

Boomtown

by

Matt King

Contact:

John Zaozirny
Bellevue Productions
john@bellevueprods.com
(818) 636-7412

..The camps were isolated, far from the centers of law, order and protection. And so people took the law into their own hands, when the occasion demanded it.

William Downie
Hunting for Gold, 1893

I can't seem to face up to facts
I'm tense and nervous and I
Can't relax

Talking Heads

FADE IN ON:

THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

A dark road, a darker night. Splitting all this nothing, a BATTERED SUBARU barrels along, whipped speakers and rattling exhaust pushed to the limit-

EXT. HOME - NIGHT

A rancher set back from the road -- The Subaru stops out front. We glimpse PLATES: "North Dakota - Discover the Spirit!"

Unfolding from the ride is a Native American TEENAGER. The back of his jacket says 'Pizza Palace' and the name patch stitched to the front reads 'RJ'. A wannabe gangster, a dime-bagger townie.

He pulls a rapidly cooling Meat Lovers from a warming sleeve, makes tracks for the porch light. Knocks without hesitation-

The door SWINGS OPEN, left ajar to the chilly Dakota winds. RJ puzzles on this for a moment... Then he steps inside.

INT. HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

An unlit hallway leads into the bowels of the home.

RJ

Hello?

TV SOUND throbs from the hall's far end, which opens into an attached kitchen... CANNED LAUGHTER, cranked up to 11.

RJ

Yo! Pizza Palace!

No answer. So young RJ has a look around -- Set by the door are sunglasses and a wallet, fat with cash.. *What to do, what to do?*

RJ quickly pockets the SUNGLASSES.

RJ

I got a large Meat Lovers for...

(check his order)

Travis, here!

Still nothing... *Huh.* Then RJ notices something odd: BLOOD. Spattered and congealing, fanned up the hallway wall-

A SCREAM slices the house -- RJ FREEZES. It came from the kitchen... After some dithering, the kid screws up his courage, creeps toward the sound. He peeks around the corner to see-

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Three men. Or rather, TWO DARK MEN standing over one shattered man, TRAVIS KEMPER, 30s, who's curled in pain and plasma on his simple kitchen floor -- Travis is a man UNDER SIEGE-

TRAVIS

I've got cash... And keys're... In
the ignition... It's a F-150, new!
Got the satellite radio package!

He pauses to cough a gob of blood matter onto the linoleum.

TRAVIS

Just take it. Take it and go...

The dark men face away from RJ's vantage. No way to gauge their reactions... But the PISTOL tucked in the nearest man's waistband speaks volumes. The other grips a heavy PIPE WRENCH.

TRAVIS

HEAR ME? THERE'S NOTHING ELSE-

The wrench WHISTLES DOWN in a sickening arch -- RJ flinches back, can't watch. Backs out, digging his PHONE from his pocket-

INT. SUBARU - NIGHT

RJ's back in the car, nervous. Waiting for something...

Headlights flare in his rearview. They cut immediately, and a HEAVYSET MAN moves to the window.

FISCHER (O.S.)

Ya did right callin' it in. They
still there?

The uniformed speaker is SHERIFF AL FISCHER... But we won't see much of him just yet -- For now all we get are GUT AND GUN.

RJ

I think so.

Fischer checks the load on his big Python.

FISCHER (O.S.)

Hang tight. I'll take care'a this.

RJ

What're ya gonna...

RJ trails off -- The sheriff's already made for the front door. He raises his revolver, creeps into the home without hesitation.

RJ exhales heavily -- Reaches for the glove box. It clatters open, junk spills out... RJ roots around on the floor... Finds what he wants: Cigarettes. Next, goes for the lighter-

POP!-POP! -- Smokes scatter into RJ's lap as GUNSHOTS ring out -- RJ's saucer eyes go to the front door in time to see more strobing FLASHES -- POP!-POP!-POP!-

CUT TO:

POP!

The CORK is pulled from a bottle of prosecco -- The geysering liquid is expertly controlled by a SOMMELIER.

ELLIOTT (O.S.)
And this'll get you into anywhere
in the Capitol building?

INT. MAURICES - NIGHT

Widening out reveals JOHN STREET, 40s. Good suit and tie. Better poker face... He politely declines the sommelier's pour.

JOHN
All that, plus a free side of slaw
at Hooters.

John's handsome, sure. But more than that: Easy to trust. Composed. And, impossible not to like... All handy qualities when lying is a requisite to your work.

ELLIOTT
Why you bringin' me here, then?

Across is ELLIOTT, an Earthy mid-aged Missourian. He hands back a CONGRESSIONAL ID. The restaurant is dim, thick with atmosphere and DC strivers. The Capitol framed in the dining room window.

ELLIOTT
(finally)
So what's he like, your boss?

JOHN
Busy.

John exudes confidence. His only betrayal: He fiddles with a silver PENDANT, the size of a half dollar. It flashes through his fingers rapidly, unconsciously, just below Elliott's view.

ELLIOTT
That why he couldn't be here his
own self? He too busy?

JOHN
Not for the big boys, he's not.
Lockheed, Northrop, Raytheon-

Elliott smirks, helps himself to a breadstick.

ELLIOTT
Hey, it was you reached out to me.
It was you who said the committee
chair wanted to meet-

JOHN
(interjecting)
Vandalia isn't happening.

Elliott enters a COUGHING FIT, face purpling-

ELLIOTT

What??

JOHN

You heard me. Vandalia. It's over.

Elliott gets his airway clear. Clear enough to get angry.

ELLIOTT

Ground breaking was six weeks ago!

John shrugs. Showing as much emotion as the Palace Guard.

JOHN

You got out ahead of yourselves.
You didn't do your diligence.

ELLIOTT

What're you- We've got permits, a
bond issue... As we speak, 11,000
square feet of sheet metal are
being trucked across Indiana!

JOHN

But you didn't have *everything*.

Elliott leans in, lowers his voice.

ELLIOTT

Now wait just a second, here. We
were assured that contract was
tucked in and waitin' for us.

JOHN

In so many words?

Elliott eyes the passing waiter, considers how many forks he can get into John Street's eyes before they're separated.

ELLIOTT

You smug bloodsucker, I'll-

JOHN

C'mon Elliott, you know how this
works. What we run on. Quid pro
quo. And you got nothing to quo.

ELLIOTT

Check your books, asshole. We max
donations to the committee members,
the party and the PACs.

JOHN

Just like everyone else. That's not
what it's about any more.

ELLIOTT

What the hell else you want from
us? Kick our wives? Fuck our dogs
around some?

JOHN

Jobs.

ELLIOTT

...Jobs?

JOHN

Jobs.

Elliott settles back, thinking-

ELLIOTT

Okay... Well... I suppose that, after the congressman leaves office, that we can find something for him. Advisor or some such...

John FINALLY SMILES. He's a heck of a smiler. Especially when he's hooked a fish-

JOHN

You misunderstand. The party platform is refocusing. Employment is our brand next cycle-

ELLIOTT

What's this got to do with-

JOHN

Let me finish, Elliott... Employment is our brand next cycle. Specifically, returning quality manufacturing jobs to heartland America. "America Assembling" we call it.

ELLIOTT

Well hell, right now we employ 1,700. Once Vandalia comes online we'll have 2,500 full time.

JOHN

But it was 3,000 on the books last year. And 7,800 employees you had five years prior... And you aren't even doing the outsourcing thing and shipping those jobs overseas.

ELLIOTT

So? That's nothing, a slump... Defense is an up and down industry.

JOHN

You're dying. Vandalia is a death rattle. I'll put it in terms you can understand: We're not marching out our prettiest daughter for a suitor who can barely limp his way to the porch step.

John signals the passing waiter. He wants the check.

ELLIOTT

You ain't leavin'! Nothing's been had yet but bread and bullshit!

JOHN
I've got other meetings.

ELLIOTT
Okay, okay! Hold on Mr... Street,
is it? Look, success in my industry
is predicated on two things, right?

JOHN
War and innovation... Please. We
get the NDIA annuals same as you.

ELLIOTT
So we're experiencing a drought of
the first, right? But the second,
well, we struck a gusher.

John pauses, as though quaffing the veracity of this -- Deciding
if Elliott's worth one more moment of his precious time. Then,

JOHN
I'd need to see proof. Something I
can take to the chair.

Street conceals a smile, as Elliott reaches for his ATTACHÉ CASE-

CUT TO:

BANG!

A thick manila FOLDER lands on burnished wood. The folder reads
"CONFIDENTIAL, PROPRIETARY, NOT TO LEAVE OFFICES"-

INT. DAN'S OFFICE - DAY

John stands across from DAN GRISHOM, 60s, avuncular. Blue collar
manners at odds with his white collar sheen... Dan believes in
capitalism and second chances, in just that order.

Also in the small but elegant Midtown office is KEN LEVO, a man
of martial bearing. He pages through the folder. It contains
schematics for a MILITARY DRONE.

KEN
And then Elliott just gave it to
you? On a phony ID and some
bullshit?

Ken SEETHES at this violation of security protocols.

JOHN
He just gave it to me. After a
phony ID and some bullshit --
Exemplary bullshit. But, still...

Dan cuts him off with a look. Turns to smile at the client.

DAN
But that's why you hire us, right?
To find seams and turn stones.

OFF Ken, taking this in-

INT. CIGAR BAR - DAY

All resplendent luxury, a great place for a victory lap. Dan and John occupy a quiet table... Dan leans back, amused.

DAN

Boy was he pissed. That file was supposed to be locked up tighter than a Mormon girl's legs on prom night. Great work, bud.

No answer -- John's mind is elsewhere.

DAN

John... John? You with me? Let's talk a bit. How's the family?

John returns to present.

JOHN

Alright... Tired. We're trying to get Kate into Insight Academy.

DAN

That specialized school you were talking about? What's that like?

JOHN

Equipped to help.

Dan nods, knows what John's talking about. We will later.

DAN

The first half of our lives is ruined by our parents, the second half by our children.

John cracks a smile at that. Dan's on to new business.

DAN

Well maybe I can help too: There's something else. Just came up. Time sensitive.

JOHN

I appreciate the thought, but this is my weekend.

John stands, to go.

DAN

Look, this new one? It's serious. Need you to leave for DFW straight away.

He produces a bulge of corporate stationary: "SecAn: Corporate Security Consultants" -- Affixed is a plane ticket, JFK to DFW.

Pushes the papers forward. John stops, hates himself for asking:

JOHN
...How serious?

DAN
\$10,000 serious. For a week's work.
I like you too much to waste your
time, John. Kate'll understand.

There's John, frozen on the high dive-

DAN
(nail in the coffin)
That school isn't cheap, right?

John's eyes squeeze shut, and-

CUT TO:

DING ... DING-

Seatbelt light flares on. Time to descend.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

John seems not to hear it. He's absorbed in the documents Dan passed along -- Then, a light CHIME issues from his Blackberry. This he notices. Takes it AS CUE to reach into jacket pocket-

STEWARDESS
(in passing)
Sir? We're landing.

He nods, as he extracts an unlabeled PILL BOTTLE. Shakes two into his palm. Knocks 'em back, begins to tidy up for deplaning.

INT. DALLAS/FORT WORTH - DAY

John emerges into the bustling Arrivals Lobby. A suited DRIVER waits, holding a sign with his name on it.

EXT. DALLAS - DAY

Strip malls and sprawl, far as the eye can see. The American Dream on easy credit and Viagra.

INT. TOWNCAR - DAY

John watches it all roll by from the back of a towncar, the silver pendant weaving through his fingers-

DRIVER (O.S.)
Mr. Street? We're here.

EXT. MERCURY PETROLEUM BUILDING - DAY

A towering glass monolith in downtown Dallas. The towncar slides to a stop before it-

CUT TO:

AN EARNEST CHILD

In a framed POSTER, eagerly awaiting daddy's arrival home from work. Caption reads "Mercury Petroleum: Delivering Your World".

INT. RECEPTION - DAY

John studies this piece of corporate propaganda. He waits in an antechamber outside the office of some powerful man.

The waiting room buzzes with ACTIVITY. Reports are being combed by exhausted EMPLOYEES. The phone rings constantly. A rumpled man snoozes on a couch -- His Mercury ID reads "Accounting".

RECEPTIONIST
(to John)
You can go in now.

INT. CALLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

John enters to find WILLIAM "PEP" CALLAN, 70s, standing, slowly. Real money here, the kind that actually moves the world.

Callan, once an undeniable force of nature, has become a corporate lion in winter. He periodically sucks from an OXYGEN TANK, something John takes in but does not mention.

CALLAN
Mr. Street?

JOHN
Mr. Callan.

They shake. The office is a sea of tranquility relative to the hurricane outside.

CALLAN
Pep, please... Jamie, be a son of a bitch and fetch us up a drink. Mr. Street's come a long way on short notice.

Callan is attended by TWO PEOPLE. The first is JAMIE BLISS, 40s, emotive as a cigar store Indian. Officially Bliss is the Mercury VP of Internal Resource Management. But everyone knows what he really is: Callan's sycophant.

JAMIE
Sure thing, Pep.

CALLAN
Come, sit. How was the flight in?

JOHN
Terrible. I tampered with the lavatory smoke detector, it became this whole to-do.

Callan smiles, as Bliss sets down two whiskeys in cut glass tumblers. Callan lifts his.

CALLAN
To unquenchable appetites.

He keeps the glass aloft briefly, waiting for John to hoist too
-- He does not. Callan shrugs, downs his alone-

JOHN
Can we cut the shit, Pep?

CALLAN
It's your show. You tell me.

JOHN
Because mergers are like a hot air
balloon: Let off the gas and they
sink right back to Earth.

Callan's face tightens -- But it's Jamie Bliss who REACTS:

JAMIE
What makes you think we've got a
merger in the works?

JOHN
Other than the accountants combing
financials in your waiting room?
Maybe the Kung Pao you had for
breakfast after your all-nighter.

Jamie narrows his eyes. Callan breaks the tension.

CALLAN
What do you know about North
Dakota, Mr. Street?

JOHN
That it's cold and it's flat and
it's got a prettier sibling nearby.

Bliss surreptitiously huffs into his palm, checks his breath.

CALLAN
As you so astutely hypothesized,
Mercury Petroleum is buying in
North Dakota.

JOHN
Fields? Land?

CALLAN
Lunch.

JOHN
Lunch?

CALLAN
(nodding)
Or, rather, the capacity to serve
it... Ms. Sanger?

Callan's second attendant, GINA SANGER, also 40s, spokemodel looks muted for (and in service of) her high-flying career, extends a thick FOLDER. John does not take it immediately...

The folder she extends bears a logo and tag: "HOMESTEAD: All the comforts..." It HANGS THERE, waiting for John's acceptance-

EXT. MERCURY PETROLEUM BUILDING - DAY

John exits the building, headed for the waiting towncar. He carries the proffered folder -- HE'S IN.

The remainder of the office interaction continues in V.O.

CALLAN (V.O.)
Mercury already owns and leases
vast mineral rights in North Dakota
-- At no small expense, mind you.

EXT. EXECUTIVE AIRPORT - DAY

The towncar drives onto the tarmac at Dallas Executive Airport. A private jet bearing the Mercury logo waits idle.

JAMIE (V.O.)
The Dakota shale fields have been a huge boon for us, for the entire US energy industry, really. With the advances in hydro-fracturing and horizontal drilling, we're at an output of American oil that hasn't been seen since the late 60s.

INT. PRIVATE JET - DAY

A pretty FLIGHT ATTENDANT places a hot towel and flowers next to John. He is one of two passengers on the flight, now airborne.

CALLAN (V.O.)
Got the camel jocks quakin' under
their bedsheets. It's great.

He studies the folder, which is filled with dense financial documents. Unconsciously massaging his pendant. Glances around-

Gina Sanger is across, engrossed in a phone call. She sees John looking. Smiles. ...Maybe this won't be so bad after all?

EXT. MUNROE AIRFIELD - NIGHT

The jet banks toward a private airfield in Northwestern North Dakota, a place characterized by a lack of characteristics. A whole bunch of flat nothing, far as the eye can see.

JAMIE (V.O.)

This boom means that little farm towns with one restaurant and no traffic lights are seeing 100, 200 new workers arrive every month-

CALLAN (V.O.)

Which is probably less than half of what we need, mind you.

Early Spring snow edies and swirls as the Gulfstream descends.

INT. HANGER - NIGHT

The plane powers down in a hanger bearing the Mercury logo.

JAMIE (V.O.)

Still, this means that specialized operators have sprung up with nothing to do with extraction, production or transportation of oil -- All they do is the people.

The pilot points to a collection of luxury cars, loaner Mercedes for visiting executives. John heads for one, Gina another.

INT. MERCEDES (MOVING) - NIGHT

John drives, surrounded by fields, unplanted, awaiting better weather and the Almanac's okay. Some fields sprout EXTRACTION PLATFORMS -- They do not overwhelm, though. Horizontal drilling allows for huge spacing between platforms.

CALLAN (V.O.)

The best of them -- Or the biggest, anyway -- Is a company called Homestead.

JAMIE (V.O.)

Provides room and board for some 13,000 field workers, in exchange for a percentage of their gross pay-

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CALLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Mercury HQ. John thumbs through the breakdown of Homestead's holdings. Callan has the same folder on his desk.

JOHN

And you're buying Homestead -- Makes sense, vertical integration -- What's your timeframe?

JAMIE

The board votes in eight days.

John snorts out a LAUGH at that, settles back-

JOHN

So what do you need us for?

CALLAN

Peace of mind. I might be a lot of things, Mr. Street, but reckless isn't one of them. I want you to go out to Homestead.

JOHN

Purpose being?

CALLAN

The camps, these oil towns, they can be... Rough. They attract an element. It's not unheard of for them to become drug hubs. Or worse.

JOHN

And you want us to make sure this Homestead isn't built on top of a pile of bodies.

CALLAN

Last thing I want is being kept up nights wondering if the investment property I'm buying comes with a basement full of dry rot.

JOHN

This is something you can't look into on your own?

JAMIE

We can. We are. But recently we've decided a little independent verification might be...
(delicate)
Prudent.

Callan nods toward Gina Sanger, who has remained silent to now.

CALLAN

This is Gina Sanger, our GC. She'll be along to finalize terms. You'll work with her.

JOHN

So she does the deal, and I'm left auditing protocol and running background checks on roughnecks?

Gina leans forward. Deploys her megaton smile.

GINA

C'mon now. I promise we'll find a way to get up to some trouble.

EXT. MUNROE - NIGHT

John's loaner Mercedes flies past a SIGN for the township of Munroe, North Dakota -- Pop. 11,246. The town, much like the countryside it interrupts, is low and grey.

Also displayed is the township's motto: "Always A Smile!"

INT. MERCEDES (MOVING) - NIGHT

Passing through Munroe. Little to see: Hardware store, pizza shop, diner, bar, Ford dealership. Bare tree limbs rattle in the wind, rictus fingers begging for a thaw that's late in coming.

EXT. REST EZ HOTEL - NIGHT

Not exactly the Ritz, but comfortable. The parking lot is jammed, license plates spanning the country: Iowa to Idaho.

John's Mercedes pulls in, finds the last available spot-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - RECEPTION - NIGHT

A small and standard lobby, with an attached bar-restaurant, Coasters. Rough men funnel in and out. It's all strangely busy.

