

BREAKDOWN

by

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Revised First Draft

**FOR EDUCATIONAL
PURPOSES ONLY**

FADE IN:

EXTREMELY TIGHT ON ELECTRONIC GUTS

of a video camera. The screwdriver blade of a Swiss Army knife ENTERS FRAME, methodically tightening a row of screws.

PULL BACK to reveal:

EXT. BOMBARDED NEIGHBORHOOD (WAR-TORN COUNTRY) - DAY

On the backslope of a mound of rubble, a three-man TV crew (field producer, reporter, and cameraman, all wearing flak jackets) waits while the cameraman, JEFFREY TAYLOR, works to repair his malfunctioning minicam.

Throughout this sequence, ROD, the reporter, types on a laptop computer, oblivious to what is happening around him.

HOWARD, the field producer, lies on his stomach, peering cautiously over the crest of the rubble through binoculars.

Beyond him we see an empty street. It is lined with buildings blasted by shells: a sawtooth wall in the f.g., a ruined high-rise at the end of the street, billboards in an unrecognizable foreign language.

HOWARD

How about it, Jeff?

Jeff finishes his repair job, snaps the minicam closed.

JEFF

Done.

Jeff slips the knife back in his pocket, scrambles over the loose bricks and stones to a position next to Howard.

EXT. SAWTOOTH WALL - DAY

A frightened woman lurks nervously in the shelter of the wall. She is young, in her early twenties, with shining dark hair down to her shoulders. She's carrying an armload of books.

EXT. MOUND OF RUBBLE - DAY

Jeff focuses the minicam.

MINICAM POV

FRAMED in the viewfinder we see the frightened woman.

HOWARD (O.S.)

Nice legs.

Jeff ignores Howard, PANS the minicam DOWN the street.
In the viewfinder we see the flash of sun on metal.

EXT. RUINED HIGH-RISE - DAY

A row of blasted windows. In one of the windows, a
sniper crouches. Sunlight glitters on his rifle barrel.

EXT. MOUND OF RUBBLE

JEFF

(matter-of-fact)

Sniper.

HOWARD

Where?

JEFF

High-rise. Top floor. Window in
the middle.

HOWARD

(looking through
his binoculars)

Stay on him. Stay on him. Now go
back to the woman. Now!

Jeff swings the minicam and --

EXT. SAWTOOTH WALL - MINICAM POV

-- the image blurs, then holds steady on the frightened
woman. Nervously, she peeks around the corner.

HOWARD (O.S.)

Back to the sniper.

EXT. MOUND OF RUBBLE

HOWARD

Stay tight on the sniper.
Jesus -- look at him! He's about
fourteen! Don't lose this!

Jeff kneels on the ridge, minicam on his shoulder.

EXT. RUINED HIGH-RISE - POV THROUGH VIEWFINDER

Jeff's minicam ZOOMS IN ON the sniper. The sniper sees the woman peeking and gets his rifle in firing position.

JEFF

He sees her.

EXT. MOUND OF RUBBLE

HOWARD

Stay on her. If she runs, widen and try to get her and sniper in the same frame.

Jeff turns his head away from the camera and stares at Howard.

JEFF

I said he sees her.

HOWARD

I heard you. Stay on her.

Jeff looks to Rod for support but he's busy typing, oblivious.

Jeff hesitates, then lifts the minicam to his eye again.

EXT. RUINED HIGH-RISE

The sniper, taking aim.

EXT. SAWTOOTH WALL

The frightened woman decides to make a dash for it. She takes off her high-heeled shoes, inhales deeply, gathering herself to run.

EXT. MOUND OF RUBBLE

Jeff watches through his viewfinder:

JEFF

(under his breath)

No... no...

EXT. STREET

The frightened woman bolts, sprinting barefoot across the cobblestones, skirt lifted, slender legs flashing.

EXT. MOUND OF RUBBLE

Jeff jumps to his feet, waves the minicam, shouting:

JEFF
Sniper! Sniper! Sni--

STREET

The woman looks up in Jeff's direction, confused,
breaking stride --

We hear a burst of automatic gunfire --

RUINED HIGH-RISE

In the window, the winking muzzle-flash of the sniper's
AK-47.

STREET

The woman's body jolts from the impact of the bullets.
The books go flying from her hand. She spins to the
pavement, her hair billowing.

JEFF

just stands there, a shattered expression. The camera
hangs at his side. He stares at the dead woman as a pool
of dark blood expands around her body.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOGAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (BOSTON) - RUNWAY -
NIGHT

A 747 touches down on the tarmac.

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL - NIGHT

A late-model Jeep Cherokee is parked at the arrival curb.
AMY TAYLOR, Jeff's wife, peers out from behind the wheel,
scanning the crowd.

HER POV

Jeff, carrying a single bag slung over his shoulder,
emerges from the terminal.

BACK TO SCENE

Amy gets out of the car, grinning. Jeff sees her and hurries over. He drops his bag and they fall into each other's arms, kissing hungrily. These are two people passionately in love with each other.

AMY
God, I missed you.

JEFF
Me too.

AMY
Let's get out of here. Where's your equipment? Don't tell me you checked it?

JEFF
(holds up his bag)
This is it.

AMY
No camera?

Jeff shakes his head no.

AMY
No nothing?

Again Jeff shakes his head. Amy arches an eyebrow.

AMY
Ah ha.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFF AND AMY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A modest apartment in the Back Bay neighborhood. Not much furniture, but lots of books and CD's. On the walls, blow-ups of arty photographs -- Amy in modeling poses, plus many black-and-white scenery stills.

Jeff's bag is unopened on the floor. We see two nearly full wine glasses on a table. The CAMERA TRACKS DOWN a hallway TO the open bedroom door.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

More framed photographs.

Amy lies in bed, curled up against a pillow. The sheets are tangled in post-coital disarray, the only sign of disorder in this neatly arranged room.

CLOSER

Amy stirs, reaching her hand out toward the other side of the bed, which is empty. She opens her eyes, surprised to find herself alone.

AMY

Jeff?

No reply.

Something catches her attention from across the room. She rises, pulls a loose robe around herself and pads over to a closed door. She knocks softly.

AMY

Can I come in?

JEFF (O.S.)

Sure.

INT. DARKROOM - NIGHT

A walk-in closet has been converted into a small photographic darkroom. Moist 8 X 10 prints hang from a clothesline, bathed in a warm red glow. The images are moody black and white landscapes.

Jeff stands over the developer, timing a print. Amy enters through a thick black curtain behind him. He doesn't look up.

AMY

Couldn't sleep?

Jeff shakes his head. Amy looks over his shoulder at a landscape photograph in the developing tray.

AMY

I remember when you took that. We had fun on that trip, didn't we?

Jeff nods. Amy looks at him. After a beat:

AMY

You want to talk about it?

JEFF

There's nothing to talk about.

AMY

C'mon, Jeff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF
I told you. I quit. Walked out.
end of story.

AMY
That's it?

Jeff nods.

AMY
Whatever happened back there
wasn't your responsibility. You
can't keep beating yourself up
over it.

He says nothing.

AMY
What do you think? You could have
stopped that girl from getting
killed?

JEFF
You don't understand...

He stops, lifts his eyes.

JEFF
It was different this time.

He breaks off and pushes through the curtain. She
watches him go.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT

Jeff pours himself a glass of milk. Amy enters, stands
on the other side of the counter. Jeff doesn't meet her
eyes. After a beat:

JEFF
I talked to Reynolds.
(a beat)
He thinks I could still get the
job at the San Diego station.

AMY
Oh, Jeff, you didn't...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

Think of it. Low pressure, a steady paycheck. So I shoot city council meetings -- how bad could it be?

She looks at him, concerned.

AMY

Is that what you really want -- or are you just running away?

JEFF

Who's running? It's good money, full benefits. I'm tired of freelance. We could finally put some money in the bank.

AMY

You know I'll never stand in your way. But you've worked so hard. Are you sure you want to throw it away?

JEFF

Throw what away? Don't you get it? I don't do anything. I sit, I watch, I film -- I let it happen.

AMY

You're supposed to let it happen. It's your job.

JEFF

No, Amy. It's my excuse.

She looks at him, not understanding. He hesitates.

JEFF

That girl... it's like I was paralyzed. I wanted to do something, but I didn't. I just stood there and watched her get killed.

He looks at her, emotional.

JEFF

Please, babe, I need this. Say yes and we'll take as long as you want -- drive cross-country and make a vacation out of it. What do you say?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Amy looks at him, considering. We hear a faint RUSH OF WIND. Then it gets LOUDER... LOUDER... and --

CUT TO:

EXT. CREDIT MONTAGE - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - LOW ANGLE - DAY AND NIGHT

The metallic grill of the Cherokee explodes INTO FRAME as the car whooshes over us, hurtling down the Massachusetts Turnpike.

In a SERIES OF SHOTS, with CREDITS OVER, we see landmarks from the cross-country trip: a Pennsylvania Dutch farmhouse, a smoke-spewing factory in Ohio, the Mississippi River, Kansas wheat fields, Loveland Pass and the Continental Divide.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OPEN DESERT - DAY

The middle of nowhere. Sand, weeds and sagebrush. A two-lane highway stretches to the horizon like a ribbon of asphalt.

The Cherokee cruises along the road. Its Massachusetts plates seem out of place in this stark landscape.

There are no other vehicles.

MOVING CLOSER, we see that Jeff is driving. Amy is sound asleep in the reclined passenger seat.

In back, luggage, moving boxes, camera cases.

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE - DAY

The AIR CONDITIONING WHISPERS. On the console are two empty Styrofoam McDonald's coffee cups and a state-of-the-art Nikon Camera.

Jeff stretches in the driver's seat. He forces his eyes open, fighting sleep. He reaches for the coffee cup... it's empty. He glances into the back of the Jeep. There is a thermos of coffee on the back seat.

Keeping one hand on the wheel, he reaches for the thermos and fumbles it to the floor. He strains to reach it. He doesn't notice...

EXT. HIGHWAY - 200 YARDS AHEAD

A slow-moving Dodge Ram pickup truck is approaching the highway along a small road that cuts across the desert floor.

The pickup, equipped with oversized tires, roll bar, and a CB whip antenna, bounces over the uneven terrain and turns onto the highway, stopping just before entering Jeff's lane.

INT. CHEROKEE - DAY

Jeff glances up just in time to see the Ram lurch into the road in front of him. Jeff drops the thermos and spins the wheel!

Amy's eyes fly open --

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The Cherokee goes into a wild looping skid. The Ram jerks to a halt as the Cherokee whips past, averting a collision by inches.

INT. CHEROKEE - DAY

Jeff expels a breath. Amy turns to see the pickup stopped in the road. She looks at him, concerned.

AMY

Jesus, Jeff...

JEFF

Sorry. I took my eyes off the road.

AMY

(seeing thermos
on floor)

Maybe it's time we took a break,
you know?

Jeff nods, looks in the rearview mirror.

HIS POV - PICKUP

halted in the middle of the road. Inside, dimly-visible through tinted windows, are two figures in cowboy hats.

The driver leans out the window and gives Jeff the finger.

BACK TO JEFF

angry at himself. He looks over at Amy.

JEFF

I'll pull over next chance we get.

(a beat)

Sorry...

He glances in the rearview again, still a bit shaken.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

A small desert gas station/mini-mart just off the highway. A sign over the building: "Last Gas For 30 Miles." The Cherokee is parked at the pumps, hood raised.

Jeff comes out of the mini-mart, carrying a plastic quart of oil. He unscrews the cap and starts to fill the crankcase, careful not to spill on the new engine. In the b.g., Amy is visible inside the store, browsing a magazine rack.

INT. CONVENIENCE MART - SAME TIME

Amy thumbs through a cheap tourist guide, The Desert Southwest. A TRUCK DRIVER stands nearby, perusing the magazines. He glances in Amy's direction, notices what she's reading.

TRUCKER

On vacation?

Amy looks up at him. He's 50ish, plain-looking, friendly, wearing a "U.S.A." logo baseball cap.

AMY

Sort of. We're moving, actually.

TRUCKER

Whereabouts?

Amy hesitates. She's not used to talking with strangers, but the guy seems harmless enough.

AMY

California. We thought we'd take the scenic route.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRUCKER

Huh. In that case, you oughta try the Pass Road, 'bout thirty miles west. Real pretty, makes a loop through the hills, then hooks back up with the highway.

Amy smiles politely, moves toward the cash register.

AMY

Thanks. I'll mention it to my husband.

The Trucker tips his cap.

TRUCKER

Okay, then. Good luck. Enjoy the rest of your trip.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

As Jeff continues pouring the oil, he doesn't notice the mud-streaked Dodge Ram pickup pulling up to the pumps behind him. The driver, EARL, climbs out. The other man remains in the cab with the smoked windows rolled up.

Earl is a beefy man about Jeff's age. He wears a sweat-stained Western hat, cowboy boots and a T-shirt with the sleeves cut out to display his tattooed biceps. He saunters over to the Cherokee, stands there a beat, looking over Jeff's shoulder.

Jeff senses something behind him, turns. His eyes widen as he sees Earl, recognizes the pickup as the one he nearly hit a few minutes before. Earl stares at him, unsmiling.

EARL

(flatly)

Nice car.

Jeff is in an awkward position. He's got a half-full upside-down bottle of oil in his hands. If he lifts it now, he'll spill on the engine. He turns his gaze back to the engine, decides to keep pouring.

JEFF

Thanks.

Earl steps around to the open passenger window, peers in. Jeff watches him, wary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EARL

Air, C.D., leather -- I guess you sprung for the whole nine yards.

JEFF

I guess.

EARL

Then again, out here, what you really need's a C.B. radio.

JEFF

Is that right?

The oil bottle empties out. Relieved, Jeff pulls it away and screws back on the crankcase cap. He shuts the hood with a thunk and moves around to the side of the car to remove the gas nozzle from the tank. Earl blocks his path.

EARL

'Course, if you use a C.B., you gotta have a handle.

Jeff says nothing. This is not a friendly conversation.

EARL

How about Shit-for-Brains?

(beat)

You damn near killed us back there, boy.

JEFF

Look, I'm sorry, I didn't see you. You pulled out in front of me.

EARL

The hell I did. I saw what happened.

Looking past Earl, Jeff sees Amy come out of the mini-mart with a bag of groceries. He speaks carefully, anxious to avoid a confrontation.

JEFF

How about if we just forget it, okay? I'm sorry it happened. I don't want any trouble.

EARL

(snorting)

Yeah. I bet you don't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Earl glares at Jeff before turning away. He passes Amy, gives her a broad smile.

EARL

Howdy, ma'am. Caught this fellow tryin' to steal your Cherokee.

Amy takes in the situation. She nods politely. Earl continues into the mini-mart. She approaches Jeff, puzzled.

AMY

What was that about?

JEFF

Nothing. Guy in the truck. Thinks I tried to hit him.

Jeff glances apprehensively at the man in the pickup, who has not moved during the scene. He looks back at the mini-mart.

JEFF

C'mon, let's go.

AMY

You want me to drive?

JEFF

Later. Just get in.

AMY

Is something wrong?

JEFF

No, let's just go.

Jeff climbs in behind the wheel. Amy glances at him and gets in the car. Jeff keys the IGNITION and pulls away.

INT. CHEROKEE - DRIVING - DAY

As Jeff steers back onto the highway, he glances in the rear-view mirror, sees --

MIRROR POV

Earl coming out of the mini-mart, staring after the disappearing Jeep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff shifts in his seat, relieved to be getting away from there. Amy watches the speedometer as it climbs to 75, then 80, then 85.

AMY

This isn't the Grand Prix, you know.

Jeff releases his foot from the accelerator. The needle sinks back down to 65.

She gives him a long contemplative look.

AMY

What's bothering you?

JEFF

I told you. Nothing.

