But if it's a Grizzly, you tell
him to get me at the end of the
trip. I've got more trout to catch.

Jim settles back against his log. Peter looks up: A shooting
star streaks across the sky.

PETER

When we finally figure out what
we want to be when we grow
up...what say you give up the
law and I sell my real estate
company, and we open up a fishing
store and pub somewhere out here
and call it the Bait & Brew.

Jim raises his cup to the new partnership.

IN THE WOODS

CRUNCH...CRUNCH. Footsteps. A hand pushes branches back. Two men step into the campsite clearing -- startling Jim and Peter by their sudden appearance.

ANGLE WADE & TERRY

Looking a little more haggard than when we last saw them.

WADE

Evening. Saw your fire. We're camped downriver a little ways.

VARIOUS ANGLES

Peter and Jim aren't sure what to make of the intrusion.

WADE

Sorry if we spooked you.

TERRY

No harm intended.

Jim and Peter stand.

PETER

No, no...join us for a drink. Jim had me thinking maybe you were a bear.

WADE

That's good, a bear.

He tries to share a laugh with Terry, but Terry's looking very nervous all of a sudden. The animal kingdom is not his favorite. Wade sizes up his partner.

WADE

He's big enough. Not me, though. Name's Wade. This is Terry.

PETER

I'm Peter. This is Jim.

Wade and Terry walk over to the fire and all four shake hands. Terry rubs his palms together, squats to hold them in front of the fire.

TERRY

Feels good, even in June.

JIM

Got something to warm you from
the inside out if you're interested.

He holds up a quart of tequila.

WADE

Don't mind if I do.

He takes a swig, passes the bottle to Terry -- who takes a
long pull.

Peter and Jim exchange looks. Everything's just a little
off. Terry hands the bottle back.

TERRY

Thanks.

The men settle in around the fire.

PETER

So where're you camped?

WADE

Just around the bend.

JIM

Nice site?

WADE

Oh yeah.

TERRY

Sure gets dark in this canyon.

PETER

Moon'll be up anytime, now.

TERRY

Good. I like it lighter.

He slaps a mosquito.

TERRY

Doesn't seem to bother the bugs
either way.

JIM

You fish today?

TERRY

They sure have some big bass
on this river.

JIM
(huh?)
There're only trout on this stretch.

WADE
(covering)
What he means is they're big as
bass. 'Least the ones we caught.

He shoots Terry a look.

PETER
(suspicious)
You guys ever float the Wild before?

WADE
First time.

TERRY
Me too.

WADE
How about you?

JIM
Been down once before. We're
meeting some friends tomorrow.

Wade nods; you can almost see him scheming.

WADE
They must be good to tackle this
water. I hear it gets pretty tough.

PETER
Gail used to be a guide.

WADE
(probing)
She must really know the river.

JIM
Every bend and boulder. Wouldn't
try it without her.

Wade takes in the immensity of the canyon.

WADE
That's got to be a comfort.

PETER
(happily)

Especially when there's nothing
between here and takeout but
fifty miles of sheer walls and
hungry trout.

TERRY

Fifty miles?

Terry's obvious surprise makes Peter and Jim even more
suspicious: what are these clowns doing out here? The men
stare hard at the fire. CRACKLE. POP.

EXT. WHITE SULPHUR CAMPGROUND - DAYBREAK - DAY TWO

Tom and Gail's blue tent sits alone on the river bank,
sparkling with morning dew. Fog hangs in shrouds over the
Wild. We hear the faint sound of SNORING.

The sides of the tent are poked here and there: a creature
trying to break out of a cocoon. The front flap is unzipped.
Gail's head emerges first. She looks around. Roarke's head
pops out just above hers -- then Maggie's down below. They
look like a totem pole. Tom's SNORING continues.

LATER

The rising sun has burned the fog off the river. The raft is
packed and beached, oars out. Gail, wearing hipboots,
empties a pail of water on their breakfast fire: ZZZZZZZ, a
cloud of smoke. She stoops to pick up a hatchet stuck into a
log -- before moving off.

UPSTREAM

Roarke and Maggie explore the river's edge. Roarke's got a
camera slung around his neck. Tom appears beside them,
wearing brand new waders and a fishing vest that's still got
the price tag dangling from it.

TOM

Got a little present for you, son.

He hands Roarke a beautiful Swiss Army knife.

TOM

They say it's a good thing to
have in the woods.

ROARKE
(eyes ablaze)
It's a beauty...thanks, Dad.

His son's smile sends him happily marching off, waders swishing.

Dad!
ROARKE

Tom stops. Roarke runs up, selects a blade, and snips the price tag off the vest.

AT THE JEEP

Tom makes a final check. He gathers several topo maps of the river, then grabs a newspaper from the front seat and waves it in Gail's direction.

TOM
Want your paper?

AT THE FIRE

Gail loads the last of six shells into her .22 handgun, and clicks the cylinder shut. She returns the pistol to its holster and wraps it in an oilskin bag.

GAIL
Might come in handy starting a fire.

AT THE JEEP

Tom locks the door and places the keys on top of the front right tire.

AT THE RAFT

The gear is safely stowed. Sturdy, plastic tubes, lashed to each gunwale, protect the fly rods and provide easy access.

Roarke climbs into the stern seat. Gail takes the middle seat and grips the oars. Tom walks up.

GAIL
Where's Maggie?

Roarke puts two fingers in his mouth and WHISTLES. Maggie gallops along the water's edge and flies into the rear of the raft next to Roarke.

GAIL
(to Tom)
Just get us started, honey,
then climb in.

Tom drops the newspaper on the bottom of the raft and puts a shoulder to the bow. The raft glides into the current.

Gail holds their position with the oars as Tom swings a leg over the edge. Because of the slippery new waders, he can't get a good purchase. He slides back into the river, sinking to mid-thigh depth.

GAIL
Honey, get a little spring in
your legs.

Tom measures the distance. He begins to bounce in preparation for take-off.

TOM
Sure, too bad white guys can't jump.

Tom rises out of the river and flops awkwardly over the rubber gunwale -- splattering his wife and son with a faceful of water and mud.

TOM
(proudly)
How's that?

Gail removes a glob of weeds from her nose.

GAIL
(deadpan)
Great, hon'.

Click. Roarke snaps a picture of his father, ass over tea kettle. When he lowers the camera, we see his mud-speckled face. He wipes a hand across his forehead, rolls his eyes.

ROARKE
Really good, Dad. Great hang time.

Gail leans into the oars and pulls for the main current.

GAIL
(mimics a conductor)
All aboard. Leaving civilization.
This raft stops at Two Falls...
Bear Flats...Little Springs...and
Deep Water Canyon. All aboooooard!

CLOSE ON: The newspaper on the bottom of the raft, soaked by Tom's boarding maneuver. More water from Tom's waders drips onto the pictures of Wade and Terry -- staring out from the front page in classic mug shot poses. A headline reads: KILLERS ESCAPE PENITENTIARY.

EXT. ISOLATED MONTANA ROAD - MORNING

BAYING bloodhounds, straining at their leashes. They pull their handlers down an embankment toward railroad tracks.

ON THE RISE BEHIND

A body bag is loaded into a waiting ambulance.

Three Montana State Police vehicles surround the student's abandoned red Bronco. One Trooper looks underneath it, another dusts the steering wheel for prints.

ON THE RAILROAD TRACKS

The dogs scramble out of the brush, sniffing, BARKING. A handler looks into the distance: nothing but a shimmer of hot, hazy summer air.

AT ONE OF THE POLICE CARS

A TROOPER reports on the radio.

TROOPER

...We're dusting it now. The dogs got a pretty good scent.

EXT. STATE POLICE HEADQUARTERS - GREAT FALLS, MONTANA - DAY

The Captain, an old rodeo rider with a belt buckle the size of a porkchop, hangs up the radio phone in his office and stares at a wall map of Montana. His skill at cutting cattle has earned him the nickname CUTTER. A bronze buckin' bronco sits on his desk.

His assistant, a young Sergeant named MARTIN, thin as a fence post, hovers at his elbow. He idolizes his boss.

CUTTER

Ain't exactly the size of Rhode Island, is it?

He winces at the amount of territory involved. A magic marker "X", north of Great Falls, close to the Canadian border, designates the location of the abandoned car.

CUTTER

Guess it's no secret they're headin' for Canada. Let's put every man we can on the border. Cover every road, railroad, and river crossing. Let's see if we can give those sons-a-bitches a proper welcoming committee.

EXT. RIVER WILD - MID-MORNING

RAFT - MOVING

Ranch land has given way to the first signs of canyon country. A small cliff steers the river in an "S" curve. Downstream, as far as the eye can see, the tops of mountains lift themselves majestically higher and higher.

The sun's warmed the chill morning air. Gail's rowing now in a tank top and shorts. Roarke's bare chested beneath a life preserver, casting his fly from the stern seat. Tom's muttering in the bow, trying to undo a knot in his line. Gail maneuvers the raft closer to the cliff.

GAIL

Roarke, put your fly close to the cliff. Looks fishy.

Roarke struggles with his cast as Maggie's eyes follow the flight of his fly -- it lands a foot from the rock wall.

GAIL

Good cast, honey, you're due. Now take in the slack...good.

A trout strikes the fly with a great splash.

GAIL

Set him!

Roarke strikes and the fish is hooked. Roarke's rod bends as the sizable rainbow leaps out of the water.

ROARKE

Mom! What do I do?!

GAIL

(cooly)

Keep the tension. You could be holding onto dinner.

She maneuvers the raft so Roarke has a better angle to fight the fish. In the bow, Tom finally frees his tangled leader.

GAIL

Your turn, Tom. Let's see if we can get a double hook-up. Try over by that log.

The raft bounds down a stretch of fast water as Tom releases his cast. The fly overshoots the mark and snags on a branch. He shoots Gail a panicked look.

TOM

What do I do now?

GAIL

Current's too strong here to stop. Point your rod tip at the fly and wave it bye-bye.

Tom does as he's told. The line tenses -- then snaps with a PING. He glares at the bare leader where his fly used to be. This is not his idea of fun. Gail grins and shrugs. The truth:

GAIL

That's fishing.

EXT. RIVER WILD - JIM & PETER'S CAMPSITE - LATER

Peter and Jim's raft is beached by the water's edge, across from a towering canyon. Their orange tent sits in a shaft of sun.

A hundred yards upstream, Gail's raft floats into view.

When the rubber craft touches the beach, Wade and Terry step out from behind some trees, giving Tom and Gail a start.

Both men are now clean shaven. Wade's wearing a chamois shirt. Terry's wearing a plaid lumber shirt that's too small for him. There's an uneasy moment -- before Wade grins and waves in a friendly way.

WADE

Afternoon. You must be Gail.

He helps pull their raft onto land. Maggie jumps out and approaches him warily. She GROWLS.

WADE

C'mon, pup. What's that all about?

TOM
(sternly)

Maggie!

Wade stoops and offers his hand. Maggie relents and lowers her head for a rub. Tom jumps ashore.

TOM
Tom MacDonald.

WADE
I'm Wade...my buddy, Terry.

Terry steps up and shakes hands. Gail stoves the oars and vaults over the side of the raft.

GAIL
Hi, I'm Gail.

WADE
Jim and Peter told us all about you...except they left out the part about you being this pretty.

Roarke steps up politely and shakes hands.

WADE
(pretending to remember)
Don't tell me...

ROARKE
Roarke.

WADE
Right.

He musses Roarke's hair.

GAIL
Where are Peter and Jim?

WADE
Terrible thing happened last night. Jim nearly took off a couple fingers with his hatchet, and Peter decided they'd better get him to a doctor, pronto. They rowed out at first light.

GAIL
(concerned)
Is he okay?

TERRY

Yeah, but it's going to take
a bunch of stitches.

WADE

We wrapped it up as best we could.
Truth is they were more worried
about you people. We told them
we'd stay behind, let you know.

GAIL

Poor Jim...thanks for your help.
(then)
Sorry if we held you up.

Wade waves off her concern.

WADE

Fact is neither of us knows
much about the woods. We'd
heard how beautiful this river
was, but I think we got in a
little over our heads.

TERRY

Damn river's got the right name.

GAIL

Wait until you see it downstream.

Wade runs a hand through his hair.

WADE

Truth is Peter and Jim were kind
enough to ask us to tag along
with them for a while. Now...

He shrugs, lays on the helplessness.

WADE

Of course the last thing we
want to do is impose on you.

GAIL

(casually)

Come with us if you like.

WADE

Wouldn't be for more than a day, tops.

GAIL

That'd be okay, wouldn't it Tom?

Tom hesitates; she's put him in an awkward position.

TOM
I was kind of hoping we'd get
some time alone.

Gail's embarrassed. Tom persists.

TOM
I thought that was the point.
Wade reads the bristle between them.

WADE
I think Tom's right.

GAIL
(determined)
Honey, after what they did for
Peter and Jim...let alone us?

ROARKE
(pipes up)
It's okay with me, Dad.

Tom looks at Wade then Terry. He doesn't like the set-up,
but he's cornered. A concessionary smile.

TOM
Why not. Incompetence loves company.
Gail rolls her eyes at him.

ROARKE
Mom, I'm going to take some
pictures by the river.

GAIL
Just be careful.

ROARKE
Maggie! C'mon girl!

The boy and his dog head downstream.

Tom helps Gail lift their cooler out of the raft.

GAIL
We'll make camp here, and head
out in the morning.

She begins unloading the tent and waterproof duffels.

TERRY

Here...let me give you a hand.

He lifts the cooler with ease and heads for the campsite. Wade grabs a duffel and follows Terry. Gail makes sure they're out of earshot. Then:

GAIL

What's the matter with you?!

TOM

(erupts)

They're strangers! That's what's the matter with me. I thought this was our vacation.

GAIL

What are we supposed to do? They're in trouble...of course we help them. It's what you do in the wilderness.

TOM

(flabbergasted)

Gail you don't know who they are...or what they do. Hell, they could even be Republicans.

He marches off, muttering.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT TWO

Gail and Tom sit across from Wade and Terry, staring at a blazing campfire. A cast iron pan holds the remains of Roarke's fried trout. The boy is visible in the background, washing dishes down by the river.

WADE

(to Gail)

Jim told us you used to work the river for an outfitter.

GAIL

That was a long time ago. Before I had to get serious and get a real job...husband. Kid. The works. Funny... everything else changes, but this river always stays the same.

She knocks on a piece of wood before tossing it on the fire.

GAIL

...At least I hope it will. Maybe
that's why I like it so much.

TERRY

Too bad about Peter, huh?

TOM

I thought it was Jim who
gashed himself.

TERRY

Did I say Peter?

TOM

You did.

Terry touches a finger to his temple: I must be losing it.
After an awkward silence:

TOM

What do you guys do when you're
not over your heads in the woods?

WADE

I manage a ski shop over at
Big Sky. Makes for a busy
winter -- plenty of free time
in the summer. Terry here-

TOM

(interrupting)

Why doesn't Terry tell us.

TERRY

Mostly seasonal work, too.
A little bartending in the
winter. Whatever I can find
the rest of the year.

WADE

(changing gears)

How long are you folks spending
on the river?

GAIL

I'd take a month if I had my way...

(beat)

But I'll settle for three more days.

She grabs Tom's thigh playfully.

GAIL

Right honey?

TOM

I'm kind of partial to the great architect who said "less is more."

Roarke emerges out of the dark carrying a stack of dishes, some kindling, and the newspaper, tucked under his arm.

ROARKE

I brought the paper up in case anybody wanted to see it.

Terry spots his and Wade's pictures on the front page. His face tenses.

He nudges Wade and nods toward the paper. Wade's eyes widen with alarm. Terry's hand creeps down his leg to a hunting knife strapped to his shin. Wade reaches out a hand.

WADE

Maybe I'll check the scores.

Roarke hands him the paper, then stoops to leave the washed dishes and take the pan away for cleaning.

GAIL

Thanks for doing the dishes, honey.

ROARKE

(smiles)

Don't worry, that's one score I'm keeping.

Wade unfolds the paper and peers at his own image. Terry leans in. The two men scramble to read the story about their escape. Finally, Wade crumples the page and tosses it in the fire.

CLOSE ON THE BALLED UP PAGE: The wrinkled faces of the two killers stare up from the coals.

GAIL (v.o.)

I don't know about anyone else,
but I'm calling it a night.

The ball of paper suddenly bursts into flames, and POOF -- Wade and Terry are gone.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAWN - DAY THREE

Gail, on her knees, towel draped around her neck, adds a few sticks of tinder under a coffee pot and blows on a fledgling fire. The sticks glow red and orange and suddenly catch.

She stands and looks around the campsite. All's quiet. She makes her way to the water and walks around the bend, out of sight.

AT THE RIVER'S EDGE

She pulls off her t-shirt, steps out of her shorts and walks naked into the river. She swims briefly upstream, then lets the current swing her down.

GAIL'S POV: She looks up at a grove of pines -- a dozen trunks tightly bunched.