John enters, heads for the reception desk, manned by a septuagenarian DESK AGENT. Nametag: "Dave".

DESK AGENT

Help ya?

John slides a card across to him.

JOHN

I've got a reservation.

Dave checks his computer. John clocks the digs.

JOHN

It's busy.

DESK AGENT

We're booked near full. Just like every other night.

OFF John taking this in-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

John searches for his room, number 171. On the way he passes another group of hard men, casually walking with beer in hand.

He finds his room, near the end of the hall by the back door-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John lets the door shut out the world behind him... Lets out a deep breath... Then he moves to unzip his suitcase-

But, something occurs -- He stops unpacking, checks his watch. Then sits on the bed, lifts the phone receiver-

INTERCUT:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A homey kitchen in a pre-war building on the Upper West Side. A fridge full of a young child's art. EMILY BROGAN, 30s, enters-

EMILY

No buts, missie! You brush your teeth and then bedtime-

Emily is a delicate beauty seasoned by life's perpetual harassments. She's also in the midst of a bedtime battle with an energetic six year old foe. A nightly occurrence these days.

KATE (O.S.)

I want a book! I want a book!

EMILY

You just had a book! C'mon, brush 'em up, double time!

Emily sighs toward a sinkful of dirty dishes -- Just as she's about to scrub in, the kitchen phone begins to RING-

EMILY

Hello?

JOHN (ON PHONE)

Emily.

She leans against the counter -- This is not a welcome call.

EMILY

It's late.

JOHN (ON PHONE)

I've been on the road all day, lost track of time... Can I say hi?

EMILY

She's going to bed. Hopefully.

JOHN (ON PHONE)

Will you just check for me?

EMILY

You know our deal: You don't call after eight. You work her up. She doesn't sleep.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

This news, like a wet towel snapping his soul. He considers pressure... Takes a different approach:

JOHN

She keep waking up prettier every morning?

The pendant has appeared in hand. He juggles it unconsciously.

EMILY (ON PHONE)

She does.

JOHN

It's from her mother she gets that.

Emily's annoyed GROAN floats clear from Manhattan to Munroe.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

She's the ex-wife who's heard it all before -- She shoulders the phone, begins taking out exasperation on the dishes.

EMILY

What do you want, John?

JOHN (ON PHONE)

Something came up. Work. I was hoping we could switch weekends.

EMILY

You promised you'd take her to the museum. She's excited.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

JOHN

I thought you might cover me?

A hopeful BEAT. John squeezes the pendant tight-

EMILY (ON PHONE)

No way. Not again. It's too many times, now... But I'll let her know you'll take her next weekend.

John smiles. Good enough.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

She stops her washing. The water runs.

EMILY

But you have to do something for me-

JOHN (ON PHONE)

Anything. Name it.

EMILY

She's getting worse.

JOHN (ON PHONE)

She's still young. A lot can change.

Emily is bone-tired. Though she and John share a devotion to their daughter, this disagreement is an old one.

EMILY

There was a situation. Yesterday. On the bus.

JOHN (ON PHONE)
A situation?

Emily shudders, remembering -- Clearly an ugly scene. Our imaginations run wild.

EMILY
An incident. It was bad.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John's eyes squeeze shut. A sense that he's somehow blaming himself for his daughter's problems-

EMILY (ON PHONE)
To top it off, I heard from Insight.

JOHN
What'd they say?

EMILY (ON PHONE)
They won't hold our spot much longer.

JOHN
Just remind me the tuition again?

EMILY (ON PHONE)
Thirty seven.

Ouch. John reels at the figure.

JOHN
Okay, well just... Let me see what I can do.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

In runs KATE BROGAN, age 6, dressed for bed, with a wild spray of hair and eyes glowing with mania -- She radiates ENERGY, too much of it given the late hour. Rushes to the kitchen pantry-

EMILY
I'm at my wit's end, John. I need help, here-
(then-)
No, baby! John, I've got to go-

Kate is TEARING through the pantry, scattering canned goods and jars wildly -- Emily moves to block her-

EMILY
Whoa baby, whoa! Stop! What are you looking for?

Kate's expression isn't malicious -- She's SCATTERED. Keyed up.

KATE
I forget. Who was on the phone, mommy?

Emily's used to tracking her erratic child. Doesn't miss a beat.

EMILY

Daddy.

KATE

We're seeing the blue whale
tomorrow. They have tongues the
size of elephants!

EMILY

Not this time, honey. You've got to
wait just a little bit longer.

This news crushing the child. Emily wraps her arms around her.

EMILY

Oh Bubble. I'm sorry.

And then Kate's face twists into a mask of childish RAGE. She SQUIRMS in her mother's embrace-

KATE

No! No, no, NO!

EMILY

Baby, you're-

Kate begins to BUCK VIOLENTLY against her mother's grip.

KATE

NO! NO! NO!

Emily does the only thing she can: She clings on and waits for the storm to pass. And prays it won't last the whole night...

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John settles the receiver into its cradle... Absently shakes the pendant some, stops. Stares at it -- A MAN'S FACE on it, just visible through the wear... A wave of guilt comes over John.

So he has a few calming breaths -- Count off to himself, silently... The EXERCISE works. He grabs his jacket, and-

CUT TO:

A TRIO OF SHOT GLASSES

Oily brown whiskey is poured to overflowing, before they're slid across a sticky length of bartop.

INT. COASTERS - NIGHT

The shots join foamy cousins in pint glasses -- These BOILERMAKERS are for yet three more ROUGH MEN, waiting.

Coasters is the small bar-restaurant affixed to the Rest EZ. Decor is pure cheese, but the clientele are something from Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" -- TOUGH MEN. Lots of them.

John enters, clocks the scene, taking it in -- Then sees something: Off in a quieter corner is Gina. Engrossed in work, consciously blocking out the sea of testosterone. Moves for her.

JOHN
Mind if I join you?

GINA
Please. Keep the wolves at bay.

JOHN
Thanks... Boy, this place is packed as a fridge after Thanksgiving.
Hey, whatcha readin'?

He turns the ring binder she's highlighting. She examines him.

GINA
Homestead's P and L's for the last three fiscal quarters.

John flips the documents, scanning. He UNDERSTANDS what he's seeing -- Something not lost on Gina Sanger.

JOHN
(impressed)
These are some ratios. What're they doing in revenues a year?

GINA
Almost 18 million. Privately held.

JOHN
Who holds that 18 million a year?

GINA
It's scattered among a group of local investors... But mostly Homestead is Caleb Leaten.

JOHN
What's his story?

GINA
Born here, Dad was a self-styled preacher, fundamentalist revivals, this sorta thing. He was also a drunk, with a long history of violence against Mom.

JOHN
Sounds like a real charmer.

GINA
Sure, and all that was before he went broke and lost the farm-

JOHN
And the chance to lease the rights underneath when the town goes boom.

GINA

Right... So, the bonanza kicks off and men flood Leaten's town -- And there's literally no place to put them. They're making good money, and they're living out of hotels and camping in parking lots-

JOHN

He sees opportunity.

GINA

Just inside of five years Homestead Logistics has three workforce lodges in Western North Dakota, largest being right here in Munroe.

JOHN

Incredible.

They're interrupted by a COMMOTION -- At the bar, a shoving match has broken out between two roughnecks. A bouncer separates the drunk men, to the disappointment of the crowd.

A SERVER appears, a young woman, rather plain. But as she moves through the place she's followed by LEERING, and we sense why:

There are almost no women here. One or two tough-looking lady roughnecks, but few others. This constant attention has left the server exhausted and suspicious.

SERVER

What can I get you?

JOHN

(re: the crowd)
Is it like this all the time?

SERVER

Pretty much, yeah.

JOHN

(to Gina)
What do you say we get out of here?

ANOTHER FIGHT breaks out near the bar-

GINA

I thought you'd never ask.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - INDOOR POOL AREA - NIGHT

Our man RJ wanders into the indoor pool area of the hotel. He's in uniform, and sports a familiar pair of SHADES, evening or no-

RJ

Call for a pizza?

Seated at one of the wire mesh tables around the pool are John and Gina. The place is otherwise blessedly quiet.

JOHN
That's right.

RJ comes over, accepts cash without counting. He's slumped-shouldered, seems to have aged a lifetime in a day or two.

RJ
Plates and napkins are in the bag.

RJ turns and goes. John begins to set up dinner for them both.

GINA
So how is it you got into this,
anyway?

JOHN
Serving pizza poolside at the Rest
EZ? Funny, I was just wondering the
same thing.

GINA
You know what I mean: Consulting.
Corporate Security.

John passes her a slice on a paper plate.

JOHN
I used to be a lawyer. ADA,
Financial Crimes Division, Kings
County... Once upon a time.

GINA
You wanted to make a change?

JOHN
Something like that.

GINA
So this new gig, is it ever
dangerous?

JOHN
Sure. When I have to digest too
much airport food.

He bites into a slice -- It's messy. She passes him a napkin...
They chew in silence for a moment, then:

JOHN
So what's our plan of attack?

GINA
Well, you assure the board members
that the purchase of Homestead
presents no undue surprise. You do
this discretely, please, so as not
to raise suspicions in our counter-
party. And while you're doing that
I'll be finalizing the purchase
negotiations.

JOHN

And then we go live happily ever
after?

GINA

Easy, cowboy. Let's see how the
week goes first.

Something's going on here... Chemistry.

JOHN

Can I ask what the coin is? The one
you were playing with on the plane?

John's embarrassed, but... Might as well let her in. Just a
little. He gets out the pendant, passes it over-

JOHN

It's a pendant. St. Jude.

She examines it -- The APOSTLE'S PORTRAIT worn down to nothing.

GINA

Patron saint of lost causes.

John nods, impressed.

GINA

Funny, I wouldn't of pegged you the
God-fearing type.

She passes it back. He begins moving it through his fingers like
a street magician.

JOHN

Far from it... It belonged to my
father. I carry it as a reminder.

GINA

Of what you've got to live up to?

He doesn't immediately answer -- Instead, a timely interruption:
John's Blackberry CHIMES. It's Pavlovian: Instantly, he stands.

JOHN

I'm going to hit the sack... I look
forward to working with you this
week, Ms. Sanger.

He's already moving toward the door. Gina's confused as all hell
-- What just happened?

GINA

Wait!

He turns back.

GINA

Gina. Call me Gina.

John gives her a parting grin. It's a doozy.

JOHN
Goodnight, Gina.

And he's gone... Her smile DROPS. She returns to her work.

CUT TO:

RUNNING WATER

Gouting from a bathroom sink. A plastic cup is filled.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

John shakes pills from THREE UNLABLED BOTTLES lined up on the counter. Gulps them down. Then examines himself in the mirror -- Studies his face. Checking for something... Not seeing it.

Satisfied, he clicks the bathroom light off.

EXT. MUNROE - DAY

The sun rises all at once over the endless flat and cold of Western North Dakota.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - INDOOR POOL AREA - DAY

A lonely figure cuts across the pool -- John swims steadily, goggled, doing laps, the only one up at this hour.

Reaches the edge, momentarily bobs his head above surface-

JOHN
(to himself)
Forty six-

He ducks back under and pushes off.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

John shaves. Staring himself in the face. He's clear-eyed. Focused. Ready to work.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - CLOSET - NIGHT

John peruses his shirts, finds the one he's looking for -- Smiles to himself...

EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DAY

A sprawling, fenced-in and lit facility, set back from the road in the middle of nowhere. Low slung. Prisonlike.

INT. NORTON'S OFFICE - DAY

A wormy man, 40s, thin mustache, thinner hair, in short sleeve shirt and tie. Nameplate: G. NORTON, DIRECTOR. He's wiping diligently at a spot on his desk when there's a KNOCK-

GILL
I'm on the phone!

VOICE (O.S.)
Someone to see ya Gill!

GILL
What the fuck! Didn't ya hear me?

VOICE (O.S.)
He's from the county!

Before he has a chance to give permission, the door swings open and John strolls right in. Sticks out his hand-

JOHN
Mr. Norton? John Street. Health and Human Services, Daggert County. How you doing?

The man, whose Christian name is GILL, tentatively shakes-

JOHN
I hope you don't mind me barging in-
I could see by the lights on your receptionist's phone you'd finished your call.

John pushes back a pair of unstylish glasses he's donned for this meeting, along with bad shirt, tie and shoes to match.

GILL
It's... No problem. What can I do for ya?

JOHN
Well, here's the thing: The governor's wife Genie, she's watching the TV some weeks back, and I know what you're thinking, "Shouldn't it be his honor who gets to hold the remote in the mansion in Bismark?"

It's all over Gill's face: Who is this guy? Is he for real?

GILL
(noncommittal)
Sure.

John plows onward.

JOHN
So Genie's watching the TV, and on comes a report about crime in the man camps -- Gambling, drinking, fighting, etcetera-

GILL
(interrupting/automatic)
Workforce lodges.

JOHN
What's that?

GILL
Workforce lodges. We don't call 'em
"man camps"- It conjures an image:
lawlessness, vice, slums...

JOHN
'Scuse me- Workforce lodges.
Anyway, the governor's wife sees a
news story, now I've gotta drive
out from the county seat.

Gill turns this over in his head. Suspicious.

GILL
Yah'd like, what, an inspection?

JOHN
Nothing so formal. Just a courtesy
call, to satisfy the old lady.

GILL
Hey, no problem. Let's go-

Gill stands, gathers his coat from its wall hook.

JOHN
Sorry to spring this on you. Not
more than a formality, really.

Gill doesn't reply to this -- Instead, casually...

GILL
Ya're from the county, huh? How're
those new offices working out?

Without missing a beat:

JOHN
New? Think you might have some
wires crossed. We been in the same
pile since '92, when the tornado
cleaned us out.

GILL
My mistake. This way please.

EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - OFFICES - DAY

Gill leads John down the folding steps of his modular office space and out among row after row of RESIDENCE BUILDINGS.

GILL
Where ya want to start?

JOHN
At the beginning, you don't mind.

GILL

Alright... This here is Homestead lodge. 4,500 beds. Biggest site of its kind in the US. And the safest.

Gill produces a KEYCARD, inserts it into a door marked "26"-

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - HALLWAY - DAY

Inside one of the residence buildings. One long hallway, doors on both sides, 120 rooms in all.

GILL

Electronic card access, state of the art, plus full time security detailed to all common areas.

JOHN

How many residence buildings you have at this site?

GILL

Thirty eight.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DISPLAY UNIT - DAY

Gill shows John a DISPLAY UNIT: Single bed, dresser, clothing rack, chair. Tiny and utilitarian, but not uncomfortable. Army barracks crossed with a Red Roof Inn.

GILL

All identical: Pillowtop mattress, heating and AC, WiFi throughout.

JOHN

How many unoccupied beds you have?

GILL

Maybe two or three come up a month?

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - HALLWAY - DAY

John and Gill walk the same hall, passing a MAID CART.

GILL

By rule, all units inspected and cleaned once a week, minimum.

John has a glance into the open door. Inside is a MAN changing sheets... John takes a moment to watch him work.

GILL

Mr. Street?

John turns back. Gill is waiting for him.

JOHN

Sorry. Go on.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - CAFETERIA - DAY

John and Gill pick their way among CAFETERIA tables. The space is well lit and maintained. As Gill mentioned, two uniformed GUARDS oversee all.

GILL

This is our Sundial cafeteria, one of two we have. Provides 24 hour food service.

JOHN

How's the grub?

GILL

Not bad. Menu developed to maximize nutrients and proteins.

John watches a man in a hairnet change out a steam tray of chicken cutlets... Dumping the old ones in the trash.

GILL

If ya'll follow me-

EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DAY

Gill leads John between buildings.

GILL

Demand's been pretty steady, on account of the boom. We got zero percent unemployment here, ya know? Men from all over the country are coming ta work.

JOHN

Like the gold rush.

GILL

Sure, except now days none of 'em expect ta get rich. Now it's enough if they just got a job.

John isn't listening. He's stopped, staring at a fenced off BUILDING different from all the rest.

JOHN

What's that building?

GILL

Our infirmary. No real hospital for a good 100 miles, so we're setup for most anything. Overseen by a man named Erskin. I'd introduce ya, but it's closed today.

JOHN

May I see it?

GILL

Oh, not a good idea right now.
 Couple tanks of ammonia burst in
 there. Faulty valves. Doc says we
 gotta let it clear a day or two.

John lingers. Wants to see in that building. Gill notices.

GILL

This way, please.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - LEISURE BUILDING - DAY

Gill and John walk a common area housing pool tables, couches and flat-screen TVs. As in the cafeteria building, two uniformed GUARDS are here, these posted by a door at the room's far end.

GILL

This is our leisure building. We do a movie night every Tuesday. This week they're showing "Manhunter". Ya seen it? It's good.

JOHN

(enough shit)

So it's 4,000 men living on top of one another... When was your last incidence of serious violence? How do you keep a lid on this place?

GILL

Two ways. First, zero tolerance for alcohol, firearms, drugs. Caught once and see-ya. We got too many others tryin' to get in.

JOHN

And second?

GILL

We're an all male facility. No female tenants or staff.

JOHN

There's a sign on your treehouse says 'No Girls Allowed'?

Emerging from the guarded door at the rear of the room is a GIGANTIC MAN, sweaty, heavily TATTOOED. A corona of ORANGE FLAMES licks up out of his t-shirt, a serious piece of NECK INK.

TIGGER

Stays quieter this way.

GILL

This is Tigger Zaitoon, Company's Head of Security.

(to Tigger)

John works for the county. Health and Human Services.

They shake.

JOHN
Tigger? Interesting name.

TIGGER
Yup.

And that's all he says... A man of few words, apparently.

GILL
In there are our gym facilities.
Would ya like ta see 'em?

Tigger's unrelenting gaze bores into John.

JOHN
I think I've seen enough. I'll get
out of your hair.

EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DAY

Gill and John exit the leisure building. John seems unnerved.

JOHN
What is, uh- What's his story?

GILL
Tigger? He's been with the company
since the beginning. He and Caleb,
the boss, they go way back.

A pair of silver SUVs enter the compound, splashing through
puddles and muck- John can see GINA in the rear of the second...
They pass, parking in front of Gill's office.

GILL
Speak of the Devil... Listen, ya
mind finding your own way out?

JOHN
No problem.

GILL
Pleasure, Mr. Street.

JOHN
Thanks for putting the first lady's
mind at ease.

Gill nods, hustles off. John watches him go... And immediately
seizes the moment to deviate towards the forbidden infirmary-

TIGGER (O.S.)
Visitor parking is that way.

John turns- Tigger's appeared, as if from nowhere, smoking among
HVAC and PLUMBING units out behind the leisure building.

JOHN
(small talk)
Hey, lookit all that HVAC and
plumbing... This building must pull
serious resources, eh?

Tigger's jaw tightens, eyes narrow. He positively exudes menace.

TIGGER
Who are ya?

JOHN
Mr. Norton, he explained-

TIGGER
Bullshit. Ya ain't no Human
Services whatever... Ya some kinda
liberal fag reporter, sniffin' dirt
in the flop and slops?

JOHN
Absolutely not.