(pause)

The guy was an asshole.

Keeping an eye on the rear-view mirror, Jeff nods toward the grocery bag, trying to change the subject.

JEFF

What'd you get?

Amy pulls out an assortment of candy bars and junk food.

AMY

Junk food fiesta. Sno Balls, Yoo Hoo, Moon pies... can you believe they still make this stuff?

JEFF

You kidding. It's probably gourmet cuisine around here.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - AERIAL - DAY

Far below us, the Cherokee traces the empty highway. There are no buildings, no houses, no other vehicles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHEROKEE - DRIVING - FEW MINUTES LATER

Jeff drives in silence. Amy stares out the window, bored. Looking for a distraction, she picks up a cellophane package of doughnuts and peruses the label.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMY
 (trying to brighten
 the mood)
 This is crazy. Look at this.
 Says if you win this mail-in
 contest, you can choose either
 ninety thousand dollars or ninety
 thousand doughnuts.

She gives him a playful glance.

AMY
 What would you do with ninety
 thousand doughnuts?

Jeff shrugs, disinterested.

JEFF
 I dunno... Sell 'em for thirty
 cents each and pay off this car.

AMY
 Very funny.
 (beat)
 Alright, what about ninety
 thousand dollars? What would you
 do with that?

Jeff stares out the window. He's not into this.

JEFF
 I don't know. Look, Amy, I'm
 not --

Suddenly his eyes drop to the console between them --

JEFF
Sonofabitch!! My camera! He
 stole my camera!

AMY
 (startled)
 Who?

JEFF
 The redneck at the gas station!
 He lifted it right under my nose!
 My brand new Nikon.
 (pounds wheel
 in frustration)
Goddammit.

AMY
 Should we go back?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

What's the use. He's probably halfway to Bumblefuck now, the bastard.

AMY

Look, maybe if we call the cops --

Jeff is about to reply when suddenly the car bucks.

JEFF

What the hell?

The car gives another jolt.

AMY

What'd you do?

JEFF

Nothing. I --

A warning light flashes on the instrument panel. The brakes and steering lose power. The engine quits cold.

JEFF

Hang on -- I can't steer!

The CAR bucks and SCREECHES. After a few HICCUPS, it jerks to a halt, just beyond a crest in the road.

For a moment, they sit there dazed, staring ahead at the empty road. Then Amy notices an object on the floor -- the Nikon. She picks it up.

AMY

(deadpan)

Found your camera.

He rolls his eyes. He yanks the hood release and gets out.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Steam pours from under the hood of the Cherokee. Amy gets out and looks around at the scorched wasteland. Jeff goes to the front of the car, gropes under the hood for the release latch. He yanks his hand away, burned by the hot metal.

JEFF

Ow!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMY
Are you okay?

JEFF
I'm fine.

Amy moves to Jeff to examine the burn. She reaches out.

JEFF
(annoyed)
I said I'm fine, okay?

Jeff lifts the hood, examines the engine. He tugs on a cable, checks the battery connection and radiator.

He goes to the passenger's side and takes a hand-held cellular phone from the glove box. He dials zero and hits "send." The PHONE BEEPS.

AMY
Out of range?

Jeff grunts, tosses the phone on the seat. It bounces and lands on the floor. Amy watches as he returns to the engine and begins unscrewing the radiator cap.

AMY
What's going on, Jeff?

JEFF
What's it look like? I'm trying to fix the car.

AMY
Not the car.

JEFF
What?

AMY
What's going on with you?

Jeff busies himself with the engine, not answering.

AMY
It's been a month since you got back. You can't keep shutting me out like this.

Jeff says nothing.

AMY
Jeff, I'm talking to you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

(flaring)

Look, I really don't want to go into this right now. I'm changing jobs, our finances are fucked, and we're stuck in the middle of nowhere. So could we maybe just fix the --

He stops in mid-sentence. There is a RUMBLE in the distance. They look down the road.

JEFF

Christ, not these guys...

JEFF'S POV - DODGE RAM PICKUP

approaching fast on the road. As it streaks past, Earl yells and launches a beer bottle from the window. The BOTTLE SHATTERS on the asphalt.

BACK TO JEFF

watching the Ram speed away.

JEFF

Asshole...

AMY

(looking down
the road)

Jeff --

A quarter-mile away, the pickup is slowing. It pulls a U-turn and stops, facing the Cherokee. It just sits there, ENGINE IDLING.

JEFF

What the hell?

AMY

What's he doing?

JEFF

I don't know.

Jeff watches the pickup, frowning. Then, from the opposite direction, they hear a LOW RUMBLE. They turn and stare at --

MASSIVE TRACTOR-TRAILER

coming over a crest in the road.

It's a huge eighteen-wheeler. A white 1988 Peterbilt. It grinds into low gear and slows, BRAKES CREAKING.

The TRUCK comes to a halt with a HISS of compressed air.

DOWN HIGHWAY

the PICKUP STARTS UP again. It pulls another U-turn and drives away, melting into the desert.

AMY

breathes a sigh of relief.

The driver dismounts from the cab, leaving the ENGINE IDLING. We recognize him as the Trucker in the mini-mart. He removes his cap, revealing a shock of prematurely white hair. He is well-shaven, his clothes immaculate. His name is Red.

RED (TRUCKER)

You folks all right?

JEFF

Yeah. Our car broke down.

RED

(chuckling)

I figured that much. You want a hand pushing it off the road?

JEFF

Thanks, I'd appreciate it. Amy, you want to steer?

Amy gets behind the wheel and puts the shift in neutral. Jeff and Red push the car to the shoulder. As they push, Jeff glances at the CB antenna on Red's cab.

JEFF

Think you could radio a tow truck for us?

RED

I sure would if I could, mister, but my C.B. blew a fuse this morning. I'm waiting till I hit the truck stop on I-40 to get it fixed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

How far is that?

RED

About 60 miles.

JEFF

(disappointed)

Oh.

Red walks around to the front of the car and peers down at the exposed engine.

RED

I'd offer to take a look, but it's hard to say with these new engines. Used to be, you could give 'em a kick and a holler and they'd start right up. Now it's all computers and chips.

JEFF

It's a new car.

RED

That could be the problem. You been running it pretty fast?

Amy gives Jeff a reprimanding look. It's subtle, but Red notices.

RED

Tell you what. If you want a ride, there's a little diner up the road. Belle's. They got a pay phone. You could call a tow truck from there.

Jeff considers this, glances back to where the Dodge Ram was last seen.

JEFF

Nice of you to offer. But we've got a lot of stuff in the car. I think we're better off waiting for a cop to come along.

Amy rolls her eyes. Red sees the look, trying not to smile. He glances up at a small plane flying overhead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED

(casually)

Suit yourself. Not many cops on this road, that's why the truckers use it. Maybe you'll get lucky.

(tipping his cap)

Good luck.

He turns and heads back toward his truck. Amy looks at Jeff. She waits till the trucker is out of earshot.

AMY

Are you nuts?

JEFF

We don't know this guy.

AMY

He's offering to help. It could be hours before anyone else comes along. It's 100 degrees. You really want to be stuck out here?

JEFF

Amy, I've got my equipment in the car. All our stuff. What if those guys come back and we're not here?

(turns away,
quietly to
himself)

Jesus... don't be stupid...

Amy hears this. She's had enough. Flares.

AMY

Stupid is sitting out here waiting for a cop when we already have a ride.

In the b.g., the TRUCK is THROTTLING UP. Then, mad and careless:

AMY

Stupid was letting you talk me into leaving Boston.

She turns away. The truck starts to pull out. She bites her lip, thinking, then steps into the road and flags the truck down. Red brakes.

AMY

Excuse me? Do you think you could drop me at that diner?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED

(surprised)

Sure thing. How about you, mister? I could take you both just as easy.

AMY

That's okay. My husband wants to stay with the car. I'll just get my purse.

She goes to the passenger side of the Jeep for her purse. Jeff follows, lowering his voice.

JEFF

What do you think you're doing?

AMY

I'm going to the diner. I'm going to call a tow truck. Then I'm going to order an iced tea and wait. Good-bye, Jeff.

JEFF

(firm)

You're not riding with that guy. End of story.

AMY

You wanted to be alone. Well... you're alone. Why don't you take the time to get your head together?

She walks to the truck. Jeff stands there. She climbs into the cab. Red moves some papers out of the way.

RED

Watch your step, ma'am.

She pulls the door shut. The TRUCK THROTTLES UP and pulls away. Jeff watches the truck dwindle in the distance, flashers blinking. After a beat, the flashers cease.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROADSIDE - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Beneath a blazing sun, Jeff paces restlessly in front of the Cherokee, checking his watch, wiping beads of sweat from his face. He looks down the highway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nothing in sight. Extremely bored, he wanders over to the raised hood and studies the engine again.

After a few moments, something catches his eye. Curious, he kneels down and peers under the chassis. He frowns.

JEFF'S POV - LOOSE WIRE

dangling under the engine.

BACK TO JEFF

JEFF

Oh for Christ's sake...

He pulls his Swiss Army knife from his pocket and slides under the car. Working with the screwdriver blade of the knife, he reconnects the plug to its socket. In the process, his hands and shirt become stained with grease.

Jeff slides out from under the car, brushes himself off and gets behind the wheel. He tosses the Swiss Army knife on the center console and keys the ignition. The ENGINE ROARS to life.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - MINUTES LATER

The Cherokee speeds down the empty highway.

INT. CHEROKEE - SAME TIME

Jeff drives, a determined expression.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

The Jeep blows past.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BELLE'S DINER - DAY

A weather-beaten structure with a gravel parking lot. A peeling sign on the roof: "Belle's: Beer & Food." There is a phone booth outside.

The Cherokee pulls in and parks. Jeff CHIRPS the ALARM, heads for the entrance.

INT. BELLE'S - DAY

Dark and dingy. Formica tables, a bar. Chunky customers in K-Mart clothes sit at the bar, nursing beers and watching a football game on a big MUTED TV.

Jeff enters and all conversation stops. The other patrons turn and stare. After a moment, they return to their beers.

Jeff glances around. No sign of Amy. No sign of Red.

A bored-looking BARTENDER stands behind the counter, preparing a sandwich. Behind him, a blackboard menu. Jeff approaches.

JEFF

Excuse me.

The Bartender looks up, a cutting knife in his hand.

JEFF

I was supposed to meet my wife here.

The Bartender shrugs, gives him a look: Yeah, so?

JEFF

Dark hair, slender, about five-five. Wearing a pale blue Benetton shirt.

BARTENDER

A pale blue what?

JEFF

Benetton shirt.

The Bartender plops the sandwich on a plate, tears off an order slip.

BARTENDER

Hank! Your order's ready.
(to Jeff)
I been busy. They come and go.

JEFF

It would've been within the last half hour. She might've been with a trucker?

BARTENDER

A trucker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

Guy with a baseball cap. Driving
an eighteen wheeler.

The Bartender thinks a moment, shakes his head.

BARTENDER

Don't ring a bell.

JEFF

You sure?

The Bartender leans over the counter, calls out:

BARTENDER

Hey! Man here's looking for his
wife, dark hair, button-on shirt,
travelin' with a guy in a baseball
cap. Anybody see 'em?

Jeff looks up and down the counter. Blank faces, a few
disinterested shrugs, a few headshakes no.

A disheveled female barfly, FLO, grins up at him.

FLO

Looks like she got away from ya,
cowboy.

A few of the regulars chuckle at this. Jeff ignores
them, turns back to the Bartender.

JEFF

Could she have left a message with
another one of your employees?

BARTENDER

Don't see how. I'm the only one
who works here.

Jeff scratches his head. This doesn't make any sense.

JEFF

I don't understand. Is there
another Belle's Diner?

BARTENDER

(chuckles)

No siree. Definitely not.

Jeff clenches his jaw, takes another look around. An
elderly couple sit at a rear table, watching him. They
whisper to each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF
(under his breath)
Shit.

He turns and goes outside...

EXT. BELLE'S - DAY

Jeff squints in the bright sunlight.

Maybe he got this place confused with a different diner. He peers up at the sign. It says "Belle's," all right.

He walks to the phone booth, looks inside. The phone book is missing.

He picks up the receiver, listens for the dial tone... Phone works okay. He hangs up.

He stands there for a moment, scanning the horizon in all directions. There is nothing else out here, nowhere else she could have gone.

Jeff marches back into the diner...

INT. DINER - DAY

Jeff goes to the Bartender.

JEFF
Excuse me, how far is the next town?

BARTENDER
About twenty miles.

JEFF
Look, if my wife comes in -- her name is Amy -- tell her I was here. Tell her to stay put till I get back, not to move. Would you do that, please?

BARTENDER
(shrugs, bored)
Okay.

Jeff regards the Bartender skeptically. He takes one last look around, then heads out.

EXT. BELLE'S - DAY

Jeff marches briskly to his car and opens the door, forgetting to deactivate the alarm. The SIREN WAILS. Jeff fumbles for the remote and shuts it OFF.

HIGH ANGLE - MOMENTS LATER

The Cherokee pulls out of the parking lot, kicking up gravel.

CUT TO:

INT. CHEROKEE - DAY

The stereo is off, the windows rolled up. Jeff drives, his jaw set tightly.

The speedometer reads 88 mph.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - MINUTES LATER

The Cherokee crests a rise...

INT. CHEROKEE - DAY

... and then across the desert plain, traveling on another road, he sees it...

PETERBILT

The 18-wheeler that picked up Amy. Cruising leisurely.

Jeff presses the accelerator...

EXT. FORK IN ROAD - DAY

The Cherokee turns sharply onto the other road.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - AERIAL VIEW - DAY

The Cherokee speeds down the road, gaining on the Peterbilt. It comes up behind.

INT. CHEROKEE - DAY

Jeff HONKS his HORN, flashes his lights.

JEFF
C'mon, you fat-ass. Pull over.

Either the driver doesn't notice, or he's ignoring Jeff, but the truck does not slow down.

Jeff shifts into the oncoming lane and pulls alongside the cab. He HONKS again and waves, gesturing for the truck to pull over. But the Peterbilt maintains its speed.

Jeff cranes his neck to get a glimpse of the driver...

POV SHOT

It's Red, alright. But he's wearing a different cap. FROM this ANGLE, we can't see into the passenger side of the cab.

Red peers down at Jeff, puzzled. Jeff shouts at him, waves:

JEFF
Pull over! Pull over!

Red suddenly notices something ahead in the road, BLARES his HORN.

Jeff looks up, sees --

An RV camper approaching in the oncoming lane!

HIGHWAY

Jeff swerves onto the far shoulder as the RV whooshes past in the opposite direction, HORN BLARING.

CHEROKEE

Jeff is rattled, catching his breath. He swings back onto the road.

HIGHWAY

Jeff slips in ahead of the Peterbilt, then starts weaving and braking, forcing the truck to slow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Both vehicles pull to the side of the road and stop. Jeff leaps out of the Cherokee and runs over as Red climbs down from the empty cab.

(NOTE: Throughout this scene, various cars and trucks pass in either direction.)

RED
Jesus, pal, what the hell you
doing?

JEFF
I was signaling you to stop.
Didn't you see me?

RED
No.

Jeff reacts. How thick can this guy be?

JEFF
Where's my wife?

RED
Huh?

JEFF
My wife. Where is she?

Red gives him a puzzled look.

RED
How should I know where your wife
is?

JEFF
I checked at the diner. No one
saw her there.

RED
Mister, I don't know what you're
talking about.

Jeff stares -- is this guy nuts?

JEFF
You gave her a ride. You were
supposed to drop her at Belle's
diner.

Red searches his memory, trying to be as helpful as possible. He shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED

Nope. Sorry.

JEFF

How can you not remember? It was just half an hour ago, for chrissakes!

Red gives him a peculiar look.

RED

Mister, I never seen you before in my life.

