

"INHERITANCE"

FADE IN:

EXT. EYOTA VALLEY - DAY

Desert in every direction. An oppressive sun beats down on the dry, cracked earth. The wind whistles through the eroded hills and etched rocks.

SUPERIMPOSE:

The Eyota Valley covers nearly 5000 square miles, and is said to be the driest, harshest desert in North America. It's western plain is called the "Tihkisu," the House of Nothing. Here rests the small town of Tremo.

EXT. TREMO - STREET - DAY

The town of Tremo: population 2003. A quiet and lazy day. The sun beats down. A DARK FIGURE leans against the motel office window. A LIGHT BLUE EL CAMINO drives by and parks across the street. A MAN and his TEENAGE SON get out of the car, remove groceries from the back, and walk toward the hardware store. The dark figure crosses the street. The keys are still in the ignition. The dark figure jumps into the El Camino and pulls away. The man drops his groceries and runs into the street as the El Camino pulls a U-turn and drives past.

EXT. NILES RANCH - DAY

The harsh sun and wind continue. A weather-beaten barn stands teetering in the wind, and a dirt road extends into the vast desert. The desert has climbed over the broken wooden fence that used to separate it from the Niles Ranch. The desert now sits perched at the base of the house of

ZACHARY NILES IV.

CAMERON (V.O.)

Sometimes giving your all is the most you can do. And did he ever give his all...

The house has been sitting in the desert for more than a hundred years. It is old and worn, and the paint is completely gone. The brown, exposed wood is almost the same color as the sandy dirt that surrounds the house.

JOHN (O.S.)

I don't care. It's the principle of the matter.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

JOHN BRODY, nearing thirty, once a middle-weight contender, is entrenched on the old leather couch trying to relax. John's stubborn and got a lot more heart than brains.

MARY

I'm going to shove your principles down your throat. MARY JOHNSON stands over him, staring hatefully down at her stubborn lover. Mary is dark, beautiful, and tough as nails. Her grandiose ideas far exceed her ability level.

JOHN

First, if we give your family any money, they're an accessory. You want them to go to jail?

MARY

They're not going to jail.

JOHN

Second, it's not realistic. When we take off with the old man's inheritance, we're going to have to drop off the face of the earth.

MARY

We're already there. John's sweating quite heavily on the leather couch.

JOHN

And third, if that inbred bunch of rednecks you call your family was supposed to be rich, they'd of had money by now.

Mary slugs John, THUMP. John rolls his eyes at her feeble attempt to hurt him.

EXT. DESERT - ROAD - SAME TIME

The El Camino speeds down the road.

INT. EL CAMINO - MOVING

The dark figure is: EDWARD ROMERO, a tough looking Hispanic man in his mid-twenties. a PISTOL sits on the passenger seat.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

John wipes perspiration off his forehead and sinks further into the couch.

JOHN

We've got to go over this stuff again before tomorrow.

MARY

We've been over it enough.

JOHN

You got to know this stuff cold! Mary grabs a plate off a shelf and hurls it at John. It hits him square in the face, and he's stunned and he wipes...

BLOOD off his nose. Mary lunges for the dining room... John dives for her, catches her long black hair.

MARY

Get away from me! John drags her by her hair, away from the kitchen, as she screams and kicks.

EXT. NILES RANCH - DIRT ROAD

The El Camino comes over a rise and speeds toward the house.

INT. EL CAMINO - MOVING

Edward steers with one hand and struggles to load the pistol with the other.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

And as John drags Mary by the fireplace, she grabs a steel poker and swings it at John's knee cap. WHACK!!! Direct hit.

JOHN

Oowww...!

John drops to the ground, releasing Mary from his grip.

EXT. NILES RANCH

The El Camino pulls up in front of the house, next to John's beat up YELLOW CONVERTIBLE. Edward checks the pistol and shoves it into his pants. He gets out of the car and cautiously approaches the house.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Mary lunges for a... SHOTGUN hanging above the fireplace...

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

Edward cautiously moves to a window, peeks in.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Mary swings the gun at John but... John blocks it and swings and hits her in the face and... BOOM! The shotgun goes off, blasting out the front window and blowing Mary backwards, and there's a THUMP as Edward hits the ground outside. SILENCE. John and Mary look at each other, puzzled.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

John opens the front door and pokes his head out. Edward lies on the ground in front of the porch. Mary appears and runs to the body. She feels for a heart beat and when she takes her hand away it's covered in blood. Mary is shocked.

MARY

... he's dead.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - DUSK

Mary and John sit on the porch steps overlooking Edward's body. A fan whirs overhead. Mary holds a bag of ice to her head while she smokes a cigarette and drinks from a bottle of whiskey.

JOHN

You always have to drink and smoke?

MARY

We just killed a man, John. I think I can take a drink if I want. John looks at Mary and takes a deep breath and sees the bruise on Mary's face.

JOHN

I'm sorry. I'm never going to hit you again, Mary.

MARY

Yeah, yeah, right. She blows smoke at John.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN

No. I'm never going to hit you again.

Mary looks at John and nods and extinguishes the cigarette. John turns toward the body.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Who is this guy?

MARY

We can't go to the police.

JOHN

What was he doing here?

MARY

I've never seen him. Mary takes another slug of whiskey. John walks over to the body. He notices the gun sticking out of Edward's belt.

JOHN

Look at this.

MARY

What?

JOHN

What was he doing with a gun?

MARY

Who knows.

John pulls out Edward's wallet, examines it, walks back to Mary, shows her Edward's driver's license.

JOHN

Look at the address. Mary looks and her expression changes to horror and she takes a long hit from the whiskey bottle.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's two blocks from where we lived...

MARY

So?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHN

There's no way that's a coincidence. He couldn't have just followed us across the country.

MARY

Just bury him.

John takes a deep breath and stands up.

JOHN

I'm not going to bury him. Disgusted, Mary gets up and goes inside.

MARY

Oh, for God's sake.

JOHN

I'm not a gravedigger. The door slams shut as Mary disappears into the house. John grabs Edward by the ankles and pulls him under the porch.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM

Mary puts the bottle of whiskey back into the liquor cabinet. The off screen sound of John under the porch, dragging the body can be heard.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - UNDER PORCH

John takes the gun from Edward's belt.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

John crawls out from under the porch and goes inside.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM

John moves across the room to a bureau. He places the pistol into the top drawer.

JOHN

It's time for bed. Mary's cigarette glows as she takes her last drag from it.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary and John lie in the darkness. Mary lies with her back to John. John moves close to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN

We're going to get away with this.  
He kisses her, she turns to face  
him and kisses him back as she  
moves closer to him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Go to sleep. We've got a lot to go  
over tomorrow. Mary turns back  
around.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - DAWN

The sun rises up.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

A flame ignites on the gas stove under the frying pan. Mary cracks some eggs and lays a few stripes of bacon into the pan. Mary drops some bread into the toaster and looks out the window at John, as he covers the El Camino with a tarp. Mary sets the table and pours two glasses of juice. She flips the eggs and bacon. John enters, sits down at his place.

MARY

You want some toast with your eggs?

JOHN

Yeah, sure.

The toast pops up and Mary sets it on a plate.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

We've got to go over this stuff one  
more time. He's going to be here  
at noon.

Mary sets a plate of eggs and bacon in front of John. She sits down and lights a cigarette. John looks at her. She puts the cigarette out.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Go ahead.

John starts to eat...

FLASHBACK:

EXT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - DAY

A low-income New York City apartment, and John's yellow convertible is parked on the street.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - DAY

It's dark. A few candles burn. The blinds are pulled down. The room is littered with trash. ELLEN NILES, strung out on drugs, sleeps in a reclining chair. Once, she was very beautiful and elegant. Not anymore.

MARY (V.O.)

My name is Ellen Niles. I was born on... February 7th, 1964... that makes me thirty-four years old. I visited my late, great uncle Zachary, once, almost twenty-seven years ago. I don't really remember much because I was too young.

Among the clutter in front of her, on the coffee table, is an assortment of drug paraphernalia.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

John chomps on a strip of bacon and says between bites:

JOHN

Less sarcasm, please. How are you related to Niles?

MARY

He's my... brother's... father.

JOHN

No! We've been over this a hundred times. He's your father's brother, not your brother's father.

MARY

He's my uncle. Why can't I just say uncle?

JOHN

That's fine, you can, but you've got to know which parent he's related to.

Mary sips her coffee and downs a few vitamins for her breakfast.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

Mary makes the bed. John sits in a chair across from her, drilling her.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

JOHN

Why did Niles leave all his dough  
to you?

Mary takes a deep breath.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Come on, come on. You can't  
hesitate.

MARY

He never had any children of his  
own. Besides my parents, I'm his  
only living relative. John fires  
off the next question:

JOHN

How did Niles get so rich?

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

The sun is nearly at it's peak. Mary is seated in a wicker  
rocking chair.

MARY

... his, I mean, my, great-  
grandfather was a hotshot lawyer in  
New York City. John nods his  
approval. He's standing by the  
blown out window, knocking out the  
remaining jagged glass with a screw  
driver.

JOHN

Okay, one more time. John starts  
sweeping the glass off the porch.

Mary pokes her cigarette into an ashtray filled with dozens  
of cigarette butts.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - HALLWAY

The shower sounds from the bathroom. Mary sits by the  
bathroom door frantically writing. The shower stops. Mary  
notices. She organizes her stack of papers. Mary stands up  
as the bathroom door opens and John enters the hallway. She  
hands John the pages she's written. John looks at them.

JOHN

See? See how these are  
different...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The dozen or so papers are filled with the words "ELLEN NILES."

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 (continuing)  
 You don't sign your name differently every time you write it, not at thirty-four. It doesn't matter what it looks like, it just has to be consistent. Mary takes the papers from John.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 (continuing)  
 This is how we're gonna get busted. Now, we got to have this stuff down cold. No mistakes, remember?