Tigger drags on his cig, letting the moment linger. Then-

TIGGER
Whatever mister. But know this:
Ain't nothing happens in the man
camps I don't get my arms 'round.

John showing nerves:

JOHN
You mean, workforce lodges?

Tigger gives him an icy, level gaze.

TIGGER
Right.

John can take no more, turns and heads for his car. A little
faster than is necessary-

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

John pulls the door shut. Catches his eyes in the rearview --
Begins repeating to himself, remembering:

JOHN
Zaitoon, Zaitoon...

He starts the car-

INT. DAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dan is at his desk in his Midtown office, inputting information
into his computer. A BACKGROUND CHECK appears-

DAN
Here we go. Zaitoon, Tyler J. DOB
2/5/78... As for criminal
records...

Dan whistles, impressed-

DAN
This one's a peach. Here,
forwarding you a copy now-

INTERCUT:

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - DAY

John is back in his hotel room speaking with Dan by phone. On his laptop Tigger's criminal record appears.

JOHN
Starts out a general nuisance:
Assault, assault with intent,
resisting. Then ups his game, gets
nicked on Federal charges for drug
trafficking into the United States.

The St. Jude pendant moves through his fingers as he speaks.

DAN (ON CELL SPEAKER)
Lands 14 months for that.

JOHN
Must be where he picked up his
people skills -- But trafficking
charges and he barely does a year?

INT. DAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dan scrutinizes his screen-

DAN
Looks like they could only make a
LIO distribution charge stick. Had
a brother who took the brunt of it.

Up pops a labeled prison INTAKE PHOTO of Tigger's BROTHER STU. Another real charmer, by the look of his dead-eyed stare.

JOHN (ON SPEAKER PHONE)
So what's a guy like that doing
running security?

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - DAY

DAN (ON CELL SPEAKER)
Search me... But I want you to
watch yourself. Let me know if you
want me to send someone.

John smiles. His boss's concern is touching.

JOHN
I'm auditing a company in advance
of merger, Dan. Most I risk is a
paper cut.

INT. DAN'S OFFICE - DAY

DAN

Just be careful. I didn't pluck you
from the remainder bin to see you
tossed right back in.

JOHN (ON SPEAKER PHONE)

Hey, I learned from the best.

And John's gone... Dan stares at the phone. Seems to toy with
some decision, then -- Lifts the receiver-

DAN

Find me Ed Hayes.

EXT. MUNROE SHERIFF STATION - DAY

A little storefront Sheriff Station. On Main Street, slotted
between Big Dick's Hardware and the Eternal Youth Toy Store.

INT. MUNROE SHERIFF STATION - DAY

Small and unkempt. Behind the desk a Native American woman,
WINONA, 50s, reads a book about training game dogs. The BELL
above the door sounds. John enters. Winona does not look up.

WINONA

Help you?

JOHN

Hope so. My name is John Street,
I'm an investigator. I need to talk
to someone about Homestead Lodge.

He shows a New York State PI IDENTIFICATION. She glances at it.

WINONA

New York? You a long way off home.

MATTIE (O.S.)

I'll take this, Winnie.

They're joined by DEPUTY MATTIE COOPER, late 20s, youthful good
looks and rookie enthusiasm undulled by the uniform and gun.

MATTIE

This way, please.

Winona just shrugs, returns to her book.

INT. MUNROE SHERIFF STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Mattie leads John into a cluttered interview room.

MATTIE

My name is Deputy Cooper. What can
I help ya with, Mr. Street?

John looks her over, getting her measure: Mattie appears to be a young mother playing at cop -- Though she's got a reservoir of grit that runs far, far deeper than even she knows.

JOHN

I just had a couple questions.

MATTIE

About Homestead.

JOHN

You get many calls out of there?

MATTIE

Not really. Stays pretty quiet.

JOHN

And what do you know about their Head of Security? Zaitoon?

MATTIE

A lot, actually. I usedta be married to his brother.

John raises his eyebrows at this.

JOHN

Small town, huh?

MATTIE

(nodding)

Funny, Tigger's about the last I'da picked to run my security, but... Sometimes people change, I guess.

JOHN

But usually they don't.

MATTIE

That's true... So want to see 'em?

She eagerly begins scanning evidence boxes piled along the wall.

JOHN

(confused)

...What?

She finds the box she's looking for, plops it before John.

MATTIE

We been taking bets on whether someone would show up asking after 'em. Ya just won me a lunch.

He has no idea what she's speaking about -- But instinct tells him to go with it-

JOHN

And?

MATTIE

We got about zero on 'em so far. That's why we put 'em on the wire.

She takes out medical examiner's PHOTOS, postmortem close ups of the men from Travis Kemper's kitchen -- Both SHOT MULTIPLE TIMES, puckered entry wounds shining under clinical light.

MATTIE

By their dental work, we're guessing they ain't from here.

JOHN

What happened to them?

MATTIE

Winona out there? Her nephew delivers pizza, caught 'em at a home invade a couple days back. The Sheriff took it from there.

She begins removing CRIME SCENE photos from the box. Dirty brown blood smeared across the kitchen floor, the pipe wrench speckled with viscera and hair, etc. -- All revealed in lurid detail.

JOHN

Whose home did they invade?

She passes over another picture, this one of Travis in a security UNIFORM and shades, leaning on a truck. Happier times.

MATTIE

Man by the name of Travis Kemper. Worked him over good... Died on the ER table in Lewiston, poor guy.

John studies the photo -- NOTICING a badge on the uniform...

JOHN

He was a guard at Homestead.

MATTIE

'S why you were askin' about Tigger, right?

John carefully maintains his cool.

JOHN

You mind if I make copies?

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - GINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a Rest EZ hotel room door, seen from just inside. Speaking on the phone OFF SCREEN is Gina. Providing dispatches from the front, for the benefit of the Powers That Be.

GINA (O.S.)

Price is all but agreed on.

A POUNDING comes on the door-

GINA (O.S.)
Only thing they're stubborn on is
indemnification...

Again, the POUNDING. Louder.

GINA (O.S.)
Sorry, would you mind holding a
sec, sir?

She walks into frame wearing an old UT sweatshirt and jeans,
phone in hand. Opens the door-

JOHN
We need to see something.

She covers the phone receiver-

GINA
(whisper)
What's up? I'm on a conference with
Dallas.

JOHN
You're going to want to call them
back anyway.

INT. MERCEDES (MOVING) - NIGHT

John drives the sloppy highway. A light Spring sleet has come
up, not unusual this time of year. Gina rides shotgun.

GINA
This better be good. Pep hates
interruptions. His third wife went
into labor during a refinery ground
breaking -- He detests the kid to
this day.

JOHN
Trust me.

By her sidelong look it is quickly becoming obvious that she
DOES NOT -- Street doesn't notice. Not yet.

EXT. HOME - NIGHT

The car stops before a familiar home: The one belonging to the
recently deceased Travis Kemper, now decorated with CRIME SCENE
TAPE -- John beelines for the front door.

Gina gets half out. Reluctant to commit fully.

GINA
What are we doing?

He ignores this, busily snaps on latex gloves. Reaches past the
neon yellow police tape to try the front door... No luck.

JOHN
Let's try the garage.

INT. HOME - GARAGE - NIGHT

Quiet and dark. Momentarily. Then a beam of light cuts across the dark space, illuminating fishing rods and hunting gear.

It's quiet. EERIE. John's penlight finds the door leading from the garage into the house.

GINA
Who lives here?

JOHN
Nobody.

He just keeps going. Relentless in pursuit of his logical end --

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen light flares on. John pulls his gloved hand from the switch, takes a moment to look over the scene.

It's bad.

Furniture is overturned and dishes are broken. The patio door is shattered. A thick smear of muddy brown blood has dried across the tacky yellow linoleum, like some perverse Rothko. Somehow, a 'SECURITY' jacket still hangs from a hook by the door.

John lifts the jacket, displays the Homestead PATCH for Gina... She stays quiet -- Better to see where all this is going.

He skirts the stained floor to open a cupboard... Empty. He takes a Xeroxed crime scene photo out, compares. It's a match.

JOHN
See the shoebox in the picture?

He taps a RED BOX contained in the photograph cupboard.

JOHN
It's in an evidence locker. Know why?

Gina just shakes her head. Something building inside her-

JOHN
It had almost \$15,000 in it.

John shows her a Coroner's photo of Travis. Ugly.

GINA
We know about this.

JOHN
What?

GINA

We know about this. Travis Kemper, right? This was a burglary went bad.

JOHN

...That's the current theory. But by the time the sheriff showed they'd been working on him awhile.

GINA

You're not listening: We know about this already. The official report confirms what I've just told you-

JOHN

(interjecting)

If they were here to rob him, why not just grab the goods and go? Why stay and play Inquisition on the Prairie?

Gina's not liking what she's hearing -- Her mask is slipping.

JOHN

What if this wasn't a home invasion? What if it was something else, something targeted? Something connected to Homestead-

GINA

(icy)

Fuck you, Street.

And she storms from the kitchen... He's CONFUSED as all hell.

EXT. HOME - NIGHT

Gina marches from the home, gets to the car. It's locked. She's forced to wait, standing there in that pissing Midwest sleet-

JOHN

Hang on, wait-

She spins, anger bursting like a furnace door thrown wide -- This is not the Gina we knew the night before. This is a cold blooded corporate assassin -- The velvet off the switchblade:

GINA

What's your game, huh?

JOHN

What?

She scrutinizes him.

GINA

You working for him?

JOHN

I'm working for Mercury-

GINA

Because this deal, Homestead? *I brought this in...* Me! My vision.

John is confused. This is not the reaction he expected.

GINA

You know how goddamn hard it is to climb the ranks as a woman working in oil, in fucking Texas?

JOHN

...Can't say as I do.

GINA

I have to be twice as smart and ten times as tough as any good ol' boy whose only qualification is dangling between his legs!

And now she's loosing a torrent of vitriol built over years-

GINA

So, fuck you, and fuck Jamie Bliss, and fuck whatever angle you're working to torpedo my deal!

(then; done-)

Drive me back.

JOHN

If you've got some... Political... Situation, I'm sorry. But that doesn't change the fact that I was hired to dig into Homestead. And that's what I'm doing.

He triggers the keyless entry. Doors slam and the car is off, skidding into the damp evening...

...And after the Mercedes leaves, another car rumbles to life -- A purple MONTE CARLO, a real G-ride. ...Was it there before?

INT. MERCEDES (MOVING) - NIGHT

John drives. Gina stares out the window, silent. The storm is passing. For a moment they just ride... Then:

JOHN

What am I even doing here?

Gina speaks without looking his way:

GINA

Jamie Bliss. He's got Callan's ear. He used Kemper's murder to get your company in on this.

JOHN

And what does he want me to find?

GINA

Anything... Something he can use to kill the buy.

JOHN

I don't understand... What I can see by the papers, this deal makes sense for everyone.

GINA

Exactly. Except him.

JOHN

This is about Callan, isn't it? How sick is he?

GINA

It's the only adversary the bastard can't beat or buy -- Time. He'll need to appoint a new CEO soon.

John stops the car at a red light. She finally turns.

GINA

If the Homestead deal comes off the boost in share prices will be undeniable-

JOHN

-And fresh on Callan's mind when he's picking his successor.

GINA

So, spend the week. Walk through Homestead's books, run whatever checks you want... Then, sign off on the deal. You do that and I'll double your fee -- Not to your company either. Straight to you. Call it a completion bonus.

John glances her way -- She's collected. Composed.

JOHN

Who do you think I am, exactly?

GINA

(unflinching)

I know who you are, Mr. Street -- You're just like the rest of us... You are a man with a price.

(beat)

Now you just have to figure out what that is.

A CAR HORN sounds behind him. The light has gone green. Suddenly the Monte Carlo ROARS past- Giving him a JOLT.

John collects himself, lets his foot off the brake, drives on-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - GINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gina enters her room, shuts and locks her door... Then SHOVES OVER a pile of documents in frustration. She stands at the center of the dim room vibrating with ANGER-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John enters his room, stops, FREEZES -- His room has been TRASHED. Ransacked. Someone's been in here, and they made an awful mess having a look around-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - GINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gina gets hold of herself, crosses to her laptop. Types "John Street Kings County ADA" into her search engine-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John begins sifting though the mess of his room, taking stock, reassembling the remains -- Something occurs-

He shows PANIC -- Scrambles to the bathroom-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - GINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

...And now a strange thing: Huddled in her laptop's glow, as an ancient adventurer on a foreign shore, Gina begins to SMILE...

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

The bathroom, similarly destroyed, toiletries and towels scattered -- But John's only got eyes for one thing:

During the search his PILL BOTTLES were EMPTIED OUT -- In haste some caplets were trod on, others tossed to dissolve in the toilet -- Whatever was in them, John will be doing without...

OFF his concern, as he lifts a discarded bottle from the floor-

FADE TO:

A FRAMED NEWS ARTICLE

The headline: "A Homegrown Success: Caleb Leaten". In the picture a TRIM MAN, 40s, shakes hands with the lieutenant governor while receiving an award.

The caption below the photo: "Leaten, Born and Raised in Munroe, Credits 'God and Timing' for Success".

INT. LEATEN HOUSE - STAIRCASE - DAY

The framed article is one of many adornments on the sweeping staircase wall, which leads up from the columned foyer of a grand entranceway. Low along the wall is a METAL TRACK.

Down the stairs creeps the man from the article, CALEB LEATEN. Whippet thin and balding, swaddled in high-end jogging gear, he moves quietly, trying not to wake the house. It's early.

Passes more mementos: Photos of his wife DARLA and their twin boys, a framed 'First Dollar'. Religious iconography pervades.

INT. LEATEN HOUSE - ENTRY - DAY

Caleb reaches the base of the stairs, passing a grey metal chair attached to the track, for use by a disabled person.

Just before he reaches the door he stops, noticing -- Light HYMNAL MUSIC floats from somewhere further in the house.

INT. LEATEN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

At the breakfast nook in the expansive kitchen sits Darla Leaten, 40s. She is wheelchair-bound. She listens to religious radio and flips through a gossip magazine in the morning light.

CALEB

Hey hon. Didn't know ya were up.

She does not look up during their conversation.

DARLA

For a bit now. Ya goin' ta run?

CALEB

Gonna run just a little bit yeah.
Gonna stop by work on the way
back... Got church in ya later?

DARLA

Uff da. My leg's 're screamin'.

CALEB

Okay so we try for tomorrow.

He turns and leaves. She flips the page of her magazine.

EXT. LEATEN HOUSE - DAY

A bloated Palladian McMansion erected on a large lot marked out by newly planted trees. The yard is brown and dead.

Caleb emerges. Fits EARBUDS in, presses PLAY -- Up comes a VOICE, popping with static, a copy of a copy. The breathless fire in the voice remains undiluted.

PREACHER (V.O.)

I'd like to talk for a moment about
our universe -- God's universe! --
And the state of natural order...

After some perfunctory stretching, Caleb begins jogging down the long, curving drive.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

The intersection where the driveway meets the desolate road. The morning is cold and clear. Caleb runs with conviction.

PREACHER (V.O.)
 Now despite the... Troubled...
 Times in which we live, there are
 some truths that have not changed!
 Some truths that will not change...

As the preacher builds in energy so too does the runner.

EXT. EMPTY ROAD - DAY

A long and low horizon, split by drilling platforms -- The only crops that produce year round.

PREACHER (V.O.)
 The universe was purposefully designed. Every and all things in their rightful place: Man to serve God... And woman to serve man!

Leaten's stride is steady. He pumps steam like a locomotive in the cold morning air.

PREACHER (V.O.)
 From whence am I receiving these wild ideas? Some entertainment or idle talk? No! These are the words of the Lord our God!

EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DAY

The camp is quiet on account of the hour.

PREACHER (V.O.)
 For man does not originate from woman, no! But woman from man... For man was not created for woman's sake, oh no! But woman for man's.

Caleb flies past, flashing between buildings at top speed.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - LEISURE BUILDING - DAY

A GUARD, half asleep, snaps to as the boss, huffing and sweating, enters the premises. Head swiveling. Seeing all.

PREACHER (V.O.)
 These are the words of our Lord and they are sacrosanct...

INT. WINDOWLESS SPACE - DAY

A small waiting room, unadorned except for a single, somehow lurid, decoration: Christ in agony on the cross.

Seated at a DESK is Tigger. He yawns and stretches, turns up the volume on a small TV set. Lights a cigarette.

CALEB
 Ya wanted to see me?

Caleb enters by way of a SPIRAL STAIRCASE.

TIGGER
Got a visitor yesterday. Guy from
the county wanted an inspection.

CALEB
So?

TIGGER
So he wasn't what he said he was.

CALEB
What was he? Reporter?

TIGGER
Roper 'a some kind.

CALEB
What's that now?

Tigger taps a paper, though his attention remains with the TV.
On it a horny cartoon skunk manhandles an unwilling female cat.

TIGGER
He's staying at the Rest EZ, I had
a look around his room. He works
for a company does something called
'Corporate Security Consulting'.

CALEB
I wish you'da asked me first, Tig.

Caleb takes the paper, briefly. It's the job summary written on
corporate stationary that Dan handed John in the cigar bar.

CALEB
This is nothing. Ya know what this
is? This is Mercury being
careful... He hasn't found
anything, right?

TIGGER
The dead guard. He knows about
that.

CALEB
Him, and everyone with a TV set in
the county. Anything else?

TIGGER
Not so far as I could tell.

CALEB
Good. And there's gonna be nothing
else to find... Right?

Tigger finally looks up. A moment.

TIGGER
Right.

CALEB
 So leave him be. Let him turn
 stones. Just make sure there's
 nothing under 'em...

Tigger frowns, draws on his smoke. Caleb changes the subject.

CALEB
 How's the flock? Up yet?

TIGGER
 Not yet.

CALEB
 Let's go 'head and roust 'em, yah?

He claps Tigger on the shoulder, as he moves past, using a keycard to unlock the DOOR behind the desk. It is marked "39".

CUT TO:

SPLOOSH!-SPLOOSH!-SPLOOSH!-SPLOOSH!-

Arm churn. Rapidly. Frantically.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - INDOOR POOL AREA - DAY

John SWIMS like a maniac -- As though being chased, almost. He's in the pool at the Rest EZ and has been for some time.

He nears the edge -- Fingers extend, touch -- He pulls himself out, huffing, COUGHING: He's worked himself to exhaustion.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - DAY

The room has been hastily reassembled. A cup of hotel coffee steams on the nightstand... Police reports and photographs are now mixed among the Homestead financial documents.

Among it all, John, freshly showered, paces with PHONE to ear-

JOHN
 -No, no, NO -- You're not -- You
 aren't hearing me- I need you to
 overnight them...
 (then-)
 What do you mean you won't?
 (then-)
 Because I'm in the middle of
 nowhere. I don't have anyone.

He listens... And then, uncharacteristically, he EXPLODES:

JOHN
 Well what GODDAMN GOOD are you?

PING -- Call waiting... He checks the caller ID.

JOHN
 Shit...

He has a deep, calming breath... Takes the OTHER CALL:

JOHN
(chipper)
Hey Dan, what's up?

Dan comes across with all the subtlety of a buzz saw:

DAN (ON PHONE)
What's this I hear about you
dragging Gina Sanger off a
conference call to play Keystone
Kops at some murder scene?