Suddenly, there is a loud SQUAWK from inside the cab -- the CB RADIO.

CB VOICE (V.O.)

(filtered)

Breaker, breaker -- Iron Man, you copy?

JEFF

(reacts)

Your radio works --

(locks eyes with Red)

What the hell are you doing -- ?

Jeff freaks out, circling the truck, calling loudly:

JEFF

Amy? Amy?! You in there?

Red shrinks back, unnerved.

RED

Look, mister, I don't know what you want, but --

JEFF

I want my fucking wife, is what I want! What have you done to her?!

Red's eyes dart to something in the distance. Jeff catches this, turns...

SHERIFF'S PATROL CAR

Cruising toward them.

Jeff runs into the middle of the road and waves frantically. The patrol car switches on its flash bar and speeds up, pulling to a stop behind the Peterbilt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF BOYD, 50ish, climbs out, sizing up the situation.
Jeff runs over.

JEFF

Officer, I need your help!

SHERIFF BOYD

What's your problem?

JEFF

I don't know, this guy has my wife!

SHERIFF BOYD

Calm down, sir. Tell me what's going on.

Jeff catches his breath.

JEFF

I don't know what the hell's going on. Last time I saw her she was with this guy in his truck. Now he's saying he's never seen her!

RED

Officer, he's crazy -- I don't know what he's talking about.

JEFF

Don't lie, you son of a bitch!

The Sheriff unsnaps the safety strap on his holster...
just a precaution.

SHERIFF BOYD

All right -- everybody just calm down.

(to Jeff)

Sir, you want to tell me what happened?

JEFF

Our car broke down. This guy stopped to help us, said he'd drive my wife to a pay phone. But she never showed up.

SHERIFF BOYD

(turning to Red)

Sir?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED

I don't know, officer. I'm driving along, suddenly this fella runs me off the road and starts hollering about his wife. I swear, I never seen the guy before.

SHERIFF BOYD

And you didn't give his wife a ride?

RED

No, sir.

JEFF

He's lying!

The Sheriff takes a long look at both of them, unsure what to think. He turns back to Red.

SHERIFF BOYD

Sir, all right with you if I search your truck?

RED

Hell yes, officer. Go right ahead. Name's Red, by the way. Red Barr.

(pulls out his
wallet)

My permits are all current. You can check 'em out.

SHERIFF BOYD

That won't be necessary yet. Just stand back behind the line. Both of you.

As Red closes his wallet, several credit cards fall to the ground. He bends to scoop them up. Jeff eyes this suspiciously.

The Sheriff climbs up into the truck.

INT. PETERBILT CAB - DAY

The Sheriff pokes his head inside, looks around.

Pretty much what you'd expect in a long-haul big rig: a CB radio, a plastic Jesus, a map of the U.S. taped to the ceiling with hundreds of magic marker X's showing where the truck has been.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Sheriff looks into the sleeping area behind. A blanket is folded over a foam mattress. A stained pillow rests on top.

EXT. PETERBILT - DAY

Jeff and Red keep a careful eye on each other as the Sheriff climbs down from the cab, wiping his hands.

SHERIFF BOYD
 (to both of them)
 All right, let's see your license
 and registration.

Jeff and Red fish into their wallets and hand over I.D.'s. The Sheriff examines them, comparing faces to pictures and writing down names.

SHERIFF BOYD
 What are you hauling today, Mr.
 Barr?

RED
 Nothing, empty load. I'm heading
 to Fresno for a pick up -- ball
 bearings or something.

SHERIFF BOYD
 (eyeing him)
 Long way to go empty.

RED
 Tell me about it. Too much
 competition nowadays. One horse
 guys like me gotta drive halfway
 'cross the country just to get a
 payin' job.

JEFF
 (to Sheriff,
 impatient)
 Are we gonna keep looking or what?

The Sheriff hands back the I.D.'s.

SHERIFF BOYD
 Yes, we are.
 (to Red)
 Sir, I'm gonna have to see
 everything.

RED
 No problem. I understand.

EXT. REAR OF PETERBILT - DAY

Jeff and the Sheriff observe as Red unlatches two heavy padlocks. Grunting, he raises the slatted METAL DOOR. It retracts along the ceiling with a noisy RATTLE.

INSIDE

The cavernous interior is mostly empty, except for a few randomly strewn cardboard boxes, too small to contain a person.

SHERIFF BOYD

(re: boxes)

Those yours?

RED

Yeah. Personal stuff. Clothes and whatnot. You want to take a look?

The Sheriff considers it, shakes his head.

SHERIFF BOYD

No. I think we're pretty much done here. You're free to go.

JEFF

(reacts)

Whoa, whoa -- wait a sec. That's it? You're not going to question him anymore?

SHERIFF BOYD

Sir, I searched the truck. There's no evidence of suspicious activity, no sign of struggle.

Red has been looking on. He chimes in, trying to be helpful:

RED

Look, I don't mean to butt in, but maybe you got my truck confused with someone else's.

JEFF

(lunges)

Go to hell, you sonofabitch --

The Sheriff grabs Jeff, holds him back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF BOYD

Hey! Hey! You want to get arrested? Now the man has a point. This is a plain-looking, John Doe truck. Maybe you did get them mixed up.

Jeff stares at the Sheriff a beat, then bolts suddenly for the front of the truck. He yanks open the door and leaps up into the cab.

SHERIFF BOYD

Hey!

The Sheriff jogs after him. Red walks to the cab, unconcerned.

INT. PETERBILT CAB - DAY

Jeff searches the cab for signs of Amy. He tosses aside a jacket, rifles papers on the floor. There is nothing.

EXT. CAB - DAY

Sheriff Boyd looks up sternly as Jeff continues searching the cab. Red watches calmly.

SHERIFF BOYD

Mr. Taylor, either you come down from there or I'm going to have to arrest you.

Jeff gives up reluctantly. He looks lame and desperate and he knows it. He steps down from the cab, gritting his teeth.

JEFF

It was him. It was this truck.

SHERIFF BOYD

Uh-huh, I can see that. Did you get a license plate?

Jeff stares at him, knows where this is going.

JEFF

No.

SHERIFF BOYD

What about the information on the door panel. You recall any of that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

I wasn't paying attention.

The Sheriff studies him a beat, nods.

SHERIFF BOYD

Mr. Taylor, did you by any chance have a beef with your wife today?

JEFF

What does that have to do with anything?

SHERIFF BOYD

Well, for starters, maybe she left you.

JEFF

I don't believe this...

SHERIFF BOYD

I've seen it a hundred times. Lovers, married couples, gay guys. You put two people in a car long enough, they'll go at it. Hell, I've even seen men dump their women on the side of the road, and vice versa.

Jeff stares at the cop. Emphatic:

JEFF

My wife did not leave me.

RED

(cuts in)

Officer, I'm sorry, I'd like to stay and help, but I really got to make it to Fresno...

SHERIFF BOYD

I understand. Go ahead, sir. I appreciate your cooperation.

JEFF

This is insane. You're just going to let him go?

SHERIFF BOYD

I've got his information. If we need to find him later, we'll know where to look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED

Much obliged.

(to Jeff)

Good luck findin' your wife,
mister. No hard feelings.

Red climbs into the cab. Jeff watches helplessly, resigned to the fact there's nothing more he can do. The Sheriff goes to the cruiser and speaks on the radio. As the truck drives off, Jeff goes over to the cruiser.

SHERIFF BOYD

Sir, I believe you that your wife is missing. Maybe you got confused about what truck she got into, maybe you had a fight -- you don't have to tell me. The point is I'm trying to help.

He hands Jeff a card with an address printed on it.

SHERIFF BOYD

The town of Brackett's 31 miles that way. My deputy's name is Len Carver. He's a good man. He'll help you fill out the necessary forms if you want to report your wife missing.

Jeff clenches his jaw as the words sink in. The Sheriff softens, his tone sympathetic.

SHERIFF BOYD

If you want my opinion, your wife is probably around here. Lost or plenty pissed off and giving you a scare. Either way, she'll turn up.

As Jeff stares at the Sheriff, the police RADIO SQUAWKS.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

(filtered)

Sheriff, this is dispatch. Mrs. Gilbert's locked out of her trailer again. Can you respond?

SHERIFF BOYD

(into mike)

10-4, dispatch. Tell her I'm on my way.

He racks the mike.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

I want your name and badge number.

The Sheriff looks up at Jeff, sighs.

SHERIFF BOYD

Sheriff Arthur Boyd. 226-93.
This really isn't necessary --

JEFF

Don't tell me what's necessary,
goddamnit. I'm noting the exact
time of this conversation. 10:52
A.M.

SHERIFF BOYD

(exhaling)

Suit yourself, Mr. Taylor.

The Sheriff shifts into gear and drives away. Jeff is left standing on the side of the road, desert in all directions.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A wall is covered with missing persons' notices. Photographs of men, women and children stare back at us. Names and dates are printed across the bottom of the notices.

PULL BACK to reveal Jeff staring at the gallery of faces. It's a creepy feeling. Several yards away, DEPUTY LEN CARVER, a young puffy-faced lawman, sits at a desk filling out a form. Jeff looks shaken.

DEPUTY CARVER

Is this a recent picture?

Jeff glances over. Deputy Carver is holding up a wallet-sized photograph of Amy.

JEFF

Two months old.

DEPUTY CARVER

She still wear her hair like that?

JEFF

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Deputy resumes filling out the form. He clicks his tongue sympathetically.

DEPUTY CARVER

We'll certainly do our best, Mr. Taylor. There's over a hundred thousand people go missing in this country every year. Runaways, deadbeat dads, dropouts, folks hiding from the I.R.S. -- all vanishing without a trace.

Jeff stares at the faces.

DEPUTY CARVER

Now I'm not saying she's one of them. I sure hope not. But unless there's a ransom demand or evidence of forced abduction, believe me, the F.B.I. won't even look at your case till it's been 24 hours.

Deputy Carver finishes the paperwork and staples the photograph to the form. He looks up at Jeff.

DEPUTY CARVER

Nevertheless, we'll sure keep our eyes peeled. How's that sound?

Jeff clenches his jaw.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOF OF BELLE'S DINER - DAY

From this high vantage point, we see Jeff's car approaching.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The Cherokee pulls up to the side of the building. Jeff gets out and walks inside.

INT. BELLE'S DINER - DAY

Jeff enters, looks around. It's the same scene as before: same Bartender, a slightly different cast of characters.

No sign of Amy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff advances to the Bartender, who stands at a sink rinsing beer mugs.

JEFF

Did she come in?

BARTENDER

(looks up, uninterested)

Didn't see her.

JEFF

You didn't see her, or she didn't come in?

BARTENDER

Buddy, I told you the last time. I'm busy. Maybe she came in, maybe she didn't. All I know is, I didn't see her.

Jeff looks around, not particularly trusting the Bartender's skills of observation. He grinds his jaw.

The other customers at the bar have been watching all this. One of them, an older grizzled BARFLY, looks up at Jeff.

BARFLY

(confidentially)

None of my business, mister. But if I was you I'd take a look in the ladies room.

The Barfly gives Jeff a wink and turns back to his beer. Snickers from some of his bar mates, who avert their eyes when Jeff glances at them. Jeff knows this is almost certainly a put-on, but he can't take a chance.

While the Barflies watch, poker-faced, Jeff walks to the door of the ladies room, hesitates, then knocks. His knock is answered by a wordless sound, HALF-GROAN, HALF-GASP.

JEFF

Amy?

Silence. Jeff tries the door. It's locked. He rattles it. Another GROAN. Jeff puts his shoulder against the door, heaves inward. The door swings open, revealing --

INSIDE BATHROOM

Flo, bent over the toilet, vomiting. She whirls around, a strand of spittle dangling from her lip.

FLO

Hey -- what the hell you doing?!

Jeff backs away, yanks the door shut. The barflies chuckle among themselves.

Jeff strides angrily for the exit. He stops at the door, takes one last look around. No one seems to be paying him much attention. He turns to leave...

... but something stops him. He can't put his finger on it. There's something wrong here...

He stares at the other customers. Why do they avoid eye contact? Are they hiding something?

He scrutinizes more closely...

There is the gruff trucker, sitting at a nearby table shoveling food in his mouth. He's been averting his gaze ever since Jeff walked in.

And then there's the traveling salesman. Overweight, sweaty. Popping vitamins along with his coffee.

Or what about the shirtless biker, reading a comic book at the bar? Probably an ex-con.

While Jeff is running these suspicions through his mind, a trucker approaches the counter to place an order. The Bartender jots it down on a pad, then tears off the carbon slip. He places one copy above the grill and another in a pile by the cash register.

Jeff stares, an idea forming...

He approaches the bar.

JEFF

I want to see your order slips.

BARTENDER

What?

JEFF

You write down the names. I want to see them.

BARTENDER

What are you, nuts? I don't have to show you jack shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff leans in his face.

JEFF

If my wife came in here, then her
name's in that pile.

The Bartender stiffens, stares him straight in the eye:

BARTENDER

You calling me a liar?

A tense beat.

Possessed by a sudden impulse, Jeff makes a grab for the receipts. Before he can reach them, the Bartender's hand clamps onto his.

BARTENDER

Mister, I've had just about enough
of you.

JEFF

Let me see the fucking slips.

In one swift motion, Jeff overpowers the man and extracts the receipts. He starts going through them, fast, looking at names. TULLY, MARK, FLO, ANDY and...

Jeff raises his eyes to face the unpleasant end of a Smith & Wesson revolver.

BARTENDER

Now, mister, you're going to have
to leave.

Jeff takes a step back. Everyone in the diner is staring. He stumbles backwards, heads for the exit.

EXT. BELLE'S DINER - DAY

Jeff exits, breathing hard, and runs to the phone booth.

PHONE BOOTH

is occupied by a YOUNG MAN with an awkward oversized frame, ill-fitting clothes. Jeff raps on the glass anxiously.

JEFF

Please, I need the phone -- I have
to call the police!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Man looks up, dull and glassy-eyed. His sluggish demeanor suggests mental retardation. He hangs up and slowly opens the door.

SLUGGISH MAN

(drawls)

My name's Billy. You the feller
lookin' for his wife?

JEFF

How'd you know? Did you see her?

The Sluggish Man hesitates. There's something holding him back. Jeff senses this.

JEFF

Please, if you know something,
anything, tell me.

BILLY (SLUGGISH MAN)

(a beat)

I seen her... maybe.

JEFF

What? When?

Billy is about to answer. In b.g., the Bartender sticks his head out of the diner. Billy backs away, spooked.

BILLY

Oh man. Never shoulda opened my
damn mouth. Now I'm gonna git it.

Billy breaks into a loping run through the parking lot. Jeff hurries after him and catches up, cornering Billy between two cars, trying to calm him.

JEFF

No one's going to hurt you, Billy.
Just tell me what you saw.

Billy glances around nervously, swallowing.

BILLY

She came in on a truck. A big
white one.

JEFF

Yes...

BILLY

Then she... she got in another
truck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

Another truck? With who?

BILLY

Dunno. Some men. Bad men. They say I'm a dummy, but I ain't. I see things.

Jeff reels, struggles to stay focused.

JEFF

Do you know where they went?

BILLY

Uh-huh. Route seven. Up by the river.

JEFF

Where by the river?

BILLY

Dunno. They don't tell me that kind of stuff.

JEFF

Who doesn't? The bartender? The men in the truck?

Billy's expression darkens. He starts backing away.

BILLY

I ain't talking to you no more.

JEFF

Billy, I need you to come to the police. If you tell them what you saw, they'll be able to help me.

Billy laughs.

BILLY

Man, you're the dummy.

Jeff looks at him, confused.

BILLY

Don't you git it? The police is the ones in on it!

