

THE WETTEST COUNTY IN THE WORLD

by

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Based on the novel by Matt Bondurant

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ROLLING TITLE:

"In 1768 John Hancock was accused of unloading illegal liquor from his ship 'Liberty' in Boston. The incident proved a major event in the coming American revolution. John Hancock became one of the founding fathers of America. The battle over taxes on liquor continued, reaching its peak with Prohibition in 1920 - 1933. The greatest crime wave in American history was unleashed and during this time Franklin County, West Virginia was known as the 'Wettest County in the World' manufacturing more illegal liquor than any where else in the United States. The Bondurant brothers lived in these mountains. The following is based upon true events..."

EXT. PIG ENCLOSURE - MORNING

A pig enclosure and a barn. The ground is hard with frost and fog rises from it, like smoke. A bridled sow trots past.

CREDITS

TITLE: THE WETTEST COUNTY IN THE WORLD

END CREDITS

1918

JACK BONDURANT (7 yrs.) enters the pig enclosure, fog blows from his frightened breathing. He carries a bolt-action .22 rifle. The sow, in the corner of the pen glowers at JACK.

FORREST BONDURANT (14 yrs.) lean and smirking and HOWARD BONDURANT (11 yrs.) a giant of a boy, sit on the railed fence of the enclosure and watch.

JACK (V.O.)

*Blood and violence - I heard it
said that it followed my family
like a mad dog all our lives.*

JACK chambers a round, walks over to the sow, puts the the barrel to its eye and pulls the trigger. There is a crack, a spray of blood, the sow staggers, charges at JACK. JACK drops the rifle and leaps out of the pen. The sow butts at the fence, trots back into its corner.

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

*But I'm not sure that's true.
Cause when it stopped followin'
us, it seemed to me, my brothers
Forrest and Howard went out and
found it.*

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JACK reenters the pen, picks up the rifle and fires again. Blood spreads over the pig's eyes but it remains standing. JACK fires again. The bullet burrows into the skin above the pig's eye but still the sow does not fall. Little JACK sits down on the ground and cries.

JACK sees FORREST standing over him, smirking. FORREST straddles the sow, pulls her snout high, stretching her neck tight. He brings a long boning knife across her throat. There is a hot gush of blood and a red jet of lung air. The sow's body goes limp in FORREST'S hands.

HOWARD, immense, walks over, hauling a heavy hooked chain and a bucket. FORREST and HOWARD look down at JACK. They begin to laugh. Little JACK, cradles his rifle, smiles up at them through his terrified tears. JACK, too, begins to laugh.

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

*Blood and violence? My brothers
had a talent for it. A gift. They
were susceptible to its needs.*

*(beat) Me, well, I guess my
talents lay elsewhere.*

FADE TO:

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

GRANVILLE BONDURANT (60 yrs) pulls the shades down in the windows of his General Store and turns the sign that hangs in the door to 'CLOSED' and steps outside.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

GRANVILLE pulls the door shut and locks it.

JACK (V.O.)

*When the Spanish Lady Flu epidemic
swept through Franklin County,
everyone locked themselves away in
a kinda self-imposed quarantine.
My daddy, Granville, closed up his
store.*

GRANVILLE looks up and down the street and we see ROCKY MOUNT, a small, industrious town emptied of its denizens. GRANVILLE presses a handkerchief to his mouth and nose and crosses the deserted street.

A FAMILY hurry by, rags tied across their mouth and nose.

EXT. FILLING STATION - DAY

A deserted filling station. Snow blasts through, the filling station sign flapping in the wind.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Colored light filtering through the windows of an eerie unpeopled church. The doors blow open and a gust of snow whips down the aisle. A dog sniffs around.

INT. FAMILY HOME - EVENING

GRANVILLE, FORREST, HOWARD, EMMY and JACK sit around the kitchen table. THREE DEAD FIGURES lie on the floor covered in a quilt. The scene is spectral and sad. EMMY'S face is slick with tears.

JACK (V.O.)

*But Daddy needn't have bothered.
The flu got my mother and Belva
May and Era. It almost took
Forrest too but he somehow managed
to fight it off, though it left
him haunted and bent crooked and
in certain lights his skin looked
strange and blue.*

FORREST is wrapped in a blanket, gaunt and blue and twisted, a manic light in his eyes.

The front door opens and HOWARD stands in the doorway, kit bag in his hand. There is an expression on his face of a man who has seen unspeakable horrors.

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

*Howard returned from the war, the
day mama and the girls died. I
barely recognized him - my big,
laughing brother. What ever
horrors he saw over there, he
never said nothin, but you could
see 'em boiling behind his eyes.*

FORREST stares at HOWARD, in the doorway.

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

*I remember Forrest leanin' across
the kitchen table and sayin',
"Nothing can kill us now.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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JACK (CONT'D)

We can never die." (beat) *Well, in a way Forrest was right. (beat) But, in a way, he was wrong too.*

FADE TO:

1931

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

A pack of hungry looking dogs skulk through a depression-era town.

JACK jogs along the back lots. He runs up to the back door of a store and a STORE OWNER appears. JACK reaches inside his coat for a bottle of moonshine, hands it to the STORE OWNER, who gives JACK money. JACK trots across the lot, up to the back door of the police station. SHERIFF PETE HODGES, opens the door and JACK pulls a bottle from his coat and gives it to him.

SHERIFF HODGES

Mornin' Jack.

JACK

Mornin' Sheriff. (beat) Howard says to tell ya you might wanna hold onto something when you drink this stuff.

SHERIFF HODGES

Oh, yeah? Better give me two if it's that good.

JACK produces another bottle from another pocket. DEPUTY HENRY ABSHIRE moves into the doorway.

HENRY ABSHIRE

Mornin' Jack.

JACK

Mornin' Henry.

HENRY ABSHIRE

I'll take one.

JACK

(smiles)

Pure corn whiskey. *White Lightning*. It comes at you like a knifing - point first, sharp and hot all the way down.

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HENRY ABSHIRE

Aw fuck it. Gimme two, then.

JACK reaches inside his coat and, like a magician, produces two more bottles. JACK runs over to HOWARD who sits, in the front seat of an old clapped-out flat-bed Ford idling in the street. HOWARD drinks from a bottle, a mad look in his eyes.

JACK takes more bottles of moonshine from the back of the truck and trots off toward another store. He is the milkman, only dealing in "illegal" liquor.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - LATER

JACK and HOWARD drive the Ford into the lot. JACK and HOWARD climb out of the Ford, as FORREST comes out of the station and stands grimly in the doorway.

HOWARD

Forrest, we need six gallons for a
gatherin' at the Deshazo place.
Old Little Bean Deshazo just died.
Ida Belle axed if we could come
down there.

HOWARD twists the cap of a jar of liquor and spins it away. He drinks from the jar. FORREST tosses a bunch of keys at JACK.

FORREST

You bring a crate from the shed.
(to Howard) I'd better come with
you.

HOWARD

Why's that?

FORREST goes inside. HOWARD drains the jar.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

What, you don't reckon I can
handle a couple of niggers?

Seconds later Forrest comes back out putting on a heavy coat, and tucking a gun in his trousers.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Suit yourself.

EXT. DESHAZO CABIN - EVENING

FORREST, HOWARD and JACK walk up the path toward IDA BELLE'S cabin. HOWARD carries a crate of liquor. They are drunk. A half-dozen motley cars, some knobby horses and mules. A bonfire roars in the backyard. CHILDREN run around, chasing each other with sticks.

IDA BELLE, huge, coal black, marches down the path to meet them.

IDA BELLE

Thank you Mr. Bondurant. I'm Ida Belle, Little Bean's daughter.

IDA BELLE eyes the whiskey.

JACK

Sorry to hear about Little Bean.

IDA BELLE

Come in.

INT. DESHAZO HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

FORREST, HOWARD, JACK enter the house. The house is packed with RELATIVES, who sit and sing a solemn hymn. The corpse of LITTLE BEAN is propped up in a coffin, in a tattered suit, yellow staring eyes open. When the RELATIVES see the crate of liquor, there is a sudden sense of expectancy and excitement.

IDA BELLE hands FORREST a pile of crumpled dollars. HOWARD puts the crate down and immediately the hymn stops and the jars get passed around.

IDA BELLE

(to the BROTHERS)

Please, sit, stay.

FORREST, HOWARD and JACK are the only white people there. Several DESHADO MEN come forward and shake the BROTHERS hands. HOWARD cracks open another jar.

INT. DESHAZO HOUSE - LATER, NIGHT

Everybody is completely drunk. A FIDDLER plays a screeching reel. WOMEN wail in an unintelligible tongue. Shouting, dancing, screaming. Complete chaos. RELATIVES put lit cigarettes in LITTLE BEAN'S fingers and pour whiskey into his open mouth.

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HOWARD and JACK sit at a table. HOWARD picks at pig knuckles in a bowl. FORREST stands at the back, his face grave. He watches as HOWARD empties a jar, in three monumental glugs. HOWARD passes the jar to JACK.

JACK

(awed)

Jesus, Howard, you sure can drink.
You might wanna slow down.

JACK drinks from the jar and hears a thunderous sound mounting in his ears. He looks about as if to identify the direction of the sound.

HOWARD drains the dregs from his jar, raises it above his head and slams it into the table, smashing it. HOWARD lifts his hand and contemplates the shards of glass that pepper his bloody palm.

HOWARD

(entranced)

Look at that.

JACK puts his hands over his ears as he hears a sound like ripping sheet metal.

JACK

Howard, can you hear that?

HOWARD rises in an unsteady crouch, locks gazes with FORREST from across the room, then plunges face first through the table, splitting it cleanly in two parts.

HOWARD flounders on the floor in a detritus of cigarette butts, broken glass and splintered wood. FORREST steps across to HOWARD, grabs two handfuls of HOWARD'S shirt and pulls him to his knees.

FORREST pushes him out the back door. JACK crouches, his mouth open in a silent scream, hands over ears.

JACK (CONT'D)

Can anyone hear that?

EXT. DESHAZO'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

HOWARD stumbles through the back yard, leans against a tree, begins to wretch. JACK charges into the darkness, reeling as though there is an earthquake beneath his feet. He falls to his knees in the yard, beside HOWARD.

A GROUP OF MEN pour out of the kitchen and boil around the BROTHERS. A MAN with no shirt on, screams at them.

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SHIRTLESS MAN

You damn crackers got no respect!

HOWARD vomits a gush of blood. It is impossible to tell if JACK is hallucinating this or not. The CROWD surges - incensed, incoherent, ravenously drunk. The SHIRTLESS MAN pulls a straight razor from his boot and steps forward. The CROWD urge him on.

SHIRTLESS MAN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna cut you, you
motherfucker.

FORREST moves in front of HOWARD and JACK. The SHIRTLESS MAN half-circles FORREST, waving the viscous razor. FORREST removes his hat and sends it sailing into the darkness. His body torques like a coiled spring and his right arm shoots out, catching the SHIRTLESS MAN square in the teeth, making a strange tink sound.

The SHIRTLESS MAN crashes backwards, falling into the crowd, spitting blood and teeth. A set of iron knuckles hang loosely from FORREST'S fist.

HOWARD stands upright, his face, a gruesome horror of blood and bile. He is smiling.

The CROWD melts into the dark, leaving the SHIRTLESS MAN, unconscious, the razor still in his hand. JACK remains kneeling on the ground, his hands over his ears, to blot out the sound.

HOWARD

(smiling maniacally
at FORREST)

Expertly done, big brother.

FORREST looks at HOWARD and JACK, spits on the ground in disgust, then stalks off across the vacated yard.

EXT. CRICKET'S STILL - DAY

JACK stands next to an crude still made from the rusted radiator of an old Ford. This contraption is comic and inventive. CRICKET PATE, a boy with bowed knees from rickets squats beside the still and siphons off a jar, a terrifying brown in color. He holds it up to the light, as if examining a work of art.

CRICKET

Looks good.

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JACK

Kinda rusty lookin' ain't it,
Cricket?

CRICKET

I guess.

JACK

Give it here.

JACK takes a slug of the liquor. There is a metallic rushing sound and JACK clings onto a nearby tree.

JACK (CONT'D)

Damn. (beat) Jesus.

CRICKET grins.

CRICKET

Does the damn trick though.

JACK

Ok. What we need now is a decent still. Somewhere to put it.

CRICKET

I got some ideas 'bout that.

JACK

Then we make a whole bunch and get old Forrest to sell it out of the station.

CRICKET

You done talk to him?

JACK

Yeah, well, I'm aiming to.

CRICKET

Yeah, well, aiming, ain't doing.

JACK

You just figger out how to make the shit, Cricket, and leave old Forrest to me.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - LATER, DAY

JACK and HOWARD stand outside the General Store. HOWARD holds a sack of meal over each shoulder. CRICKET leans with a small sack in his hands against a segregated drinking fountain - a 'White' and a 'Colored' sign.

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A gut-rusted Ford guns down the street and draws up at the curb. DANNY MITCHEL sticks his head out the window.

DANNY

You comin'?

HOWARD

What took so damn long?

HOWARD sets the meal in the truck bed. CRICKET steps forward and shuffles his feet.

JACK

(nervous)

What about Forrest's place? You gonna be there tonight?

HOWARD

Yeah. What about it?

JACK takes the sack off CRICKET and hands it to HOWARD.

JACK

Here, try this. It's me and Cricket's brew.

HOWARD

Oh yeah?

JACK

Maybe you could talk to Forrest about letting me and Cricket in?

HOWARD

How old are you, Jack.

JACK

Nearly twenny.

HOWARD

How old's Cricket there?

JACK

Sixteen.

HOWARD climbs in the cabin of the Model A. He looks at JACK, then looks at CRICKET. He laughs. DANNY joins in. DANNY floors the engine and JACK watches as the Model A clatters down the street. JACK spits on the curb, curses and looks at Cricket.

JACK (CONT'D)

They got no damn direction or vision.

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CRICKET eyeballs JACK, then sticks his hands in his pockets and they mope up the sidewalk toward town.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - MOMENTS LATER

From the other end of town a brand new Ford Tudor Sedan careers wildly down the main street. A GANGSTER hunches over the steering wheel. Beside him FLOYD BANNER, sucks a toothpick, in a snappy suit and hat. The car is a thing of gleaming beauty in this busted-down town.

JACK and CRICKET press into a doorway, transfixed by the action. FLOYD BANNER screeches to a halt, climbs out of the Ford, reaches into the back seat, producing an immense and extremely heavy Tommy gun. FLOYD walks calmly back down the center of the street.

A police car wildly appears and FLOYD walks towards it. He lets forth a blaze of gunfire, hard to control, laughing insanely. The tires blow out and it swerves, mounts the sidewalk and crashes through the window of the Haberdashery.

FLOYD calmly walks back to his auto, catching the awed eye of JACK for a weighted second. A look passes between them. FLOYD takes his toothpick from his mouth, snaps it and flicks it on the ground. He throws the Tommy gun in the back seat, climbs in his car and tears off.

JACK picks up FLOYD'S toothpick.

JACK

Now there's a man with direction
and vision.

INT. MODEL A - DAY

HOWARD holds CRICKET'S liquor up to the light. The liquid is clear at the top, a thick brown swirl at the bottom. He shakes the jar, disturbs a thick mushroom of murk, dislodges bits of twig and dirt. HOWARD laughs.

HOWARD

This here's made with tadpoles and
swampwater!

HOWARD drinks, throat constricts, tears pour from his eyes.

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HOWARD (CONT'D)

(gagging)

This is the worst damn whiskey I
ever put a lip on.

HOWARD throws down some more and hands the jar to DANNY.
DANNY drinks, shakes his head, then bays like a hound.
HOWARD takes another long drink.

DANNY

Hey, you just be careful. That
shit'll get on you. Wake up with
your liver in your sock.

HOWARD

I know. I gotta get back down to
Blackwater Station to help
Forrest. He needs backup for a
sale he's got going down. Set to
go off about midnight. I'm gonna
need the truck.

DANNY

You drivin' my truck? (beat) Shit.

HOWARD takes another slug of the jar, sneezes three times
and passes it back to DANNY.

HOWARD

Jesus, this aint fit to slop hogs!

DANNY

Give it here.

DANNY drinks and bays like a dog again.

DANNY (CONT'D)

White Lightning!

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - NIGHT

HOWARD and DANNY bursts through a hedge into the
clearing, carrying sacks of meal. They are drunk. There
are two stills and the camp is littered with debris.

HOWARD

My babies!

HOWARD walks over to the one of the stills, studies the
mash boxes. HOWARD picks up a jar of liquor, shakes it
and checks the bead. HOWARD smiles.

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HOWARD (CONT'D)

One hunnert-fifty proof, I reckon,
at least!

He opens a jar, spinning the lid into the dark.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

This will sure change your
perspective on things! You might
wanna hold onto that maple there.

They drink. There's a rushing of sound, as if the heavens
are tearing open. They cling to the tree.

HOWARD AND DANNY

White Lightning!

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - EVEN LATER, NIGHT

HOWARD, DANNY lay unconscious by a camp fire. The thumper
keg, connected by a length of copper pipe between the
still and the condenser coil begins to knock
convulsively. HOWARD wakes to find he leg of his trousers
has caught fire. He leaps to his feet and bats at the
flames. He is blind drunk.

HOWARD

Shit! (remembering) *Forrest!*

HOWARD kicks DANNY but DANNY does not waken.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Danny! Shit! I gotta get to
Forrests!

HOWARD flops back down on the log, a great roaring in his
head. He grabs a jar of liquor, drains it.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Aw, fuck him. Forrest can look
after hisself.

HOWARD falls drunkenly backwards, unconscious again.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

Snow-filled wind howls around a lone plank building lit
by a single light. A sign 'BLACKWATER STATION' bangs.

INT. FRONT ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

A simple place with a counter and stools in front of a grill, a few tables, windows looking onto a muddy lot. A GROUP OF MEN sit playing cards. A FEW MEN sit at the bar, haggard and dog-eyed, drinking brandy from jars. A radio on the counter plays the Carter Family.

MAGGIE tall, auburn hair, fries eggs and bacon behind the counter. She wears a yellow satin dress and the TWO MEN at the counter, watch her every move with carnal intent. One of the MEN has a flaming goiter under his jaw. HAL CHILDRESS works the counter as well.

INT. KITCHEN, COUNTY LINE RESTAURANT - MIDNIGHT

In the kitchen FORREST stares out the window, rimed with frost, at the road. He sees an old clapped-out Ford pass by, a miserable FAMILY inside, their possessions tied to the roof - part of the great procession of out-of-work drifters and itinerants.

FORREST sees a pack of dogs squabbling by the road. EVERETT DILLON washes dishes.

EVERETT

Howard's late, Mr. Forrest.

FORREST nods, checks his watch. He puts two fingers in his mouth and whistles. HAL, steps through the door into the kitchen, wiping his hands on his apron, a look of enquiry on his face.

FORREST

Shut 'er down.

HAL nods and returns to the front room. FORREST picks up his coat and begins to put it on when he hears the pop of shattering glass and the heavy sound of struggling bodies and a MAN yelp with pain.

FORREST moves through the swinging door.

INT. FRONT ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

FORREST sees a MAN (HOPHEAD ONE) stretching a bloody hand across the bar trying to catch hold of MAGGIE. Another MAN (HOPHEAD TWO) with the goiter stands next to him, his stool lying on the ground. MAGGIE is backed up against the grill, hands behind her back.

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The CARD PLAYERS are all standing and moving away. HAL, at the end of the counter, holds a wooden club and is breathing heavily.

FORREST

That's it! Everybody out!

HOPHEAD ONE, leaning over the bar, twists around, his drugged eyes, pin-pricks and fiercely blue.

HOPHEAD ONE

I done paid for another jar and
she won't give it. Then the bitch
done cut me!

He holds up his bloody hand, a deep slice running across his knuckles. FORREST looks at MAGGIE and she shakes her head slightly. He looks back at the HOPHEAD ONE.

FORREST

No, you didn't.