BACK TO SCENE

As she dives underwater, Terry's head emerges from behind one of the trees. He's mesmerized by Gail. He swallows. Takes a deep breath. Holds her in his gaze.

A hand slams down on his shoulder. Terry turns, startled. It's Wade, who looks past him to Gail.

WADE

Why don't you reel in that
tongue ol' buddy and walk it
on back to camp.

Terry ignores him; he can't take his eyes off of Gail.

WADE

Now!

Terry suddenly grabs Wade by his neck and slams him against one of the pine trees.

TERRY

First of all, we ain't old buddies...

Wade struggles to peel off the chokehold.

TERRY

And second...we're only partners
until we get down this river.

Wade fights for a breath. Terry releases his grip and walks off.

IN THE RIVER

Gail treads water, her back to the trees. Behind her we see Wade's face. Suddenly, she swirls around, sensing someone.

GAIL'S POV: Nothing but tree trunks.

EXT. MONTANA/CANADA BORDER - HIGHWAY - MORNING

Traffic's backed up hundreds of yards at a customs stop. Just beyond, a sign reads: WELCOME TO CANADA...BIENVENUE AU CANADA, but it's hardly a friendly welcome.

Montana State Troopers check drivers licenses, open trunks, inspect RV's, etc. Drivers at the end of the line stand agitated beside their cars.

EXT. MONTANA/CANADA BORDER - GLACIER NATIONAL PARK - MORNING

A beautiful, mountain vista in the northwest part of the state. WAPA-WAPA-WAPA -- a State Police helicopter bursts into view, circles overhead, searching, then drops precipitously into a ravine and out of sight.

EXT. MONTANA/CANADA BORDER - RAILROAD TRACKS - MORNING

A freight train is stopped along a stretch of a remote spur line. Two Troopers with bloodhounds make their way across the tops of the freight cars.

INSIDE A FREIGHT CAR

A dog BARKS ferociously, strains at his leash. A flashlight BEAM settles on a figure huddled in a dark corner. It's a HOBO, gap-tooth smile etched on his ravaged face.

A Trooper smiles benignly and pulls his dog back.

OUTSIDE THE FREIGHT CAR

The Trooper and his dog jump out and join three other Troopers. The freight doors CLANG shut.

EXT. CAMPSITE - RIVER WILD - DAY

Camp has been struck and both rafts loaded. Terry is at the oars of his raft, Gail's at the oars of hers, with Roarke seated behind her. Tom and Wade wait on shore to shove off.

TOM
(shouts)
Maggie! C'mon girl.
(to Roarke)
Give her the old two fingers.

Roarke rips off a WHISTLE. Everybody stares at the campsite. No Maggie. Roarke shrugs; don't look at me.

IN THE NEARBY WOODS

Maggie paws like mad at the ground, WHINING and GROWLING. She looks anxiously toward the river, then continues digging away at a mound of fresh dirt.

TOM (v.o.)
(shouts)
Maggie!

Another Roarke WHISTLE. Maggie BARKS toward the voice before resuming her furious digging.

AT THE RIVER

Tom hears the BARK. He turns to Gail and Roarke, annoyed.

TOM
I told you she'd be trouble
in the woods.

He shakes his head and starts in the direction of the BARKING. Gail apologizes to Wade.

GAIL
She's always digging up something.

WADE
(sympathetically)
Dogs'll be dogs.

He and Terry exchange a look.

WADE
Terry, why don't you go help Tom.

GAIL
Don't bother, he's used to it.

TERRY
No sweat.

He bounds out of the raft and begins to jog after Tom.

IN THE NEARBY WOODS

Maggie's got her mouth on something. She tugs with all her might.

TOM (v.o.)
(angry)

Maggie!

MAGGIE'S POV: She can see Tom approaching through the brush.

IN THE CLEARING

Terry comes up behind Tom, reaching toward his knife.

TOM
Goddamn it Maggie, get over here!

MAGGIE

Whines once more, then slinks off toward her master.

IN THE CLEARING

She shimmies up, guilty and groveling, as only dogs can do.

TOM
Bad girl!

He swats her on the rump, then turns and marches back toward the raft, trailed by Terry. Maggie makes a beeline for Roarke.

IN THE NEARBY WOODS

Jim's forearm sticks out of the ground at a grotesque angle, a single, bloody finger pointing downstream.

AT THE RIVER

Tom and Wade launch the two rafts, then hop in. The rafts float side by side as Gail gives a brief rowing lesson.

GAIL
Most of the time you want to keep the river in front of you. So it's always bow first...mostly what you're doing is steering. Let the current do the work. Okay?...Nothing to it. We've got a few bumps ahead, but the killer water is days away.

She leans into her oars and centers the raft in the current.

Terry watches for a moment, then dips his oars into the water, imitating Gail. The current catches his raft and they're off. An anxious Wade grips the gunwales.

EXT. RIVER WILD - LATER

Gail expertly lines up her raft to shoot a small rapid. She backpeddles with one oar, strokes with the other until she's happy with her position.

They swoop into the chute of rough water -- Roarke and Maggie HOWLING and BARKING gleeful approval from the bow as the raft bumps up and down. In the stern, Tom white knuckles his seat.

WADE & TERRY'S RAFT

Terry sizes up the approaching fast water. In the distance, he sees that Gail's already made it through.

Wade braces himself for the ride. A sudden surge and they're in it -- the raft spinning around almost out of control -- bouncing off rocks like a pinball into-

CALMER WATER

Where the two rafts drift side by side.

GAIL
(beaming)

Fun, huh?

Wade and Terry are soaked and white as sheets.

GAIL
Forgot to tell you one thing.
When you see a rock or some
other obstacle, point your stern
away from it, and row upstream.
The current'll do the rest.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANOTHER STRETCH OF THE RIVER WILD - MIDDAY

Tom and Gail's raft drifts lazily through a long, green pool. Gail's at the oars, Tom's floating on his back, connected by a short line to the raft. A clear plastic water bag, bulging with water, heats up on one gunwale. Maggie's asleep on another. Roarke's nowhere to be seen.

Terry and Wade's raft is barely visible, a hundred yards upstream.

TOM'S POV: Looking up at towering cliffs. The rock formations are striking.

TOM

I just realized that being on this river is like being inside one of my projects rather than looking at a model.
(genuinely)

I'm glad Roarke's seeing it from the inside out. It makes a difference.

BACK TO SCENE

GAIL

(pleased)

I think a city kid needs to know what this is all about. Just like a country girl needed to learn about the city.

TOM

Any regrets?

GAIL

One's good for the heart, the other's good for the head.

(soft sell)

Doesn't mean we have to live in Boston...or anywhere else forever.

She lowers her sunglasses to peer at Tom, hoping to get a rise out of him. No luck. She pulls in the oars and angles her face to catch the sun. After several moments.

GAIL

Tom?

TOM

Ummm?

GAIL

Do Wade and Terry seem funny to you?

TOM

Sure. They seem like a couple of goofballs in the woods.

GAIL
It's one thing to take an overnight
at a campground. You know? It's
something else to get on a sixty
mile river and not know the blade
of an oar from the handle.

TOM
Ummm...you mean just like me.

GAIL
Yeah, but you're with me.

TOM
So are they, thanks to you.

Gail shakes her head, suddenly weary of all the sniping. She
unties the line connecting Tom to the raft and flips it into
the water.

Just then Roarke's head pops up beside Tom's -- camera
poised.

ROARKE'S POV: Tom's eyes spring open, startled.

BACK TO SCENE

Click -- Roarke snaps a candid picture, takes a big breath,
and sinks once more from view.

EXT. ROCK SHELF/ShORE - DAY

Both rafts are pulled onto a smooth, rock shelf that angles
gently up from a deep, green pool. Picnic trappings can be
seen in a shady spot.

On the nearby beach, Terry squeezes the last drop of insect
repellent into his hand. The horse flies are killing him.
Tom walks up and hands him his bottle of bug dope.

TOM
All yours. I don't seem to
have what they want.

Terry nods thanks.

DOWNSTREAM

Roarke struggles to land a good fish.

ROARKE
Dad, get the net!

Tom pulls a landing net out of one of the rafts and beats it toward the boy.

ANGLE TOM

Swishing the net playfully through the air.

TOM
Tom's trout service. You get
'em, we net 'em.

ON THE ROCK SHELF

Gail is teaching Wade the basics of flycasting. She's wearing a bathing suit, he's shirtless. His casting's no good, but his body gets an "A".

He turns, flyline hopelessly tangled over his shoulders.

WADE
How's that?

GAIL
Um...I think you need a little work.

She takes the rod from him.

GAIL
Stand on my right, and hold your
hand over mine. It's the only
way to get a feel for the rhythm.

Wade stands beside her and wraps his right hand over hers. His forearm touches hers. Her body touches his here and there. It's a sexy moment.

ANGLE TERRY: Watching jealously from a rock.

GAIL & WADE

Gail starts to guide him through the motions of casting.

GAIL
Just remember ten and two. Ten
o'clock on the front end, two
o'clock on the back...wait just
a sec for the line to unravel...
then do it again - ten and two -
letting out a little more line
with your left hand.

DOWNSTREAM

Tom circles the trout, net extended, as Roarke cranks away on the reel, his concentration fierce.

ROARKE

Get him Dad!

Tom stabs the net in the water, but misses the fish.

TOM

I'm trying, I'm trying.

ROARKE

Don't lose him.

Tom positions himself for a second attempt.

TOM

Don't worry. We're under control.

He reaches with the net a second time, snapping the leader by mistake. The trout is gone in a flash.

Roarke's crushed. Tom feels worse.

TOM

Sorry.

He shifts his gaze to the ledge -- where he sees Wade's arms wrapped around his wife. Double whammy.

EXT. RIVER & CAMPSITE - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun has sunk lower in the sky -- leaving much of the river in shadow.

Tom and Gail's raft is beached on a patch of sand across from a towering cliff. Upstream, a long rapid empties into the pool with a rush of white water.

AT THE CAMPSITE

Gail, Roarke and Maggie sit on rocks, watching Tom make the final adjustment to a solar shower he's fashioned from the clear plastic water bag, a tin can with holes in the bottom, a rope, and a tripod of sticks.

He steps back to admire his work.

TOM

(proudly)

Well?

ROARKE

Yeah, but does it work?

Tom suddenly grabs his son and starts to peel off his shirt.

TOM

Only one way to find out.

(German accent)

Vee need a volunteer for zis experiment!

Roarke SQUEALS. Gail beats a hasty retreat; one guinea pig's enough. She looks upstream.

GAIL

Wonder where Wade and Terry are?

Tom drags a laughing Roarke under the shower.

TOM

They'll make it. Only one way to go.

Tom holds Roarke under the shower and pulls the rope. The rope tips the bag, the water pours into the can, the "shower head" springs to life.

Roarke's howls turn to contented "ahhh's." He angles his body to let the water find every part of him.

ROARKE

I can't believe it...hot water!

A smiling Tom picks up Roarke's camera.

TOM

Hey, guinea pig!

Roarke turns toward his Dad, eyes closed, sputtering water. Click!

AT THE WATER'S EDGE

Gail looks at a stand of birch, as if searching for something. She walks to one of the trees...there: A smile wide as the Wild.

CLOSE ON: a carving: GAIL - 78.

UPSTREAM

Terry and Wade bounce their way down the rapid toward the pool -- fear etched on both men's faces.

TERRY'S POV: A large boulder looms dead ahead.

BACK TO SCENE

Terry flails at the oars, doing the opposite of what Gail told him -- trying to push the raft past the obstacle instead of aiming the bow at it and rowing in the other direction. Wade sits in the bow, terrified.

WADE

(shouts)

She said the other way! You're pushing us into it!

Closer, closer, they rush toward the rock.

WADE

(screaming)

The other way, goddamnit!

TERRY

Hold on!

The raft smashes into the rock, tossing Wade out of his seat and into the froth. He struggles to keep his head afloat, flapping his arms wildly as he's swept downstream.

The raft, meantime, swings around in the current and Terry is now heading stern first downstream, completely out of control.

AT THE WATER'S EDGE

Gail glances up from the carving and sees the impending disaster. She springs into action -- splashing through the shallows toward deeper water to intercept the raft.

UPSTREAM

Wade bounces off a rock, goes under and bobs up.

WADE

(screams)

Help! Help!...

He disappears once more, as -

Terry has given up trying to control the raft and is holding on for all he's worth.

The raft bangs into a boulder, swings into another, takes on water, spins wildly, and plunges down the final chute.

IN THE CAMPSITE POOL

It flies by Gail, toward calm water.

TERRY

Wade can't swim!

Gail dives in and swims strongly into the main current. She spots Wade's bobbing head...manages to grab an arm.

AT THE WATER'S EDGE

Tom comes sprinting down from the campsite. He looks around, grabs an oar from their raft and gives chase.

IN THE POOL

The rush of the current carries Gail and Wade downstream, entangled. A half-drowned and frantic Wade fights to crawl on top of Gail, pushing her under. She swallows a mouthful of water and suddenly she's in trouble.

UNDERWATER

We see Wade's legs kicking wildly. Gail elbows him in the stomach, slips out of his grip, then swims under, up, and behind him.

IN THE POOL

Tom plunges into the deeper water below them, oar extended. Gail surfaces ten feet away.

TOM

(shouts)

Gail, grab the oar!

Gail locks an arm across Wade's neck and chest. He fights her for a moment.

GAIL

Stop it! You're okay!

Wade relaxes. He pukes up some water, but he's safely in her grip. Gail grabs the end of the oar -- Tom pulls them toward safety.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT THREE

It's coal black in the canyon. Roarke's gone to bed. The fire burns low. The ROAR of the rapid is constant.

Tom and Gail are leaning against a log, peering into the fire, sipping whiskey from tin cups.

Terry and Wade sit across from them. Wade's face is bruised and scratched. Terry is whittling. Wade's wet clothes hang from a couple of sticks jammed into the ground beside the fire. Silence feels good.

A single streak of LIGHTNING flares across the sky.

GAIL

Might get a shower tonight.

WADE

(appreciative)

Won't feel as good as Tom's.

CRACKLE, POP. Even to look at, the fire feels good.

WADE'S POV: He looks at Gail's daypack, lying on the ground beside the cleaned plates and spots the handle of her .22 pistol.

BACK TO SCENE

He looks at Gail. His face tenses. His hand inches toward the pistol...closer...closer...his fingers close over the grip.

Suddenly, he trains the .22 on Gail.

WADE

Don't move.

Gail swallows nervously. Tom sits up.

TOM

What?!...

WADE

I said don't move!

Terry looks at his partner. There's confusion in his eyes.

TERRY

(softly)

Not now.

Wade cocks the pistol. Gail looks down the barrel. Tom freezes. Wade takes careful aim.

BLAM!

A rattlesnake flies out of the end of the log Gail and Tom are leaning against. Its headless body lands a yard away, writhing grotesquely.

Tom and Gail take in the grim spectacle.

WADE

Must have been sleeping in the log.

He offers the pistol to Gail handle first.

WADE

I can see why you brought this along.

Gail takes the gun. For an old pro, this is the most unsettled we've seen her. She takes a breath, collects herself.

GAIL

Thanks.

WADE

Got to protect our group leader.
Besides, it only makes us even.

He pushes himself to his feet.

WADE

Time to put this day to bed.

Terry follows suit.

TERRY

'Night.

TOM/GAIL

Good night.

They watch Wade and Terry disappear into their tent. Gail spreads the coals with a stick.

TOM

(still spooked)
This river get any wilder?

GAIL

Oh yeah.

(she cuddles up)
Having fun?

TOM

Not as much as you and Wade.

Gail's hurt and disappointed. She pulls away.

TOM

One near drowning. One shooting.
Isn't this the perfect family
vacation?

(he stands)

I think I'll turn in, too.

Gail watches him start to walk off.

GAIL

Tom!

He stops, his back to her.

GAIL

I was teaching him how to cast a
fly rod. That's what I was doing...
and that's all I was doing. Teaching
him how to goddamn fish! Is there
something you want to talk about?

Tom hesitates for a moment - too long, too telling - before
walking off.

Gail gathers her knees in her arms, rests her chin on top and
stares at the fire. It bathes her face in an orange light.
A tear slides down her cheek.

LATER

The fire's died to a few embers. The campsite's nearly
dark. LIGHTNING shoots across the black sky. THUNDER
RUMBLES. A breeze flaps Wade's drying shirt.

Gail emerges from her tent wearing shorts and a t-shirt,
holding a small flashlight. She heads into the woods to
relieve herself.

A fat raindrop SPLATTERS against a rock. Another drop hits
an ember with a HISS. A strong gust knocks Wade's shirt off
its branch.

Gail returns from the woods, sees the shirt on the ground,
and picks it up. She shakes it clean, and a folded piece of
paper flutters out of a pocket. She unfolds the paper and
holds it under her flashlight.

It's a Montana fishing license. The name on the license is Jim Ladage, their Boston friend.