Billy turns and runs back into the diner. ON Jeff's sickened reaction, we --

CUT TO:

INT. CHEROKEE - DAY

Jeff drives flat-out, his face grim. The speedometer reads 100 mph.

Keeping his eye on the road, he thumbs through the pages of a pocket address book. He picks up the handheld cellular phone and dials.

JEFF

C'mon... work, goddammit...

The "NO SERVICE" INDICATOR BEEPS.

JEFF

Fuck.

EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY

The highway intersects Route 7. The Cherokee slows just enough to take the corner without tipping over.

It flies past a sign: "Route 7 - North."

CUT TO:

EXT. ROUTE 7 - DAY

The road ascends into the rocky hills above the desert plain. The route is narrow and windy, forcing Jeff to reduce his speed.

INT. CHEROKEE - DAY

Jeff drives, desperately searching for any sign of a truck. There are no other vehicles on the road.

He keeps pressing the "REDIAL" button. The "NO SERVICE" INDICATOR BEEPS over and over.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

The road curves through a tunnel, then climbs higher, past sharp cliffs and drop-offs. Jeff follows the signs for "Route 7."

INT. CHEROKEE - DAY

Something catches Jeff's eye on the cell phone. For the first time, the "SERVICE" indicator blinks green. Jeff immediately grabs the phone again and presses "REDIAL."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There is a burst of STATIC, then we hear a SCRATCHY RINGING. The call is going through.

JEFF
(thank God)

Yes.

He waits for an answer.

JEFF
Hello, Steve? It's Jeff Taylor...
Listen, I -- don't put me on hold!
I need a favor... I've gotta talk
to that friend of yours at the
F.B.I... No, it's about Amy, she's
missing --

There is a burst of STATIC. The reception is very poor.

JEFF
I said Amy's been --

More STATIC.

JEFF
Fuck!

Jeff holds the phone tight to his ear.

JEFF
Yes, I'm still here. No -- don't
call back -- Steve?! Steve?!

The SIGNAL CUTS OFF. Jeff slams the phone against the dash, furious.

JEFF
Goddammit!

He punches redial, gets the "NO SERVICE" BEEPING, then glances up, sees a --

CHAINLINK FENCE

covered with high-visibility markers stretched across the road. The sign: "ROAD CLOSED."

BACK TO JEFF

He mashes the brakes. The CHEROKEE SKIDS to a halt just short of the fence. Jeff stares at it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

Shit!

He grinds his teeth. Beyond the padlocked gate, the highway continues as an unpaved dirt road.

He deliberates, then throws the Cherokee in reverse and does a three-point turn so he's facing back in the opposite direction.

He looks up, sees --

DODGE RAM PICKUP TRUCK

has been hiding in the bushes off the road. It lurches forward and stops in the middle of the road, blocking Jeff's escape. Jeff's eyes widen in fear as he recognizes the vehicle and its driver: Earl.

Earl gets out of the cab with a hunting rifle. He raises it to his shoulder.

EARL

(calling out)

Out of the car! Put your hands
where I can see 'em!

JEFF

swears, panicking.

EARL

I said get out, dammit! Now!

Jeff stares into the rifle, deliberating. His hand moves to the gearshift.

He jerks it into reverse and floors the gas!

CHEROKEE

peels out in reverse, snaking wildly side to side, aiming for the chainlink fence.

It BURSTS the FENCE! Poles and chain mesh go flying!

JEFF

cranks the wheel and brakes hard. The rear end of the Cherokee swings wide to the edge of the road.

He throws the shift into drive and punches the throttle.

EARL

jumps in the Ram and takes off in pursuit.

JEFF

GUNS the ENGINE. The Cherokee bounces wildly on the rutted, storm-damaged road. He yanks the four-wheel-drive lever.

DIRT ROAD

The huge pickup streaks after the Cherokee, its 7.5-LITER V10 ROARING, oversized tires devouring the terrain.

JEFF

GUNS the ENGINE on the washboard road surface, the vibration nearly shaking the suspension apart while --

RAM

keeps pace in the dust from its wake. Inside the cab, Earl can be seen speaking on a CB transmitter.

JEFF

throws the Cherokee into a sharp turn in the road. As the car rounds the bend, he looks up, reacting, as --

IDLED BULLDOZER

blocks the road at a construction site. More unattended earthmoving equipment fills the road beyond.

JEFF

brakes wildly. To his right, a cliff goes straight up; on the left, a guardrail protects a steep ravine.

He cuts the wheel left, CRASHES through the GUARDRAIL and plunges into the ravine!

CHEROKEE

bounces wildly as it hurtles down the slope, CRASHING through sagebrush and manzanita.

JEFF

clings to the wheel, tossed about violently, as suitcases and packing boxes go everywhere.

The Cherokee hits a bump on the steep slope and CRASHES through the upper branches of a willow grove.

As the leaves part, we see... a river.

CHEROKEE

lands on the passenger side with a SPLASH and comes to rest half-submerged in the RUSHING WATER.

EARL

jerks the Ram to a halt, leaps out and runs to the edge of the road to look down on the Cherokee in the river.

EARL

Sonofabitch...

He grabs the rifle and begins making his way down the slope.

INSIDE CHEROKEE

The world is sideways. Water rushes into the car. Jeff is strapped into the driver's seat by the seatbelt. The AIRBAG DEFLATES with a HISS.

Jeff grimaces in pain. He looks around, blinking. The river is flowing right through the Cherokee!

Luggage, styrofoam hamburger clamshells and empty Coke cans bob on the surface of the water.

Jeff fumbles with the seatbelt release. The belt comes free and he drops suddenly into the water on the passenger side.

He gets to his feet, reaches overhead to unlatch the driver's side door and pushes it open.

He hoists himself through the door.

RIVERBANK

Earl sees Jeff emerging from the half-submerged Cherokee, levels the RIFLE and FIRES!

JEFF

ducks back inside the Cherokee, freaking.

The passenger side is on the river-bottom and if he tries to get out through the driver's side, he's a sitting duck!

Jeff swears and looks around, seeing a metal camera case underwater in the back seat.

He grabs the case and swings it at the windshield. The first three blows bounce off harmlessly.

Then the WINDSHIELD SHATTERS with a CRASH!

He takes a deep breath, submerges and swims underwater through the broken windshield.

ON BANK

Earl stiffens as he sees movement in the water. Several items of debris from the car are floating on the current.

EARL

Fuck!

He begins moving downstream along the bank, eyeing the river.

UNDERWATER

Jeff breaststrokes for all he's worth. Sand swirls in the swift current. He pushes away from a boulder in his path.

He swims until his lungs are bursting, then surfaces for air.

ON BANK

Earl sees Jeff break the surface. He aims the RIFLE and FIRES! A BULLET SMACKS the WATER near Jeff's head.

Then Jeff is under again.

EARL

Goddammit...

UNDERWATER

Jeff struggles to stay in control. The current is turning swifter. His shoulder glances painfully off a boulder.

ON BANK

Earl works his way through the brush at the river's edge. His foot lands between two rocks. He pulls it out, swearing.

BEHIND ROCK

Jeff surfaces and gulps in air, staying out of sight of Earl on the bank. Then he is down again.

ON BANK

Earl works his way along the shore. Up ahead, the river runs over rapids before passing around a bend.

Earl hears an ENGINE and turns. A huge moving van has arrived on the dirt road overlooking the ravine.

He shouts to the DRIVER, pointing downriver.

EARL

He's getting away!

The Driver shouts something inaudible. Earl runs along the bank, ducking under low-hanging branches.

IN RAPIDS

Jeff is carried over the rocks by the fast-moving current. He slams into a boulder, letting out a cry and swallowing a mouthful of water.

A downed tree hangs over the river. Jeff grabs desperately and takes hold of a branch. He's got it!

Hanging on to the branch, he notices a familiar object floating past in the water: the "90,000 Donuts" pack.

Jeff tries to haul himself from the river. The BRANCH bends under his weight. Then it comes free with a CRACK!

Jeff is carried downstream on the rushing water.

ON BANK

Earl works his way along the shore. The unseen Driver of the van shouts to him from upriver.

DRIVER OF VAN (O.S.)

Where is he?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EARL

He's in the water! I just saw
him!

BELOW RAPIDS

The river has turned slow again.

Jeff fights to his feet in the shallows and staggers to the bank. He drops to his knees, retching.

Clutching his ribs, he raises his head and looks upriver. For the moment, there is no sign of Earl. But he could appear anytime.

Jeff gets to his feet, wincing. He looks up at the rocky canyon wall bordering the river. It's steep but scalable.

He begins climbing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROCK OUTCROPPING - MINUTES LATER

Jeff has climbed to higher ground. He lies flat on his belly and peers THROUGH a gap in the rocks at the river valley below.

JEFF'S POV - RIVER

The men have given up their pursuit.

The moving van, a jumbo three-axle GMC, has turned around and backed up to the edge of the ravine.

A stocky man, AL (whom we recognize as Earl's passenger at the minimart), operates a gas-powered winch in the cargo door of the van.

A cable runs from the winch down to the Cherokee in the river.

Standing knee-deep in the current, Earl signals to Al while the winch slowly tugs the Cherokee onto its wheels, then backwards out of the river.

BACK TO JEFF

watching in amazement. He can hear only snatches of their conversation.

AL
... can't believe you let him get away...

EARL
You try chasing... through this shit...

AL
Fuck... this is what happens when you get one without the other...

Jeff can't believe it. The Cherokee is being pulled backwards up the slope toward the road.

He belly-crawls back from the outcropping, gets to his feet and climbs higher.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF CLIFF - LATER

Jeff has moved to higher ground. He crouches behind a stand of manzanita and looks down at the activity below.

JEFF'S POV - ROAD

The Cherokee is now back on the road.

Operating the winch with precision efficiency, Earl and Al drag the Cherokee up a ramp into the rear of the moving van.

Once the vehicle is aboard, they stow the ramp and close the van doors.

BACK TO JEFF

watching in amazement, straining to hear what Earl and Al are saying. Behind Jeff, a PEBBLE SKITTERS on the rock.

He turns, reacts.

It's Billy -- the halfwit from the diner! Wielding a shotgun like a club, he swings the butt at Jeff's skull!

Jeff drops to the ground, unconscious.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. CAR TRUNK - DAY

There is a CREAK as the TRUNK opens. Jeff lies inside, dazed and disoriented, blinking into the sun. His eyes won't focus. Earl and Billy stand over the trunk in silhouette. He can hear their voices:

EARL

He coming around?

BILLY

Should be... I clocked him pretty good...

A gun barrel jabs Jeff in the ribs.

BILLY

Rise and shine, dad.

Jeff blinks. A face slowly comes INTO FOCUS. Is it really Billy? The halfwit from the diner? Only he isn't a halfwit anymore.

BILLY

C'mon, shake a leg.

Jeff looks at Billy. Nothing makes sense anymore. But one thing is clear: Billy's mental retardation was all an act.

JEFF

(weak)
Where is she?

BILLY

Give us some answers and you might find out. According to her, you've got a pretty good pile of ready cash sitting in the bank. Is that true?

JEFF

There's some... yeah...

BILLY

Uh-huh... well, 'some' doesn't cut it. Your wife gave us a dollar figure. I want the same exact from you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

(coming around;
stalling)

I don't -- there's different
accounts... the balance
fluctuates...

BILLY

Fluctuates, my ass. If a hotshot
like you ain't tracking his bottom
line, it'd be the first time in
history.

(turning)

What do you think, Earl?

EARL

We been fucked with, is what I
think. Little slut lied to us.
Put 'em on the spot, they'll say
anything to stay alive.

Billy nods, disappointed.

BILLY

Yeah, I suppose. Too bad.

(peers down at Jeff)

Guess you're not the donut magnate
after all.

(to Earl)

Waste of time. Plug him.

Earl raises a pistol. Jeff's eyes flash.

JEFF

(blurting out)

Ninety thousand.

Earl stops, glances at Billy. They both eye Jeff
carefully.

BILLY

Say again.

JEFF

(emphatic)

Ninety thousand dollars.

A faint smile plays on Billy's lips. He slams the trunk.

INT. CAR TRUNK - DAY

It's nearly pitch black. A beam of sunlight shines
through a rusted hole. It illuminates Jeff's eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The car shifts into gear and sets off across the desert. Jeff grunts as the car bounces on the uneven terrain.

He braces against the confines of the trunk. The ENGINE NOISE is deafening. The car hits a depression and jounces wildly. Jeff is thrown about violently.

CUT TO:

EXT. MESA OVERLOOK - DAY

There is a CREAK and the TRUNK opens. Jeff squints into the sun. Earl and Billy stand over the trunk.

EARL

Get out. Don't try anything stupid.

Jeff gets out, grimacing. His clothes are stained with grease and tire grime. He sets his feet unsteadily on the ground, looks around. We see that he has been confined in the trunk of a Pontiac Firebird.

The Firebird and Dodge Ram are parked on a bluff. Red stands on the highest point, peering through binoculars at the desert below. He glances at Jeff.

RED

You're a tough man to get a hold of, Jeffrey.

Jeff stares, a mix of emotions -- anger, fear, confusion.

JEFF

(barely able to control himself)
What do you want?

RED

It's not me we're talking about. Question is what you want.

Jeff looks at him with loathing.

RED

See, I've got something you might want to buy. Can't show you the merchandise right now, but I can describe it for you. About five-five, hundred and fifteen pounds. I'd say three, maybe four of that is tits. Black curly hair upstairs and down. Interested?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff's anger bubbles over...

JEFF
You sonofabitch --

He advances toward Red. Billy and Earl grab him from behind and tackle him to the ground. Billy drives a fist into his kidney. Jeff gasps in pain.

Red nods impassively.

RED
Bring him up here.

Earl and Billy hoist Jeff to his feet and propel him up the mound closer to Red.

From here, Jeff can see a small desert town spread out below, as well as the highway leading through it. Red gestures.

RED
Welcome to Brackett, Jeff. If ever there was a two-bit shithole in the middle of nowhere, this is it. One gas station, a half-dozen stores and a V.F.W. hall.
(pointing)
See that building?

Jeff follows his gaze.

RED
That's the bank. Brackett Commerce Bank. You with me?

Jeff nods tightly.

RED
Then here's the drill. You're gonna walk in there and tell the manager you want an express wire in the amount of \$90,000 from your account in Boston. Got your wallet?

Jeff nods.

RED
You ask for the money in cash. Small bills.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED (CONT'D)

Today's payday at the copper mine, so don't take any horsecock about how they haven't got it. If the manager gives you a hard time, that's your problem. It's your wife who's counting on you.

JEFF

How do I know she's still alive?

Billy slugs him in the gut again. Jeff doubles over.

BILLY

Shut up.

RED

She's tucked away someplace safe. You get her back as soon as we get the money. Simple as that.

Jeff compresses his lips.

RED

Now a smart guy like you, you're already thinking about calling the cops, right?

Jeff says nothing. Red raises a hand-held CB to his mouth. He keys the transmitter.

RED

(into mike)
Iron Man to Blacktop, let's open the gate.

AL (V.O.)

(filtered)
Copy that, Iron Man.

Red turns back to Jeff.

RED

Like I said, Jeff, if you want to call the cops, there's nothing I can do. Hell, with the fire you've got in your eyes right now, I figure you're fixing on calling the F.B.I., C.I.A. -- even the 82nd Airborne.

Jeff stares back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED

Problem is, you can see this town for miles around. So ask yourself: How's the law gonna get here? They gonna fly in? Drive in? Either way, we'll see 'em. So let me be very clear: if we see one unmarked car, one plane, one human being who even smells like a cop -- this deal is dead.

He tosses Jeff the binoculars.

RED

Now take a look at the building with the flagpole.

Jeff hesitates, then raises the binoculars.