HOPHEAD ONE

We gonna buy near a hunner' gallon
of your liquor. Now you ain't
gonna throw in some extra?

FORREST

You ain't buying a damn thing. Get
out.

HAL bends down and picks up a long-barreled Colt pistol, flecked with blood, off the floor.

HAL

He pulled it on Maggie when she
wouldn't give him one. She brung
the knife around and caught him.

FORREST looks at the TWO HOPHEADS.

FORREST

Did you pull a gun on this woman?

HOPHEAD ONE pounds the bar with his fist and seizes another jar. He cocks it in the air.

FORREST (CONT'D)

Throw that damn jar and you're
gonna get yourself seriously hurt.

CARDPLAYER

(to HOPHEAD ONE)

I'd do as he says. You don't know
who you're messin with.

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The CARD PLAYERS tumble out into the night.

FORREST glances at MAGGIE who grips a carving knife, smeared crimson with HOPHEAD ONE'S blood.

The HOPHEAD ONE heaves the jar just to the right of MAGGIE, shattering a large mirror.

FORREST

(blankly)
I'm sorry you done that.

A wind roars in FORREST'S head.

HOPHEAD ONE charges at FORREST with both fists, howling. FORREST sidesteps him, pushes him into a table and the man crashes to the ground. EVERETT rushes from the kitchen and sits on the HOPHEAD ONE'S legs and HAL puts the pistol to the man's temple.

HAL

Lay still, you sack of shit.

HOPHEAD TWO comes at FORREST, splitting his ear with a blow. He gets both arms around FORREST'S midsection and lifts him off the floor. FORREST gets an arm free and brings the heel of his hand sharply under HOPHEAD TWO'S chin, into his goiter. HOPHEAD TWO'S teeth clack hard and he lets go of FORREST, his eyes wild. A fleshy sliver of tongue dribbles over his bottom lip, followed by a sheet of blood that runs down his chin. He catches the piece of tongue in his hand and groans. FORREST slips on his iron knuckles and catches HOPHEAD TWO with a crunching overhand right between the eyes, laying his forehead open and dropping him to the floor.

FORREST

Damn.

FORREST grabs the unconscious HOPHEAD TWO and drags him out the front door.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

Holding HOPHEAD TWO by the ankles FORREST drags him through the snow and dumps him in a ditch beside the road. HOPHEAD TWO moans and clutches his bloody head. FORREST stalks back inside.

INT. FRONT ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

EVERETT still sits on HOPHEAD ONE. HAL still points the gun at his head. FORREST hauls him to his feet.

FORREST

Get up.

FORREST throws him thru the door and follows him out.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

FORREST drags HOPHEAD ONE through the snow to the parking lot and kicks him savagely with his heavy boots. HOPHEAD ONE rolls about cursing and crying.

FORREST

I don't like trouble!

FORREST touches blood leaking from his split earlobe and kicks HOPHEAD ONE in the head and ribs, some more.

FORREST (CONT'D)

You hear?!

After a while, HOPHEAD ONE lays still and FORREST may as well be kicking a rag doll.

FORREST spits in the snow, looks up the road.

FORREST (CONT'D)

Goddamn you, Howard.

FORREST kicks MAN ONE a final time.

FORREST (CONT'D)

Goddamn you.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - AFTER MIDNIGHT

HOWARD and DANNY lie comatosed by the light of the waning fire.

INT. FRONT ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - LATER

MAGGIE stands in her coat and hat, counting money in the till, behind her, the remnants of the shattered mirror. EVERETT and HAL have gone home. FORREST, has a bandage taped to his ear. He stands by the door, watching MAGGIE, who doesn't look up.

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FORREST

What you doing?

MAGGIE

(continuing to count
money)

Eatin' ice cream.

MAGGIE looks up, her coat hanging open and FORREST can see a fine spray of dried blood across the waist of her yellow dress.

FORREST

You better be gettin home. The
roads are filling up.

MAGGIE

I'll be out in a minute.

FORREST

I'll see you out. There's some
mean looking dogs hangin around
out there.

MAGGIE

(smiling)

Are you worried about me, Forrest
Bondurant?

FORREST shuffles awkwardly. MAGGIE, steps out behind the counter. She crosses the floor and stands in front of FORREST. There is a heavy sexual tension, that obviously has not been acted upon.

FORREST

(mumbles awkwardly)

I'll see you out.

MAGGIE

You do that, Forrest.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

FORREST and MAGGIE exit the station and FORREST stands on the porch and watches MAGGIE walk across the lot, open her car door. FORREST looks as if he wants to ask her something, but loses his nerve.

FORREST

Bye.

MAGGIE

Bye.

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MAGGIE climbs in her flatbed truck and drives away.

FORREST walks onto the lot and puts his head back and watches the snow fall. He sees a splash of blood in the snow where he kicked MAN ONE and he pushes fresh snow on top of the blood with his foot. The pack of skin and bone dogs look on, FORREST throws up his arms and they scamper into the darkness.

FORREST looks across the lot at his Ford and detects some movement there. He sees a MAN slumped across its front fender. It is HOPHEAD TWO, who he hit with his iron knuckles, a dark smear of blood on his forehead.

FORREST looks about him and sees nothing. The lot is eerily empty. FORREST notices that the hood of his Ford is slightly ajar and a hot anger returns to his face and a familiar wind howls in his head. He looks down at HOPHEAD TWO.

FORREST

You messin' with my car? What is it with your kind? Wake up each morning needin' some kind of beatin' or other.

FORREST grabs HOPHEAD TWO'S lapels in order to shift him off the running board. HOPHEAD TWO'S eyes shoot open and his bloody hands grip FORREST'S wrists. HOPHEAD TWO grins horribly, sticks out his stump tongue and makes an incomprehensible sound.

FORREST (CONT'D)

Shit, son! You want some more?

From out of nowhere HOPHEAD ONE appears, close to FORREST'S back, leans his weight on FORREST, keeping him from standing. HOPHEAD ONE hooks a forearm under FORREST'S chin and pulls his face up to the sky.

MAN ONE

Now ya got trouble.

HOPHEAD ONE produces a razor and draws it across FORREST'S stretched throat, opening it in a scarlet smile. HOPHEAD TWO continues to hold FORREST'S wrists, their combined breath billowing around them. Blood pours from FORREST'S throat, down his chest as the HOPHEAD ONE saws roughly at FORREST'S neck.

FORREST pulls an arm free, sticks it into the eye socket of the MAN behind him, who screams.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FORREST staggers a few steps back, falls heavily on his hands and knees, blood pouring into the steaming snow. He crawls across the lot to the side wall of the station.

FORREST leans against the wall of the station and feels for the edges of the cut in his throat with his trembling fingers. He leans back and holding his wound closed, watches the snow fall all around. The vault of the sky closes and the stars go out one by one.

Then FORREST falls sideways, his face going down in the snow, ice against his cheek, his fingers still holding the edges of his throat as he drifts into darkness.

There is a splintering sound of a door being kicked in. A fine blanket of snow covers the body of FORREST.

EXT. MAGGIE'S FLATBED TRUCK, ROAD - SAME TIME

MAGGIE drives her truck through the snow. She screeches to a halt. She looks at her reflection in the rearview mirror, pats at her hair, puts on some lipstick, decides upon a course of action.

MAGGIE
(under her breath)
Damn you, Forrest.

She swings the truck around, heads back to the station.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT, MINUTES LATER

MAGGIE walks up the steps of the station in the dark. She enters the station.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

MAGGIE enters the station.

MAGGIE
Forrest?

HOPHEAD ONE is behind the counter, going through the cash register. He looks up and leers horribly at MAGGIE, his face and hands splashed in blood.

Before MAGGIE can react, HOPHEAD TWO appears behind her, throws an arm around throat and presses the carving knife to her breast, muttering something incomprehensible in MAGGIE'S ear.

EXT. GRANVILLE'S FARM - DAY

Simple farm, with farmhouse, livestock barn, vegetable garden. EMMY BONDURANT tall and stooped, hangs washing.

JACK is stripped down to his undershirt, splitting firewood, his body steaming like a workhorse. A car drives up, snow chains on its wheels and HAL CHILDRESS steps out and picks his way through the snow toward JACK.

HAL

Where's your daddy?

JACK

At the store, course.

HAL

Howard about?

JACK

No. Ain't seen him. What's goin' on?

HAL

Somethin' done happened to Forrest.

JACK

What?

HAL

Don't rightly know. A deal with some damn hop heads from the city went bad. Took care of it but this morning Forrest's car is there but he ain't.

JACK puts on his checkered shirt. Pulls on his hat.

JACK

Let's go.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

The station is littered with broken glass and shattered furniture. The register lies smashed on the floor, draw gaping, every shelf behind the counter cleared of its contents. The carving knife on the bar, its blade smeared with a dark crust.

JACK and HAL peruse the damage. Try to make sense of things.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

Maggie?

HAL

She normally leaves just after me
and Everett. Cars gone, so I
'spect she made it home.

JACK

We better call Sheriff Hodges.

HAL

Let's check the shed first.

JACK and HAL move through the trashed kitchen and leave
by the back door.

EXT. STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

JACK and HAL follow a set of tracks that lead to the
shed, the tracks indicating a series of trips. The door
to the shed is open, hacked apart, in splinters.

JACK

How much did he have in here?

HAL

Near two hunnert, I 'spect

They enter the shed cautiously.

INT. STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

In the dark shed, some broken bottles and a few empty
cans on the floor. Otherwise the shed is empty.

JACK

Shit. Worth at least five hunnert
dollars. Forrest ain't gonna like
this one bit.

JACK and HAL leave the shed.

EXT. PARKING LOT, BLACKWATER STATION - DAY.

JACK and HAL walk around the station to the parking lot.
MAGGIE'S flatbed is gone but FORREST'S Ford is as it was
the night before. JACK scratches his head and turns
toward the station.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

Shit.

JACK looks down and see a vast crusty patch of blood, melted down to the gravel, by the station wall. FORREST, though, is not there.

JACK (CONT'D)

Christ, Hal. Call the hospital.

INT. ROCKY MOUNT HOSPITAL - DAY

JACK marches down the hallway of the hospital, his face grim. HAL hobbles along behind him, breathing hard. They follow a DOCTOR who leads them into a room.

INT. ROOM IN ROCKY MOUNT HOSPITAL - DAY

FORREST lies unconscious in a hospital bed, his throat swathed in bandages. JACK and HAL look on in horror.

DOCTOR

The nurses said he came in sometime last night under his own power. (beat) His throat was cut from here to here.

The DOCTOR draws his finger across his throat.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

(dryly)
He was holding the edges of his throat together with his fingers. (beat) Your brother claimed he'd had "an accident".

The DOCTOR rubs his face in weary exasperation.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Before he passed out the nurses asked how he got there. He said he "walked."

JACK and HAL look at each other, stupefied.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

That'd be about twelve miles, right?

JACK

(Quietly)
About.

INT. ROOM IN ROCKY MOUNT HOSPITAL - DAY - LATER

FORREST lies in the hospital bed. The bandages are off and a terrible stitched gash stretches across his throat. He stares at a spot on the ceiling. JACK stands beside the bed. HOWARD sits on a chair, staring at his feet. MAGGIE stands in the corner.

JACK

Them doctors are saying you walked in here, Forrest.

(smiles in wonder)

All the ways from Blackwater station!

FORREST says nothing. JACK turns to MAGGIE.

JACK (CONT'D)

Through the damn snow! Can you believe it, Maggie?!

MAGGIE shakes her head but says nothing.

JACK (CONT'D)

Did you get 'em, Forrest?

FORREST

No.

JACK

What you gonna do?

FORREST looks at JACK and says nothing.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'll hold those bastards down myself. Where are they?

FORREST

They're goddamn drifters. They are vagrants. They're everywhere you wanna look.

JACK

Well, I wanna be there when you get 'em.

FORREST looks at JACK, the corners of his bristling scar drawn up like some kind of ghastly second mouth.

FORREST

Do you now. (beat) You want into this business?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST points at the stitched gash across his throat.

FORREST (CONT'D)

Well, this is the business. You think I'm gonna up and go after every piece of trash that blows over the county line? Every goddamn stiff who tries to do me ill?

JACK

But, Forrest...

FORREST

I ain't got to do nothin'! I got to get back to work that's what I got to do. I got a damn business to run.

FORREST looks back up at the ceiling and his eyes darken.
JACK peruses his brother. HOWARD stands.

HOWARD

(to JACK and MAGGIE)

Let's let him rest.

FORREST

Hey, Howard.

HOWARD steps somberly forward.

FORREST (CONT'D)

You shoulda been there.

EXT. FRONT LOT, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

FORREST stands outside the filling station, under its single light, smoking and looking out over the surrounding terrain. We see the light of many fires high up in the hills.

JACK (V.O.)

Most everybody in the county was involved in the illegal liquor trade in some ways or 'nother and at night the fires from the stills winked across the mountainside like fireflies.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

JACK, dressed in a white apron, disconsolately sweeps the floor of the station. His face, plots and schemes.

JACK (V.O.)

Me, well, I looked on, fulla frustrations. There was big money to be made. Forrest may have been the toughest son-of-a-bitch in Franklin county but he had no ambition and was content to run his nickel and dime operation. I had me, bigger ideas.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

FORREST hangs an oval gilt-edged mirror in a simple bedroom. The mirror is exotic in the Spartan room and there in a awkward tenderness to this act.

JACK (V.O.)

A week after Forrest got outa hospital, Maggie moved into the Blackwater Station. Forrest set up a room for her upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NEXT NIGHT

MAGGIE sits on bed, in a scarlet dress, her valise beside her. She looks about the room taking it in.

JACK (V.O.)

Maggie never said a word to anyone about what happened the night Forrest got attacked or anything about moving in with Forrest.

INT. FORREST'S BEDROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

FORREST lies on a rough straw mattress on the floor in his bedroom. There is no other furniture. He looks at the ceiling, eyes dark and troubled.

JACK (V.O.)

...and Forrest, well, Forrest never really said nothing about anything.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MORNING - SUMMER

MAGGIE works the grill. HOWARD sits silently eats breakfast at a table, spooning grits into his mouth. JACK, in an apron, sweeps.

JACK V.O)

*But we all knew Prohibition was
comin' to an end and the great,
big cow's titty the whole damn
county was sucking on was soon
gonna whither up and dry.*

JACK moves close to HOWARD.

JACK

Howard, listen to me. I know
someone across the county line at
the Burnin' Bag Station that will
take your whole run for five
dollars on the gallon. All of it.

HOWARD pays JACK no mind, spooning in his breakfast.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm tellin you Howard. Me and
Cricket will drive it there. We'll
make a damn packet. (beat) Shit,
Howard, are you even listenin' to
me?

HOWARD continues to ignore JACK, spins the lid of a jar
of alcohol and takes a great swig.

JACK (CONT'D)

Christ, you drinkin' that shit
with your eggs?

JACK hears a car and looks out the window and sees a
police car enter the front lot. JACK watches it stop and
DEPUTIES HENRY ABSHIRE and JEFF RICHARDS climb out,
holstered pistols on their hips. EVERETT DILLON sits by
the pumps. FORREST stands on porch.

JACK(V.O) (CONT'D)

*But we was not the only ones who
knew Prohibition was gonna end.*

JACK (CONT'D)

Shoot, Howard. Look at this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD looks up from his eggs.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MORNING

ABSHIRE and RICHARDS stand in front lot.

HENRY ABSHIRE
(calls across the
lot)
Forrest Bondurant.

FORREST moves across the lot to meet them. RICHARDS and ABSHIRE look nervous their hands wavering around their pistols. ABSHIRE takes a piece of paper from his pocket, holds it out to FORREST.

HENRY ABSHIRE (CONT'D)
This here is a summons for you to
appear in court.

FORREST
They send just you two?

HENRY ABSHIRE
Eh?

FORREST
A summons for what?

HENRY ABSHIRE
It seems you've been involved in
certain illegal activities.

FORREST
Illegal activities?

HENRY ABSHIRE
The summon's comes from Carter
Lee.

FORREST
Who the hell is that?

HENRY ABSHIRE
The new Commonwealth's Attorney.

FORREST
What's he want?

HENRY ABSHIRE
He says if you play ball he can
make this summons disappear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST takes the summons and looks at it, calmly.

FORREST

Get outa here. There ain't a jury
in this county that would convict
me.

HENRY ABSHIRE

Carter Lee says it's 'tirely up to
you.

FORREST

What's he want?

HENRY ABSHIRE

Carter Lee says he's gonna come by
and let you know.

FORREST

You tryin' to shake me down,
Henry?

HENRY ABSHIRE

I'm just the messenger here.

The front door of the station crashes open and HOWARD
descends the stairs like a mad bull, his fists clenched,
his stride fast and purposeful.

FORREST

(without looking up)
You boys met Howard?

ABSHIRE and RICHARDS wrestle with their holstered guns,
crouch into position and aim their guns at HOWARD.

HENRY ABSHIRE

Stop where you-

HOWARD comes at them regardless, in great unstoppable
strides.

HOWARD

Whatcha gonna do? Shoot me?

HOWARD moves in and throws a punch to the side of
ABSHIRE'S head, splitting his eye open. He brings a left
up that lifts RICHARDS off the ground and lays him out.
HOWARD kicks their guns away, moves to the petrol pump,
pulls it from its cradle, jams the nozzle into ABSHIRE'S
mouth.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

You ready for this?

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - MORNING

JACK kneels at the window looking on in awe. HOWARD with the petrol pump, the TWO COPS on the ground.

JACK
(to himself)
Jesus.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

FORREST moves across to HOWARD and takes the petrol pump from his hand. He hangs up the nozzle.

FORREST leans down and hauls the two OFFICERS to their feet. He pushes the summons into ABSHIRE'S pocket.

FORREST
You boys shoulda known better to come around when Howard's been on the stump whiskey for a few days. (beat) You might wanna get out of here. Not sure if Howard thinks you got the message yet.

The OFFICERS stumble away. HOWARD wavers drunkenly, looks at FORREST and throws out his hands.

HOWARD
I'm here, brother.

INT. BARN, MITCHEL PLACE - DUSK

At one end of a barn, WORKERS shuck corn. At the other end of the barn WOMEN place plates of food on a table. At the back of the barn THREE MUSICIANS play music. BERTHA MINNIX, a young Mennonite girl, in a white bonnet- plays a mandolin. MEN and WOMEN dance and stand around.

JACK and HOWARD lean against the wall watch the MUSICIANS. JACK is transfixed by BERTHA MINNIX who steals glances at JACK. HOWARD swigs freely from a jar of liquor. HOWARD gives off an aura of animal menace and PEOPLE give him a wide birth..

HOWARD
She eyeballin you?

JACK blushes and kicks at a few stray corn husks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

Aw, shit, I dunno.

HOWARD grins broadly and nudges JACK.

HOWARD

She is! She's eye-ballin you.

JACK changes the subject.

JACK

You done talked to Forrest bout lettin' me and Cricket in?

HOWARD takes a drink from the jar.

HOWARD

What? With this damn popskull shit?

JACK

You don't seem to have no problem drinkin it. (beat) Cricket says he got me and him a new still.

HOWARD looks at the jar, three quarters full and drains the entire contents in three glugs. By any standard this is a monumental feat. HOWARD grins maniacally.

JACK (CONT'D)

Jesus, Howard.

HOWARD

S'alright as long as you have somethin sturdy to hold on to. (beat) Forrest just don't want you involved.

JACK

Why's that.

HOWARD looks at JACK, not unkindly.

HOWARD

He don't think you got the grit.

JACK spits in the soil, clearly offended. He looks across at BERTHA MINNIX and he she shoots him another glance.

JACK

O yeah? He tell you why he ain't gone after those sons-a-bitches who cut him, if he's so damn tough?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOWARD

Nobody knows where those bastards
went and anyhow, Forrest don't
tell me nothin. Maybe you should
ask him.

(beat)

Got another jar?

JACK reaches behind him and takes a jar from a burlap
bag.

JACK

Slow down, Howard, I gotta sell
this stuff.

