

BIG HOLE

By

Michael Gilio

"YOU COULD WIN A MILLION \$\$! ENTER TODAY, WIN TOMORROW!"

A thick forearm with a faded tattoo clicks a pen and begins to fill out the little boxes of a sweepstakes form;

FIRST NAME: *Francis* LAST NAME: *Lee Sr.*

GENDER: *Male* DATE OF BIRTH: *21 May 1930*

STREET ADDRESS: *1724 N. High Wood Ln.*

CITY/STATE: *Glass Valley, Montana* ZIP: *59004*

PHONE: *406.398.7676* E-MAIL: *No*

OCCUPATION: *Cattle Rancher, Retired*

ARE YOU A VETERAN? *World War II Marine*

And so on, till the gnarled hands slowly and deliberately fold the sweepstakes into an envelope and licks it shut.

Smacks down a liberty-bell stamp.

EXT. LEE RANCH COMPANY - CATTLE GATES - DUSK

The tattooed-forearm pulls a handful of mail from a curb side box, tips the flag and stuffs the sweepstakes inside for a next day delivery.

PULL BACK to reveal the silhouette of a barrel-chested man, bent and bow-legged with age; FRANCIS LEE SR., (78), owner of the Lee Ranch Company and FLICK, the aged bay horse chewing grass beside him.

Lee turns, muttering and flipping through envelopes:

LEE
...goddamnit bills...

And lumbers down the long and winding driveway he came from, in the middle of nowhere.

EXT. OPEN RANGE - DUSK

With his horse plodding behind him, Lee comes upon the far-flung corner of his 51,000 acre property. He props a boot on a rotting border fence, rests his folded arms on a post and squints across the distant horizon; a small grid of electric lights twinkle at the bottom of a darkening sky.

We can see the face of Francis Lee Sr. more clearly now-- weathered, thin hair and a broken nose healed crooked. An impressive gut hangs over his belt-buckle. Penetrating eyes.

Two bright searchlights wave at him from in town, taunting, announcing a Grand Opening of something or another.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: "September"

EXT. PRAIRIE HOUSE - NIGHT

Lee's home, a tiny RANCH HOUSE dimly-lit like a kerosine lamp. He labors up the creaky steps of the porch, pauses at the sight of his busted Dodge pick-up resting on cinder blocks, and shakes his head.

LEE

...not my goddamn fault if they...

And he disappears inside, the screen door banging behind him.

INT. PRAIRIE HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

A busy, cramped little trophy room; stacks of worn paperbacks, Hummel figurines and war medals. The walls are crowded with the black eyes and moldy fur of mounted bison, Montana mule-deer and bobcat heads.

A John Philip Sousa march, *American Patrol*, plays from a cassette player somewhere.

Lee naps in a La-Z-Boy chair, a TV dinner tray across his lap and a crossword puzzle folded across his chest.

He abruptly snorts, bolting upright:

LEE

Patty?

Lee looks around the room;

Nothing.

He sighs, attempting to stand and rubbing his hip.

LEE (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Duke, you're gonna haveta sleep
without the cover on tonight.

(MORE)

LEE (CONT'D)
I'm too tired to come all the way
over there.

DUKE, a bright and nervous parakeet, bounces around a cage
hanging in the kitchen.

Lee finds his balance, turns off the lamp light and makes his
way to the narrow staircase.

STAIRWAY

Hands on the walls for support, Lee grunts and groans the
long journey up to the second floor, passing framed photos of
his younger days; a military ceremony, a wedding portrait and
a stark photo of a middle-aged Francis Lee riding Flick--

PUSH IN

A solitary figure on a windswept land, surrounded by a dusty
herd of cattle.

INT. PRAIRIE HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lee plops down on the bed, breathing hard. Goes to take off
his boots but instead falls back, staring at the ceiling.

LEE
I ain't gonna take off my boots
tonight.

Long silence, listening to the cicadas.

LEE (CONT'D)
Goddamnit.

He sits forward and pulls at the boot heel, kicking it into
the corner and collapses on the bed again, wheezing.

After a moment, Lee's short breaths become steady and
finally, with his clothes still on, we hear the flutter of
snoring.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE NEXT DAY - DAYBREAK

Lee lies in the same position, clothed and still wearing one
boot.

A WOMAN'S voice from downstairs:

VOICE (O.S.)
Lee?! You here?

He stirs, coughing.

Footsteps hop on the landing.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Lee. You up there? Wake up.

The steps get louder, coming up the stairs.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You forgit? It's the first.

LEE
I didn't forgit.

A black-haired woman appears in the doorway; MAYA (30's), Blackfeet Indian, a tough plug. She rests a plastic laundry basket on her hip.

MAYA
Get up, Stretch.

LEE
What time is--

MAYA
Early. We gotta go.

LEE
Goddamnit--

MAYA
C'mon *El Toro*.

She moves around the room, tossing discarded socks and breeches into the basket. Lee sits up and rubs his eyes hard.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Let's make tracks. I gotta get to Deer Lodge.

LEE
You gotta do that today?

MAYA
Today's the only day I could swing it with them new rules.

A long exhale and a shake of his head.

MAYA (CONT'D)
We'll still gitcha there, El Toro,
we just gotta motor. Did you
forget?

LEE
I didn't *forget*, Goddamnit.

MAYA
Hop to it, then.

INT. MAYA'S GEO METRO - MOVING - MORNING

Wearing a grease-stained cowboy hat, Lee sits in the passenger seat.

Dirty laundry fills the backseat.

MAYA
You do your thing and I'll pick you up at five.

A sun-bleached grain elevator passes by.

MAYA (CONT'D)
You hear me, El Toro?

LEE
I *hear* you.

She snaps on the radio:

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
...whether or not the Interstate Project will extend through the Valley, will be determined--

LEE
Quit calling me that.

MAYA
What.

LEE
Quit it.

MAYA
I always been callin you El Toro.

LEE
I'm sicka it.

MAYA

Well, you quit acting all mean and stubborn like a bull and I'll quit callin you one.

Lee slouches in his seat, pulling the brim of his hat over his eyes.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

...all agree it's a foregone conclusion, it's just a matter of when the highway...

An oil well methodically and desperately pumps the ground.

"Welcome to Glass Valley"

EXT. GLASS VALLEY - MAIN STREET - DAY

A tired, gray town. Parked pick-ups, gun racks and an empty bandstand.

Maya's car putters down Main Street and makes an abrupt stop in front of a short strip of old storefront businesses; a pool hall, H & R Block and squeezed between them, Dutch's Barbershop, a crumbling building with a candy-striped pole.

INT. DUTCH'S BARBERSHOP - DAY

With a door jingle, Lee enters a narrow room with two barber chairs.

In the "lobby"-- three folding chairs, a spittoon and a crate stacked with newspapers-- sits a stocky and flat-nosed old-timer, DUTCH (70's), the owner of the joint and former rodeo "star" (if you hear him tell it) appearing in the black-n-white photos taped to the mirrors.

His son-in-law, DEAN (40's), fools with an iPOD, earphones plugged into his head.

DUTCH

(standing)

Funny you comin in-- Heck was just here, bout fifteen, twenty minutes ago.

LEE

Hm.

DUTCH

You could probably still catch em.

Lee sidles up to a chair, silent. Dutch snaps out a smock and wraps it around Lee's neck, pulling off his hat.

DUTCH (CONT'D)
Today already the first?

LEE
That it is.

DUTCH
You two been comin to me for how long now, d'ya think, Lee?

LEE
Long time.

DUTCH
He's a stand up guy, that Heck.
Good man. How come you two never... ?

LEE
What.

DUTCH
I just never see you two together no more.

Lee shrugs.

Dutch pulls a comb out of a disinfecting jar, snatches a pair of shears and goes to work on what's left of Lee's hair.

DUTCH (CONT'D)
That daughter of his is a real pretty girl, Lee. If I had a granddaughter like--

LEE
(re: Dean)
What's he got?

DUTCH
What? Oh, that's one of them Walkmans... Little jukebox in your ear.

LEE
Mm.

DUTCH
Finally got hisself one. Seem silly to me.
(to Dean)
(MORE)

DUTCH (CONT'D)

Why you wanna listen to music to
yourself? I thought music was for
dancin to.

Dean's oblivious, his face lit up by the screen.

DUTCH (CONT'D)

Half-wit.

Lee smirks.

DUTCH (CONT'D)

But my baby girl loves the dumb
cluck, so I guess I do too.

Silence. *Snip, snip.*

LEE

Dunno bout that.

DUTCH

What?

LEE

I dunno, I figure if the fellas
ain't good enough for your
daughter, you should say sumpin.

DUTCH

You think?

LEE

That's what I figure.

DUTCH

(calling out)

Hey, Dean.

Nothing.

DUTCH (CONT'D)

You're a monkey.

(beat)

See. It don't make no difference.

Dutch laughs and Lee watches him in the mirror, cutting his sideburns.

INT. WACHOVIA BANK - COUNTER - DAY

A Teller (20's) with down-turned eyes counts out Lee's money.
A little name tag says, "LORETTA"

LORETTA
...sixty, eighty and one-hundred.

LEE
Could you-- Let's just do sixty.

LORETTA
Sixty?

LEE
Eighty.

LORETTA
Eighty.

LEE
Yeah. Let's do that.

LORETTA
Eighty.

LEE
And could I get me a receipt, cuz
last time my check book,
(laughs)
I dunno what happened, it's ...

She shuffles through the register, bored. A big-haired
female CO-WORKER, (20's) opens a window next to her.

LEE (CONT'D)
Did I deposit ... that government
check--

LORETTA
Got it right here.

LEE
Right.

He shakes his head, cussing to himself. Loretta hands him a
transaction receipt:

"On deposit: \$34, 320"

He squints.

LEE (CONT'D)
That right?

LORETTA
Yep.

LEE

I thought I had some more than
that, ...

LORETTA

You want me to print up your
banking history?

LEE

I get all my numbers mixed up--

LORETTA

Uh-huh.

LEE

I was over last month.

LORETTA

Mm.

LEE

That's worse, I think, believin you
got more money than--

LORETTA

He didn't say anything, by the way.

LEE

Pardon?

The Co-Worker turns to Loretta.

CO-WORKER

When, today?

LORETTA

While you were on break.

CO-WORKER

He didn't say anything at all?

LORETTA

Just a "Good morning, sweetie."

CO-WORKER

Unbelievable.

Lee goes quiet.

Stares at the floor, waiting for his receipt.

INT. COLE MERCANTILE CO. - DAY

A large store that seems to have everything; groceries, bait & tackle, beauty supplies, a PHARMACY, hunting rifles and a Louis L'Amour paperback rack that Lee browses through, his reading glasses on.

ALMA (60's), a heavy woman with heavy make-up, bags Lee's groceries, a cigarette dangling from her mouth.

Lee cracks open a thin L'Amour book; "THE IRON MARSHAL"

ALMA

We're hurtin, you know, really
hurtin.

LEE

Mm.

ALMA

Don't know what the big deal is,
some super-store. It's got me and
Karl, all... well, you know.

He stares at the cover art; a square-jawed SHERIFF stands poised to protect and to serve.

ALMA (CONT'D)

You still got that woman cleaning
up after you?

LEE

Mm-hm.

ALMA

Got yourself a ride back home?

Lee nods, tossing the paperback in a bag.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Lee.

He looks at her.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Will you do me a favor?

LEE

Hm.

ALMA

Don't go to that new store.

Lee nods.

LEE

Don't you worry none.

ALMA

I'm sorry to--

LEE

(serious)

Don't you worry none, Alma.

ALMA

Thank you, honey.

LEE

I'll see you next month.

ALMA

Yes, you will.

He hands her a FOLDED CHECK, struggles with the three bags, but exits gracefully.

ALMA (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Your medication's in the bag.

Alma stubs out her cigarette, staring after him.

INT. THE STEAK KNIFE RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

Lee sits in a corner booth, comparing the bank receipt with his checkbook.

An enormous dinner plate is set in front of him; a thick and bloody T-bone steak with french-fried potatoes and a side of candied yams. All smothered in brown gravy.

Bows his head in grace.

Then he gets to work, methodically cutting the steak into little bite-sized pieces.

Takes a bite-- chews and chews, very slowly, till the flavor's gone and grabs a napkin:

Spits it out.

Takes a handful of french-fries and sucks the salt off them, licking his fingers.

The waitress, LEENA (40's), a redhead, returns with a salad and a tall glass of milk.

LEENA
Here you go, then.

She regretfully sets down Lee's real meal.

He pauses a second, switching gears, and rips open a Cole's bag filled with three prescription bottles. Empties out his doses (fifteen multi-colored HEART PILLS) and washes them down with a Royal Crown Cola.

Takes a deep breath.

Eats his salad.

A door JINGLE.

Lee looks up:

A tall MIDDLE-AGED MAN walks through the door--

Lee shrinks in his seat.

The owner, SAL (60's), scurries from the kitchen, waving a hand as the imposing Man swaggered to the counter:

SAL
I saved you a bear claw, Heck, but
I wasn't sure ...

HECK
Put it in the bag, you sonuvabitch.

SAL
(smiles)
For your old lady.

HECK
You said it, not me. And some
orange juice too.

Sal pours coffee into a Styrofoam cup and HECK turns to scan the diner--

Lee stares at his food, his face hidden.

Heck takes a step in Lee's direction, seemingly looking right at him, but instead spots the Sports section from a newspaper bin and snatches it.

SAL
Here you go.

Heck takes the coffee, an orange juice and the paper sack, dropping a ten-spot.

SAL (CONT'D)

C'mon now.

HECK

Take it.

SAL

Your money's no--

HECK

Take it.

He abruptly turns-- Lee quickly looking away -- and heads for the exit.

SAL

(calling out)

Give my best to the girls.

HECK

You'll hear from Sissy, I'm sure.

The door jingles.

And he's out the door...

Lee watches him cross the street from the window: Heck sidesteps a Pick-Up that honks and waves at him, trotting to a parked Chevy Suburban. An aluminum canoe is strapped to the roof.

Heck hops in next to an old Collie riding shotgun and hands the Styrofoam cups to a YOUNG GIRL and a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN sitting in the backseat, their faces hidden in silhouette.

The Suburban roars to life and slowly pulls away, Lee watching the sun glint off the canoe, disappearing down the street.