John kisses Mary on the forehead.

MARY  
 I set your clothes on the bed. Mary goes into the bathroom as John goes into the guest bedroom.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - DAY  
 as John enters and starts getting dressed.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BATHROOM  
 Mary applies makeup to her facial bruise.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM  
 John finishes dressing and exits.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BATHROOM  
 John enters and watches as Mary finishes with her make-up.

JOHN  
 You look great.

And the doorbell RINGS and John exits. Mary stares at her reflection in the mirror.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH  
 ZACHARY CAMERON waits on the porch. He's tall, strikingly good looking, and well dressed. The front door opens and John appears in the doorway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

How's it going? You must be--

JOHN

John. Ellen's friend. Cameron extends his hand to John.

CAMERON

Zach Cameron. It's good to meet you.

Cameron smiles at John with a sincere, yet killer, smile.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Mary, John, and Cameron sit at the huge mahogany dining table. Cameron has papers spread out all over the table. Cameron hands a paper to Mary.

CAMERON

Just sign right there. Mary takes the paper, whips off an "Ellen Niles" signature, and hands it back to Cameron.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Oh, and I need your birth date right here.

Mary takes the paper back, writes down Ellen's birth date with confidence, and hands the paper back to Cameron. A slight smile crosses John's face. Cameron picks up a picture of a young Ellen and her "Uncle Niles." The young Ellen has dark hair like Mary.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Was this the last time you saw your uncle?

MARY

Yes. It was twenty-seven years ago. I was too young to remember much.

Cameron nods. Although Mary's response was correct, it was a little stilted.

CAMERON

When was the last time you talked to him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mary glances at John, he doesn't know either.

CAMERON (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
I thought he mentioned he talked to  
you about a month ago.

MARY  
Yeah, yeah that's right. I talked  
to him a month ago.

Satisfied, Cameron nods. He sets the picture back down.

CAMERON  
Come on, let me show you around the  
property, so you can see what  
you're getting.

MARY  
How much money did he have? John  
stares at Mary, annoyed, and the  
question hangs in the air.

CAMERON  
I'm not exactly sure, but your  
uncle was... well off. Cameron  
moves toward the exit.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The sun beats down on the dirt and rock. Cameron's 4X4 drives  
along a dried up riverbed.

INT. CAMERON'S 4X4 - DAY

Cameron drives, Mary's in the passenger seat, and John leans  
forward from the back.

CAMERON  
The river marks the edge of his, I  
mean, your land. Cameron stops the  
car.

CAMERON (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
Up there we can get a good look at  
the place.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

as Cameron, Mary, and John get out of the truck and start  
walking up a steep hill.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mary stumbles in her high heels and tries to keep her hat and dress from being blown off by the fierce wind. Cameron buttons his jacket and leads them to the top.

AT THE TOP

they overlook the riverbed and can look out into the vast Eyota Valley - desert in every direction. John takes off his jacket. His shirt is drenched in sweat.

CAMERON

(pointing)

Right along there, that's the edge.  
Not that anyone would ever dispute  
it.

JOHN

What's that tractor doing over  
there?

In the distance, back toward the Niles Ranch, a tractor lies on its side. Cameron looks nervously at Mary.

CAMERON

That's where he died. He passed  
out from the heat, fell off the  
tractor and hit his head. Mary  
looks away.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I'm sorry, ma'am. I shouldn't have  
brought you here.

MARY

It's not that. The sun is hurting  
my eyes.

In the distance, a bobcat is barely distinguishable from the heat dancing off the sand. Beyond that, the Hamilton Ranch can be seen, it's acreage green, surrounded by brown desert.

JOHN

Who owns the land over there?

CAMERON

That there's the Hamilton Ranch.  
Sam Hamilton's the only one that  
ever made a go of it in this  
valley. Niles had enough money,  
but Hamilton worked and eked out  
some existence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN

Why would anyone want to live out here?

CAMERON

I don't know. He could have got some better land than this somewhere. I guess he's spent a little too much time in the sun. John looks at him, not understanding.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

He's crazy.

EXT. NILES RANCH - DAY

Cameron shakes hands with John and Mary as they get out of his car.

JOHN

How long is this going to take, to settle everything?

CAMERON

Hard to say. Are you going to want to hang on to the farm?

JOHN

No, we're not farmers. We got to get back to New York.

CAMERON

We should be able to transfer his assets in a day or two. I can take care of selling this place after you leave. Cameron gets back into his 4X4.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I'll give you a call tomorrow. Hopefully, we'll be able to wrap this thing up.

MARY

That'd be nice.

CAMERON

Have a good evening, folks. Cameron drives off.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON (CONT'D)

As he passes the El Camino, a gust of wind raises the tarp up, exposing the back end!

JOHN

That was so stupid!

MARY

What?

JOHN

I should have tied the tarp down.

EXT. TREMO - STREET - DAY

A police car is parked outside the convenience store.

INT. SAL'S CONVENIENCE STORE

SHERIFF ROBERT CAMERON, JR. takes a report from SAL MARINARO, the owner of the El Camino. His teenaged son stocks the shelves. Sheriff Robert, early 50's, wears his uniform with pride and dignity, but it's not the same uniform he wore ten years ago. He's gained a little weight. He's often fumbling, hot tempered, and seems to lag a step behind.

SAL

I saw him, Bob. He musta been a city boy, 'cause he just got in there and had that son of a gun hot wired in less than two seconds. By the time I got myself out there he was down the street.

SHERIFF ROBERT

'67 El Camino, light blue. License plate 228ZYX? Sal nods, keeps staring at Sheriff Robert.

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)

(continuing)

You think you could identify him if you saw him again?

SAL

Sure as the sun beatin' down tomorrow and heatin' this place up to a hundred and ten. Sheriff Robert's eyes wander across the street as Cameron gets out of his car and enters a building.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF ROBERT  
I'll see if I can get an artist  
over here from County.

SAL  
I'd really appreciate it, Bob. I  
delivered a lot a groceries in that  
car.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Hey, give me a couple of them  
"Scratchers."

Sal tears off a couple of lottery tickets and gives them to  
Sheriff Robert.

EXT. NILES RANCH - HOUSE - DAY

The sun continues it's assault on the Niles Ranch.

JOHN (O.S.)  
All's I'm saying is... you  
shouldn't have said you talked to  
him a month ago.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

Mary moves around the room picking up the dirty laundry.

MARY  
What was I supposed to say? John  
stands in the doorway.

JOHN  
I don't know, but Ellen told us she  
couldn't even remember the last  
time she talked to him, so it  
probably wasn't a month ago...

FLASHBACK:

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - DAY

A BLONDE Mary sits in John's lap at one end of the couch,  
watching television. Ellen enters with the old picture of her  
and Niles.

ELLEN  
I'm going to be rich.

JOHN  
You're already rich.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

ELLEN

No, not that pittance my parents give me. This is going to be my money. My uncle just croaked and left me a fortune.

John and Mary look at each other and start to pay attention to Ellen, who sits down at the kitchen table and starts to "cook" a dose of heroin.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

You guys want to like, come and live with me in San Francisco?

JOHN

Yeah, sure. But why is he leaving his money to you?

ELLEN

Who else?

JOHN

What about your folks?

ELLEN

He was like the family plague. They just like totally ostracized him. Won't even acknowledge he exists.

JOHN

Kind of like you?

ELLEN

Yeah, kind of like me. But for a different reason. Ellen fills the hypodermic needle with heroin.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

But he must have liked me, 'cause I'm getting the inheritance. I'm meeting his lawyer next week in Tremo.

JOHN

Where's Tremo?

ELLEN

Some desert town out west. You guys want to come?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

John turns back to the television,  
not really believing. Ellen  
plunges the needle into her arm.

JOHN

Yeah, yeah sure.

MARY

We're you two close?

ELLEN

Ha. I can't even remember the last  
time I talked to him... And Ellen  
slowly slips away...

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

as Mary finishes picking up all the clothes.

MARY

He doesn't know a thing, or he  
would have busted us, right?

JOHN

(trying to hold his  
temper)

Yeah... but you should have told  
him it wasn't a month ago and then  
been as vague as possible.

MARY

Who cares? Isn't he bringing us a  
check?

Mary exits.

EXT. TREMO - STREET - DAY

Sheriff Robert sits on the steps of the convenience store,  
swigging the ice cold Coca-Cola and scratching the lottery  
tickets. He considers the tickets for a moment and then  
tosses them into a trash can. He walks across the street. A  
group of KIDS run past him.

SHERIFF ROBERT

What are you kids doing out of  
school?

The kids stop, but only for a second.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KID #1

It was too hot and them air  
conditioners are all broken down.

SHERIFF ROBERT

You kids stay out of trouble. The  
kids run off as Sheriff Robert  
enters the building.

INT. CAMERON'S OFFICE

Sheriff Robert bursts in. Cameron is seated at his desk.

SHERIFF ROBERT

You go over to Niles'? Cameron  
nods.

CAMERON

This is their file. He holds up an  
envelope marked "Niles," and puts  
it into his top desk drawer.

SHERIFF ROBERT

What were they like? Cameron  
hesitates for a minute, then:

CAMERON

Seemed like nice folks. Genuine  
nice folk.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Wouldn't you be if you were getting  
all that money?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOE'S DINER - EVENING

Cameron and Sheriff Robert sit at a secluded booth, eating  
their dinner.

SHERIFF ROBERT

You know Sal? His car was stolen.

CAMERON

What kind of car was it?

SHERIFF ROBERT

You know, his old El Camino.

CAMERON

Blue?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Yeah, why?

Cameron thinks for a moment.

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)  
What kind of car did them Niles'  
drive?

CAMERON  
I don't know.

ALICE, their long-legged waitress, appears.

ALICE  
Is everything all right? Cameron  
flashes his dazzling smile:

CAMERON  
It's great, thanks. She freshens  
the coffee and takes the plates.