HOWARD twists the lid off the fresh jar and flips it into
the straw. He drinks.

HOWARD

It's got a kick, I'll give it
that.

JACK

(nodding towards

BERTHA)

Who is that?

HOWARD

That's one of them crazy
Mennonites from Burnt Chimney.
You'll need a crowbar to get into
her.

JACK

She don't look that crazy.

HOWARD laughs at JACK, then sees LUCY (his wife), bawling
infant in her arms pushing her way through the crowd. She
is upset.

LUCY

(to HOWARD)

You ever gonna come home?

BERTHA starts up a song on the mandolin, her eyes fixed
on JACK. JACK watches her, hits the jar again and there
is a roaring, like thundering wind, in his ears.

LUCY (CONT'D)

(screaming)

Are you ever gonna come home!

A SINGER begins to sing in a haunting country voice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SINGER

There once was a time when
everything was cheap/ But now the
prices nearly puts a man to sleep/
When we pay our grocery bill, we
just feel like making out our
will/ Tell me how can a poor man
stand such times and live?

BERTHA plays. JACK watches.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

Sun drenched day. EVERETT DILLON runs to the storage shed, a worried look on his face.

INT. STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

In the dim light, FORREST stacks crates of liquor.

EVERETT

Someone here to see you. Sheriff
Hodges and some others.

FORREST crams a .38 into the back of his trousers and follows EVERETT out. He closes the door of the shed, locks it with a key he keeps on a chain round his neck.

EXT. FRONT LOT, BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

FORREST follows EVERETT to the front lot.

Two brand new Ford Tudor Sedans idle at the pumps. FOUR MEN (SHERIFF HODGES, DEPUTY ABSHIRE and RICHARDS, SPECIAL DEPUTY CHARLEY RAKES) stand by one of the cars and ANOTHER MAN (CARTER LEE) sits in the back seat of the other, shadowy, profile barely visible.

FORREST makes his way over. EVERETT ducks inside. SHERIFF HODGES moves forward, fat and smiling nervously.

SHERIFF HODGES

Forrest.

FORREST

Pete.

HODGES cocks his thumb at SPECIAL DEPUTY RAKES - tight, ill-fitting suit, bow-tie, oiled hair parted down the middle. He leans against the hood of the sedan with a vicious smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF HODGES
This here is the new Special
Deputy Charlie Rakes. He's been
brought in to help us out.

ABSHIRE has a bruised face and a bandage over his eye.

FORREST
(to RAKES)
You ain't from round here.

RAKES
I am now.

FORREST
Who's that in the car, Pete.

HODGES looks around the place.

SHERIFF HODGES
Anyone around here other than
Everett and that counter woman.

FORREST
Nope.

HENRY ABSHIRE
How about that damn brother of
yours.

FORREST
Howard? If he were here, you'd
know it. (beat) Who's that in the
car?

SHERIFF HODGES
That there is the Commonwealth's
Attorney, Carter Lee. You prob'ly
heard of him.

FORREST says nothing.

SHERIFF HODGES (CONT'D)
Look here, Forrest, Carter Lee
wants to work it out so everybody
can do a little business. We just
want to make sure we have your
cooperation.

There is a clacking of metal on glass. CARTER LEE rapping
on the window with his ring.

SHERIFF HODGES (CONT'D)
Henry, go see what Mr. Lee wants.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ABSHIRE walks to the car and bends to the window.

SHERIFF HODGES (CONT'D)

Look, Forrest, this is the way it is. We want to help you build your business. No one will bother you across the county all the way to Roanoke. We got a place in Rocky mount will sell you what ever you need. Grains, sugar, yeast.

FORREST

Nobody bothers me now. What do I need all that shit for?

RAKES chuckles malevolently, slaps his leg. He spits.

CHARLIE RAKES

Hell, we ain't stupid. We know you're moving liquor. We know you got it stored up there in that shed and you movin' it from the station here.

SHERIFF HODGES

Easy, Charlie. No reason to-

CHARLIE RAKES

So, if you wanna keep moving liquor then we gonna need to have an arrangement.

RAKES steps forward, jabs a finger at FORREST.

CHARLIE RAKES (CONT'D)

You unnerstand?

FORREST face darkens and a wind roars inside his head.

FORREST

Pete, just who the hell is this son-of-a-bitch?

CHARLIE RAKES

Me? I'm the one who don't care who the fuck you are. I'm your re-tribution. I'm the one gonna make your life real difficult from now on.

FORREST moves forward in front of RAKES, eyes on fire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FORREST

You ain't from round here. You don't know how it works.

HODGES steps between FORREST and RAKES.

SHERIFF HODGES

Forrest, it's already settled. Everybody is getting on board, the whole county. (beat) I need you to talk to your brother Howard about this.

FORREST

Why don't you ask him yourself?

SHERIFF HODGES

Forrest, you're a reasonable man. It's best if you did it. Howard is, well...you unnerstand. Your brother Jack, too. He's been running stuff, him and that cripple, Cricket Pate. We're gonna have to break up Howard's still and we'll have to take all your stock. Everybody's got to get on board or their stills go. The entire county. That the way it's gonna work. Well send a man around every few weeks. Start at twenty dollars a week and thirty dollars a load, and that's complete safe passage throughout the county. No one will touch you.

ABSHIRE steps up with a five dollar bill in his hand.

HENRY ABSHIRE

Mr. Lee would like a jar of yo' best apple brandy. That be alright?

SHERIFF HODGES

Look, it's in your best interests. Everybody pays, everybody gets along, we all make money.

FORREST looks at the car, the silhouette of CARTER LEE.

FORREST

Nobody touches me now. And I don't speak for my brothers, Howard or Jack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HODGES snaps the five dollars out of the hand of ABSHIRE. He holds the money out to FORREST.

SHERIFF HODGES
Take it, Forrest. Let's do a little business.

FORREST
I don't have any damn brandy, so unless you buying fuel, why don't you get the hell out of my station.

SHERIFF HODGES
Come on, now, Forrest.

FORREST snatches the bill from HODGES, marches around the side of the car. FORREST looks at CARTER LEE who rolls down the window. He is dressed in a white linen suit.

CARTER LEE
Can I help you, son?

FORREST
Send one of these clowns around here again, you'll be pulling a fucking cleaver out of his skull.

FORREST stuffs the bill into the pocket of CARTER LEE'S jacket. CARTER LEE'S face opens in a lupine grin and rolls back the window.

SHERIFF HODGES
You gonna regret this, Forrest.

CHARLIE RAKES
He's already regretting it, he jes too stupid to know it yet.

FORREST looks at RAKES, touches the gun stuck in his waistband, thinks better of it, walks back toward the station.

SHERIFF HODGES
(calls out)
Hey, Forrest, tell your damn brothers. This applies to all you Bondurant boys.

FORREST mounts the steps. MAGGIE is standing in the doorway, looking on as FORREST walks past her.

EXT. TRAIL TO AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - SAME MORNING

JACK rides one of his father's draft horses, up a dirt trail. On the saddle are sacks of sugar and corn.

In a clearing he sees a small cabin. Standing at the gate to the cabin are the TWINS, STEVEY and DAVEY. They are fat, shirtless and identical. They share a jar. JACK looks to the cabin and notices smoke pouring out of the windows and door and chinks in the logs.

STEVEY

Hey there, Jackie. How's things?

DAVEY

Good to see you.

JACK

Where's Cricket?

DAVEY

Up in the house.

JACK

What the hell is goin' on with the house? Is it on fire?

STEVEY

Naw, It's the new still.

JACK

He's got the still in the house?

DAVEY

Oh yeah, you got to see it.
Cricket is a genuine genius.

JACK

(incredulous)
In the house?

DAVEY

Yep.

STEVEY

And we're on lookout.

JACK

Who's house is it?

DAVEY

Aunt Winnie's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEVEY
Old family relation.

DAVEY
Don't worry about her, she's blind
and crazy anyhow.

JACK continues up to the house. JACK dismounts. In a billow of smoke CRICKET PATE hobbles out the front door of the cabin, a smile on his soot-blackened face.

From inside the house, a thumper keg knocks out a steady beat, steam hisses and whistles, the whole cabin seems like some infernal machine about to explode.

CRICKET
You gonna like this, Jack! This is
something we got going here!

JACK
What? The goddamn still in the
cellar?

CRICKET
That ain't the half of it! I had
me an idea! Follow me!

CRICKET and JACK enter the cabin.

INT. AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - MORNING

JACK follows CRICKET into the cabin. The cabin is modestly furnished with rough, wood furniture. JACK crouches down to get out of the rising smoke and holds his arm over his mouth.

JACK
Damn. Smokes kinds thick , ain't
it.

CRICKET
Naw, you get used to it.

Sitting in a rocking chair, knitting, is AUNT WINNIE. AUNTIE WINNIE is a huge woman in a gingham dress. She wears dark shades, a walking stick across her knees.

JACK
(jumping in fright)
Jesus!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUNT WINNIE

Don't you be using no profanities
in my house!

CRICKET

Jack, meet Aunt Winnie.

AUNT WINNIE waves away the smoke.

AUNT WINNIE

Anyone smell something funny?

CRICKET

Ain't nuthin, Aunt Winnie.

AUNT WINNIE

Smells like a skunk nailed to a
dead man!

CRICKET leads JACK to a trapdoor, pulls it open. A gust of smoke billows out. They grope downstairs toward a flickering glow. Mash barrels stand at the foot of the stairs. A twenty gallon teapot still, fed by a brick furnace. The floor is covered with sacks, sugar bags, spilled corn. JACK coughs. CRICKET seems oblivious.

CRICKET

(shouting above the noise)
This here is the still.

JACK

Jesus, Cricket.

CRICKET leads JACK back up the stairs.

CRICKET

Now, follow me. You're gonna like
this.

CRICKET limps down the hallway and JACK follows.

CRICKET (CONT'D)

Liquor runs directly into an old
water tank we sealed up. We hooked
the tank into the house's well
water lines. Aunt Winnie got a
damn gravity pump set up to bring
water from the basement. The tanks
got a sixty gallon capacity!
Follow me.

CRICKET moves up the staircase, followed by JACK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CRICKET (CONT'D)

Up here Aunt Winnie's got a water closet with a damn flush toilet and hot 'n' cold taps!

INT. WATER CLOSET, AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - MORNING

CRICKET and JACK cram into a small WC, with a toilet and a basin. On the wall of the WC is a crudely painted landscape, with a set of hills and a cow or a horse, it's impossible to tell.

CRICKET

See, Jack, this here is how it will work.

JACK leans back and knocks the painting skew-whiff.

CRICKET (CONT'D)

Careful.

CRICKET puts the painting straight.

CRICKET (CONT'D)

Aunt Winnie done that.

JACK

You don't say.

CRICKET brandishes a glass pint bottle.

CRICKET

OK, everythin' seems normal, just a nice little mountain house here, us fellows here watchin' the place, whatever. Well, at some point, after sittin' a spell, the man asks if he may use the water closet, and we say 'yes', try the hot water, it's real nice, or something like that. So he comes in here.

CRICKET holds the bottle under the hot water tap, turns the valve. There is a ominous rumble, then some murky water, followed by a stream of steaming whiskey. CRICKET fills the pint bottle, corks the bottle triumphantly. The whiskey is a terrifying cloudy grey.

CRICKET (CONT'D)

The man tucks his bottle away and out he goes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK looks at CRICKET, disbelievingly.

JACK
Hell, Cricket, that's the
stupidest thing I ever seen.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - MORNING

HOWARD sits at a table with TWO MEN, playing cards. He is dangerous drunk. He drinks from a jar of whiskey. Behind the counter MAGGIE cracks eggs onto a skillet.

FORREST enters the bar from the back of the station and moves behind the counter next to MAGGIE - an unnamed tension between them.

FORREST looks across at HOWARD.

FORREST
(quietly to MAGGIE)
How long has he been here?

MAGGIE
All night.

FORREST grunts, pours himself a cup of coffee. MAGGIE moves around FORREST to get to the biscuits.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
'Scuse me.

FORREST'S eyes follow her shyly as she passes.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Poor ol' Lucy's already been in
with that sickly little baby,
trying to get him home. He won't
budge.

There is a roar from the table. HOWARD throws down his losing hand angrily. The other TWO MEN look at each other nervously wishing they were some place else.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Your brother's losing bad. No
sooner he makes it, it's gone.

FORREST
Damn fool.

MAGGIE sidles past FORREST, making a show of him being in the way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGGIE

'Scuse me.

FORREST'S eyes follow her some more.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You gonna say something?

FORREST

I ain't his mother.

MAGGIE

Well, I don't want him busting up the joint...again.

FORREST

Get him somethin' to eat.

MAGGIE

That's what I'm tryin' to do.

FORREST walks from behind the bar to the table where HOWARD and the TWO MEN are playing cards.

FORREST

Howard.

HOWARD

Forrest.

The TWO MEN nod nervously at FORREST.

FORREST

You seen Jack?

HOWARD

Not since last night at the shucking.

FORREST

'Sposed to be helpin' out around here.

HOWARD slams down another losing hand.

HOWARD

Maybe Jack got tired of being your house dog.

FORREST leans down like a crooked stick.

FORREST

Plannin' on losing all your money?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOWARD
Deal the damn cards.

EXT. AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - LATER, DAY

JACK sits at the door of AUNT WINNIE'S cabin collecting cash from a motley crew of CUSTOMERS. He puts it in a biscuit tin.

JACK
Fifty cents a glass, a dollar a pint.

In the yard, CUSTOMERS drink CRICKET'S corn liquor. Some walk into trees, lie comatose in the grass, howl and walk about as though they are blind. The yard resembles the grounds of a lunatic asylum. The effect of CRICKET'S liquor is clearly radical.

CRICKET opens the front door. Leans down to JACK, a worried look on his face.

CRICKET
Jack, come in here.

A MAN vomits over the railing of the porch.

CRICKET (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Something ain't right with this liquor.

JACK
You can say that again. Look.

JACK gestures at the drunken insanity on the lawn.

CRICKET
Yeah, well, I got trouble inside.

JACK follows CRICKET inside.

INT. OUTSIDE WATER CLOSET, AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - DAY

JACK and CRICKET stand outside the WC.

CRICKET
Got an old boy in there.

JACK
Well, get him out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRICKET smiles weakly, drunkenly.

CRICKET
Don't think I can.

JACK opens the door. It swings a few inches and hits something. JACK forces it with his shoulder. A MAN yells. JACK looks in, sees TWO OLD TIMERS standing at the sink, holding jars of whiskey. One has his pants around his ankles. JACK closes the door.

CRICKET (CONT'D)
What they doing?

JACK
I don't know, but it ain't good.

JACK hammers on the door of the WC.

JACK (CONT'D)
You old fools get the hell out.
We're closed!

CRICKET scratches his head. Pulls a jar out of his pocket and drinks from it.

CRICKET
Too much rust in the tank, maybe.

CRICKET drinks some more.

CRICKET (CONT'D)
Or lead.

JACK
(to himself)
Shit.

INT. PARLOUR, AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - NIGHT

The CUSTOMERS have all gone and JACK sits on the couch, counting the money from the biscuit tin.

The door bursts open and THREE MEN come in. RAKES, wolf-like, with a shotgun cradled in his arms. ABISHIRE and RICHARDS both have axes over their shoulders. JACK freezes, the biscuit tin between his feet.

CHARLEY RAKES
Who's in charge here?

RAKES strides through the parlour into the hall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUNT WINNIE

(mumbles)

Don't spect no biscuits comin out
of round here.

RAKES comes back into the room dragging CRICKET by his ankle. RAKES releases him. CRICKET sits up, rubbing his bloodshot eyes, staring at the MEN with their axes.

CHARLEY RAKES

Three things you gotta tell us,
son, where's the still, where's
the liquor and where's the money.

CRICKET looks at RAKES uncomprehendingly. JACK shifts the biscuit tin under the couch with his foot. RAKES hauls CRICKET to his feet by his collar. CRICKET collapses, drunk, sinking down to his haunches. RAKES starts slapping CRICKET'S face, back and forth.

CHARLEY RAKES (CONT'D)

The money, son, where's the damn
money!

JACK stands up.

JACK

He don't have it.

The MEN look at JACK as if seeing him for the first time. RAKES points his shotgun into JACK'S face.

CHARLIE RAKES

Who the fuck are you?

JACK brings his hands up and shrugs. RICHARDS moves the barrel in short circles around JACK'S nose.

HENRY ABSHIRE

That there is Jack Bondurant.

RAKES smiles and whistles slightly.

CHARLEY RAKES

I'll be damned. I was told I'd
find you here. And look, here you
are. You are some kind of stupid.

JEFF RICHARDS

Where's the still?

RAKES turns to ABSHIRE and RICHARDS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHARLIE RAKES

Go find it.

RAKES pokes JACK in the chest with his shotgun, his foot kicks the biscuit tin under the couch. He smiles, his brown teeth like a row of acorns. He leans down, picks it up, opens it and riffles the cash.

CHARLEY RAKES

You boys don't get it do you?
There is a new system, and you
gotta play along.

JACK looks at the ground and says nothing.

CHARLEY RAKES (CONT'D)

This ain't just me. This is
Commonwealth's Attorney Carter Lee
comin' down on you. You don't mess
with him. Things are gonna be
changin' from now on. (beat) You
gotta weapon of any kind?

JACK

No.

CHARLEY RAKES

Gun, knife, anything?

There is a sharp clang from the basement, the sound of
metal punching through metal, hiss of steam.

JACK

No.

CHARLEY RAKES

You tellin' the truth?

JACK

Yes.

CHARLEY RAKES

Then you are a damn fool.

RAKES brings the barrel of the shotgun, lands a glancing
blow on JACK'S cheek. JACK stumbles back, rubs his jaw,
checks his hand for blood.

CHARLEY RAKES (CONT'D)

Come here. Step forward.

More shots of metal ring out from the basement as ABSHIRE
and RICHARDS attack the still with their axes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK comes forward slowly. RAKES lunges and jabs the end of the shotgun into JACK'S teeth. JACK falls to his knees and cups his hands as the blood begins to flow.

CHARLEY RAKES (CONT'D)

Get up.

The clanging in the basement is increasing in tempo. JACK rises slowly to his feet, hand against his mouth.

CHARLEY RAKES (CONT'D)

You ain't so goddamn tough. I
thought they said you Bondurant
boys were a bunch of hard-boiled
sons-a-bitches.

RAKES rears back and hooks JACK with a haymaker in the ribs, sends him stumbling out onto the porch.

EXT. FRONT YARD, AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - NIGHT

RAKES follows JACK outside, stumbling across the porch. RAKES swings the shotgun and crunches the side of JACK'S knee. JACK rolls off the porch into the yard. RAKES moves after him.

CHARLEY RAKES

This is terrible. This just won't
do. It's like steppin' on a slug.

RAKES leans the gun against the porch. Walks over to JACK, who is curled in the dirt. RAKES yanks JACK to his feet.

JACK

(slurs)
My brothers gonna get you. They're
gonna kill you.

CHARLEY RAKES

S'at so? That ain't gonna help you
right now, is it?

RAKES smacks JACK across the face with an open hand.

CHARLEY RAKES (CONT'D)

So much talk about the goddamn
Bondurant boys. Hell you ain't
shit.

RAKES jerks JACK back and forth like a child.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLEY RAKES (CONT'D)

You tell those two brothers of
yours we're coming for them next.
You tell 'em.

RAKES holds JACK'S lapel and starts clubbing him, the
blows landing viscously on the side of JACK'S head, his
neck, smashing his ear. JACK twists and struggles.

JACK

(whimpering)

Please no more. No more.

RAKES hits JACK a direct blow on the temple and JACK
passes out. RAKES drops him like a rag doll. He spits on
JACK and snaps his red suspenders.

CHARLEY RAKES

You best repent your ways, boy,
and pay the fucking money.
(shouts to others)
Alright! Let's get outa here.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

FORREST walks down the hall, pauses in the doorway of
MAGGIE'S room. It is dark and MAGGIE breathes beneath her
hair on the pillow. FORREST stands there, watching her,
for some time.