He lets out a long exhale ...

Silence.

And he continues eating.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DUSK

Lee slumps in a park bench, flanked by grocery bags, waiting for Maya to return.

An impossibly long freight train inches through town, clicking and clacking forever, lulling Lee into a sudden catnap.

He snaps awake.

A LITTLE DARKER NOW, the freight still pushes through town.

The Grand Opening searchlights wave behind the historic State Hotel, just around the corner, bright and animated, poking around the night sky.

Across the street, "Gabby's Saloon" buzzes from a neon sign.

He stares at the tiny bar, longingly, and with a sudden, stark silence, the train is gone--

A Buck Owens song and Women's laughter spill out of the swinging saloon doors, echoing down Main Street.

A CAR HONK.

Maya's GEO Metro tears around the corner, slamming to a stop.

MAYA
(hopping out)
I am *so, so sorry*, Lee. I got
caught at the train.

She grabs the bags and hauls them into the trunk.

Lee watches her ... too tired to move.

INT. MAYA'S GEO METRO - MOVING - NIGHT

Lee stares out the window. Folded laundry sits in the backseat.

MAYA
You got everthin you needed?

LEE
You're late.

MAYA
I know, I'm sorry, Lee.

LEE
I don't pay you to see your brother
in prison.

MAYA
You barely pay me.

LEE
Don't talk toward me.

MAYA

C'mon, now.

LEE

I pay you fair.

MAYA

It's fine.

LEE

Don't tell me I don't pay you fair.

MAYA

It's fine.

Beat.

LEE

If you think them wages ain't fair,
don't bother showin up next month.

They both sit in silence, staring at the black landscape.

EXT. LEE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maya pops the trunk.

With much effort, Lee leans out of the car and slams his door, hobbling over to the open trunk.

An entire sack of groceries spill to the gravel.

LEE

...goddamnit...

Maya hops out of the idle car.

MAYA

Lee, lemmee--

LEE

Leave me be.

MAYA

No, you shouldn't--

LEE

I CAN DO IT!

She backs off. Dumps the laundry basket on the ground and jumps back in the car, squealing out of the driveway.

Lee gathers up the spilled produce in a thick cloud of dust, coughing.

He finally makes his way to the porch, leaving the laundry in the driveway.

INT. LEE'S RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lee collapses in a chair at the kitchen table, the grocery bags toppled in front of him.

Duke chirps away, bouncing around in his cage.

LEE
(quietly)
...please shut-up, Duke...

He begrudgingly starts the tedious process of unloading the day's work, coming across the paperback book-- "The Iron Marshal."

Looks at the cover art; the young sheriff stares through him.

Impulsively, he grabs the rotary phone on the table and starts to dial a number taped to the receiver.

He stops.

Hangs up.

A moment passes.

Then.

THE PHONE RINGS.

He snatches it, mid-ring:

LEE (CONT'D)
Yes, hello.

VOICE (V.O.)
(a young male)
Hello? Is this a Mr. Francis Lee
Senior?

LEE
Yes.

VOICE (V.O.)
Of 1724 North High Wood Lane?

LEE

Yes.

VOICE (V.O.)

Mr. Lee. I'm glad you answered.
Are you sitting down?

LEE

I reckon.

VOICE (V.O.)

Good. Cuz this is a big shock.

LEE

What.

VOICE (V.O.)

You ready?

Silence.

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Mr. Francis Lee...

LEE

Come out with it.

VOICE (V.O.)

You've just won a million dollars.

Lee blinks.

LEE

OK.

VOICE (V.O.)

You've won a million dollars!

LEE

A *million* dollars.

VOICE (V.O.)

One *million* dollars.

LEE

Really.

VOICE (V.O.)

Yes.

(laughs)

Hard to believe, huh?

LEE

How?

VOICE (V.O.)

You've filled out a Clearing House
sweepstakes, right? In the mail?

LEE

A whole bunch, sure.

VOICE (V.O.)

Well, there you go, sir. You've
got yourself some good luck.

LEE

I've won.

VOICE (V.O.)

(laughs)

Why don't we set this thing in
motion then...

LEE

A *million* dollars.

VOICE (V.O.)

Yes.

Lee looks down at his trembling hands.

LEE

I...

VOICE (V.O.)

Now, if I could just get--

LEE

I don't...

His face twists into a pinch--

VOICE (V.O.)

You there, Mr. Lee?

LEE

Yes, I...

And he loses it, sobbing something fierce.

VOICE (V.O.)

Oh.

After a long moment.

LEE

...thank you....

VOICE (V.O.)

Sure.

LEE

Thank you so much--

VOICE (V.O.)

Sure, sure.

LEE

Thank you, *really*, thank you.

The Voice on the other end simply falls silent.

Lee pulls it together.

LEE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

VOICE (V.O.)

Oh, please--

LEE

No, I'm sorry, that was...

VOICE (V.O.)

It's overwhelming, I know.

Pause.

LEE

Thank you.

VOICE (V.O.)

Our pleasure.

LEE

From my heart, thank you.

Silence.

LEE (CONT'D)

It's... hard.

VOICE (V.O.)

Mm.

LEE

Real hard, lately.

VOICE (V.O.)

Sure.

LEE
You get to thinkin sometimes...
(beat)
Is that it?

VOICE (V.O.)
Mm.

LEE
Is that all I got?

Silence.

LEE (CONT'D)
Son, what's your name?

VOICE (V.O.)
Um. Jeffery.

LEE
Jeffery ...

VOICE (V.O.)
Jeffery ... Smith.

LEE
Well, that's easy to remember.
(laughs)
I tell ya what, Jeffery. I'll take
you to dinner. Wherever you want.

VOICE (V.O.)
Well, thank you, Mr. Lee.

LEE
Francis.

VOICE (V.O.)
Francis.

LEE
There's this chop house... hell,
it's been damn near forty somethin
years since I was there in Jackson.
A fishin trip at Big Hole-- You
hear a Big Hole?

VOICE (V.O.)
I don't think so.

LEE

Finest trout streams on the planet.
We was on this fishing trip and we
went into Jackson for steaks--
can't think a the name of that
place, but, Heck and me really
liked it.

VOICE (V.O.)

Heck?

LEE

Couldn't catch worth a damn. My
son. And I was out there, swooping
up the biggest rainbow trout you
ever did see.

He laughs loud.

VOICE (V.O.)

Funny.

LEE

We had ourselves a good time. Bout
the happiest time in my life, I
reckon... Except for maybe now,
winning this million dollars. A
million dollars?

VOICE (V.O.)

One million.

LEE

My God, Jeffery, I gotta tell ya--
I got this ticker that just won't
quit. I've stashed some money
away, but I was gettin real worried
that it weren't enough.

(laughs)

Don't have to worry about that no
more, that's for sure.

VOICE (V.O.)

Whattaya say we get down to
business, Francis.

LEE

Let's do it.

VOICE (V.O.)

Now, we got most of your information right here, but we obviously can't send you this kind of prize money through the U.S. Postal Service.

LEE

Please don't.

VOICE (V.O.)

So all we gotta do now is get your bank account information and we'll deposit the one million dollar prize directly into your account within the next 30 to 60 business days.

LEE

Sounds good to me.

VOICE (V.O.)

Great. Could I please get that account number?

LEE

Lemme find my checkbook.

With sudden energy, Lee bolts up and searches the newspapers and mail strewn about the den.

LEE (CONT'D)

Got it.

VOICE (V.O.)

Please go ahead.

LEE

OK, it's the Wachovia Bank... 2643, 9815, 0074, 3868.

VOICE (V.O.)

3868. OK, lemme repeat; 2643--

LEE

Yep.

VOICE (V.O.)

9815, 0074 and 3868.

LEE

That's it.

VOICE (V.O.)

OK, Francis. In 30 to 60 days,
you'll be a millionaire.

LEE

Good Lord. Thank you.

VOICE (V.O.)

It's all you, Mr. Lee, and that
luck of yours.

LEE

Listen. I'm serious about taking
you to dinner. Where you at? Here
in Montana?

VOICE (V.O.)

Uh, no. I'm-- I live up in Canada,
actually.

LEE

Canada?! Now they got some great
fishing up there, they say.

VOICE (V.O.)

So my father says.

LEE

You're not a fisherman.

VOICE (V.O.)

My Dad's always talking about
taking me, but...

LEE

Go. Time with your Daddy's most
important.

VOICE (V.O.)

Your son ever catch any of those
fish?

LEE

The biggest damn cutthroat trout
the Valley's ever recorded.

VOICE (V.O.)

Wow.

LEE

No lie. I'm proud of that.

VOICE (V.O.)

I'm sure.

Lee stares off, a frozen smile.

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
So, Francis. You have yourself a
good celebration tonight. Take the
wife out.

LEE
I think I will.

VOICE (V.O.)
Take her to that steak place,
maybe.

LEE
Now, there's an idea-- Get all
duded up, pack the Cadillac and
take my girl down to Jackson. Have
ourselves some prime rib.

VOICE (V.O.)
Sounds like a plan.

LEE
Patty loves a good prime rib.

VOICE (V.O.)
So do I.

LEE
I'll buy the fattest, bloodiest one
they got. In your honor.

VOICE (V.O.)
You have yourself a great night,
Mr. Lee.

LEE
You're a good man, son.

Beat.

VOICE (V.O.)
Thank you.

LEE
Good night.

VOICE (V.O.)
Good night.

Click.

He pounds the kitchen table.

LEE
Duke, we're millionaires!

EXT. LEE'S RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

Sitting on the vast, purple-black tableland, Lee's house appears quaint and miniature, like a lonely doll house. A single dim light in the kitchen winks out.

Long silence. A hum of crickets.

The bedroom light from upstairs pops on for a few moments (grunts of Lee pulling off his boots) and then becomes dark again.

On the driveway, outlined by a pale moonlight, sits a basket of clean laundry.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: "OCTOBER"

EXT. OPEN PLAINS - DAY

The Big Sky, black with storm clouds. A vein of lightning touches down on the pasture, ecstatic, illuminating a moving speck on the highway; Maya's GEO Metro.

INT. MAYA'S GEO METRO - MOVING - DAY

Lee and Maya sit in silence, business as usual.

Then:

LEE
Wanna get some dinner tonight?

She looks at him.

LEE (CONT'D)
Bring your whole family.

MAYA
Really.

LEE
Yeah.

MAYA
Well, gee...

LEE
Think about it.

MAYA
I will.

They smile to themselves.

INT. DUTCH'S BARBERSHOP - DAY

A brand-new plasma TV flickers to an empty room.

The door jingles and Lee ambles in, pulling off his cowboy hat.

LEE
Hello?

A pharmaceutical commercial blares at him.

LEE (CONT'D)
Anybody home?

From the back room, Dean appears, wearing an apron.

DEAN
Lee.

LEE
Dean.

DEAN
Haven't seen you in a bit.

LEE
It's the first.

DEAN
(not getting it)
Uh-huh.

Lee sits down in one of the barber chairs.

LEE
Where's Dutch?

DEAN
Oh.
(beat)
You don't know?

LEE
What.

DEAN

Well, ... Dutch passed on.

Stares.

DEAN (CONT'D)

I told Heck all about it, figured
he'd tell you...

LEE

No. I didn't know.

DEAN

Heart attack.

LEE

No...

DEAN

Yeah.

LEE

I'm real sorry.

Dean shrugs.

LEE (CONT'D)

He was a friend.

More stares.

DEAN

The place is mine now. Gonna do
what I can to keep it going like he
wanted, I guess.

Dean grabs a smock and wraps it around Lee's neck, holding up
an electric razor.

DEAN (CONT'D)

So. How you want your hair cut?

EXT. GLASS VALLEY - MAIN STREET - DAY

A dull drizzle. Curled autumn leaves skip across the wide,
quiet streets.

Lee shakes an umbrella to spread it open and ducks beneath
the swinging "Cole Mercantile Co." sign.

Lee turns, facing the storefront window:

INSIDE, rows and rows of empty aisles. No sign of Alma or anyone except a stray box of cereal on the stone floor. Lights off.

A cardboard sign, propped in the door; "FOR LEASE."

The umbrella suddenly pops open and Lee trudges on, looking back for only a moment.

EXT. GLASS VALLEY - TOWN SQUARE - DAY

It's pouring now.

Lee leans into the wind, his umbrella cutting through the pissing rain.

He stops:

"THE CORNER STORE" looms above him, the new civic center of Glass Valley, a mega-store. A massive parking lot expands beyond it, miraculously filled with cars.

INT. "THE CORNER STORE" - DAY

Glass doors slide open and a drenched Lee slinks in.

"Man! I Feel Like a Woman!" shrieks unconscionably loud from a bank of big-screen televisions. He stares up at the twenty-plus Shania Twains strutting over his head, rapt.

Without making any sudden moves, Lee pulls himself away from the noise and grabs himself a cart, pushing it down the central aisle.

A skinny male EMPLOYEE (20's), pre-occupied, walks past him.

LEE

Excuse me, could you--

The kid averts his eyes, pretending not to hear him.

Lee presses on, pausing in the GROCERY SECTION. He slips on his reading glasses and looks up again for assistance; nothing but wide empty aisles in both directions.

The warehouse walls seem to expand and stretch, Lee becoming smaller and smaller.

PHARMACY - LATER

A cart full of groceries, Lee steps up to a white, sterile counter plastered with Halloween decorations. A woman pharmacist (30's), fills a prescription. Her little name tag says, "FRANCINE"

LEE

Are you-- you work here?

FRANCINE

Yessir.

LEE

I used to get my heart pills from Cole's.

FRANCINE

OK.

LEE

You know Cole's?

FRANCINE

No, sir.

LEE

Well, I need them pills.

FRANCINE

OK, you'll need your Doctor to write another prescription and we'll be happy to fill it for you.

LEE

My Doctor.

FRANCINE

Yessir.

LEE

But I need them pills now.

FRANCINE

I'd need your prescription.

LEE

My Doctor's in Great Falls.

FRANCINE

I could call his office for you.

He rubs his forehead.

LEE

I can't ... it's a Jew name, like
Finkel-something, Stein, Klein ...
Great Falls.

FRANCINE

I would need more information--

LEE

Great Falls.

FRANCINE

Yeah, no.