JOHN
Good morning to you too.

INTERCUT:

INT. RUSSIAN & TURKISH BATHS - DAY

Dan wears a cotton robe, speaks on a cell phone. He walks between saunas, enjoying a morning steam.

DAN
She's lobbying to have you pulled.

JOHN (ON PHONE)
And why would she do that? Because
I'm coming onto something-

DAN
Hello! Hello! What's the first
thing I taught you when I brought
you in? When you were radioactive?

JOHN (ON PHONE)
Dan, there's something else too-

DAN
(interrupting)
Remind me: Rule number one, is..?

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - DAY

John grimaces. A kid caught red handed. Squeezing his father's pendant tight, says by rote:

JOHN
"The people signing the checks make
the rules."

DAN (ON PHONE)
Thaaaaat's right! And rules number
two through all the rest? How do we
sum those up?

JOHN
"Don't be a fuckhead".

DAN (ON PHONE)
Ding ding ding... We got a winner.

INT. RUSSIAN & TURKISH BATHS - DAY

Other robed patrons, Hassids, give Dan a nasty look for cursing. He doesn't notice -- He's an angry parent slapping wrists-

DAN

Now, I'll grant you no orders were specifically issued against taking the general counsel of the Fortune 500 company out to some dead townie's house... But you know why?

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - DAY

John doesn't answer. Just waits for it-

DAN (ON PHONE)

...Because that's one of those things that falls under rules two through all the rest!

JOHN

I'm telling you, that dead townie? He was into something. Why else would he have the box full of cash?

DAN (ON PHONE)

Unless it's to do with Homestead's integrity as a company, I don't care! What the man did, bought, snorted or sold in his free time or in his own home is not our concern.

John sighs, scrubs his face. He's looking a bit... *Frayed*.

JOHN

You're probably right.

INT. RUSSIAN & TURKISH BATHS - DAY

DAN

That's right I'm right. You were hired to review corporate security. Not play Sam Spade of the Fly-Overs.

JOHN (ON PHONE)

There's something else. My room-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - DAY

DAN (ON PHONE)

(interrupting)

Sorry, but I gotta ask: Are you taking your... Shit? Whatever you need to keep straight?

John's caught OFF-GUARD -- This subject so taboo to him-

JOHN

(finally-)

What?

DAN (ON PHONE)
 Your meds? You taking them?

The pendant, moving FURIOUSLY... John cuts eyes at the wastebasket. It contains three empty pill bottles.

JOHN
 (then-)
 Yes.

DAN (ON PHONE)
 Alright then. Keep me updated.

Dan ends the call, John sets the phone down. Then, stares at it... And his medication reminder alarm CHIMES, tauntingly.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - GINA'S ROOM - DAY

A HAND reaches into frame, KNOCKS politely.

JOHN
 Gina? Gina, it's John. You in there? I come to make peace.

No answer. He knocks again... The door opens. Gina looks great. Smiles when she sees him. The smile doesn't touch her eyes.

JOHN
 I just wanted to apologize. About last night. There was no reason for you to be there.

GINA
 You were just doing your job.

JOHN
 Right.

GINA
 Zealously.

JOHN
 What?

GINA
 Zealously. Manically.

JOHN
 Right...

GINA
 I'm glad we had this talk.

And she closes the door. John turns and walks off down the hall... Then, turns back -- *What was that??*

EXT. REST EZ HOTEL - DAY

Lot still jammed with cars. It's clear that, wanting for other options, desperate roughnecks have taken to living in the hotel.

One difference this particular morning: Waiting out front is a Munroe Sheriff's Department CRUISER. Leaning against it, in her fur-lined sheriff coat and hat, is Mattie.

She's carefully unscrewing the top from a plaid print THERMOS. Sets the top aside, begins to pour steaming coffee into a Styrofoam cup. Sets it aside, begins pouring a second-

JOHN
Waiting for someone, Deputy Cooper?

John has emerged through the hotel's automated front doors.

MATTIE
Call me Mattie.

She extends a cup to him.

MATTIE
That's ground cinnamon you're sniffing. Better'n any cup in town.

He accepts, gratefully.

JOHN
Thank you.

MATTIE
Ya get a chance to go by Kemper's?

John's demeanor shifts.

JOHN
I did.

MATTIE
...And?

She's smiling at him... But scrutinizing as well. Under her homey North Dakota patina, this woman has some steel.

JOHN
And it was ugly stuff. Very sad.

She waits, hoping for more... It doesn't come -- Instead, the SLIGHTEST TWITCH registers on his face. Mattie notices.

MATTIE
Everything okay?

JOHN
Sure.

Beat. Mattie decides to let it lie.

MATTIE
Well, if you're not busy this morning I thought we might run by RJ's, ask him a couple questions.

JOHN
 The kid who called it in?
 (incredulous)
 You haven't talked to him yet?

MATTIE
 Not me -- Al. That is, Sheriff Al
 Fischer. My boss. He spoke with him
 and he wrote the report.

JOHN
 And what'd Al say?

She turns, surveys the horizon... Then:

MATTIE
 Nothing. Just the kid shows up with
 a pizza, hears screaming. He calls
 it in and splits.

JOHN
 But you think there's more.

She stays quiet. Just sips from her coffee-

JOHN
 Listen, I wasn't completely honest
 with you yesterday. I'm not here
 for Travis Kemper.

Mattie's look suggests that this, she ALREADY SUSPECTED. Hers
 are hidden depths, disguised in a town that would otherwise
 mistrust female intelligence.

MATTIE
 (cagey)
 Oh? You're not a detective?

JOHN
 Yes- No- I mean, I am. But a
 different kind.

She looks him over, taking her time in answering:

MATTIE
 What kind are ya, Mr. Street?

JOHN
 I'm here to investigate a company.
 Review its security. Make sure
 everything's above board.

MATTIE
 Homestead?

JOHN
 That's right.

MATTIE
 That where you're goin' all fancy?

JOHN
 That's right.

MATTIE
And what exactly does that entail?

John is confused.

JOHN
...I'm sorry?

MATTIE
I'm investigating too. I'm investigating the death of a man no one else seems ta care about. A man killed just three nights ago but's already been forgot. To do this I'm going ta talk ta the only living witness to his murder, and then I'm going to try'n discern why a security guard who made fourteen seventy five an hour had thousands a' dollars in his kitchen.

John can't help it... He's impressed.

MATTIE
When ya investigate a... Company?
What do ya do? Where do ya go?

JOHN
Not so much as that... I've got an appointment with Burton Transport.

MATTIE
The trucking concern? That's right near the station. C'mon, hop in.

JOHN
How will I get back?

MATTIE
Ya come see me after. We'll grab a bite, then I'll drive ya back.

He doesn't answer straight away, sizing her up. She looks right back at him, open and honest. But EYES SHARP-

JOHN
Okay.

She claps a little.

MATTIE
(excited)
Okay? Great.

INT. CRUISER - DAY

John clammers into the shotgun seat of Mattie's cruiser -- As he sits a recorded voice starts up:

MATTIE (ON RECORDER)
Cinnamon bark home remedy for bed wetting?

John pulls a small digital VOICE RECORDER from under his buttocks. Mattie, embarrassed, snatches it away.

MATTIE
So I don't forget. Better than Post
Its, I think.

JOHN
Sure, and less mess.

John examines the state of Mattie's cruiser: It's a jumbled mishmash of children's sports gear and police equipment. He moves a bulletproof vest, picks up a hockey stick-

JOHN
This police issue?

MATTIE
Sorry. My week for the carpool.

JOHN
How long you been with the
department?

MATTIE
Eight months, and it still seems
funny... Never thought I'd wear a
gun for a living.

JOHN
How'd you get started, you don't
mind me asking?

MATTIE
I don't. Stu, my ex? Well, he was a
bit of a dope... Anyway, he went
away and Braden and me, we needed
something dependable.

JOHN
Braden, that's your son?

MATTIE
Mr. Hercules, pride of Munroe
Elementary two years running.

She taps a PICTURE clipped to her sun visor. In it a fourth grader proudly displays a trophy, all brown hair and smile.

JOHN
Cute.

MATTIE
You have any kids, Mr. Street?

JOHN
One. Kate. Six years old.

MATTIE
I bet I check your billfold, all I
find is pictures, right?

JOHN

Sorry?

MATTIE

I got two sisters myself. It's something my father used ta say: "A daddy carries pictures where his money used to be".

OFF John's appreciation for this bit of folksy wisdom-

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Another one story rancher, nicely maintained. Parked in the drive are two cars, one of which is RJ's familiar SUBARU.

On the brown front lawn Winona, the police dispatcher, holds the collars of two young Spaniel DOGS -- They strain, wanting to go for the TRAINING DUCK across the yard.

Winona won't let go. Between her teeth she has a whistle.

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Mattie pulls the car to a stop outside Winona's house.

JOHN

Where are we?

MATTIE

Winona's place. RJ stays with her.

JOHN

Wait-

MATTIE

(already exiting)

I'll be quick.

SLAM. Her door shuts. John watches Winona blow her WHISTLE and release the dogs, before she and Mattie speak.

After a brief (unheard) conversation, Winona points to the house. Mattie nods her thanks and heads inside. In the distance the dogs vie for control of the silicon duck.

John SIGHS... Then opens his door-

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Winona stares at the dogs, still locked in a tug-of-war over the duck. Frustrated, she blows two bursts on her whistle.

John, approaching, squints a little at the sound. Before:

JOHN

It's Winona, right?

WINONA

(still on the dogs)

Inside. Down the hall, second door on the left.

WINONA (CONT'D)

(then)

They got no problem fetching. But
they don't return for shit.

INT. RJ'S ROOM - DAY

A murky space. Blinds pulled, clothing in piles. On the walls, posters for metalcore bands: Killswitch Engage, As I Lay Dying, etc. The den of a teenage boy stuck in neutral.

MATTIE

C'mon RJ, just take me through it
once more, ya don't mind...

RJ sits on the floor, hypnotized by some videogame. He marauds through a digital war zone, firing a digital rocket launcher-

MATTIE

Ya arrive at Kemper's house with a
meat lovers, one'a my favorites by
the way... Who answers the door?

RJ's tuned out. Blowing away terrorists in a pixilated land.

MATTIE

Ya're not in any trouble, RJ.

RJ gives a total of zero fucks. They might not even exist. Just clacking on the game control -- Then, BWOOP! The TV powers down-

RJ

(finally-)

Hey!

Street stands with the loose end of the TV's POWER CORD-

JOHN

(without enthusiasm)
Answer the question, RJ.

RJ shifts. Taken by surprise.

MATTIE

This is John Street. He's working
with me.

RJ

I don't got-

He stops. Looks nervously between them. Somewhere off in the house a phone begins to RING-

MATTIE

I'm just wonderin' if there might
be something ya... Forgot? When ya
made your report to Al.

RJ

He already talked to me. The, uh-
Fat. One.

John looks at Mattie-

MATTIE

(aside)

Sheriff? He's a bit of a big fella.

(then, back to RJ)

We know and thank ya much, RJ.

Just... Maybe ya were maybe a
little intimidated and didn't want
to say?

RJ squirms. Uncomfortable in his own skin.

RJ

I was 'bout to knock when I heard
the two of 'em. Beatin' on him.

MATTIE

Ya didn't get a look? Ya didn't
hear what they were arguin' about?

RJ just shakes his head -- And Winona enters. She's holding the
house PHONE, covering up the receiver with a palm-

WINONA

Mattie? It's Al.

MATTIE

Give us a sec' here, Winnie.

WINONA

He wants to talk to you.

MATTIE

In a minute.

WINONA

He says right now like.

Mattie looks at John -- What's this about?

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Mattie steps out into the hall, accepts the phone-

MATTIE

How ya doin', Al?

INT. RJ'S ROOM - DAY

John is left with RJ, still seated, looking up at him. They
stare at one another. Neither wanting to be where he is.

JOHN

(finally)

How's the pizza racket? Tips okay?

RJ

I guess.

JOHN

People ever screw with you?

RJ

Like how?

JOHN

You know, order a dozen pies, send
'em to the Bulimia Support Group,
that sort of thing.

RJ

(shrugs)

Sometimes people are assholes.

JOHN

Is that why you let yourself in?
You figured he was being an
asshole, not answering the door?

RJ

But I didn't go in. I heard like,
fighting. So I called 911 and left.

JOHN

Then how'd you know there were two
of 'em in there?

RJ

I didn't- What?

John's speech is speeding up. RJ notices, unease growing-

JOHN

Two of them, two of them -- You
said you heard two of them... How'd
you make the number without going
in there, Carnac?

RJ

I, uh... I don't...

JOHN

Okay, maybe you get that from the
Sheriff.

RJ

Yeah. Yeah, that musta-

JOHN

(cutting him off-)

But that still doesn't explain why
you've got the man's sunglasses.

John digs out a CREASED PHOTO of Kemper, the one of him standing
by the truck, wearing shades. Shows it to RJ.

RJ

...What?

JOHN

Travis Kemper's sunglasses. You
were wearing them two night ago.
When you were out delivering pizza.

RJ
I'm not sure-

JOHN
(and, again-)
They're right there... Between the
roach clip and the girlie mag.

Sure enough, the nightstand is AS DESCRIBED.

JOHN
So, why don't you spare us both?
What was happening... In that
HOUSE?!

The last word nearly SHOUTED -- Freaking them both out.

RJ
(caving)
Sheriff says, he says don't tell
anyone! Don't tell anyone I was in
there. Don't say what I heard.

John seems to consciously rein back. Regaining control.

JOHN
Why? What'd you hear?

RJ
He's doing my aunt a big favor,
letting me slide. I get trespassing
at least, if anyone knows went
in... Says maybe I get blamed. For
him. For him dying.

JOHN
Okay, slow down. What'd you hear?

RJ
They was beatin' on him. With a
wrench, real bad... They'd swing,
and it'd make this horrible sound,
like wet and hollow... And in
between swings they kept askin' him
a question.

JOHN
What were they asking?

RJ
Same question. Again and again.
They'd hit him and then one would
say, "Where the girl".

JOHN
"Where the girl"? Just like that?

RJ's out of steam, deflates.

RJ
...What's gonna happen to me?

MATTIE
Excuse me, John? Will you step
outside with me, please?

Mattie's reappeared. Her demeanor has shifted.

JOHN
You're going to want to hear this-

MATTIE
(cutting him off-)
Now please.

She removes CUFFS from a pouch on her belt. John silently clocks this change in mood.

INT. CRUISER (MOVING) - DAY

Now John rides in BACK of the undivided cruiser, among footballs and homework. Mattie drives. Her earlier warmth frosted over.

JOHN
At least tell me what this is
about?

MATTIE
Nothin' probably. Just a quick
couple'a questions.

JOHN
What questions?

MATTIE
Al called New York. Says your
license has been flagged.

JOHN
That's why the big display?

MATTIE
Says someone used it ta get past a
night guard at a hospital outside
Cleveland, maybe messed with a
buncha medical papers... Sound
familiar?

John takes this in stride.

JOHN
That was me.

MATTIE
Oh yeah?

JOHN
Pharmaceutical company doing third
phase trials. Hospital had a
security leak. I flushed it out.

MATTIE
Is that right?

John looks out the window. The desolation here is consuming.

JOHN
Your boss is lying to you.

MATTIE
It doesn't much sound like it.

JOHN
Not about me. About Kemper's
murder. The report he filed, he
left something out.

MATTIE
And why would he do that?

JOHN
People lie all the time. Make up an
illness to cover for oversleeping,
maybe a phantom trip to Europe to
impress a first date, whatever...
But when they lie about the big
stuff, the stuff that might get
them fired or arrested or worse, my
experience? There's only two
reasons for that.

MATTIE
Which are?

JOHN
Money or sex... Or, money and sex.

OFF her eyeing John in the rear view-

EXT. ANGIE'S - DAY

A homey family diner. As usual, the parking lot is packed with
trucks -- Not an inch of this town doesn't crawl with men.

Mattie's CRUISER turns into the lot.

INT. CRUISER - DAY

John's confused-

JOHN
...What are we doing?

MATTIE
I promised ya a meal, didn't I?

She climbs from the car.

EXT. ANGIE'S - DAY

She comes around, opens John's door.

JOHN
I'll make my appointment after all?

MATTIE
We'll see... Hands-

He sticks out his wrists, she makes to uncuff him-

MATTIE
One condition: I want honesty.

JOHN
Or you get the boys in county to
turn me into a fingertrap?

Something parental in her look: Not mad. Just... Disappointed.

MATTIE
A man's dead... Someone, somewhere
is hurting for him.

This hits home. His poker face falls. She unsnaps his cuffs.

INT. ANGIE'S - BOOTH - DAY

An aged WAITRESS waits patiently for John and Mattie to complete their order. It is midmorning but the restaurant is busy.

JOHN
What's good here?

She removes his menu from his hand as she tells the waitress-

MATTIE
Two patty melts. Thanks Shirl.

WAITRESS
Comin' up.

She takes the menus, goes. John looks at Mattie, "Patty melt"?

JOHN
It's like 10:30 in the morning.

MATTIE
Ya gotta treat yourself. Ya never
know which is gonna be your last
sandwich.

JOHN
That's profound.

MATTIE
Ya disagree?

JOHN
Not me, but I know someone who
would.

MATTIE
Oh yah? Who?

JOHN
My ex. Nutritionist. A grazer,
practically.

MATTIE
Why'd ya two split?

John is suddenly engrossed with the stirring of his coffee.

JOHN
Irreconcilable differences.

Mattie knows there's more there. Aims a frank stare -- "Honesty, right?" A moment... Then:

JOHN
Okay... I used to be a lawyer.

MATTIE
I knew there was somethin' about ya
wasn't ta be trusted.

JOHN
I was one of the good ones: ADA.
Put the bad guys away.

MATTIE
Why'd ya quit? Money not enough?

JOHN
Wasn't the problem...

John's got the St. Jude pendant in hand -- Funny, doesn't even remember getting it out... He TRAILS OFF, stares at it-

MATTIE
...John?

JOHN
My dad? He was what they called
"troubled" -- And he'd never cop to
it, never.

MATTIE
A boozier?

JOHN
And worse. Up here.
(taps his temple)
Bipolar. Not that he'd ever see a
doctor. And he sure couldn't seem
to find work... Instead he'd
disappear for weeks, God knows
where, drinking and making bets he
never had a chance of settling...
Then he'd stumble home, beaten and
broke, and absolutely crash -- Just
stay in bed for months.

Mattie's not really sure what to do with this information.

MATTIE
...I'm sorry.

JOHN

Apologize to my mother, who had to work and keep house and raise three boys -- For me, it was fine. I knew what I needed to do: Study my ass off and get as far away from that broken loser as I could.

MATTIE

It sounds like you did.

JOHN

I thought so... Then, during law school, things start changing -- I'd stay up for weeks cramming... Then, post finals, I can barely leave my room... But right away I know what it is -- All the signs are there. I'd seen it all my life.

MATTIE

Ya seem pretty together to me.

JOHN

Because I got aggressive on it. Meds, every day, on a schedule. Exercise. Meditation... I do it all. And guess what? It works. I don't have to tell anyone. Ever... I don't have to ruin my chance at a normal life.