MAGGIE opens her eyes and just as FORREST turns away, she
pulls back the covers to welcome him in. FORREST does not
see this and walks into the sitting room.

INT. SITTING ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

FORREST sits down on the couch. He turns to see MAGGIE
standing naked in the doorway. This is the first time
FORREST has seen her this way. MAGGIE walks over to him.

FORREST holds her face in his hands and brushes his lips
against her forehead, cheeks, throat. MAGGIE kisses him,
wraps herself around him.

INT. SITTING ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - LATER, NIGHT

In the dim starlight, FORREST watches MAGGIE'S face as
they lie together on the couch after making love. He runs
his finger down the profile of her face. She looks up at
him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGGIE

Damned if you don't keep a girl waiting.

INT. GRANVILLE'S FARM - MORNING

In the kitchen GRANVILLE BONDURANT (60 yrs) sits eating breakfast. EMMY washes dishes in a sink.

EMMY

(looking out window)

Here comes Jack.

JACK hobbles into the house. His face is bruised, his left ear split and swollen, an angry welt on his upper lip, the rough circumference of a twelve-gauge barrel.

JACK sits down at table. EMMY looks on, mortified by the state of JACK. She serves him biscuits. GRANVILLE looks at JACK disapprovingly.

GRANVILLE

I need you and your brother, this morning. In the barn.

JACK nods, bites the biscuit, grimacing with the pain of it.

INT. BARN, GRANVILLE'S FARM - DAY

A Hereford leans forward on spread legs, a stream of blood running down her hindquarters. JACK, bruised and beaten, and HOWARD, hungover, look at the suffering beast.

JACK

(looking at the cow)

Damn.

HOWARD

I don't know who looks worse, you or the cow.

JACK

You don't look too good yourself.

HOWARD walks to the cow and strokes her head.

HOWARD

How long she bin like this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

Daddy said, yesterday evenin',
some ten hours maybe.

HOWARD

What happened to you?

JACK

Nuthin.

JACK touches his torn ear. HOWARD pulls a thin cable saw
off the wall and hands JACK the saw handles.

HOWARD

I asked you a question.

JACK

Carter Lee's men done it. Some son-
of-a-bitch called Rakes and some
others. They come bust up
Cricket's still.

HOWARD steps back to the cow and makes a loop in the end
of the cable.

HOWARD

They beat you like that? Shit.

JACK

They got me unawares.

HOWARD moves behind the cow.

HOWARD

When I get this placed, you work
that saw. Work it quick.

HOWARD cinches up his sleeve, closes the saw loop in his
fist, drives it into the cow's swollen opening, pushing
up past the elbow. He works like this a moment.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Now.

JACK plies the handles, sawing away until HOWARD signals.
HOWARD pulls from the cow's orifice a bony leg with a
tiny black hoof. He tosses it in the straw, puts his hand
back in. JACK works the saw. HOWARD pulls a second calf
leg out and throws it next to the other. HOWARD repeats
the motion, nods at JACK.

JACK

(shakes his head)

Howard, I can't do this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOWARD

You wanna do what I'm doing?

JACK starts to saw again.

INT. BARN, GRANVILLE'S FARM - LATER, DAY.

HOWARD cradles the cow's head in his arms, whispers to her as she dies. He stands, wipes blood and mucilage from his arms with a rag. He pulls a jar from his back pocket, takes a long pull and offers it to JACK. JACK waves it away. HOWARD looks closely at JACK'S face.

HOWARD

Jesus. Those sons-a-bitches done you good.

HOWARD makes fists with his hands and throws a couple of haymakers at the air.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

You ever whupped on someone?

JACK

I done thought about it.

HOWARD

Never does turn out like you think. When the first swing happens, everything is new an nothin' is the way you thought.

JACK

I gotta lie down some, Howard.

HOWARD takes another great swig from the jar.

HOWARD

I'll tell you this. You only need to know one thing in this life. Somethin ol' Forrest knows. That's you gotta hit first, hit with everythin' you got, and then keep hittin' until the man is down, then you hit him some more.

JACK nods.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Many men like the idea of fightin' but very few likes to get hit. A good straight left into the nose-bone and most will let be.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD (CONT'D)

(beat) A man who likes to get hit
is the one to watch out for.

HOWARD drains the jar and tosses it across the barn and
grins like a mad ogre.

JACK

They said they were comin' for you
next.

HOWARD

Oh yeah?

HOWARD looks down at the dead cow. He looks at the
carcass of the aborted calf covered with a sack. He looks
at the severed calves legs - six of them in a row.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Six legs. Damn if that ain't
something.

JACK leans against the side of the barn, looking green.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Never seen such a thing. (beat)
Hey, Jack, you reckon that's a
good omen or a bad'n?

EXT. CRICKET'S AUTO, OUTSIDE DUNKARD'S CHURCH - EVENING

JACK sits in CRICKET'S car outside the MENNONITE Church
drinking, eyeing the stream of MENNONITES drawing up
their teams and tattered Model T's. His face is less
bruised. It is five days since his beating.

At the door of the church a BEARDED MAN in a long black
coat clasps the hands of the MEN and WOMEN warmly. The
stream of MENNONITES dwindles and the BEARDED MAN steps
inside the little church.

JACK drinks recklessly. Singing comes from inside the
church. JACK moves across the carpark to the church. He
drinks the rest of the liquor and pitches the jar across
the field. There is a sudden rushing sound in his head and
holds onto the bannister of the stairs for support. He
enters the church.

INT. FOYER, DUNKARD'S CHURCH - NIGHT

JACK enters the foyer. The walls lined with coats hanging
on pegs. The BEARDED MAN watches JACK come in. Like all
MENNONITE MEN his upper lip is shaven clean.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEARDED MAN

Welcome, brother.

JACK

Eh?

BEARDED MAN

Peace be with you, all that are in
Jesus Christ.

The BEARDED MAN tries to take JACK'S coat but JACK shakes his head. He steers JACK into the main hall of the church.

INT. MAIN HALL, DUNKARD'S CHURCH - NIGHT

Rows of ONE HUNDRED PARISHIONERS, MEN on one side, WOMEN on the other, singing. In the centre of the room SEVEN MEN stand by chairs, buckets and stacked towels. A cross made of railway ties hangs from the ceiling.

TIZWELL MINNIX, BERTHA'S FATHER, with a long double-pronged beard, intones a set of lyrics from a lectern. The PARISHIONERS echo the lyrics in full song. Oil lamps cast flickering circles of light.

JACK enters, noisily, sweating in his coat. A few heads turn. The MEN sit ram-rod straight. The WOMEN are dressed in long black capes and small lace caps. JACK looks around, the only empty space is at the end of the front row. JACK, drunk, mock sings along with the PARISHIONERS, in a wavering thin tone.

TIZWELL MINNIX

Let us pray.

The PARISHIONERS bow their heads. JACK scans the rows of WOMEN intently, sees BERTHA MINNIX, the mandolin player. TIZWELL MINNIX delivers the sermon.

JACK tries to catch the eye of BERTHA MINNIX. JACK hears a hum of something in his head and he rubs at his ears. The prayer ends and the PARISHIONERS sit. The PREACHERS line up seven chairs in the centre of the room. SEVERAL WOMEN come forward, including BERTHA MINNIX and sit in the chairs and unlace their boots.

JACK reaches in the pocket of his jacket and finds a piece of corn and he flicks it at BERTHA MINNIX and hits her on the arm. She doesn't seem to notice. The PREACHERS move metal buckets in front of the chairs and roll up their sleeves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTHA MINNIX removes her boots. JACK sits, entranced as she arches forward her small white foot. The PREACHER dabs at it with a cloth. Her feet are a luminous white. JACK shakes his head, the grinding noise in his skull getting louder.

The MEN in the front row with JACK unlace their boots. JACK tentatively follows suit. The WOMEN, shoes back on, pick up buckets and rags and move toward the front row where JACK sits.

TIZWELL MINNIX (CONT'D)

Love not the world, neither the
things that are in the world.
If any man love the world, the
love of the Father in not in him.

PARISHIONERS

Amen.

A harsh sound like ripping metal, in JACK'S head, tears through him and the floor begins to vibrate. He looks down at his bare feet. They are filthy. JACK shakes his head, trying to dispel the ever-mounting roar. The church begins to shake.

JACK

(to himself)
Somethin's wrong here.

TIZWELL MINNIX

For all that is in the world, the
lust of the flesh, and the lust of
the eyes, and the pride of life,
is not of the Father, but is of
the world.

JACK looks down. BERTHA is kneeling at his feet, bucket by her side, looking up at him, with a slight smile. She takes JACK'S foot in her hand. JACK clutches the pew, arches himself like a squirming cat, the chainsaw in his head intolerable.

TIZWELL MINNIX (CONT'D)

And the world passeth away, and
the lust thereof, but he that
doeth the will of God abideth for
ever.

JACKS looks around and sees the PREACHERS staring at him. The floor twist beneath his feet. JACK sees TIZWELL MINNIX lead the PREACHERS towards him, his beard, a double-edged sword emerging from his mouth. BERTHA MINNIX smiles at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He wrenches his foot away, explodes from the pew, steps in a bucket, thrashes against the MEN next to him. TIZWELL MINNIX shouts something at him but he cannot hear anything but the terrible roaring in his ears.

JACK runs from the church, leaving his boot behind.

EXT. OUTSIDE DUNKARD'S CHURCH - NIGHT

JACK runs from the church, the ground heaving beneath his feet, his eyes wild, his hands thrown across his ears, the air full of thunder and dust. He runs to CRICKET'S Pierce Arrow and vomits purple bile on the ground.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

JACK, HOWARD, FORREST sit on the porch of the station. Black dust hangs in the air. HOWARD is drinking. JACK looks worse for wear. He wears sunglasses and holds a pack of ice on his head. HOWARD slaps at his clothes disturbing black dust.

HOWARD

Shoot. This here comes all the way
from Texas...

He drinks again from his jar.

JACK

(tentatively)

Forrest?

FORREST casts one stern eye in JACK'S direction - JACK with his battered, hung over face.

FORREST

Yeah?

JACK

Um...while we're all just sitting
here...

FORREST

What?

JACK

I've been thinkin', Forrest...

FORREST

Have you now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

Yeah, I've bin thinkin' that we
could be makin' a whole lot
more...

FORREST

Who's we?

JACK

Well, me, you and Howard, course.

FORREST

Oh yeah?

JACK

Listen, Forrest, old Roosevelt is
gonna get in, everyone knows that.
The first thing he's gonna do is
stop Prohibition. Once he done
that this whole damn thing is
over...

An old beat up flatbed truck enters the lot.

JACK (CONT'D)

...And I was thinking that if you
let me...drive...

JACK sees the Mennonite preacher, TIZWELL MINNIX, step
out of the car, a burlap sack in his hand.

JACK (CONT'D)

...drive some of your...
(he peters out)
...oh no...oh shit...oh damn...

FORREST stands, looks at JACK, makes his way down to the
pumps. EVERETT DILLON, sitting by the pumps, stands, a
rag pressed to his mouth.

EVERETT

(coughing up dust)
Fuel, sir.

TIZWELL MINNIX

Is Jack Bondurant here?

JACK shrinks in his chair, pulls his cap down over his
eyes. HOWARD grins.

JACK

Oh fuck...oh shit...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TIZWELL MINNIX
(to FORREST)
You the brother of young Jack
Bondurant?

FORREST
Yes.

TIZWELL MINNIX
I came here to speak to you about
him.

JACK stands and slips inside the station. HOWARD grins
and follows.

TIZWELL MINNIX (CONT'D)
Did you know that your brother
came to our service last night. At
the Brethren Church in Burnt
Chimney. (beat) Our Love Feast
ceremony.

The faintest smile cracks on FORREST'S face.

FORREST
I know the place.

TIZWELL MINNIX
Well, he was there and he was
drunk or crazy or both.

FORREST
Is that so.

TIZWELL MINNIX
Yes, Sir.

TIZWELL MINNIX hands the burlap sack to FORREST.

TIZWELL MINNIX (CONT'D)
That he was.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

JACK watches FORREST and TIZWELL MINNIX through the dusty
window.

HOWARD
You bin messin' with the
holyrollers, Jack?

JACK
Fuck you, Howard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD laughs. JACK curses and sits himself down at the table with HOWARD as FORREST enters, carrying the sack. He stops at JACK'S table.

FORREST
What happened to your face?

JACK
Eh?

FORREST
You heard me.

JACK
Ain't nothin.

FORREST
That so?

MAGGIE scrapes at the grill, a cigarette clenched in her teeth. FORREST moves to the counter, punches the till and starts counting notes.

FORREST (CONT'D)
I heard what they did to you over Winnie Mitchell's place. You and Cricket Pate.

JACK
Who told you?

JACK looks at HOWARD.

JACK (CONT'D)
Shit.

MAGGIE walks over, tops up JACK'S coffee, giving him a slight grin. JACK blushes with embarrassment.

FORREST
The question is, what you gonna do about it?

JACK looks stunned.

JACK
What am I gonna do?

FORREST
You expecting someone else to handle it?

JACK
That ain't what I meant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FORREST sets down the bills and walks around the counter and fronts up to JACK.

FORREST
Here it is. As long as you are my brother, you better never let it happen again. You unnerstand me?

JACK
I get it.

FORREST
I don't think you do.

JACK
What if I can't? You know I ain't like you and Howard like that. I ain't never been like you.

FORREST leans in close to JACK.

FORREST
There is only one answer. People will know, and you will suffer for it for a long time, maybe the rest of your life. Do something about it. If those animals out there see for a moment you are afraid, then they'll be at your door and it'll be over.

JACK
They told me to tell you they are comin' for you next.

FORREST
I know it.

JACK sees a weariness cross FORREST'S face.

FORREST (CONT'D)
You wanna be a part of this?

JACK
Yeah.

FORREST
You sure about that?

JACK
Yes, I am. I got plans, Forrest. If you'd just let me explain...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FORREST

Alright then. There's a meeting up the Jamison place near Thorton Mountain. I want you to bring Howard.

JACK can't help but smile.

FORREST (CONT'D)

But, you better be ready to do what's necessary.

JACK

I am, Forrest.

FORREST slaps shut the register drawer.

FORREST

We control the fear. You unnerstand? Without the fear, we are all as good as dead.

JACK

All right.

FORREST drops the burlap sack onto the table.

FORREST

Present from the preacher.

JACK reaches into the bag and pulls out his battered old boot and cringes with embarrassment.

HOWARD

(grinning)

You gettin' religion, brother?

INT. MODEL A FORD, ROAD TO JAMISON'S PLACE - DAY

Dust coating the ground, no longer in the air. JACK, in a driving cap, sits at the wheel of GRANVILLE'S Model A Ford as it judders up the bumpy county track. Beside him, DANNY. HOWARD sprawls in the back seat, a jar of popskull in his hand, his hat pulled over his eyes.

They drive up to an outbuilding near a stand of woods. There is a ring of cars and a half dozen horses. JACK parks and they get out. DANNY pushes a gun into his waistband.

Many of the vehicles are new - a few Packards, an Auburn Sedan, a Dodge Coupe. JACK looks at the cars enviously.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
Somebody around here is making
money.

They pass a two tone Buick, series 121.

JACK (CONT'D)
(almost drooling)
That sweet mother would do seventy
easy.

They pass FORREST'S busted down old flatbed truck. JACK
looks at the state of the truck with a certain disgust.

JACK (CONT'D)
(wryly)
Forrest's already here.

INT. OUTBUILDING, JAMISON'S PLACE - DAY

The building is full of BOOTLEGGERS. Noise. Smoking.
Passing of liquor jars. Some are dressed well and are
major players in the bootlegging business. HOWARD leans
against the wall, taking in the crowd, his face grim.

HOWARD and DANNY enter. A BOUNCER prevents JACK from
entering.

DANNY MITCHEL
I'd step aside, if I was you. That
there is a Bondurant.

The BOUNCER lets JACK in, the CROWD reflexively opening
for HOWARD. JACK moves along, chest out, in HOWARD'S
wake. MEN nod in greeting. Some shake his hand.

JACK, HOWARD, DANNY stand by FORREST against the wall.
JIMMY TURNER stands up on an overturned bucket.

JIMMY TURNER
For a long time we been able to do
business here in Franklin and
nobody paid no mind. Lately there
been some trouble. We know the
Alcohol Tax Unit is goin' come in
from time to time and break up a
still and get their pictures in
the paper.

Some BOOTLEGGERS laugh, some curse under their breath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMY TURNER (CONT'D)

The sheriff's department, on the other hand, has always looked the other way. But the fact is the ATU is makin it difficult to move stuff out of the county, even when we use way station's like Forrest Bondurant's place up in Blackwater.

TURNER nods acknowledgement FORREST. FORREST does not seem to register the recognition.

JIMMY TURNER (CONT'D)

Well, there is an offer from the sheriff's office, to make things a bit easier on everybody.

DANNY MITCHEL

You mean pay a damn granny fee!

Some BOOTLEGGERS hoot and murmur.

JIMMY TURNER

Call it what you want! For things to go smooth you gotta grease the tracks.

DANNY MITCHEL

Horseshit! This here is Carter Lee talking! The damn Commonwealth Attorney! This here is about making the fat cats richer. Well, I never paid no granny fee to no man and I ain't gonna do it now.

DANNY pushes through the crowd and leaves the building.

JIMMY TURNER

Let him go. He's just gonna make it hard on himself. (beat) A deputy will be assigned to each district and you boys will be responsible for getting the fees together. So get the word out to anyone who is making in your area. A deputy will come by each week to collect. Simple as that.

BOOTLEGGERS

What's the price?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JIMMY TURNER

About ten dollars a car load, plus
twenty a month to make.

There is a general commotion in the room.

JIMMY TURNER (CONT'D)

For that you get no trouble. No
lost product, no jail time, no
blockading problems. (beat) You
fellas know that prohibition is
near over, done any day now. We
have a chance to make a good stack
of money here, while the gettin's
good.

FORREST

What if we refuse to pay?

The room goes quiet and everyone turns and looks at
FORREST. JACK stands tall.

JIMMY TURNER

What?

FORREST

What's Carter Lee gonna do if we
don't pay?

JIMMY TURNER

People who don't want in are gonna
have to fend for themselves.

FORREST

You gonna send Hodges and his men
around my station?

JIMMY TURNER

I ain't saying that. I'm just
saying there won't be any
attention.

JIMMY TURNER points at JACK.

JIMMY TURNER (CONT'D)

I know some deputies roughed up
Jack there. That's the kind of
thing that won't happen in the new
system.

JACK squirms as all the BOOTLEGGERS look at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FORREST

(addresses the room)

Listen up! Any of you want to move liquor through me instead of the government then come on. We will accommodate you. We will continue to operate free and clear, like always.

JIMMY TURNER

Times are a-changing, Forrest, you can't do it the old way no more.

FORREST

I guess we'll see about that.

FORREST, HOWARD and JACK make their way through the crowd and leave the building.

INT. MODEL A FORD, ROAD FROM JAMISON'S PLACE - DAY

JACK drives with a quiet intensity and DANNY drinks grimly from a jar and hands it back to HOWARD.

DANNY MITCHEL

That damn Turner. He's just one of Carter Lee's flunkeys.

JACK

He's right about one thing though.

HOWARD

Oh yeah? What's that?

JACK

There's a lot more money we could be making.

DANNY MITCHEL

How's that.

JACK

Gimme your load. I know where I can sell it all in one go. Five dollars on the gallon. Me and Cricket.

HOWARD

We ain't blockaders. Too damn risky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
I'll do the driving. You don't
have to worry about nothin.

HOWARD
Forrest won't hear of it.

JACK
Forrest's operation stops at
himself. He don't see the big
picture.

HOWARD
You wanna to tell that to your
brother.

They sit in silence, the light through the trees glancing
off the windscreen. DANNY'S mind whirs.

DANNY MITCHEL
Five dollars?

JACK
Uh-huh.

DANNY MITCHEL
On the gallon?