He head sinks.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

You want me to ring up your
groceries?

Lee nods.

While Francine scans his groceries, Lee sits down in the
lobby of plastic blue chairs.

He reaches into his soaked jacket pocket and unfolds a
personal check made out to "Cole's Mercantile & Co."

Looks at it.

Rips it in half.

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

Sir?

Lee hobbles to the window.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Your total comes out to-- one
hundred-n-forty-two dollars.

LEE

A hundred, what?

FRANCINE

A hundred and forty-two dollars.

LEE

Well, I.

Panicked, Lee dips into his wallet.

LEE (CONT'D)

I only have-- Gee, I don't have
that.

FRANCINE

Do you have a debit or credit card?

LEE

Uh, I think I have....

Pulls out a debit card with an orange sticker on it.

FRANCINE

Oh, well, it looks like you haven't
activated the card yet, sir. You
see, you have to call that 1-800
number right there.

LEE

I'll do that.

FRANCINE

No, you have to activate the card
to use it. Now.

LEE

I can't... buy these?

FRANCINE

Not till you activate the card. Do
you have a credit card, maybe?

Lee's face flushes.

LEE

I have the money, I just--

FRANCINE

Would you like me to cancel the
transaction, then?

LEE

(suddenly)

I'm a millionaire.

She stares at him.

LEE (CONT'D)

So. I can afford it plenty, that's
not...

(trails off)

I just. I will ...

And he quietly moves away from the cart-full of groceries.

INT. WACHOVIA BANK - DAY

Soaking wet, Lee sits with ICKE, a customer service rep (20's), alt-country hipster, who taps away at a computer keyboard.

ICKE

The card's activated--

Hands him the debit card.

LEE

I can use the card.

ICKE

But you won't be able to use the card right now.

LEE

I can't use the card.

ICKE

You don't have enough money in your account--

LEE

What.

Icke punches some keys and prints up a transaction receipt, sliding it across the desk.

ICKE

You're under the limit.

Lee looks down at the statement: "On deposit: \$1,300,000.00"

Puts on his reading glasses: "On deposit: \$130.00"

LEE

It says here, I only have a hundred-thirty dollars.

ICKE

That's correct.

LEE

No, it ain't.

Icke sighs.

ICKE

How much do you think should be there, sir?

LEE

A lot. I mean. I have a lot of
money.

He shrugs.

LEE (CONT'D)

I should have...

Lee pulls out last month's statement from his shirt pocket.

LEE (CONT'D)

"\$34, 320."

ICKE

That's considerably different.

LEE

At least, but I...
(quietly)
...won me a million dollars.

Icke just stares at him.

ICKE

Could I please see that?

Icke looks over the statement, taps the keyboard, looks at it again and rises.

ICKE (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

LEE

It's says it right there.

Lee watches the young rep scuttle across the lobby, grabbing a heavy man, the MANAGER (40's), and whispering furtively, the two of them looking at Lee.

Lee swallows hard, looking at the new statement again:

"On deposit: 130.00"

INT. THE STEAK KNIFE RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

Lee sits at his corner booth, hat on the table, staring out the window and drinking a Royal Crown Cola.

LEENA (O.S.)

You ready for some lunch?

LEE

Uh. No. Not today. I'll just...
stick with this.

With a little shrug, she disappears.

ON THE JUKEBOX, a Patsy Cline song starts to play:

Lee stares at the rainfall, biblical in its fury, thunderous, watching the COUNTY SHERIFF'S car bounce over the train tracks and plow through an intersection, its lights and sirens suddenly popping on.

Lee sits forward, trying to get a glimpse of the Driver--

The cruiser passes, the windows too steamed to see.

Lee drains the bottle of Royal Crown.

LEE (CONT'D)

Fuck.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: "NOVEMBER"

EXT. LEE'S RANCH HOUSE - DAYBREAK

WE FOLLOW Maya's car through the ranch gates and over the cattleguard, pausing to pick-up Lee's mail; a heavy cluster of envelopes tumble to the ground, blowing in the wind.

She latches the gate.

The GEO Metro cuts through the empty grasslands, down the long and twisted driveway to Lee's bunkhouse.

Maya parks behind the busted Dodge, goes to the front porch and knocks on the screen door.

No response.

Opens the screen and knocks on the door.

Nothing.

Kicks aside the Welcome mat and snatches the spare key.

INT. LEE'S RANCH HOUSE - DAYBREAK

It's dark.

MAYA

Lee?

And cold, her breath in white plumes.

She moves down the front hallway, a hand trailing the wall.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You here?

THE DEN

A disaster. Tuna-fish tins, dishes and glasses pile up in dark corners. Marble eyes of mounted heads stare at her.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Lee?

She stands over the kitchen table, thumbing through a stack of thick telephone books, bank account data and a spiral notebook black with mad scribbles; "WACHOVIA" "infoUSA" and "WINDFALL INVESTMENTS"

VOICE (O.S.)

Whattayou want.

Lee stands at the bottom of the stairs, a hunched figure in the blackness.

MAYA

It's the first.

He shuffles past her, wrapped in a blanket.

LEE

...not going back there...

MAYA

What's the matter.

He reaches for the notebook; face ashen, teeth yellow. A patchy white beard.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Why don't you turn on the heat?

LEE

Go home.

Shuffles back to the stairwell.

MAYA

Lee. Talk to me.

Starts up the stairs.

MAYA (CONT'D)
I have your mail.

But he's gone. Creaks and grunts.

She stands over the kitchen table again, staring at the reams of documents. Sifts the junk from the mail.

Stops, finding--

"Wachovia Bank - Corporate Headquarters"

She rips the envelope open.

INT. LEE'S RANCH HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Lee lies on the bed, staring at the ceiling with short, thin breaths. A mounted Texas longhorn stretches over the bed mast.

The bed springs squeak and Maya reaches under the lamp shade; a Click.

MAYA
No power, too.

LEE
Mm.

MAYA
I opened some of your mail, so ...

She unfolds the letter.

MAYA (CONT'D)
You got a letter from the bank and
the good news is, they're
conducting an investigation--

LEE
Mm.

MAYA
And they were able to recover some
of your money...

He faces her.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Fifteen-hundred dollars.

He looks away.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Now, hold up. It says that...

(skims)

Your personal info was gathered by
a *fake sweepstakes*, it says.

LEE

Mm.

MAYA

Some BS "Payment Processing Center"
printed some unsigned checks in
your name, and your bank... now why
would they accept--

(reads)

"Windfall Investments" was the
other BS company. They stole your
money but your bank-- Why did they
allow these people into your
account?

(skims)

There's a civil suit pending
against the bank, that's good, and--

(reads)

"Wachovia works diligently to
detect and end fraudulent use of
its accounts," etcetera, etcetera,
but "the scheme was too complicated
to untangle and your money is
likely lost."

Silence.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You get Social Security.

LEE

Eight-hundred.

MAYA

That's good.

LEE

A month.

MAYA

A month? Whatta bout military
pension?

LEE

Don't even cover my medication.

MAYA
Didn't Patty have life insurance?

LEE
Was livin on it.

She thinks.

MAYA
I got a little somethin saved--

LEE
No.

MAYA
I could probably--

LEE
No.

A long silence.

MAYA
I dunno, Lee.

He stares at the frozen ceiling fan with sunken eyes.

Then.

LEE
I'm old. I screwed up.
(beat)
When you're old and screw up,
there's no learnin from that
mistake. You just are that
mistake.

She looks down at her folded hands.

MAYA
Lee. It seems to me you only got
one option...
(delicately)
You gotta sell the ranch.

He doesn't look at her.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Make a fortune, set you up nice.
Sell it as a hobby spread or lease
it for grazin or sumpin ...
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)
And there's plenty of places for
you to set down, like that
Leisureville my sister works for.
I could take you there--

LEE
(suddenly)
Get out.

MAYA
Lee, c'mon.

LEE
You get out. Now.

MAYA
You gotta start thinkin bout--

LEE
What, so you can take everthing?

He sits up.

LEE (CONT'D)
So you can move your family into my
house, the whole horde of em--

MAYA
What are you sayin, I can't--

LEE
Complainin I don't pay you nuff, so
now you gonna steal from me!?

MAYA
Don't talk nonsense.

LEE
Shoulda known your kind don't know
nuthin bout loyalty.

MAYA
My "kind?"

LEE
You and your criminal brother-
types.

Maya stares at him:

MAYA
Watch it, Lee.

LEE

You think I need you? I don't need you.

MAYA

You watch what you say, old man, cuz I'm all you got.

LEE

You're fired. I fire you.

MAYA

You mean that?

LEE

Get out.

MAYA

You *really* mean that?

LEE

Get outta here, goddamnit. Now.

Maya sighs and slowly stands above him.

MAYA

You're a sad, mean old bastard, Lee, and if weren't for the peanuts you pay me, I'd be avoidin you just like the rest of em. Just like your own son.

He LURCHES FORWARD, PUSHING HER.

LEE

YOU GET OUTTA MY HOUSE, BITCH!

She stoically turns and exits the bedroom.

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

(calling after her)

NO ONE'S GONNA TAKE MY HOME FROM ME!

She walks through the den, down the hallway and out the front door.

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

THIS IS MY HOME, YOU HEAR ME?!

She pulls the Welcome mat and places the spare key back where she found it.

LEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
MY HOME, GODDAMN YOU!

The GEO Metro pulls away, a dust cloud trailing behind it,
the house looking small on the horizon.

LEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
MY HOME!

INT. LEE'S RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Lee sits at the kitchen table, the rotary phone in front of
him.

Dials.

Rings--

VOICE (O.S.)
(a middle-aged woman)
Hello.

He tries to speak-- can't.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hello?

LEE
Hello.

VOICE (O.S.)
Who's this?

LEE
(quiet)
Is this Sissy?

VOICE (O.S.)
Yes, who's this?

The line goes dead.

The phone service turned off.

Lee looks at the phone.

SLAMS IT.

Closes his eyes.

It's ... quiet.

Goes to the cage hanging in the kitchen nook and peers down:

Duke.

Still and peaceful at the bottom of the cage, bright as a lemon peel.

Lee blinks.

...

That's it. No more.

INT. BARN - SADDLE ROOM - DAY

Wooden doors are kicked open.

Sawdust spirals up, then settles; Lee stands before a small tack room, a slat of sunlight across his eyes.

He steps forward.

Coiled rope and harnesses are draped from antler hooks, discarded tools are scattered about...

He pauses.

Sun spotlit in the middle of the room:

An abandoned high-backed saddle sits on a wooden horse.

Lee reaches out and places a scarred hand on the pommel, wiping the dust with a slow drag, caressing the leather.

He goes to a large cupboard and grabs hold of a rusty padlock. Takes a branding iron (a cursive "L" at the end) and SMASHES THE LOCK, the cupboard doors banging open.

Lee's gear.

Buckskins, packer boots and a saddlebag. Tightly-wrapped in a bedroll is an ancient pouch of tobacco, a flask and a pair of pristine silver spurs.

Lee reaches into the darkness of the top shelf and with much care, slowly lowers a double-barrelled shotgun.

Feels it's weight in his hands.

Finds a carton of ammunition.

Locks-n-loads.

CUT TO:

INT. LEE'S RANCH HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Lee's tattooed-forearm rifles through a sock drawer, unearthing a hidden coffee-can. Opens it: a wad of twenties. Emergency stash.

In the bedside drawer, his hands search and find a black-n-white photograph of PATTY, blurred and faded.

Snatches another wallet-sized photo, UNSEEN, and stares at it, considering.

Stuffs it in his poke.

KITCHEN

His hands empty out the pantry of tuna tins, cans of beans, a small frying pan, etc., dumping them into his saddlebag.

Throws in his spiral notebook and "The Iron Marshal."

Grabs a small cassette player.

Strides through the front hallway, leaving, but abruptly stops, his hand on the door knob:

His foyer.

His den.

He shuts the door.

EXT. BARN - DAY

The massive barn doors slide open;

Lee swaggered into the sunlight, wearing a full-length canvas duster and a tilted cowboy hat. Silver spurs jangling.

He carries the saddle (a small struggle) over to the seemingly endless acres of empty corrals, the lonely home of Flick.

The aged horse whinnies, sensing what's next:

Lee gently bridles the saddle on Flick's back, cinching it.

LEE

Ata boy.

With much effort, Lee shoves his boot into the stirrup, muscles himself onto the saddle and in that brief moment, we see the real Francis Lee Sr., no longer an old man, a shadow, but a cowboy, a cattlemen, tall and determined in the saddle.

Lee whoops.

Spurs dig in.

And they're off, Flick racing across the grassy prairie, hoofs drumming, mane lashing and Lee leaning into the wind.

EXT. GLASS VALLEY - MAIN STREET - DAY

Snow-capped mountains behind him, the sleepy town of Glass Valley in front of him, Lee reins Flick to a proud trot.

He picks the horse just outside of town, hidden from view, at a playground of rusty slides and benches.

Dismounts.

Pulls the shotgun from the saddle and conceals it under his duster.

LEE
Be right back.

He marches down the middle of Main Street, moving past Dutch's Barbershop, Dean sweeping the sidewalk.

DEAN
First of the month, huh?

LEE
That it is.

And he keeps on.

INT. WACHOVIA BANK - DAY

The Bank Manager sits at his desk, talking on the phone.

A bored teller, Icke, stacks deposit slips into a neat pile, meticulously lining them--

Suddenly...

They blow away, fanning over the counter.

Icke turns his head, a slow burn, to the front entrance:

A tall silhouette stands poised in the open entryway, a red kerchief over his nose and mouth, a long duster waving in the wind.

Everyone turns.

The Figure locks eyes with the Bank Manager and strides across the lobby, directly to his desk.

Stands above him.

MANAGER
(on the phone)
Uh. Lemme call you back.

Hangs up.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Can I help you?

LEE
Do you accept unsigned checks?

Beat.

MANAGER
Do I accept ...?

LEE
Do you. Accept. Unsigned checks?

MANAGER
Sir. You're making me very
uncomfortable with ...
(gestures his face)
Could you please take that off.

Lee doesn't move.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Am I to assume ... Are you robbing
us?

LEE
You robbed me.

MANAGER
Huh.

LEE
Do you. Accept. Unsigned checks?