THROUGH BINOCULARS

The IMAGE SHIFTS, then STEADIES and FOCUSES ON a small building with a police cruiser out front and a barely legible sign: "BRACKETT SHERIFF." It's the police station where Jeff filed the missing persons' form earlier.

RED (O.S.)

There's exactly two cops in this town. One of them's inside pulling ass duty; the other's on patrol in the foothills. Now a minute ago one of my men called in a non-injury accident on the I-40 connector.

Deputy Carver comes out of the building gulping down a sandwich. He gets in the cruiser and pulls away, lights flashing.

RED (O.S.)

It'll take that good ol' boy 20 minutes to get to the connector, another 10 to see there's no accident, and another 20 or so to tool his way back. 50 minutes all in.

The cruiser pulls away down the highway.

JEFF

lowers the binoculars and looks at Red.

RED

That's your deadline. If for any reason one of those cops pulls into town before I'm looking at a bag of money, your wife is dead, you're shit out of luck and we're gone for good.

He smiles at Jeff.

RED

See, that's why there's no risk to us in this thing. You do the legwork. We sit back, we watch, we listen to our scanners, we monitor you every step of the way. If at any moment we don't like something, we split. Period.

(beat)

Helluva lot safer than sticking up 7-11s, wouldn't you say?

They lock eyes. Red tosses Jeff a Windbreaker.

RED

Put this on. You can't go into the bank like that.

Jeff puts on the jacket. It covers his filthy shirt. Red checks his watch.

RED

How about it, Jeff? Time to get the show on the road?

ON Jeff's expression...

CUT TO:

EXT. BOTTOM OF MESA - DAY

Jeff stumbles and nearly falls as he descends the loose rock at the foot of the mesa. He looks up at the ridge, but Red and his crew have pulled back out of view. Jeff starts across an open field toward the town, first jogging, then running.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jeff hurries toward the bank. He looks back at the mesa again. The gang has disappeared.

Up ahead, a mud-streaked pickup cruises the main street. Jeff eyes it warily. Is it one of theirs? The truck pulls around a corner.

INT. BANK - DAY

Jeff pushes through the main doors. It's a typical small town operation. A guard stands near the entrance. Several customers wait in line for the woman teller.

Jeff looks at the slow-moving line and swears softly. He doesn't have time to wait. He glances around, sees an older man sitting at a desk in the rear of the bank, the nameplate on the desk identifying him as Roger Calhoun. Jeff approaches.

JEFF

I need to see the manager. I need
a wire transfer from my bank in
Boston.

CALHOUN looks up from his paperwork, hesitates at Jeff's appearance.

CALHOUN

Yes... sir. I'm the manager.
Would you like to have a seat?

Jeff remains standing. He eyes the other customers nervously.

CALHOUN

Sir?

JEFF

(turning; preoccupied)
What?

CALHOUN

I said you can have a seat if you
want.

JEFF

Right.

He takes a seat across the desk from the manager, reaches into his wallet and brings out several forms of identification.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

Here's my driver's license, credit card if you need it, my account number in Boston... How long is this going to take?

Calhoun looks at him curiously.

CALHOUN

Are you all right?

JEFF

(quickly)

Yes, I'm fine. Look, that account only has \$5,000 in it. How much can you advance me on my credit card?

CALHOUN

Excuse me?

JEFF

(impatient)

My credit card. I've got a \$6,000 limit. Can you advance me the whole \$6,000?

Calhoun looks mystified.

CALHOUN

No, I can't. For non-customers the limit is \$500 a day. Sir, are you sure you're all right?

JEFF

Yes, I'm fine. Just... transfer the money, okay?

Calhoun raises an eyebrow and begins filling out the transfer form. Jeff eyes him, decides he has to risk it. He leans toward the desk.

JEFF

Look, I'm going to tell you something. Whatever happens, just keep filling out that form, okay?

CALHOUN

(looking up;
baffled)

Sir?

JEFF

There are people watching --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COWBOY (O.S.)

Excuse me, you the manager?

Jeff turns. A GUY wearing cowboy boots and a feed cap stands behind him.

CALHOUN

Yes, I am.

COWBOY

Lady over there said to see you about a car loan.

CALHOUN

(indicating
waiting area)

Certainly, sir. Would you like to have a seat?

The guy takes a seat ten feet away. Jeff looks at him, paranoid. Their eyes meet. Jeff looks away quickly.

CALHOUN

(turning back
to Jeff)

You were saying, Mr. Taylor?

JEFF

Just... transfer the money.

CUT TO:

INT. BANK REST ROOM - DAY

Jeff enters and locks the door.

He startles at his reflection in the mirror. He is sunburned, dirty, lacerated.

He opens a cabinet and rifles through the supplies, looking for anything that could be used as a weapon. He tosses aside detergents and air fresheners.

He picks up the toilet plunger, pulls the wooden rod from the rubber base. He swings it into his palm a few times, testing it as a club. It's too bulky. He won't be able to conceal it.

He checks his watch. Time is running out. He takes one last look around the bathroom, then exits.

INT. BANK - DAY

Jeff comes out of the rest room. The manager is behind the teller's counter. The cowboy is gone. In his place sits a middle-aged blue collar worker. He looks at Jeff.

Jeff takes a seat, glances at Calhoun's empty desk. There is a letter opener on the desk, several paper bands for wrapping currency.

Positioning his body so no one can see, Jeff takes the letter opener and slips it into his sleeve. He scoops up a handful of currency wrappers.

Jeff goes to the teller's window, scribbles something on the back of a deposit slip and hands it to the teller.

JEFF

Would you tell the manager I want
the money in these denominations?

The teller looks at him oddly.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jeff comes out of the bank with a manila envelope, glancing up and down the street. There's no sign of the men. He squints toward the mesa. No sign of them there either.

He stands there. What's he supposed to do now? He checks his watch, growing anxious. Finally he is about to jog back in the direction he came, when... a PHONE RINGS.

Jeff turns. There's a pay PHONE down the street. It RINGS again. He approaches quickly, lifts the receiver.

JEFF

I'm here.

RED (V.O.)

(filtered)

No shit. I can SEE that. How
much you got?

Jeff looks up and down the street, trying to figure out where they're watching from. He looks toward the bank, glimpses the manager peering through the window.

JEFF

The whole thing. Ninety thousand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 Good. Turn left and start walking
 toward the main road. Get in the
 first car that stops.

JEFF
 When do I see my wife?

RED (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 When I say so. Now walk.

The LINE CLICKS. Jeff hangs up and starts walking.

CUT TO:

INT. BANK - DAY

Calhoun speaks on the phone.

CALHOUN
 Marie, this is Roger Calhoun down
 at the bank. Is the Sheriff
 there?
 (a beat)
 Well, maybe it's nothing, but you
 might tell him we just had a
 fellow in here acting kind of
 strange...

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAY

Jeff walks along the road, carrying the envelope.
 Various cars pass in either direction, but none slow
 down.

Jeff stiffens as an 18-wheeler approaches. But the TRUCK
 THUNDERS past, blowing a cloud of dust and sand in his
 face.

Jeff continues walking, anxiously checking over his
 shoulder every few moments. His eyes narrow.

The Dodge Ram pickup is cruising toward him. It slows,
 then brakes to a halt. The passenger door opens. Earl
 sits behind the wheel, aiming an automatic pistol.

EARL
 Toss the envelope on the seat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff stands firm.

JEFF

No. First you tell me where she is.

EARL

Wrong, asshole. First you give me the money, then you find out. Unless you want me to shoot you dead right here on the highway.

Jeff looks around, wonders if Earl would risk shooting him in view of passing traffic.

Jeff hesitates, then tosses the envelope on the seat. Earl opens it, reaches in and pulls out several packets of currency. They are wrapped with paper bands and appear to be stacks of fifties and hundreds. He replaces them and gestures at Jeff with the gun.

EARL

Now lift your shirt and jacket and turn around.

Jeff complies. Earl sees that he isn't carrying a gun. He beckons Jeff toward the truck with the automatic.

EARL

Turn around, hands behind your back, and step toward the truck.

Jeff takes two backwards steps toward the passenger side door. Earl grabs his arms, yanks roughly and wraps them with several layers of duct tape.

EARL

Now get up in the truck, knees on the floor. Do it now!

Jeff struggles into an awkward kneeling position on the floor, facing the rear of the pickup, his belly pressed against the seat.

Earl reaches over and pulls the door shut. He throws the truck in gear and starts driving. Jeff grimaces, looking up at him.

JEFF

I gave you the money. Now let her go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EARL

'Let her go.' Do I look like I
have her?

JEFF

What the hell --

Earl backhands Jeff against the passenger door. There is a RINGING sound and Earl pulls a CELL PHONE from his pocket. He presses a button and raises it to his face.

EARL

(on phone)

It's done. I'm heading in.

(a beat;

listening)

Gotcha.

He ends the call and tosses the cell phone on the dash.

EARL

You gotta be the dumbest
motherfuck yet. You think we
picked you out of the blue? New
car, Massachusetts plates --
probably be days before anyone
misses you. Hell, you shoulda got
the bumper sticker that goes with
it: 'Rich Assholes Looking for
Trouble!'

He tucks the pistol in his belt. Jeff looks at him, seething.

Jeff tries to squirm free. Earl sees it and belts him across the temple. Jeff slams into the passenger door, wincing.

EARL

I'd have loved to see the look on
your face when that car seized up.

(mimicking panicked
driver)

Help, help, I ain't got no power!

Earl laughs. Jeff has come to rest with his back against the door. By contorting his arms, he is able to draw the letter opener from his pocket.

He manipulates the letter opener into position and begins cutting the duct tape that binds his wrists.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Steering with one hand, Earl reaches into the envelope, pulls out a packet of bills and waves it in Jeff's face. Jeff swears faster at the duct tape.

EARL

You know what I'm gonna do first with your money, boy? Well, do you?

Jeff glares at him.

EARL

(fluttering bills under his nose)

I'll give you a hint. Only one thing smells better than money. You wanta guess what?

Earl laughs obscenely. He riffles the bills under his nose again, then stops abruptly, frowning. He looks down at the bills.

EARL

What the hell?

Earl stares at the bills. Jeff works feverishly behind his back. Earl pulls out another packet, then another, examining the bills.

EARL

These are... it's nothing but singles...

(erupting)

You lyin' sonofabitch!

There is a RIPPING SOUND. Jeff wrests his hands free and lunges across the cab. He plants the letter opener in Earl's shoulder!

EARL

Aaagghh!

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The pickup veers across the center line on the narrow mountain road. It swerves back, over-correcting wildly, and drifts for the opposite shoulder.

INT. PICKUP - DAY

Jeff seizes the pistol from Earl's waistband. Earl flails and knocks the pistol from his grasp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The pistol flies onto the floor.

Earl uncorks a vicious backhand. Jeff's head snaps sideways. He grabs Earl by the arm and twists sharply. Earl howls!

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The pickup careens back and forth across the treacherous roadway.

INT. PICKUP - DAY

Jeff gropes on the floor. His hand closes around the pistol and he swings it at Earl -- crack! Earl's nose erupts! Jeff reaches across and jams his foot on the brake.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The PICKUP SCREECHES and comes to a halt straddling the road.

INT. PICKUP - DAY

Jeff swings the pistol into Earl's face -- crack! Earl tries to fend off the blows. Jeff creams him again -- crack!

INT. TOW TRUCK - DAY

A TOW TRUCK DRIVER traveling in the opposite direction pulls to a stop. He gawks at the two men struggling in the pickup.

INT. PICKUP - DAY

Jeff aims the pistol at point blank range. Earl is a bloody wreck. His head lolls groggily.

JEFF

Where is she, goddammit? What'd
you do with her?

Earl sneers. Jeff is about to slug him again when he notices the tow truck parked across the road, the driver staring out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff swears and wrestles Earl into the passenger seat.

He seizes the roll of duct tape and binds Earl's wrists, then passes the tape under his legs so Earl is effectively hog-tied.

He then slams Earl back in the seat, circles his neck twice with tape and wraps the free end around the base of the passenger side headrest. Earl begins to gasp for air.

The Tow Truck Driver gets out and approaches.

TOW TRUCK DRIVER

Hey! You there!

Jeff gets behind the wheel and throws the pickup into gear.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The Tow Truck Driver leaps out of the way as the pickup surges forward, tires smoking. He stares open-mouthed after the departing vehicle.

INT. PICKUP - DAY

Jeff drives, one hand on the wheel, the other brandishing the pistol at Earl.

JEFF

Where is she?!

EARL

(barely able
to breathe)

Fuck you!

Jeff swings the pistol. There is a crack of exploding teeth! Earl's mouth erupts with frothy blood!

JEFF

You like that? How about this?

Jeff hits the brakes. Earl is thrown forward, letting out a strangled cry as the duct tape chokes off his windpipe.

JEFF

Four wheel anti-lock brakes, you sonofabitch! You want to try 'em again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hits the brakes again, harder. Earl's tongue protrudes from his lips, choking. His face is red.

JEFF

How about an emergency stop? You want to try that, Earl? Where is she?

EARL

I don't know!

JEFF

Fuck you, you don't!

He slams the brakes again. Earl's eyes bulge sickeningly. He is being choked to death.

EARL

Stop!

JEFF

Is that what you want? You really want me to stop? 'Cause I bet this baby stops on a dime!

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE CRUISER - DAY

Traveling in the opposite direction, Sheriff Boyd is returning toward town. As he rounds a bend in the road, he sees --

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The Ram driving erratically and weaving back and forth across the road.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - DAY

The sheriff reacts.

SHERIFF BOYD

What the hell?

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

As the Ram passes, Sheriff Boyd throws the cruiser into a SCREECHING 180-degree turn. He flicks on the SIREN and takes off in pursuit.

INT. DODGE RAM - DAY

Jeff glances in the rearview mirror. The cruiser is on their tail, SIREN WAILING, lights flashing. He swears and pumps the brakes in a series of rapid bursts.

JEFF

End of the line, Earl! How about it? You gonna tell me?

EARL

She's with Billy.

JEFF

Yeah? Where's that?

EARL

I don't know! Driving around!

Jeff hits the brakes again.

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Sheriff Boyd jerks the wheel to avoid a collision with the pickup as it slows and accelerates in rapid spurts.

SHERIFF BOYD

(on radio)

Repeat, I am in pursuit of a Dodge Ram pickup. Request back-up, repeat, request back-up!

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The cruiser pulls up alongside the pickup...

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Boyd reacts in amazement to what he sees --

SHERIFF BOYD

Jesus Christ --

(on radio)

Dispatch! Suspect identified as one Jeffrey Taylor, repeat, Jeffrey Taylor!

Boyd taps his brakes, falling back behind the pickup.

INT. PICKUP - DAY

Jeff is wild-eyed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

Where were you taking the money?

EARL

(losing it)

To the truck stop...

JEFF

Where?

EARL

Main highway... Texaco...

Jeff has the information he needs. He slams on the brakes!

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Sheriff Boyd swerves to avoid a crash as the RAM SCREECHES to a halt in front of him!

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The cruiser skids to a stop. Jeff leaps from the pickup with the pistol in his hand. He rushes toward the cruiser. Sheriff Boyd hops out, levels his service revolver.

JEFF

I know where she is! My wife!

SHERIFF BOYD

(ignoring him)

Drop the gun!

Jeff pitches the gun away and it skitters down an embankment. He raises his hands.

JEFF

You don't understand! She's been kidnapped!

SHERIFF BOYD

I understand plenty. Now get down on the ground or I'll shoot!

He means it.

INT. PICKUP - DAY

Earl struggles for breath. The duct tape is still tight around his neck. He strains against the tape binding his limbs.

He glances in the side view mirror to see the Sheriff ordering Jeff down on the ground.

By wriggling and contorting his wrists, Earl is able to tear one hand free. Then he pulls away the rest of the duct tape from his knees.