Something's not right. She turns the license over. Her eyes bulge at a smudge of dried blood. She clutches her mouth, squelching a GASP.

INT. TOM & GAIL'S TENT - NIGHT

Gail climbs back in and zips the flap closed behind her. She crawls over to Tom and shakes him.

GAIL
(whispers)

Tom, wake up!

He rolls over. She shakes him harder.

GAIL
(urgently)

Wake up!

He sits bolt upright, starts to speak. Gail clamps a hand over his mouth. She clicks ON her flashlight and holds the illuminated license in front of Tom.

GAIL
Look at this!

TOM
What? It's a fishing license.

GAIL
It's Jim's!

Tom stares at the license. Roarke stirs and drowsily opens his eyes. He's got an arm around Maggie.

TOM
So?

ROARKE
(sleepy)
What's going on?

GAIL
Nothing honey. Go back to sleep.

ROARKE
(big yawn)
No problem.

She smiles at Roarke, who settles back. Then she pins Tom with a look of horror.

GAIL

I found it in Wade's shirt.

Tom wrestles with the information.

GAIL

Don't you understand! He's wearing Jim's things. And Terry's probably wearing Peter's. No wonder nothing fits him!

TOM

Maybe Jim lent him his shirt and forgot the license was in the pocket.

Gail turns the license over, revealing the blood stain.

TOM

Gail, he cut himself with the hatchet...remember?

Gail's brow suddenly furrows.

GAIL

Tonight, just before Wade shot the snake...did you hear Terry say, "Not now?"

TOM

(tries to remember)
No...sure didn't.

Gail starts to rock back and forth.

GAIL

(losing it)

Oh shit...shit, shit shit.
He did say that. He did!

Raindrops begin to WHACK the tent. Tom grabs Gail by the shoulders.

TOM

Gail, what's the matter with you?
You're the lawyer. Whatever happened to innocent until guilty?

GAIL

I can't believe I let them come with us.

For the first time, Tom sees real fear in his wife's face. Vulnerability. He gathers her in a hug.

TOM

Hey, c'mon. We've got the best
white water lawyer in Boston...
(a beat)

...Plus we've got a hot water
shower. How bad can that be?

Gail can't stop herself from laughing. Tom rocks her gently, strokes her hair. Gail smiles bravely, tries to convince herself...still:

GAIL

Something's not right.

LIGHTNING FLASHES. THUNDER ROLLS.

INT. WADE & TERRY'S TENT - NIGHT

Wade's eyes pop open in the dark. Terry is asleep. Wade can barely make out TOM and GAIL'S MUFFLED VOICES -- but the urgent tone is clear.

THUNDER CRASHES once more. Rain SLAMS against the tent in a wave. A FLASH of LIGHTNING momentarily lights Wade's face. He's ticking, ticking, ticking. Then it's dark again.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Rain slashes down. All we can see are the vague outlines of the two tents, one blue, one orange. Nothing more.

INT. TOM & GAIL'S TENT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON MAGGIE: In the dark, she suddenly bares her fangs. A scary GROWL, low in her throat.

SMASH CUT

EXT. TOM & GAIL'S TENT - NIGHT

ANOTHER FLASH OF LIGHTNING: Reveals Wade, now squatting just outside, naked, listening. Water drips from his face...trickles down his bare, white flanks. Another THUNDER BOOM, then...

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP ON:

EXT. MONTANA HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A solitary truck sends up a roostertail of rain water as it slogs through the downpour at a high speed. We hear the faint sound of BAYING...closer...closer.

IN THE WOODS BEYOND

We see flashlight BEAMS in the miserable blackness. A team of bloodhounds bursts out of the tempest and into a clearing. Their HANDLERS are bundled in foul weather gear.

The men's galoshes sink ankle deep in mud. The dogs press their noses to the muck, trying to catch a scent.

HANDLER #1

This is goddamn useless.

HANDLER #2

Gonna take me a bottle of Jack to get warm.

They stand for a moment, shivering, rain running off the brims of their rain hoods.

HANDLER #1

If they're out there in this they're probably drowned anyway.

They turn their dogs and retreat into the dark.

INT. STATE POLICE HEADQUARTERS - GREAT FALLS - NIGHT

Cutter stares out a window rattled by wind blown rain. The Sergeant stands beside him.

CUTTER

If there ever was a trail, there ain't one now.

He walks over to study the map of the state. Along the Canadian border, dozens of tiny plastic police cars indicate the strength and deployment of manpower. Cutter's eyes roam here and there...settling finally on one section of the map.

THE CAMERA SLOWLY ZOOMS in on a green, rugged patch of State Forest in the middle of Montana, south of the abandoned Bronco. There're no miniature police cars there. No men. No dogs. No manhunt. Only a windy, blue ribbon, with the name THE RIVER WILD.

EXT. CAMPSITE - RIVER WILD - DAY FOUR

Morning. The storm's blown through, discoloring the river with runoff. A few branches are down.

AT THE BEACH

Tom and Gail secure their gear aboard the raft. Gail looks like hell. Her eyes are red, she hasn't slept.

As she lashes down a duffel, she glances up at the campsite: where Terry is stuffing his tent into a bag, then, downstream: where Wade and Maggie watch Roarke fish.

GAIL

If they touch Roarke, I'll kill them.

TOM

Gail, calm down. You're losing it.

GAIL

(explodes)

Don't tell me to calm down!

(softly)

Tell that to Peter and Jim.

Her VOICE carries.

AT THE CAMPSITE

Terry abruptly looks up from packing his gear.

DOWNSTREAM

Wade, who's scratching Maggie's head, glances back toward the raft. He thinks for a moment, then looks at Roarke, who's peering intently at his floating fly.

WADE

Looks like you're getting pretty good at this.

ROARKE

Mom says small victories. That's what you get when you go fly fishing... a little better each time out.

CLOSE ON HIS FLY: A trout hits it.

ON SHORE

Roarke strikes, but he's slow on the draw. The fish spits out the hook before the boy can set it.

ROARKE

Damn!

WADE

Sure looks like fun.

ROARKE

(grins)

Real fun. Even when you screw up.

Wade looks up at Tom and Gail again.

WADE

How'd you like to show us how to do it?

(calculating)

Ride with us this morning.

ROARKE

(shrugs)

I can show you what I know.

AT THE BEACH

Tom consoles Gail.

TOM

Honey, okay, I'm with you. We'll play it safe. As soon as we can we'll take off on our own. Fair enough?

GAIL

I've never been this scared...ever.

She stiffens when she hears FOOTSTEPS. Terry plunks his tent in his raft, and walks off for another load.

Tom looks downstream at Roarke. He takes a nervous breath.

A LITTLE LATER

Wade's ready to launch his raft -- Terry's at the oars.

Gail sits in the rowing seat of her raft, waiting for Tom to load the last of their gear.

Wade looks at Gail and smiles. She forces a return smile.

Roarke comes running up the beach, preceded by Maggie. When he reaches the rafts, he climbs into Terry's, with Wade's help. Wade quickly pushes off and jumps in.

ROARKE
Mom, I'm going to show these
turkeys how to fish, okay?

GAIL
No!

Her panicked cry echoes off the canyon wall -- the return
"Noooo" seeming even more anguished. She scrambles to
recover her composure.

Terry gently dips the oars into the water and pulls --
putting more distance between the two rafts.

GAIL
(forced calm)
You shouldn't be bothering Wade
and Terry, honey.

WADE
(grins)
No bother to us, ma'am. I figure
he might be able to teach us what
this sport's about.

Terry takes another stroke. Gail trembles as her son moves
farther away.

GAIL
You're not experienced enough
to take him with you.

ROARKE
C'mon, Mom. You always tell
me I swim like a fish.

Gail looks helplessly at Tom, who fumbles with the last
duffel.

GAIL
(urgently)
C'mon...Tom...C'mon!

ROARKE
Please, Mom. Just 'til lunch.

Another stroke. Tom sees it's a done deal.

TOM
I think it'll be okay. We'll
switch in a few hours.

Stroke, stroke.

ROARKE
Don't worry. We'll leave you
some fish.

(proudly)
My group this way.

Terry centers the raft in the current, and they're off.

CLOSE ON GAIL: Her expression reflecting a mother's worst
nightmare.

EXT. RIVER - MID-MORNING

THE TWO RAFTS

Float far apart down a long, slow stretch, flanked by
towering cliffs. The country's more rugged by the mile.

TOM, GAIL & MAGGIE'S RAFT

He's rowing, she's in the bow seat, facing him, arms folded.
The dog's asleep on a gunwale.

TOM
Gail, listen to me. We don't
exactly have grounds to convict.
I mean, for all we know, Jim and
Peter are back on the Cape, sipping
martinis, counting stitches, wishing
they were out here with us. Right?

GAIL
How could I have been so stupid
to let them come with us.
(disgusted)
Good old Gail. Not always right,
but never in doubt.

TOM
Second...they don't know we
think something's screwy. So
that's to our advantage, too.

GAIL
Then I go and save the guy from drowning.

TOM
And, third, if they are killers...
(a smile)
we're in a shitload of trouble,
and that's something I don't
even want to think about.

A long silence. Just the soothing sound of oars in water.

GAIL

Who are they, Tom? What do they want?

They exchange an apprehensive look.

TOM

I don't know.

WADE, TERRY & ROARKE'S RAFT

CLOSE ON: The topo map, showing the course of the River Wild through State Forest.

ROARKE (v.o.)

...That's where we camped last night, Bear Flats. Tonight...

His finger traces the curves of the river.

ROARKE (v.o.)

...we'll put in here at Little Springs.

PULLBACK TO REVEAL: Wade and Roarke, peering at the map as Terry rows. Wade tousles the boy's hair.

WADE

You're really learning how to use this map.

ROARKE

Mom always wanted me to.

WADE

So where do we get off?

ROARKE

Takeout's at a place called Deep Water Canyon.

He scans the map...finally plunks his finger down.

WADE

How far's that from here?

ROARKE

Not too far...you could figure it out using the scale down here.

WADE

Rest of the river like this?

ROARKE

Mom says there's only one really scary rapid we got to run, The Gauntlet, just before takeout... right here.

(eyes afire)

She says it's really kick-ass.

Wade registers the information, a hint of fear. Roarke lifts his camera and aims it at Terry.

ROARKE

Hey Terry, say-

Wade darts his hand in front of the lens and roughly pulls the camera down. Roarke stares at him, startled.

ROARKE

What's the matter with you?

WADE

(awkwardly)

Terry's a little funny about having his picture taken.

(recovering)

No big deal or anything...

Roarke looks back and forth between the two men: you guys are strange.

INT. STATE POLICE HEADQUARTERS - GREAT FALLS - DAY

Cutter's seated at his desk. He's on the phone, listening, while studying an FBI report. A half-eaten tuna sandwich lies on a paper plate. Martin looks on anxiously.

CUTTER

Umm...umm...ummm...right.

He hangs up, jams the rest of the sandwich in his mouth.

CUTTER

Goddamn it!

Martin's face falls.

MARTIN

You did say tuna....right?

CUTTER

(a look)

Martin, the Goddamnit was not for the tuna. The Goddamnit's because we got two hundred men shaking the trees of this state... and the only things falling out are pine cones and hobos, and not two city slickers who couldn't start a fire in a forest if they had a goddamn duroflame log and a blowtorch... so where the hell are they?

Martin shrugs. Cutter gets up and walks to the wall map.

CUTTER

What if those sons-a-bitches doubled back and went south instead of north...thinking we'd be thinking they'd go north?

He puts a finger on the green area of the map -- the State Forest surrounding the River Wild -- south of where the car was found.

CUTTER

What if they went here?

MARTIN

Nothing in there but Grizzly bears and snakes you don't even want to know about. They wouldn't stand a chance.

CUTTER

Who?...The bears?

EXT. BEACH SITE/RIVER WILD - NOON

CLOSE ON A KNIFE raised -- then, slashing downward.

WIDER

It slices an apple cleanly. Terry pops one of the cleaved halves in his mouth.

Everybody's sitting under the shade of a tree, a ways back from the beached rafts, going through the motions of eating lunch. It's all very stiff -- darting eyes, flickered smiles -- civil on the surface, excruciatingly tense an inch below.

Tom, Gail and Roarke watch Wade play cat and mouse with a little garter snake he's caught. He holds it on the ground, pinching its tail between his fingers. Then he lets it go, watches it wiggle for freedom, before pulling it back again.

ROARKE

Why don't you let it go?

Wade releases his hold and looks up at the boy. The snake makes a run for safety.

WADE

Because if I do, it'll try to get away.

His hand suddenly darts out and pins the snake moments before it can squirm under a log.

WADE

See, every time.

Terry rubs his brow, looks away. Wade's behavior bugs him.

TOM

It's torture.

WADE

Not for me.

Roarke jumps up and grabs his fly rod.

ROARKE

You guys are weird.

(he nods at Terry)

He doesn't like his picture taken, and you...

(he shakes his head)

I'm going fishing.

Tom and Gail exchange a look. They watch Roarke head off, Maggie at his heels.

GAIL

(shouts after him)

Just stay in sight, okay?

Wade takes his hand off the snake. It hesitates a moment -- either from exhaustion, or fearing a trick.

WADE

Then, just when you think it's gotten smart -

The snake darts for high grass. Wade shakes his head.

WADE

Every time.

(a grin)

If you let it.

He pushes himself to his feet.

WADE

I'm going to stretch my legs.

Gail glances at Tom as he starts up the hill.

EXT. RIVER PROMONTORY - LATER

Wade makes his way up a steep slope directly above the lunch site, visible below. It's slow going given the pitch and the hot sun. He's sweating heavily.

Behind him, hundreds of yards away, we see another raft emerge from the cover of trees and drift into view. The river, at this point, makes a big "U" shaped meander around the lunch site.

EXT. RAFT-ON-RIVER - DAY

Two FISHERMEN and a GUIDE glide by the lunch site. The fishermen cast toward the wall opposite the camp.

GUIDE

Want to pull in here and grab
a bite, or keep fishing?

One of the fishermen glances over at the site and sees Tom, Gail and Terry taking a siesta above the beached rafts.

FISHERMAN

Let's find a place to ourselves.

DOWNSTREAM

Roarke looks up from his casting when the strangers' raft appears. He strips in his line and waits politely for the newcomers to float by.

GUIDE

You leaving us any fish, son?

ROARKE

(grins)

Yeah, a few...catch anything?

GUIDE

Nothing but hogs.

He leans over and lifts up a stringer with two rubber piggies attached -- one pink, one spotted. He's one happy guide... anything for a laugh on the river. He lowers the stringer out of sight and gives a tug with the oars.

GUIDE

Time to rock and roll.

EXT. RIVER PROMONTORY - DAY

When Wade reaches the crown of the ridge, he shields his eyes to look downstream. The mountains seem to grow taller, if anything, and more jagged. The river disappears in their midst. The strangers' raft has drifted out of sight -- unseen by Wade. He glances up: the sun fills his vision with a pulsing yellow.

EXT. BEACH SITE/RIVER WILD - DAY

Everybody's asleep.

Terry's face begins to redden in the noon-day sun. His SNORES punctuate the natural summer BUZZ of CICADAS.

Gail's eyes pop open. She cranes her head to look at Terry, then she sits up, taps Tom. He sits up immediately -- a plan's afoot.

They crawl away, standing only when they're a safe distance from the picnic site. Gail starts to run. Tom grabs her.

TOM

Walk...if he wakes up, we're just going for a stroll.

When they get to the rafts, Tom looks around nonchalantly. Terry is still asleep. Roarke's barely visible, fishing at the bend below. Gail's frantic to bolt, but first she unscrews the air-plug on Wade and Terry's raft.

Then they each grab a side of their raft and slide it into the water. Gail climbs into the rowing seat. Tom pushes off and hops in with a single leap. He's learning.

As the raft glides away, Tom glances nervously at Terry, then downstream at Roarke. Gail lowers the oars gently and gives a pull. The raft catches the current.

Gail angles them so that they're heading straight for Roarke. She holds the oars silently above the water and lets the current do the work.

DOWNSTREAM

Roarke fights a trout as Maggie prowls the bank, stops, points at something -- then plunges into the underbrush.

Roarke looks up and sees his parents approaching.

ROARKE
(shouts)

Dad...four trout on five casts!

His voice carries across the water. Tom signals him to be quiet, but he misinterprets the gesture. Just then his trout jumps.

ROARKE

Yahoo!

Gail shakes her head wildly -- "shushes" him as the raft draws close.

ROARKE
What's the matter?

GAIL
(sternly)

Shush!

TOM
Get in.

ROARKE
(protests)
But I got a fish on.

Tom grabs the boy's leader and snaps it with his hands.

GAIL
Get in the boat now!

Roarke hands his rod to his father and climbs in.

ROARKE
(sulks)
You owe me one Royal Coachman.

TOM
Where's Maggie?

ROARKE
She was here just a minute ago.