MANAGER
Yes. We do.

Lee whips the duster aside, lifting the shotgun to the Manager's head.

LEE

Stand up.

MANAGER

Oh, no.

He stands, hands in the air, a stain growing between his legs.

LEE

This is gonna happen fast and simple.

MANAGER

Please don't.

LEE

You stole thirty-four thousand, one-hundred and ... uh ... goddamnit...

Lowers the gun. Pulls a bank receipt from his inside pocket and slips on his reading glasses.

LEE (CONT'D)

(reads)

"Thirty-four thousand, one-hundred and ninety dollars." You stole it.

Levels the gun again.

LEE (CONT'D)

Give it to me.

MANAGER

We stole it--

LEE

You took an unsigned check in my name.

MANAGER

OK, hold up. Tell me your name and we'll sit down and figure--

LEE

I'm done with figurin.

MANAGER

Listen. You're upset, I understand.

(MORE)

MANAGER (CONT'D)
But unsigned checks are *legal*, OK,
under a provision of the banking
code, now--

Lee pulls back the hammers.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Please don't.

LEE
You tryin to tell me stealin's
legal.

MANAGER
No. Now if you just tell me your
name--

VOICE (O.S.)
PUT THE GUN DOWN!

Lee spins around and BLASTS THE FLORESCENT LIGHTS above, the
glass shattering and spilling all over a SECURITY GUARD's
head and counter.

Everyone SCREAMS.

Lee turns back.

LEE
I want my money.

MANAGER
We don't have that kind of money
here. Not now.

Points directly at his face.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
I can...give you what we have, but--

LEE
I want my thirty-four thousand, one
hundred and ninety dollars.

A DISTANT SIREN.

Lee turns, straining to hear.

MANAGER
Sir, why don't we just sit down--

LEE
Damnit.

MANAGER
And put this to rest right now.

LEE
(pointedly)
Tell Jeffery Smith I'm comin for
em.

MANAGER
Who?

LEE
This ain't the end, Joker.

MANAGER
Just tell me your name...

Lee throws the shotgun over his shoulder, turning to leave:

LEE
My name is El Toro.

And he lopes through the lobby, disappearing into the noon-day brightness.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Lee walks determinedly across the square, re-loading.

Sirens get louder. Reflections of police cars move in from the horizon.

A stray dog follows Lee for a pace or so, then moves on.

INT. "THE CORNER STORE" - DAY

The entrance doors slide open:

Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White & Blue," thunders from the enormous wall of televisions.

Without thinking, the shotgun EXPLODES repeatedly, rapid-fire, the wall igniting into electric flames, Toby's face in pieces.

WHITE NOISE.

Lee walks through the shower of sparks, the shotgun leveled from his waist.

RANDOM SCREAMS.

DOWN THE CENTER AISLE, Lee paces himself, still wearing the kerchief over his face, reloading and searching for some customer assistance. A SECURITY GUARD (40's) appears and disappears between the aisles, pulling a small pistol.

Lee faces the PHARMACY, knocking on the window with the butt of his gun:

LEE
I need assistance.

Kneeling on the floor, Francine, the pharmacist, weakly raises her hand.

LEE (CONT'D)
You. Stand up.

She does. He slips her a piece of form paper.

LEE (CONT'D)
Fill this prescription.

FRANCINE
Uh.

LEE
Do it.

Her back to Lee, she gets to work, the window suddenly FLASHING into a white web of cracked glass. A thin gunshot.

Lee turns and blindly shoots rows and rows of merchandise into tatters.

LEE (CONT'D)
How you doin back there?!

FRANCINE
I don't have very much.

LEE
How much.

FRANCINE
Enough for a week or two, but--

LEE
Give it to me.

A handful of orange cannisters tumble onto the counter.

LEE (CONT'D)
Do you have ... say, a bag?

Hands him a paper bag and he dumps the cannisters into it, his KERCHIEF SLIPPING OFF HIS NOSE for a moment.

He adjusts.

LEE (CONT'D)
Keep your head down.

And he marches into the fray, carrying a sack of prescription medicine.

The Security Guard bends low, running alongside a parallel aisle with Lee.

Lee stops at a corner carousal; snatches an ATLAS and other MAPS.

Another hollow shot WHIZZES by.

Lee pivots, blowing off another round of double ought buckshot, reducing the Cosmetics department into a pink rubble.

He kicks open an emergency exit, ALARMS SHRIEKING, and slips outside.

EXT. "THE CORNER STORE" - LATE AFTERNOON

Lee crouches between two dumpsters, re-loading.

Sirens from every direction.

He moves through the immense parking lot, weaving in and out of cars, heading for a cluster of trees outlining the perimeter of the town.

WE FOLLOW LEE, walking and watching through the naked birch trees, police cars racing down the streets, surrounding the bank.

Lee moves steadily for the children's park where Flick anxiously grazes.

Pats him on the neck.

LEE
Hey boy.

He dumps the meds and maps into his poke.

Swings up and digs in, the shotgun reaching from Lee's hip.

Lee wheels the horse to where they came from, touching up for the darkening mountain range, the Big Sky tinted with torn red clouds.

CUT TO:

EXT. WACHOVIA BANK - LATE AFTERNOON

A dusty brown cruiser peels down Main Street, "GLASS COUNTY SHERIFF" emblazoned across the sides.

The car slams into Park and the driver-side door bangs open:

Francis "HECK" Lee Jr. (50's), rises from the car. Brown uniform, wide hat and a prominent badge.

He yanks off his mirrored sunglasses, slams the door and walks fast to the bank entrance, the street still wild with alarms and sirens.

INT. WACHOVIA BANK - LATE AFTERNOON

Heck steps over the debris, instantly accosted by Sheriff Deputy RANDOLPH (28), sporting a thin mustache to cover a hare lip.

They walk and shout:

RANDOLPH

(fast)

We got an attempted armed-robbery
by an elderly man calling himself
"El Toro" who says the bank ripped
him off by accepting an unsigned
check but wouldn't tell the Manager
his real name--

HECK

Deputy.

RANDOLPH

Yessir.

HECK

Have someone turn off the sirens.

Randolph falls back and Heck walks to the Bank Manager, sitting on the floor.

HECK (CONT'D)

You OK?

MANAGER

I ain't braggin.

HECK

Let's take a look at the tapes.

INT. WACHOVIA - SURVEILLANCE ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Heck and the Manager (sport coat hanging over his pants) watch a close-circuit TV.

ON SCREEN: a pixilated, high-angled image of a masked man, slow and strobe-like, making his way to the Manager sitting at his desk.

A silent conversation.

MANAGER

This is where ...

El Toro whips out the shotgun and the Manager rises. Quite clearly, we see the large spot on his pants.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

He really meant business.

HECK

Get me a list of them customers age sixty and up and get me a list of all ongoing check fraud investigations.

MANAGER

One thing, Sheriff.

HECK

Yessir.

MANAGER

He said, "Tell Jeffery Smith I'm comin for em."

HECK

You know who that is?

MANAGER

Dunno.

Randolph pokes his head in.

RANDOLPH

Sheriff. You gotta see this.

INT. "CORNER STORE" - LATE AFTERNOON

Heck stands before the blackened, smoldering ruins of the television wall, ALARMS and WHITE NOISE BLARING.

He bends over to examine a pile of brass shell-casings.

Randolph walks up with the store Security Guard.

HECK
(shouting)
C'mon with the alarms, deputy.

CENTRAL AISLE

With a sudden silence, the alarms turn off. Heck and the Guard walk and talk:

SECURITY GUARD
He came down this here aisle and I
followed him...
(points)
Down that there aisle, with my
pistol drawn.

HECK
You get a good look at him?

SECURITY GUARD
Big. A real cowboy.

They pause at the shattered window of the PHARMACY.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Got myself a shot in right here and
then he just tore up the place-- a
double-barrel shotgun and the
fucker used it.

Randolph appears with the pharmacist, bits of glass in her hair.

RANDOLPH
Francine here was working the
counter.

HECK
(nods)
Maam. How you doin, you all right?

She weakly nods.

HECK (CONT'D)
Tell me what happened.

FRANCINE

(shrugs)

He was just an old man ...

SECURITY GUARD

Crazy old man, a mean sumbitch--

FRANCINE

Who needed medication and just
wanted his prescription filled.

HECK

He wanted his prescription filled.

FRANCINE

Yes.

HECK

Nuthin else.

FRANCINE

He gave me this...

She hands Heck the form paper.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

The name's been cut out.

HECK

(looks it over)

What are all these for... ?

FRANCINE

(takes it back, reading)

Toprol is for high blood pressure,
Lipitor, Zetia and Plavix are all
for cholesterol and Metformin and
Actos are for diabetes.

HECK

He didn't steal anythin else.

FRANCINE

LoDoz too.

HECK

For people with stents.

FRANCINE

Usually, sure.

HECK

(to Randolph)

Old man with heart disease,
diabetes and stents. Let's see if
that narrows it down.

FRANCINE

That's like, every old man who
comes in here.

He nods, thinking.

HECK

You good?

FRANCINE

I'm good, thanks.

HECK

(to the Security Guard)

Where's your surveillance?

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Heck, Randolph and the Security Guard surround another black-and-white image, coming from a tighter angle this time, of El Toro negotiating with Francine.

They silently watch to the hum of the monitors.

RANDOLPH

What's a "stint."

HECK

A tube or wire they put in your
artery to keep the blood goin.

ON TV: The window cracks from the Guard's gunshot.

SECURITY GUARD

I did that. That was me.

RANDOLPH

You got one of em?

HECK

What.

RANDOLPH

One of them "stints." That why you
know so much about em?

El Toro's kerchief slips off his nose.

HECK

No, I used to know someone ...
(to the Guard)
Rewind it.

The action scrambles back, the image bobbling.

HECK (CONT'D)

Stop right there.

El Toro shoves the medication into a bag and the kerchief falls again.

RANDOLPH

They had heart disease?

HECK

Yeah, he did.
(waves a hand)
Freeze it.

Frozen, we see the blurry, barely recognizable face of Francis Lee Sr. Heck leans in to the monitor, real close.

RANDOLPH

So whattaya think. Do we know him?

Heck stares at the opaque pixels.

Lies.

HECK

Not at all.

CUT TO:

EXT. MILK RIVER VALLEY - FALLING DUSK

CLOSE-UP on Lee's face, set in a long stare, watching cloud shadows crisscrossing the yellow flatlands, a vast chessboard.

From the saddlebag, Lee pulls out his cassette player and secures it with rope around the pommel of the saddle.

Presses Play.

A tinny Sousa march fills the barren, meaningless meadow with uplift and purpose.

They march into the oncoming night.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MILK RIVER VALLEY - NIGHT

A dim circle of orange light.

Within it, a blanket roll is laid out at the foot of a cook-fire. Lee bakes beans in a frying pan and boils a kettle of water for coffee.

In the pitch blackness beyond, the dull shape of Flick grazes on the low-hanging cottonwood he's tethered to.

Lee studies a map of the "Far Country," the upper-northern range of the Montana-Alberta, Canadian border, his reading glasses low on his nose.

Consults his spiral notebook; "Wachovia Bank - Corporate Headquarters - Edge City, MT. 59427"

He lifts the thin map up to the fire, its mountain ranges illuminated, and follows the varicose trails with a steady finger. It ends at a black dot; EDGE CITY, MONTANA.

Lee circles it with a marker.

Stashes the map and notebook in a saddlebag and leans forward to stir and taste the grub; it'll do, and he pours the beans into a tin plate, soaking it up with a handful of soda biscuits.

Pulls the "Corner Store" sack of medicine out from his poke and swallows the candy-colored heart pills.

Lee leans back on his saddle with a creak, crosses his ankles and stares up at the dome of blinking lights.

The low rushing sound of the Milk River.

A STAR suddenly dies-- slashes across the black sky, a neon flare.

Lee sips hot coffee from a tin cup.

A deep breath and long exhale.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LEE'S RANCH - CATTLE GATES - NIGHT

Headlights roam the long gravel driveway, making its way to the ink-black box on the horizon, Lee's ranch house.

The headlights snap off.

Heck gets out of the cruiser, alone, and steps up onto the porch.

Peers through the window; blunt shapes through filthy curtains.

Long sigh.

HECK

...fuck...

Knocks on the door.

Nothing.

Knocks again.

He kicks aside the Welcome mat and snatches the spare key.

INT. LEE'S FARMHOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Click.

The lights don't turn on.

Click.

Heck's flashlight turns on, searching the foyer with a dusty beam of light; checkered wallpaper and a water-stained ceiling.

He knocks on the wall as he enters ...

HECK

(calling out)

Sheriff Department.

THE DEN

Empty. Thick air.

The beam slashes across the black eyes of mounted heads.

Heck moves to the kitchen table, examining the stacks of Lee's investigative work:

Key words pop out, "Wachovia Bank - Corporate Headquarters" "Jeffery Smith" "Alberta, Canada" "Windfall Investments" "Edge City, MT"

He jots these down in a small note pad.

Attached to one of the phone books is a POST-IT with Maya's name, address and phone number scribbled on it.

Heck snatches it.

STAIRWELL

Flashlight on a wedding photo; Lee and his young bride stare solemnly into the camera lens, patiently posing for a portrait.

Heck leans against the wall, lowering the light.

...

Continues on.

INT. LEE'S FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Heck stands in the doorway, a silhouette with a bright light emanating from his hip.

An unkempt bed.

Finds the "Wachovia" letter on the floor. Skims and pockets it.

He goes to the window, peering through the flimsy, ghostly curtains; miles and miles of dead landscape and empty corrals.

HALLWAY

Heck walks slowly, as if afraid to wake someone, down the creaky hallway.

Pauses at a bedroom door.

It's locked.

BASHES IT OPEN with his shoulder.

INT. LEE'S FARMHOUSE - SMALL BEDROOM - NIGHT

A teenage boy's room.

A poster of Johnny Cash flipping the bird, a folded baseball mitt and a Louisville Slugger. Untouched and dust-covered.

Heck stands there.

He goes to a small closet and slides it open; finds a big cardboard box, duct-taped shut.

He takes out a Swiss-Army knife and slices it open. Reaches into the darkness and unearths a baseball trophy. Holds it to the moonlight. Flips through a worn binder of encased baseball cards and a few Buddy Holly & the Crickets records.