MATTIE

So what happened?

JOHN

Things were going great. I had the wife, apartment, kid on the way -- And most of all? I'm not my dad.

John hesitates. Not an easy subject, this...

JOHN

You know the difference between bad luck and fate? Fate's got a sense of humor.

CUT TO:

A CHAMPAGNE BOTTLE

A fine vintage. Lying on its side on a dance floor, drained --
Now just an empty vessel. The label splotched with BLOOD-

JOHN (V.O.)
We'd won a case, a big one:
Hospital administrators defrauding
Medicare for millions. Trial took
weeks. And my boss had everyone out
celebrating afterward.

A slow pan reveals the DOWNTOWN CLUB in full -- The kind that
exists to inflame the synapses of the beautiful and upwardly
mobile. But, like the champagne, it has been emptied. Ominous-

JOHN (V.O.)
Now, I'm not allowed to drink --
Zeroes out the stabilizing effects
of the meds in my bloodstream. And
I know this. I've known it for a
long time.

Next, a VIP BOOTH fit for American royalty: Power brokers and
the nouveau riche -- But TRASHED. Table split, mirror shattered-

JOHN (V.O.)
And I figure: Just this once. Just
one time. I'll let down my guard.
I'll live like everyone else.

And now we hear it: Sirens, lots of them, wailing like lost
children, from nearby. Just outside the lavish club.

JOHN (V.O.)
I don't remember any of it. All I
know is from the papers, once they
got hold of it: Some poor kid
spills a drink. We get into it, and
I just start hitting him. Over and
over. Took three bouncers to drag
me off. Then I went after them-

CUT BACK TO:

INT. ANGIE'S - BOOTH - DAY

Mattie, affected by his telling-

JOHN
The DA convinced the family not to
press charges, but I still lost
everything in the fallout: My
career, my family -- I hadn't told
them -- I hadn't told a soul --
About my... Condition.

MATTIE
Your wife?

JOHN
 Not a soul.
 (then, carefully-)
 It's been my experience that...
 When people, no matter how
 enlightened... Get wind that you're-

"Crazy" -- Can't even bring himself to say the word-

JOHN
 Well, it's suddenly a whole lot
 easier not to trust you.

Their food arrives, ending the line of discussion. John tucks in -- Happy to be done with his retelling. For her part, Mattie is a bit off-balance, the story is so... Raw -- So, downplays, as:

MATTIE
 So what'd RJ tell ya?

JOHN
 What the guys who killed Travis
 Kemper wanted.

Mattie's excitement shows plain:

MATTIE
 What?

JOHN
 "Where the girl".

MATTIE
 Where the girl?

JOHN
 "Where the girl".... Meaning either
 RJ doesn't hear English real good,
 or those guys didn't speak it.

And now she's caught up in logicking it out-

MATTIE
 RJ tells this to Al, and Al just...
 Leaves it out of the report?

JOHN
 Told the kid he was doing him a
 favor... He's scared of being
 implicated.
 (re: sandwich)
 These are excellent, by the way.

MATTIE
 I think we should go talk ta him
 again. And I wanna have another
 look around Kemper's place.

She signals, trying to get the waitress' attention.

JOHN

You know the most dangerous thing
to chase, deputy?

MATTIE

This is what, a trick question?

JOHN

A cause. Thinking- *Knowing-* there's
a wrong needs to be put right. And
you're the one to do it.

MATTIE

What's that got ta do with-

JOHN

What happens when the bad guys win?

MATTIE

But the bad guys don't win.

Like a tidal pull, John's speech is again increasing in volume --
Mattie sinks further and further back during the following:

JOHN

Sure they do -- They're winning
right now -- And nobody cares...
Bankers taxed at a quarter the rate
of teachers, politicians put in
office by corporate money doing
favors in kind, gun companies
selling the idea they make us
safer...

(beat)

Bad guys are winning all the time.
And you don't even know it.

Mattie's response is halting... And, concerned:

MATTIE

Maybe out there. But not here. Not
in Munroe, North Dakota. Here
people are decent. Here people look
after one another.

JOHN

Is that right?

John gets to his feet. He's leaving.

MATTIE

Sure. Heck, I haven't had to take
out my sidearm once. Haven't even
thought I might.

JOHN

May your luck continue. But you're
in barely a hockey season...

(then)

So, thanks for lunch. Tell your
boss... Whatever. I'm out of here
in a couple of days.

Mattie's face falls. She wants to believe in the goodness of John Street -- To trust him. But he's not making it easy...

CUT TO:

A DOLLY OF BANKERS BOXES

Being pushed effortfully and set down heavily-

INT. BURTON TRUCKING - OFFICE - DAY

The bearer, STEPHANIE, late 40s, exhales from the exertion... She studies John, in the midst of a growing PAPER MASS.

STEPHANIE

That's most of the Homestead manifestos. Ya want I should keep going?

She adds the boxes to the pile already here. He's auditing shipping manifestos. It's boring.

JOHN

All you've got, please.

(then)

Stephanie, right? Would you c'mere, take a look at this for a second?

She comes around. He's holding a manifesto CARBON COPY-

JOHN

What's this look like to you?

The genial woman dons a pair of reading glasses, then-

STEPHANIE

(reading)

Tubing, IV Bags, Codeine Phosphate, Azithro...

JOHN

Azithromycin. Common antibiotic. This is medical supplies they're ordering, right? Okay, read this-

He points to an entry.

STEPHANIE

Levo... Norgestrel implants... What's that?

JOHN

Norplant. Birth control sticks they put under the skin. Good for like five years. Big in the third world.

Stephanie gives him a even Midwestern look -- So?

JOHN

What's a 'No Girls Allowed' man camp want with that?

A moment... Then the phone out front begins to RING.

STEPHANIE
I gotta get that.
(as she goes)
...So it's happening? Mercury
buying Homestead?

He focuses on the medical supply sheet -- Something percolating-

JOHN
I really can't say.

She stops, turns back -- Starts to say something ... Doesn't.
She's staring at his hand -- It's tap-tap-tapping on the desk.

STEPHANIE
Ya work for Mercury, right?

He follows her gaze... Stops his tic. Moves hand to his lap.

JOHN
Consultant, yes.

STEPHANIE
'S funny. When Caleb started up
Homestead there was about a dozen
other little roughneck dorms
startin' up too.

This gets his attention. He looks up from his work.

JOHN
But his was the only one that took.

STEPHANIE
Lucky, I guess. It's like he says
at Bible Study: Wealth dwells in
the houses of the righteous.

The phone continues to RING.

STEPHANIE
I'll see what else I can find.

She closes the door behind her... And his cell phone begins to RING -- He digs it out from under a paper mound, answers-

JOHN
Hello?

KATE (ON PHONE)
Daddy I'm in school!

INTERCUT:

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

A bustling city grocery store. Kate stands with her mother mid-aisle, with Emily's cell phone pressed to her face.

JOHN (ON PHONE)
What's that, honey?

KATE
I'm in school, I'm in school!

Kate's speech is pressured, excitable -- She's worked up.

INT. BURTON TRUCKING - OFFICE - DAY

John's happy to talk, but CONFUSED. Plus her tone worries him some -- The obvious mania of it. Still, continues playfully:

JOHN
Like, right now?

KATE (ON PHONE)
Daddy, when will I see you?

This change in tack, though seemingly erratic, still HURTS.

JOHN
Soon Bubble. We'll go to the museum. To see the whale.

EMILY (ON PHONE)
(interrupting)
-Hang on -- It's me now-

John's face adjusts.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Kate's abandoned the phone to her mother, to dash off and sate some urgent curiosity.

EMILY
She insisted on talking to you.

JOHN (ON PHONE)
What was she saying?

EMILY
Insight called today. They gave her a scholarship.

INT. BURTON TRUCKING - OFFICE - DAY

John's face LIGHTS.

JOHN
That's wonderful news, Em!

EMILY (ON PHONE)
It's only partial tuition. But it's something.

JOHN
How partial are we talking?

EMILY (ON PHONE)
We just need to come up with twenty
two.

Not quite the windfall he'd hoped for -- John resumes tapping away on the desk, with gusto.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

JOHN (ON PHONE)
I'm just not sure where to-

EMILY
(interrupting/emotional)
Listen! Listen, Goddamn you!
(then; collecting herself)
She'll go days bouncing off the
walls, and then a week where she'll
barely eat or talk-

Emily notices: Kate is half done with a mustard Jackson Pollock on the floor -- A real mess. Strangers give Emily the evil eye-

EMILY
I knew this was a possibility,
okay? Wasn't quite what I signed up
for, but I made peace with that...
But I'm doing it alone, John! This
is your problem! And I'm handling
it all alone!

She stabs at the End Call button, heads for Kate. Steeling herself for the outburst that's sure to come.

INT. BURTON TRUCKING - OFFICE - DAY

John stares at the phone, seems to make a decision -- Then Stephanie reappears, another BOX underarm.

STEPHANIE
I found one more!

John eyes the new box -- And, like clockwork, his Blackberry alarm CHIMES. Again John feels the twist of the knife.

JOHN
Mind if I pick it up tomorrow?
There's someone I need to see.

STEPHANIE
Course. I'll have it right here.

John's already headed for the door.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Busy. Like always. Roughnecks everywhere. John enters, approaches Dave the Desk Clerk.

JOHN
171. Any messages?

DESK AGENT
I'll check... No.

John nods, turns to go -- Then stops, turns back-

JOHN
A woman I work with checked in same
night as me... I'm wondering if
you've seen her tonight? She's-

DESK AGENT
(interrupting)
She's in Coasters.

JOHN
You know who I'm talking about?

DESK AGENT
We only got the one staying. I just
saw her go in.

JOHN
In the entire hotel? You've only
got one woman staying?

OFF Dave's vacant smile-

INT. COASTERS - NIGHT

Gina Sanger occupies a quiet table, apparently alone. John sits down all at once, places hands on tabletop -- Again, his speech is RAPID. As though his words are all in a race to escape.

JOHN
Okay, listen. I'm not here to cause
problems for anyone. I want you to
know that you can count on me. That
everyone can count on me.
(insinuating)
And I'm hoping that I can count on
you... As in regards to what we
spoke about. The bonus.

John stops, stares, expectant. Gina says nothing. Instead:

CALEB (O.S.)
You're in my seat.

John looks up. Standing there is Caleb Leaten. He's got two
drinks, one for him and one for Gina.

GINA
John Street, this is Caleb Leaten.
Caleb, this is John.

CALEB
Nice to meet ya.

JOHN
I'm sorry, are you two...
Celebrating?

GINA
Negotiations are complete.

John stands, making way. Caleb studies him.

CALEB
Would ya care to join us?

JOHN
I wouldn't want to interrupt. You
two have a nice evening.

They watch him go. Once he's safely out of earshot:

CALEB
That was him?

GINA
That was him.

CALEB
Should we be worried?

GINA
(shaking her head)
He's found his price.

OFF Caleb's contained relief-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dark. Quiet. It's very late at night. But John's EYES ARE OPEN --
Staring at the wall. Unable to sleep... The phone RINGS.

JOHN
Yeah?

MATTIE (ON PHONE)
RJ's dead.

Mattie speaks in a HURRIED WHISPER -- She shouldn't be making
this call. John sits up, silhouetted in the dark.

JOHN
What? What time is it?

He looks at the clock -- It reads: 3:47.

EXT. CROSSROADS - NIGHT

A typically deserted meeting of backroads, now not so empty: Two
Sheriff's cruisers block off the scene, EMTs cover a LIFELESS
FORM laid out on the road -- No saving this one.

JOHN (ON PHONE)
So why are you calling me?

A familiar SUBARU is parked on the roadside, driver's window
BLOWN OUT with gore. Mattie stands a ways off, speaks furtively.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

MATTIE (ON PHONE)
Al's calling it suicide.

John switches on the bedside lamp, sits up-

EXT. LONELY ROAD - NIGHT

She waits on the phone, expecting something... Nothing comes.

MATTIE
Single shot to the head, found
alone in his car. Weapon was
registered to one Travis Kemper.
(then)
...John?

In background, an obese, uniformed man, SHERIFF AL FISCHER, turns from the body... We won't get a good look at him just yet-

FISCHER
Mattie? Mattie, what're ya doing
here?

MATTIE
Shoot, I've gotta go.

FISCHER
Ya know you're not supposed to be
here, now-

She quickly hangs up.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John replaces the phone in cradle. DISTURBED by what she's told him. Attempting to put it out of mind.

Flips the sheets off, wanders to his window. Mulling a decision, his father's pendant in hand... Pulls aside the curtain-

See something odd, a car different from the rest -- The MONTE CARLO -- We've seen it once, but he hasn't yet -- Just sitting there, standing out. Two men inside, obscured in darkness-

Suddenly, a FLASH -- A zippo being struck. Briefly illuminating the DARK FACES haunting the car-

BANG-BANG-BANG-

Street nearly jumps out of his skin -- What was that? He spins around, looking.. It comes again from the door -- BANG-BANG-BANG- Street approaches. Cautiously.

JOHN
Who is it?

HAYES (O.S.)
Judge Crater, who do ya think!

John puts his eye to the peephole -- Revealed in FISHEYE is a MAN'S CHEST. Too big to get a look at him-

John backs from the peephole, thinks...

EXT. REST EZ HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

From behind we see a HUGE FORM bearing a duffle. The door finally cracks, John pokes his face out-

JOHN

...Hayes? What're you doing here?

HAYES

You don't write, you don't call? I was worried, Johnny.

ED HAYES, 30s, is a mass of coiled energy in a Carhartt jacket: Heavy shoulders, boxer's nose. Hands that know how to hurt.

JOHN

Jesus, it's like four AM.

HAYES

Yeah, well. I wanted to let you know I'm across the hall. 172.

He turns for the door opposite, inserts a keycard, opens up-

HAYES

You got nothing to worry about. We're gonna finish strong on this.

OFF John, left blinking in the hall-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - DAY

Shades of morning eke over the horizon. John's dressed and on his phone, PACING like a caged animal -- Looking like he never did get to sleep last night.

JOHN

You don't just spring Hayes on me like that. The guy twists the heads off pigeons for fun.

DAN (ON PHONE)

You said it yourself: These are sketchy customers. Can't be too careful with my best investigator.

John stops pacing to look from his window -- The Monte Carlo is GONE. Left sometime in the night.

JOHN

So you're not... Worried about me?

John heads for the door.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

John closes his door as quietly as possible, sneaks a glance at 172. It's shut, "Do Not Disturb" hanging on the handle.

DAN (ON PHONE)
Isn't that what I just said?

JOHN
So it never occurred that I might
turn up something...
Uncomfortable... Out here?

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - RECEPTION - DAY

Reception is quiet. It's very early in the morning indeed. John speeds through, heading for the door.

DAN (ON PHONE)
Why? What have you found?

JOHN
Client'll have my report in a
couple days, same as you.

DAN (ON PHONE)
I'm not liking what I'm hearing,
John. You don't sound great.

JOHN
I'm perfectly clear. I've never
been more clear.

DAN (ON PHONE)
Because you don't sound great. You
sound like you're slipping. You
sound like a guy who's losing it.

This hitting John hard -- Dan saying what John too is thinking.

EXT. REST EZ HOTEL - DAY

John exits the hotel, digs out his keys -- Doesn't notice the LARGE FORM approaching silently from behind-

HAYES (O.S.)
Up early?

John STARTS, spins -- There, blithely sipping coffee, is HAYES.

JOHN
Jesus, don't you sleep?

HAYES
Tried it once. Wasn't for me.

JOHN
(deadpan)
That's not psychotic at all.

HAYES
Pot, kettle, black. Right Street?

OFF John's choked back anger-

INT. MERCEDES (MOVING) - DAY

Hayes pilots the car. John sits shotgun. He isn't happy about this new arrangement.

HAYES
Where to first?

JOHN
Homestead Lodge. I've got questions regarding their pharmaceutical supply order.

HAYES
They leave Valium on the pillow like hotel mints?

JOHN
Something like that.

HAYES
I shoulda booked there.

Street glances sidelong at Hayes-

INT. MERCEDES (MOVING) - DAY

They're coming up on Homestead Lodge. The fence and sprawl visible, the facility sedate, quiet.

JOHN
We get in you follow my lead, okay?

Hayes tightens his grip on the wheel-

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - INFIRMARY - DAY

A rudimentary treatment room, one we've not seen before. The room lights are low, to better reveal an INFECTED FOOT, bright under harsh exam lights. Gloved hands probe the area.

After a satisfactorily disgusting examination:

DR. ERSKIN (O.S.)
How often have you been changing your socks, Colt?

POP -- Room lights come up. DR. ERSKIN, warm and wooly, lab-coated and name-tagged, late 60s, turns from the roughneck's foot to see John and Hayes.

JOHN
Doctor Benjamin Erskin?

DR. ERSKIN
Yes?

John checks his paperwork, shows Erskin's medical license.

JOHN
Of 255 Winfred Lane?

DR. ERSKIN
What's this about?

John fast flashes his Rest EZ keycard in his wallet sleeve-

JOHN
We're with FDA Compliance and
Enforcement. Your license has been
flagged.

Dr. Erskin, a conscientious objector-type, looks between the two
serious men... Gulps.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - INFIRMARY HALL - DAY

Erskin is leading Street and Hayes down a hallway, fumbling KEYS
and words as he goes. We move with them-

DR. ERSKIN
I don't understand it... Flagged?
Like, what does that even mean?

JOHN
Probably nothing. With Obamacare
large-scale 'scripts monitoring
went digital -- Now it's just
computers looking for atypical
orders, we follow up... Kinda takes
the fun out of it, right Hayes?

Hayes just grunts in response. He lacks John's finesse.

JOHN
Machines spot something they don't
like, we come out and poke. Usually
it's nothing. Sometimes it's
something. How are your controlled
substances handled, doctor?

DR. ERSKIN
Gosh, shipment comes in first
Thursday of every month, moves
straight into the cage from the
truck. Here we are-

Erskin reaches a large closet space that's been modified into a
PRESCRIPTION CAGE -- A little holding cell for drugs. He uses
two keys to open it, flips on lights, steps back-

JOHN
Everything is held here?

John enters the space, scanning the shelves -- Whatever he's
looking for, it ISN'T THERE-

DR. ERSKIN
That's right... Is there a problem?

John presents him with one of the Homestead manifestos.

JOHN
Is this your signature?

DR. ERSKIN
Yes, but- This order... This can't
be ours.

JOHN
And why is that, Dr. Erskin?

DR. ERSKIN
Well, look at these: Lorazepam,
Ativan... These are
benzodiazepines. We got no call to
keep those on hand, and especially
in such quantities... And, this
here? The Norplant? I don't even
know where to begin with that...
(beat; returns form)
These aren't my drugs.

JOHN
Who else has keys to this room?

DR. ERSKIN
No one. Just me, and-

TIGGER (O.S.)
That's enough!

Tigger, plus a uniformed GUARD, has arrived -- Behind are two
more GUARDS, surrounding them -- Things ratchet up quickly-

TIGGER
Doc, scram!

DR. ERSKIN
These men are with the FDA.

TIGGER
They're no FDA. This one's a
corporate dick, and this must be
his rent-a-goon-

HAYES
...Goon?