ALICE  
(to Cameron)  
You call me if you need anything.  
Sheriff Robert watches as Alice  
saunters away.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
She's got the hots for you.

CAMERON  
Nooooo.

Sheriff Robert shakes his head.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Them folks say what they were going  
to do with all that money?

CAMERON  
Didn't say.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Don't it make you mad? You were  
his attorney for all these years  
and he didn't leave you nothing.

CAMERON  
He paid me fairly for my legal  
services. Besides, I wouldn't want  
any of his money, even if he had  
left it to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHERIFF ROBERT

It ain't right, you know, them coming into town and collecting all that money. Never did anymore than you or me to deserve it. This town had to put up with Niles for all these years.

CAMERON

That's why it's called inheritance, Bob. They were born with a right to it.

EXT. NILES RANCH - DUSK

John pulls the tarp off the El Camino and covers the yellow convertible. He moves to the barn and slides the door open. A large horned owl bursts out. John ducks. John gets into the El Camino and drives it into the barn.

INT. BARN

as John maneuvers the El Camino into position, trying not to hit Niles' car. John gets out of the car. He looks around. The barn is filled with old farm equipment, but it all shines like the day it was made. John pulls a piece of burlap off a pile, uncovering a canister. John takes the burlap and covers the El Camino. John moves to the exit, but then has a second thought and goes back to the canister and examines it. It's

LIME.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

John carries the canister of lime under the porch.

INT. UNDER PORCH

John crawls in with the canister of lime. He opens the canister and pours the white powder all over Edward's body.

EXT. NILES' PORCH - NIGHT

John emerges from under the porch and moves back to the barn. John slides the barn door closed, but before he's finished headlights are baring down on him, blinding him, forcing him closer to the barn. John stops, waits, squints to see who's in the car. The engine stops and the headlights go out and an elderly woman emerges from the car. Her name is BELLE.

BELLE

Who are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN  
I'm John... Ellen's boyfriend.

BELLE  
Oh.

JOHN  
(a long pause, then)  
Who are you?

BELLE  
My name's Belle. I used to be Mr. Niles' cleaning lady. John moves closer to her, so he doesn't have to keep yelling.

JOHN  
Did you need something from the house?

BELLE  
No, no, I just wanted to see how Ellen was making out.

Light tears start to roll down Belle's face.

JOHN  
Well, she's inside. You can come in.

Belle wraps her arms around John and begins to sob on his shoulder as they move toward the house.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM

Mary looks down at Belle and John.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Mary climbs down the stairs. Through the window, John and Belle can be seen walking onto the porch.

JOHN (O.S.)  
Have you ever met Ellen?

BELLE (O.S.)  
What? She didn't tell you? John shakes his head "no."

BELLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
I baby sat for Mr. Niles years and years ago when Ellen was visiting.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BELLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I bet she'll remember me. Mary  
stops.

EXT. NILES' PORCH - NIGHT

John and Belle sit in the wicker furniture.

BELLE  
What did you say your name was?

JOHN  
(again)  
John.

BELLE  
Oh, John. I've been coming here  
every other week for more than  
forty years, keeping this place  
cleaned up and all. Bringing him  
food. Doing some cooking.

He'd a never had a home cooked meal if it weren't for me. He  
was never married, you know. Belle reaches inside her pocket  
book, pulls out a pen and a small scrap of paper and begins  
to write. John looks into the living room at Mary.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Mary stares back at John. She looks at the picture of Ellen  
and Niles on the bureau, and pulls her hair back the way  
Ellen has her hair in the picture. Then, she takes the PISTOL  
out of the bureau and goes into the kitchen.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

Belle finishes writing and holds the scrap of paper out to  
John.

BELLE  
I'm retired, but I wouldn't mind  
keeping this place clean for you...  
if you think you'd need me? John  
takes the scrap of paper and puts  
it into his wallet.

JOHN  
We're going to sell everything.

BELLE  
Oh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN  
I'll be glad to tell whoever buys  
the place about you.

BELLE  
Thank you. What did you say your  
name was?

JOHN  
(again)  
John.

BELLE  
Oh, John, you're such a handsome  
young man. I'm old enough to say  
that, too... Where's Ellen?

JOHN  
She'll be right out.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN

Mary sets three glasses of ice tea on a tray, next to the  
pistol. She covers the gun up with a dish rag, and exits.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

Mary comes out of the house with a tray of ice tea. Belle  
stands up to get a better look at Mary. John sits up in his  
chair.

BELLE  
Oh, Ellen. Do you remember when  
you came to visit?

MARY  
I was too young.

BELLE  
Really?

Mary nods and offers Belle a glass of tea. Belle takes the  
glass of tea but she keeps looking at Mary. Mary offers John  
a glass of tea, and shows him the pistol.

BELLE (CONT'D)  
Well I'd recognize you anywhere.  
You've grown, but you haven't  
changed a bit. You look just like  
Mr. Niles.

Belle continues to stare at Mary. Mary looks at John. John  
smiles.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

BELLE (CONT'D)

That's a nasty bruise on your face.  
Mary touches the bruise and looks  
down at John, and John waits for  
Mary's response.

MARY

... I fell.

Belle looks scornfully at John and says:

BELLE

I fell a few times myself, when I  
was married.

Mary and Belle share a smile. Mary shivers from the cold.

MARY

It sure does get cold here at  
night.

The breeze blows through Mary's light nightgown.

BELLE

That's the desert for you. Belle  
wipes a few tears away from her  
eyes and pulls out a handkerchief.

BELLE (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I never thought it'd be the last  
time I saw him. It was so  
sudden... so sudden.

MARY

When was the last time?

BELLE

Last week. I brought him dinner...  
Belle's sobs increase. Mary hugs  
Belle. Belle tries to gather  
herself and she sits back down.

BELLE (CONT'D)

(continuing)

It seems like just yesterday.

(to Mary)

Are you sure you don't remember me?  
Mary shakes her head.

BELLE (CONT'D)

(to John)

What did you say your name was?

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary washes the glasses in the sink.

John dumps the silverware onto the kitchen table. He sifts through each piece.

JOHN

Stainless... it's all stainless.  
What'd this guy spend his money on?  
John tosses a piece of silverware  
back into the drawer. Mary moves up  
behind him and wraps her hands  
around his waist. John pulls them  
off.

JOHN (CONT'D)

We got to look through the house  
and see if there's anything  
valuable.

Mary shrinks into one of the kitchen chairs as John starts going through another cabinet.

MARY

I kinda like the dishes.

JOHN

We're not taking anything we can't  
sell.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

John is on his knees going through the bureau. Mary is on the other side of the room searching the glass cabinet filled with antique dishes.

JOHN

Nothing!

John reaches out and dusts off a cast iron sculpture of a stork. One knee is broken but it still stands, almost three feet high.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I wonder if this is worth anything?  
Mary looks at him, shrugs, she  
doesn't know either.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(continuing)  
It's kind of cool.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

"We're not taking anything we can't sell."

John glares at Mary.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

As the door opens, light pours in from the hallway, and John and Mary enter. One whole wall is lined with books of varying shapes and sizes. Next to the book case is Niles' large king-sized bed, unmade. A small bureau and desk fill the remainder of floor space. John flips on the light and takes it all in and moves to the bureau and begins to search it. Mary sits down at the desk with her bottle of whiskey.

MARY

I don't think that house keeper did a very good job. Mary blows across the desk. Dust flies everywhere and Mary coughs and fans the air with her hand. John has finished with the bureau and is now looking through the books. But Mary is still at the desk, rummaging through Niles' elaborate wooden letter box. She opens one of it's drawers and pulls out some letters and starts reading.

JOHN

What is it?

MARY

They're letters... love letters from a woman.

John returns to the books and Mary keeps reading.

JOHN

You going to read those letters all night?

MARY

It's romance. You could learn something.

Mary pours herself another drink and keeps reading. By now John is on his knees, searching the lower portion of the bookcase. He stands up, holding a box, which he drops in front of Mary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN

He was romantic all right. Mary looks at the box... it's filled with porno magazines. Mary keeps reading.

MARY

They had a child. This stops John.

JOHN

A child?

MARY

(reading)

But she was married and... and she knows it's his but she can't tell anyone.

JOHN

We gotta get rid of those letters.

MARY

Why?

JOHN

'Cause we don't need anyone else thinking they can get in on the old man's money. John exits.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

John holds a flashlight as he pries the cellar door open. He pulls and pulls and it opens. He shines the light down the stairs and cautiously descends into the cellar.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - CELLAR

as John descends the stairs. The cellar has only one dim light hanging from a bare electric cord. The cellar is cluttered with junk... J.U.N.K. - junk, nothing but junk. John turns to leave, spots a large framed painting set against the wall. It's an African hunting scene. John consider it for a moment.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

John sets the large painting on the fireplace mantel, covering the shotgun.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BEDROOM

Mary sits at the desk, still reading.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN (O.S.)

Mary?

MARY

(without stopping)

I'm in here.

John enters.

JOHN

Did you-- are you still reading those letters?

MARY

Look at this. This jerk didn't want to acknowledge his own kid.

JOHN

We're burning'em.

MARY

Listen to this... "I know in my heart that this child is ours, no matter what you say, consummated in a moment that's special to me. I beg you to acknowledge your son, who in your heart you must know is yours." What a jerk. This woman really loved him.

JOHN

Maybe it wasn't his.

MARY

It was his. She didn't have any other lovers. "And the most painful of all is the rejection of your love for me, and for our baby..." I'm not sure we even want this guy's money.

JOHN

We'll take it.

John exits.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - NIGHT

The last light goes out...

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - DAWN

The sun starts its rise toward the sky.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

John pulls the letters out of Niles' letter box and throws them into the fireplace and lights them on fire.

EXT. NILES' RANCH - DIRT ROAD

A POLICE CAR drives toward the house.