EXT. ROAD NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - NIGHT

JACK, dressed in an dark serge suit, stands next to his
father's Model T. He sucks a toothpick, in a clear
imitation of Floyd Banner. CRICKET, in bib and brace
overalls, leans against the car. HOWARD and DANNY emerge
from the dark woods, with a wheel barrel full liquor.
They haul the liquor into the back of the Model T. HOWARD
doesn't look happy.

HOWARD
Where ya get the suit?

JACK
It's dads.

HOWARD
He know you borrowed the car?

JACK
Shit, Howard, I'll be back before
mornin'.

HOWARD shakes his head. HOWARD closes the trunk of the
Model T.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD
That's sixty gallons. Don't make
me regret this.

JACK shoots his cuffs. Straightens his tie. Snaps his
toothpick and flicks it out the window.

JACK
Cricket! Let's move.

CRICKET climbs into the passenger seat. HOWARD shakes his
head again, pops a jar and watches them drive away.

HOWARD
(to DANNY)
Shit.

INT. MODEL T, ROAD - NIGHT

JACK drives the Model T through the night, a look of
determination on his face. CRICKET sits in the passenger
seat, looking scared. In the back seat, gallon bottles of
whiskey rattle and clink. JACK pops the glove compartment
and pulls out a small revolver and jams it into his
waistband. CRICKET blanches.

INT. MODEL T, ROAD - LATER, NIGHT

JACK passes a flatbed truck pulled to the side of the
road by two armed DEPUTIES. They hold two BLOCKADERS on
their knees at gunpoint, their hands clasped behind their
heads.

INT. MODEL T, ROAD - LATER, NIGHT

JACK looks visibly relieved as the front beams of his car
slice through the night and he and CRICKET cross the
county line.

EXT. FRONT LOT, BURNING BAG STATION - LATER, NIGHT

JACK flashes his lights and pulls into the station at
Burning Bag. There are three cars in the lot. JACK and
CRICKET pull up beside them. THREE MEN smoke, lean
against the station wall, hats pulled low. One MAN'S
jacket gapes open to reveal a pistol stabbed into his
belt, the barrel a foot long.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK and CRICKET get out of their vehicle. The MEN watch JACK and CRICKET. GUMMY WALSH sits on a step, with a four-day bender beard. He has no teeth.

GUMMY WALSH

Cricket.

JACK and CRICKET approach GUMMY WALSH, who stands.

CRICKET

This here is Jack Bondurant. Jack,
this is Gummy Walsh.

GUMMY WALSH smiles horribly.

GUMMY WALSH

I've heard of you boys from
Blackwater. Your brother's the one
who walked twenty miles with his
head cut clear off, yeah? Heard he
walks around drinkin' white mule
through a hole in his neck!

The MEN against the wall chuckle and move toward JACK and CRICKET and suddenly it becomes clear all is not well. JACK looks quickly at CRICKET.

JACK

(to GUMMY WALSH)

All right. Let's get this done. We
ain't got much time.

GUMMY WALSH smiles again, an edge to it this time.

GUMMY WALSH

What you got?

JACK

We've got sixty of quality crazy
apple, the best in Franklin
County. And then we got another
thirty of rotgut.

CRICKET

(hurt)

It ain't so bad.

GUMMY WALSH

That'll do nicely.

GUMMY WALSH pulls out his pistol, as rifles and guns appear in the other MEN'S hands. Gun barrels placed against the back of JACK and CRICKET'S heads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TWO MEN have crept up behind them. They pull JACK and CRICKET'S pistols from their waistbands, toss them aside.

GUMMY WALSH (CONT'D)

Now, walk.

JACK

We had a deal. You'll regret this.

GUMMY WALSH

You one stupid sack of shit. I said, walk.

The MEN jab pistols at JACK and CRICKET and lead them into a woods beside the station. Here, a grave has been dug. GUMMY WALSH kicks out CRICKET'S legs and he hits the ground. GUMMY kicks CRICKET into the hole. He puts his pistol against JACK'S head.

GUMMY WALSH (CONT'D)

In the hole.

JACK climbs in the open grave with CRICKET. A MAN walks over with a spade over his shoulder. He has a huge inflamed goiter at his neck. He is one of the HOPHEADS who cut FORREST'S throat.

FLOYD BANNER O/S

(high-pitched)

I hear the Commonwealth Attorney got you boy's nuts in a vise over in Franklin. That's a right pity. Everybody trying to muscle in... Ain't no honour in the business anymore.

FLOYD BANNER, looking flash in a tailored three-piece suit and derby, strides up, sucking a tooth pick. He is tall and hooked like a sickle.

FLOYD BANNER

You done dug these motherfuckers a hole like I told you?

HOPHEAD TWO

Yes, boss.

FLOYD BANNER

Then shoot 'em and bury 'em.

HOPHEAD MAN

Okay, boss.

GUMMY WALSH pulls a pistol from his waistband and aims it at JACK'S head. JACK looks up at FLOYD BANNER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK

(weakly)

My name is Jack Bondurant.

FLOYD BANNER

Eh?

JACK

I come from the Blackwater
Station.

FLOYD BANNER

What?

FLOYD'S expression changes and he pops a backhand across
GUMMY WALSH'S chest and raises a cloud of dust.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

You a Bondurant? Shit, boy. Why
didn't you say so. Gummy, you
stupid shit, help these boys out
of the hole and bring em' inside.

JACK and CRICKET look at each other, relieved.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

(to HOPHEAD TWO)

Put down that spade, you moron and
bring me some samples. (to JACK)
Come on. Follow me.

JACK follows FLOYD BANNER into the station.

INT. PARLOUR, BURNING BAG STATION - NIGHT

Darkened parlour. Gas lights burn dimly. A FEW MEN sit
around a table, only their hands visible in the gloom. A
MAN leans into the light and he wears a SHERIFF'S
uniform. The scene is eerie and threatening. JACK and
FLOYD pass through.

INT. BACK ROOM, BURNING BAG STATION - NIGHT

JACK and FLOYD enter. There is a table, a dripping sink,
a tall china cabinet. HOPHEAD ONE stands in the corner, a
shotgun cradled in his arms.

FLOYD BANNER

Sit down, Jack. You gotta excuse
my boys. They are little out of
touch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK and FLOYD sit at the table. HOPHEAD TWO comes into the room with a can of HOWARD and JACK'S liquor in each hand. He opens the cans and slops a bit of liquor into each of the saucers. He puts the saucers in front of FLOYD. HOPHEAD TWO looks at HOPHEAD ONE, nervously.

HOPHEAD TWO
(indicating one
saucer)
Crazy apple.
(indicating other)
Rotgut.

FLOYD BANNER
Good. Now git outa here, you damn
fool.

HOPHEAD TWO leaves. FLOYD strikes a match, tosses it to the saucer containing the apple whiskey. It ripples with an orange flame. FLOYD throws a match at the rotgut. There is a bang and the saucer burns a fierce blue.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)
Shit!

JACK
(proudly)
Yeah, I know. It's evil.

FLOYD BANNER
Always got to check, you
unnerstand.

FLOYD checks the bead in the jars. Satisfied he reaches under the table for a strongbox and opens it.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)
I'll give you five. Keep this to
yourself. Those boys out front,
they only get but four dollars.

FLOYD counts out the money - more than JACK has ever seen. He hands JACK the cash.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)
Welcome to The Midnight Coal
Company! (to HOPHEAD ONE) Let's
get it unloaded.

HOPHEAD ONE
All right, boss.

HOPHEAD ONE walks out of the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A faint triumphant smile crosses JACK'S face. As JACK starts to rise FLOYD takes hold of JACK'S arm. He leans in close.

FLOYD BANNER

Make sure you tell ol' Forrest that Floyd Banner says hello. Tell him I done good by you. (beat) They say that Carter Lee is running things in Franklin but I figured ol' Forrest and that big ox Howard wouldn't bend over for no fat cat. You tell him I said so.

JACK

You want more of this stuff?

FLOYD BANNER

As much as you can bring me. If you can get it through. I'll sell it.

EXT. BURNING BAG STATION - LATER THAT NIGHT

JACK and CRICKET climb into their car and take off. FLOYD stands with his MEN and watches JACK leave.

FLOYD BANNER

(to all)

Gentlemen, we are now in business with the Bondurants.

FLOYD turns to HOPHEAD TWO, who is holding the spade.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

Pass me the spade, would you.

The HOPHEAD TWO does so and FLOYD swings it around and catches the HOPHEAD TWO flat in the face. There is a loud klang! and he falls backward, out cold.

FLOYD points to the HOPHEAD ONE, who shrinks back.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

You. Take that piece of shit and get the fuck out of here. I don't wanna see either of you in a hundred miles of this place. You unnerstand?

HOPHEAD ONE

But boss...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLOYD pulls out a pistol and waves it at them.

FLOYD BANNER

You still here?

FLOYD points his gun at them and the HOPHEAD ONE wrestles with the inert body of the HOPHEAD TWO and dragging him, scurries off.

INT. SLOANE'S HABERDASHERY, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

JACK walks out of the changing room. He wears a wool pinstripe three piece suit, new snap collar shirt, paisley bow tie, a sharp Dunlop cap. He wears a pair of new burgundy calf skin boots. He puts his old boots on the counter. SLOANE looks at them as if they might bite him.

JACK

You can burn those.

A cluster of MEN in the back stand around a radio, listening to an address by Frank D Roosevelt.

ROOSEVELT ON THE RADIO

"These unhappy times call for the building of plans that rest upon the forgotten, the unorganized but the indispensable units of economic power, for plans that build from the bottom up and not from the top down, that put their faith once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid."

JACK pays no mind. He points across the counter.

JACK

(so everyone can
hear, above the
radio)

Give me one of those Brownie cameras. May wanna get a photo of myself in my brand new three-piece suit!

JACK smiles at SLOANE and the MEN. He counts out cash, takes the Brownie and walks, head high, from the store.

EXT. SLOANE'S HABERDASHERY, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY - AUTUMN

JACK saunters out of the haberdashery, drops his parcels in the back of the old Ford. HOWARD sits, dead drunk, in the front seat, his eyes closed.

JACK

Give me a minute, Howard.

HOWARD does not respond.

Parked across the road we see a new Roadster with RAKES and ABSHIRE in the front seat watching JACK.

JACK crosses the street and makes his way towards the Feed Store. A flatbed truck sits outside. In the truck sits BERTHA MINNIX.

EXT. TIZWELL MINNIX'S FLATBED TRUCK - DAY

BERTHA MINNIX sucks on a bottle of pop, flipping the pages of a book, windows rolled down. She sees JACK, bow-tied and suited, a cigarillo streaming off his lip. BERTHA watches him out of the corner of her eye as he walks past. She adjusts the wing mirror to watch his retreat, then sees him turn around and walk past again.

BERTHA MINNIX

You going to walk up and down all day?

JACK approaches and puts his foot on the running board of the truck. He flicks away his cigarillo.

JACK

How you like to come for a ride with me sometime.

JACK nods to his car across the street.

BERTHA MINNIX

Why would I want to do that? I don't need to go nowheres.

JACK

We wouldn't have to go anywhere, just for a ride.

BERTHA MINNIX

You ought to be worried if my father catches you here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTHA MINNIX (CONT'D)

Talking to me. He's just in the
feed store there.

The feed store door slaps open and JACK straightens up.
Some other OLD MAN walks out.

JACK

Why'd I need to be worried?

BERTHA MINNIX

You know, coming to the church
meeting like that. Then busting
out like a crazy person. Are you
affected in the head?

JACK

Shoot. Does a crazy person wear a
suit as fancy as this? And me not
yet twenty?

BERTHA MINNIX

Still don't explain why you acted
like a lunatic. Daddy says you
were drunk but I've never seen a
drunk like that.

JACK

I just didn't want my feet washed
is all.

BERTHA looks at JACK out of the corner of her eye.

BERTHA MINNIX

I know who you are.

JACK

Oh yeah, who's that?

JACK grins, adjusts his hat.

BERTHA MINNIX

One of them Bondurant boys, and
that's enough. There aren't many
that have a good word to say about
you.

JACK

That so.

BERTHA MINNIX

My granddaddy says you boys are
the worst ever to hit Franklin.

JACK hangs his head, kicks a clod, jams his balled fists
in his pockets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK

Shoot. What would your granddaddy know?

BERTHA looks at JACK slyly.

BERTHA MINNIX

You know where my daddy's place is?

JACK

Yeah.

BERTHA MINNIX

I get done with my chores around two. If you came to the end of the road, I might take a ride.

JACK nearly chokes.

JACK

Tomorrow then?

BERTHA lets forth a bright, musical laugh. JACK grins from ear to ear.

BERTHA MINNIX

You sure gotta funny way of courtin', Jack Bondurant. (beat)
This is what you're doin', right?
Courtin'?

JACK

I'll see you tomorrow then.

JACK spins away across the street, just as TIZWELL MINNIX comes out of the store, feed sacks in a wheel barrow. JACK whistles, acts innocent. BERTHA toys with the strands of her hair, flipping through her book, a little smile caught on her lips.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HABERDASHERY, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

JACK looks down the street, sees RAKES and ABSHIRE standing by his car. They've hauled HOWARD from the passenger seat. RAKES slaps HOWARD'S face, back and forth, but HOWARD is too drunk to respond. HOWARD just grins. JACK sees RAKES draw out his gun and pistol whip HOWARD and drop him to the gutter in a heap. RAKES spits on HOWARD and then they cross the road and climb in their car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK has slowed his pace to avoid confrontation. RAKES and ABSHIRE drive past and RAKES rolls down his window. He wears a lupine grin on his hatchet face.

RAKES

(to JACK)

I'm getting real tired beating on you Bondurant boys. Tell your brother Forrest he got till the end of the week to pay up. If not I'm gonna bring the fucken heavens down on him. I'll dynamite his stills, then his station and everyone in it. You unnerstand, you damn cry-baby. (beat) Hardboiled?...Shit.

RAKES and ABSHIRE continue on.

JACK runs to his car and stands over HOWARD, who grins drunkenly up at JACK, blood spilling from his nose.

HOWARD

Hey Jack, you seen my jar?

With great difficulty JACK helps the massive, bleeding HOWARD to his feet, just as: TIZWELL MINNIX and BERTHA drive past. TIZWELL looks at them with disgust. BERTHA looks straight ahead, her chin up, but with a certain light in her eyes.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - FOLLOWING DAY

FORREST, HOWARD and JACK sit around a table. An uneasy silence. HOWARD has a strip of plaster across his nose. He is sober but looks grim. JACK squirms in his seat. FORREST looks from one to the other, but says nothing.

HOWARD

(eventually)

Don't worry yourself about it.

(touches his nose)

I was drunk.

FORREST leans back in his chair.

FORREST

Danny Mitchell, Tom Jamison, the rest of them, they paying?

HOWARD

Not Danny. He won't. Think we the only other ones left.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK leans forward, seething.

JACK

Look, we gotta do something. Time is running out. That piece of cowshit, Rakes, he's gonna bust our operation up. We got to act now!

FORREST

We don't gotta do nothing at all.

JACK

Well dammit! I already done it! We run a hundred gallons to Burning Bag a few weeks ago. Floyd Banner told me he can sell as much as we give him.

FORREST looks at HOWARD with a look of genuine disbelief.

FORREST

(to HOWARD)

Floyd Banner? This true?

HOWARD nods.

JACK

He's got places all over to drop and we done do it again, as soon as Howard gets another batch up. I'm part of his syndicate now, the Midnight Coal company.

FORREST

That so?

JACK

Yeah.

FORREST

You don't know a thing about Banner and his damn company.

JACK

I know they take our liquor for a good price. I know they're makin' money. Unlike us.

FORREST

Floyd Banner will plug you as soon as look at you. There ain't no kind of guarantee with the likes of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK

I can look after myself.

FORREST

Can you now?

JACK

Listen, Forrest. Howard's got good stills and we got the vehicles and you got a shed fulla liquor. Floyd Banner will take all we got, including your stuff. Once we get through a couple of times the others will stop paying and the whole thing will give. I'll drive the pilot car myself. And if Rakes and Abshire try to stop us I swear to God I'll shoot those son-of-a-bitches myself.

FORREST

Once something like this gets started, then something else will have to stop it.

JACK

You asked me if I was ready. Well, I am, Forrest, I'm ready.

FORREST

(shakes his head)

Shit.

INT. JACK'S FORD - DAY

JACK and BERTHA drive along a country road. JACK seems nervous, concentrating on his driving. BERTHA unwinds her head scarf. Her hair falls in curls around her shoulders. BERTHA gazes out the window at the withered, unyielding tobacco farms and the occasional desperate, dirt-poor FARMER bent over the drought-ruined crops, yet vivid colors of autumn leaves. They pass a pack of ravenous dogs.

BERTHA MINNIX

Didja hear they might close up the Co-cola plant?

JACK

Yeah? What for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTHA MINNIX

Well shoot, Jack, don't you read the papers? The country's in real trouble.

JACK

Not me.

BERTHA MINNIX

Well, people are out of work all over. Daddy says Hoover's to blame. Curses him up one side of the street and down the other.

JACK

Yeah, well, I'll be leaving soon. Getting out of this county. Out west, maybe Texas, or some big city.

BERTHA MINNIX

What'll you do?

JACK

Shoot. Anything. Everything. Get myself set up. What about you?

BERTHA MINNIX

I reckon I'll stick around. Stay close to my family.

JACK

Can't see why you wanna do that.

BERTHA looks out the window, annoyed.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well, those Mennonites are always tryin' to stop you from doin' things.

BERTHA MINNIX

You show up to church and then run out like a lunatic and you think you somehow know my family?

JACK

Okay, Sorry I said it.

BERTHA MINNIX

Oh, never mind.

JACK looks foolish.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK

When I go maybe I'll take you with me.

BERTHA gazes out the window. They are silent.

JACK (CONT'D)

Got you a lil' somethin'.

JACK hands BERTHA the Brownie camera, who examines it.

BERTHA MINNIX

I can't take this.

JACK

It ain't nothin'.

BERTHA MINNIX

This is one of them cameras.

JACK

Yep.

BERTHA MINNIX

I don't know how to operate it.

JACK

Shoot. All you do is look through the little window and push the button. Ain't nothin' to it.

BERTHA MINNIX

If my daddy caught me with one of these things, he'd whup me good and proper.

JACK jerks the car into a sidecut off the road.

EXT. SIDECUT OFF ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

JACK and BERTHA clamber out of the car into the sunshine. JACK takes the camera, points to a colorful autumn tree.

JACK

Here, you go stand by that crab apple tree and I'll take your picture.

BERTHA is excited.

BERTHA MINNIX

Wait a second.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTHA shucks off her sweater to reveal a white blouse, tied at the neck with a blood red kerchief. She preens and mocks for a while, smiling and rounding her eyes.

JACK

Keep steady. Now hold it so as I can get it.

BERTHA raises her chin, her mouth a grim line. JACK snaps the photo.

JACK (CONT'D)

Why'd you stop cutting up?

BERTHA MINNIX

Well, that's how the movie stars do it in California. (beat) Now you.

JACK arranges himself on the hood of the car, his feet on the bumper.

BERTHA MINNIX (CONT'D)

That's a good one!

JACK

Hold it.

JACK fishes out a fresh cigar, sticks it between his teeth, sets his hat back at a rakish angle.

JACK (CONT'D)

All right.

BERTHA snaps the photo and laughs. JACK smiles back foolishly.

INT. HOWARD'S CABIN - DAY

LUCY stands in the kitchen, her sickly baby cradled in one arm, stirring a saucepan on the stove. HOWARD sits at the table, a bowl of stewed tomatoes in front of him. He breaks up lumps of corn bread, listens to the radio, sitting in front of him on the table - Carter Family singing Wildwood Flower.

LUCY

I'm gonna head up to my mother's place. She'd take me and the littl'n in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD
(listening to radio)
No, you ain't.

LUCY takes the ramps off the stove and ladles a spoonful onto HOWARD'S plate. HOWARD delivers three monstrous sneezes and the BABY wakes and begins to cry.