Gail takes a deep breath, then steers the raft a little closer to shore. They wait...and drift...and watch.

AT THE BEACH SITE

Terry brushes a fly from his face, then sits up. He looks around: there's no one. He pushes himself to his feet. His face tenses: there's only one raft at the river's edge, and it's deflating by the moment. He starts to run toward it.

ON THE RIVER

Tom, Gail and Roarke all peer at the bank.

ROARKE
Want the old two fingers?

TOM
No!

GAIL
Goddamnit Maggie.
(looking, muttering)
We might have to leave her.

ROARKE
(bewildered)
Leave her? What's going on?

TOM
We will if we have to.

ROARKE
What about Wade and Terry?

TOM
Son, we'll fill you in in a minute.

GAIL
C'mon Maggie!

She looks frantically at the shore. A pine tree leans out over the river fifty feet downstream.

GAIL
If we don't find her by the time
we reach that tree, that's it.

ROARKE
(distraught)
How would you like it if we
deserted you?

No response from Tom and Gail. Roarke shakes his head.

ROARKE
Oh, this is mature.

ON SHORE

Terry is sprinting now - hurtling over logs and rocks - fists clenched, legs churning.

ON THE RIVER

The raft reaches the pine tree. Suddenly a SOFT EXPLOSION -- and a covey of mountain quail bursts from cover at the water's edge. Moments later, Maggie leaps through the brush and splashes into the river BARKING.

ROARKE
Yeah Mags!

The dog watches the quail flap away, then heads for the raft. Roarke pulls her in by her collar and gives her a big hug.

ROARKE
They were going to leave you.

Gail leans into the oars and pulls hard for the main current. Stroke, stroke -- rowing for all she's worth. Tom looks nervously behind them as the raft gathers speed.

ON SHORE

Terry crashes through the underbrush at the edge of the river and glares downstream as the raft rounds a bend and floats out of sight.

ON THE RIVER

Gail guides the raft past a few dangerous rocks. They rocket through a final chute, take a spray of water over the bow, and finally bounce off a canyon wall into calm water.

SMASH CUT

Wade stands on a rock in front of them -- Gail's .22 trained on them.

ROARKE
What's going on Dad?

Wade waves them ashore. Crushed, Gail steers them in.

ROARKE
Mom, why's he aiming at us?

TOM
We're not sure, son.

When they get close, Maggie jumps out and starts GROWLING at Wade. He draws a bead on her.

ROARKE
Don't!...you crazy?!

Roarke flings a life preserver at Wade just as the killer squeezes off the SHOT -- deflecting his aim. The bullet zips harmlessly into the water beside Maggie.

TOM
(bellows)
Maggie! Get out of here!

Maggie whimpers a brief protest, then splashes ashore and disappears into the brush.

EXT. CAMPSITE - RIVER WILD - NIGHT FOUR

CLOSE ON: A foot pump -- inflating, deflating, inflating, deflating.

REVEAL: Tom, hands bound, pumping up the deflated raft. He's guarded by a somber Terry, who holds the .22.

Gail sits closer to the fire, hugging Roarke, watched by Wade. Tom finishes pumping and sits down beside them.

TOM
What'd you do to Peter and Jim?

WADE
They're not worrying about you,
so don't you be worrying about them.

ROARKE
(scared)
They do something to Peter and Jim, Mom?

GAIL
We don't know, honey.

TOM
What do you want, Terry?

Terry seems genuinely uncomfortable: Besieged by bugs, bullied by Wade -- faced, now, with yet another confrontation on a river he wanted no part of in the first place.

TERRY
I just want to get out of here.

TOM
(to Wade)
Is it money you want?

Wade retrieves Jim's wallet from his pocket.

WADE
Money? Got plenty of that.
Can't spend it out here, anyway.
He fumbles for a credit card.

WADE
Got credit cards, too.
(reads)
Jim Ladage. Expires 10-12-93.
Not a good thing to be outlived
by your credit card.

Gail cradles Roarke protectively against her chest.

WADE
'Course I don't plan to wait
until '93 to get out of here...
which is where you come in.

He walks over to Gail and squats in front of her. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a set of car keys.

WADE
We need you to get us to the
takeout...to the rental car Jim
and Peter had shuttled ahead. Do
that for us and nobody gets hurt.

TOM
You mean nobody else?

Wade removes his hunting knife and runs the blade gently under Tom's chin.

WADE
Right...nobody else.

INT. ROARKE'S TENT - LATER

Roarke lies on his sleeping bag, eyes open in the dark, straining to hear, trying to think. He slides a hand into one sneaker and pulls out the Swiss Army knife Tom gave him at White Sulphur Campground. He opens a blade and tests its sharpness. A bead of blood.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Eyes in the dark. Spooky. Looking, shifting, looking.

Only embers remain in the campfire. Tom and Gail are slumped together for warmth, each of their sleeping bags bound by rope. Terry is half-awake, half-asleep, sitting in his sleeping bag, slapping at mosquitos. He cradles the .22.

A RUSTLING SOUND on the outskirts of the campsite.

Terry's eyes pop open. He stares in the dark, but it's all a black, shapeless blur.

The RUSTLING SOUND startles him from another direction. Terry aims his gun here and there -- unsure of his target. There's sweat on his upper lip. He's nervous. He sees a pair of glowing eyes.

When the RUSTLING SOUND pops up in yet another place, Terry swings the gun and FIRES. BARKING -- followed by a NOISY RETREAT.

The COMMOTION awakens Tom and Gail. They see Terry peering into the darkness, gun raised.

All we hear is a distant GROWL.

TOM

Get out of here Maggie!

Roarke's VOICE floats out from his tent.

ROARKE (v.o.)

Is Mags okay, Dad?

TOM

I think so.

ROARKE (v.o.)

Good...I hope she bites their butts off.

Wade runs from his tent. He looks around suspiciously before walking up to Terry.

WADE
What the hell's goin' on?

TERRY
I thought it was a bear.

In the dark we hear Maggie WHINE and WHIMPER. Wade pins his partner with a look of disgust.

WADE
It's the goddamn dog. Jesus,
you'd probably shoot your foot
if it moved in the dark.

He shakes his head, and climbs back into his tent.

Meanwhile, Tom and Gail are eye to eye. In whispers:

TOM
How many bullets did you bring?

GAIL
Just the six in the gun.

TOM
So one now...this afternoon, also
at Maggie...four left.

GAIL
Three. The rattlesnake.

Tom nods. Gail nods back. At least it's something.

EXT. CAMPSITE - EARLY MORNING - DAY FIVE

WILDERNESS MONTAGE

SCENE #1: The river flows clear and cold over a gravel bar. A TROUT rises and sips a MAYFLY -- leaving a small ring on the gray-green surface.

SCENE #2: A RACCOON peers intently into a shallow pool... darts a paw under water, scoops up a TROUT.

SCENE #3: On a cliff ledge high above a pool, a HAWK swoops in carrying a still struggling WOODCHUCK in its talons. She settles her wings, looks around for a moment, then begins tearing the animal apart with her beak.

Kill and be killed, the way of the wild.

END OF WILDERNESS MONTAGE

EXT. CUTTER'S RANCH - MORNING

A small spread, with a modest ranch house, a few outer barns, and a corral.

IN THE CORRAL

Cutter sits in the saddle of his horse MARLENE, "cutting cattle." They single out a cow and go to work.

ANGLE - DRIVEWAY

A State Police Jeep makes its way toward the ranch, trailing a cloud of dust.

IN THE CORRAL

Cutter and Marlene bob and weave to keep the "cut" cow from rejoining the others. Rider and horse move as one.

IN THE BACKGROUND, Martin parks his jeep by the corral, gets out and watches his boss from the split rail fence.

Marlene's practically head to head with the cow, staring it down, almost daring it to make a move. Pleased, Cutter pats Marlene on the neck, then lets the cow scramble back to the herd. He rides over to the Sergeant.

MARTIN

You and Marlene haven't lost a step.

CUTTER

Yep...she's still making me look good. Figuring out where they're going and getting there before they do -- that's the name of the game.

MARTIN

Nothing unusual over at White Sulphur Campground.

CUTTER

I guess it'd be a little much to expect them to sign in and reserve a space.

Martin rubs the mare's nose.

MARTIN

How ya doin' Marlene?

CUTTER

She's a little mad I've been neglecting her.

MARTIN

Maybe we should send someone down the river?

CUTTER

And do what? Tell us bears shit in the woods? We need a break's what we need. Something. Let's hope it ain't another body...

(a beat)

...Though that might help.

EXT. CAMPSITE - RIVER WILD - DAY

Roarke, alone, looks around to make sure nobody's watching, then he takes a sandwich from underneath his shirt and leaves it on a log. The campsite's been struck. His mother's voice echoes up from the river.

GAIL (v.o.)

Roarke!...C'mon!

He scans the bushes before running toward the river.

AT THE RIVER'S EDGE

The rafts have been packed and readied. Tom sits in the back of theirs, Gail's at the oars. Wade holds the .22 as Terry makes sure everything's secured. When he's done, Wade hands him two lengths of rope.

WADE

Tie them in. We don't want any unauthorized swimming.

Roarke jogs up to the rafts as Terry ties Gail and Tom by their ankles to "D" rings inside the raft.

Gail smiles at her son.

ROARKE

Can I go with you and Dad, Mom?

GAIL

Just do what they tell you.
Everything's going to be okay.

TOM
(a warning)
He's just a boy, Wade.

WADE
Luckily not just any old boy,
but your boy...which makes
him special to all of us.

He grabs Roarke by the back of his belt and lifts him off
the ground like a laundry sack. Roarke SQUEALS.

WADE
Short people this way.

ROARKE
Dad!...

Tom lunges toward the killer, but his secured feet send him
sprawling over the gunwale.

TOM
Get your hands off him!

WADE
(shrugs)
Whatever you say.

He lets go -- and Roarke drops to the beach. Wade pulls out
his knife.

As Tom scrambles to regain his seat, Roarke grabs a handful
of sand and throws it at Wade. Wade shields his face -- then
grabs the boy by the scruff of his neck and swings him
kicking into the raft.

TOM
Leave him alone!

Wade advances on Tom with the knife. He flicks the blade
inches from his face.

WADE
It's important for you to
realize that you're travelling
permanent standby on this trip.
(an icy look)
You can be bumped at any time.

Gail struggles against her ropes.

Tom looks down the length of the blade -- at Wade's face just beyond.

TOM
You're really sick.

WADE
You must have seen my prison record.
(proudly)
Textbook psychopath.

Wade looks away. His free hand slashes through the air and slaps Tom's face with a stinging WHACK. He wags a finger.

WADE
Which doesn't mean I like to
be reminded of it.

Tom blinks off tears.

TOM
You're something with a knife
in one hand and me tied up.

GAIL
He's a killer, Tom.

Wade puts the tip of the knife to Tom's chin, forcing him back, back, back.

Suddenly the blade slashes down, slicing Tom's restraining rope. Wade wheels and hurls the knife so it sticks into a hunk of driftwood on the beach.

WADE
You want a piece of me?

He tugs the .22 out of his belt and tosses it to Terry.

WADE
Just you and me.

Tom debates his move. He looks at Roarke.

WADE
C'mon, Dad. Show your
boy what you're made of.

GAIL
Tom, don't.

A ticking silence. Tom glares at Wade; he's practically bursting. Finally:

WADE

(mocking)

She who must be obeyed.

As he turns to retrieve his knife, Tom launches himself with a GRUNT and knocks him to the ground. They tumble over and over, until Wade is able to push him off.

Both men scramble to their feet and begin to circle each other -- Tom assuming a clumsy boxing position, Wade cockily standing with his arms at his side.

ROARKE

Pick your spot, Dad. Pick your spot!

Wade flicks out a jab, hitting Tom in the face. Another jab, another hit.

Roarke winces.

Tom crouches warily, telegraphing his thinking the way non-fighters do. He charges, but Wade steps aside and drills him in the stomach. Tom falls to his knees, gagging.

Roarke lowers himself below the gunwale, then slowly rises up, hoping to see a better result.

Terry looks down and jams his hands in his pockets, embarrassed. He removes something: the bug repellent Tom gave him. More guilt. He eases the repellent back in.

When Tom finally regains his feet, he winds up and throws a wild punch. Wade easily ducks it and drops him again with a powerful right hand. Tom struggles to catch his breath.

GAIL

Stop it! No more!

Tom, determined, stands again. He's bleeding from his lip and nose. His breathing's raspy. He fakes one move, then lowers his head and charges again. This time Wade grabs his head in both hands and SLAMS his knee into Tom's face. Tom SCREAMS and falls face down in the sand.

Gail yanks frantically on her restraining ropes. Her helplessness infuriates her.

GAIL

Tom?...please be okay...please.

Wade stands over Tom.

WADE
Still want a piece of me?

GAIL
Stay down, Tom.

Roarke stares at his father, crushed. Terry looks at the boy. Then he stares at his huge hands. He rubs his knuckles. He feels awful.

TERRY
He's had enough, Wade.

Wade ignores him -- bends closer to Tom, cups an ear.

WADE
Huh? I can't hear you. You
still want a piece of me?

Tom shoots out an arm and grabs Wade's legs.

ROARKE
(erupts)
All right, Dad!
(coaching)
Take him down!

Tom rises up, pulling Wade's legs out from under him. He pins him to the ground and lands one good punch before the killer jabs his fingers into Tom's eyes, momentarily blinding him.

Wade leaps to his feet as Tom staggers to his. There's a sadistic look in Wade's eye.

Again they circle each other. Wade flicks the jab: WHUNK, WHUNK, WHUNK. Tom's head keeps snapping back as the punches land with gruesome ease.

Gail grabs her restraining rope with two hands and pulls with all her might. Unable to free herself, she surges to her feet -- SCREAMS:

GAIL
Leave him alone!

Something snaps in Terry. He yanks the .22 out of his belt and threatens Wade.

TERRY
(bellows)
Stop it you sick fuck!...
Stop it or I'll kill you!

Tom's disoriented and defenseless. He stands there like a drunk, balancing precariously, refusing to go down.

Terry cocks the pistol and aims at Wade's chest.

TERRY
I mean it!

He takes a deep breath. His finger closes on the trigger.

Just then, Wade unloads from down under. The uppercut catches Tom with a sickening CRUNCH. His head snaps back a final time. His eyes go haywire. His knees quiver and buckle -- he drops in a heap.

GAIL
(howls)
You Fucker-Loser-Psycho!

Her voice ECHOES through the canyon and returns as bleak and pathetic as the sight of her battered husband on the beach.

Terry slowly uncocks the trigger, and lowers the gun to his side.

Gail jabs a finger at Wade. Her face pulses with rage.

GAIL
You touch him once more and I'll
never take you down this goddamn
river. You hear me! You will
never get down this river alive!

Roarke's head rises up from behind a gunwale. His father lies as still as driftwood.

Terry glares at Wade; he hates him.

Wade steps over Tom and walks past Terry toward the rafts.

WADE
Okay. Let's try this again.

AT THE CAMPSITE

A golden muzzle reaches for the sandwich. A hungry Maggie gulps down the food -- keeping a wary eye on the rafts.

EXT. CLIFFS - RIVER WILD - DAY

Maggie races along the towering cliffs as the two rafts pass below.

MAGGIE'S POV: Tom and Gail's raft is first. Tom's head is wrapped in a wet shirt. Gail, at the oars, looks behind her.

Wade, Terry and Roarke follow -- thirty yards behind. Wade sits in the bow, riding shotgun, in effect, with the .22.

BACK TO SCENE

Maggie scrambles over rocks and fallen trees, sticking as close to the edge as possible. A rabbit pops up in her path and freezes -- but Maggie pushes past the bunny, undeterred from her downstream mission.

EXT. RIVER - CHURNING WHITE WATER - LATE AFTERNOON

FROM A LOW ANGLE

We look up the ROARING rapid -- over the spumes of spray and moss flecked boulders. It feels like the Wild's pouring down our throats. More than ever, we feel the river's relentless power.

Heads appear: Tom's and Gail's, seeming to float over the water.

They dip out of sight -- then the black rubber nose of their raft shoots up like a whale. The nose crashes down, scoops a barrel of water that soaks them both -- before the raft flattens out for a final dash to the quiet pool below.

IN QUIETER WATER

Gail maneuvers the raft slightly downstream. Both she and Tom are drenched and shivering.

GAIL

I'm going to hold here, honey.
If they flip over, we'll be in a
better position to help Roarke.

She takes the wet shirt off Tom's face and dunks it in the river. His face is a mess. She wrings out the shirt and dabs at his cuts and bruises.

TOM

Wade's planning to kill us at
the takeout.

A look between them confirms it.

TOM

Which means we've only got one more night...tonight.

GAIL

They'll need me to get them through The Gauntlet.

(hopeful)

If you could get away and get help, that'd be the best.

TOM

What if I can't?

GAIL

(steel-eyed)

Then I'm going to put us in the water.