INT. POLICE CAR - MOVING

Sheriff Robert drives and his Deputy, EARL, twenty years old and skinny as a rail, sits in the passenger seat. Earl's a lot shrewder than he looks.

SHERIFF ROBERT

It's a little warm to be lighting a fire, isn't it?

EARL

Yes, it is.

They look toward the house as the smoke rises out of the chimney. Sheriff Robert hands Earl a POLAROID.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Now I want you to get some good pictures of the two of them.

EARL

Why?

SHERIFF ROBERT

Just do it, will you? Why you always asking so many questions? Earl shrugs and pops two mouth fulls of chewing tobacco into his mouth.

EARL

(barely audible through the tobacco)

I'm naturally curious. Earl spits a huge wad of dark tobacco out the window.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

John and Mary exit the house. CLICK. CLICK. Earl snaps a couple of pictures.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF ROBERT

Sheriff Robert Cameron. Good to meet you, good to meet you. Sheriff Robert climbs the stairs to John and shakes his hand.

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Don't mind if we take a few pictures, do you? John just nods, but Mary turns back into the house. CLICK. CLICK. Earl snaps a few pictures.

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)

(continuing)

We're looking for a stolen car.

JOHN

What kind of car?

SHERIFF ROBERT

An old El Camino. Earl tries to spit a wad of tobacco juice.

EARL

Yeah, light blue, metallic... Earl tries to spit again, succeeds. Sheriff Robert and Earl step down off the porch. John glances at the barn.

JOHN

Haven't seen it. CLICK. CLICK. Earl snaps a couple of pictures.

EXT. NILES RANCH - DRIVEWAY

John stand on the porch, watching. Sheriff Robert and Earl walk down the steps, looking around.

SHERIFF ROBERT

(yelling back at John)

You don't mind if we look around a little, do you? John goes back into the house.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM

John enters, Mary is standing in front of him holding the pistol. John locks eyes with Mary. Mary gives the gun to John. He checks the cylinder, closes it, and tucks it behind him into his belt and exits.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

John exits the house and watches Sheriff Robert and Earl walking toward the barn.

AT THE BARN

Sheriff Robert and Earl stop at the yellow convertible. Sheriff Robert nods to Earl.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Let's see what we got. Earl pulls the cover off the yellow convertible. Sheriff Robert continues toward the barn. Earl snaps a picture of the New York license plate and follows.

AT THE PORCH

John continues to watch... as Sheriff Robert and Earl walk toward the barn door. John walks down the steps and Mary pulls on his shoulder, but John keeps going toward the barn.

AT THE BARN

Sheriff Robert and Earl arrive at the barn door.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Well, what are you waiting for?  
Open it up.

Earl grabs the iron door handle and starts to slide the door open...

MARY

Honey? What's going on? John stands halfway between the house and the barn, fingering the gun... A CAR travels down the dirt road toward them... Earl struggles to get the door open... John squints at the car to see who it is and it's Cameron. John pulls his shirt tail over the gun.

AT THE BARN

Sheriff Robert sees Cameron and starts walking back toward the house. Through the partially opened door, the covered El Camino can be seen. Earl stops, follows Sheriff Robert. They watch as Cameron pulls up and gets out of his car.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

CAMERON

Robert, what are you doing  
bothering these nice people?

SHERIFF ROBERT

Just doing my job.

CAMERON

Come on, this isn't your job.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Come on, Earl.

(to John)

Kind of warm for a fire, wouldn't  
you say?

Sheriff Robert smiles and moves toward his car. Earl follows.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - DAY

Sheriff Robert and Earl drive away as...

Cameron, John, and Mary walk toward the house.

CAMERON

I'm sorry about our overzealous  
sheriff. He's been like that ever  
since we were kids.

MARY

I guess you've known him awhile?

CAMERON

Well, yeah. He's my brother.

JOHN

He's your brother? You guys don't  
look anything alike.

CAMERON

And our personalities are just as  
different.

Cameron laughs and smiles.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Our father was the sheriff. I  
think he's just trying to keep up.  
They arrive at the porch, climb the  
steps.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

as they move up the steps.

CAMERON

You want the good news or the bad news first?

MARY

The bad news.

Cameron smiles, says:

CAMERON

Why don't we sit down. John gives Mary a worried glance and they go inside.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

as they enter and sit down. The gun pokes into John's back as he sits down.

CAMERON

It's not that bad, it's just... some guy in Las Vegas has filed an injunction.

JOHN

Who?

CAMERON

I don't know, he's... he's claiming that Niles was his father.

JOHN

But he didn't have any kids.

CAMERON

That's not what this guy is claiming. Niles used to take trips to Vegas once in a while, maybe this is the result. John and Mary glance at each other. Cameron catches the glance.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I'm just thinking out loud here but, he's probably not even related to Niles. He's probably just looking for a quick pay off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

But the will left everything to me,  
right?

CAMERON

Yes, but... if Niles didn't know he  
had a son, and then found out about  
it, then he might have wanted to  
leave him something.

JOHN

How long is this going to take?

CAMERON

Well... if you could prove that  
Niles knew about his son and still  
left him nothing, you might be able  
to get him to back down right away.

JOHN

Why?

The ashes smoulder in the fireplace.

CAMERON

If Niles knew about his son, then  
his will is exactly the way he  
intended it.

John shifts uncomfortably in his chair and the gun pokes  
deeper into his back.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

If he is Niles' son there's got to  
be something or... someone that can  
prove he knew about him. And if  
he's not Niles', he won't get a  
thing. Either way, you're okay.

EXT. TREMO - CONVENIENCE STORE - DUSK

Sheriff Robert pulls up next to another police car, a COUNTY  
POLICE CAR. Sheriff Robert goes into the store carrying an  
envelope.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE

as Sheriff Robert enters. Sal talks with a young female  
sketch artist, MEL.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Good morning, Sal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAL

Morning.

Sheriff Robert looks at the sketch. It's taking shape.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Mel, I was starting to think you weren't coming.

MEL

Now come on, Robert. A stolen truck in Tremo ain't the highest of priorities.

Sheriff Robert opens the envelope and takes out the snap shots of John and Mary. He shows them to Sal.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Is this him?

Sal takes the pictures and studies them...

SAL

That ain't him, Bob, but I seen the girl. She was in here a couple of mornings ago buying groceries.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Are you sure?

SAL

Yeah, why?

SHERIFF ROBERT

Just a hunch.

Disappointed, Sheriff Robert puts them back into the envelope. Mel shows Sal the picture.

SAL

Yeah, yeah... his face was a little rounder, a little fuller. Mel starts to make the changes.

SAL (CONT'D)

We're going to get your brother to prosecute this jerk, ain't we?

SHERIFF ROBERT

Yeah, sure. When I catch him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAL

I remember when he was just a kid, running around here trying to bargain for a Coke. Sheriff Robert looks hard at the picture, as Edward's face starts to show through on the sketch.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

John and Mary lie in the darkness.

MARY

John?

JOHN

(asleep)

Yeah?

MARY

Maybe we should just... leave.

JOHN

What?

MARY

We could leave now, disappear, and nobody'd even know. John takes a deep breath, says:

JOHN

Think about this logically...

FLASHBACK:

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - DAY

The blinds are up and light spills in and two PARAMEDICS load Ellen's body onto a stretcher and drape a sheet over her body.

JOHN (V.O.)

First, Ellen O.D.ed right? We had nothing to do with it. A DETECTIVE examines Ellen's wallet and writes on a clipboard.

DETECTIVE

Ellen Niles... isn't she city attorney Niles' daughter? Mary nods. The detective picks up the heroin needle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)  
 (continuing)  
 Heroin... what a shame. Mary and John watch as the paramedics carry Ellen's body out of the apartment.

MARY  
 What are we going to do now? Mary buries her face in John's chest.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

John and Mary still lie in bed.

JOHN  
 ...so what's the big deal? Attempted embezzlement? A few months in the can? It's worth the risk, 'cause... second, how long could it take? No one knows you're not Ellen. So, even if we have to fight this guy, we'll still end up with half. We could stay here ten years if we want to. Mary sighs.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 (continuing)  
 And third, when are we ever going to get a chance like this again? We can always leave, but once we leave, we can't come back.

MARY  
 What about the body under the porch?

Mary turns her back to John... and then her head pops up.

MARY (CONT'D)  
 (continuing)  
 Did you hear that?

JOHN  
 What?

MARY  
 I heard something. Someone's out there.

JOHN  
 Go to sleep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

I'm serious.

Mary gets out of bed and pokes her head into the hallway.

HALLWAY

Mary looks down the hallway,  
toward... Niles' bedroom.

GUEST BEDROOM

Mary turns back to John, her face  
ashen white.

JOHN

Go to slee-

And Mary holds her finger to her mouth and motions silence and John sees her expression, grabs a flashlight off the night stand, and joins her in the doorway.

HALLWAY

John and Mary peer down the hallway  
toward...

NILES' BEDROOM

A DARK FIGURE has lifted up a few  
floor boards and is pulling  
something out of the floor.

HALLWAY

John aims his flashlight at the  
figure and... POP! He turns it  
on...

NILES' BEDROOM

The INTRUDER looks up, he's on his  
hands and knees and his eyes glow  
as the light reflects off them.  
He's short and stocky, with long  
dark hair...

JOHN (O.S.)

Hey!

...and the intruder is gone.

GUEST BEDROOM

JOHN

(to Mary)

Lock the door!

And John darts down the stairs and Mary slams the door behind him and the figure has jumped out the window.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE

The intruder dives out the window, onto the porch roof, and keeps running, and jumps to the ground and doesn't miss a beat, but he drops a video tape as he keeps running across the desert landscape.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM

John flies down the stairs, and goes to the bureau, and removes the pistol, and runs out onto the porch...

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

as John comes out of the house the intruder jumps on a dirt bike and fires it up. John aims the gun but hesitates. The intruder races away, disappearing into the desert. John notices... the VIDEO TAPE, lying in the dirt.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

John and Mary stand around the open floor boards. Several hundred dollar bills litter the floor. John picks up one of the bills and shines his flashlight on it.