LUCY
You need to eat them. Gotta purify your blood. (beat) Lord knows, you need some purifying. The stuff you put into you. It's a miracle you still alive.

HOWARD forks the ramps into his mouth.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Maybe that's the problem.

LUCY sits down at the table, calming the BABY.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Maybe all the stuff you puttin' in yourself is the reason our children is born the way they is.

HOWARD reaches over turns up the radio to drown out LUCY.

CARTER FAMILY ON RADIO
Oh, he taught me to love him and
called me his flower/ That was
blooming to cheer him through
life's dreary hour/ Oh, I long to
see him and regret the dark hour/
He's gone and neglected this pale
wildwood flower

INT. MONTAGE - JACK'S FORD - NIGHT

JACK drives the Ford, CRICKET beside him. They are running liquor, the back of the car stacked with bottles of liquor. The headlights cut thru the night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK (V.O.)

I ain't gonna say that these runs across the county line were easy and that I didn't see things that I wished I never seen, but I gotta say there was a true kinda thrill involved - me tearing through the night, with a gun in my pocket and Cricket sat beside me near set to mess his pants.

INT. MONTAGE - JACK'S FORD - NIGHT

JACK passes a gunfight between two POLICE OFFICERS and a couple of desperate looking BLOCKADERS. Caught in the crossfire, CRICKET and JACK hunker down in their seats as bullets ping! and wang! around their ears. JACK speeds on through, CRICKETS eyes, wide with fear.

JACK (V.O.)

If it weren't the damn Alcohol and Tax Unit, it was the Police and if it weren't them it was bandits and vagrants pouring out of the woods.

INT. MONTAGE - JACK'S FORD

JACK and CRICKET speed through ominous backwoods roads, the lights of the Ford cutting through black dust. JACK sees through the dust haze a GANG OF BANDITS - mangy, grizzled backwoods men drag a BLOCKADER from a busted up flatbed truck and beat him with hammers and shovels.

JACK (V.O.)

The reason I never got stopped, I guess, was that everybody was doing it. Forrest kept saying it was just a matter of time, but he damned worried too much and when I come back with my pockets full of cash, there just wasn't no room for argument.

INT. MONTAGE SHED - DAY

FORREST, HOWARD and CRICKET work in HOWARD'S shed with a makeshift forge and bellows, stripped to the waist. CRICKET, all bones and rickets, issues instructions as to how to build the submarine stills.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK (V.O.)

Forrest and Howard invested their money back into the business and they got old Cricket to lend his expert knowledge and through the months of October and November they hammered out four three hundred gallon submarine stills. They was works of art.

INT. MONTAGE, JACK'S DODGE COUPE - DAY

JACK, dressed like a dandy, drives a brand new Dodge Sport Coupe, toothpick twisting between his lips.

JACK (V.O.)

Me, well, I bought some new suits, a fob watch and a brand new Dodge Sport Coupe.

INT. MONTAGE, SHED - DAY

CRICKET, in overalls, tinkers with the engine of the Dodge, while JACK looks on.

JACK (V.O.)

Cricket, God bless him, reconfigured the motor so that I could top near 70 miles per hour on the flat. Man, there was nothing that could catch me.

INT. MONTAGE, JACK'S DODGE COUPE - NIGHT

JACK passes an Alcohol & Tax Unit car pulled up to the side of the road. Ahead of him TWO OFFICERS chase down a crazed woman limping away through the woods. Shots are fired. The moonshiners car is totaled, upside down, a HEADLESS BODY flopped next to it. JACK speeds past, CRICKET watches in horror out the window.

Something on the road is caught in the headlights.

CRICKET

What's that?

JACK (V.O.)

One time I actually ran over somebody's head that was just lying on the road...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The thing caught in the high beams is a human head and there is a sickening thunk, like a watermelon popping as JACK drives over it.

CRICKET

Was that somebody's damn head?

JACK drives doggedly on.

JACK

...Hey, Cricket?

CRICKET

(green around the
gills)

Yeah?

JACK

Be damned if I die in a car.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM, GRANVILLE'S HOUSE - MORNING

JACK admires himself in the mirror, straightening his bow-tie, combing his pomaded hair, happy with what he sees. He slips on a camel-hair coat.

INT. KITCHEN, GRANVILLE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

GRANVILLE sits gloomily at the kitchen table in his threadbare overalls and EMMY cooks in a faded rag of a dress. JACK walks through the kitchen with a mixture of pride and sheepishness.

GRANVILLE

This country's got nothin'. We are
lookin' at the end of things here.
It's Revelations! It's damn
Armageddon!

JACK

Mornin', dad.

GRANVILLE

This county is dyin' before our
very eyes...

JACK

Mornin' Emmy.

GRANVILLE slams his hand down on the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRANVILLE

And you struttin' around like a
damn peacock!

JACK

Bye, dad.

JACK opens the door of the kitchen and cloud of dust
blows in. JACK exits. GRANVILLE seethes.

EXT. GRANVILLE'S FARM - MOMENTS LATER

JACK moves across the front yard and climbs into his
shiny new Dodge Coupe, checks himself in the mirror.

JACK (V.O.)

Yeah, well, me. I had me some
courtin' to do.

EXT. ROAD AT TIZWELL MINNIX'S FARM - DAY

BERTHA MINNIX stands at the end of the drive wearing
men's overalls, her hair tucked under an engineer's cap.
JACK swings the Coupe around. BERTHA is in before the car
has stopped moving. JACK grins and drives.

BERTHA MINNIX

(excited)

So daddy did the milking this
morning and mother's watchin' him
bring cows up the hill to the
house, and he milks them right
outside the back door, four pails
worth, then heads back down.

JACK stares at BERTHA entranced by her beauty.

BERTHA MINNIX (CONT'D)

Anyway, so mother says to him:
Why'd you walk them cows all the
way up here to milk? Why don't you
just milk em down there? (beat)
And daddy says: well, I figure
them cows can get the milk up the
hill easier than I can!

JACK

(sarcastically)

That father of yours is a real cut
up.

BERTHA aims a sharp elbow at JACK'S ribs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTHA MINNIX

What would you know.

JACK grins playfully.

JACK

I know this, for sure. I'm goin'
show you something you ain't never
seen before.

EXT. ROANOKE CITY - DAY

JACK and BERTHA drive down the main street of Roanoke, a bustling city. BERTHA looks all around, overwhelmed by the experience - the traffic, the crowds, the industry. JACK drives with an air of ostentation, as if he has invented this scenario especially for BERTHA.

What we see, in actuality, is a depression-era city - hopeless, desperate. JACK pulls up outside a movie house.

INT. MOVIE HOUSE - ROANOKE - DAY

In the darkness, JACK and BERTHA eat popcorn and watch the silent movie, *Laugh, Clown, Laugh* with Lon Chaney. The segregated cinema is full, BLACK PEOPLE hanging over the back stalls. As Tito the clown (Chaney) dies after falling from the high wire, BERTHA sobs into a handkerchief.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF ROANOKE CITY - DAY

JACK and BERTHA drive past crowds of desperate, hopeless people walking along the side of the road, their belongings in carts or tied to their backs. BERTHA turns to look at JACK, her eyes red, a balled-up handkerchief in her fist.

BERTHA MINNIX

That's the saddest thing I ever
done seen.

JACK

What?

BERTHA MINNIX

When that poor clown died. I
didn't think I'd ever stop crying.

JACK

You sure was lettin' loose.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A Black Blizzard - a great, ominous cloud of dust moves across the horizon, adding to the desperate nature of the scene.

JACK (CONT'D)

Shoot, Bertha, look at that old Black Roller comin' in!

BERTHA MINNIX

Lordy.

JACK

Best play some music on my new Motorola radio. Cost me a hundred and ten bucks.

JACK turns on his car radio, the voice of Franklin D Roosevelt comes out.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT ON RADIO

...no cracked earth, no blistering sun, no burning wind, no grasshoppers, are a permanent match for the indomitable American farmers who have carried on through desperate days, and inspire us...

JACK

Damn...

JACK changes the channel on the radio. Blind Alfred Reed comes out.

ALFRED REED ON RADIO

My heart is broke/ It is no joke
I'm happy and I'm sad/ I feel so
queer/ I sometimes fear/ that
things will drive me mad/ A little
girl/ with frizz and curls/ come
here a week ago/ to work upon the
telephone/ that says hello! hello!
hello!/ Hello! Hello! Hello!

JACK and BERTHA drive through the dread landscape of dispossessed, rag 'n' bone families, ravaging drought and apocalyptic dust storms as the music blares from the radio. They sing along.

JACK turns down the radio.

JACK

I got somethin' for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK reaches under his feet and pulls out a package wrapped in gold tissue paper.

BERTHA MINNIX

(overwhelmed)

Jack, I don't think this is a good thing.

JACK

Jus' open it.

BERTHA opens the package. Inside is a yellow silk dress, with crimson roses splashed across the bodice. BERTHA'S eyes brim with tears.

JACK (CONT'D)

Oh not again! (beat) Don't you like it?

BERTHA MINNIX

It don't matter if I like it, I can't take this.

JACK

The money don't matter. That don't make a dent in what I got. I just wanted to give you something nice. What's the problem?

BERTHA wipes at her tears with her fingers.

BERTHA MINNIX

Jus where do you think I would wear something like that?

JACK

I dunno.

BERTHA MINNIX

You think I can go home wearing that, singing songs I heard on the radio?

JACK

I'll take you somewhere where you can wear clothes like that everyday.

BERTHA MINNIX

What makes you think that's what I want!

There is a long, awkward silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK

Hey, Bertha, you wanna see something else?

(beat)

Something you ain't never, ever seen before!

BERTHA MINNIX

(overwhelmed)

What now, Jack Bondurant?!

EXT. TOWARD TURKEYCOCK STILL - LATER, EVENING

JACK and BERTHA walk through a thicket of birch trees toward the Turkeycock still. BERTHA is wearing the yellow dress, pulled over her farm clothes. She holds up the hem, to stop it trailing on the ground, exposing the legs of her overalls. She has removed her cap.

BERTHA MINNIX

When I was a girl, I used to kick through the leaves and pretend the sound was a silk petticoat.

BERTHA kicks at the leaves.

JACK

Well, now you don't have to pretend.

JACK gets serious, holds BERTHA'S arm, draws to a halt.

JACK (CONT'D)

Okay. Now listen to me. Walk quietly, stop kickin' up leaves, don't break sticks if you can help it. Remember, the warnin' sign is a single shout: *somebody!* What ever you do don't go back to the car.

BERTHA MINNIX

Yes, sir.

BERTHA pops JACK an exaggerated salute.

JACK

I'm serious.

BERTHA MINNIX

I know it.

JACK and BERTHA continue through the heavy woods.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK MOUNTAIN - MOMENTS LATER

A SHERIFF looks down on JACK and BERTHA with binoculars. BERTHA yellow dress stands out like a flag. The SHERIFF lowers the binoculars - it is RAKES.

RAKES grins, shakes his head at what he sees.

CHARLIE RAKES

Damn fools.

EXT. TOWARD TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

Same as before.

JACK

(eager to impress)

I do business with Floyd Banner.

BERTHA MINNIX

The Floyd Banner?

JACK

Yep. Up at Burning Bag.

BERTHA MINNIX

People say that place is like rum alley, men shooting each other every day.

JACK

(grins)

Ain't shot me.

JACK stops at gestures at what looks like nothing.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well, whatcha think?

BERTHA looks all about but sees nothing.

BERTHA MINNIX

What do I think about what?

JACK

(smiling)

My place of employment.

BERTHA MINNIX

What are talking about, Jack Bondurant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK lets go a short sharp whistle.

JACK

Stay close.

JACK bends down and moves through an obscure opening in a thick hedge of huckleberry. BERTHA follows. It opens into a clearing.

BERTHA MINNIX

Gonna ruin this dress.

CRICKET squats by a still furnace. Beside him four massive copper submarine stills, charred coal black. Mash boxes stand lined in rows, the contents roiling. CRICKET stands, awed by the vision of BERTHA in her yellow silk dress. BERTHA looks equally dumbfounded.

CRICKET

Shoot, Jack, what's she doin' here?

JACK

This here is Miss Bertha Minnix.

CRICKET scratches his head, then shakes it.

CRICKET

(to JACK)

Damn if your brothers ain't gonna be mad.

JACK

Don't you worry about that.

JACK shows BERTHA the mashboxes, how they operate.

JACK (CONT'D)

Grain, sugar, yeast goes in here.

Bertha dips her fingers into the brew, pushing aside the snowballs. JACK picks up a plank and stirs it.

JACK (CONT'D)

You try.

BERTHA stirs the mash. They look around the still, BERTHA taking it all in.

JACK (CONT'D)

We goin' to be able put out a thousand gallons a week. When it warms up we'll get 'em all hot and flood the damn valley white!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BERTHA turns and looks at JACK and he is nearly knocked off his feet by her beauty. They look at each other silently for a moment, in the waning light.

JACK (CONT'D)

Damned if your face don't belong
on a coin.

Three high pitched whistles break from the woods. JACK freezes. CRICKET stands. JACK cocks an ear, hears a rustle. BERTHA clutches at JACK'S arm.

BERTHA MINNIX

What! What is it?

VOICE

(O/S)

Somebody!

JACK

(to CRICKET)

Who is here? Who is up the hill?

JACK hears the snap of underbrush coming down from the mountain. JACK jumps on a still, leaps into the branches of a nearby elm. He scopes the hillside.

EXT. HILLSIDE, NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - EVENING

FOUR SHERIFFS (RAKES, ABSHIRE, RICHARDS and HOSKINS) emerge from the trees, two of them carrying axes over their shoulders, the other two cradling shotguns, their faces set in grim determination.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

JACK scrambles down the tree.

JACK

Sheriffs! Which way?

CRICKET motions up the hill.

CRICKET

Break up till we hit the hollow,
then east along the stream.

BERTHA MINNIX

Oh God, Jack, whadda we do?

JACK grabs BERTHA'S hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
We run. Stay with me.

JACK pushes CRICKET in the back, into the woods.

JACK (CONT'D)
Go, dammit!

CRICKET hobbles off. JACK and BERTHA sprint after.

EXT. ROCKY OUTCROP, NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - EVENING

HOWARD crouches, on an outcropping forty yards above the still site, a half-empty quart jar in his hand. He sees JACK, CRICKET and BERTHA, bright in her yellow dress, racing from the camp. He drinks deep from the jar.

HOWARD
You're a damn fool, Jack.

He sees the FOUR SHERIFFS come jogging into the clearing, guns out.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

THE FOUR SHERIFFS move into the clearing. RAKES smiles, dips his hand into the still beer.

CHARLEY RAKES
Gotcha.

ABSHIRE leans on his axe, lighting a cigarette. RICHARDS taps at the blackened stills with his knuckles.

JEFFERSON RICHARDS
Beautiful.

The FOUR SHERIFFS look all about them.

EXT. ROCKY OUTCROP, NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

HOWARD stands, picks up the jar, drains the last drops and pitches it at the head of CHARLIE RAKES.

EXT. STREAM, NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

JACK and BERTHA work their way through the heavy brush. They are a few hundred yards away from the clearing. JACK and BERTHA stop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

Sssh. Listen.

They can hear the SHERIFFS in the clearing.

JACK (CONT'D)

(hissing)

Cricket!

CRICKET slows and crouches in the leaves.

CRICKET

(loud whisper)

Here!

JACK and BERTHA move over to CRICKET.

JACK

Was that Howard? That yell?

CRICKET nods.

CRICKET

We better move on. They'll be on
our trail here shortly.

Thick clouds roll over the mountain and under the trees
the darkness settles heavy and close.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - MOMENTS LATER

A jar whistles by RAKES ear and explodes on the still
cap.

CHARLEY RAKES

What the fuck?

RAKES drops his axe and grabs the shotgun from RICHARD'S
hands.

RICHARDS

What the hell was that?

RAKES raises the gun, up the hill. The FOUR SHERIFFS see
the silhouette of HOWARD on the outcrop above them, a
giant against the darkening sky.

ABSHIRE

Who the hell is that?

The SHERIFFS point their guns at him and fire, sparks
blowing from their weapons.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - MOMENTS LATER

JACK, BERTHA and CRICKET hear gunfire, *thum, thum, pock, pock, pock* echoing across the mountain, coming from the camp.

BERTHA MINNIX

Oh glory.

JACK and CRICKET look at each other.

JACK

The bastards are shootin' Howard.

CRICKET

I'm sorry, Jack.

JACK

The shotgun. Where is it?

CRICKET

In a poke by the mash barrels.

JACK pushes BERTHA towards CRICKET.

JACK

Go, Cricket, take her clear, then scam. I'll be back at the station tonight.

BERTHA MINNIX

What? Don't leave me!

JACK

I gotta go back.

JACK takes CRICKET'S arm and puts it on BERTHA'S.

JACK (CONT'D)

Go! Go, Goddamn it!

JACK turns and takes off. There is more gunfire.

EXT. ROCKY OUTCROP, NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

HOWARD feels the shots whistle by him, rippling his pants leg, whining passed his ear, exploding in the rocks around him. He does not move.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - MOMENTS LATER

RAKES
You come down from there!

ABSHIRE
I swear I'll shoot you if you
don't get down here.

HOWARD turns and disappears into the bush.

ABSHIRE (CONT'D)
Where did he go?

RICHARDS
Shut up and listen!

RAKES
It's that big son-of-a-bitch
Howard Bondurant.

ABSHIRE
You sure?

Then there is a heavy crashing sound, footfalls crunching
the undergrowth, coming towards them.

RAKES
Get a light goin'.

ABSHIRE sets a stick of pitch pine blazing, using the
still furnace. He joins the SHERIFFS huddled together,
illuminating them, their guns outstretched, in a
defensive formation.

EXT. CLEARING, TURKEYCOCK STILLS - MOMENTS LATER

Unseen, JACK enters the clearing, crouches behind the
mash boxes, fifty feet from the FOUR SHERIFFS, who wait
for HOWARD to descend, guns extended. He finds the
shotgun. He can hear HOWARD crashing through the
undergrowth, like thunder shaking the trees.

RAKES
(loudly)
When you see that fucking son-of-a-
bitch, pop him one.

The crashing grows louder.

RICHARDS
Get ready!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK hides, terrified. He takes a deep breath.

JACK

(shouts)

Hey!

The SHERIFFS spin around.

RICHARDS

Dammit there's another one!

HOSKINS

Who's there?

ABSHIRE

Watch him comin' down the hill there!

JACK

(from behind the mash boxes)

You better run! You better get out now!

The SHERIFFS shoot at the mash boxes, blowing holes in them, the mash glugging out of the bullet holes around JACK'S feet. The torch light flickers over him.

JACK pokes the shotgun out with one hand and aims in their general direction, pulls the trigger. Sparks leap from both barrels, jerking the gun out of JACK'S hand. The torch is dropped, there is a terrible scream.

ABSHIRE

Jesus, I'm hit!

RAKES

Damn it, get that light!

RICHARDS picks up the torch, as HOWARD springs from the woods like a coiled demon. The SHERIFFS shrink back. ABSHIRE curls on the ground holding his head. HOWARD drives his fist into HOSKINS shoulder - there is a crack! - the shattered bone pokes through HOSKIN'S shirt. HOSKINS shrieks in pain. RAKES drops to his knees, searching in the gloom for his gun. RICHARDS drops the torch, takes off down the hill. ABSHIRE staggers to his feet, face slick with blood, grabs HOSKINS, helps him to his feet.

HOWARD stands calmly watching the THREE SHERIFFS struggle on the ground. RAKES looks up at HOWARD as he paws at the ground for a gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RAKES (CONT'D)

I'm gonna kill you, god dammit!

JACK looks at the shotgun in his hands. He sees his hands are shaking. He gives pause for a moment.

JACK

(to himself)

Fuck it!

JACK rises from behind the mash boxes and levels his shotgun at RAKES and charges towards him.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hey Rakes! Remember me?

RAKES cranks his head around, his eyes wide. JACK puts the gun to RAKES head, cocks both hammers.