The spectre of a suicide mission puts a grim mask on both their faces. The rushing current laps against the raft.

GAIL

I'd rather we had some control over what happens.

TOM

Where?

GAIL

In The Gauntlet...there's a rock called the Devil's Cleaver.

A long, awful silence.

TOM

What about Roarke?

Gail clamps a hand to her mouth, fights off tears.

GAIL

Any chance is better than none, isn't it?..

(tears flow)

...And he swims like a fish.

Tom engulfs her in a hug. The Boston Brahman lacquer shatters. Tears stream down his swollen cheeks.

TOM

He does because you taught him.
And when we get out of here I'm
going to teach him some things,
too. I promise.

He holds Gail's head in his hands, wipes her matted hair from
her face.

TOM

Can you forgive me for being
missing for so long?

Gail looks at him lovingly.

TOM

Sometimes you can't appreciate
the quality of life until you
know the value of it.

(rueful)

My problem is I've got a wall
full of degrees and a head full
of nothing.

She touches a finger to his cracked lips. She starts to
laugh.

GAIL

Ship of fools, that's us.

(she smiles)

But it's the only ship for me.

Tom pulls her to him; they kiss long and loving.

ANGLE WADE & TERRY'S RAFT

Bouncing into view at the head of the chute. Terry sights
down the rapid, trying to chart the best course.

TERRY

Hold on!

Roarke slips onto the floor and braces his legs against the
sides of the raft. Wade pushes his pistol deeper into his
belt, then grips his seat.

The bow of the raft dips suddenly -- they seem to be falling
into a hole in the river. Roarke's head bounces up, then
Terry's...finally Wade's, as the raft snakes its way over a
watery ledge and shoots straight up.

Terry tries to steady the raft with the oars, but all he gets is air with one and a rock with the other. The raft swings broadside in the current -- then hits another rock that SLAMS it against the sheer granite wall of the bordering cliff. The force of the river holds the raft in a straight course, banging, banging, banging along the wall.

One final plunge -- then they shoot through a wall of spray and into the safety of quiet water.

IN THE POOL

Gail maneuvers her raft to stop their progress, like a rodeo rider running down a runaway horse.

GAIL

(to Roarke)

You okay, honey?

Roarke nods, but he looks like a drowned cat. Tom grabs the bowline and Gail digs for shore.

ON THE BEACH

The gear's unloaded and the rafts are tipped up one at a time to drain off the water they've taken aboard.

WADE

(to Gail, concerned)

How's that rapid compare to
The Gauntlet?

Gail takes a grain of pleasure in his non-swimmer's fear.

GAIL

It doesn't.

A CANOE

Suddenly rockets through the tail end of the white water -- expertly navigating the narrow chute. The khaki and green uniform tells us it's a FISH & GAME RANGER.

ON THE BEACH

WADE

(deadly; to Gail)

Silence is life.

He shows her the gun, then replaces it in his belt.

WADE

Terry, get Roarke.

Terry pulls the boy beside him and holds a knife to the small of his back.

The Ranger beaches his canoe and hops out.

RANGER
Afternoon, folks.

TOM
Hi.

RANGER
That chute's trickier than it looks.

He wipes his face with a bandana and stuffs it back in his pocket, looks around.

RANGER
Going to camp here tonight?

Tom and Gail say nothing. Wade gives her a look.

GAIL
Thought we might. We're pretty wet...and I never like to run The Gauntlet at the end of a day.

RANGER
Smart thinking. The river's running high.

The Ranger senses an awkwardness. He looks from face to face -- his eyes settling, finally, on Tom's.

RANGER
What happened to you?

TOM
(mumbles)
Slipped on one rock, smashed it on another.

RANGER
Done that myself.

Gail wants to scream. She shoots a look at Wade, then Terry, desperate to forge some plan, any plan. She glances at Tom.

Together they see Terry tightening his grip on Roarks.

Tom eyes the gun, tacked in Wade's belt. He debates his action.

HIS TOE

Begins to carve an S.O.S. in the sand.

VARIOUS ANGLES

Gail sees what he's doing and begins to edge away, hoping to distract Wade.

The Ranger scratches his head, then looks up at the sun.

RANGER

Been on this river one long week. I better move it if I'm gonna get off by nightfall.

He heads for his canoe.

TOM

(blurts)

Officer!

The Ranger stops abruptly.

A tense silence, as -

Terry tightens his grip on Roarke.

Wade places his hand on the .22.

TOM

I was wondering, ah...

Tom glances at the S.O.S. at his feet -- then his eye settles on a trout fly stuck to his own fishing vest. He gestures toward the fly.

TOM

...if you knew what the hell this is? Seems to be the only fly the fish are interested in. It's my last one.

RANGER

Let's take a look.

He makes his way toward Tom, who looks down once more at the S.O.S. Please Lord. Tom hands him the fly.

RANGER

Looks like some sort of caddis.

Tom tries to position the Ranger to look down at the message. It's a silent, awkward tango. Maddening.

Gail mouths: C'mon...c'mon!

CLOSE ON THE S.O.S.

Wade's boots suddenly fill the frame, covering the crude letters. A quick shuffle...and the S.O.S. is wiped out.

BACK TO SCENE

Wade grins at Tom. Tom's face falls. The Ranger hands him back his fly.

RANGER

Might try a Hump, but you know
these trout: whatever works, works.

He retreats to his canoe, slides it into the river, pushes off and jumps in.

Gail watches him paddle away. She stares through glazed eyes...then something snaps. Her feet start to move.

GAIL

Come back...

She starts for the river, as if in a trance. Walking at first. The Ranger's still in sight.

CLOSE ON HER FEET: Picking up speed. Faster...faster.

BACK TO SCENE

TOM

Gail?

WADE

(alarmed)

Where the hell's she going?

Gail's running now.

WADE

(to Tom)

Stop her!

Gail watches the Ranger head into the tail water of the pool.

WADE

(shouts)

Goddamn it, stop her!

GAIL
(screams)

Come back!

Tom runs after her. Terry pushes Roarke to the ground and sprints at an angle to cut her off. Wade joins the chase.

WADE
Grab her Terry!

Gail scrambles onto a rock shelf and bounds closer to the edge -- where the shelf drops into a cauldron of churning water.

Terry clears the rock face in a single leap. He reaches out just as Gail plunges into the river. Wade and Tom rush up beside him. They all peer into the white water.

TOM
Gail? C'mon...please!

WADE
(nervous)
Where the hell is she?

ON THE BEACH

Roarke's running toward the river as fast as his legs will take him. HUFFING & PUFFING, his eyes filled with fear.

ON THE ROCK SHELF

Tom looks downstream: no sign of Gail. He's frantic.

TOM
Gail!...Gail!
(pleading)
Please, don't do this.

WADE
Come back, Goddamn it. Come back!
(screams)

We need you...you hear me!
We need you!

Tom jumps in and struggles to hold his head above the white froth. He takes a breath and dives under.

UNDERWATER

He strains to see through all the bubbles and currents. It's like being suspended in the middle of a blizzard. No sign of Gail.

BACK ON THE ROCK SHELF

Wade and Terry exchange panicked looks.

IN THE RIVER

Tom pops up downstream, as-

ON THE BEACH

Roarke reaches the water's edge.

ROARKE

(hollers)

Find her, Dad!...Please!

(tears)

She's gotta be in there!

IN THE RIVER

A frantic Tom treads water long enough to catch his breath, then he disappears under the surface once more.

REVERSE ANGLE

Looking back at Wade and Terry at the lip of the shelf.
Behind them, Gail's head rises up from a crevasse in the rock.

She climbs out like a worker emerging from a man hole and creeps silently toward the two convicts. The ROAR of the river covers her approach.

GAIL'S POV: The grip of her .22 sticks out of Wade's belt as she moves closer...closer...closer.

BACK TO SCENE

A quick snatch, and Gail has the gun. Wade whirls around. Gail points the .22 at him as she backs up a few steps.

WADE

(admiringly)

How'd you do that?

We see Tom surface downstream.

GAIL

Tom!

WADE

Goddamn!...You do know
this river.

Tom looks as if he's just seen a ghost -- the nicest, friendliest ghost ever. He swims for the beach.

GAIL

(shouts to him)

Get Roarke into the raft.

Wade and Terry start to edge apart.

GAIL

Don't move, or I'll shoot.

Her words are firm, but her eyes dart nervously. Her gun hand shakes.

WADE

I doubt it.

He steps toward her. Gail stops him by drawing a bead on his forehead. Wade smiles his cat & mouse smile.

Tom swings Roarke into the raft.

TOM

(bellows)

Shoot the son-of-a-bitch if he moves!

GAIL

Tom, find something and slash the other raft.

WADE

You don't want to do that.

Tom takes the aluminium landing net from the raft, bends the long handle over his knee and wrenches it back and forth until it breaks -- giving him a sharp edge.

GAIL

Sink it Tom!

WADE

You're doing the wrong thing.

GAIL

Shut up!

Tom plunges the aluminum shard into a gunwale, and the raft sputters into a heap of rubber.

TOM

I'll row into shallow water.
You come down.

Tom hops in with Roarke and pushes off. Wade shakes his head. Then he reaches into his pocket and holds up his fist. He opens his fingers slowly. He's holding the three remaining bullets. Gail's face falls.

WADE

I may not be the hottest thing on the river, but it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that running rapids with a loaded pistol in your pocket is a short cut to the tenor section.

GAIL

Go, Tom! Take Roarke and go!

Gail looks at the useless gun in her hand. She starts to heave it, but Wade pounces first. He grabs the .22, and forces her to the ground.

Tom dips the oars in and pulls into deeper water.

WADE

(hollers)

You're looking at her for the last time if you take off.

Tom looks back and forth between Roarke and Gail. His swollen face is wracked with emotion.

GAIL

(pleads)

Go! Do it for Roarke, Tom!
I would. Please, for Roarke.

The current tugs his raft slowly downstream.

Roarke suddenly throws himself into the water.

Gail's face fills with horror as the boy splashes toward her.

GAIL

No Roarke! Go back...
go with Dad!

Roarke swims with all his might.

ROARKE

Don't worry, Mom. I'm coming.

Tom's shoulders sag. Defeated, he dips in the oars and takes the first stroke toward shore.

CLOSE ON GAIL: Devastated. She gathers all her energy and wails like a siren:

GAIL

Noooooo!

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT FIVE

Terry chops some firewood with Gail's hatchet, then jams the blade in a log. He tosses the newly cut wood on the campfire -- sending flames shooting into the night.

Wade's sitting against a rock, studying the topo map. Tom and Gail sit together, hands bound behind them, Roarke huddled between them.

Terry sits down across from them. He scratches his forearms, they're a mass of bug bites.

TERRY

Anybody want anything?

Silence. He's almost embarrassed to look at Tom.

GAIL

What'd you do, Terry...that got you in trouble?

TERRY

(remorseful)

Did something I shouldn't of done
...to a guy who was doing something
he shouldn't of been doing.

GAIL

Did he die?

TERRY

His brain did.

Gail nods in Wade's direction.

GAIL

What about him?

TERRY

He killed a bunch of people.

Wade's eyes rise up over the top of the map.

GAIL

Who killed Jim and Peter? Wade?

Terry nods, somberly. Gail pauses for a moment -- knowing where she wants to go -- not sure how to get there. Tom steps in.

TOM

So if he did all the killing,
he's in more trouble than you.

Wade folds up the map and pushes himself to his feet. He walks over to the fire and pokes at it.

WADE

Divide and Conquer 101. Is
that it? When's the test?
(he stands, gestures grandly)
Yep. What you're looking at is
the firm of Murder & Mayhem. Terry
and me. What we share is the
unfortunate ability to run across
people who happen to find themselves
in the wrong place at the wrong
time. Isn't that right, Terry?

Terry is silent. He starts to whittle a piece of wood.

TERRY

You don't even know me.

WADE

He doesn't like to talk about it
much...it's the old story: Boy gets
girl. Boy finds girl with other
boy. Boy gets boy who gets girl.
(sad to say it, but)
And now girl...

Terry glares at him. Wade plunges happily on.

WADE

...Is boinking new boy...making
old boy very, very unhappy.

Terry slices bigger and bigger splinters of wood -- trying to vent his anger. The stick SNAPS.

TERRY

Fuck you, Wade!

Wade throws up his hands...no offense intended.

WADE

Just a layman's depiction.

Terry jabs the knife at him. He's trembling.

TERRY
I said shut-the-fuck-up!

He stands and takes a step toward Wade -- threatens him with the knife.

Wade pulls the pistol out of his belt and aims it at Terry.

WADE
No you didn't. You said fuck you.

BLAM! A shot wizzes past Terry's ear.

Tom sees them lock eyes. A stony silence. He looks at Gail, unseen by either killer.

TOM
(mouths)
Two left.

WADE
But if you want me to shut up
I will. Just know that they're
trying to fuck with your head.

Terry lowers the knife. Wade returns the gun to his belt.

GAIL
Why'd you have to come to this
river?...To this beautiful place?

Wade squats in front of her.

WADE
It wasn't exactly our first choice.
That was Canada. But then we
figured they'd figure we'd
make that move. So we made them
think we did, but we doubled back,
instead. Hated to give up the Bronco,
but they were onto that anyway.

He pushes himself to his feet, starts to walk away. Gail glares at him, her eyes burning with hate.

GAIL
You better know something about
the wilderness.

Wade stops, his back to her.

GAIL

(trembling)

You better know there's an order out here. Everything has its place. The rocks...the river...the fish. The trout eats the mayfly and the hawk eats the trout. But nothing kills for nothing. It's been going on this way for ever. And when you break that order, you will be broken.

Silence. A new resonance in Gail's voice: the truth.

GAIL

Somehow. Somewhere. Sure as rain. When you break that order, you will be broken.

Wade takes out the .22 again, and squats in front of her.

WADE

Maybe, but there are a lot of laws. And I've spent a lifetime breaking most of them.

He puts the gun barrel to Gail's forehead. Gail closes her eyes.

WADE

But the one I believe in the most is the law of relativity. And right now, relative to you, I kind of like my position. Click!

He smiles, stands.

WADE

Roarke, get in the tent.

Roarke wraps his arms around his mother's neck. Gail kisses him, fiddles with his shirt.

GAIL

I'm so proud that you're my son.

Roarke hugs his father next.

CLOSE ON ROARKE'S HANDS: Behind Tom's back. The boy has palmed his Swiss Army knife. He slips it in his father's hand and closes his fingers around it. Tom squeezes the knife.

BACK TO SCENE

Roarke touches his father's bruised face. They exchange a long look...then Roarke walks off toward the tent.

Tom catches Gail's eye. A look. Something's on.

Wade offers Terry the .22.

WADE

Truce?

Terry hesitates before taking the gun.

TERRY

For now.

WADE

Well, I always say there's no time like the present.

(to Tom & Gail)

Lights out.

Gail and Tom climb into their sleeping bags. Wade zips them up, then lashes a rope around each one. He walks past Terry toward their tent.

WADE

You take the first two hours,
I'll grab the next two.

Terry throws some more wood on the fire, then he drags his sleeping bag to the base of a nearby pine tree and climbs in.

He looks across the fire to Gail. He can see her face -- feminine, vulnerable, eyes closed.

He takes out his bottle of bug repellent. It's empty. He scowls and tosses the bottle away. He looks back at Gail. More than anything he wants her. A sex fantasy puts a smile on his face.

LATER

The fire's burned low. Terry has snuggled deeper into his bag and dozed off.

CLOSE ON TOM'S SLEEPING BAG: A knife blade breaks the material like a shark fin. Slowly it cuts through the bag...sawing one coil of rope...then another...

VARIOUS ANGLES

Tom hacks through the final coil of rope. He sits up and looks at Terry -- then at Gail: her face is lined with fatigue. She's given in to sleep.

Tom takes a deep breath and slips out of his bag. There's a hardness in his eyes. A Tom we've never seen.

He crawls toward Terry, holding the knife in his right hand. Hand forward. Knee forward. Stop. Listen. Other hand. Other knee forward. Stop. Listen. He looks like a panther.

A mosquito hovers above Terry's face...buzzing...looking for a sweet spot. Terry swipes a hand, sputters, half-asleep.

Tom drops face down. He waits for several moments, then pushes back up on all fours. He takes a deep breath and inches ahead. Two more steps and he's in position to strike.

Tom sits back on his haunches, his face taut. He raises the knife, ready to bring it down.

The mosquito lands on Terry's nose. His eyes pop open.

TERRY'S POV: Tom's face looms large and crazed...the knife blade gleams.

BACK TO SCENE

Terry rolls to one side as the knife comes down. The blade cuts him in the forearm, drawing blood. The .22 goes flying in the dark.

Tom looks frantically for the gun as Terry thrashes to get out of his sleeping bag. Tom's eyes dart here and there. Nothing. He lunges once more at Terry, but the convict is able to block him with his forearm and send him flying.