JOHN

The guy knew where the old man kept his stash.

John kneels down and focuses his flashlight a few feet under the floor boards and finds a few more porno magazines, only they're gay porno magazines.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John pops the video tape into the VCR and presses play.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Two naked men ride around in front of Niles' house on a new dirt bike, yelling and screaming and carrying on.

The driver of the dirt bike is the INTRUDER, only his hair is much shorter, and Niles is on the back.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

John and Mary watch the action on the television, horrified. The intruder waves and yells:

INTRUDER

We're having fun now, aren't we Zachary?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

John and Mary look at each other. John turns the television off.

JOHN  
Well, he was your uncle. Mary pulls  
the tape out of the VCR.

MARY  
Bizarre.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - DAY

The sun has started to pound down on the Niles Ranch.

MARY (O.S.)  
But we could be out of here  
tomorrow.

JOHN (O.S.)  
This is not open for discussion.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BATHROOM

John looks into the mirror. Shaving cream covers his face.

JOHN  
When I got out of the can I swore  
I'd never forge nothing again. And  
I meant it.

John pulls the razor across his face.

MARY (O.S.)  
It'd take you fifteen minutes to  
write up a letter, just like we  
need. We give it to the lawyer,  
we're out of here.

JOHN  
That's not the point.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM

Mary moves around the room making the bed.

MARY  
And I suppose you're just going to  
let that body rot under the porch?

JOHN (O.S.)  
Unless you can think of a way of  
burying a body without digging a  
grave, 'cause--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY  
(interrupting)  
--Digging graves didn't make him a jerk.

JOHN (O.S.)  
Yeah, well, that's what he did for a living, and I ain't gonna do it. I ain't like him.

MARY  
Him! Him again! You know, you sit around feeling sorry for yourself--

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BATHROOM

as John continues to shave.

JOHN  
--I don't feel sorry for myself.

MARY (O.S.)  
--at least you had a father.

JOHN  
A drunk who beats his wife and kids, that ain't better than no father!

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM

Mary throws the bedspread across the bed.

MARY  
It's going to stink this place to high heaven.

JOHN (O.S.)  
I covered it in lime. That'll handle it 'til we get out of here.

MARY  
That won't get rid of it.

JOHN (O.S.)  
There's two things I won't do, and you want me to do them both? Mary counts on her fingers, says:

MARY  
And you won't drink.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BATHROOM

as John pushes the razor back and forth across his face.

JOHN  
Okay, three.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM

Mary continues to count.

MARY  
You won't leave.

JOHN (O.S.)  
Damn right.

MARY  
And you won't make love to me. Mary  
folds the bedspread under the  
pillows.

John appears in the doorway, clean shaven and refreshed.

JOHN  
That's different, it's temporary.  
Once we get the money we'll be  
doin' it twenty-four/seven.

Mary shakes her head, mumbles under her breath.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
I'll take care of this. John exits.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

John climbs down the stairs. He pulls Edward's wallet out of the bureau and moves to the couch. He grabs the rotary phone and dials. Mary slowly descends down the stairs.

JOHN  
(into phone)  
Brooklyn...  
(beat)  
Edward Romero... Yeah, I know. I  
got an address. 134 Seventh  
Street... Thanks. John writes on a  
piece of paper, hangs up, and re-  
dials.

MARY  
What are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN  
I'm calling our friend, see who  
lives there.

MARY  
Are you sure--

John motions for her to be quiet.

JOHN  
(into phone)  
Hello, is Edward there?  
(beat)  
I'm a friend of his... Mike.  
(beat)  
Well, yeah... maybe Mickey or  
Michael... No? Do you know Mary  
Johnson?

CLICK. Too late. "Mary Johnson" rings out and Mary's eyes  
come alive.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
She hung up on me.

MARY  
What the hell was that supposed to  
mean? Why would she know me?

JOHN  
I don't know.

MARY  
Why didn't you ask about yourself?

JOHN  
I know I don't know him. Mary goes  
into the kitchen. John waits a  
moment, thinks, goes into the  
kitchen.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN

John enters. Mary sits at the table smoking.

JOHN  
You know, you can make fun of my  
convictions if you want.

MARY  
I don't care about that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN  
But it's better than not having  
any...

Mary ignores him.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
You got to have convictions in  
life. We came out here to get the  
money and we're not leaving 'til  
the final bell.

Mary gets up and goes to the counter and pours herself a shot  
of whiskey, drinks it and stares into John's eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
You know I'm trying to find things  
out for myself, instead of just  
doing it the way my parents did'em.

MARY  
What is that supposed to mean?

JOHN  
Your mom was a drunk, and now look  
at you.

MARY  
So?

JOHN  
Look at the string of men your mom  
had.

MARY  
Yeah, so?

JOHN  
Since you were fifteen, how many  
hours of your life have you spent  
without a boyfriend? And with this  
Mary's had enough. She splashes  
John in the face with the whiskey  
and... he goes for her but he  
stops. Mary stares at him,  
waiting.

MARY  
Go ahead!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The moment has passed. John takes a deep breath and Mary moves to the back door.

MARY (CONT'D)

You ask me tomorrow... how many hours I've been without a boyfriend... and I'll tell you... twenty-four.

Mary slams the door as she exits.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

John enters and goes to the window and watches as Mary melts into the desert.

INT. BOXING ARENA - NIGHT

A cloud of smoke hovers over the rowdy spectators who cheer and yell and even throw a few things at the...

RING

In the spotlight center, a RING ANNOUNCER reaches for a microphone being lowered.

RING ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen! The crowd erupts with cheers.

RING ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

(continuing)

And now, on tonight's main card, in the green corner, weighing in at one hundred sixty-eight pounds, with a record of eight wins, five losses, all the way from New York City, John Brody. John stands in one corner, staring across at his opponent...

RING ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

(continuing)

And in the red corner, at one hundred seventy-five pounds, with a record of twenty wins, twelve by knock out, and no losses, hailing from the "Iron City" of Pittsburgh, Middle Weight Champion, Big Bill Bull. The crowd goes wild as BULL taunts John. John's shoulders hang and he keeps staring at Bull and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The screen fast forwards...

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

John presses play and the fight continues on the  
TELEVISION SET...

Bull hits John over and over again. WHAM! John takes one in  
the stomach. WHAM! John takes one in the head.

SPORTSCASTER #1 (V.O.)  
Brody takes another... and another.  
Brody is taking a beating--

OOOH! WHAM! WHAM! and John takes a double combination in  
the stomach and chest. DING! The round ends.

INT. BOXING ARENA

The RING GIRL prances around the ring with a card. John goes  
to the corner, sits on the stool. MAX, the corner man, wipes  
John's face with a towel.

JOHN  
I don't know...

MAX  
Oh, come on, John. Only dumb guys  
quit. You're smart. You're going  
to have to fight all the way to the  
last bell.

John spits out water as Max applies a cold compress to his  
brow. DING. Round ten begins. John's off the stool and back  
into the action.

INT. NILES' LIVING ROOM

as John watches the action on television. Bull continues from  
where he left off, beating John senseless.

SPORTSCASTER #1 (V.O.)  
This boy is going to be hurting in  
the morning.

The crowd "ooh's" as John takes another batch of Bull's fury.

SPORTSCASTER #2 (V.O.)  
Why doesn't he just lie down? John  
flips the television off. He goes  
to the window and looks out... no  
sign of Mary.

EXT. DESERT - RIVERBED - DAY

The sun beats down. Mary wanders around in the dried up riverbed. She squints, trying to see ahead of her. She takes off her shoes and keeps going.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

John stares out the window.

JOHN

Damn.

John exits the house.

EXT. NILES RANCH

John disappears into the desert.

EXT. DESERT - RIVERBED - DAY

A SHOE lies in the middle of the dried up riverbed. John stumbles to the shoe and... a rattlesnake winds it's way out and slithers across the riverbed. John picks up the shoe. It's one of Mary's. John looks up to the other side of the river and a FIGURE emerges, but John can't make it out because the sun's shining in his face, illuminating the figure like an angel.

JOHN

...Mary?

BANG! The earth erupts in front of John. John dives for cover. BANG! as the figure shoots again, and again barely misses John. John starts running and the figure is following him but he still can't really see him because of the sun.

EXT. RIVERBED - FURTHER

as John runs by, dropping Mary's shoe on the ground.

BANG! This time the blast hits the side of the riverbed in front of John and... John stumbles to the ground, grinding his head into the hard dirt. John turns and starts to get up but it's too late... SAMUEL HAMILTON stands over John, aiming the rifle at him. John lies on the ground motionless. Hamilton peers at him, then... Hamilton drops the rifle down and begins to reload it. John watches, unsure. Hamilton's old and grizzled, but still quite physically imposing. His skin, especially in the face, is burnt and cracked like an ancient piece of leather.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

JOHN

Why were you shooting at me?

HAMILTON

I wasn't, I was shooting at the ground around you... I thought you's that bastard lawyer of Niles'. He's trying to say some of my land wasn't mine, like it was their's.

And when Hamilton talks he exposes his toothless mouth. Hamilton turns and starts walking back the way he came.

JOHN

Hey! Are you Sam Hamilton?  
Hamilton mumbles and keeps going.  
John gets up and starts after him.

EXT. DESERT - RIVERBED

as John gets to Hamilton. Hamilton never stops walking and John has a hard time keeping up with the old man.

JOHN

Have you seen a woman around here?  
Hamilton just lets out a loud laugh... and seeing Mary's shoe, John picks it up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Here. This is hers. Have you seen her?

Hamilton keeps laughing. John stops and then runs after Hamilton.