JACK (CONT'D)

Like stepping on a slug.

JACK pulls the trigger. There is a look of surprised horror on JACK'S face, as if he can't believe what he has done. The hammers fall on dead chambers with a solid thunk. JACK looks dumbfounded at his weapon.

HOWARD steps on the torch, plunging them into darkness.

ABSHIRE

Let's go!

There is the sound of the SHERIFFS retreating, groans, curses, thumping footfalls.

JACK stands frozen, blinking in the dark.

HOWARD

(close to his ear, in
the gloom)

You're done, Jack. Go. Now.

JACK throws down the shotgun and takes off.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - NEXT DAY

C/U of CARTER LEE, dressed in his white linen suit, moves purposefully through the undergrowth, dabs at his face with a handkerchief, his jaw set.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - DAY

RAKES, RICHARDS and HORSLEY, dressed in suits and ties, crouch down behind a log and cover their heads. There is a fierce explosion as they dynamite the stills.

JACK (V.O.)

*The next day, the sheriff's
department dynamited the stills,
blowing shards of copper all over
Turkeycock Mountain.*

Shards of copper rip through the trees like razors, stripping them of their foliage.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - LATER

CARTER LEE, cool, pristine, stands before the demolished stills with an axe in his hand. A PHOTOGRAPHER takes his picture, with a pop and a flash.

JACK (V.O.)

*The Commonwealth's attorney,
Carter Lee got himself in all the
newspapers.*

A local newspaper shows the photograph with a headline that says COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY CLEANS UP.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - MOMENTS LATER

CARTER LEE waves away the PRESS GANG.

CARTER LEE

That's it, fellas.

PRESS GANG

Thank you, Mr. Lee.

The PRESS GANG file away. CARTER LEE moves across the blasted stills to RAKES. RAKES smokes. Together they look like two jackals.

RAKES

You might wanna see this, Mr. Lee.

RAKES leads CARTER LEE through the undergrowth behind the stills. CRICKET squats on the ground, handcuffed to a maple tree. His face is bruised, his lip split.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAKES (CONT'D)

This cripple boy here is one of them.

CARTER LEE

Is he now.

EXT. TIZWELL MINNIX'S FARM - LATER

JACK, panting, eyes wild, runs up the path of Tizwell's farm. A wind blows around him, flapping his clothes. He jumps up the porch and hammers on the door. BERTHA comes to the door, looks at JACK imploringly through the screen.

BERTHA MINNIX

(beneath her breath)

Jack, you can't come here!

(beat)

Are you all right?

JACK

(yelling above the storm)

Are you?

BERTHA MINNIX

I ran all the way home! My daddy is set to kill me!

(beat)

You gotta go!

TIZWELL MINNIX O/S

Bertha? Who's that?

BERTHA MINNIX

Go, Jack, go!

BERTHA closes the door.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

FORREST rages, his face as dark as thunder. MAGGIE stands behind the counter. HOWARD sits, drinking, his knuckles wrapped in bandages. JACK cowers.

FORREST

Everything we had was in them stills, you damn fool.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST slaps JACK - once, twice.

JACK

I never meant...

FORREST

You never meant what? Walking around like you're a big man. Like you're damn Al Capone. (slap) Like you're public enemy Number One.

JACK

I was just...

FORREST

You were just what? The Law see you comin' a mile off, you damn fool. (slap, slap)

JACK

(stands up to
Forrest)

Yeah, well I had that damn Rakes about to shit a cow.

FORREST

You pleased with your self bout that?

JACK

Your the one who told me to do something about it!

FORREST

Christ, you damn idiot, now they ain't ever gonna let us be. (slap) Now we'll never get no peace. (slap, slap)

HOWARD

Might be he's had enough now.

FORREST turns on HOWARD.

FORREST

As for you...

EXT. MAGGODDEE CREEK - DAY

RAKES, RICHARDS stand at the edge of a dry creek. Lying against a sandbar, his body horribly contorted, mouth prized open and full of black earth, is CRICKET. A small collection of LOCALS look on from the bridge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK (V.O.)

Worse thing was they got old Cricket. They found him lying in a shallow sandbar in Maggodee creek, down by Blackwater Station. His mouth was packed full of clay. The sheriff's department ruled it accidental drowning, 'cept there was no damn water in the creek.

BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT, LATER

FORREST, HOWARD and JACK stand around the storage shed. FORREST opens the doors and reveals cases of liquor. JACK holds up a lantern and they peer in.

FORREST

How many cars we gonna need.
Howard?

JACK

Four, I reckon.

FORREST looks at JACK, curses beneath his breath.

HOWARD

Danny will need to be in.

FORREST

The weather's stackin' up. We gotta run this come sun up. Ain't gonna be easy. Ain't gonna be easy at all.

HOWARD

We need to do this, Forrest. We don't get this stuff out of here, they'll be all over us, and we'll lose the lot.

FORREST

I know it.

JACK

Floyd Banner is waitin' for it.

INT. SITTING ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lit by a flickering lamp, MAGGIE sits at a sewing machine, seesawing her feet, and sewing a length of cream taffeta. FORREST enters, carrying a valise.

FORREST

Whatya doin'.

MAGGIE

Eatin' ice cream.

FORREST puts the valise in front of her.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

What's that?

FORREST

What's left of the money. I want you to take it.

MAGGIE

What am I gonna do with it?

FORREST

Don't know. What ever you want.

MAGGIE unbuckles the valise, looks at the stacked bills, uncomprehendingly. She closes it. MAGGIE stands and lights a cigarette.

MAGGIE

I don't understand. (beat) What've you got planned?

FORREST

We're runnin' the last of the liquor to Burnin' Bag. Howard, Jack and me...

MAGGIE

You're what?

FORREST

You heard me.

MAGGIE

It's that simple, eh?

FORREST

Eh?

MAGGIE moves up to FORREST.

MAGGIE

I gotta save your hide again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FORREST

What're you talking about?

MAGGIE

I got to watch you die all over again?

FORREST

What do you mean?

MAGGIE

I gotta find you lyin' in a pool of your own blood? Drag your damn body into my truck? Drive you all down to the hospital? Your throat cut from ear to ear?

FORREST steps back, shocked.

FORREST

You did that?

MAGGIE

I ain't doin' it again!

FORREST

I thought I *walked*.

MAGGIE

Ain't that just like you to believe your own damn legend.

(beat)

I didn't save you once, so you can die in some fool scheme runnin' liquor.

FORREST

Maggie...

MAGGIE

Stay here, Forrest. You've done nothin' wrong.

FORREST

They gonna come, Maggie, and they're gonna hurt us.

MAGGIE

Leave all that to your brothers. Trouble is what they want.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FORREST

Yeah, well, Jack don't really know what he wants, he just thinks he knows what he wants.

MAGGIE

And you do?

(beat)

You best worry about yourself.

FORREST falls silent, grows grim, moves towards MAGGIE.

FORREST

You came back to the station?

(beat) Why?

MAGGIE

Well, someone had to make the first move and it sure weren't gonna be you.

FORREST falls silent, his face darkening.

FORREST

Let me ask you something. And I want you to answer.

MAGGIE'S face hardens and she walks to the window, her back to FORREST - she knows what's coming.

FORREST (CONT'D)

What happened when you got back.

MAGGIE

(flatly)

I told you.

FORREST reaches for MAGGIE, his hand stopping just short of touching her. MAGGIE folds her arms.

FORREST

Look at me.

MAGGIE remains motionless. FORREST anguished.

FORREST (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I was the one that brought that trouble to you.

MAGGIE

No. That don't matter none. It weren't you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FORREST
Either way. Look at me.

MAGGIE turns to face FORREST.

FORREST (CONT'D)
I've gotta know. What happened?

MAGGIE takes a defiant step forward.

MAGGIE
(low and measured)
Not a damn thing. Now you know.
Not a god-damn one of them
bastards ever did a damn thing to
me.

MAGGIE moves past FORREST and exits the room.

EXT. STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION - SUNRISE.

The morning sun breaks over Franklin County casting fingers of light across the Blackwater Station. HOWARD, DANNY, JACK and FORREST load four vehicles with the liquor from the storage shed.

They look tired, worn out. FORREST'S face is dark as thunder. They stretch tarpaulins over the stacks of boxes in the back seat. They work silently.

EXT. HILLS BEHIND STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION - SUNRISE.

Crouched in the foliage a SHERIFF watches the BONDURANT BROTHERS load their vehicles, through binoculars, plumes of frost billow in his breathes.

EXT. STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION - LATER

FORREST, HOWARD, DANNY and JACK leap in their respective vehicles and tear off.

EXT. ROAD INTO ROCKY MOUNT - MORNING

A convoy of four cars race along a hard road. JACK leads the convoy, his eyes wild with excitement. Then FORREST, then DANNY. HOWARD, grinning at the wheel, a jar between his thighs, heads up the rear.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - MORNING

The convoy enters Rocky Mount and hammers down Main Street, flashing by the Courthouse. TOWNSFOLK watch them fly past.

HOWARD and DANNY have trouble keeping up as JACK floors it, hitting 50 MPH.

They pass a tobacco warehouse, its doors open, its smokestack steaming. DEPUTY HORSLEY on an outdoor telephone, sees them pass. He drops the telephone, heads across the lot.

HORSLEY

It's them!

JACK sees, RICHARDS and another DEPUTY (SETTERS) throw down their cigarettes and run for their cars, that sit idling in the lot.

JACK

(to himself)

Here we go.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - MOMENTS LATER

On the edge of town the roads are not cleared and JACK is soon up to his hubs in snow. He stops the Dodge, steps out. FORREST pulls up behind him, leaps out.

FORREST

Snow chains! Make it quick!

HOWARD and DANNY pull up and all FOUR set about putting on snow chains. JACK struggles with his chains, laying them out flat, then scrambling back in the car in order to drive onto them. HOWARD is the last to finish. JACK sees in the rear view mirror, his PURSUERS bearing down hard on them.

JACK

(urgent, to himself)

C'mon, Howard. C'mon.

HOWARD leaps into his car. JACK pulls out, the chains biting through the snow. The convoy lurches down the road. JACK looks back. Two cars have stopped in the same spot and the two drivers, HORSLEY and SETTERS are kneeling at their tires, putting on chains. RICHARDS sits in the passenger seat of the first car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The convoy ploughs on and crests a hill. The road down the hill is straight and clear of snow. JACK slams to a halt and leaps out of the Dodge. FORREST screeches up behind.

JACK (CONT'D)
(to FORREST)
Mostly clear! Get the chains off
and we'll be faster down the hill!

FORREST nods and relays the message to DANNY and HOWARD who have stopped behind.

FORREST
(shouts)
Get your chains off!

JACK
(shouts)
Who's that comin' behind us?

FORREST
Richards. Some others.

JACK struggles to loose the chains, slipping in the snow. He shucks off his coat, throws it into the back of the car. He can hear the sound of the cars approaching. He jumps into his car to pull it forward. He gets out and sees that part of the chain is still pinned under the wheel, the hooks around the axle. He yanks at the chain. It's stuck.

JACK
Shit.

FORREST'S car pulls up beside him.

FORREST
C'mon, Jack! Let's go!

Suddenly HOWARD is beside him, bending, taking the wheel hub in his hands and lifting, the wheel coming an inch of the ground.

HOWARD
Get it off!

JACK slides under the car, finds the hooks, slips them off and inches back out. HORSLEY and RICHARDS car crests the hill, SETTER'S close behind him, churning a wake of snow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK
(to FORREST)
Go! Go! We'll catch up!

FORREST starts down the hill, followed by DANNY. HOWARD turns and looks at their PURSUERS.

HOWARD
Get going. I'll be right behind you!

JACK jumps in his car and starts down the hill, FORREST and DANNY disappearing down the slope.

JACK cranes out the window, sees HOWARD get in his car, HORSLEY slowing behind him. RICHARDS opens the passenger door, stands on the running board, shoots out the rear window of HOWARD'S car. JACK sees HOWARD'S face grinning at him through the windshield like a lunatic.

JACK
(frantic, to himself)
Don't do it, Howard. Don't!

HOWARD puts his car in reverse, shoots backward. HORSLEY wrenches the wheel but HOWARD turns into him. RICHARDS, on the running board, clings on as the car door swings wildly. HOWARD smashes into HORSLEY'S vehicle, RICHARDS is flung forward, then whipped backwards into the snow. SETTERS'S car ploughs into the back of HORSLEY, pushing his car into a ditch.

JACK slows his car, craning around and watching the scene.

JACK (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Damn. Damn. Damn.

HORSLEY struggles with his door. SETTER, driving second car, staggers out, his hands to his bloody face. HOWARD goes forward, tires spin in the snow. RICHARDS, on his hands and knees, digs through a snow for his weapon.

There is a wrench of metal and HOWARD'S car inches forward and comes up on the road. RICHARDS finds his pistol and charges at HOWARD'S car. JACK takes off *Pock!* *Pock!* JACK hears gunfire and gathering speed down the hill, takes one look back to see HOWARD'S car veer sideways, floundering in a flurry of churned snow.

HOWARD
(to himself)
Oh Howard. Damn.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

MAGGIE sits on her bed, hears in the distance the screech of cars, walks barefoot to the window. She sees two police cars scream past. MAGGIE closes the blinds, sits down on the bed.

EXT. MAGGODEE CREEK BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

JACK catches up to FORREST and DANNY as they slow before the clearing at the bridge. FORREST stops about thirty yards from the bridge and DANNY and JACK pull up behind. Two cars block the wooden bridge, CRAKES and HODGES stand by one. TWO DEPUTIES lean against the other.

FORREST gets out of his car and walks back to JACK.

FORREST

Howard?

JACK

Said he was coming. He wrecked both of them, I think. Put them in a ditch.

FORREST

Did you see him get away?

JACK

Richards was shootin' at him but I don't think he got him.

FORREST straightens and looks over at RAKES and HODGES. RAKES smiles and gives FORREST a tight little wave.

JACK (CONT'D)

Can you talk to Hodges? Think he'll let us by?

FORREST

Do you have a gun?

JACK grabs his coat off the seat and pulls a .38 out of its pocket.

FORREST (CONT'D)

Stand by the car but don't do anything till I say.

FORREST slips out a pistol, holds it against his thigh. He approaches the bridge and the TWO MEN, one cradling a Tommy gun, the other, a shotgun, lift their weapons.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAKES puts a hand on the butt of his pistol but SHERIFF HODGES, holds up a cautionary hand to RAKES.

SHERIFF HODGES

Let me talk to him.

HODGES flicks his cigarette, walks out to meet FORREST.

SHERIFF HODGES (CONT'D)

Forrest.

FORREST

Pete.

SHERIFF HODGES

You can take the one, but we need the other two.

FORREST

You can let all through, easy as you can let one.

SHERIFF HODGES

Listen, son, let me make it easy for you. That one car there don't have anything, so that one can go.

FORREST

You can't have the other cars.

(to JACK)

Go on, tell Danny he can head back and go home.

JACK

We need all of them. They can't take any.

SHERIFF HODGES

What? We ain't afraid of you, son. You boys gotta take your medicine, like everybody else. What we are doin' now is settin' a precedent. You move liquor, we take a cut. Real simple.

JACK walks over to DANNY'S window and leans in. DANNY looks around, sweating in his overalls.

JACK

Listen, Danny, if something happens, you turn this car around and get back to the station. Okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY nods. JACK returns to his car and stands by it, watches FORREST exchange words with HODGES. RAKES comes striding across the clearing. FORREST'S hand goes to his gun but RAKES walks right past him, heading toward the line of cars. JACK looks behind him up the road.

JACK (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Where are you Howard?

RAKES comes up, looks in DANNY'S car. DANNY sits stone still.

CHARLEY RAKES

What you got in there, boy?

DANNY

(sweating)

Nothin'. Just some groceries for the station.

RAKES straightens.

CHARLEY RAKES

That so?

FORREST moves in close to HODGES.

FORREST

Listen, Pete, somebody is gonna die unless you let us across this bridge.

SHERIFF HODGES

Don't be a damn fool.

FORREST

You ain't leavin' us no choice.

RAKES leans in the window of DANNY'S car.

RAKES

(whispers to DANNY)

You got a weapon, boy?

DANNY

I got nothing. I'm just gettin my groceries.

RAKES

Yeah, well, you won't be needing them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANNY

(sweating)

What you mean?

RAKES straightens up and looks across the car at FORREST, who is about twenty yards away, and smiles.

RAKES

(exaggerated)

Oh, this boy done his grocery shopping!

FORREST and HODGES look at RAKES.

FORREST

Eh?

RAKES continues to smile at FORREST his hand in the window of DANNY'S car.

RAKES

(exaggerated)

Are you drawing on me, boy?

JACK stands by his car, looks confused.

JACK

Danny?

Blam! There is an deafening explosion and the inside of DANNY's windscreen is sprayed in blood and brains. RAKES removes his hand, holding a pistol, covered in blood. He aims at JACK.

RAKES

You drawing on me too.

FORREST looks at JACK.

FORREST

(screams to Jack)

Run, god damn it!

JACK takes off across the road as RAKES swivels and rounds on FORREST. He crouches and shoots FORREST at a distance of twenty yards. *Blam!* A blossom of blood opens on FORREST'S chest.

RAKES steps away from the car. His shirt is splattered in DANNY'S blood. RAKES spins around, aims down the barrel of his blood-soaked pistol. *Blam!* The bullet hits JACK in the side, just under his arm. His torso twists around, his feet swivelling into the snow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JACK

Forrest!

JACK falls on his stomach and elbows, blood fanning out across his side. JACK stumbles and lies still. FORREST starts towards JACK, arms pumping, rooting in his pocket for his pistol.

HOWARD comes barrelling into the clearing, the Ford fishtailing and overcorrecting. The TWO DEPUTIES run toward the careening car, Tommy guns and shotguns out. The TWO DEPUTIES let go a burst of machine gun fire at HOWARD'S auto and it skids and swerves in the snow.

RAKES drops to one knee, stretches out his arm and shoots again and FORREST lurches forward, doubled at the waist, stumbling to his knees, his hands clenched to his belly, his head down. FORREST kneels in the snow, his knees apart, sitting on his heels, his shirt steeped in blood.

HOWARD ploughs into the back of JACK's car and he crashes through the front window onto the bonnet, his face covered in blood. RAKES moves toward him, raise his gun, puts it to his head. HODGES comes up and chops RAKES arm down as he shoots at HOWARD, the round discharging into the snow in a flush of white. HODGES holds his own pistol on RAKES.

SHERIFF HODGES

Drop the damn gun.

RAKES looks insane, brindled in blood, frothing at the mouth, a deranged look in his eyes.

CHARLEY RAKES

(ranting)

Oh yeah? Look at them goddamn hard-boiled son-of-a-bitches with their fucking blood running all over the place! The bastards! Look at them! They ain't so tough! They ain't so goddamn tough now!

FORREST falls flat into the gore-splattered snow.

JACK rolls to one side, bleeding scarlet into the snow, his left arm flopping numbly to the ground. He stares at his fingers, as if they were a things not of himself. He lays his head back and watches the sky shrink to a pinprick of black.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. HOSPITAL, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

JACK lies unconscious in a hospital bed. In a far corner sits GRANVILLE, in overalls, ringing his hands. Beside him sits CARTER LEE, dressed in his white suit. They are discussing something, in hushed voices.

INT. HOSPITAL, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

JACK'S P.O.V: Low lamp light. A ring of dark shapes. A ripple of white bedding stretched over his body, the peaks of his feet. A DARK FIGURE unfolds itself from the corner, moves across the room and looms over the bed.

FLOYD BANNER

Hey there, son.

FLOYD BANNER bends down over JACK'S face.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

Lookin' good.

SEVERAL OTHER MEN materialize, standing around his bed, in long coats and hats, arms folded.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

I figured you could use a visit
from the Midnight Coal Company,
after all the money we made
together.

JACK lies, his shoulders swathed in bandages, the life leeches from his face.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

(whispers)

I've been feeling a little
uncomfortable of late, so I
thought I'd bring Forrest
a little somethin'.