GAIL

Awakens when she hears the STRUGGLE. She looks over at Tom and Terry -- then she spots the hatchet, still stuck in the log by the fire. Bound in her sleeping bag, she squirms like an inch worm, desperate to reach it.

TOM & TERRY

Tom's regained his feet, but Terry is finally free of his sleeping bag. He grabs it and twists it around his forearm as a shield. Then he reaches for his own knife. It looks like a machete compared to Tom's.

THE GUN

Both men spot it at the same time, but Terry's closer. A momentary standoff as Tom weighs his odds. Not so good. He bolts for the woods.

TERRY
(shouts)

Wade!

IN THE WOODS

Tom leaps over a felled log, trips, picks himself up and plunges through a thicket.

AT THE CAMPSITE

Terry grabs the gun and rushes to the edge of darkness. He can hear Tom crashing around, but he's afraid to go after him. He sees imaginary pairs of eyes everywhere he looks. In the trees, on the ground. He looks around nervously, waiting for help. He aims the gun here and there, hoping for a shot...all he sees are eyes.

IN THE WOODS

Tom scrambles on all fours. Branches whack him in the face. An eye tears, but he pushes on, desperate.

AT THE CAMPSITE

Gail is only inches from the hatchet when Wade beats her to it. He wrenches it from the log and hurries over to Terry.

WADE
(disgusted)

What happened?

TERRY
He had a knife.

WADE
What'd I tell you about him.
I'll get my flashlight.

He runs off.

Roarke pokes his head out of his tent: no one's watching. He scrambles out and runs to his mother. He starts to untie the ropes that bind her in her sleeping bag.

GAIL
Dad's gone for help.

Wade swoops by and snatches up the boy by his belt. He carries him off like a duffel, butt end first.

Gail looks on helplessly as Wade tosses Roarke into his tent and zips up the front flap.

IN THE WOODS

Tom crashes through a clump of saplings thirty yards from camp, and stops to catch his breath. He looks around: to his right he sees the base of the cliff, angling in. To his left and straight ahead he HEARS the river. Behind him the camp fire glows faintly visible. He looks at his feet. He's standing in the soft mud of a spring.

His eyes begin to adjust to the dark. What used to be only dark forms start to show detail. A stump...a boulder...a thicket...all clearly defined. He splashes down the spring toward the river.

AT THE RIVER'S EDGE - FIFTY YARDS DOWNSTREAM

Tom bursts from the underbrush and pauses to take stock. The sheer wall of granite pinches in, forming the mouth of another gorge.

He starts out into the current. The water rises quickly. Suddenly, Tom's over his head. He disappears momentarily in the dark water, then bobs up. Downstream, moonlight illuminates a line of white spray that marks the start of a roaring rapid.

AT THE CAMPSITE

Wade runs up to Terry, his flashlight beam bouncing before him. He grabs the gun from him, hands him the hatchet.

WADE

See if you can guard her
without fucking up.

He plunges into the woods.

AT THE RIVER'S EDGE -- FURTHER DOWNSTREAM

Tom struggles ashore. He looks at the rock wall across the river, then at the cliff face on his side. Up, up, up it climbs -- like the Cliffs of Moher.

A NOISE...movement. Tom looks toward the campsite. He spots the BEAM of Wade's flashlight, then loses it. The CRASHING in the thicket grows louder. Tom looks up once more. He swallows: there's no way out but up.

He leaps for a root and grabs it with both hands. His feet scramble to get a purchase. He reaches for another handhold.

IN THE WOODS

Wade splashes into the spring. He points the flashlight on the muddy ground. Footprints. He kneels to inspect them. They're fresh, filling with water. He traces their direction with his light, and heads for the river.

ON THE CLIFF WALL

Tom's now twenty feet up, breathing hard. He looks to a ledge some twenty feet higher, then he looks down: Wade's flashlight BEAM draws closer. Tom reaches for another hold, tests it, then pulls. He GRUNTS and scrambles upward.

ON THE GROUND

Wade emerges from the woods at the base of the cliff. He kneels and fingers more footprints. He starts out into the current, but the force of the river frightens him. His eyes widen with fear -- one near drowning is enough. He struggles back to shore.

A pebble lands with a PLINK beside him. Wade aims his flashlight up the wall. Tom is nearing the ledge directly above him.

ON THE CLIFF WALL

Tom freezes, exposed by the BEAM of light. His fingers scratch at the rock, frantic for the next handhold.

ON THE GROUND

Wade aims the .22 at Tom -- but all he's got to shoot at are boot soles. He can't afford to waste the shot. He points the light at the river, swallows hard, and starts back into the current to get a better angle.

IN THE RIVER

He inches - step by cautious step - further out. The beam hits the drop-off. Wade tip toes his foot to the edge, then swings around to face the cliff.

ON THE CLIFF WALL

Tom plops a hand onto the lip of the ledge. There are several loose boulders beneath it. His head is suddenly illuminated by Wade's flashlight. His foot swings onto the

IN THE RIVER

Wade has a clear shot. He takes aim.

ON THE CLIFF WALL

Tom's face is contorted by his efforts.

TOM
C'mon!...C'mon!...

His fingers turn white...his eyes bulge...a final GASP and he wrenches his body up and over the ledge, as -

IN THE RIVER

CLOSE ON THE .22: BLAM!

ON THE CLIFF WALL

Tom SCREAMS as the bullet splatters just inches from his exposed elbow, loosening a small rock. The small rock frees a bigger one, and suddenly a boulder peels off the cliff and sails into the night.

IN THE RIVER

Wade hears a MIGHTY SPLASH twenty yards downstream. He swings the flashlight toward the sound. Nothing but dark water. He aims the light back up at the cliff. No movement. No Tom. He waits, then heads toward shore, satisfied he's killed his prey.

ON THE CLIFF LEDGE

A prone Tom flattens his body to the narrow shelf, trying desperately to muffle his heavy breathing.

TOM
(rasps)
Five shots...one left.

Tom angles his head so he can look toward the campsite. He hears FOOTSTEPS in the brush. Then he sees the beam of Wade's flashlight heading for camp. Farther off, the glow of the campfire makes an orange smudge in the dark.

Tom sits back on the narrow ledge and forces himself to look up: the massive slab of granite glistens in the moonlight -- its surface unbroken but for a few cracks and chutes.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Wade crunches his way out of the woods and joins Terry and Gail at the campfire.

Her face is taut with fear. She's heard the shot.

TERRY

You get him?

WADE

I got him first. The fishies
get him next. I'm going to get
some dry clothes.

Terry can't bring himself to look at Gail. He stares at his hands.

CLOSE ON GAIL: Her face shatters piece by piece. An eye twitches. A lip quivers. The GUN SHOT ECHOES in her mind. A tear slides down one cheek. The campfire flickers in her eyes. THE GUNSHOT ECHOES AGAIN. She begins to rock her head -- tears flow like the Wild.

EXT. MONTANA GAS STATION/CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

In the middle of nowhere. One gas pump, and a clutter of signs in the window that advertizes everything from beer to worms. C&W MUSIC spills out the screen door.

A TEENAGE GIRL sits on a stack of Coke crates, talking to someone on the pay phone.

A Montana Fish & Game jeep pulls up, canoe lashed on top. The Ranger we saw on the river gets out, walks past the Girl and inside the store.

The Girl's immersed in crucial conversation. We can tell by the way she's toying with the cord.

GIRL

...She said that! Ghod!
I'm sure. I mean what does
Sandra know about what I know
about what Billy knows about
me?...You know? I mean, Ghod!...

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE TWO FAMILIAR MUG SHOTS OF WADE & TERRY: Posted on the community bulletin board just inside the door.

PROPRIETOR (v.o.)
Evening, Justen. The usual?

RANGER (v.o.)
Better make it two quarts.
Been on that river too long.

THE RANGER

Collects his change and happily cradles his beer.

RANGER
(grins)
Doesn't get any better than this.

He walks past the bulletin board with barely a glance and leaves. The screen door SLAMS shut.

Several beats. The screen door BURSTS OPEN. The Ranger, suddenly animated, stares at the mugshots.

RANGER
Holy shit!

EXT. STORE - NIGHT

The Ranger sets his two quarts of beer down and taps the Girl on the shoulder.

RANGER
(urgent)
Excuse me! I've got to use
the phone. It's important!

She cups the receiver and looks at him as if he's just pinched the head off a baby.

GIRL
I'm sure. This call is important
to me, you know. Ghod!...Some people-

The Ranger takes a breath, then wrenches the phone from her.

RANGER
(growls)
Get off the goddamn phone! This
is an emergency!

He hangs up and punches a number, as the Girl glares at him.

EXT. CANYON WALL - NIGHT

Tom stands on a precarious ledge, higher than the one we left him on.

Off to his left a small scrub pine angles out from the rock face. Beyond it, there's a another ledge and a promising trail -- but there's no safe way to reach the pine tree and get to the trail.

Above him there's a steep, narrow chute.

Neither route thrills him, but Tom chooses the chute and squeezes inside -- flattening his back against one side, pressing the soles of his boots against the other. His knees are socked against his chest.

He slides his back upwards, then inches his feet higher to maintain the tension that holds him securely between the two sides. Exhausted, he repeats the process twice more, then pauses to catch his breath.

THE MOON ducks behind a cloud.

WIDE ON THE CLIFF: The chute is a darker vertical shaft cut into a gray wall. We see Tom's figure scrunched inside.

CLOSE ON TOM: Once more inching his hands upward. Then his feet, caterpillar style. He GRUNTS, blinks sweat.

VARIOUS SHOTS OF THE RIVER: Gleaming in the moonlight. Time passes.

BACK TO THE CLIFF: Tom's made it to the top of the chute. Above it, the cliff grows less sheer. Stunted pines. More handholds. Easier going, if he can only get out of the chute and onto the ledge.

Tom braces himself between the rock sides of the chute and reaches his hand overhead, searching for a good grip on the ledge. He finds a handhold with his outer arm. Next, he reaches across his body with his inside arm to find a similar purchase. It scares him to lose contact with the chute, and he pulls back.

He looks down: the granite chute falls away like a very steep bobsled run. His toes start to quiver from the strain of holding him in place. It's a good two feet wider at the top than the bottom -- harder to maintain the tension.

HIS TOES quiver faster, faster.

HIS HAND inches out once more.

HIS BODY trembles with a final spasm of effort. He makes a sickening MOANING SOUND -- then his foot gives way.

Down the chute he plummets: out of control, his hands and feet trying to jam against the sides to slow his fall.

His back scrapes along the coarse rock surface; the effect is like a cheese grater -- his skin peeling off in sickening flecks.

He drops twenty-five feet before his efforts and the narrowing chute slow his fall.

His body comes to a thumping halt just above the ledge where he started his climb. His knees are pinned against his chest. His breathing comes in compressed gulps. His eyes are closed. His palms are raw.

ON THE LEDGE

The first drop of blood from his back hits the rock. The drops come faster and faster as the blood surges through the open abrasion.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Gail's eyes pop open. Terry looms above her, only inches away. She SCREAMS, but a huge hand muffles the sound.

TERRY

I just want to talk.

Fear shimmers in Gail's eyes. She struggles. Terry lowers his body onto hers.

TERRY

Shhhh! I won't let him hurt you and the boy. Understand?

His hand gropes her through her sleeping bag.

TERRY

(whispers)

Trust me. I won't let him hurt you.

Gail stops struggling. Terry swallows. He fondles her breasts through the thick material. His hand starts down.

TERRY

The barrel of a pistol suddenly appears at his temple. Terry's expression changes to fear. He climbs off Gail as Wade holds the .22 to his head.

WADE

What the hell's the matter with you?

He taps Terry's head with the gun barrel.

WADE

You've got to start thinking more with this head.

He puts his face inches from Terry's.

WADE

So leave her a-fucking-lone until she gets us through the goddamn Gauntlet. Is that so hard for you to understand? After the big one you can do whatever you want. Fuck her in the trees. Fuck her in the water. Fuck her to death if you want. But just leave her a-fucking-lone 'til then.

Terry skulks off, humiliated.

Wade looks down at Gail, cowering in her sleeping bag. He touches the barrel of his .22 to his forehead, pretending to tilt up the brim of a stetson (in the traditional cowboy gesture: "At your service, ma'am").

EXT. TOP OF CANYON - NIGHT

A sad-eyed Maggie stares down at the campfire below. From this perspective, it looks like a tiny, orange dot. She lifts her head from her paws, WHIMPERS, then lowers her head once more.

EXT. CLIFF WALL - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A knife chipping pebbles loose from a crack.

REVEAL TOM

Standing once more on the precarious ledge he fell to -- reaching out to carve a handhold that will provide him a way to get to the scrub pine and the ledge beyond -- the route he initially rejected in favor of the chute.

Tom works the crevasse until he's satisfied. Then he leans out to test the hold. Pretty good. He closes the blade and pockets the knife.

For the first time, we get a good look at his back. The terrifying fall has torn most of his shirt and turned a sizable patch of skin into raw hamburger.

Tom takes a breath, wiggles his left hand into the newly widened crack, and steps off the ledge. His body swings into space. His feet scratch the rock face for a nub of support as his right hand joins his left, giving him two hands in the crevasse.

Now he's glued to the wall at four points. He removes his left hand from the crack and reaches for the pine.

HIS FINGERS fall six inches short.

TOM GRUNTS, and tries again, reaching out as far as he dares.

HIS FINGERS fall three inches short.

Panic! He's misjudged the distance, and put himself in no-man's land. Tom looks down. The river's a hundred feet below.

He eyes the scrub pine once more. It's his only chance. Tom gathers himself for a do-or-die leap. He begins to rock his body gently against the wall...once, twice...like a kid on a swing trying to get higher.

On the third swing he launches himself from his tenuous perch and sails through the air.

His hands grab the tree trunk. The little pine creaks. Some of the roots pull out from the cliff, but the tree holds. He swings forward once, then back -- then he flings himself a second time and lands on the ledge on all fours.

ON THE LEDGE

Tom catches his breath and looks up: a narrow trail of loose rock leads up the cliff wall to a place where the granite is cleaved. He scrambles forward and disappears.

EXT. CAMPSITE - RIVER WILD - NIGHT

Wade and Gail face each other across the fire -- captor and captive -- lit an eerie orange by the embers. Gail's still trying to find some chink...get some advantage...anything.

WADE
You just love playing lawyer,
don't you?

GAIL
Usually I come out here so I
can stop being a lawyer.

WADE
(laughs)
...So then the guy told me he was
going to cut out my adams apple
with a very sharp knife if I didn't
give him what was in my wallet. I
said he could have the money. I told
him I was reaching for my wallet...
only it wasn't my wallet.

GAIL
Sounds like self-defense.

WADE
Sort of. Except I owed him the
money he was asking for.

He takes a stick and pokes the fire.

WADE
I always loved math, growing up.
It's so black and white. With
only one answer per problem.
(correcting himself)
One right answer. Seven times
six is forty-two. I love that.
So when I grew up and life started
getting complicated, I decided I'd
make it simple. The shortest distance
between two points is a straight
line. And if people got between me
and the point I wanted to get to...
It was just a matter of math.
(a grin)
Usually subtraction. Clean,
simple, one answer.

Gail realizes the depth of Wade's derangement.

EXT. CLIFF - LATER

Tom crawls over a cluster of jagged boulders and drops to a
narrow trail that winds upward to the rim of the canyon. He

ON THE TOP OF THE CLIFF

Tom pulls himself over a final boulder and emerges at last from the canyon. The Wild winds like a silver ribbon far, far below.

Tom looks downstream where he knows he has to go. In the dark, the mountains seem soft and almost rounded. Way beyond, the city lights of Great Falls glimmer like a bed of scattered coals.

INT. STATE POLICE HEADQUARTERS, GREAT FALLS - NIGHT

A wall clock tells us it's 3:00. The Ranger stands in front of the map of Montana -- surrounded by Cutter, Martin, and several other Troopers. He points to a place on the river.

CUTTER

You're sure it was them?

RANGER

Oh yeah. The guy's face was a mess. They must of beat the shit out of him.

CUTTER

And you say they were camped for the night?

The Ranger nods.

CUTTER

How far is it from that campsite to takeout?

RANGER

About eight miles.

Cutter studies the map.

CUTTER

What's that last part of the river like?

The Ranger's finger traces the Wild down to the takeout.

RANGER

You've got about four miles of slow water and steep canyon below them.

-MORE-

RANGER cont'd.
Then there's The Gauntlet...the
toughest rapid on the Wild.
Below that you've got some gentle
meadowland...then you hit the last
two miles of canyon...and you're out.

CUTTER
Takeout's where? Show me, exactly.

RANGER
Right here. Deep Water Canyon.
The cliffs rise up kind of like
gates, and that's it.

CUTTER
You say the woman knew what she
was doing.

RANGER
She sounded like a pro.

CUTTER
So let's say they need her to
get them to the takeout. Where'd
be the best place to get our men
in there to intercept them?

The Ranger points to the meadowland below The Gauntlet.