EXT. HAMILTON RANCH - DUSK

A golden sun light bounces off the ground as it slowly sets. A huge, wooden wind mill extends into the sky. Hamilton passes through the entrance, a well tended fence that extends as far as the eye can see. John follows, struggling to keep up. As John passes into the ranch he notices that he is no longer walking entirely on dirt, but a light coating of grass covers the ranch. Hamilton keeps moving, through a dozen or so farm animals, and keeps moving toward his one room house. Hamilton goes into the house leaving John standing outside, alone. A moment later the door opens again and Hamilton re-appears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAMILTON

Well... you can come in if you want.

John nods and goes in.

INT. HAMILTON'S HOUSE

John and Hamilton enter. Although very much lived in, the house is immaculate. A neat well-made bed sits in one corner, a few stretched canvases, paint and brushes, and an easel sit in another corner. Hamilton moves to the KITCHEN AREA. It's clean and orderly. Hamilton selects a glass from a counter of neatly stacked glasses.

HAMILTON

I'm done with my work for today.

JOHN

You live here alone? Hamilton nods and pours some water into the glass. He offers it to John. John drinks the whole glass of water.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I got to get back. I'm worried about my girlfriend. Hamilton takes a glass of water for himself.

HAMILTON

I'll give you a ride home. That'll save you a half hour. That means you can stay at least a half hour. Here-- Hamilton pulls a chair out of a corner and offers it to John. John sits down. An awkward silence as Hamilton just looks at John.

JOHN

Were you friends with Zachary?

HAMILTON

Who?

JOHN

--Niles.

HAMILTON

No. I don't think anyone was.

JOHN

He had at least one friend.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAMILTON

No, he didn't. He had a handy man. A few other people would come around, people he'd pay, his lawyer, the maid... but I don't think he left the house much the whole time he was here.

JOHN

What was he doing out there on the tractor?

HAMILTON

Beats me. Never did make much sense. He hadn't done a lick of farming in the forty years he lived there.

John looks at his watch.

HAMILTON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

What time is it?

JOHN

maybe I could use your phone?

HAMILTON

Don't got one.

JOHN

Oh.

HAMILTON

Never had anyone to call.

JOHN

I really gotta go. My girlfriend just went for a walk and... and I think something coulda happened to her.

John stands up.

EXT. HAMILTON RANCH - NIGHT

John and Hamilton exit the house and walk toward Hamilton's car, a 1946 Willys Jeep.

JOHN

How long have you been living here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAMILTON

A long time.

JOHN

You like it out here?

HAMILTON

I only got to spend time with one person I don't like.

Hamilton smiles his toothless smile as they get into the Jeep.

INT. WILLYS JEEP

Hamilton fires up the engine and it roars to life without a real muffler.

HAMILTON

You need anything in town? We could go if you want.

JOHN

No... I gotta get back. Hamilton nods and they drive off down the road.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Exhausted, Mary walks up the front steps and goes into the house.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN

as Mary enters and goes immediately to the sink and runs the water and starts gulping down mouth full after mouth full of water.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

The Willys Jeep crawls down the road.

INT. WILLYS JEEP - MOVING

Hamilton stares ahead. John shifts in his seat.

JOHN

You think you'll ever make the ranch profitable?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAMILTON  
Not a chance in hell. Never  
thought I would. This is a real  
surprise to John.

JOHN  
Never?

Hamilton shakes his head.

HAMILTON  
Not really.

JOHN  
Why do you stay? Hamilton chuckles  
a little.

HAMILTON  
You think I'm crazy, don't you?

JOHN  
No.

Hamilton veers the Jeep off the road, into the rough desert.

HAMILTON  
You think I'm crazy, don't you? The  
Jeep bounces up and down and  
swerves in and out, occasionally  
missing rocks and holes.

JOHN  
Okay, I think you're crazy.  
Hamilton steers the Jeep back onto  
the road and laughs in triumph.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
What are you laughing at?

HAMILTON  
I think I've succeeded.

JOHN  
...Okay?

EXT. NILES RANCH

The Jeep moves toward the house.

INT. WILLYS JEEP - MOVING

Hamilton turns to John, says:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAMILTON

When you've done all you can,  
people start calling you crazy,  
people start saying you've lost a  
screw or two, people start thinking  
you've been out in the sun too  
long... but then you've succeeded.

John doesn't know what to say.

HAMILTON (CONT'D)

You don't understand. And now the  
Jeep stops in front of Niles' house  
but John doesn't move.

JOHN

No... I think I do.

HAMILTON

No, you don't.

JOHN

I think I do.

Hamilton shakes his head and mumbles, waiting for John to get out.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I used to be a boxer, and my last  
fight, I fought this guy who was a  
real contender, you know. I  
trained my butt off. And people  
kept saying, "Why you training so  
hard, John? You don't have a  
chance? You're going to get your  
butt kicked."

HAMILTON

--and?

JOHN

--and I didn't have a chance. I  
got pounded for ten rounds, but I  
went the distance, and I didn't go  
down.

Hamilton starts to smile.

HAMILTON

And did they think you were crazy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHN

Yeah, in fact they did. Both men laugh. John gets out of the Jeep.

HAMILTON

Niles had enough money to last, gives everyone who tried to make it out here an easy excuse when they couldn't cut it. But me, I'm not that easy- oh no- so they got to say my land is better and-

JOHN

(interrupting)

--and that you spent too much time in the sun?

HAMILTON

You got it... very few people really know much of anything in life.

Suddenly, a light rain begins to fall. Hamilton grabs an old straw hat and puts it on his head.

HAMILTON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

But when it's over, I'm going to know I gave it my all. There's nothing more I could have done... nothing.

Hamilton drops the clutch and drives off, and John walks to the front door.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John enters. The sound of the Jeep slowly fades into the distance. Mary is in the dining room, cleaning the dining room table. She looks up and their eyes meet. A letter sits on the table.

JOHN

Where have you been? Don't you realize the desert can kill you?

DINING ROOM

John enters and looks at the letter on the table.

MARY

I saved one of her love letters, the part about his kid...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY (CONT'D)  
in case you burned them or  
something. Half insulted, half  
overjoyed, John hugs Mary.

MARY (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
It's not as good as one coming from  
Niles.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary and John lie in bed. John moves closer to her, on top  
of her.

MARY  
Get away. I'm not your girlfriend  
anymore.

JOHN  
You're in my bed naked and you're  
not my girl?

Mary playfully pushes John away.

MARY  
(imitating John)  
"Go to sleep. We have a lot of  
work to do tomorrow." John smiles  
and shrugs as he moves away. Mary  
turns back to John and moves on top  
of him...

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - NIGHT

as light rain continues to fall on the house... The rain  
bounces off the yellow convertible... and runs off the barn  
roof... and hits the hard dirt...

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Cameron stands over John and Mary, reading the letter. He  
flips to another page. At this time of day the porch roof  
provides no protection from the sun. It blasts down on them.

MARY  
It's what you said we needed, isn't  
it?

Mary tries to block the sun from her eyes. John moves around  
in his chair, sweating profusely. Cameron nods and keeps  
reading.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

CAMERON

Yes... this is very... telling.

MARY

The sun sure is hot this time of day.

Mary fans her dress, trying to dry off. John shoots her a look. He's still sweating but he's trying to ignore the extreme heat.

MARY (CONT'D)

What? The sun is baking me. I'm going to be brown as a nut by noon. Cameron looks up and smiles and doesn't seem to be sweating at all.

CAMERON

It's good to be in the sun.

MARY

It's making me dizzy.

CAMERON

It heats up all the air around us. It's invigorating. It's stimulating. It's good to be in the sun.

John gives Mary a puzzled look. Cameron smiles.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

We could go inside if you'd like.

MARY

(looking at John)

Please!

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

They enter...

CAMERON

This is really good. I'm glad you showed this to me. You found it, Ellen?

and keep moving into the...

DINING ROOM

Mary nods as they sit down at the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

It's really lucky you found this. It'll definitely make your case a lot stronger... but... but you need something more.

JOHN

More?

CAMERON

Yeah. This proves he knew about the child... sort of, but it's not his letter. What you need is something he's written, that specifically says he wants all his assets going to Ellen, despite any other claims.

JOHN

What are the odds of finding that?

CAMERON

I don't know. I'm just thinking out loud here. But if he really did see this letter, he must have had some thoughts on the matter. Cameron stands up.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

But don't worry about it... these'll help... Cameron puts the letter into his briefcase.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

-take a little more time, but this'll help.

INT. JOE'S DINER - DAY

Sheriff Robert sits at the counter, talks to JOE, the owner and the cook. He's been here since the gold rush in '49... 1849.

JOE

I've seen them in here but- but I don't think I've seen that other one.

The sketch of Edward sits on the counter with the pictures of John and Mary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sheriff Robert puts them back into his envelope. Alice checks the ticket spindle, then moves next to Joe.

ALICE

Joe, you going to cook this or do I got to go back there myself? Earl enters, carrying a folder. He looks around, sees Sheriff Robert and starts making his way to him.

JOE

Shut up, Alice. Can't you see I'm talking to the Sheriff? Alice winks at Sheriff Robert.

ALICE

Is your brother seeing anyone, Bob?

SHERIFF ROBERT

No, he's still Tremo's most eligible bachelor. I'll tell him you asked.

ALICE

I wish you would. He doesn't know what he's missing. Earl arrives at the counter and takes the seat next to Sheriff Robert.

JOE

He knows what he's missing... he reads the locker room walls.

ALICE

Take a hike, Joe. You're just mad 'cause I never went down on you.

JOE

And proud of it! Woman ain't never eaten at Joe's, that's the God's honest truth.

EARL

I ain't seein' no one, Alice.

ALICE

I "ain't" teaching pre-school.

JOE

Now get. Or I'm sending you next time that weirdo Jamie calls in an order.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Alice makes a face and moves off to her customers. Someone's lunch catches on fire in the kitchen and Joe takes off to put it out.

EARL

I've got somethin' kinda important to tell you, Sheriff.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Well... what is it?