Digs deeper, flipping through a thick stack of snapshots; baby Heck covered in shredded Christmas paper - Patty holding her tiny son up on her shoulders - a sullen teenage Heck slouched on a horse.

He stops.

A yellow-faded photograph: a young Lee wraps his arms around his son, teaching him how to cast a fly-fishing line.

Heck flips it over-- "Big Hole '56" etched in black marker.

Heck sits on the bed. Falls back.

Short breaths.

Sits up again.

Grabs the baseball bat.

Tightens his grip, weighing it, as if--

A CELL PHONE RINGS.

He drops the bat and flips open his phone:

HECK

Hi.

SISSY (V.O.)

Hey. Where you at?

HECK

I'm at work. Still.

SISSY (V.O.)

You headin home?

HECK

Should be.

SISSY (V.O.)

You wanna pick up some sherbert for us?

HECK

OK.

SISSY (V.O.)

No orange.

HECK

Right.

Beat.

SISSY (V.O.)

You all right?

HECK

Sissy?

SISSY (V.O.)

Yeah?

HECK

You love me, right?

SISSY (V.O.)

Baby.

HECK

You do? You do.

SISSY (V.O.)

Come home.

He hangs up.

INT. CRUISER - MOVING - NIGHT

A pint of sherbert rests on the passenger seat (a "Corner Store" plastic bag) as Heck drives down Main Street.

Slows down, the headlights passing the front doors of "Gabby's Saloon."

INT. GABBY'S SALOON - NIGHT

Heck stands at the door. George Jones on the jukebox, tobacco-stained walls. A dumb haze.

He sidles up to the bar, unsure if he should take a seat. He stands.

The bartender, TOAD (50's), looks like one; huge eyes blinking in Coke-bottle glasses.

TOAD
Sheriff.

HECK
Jack. Straight up.

Toad looks at him.

TOAD
You sure bout that?

HECK
I'll be over there.

He strides to a corner booth and falls in it, all eyes upon him.

He goes to pull some money from his breast pocket, but instead finds the Post-It with Maya's phone number.

TOAD (O.S.)
Here it goes...

A brown shot glass hits the table.

Heck just stares at the whiskey, rubbing his chin. He looks at Maya's number.

Flips open his phone and dials.

Rings.

MAYA (V.O.)
Yes?

HECK
Is this Maya?

MAYA (V.O.)
Maybe. Who's this?

HECK
This is Sheriff Heck Lee. You got a moment?

MAYA (V.O.)
You're Francis Lee's son, eh?

HECK
He was in your care recently...

MAYA (V.O.)
Yes.

HECK
We need to talk.

MAYA (V.O.)
He's in some trouble, you know.

HECK
When can you be available?

MAYA (V.O.)
Well. Now's good.

HECK
I'll be over.

He hangs up.

Throws down a couple of bills and rushes for the doors, the drink untouched.

INT. MAYA'S TRAILER HOME - NIGHT

A warm, too-cozy home.

Heck sits squeezed in the kitchen nook, shoulders pushed together and hands wrapped around a cup of coffee.

Maya sits across from him, her SISTER (20's) and her Sister's DAUGHTER (in diapers) sit on the floor.

The Wachovia letter is open between them.

MAYA
It's no good.

HECK
Mm.

MAYA
I guess they had it comin, stealin
from a old man.

HECK
It don't work that way.

MAYA
Well. They shoulda known better to
fuck, excuse me, with a tough old
bear like El Toro.

HECK
El Toro.

MAYA

Yessir. Stubborn as one.

Heck takes a sip of coffee, staring at her over the rim.

HECK

Maam. Francis Lee is a outlaw. A fugitive. There's nuthin to gain by understandin him.

MAYA

I guess.

HECK

Them sweepstakes were fraudulent?

MAYA

Yeah. Took his information and sold em to a racket, some Wind Investors--

HECK

Asked for his bank account.

MAYA

Yep.

Heck shakes his head, jotting in his note pad.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I think your Father was lonely.

HECK

Alotta people are lonely. Don't make them stupid too.

MAYA

You talk like him.

He stares at his coffee.

MAYA (CONT'D)

All tough and mean...

HECK

You have no idea where he mighta went.

MAYA

To get his money back, that's where. How is the real question.

HECK

I reckon he's on horseback.

MAYA
(snorts)
That old bag a bones?

HECK
The bank headquarters in Edge City
could be his next move.

MAYA
Maybe.

HECK
(scans his note pad)
Does a "Jeffery Smith" ring any
bells?

MAYA
No, I can't say so.

HECK'S CELL PHONE RINGS.

HECK
...pardon me...

He looks at it, dumping it into voice-mail.

HECK (CONT'D)
I gotta hit it.

MAYA
Did I help any?

HECK
Yes, maam. That the number to
reach you?

MAYA
Yeah. Anytime.

HECK
No need to talk bout this.

MAYA
Of course.

He wriggles his way out of the booth, his frame towering in
the low-ceilinged room.

MAYA (CONT'D)
You really need to sell that place.

Stops at the door.

HECK

Why you say that.

MAYA

It just makes sense, I think, all
that land goin to waste.

HECK

Someone talk to you bout that, bout
buying the place?

MAYA

No. I'm just sayin--

HECK

Then keep out of it.

Beat.

MAYA

OK.

HECK

You get me?

MAYA

Someone's gotta look after--

He turns away, slamming the door behind him.

INT. CRUISER - NIGHT

He falls into the driver's seat. Stares forward.

HECK

Shit.

The sherbert leaks from the plastic bag, soft and gooey on
the passenger seat.

CELLPHONE RINGS AGAIN.

Ignores it.

Heck stares through the windshield; a tight cluster of
trailers strung together with little dots of light.

The cellphone rings.

And rings.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OPEN MEADOW - DAYBREAK

We hear a Sousa march first.

Then we see Flick ... then Lee, riding tall and chewing on a piece of grass.

They walk slowly through a golden meadow, clomping in and out of giant haystacks, dry and ruinous, like fallen prehistoric beasts.

Lee digs in.

And Flick gallops up a switchback, faltering at first, pebbles and rocks skipping down the hill, but the horse finds his pace and sticks to it, climbing towards the pink candy sky.

HILL CREST

They come over the peak of a hill and Lee halts, scanning the landscape; A long, grassy valley bed with a blue mountain mast.

And from the wind-bent grass, incongruously, rises an abandoned DRIVE-IN MOVIE SCREEN. Bone white, tattered and planted at the far end of the pasture, like a goalpost.

Then.

A dust cloud blankets the movie screen, like a sudden fog. A dirty swarm of black, white and brown beasts, insect-like, infest the entire field, rushing the screen, hundreds of them, thundering underfoot. A loud moan.

Then.

Men on horses, just their torsos seen, rise above the clamor, charging, waving their hats ...

Cattlemen.

A cattle drive.

Lee watches for a long moment, leaning back in his saddle; SIX DROVERS position themselves around the herd, yelling to each other. Behind the outfit, a rickety chuck wagon drunkenly sways from side-to-side, coming down the far hill.

The dust settles and the cattle slow to a listless graze.

Lee edges his way down the hill and works his way to a stout vaquero leading point, the TRAIL BOSS (40's).

LEE
(calling out)
You the big sugar of this outfit?

TRAIL BOSS
¿De dónde vino usted?

LEE
What's that?

TRAIL BOSS
¿Qué quiere usted?

LEE
I don't speak no Mexican.

The Boss stands up in his stirrups, whistling to the other vaqueros.

LEE (CONT'D)
I wanna know I'm on the right trail, thas'all.

TRAIL BOSS
Stay.

The outfit cuts through the herd with hard looks.

Lee touches his hidden shotgun in its scabbard.

TRAIL BOSS (CONT'D)
¿Clase de viejo a estar fuera aquí de todo solo, no?

The Boss spits.

The outfit surrounds Lee, eyes narrow.

LEE WHIPS OUT HIS SHOTGUN, point-blank at the Boss.

LEE
I think I best be on my way.

A long silence. Furtive looks.

The Trail Boss chews on his unlit cigarillo, then speaks very slowly:

TRAIL BOSS
Usted está en la propiedad de
Ganado de Russell.

Beat.

LEE
"Russell?"

A TEENAGE COWBOY gives a quick WHISTLE, pointing to the black "L" branded on Flick's haunch.

The Trail Boss sneaks a glance:

TRAIL BOSS
¿Las Lee Ranch Company?

LEE
Lee Ranch Company. Si.

All the vaqueros relax into a smile, tipping their hats with deep respect.

TRAIL BOSS
Muchas apoloías.

Humbled, Lee lowers his gun.

LEE
Russell Livestock.

TRAIL BOSS
Si. Yes.

LEE
I knew Cullen well.

No comprende.

LEE (CONT'D)
Edge City?

TRAIL BOSS
Edge City. Ah.

He points to the mountains.

TRAIL BOSS (CONT'D)
Nos dirigimos en aquella dirección.

LEE
North? North.

TRAIL BOSS
Usted podría cabalgar con nosotros.

Lee doesn't get it.

TRAIL BOSS (CONT'D)
(waves him on)
Come. Come.

Lee sizes up the situation.

Then.

LEE
Much obliged.

And Lee sallies forth, absorbing himself into the drive, moving North through a gap in the mountains and onward to Edge City.

INT. COURTHOUSE - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Boot heels on the desk, Heck leans back in a swivel chair and hangs up the phone.

Randolph stands in the doorway:

HECK
Shut the door.

He does.

HECK (CONT'D)
Take a seat.

He does.

Heck squints at him.

HECK (CONT'D)
Deputy.

RANDOLPH
Yessir.

Pause.

HECK
This El Toro thing...

RANDOLPH
Trouble.

HECK
Sure is.

RANDOLPH
Never seen nuthin like it.

Heck folds his arms and looks squarely at him.

HECK

I just got an anonymous tip.

RANDOLPH

No.

HECK

Yeah.

RANDOLPH

Who?

Heck blinks.

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)

I mean, who do you think?

HECK

I dunno.

(beat)

They say he's gonna hit the
Wachovia in Edge City next.

RANDOLPH

Damn.

HECK

And they think he's on horseback.

RANDOLPH

A real cowboy.

HECK

He could be arriving in Edge City
as soon as today.

RANDOLPH

Today?

HECK

We'll head him off there.

Heck abruptly stands.

RANDOLPH

But that's in Blaine County, ain't
it?

HECK

We're takin El Toro down, Deputy.

He moves to the coat rack.

HECK (CONT'D)

This man...

(beat)

...shot holes into our little
community here. Stealin what ain't
his.

(swings on his gun belt)

Now he thinks he can run from the
mess he's left behind but that
ain't my line.

(swings on his jacket)

He's our problem, Deputy. And I
aim to fix it.

Randolph solemnly nods.

HECK (CONT'D)

No one needs to know how things get
done round here, you get me.

RANDOLPH

Yessir.

HECK

Let's go.

They leave together.

EXT. INTERSTATE 15 - DAY

The cruiser moves fast at the bottom of the desolate terrain,
the sky above an uproar of clouds.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EDGE CITY - AFTERNOON

A corporate outpost.

High-rise office towers reach from the barren prairie, like
an alien city on the moon; parking structures, manicured
lawns and manufactured lakes.

The unit flies down the interstate off-ramp and parks in the
lot of a violent-blue metallic skyscraper:

The Wachovia National Bank Headquarters.

INT. WACHOVIA BANK HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Sheriff Heck and Deputy Randolph, both in plainclothes, plant themselves in the middle of a monumental lobby, wearing mirrored sunglasses.

They take in the lay of the land; smartly-dressed PROFESSIONALS come and go and TWO ARMED SECURITY GUARDS lounge at a fortress-like security desk. Beyond the METAL DETECTORS are three rows of elevator banks leading to the offices above.

It's quiet.

RANDOLPH

Whattaya say?

HECK

Keep an eye out.

He strides across the vast lobby to the revolving doors.

EXT. WACHOVIA BANK HEADQUARTERS - AFTERNOON

Standing in the middle of the road, Heck scans the horizon; nothing but Big Sky and low hills.

He prowls the empty streets, his shadow long and spindly, looking between the glass buildings.

Nothing.

Heck stops at the other end of the "city," looking up at the sun lowering itself into the swollen hill.

Quiet.

Snaps open his Motorola two-way radio:

HECK

Deputy.

INTERCUT:

INT. WACHOVIA BANK HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Randolph stands exactly as we left him, a Security Guard (50's) approaching from behind.

RANDOLPH

Yessir.

HECK (O.S.)
You fixin for some coffee?

RANDOLPH
Sounds fine to me.

HECK (O.S.)
Black?

SECURITY GUARD
Can I help you with sumpthin?

Randolph spins around.

Beat.

They look at each other.

RANDOLPH
Um.

SECURITY GUARD
What you doin here, mister.

RANDOLPH
Just waitin on a friend.

SECURITY GUARD
Well, you gonna have to wait for
your friend somewhere's else. No
loiterin.

HECK (O.S.)
You there Deputy?

The Guard raises an eyebrow.

SECURITY GUARD
Deputy?

RANDOLPH
Pardon.
(quiet, to Heck)
Sheriff, the Security Guard here
wants us to state our business.

INTERCUT:

EXT. EDGE CITY - AFTERNOON

Heck rolls his eyes.

HECK

Tell em to hold on.

Snaps the phone shut and turns to leave--

Then.

A LOW RUMBLE. Barely perceptible.

Heck stops.

Turns back to the hills:

The horizon goes brown with dust, a dirty smear across the sky.

THE RUMBLE GETS LOUDER, suddenly thunderous, the pavement shaking under Heck's boots and the hill is instantaneously covered with hundreds of drumming cattle, FOUR COWBOYS small in the distance, coming over the hill.

Heck stands there and stares, the orange, fiery sun at eye-level--

Then.

A SOLITARY FIGURE, riding a horse in silhouette, slowly rises from the hill and blots out the sun.

Is it... ?

Heck squints, his hand on his gun belt.

The bent Figure vanishes with the dust.

Heck starts moving down the street, fast, craning his neck and searching the distant black dots on the hill ...

He stops.

Considers.

Goes for it.

Sprints down the street he came from, hops in the patrol car, the tires squealing and burning out of the parking lot and barrels through the office parks.