RANGER
This would be the easiest way
onto the river itself. Only
problem is there're no roads in.

MARTIN
Helicopter?

CUTTER
If those killers see or hear
a chopper, you'd be looking
at a family with zero life
expectancy.

The Ranger points to the cliffs a mile above the takeout.

RANGER
There is a fire road into here.
Piece of cake for 4-wheel drive,
but getting down those cliffs
to the river...

The Ranger shakes his head. Cutter's determined.

CUTTER
If you can get me on top of
those cliffs, I'll round up
some men who'll get down.

MARTIN
Sir?

All eyes turn.. What now?

MARTIN
You might want some kind of cover.

CUTTER
Such as?

MARTIN
Fishing, ah...
(he glances around)
...stuff.

EXT. CAMPSITE - RIVER WILD - NIGHT

Wade and Gail remain face to face across the campfire.

GAIL
I need to go to the bathroom.

Wade gets up and unties her. He waves the .22.

WADE
Roarke says you got one minute.

Gail heads for the woods between the campsite and the rafts.

INT. ROARKE'S TENT - NIGHT

In the dark, Roarke struggles to write a message on the back of the washing instructions tag on the inside of his sleeping bag. He's got a stub of a pencil. He's using his mess kit to write against.

We can just make out the crude letters: **HELP. WE'RE PRISONERS. ESCAPED CONVICTS. GOING TO TAKEOUT. JUNE 18.**

EXT. CAMPSITE - RIVER WILD - NIGHT

IN THE WOODS

Gail crouches down and pulls a spool of monofilament fishing leader from her shirt pocket. Her eyes dart about...from tree to tree...searching...searching -- settling finally on two saplings about six feet apart. A splintered tree stump forms the third point of a triangle, a body length away from the saplings.

Gail ties one end of the line around one of the trees about shin-high -- then loops it around the other tree and brings it back. She ties it off, and jams a stick between the line.

WADE (v.o.)

Ten second warning! Nine...eight...

Gail twists the stick over and over, making the line taut.

WADE (v.o.)

...Four...three...two...

GAIL

(shouts)

Be right there!

CLOSE ON HER HANDS: Working furiously.

EXT. CLIFFS ABOVE THE RIVER WILD - NIGHT

Tom runs through the woods at the edge of the canyon. He trots down an embankment, then scrambles up the back side of a huge boulder. He jumps down to a clearing of pine needles. We hear a low GROWL.

SMASH CUT

A GRIZZLY SOW surges out of the dark and rises up on her hind legs. She GROWLS LOUDER, fangs bared...slices the air with a massive paw just yards from a terrified Tom.

Tom staggers backwards, stumbles over a rock and falls to the ground. The bear teeters forward on her haunches.

TOM'S POV: Gobs of saliva hang from the grizzly's black lips. She SNORTS and HISSES. He can almost smell her breath.

BACK TO SCENE

Suddenly, a SNARLING. A golden blur hurtles through the air.

Maggie rips at the sow's throat, knocking her to the ground. The retriever's momentum sends her tumbling past the bear, as Tom scrambles for safety.

Maggie leaps out of the bear's reach as a life-ending swat just misses her head. Her BARKING seems to bewilder the grizzly more than anything else.

ON A NEARBY KNOLL

Tom looks down from higher ground, protected by a steep bank.

TOM
Maggie! Come here girl!

BACK TO SCENE

The dog makes a final feint at the bear -- unloads a burst of her most ferocious BARKS -- then sees the wisdom of retreat.

The sow rises up once more, thrashing the air with her front paws as Maggie bounds up and over the hill toward Tom. Then she lowers herself, convinced the danger has passed.

She hurries back to a shallow cave at the base of the boulder, where her two cubs tumble playfully around. She licks their faces with a big, wet tongue.

ON THE NEARBY KNOLL

Maggie licks her master's face. Tom hugs her dearly.

EXT. CANYON RIM - NIGHT

START RUNNING MONTAGE - VARIOUS SHOTS

Tom and Maggie make their way downstream...

Tom crashing through saplings...

The two of them in silhouette at the edge of a cliff, looking down at The Gauntlet. We HEAR it more than see it, the ROAR and RUMBLE of the infamous stretch of river seeming almost to shake the ground they stand on...

Later - past the killer rapid - Tom hurtling fallen trees -- scrambling over boulders...Maggie at his side.

A determined look in Tom's eye. A man on a mission. RASPY BREATHS. Running, running, running -- always downstream.

END OF RUNNING MONTAGE

EXT. CLIFF OVERLOOKING THE RIVER - FIRST LIGHT - DAY SIX

A brightening of the sky and the CHATTER of birds announces another dawn on the River Wild.

Tom and Maggie stand on a cliff high above a deep, still pool. Tom's shirt is in tatters, his pants are shredded.

A tributary stream - cut into a rocky gorge - blocks them from continuing downstream on land. A sheer cliff faces them on the far side. Below the pool, on the main river, there's a final section of churning rapid -- and below that, gentle, rolling meadowland.

Tom kneels beside Maggie. The dog licks his face.

TOM

Okay, Mag, time to show me your stuff.

MOMENTS LATER

Tom & Maggie get a running start and hurl themselves off the cliff. They sail through the air, the ghosts of Butch & Sundance leading the way.

IN THE RIVER

They splash down several yards apart. Tom bobs to the surface and finds Maggie already searching for him. The current starts to take them down river.

ANGLE FROM DOWNSTREAM

Together, we see them swept into the first section of menacing white water. Maggie flails with her forepaws to keep her head above water as Tom clings to her side.

NEW ANGLE

Tom eyes a knife-like rock that parts the current twenty feet ahead. He decides to steer them to the right, and pulls hard with his right arm. Closer...closer...a violent collision seems unavoidable. Closer...the ragged rock edge rushes at them...

At the last moment, they sail past the deadly obstacle and tumble into a white froth.

A log suddenly angles out from a bank. Tom has to suck in a breath and duck under to avoid being decapitated. When he comes up, he's separated from Maggie.

VARIOUS SHOTS: Tom and Maggie are able to see each other, but the current keeps them apart as they careen downstream.

FROM THE POOL BELOW

We see the final roller coaster ride. Maggie appears first in the boulder-strewn chute. She bounces off of one rock... then another...before sliding over a mossy ledge where the river flows clear and tumbles into the froth. She pops up twenty feet later, and looks back as -

TOM

Slams against one rock, then suddenly seems to drop straight down. His feet catch on a stump, and he's propelled face first down the final chute. We see him take a last gulp of air before he's pitched into the swirling froth.

UNDERWATER

The force of the current flips him into a somersault, and he lands feet first with great force.

CLOSE ON HIS FOOT: Being jammed between two boulders.

TOM

Strokes for the surface, but his foot's stuck. His eyes bulge with panic. He struggles to pull his foot free.

ON THE SURFACE

Maggie splashes around and around in circles, BARKING -- looking for her master.

UNDERWATER

Tom's foot won't budge. His face is frozen with fear. He's running out of breath. He looks up and sees Maggie's dangling legs. He reaches for a paw, but his hand falls inches short.

He looks down at his foot again. His only chance is to intentionally break it. He closes his eyes and grimaces with exertion.

CLOSE ON THE FOOT: SNAPPING at a grotesque angle.

TOM

Lets out a SCREAM. We hear it, muffled, as it turns into a rush of bubbles. They fly upward, toward Maggie and the blue beyond. Then all we see is white.

EXT. CAMPSITE - RIVER WILD - MORNING

The white gives way to the gray, thick light in the canyon -- before the sun has angled in. Fog hangs over the river in gossamer patches.

AT THE WATER'S EDGE

Terry loads gear into the remaining good raft. The one Tom slashed is a pile of rubber folds.

Thirty yards inland, a puff of white smoke rises over the treetops. It's coming from their campsite -- hidden from view by brush and trees.

AT THE CAMPSITE

Wade empties the last of a pail of water onto the campfire, sending a final plume of smoke and steam into the air. The .22 is stuck in his belt.

Gail and Roarke watch from a short distance as Wade scatters the soggy ashes with his boot.

WADE

Okay, let's move 'em out.

Something catches his eye as he starts to shepherd Roarke and Gail toward the raft. It's Roarke's note, stuck to the splintered stump of a pine branch.

Gail glances behind her as she heads down the path toward the river. Catching Wade momentarily distracted, she bolts for the woods, pulling Roarke along with her.

Wade quickly pockets the note, pulls out the .22 and gives chase.

AT THE WATER'S EDGE

Terry leans across the plastic fly rod cases and into the raft to tie ropes to the "D" rings. He can neither see nor hear what's going on.

IN THE WOODS

A sprinting Gail looks over her shoulder to make sure Wade is following.

She and Roarke crash through a small bush, then scramble toward two saplings -- slaloming around them at the very last moment.

Wade quickly closes the gap; he sees that by splitting the trees he can cut them off.

ANGLE MONOFILAMENT LINE

Gail rigged the night before. Wade's shins hit the nearly invisible tripwire.

THE SPLINTERED STUMP

Seems to rush toward his midsection as he tumbles forward.

WHUNK...Wade tumbles in a heap, motionless, gun hand stretched out before him -- his body covering the stump.

GAIL & ROARKE

Skid to a halt.

ROARKE
(baffled)

What happened?

Gail puts a finger to her lips to shush him, then she peers cautiously through the woods toward the water. Terry's leaning into the raft, his head buried.

Gail scrambles toward the .22.

VARIOUS SHOTS

As she reaches for the weapon, Wade's hand rises.

Gail freezes: the gun barrel is pointed at her face.

Roarke's shoulders slump. There's defeat in his eyes.

The killer looks up, then slowly pushes himself off the stump. The splinter is wedged between his arm and chest.

He inspects his torn shirt and slight wound: a little blood, but nothing serious. He looks back at the tripwire -- then at Gail.

WADE

Nice pit'stop.

ON THE RAFT - LATER

Terry strokes away from the campsite. Wade's in the bow. Gail and Roarke are huddled in the back. She's tied to a "D" ring.

They pass beneath the cliff we saw Tom scale the night before; it seems even more daunting by day.

Gail and Roarke eye the first ledge...then the second ledge with the chute above. Their gaze leads finally to the pines on the canyon lip -- the entirety of the massive facade revealed like a giant relief map.

Mother and son are numbed by the reminder of Tom's death. Gail stares through dead eyes; she knows she's on her own.

Lost in their thoughts, neither she nor Roarke sees Wade remove a small square of cloth from his shirt pocket, smile at Roarke's attempted rescue message, and let it flutter onto the water.

CLOSE ON ROARKE'S NOTE: Floating upside down, so all we can read are these words: UNDER THE PENALTY OF THE LAW THIS TAG NOT TO BE REMOVED EXCEPT BY THE CONSUMER.

EXT. STATE FOREST - DAY

A lovely meadow, carpeted with wild flowers, surrounded by lush forest. We hear the faint sound of ENGINES. They seem odd in such a bucolic setting. They grow LOUDER AND LOUDER.

The Ranger's jeep bursts out of the woods and into the meadow, towing a horse trailer carrying Cutter's horse, Marlene. Her tail flutters out the back.

The first jeep is followed by a second, third, and fourth -- all with MONTANA STATE POLICE lettering on the side.

The next vehicle that emerges is a van with the lettering: BEAR CANYON ANGLERS on the side panel.

Two more State Police jeeps complete the convoy.

INT. RANGER'S JEEP - DAY

The Ranger drives, Cutter's in the front seat beside him. Martin's in the back. It's a bumpy ride.

CUTTER

How much farther?

RANGER

Just a couple miles.

Cutter looks back briefly. A guilty wince.

CUTTER

Marlene's gonna be shook up.

He holds on as they sail over a bump and plunge into the woods once more.

EXT. THE RIVER WILD ABOVE THE GAUNTLET - DAY

Terry steers the raft toward a beach at the tail end of a placid pool. Below a narrows guarded by towering cliffs, the river seems to sink off the face of the earth. We hear a ROAR that sounds like continuous thunder.

Wade jumps out and pulls the nose of the raft onto shore. Gail and Roarke are still huddled together.

Wade stares downstream. He's scared shitless. The Gauntlet RUMBLES its warning. He scans the cliffs, hoping for some other way around. Only one way to go: down.

(Note: Throughout this scene, the rapid should be an audible, ominous presence. The characters have to raise their voices to be heard).

WADE

That's it, isn't it?...the Gauntlet?

Gail's silent. He sticks his face in hers.

WADE

Isn't it!

Gail nods. Wade takes a deep breath to try to calm himself. He lifts Roarke out of the raft and sets him on the beach. The boy stands off to the side, defeated, doe-eyed, his camera slung around his neck.

Wade begins to untie Gail.

WADE

Time to switch drivers...let the pro show us how it's done.

GAIL

Only if you let Roarke go.

WADE

Sorry. We're all in this together.

Gail steps out of the raft and appeals to Terry.

GAIL

Terry let him go. He's only
nine. He can't do anything to
you. I'll get you down the river,
but leave him.

Terry has heard it before...fallen for it one too many times.
Gail plants herself in front of him.

GAIL

You can do anything you want
to me...anything!

(desperate)

I'll do anything to you.

ANGLE ROARKE

Tears fill his eyes. His father is dead; now this -- his
mother's humiliation.

BACK TO SCENE

Terry wrestles with his conscience. He's genuinely
conflicted. Finally:

TERRY

We don't need the kid, Wade.

WADE

Jesus Terry, they've been tap
dancing on your head since day
one and you're still falling for it.

TERRY

What does killing the kid buy us?

(angry)

What?...You're so fuckin smart.

What good does it do us?!

WADE

(exasperated)

We need the kid because the kid
is the only thing that's going
to keep the mother from flipping
over the goddamn boat in the
goddamn rapid. Okay?

Terry thinks it over.

ROARKE

Unnoticed, by the others, slowly slips his camera off his neck and advances the film. He looks above him at the cliff, then he eyes the two killers and his mother.

BACK TO SCENE

WADE

She'd just as soon kill us
as look at us. You saw that
this morning. And if we leave
Roarke here, she will kill us.

Terry knows he's telling the truth. Still...

Suddenly:

ROARKE (v.o.)
(shouts)

Wade!...Terry!

Both men turn at once.

ROARKE

Has his camera to his eye. Click! He has their
picture...with his mother.

Before either can react, he whirls the camera by its strap
and heaves it like a hammer thrower toward the brushy,
overhead cliff.

HIGH ON THE CLIFF

The camera smacks into the rocks, begins to slide back, and
catches on a bush forty feet above the raft. It dangles
there, swinging gently.

ON THE SHORE

Everyone stares up at the camera -- evidence for someone to
find. Wade lowers his gaze, and fixes Terry with a steely
look. Any more second thoughts?

An angry Wade grabs Roarke and throws him into the raft.
Then he picks up Gail and plants her in the rower's seat.

WADE

Let's get this show on the road.

He stares downstream, trying to psyche himself up -- readying himself to run The Gauntlet.

WADE

Terry, hop in back with the kid.
(to Gail)

And tie him in.

Terry climbs in and secures Roarke to the "D" ring. Then Wade pushes the raft into the current and scrambles aboard.

WADE

Drive safely, now. We got children aboard.

ON THE RAFT - MOVING

Gail pulls hard on the oars, and angles into the main current. Then she swivels the raft so that the bow faces downstream.

Wade lowers himself to the rubber bottom and braces his legs. Terry follows suit in the stern. Roarke hunkers in beside him.

NEW ANGLE

The river narrows at the tail end of the pool. Forced in by the cliffs, the current picks up speed, pushing the raft at a faster clip.

Gail makes one correction with the oars, then glances over her shoulder at her son.

GAIL

Hold on, Roarke.

There's a sudden sparkle in her eyes -- she's back in her element -- in control, at least for the moment.

The raft sweeps out of the unbroken water and plunges down the first chute. It bounces easily, bends in the middle as it slides over a mossy ledge, catches a noseful of water, and surges upward.

Wade's hands grip the bow seat as the raft shoots up.

WADE'S POV: For a moment all he can see is the black rubber nose. Then the raft SLAMS DOWN and flattens out.

Ahead, for a good hundred yards is nothing but boiling white water. Beyond that stretch, the river angles sharply and disappears between two more cliffs.

BACK TO SCENE

The raft bucks and rumbles down this stretch of angry white water. It's bumpy, but consistent. Gail makes constant corrections -- expertly holding their course.

When a dangerous rock breaks the surface directly ahead, she points the bow at it and leans into her oars to steer them past. Her arms and hands strain with the effort. She takes one more stroke, then scrambles to swivel the bow as they shoot past the rock in a straight downstream line.

As they head into the turn, Gail aims the bow at the onrushing outer wall and pulls hard to keep them on the inside of the flow. The river seems to stampede itself between the flanking rock walls -- before straightening out for the final charge.

CLOSE ON WADE: A look of horror. His eyes bulge.

CLOSE ON TERRY

TERRY

Jesus!...

CLOSE ON ROARKE: Wearing an E-ticket expression.