EARL

Remember Zachary Niles? Sheriff Robert rolls his eyes.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Of course! Now, what is it?

EARL

Well, remember when we's first found him out there in the desert, we's thought he just died, you know, from the heat, an' the fall, an' everything.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Yeah?

EARL

Well, they just faxed over the Coroner's report, and it says that he didn't die from no sun blazin' down on him.

It says he died from suffocation before he tipped over that dang tractor.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Let me see that. Earl hands him the report.

FLASHBACK:

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

as Niles sits at his desk and two hands cover his face with a plastic bag...

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

John sits at the table. Mary stands behind him, her hands around his neck.

MARY

You heard him. All you got to do is forge a letter and we'll be out of here.

John sighs and... the spinning red lights of a distant siren probe in from outside. John gets up and goes to the window.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

as John and Mary exit onto the porch and two police cars and Cameron's 4X4 approach the house and stop at the base of the porch. Sheriff Robert jumps out of his car, yelling:

SHERIFF ROBERT

You've gone too far. Sheriff Robert keeps going up the stairs, toward John and Mary. Cameron is running up behind him.

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Seems your little Misses' Uncle didn't die of... no natural causes. He was suffocated. John and Mary are visibly shocked. Cameron joins Sheriff Robert at the front door.

CAMERON

Bob, you need to just calm down.

SHERIFF ROBERT

(ignoring Cameron)

Where were you the Sunday before last?

CAMERON

Bob, this is not necessary.  
(to John)  
You don't have to answer that.

JOHN

What, was that the day he died? Well me and... Ellen were in New York, and we can prove it if we had to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF ROBERT

I hope so.

Sheriff Robert walks down the steps and starts moving into the desert. Earl and two other OFFICERS follow him.

JOHN

Hey...

and John goes after Sheriff Robert and Cameron follows John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Cameron)

Could it be this guy who's trying to claim he's Niles' son? Cameron stops John and Sheriff Robert and his men keep walking further into the desert.

SHERIFF ROBERT

(yelling at John)

Go back in the house! Cameron takes John aside.

CAMERON

You're not supposed to know about that.

JOHN

Why?

CAMERON

Niles was a prominent person in Tremo. The Sheriff thought it would be better if we not tell anyone until it could be substantiated. I'd appreciate it if you didn't say anything for a while.

JOHN

Yeah... okay.

CAMERON

He's under a lot of pressure, this being a murder now. Don't worry, the truth will work itself out. I know you didn't kill Niles. Cameron smiles at John. John nods.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Wait in the house... I'll fill you in later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

John starts moving back to the house and Cameron walks after Sheriff Robert.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Flashlights cut through the night, exposing the tractor. Sheriff Robert, Earl, and the two officers stand over the tractor staring at it.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Let's go boys.

The two officers start searching the tractor and dusting it for fingerprints.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

Sheriff Robert, Earl, and Cameron wait.

OFFICER #1

We've got a bunch of clean prints. Sheriff Robert moves to the tractor and looks at the fingerprints with a flashlight.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Let's run'em. See if we get a match.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

John and Mary sit on the porch, waiting... and in the distance the group's flashlights slowly come into view. John stands up.

JOHN

Here they come.

Sheriff Robert, Earl, and the two officers get in their cars and drive away. Cameron goes to John and Mary.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Did they find anything?

CAMERON

Not really. Some prints. Probably just Niles'. The police cars disappear in the distance.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary throws her few belongings into a suitcase. John stands in the doorway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

I'm not staying here watching you  
piss in the wind.

JOHN

You're going to listen to me.

MARY

Someone murdered that old man. Who  
do you think everybody suspects?

Mary's packed. She moves to the doorway but John blocks her  
exit.

MARY (CONT'D)

Get out of my way.

JOHN

You're going to listen to me.

MARY

I'm not in the mood for one of your  
lectures. Get out of my way! Mary  
kicks him in the shin. It hurts  
but John ignores it. He doesn't  
budge.

JOHN

You're going to listen to me. You  
at least owe me that.

MARY

It's not our fault. We did the  
best we could. We can leave now  
and nobody'll be the wiser.

JOHN

You think we'll ever get a better  
chance than this our whole lives?  
Mary doesn't answer.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Every opportunity is gonna have  
problems. People who are  
successful, it's not that they  
didn't face any problems, it's that  
they overcame them. John stops and  
waits, and Mary sighs and starts to  
listen.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

JOHN (CONT'D)

First, they can't prove that we killed Niles... because we didn't.

Second, even though people might think we killed the old man, no one suspects that you're not really his niece. Third, if we have to, we'll prove we were in New York when Niles was killed. Mary slams her suitcase down.

MARY

It's not Niles I'm worried about. Have you forgotten about the body under the porch?

JOHN

What? A Car thief from New York, no one's looking for him. Attempted embezzlement is worth it. And fourth, we've got to come up with a plan to get this thing moving.

MARY

Damn it, John.

Mary sits on the bed.

MARY (CONT'D)

You've got to write that letter... I'll stay, but you've got to write that letter.

Mary looks up to John, he looks away.

MARY (CONT'D)

Compromise John, you ever heard of it?

INT. NILES' HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary and John lie in the bed tangled together, kissing and rolling, and John whispers to Mary.

JOHN

I love you, Mary. And he kisses her.

MARY

You were wrong though.

John stops.

JOHN

About what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

About me not being able to go without a boyfriend. John kisses her again.

MARY (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Come on, I want to hear you say it. Mary stops John.

JOHN

Oh, come on, you're kidding, right? You go for a walk in the desert and you think that's going without a boyfriend. Mary considers this for a moment and John tries to keep kissing her and... Mary SLAMS her knee into John's groin.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Ugh!

MARY

You're wrong.

JOHN

Damn it, Mary, I wasn't wrong. You didn't go one whole day. And this makes Mary madder and she's out of bed and putting her clothes on and John's still rolling around

in agony. Mary rips a blanket away from John and exits.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(still in pain)

Ow!

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In the darkness, Mary lies on the couch, eyes wide open, staring at the ceiling, bottle of whiskey on the coffee table, a lit cigarette in an ashtray on her stomach. She takes a long drag from the cigarette and blows smoke toward the ceiling.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The morning sun floods in from the windows. John descends from the stairs, looks around, no sign of Mary. He goes into the...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KITCHEN

as John enters. Still no sign of Mary. John exits.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

as John exits the house. Mary is seated in the wicker chair. She is dressed in black, legs crossed, wearing sunglasses and a large brimmed hat, smoking, with a bottle of whiskey at her side, reading. John sees Mary.

JOHN

How can you smoke in this heat?  
Mary ignores him. John shrugs and goes back inside.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

An overhead projector blasts images of fingerprints onto the screen. Sheriff Robert, Cameron, Earl, and DOTTY, a middle-aged forensic scientist, look at the screen.

DOTTY

These are the fingerprints you lifted off of the tractor-- She points to several spots on the prints.

DOTTY (CONT'D)

(continuing)  
--and as you can see it's distinctly two different people...

SHERIFF ROBERT

Did we get a match?

DOTTY

We did. One belonged to Mr. Niles--

Sheriff Robert shakes his head, moans.

DOTTY (CONT'D)

(continuing)  
--But the other one... there's no match.

Sheriff Robert stands up and moves to leave.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Come on, Earl, what are you waiting for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

Where are you going?

SHERIFF ROBERT

To get some fingerprints. Earl stands up and exits with Sheriff Robert. Cameron slowly follows.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

John sits at the table, eating. From his position he watches as Mary comes inside and disappears upstairs. A moment later he can see Sheriff Robert, Cameron, and Earl at the front door.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

John opens the front door. Sheriff Robert, Cameron, and Earl stand in the doorway looking at him.

SHERIFF ROBERT

You don't mind if we take a few more fingerprints, do you?

JOHN

No. Go right ahead. Look around.

SHERIFF ROBERT

No, this time we need yours.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

John sits at the table as Earl takes his fingerprints. Mary wipes black ink off her hands with a towelette. Sheriff Robert walks around the room, inspecting the furniture and antiques.

SHERIFF ROBERT

So how much you think old man Niles was worth, John?

CAMERON

Come on Bob, lay off it. Cameron sits at the table, too. Earl finishes up with the fingerprints.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - DAY

Cameron and John watch as Sheriff Robert's police car drives away.

CAMERON

I'm sorry about that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN  
It's all right.

CAMERON  
He's a good cop. He just gets a little... excited at times. Niles' death was hard on the entire town.

JOHN  
What'd he want my prints for?

CAMERON  
They found two sets of prints on the tractor.

JOHN  
There was a guy, a few nights ago, that broke in here... I wonder if he could have...

CAMERON  
What'd he look like?

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

John is on his hands and knees, pulling up the floor boards.

JOHN  
--He was short with long, dark hair, and kinda stocky. Cameron looks into the floor at the gay porno's.

CAMERON  
Did he take anything?

JOHN  
I think all he got was some money.

CAMERON  
Was there anything else? John stops. Something's not right.

JOHN  
Like what?

CAMERON  
I don't know?

JOHN  
(cautiously)  
A video tape?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON  
There was a video tape?

JOHN  
Yeah, there was.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

as John presses eject on the VCR and a tape pops out. John hands the tape to Cameron.

JOHN  
It's really weird. It was the guy,  
the short stocky guy, and Niles,  
riding around on a motorcycle,  
naked.

CAMERON  
Really.

John nods.

CAMERON (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
Do you mind? Niles had a  
reputation, and I don't think it  
needs to be destroyed now that he's  
gone.

JOHN  
You can have it if you want. John  
hands Cameron the tape.

CAMERON  
Thanks.

Cameron puts the tape into his briefcase. The lowering sun beams in, hitting John in the eyes. He moves to the window to lower the blinds.

JOHN  
How much longer is this going to  
take?

CAMERON  
Another month or two and we should  
have this thing wrapped up. The  
blind won't lower. John pulls on  
it, but it's stuck.