The cruiser hits the street curb, wildly bouncing up-n-down, catching itself and racing across the plains, heading for the cattle-covered hills and inflamed sky.

A two-way radio BEEP.

RANDOLPH (O.S.)
(hissing)
Sheriff?!

Heck grips the spinning steering wheel, ignoring it.

RANDOLPH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Sheriff, come in!

Grabs it.

HECK
What?!

RANDOLPH (O.S.)
He's here.

INTERCUT:

INT. BANK LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Randolph and the Security Guard stare at the SILHOUETTE of a man, thin and black against the brightness of the glass entrance. He wears a long canvas duster and crooked cowboy hat.

HECK (O.S.)
Say again.

RANDOLPH
He's here, Sheriff. Standing at
the doors.

The Silhouette hobbles to a directory on the wall.

HECK (O.S.)
Describe him.

INTERCUT:

EXT. CRUISER - MOVING - AFTERNOON

Still flying across the plains, driving toward a slouched COWBOY on a horse.

RANDOLPH (O.S.)
He's a old timer roughneck, I
guess. Can't see him too good.

Beat.

HECK

Hold 'em without making a fuss and
wait for me.

RANDOLPH (O.S.)

Yessir.

Throws down the phone and slams on his brakes, dust
everywhere.

THROUGH THE DIRTY WINDSHIELD: the Trail Boss and his horse
stare wide-eyed at the patrol car.

Heck stands, showing his badge.

HECK

Sheriff Department.

Two other cowboys halt their horses, the Boss nervous.

HECK (CONT'D)

I'm looking for the old timer
you're riding with.

The Boss shrugs.

HECK (CONT'D)

Old man. Comprende? Old.
(points)
Saw 'em ridin yonder.

The Boss shakes his head, poker-faced.

Heck searches the horizon, hands on his hips.

Moves to his car.

HECK (CONT'D)

Don't move.

INTERCUT:

INT. BANK LOBBY - LATE AFTERNOON

FACE UNSEEN, the Silhouette trudges directly toward Randolph
and the Guard.

RANDOLPH

(under his breath)

No time to explain; this man is a
violent and no-account outlaw, you
understand?

SECURITY GUARD

Yessir.

RANDOLPH

Follow my lead.

Randolph steps forward with an arm outstretched.

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)

Pardon me, sir, but could you come
with me a moment?

The Silhouette pulls a SHOTGUN from under his duster,
leveling it at the Security Guard.

LEE

Drop your weapon.

Pause.

RANDOLPH

Do as he says.

SECURITY GUARD

Really?

RANDOLPH

Now.

They slowly un-holster their pistols and lower them to the
floor.

LEE

Kick em over.

They do.

The Silhouette steps forward, his face revealed: a red
kerchief covers the nose and mouth of El Toro, his eyes
leveled at them.

He gathers the guns and shoves them in the waistband of his
jeans.

LEE (CONT'D)

Where's the president.

Confused.

LEE (CONT'D)

The bank president. Where's he at?

Nothing.

RANDOLPH
Tell em what floor, for Chrissakes.

SECURITY GUARD
Thirtieth. Top floor.

LEE
Let's take a walk.

They turn and walk sheepishly to the security desk, prodded by Lee's shotgun.

The other Security Guard, (30's & big) rises from behind the counter.

Lee raises the gun.

LEE (CONT'D)
Set down.

He does.

LEE (CONT'D)
Kindly hand over your weapon too,
mister.

He does.

Lee pushes the men through the metal detector, the BUZZERS GOING OFF.

He aims the gun under the desk:

LEE (CONT'D)
Get down over there, all of yous.

They reluctantly crouch down.

He yanks the phone from the desk, tossing it to their feet.

LEE (CONT'D)
I'm goin upstairs. I come back
down here and find myself steppin
in a world of shit, I will kill
people, you understand? It don't
matter to me none. Dyin now or a
couple a years from now don't make
much of a difference.

They stare up at him.

LEE (CONT'D)
We clear?

They nod and he turns, moving to the elevators.

Presses the UP button.

The door slides open and Lee steps in ... And the door slides shut.

BEEP.

HECK (O.S.)
Deputy, you there?

Randolph snaps open his phone:

RANDOLPH
Sheriff, it's him, he's here.

INTERCUT:

INT. CRUISER - LATE AFTERNOON

Heck sits in the driver's seat, eyes locked with the Trail Boss.

HECK
Slow down. Where is--

A HORSE WHINNY--

And sudden burst of movement.

THEY'RE GONE, the two cowboys bolting for the hills.

HECK (CONT'D)
What the hell.

RANDOLPH (O.S.)
Sheriff, you there?

The Trail Boss holds up his hands and he suddenly digs in too, hollering to the rest of the boys and rushing for the hills.

HECK
Goddamnit, I'm not the INS--

He throws down the phone and FLIPS ON THE SIRENS & LIGHTS.

Oh, Shit.

He immediately flips off the noise.

Too late.

A crazed moan and ripple of wild terror spreads.

Heck slams the door shut, locking it.

The cruiser vibrates and then shakes.

A STAMPEDE.

CATTLE SMASH THE FRONT OF THE CRUISER, the car spinning.

Hooves trample over the hood, heavy bodies toppling, bones snapping.

The hood caves in. A LOUD ENGINE HISS, steam spraying into the air.

The back WINDSHIELD SHATTERS--

A cow's head jams for a moment, panicked, rolling, and then carried away with the crush.

Heck falls to the floor, shards of glass in his hair, screaming over the din.

PULL BACK: the cruiser has vanished in the dark current, the dented raft of a roof the only thing visible.

A mad pulsing herd.

INT. WACHOVIA BANK HEADQUARTERS - TOP FLOOR - LATE AFTERNOON

The elevator door opens.

A FEMALE RECEPTIONIST (20's) looks up from behind her desk;

A dark elevator.

The door starts to slide shut and Lee steps out from the shadows, kerchief firmly in place, his shotgun concealed.

He slowly approaches the desk, yanking his kerchief down and taking off his hat.

LEE

Maam.

(nods)

I'm here to see the president.

She stares up at the grizzled old man.

RECEPTIONIST

Can I get your name, please?

LEE

Tell em a close friend is here to
see em.

RECEPTIONIST

OK, well, why don't you have a
seat.

He considers, looking around the stark, modern lobby.

LEE

All right then.

She picks up the phone, whispering into the receiver.

He trudges over to the glass table and magazines, collapsing
in a leather couch with a loud exhale.

Wipes his brow.

She hangs up the phone.

RECEPTIONIST

Could I get you some coffee,
water...?

LEE

You got Royal Crown?

RECEPTIONIST

Yessir.

LEE

That would be fine, thank you.

She stands.

LEE (CONT'D)

And don't be botherin with the
security downstairs. They know all
about me.

RECEPTIONIST

Yessir.

She disappears.

He closes his eyes.

Rubs his forearm and touches the inside of his wrist, feeling
his pulse.

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

Here you go, sir.

LEE

Thank you, maam.

Lee reaches into his coat pocket, takes out a handful of heart medicine, swigs a mouthful of Cola and washes them down.

Smiles to himself.

LEE (CONT'D)

Got yourself a real nice place here. Swank.

RECEPTIONIST

Thank you.

Silence. He listens to the phones ringing somewhere.

LEE

Been a long while since I seen Dr. Klein.

RECEPTIONIST

Pardon?

LEE

Needs to write me that new prescription...now with all...
(drifts off)

A female secretary, KELLY (30's), strides into the lobby. Lee snaps to attention.

KELLY

I'm Mr. Thompson's assistant, Kelly. Is there something I could help you with?

Lee sizes her up.

LEE

Where's Mr. Thompson?

KELLY

I'm afraid he's not here today.

Lee puts his hat on, squaring it.

LEE

I'm afraid I don't believe you.

KELLY

Mr. Thompson's in Phoenix, sir, attending a convention.

With a small grunt, Lee rises from his seat, standing toe-to-toe with the secretary.

LEE

I'd like to speak with Mr. Thompson. Today.

KELLY

I'm afraid that's just not possible.

LEE

I don't wanna get hard with you, darlin, but I will.

KELLY

Excuse--

Lee opens the duster, the shotgun lowered by his leg.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Oh. Jesus.

LEE

Show me his office.

She quickly nods, sharing a panicked glance with the Receptionist and guides Lee through a maze of carpeted hallways, bare cubicles and conference rooms.

Kelly talks over her shoulder:

KELLY

(fast)

Sir, I swear to you that Mr. Thompson is not here today, he's almost never here, coming in once or twice a year, always away on business or vacation or whatever, but I swear to you, sir, he's not here today.

She passes her own desk, stopping in front of a large door; THE CORNER OFFICE.

LEE

The president of a bank is never here.

KELLY

He's never here.

LEE

Big bug like that. That's just
hard to believe.

INT. CORNER OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

The door kicks open.

Lee stands in the doorway, his gun leveled at a high-backed swivel chair facing the opposite wall, behind a huge and empty desk.

He shuts the door behind him.

Pause.

LEE

Mr. Thompson. I'm here to collect
the money you stole from me.

Lee inches forward.

LEE (CONT'D)

I know I ain't the only old fart
you've ripped off, but I'm the
maddest.

Pulls back the hammers.

LEE (CONT'D)

Hopin to die before the money runs
out is no way to live, Mr.
Thompson.

The gun reaches over the desk.

LEE (CONT'D)

I'm sure that don't keep you up
nights, but I ain't slept right in
years...

The barrel of the shotgun slowly spins the chair around;

LEE (CONT'D)

And I aim to dream again.

Nothing.

Lee wearily lowers the gun.

Sits in the chair.

He stares at the vast office; a dull flat-screen TV hangs between two mahogany bookcases, family portraits everywhere.

An absentee landlord.

Lee leans forward and presses the Intercom button.

LEE (CONT'D)

Maam?

Nothing.

LEE (CONT'D)

...see how this thing...

Lets go of the button.

KELLY (O.S.)

Yessir.

Presses it again.

LEE

I want all your information bout
Windfall Investments on this desk.

KELLY (O.S.)

Yessir.

LEE

Now.

KELLY (O.S.)

Right away, sir.

He leans back in the swivel chair.

Closes his eyes.

EXT. PLAINS - TWILIGHT

Heck falls out of the twisted, metal ruin of what was once an automobile.

He stands unsteadily, looking after the doomed dust cloud racing over a distant hill.

Blood drips from his forehead.

BEEP.

RANDOLPH (O.S.)

Sheriff?!

He snaps open the phone:

HECK

Yeah.

RANDOLPH (O.S.)

Where are you?!

HECK

I'm on my way.

He walks and talks, fast.

HECK (CONT'D)

Where's El Toro?

Silence.

HECK (CONT'D)

Deputy. Where's El Toro.

RANDOLPH (O.S.)

He forced over our guns, Sheriff.

Heck stops in his tracks.

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

He got past me.

HECK

He still there now?

RANDOLPH (O.S.)

He's on the top floor, looking for
the president.

Heck spins around and runs back to the ruined car.

HECK

Where are you?

RANDOLPH (O.S.)

We're in the lobby.

HECK

Don't move. I'm comin.

He jams his keys into the trunk lock; it won't turn.

Pulls his custom-made COLT .44 from his gun belt and BLASTS
THE LOCK, the trunk banging open.

Reaches in and pulls out TWO SHOTGUNS.

Starts running.

Blood in his face and glass in his hair, Heck trots down the center of the desolate street, shotguns in both fists.

INT. CORNER OFFICE - TWILIGHT

A thin manila folder smacks down on the desk, waking Lee from a catnap.

Kelly stands over him, nervous.

LEE

That's all?

KELLY

That's everything we got on the Windfall Investments investigation.

Lee sighs, opening and shutting the file.

LEE

Well... thanks, Kelly.

KELLY

Yessir.

She stands there, waiting for instructions.

LEE

You're free to go.

KELLY

Thank you, sir.

The door shuts.

Lee lets out a huge yawn, stands and snatches the file.

With the file under his arm, Lee slowly walks across the vast office ...

Stops at the door.

Raises the shotgun.

BLASTS THE FLAT SCREEN into pieces and BLASTS THE BOOKCASE into splinters, ejected casings bouncing wildly, BLASTS THE SWIVEL CHAIR, flashes of orange muzzle-fire, BLASTS THE FAMILY PORTRAITS, blue gun smoke filling the room and Lee finally BLASTS THE PICTURE WINDOW into a blizzard of white glass--

INTERCUT:

ONTO THE STREET BELOW

Glass smashing and spreading in front of Heck.

He ducks to one knee, looking up at the gaping hole in the building, shards and pebbles showering upon him.

INT. WACHOVIA BANK HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - TWILIGHT

Heck spins through the revolving doors and runs to the metal detectors.

HECK
DEPUTY?!

Randolph meekly rises from behind the desk.

Heck tosses him a shotgun.

HECK (CONT'D)
What floor is he on?

RANDOLPH
Top floor.

Heck gets close, quiet.

HECK
Stay here. Do not let him out of
this building, you hear me.

RANDOLPH
Yessir.

HECK
(points at him)
Do NOT shoot him.

RANDOLPH
Yessir.

HECK

He's an old man, Deputy. This
shouldn't be so fuckin difficult.

RANDOLPH

Yessir, I'm sorry sir.

He heads for the elevators, a shotgun slung over his shoulder.

INT. TOP FLOOR - TWILIGHT

Lee struts through the office hallways, Kelly keeping up.

LEE

You got another way outta here?

KELLY

There's the service elevator.

LEE

Show me. And Kelly?

KELLY

Yessir.

LEE

You make sure to tell Jeffery Smith
that he can't stop what's comin.

KELLY

Uh, ok.

LEE

You tell em.

INT. TOP FLOOR - TWILIGHT

The elevator door opens.

Heck steps forward-- the Receptionist stands behind her desk, panicked.

HECK

Sheriff Department.

RECEPTIONIST

(points)

He took the service elevator.

HECK

Show me.

They run through the hallways, EMPLOYEES staring over partitions, turning corner after corner, past the rest rooms, kitchenette and finally a dim hallway with a single elevator--

The door closes.

Kelly turns to them.

HECK (CONT'D)
Where's that go?

KELLY
The back alley.