JOHN
Stay calm, Ed-

Erskin, thoroughly confused, backs away -- The guard nearest
Hayes whips out an extending TRUNCHEON-

HAYES
Better be planning to use that to
direct traffic, Plastic Badge.

JOHN
We just had a couple questions,
that's all. We'll be on our way.

TIGGER
You're going nowhere 'til I get
some questions of my own answered-

HAYES
Fuck this-

-And then Hayes LASHES OUT at the guard behind him -- Spinning and BASHING his head into the cement wall -- The violence and brutality of it, JARRING-

JOHN
Don't-

The guard with the club lunges forward, cracks Hayes on the back of the skull, staggering him -- Hayes spins, twists the club from man's grip, SMASHES his forehead into the attacker's nose-

Suddenly Hayes' back ARCHES, muscles go TAUT -- Collapses -- The coiled leads of a STUN GUN poke from his back, extending from the third guard's hand-

JOHN
Whoa, whoa! This is all just- This
is a misunderstanding-

TIGGER
Smug bastard. Stay outta my camp.

BAM -- Tigger's FIST fills frame, driving John (AND US) down the express lane to dreamland-

SMASH TO:

BLACK

And quiet. Momentarily. Then up comes a voice, a new one we've only heard a few times before-

FISCHER (V.O.)
Ya sure been causin' a mess of
trouble, haven't ya?

INT. MUNROE SHERIFF STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

The cluttered interview space. Except more crowded this time: Seated on one end, finally viewed in full, is SHERIFF AL FISCHER, jowly and perspiring. Huey Long meets Boss Hogg.

Across the interview table, with CUFFED HANDS, are Street and Hayes. Hayes sports a gash on his forehead, hastily repaired with butterfly bandages. Street's got a prime shiner.

FISCHER
Running around, spinning up a
tornado of lies. Leavin' confusion
and destruction in your wake.

JOHN
I think we're owed a phone call?

Fischer smiles -- Then SHOVES the table forward, slamming it into John and Hayes -- Both exhale heavily, OOF!

FISCHER

Sticking your nose in open investigations. Clouding the judgement of my deputies.

JOHN

(coughing)

Where is Mattie?

FISCHER

Deputy Cooper allowed a suspect to go free. Deputy Cooper has been placed on administrative leave.

JOHN

She was too close, wasn't she? Too close to the stain this shitheel town's collectively agreed to drop a rug over top of-

WHAM! -- The table again connects with Street and Hayes-

HAYES

John, give it a rest!

FISCHER

You boys readers?
(to John)
I bet ya are, with your smart mouth. Am I right?

JOHN

You want help spelling 'Public Scandal'?

Fischer makes like he's going to SLAM the table again -- Street and Hayes FLINCH... Fischer smiles like a snake-

FISCHER

I was born in this shitheel town. Daddy farmed spring wheat. Now the schools, they weren't for nothin' -- Couldn't teach fakin' it to a six buck whore. But there was one thing stuck with me: Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven... So I never left. And now-
(spreads arms wide: "Here I am...")

Hayes and Street wait, knowing more is to come...

FISCHER

(drums fingers on table)
So, what're we to do with you?

JOHN

Enough of the routine. Either charge us or cut us loose.

Fischer is up and out his seat -- He moves surprisingly quick for a man his size -- GRABS a handful of Street's shirtfront-

FISCHER
You're getting charged, boy-

A sudden KNOCK on the door spares us the dispensation of Fischer's justice -- He goes to the door... Waiting there, just seen, is Caleb. Fischer half-shuts the door and they converse-

Only MURMURS are heard, but the discussion is a heated one... Finally, Fischer reenters. Cowed. A decision has been made.

FISCHER
There's someone else out here wants to talk to ya... But before I let her... Man runs Homestead called Norton, you know him?

JOHN
I met with him two days ago.

FISCHER
Seen him since?

JOHN
Why? Something happen to him?

FISCHER
He left for work this morning but never made it... You boys wouldn't know anything about that, would ya?

Hayes and Street share a puzzled glance. Fischer reads it.

FISCHER
Figures.

He steps out, trading places with a new entrant: Gina Sanger. She enters, sits... She's ALL BUSINESS. As though this meeting were taking place in a boardroom, rather than a police station-

GINA
(chipper)
Gentlemen. Glad I caught you...
(to Hayes)
I'm sorry, we haven't been introduced, Gina Sanger.

Hayes looks to Street, confused as all hell.

HAYES
Nice to meet you?

GINA
I just wanted to give you a little update as to where we stand. Mercury's agreement for purchase of Homestead is complete.

GINA (CONT'D)

They rode us hard on indemnification and earn-outs, but we felt that, in the end, their requests were more than reasonable.

JOHN

Get to the point.

GINA

The final step of the process is approval by our board of directors.

Gina produces two REST EZ ENVELOPES. Lays them on the table.

GINA

They will arrive for a formal presentation soon, and when they do I will summarize the terms of the agreement for them. And a representative from your organization will present its independent report as well.

Hayes has no idea what's going on-

HAYES

(to John)
What's she talking about?

JOHN

You'll like this part. I promise.

GINA

In these envelopes are two disbursements from a discretionary account, meant to guarantee expeditious completion of said report, as well as to express our gratitude for such... *Thorough...* Auditing during this process.

She removes one of the checks from its envelope. The amount has already been filled in -- It is for \$20,000.

GINA

(to Hayes)
Who shall I make it out to?

HAYES

Uh, Ed- Edward- Hayes.

She fills in the PAYEE LINE, tucks Ed's check back into its envelope, extracts the next check-

GINA

(to John)
And yours?

They LOCK EYES... And a lifetime passes. Somewhere in the world a baby is being born. But in here, in this crooked police station, in this flyspec town, a tattered remnant of John Street's soul is crying out-

HAYES
(answering for him)
John Street. That's great-

JOHN
(firm)
No.

Her eyes FLASH DANGEROUSLY-

GINA
...No? I hope you realize that to
reject this disbursement would
alter our relationship. Mercury
would no longer be able to provide
legal protection for any misconduct
during your time here.

John looks away.

JOHN
No... Emily Brogan. Make it out to
Emily Brogan.

Her lips curl into a the slightest of smiles... She's got him.

INT. CRUISER (MOVING) - NIGHT

John and Hayes ride in the rear of Fischer's undivided cruiser. He's chatting amiably, much for his own benefit as theirs. All signs of his earlier menace gone.

FISCHER
Time was Munroe wasn't much more
than farmland and floodplain.

John and Hayes aren't listening. Fischer doesn't care. John digs in his jacket pocket -- Difficult with cuffed hands.

FISCHER
And now I hear talk about fracking,
and how it's bad for the
environment or what the heck.

We see what John is up to: He takes the Rest EZ envelope containing the check, presses it up against the passenger window, begins to ADDRESS IT. Hayes watches him do this.

FISCHER
But I tell ya: In this town ya
could change your second name to
'fracking' and run for mayor.

John's writes: "Emily Brogan, 495 West End Ave."

JOHN
I hate to interrupt the Prairie
Home Companion there Sheriff, but
do you have any stamps?

Fischer's eyes GO HOT in the rear view-

EXT. REST EZ HOTEL - NIGHT

SCREEE! The cruiser jerks to a stop in front of the hotel -- Fischer clammers out, yanks John from the back seat.

FISCHER

Listen close: After your show at Homestead you clear out of our charming little town, hear?

Fischer uncuffs John. John massages his raw wrists.

JOHN

Charming? There are plagues that would skip this place on account of wasted effort.

Fischer breaks into a BIG GRIN-

FISCHER

Hey, don't forget our motto...
"Always a smile"!

And he plants a MEATY FIST in John's stomach.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Reception at the Rest EZ, same as always. The auto-doors part to admit Street and Hayes -- Or rather, Street on Hayes. The latter supporting the former.

HAYES

You just had to needle the man?

JOHN

There's nothing worse than corruption going nostalgic.

Hayes smiles at that. That's one he's gotta remember-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

They move down the hall. Tired after the day they've had.

JOHN

I'll take it from here.

John decouples from Hayes. Each at his respective room door.

HAYES

You alright?

JOHN

(nodding)
Nothing a night's sleep won't cure.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John enters the darkened room, letting the door shut behind him. He gropes for the lights-

They come on and he's staring at an IMPOSING FIGURE, dark and muscular, with matching SCARS carved outward from the corners of his eyes. It is for these scars that JAPA was named.

JAPA
Please, no shout.

Japa speaks with a thick BRAZILIAN ACCENT.

JAPA
Mano, he is... Nervous type.

John, still frozen by the door -- No idea what the hell is going on -- Startled by the emergence of another YOUNGER MAN from the bathroom, MANO.

JOHN
Figures. Put out the housekeeping sign, the help thinks they can spend all day in your room.

Japa smiles. Likes John immediately -- But he's had to hurt plenty of people he liked... Mano starts chattering angrily in PORTUGUESE. Japa translates.

JAPA
Mano want to know who is you?

JOHN
God's risen son. I vacation here to ruminant on hell.

Mano speaks no English... But is fluent in smart-ass. He violently SLAMS Street to the wall, holds a knife to his eye. He shows John the CORONER'S PHOTOS of the men who killed Kemper-

JAPA
Mano want to know for what you have these?

JOHN
Who are you...?

Mano is eye-to-eye with John... He's unhinged, desperate.

JAPA
These Mano's brothers.

John's face falls.

JOHN
I'm sorry.

Mano may break down at any moment -- Either tears or violence, not clear which...

JAPA
You ride with us.

JOHN
Sounds like a hoot, but I've got work to do.

JAPA

This was no question.

John's eyes slide to the shining REVOLVER that's appeared in Japa's hand -- Mano SHOVES HIM toward the door-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

John's hustled toward the back door by the Brazilian men -- Hazards a look at Hayes' room. Japa jams his gun in John's back-

JAPA

No.

EXT. REST EZ HOTEL - NIGHT

Mano runs ahead, opens the Monte Carlo, Japa indicates for John to climb in the back-

INT. MONTE CARLO (MOVING) - NIGHT

Mano drives with abandon, bloodshot eyes skipping between the road and rear view. Japa sits in the back with John, staring out the window. His face a blank.

As they drive Japa fiddles with a zippo, flicking it open and striking it, then snapping it shut, all in one motion -- CLICK... SNICK, SNAP! -- Over and over. A neat trick.

JOHN

You guys wanna give me a clue where we're headed?

No answer. Just: CLICK... SNICK, SNAP! -- CLICK... SNICK, SNAP!

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

The Monte Carlo turns off the highway onto an unmarked DIRT ROAD. Leads off into a field still patchy with snow... In the distance an OIL DERRICK shows on the dark horizon.

The noise of the lighter continues: CLICK... SNICK, SNAP! -- CLICK... SNICK, SNAP!

INT. MONTE CARLO - NIGHT

The car jerks to a stop. John peers out. The derrick LOOMS above, rust covered and in some disrepair.

EXT. ABANDONED DRILL SITE - NIGHT

The men exit the car. The place lonely, ABANDONED. The ground below, DEPLETED. Japa notices John noticing-

JAPA

Drained out. Long time.
(stamps ground)
Dead.

Japa gestures with his gun, toward the small utilitarian building near the drilling platform. It is dark.

JAPA

Come.

Mano SLAMS shut the trunk. He's got a JERRY CAN.

CUT TO:

MURKY DARK

And somewhere in it a WHINE, long and low. Like a trapped animal dying slow. ...Then, the CLICK... SNICK of the zippo -- Flame floating up into a GASLAMP-

INT. ABANDONED DRILL SITE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Light blooms through the dark interior of the abandoned site office, powder-coated with dust, empty for some time.

The details are unimportant, though -- All John can see is what's in front of him. And it's not pretty-

GILL NORTON, the man who toured John around Homestead Lodge early on, has been affixed to a metal chair with baling wire. HEMOGLOBIN has congealed all down his naked chest, poured from the remains of his face. His breathing is shallow, sharp-

GILL

Who- Who is it? Who's there?

Gill cocks his head awkwardly, trying to line up his ONE REMAINING EYE -- It's swollen shut -- Meanwhile, Mano and Japa force John into a similar chair across from Gill, twist wire around his wrists and legs -- Finally, Japa turns-

JAPA

Boa noite, Senhor Gill.

Gill RECOILS, screaming-

GILL

No! No more! Get away, just kill me or get away-

Gill topples his chair-

JOHN

Jesus, you're torturing him?!

Japa lazily wheels the gun in John's direction. Reminding him who's in charge -- Says something in Portuguese to Mano. Mano sets Gill's chair upright. And then he LOSES IT -- Mano begins senselessly ATTACKING Gill with abandon-

JAPA

Mano! No! No Mano!

Mano isn't hearing -- Right until Japa SHOOTS OFF the big gun into the wall, *BLAM!*

Mano FREEZES, panting, turns to Japa -- Japa shouts at him in PORTUGUESE -- A bit of a back-and-forth... Then Mano SPITS on Gill. And then he turns and leaves. Ordered outside.

JAPA

Desculpe... Mano, he has hot temper.

Japa tucks his gun away. Bends to pick up the jerry can. Gill begins to cry softly. John struggles against the wire, biting into his wrists-

JAPA

Senhor Gill is telling us about girls... Senhor?

Gill says nothing. Continues to cry... Japa adopts the look of a man disappointed in a half-trained dog -- Begins to SPLASH Gill from the jerry can -- Air overhead folds in waves from the fumes-

JAPA

Senhor Gill! Senhor Gill! Please tell us more about girls!

Gill snaps to, SPUTTERING -- Words begin to gush. They don't make much sense at first-

GILL

A year! A year! They just do a year and then he sends them back!

(gasp-gasp)

It's really not so bad! They're healthy, made comfortable! They're from the missions and the favelas, for godssake! He only takes unmarried, with no kids!

(gasp-gasp)

...And I protested! From day one! I swear to God I did!

JOHN

What's he talking about?

Japa splashes again, caught up-

JOHN

What's he- Stop! Gill, what are you talking about?

Japa looks at John.

GILL

(blubbering)

The girls! The girls! I got nothing to do with them! I don't even have the card for Thirty Nine!

JOHN
...What's he talking about?

Japa sets down the gas, leaving a trail from Gill's chair, reaches into his pocket -- Sets a tattered neon HANDBILL on John's lap. Turns back, squats by the gas trail.

John examines the document. It is old, near illegible, and written entirely in Portuguese -- But one thing is familiar-

Right there at the top is the HOMESTEAD LOGO-

JOHN
What does it say?

JAPA
A job. Is a job. "Young ladies wanted. *Empregadas domésticas* -- Maids. For to work in *Estados Unidos*. Medical care, good wage."

This falls heavily on John.

JOHN
Homestead is bringing them in?

GILL
They're treated good! They're treated good! I swear...

Gill breaks into SOBBING.

GILL
Please... I don't want to die...

Japa does his trick with the lighter-

JAPA
Shame, *Senhor Gill!* You seem to have no more to say...

And Japa TOUCHES the lighter to the gas trail. The flame races across the floor... And then-

...FWOOM!

The space is lit NOON BRIGHT, as Gill's SCREAMS echo throughout -- John struggles, horrified, but his bonds hold tight -- Japa just watches implacably, as Gill's thrashing slows and stops.

JAPA
(turning)
Now we are to find what you know.

John can't take his eyes from Gill's bubbling corpse-

JAPA
Mano, he no like it here. This Mano first time out *Brasil*.

Japa picks up the gas can. Playing the moment out.

JAPA
 Me? I no mind... Much- How you say?
 (throws arms wide)
 Space. Is no like *favelas*. Is you
 go many miles... And no people. Is
 you scream-

Japa demonstrates -- AAAAHHHHHH!

JAPA
 -And no one hear.

John knows Japa's trying to rattle him. And it's working.

JAPA
 (big smile)
 Is now questions... Who you are
 work for? Homestead?

JOHN
 No. I work for another company,
 Mercury. They're buying Homestead.

JAPA
 What you do at the home of dead
 guard two nights behind?

JOHN
 I was trying to figure why he got
 killed.

JAPA
 And why he get killed?

Gill's charred head FALLS OFF -- Disgusting-

JOHN
 Probably same reason as him. To
 figure where they're being kept.

Japa shows a toothy grin. Pleased John's piecing it together.

JAPA
 Where they keep them?

JOHN
 I'm not sure...

John trails off. Japa shakes his head... He holds the gas up by
 his ear, sloshes it.

JAPA
 Is still half full... "39"? Where
 this "39"?

JOHN
 I never heard of it before
 tonight... But I know who knows.

Japa gets down, nose to nose with John. Studying him closely,
 with his strangely scarred eyes.

JAPA

Who?

JOHN

Guy who works- Worked-
 (re: Gill)
 With him... Homestead's head of
 security. Zaitoon.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hold it!

This from the darkened DOORWAY -- Japa looks curiously, as-

MATTIE

(steps in)
 Right there! Put down the gas! Put
 it down!

Mattie is dressed in plainclothes, her service weapon drawn and ready, looking huge in her hand. Japa cocks his head. As though he's examining an exotic bird.

JAPA

Who you are?

MATTIE

Sheriff's Department. Now ya put
 your hands up real slow like.

JAPA

You are to shoot me, Gatinha?
 (chuckles)
 I think no.

MATTIE

I'm real serious now. Ya put down
 that down.

JAPA

Is easy to kill, you know?

MATTIE

You have until three.

JAPA

I do my first at 15.

Japa's free hand is slowly reaching for his hidden gun...

MATTIE

One.

JAPA

In prison cell. Ten men watch.

MATTIE

Two.

JAPA

This when I learn: Kill without
 pause. Or next time...

Japa drops the jerry can and his revolver FLASHES up -- BLAM!

With shaking hands, Mattie lowers her gun... Her face ashen and blank -- Japa CRUMPLES forward. Dead.

JOHN

Mattie... Mattie, quick. I need you to untie me.

She comes to, just keeping it together -- Puts her gun on the floor and kneels by John. Sets to work on his bonds-

JOHN

How'd you find us?

She's fumbling, gets one wrist free. Tears welling in her eyes-

MATTIE

I, uh- Picked ya up outside the hotel. And then I lost ya on the drill roads, there's just so many back here-

John's eye's widen -- Over her shoulder, a DARK SHAPE takes form-

JOHN

Look out!

She barely has time to spin as Mano HOWLS out of the dark -- SINKING his knife into her neck, toppling her over -- They go down in a heap -- Her gun skittering away-

JOHN

No!

John wrenches his other wrist out with painful effort -- Even as Mano scrambles back up... And they both see it at once: Mattie's SERVICE REVOLVER -- Kicked against a wall-

Both dive at the same time -- Awkward -- One of John's ankles is STILL WIRED to the chair -- They struggle, ripping at one another, totally brutal, inelegant --

Mano getting on top as John claws for the weapon -- John wrestles it to Mano's chest-

BLAM!

John shoves the corpse off him, lies back panting -- All at once, remembers: MATTIE -- Scrambles to his feet-

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A darkened master bedroom in a homey bungalow -- A peaceful scene. Broken by POUNDING at the front door.

JOHN (O.S.)

Doc! Doc, I need help out here!

The bedside lamp clicks on. A matronly woman, Doc Erskin's wife JUNE, turns and shakes the snoring man-lump next to her-

JUNE
 Benny... Someone's downstairs.