The tape is still wrapped tightly around his neck, pinning him to the backrest. Earl claws at the tape, but it won't come free. Finally, with both hands, he reaches behind his head and yanks the head rest from the seat.

He reaches into his boot for something...

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Jeff is spread-eagled on the ground. Sheriff Boyd calls out to Earl in the cab. He keeps his gun leveled.

SHERIFF BOYD

You there -- in the pickup! You all right? Can you get out?

EARL

Yeah! Just don't shoot me, officer! He's crazy, I tell you!

SHERIFF BOYD

Well, get out dammit!

JEFF

Officer, please. You gotta listen to me --

SHERIFF BOYD

(glances down
at Jeff)

Shut up.

(to Earl)

C'mon out, sir. It's safe --

Earl sets one foot on the road. The headrest dangles against his back, still taped to his neck. Suddenly Earl whirls, holding a .22 snub-nose REVOLVER and FIRES!

The sheriff stumbles away, blood spurting from his shoulder, the gun flying from his hand.

Jeff looks up in horror as the sheriff falls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Earl comes around the pickup after Jeff, raising the gun to fire. Jeff scrambles to his feet and dives down the embankment.

Earl runs to the edge of the embankment. Down below, Jeff is reaching for the automatic pistol the sheriff ordered him to drop.

He finds it... too late...

Earl is aiming at point-blank range from the top of the embankment. He is already squeezing the trigger when...

BLAM! Earl's chest erupts outward as a bullet passes through his body from behind!

Earl staggers and flops down the embankment. He comes to rest near Jeff, blood gurgling from a massive chest wound.

Jeff climbs the embankment. The sheriff is lying on the road, critically injured, gun lying nearby and still smoking from the shot that killed Earl.

The sheriff is struggling to speak into a remote transmitter strapped to his uniform.

SHERIFF BOYD

(weak)

Shots fired... Officer down...
Suspect...

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Help is on the way, Sheriff. Just
hang on. I have units and an
ambulance en route.

Jeff bends over the Sheriff and examines his wound with a grimace. He is verging on unconsciousness. Jeff deliberates, torn. There is nothing he can do here.

Making up his mind, Jeff runs to the pickup. The hand-held cellular phone has spilled into the road. He scoops it up, jumps behind the wheel and LAYS RUBBER.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLUFF - DAY

Jeff stands on a ridge overlooking a Texaco truck stop. Behind him, the Dodge Ram pickup lies hidden in a growth of scrub oak and tumbleweeds.

Jeff looks overwhelmed by what he sees spread out below.

JEFF'S POV - TEXACO TRUCK STOP

It's a giant truck stop. There are hundreds of big rigs parked in rows like silvery sardines.

A sign towers over the main building: "DIESEL \$.99 GAL."

BACK TO JEFF

He looks shaken. How will he ever find Red here? It seems impossible.

He descends the bluff to the truck stop.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAY

Jeff skids on his heels down the loose hillside and reaches the edge of the parking lot. There are trucks everywhere. Diesel MOTORS RUMBLE. Exhaust fills the air.

He reaches the end of a row of big rigs, starts searching the grounds for the markings of Red's 18-wheeler.

It's nowhere in sight.

A high-pitched FEMININE SQUEAL from an adjacent truck's sleeping compartment startles Jeff.

TRUCKER (O.S.)
(muffled)
C'mon, baby, give it up!

The woman GIGGLES, O.S. Jeff ignores it, scanning the truck stop. He stiffens.

A police car is arriving at the truck stop.

Staying out of sight, Jeff passes quickly to the rear of a tractor trailer.

EXT. TRUCK WASH - DAY

Jeff peers out from behind a parked mini-van as trucks emerge wet and dripping from an immense truck wash.

Across the way, trucks are filling up on diesel at the gas islands. Jeff's eyes narrow. Is that Red's Peterbilt among them?

He quickens his pace, then falls back, slumping. The rig's black driver is getting in the cab. Jeff glances to the side, frowns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An older vacationing couple is eyeing Jeff warily.

Jeff looks down, cops to it instantly. His clothes are ripped, caked with blood. He ducks between two parked cars, using a side-view mirror as he hastily wipes blood off his face. He checks to be sure no one is watching.

Something catches his eye.

EXT. BLUFF - JEFF'S POV

A highway patrol car with flashing lights is parked near the place where Jeff ditched the pickup. Beside it, a state trooper surveys the truck stop with binoculars.

EXT. TRUCK WASH - DAY

Jeff's jaw tightens. He glances toward the road, sees two more highway patrol cars cruising the perimeter of the truck stop.

Swearing, Jeff turns on his heels and walks away in the opposite direction, shielding his face.

EXT. TRUCK STOP PARKING LOT - DAY

Jeff emerges from between two vehicles, glancing over his shoulder nervously. He keeps his head down, moving fast.

He scans the truck stop in all directions. The patrol car is still parked on the ridge, the patrolman peering through binoculars.

Jeff quickens his pace alongside the truck stop building, passing a row of pay phones. He looks up, stops dead.

Red is talking on a pay phone six feet away.

Jeff stares. Red is facing away, unaware of his presence. Jeff darts into an adjacent pay phone.

He shields his face with the receiver and listens.

RED

(on phone)

I don't know, dammit, he was supposed to be here a half hour ago. There's reports on the police band about a cop down and this place is crawling with uniforms...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Red waits, listens.

RED

Look, I'm getting out of here.
Stay off the airwaves. Bring the
girl and meet me at the barn...
You got that?

He hangs up. Jeff presses the phone against his face and turns away.

When he looks up, Red is walking toward his Peterbilt truck, parked in a row of big rigs. Jeff starts to follow, then freezes.

Several cops are fanning out on foot, questioning everyone they encounter.

Jeff sees Red getting into his truck. The ENGINE KICKS OVER. The BRAKES HISS and the truck begins pulling out.

Jeff whips around. The older vacationing couple are talking to a cop fifty yards away. The husband points toward the pay phones.

Jeff makes a sudden decision, doubles back behind a rolling farm truck.

COP

thanks the couple, calls out something to his fellow officers.

JEFF

runs alongside the farm truck, using it as a shield. He overtakes the truck, cuts across its path. The farmer BLARES his HORN.

Jeff glances left. Red's tractor trailer is traveling across the crowded parking area, slowly gaining speed. Jeff sprints in front of a moving car.

The driver jerks to a halt and HONKS, catching the attention of a nearby cop. Jeff quickly turns away, avoiding being seen.

Red's 18-wheeler turns toward the access road. Jeff looks around, panicked. More cops are spreading out on foot. They'll notice him any second.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff crouches low and scurries underneath a slow-moving postal truck. The truck speeds up, nearly crushing him under the rear wheel assembly.

Jeff rolls out of the path of the giant wheels, gets to his feet on the other side and finds himself...

... in the path of another huge truck!

A cop is standing only 20 feet away! Jeff goes underneath another trailer, crawling between the moving wheels. He springs to his feet.

Red's Peterbilt is pulling away!

Jeff runs for all he's worth. His arms and legs pump furiously. He runs abreast of the truck...

... and seizes the spare tire mount!

EXT. INTERSTATE - UNDER TRUCK - DAY

Jeff hangs on for dear life. His legs drag over the asphalt. He lets out a cry of pain.

The truck is joining the highway, accelerating.

Grimacing, Jeff swings his legs over the universal joint as the roadway races past below. The huge TIRES are a HOWLING blur.

Suddenly his grip falters on the grease. His back scrapes the rushing asphalt. Jeff gasps, makes a grab and holds firm.

As he hangs on, a station wagon overtakes the Peterbilt in the passing lane. A three-year-old boy sits in the rear compartment, staring out at Jeff, a puzzled expression on his face.

Jeff stares back. It's an odd moment between the two. The station wagon continues forward and EXITS FRAME.

EXT. INTERSTATE - DAY

The PETERBILT THUNDERS over a patch of highway that is being graded for paving.

EXT. UNDER TRUCK - DAY

The tires kick up a hail storm of loose gravel and dirt, pelting Jeff all over his body.

He realizes he can't stay where he is. Grunting with effort, he works his way hand over hand along the underside rigging toward the cab.

He seizes the trailer hitch and hoists himself up.

EXT. BETWEEN CAB AND TRAILER - DAY

Standing on the coupler, Jeff clutches his ribs and catches his breath. He's in pain. The road whips by below his feet.

The truck hits an uneven stretch of road and bounces violently. Jeff grabs the coiled brake line for support.

The truck is doing 70 mph, exhaust racketing.

Jeff pulls the cell phone from his pocket and dials 911. He holds it tightly to his ear, shouting above the wind.

JEFF

(on phone)

Hello? Can you hear me? This is Jeff Taylor. I need to talk to the deputy.

He strains to hear the reply.

JEFF

The name is Jeffrey Taylor. I just witnessed your sheriff being shot. Now put someone on, goddammit!

He waits.

INT. TRUCK CAB - DAY

Red glances in the side mirror at the road behind him as he drives, unaware of Jeff's presence.

EXT. TRUCK COUPLER - DAY

Jeff clutches the cell phone to his ear, waiting. He reacts suddenly as the call is put through.

JEFF

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Deputy Carver speaks on a phone extension while the DISPATCHER sits nearby.

DEPUTY CARVER

It's no good. He's not talking.
You better mobilize your boys.

The troopers stare back. They look like they have a score to settle.

CUT TO:

EXT. RED'S PETERBILT - DAY

The truck streaks along the interstate. Sitting on the coupler, Jeff is a picture of despair.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RED'S PETERBILT - DUSK

Hours later.

The truck races toward the bloated lowering sun, with no sign of slowing down. Jeff lies curled under the windfoil on the roof of the cab. He hugs himself, shivering in the cold draft.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RED'S PETERBILT - NIGHT

The TRACTOR TRAILER RUMBLES in low gear along a sparsely populated two-lane road. A neighborhood DOG YAPS.

EXT. ROOF OF TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

From his hiding place under the windfoil, Jeff peers out into the darkness, unable to figure out where he is.

He catches his balance as the truck turns a corner and slows, driving past a tract of undeveloped land, before turning into the driveway of a...

EXT. RESIDENTIAL LOT - NIGHT

and braking to a halt under the broad overhanging eave of an old dilapidated barn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Behind the two-story farm house, a rusted Volkswagen bus and satellite dish hunker in the weeds. A newer car, a 1981 Cadillac Deville, is parked to the side.

Red kills the engine and climbs out of the cab. As he walks toward the house, a screen DOOR SLAPS. DEKE, 9, squirts across the lawn in his pajamas.

DEKE
Daddy, you're home!

Red scoops him up.

RED
Hey, Deke, you miss me?

ARLEEN, 35, comes out of the house in a bathrobe.

ARLEEN
Deke, get back to bed! I said
now!
(to Red)
Warren? I thought you were coming
back next week.

She comes out into the yard.

EXT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Jeff flattens against the sleeper. He can see Red greeting his wife, their words carrying faintly across the lawn. Jeff is baffled by this domestic scene.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Arleen reacts with disappointment to something Red's told her.

ARLEEN
... but it's four in the morning.
Why can't Al and Billy come some
other time?

RED
(reasoning)
I told you, we've got some stuff
to take care of. Won't be more
than a couple of hours -- I
promise.

Red turns to his son, extends a key.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED

Say, Deke, how 'bout opening up
the barn for your daddy?

Deke takes the key and sprints for the barn while Red returns to the cab, passing within several feet of Jeff's hiding place.

He reaches into the cab, brings out a duffel bag and unzips it. Jeff keeps his breathing shallow, squeezes against the windfoil.

RED

Deke, c'mon over here, I got
something for you.

Deke runs up, breathless. Red holds two hands behind his back. Red and Deke are just six feet from Jeff.

RED

Guess which hand.

DEKE

(pointing to
right hand)

This one.

Red opens his right hand. Empty.

RED

Nope. Try again.

DEKE

(pointing to left)

This hand.

Red opens his left. Empty.

RED

Nope.

DEKE

(he's been
tricked)

Dad...

RED

(laughing)

Okay, okay, I'll give it to you.

He opens his hand, revealing Jeff's Swiss Army knife.

DEKE

Cool!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Deke takes the knife and runs off. Red goes to the rear of the trailer, unlocks it and raises the slatted door.

He hops up inside. His FOOTSTEPS ECHO in the metal trailer. We hear him SHIFTING BOXES.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Jeff seizes his chance. He crawls out from under the windfoil and hoists himself onto the overhanging eave.

The STRUCTURE CREAKS under his weight.

INSIDE TRAILER

Red sticks his head out of the trailer, puzzled.

RED

Deke? Deke, you back there?

EXT. ROOF OF BARN - NIGHT

Jeff crouches in the shadows. He can see Red poking his head out from the trailer, peering up at the roof.

INSIDE TRAILER

Red shrugs, lets it go. He resumes unloading boxes, tosses down a full set of Louis Vuitton luggage. He lugs the items into the barn.

EXT. ROOF OF BARN - NIGHT

Jeff goes to a second-story window. A board has been nailed over the window. He pulls it away, steps into...

INT. BARN HAYLOFT - NIGHT

and looks around, amazed. Everywhere around him there are stolen goods.

Matching luggage sets... a rack of women's coats... a table piled with cameras... a crate filled with car phones...

A stack of windshields... two sets of golf clubs... three child safety seats... a ten-speed bicycle...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Several dozen "COMMERCIAL VEHICLE" license plates are scattered about -- Arkansas, Oregon, Texas, Iowa, South Dakota...

As Jeff stares, reeling, there is a RUMBLE outside.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Red looks up from toting a box of car stereos and snarled wiring as the moving van and Pontiac Firebird arrive at the barn.

He beckons for the vehicles to pull forward into...

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Al dismounts from the moving truck. Billy climbs out of the Firebird. They are travel-sore, stretching. Red shuts the door behind them.

AL

Man, if I never see another couple from Massachusetts it'll be too soon.

RED

Tell me about it. You get any word on Earl?

BILLY

(shakes head)

There's reports of an accident up Five Mile, but that's about it.

Red grunts, unlatches the door to the moving van, lowers a ramp. The three men begin unloading boxes.

INT. BARN HAYLOFT - NIGHT

Jeff lies on his belly peering through a knothole.

JEFF'S POV THROUGH KNOTHOLE

The men unload Jeff and Amy's belongings -- luggage, photography equipment, miscellaneous items. Inside the moving van, the battered Jeep Cherokee is visible, partially covered with a tarp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

I told you we shoulda gotten rid
of 'em like that couple up in
Utah. Nice and clean.

RED

So it got a little fucked up -- so
what? We stay out of the area for
a while, things will cool off.

There is a HAMMERING noise, O.S. Red looks over,
irritated.

RED

Dammit, Al, what the hell you
doing?

Al sits at a workbench hammering precious stones out of
Amy's jewelry. He looks over at Red.

AL

Figured I'd get started on the
jewelry.

RED

Fuck that, you can work on it
later. Help us with the girl.

INT. BARN HAYLOFT - NIGHT

Jeff breathes in sharply, presses his eye against the
knothole.

INT. BARN GROUND FLOOR - NIGHT

Red unlatches a hidden compartment under the chassis of
the moving truck. He and Billy slide out a long metal
box, similar to a drawer in a morgue.

They lift the metal lid, revealing --

CANVAS SACK

The sack is stained and ripped. Red pokes at it. The
sack doesn't move. Red shrugs.

RED

Must've died from the exhaust.

INT. BARN HAYLOFT KNOTHOLE - NIGHT

Jeff stares, paralyzed, his universe exploded. Moisture forms in his eyes.

INT. BARN GROUND FLOOR - NIGHT

Billy and Al reach into the compartment, start to lift out the sack.

RED

I'll get some plastic. We'll bury her before it gets light out.

Suddenly the sack drives its legs into Al's belly.

AL

(startled)

Aagh!