Heck pushes the DOWN button and snaps open the phone.

HECK
Deputy.

INTERCUT:

INT. LOBBY - TWILIGHT

Randolph guards the entrance.

RANDOLPH
Yessir.

HECK (O.S.)
He's comin to you.

He closes his eyes.

HECK (CONT'D)
Took the service elevator, stop em
in the alley.

RANDOLPH
Yessir.

HECK
I'm comin down.

Randolph takes a deep breath and disappears through the revolving doors.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - TWILIGHT

The industrial door opens and Lee warily steps out on a concrete landing; he spots Flick in the alley cul-de-sac, picketed to a green dumpster.

He carefully steps down and walks over to his horse, patting his neck.

LEE

Hey, boy.

Stuffs the file into his saddlebag and sheathes the shotgun--

RANDOLPH (O.S.)

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, MISTER!

At the far end of the alley, a hunched-over Deputy inches forward, his face hidden behind the barrel.

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)

I got you in my sights.

Lee raises his hands.

LEE

I ain't armed, son.

RANDOLPH

You have my gun.

LEE

Well, you can have it back.

Reaches into his pants.

RANDOLPH

DON'T DO THAT!

Raises his hands again.

LEE

I respect what you think you're doin, kid, but I'm a dicey proposition that's gonna ride outta here, dead or alive.

RANDOLPH

Lie on the ground.

LEE

I definitely ain't doin that.

RANDOLPH

GET DOWN!

Lee stares at him for a moment.

Fuck it.

Steps into a stirrup.

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)
Don't do that!

Swings his foot up and takes the reins.

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)
I'll blow you out of your saddle,
mister!

Presses Play on his cassette player; a Sousa march.

Flick starts to trot--

A MUZZLE-FLASH and a deafening hollow echo.

Scattershot against the dumpster.

FLICK REARS UP, spooked, whinnying.

Lee digs in, charging forward, hooves clomping on the pavement, mane lashing, mouth frothing, going full chisel--

HECK EXITS THE ELEVATOR, a FIGURE WHIZZING PAST the landing, FACE UNSEEN, head down.

Heck jumps into the alley, rounding the passing Figure, and aims his shotgun at the horse's haunches.

HECK
SHERIFF DEPARTMENT!

Lee rushes toward Randolph, coming down hard on him, fast and determined, KNOCKING THE GUN from his hands, the Deputy struggling and falling to his ass.

Heck stands still, focused, the gun poised with El Toro in his sights ...

HECK (CONT'D)
Halt!

Pulls back the hammers.

HECK (CONT'D)
HALT!

El Toro reaches the light of the commercial street.

HECK (CONT'D)
STOP!

BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!

Repeatedly and rapid-fire ...

Into the air.

Blue gun smoke envelopes Heck's face, the alley suddenly quiet, El Toro gone, hooves and music fading somewhere in the city.

The smoke dissipates; Heck. Sweaty and stricken.

HECK (CONT'D)

...fuck, you fuckin fuck...

Lowers the hot gun.

Randolph's small figure at the end of the alley stands up.

Shrugs.

INT. CORNER OFFICE - TWILIGHT

Heck stands at the precipice of the 30th floor, wind whipping through his body.

Arms folded, he stares across the darkening landscape; blue-haze mountains, fire-red hills and faint stars flickering over the distant blackness of Alberta, Canada.

Kelly approaches, glass crunching beneath her feet:

KELLY

(hands him a file)

Here's a copy of what he asked for.

Heck wordlessly takes it, flips through the documents and stuffs it under his arm.

Beat.

HECK

You got any kids?

KELLY

Oh. No. Not yet.

HECK

Mm.

Silence. The cold wind blows through their hair.

KELLY

Are you Jeffery Smith?

Stares at her.

HECK

No, why?

KELLY

The old man told me to tell a
Jeffery Smith that he can't stop
what's coming to him.

He thinks.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Do you need anything else?

HECK

Thank you, no.

She hesitates, leaves.

The BLAINE COUNTY SHERIFF (50's) steps up behind Heck,
wearing a tight beige uniform and tight hat.

BC SHERIFF

You're in a mess-load of trouble,
Heck.

He doesn't look at him.

BC SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Don't know why you just didn't call
me...

They both watch the stars getting brighter, the wind
whistling through the broken glass.

It starts to SNOW.

HECK

I'm gonna need a ride home.

EXT. EDGE CITY - OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

On a high promontory, looking over the pulsing green lights
of Edge City, Lee & Flick plod forward, the snow coming down
hard.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OPEN RANGE - NIGHT

A blizzard.

Lee's bent figure leans into the slashing whiteness.

He stops.

A sunken FLOUR MILL, abandoned and ruined, squats in the middle of the black nowhere. Boarded-up. Haunted.

They slog to a dirt-smeared window and Lee peers in;

Cold, hard floors littered with rusted, forgotten machines. A high, blackened ceiling.

LEE

It ain't the Ramada.

Busts the window with the butt of a stolen pistol.

INT. ABANDONED FLOUR MILL - NIGHT

A huge bonfire roars.

A nervous shadow theatre flickers on the peeled walls, Flick hovering in the dark.

Swing music quietly plays from his cassette player.

Lee leans against his saddle, the Windfall Investments file close to his bleary eyes: pages and pages of a Federal Trade Commission investigation, legal documents and internal memos.

An address pops up; "98 N. Chiquero Lane - BRADSTON - ALBERTA, CANADA," the home of the Windfall Investments's small, covert offices.

Lee unfolds the "Far Country" map and uncaps a Sharpie. He continues the thick marker line from Edge City onward into Canada, through the mountainous wilderness and ending at the city of Bradston.

He circles it.

Folds the map and folder into his poke, pulling out "The Iron Marshall."

The wind rattles through the loose, rotting structure of the mill and Lee tightly wraps himself with a saddle blanket.

He stares out a cracked window at the dead tree branches, rapping at the glass.

Another dying STAR silently streaks the sky.

He reads the paperback by the light of the fire.

Nods off.

The books falls in his lap.

The music suddenly ramps into a discordant, possessed sound and snuffs out.

Dead batteries.

EXT. PLAINS - NIGHT

Heck stands at the edge of the dark plains, head bandaged, watching a tow truck slowly lift his patrol car.

Randolph appears behind him.

They stand there for a long while.

Then.

RANDOLPH

They're gonna be callin in the
F.B.I., I guess.

HECK

They ain't callin in the F.B.I.

RANDOLPH

I heard Blaine County--

HECK

No one's callin in no one.

Beat.

RANDOLPH

I dunno, Sheriff.

Heck turns to him.

HECK

What.

RANDOLPH

It ain't right.

HECK

Speak up.

RANDOLPH

You ain't thinkin right bout this
whole thing.

HECK

(smiles)

Piss ant's gonna tell me somethin
bout right and wrong.

Randolph rubs his mustache.

RANDOLPH

I don't appreciate you talkin to me
like that, Sheriff.

HECK

I don't appreciate no piss ant
deputy tellin me what's what.

RANDOLPH

I took my orders.

HECK

And you'll do it again.

RANDOLPH

Lighten up on me.

HECK

You wanna learn me a lesson?

RANDOLPH

Why you actin all queer bout this
guy?

HECK

You wanna teach me somethin, haus?

RANDOLPH

I want you to respect the Office.

Heck forces a smile.

HECK

You know what...

Pulls his badge.

HECK (CONT'D)

Take it.

Smacks it against Randolph's chest.

HECK (CONT'D)

You think you know better than me?
You think you're smarter? Take it,
you lil fuck. And see how things
look on my end.

He abruptly turns away and walks alone down the center of the street.

RANDOLPH

(calling after)

I ain't never questioned you
before, Heck. You gotta get your
head straight.

(under his breath)

...gutter drunk...

INT. ABANDONED FLOUR MILL - NIGHT

Dying embers in the pitch blackness.

Lee bolts up, blindly reaching in the dark:

LEE

Patty?!

(tries to stand)

I can't see you, honey, where are
you ... Patty?

He trails off, falling down.

Covers his face with his palms.

The horse snuffles, moving closer.

LEE (CONT'D)

C'mere.

Flick lowers his head and Lee embraces him, rubbing the dapple on his forehead.

LEE (CONT'D)

Good boy. Good boy.

PULL BACK TO A LONG SHOT: A man and his horse, barely visible in the pale silver light of the window.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - DAWN

Heck hunches over a formica counter, sipping a cup of coffee and looking over the Windfall Investments file.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOVING - DAWN

Heck drives determinedly across the interstate, the snow coming down hard and the wipers pumping double-time.

He slows down as he approaches the CANADIAN-U.S. BORDER.

CUSTOM AGENTS stop vehicles and lean in windows while Heck idles, waiting in line and looking over an Albertan road map:

SLOW ZOOM INTO an illustration of a mountain range, the screen filling into ...

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAWN

A WHITEOUT.

Far on the horizon, a tiny black Figure plods through the white void.

DISSOLVE TO:

NOON

The Figure appears mid-range, barely distinguishable in the pounding storm.

DISSOLVE TO:

TWILIGHT

Lee stares directly at us, bone white and blue-veined, ice dangling from his full beard.

Slits for eyes.

INT. ROADSIDE MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Heck lies in bed, illuminated by the blue flicker of the TV set.

From the bedside table, his CELL PHONE RINGS.

He doesn't answer it.

It rings and rings.

He stares forward.

EXT. RIVER BED - DAY

A gray, frozen river twists through the valley.

Flick treads alongside the riverbank, stepping over the naked skull of an animal, a moose or cow maybe, it's bones scattered and camouflaged in the snow--

A RUMBLE.

Coming from above and afar.

Lee looks up--

He's suddenly overwhelmed with the deafening rush of a BLACK HELICOPTER, blades wild, the surrounding pines waving in it's wake.

Lee digs in, charging and hiding in the white woods.

And the roar moves on, fading in the distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE - TWILIGHT

Another blizzard.

Flick struggles up a snowbank, the deep drift rising to the horse's flank.

LEE

C'mon, boy. Keep a movin.

The horse shrilly whinnies, kicking up a white mist and plodding heavily.

The horse trips.

Stops.

Gives a final mighty thrust forward and COLLAPSES, throwing Lee into the snow.

Silence.

Lee lies there for a moment, staring at the falling snowflakes with hard, quick breaths.

He pushes himself up and grabs Flick's reins.

LEE (CONT'D)

Up boy, c'mon.

A violent shiver.

LEE (CONT'D)

Git up.

Black furtive eyes.

LEE (CONT'D)

(hits him)

Git up, Goddamnit.

Flick rolls, his legs and hooves kicking up snow, but simply falls over.

LEE (CONT'D)

(pleading)

C'mon, Flick. Git up. Git up.

Nothing.

LEE (CONT'D)

GIT UP!

The horse just breathes heavy.

Lee closes his eyes.

Falls to his knees.

Wraps his arms around his horse's neck.

LEE (CONT'D)

It's OK, boy, it's fine.

Lee lowers his head.

Reaches into his saddlebag and pulls out a pistol.

Loads it.

He leans up against his friend's haunches, the gun in his lap and just stares at the snow coming down.

DISSOLVE TO:

MOUNTAIN RANGE

A rush of clouds silently envelope the jagged peaks.

GUNSHOT.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOUNTAIN CAVE - NIGHT

Lee sits at the mouth of a small cavern, drinking black coffee from a tin cup, a small cook-fire warming his feet.

He runs his hand over inside of his forearm, massaging his pulse.

Stares absently into the fire.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OPEN RANGE - DAY

The Big Sky, desolate and dull-grey.

A methodical line of international stone markers dot the horizon, an endless row of blunt little Washington monuments.

Lee wearily trudges through the bald field, head down and struggling with his gear, the brim of his hat white with gathered snow.

He finally crosses the invisible fence, stopping to look at one of the markers; "CONVENTION OF 1818" is chiseled in stone.

He steps around it, reading the other inscription; "CANADA"

EXT. BRADSTON CITY - LATE AFTERNOON

A barren one-street town.

No cars in sight except for two abandoned pick-ups, buried in snow.

He looks up at a street-sign; "CHIQUERO LANE"

Limping down the center of the slushy street, searching for the numbers hidden somewhere on the crumbling buildings.

He stops.

"98 N. Chiquero Lane"

A two-floor office building crammed between a boarded-up thrift store and a saloon.

He goes to the door and peers inside; a steep set of stairs leading up to a dark narrow hallway.

It's locked.

Presses a buzzer.

No answer.

SMASHES THE WINDOW with the butt of his shotgun.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Lee drops his saddlebags in the tiny foyer and laboriously climbs the stairs, huffing and puffing the whole way up, resting on the top step.

He pinches the bridge of his nose, catching his breath.

Walks down the long hallway, his breath trailing behind him in stark white plumes.

Finds himself at a door with little black letters hastily scratched off a frosted window; "W..df..l Inv...m.nts"

Kicks it open.

An empty office with large windows; strips of paper are strewn everywhere, an abandoned copier is turned over and a single swivel chair sits in the middle of the floor.

A LAMP LIGHT SNUFFS OUT from beyond a another frosted window, a back room.

The shotgun leads the way through the littered floor and slowly pushes open a door; a desk and a confetti-cut PAPER SHREDDER.

A tuft of hair rises from behind the empty desk.

LEE

Hidin ain't gonna do you no good.

A LARGE MAN (50's) in a puffy jacket sheepishly sits up.

He sees the gun.

LARGE MAN

Hey, now, I--

With an icy beard and steely-eyes, Lee whispers like a mad prophet:

LEE

Are you Jeffery Smith?

LARGE MAN

No.

LEE

Where is he?

LARGE MAN

I dunno who--

THE SHOTGUN BLASTS THE LAMP into pieces.

A scream.

LEE

I didn't come all this way to be lied to.

LARGE MAN

Yes.

LEE

Yes, you work for Windfall Investments?

LARGE MAN

Yes, I used to work for Windfall.

Lee nods.

Pulls back the hammers and aims directly at the Large Man's head.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)

No, oh no.

LEE

I want the thirty-four thousand, one hundred and ninety dollars you stole from me.

LARGE MAN

I- I don't have it. I'm-- was the manager of the place.

LEE

Mm.

LARGE MAN

I was hired to keep the lights on, do payroll. I never saw any money.