EXT. ERSKIN HOME - PORCH - NIGHT

Dr. Erskin pokes out his sleep-addled face. He gets a shock when he sees John, with Mattie in his arms. Just past, John's driven Mattie's cruiser right up onto the lawn. Lights still flashing.

INT. ERSKIN HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Erskin sweeps tchotchkies from his kitchen table. Erskin's wife looks on, clutching her house coat. John, layered with blood and sweat, lays Mattie on the table. She's pale, breathing shallow.

DR. ERSKIN
 Keep pressure on her -- June, hand
 me my bag and call Lewiston. Tell
 them to send a helicopter.

Erskin puts his stethoscope on Mattie. Doesn't like what he hears. Gets a bandage, Vaseline and tape from his bag.

DR. ERSKIN
 Her lung is punctured. Air's
 pocketing under her chest wall-

He coats the bandage with the jelly, pushes John's hand away from Mattie's wound. Opens her shirt and tapes three sides of the bandage down over the ugly gash-

JOHN
 Is she going to be alright?

The doctor's tone is grim. John squeezes his pendant tight.

DR. ERSKIN
 She's lost a lot of blood, EMTs are
 an hour away by air... What
 happened? You call the police?

JOHN
 She is the police. The only police
 worth a damn, anyway.

With that, John walks from the kitchen-

EXT. ERSKIN HOME - NIGHT

John makes for Mattie's cruiser, still idling out front. Erskin, baffled, follows behind -- Is this all some bad dream?

DR. ERSKIN
 (incredulous)
 You're leaving?

JOHN
 You ever been in unit thirty nine
 at Homestead, Doc?

Confusion shows on Erskin's face.

DR. ERSKIN
There is no unit thirty nine.

JOHN
That's what I thought.

John piles in the cruiser, backs right over Erskin's gardenias, then tears off into the stygian night-

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - HAYES' ROOM - NIGHT

A Rest EZ room we've not yet seen. Bed untouched. Only use of the facilities: Two HAND TOWELS -- One under a DISASSEMBLED PISTOL, the other being used to carefully oil the slide.

Hayes meticulously goes about his cleaning of the gun... Then, a frantic POUNDING at the door. His look the same as Erskin's earlier -- Who's there at this hour?

JOHN (O.S.)
Ed! Ed, open up!

Hayes obliges... And his legendary stoicism breaks, albeit slightly, at the sight of John, covered in Mattie's blood.

JOHN
Get your jacket.

HAYES
Why?

John's a nuclear reactor in full MELTDOWN-

JOHN
We're going to that camp. And we're
burning it to the fucking ground.

-And then he sees the disassembled pistol on the table.

HAYES
Slow down... What happened? Whose
blood is this?

Hayes follows John's gaze, sees he's looking at the gun.

HAYES
Look, get cleaned up and we'll grab
a drink, go over everything that
happened... Dan will be here soon.

JOHN
What? Why?

HAYES
I think he's worried. For you.

John seems to find an eye in his storm:

JOHN
 (absently)
 For me or about me?

And, for John, all moments in his life reduce to this one --
 Covered in a woman's blood in a crummy hotel hallway...

HAYES
 What?
 (beat)
 John?

JOHN
 (abruptly)
 I'll change.

John turns, crosses to his room. Hayes watches him enter, shuts his door and lifts his phone to dial-

HAYES
 We got a problem.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John comes in all at once, shuts and locks the door -- Examines the chaos brought on the room by the investigation...

PING! A text message comes into his phone. Digs it out, reads:

She paid for your silence.
 She paid him for the same.

The number is BLOCKED. And the message remains only momentarily, because a medication REMINDER, with the requisite Blackberry CHIME, shows over top.

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - JOHN'S ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

The water runs. John splashes some on his face, reaches for a towel -- Catches a look at himself in the mirror.. He looks bad.

And all at once it hits him: What if he's losing it? Spinning out, in the grips of some deep mania? He's been off-meds for awhile now. Can he trust himself to see this thing through?

The water keeps on running. He keeps on staring.

EXT. REST EZ HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hayes exits his room. Adjusts his canvas jacket -- A noticeable bulge, where the .45 waits... Reaches to knock on John's door-

HONK!-HONK! -- Hayes looks through the door at end of the hall, sees the Mercedes. John signaling to him from the driver seat-

CUT TO:

A SEA OF FACES

Old, young, white, black -- Multiform. But, all MEN. Some lives percolating, others rolling to a stop... A wistful tune plays.

INT. WHITE OWL BAR - NIGHT

JOHN

When it comes to regret, the
shrinks and the talk show hosts,
they all go one way --

He sits before us at THE WHITE OWL, a bar glowing with beer ads and testosterone -- Out of place in his clean shirt and jacket.

JOHN

Let it go -- Release -- Forgive
yourself, move on... Bullshit. I
gotta another way of lookin' at it-

He's talking to no one, talking to himself, talking to his untouched drink -- He's been here awhile.

JOHN

What if regret's useful? What if
that horrible sinking feeling --
that endless black that keeps you
up and breaks you down -- What if
regret's a talisman?

As he speaks he fiddles with his PENDANT -- Moving, always moving -- As though locked in some perpetual magic trick.

JOHN

Something a man can use to remember
where he's been, and protect
himself where he's going --

Hayes, sitting next to him, is listening, if just.

HAYES

It's time.

John nods, gets to his feet... Makes to tuck the pendant away -- It SLIPS -- It never slips -- Plinks down to the dirty bar floor-

He stares at it, among peanut shells and tobacco stains and God-knocks-what-else. So worn and tarnished, a symbol of everything he'd hoped not to become, and did... And then he turns and goes.

He leaves it behind, with all the other offal so casually discarded in this ugly place.

EXT. WHITE OWL BAR - NIGHT

Fronted by highway and a whole bunch of nothing else. Horizon broken only by a DRILLING PLATFORM.

John and Dan exit, make for the car-

JOHN
(offhand)
What time you say his plane was
getting in?

No answer -- Instead: *THUNK-*

Hayes hammers the butt of his PISTOL into the back of John's head -- Staggering him, dropping him to the muck-

JOHN
What the fuck!

HAYES
You a good talker, Street. Sure
most of it's bullshit, but still.
Wish it ain't come to this...

And Hayes begins screwing a SILENCER onto his .45 -- They both know what this means. Game over.

HAYES
Walk.

John slowly gets to his feet. Muddy, exhausted. Accepting his fate... Begins shunting into the snow-patched fields beyond.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

John walks with eyes directed up, seemingly at a remove from his situation. Pondering the mysteries. Then... Remembers-

JOHN
My pocket. The envelope. You'll see
she gets it?

HAYES
You got my word... That's far
enough.

John nods gratefully, stops and passes over the stamped Rest EZ ENVELOPE, flecked with mud. Hayes pockets it.

HAYES
Wallet, keys and phone too.

John passes these over without argument. Turns and gazes up at the night sky. Stars shine bright. An endless cosmic mandala.

JOHN
Grow up in the city and you go
months without seeing the night
sky. I remember I was little my Dad
taking us camping at Kisco, saying,
"Without real dark you never get a
chance for the stars."

Hayes does something unexpected: He smiles. He genuinely likes John... But he's a pro. The clock is running.

HAYES

There ain't nothing worse than corruption going nostalgic.

John nods, recognizing his words from earlier. Shows a last sardonic grin.

JOHN

Not the face, okay?

PSHINK! The shot punches John square in the chest. He drops immediately, crumpling in the muddy snow.

Job done. Hayes tucks away his gun, heads back for the car. Checks the wallet as he goes -- The billfold contains NO MONEY. Just pictures of Kate, cherubic, smiling up at him.

No reaction from Hayes -- He's a blank, an empty vessel. Simply trudges onward, into the windblown prairie night...

FADE TO:

DAN GRISHOM

In the flesh. Leaning on a rental car. Rubs his hands together, fighting a chill... Checks his watch. Waiting.

DAN

(to himself)
Look at this place. It's Siberia
with Walmarts.

EXT. BACK ROAD - NIGHT

Another lonely back road... After what feels like forever, a second car cruises up, joins Dan: John's Mercedes. Lights and engine cut. Hayes gets out.

DAN

Everything go okay?

HAYES

Fine... How was your flight?

Dan's mind is elsewhere.

DAN

Stupid. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

Hayes moves to the Mercedes's rear, busies himself-

DAN

I gave him a chance, you know? No one else would. I scraped him up.

Hayes finishes his work, joins Dan back by his rental car.

DAN

I tell him over and over, you take
your meds, you follow the rules.
Listen to the client. Do what the
client wants.

Both turn and stare silently at a gas-soaked rag, already
FLAMING, working its way down the Mercedes' gas tank-

B00000000M!

The two men flinch back as pieces of the car rain down on the
patchy Dakota landscape.

DAN

So why's he gotta do this to me?

INT. REST EZ HOTEL - RECEPTION - DAY

Dan and Hayes enter. Exhaustion curdles their faces. Long night.
Hayes stops. As far as he's willing to go.

DAN

You're leaving?

HAYES

Suitcase is already in the car...
Unless you need something else?

DAN

Best we get you in the wind.

HAYES

You got my number.

Dan nods and heads off down the hall. Hayes turns to go back out
the automatic doors... Then stops. Remembering-

He comes back and drops the ENVELOPE addressed to Emily in a box
labeled "Outgoing Mail". Then turns and heads for the edges of
the map, not to be seen again.

OFF this small evidence of the departed killer's humanity-

CUT TO:

A CARD

Homemade, in a second grader's scrawl: "Feel Better!"

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Mattie's bed is tilted up. She is pallid, bandages poke from her
gown. But ALIVE. She happily accepts the card.

MATTIE

For me?

BRADEN, usually a happy kid but today not so much, nods.

MATTIE
This is really nice, Bray.

BRADEN
I drew it last night.

Mattie's mother CAROL, Plains traditional, 50s, chimes in:

CAROL
He wanted to get flowers, but I
said keep your money -- We don't
need ta be spendin' on something
that's just gonna die in a day.

MATTIE
Gosh, thanks Mom.

She opens the card.

MATTIE
Braden, what is this?

The interior of the card shows two crude figures -- One with a badge, long hair and a GUN.

MATTIE
Is this me?

Braden nods. Near to tears.

MATTIE
And who is this?

The other crude figure is being SHOT. Crayola blood sprays.

BRADEN
The bad guy. Who hurt you.

MATTIE
Ya know that mommy doesn't shoot
people unless she has to, right?

Braden's big eyes, digesting -- Then-

FISCHER
Am I interrupting?

Fischer's appeared at the door. Mattie hardens at his arrival.

CAROL
'Course not. How are ya, Al?

FISCHER
Good. Happy ta see this one awake
and doin' okay.

MATTIE
Mom, take Braden home, will ya?
Sheriff Fischer and I need ta talk.

CAROL
 'Course. Real nice ta see ya,
 Sheriff. C'mon, Bray.

They exit. Fischer and Mattie watch them go -- Then:

FISCHER
 I wanted ta let ya know we got ID
 back on one of the guys ya found
 Street with. Brazilian national,
 some kinda real life Scarface, no
 pun intended. They're not even sure
 how he got in the country.

MATTIE
 What happened to John?

FISCHER
 Still looking. Found his car back
 on one'a them service roads gets
 used for drilling. Blown apart like
 a church girl during fleet week.

MATTIE
 He saved my life, Al.

FISCHER
 Did he? Way I see it, Erskin saved
 your life, Street fled. Or tried
 to... Who knows how he was mixed up
 with those boys?

MATTIE
 He coulda left me to bleed out.

FISCHER
 The important thing is you're okay.

Fischer glances at the clock. The room phone begins to RING.

FISCHER
 We found your cruiser at the hotel.
 I had it brought over for ya. But I
 oughta write ya up for the mess.

He sets her keys next to the ringing phone. Mattie says nothing.

FISCHER
 Look hon, I've got to go... Ya want
 me to get that for ya?

MATTIE
 Yah, just hand it over.

He does so.

FISCHER
 Take it easy, hear?

Fischer turns and leaves. Mattie puts the phone to her ear.

VOICE (ON PHONE)
 Mattie Cooper?

Mattie sits up a little.

MATTIE

Yes?

VOICE (ON PHONE)

Deputy Cooper, you don't know me
but I have a message for you.

OFF Mattie's steadily widening eyes-

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Mattie, in hospital gown and furred Sheriff's jacket, hustles into the hospital parking lot. Orderlies in pursuit.

She spots what she's looking for: Her cruiser.

CUT TO:

A LIGHT-FILLED DOORWAY

Mattie steps through, glances all around. She's changed into street clothes, carries a BANKER'S BOX.

INT. ANGIE'S - DAY

Mattie scans the restaurant, searching... Doesn't find what she's looking for -- It's all roughnecks tucking into breakfast.

WAITRESS

Table for one? Deputy?

Mattie goes right past her, walking the length of the restaurant. As usual, male eyes follow as she goes. She reaches the last booth where a hunched man polishes off a patty melt.

MATTIE

Not a very healthy breakfast.

He turns and looks up at her -- It's John, alive and well.

JOHN

Treating myself... You bring it?

She smiles, plops down the box, slides in across from him.

MATTIE

Stephanie knew just what ya were talking about.

Mattie notices she's sitting on something -- Holds up the BULLETPROOF VEST from her cruiser. It bears a SIZABLE SCAR at center. Right where Hayes shot him.

JOHN

Haven't made the cleaners, sorry.

She marvels at the vest as John opens the box, the one he never got to during his work at Burton Trucking.

MATTIE

What're ya hoping to find?

JOHN

Something. Anything that'll help us find them.

(reading)

Norplant, benzos... Jesus, these poor women... What else? There must be something...

Both stare at documents, scouring... Mattie taps an item-

MATTIE

Lots of vitamin D. Good in the winters, when ya don't see sun.

John looks at her like she's hit Cold Fusion -- Flips pages.

JOHN

Look at this: Mouse traps in bulk. A standing filter order for a recycled air system-

MATTIE

They're being held underground.

JOHN

Most likely.

MATTIE

But where? The camp is huge.

JOHN

To find a shell company, we'd look for empty offices. To find a subterranean prison? We look for ventilation.

EXT. ANGIE'S - DAY

John strides from the restaurant. Mattie's right behind.

MATTIE

I'm coming with you.

John continues walking.

JOHN

Your boss wouldn't like that.

MATTIE

I'm coming with you.

JOHN

It'll be dangerous-

The dry KLACK of a revolver hammer being drawn-

MATTIE
Hold it!

He turns. She's got her sidearm free.

JOHN
I thought you didn't like pulling
your gun?

MATTIE
I'm warming up.

JOHN
(beat)
We got a couple stops to make on
the way.

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Mattie watches nervously as John reenters her cruiser, tosses
SHOPPING BAGS on the seat.

MATTIE
This is your big plan?

JOHN
You got a better idea?

MATTIE
Sure. Call in the cavalry: State
police, FBI, whoever we can get.

JOHN
No time. If Homestead hasn't
disposed of the evidence, Mercury
sure will after taking over.

MATTIE
(beat)
"Disposed of the evidence"?

JOHN
Let's go.

His look is grim. She starts the car-

CUT TO:

A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Glowing on a projector screen showing one huge word: "Synergy".
Gina Sanger, dressed to kill, steps to fore.

GINA
And, just as Mercury takes pride in
anticipating the needs of the US
energy market, Homestead prides
itself on anticipating the needs of
its residents... Again you'll note
overlap in values and governance.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Widening out reveals a long, featureless conference room. Gina recedes back behind a podium.

GINA

Questions?

At the wide table are Caleb Leaten, Jamie Bliss and Dan Grishom, all business, plus Sheriff Fischer, barely awake.

The real audience though, the one that matters, is the eight member BOARD OF DIRECTORS, a mix of wealth and privilege. They swivel chairs from Gina to an LCD screen at the back.

CALLAN (ON SCREEN)

I think you shaded in the greys
pretty good, Ms. Sanger. Nice work.

Callan is VIDEO-CONFERENCED IN from a hospital bed in Dallas. Tubes and wires snake from his chest. He looks unwell.

CALLAN (ON SCREEN)

Now can we put this damned thing to
a vote and move to new business?

From a seat of cold remove, Jamie Bliss interjects:

JAMIE

Pardon me, Pep? Aren't you
forgetting something?

CALLAN (ON SCREEN)

Speak up, Bliss.

JAMIE

Our security consultant. Shouldn't
we hear from him prior to voting?

CALLAN (ON SCREEN)

Oh yes, Mr. Street... Where is he?

Gina fumbles. Dan Grishom swoops into the conversation.

DAN

I'll field this one. Mr. Callan,
I'm Dan Grishom, head of Security
Analytics. Mr. Street... John...
He's-

Door flies open. JOHN'S entrance is nothing if not dramatic.

JOHN

Sorry I'm late. Rig spun out in
front of me on the way over. I saw
my life flash before my eyes.

An apparition has just floated in, by the drop of Dan's jaw... In his blue collar get-up, John may well have resurrected as a roughneck: He's gone native.

Among the pressed and coiffed board members, he couldn't stand out more. And Sheriff Fischer? He's wide awake now.

GINA

(handling it)

No problem, Mr. Street. You're right on time. Please, if you will.

John takes the podium. Gina sits next to him, tense. As though a cobra were coiled just under her chair.

...And John begins to speak. He seems collected, cool. At first.

JOHN

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. First I'd like to thank Mr. Callan for the opportunity to speak here. I'd also like to thank Ms. Sanger, who's been incredibly helpful, and my boss, Dan Grishom, who was behind me a hundred percent.

Sweat beads on Dan's brow.

CALLAN (ON SCREEN)

That's real nice, Mr. Street. But none of us are getting any younger.

JOHN

Okay... Let's see, where to begin?

(drums his fingers;

playing out the moment)

I think Mercury Petroleum should definitely buy Homestead Logistics.

Gina Sanger relaxes ever so slightly.

JAMIE

That's it? Perhaps you'd like to offer up, I don't know, analysis?

He nods at the screen, glowing from Gina's presentation.

JOHN

Synergy, right? Both companies are malignant parasites, blind and heartless, eager to destroy lives for the slimmest of margins.

The room ERUPTS.

EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DAY

Mattie passes between buildings. She's in baggy clothes, with hair under a knit cap. Trying to blend, to pass, just about pulling it off... But still drawing looks as she goes.

She diverts for the leisure building, careful to pick it out by the mass of HVAC and plumbing equipment attached.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Now all speak at once -- A veritable cacophony of effrontery:

GINA Mr. Street, this is uncalled for!	JAMIE Wait, maybe we should hear-
--	--------------------------------------

CALLAN (ON SCREEN) Everyone, quiet!	BOARD MEMBER 1 Who is this man?
--	------------------------------------

SHERIFF FISCHER You pissant. I told you to-	CALEB Get security-
--	------------------------

CALLAN (ON SCREEN) I said be QUIET, GODDAMMIT!	
---	--

Callan degenerates into an ugly wet COUGHING FIT. This, combined with his shout, finally silences the room.

CALLAN (ON SCREEN) Now- (cough-cough)	Now- (cough-cough)
---	-----------------------

Now... Mr. Street... You were saying?