Al falls backward, drops the sack on the floor. It tears open revealing Amy -- gagged with duct tape, her wrists and ankles taped. She squirms and kicks wildly, her screams muffled.

INT. BARN HAYLOFT KNOTHOLE - NIGHT

We see Jeff's eye in the knothole. It's all we need to see to gauge the effect on him of seeing Amy alive.

INT. BARN GROUND FLOOR - NIGHT

Al gets to his feet, furious.

AL

Goddamn. Scared me half to death.

BILLY

(chuckles)

Gotcha good, huh, Al? Oughta be more careful next time.

AL

Shut up.

(glaring at Amy)

Lemme do her, Red. I'll cut her head off right now.

ARLEEN (O.S.)

(muffled)

Warren? You in there?

Red reacts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED

Shit, it's my wife. Help me get
her in the freezer.

(calling out)

Just a second, Arleen.

Red walks to a corner, moves aside a section of false flooring. He pulls up a hidden trap door, revealing a root cellar.

AMY

squirms on the hay-strewn floor. Her clothes are ripped, face bruised. She looks up, reacting: Jeff's eye is visible in the knothole.

Their gaze meets... and holds...

RED

returns and takes Amy by the legs. Al and Billy lift her by the arms. As they carry her to the root cellar, Red peers into her terrified face.

RED

Don't worry, honey. It's not as bad as it sounds. It'll take you about 10 minutes to suck the air out. Probably won't even feel it.

Amy reacts, writhing even more violently, but she's no match for the three men.

BARN HAYLOFT

Jeff watches helplessly as...

BARN GROUND FLOOR

The men disappear with Amy into the cellar. We hear a METALLIC THUD, then a few moments later, the men reappear without her. Red closes the trap door, secures it with a heavy padlock, then slides the panel of false flooring over it.

RED

C'mon, let's go.

They turn, walk toward the door. Red opens it. Arleen is standing there. Al and Billy greet her politely:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL
Howdy, Arleen.

BILLY
Hey, Missus C.

ARLEEN
Well finally. Are you coming to
breakfast? I've been calling you.

RED
Sure thing, honey.

The barn goes dark as the men leave. The barn door rolls
shut. A LOCK CLICKS.

INT. BARN HAYLOFT - NIGHT

Jeff quickly climbs down a ladder in the pitch darkness.
He crosses the room, bumping into a workbench. He
swears, makes his way toward the...

INT. REAR OF BARN - NIGHT

Jeff drops to his hands and knees, feeling for the
padlocked trap door. He finds it, speaks in an urgent
whisper.

JEFF
Amy? Amy, can you hear me?

No reply. Jeff cups his hands, presses his mouth to the
floor.

JEFF
(louder)
Amy?

Still no reply.

Jeff swears, glances around the dark room. There is a
tool bench across the room.

JEFF
Hang on, baby. They're in the
house; I can't use the lights.
I'm gonna get you out.

He goes to the tool bench, fumbling in the darkness. He
knocks over a cardboard box -- a pile of car keys spill
across the table. His hands run over an assortment of
tools. He locates a hammer, takes it.

Returning to the trap door, Jeff inserts the claw in the
padlock and tries to pry it open. The lock won't give.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He strains, using all his strength. Suddenly the handle snaps! Jeff flies backwards.

JEFF

Fuck!

He gets up, goes to the tool bench. His hands feel over and reject an assortment of small tools. He finds a crowbar, returns to the trap door and inserts it into the shackle, twisting with all his might. After several failed attempts, he swears.

JEFF

It's not working. If I make any more noise, they'll hear.

Jeff mulls his options. He sets his jaw, exhales.

JEFF

I'm going to get you out of there, Amy.

He swallows, emotional, clearly torn.

JEFF

I love you.
(under his breath)
Please, God, let her still be alive.

INT. BARN - MOVING VAN CAB - NIGHT

Jeff opens the door. A weak dome light flickers on. He climbs up into the cab and tries turning on the CB radio, but no luck -- the keys are gone.

He opens the glove compartment. There are maps, trip logs, truck stop receipts. He rifles through them quickly.

Jeff frowns, gets on the floor of the cab and gropes under the driver's seat. His eyes register a discovery.

He brings out a big black semi-automatic pistol.

Jeff studies the base of the grip, clearly unfamiliar with guns. He fumbles with the clip, ejects it. The clip is full of bullets.

He snaps the clip back in place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF
(under his breath)
Fuck you, asshole.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Jeff climbs out of the window onto the broad overhanging eave. He steps to the edge of the roof and lowers himself onto the Peterbilt cab, then drops to the ground.

He looks around. Red's is the only house visible. A light flickers in the trees a mile away. It could be anything.

Jeff moves toward the house.

EXT. RED'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Jeff holds the gun ready as he eases open the screen door. The DOOR CREAKS on its hinges. Jeff steps into...

INT. RED'S HOUSE - REAR ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Jeff lets the door close silently. There are VOICES coming from a distant room. He passes a washing machine, a hamper full of dirty clothes, and moves silently down...

HALLWAY

toward the voices. VIDEO GAME sound effects emanate from a room off the hall. Jeff flattens against the wall, peers into the living room.

Seated on the floor with his back to Jeff, Deke is playing Nintendo on a wide-screen television. Various items are scattered about: stereo speakers, a jukebox, a brand new Nordic Track. There is a rifle rack across the room.

Stepping past the doorway, Jeff continues down the hall toward...

INT. RED'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Red is in the middle of telling a story. Arleen, Billy and Al sit around the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The plates are cleared away. They are drinking beer.

RED

... So there I am, it's a howling snow storm, I've got 2000 live chickens that are supposed to be in Denver days ago, and this cop is busting my balls because I haven't got chains...

Arleen and the men laugh heartily.

RED

So what happens but this big old rooster, damn thing must've weighed ten pounds, he reaches out toward that highway patrolman...

Al glances toward the door, stops laughing. Billy and Arleen follow his gaze, go silent.

RED

... just reaches out with his beak, see, and...

Red notices his audience is no longer paying attention. He turns in his chair, sees --

REVERSE ANGLE - JEFF

Standing in the doorway. Aiming the pistol. His clothes caked with blood and dirt. He sways slightly.

Nobody else moves.

JEFF

Give me the key.

RED

(placating)

Now hold on, mister. I don't know who you are or what you want --

JEFF

Give me the fucking key!

There is silence.

RED

(a beat)

Mister --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

Don't mister me, you sonofabitch!
My wife is locked in a hole in
your fucking barn! You don't give
me the key, I'll blow your fucking
head off!

Arleen glances at Red, frightened.

ARLEEN

(clueless)

Warren? What's going on?

RED

I don't know, honey. Just stay
 calm --

JEFF

(to Arleen)

Your husband's a kidnapper and a
 murderer is what's going on! Did
 you know that about him? Huh?

(gestures)

Ever wonder where all this stuff
 comes from?

Arleen looks up at Jeff, scared. She starts to open her
 mouth, when --

DEKE (O.S.)

Stick 'em up.

Jeff turns. Nine-year-old Deke is aiming a rifle at Jeff
 from the hallway. The rifle looks enormous in his hands.
 The boy's lip quivers.

The room is silent. No one moves. Jeff keeps the pistol
 aimed at Red. He swallows, speaks slowly:

JEFF

You don't want to do that, kid.
 Just put the gun down.

RED

(firm)

Don't listen to him, Deke. Keep
 the gun on him.

JEFF

Put the gun down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEKE

(voice quavering)

My daddy keeps his rifle loaded all the time. He showed me in case I needed to protect Mommy when he's away.

JEFF

I understand that, Deke. I'm not gonna hurt Mommy. But if you pull that trigger, there's a chance I'll still kill your father.

RED

He's lying, Deke. He can't get me. Just pull the trigger.

JEFF

No, Deke, don't listen to him. He's wrong.

RED

Plug him, boy! Do what I tell you!

Deke looks at his father, fights back tears. His finger tightens on the trigger.

RED

That's right, boy. Do it. Don't worry about me.

Deke whimpers, squeezes the trigger...

JEFF

Deke, no -- !

Suddenly, Billy bolts from the table. The RIFLE FIRES! The recoil knocks Deke off his feet. The bullet rips into Al's shoulder!

AL

Oww -- goddammit, you little shit!

Red is out of his chair. Jeff dives first and seizes the rifle. He whirls, aims the pistol at Red.

JEFF

Don't fucking move!

Everyone freezes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff sidesteps to the window. Billy is running across the yard. Is he headed for the barn? Jeff swears, turns back.

JEFF

Deke? Deke? Get on your feet!

Deke rises, tears streaming down his face.

JEFF

It's okay, kid. Go over there, stand next to your mother. Hurry up.

Deke obeys. Clutching his shoulder wound, Al glares at the child as he passes.

Jeff deliberates. Where the hell was Billy going? He gnaws his lip, decides.

JEFF

Okay... on your feet. Now, everybody!

Red, Arleen and Al get to their feet. Deke stays at his mother's side. Jeff aims the pistol at Red, holds the rifle with his other hand.

JEFF

Let's go. Out.

He herds them to the door. Arleen looks to Red nervously.

RED

Do like he says, Arleen. He's crazy.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Jeff trains the pistol as his captives stand at the entrance to the barn. He glances around, keeping an eye out for Billy.

JEFF

(to Red)

Okay. Reach into your pocket and hand the key to your wife.

RED

This ain't gonna work, boy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF
(jams pistol
at him)

Do it.

Red fishes a key ring out of his pocket and extends it to Arleen. She just stands there.

RED
It's okay, Arleen. Take it.

She takes the keys.

JEFF
(indicating
barn door)
Okay, now unlock it.

Arleen inserts a key, opens the padlock.

JEFF
Good. Now give me the keys.
(turning to Deke)
Deke, push the door open.
Quickly.

Deke looks at his father. Red nods. Deke goes to the door, begins wheeling it open.

JEFF
That's enough, Deke.
(gesturing them
inside with gun)
Let's go. Move it.

Jeff herds all four into --

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Jeff leads the group through the barn at gun-point.

He glances right and left, wired. The rifle is strapped to his back. He keeps the handgun ready. He peers under the tractor-trailer, looking for any sign of Billy.

They reach the trap door. Jeff circles it, constantly keeping an eye on Red and Al. He hands the keys to Deke.

JEFF
Deke, I need you to open this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Deke looks at his father. He kneels, unlocks the padlock and heaves open the trap door, revealing a narrow staircase slanting into the cellar.

Deke looks down into the darkness and swallows.

JEFF

It's okay, Deke. There's a freezer down there with a woman in it. I need you to let her out.

Deke descends the steps, frightened.

DEKE (O.S.)

(voice quavering)

I can't see.

Jeff jabs the pistol at Red: Tell him where the light is.

RED

(a beat, to Deke)

The switch is on the right.

There's a CLICK and the light goes on in the cellar. Deke lets out a yip of fear.

DEKE (O.S.)

Dad...

RED

It's all right, son. Just ignore that stuff.

Jeff crouches to peer into the cellar.

JEFF'S POV - CELLAR

Roots and mildew hang in strings from the ceiling. The light is a bare bulb. There are several distressingly-shaped garbage bags against the wall.

BACK TO JEFF

His gaze shifts back to Red.

JEFF

(to Deke)

Deke! You at the freezer?

DEKE (O.S.)

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

Okay. You're almost done. Just open it up, let the woman out.

We hear a FREEZER BEING OPENED.

DEKE

She's all tied up with tape.

JEFF

You got that Swiss Army knife your dad gave you?

DEKE (O.S.)

Uh-huh.

JEFF

Good man. Use that. Make sure you don't hurt her.

They wait tensely while Deke works downstairs.

JEFF

(to Red)

You better pray she's all right.

DEKE (O.S.)

I got her --

AMY (O.S.)

Jeff!!!??

JEFF

Amy!!!

AMY (O.S.)

I'm almost free!!!

JEFF

Amy, come up here!

Amy climbs the stairs quickly. Scraps of duct tape cling to her wrists. She throws her arm around Jeff.

AMY

They were going to kill me.

JEFF

I know, baby. It's okay. They can't hurt you now.

While Amy embraces him, Jeff keeps the gun on Red and the others. He gestures toward the cellar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF
(to Red, Arleen, and Al)
Okay. Everybody in the cellar.

Nobody moves.

JEFF
Do it!

Arleen and Al descend the steps. Red follows, then stops, halfway down.

RED
Remember this moment, pretty boy.
'Cause whatever happens, no matter
how far you run, I will hunt you
down and kill you like a dog.

Jeff stares back. A beat, then:

JEFF
Go to hell.

He boots Red in the chest, sending him backward down the steps. He slams the trap door shut and locks the padlock.

He looks around, sees a massive tool chest. He tips it onto the trap door -- crash!

Then he takes Amy's hand, still keeping an eye out for Billy.

JEFF
Let's get out of here.

They run from the barn.

EXT. BARN - DAWN

The first rays of sunlight are beginning to poke over the horizon.

Jeff wheels the barn door shut and locks it. He sees Amy running toward Red's house.

JEFF
Amy, no! It's not safe --

AMY
(turning)
But there's a phone inside. We
have to call the police.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

One of them's still loose. C'mon
-- this way!

It's too much to explain. Jeff grabs her arm. As they take off running toward the light flickering in the distance.

REVEAL BILLY

lurking in the shadows at the corner of the barn, watching.

EXT. FIELD - LONG SHOT - DAWN

Jeff and Amy are tiny figures sprinting across the flat terrain, illuminated by the red glow of a rising sun.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAILER HOME - DAWN (MINUTES LATER)

The morning sky is lighter now.

A rickety trailer surrounded by a chicken coop, junked appliances and a clothesline. There's an old utility pickup truck parked in front. Jeff and Amy arrive out of breath. Jeff pounds on the door.

JEFF

Hello? Hello? Anybody home?

There's no answer. Jeff puts his shoulder to the door and rams it open. The flimsy door gives way easily.

INT. TRAILER - DAWN

Jeff enters. The place is ramshackle -- torn vinyl furniture, empty beer bottles scattered about. A tattered flag hangs on the wall. There's no one around.

JEFF

(shouting)

Hello? Anyone home?

Amy follows him inside, looks around. Jeff crosses the room, snatches up a phone and dials 911.

JEFF

C'mon, c'mon...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

While he waits for an answer, Amy leans the rifle against the wall. She notices a set of car keys hanging by the door.

JEFF
 (re: keys)
 Take it. We may need to get out of here --
 (into phone,
 suddenly)
 Hello! This is Jeff Taylor. I'm reporting an emergency... I don't know the address, the house belongs to a Red Barr -- I mean, Warren something... No, I don't know his name!

AMY
 (suddenly hearing something)
 Jeff --

A DEEP RUMBLE is approaching, GETTING LOUDER by the second...

JEFF
 No -- he kidnapped my wife, he's locked in a barn... Jeffrey Taylor. If you contact the police in --

Amy pulls a curtain aside, reacts to what she sees --

AMY
 (panicked)
 Jeff!

Suddenly, the ROAR is DEAFENING --

The PETERBILT EXPLODES through the wall of the trailer home!

JEFF AND AMY

dive out of the way.

INT. RED'S PETERBILT - DAY

Inside the truck cab, we catch a glimpse of Red behind the wheel, shouting something inaudible. Fragments of debris cling to the grille.

INT. TRAILER HOME - DAY

The rickety structure spins 360 degrees!

Jeff goes flying. A TELEVISION somersaults across the room and EXPLODES. Amy slams into a wall.

The speeding Peterbilt shears away a section of the trailer home with a horrible RIPPING sound!

The trailer home is suddenly open to the sky.

INT. TRUCK CAB - DAY

Red puts the truck into a hard turn, circling for another run at the devastated trailer.

INT. TRAILER HOME - DAY

Jeff struggles to his knees.

JEFF

Amy?!