LEE

Then why you squirrelin around?

He pauses.

LARGE MAN

Please. Could you put the gun down?

Lee reluctantly lowers the gun.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)

Thank you.

(stands)

Lemme show you something.

Moves cautiously to the shredder and lifts a fat file from the bin. Dumps it on the desk.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)

There's a lot of incriminating stuff in there-- names and memos I need to get rid of, like yesterday.

(beat)

Take it. It's yours. You can build a real solid case with that.

Lee sighs.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)

Just. Please. Don't kill me.

LEE

I need to set down.

LARGE MAN

Oh, of course.

The Large Man scurries behind the desk and rolls a swivel chair over to Lee.

Lee collapses in the chair.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)

Weather's a bitch out there, I know. It's warm, it's not, it's cold, it's colder and now the snow, right? Crazy snow.

LEE

I want my money.

Silence.

LARGE MAN

I knew what we were doing was wrong.

(beat)

I was just tired of taking orders.

LEE
Give me my money.

 LARGE MAN
(delicately)
I don't have it.

 LEE
I told you things.

 LARGE MAN
I'm sorry?

 LEE
Things I don't...

Raises the gun.

 LARGE MAN
Wha-- No. No, you don't have to do
that.

 (points)
That file has everything you need,
the real criminals' names,
employees' names, how we did it,
real evidence. You'll get your
money back and more, lots more.

 LEE
You're all in it together. Banks,
law, criminals. It don't matter.

Lee stands.

 LARGE MAN
I was wrong, OK? I was really
wrong.

 LEE
Get on your knees.

 LARGE MAN
Whoah. Who's this uh, Jeffery guy
you spoke of?

Lee blinks.

 LEE
He likes prime rib.

 LARGE MAN
I- I don't-- who?

LEE
Jeffery Smith.

LARGE MAN
(suddenly)
I could check. The payroll
records's right in that file.

Lee pulls the file off the desk dumps it on the floor.

LEE
Jeffery Smith. Look em up.

The Man frantically flips through the thick file, his eyes
scanning every page.

LARGE MAN
OK. Here we go. Payroll.

His finger moves down the page.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)
Uh, there's a Jeremy ... a Jake...
and a Jeffery!

Holds up the document.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)
Here we go; Jeffery Somers.

LEE
Jeffery Smith.

LARGE MAN
(scans)
Yeah, no, that's ...
(quietly)
The only Jeffery we have.

Lee thinks.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)
I could look in the other--

LEE
Take me there.

LARGE MAN
What?

LEE
Take me to Jeffery Somers.

EXT. BRADSTON - TWILIGHT

A snow-covered Toyota Corolla spins out of a parking space.

Lee sits in the back seat, his shotgun aimed at the driver, his hand on the saddlebags beside him.

As they fish-tail their way out of town, HECK'S RENTAL CAR PULLS INTO A PARKING SPOT.

The car idle, Heck handles the Windfall file. Double checks the address and looks THROUGH THE STEAMED WINDSHIELD:

A shattered office window.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - TWILIGHT

The little car chugs through the twisted, curving roads of a smoke-grey nowhere. In the surrounding white prairie, hundreds upon hundreds of orange-vinyl surveyor flags bend in the wind, lonely reminders of a housing development that never was.

They stop in front of a bland cul-de-sac: four model homes sit in a semi-circle. No trees or bushes. Just four naked, identical houses.

The Large Man turns slightly.

LARGE MAN

According to the address, this should be the place.

LEE

Gimmee the file.

The Man hands him the file.

LEE (CONT'D)

Now gimmee your wallet.

He hands over his wallet. Lee looks at his driver's license and pockets it.

LEE (CONT'D)

I know where you live, "Russ Poirier."

Lee nudges the door open with the shotgun.

Slams it.

And trudges on, leaving the Large Man alone in his idle car.

He quickly pulls away.

EXT. MODEL HOME - TWILIGHT

Lee drops the saddlebags on the front porch and rings the bell.

A moment passes, the porch light popping on and the door opens.

A pretty WOMAN (late 30's) stands before him, staring at this Old Man From The Apocalypse.

WOMAN

Can I help you?

LEE

(nods)

Maam. I'm lookin for a Jeffery Somers.

WOMAN

That's my son, yes.

LEE

Your son.

WOMAN

Yes.

LEE

May I speak with the boy?

WOMAN

Uh. Sure.

She opens the door and Lee steps in the foyer.

INT. MODEL HOME - TWILIGHT

A sparsely-furnished modern home.

The Woman stands there, shifting her weight.

WOMAN

(calling out)

Jeffrey?

No answer. She awkwardly smiles.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

JEFFREY?!

JEFFREY (O.S.)
WHAT?!

WOMAN
There's someone here to see you!

JEFFREY (O.S.)
SEND EM DOWN!

WOMAN
Oh, well. Hold on a sec.

She goes to a door and pokes her head in-- furtive whispers.
Lee hovers behind her.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Oh! He's--

LEE
I'll go down and see em.

He brushes past her and heads down the stairs.

INT. MODEL HOME - BASEMENT - NIGHT

A low-ceilinged basement apartment; Johnny Cash poster, action figures and a huge computer monitor that JEFFERY SOMERS sits at, his back to Lee.

LEE
Hello.

Jeffery spins around. He's about eighteen or nineteen years old, pale and thin.

JEFFREY
Hi.

They stare at each other. Lee's hat scrapes the top of the ceiling.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
Here, why don't you take a seat?

Offers a big red bean bag.

LEE
I'll stand.

Awkward silence.

JEFFREY
Can I help you?

Lee just stares at him.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

Well.

LEE

You worked for Windfall Investments.

Pause.

JEFFREY

Yes.

LEE

Where you ripped off old folks like me.

JEFFREY

Yes.

LEE

My name is Francis Lee Sr.

JEFFREY

OK.

LEE

You don't remember me.

JEFFREY

No, I'm sorry. I don't.

LEE

I talked to you. Talked bout things I don't ever talk about.

JEFFREY

OK.

LEE

Why me?

Jeffery looks at the floor.

JEFFREY

I only worked there for two months. Felt bad about it and left.

LEE

Why me?

JEFFREY

I go to the community college and I
needed the job to pay for it.

LEE

Why'd you do it to me?

JEFFREY

You were on a list.

LEE

I talked to you and you betrayed
me.

JEFFREY

It wasn't ...

LEE

You remember.

JEFFREY

I'm sorry, I don't.

LEE

We had a long conversation.

JEFFREY

I talked to a lot of people.

LEE

You remember.

He thinks, shaking his head.

JEFFREY

I don't think I do.

Lee moves slowly to him.

LEE

You like steaks.

JEFFREY

OK.

LEE

Prime rib.

Gets in his face, towering over him.

JEFFREY

Sure.

LEE

You talked nice to me.

JEFFREY

Sure.

LEE

You were my friend that night.

JEFFREY

OK.

LEE

You remember.

JEFFREY

We talked, I think...

LEE

A long time.

JEFFREY

Sure.

LEE

Tell me.

JEFFREY

I think we talked.

LEE

You hurt me...

JEFFREY

Yes.

LEE

Took everthin I knew.

JEFFREY

Yes.

LEE

And you don't care.

JEFFREY

I care.

LEE

Tell me.

Jeffrey looks him in the eye.

LEE (CONT'D)

Tell me.

JEFFREY

Big Hole.

LEE

Big Hole.

They stare at each other.

Lee SLAPS THE BOY, hard.

The kid stares at him, wide-eyed, his face burning bright.

Jeffery's eyes well up with tears.

JEFFREY

...i'm sorry...

Lee falls onto the boy's bed.

Stares off.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry.

And they just sit there together, not speaking.

For a long while.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT/INT. MODEL HOME - NIGHT

A dark house on the prairie, the kitchen window the only light for miles.

Jeffery and his Mother sit at the dinner table, a plate of blackened steaks piled high in front of them. Mashed potatoes and biscuits too.

Enter Francis Lee Sr., showered, his face shaved and hair damp.

He sits at the head of the table and they all bow their heads silently in grace.

He lifts his head, smiling.

And digs in, cutting up a thick steak with vigor, popping a bloody bite in his mouth, chewing and swallowing.

Closes his eyes. Shoves a mouthful of buttery potatoes into his mouth, smiling and humming to himself.

After a suspended moment, he dutifully reaches into a pant leg pocket for his medication to find--

Only one pill left in each cannister.

He stares at it.

Smiles again.

And pops it in his mouth.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MODEL HOME - DEN - NIGHT

Lee lies asleep in a La-Z-Boy chair, a fire crackling in the fireplace and a half-eaten piece of pumpkin pie in his lap.

Jeffery's Mother quietly comes into the den, wraps him in a knitted blanket and goes to take off his boots.

Pulls one off, snagging the dirty sock--

A PURPLE-BLACK FOOT.

She gasps.

Lee stirs, abruptly waking up.

LEE

Oh, hey, don't be botherin with
that.

MOTHER

Your foot.

LEE

It's nuthin, now don't busy
yourself--

MOTHER

Stay right here.

She runs down the hallway and up the stairs.

Lee quickly slips the boot back on, stands and finds his saddle bags.

Goes to the foyer, snatches his duster from the closet and sneaks out the front door.

EXT. MODEL HOME - NIGHT

On the road again.

At the little house behind him, the door flings open;
Jeffery and his Mother are a silhouette in the doorway,
watching after him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BRADSTON - NIGHT

A ghost town.

Only the corner saloon shows any life, the neon sign bathing
the fresh snow with a red pulse.

Lee limps down the center of the street.

Stares at the saloon doors.

Goes in.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Sidles up to a stool, throwing his saddle bags on the stool
beside him.

The place is empty, except for the Carl Smith tune, "It's a
Lovely, Lovely World" coming from the jukebox.

The bartender (40's) nods at him.

LEE

You know what I want?

BARTENDER

What's that?

LEE

Jack. Straight up.

BARTENDER

You got it.

Pours him a shot.

Lee looks down at it.

Smiles.

Lifts it up to his cracked lips and throws it back, savoring every drop.

Big exhale.

Rubs his inner forearm, squeezing it.

Stares at himself in the smoky bar mirror.

Reaches into his poke, taking out a wallet-sized photo, UNSEEN to us.

Thinks.

Smacks a dollar on the counter.

LEE

You got change for this?

The bartender nods, dumping four quarters in his palm.

Lee goes to a phone booth by the rest room, dropping all the quarters in the pay phone.

Dials.

Rings.

VOICE (V.O.)

(teenage girl)

Yeah?

Pause.

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Heelllooo?

LEE

Is this Chloe?

VOICE (V.O.)

Yeah. Who's this?

LEE

It's your Grandpa.

Silence.

VOICE (V.O.)

My Dad's not here.

LEE

No, that's OK. Your Father tell you bout me?

VOICE (V.O.)

Yeah.

LEE

That's good.

Silence.

LEE (CONT'D)

Listen. I ain't never been real good with talkin, but it's important that you hear me right now.

VOICE (V.O.)

OK.

LEE

Your Daddy's a good man. Better than I ever been and that's all a Father can ever ask from a son. To be better.

VOICE (V.O.)

Yeah.

LEE

Now I know I ain't been around, but you gotta believe me when I say this... I love you.

VOICE (V.O.)

OK.

LEE

I love you and I love your Mother.

VOICE (V.O.)

Well, I love you too, Grandpa.

LEE

(suddenly cries)

You do?

VOICE (V.O.)

Yeah.

LEE

Will you tell your Mother that?
That I love her.

VOICE (V.O.)

Yes.

LEE
One more thing.

VOICE (V.O.)
OK.

LEE
You tell my son I'm proud of em.

VOICE (V.O.)
I will.

LEE
And I love em.

VOICE (V.O.)
I will.

LEE
Chloe.

VOICE (V.O.)
Are you OK?

LEE
Chloe.

VOICE (V.O.)
Yeah?

LEE
I'm a good man.

Silence.

LEE (CONT'D)
I'm a good man.

VOICE (V.O.)
Yes.

LEE
I gotta go now, honey.

VOICE (V.O.)
Is everything OK?

LEE
Everthin's gonna be fine. Bye now,
baby.

VOICE (V.O.)
Bye.

He hangs up.

Stares at the phone.

Ambles back to the stool.

LEE

One more for the road, I think.

Pours another shot.

Lee throws it back.

Smiles wide.

LEE (CONT'D)

Thank you much.

Throws a hundred on the counter.

Heads for the door.

BARTENDER

Hey, mister. You forgot your bags.

Turns.

Exits.

EXT. OPEN RANGE - NIGHT

Lee walks to the edge of town, the street lights dim.

Stares at the black mountains before him. The pines.

Steps forward.

Trudges into the wilderness, fading into the night.

Only the sound of crunching snow can be heard, footsteps, and then a silence.

The wind.

The stars.

SLOW DISSOLVE:

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Heck sits at the counter.

He stares at a shot of Jack, straight up.

Squeezes the bridge of his nose, jaw clenched, a sweaty brow.

Looks up.

Spots the saddle bags.

HECK

Hey. Who's saddle bags?

BARTENDER

Some old dude.

HECK

(looks around)

Is he here?

BARTENDER

No, he left, like twenty minutes ago. Just left it.

Heck leans over, rifling through the bags.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Hey man, I don't--

He finds the empty medicine cannisters, looking at the printed name on the label: FRANCIS LEE SR.

Stops.

On the counter ... finds the photo.

Heck looks at it.

CLOSE-UP: a family portrait. Heck stands casually next to his wife, Sissy, a BLACK woman, their three-year old girl, Chloe, sitting in front of them. They all smile warmly.

Heck's face falls, staring into himself.

He bolts up.

EXT. BRADSTON - NIGHT

He runs down the street, slipping and sliding in the snow, searching the alleys and boarded-up shops.

Head lolling, eyes wide, sprinting from one side of the street to the other, finally coming to the edge of town.

He stands there, staring into the open wide darkness.

Breathing hard.

Balls up his fists ...

And he YELLS ... his body so small on the edge of space, stars streaking across the sky, hundreds of them, a meteor shower, his face twisting, a ten-year old boy, scared, his eyes filled with tears, terrified, and he YELLS and YELLS, a simple word echoing back to him from the deep blackness:

Dad?! Dad?! Dad?!

END