FLOYD CARTER holds up a piece of folded paper in front of JACK'S face, waving it back and forth.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

He might find it interesting.

He picks up a book from the bedside table, opens it, contemplates the book's contents. He chuckles, shows the MEN the book. The Holy Bible. He inserts the piece of paper inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLOYD CARTER
(indicating the
bible)
Your girl brought this in earlier.
Left it here.

FLOYD CARTER pats the book thoughtfully, places it back
on the bedside table.

FLOYD CARTER (CONT'D)
Seems like a nice girl. You oughta
marry her once you get up and out
of here.

JACK raises on arm weakly.

JACK
(croaks)
Forrest?

FLOYD CARTER
He gonna make it. Your daddy was
here. Him and Carter Lee, would
you believe it. Seems they came to
an arrangement. Commonwealth
Attorney's office gonna pay your
medical bills, no charges filed.
Seems Deputy Rakes got a little
over-zealous.

FLOYD CARTER straightens up.

FLOYD CARTER (CONT'D)
Take more than a couple bullets to
kill old Forrest, you oughta know
that by now. You take care now,
Jack. Come see me sometime.

FLOYD CARTER and THE MEN file out. JACK slowly turns his
head and looks at the bible laying there, a tip of paper
protruding like a bookmark. He reaches over, opens the
bible and looks at the piece of paper.

INT. HOSPITAL, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

FORREST lies in a hospital bed, his long, hatchet face,
pale and intense. He wears a dressing gown, gauze
bandages visible on his chest. His eyes are closed. JACK
sits next to him in a chair, reading softly from the
bible that BERTHA brought him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

(softly)

Piece from bible on 'forgiveness'

FORREST lifts a hand and eyes closed waves for JACK to stop. JACK closes the Bible.

FORREST

(weak)

Enough.

JACK

This has go to stop, Forrest.

There is a silence.

FORREST

Some people take too much store in that.

JACK

What?

FORREST

Forgiveness.

JACK

This has got to stop now.

FORREST opens his eyes and looks at JACK.

FORREST

Somethings do, somethings don't.

JACK closes the bible.

JACK

I saw you nearly die. Hell, I almost died myself.

(beat)

Don't that count for anything?

FORREST points at the wound in his chest.

FORREST

I don't care nothing about this.

JACK

Well, I do.

FORREST points to the scar on his throat,

FORREST

Or this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK
I don't unnerstand.

FORREST
These things are mere details.

JACK looks at his hands.

FORREST (CONT'D)
There are things more worse than
dying.

JACK
There are?

FORREST
There are some things where
forgiveness just don't apply.

JACK
Forrest, I don't know what your
talking about.

JACK walks over to FORREST and pulls the piece of paper
from the Bible.

JACK (CONT'D)
Forrest, some times you plain
mystify me.
(beat)
Floyd Banner was here. He done
told me to give you this.
(beat)
I got to go. I got something to
do.

JACK walks to the door.

(beat)
I'll come around again tomorrow.

JACK leaves the ward. FORREST looks at the piece of
paper.

INT. DODGE COUPE, ROAD NEAR MINNIX FARM - MORNING

JACK parks the Dodge at the edge of TIZWELL MINNIX'S
lawn. Dressed in a gray three-piece suit, bow-tie and
hat. JACK climbs out, blowing heat into his hands.

JACK V.O. NARRATION
A few days after we buried Cricket
I took a drive to Reverend
Minnix's farm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK walks across the lawn. JACK hears the sound of dogs yapping from behind TIZWELL'S house. He appears nervous, mounts the steps and at the front door.

Suddenly the front door bursts open and BERTHA MINNIX stands there, her face stricken with anguish.

BERTHA MINNIX

Oh Jack!

GRANDFATHER MINNIX sits inside at the table, cranes his neck around and squints at the door.

GRANDFATHER MINNIX

Who's there?

BERTHA MINNIX

(wailing)

They wouldn't let him in! Why wouldn't they do that?

BERTHA flings herself into JACK'S surprised arms, then pulls JACK by the hand.

BERTHA MINNIX (CONT'D)

Come.

BERTHA leads JACK around the side of the house.

TIZWELL MINNIX stands in the dog pen. Dogs leap and bark as TIZWELL MINNIX sifts through the squirming puppies. TIZWELL looks at a runt, that stands, stock-still outside the pen, at the door. JACK sees, as he draws close, the light, sparkling on the animal, the ice in it's nostrils, the eyes filmed over with gray frost. The dog has frozen to death, overnight, standing outside the pen. TIZWELL MINNIX kneels beside the dog and regards it like an icon.

TIZWELL MINNIX

I ain't never seen anything like
it in the world.

BERTHA clutches JACK'S shoulder, tears streaking her face.

BERTHA MINNIX

Why'd they do it? They didn't let
the poor lil' thing in the kennel.

BERTHA puts her hands to her face and sobs.

BERTHA MINNIX (CONT'D)

He done froze solid.

INT. KITCHEN, TIZWELL MINNIX'S FARM - LATER.

GRANDFATHER MINNIX, TIZWELL and JACK sit around the kitchen table. Both GRANDFATHER and TIZWELL with their identical two-pronged beards, one snow-white, one jet-black, look scornfully at JACK. BERTHA sits to the side staring at the floor, her despair turned to exhaustion.

JACK
(nervously to
TIZWELL)
I'm sure sorry for what happened
here, sir.

TIZWELL MINNIX
What possible business you have
here, son?

JACK
I've come to make my intentions
known, concerning Bertha.

JACK mops at his forehead with his handkerchief,
unbuttons his coat, then buttons it up again.

JACK (CONT'D)
Things are a-changing, sir. I know
I caused you trouble before, and I
want to say I am sorry for that.
But things are going to be
different from now on.

TIZWELL looks at GRANDFATHER MINNIX incredulously.

GRANDFATHER MINNIX
(disgusted)
We know what you do and where your
money comes from.

JACK
Yes, sir. But I wanna make my
intentions known. Me and Bertha,
we seen a bit of each other now. I
just wanna put you in the clear.
I'm givin' you my word. I'm givin'
up all that stuff now I got my
packet together...

TAZWELL MINNIX
You've got no idea, have you, son.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIZWELL MINNIX stands, moves across the kitchen. He opens a small box and removes a photograph and waves it before JACK'S face. It is the photograph of BERTHA standing against JACK'S Dodge.

TIZWELL MINNIX

You take Bertha with one of them cameras?

JACK

(proudly)

Yes, sir, I surely did.

TIZWELL MINNIX

Self-worship and individualism is what it is.

JACK

I think she looks real pretty, like a movie star.

TIZWELL screws up the photo and puts in JACK'S jacket pocket.

TIZWELL MINNIX

You best not be here when I get back.

TIZWELL and GRANDFATHER MINNIX leave the kitchen by the front door. JACK looks dejected.

JACK

Shoot.

BERTHA stares wide-eyed at the floor, blinking slowly, her face slick with tears.

BERTHA MINNIX

That dog didn't even have a name. Without a name that poor thing has no soul.

BERTHA shakes her head, still looking at the floor.

JACK

Those dogs didn't know better. It's just plain bad luck.

BERTHA looks up and locks eyes with JACK.

BERTHA MINNIX

No. Something awful is gonna happen. I can feel it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK

Yeah?

BERTHA MINNIX

You best think about what you
want, Jack Bondurant.

FADE TO:

EXT. FRONT LOT, GILLS CREEK FILLING STATION - NIGHT

JACK sits behind the wheel. FORREST next to him, reads the piece of paper in his hand. On the piece of paper are the names and address of his attackers. He folds it back in his pocket. HOWARD sprawled in the back seat, looking out across the front lot of a filling station. Their headlights are off. Eight cars are parked in the lot. Light shines through the window of the station and music can be heard from inside.

JACK looks agitated. FORREST looks on impassively. HOWARD twists the lid of a jar of whiskey and sends the lid spinning out the window into the night. HOWARD drinks deeply, hands the jar to FORREST. FORREST passes it to JACK.

The BROTHERS say nothing.

SIX REVELERS file out the front door of the station. Closing time. They jump into their cars and tear off. Only two cars remain.

HOWARD breaks open his shotgun and checks it's loaded. FORREST checks the load in a pistol, hands it to JACK.

FORREST

You set, Jack?

FORREST spins the cylinder of his own pistol.

FORREST (CONT'D)

This will be quick, so stay close.

They climb from the Ford and make their way across the lot. FORREST and HOWARD mount the steps of the porch. They back up either side of the doorway. JACK freezes at the bottom of the stairs. FORREST and HOWARD wait for him to join them, but JACK does not climb the three steps.

JACK

I ain't gonna do it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST

What?

JACK

Ain't gonna do it, Forrest.

FORREST

You sure?

JACK

I ain't like you.

HOWARD smiles. FORREST nods grimly, then flicks his head back toward the car.

FORREST

(not unkindly)

Suit yourself.

JACK turns.

FORREST (CONT'D)

Hey, Jack?

JACK turns and looks at FORREST. FORREST gives JACK a short smile - he understands. JACK smiles back, turns, walks back toward the Ford.

FORREST (CONT'D)

Alright, Howard. You go in hard.

HOWARD grins, lifts his knee and kicks in the station door of its hinges. They enter.

INT. PARLOUR, GILLS CREEK FILLING STATION - NIGHT

Darkened lamp-lit interior, a few empty tables, a counter and grill. Sitting at a table are HOPHEAD ONE and HOPHEAD TWO. HOPHEAD ONE is dressed in a sweat-stained shirt, belted trousers, riffles through a pile of cash. HOPHEAD TWO is dressed in dirty coveralls, the inflamed goiter on his throat even bigger now.

HOWARD moves across the room in two great steps and slams the butt of his shotgun into the HOPHEAD ONE'S face. As: FORREST steps forward, pistol whips HOPHEAD TWO out of his chair and straddles his prostrate body.

HOPHEAD ONE flies backward, hits the floor, and HOWARD steps over him and holding the shotgun by the barrel brings the gun down with a brutal crunch, crunch, crunch, like he's chopping wood and shatters all the bones in his legs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOPHEAD ONE screams, then blacks out. HOWARD looks at FORREST.

HOWARD

That hard enough?

FORREST looks down at HOPHEAD TWO, lifts up his chin and points to the scar that runs across his throat.

FORREST

Remember me?

HOPHEAD TWO cringes at FORREST'S feet. FORREST tosses the pistol to HOWARD and pulls a straight razor from his pocket.

FORREST (CONT'D)

Eh?

HOPHEAD TWO shrinks back in terror, throws his hands defensively around his own throat. FORREST emits a dry chuckle and shakes his head.

FORREST (CONT'D)

I ain't gonna cut your throat.

FORREST leans down and grabs the belt of HOPHEAD TWO'S trousers and razors it in half.

FORREST (CONT'D)

I don't care about that.

FORREST wrenches back his arm and there is the sound of tearing fabric.

FORREST (CONT'D)

I ain't doin' this for me.

FORREST tightens his fist around the razor. A roar of wind rushes in his ears.

FORREST (CONT'D)

I'm doin' this for someone else entirely.

EXT. FRONT LOT, GILLS CREEK FILLING STATION - NIGHT

JACK sits in the driver seat. The pistol sits on the seat beside him. He pulls out his wallet and inside is the creased photo of BERTHA up against the Dodge. JACK looks down at it. He runs a finger down her form. The camera moves into the photo as Bertha's face takes up the whole screen. We stare into her wide and innocent eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then we hear a terrible screaming, that goes on and on, coming from the station and floating across the still night.

JACK puts the photo back into his wallet and stares out across the empty lot, as the screams fade, his eyes look up at the surrounding mountain sides and he sees, dream-like, all the winking fires of the stills. He closes his eyes and smiles.

JACK (V.O.)

*The Commonwealth's Attorney Carter
Lee was put on trial for what
would become known as the Great
Franklin County Moonshine
Conspiracy Trial.*

FORREST and HOWARD come out of the station, stride across the lot, into the lights of the Dodge. Caught in the lights they move towards JACK, eerie and surreal. HOWARD holds a small brown paper sack out in front of him, the bottom of it wet with blood. He has a manic look in his eyes. FORREST'S hands are slick with blood, his face, as ever, darkly impassive.

INT. GRANVILLE'S STORE, ROCKY MOUNT - EVENING

GRANVILLE stands behind the counter of his store, working over the days receipts. SIX OLD TIMERS loiter around the stove, warming themselves amongst the flour and grain bins.

JACK (V.O.)

*Carter Lee started cleaning up any
loose ends. Deputy Jefferson
Richards, a key witness against
him, was killed near the Mennonite
Church a week before he was set to
testify. He was shot thirty-two
times.*

The door to GRANVILLE'S store flies open and RAKES bursts in. His tie is askew, his fedora pulled low. He is extremely drunk.

GRANVILLE

We're shuttin' down.

RAKES looks around wildly. He pulls a pistol from the waistband of his trousers and points it at GRANVILLE.

CHARLEY RAKES

Oh yeah?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRANVILLE

You oughta go home.

CHARLEY RAKES

Why? You think I oughta be *hiding*
somewheres?

RAKES kicks over a stool, grabs the rim of a grain barrel and pulls it over. A fog of flour dust rises. He sweeps his pistoled hand across the counter and sends canned goods clattering onto the floor.

GRANVILLE

I ain't afraid! I ain't afraid of
Carter Lee!

He points his weapon at GRANVILLE again.

CHARLEY RAKES

I ain't afraid of your goddamned
no 'count boys, either.

RAKES looks suddenly tired and ineffectual and pathetic.

CHARLEY RAKES (CONT'D)

To hell with you all.

RAKES clamps down his hat, stumbles back out the door.

HOWARD steps from the storeroom, passes silently through the white cloud. GRANVILLE and the OLD TIMERS look at the floor as he follows RAKES out.

EXT. WOODS BY A STREAM - LATER, NIGHT

RAKES staggers drunkenly through a woods, a jar of whiskey in his hand. He stumbles and falls and climbs to his feet again. He mumbles incomprehensibly.

JACK (V.O.)

*Charley Rakes was set to testify
too, but he died under more
mysterious circumstances...*

HOWARD

(O/S)

Hello, Charley.

RAKES whirls around, and HOWARD stands behind him, monstrous in the gloom. RAKES pulls out his pistol but HOWARD simply takes it from his hand and tosses it away. He clamps a huge hand on the back of RAKES' neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD (CONT'D)

C'mon.

He leads the drunken RAKES to the edge of a stream. RAKES turns to look at HOWARD, his back to the water.

CHARLEY RAKES

(eerily)

You hard-boiled son-of-a-bitch.

HOWARD puts his hand on RAKES chest and pushes him. RAKES stumbles backwards into the water and HOWARD calmly follows him in, knocking RAKES over. RAKES shrieks when he hits the freezing water.

CHARLEY RAKES (CONT'D)

Oh God! Oh no!

RAKES flounders on his back in three feet of iced water and HOWARD lifts his leg, places his great booted foot on RAKES' chest and pushes him under the surface. RAKES struggles, but HOWARD leans his massive weight in, trapping RAKES beneath the water.

RAKES' P.O.V, BENEATH THE WATER: We see the massive black shape of HOWARD, through the roiling water, looming over RAKES as he struggles, pointlessly beneath the surface. P.O.V BENEATH THE WATER: Eventually the water goes still as RAKES gives up the struggle, and HOWARD steps away and moves off into the dark woods.

FADE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - EVENING

A table in a dining room with candles and wine and a general sense of prosperity. Around the table sits JACK and BERTHA, looking happy and prosperous, HOWARD and LUCY doting over a huge and healthy baby, EMMY and her HUSBAND and FORREST and MAGGIE. MAGGIE squeezes FORREST'S hand, almost surreptitiously, under the table. They are celebrating the birth of another of JACK and BERTHA'S children. SEVEN CHILDREN of different ages play about the room. Someone has said something amusing and everyone is laughing.

FORREST watches this scene of familial bliss, with a sense of knowing, of pride, but of distance too.

EXT. PORCH, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM- LATER, EVENING

JACK, HOWARD and FORREST sit on JACK'S porch drinking whiskey and looking out over Jack's farm. They wear thick coats and smoke cigars. HOWARD'S face beams red with the effects of the alcohol.

JACK (V.O.)
Howard moved to Martinville and
found work in the textile mills
there. Lucy bore him four healthy
children. Old Howard never did
give up drinking.

JACK, looking fancy in a camel hair coat and fedora,
sucks contentedly on his cigar.

JACK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I married Bertha Minnix and ran my
daddy's store and raised beef
cattle and tobacco in Snow Creek.

MAGGIE and BERTHA step out onto the porch. A little
BLONDE boy holds BERTHA'S hand. The BOY kisses UNCLE
HOWARD and hugs JACK and gives a special squeeze to UNCLE
FORREST. FORREST tenderly touches the boys cheek. The BOY
darts inside. BERTHA smiles, says good night and follows
the boy in. MAGGIE leans down and gives FORREST a kiss.
FORREST is drunk and MAGGIE shoots him a mock-stern look,
then smiles and goes back inside.

The MEN all laugh.

FORREST drinks from his glass, stands and stretches. He
stumbles down the steps of the porch and staggers across
JACK'S front yard.

JACK (CONT'D)
(laughing)
You alright, Forrest.

HOWARD laughs, stands, reeling a little.

HOWARD
(grinning)
Let him walk it off. I'm going to
bed.

HOWARD staggers inside, closing the door behind him. JACK
watches FORREST walk away, disappearing into the still
Virginian night. JACK sucks on his cigar, then flicks the
butt into the dark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK (V.O.)

Forrest married Maggie, but
neither of them told no one. I
only found out years later. He was
like that, Forrest.

EXT. NEAR SNOWY CREEK - LATER, NIGHT

Under the light of a vast silver moon, FORREST walks along the bottom land by JACK'S farm. He stops, leans back and looks up and sees a shooting star traverse the night sky.

In the dark, he sways backward and accidentally steps on the frozen surface of Snowy Creek, breaks through the icy crust and sinks up to his armpits in the freezing water.

JACK (V.O.)

He once said that nothing could
kill us. That we could never die.
(beat). Well, when you think about
it, in a way, Forrest was right.

EXT. PORCH, JACK AND BERTHA'S HOUSE - LATER, NIGHT

FORREST, soaking wet, mounts the steps of JACK'S porch and enters the sleeping household. He quietly closes the door, not to wake the sleeping household.

INT. KITCHEN, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - MOMENTS LATER

Dripping and shivering, FORREST trudges to the staircase, thinks better of it, sees through the living room, a narrow cot on the floor of a back room and staggers towards it, nearly knocking and righting a vase on a small table.

INT. BACK BEDROOM, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - MOMENTS LATER

FORREST lies down on a narrow cot, in an otherwise unfurnished room. He draws his legs up, pulls a sheet over himself, closes his eyes.

JACK (V.O.)

But he was wrong too.

INT. MORNING, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - MORNING

Clacking down the stairs, the blonde BOY, wearing a night shirt, makes his way through the kitchen. The morning sun streams through the windows. He charges through the living room, stops at the door of the spare bedroom.

INT. BACK BEDROOM, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - MOMENTS LATER

The BOY moves cautiously into the room and tries to decipher the shape that lies on the narrow cot in the corner. The BOY accidentally brushes against the edge of a boot, hanging over the bed. It is cold and faintly wet.

The BOY steps forward.

FORREST'S face comes out of the dark, a mask of blue stone, his eyes open, his mouth set in a hard frown, a grimace of inconvenience. His fingers on the sheet, held to his neck, the nails gone purple are covered with a sheen of ice.

The BOY turns and runs and the camera follows close behind.

EXT. JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - MORNING

The camera sweeps out over JACK'S farm. We see the sparkling frosted land, the cattle huddled in the fields, the beeches, the pines, the birches, the sun cresting the glorious hills of Franklin County, West Virginia on a beautiful, glittering, winter morning.

END CREDITS

Cue: WHITE LIGHT/WHITE HEAT (Velvet Underground)