Amy is crawling over the debris. Jeff pulls her to her feet. He grabs the rifle and car keys.

JEFF

C'mon!

They stagger through the gaping hole in the trailer.

INT. TRUCK CAB - DAY

Red sees Amy and Jeff flee the trailer and head for the utility pickup. He throws the Peterbilt into a turn.

YARD

Amy and Jeff run for the Ford F100 utility truck -- an aging blue-collar workhorse equipped with side-mounted toolboxes and a lumber rack bearing a ladder.

IN FORD

Jeff keys the ignition. The ENGINE SPUTTERS. Amy whips around to see the Peterbilt bearing down from the side.

AMY

Jeff, go! Go!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff turns the key. The ENGINE CATCHES! He throws the Ford in gear and floors the gas.

The Ford shoots out of the Peterbilt's path!

HIGHWAY

The FORD PEELS OUT of the driveway and joins the road, spewing exhaust. It's an old vehicle that doesn't maneuver well.

IN FORD

Jeff mashes the gas pedal. The ENGINE STRAINS, BACKFIRING. Amy looks back, sees the Peterbilt joining the road.

AMY

Can't this thing go any faster?!

A SHOTGUN BLAST SHATTERS the passenger WINDOW! Amy screams as glass showers the cab. Jeff swerves wildly.

JEFF

What the fuck?!

He swivels his head right, sees --

FIREBIRD

kicking up a cloud of dust as it pulls alongside the Ford on the right-hand shoulder.

The driver, Billy, is levelling a shotgun through the window.

JEFF

cranks the wheel.

JEFF

Get down!

IN FIREBIRD

Billy triggers a BLAST!

AMY

yelps as the passenger-side MIRROR DISINTEGRATES! She whips around, sees --

CADILLAC DEVILLE

pulling even with them on Jeff's side. The driver, Al, leans as he spins the wheel and creases the Ford -- CRUNCH!

JEFF

raises the PISTOL and FIRES!

HIGHWAY

The Ford is sandwiched between the Cadillac and Firebird as they race down the highway with the Peterbilt in the rear.

JEFF

lets out a cry as they carom off the Cadillac. Blood flows in a trickle down his neck. Amy sees it, panicking.

AMY

Jeff!

JEFF

It's glass! Use the rifle!

Amy raises the rifle, thrusts the barrel awkwardly out the window and aims at Billy. She FIRES wildly -- BANG!

BILLY

grins as the SHOT WHISTLES past harmlessly. He reloads the SHOTGUN, snaps it shut and RETURNS FIRE -- BLAM!

HIGHWAY

The BLAST hits the Ford's side-mounted toolbox. The door flies open. Tools scatter on the road!

BILLY

veers away, swearing, as hammers and chisels and power tools hit the asphalt and bounce up into his path.

The front end of the extension ladder comes free from the lumber rack and hinges into his path, SMASHING the WINDSHIELD!

BILLY

Sonofabitch!

Billy swears and jerks the wheel, steering away. He glances up suddenly, sees Jeff aiming the pistol.

The PISTOL FIRES!

Billy slams backward against the headrest, hit in the face. There's blood everywhere. The car careens toward the shoulder.

HIGHWAY

The Firebird hits a mound of earth, flies through the air and lands with a CRASH!

IN PETERBILT

Red sees the crash, scowling. He presses the gas and pulls closer, taking Billy's place alongside the Ford.

IN FORD

Amy sees the Peterbilt advancing. Whipping her head to the other side, she sees Al raising a pistol.

AMY

Look out!

Al jacks the trigger -- BLAM! BLAM!

ON PETERBILT

a STRAY BULLET SLICES the hydraulic brake line running to the trailer. The HOSE HISSES and whips through the air!

IN PETERBILT

Red swears and lets the truck fall back, swearing. Up ahead is a long, curving downgrade. He taps the brakes. There is a jolt as the trailer bumps the tractor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED
Sonofabitch --

He realizes: The trailer's got no brakes.

HIGHWAY

The Peterbilt descends the grade, letting out a RAPID-FIRE BLAT of BACKFIRES. It's gaining speed, bearing down on the Ford.

IN FORD

Amy turns in the seat, terrified. The truck looms closer. Jeff keeps the gas pedal on the floor.

JEFF
Hang on!

They are flying into a hairy curve.

IN PETERBILT

Red struggles to stay in control. Every time he applies the brakes, the unchecked trailer jars the cab forward.

The Peterbilt races into the curve.

Red has no choice. He has to pump the brakes and risk jackknifing or the truck will fly off the road altogether.

He hits the brakes!

HIGHWAY

The huge TRUCK SCREECHES on the asphalt, tires smoking, cab and trailer folding at right angles!

Then, unexpectedly, the trailer disconnects from the cab!

IN CADILLAC

Flanking the Peterbilt, Al glances to the side and sees the trailer come untethered from the cab.

Now the trailer is an unguided missile, weaving drunkenly back and forth across the blacktop.

Al tries to swerve away. The trailer streaks toward him. Al SLAMS on the BRAKES, screaming!

HIGHWAY

The trailer piles into the Cadillac. There is a huge IMPACT as trailer and Cadillac are reduced to scrap metal!

And just as this is happening...

PETERBILT

blasts into the rear of the Ford, jarring it forward with a CRUNCH of METAL and taillights!

JEFF

slams against the wheel. Amy is thrown against the dashboard. The Ford is being propelled downhill by the Peterbilt.

HIGHWAY

The two vehicles are now locked together, gaining speed as they hurtle down the grade.

JEFF

jams the pistol through the rear pass-through window and FIRES at Red in the truck. BULLETS PING off the grille.

The GUN CLICKS empty.

IN PETERBILT

Red hits the brakes, but it's no use. The bumpers are meshed. The two vehicles plunge downhill, skidding sideways.

Up ahead, a concrete bridge spans a deep gorge.

HIGHWAY

The Peterbilt and Ford fly onto the bridge. The big truck glances off a railing. The vehicles suddenly come unlocked.

The FORD plows into the concrete railing with a CRASH!

The PETERBILT creams it from behind and caroms away, SKIDDING the length of the bridge before SMACKING the opposite railing!

INSIDE ROAD

Jeff grimaces. In front of them, the concrete railing has broken away. Debris falls 300 feet to the bottom of the gorge. The Ford's right front tire hangs in the air.

Jeff looks at Amy. She looks wildly adrenalated, eyes wide.

JEFF

You all right?

Amy looks back at him. She expels a long breath and nods.

Jeff forces his upper body through the driver's window and looks over the Ford's roof at the Peterbilt.

JEFF'S POV - PETERBILT

It's facing them, 50 yards away on the bridge. The engine is dead. STEAM HISSES from the crumpled radiator. One tire is shredded.

There is blood on the broken windshield.

BACK TO JEFF

sitting in the driver's window. He squints toward the truck, searching for any sign of Red. There is none.

AMY (O.S.)

Jeff...

JEFF

Yeah?

AMY (O.S.)

Jeff... I can't get out...

Jeff drops back into the cab. The dashboard is crushed against Amy's legs. She tries to wriggle free.

JEFF

What is it?

AMY

(wriggling)

It's just... I can't get out...

JEFF

What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMY

I mean I can't get out!

Jeff blinks. He climbs out of the Ford, runs around to Amy's side and yanks the door. It comes open with a CREAK of METAL.

Behind Jeff on the bridge, a MOTOR KICKS OVER. He whirls.

JEFF'S POV - PETERBILT

EXHAUST BELCHES from the smokestacks. Red is behind the wheel. His face is covered with blood. He stares hatefully.

With a RASP of GEARS, the Peterbilt lurches forward.

BACK TO JEFF

He pushes against the dashboard with life-or-death urgency.

JEFF

C'mon, Amy, push!

Amy struggles and struggles to free her legs.

JEFF

Push, goddammit!

Amy glances toward the Peterbilt, terrified.

PETERBILT

creeps toward the Ford. The truck's grille is smashed. One wheel RIM SCRAPES the asphalt. It gains speed.

IN FORD

Jeff crawls over Amy and tries pushing with his legs. She winces as the metal cuts into her skin. Jeff strains.

AMY

(turning, reacting)

Jeff!

PETERBILT

rams the rear of the FORD -- CRASH! It jars the pickup farther through broken concrete guardrail.

IN FORD

Jeff and Amy are thrown forward by the impact. The Peterbilt's ENGINE ROARS. It's pushing them over the edge!

IN PETERBILT

Red's eyes burn as he presses the accelerator and forces the pickup farther through the broken railing.

FORD

lurches through the widening gap in the railing. Concrete sails into the canyon. The front tires hang over the void.

IN FORD

Jeff strains against the dashboard. It won't give. He whips around, swearing, and leaps from the Ford.

AMY
(panicked)
Jeff?

ON BRIDGE

Jeff runs to the Peterbilt and jumps on the driver's side running board, grasping the door handle.

Red heaves the door open suddenly. It strikes Jeff's head with a crack! He falls backward to the ground.

IN PETERBILT

Red presses the gas, yelling over the ENGINE ROAR. The railing is giving way. He sees Jeff struggling to his feet.

RED
You think you can come into my
life and fuck with me? Nobody
fucks with me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks down. Jeff is no longer visible. Red frowns.

Suddenly the passenger side door flies open and Jeff surges into the cab, landing on Red, clawing at his eyes!

They grapple in the cab. Red swings an elbow into Jeff's face -- crack. Jeff drives a fist to his jaw!

The steering wheel drifts counter-clockwise as the truck inches forward, ramming the Ford closer to the precipice.

Red gets his hands around Jeff's neck as the steering wheel continues to move counter-clockwise...

ON BRIDGE

The truck is no longer hitting the Ford squarely. Instead, the Peterbilt's right front tire is riding up and over the cargo bed, crushing the left side of the Ford under its massive weight.

IN PETERBILT

Red has both hands around Jeff's windpipe. He glances up for a second, reacts, but it's too late.

ON BRIDGE

The Peterbilt is surging up the driver's side of the Ford, using the pickup like a ramp!

IN FORD

Amy screams as the left side of the cab is flattened under the Peterbilt's weight!

ON BRIDGE

For an instant, the Peterbilt's front tires seem to hang in the air... then the truck is falling!

IN PETERBILT

Red and Jeff are thrown forward in the cab, still flailing at each other, as the truck plunges nose-first into the gorge.

Then it jerks to a halt in mid-air!

ON BRIDGE

The left rear set of wheels on the trailer is snagged on the thick rebar reinforcement in the crumbled concrete railing.

The Peterbilt is dangling nose-down from the bridge!

IN PETERBILT

Jeff slams into the windshield. Red lands on top of him. Loose objects from the cab rain against the windshield.

They grapple. Red grabs Jeff's arm and twists sharply, forcing it at an impossible angle. Their faces are inches apart.

RED

You think you can fuck with me?!

He headbutts Jeff viciously -- crack! Blood erupts from Jeff's nose and mouth. Red is about to deliver another blow when...

... the windshield falls away! The loose items in the cab plummet 300 feet to the canyon floor below.

Jeff drops through the windshield opening. He clings to the center support column. His legs dangle over the hood.

Red slips through the opening, his hand locking on the steering wheel at the last instant.

The windshield sails away into the gorge.

ON BRIDGE

The iron REBAR GROANS. It's beginning to give way under the weight of the truck. The truck slips slightly.

ON PETERBILT

Jeff feels the truck shifting. He grabs the windshield wiper blade with his free hand. The blade snaps away.

Red is clinging to the steering wheel. He flails at Jeff with his feet, swearing. Jeff is barely out of reach.

Jeff looks to the side. There is a grabhandle on the corner of the cab. He reaches with his free hand and seizes the handle.

ON BRIDGE

The REBAR GROANS. The truck is wedged against the Ford. As the truck slips, it forces the Ford closer to the edge.

ON PETERBILT

Jeff clings to the handle. He reaches for the passenger side door handle, working his way up toward the bridge.

REBAR

gives away once more and --

JEFF

scales the cab, finding more handholds. He climbs past the passenger door.

Behind him, Red is working his way higher in the same manner. He grabs Jeff's foot, trying to pull him off the cab.

Jeff kicks free and climbs past the sleeping compartment. Red grabs the door handle. Jeff boots the door release button.

The passenger door flies open!

Red falls away as the door opens. He's clinging to the open passenger door, suspended over the gorge.

IN FORD

Amy breathes in sharply, feeling the Ford move closer to the edge. She struggles to free her legs from the dashboard.

AMY

Oh God... Jeff...

JEFF

climbs higher. The Peterbilt slips again. Below, Red loses his grip and almost falls.

Jeff hauls himself onto the bridge with a final gasp of exertion. He runs to the passenger side of the Ford.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Ford teeters precariously. Any move could send it over the edge. Jeff can only extend his hand to Amy over the void.

JEFF

C'mon, Amy, it's all you now...
you can do it...

With a huge effort, Amy frees herself from the dashboard and reaches for Jeff's outstretched hand just as --

PETERBILT

comes free from the rebar!

AMY

takes hold of Jeff's hand.

PETERBILT

plummets into the canyon!

RED

screams!

PETERBILT

seems to fall forever... before landing with a huge
EXPLOSION!

ON BRIDGE

Jeff and Amy fall backward on the road. Down below, secondary EXPLOSIONS rock the canyon. Jeff takes Amy in his arms.

AMY

Don't let me go, Jeff...

JEFF

I won't, baby... I won't ever let
you go...

He looks into her eyes. Their lips meet in a kiss and
we --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RED'S HOUSE - DAY

Police cars and official vehicles are parked outside the house. RADIOS CHATTER. Yellow crime tape holds back onlookers and news reporters.

Cops and evidence technicians work the scene. A criminalist photographs stolen property as it's carried out of the barn.

A plainclothes FBI AGENT closes a cellphone and walks over to where Jeff and Amy are sitting at a picnic table. They are battered and bandaged.

JEFF

How's the sheriff?

FBI AGENT

Out of surgery. It looks like he's gonna make it. As for the wife and kid, she's not talking, he's being turned over to Protective Services.

Jeff nods soberly.

FBI AGENT

We've got I.D. on the dead suspects. Turns out they were all licensed truckers. One of 'em had a rap for check kiting. Otherwise they could've been model citizens.

JEFF

What about the leader?

FBI AGENT

Same thing. His real name's Warren Claney. Three speeding tickets in five years -- apart from that, he's clean as a whistle.

Amy watches as cops stack windshields outside the barn.

AMY

(dazed)

How could they do it? How could they treat it like a... business?

FBI AGENT

(shaking his head)

I don't know. I've been doing this 15 years, I've never seen anything like it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FBI AGENT (CONT'D)

It was simple, efficient and organized. They stayed on the move, spread it over a dozen states. As long as no witnesses survived, it's an untraceable crime.

(looking at them)

You were just a couple of the lucky ones.

Up ahead, a television news helicopter is landing on the road. A cameraman, reporter and producer hurry over.

Jeff watches the news crew, a bemused expression. It seems like a million years ago...

The FBI Agent shakes his head, disdainful.

FBI

(re: media)

C'mon -- let's get you folks out of here before things really get hairy.

He escorts them to a waiting sedan. As they climb in, Jeff looks back over his shoulder, surveying the scene one last time.

He gets in and the car pulls away just as the frenzied news crew arrives, mikes and cameras at the ready, running alongside the departing sedan, shouting questions.

Through the rear window, we see Jeff putting his arm around Amy, pulling her close as we hear:

AMY

Promise me one thing...

JEFF

Name it.

AMY

Next time... we fly.

EXT. HOUSE - AERIAL - DAY

Over this last line, the sedan drives away, and we CLIMB HIGHER and HIGHER AWAY FROM the bristling crime scene until the ranch house is just one in a town of modest houses and the pink desert floor spreads out endlessly in every direction.

FADE OUT.

THE END