CLOSE ON GAIL: Concentrating fiercely, savoring the challenge.

POV FROM THE RAFT: Ahead, there's a waterfall the width of the river, then a RUMBLE of white water broken only by a giant, jagged boulder plunked right smack in the middle of the Wild -- The Devil's Cleaver!

Beyond the ominous rock, the river divides into two chutes that empty into a long, lazy pool with rolling meadowland on either side.

REVERSE ANGLE FROM DOWNRIVER

The raft plunges over the waterfall and disappears from sight for a long beat. It suddenly shoots clear out of the water. The stern lands first, and for a moment it appears as if they're going to flip over.

ON THE RAFT

Wade is paralyzed fear; like a jacked rabbit.

Behind him, Gail jams her oars into the river to right the teetering craft. She rises out of her seat for better leverage.

When the nose of the raft smacks down with a great WHUNK, she drops back into her seat and pulls like mad to correct their course. The Devil's Cleaver looms ahead.

They rocket toward it -- toward a moment of decision. Gail stops rowing and stares trance-like at the granite edge -- torn, for an instant, by the power she wields -- by what she should do -- could do. Roarke's VOICE shakes her from the grisly thought.

ROARKE (v.o.)
Mom! The rock!

The raft hurtles toward a deadly collision. Gail darts a loving look at her son -- she knows she can't do it.

She suddenly stoves the outer oar and wraps both hands on the boulder-side oar. She jams her feet into a bracing position and pulls for all she's worth.

The raft is slow to turn. Gail leans into another stroke. Her hands white-knuckle the grip. Her forearms and calves bulge from the exertion. She tilts her head back and HOWLS as the boulder looms bigger and bigger.

CLOSE ON TERRY & ROARKE: Faces taut with apprehension.

CLOSE ON WADE: There's no fear like this. He's HOWLING like a coyote.

CLOSE ON HIS PANTLEG: Urine washes down his ankle.

BACK TO SCENE

The raft swings momentarily broadside -- giving Gail the briefest opening at the last moment to straighten their course and jerk the oar in as they catapult past the rock. She gives her last ounce of energy and slumps to the floor, spent.

FROM THE DOWNSTREAM POOL

We watch the raft sail past the boulder and into a narrow chute that flings it over a final turbulence before dumping it into safe, still water.

After a moment, all we can see are Wade's eyes peering over the bow....then Terry and Roarke peeking up behind him -- like survivors of a tornado, lifting the cover of a root cellar to see what's left of their world.

EXT. CLIFFS ABOVE DEEP WATER CANYON - DAY

Cutter and the Ranger, both looking through binoculars, stand at the edge of the high cliff overlooking the river, several miles below The Gauntlet. The river's winding course prevents them from seeing very far upstream. Cutter lowers his glasses.

CUTTER

No sign of them.

He's traded in his trooper's uniform for cowboy boots, blue jeans and chaps. The Ranger lowers his glasses.

RANGER

(points)

This is the next to last stretch.
They turn the bend below us, and
that's it -- a straight shot out.

Cutter peers into the distance -- where the canyons, the mountains and the river seem to form a single wall of wilderness beneath the blue big sky.

CUTTER

One hell of a river.

Behind him, ambush preparations are under way.

TWO TROOPERS

Haul huge coils of rope from the back of a jeep. They walk toward the edge of the cliff, where other ropes are being made fast to trees and rocks by other TROOPERS.

A PAIR OF SHARPSHOOTERS

Fan out along the promontory, seeking advantageous positions.

AT THE BEAR CANYON ANGLERS FISHING VAN

More TROOPERS line up to collect fishing vests, waders and rods from the fishing store's OWNER -- who stuffs the gear in their backpacks.

AT THE ARMS VEHICLE

Rifles, small arms, knives are handed out.

CUTTER & MARTIN - EDGE OF THE FOREST

Cutter tightens Marlene's saddle, pats her on the rump and mounts up. Martin pitches his boss a look of concern.

MARTIN

You know what the Warden said...
Wade doesn't make much distinction
between living and dying.

Cutter checks the magazine of his lever-action
Winchester and slips it back into its saddle holster.

CUTTER

If he's alive when I get to him...
he's gonna wish he weren't.

He prods Marlene and steers her toward the woods, upriver.
We watch them slip between trees and disappear.

AT THE CLIFF

TROOPERS hurl ropes over the side. Rappelling belts are
buckled on, ropes tied in.

VARIOUS SHOTS

Of TROOPERS sailing through the air, bounding off the sheer
cliff wall, pushing off again -- out over the river.

EXT. THE RIVER WILD - DAY

THE RAFT

Drifts lazily through a long, narrow pool, a mile or so above
the ambush site. The roar of the rapid has given way to a
SOFT RUSHING sound.

The sun burns overhead. Meadows slope down to the water's
edge. In places, the river has cut steep dirt banks.

Trees angle over the current. Knotted ropes, the handi-work
of kids & rafters, dangle from a few of the heftier branches.

Wade is rowing. Roarke kneels at his feet, bailing. Terry,
shirtless in the bow, studies the map. Gail sits motionless
in the stern. She's won the battle and lost the war.

TERRY

We're just about there.

WADE

Yeah, except "there" isn't where
"there" used to be.

TERRY
(stunned)
What do you mean? That was the whole idea.

WADE
It was 'til I realized last night we should tiptoe outa here by land. Look at the takeout.

Terry peers at the map.

WADE
It's like a goddamn conveyor belt. If someone even thought we were on this river, where do you think they'd be waiting for us?

TERRY
What about the car?

WADE
It'll be there. I just want to make sure no one's there with it.
(he gestures downstream)
I'm going to pull in up ahead.

TERRY
(afraid to ask)
What about these two?

Wade shakes his head. Sorry to say it, but:

WADE
People drown on this river all the time...
(a beat)
And that's what they'll think when they find the raft turned over, floating on it's own...
(better yet)
Even if they find the camera.

Gail reaches out and hugs Roarke. She smothers his head with kisses. The end is npar.

ON THE RIVER BANK

We detect movement: a blur in the underbrush. Then nothing.

DOWNRIVER

Another tree angles out over the lazy current. A fallen tree lies beside it, its trunk parallel to the ten-foot bank.

ON THE BANK

We notice pair of swing ropes secured to the tree hanging over the river. Both have been pulled back taut behind the toppled trunk. One ends in a knot that's "jam-cleated" beneath a branch. The other's fastened to a two-foot log placed atop the trunk.

ANGLE FALLEN TREE

On a cleared patch of dirt, we see a crude architectural model made out of a stick, a piece of pant cloth for the swing rope, and a twig tied at the end. Parallel sticks delineate the river.

SUDDENLY:

Tom & Maggie throw themselves to the ground beside the model. Tom's pants have been sliced to a pair of ragged shorts. His shirt's gone. His hair's a tangle. His back's an open sore. His broken foot bound by a makeshift splint. He's holding a deadly, home made lance.

As he struggles to catch his breath, Tom takes Roarke's Swiss Army knife out of his pocket and gives the lance point a few more strokes. He tests the sharpness with a finger, then pockets the knife.

He makes sure he can snatch the one rope from its "jam-cleat", then he seizes the two-foot log attached to the other rope, and pulls it back until there's no slack.

He sights down it: seeing nothing but river for several moments...then the nose of the raft drifts into frame.

ON THE RAFT

Wade and Terry concentrate on their landing spot, downstream of Tom.

ON THE BANK

Tom sights down the log one final time. He takes a breath, clutches the log in both hands, lifts it slightly off the trunk, and lets it fly.

ON THE RAFT

The log swings down from the bank and SLAMS into Terry knocking him into the river. He flails away, stunned, struggling to keep his head above the surface.

Wade wrestles the .22 from its holster and whirls toward the danger.

ON THE BANK

Tom pops his head above the log.

TOM
(shouts)

Wade!

ON THE RAFT

The killer catches sight of the movement, panics, and FIRES off a quick shot.

ON THE BANK

Tom drops to the ground as the bullet ricochets harmlessly off the log. Then he grabs his lance and surges to his feet. He jerks the second rope free, jams the knot between his legs, and launches himself.

TOM

Sails through the air, clutching the lance. His mouth gapes open, locked in a HOWL.

WADE

Waits for him on the raft, gun drawn. He takes aim, then waits...and waits...smile on his face...confident of his shot. Finally, he pulls the trigger.

CLICK!

That sinking feeling. An instant before impact, all he sees is the whittled white point rushing toward his chest.

VARIOUS ANGLES

Tom crashes into him with a SICKENING THUD, knocking the useless gun from the killer's hand. The lance skewers him.

Wade SCREAMS as Tom's momentum lifts him out of the raft. At the top of the swing the two men are face to face. There's a look in Tom's eyes as wild as the River.

TOM
(half-rasp/half-mumble)
You want a piece of me?!

He lets go of the lance and Wade drops into the river.

Tom passes over the raft on his return swing and throws himself into the shallow water at the edge of the bank.

He SCREECHES with pain as his broken foot hits bottom. He grabs a huge rock and starts for Terry -- who's frantically kicking for shore.

ON THE RAFT

Gail twists her body to grab the oars, but her bound feet make it impossible.

IN DEEPER WATER

Wade turns over and over, first one end of the lance poking up, then the other. Slowly he sinks. The surface thrashing gives way to a rippling...then the water is still. Only Wade's blood is visible, floating downstream in an ever-growing crimson stain.

AT THE RIVER'S EDGE

Gagging and gasping, the stunned Terry finally touches bottom. He's bleeding from a head cut.

Twenty yards away, Tom half-hobbles, half-hops toward him, hauling the rock. It's a painful sight.

Maggie BARKS encouragement from the bank.

Tom closes in -- panting, struggling -- twenty feet...fifteen feet. Hopping, GRUNTING, dragging his broken ankle.

Terry finally reaches shallow water and shakes the cobwebs from his head. When he sees Tom closing in, he slides a hand down his leg and comes up with his gruesome hunting knife.

Tom freezes, ten feet away, holding the rock in both hands. He fights to catch his breath. The two men just look at each other for a long moment.

Terry wipes the blood from his eye with a shirt sleeve. He holds out the ten inch blade to let Tom see just how brutal it is.

ON THE RAFT

Gail realizes she needs a weapon. Her eyes settle on the plastic fly rod case. She yanks out a rigged fly rod, jams the two pieces together, and frantically begins to false cast. Her hands are a blur: peeling line from the reel, whipping the rod back and forth.

IN THE RIVER

There's a momentary stand-off -- Tom holding the rock -- Terry brandishing the knife.

TOM

Terry, it's over. Put the knife down.

Terry wrestles with his options. He's never been the driver.

TERRY

I've got to get down the river.

ON THE RAFT

The flyline tumbles from Gail's reel in tight curls. Her casting arm cranks back and forth.

IN THE RIVER

TOM

Wade's dead, Terry. He can't tell you what to do anymore. You know what's right.

An anguished Terry doesn't want to hear anymore.

TERRY

You've tricked me too many times.

He rears back to throw the knife.

THE FLYLINE

WHISTLES through the air -- faster, faster, in ever lengthening loops, a yellow line against a blue sky. SWISH, SWISH -- faster, faster.

TERRY

I just want to get out of here!!
I hate this place. I hate it.
I'm sorry!

As he starts to bring his throwing arm down -

WOOSE -- the leader of the flyline loops over his wrist.

CLOSE ON: A huge streamer being jerked into his flesh. The barb sinks deeper, blood spurts -- the knife flies from his grip.

GAIL

Standing on the raft, clamps the flyline with both hands against the fly rod she wields -- and leans back. The rod bends into a question mark, jerking Terry's arm toward her.

ON THE RIVER

Terry SCREAMS in pain as the streamer hook sinks deeper into him. He chomps through the leader; it parts with a PING.

He whirls to face Tom, but all he sees is the rock slamming against his head.

He drops into the shallow water. Tom stands over his bobbing body, rock raised for a second blow, if necessary. He looks like a caveman.

When Terry doesn't move, Tom throws the rock aside. He closes his eyes and gathers himself. He swallows. Sways uneasily. He's about to pass out. A long calm. The river GURGLES ON. He starts for shore, dragging Terry by his hair.

ON THE RAFT

The still tied-in Roarke and Gail each grab an oar and begin poling the raft for shore.

MAGGIE

Looking down from the river bank, suddenly stops her happy tail wagging. Her fur stands on end. She lowers her head and GROWLS at Tom. Lips curled, fangs bared. Scary.

TOM

TOM

It's okay Mag, it's just me.

Tom keeps coming, Terry in tow.

MAGGIE --

GROWLS louder -- SNARLS in an evil, foreboding way -- as if she's rabid. LOUDER, LOUDER... then:

SMASH CUT

Wade surges out of the river, holding the lance over his head. His face is grotesquely twisted. Blood flows from his wound.

ON THE RAFT

GAIL

(screams)

Tom!...behind you!

IN THE WATER

Tom whirls. Wade beams a maniacal smile, then starts to bring the lance down. **BLAM!**...a bullet slams into Wade's chest. He staggers backwards, surprised.

CUTTER

On the bank, astride Marlane, lowers his Winchester.

IN THE WATER

Wade's sickening smile gives way to a look of confusion. He stares at Cutter -- then defiantly raises the lance once more to finish off Tom.

CUTTER

Cranks the lever and **FIRES** again, this time from the hip.

CLOSE ON THE WINCHESTER: Lever flashing down and back: **BLAM.**
Down and back: **BLAM!**

IN THE WATER

Wade just stands there, mortally wounded. After a moment, the lance drops from his hands. He locks eyes with Cutter -- then slowly sinks beneath the water for good.

EXT. RIVER WILD, ABOVE DEEP WATER CANYON - LATER

A raft rounds the bend and drifts into view beneath towering cliffs. Tom and Gail hold each other in the bow. Roarke's at the oars, with Maggie beside him.

Wade's body is lashed to one side of the raft. A trussed and gagged Terry is lashed to the other.

Cutter sits in the stern, his Winchester propped upright on one knee. Marlene swims easily behind the raft, secured by her reins.

Gail's eyes suddenly bulge. Tom sits bolt upright.

TOM

What the?...

Roarke dips the oars to hold the raft steady in the current. His mouth drops. Gail swallows.

THEIR POV: A dozen State Troopers, decked out in full fly fishing gear, line one side of the river, elbow to elbow, thigh deep in water.

ON THE CLIFFS ABOVE

- * One sniper gently fingers the trigger of his rifle.
- * Another sniper slowly pulls his head off the stock of his rifle. He peers down at the river.

ON THE RIVER - VARIOUS SHOTS

- * Face after face, peering at the approaching rafters.
- * A hand reaches inside a vest, gripping a handgun.
- * Another "fisherman" slides his hand down his waders, toward the stock of an automatic rifle.

ON THE RAFT

Tom, Gail and Roarke aren't sure what to make of it.

CUTTER

(grins)

I want you to meet a few of my fishing buddies.

GAIL

(finally)

Looks like opening day of the fishing season back East.

EXT. DEEP WATER CANYON TAKEOUT - DAY

State Police vehicles jam the parking lot, along with a few mobile news vans and several ambulances.

WADE'S BODY

Is zipped into a body bag.

TERRY

Is led away, handcuffed.

NEWS REPORTER & ROARKE

A local TV reporter asks Roarke questions as her cameraman videotapes away. The boy is wrapped in a blanket. He looks shell-shocked. He's seen too much.

ROARKE

I was scared a lot of the time...
but at least my Mom, you know,
used to be a guide on this
river...she really knows what
she's doing. And Dad...

Roarke looks over at Tom.

TOM'S POV: He catches Roarke's eye. The boy grins, and holds up the knife Tom gave him at the start of their journey.

BACK TO SCENE

Roarke turns back to the reporters. A smile fills his face.

ROARKE

(bursting with pride)
My Dad...he saved our lives.

CUTTER, TOM & GAIL

Cutter steers Gail and a badly hobbling Tom toward one of the ambulances.

CUTTER

The hospital in Great Falls
is standing by, Tom.

Tom drapes his arm over Gail's shoulder. They exchange a tender look. Tom looks over at the river.

TOM

(to Cutter)

Just a minute.

Cutter watches them make their way to the bank.

TOM & GAIL - ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER WILD

They stare at the river for a long moment without speaking. The water is slow and calm and green and peaceful. It seems to hold them in a trance.

TOM

(finally)

Believe it or not, I'd like
to come back here some time.

Gail smiles at him. Tom looks away -- upriver where the journey started.

TOM

I figure I've been on this
river...and in it...and on
top of it...and looking down
at it...and looking up at it.
Next time, I'd just like to
be with it. With us. Besides...

(grinning)

I didn't catch even one goddamn
fish.

Gail hugs him with all her might.

ROARKE & MAGGIE

Come scampering over.

Tom tugs his son close beside him. Roarke clamps an affectionate headlock on Maggie. Maggie BARKS. The family is reunited on the banks of the River Wild.

THE END