John smiles. Gotta admire the codger's grit.

JOHN Mercury is multinational, one of the biggest companies in the world, with revenues that put it neck-and- neck with the GDP of Norway. And to reach these lofty heights, the company has extracted unfair subsidies that cost taxpayers billions, engaged in brutal labor practices in some of the world's poorest countries, and promoted junk science claiming climate change is a fiction... All in the name of money.	
--	--

These things are all true. The room is quiet. Then Callan, on his screen, does something unexpected... He LAUGHS.

CALLAN (ON SCREEN)
You 'bout done there, hoss? Cause
I've had worse lashings mutton
busting as a kid.

JOHN
I'm just getting warmed up... It's
because Mercury and its people are
unscrupulous soup-to-nuts, that
"y'all" are such a fine pairing for
Homestead... An organization that,
while less destructive in scope, is
even more willing to plumb rancid
depths of human misery in search of
profitability-

Gina gets to her feet-

GINA
Enough. These are ravings, pure and
simple... Ladies and gentleman,
this man is unwell. We're clearly
witnessing some kind of breakdown.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - LEISURE BUILDING - DAY

An exiting roughneck pushes though the door to the leisure building. Before it swings shut Mattie slides through.

She scans the room, acting nonchalant. All appears normal: Some men watch TV, others shoot pool. She eyes the door to the gym, still monitored by two of Zaitoon's uniformed GUARDS.

One of the guards takes notice of her immediately -- Taps his buddy, pointing her out. She turns away quickly.

Too late. The guard begins picking his way across toward her. She casually heads away from him.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

It's now John who's set off-balance, reeling.

JAMIE
What are you talking about?

Gina shows an old TABLOID she's procured. Headline reads: "ORDER IN THE CLUB: Prosecutor Blinds Student in Posh Disco Brawl"

The splash photo is a SPLIT -- One side is a shot of a hulking COLLEGE KID, the other side shows a professional portrait of a YOUNGER JOHN. Face unlined, eyes agleam.

GINA

He was with DA's office in Brooklyn until 2008, when he clubbed some Fordham student near to death with a champagne bottle, during an altercation at a dance club. Took three men to drag him off...

(beat)

Turns out he has bipolar disorder, something he's failed to disclose to, well, everyone. Instead, he's been attempting to manage it on his own, taking prescription drugs without any medical supervision.

All eyes in the room swivel back to John. Exposed. Naked.

GINA

Now, since Mr. Street's arrival in Munroe he's grown increasingly erratic... All culminating in a brazen extortion attempt three days ago, where he promised to divert these proceedings unless I paid him a substantial sum.

CALLAN (ON SCREEN)

How can this be true?

Dan speaks up. Grim.

DAN

It's my fault. I should have seen the warning signs.

(to John)

I believe in second chances, John. But you've been unreachable... When was the last time you took meds? When's the last time you slept?

JOHN

I, uh- It's been...

John trails off, trying to remember. Seeming, more than anything, a man totally OUT OF CONTROL -- The moment breaks-

CALEB

SECURITY!

Two uniformed GUARDS burst in -- Sheriff Fischer stands.

FISCHER

Don't bother. I'll handle this-

JOHN

HOLD IT!

All FREEZE -- John has a gleaming black GUN pressed square to the head of Gina Sanger -- His speech is pressured, speedy -- Much like his daughter, when she's in the grips of her mania-

JOHN

Hold it right there, do not -- Do NOT -- Move a muscle... Now, since touching down in this Godforsaken stretch of flyover tundra I've been beat up, shot and nearly incinerated... Well now it's my turn! So all of you SIT DOWN and LISTEN... Very. Closely.

It's safe to say that John has LOST IT -- Mania oozes from his every pore... He's capable of anything.

FISCHER

Let's not do anything crazy-

John turns his ice pick eyes on Fischer-

JOHN

Sit. Down.

Fischer complies.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - LEISURE BUILDING - DAY

The guard is almost on her, reaching for his truncheon-

GUARD

Hey. Hey! Lemme see your ID card-

And just before she's exposed, his RADIO crackles:

VOICE (ON RADIO)

Gun in two, repeat, gun in two...

Both guards instantly break off for the door. Mattie breathes a sigh of relief... Then makes her way to the door of the gym.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

John's words tear over everything. A destroying avalanche:

JOHN

As Ms. Sanger was so kind to point out, Homestead prides itself on catering to the needs of its men. And what do men in this town need?

John turns to Caleb. Caleb's look hardens.

JOHN

Women.

DAN

John. Don't do this.

JOHN

But look around -- Not a great influx of them, are there? So somebody figured, 'Maybe we expand the search'.

DAN

Think of Kate, John.

John swings his gun toward his boss-

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - GYM - DAY

Mattie enters the gym. Flips on the lights for a look around. The majority of the high-end Nautilus machinery seems to never have been touched.

At the room's far end is a door. She moves toward it. Has a deep breath... All at once, YANKS it open-

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Dan is holding it together -- Just. Not the type who's logged much time staring down the business end of a .45-

DAN

What you're doing right now, it will end badly. And Kate needs you.

JOHN

(quiet; dangerous)

What did you say?

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - GYM - DAY

Mattie is staring with disbelief into a JANITORIAL CLOSET: Mop, bucket, spray bottles, a feather duster... Nothing.

MATTIE

No.

She tears things from the closet in frustration, scattering cleaning supplies, pounding the walls. Searching frantically.

MATTIE

No!

...And then there's no place left to search. She slumps down, against a wall in frustration. Hangs her head.

Then she notices something: The duster she'd thrown is MOVING. Being ruffled... Air is being pushed through a wall seam.

She scrambles to her feet. Moves to the wall panel against which the duster had fallen, pushes gently... It gives way. A metal SPIRAL STAIRCASE is revealed.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

John aims his righteous anger at his erstwhile boss -- Dan swallows heavily, his bravura shriveled and gone-

JOHN
What did you say?

John takes two very dangerous steps toward Dan-

DAN
Just, you know... Think.

John takes two more steps-

JOHN
What'd she give you, Dan? Options?
Cash? With your fucking rules and
your endless bullshit? What's YOUR
price you SON OF A-

CRACK!

John goes down hard, WHANGING off the table as he falls.

CALLAN (ON SCREEN)
Thank you, Ms. Sanger. I couldn't
take much more of that.

Gina sets down the STAPLER she'd brained John with, steps back. Security swarms John.

INT. WINDOWLESS SPACE - DAY

Mattie creeps down the spiral staircase, gun first. Playing it safe. Takes in what she sees: Empty desk, blank empty room, crucifix. A door, marked "39", propped open with mop and bucket-

She cocks her head -- Sounds are echoing out through the door. GRUNTING. Rhythmic and steady... Stops for a moment. Then starts up again.

INT. "39" - HALL - DAY

Mattie moves down a long, dimly lit hall with doors on either side. The rhythmic grunting continues from the far end -- Mattie takes a moment to peek into a door on her right.

Inside might be a prison holding cell: Thin mattress, stripped, plus exposed toilet and sink. But the room is done in garish PINK. Someone's idea of femininity... *Disturbing.*

Mattie grits her teeth, moves forward, clearing each identical room as she goes. All are empty.

Finally she gets to the last door on the left. The grunting is loud, now matched with heavy RUSTLING noises-

Mattie spins into the room-

INT. "39" - LAST ROOM ON THE LEFT - DAY

MATTIE
FREEZE!

Tigger turns to look up at her. He is shirtless, on hands and knees. Wearing rubber gloves, holding a BRUSH he was using to work at a ruddy brown BLOOD PATCH on the room's floor.

MATTIE
Where are they, Tig?

Tigger slowly gets to his feet.

TIGGER
Hey Mattie. Long time no see.

Tigger drops his brush in a murky bucket.

TIGGER
How's Braden? He been up to see his daddy lately?

MATTIE
I'm real serious. Where are they?

TIGGER
Who?

MATTIE
The girls ya had down here for...
Use. Of the men... Ya didn't...

She cuts eyes at the blood, trails off.

TIGGER
Oh, them. No Mattie, c'mon. I'm not a monster... They're in a flatbed container bound for Port of Newark.

MATTIE
(re: blood)
What's that?

TIGGER
Well, somea them needed...
Encouraging.

INT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

John is hauled to his feet by the guards.

FISCHER
Take him to my car.

Dan collects John's gun from the carpet. Lighter than he expected. It leaves a tacky black BLOTCH on his palm-

DAN
What is this?

Gina takes it from him, with a pen through the trigger guard-

GINA
A toy. Spray painted. Probably on
the way over.

Dan shakes his head in disbelief.

DAN
He lost it. He totally lost it.

CALLAN (ON SCREEN)
Show's over, folks. Let's get back
to work.

INT. "39" - LAST ROOM ON THE LEFT - DAY

Tigger snaps off his rubber gloves, one at a time.

MATTIE
Who knew? Caleb? Al?

TIGGER
Everybody. Everybody knew. Heck, I
figured ya knew too... It was Stu
first suggested it.

Her ex. His brother. She recoils.

TIGGER
Heck Mattie, ya were married to the
guy. Ya know him better than
anyone.

MATTIE
Stu? No. This is too much. Even for
him.

Tigger pulls his cigarettes from his pocket. Slow.

TIGGER
Nah, this is an irresistible
amenity. As in, "Hey Tig, ya know
what'd be an irresistible amenity
at them mancamps?"

MATTIE
That's people you're talking about.

TIGGER
They was willing ta come thousands
'a miles to scrape roughneck shit
from communal toilets... And this
is so bad?

MATTIE
You're disgusting.

TIGGER
 Ya didn't answer my question...
 Braden see Pooh lately?

Tigger pats his pockets, casting around for matches-

TIGGER
 A boy should see his daddy.

He spots his matchbook on the grimy pink coverlet. Under the pillow, just visible, is a GUN. But Tigger takes the matches.

MATTIE
 Braden's never seeing either of ya again, never.

Tigger lights up, takes his time -- Not taking his eyes from hers. The gun in her hand, rock solid-

TIGGER
 (then-)
 So what're we doing here-

BLAM.

The back of Tigger's head FANS OUT across the oily pink wall behind -- He slumps, collapses, mouth moving soundlessly -- Smoke drifting from nostrils and ENTRY WOUND.

Cold blood.

Mattie lowers her weapon.

A part inside bricked over. A good part.

She leaves.

EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - LEISURE BUILDING- DAY

Mattie exits. Legs unsteady. Falls to her knees. VOMITS.

There. Done. Resolve settles on her like a cloak. She'll wear this day the rest of her life-

Then she sees John being tossed into Fischer's cruiser. Shit.

INT. CRUISER (MOVING) - DAY

Fischer talks and drives. John is woozy. HANDS CUFFED. Ugly gash on his forehead where he caught that table.

FISCHER
 Gotta hand it to ya, you're one
 resilient bastard.

Fischer slows the car.

FISCHER
 Crazy as a goddamn beached whale.
 But resilient.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Fischer turns the car from the highway onto one of the innumerable access roads that crisscross the area.

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Fischer U-turns, brings the car to a stop. Cuts the engine.

JOHN
(faint)
I promised...

FISCHER
What's that?

John trails off. Fisher pulls his revolver, snaps it open.

JOHN
(faint)
To take my daughter to the museum... I promised.

He pours bullets from the chamber into his palm. POCKETS them.

FISCHER
This gonna be the first promise to her you broke?

JOHN
It was going to be the first one I kept. In a long while, anyway.

Fischer closes the now empty gun, turns and holds it to John:

FISCHER
Take it. Go on.

John's eyes slip shut. Sees it all clear -- Something else, though... Through the windshield -- Unseen by either man-

Mattie's CRUISER is barreling STRAIGHT AT THEM.

FISCHER
"Suspect became unstable, went for officer's service weapon. Officer fought off suspect, though deadly force was required--"

Ker-SMASH!! The car IMPODES-

EXT. ACCESS ROAD - DAY

Quite a sight: The two identical cars shattered in what could have been some sort of law enforcement demolition derby.

The door on Fisher's cruiser wrenches open with a SQUEAL -- Fischer tumbles out -- Bleeding from nose and ears-

FISCHER
MATTIE!

He's screaming. Spitting. All blind gothic RAGE -- Raises his gun, points it toward-

FISCHER
MATTIE!

And we see her now -- She's dazed, PINNED -- Trying desperately to get free of her car -- TOO LATE-

Fischer PULLS THE TRIGGER-

-Click.

Empty. Of course.

Whips open the chamber, digs into his pocket -- Reloads -- Snaps the gun shut -- Saunters right on up to her destroyed windshield -- No way to miss at this range -- The whites of her eyes-

URK! -- The sheriff is DRIVEN down to the gravel -- John's on him, cuffed and bleeding, HAMMERING with clasped hands -- And SCREAMING -- PRIMAL, ANIMALISTIC -- As he swings down, over and over, locked in a state of PURE ID-

MATTIE
John... John. It's okay. Relax,
John. It's done... Over.

John looks up -- Mattie is there. Freed of her car. Hand on his shoulder. Motherly tones in her voice...

MATTIE
It's okay. It's over.

John's released from his fugue state... Looks down to find Fischer, brutalized. Pummeled into a bloody heap.

He slackens, practically falls over. Lays in the road. All the manic energy finally drained off.

TIME CUT TO:

A KEY

Mattie works it into John's handcuffs. They're both exhausted, sitting on the hood of her ruined cruiser.

JOHN
You find 39?

She nods. Gets the cuffs off. They fall to the gravel.

JOHN
And the girls?

She just shakes her head.

JOHN
But, Zaitoon? You arrest him?

MATTIE

He's dead.

Can't believe what he's hearing-

JOHN

So all this? It was for... Nothing?

Mattie roots in her pocket-

JOHN

All of this...

Finds what she's after -- Her little DIGITAL RECORDER:

MATTIE (ON RECORDER)

I'm real serious. Where are they?

TIGGER (ON RECORDER)

Who?

MATTIE (ON RECORDER)

The girls ya had down here for...
Use. Of the men... Ya didn't...

John slumps back as RELIEF floods through him. Mattie looks around. Studies the remains of her old life. Her face sets.

She's determined to see this through.

CUT TO:

MATTIE

With same set face, now sat before us, smartly dressed, with a LAVALIER clipped on. The recorder continues to play-

MATTIE (ON RECORDER)

That's people you're talking about.

TIGGER (ON RECORDER)

They was willing ta travel
thousands 'a miles to scrape
roughneck -BLEEP- from communal
toilets... And this is so bad?

MATTIE (ON RECORDER)

You're disgusting-

Playback stops, as a grim faced NEWS ANCHOR turns toward her.

NEWS ANCHOR

Again, that disturbing tape was
taken by Mattie Cooper, a Sheriff's
Deputy from Munroe, North Dakota...
Deputy Cooper, what was your
initial reaction when you
discovered this ongoing act of...
Depravity... In your town?

MATTIE

Shock, I guess. And, ya know, disgust.

NEWS ANCHOR

Single mother of a young son, just eight months as a law enforcement officer to that point- Tell us, how was it you were able to piece together one of the largest sex trafficking scandals in US History?

MATTIE

It started with a dead man, a security guard.

NEWS ANCHOR

And you wouldn't let go-

EXT. PORT (NEWS FOOTAGE) - DAY

Footage from inside a maze of shipping containers at a busy port. In it police and first responders guide WOMEN, malnourished and scared, to waiting ambulances.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

-And that tenacity lead to a shipping container at the Port of Newark, inside which were 28 Brazilian nationals, who had been held for the better part of a year.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

Mattie shifts in her seat, uncomfortable with the cameras, uncomfortable with the praise.

MATTIE

Yah, I was just doing my job.

NEWS ANCHOR

But it did require you to exercise lethal force, did it not?

MATTIE

He had a gun.

These words ring HOLLOW. Only we know why... He speeds right past. TV news missing the point, as usual.

NEWS ANCHOR

Well, Caleb Leaten, founder of Homestead Logistics and the man behind the alleged conspiracy, awaits trial on 107 felony counts.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)
Homestead's new owner, Mercury Petroleum, has its stock in freefall and both its CEO and General Counsel have resigned, leaving the huge company in the hands of a relative unknown, a Mr. Jamie Bliss... But one question remains-

The anchor surprises Mattie with a PHOTO of John.

MATTIE
...I don't, uh- What're ya lookin' for, here?

The anchor really goes for it, angling for his duPont Award-

NEWS ANCHOR
John Street, a disgraced attorney with a violent history of mental illness, was hired to investigate Homestead as part of Mercury's purchase. It's been suggested that he learned of the ongoing crimes and solicited bribes in exchange for his silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The interview finishes out on the TV in Emily's Upper West Side living room:

MATTIE (ON TV)
John's a good man. He risked his life ta save those women. He saved my life too.

The TV is shut off, the door can be heard to open and close...

...And we PAN DOWN to an end table. Atop it, next to a darling photo of Kate, is A LETTER. It lies open, as if recently read, next to its envelope from the Rest EZ-

JOHN (V.O.)
Dear Emily-

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Emily rides in her building's elevator. Examining her reflection in the metal door. Grappling with something.

JOHN (V.O.)
This envelope once had a check...
And now there's only promises-

EXT. 84TH STREET - DAY

Emily exits her building, begins walking. It's lovely out. Springtime in Manhattan is a fine time, indeed.

JOHN (V.O.)
 I promise that I will be a better
 father. I promise that I will be a
 better man.

EXT. PS 9 - DAY

Emily passes PS 9, playground brimming with happy, typical
 youngsters. A cheerful girl waves to her. Emily waves back.

JOHN (V.O.)
 I promise that my legacy will be
 more than faulty wiring.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK WEST - DAY

Emily turns onto Central Park West. The trees awash with
 blossoms. So different from the stark emptiness of North Dakota.

JOHN (V.O.)
 And most of all, I promise that
 from here on I will be there for
 you. I will be there for Kate. And
 together, we will find a way to
 make it work.

EXT. MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY - DAY

Emily climbs the wide stairs at the entrance of the iconic
 museum. Everywhere are people: Men, women and children.

JOHN (V.O.)
 PS: Would you call the hospital in
 Lewiston, North Dakota and ask for
 Deputy Mattie Cooper? Ask her to
 pick up where I left off at Burton.
 And tell her I owe her a sandwich.

CUT TO:

THE WHALE

Well known to every NYC school child. Gigantic and blue,
 suspended like some inflated Dalí, in the Hall of Ocean Life.

INT. MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY - DAY

Kate, face full of wonder, marvels at the giant fiberglass
 mammal. Locals and tourists wander about.

KATE
 The blue whale is the biggest
 animal ever to have lived, ever!

John, sporting a new pink SCAR on his forehead, is close behind.
 It's family day at the Museum.

JOHN
 Is that right?

KATE
(nodding)
Bigger than dinosaurs, even!

JOHN
Really?

KATE
(nodding)
And they live together in families.
They don't like to be alone.

JOHN
No one does.

Kate notices something past her father-

KATE
YOU CAME!

Kate runs to her mother, who is approaching from behind. As she and Kate embrace, Emily turns eyes on John. Saying more with a look than any words could.

EMILY
'Course I did... What'd I miss?

...And John breaks into a grin, open-hearted and truly happy.
He's finally regained his peace.

And it's right here in front of him.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END