JOHN  
A month or two?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

Yeah, after the trial begins. He twists the cord way over to the right and then rips it back to the left.

JOHN

I'm not sure me and Ellen can stay here another month.

CAMERON

How are you guys doing with money? John finally gets the blind lowered.

JOHN

It's not that.

CAMERON

I have power of attorney, and it wouldn't be improper for me to advance you some money.

JOHN

How much?

CAMERON

Would ten thousand dollars help? John responds quickly and without hesitation.

JOHN

We'll wait... for the settlement.

CAMERON

Yeah, okay. That's probably a good idea.

Cameron starts to move toward the exit.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

You know anything about art?

JOHN

Not really.

CAMERON

Well, Niles' taste in art is pretty eclectic. I think he paid a hundred and twenty-five thousand for that one.

Cameron points to the painting on the mantel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Now you could get at least twice  
that much at any art auction.

Cameron moves closer to the painting. Two men aim muskets at a large white elephant that is fleeing across a river in the African bush country, while African natives look on.

JOHN

This?

Cameron nods.

CAMERON

Don't know much about art myself  
but... it is... interesting. Why  
would anyone paint a picture of an  
elephant about to be slaughtered?

JOHN

(intrigued)

He might not be slaughtered...  
There's only two guns, one misses,  
the other hits him, but he's an  
elephant, so one hit might not take  
him out.

CAMERON

Those guns are going to put two  
slugs in him and bring him down,  
and then those natives there, are  
going to go over and skin him and  
take his tusks.

JOHN

Yeah, but two shots might not bring  
him down. He gets across that  
river and he's home free. None of  
them can follow him across the  
river.

They both look at the painting for a moment longer.

CAMERON

All I know is that it's worth a  
hundred twenty-five thousand.  
Cameron nods.

JOHN

People'll pay anything if they're  
rich. Rich people don't know what  
it's like to be poor.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

Cameron starts walking toward the door. They exit.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

as Cameron and John step out onto the porch. Mary's back in the wicker chair smoking and drinking, and occasionally looking at a book she has brought with her. As they pass Mary, Cameron flashes his pearly whites and tips his hat.

CAMERON

Good morning, ma'am. Mary just stares at them as they keep moving, down the steps, toward Cameron's 4X4.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE

Cameron and John keep walking.

CAMERON

What's wrong with her? John tries to fake a smile.

JOHN

Uh... you know women. I think her uncle's death finally hit her. Cameron nods like he understands. They arrive at Cameron's car and Cameron gets in.

CAMERON

I guess I'll... see you later. John watches as Cameron drives away.

INT. CABIN - DAY

A naked man sits on the bed. It's the intruder John chased out of Niles' house two nights ago, JAMIE ALBRIGHT.

JAMIE

I tried to get the tape like you asked. It's not my fault he gave you the wrong one.

And Cameron's standing behind him. They both look at the television set: IT'S JOHN'S BOXING TAPE, and he's actually beating Big Bill Bull for this round.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMIE (CONT'D)  
 Are you still sore at me? I'll  
 make it up to you. Haven't I done  
 everything you wanted?

FLASHBACK:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Headlights illuminate the night. Cameron sits in his A taut cable extends from its hitch to Niles' tractor. Jamie waves Cameron forward and the tractor crashes into the sand. THUMP! Dust swirls in the light. Jamie places Niles' body next to the tipped over tractor. He takes a rock and smashes it against Niles' head.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Cameron glares at Jamie.

CAMERON  
 No, I'm not mad. Cameron slowly  
 takes his belt off with its  
 monogrammed buckle.

INT. POLICE STATION - SHERIFF ROBERT'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff Robert sits at his messy desk. Dotty enters with a file.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
 Well, did those prints match?

DOTTY  
 No, but I found out who they  
 belonged to.

INT. CABIN - DAY

CLOSE - JAMIE

struggles as a leather belt is tightened around his neck. His hands grapple at the ends and the belt buckle flies off.

INT. POLICE STATION - SHERIFF ROBERT'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff Robert reaches for the file.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
 Who?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOTTY

That fella who used to work for him, Jamie Albright. Sheriff Robert gets up and grabs his jacket and runs out.

SHERIFF ROBERT (O.S.)

Earl, what are you doing?

EXT. DESERT - CABIN - NIGHT

The cabin is small, and in the middle of nowhere. Two police cars are parked outside. The DIRT BIKE leans against the cabin.

INT. CABIN

Sheriff Robert takes in the scene... The walls of the cabin are covered with male pin-ups. Jamie's naked body lies on the bed, dead. Two Officers examine the body as Earl pokes around.

OFFICER #1

He was strangled... and sodomized. The two Officers exchange looks. Earl approaches Sheriff Robert and holds up a bottle of personal lubricant.

EARL

Doesn't look like forced entry.

Earl and the two Officers burst out laughing.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Damn it, that's not funny! The laughter stops. Sheriff Robert looks at Earl.

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Earl, why you wearing sun glasses at night?

Large aviation glasses cover Earl's eyes. He spits a wad of dark tobacco juice into the cup, says:

EARL

Makes me look meaner.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - DAY

Mary still sits on the porch.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

John descends the stairs, still half asleep. He looks for Mary, sees her on the porch, goes into the kitchen.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

John gets the phone book out of a drawer, flips through it, to...

LAWYERS...

He sees Cameron's add and... one other large ad for another lawyer, SLY WHEATON, the only other lawyer in Tremo. And it's already been circled in thick black ink. John rips the page out and exits.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

as John exits, passing Mary, who's still ignoring him. He moves to the yellow convertible. He gets in and takes off down the dirt road.

EXT. TREMO - MAIN STREET - DAY

John drives by, glancing at the different addresses. He sees one, screeches to a stop, and pulls into a parking space. He gets out of his car and examines the page from the phone book. He looks across the street, squints, holds his hand up to block the sun. An OLD LADY passes behind him. He turns around.

JOHN

Hey, excuse me... The old lady stops.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Do you know where 54 is? And when the old lady gets a good look at John a scowl crosses her face and she keeps walking. John stumbles across the street, blinded by the bright sun.

HONNNNNNNNK! as a car barely misses him.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET

John looks at the numbers... 52 and next to that... but no 54. John wanders back, into the alley, out of the sun, and notices... number 54. Sly Wheaton's office. John enters.

INT. SLY WHEATON'S OFFICE - DAY

noticeably less plush than Cameron's office. A poorly groomed man of about forty sits at the desk, talking on the phone, but as soon as he sees John:

SLY  
(into phone)  
I got to go.

He hangs the phone up. SLY WHEATON is a dark man, and in addition to a tacky suit, he wears a gallon of styling gel in his hair.

SLY (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
Hi-ya. You're Niles' relative?

JOHN  
Yeah?

SLY  
Lucky guess. Lucky guess. Sit down... sit down. John sits.

SLY (CONT'D)  
You've come to settle up? Must say though, I thought I was going to have to file before I ever saw any money outta you.

JOHN  
Settle up?

SLY  
Must be a lot of people tryin' to horn in on the inheritance?

JOHN  
Well, yeah, that's what I wanted to talk to you about.

SLY  
What'cha drinking? Sly pulls a bottle of gin and two glasses out of his desk.

JOHN  
I'm not drinking anything. I don't drink.

And this stops Sly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLY  
Suit yourself. You don't mind if I  
do?

John shakes his head.

JOHN  
I just need some advice, maybe  
representation.

Sly starts laughing, but John hasn't said anything funny.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
I can pay you, as soon as... Sly  
keeps laughing.

SLY  
I bet you can.

John leans forward.

JOHN  
Hypothetically speaking, of course--

SLY  
(interrupting)  
--Of course.

JOHN  
Suppose the old man had an  
illegitimate child that was trying  
to get some of his money. What  
would be the quickest way to get  
rid of them?

This strikes Sly as very funny, he again bursts out laughing.

SLY  
Kill'em.

Sly laughs at his little joke.

SLY (CONT'D)  
If you had a letter or something,  
written by Niles that stated he  
wanted his money going to his  
niece. Then you'd be okay.

JOHN  
I don't have a letter. Sly smiles  
and nods, takes a sip from his  
glass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SLY  
You've got a problem then, don't  
you? Niles came to me... two days  
before he... died...

FLASHBACK:

INT. SLY WHEATON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Niles and Sly stand over the desk shaking hands.

SLY (V.O.)  
I bet he knew about this little  
bastard... 'cause he was going to  
have me change his will to  
explicitly exclude anyone but his  
niece.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. SLY WHEATON'S OFFICE - DAY

Sly lets this sink in. John's mind races and his eyes cross  
over the empty glass on Sly's desk.

SLY  
You want that drink now? John  
shakes his head. Sly pours John a  
drink and then pours one for  
himself and quickly drains it.

SLY (CONT'D)  
Kind of a coincidence, don't you  
think? That he should end up dead  
right before he changed his will.

JOHN  
You could testify--

SLY  
(interrupting)  
--For a price.

JOHN  
But that's all gonna take months.

SLY  
It'd be worth it. Why don't you  
leave me a check for the three  
thousand he owed me? You know, to  
show good faith.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN

I don't have three grand.  
Skeptical, Sly leans back in his  
chair. John gets up to exit.

SLY

Maybe I should let me show you the  
work I did for him. I was almost  
done.

Sly turns to a filing cabinet and starts flipping through it.

SLY (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I know he's family and all, but  
that old man was an odd duck... he  
was down right weird, if you know  
what I mean. There isn't one  
person in this town that'd have  
anything to do with him. Sly slams  
the filing cabinet shut.

SLY (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I must have that file at home. I'll  
send it over to you first thing in  
the morning... with my bill.

Sly smiles. John exits.

INT. JOE'S DINER - DAY

Sheriff Robert sits in his booth sipping coffee. The sketch  
of Edward sits on the table along with the pictures of John  
and Mary. Cameron enters, sees his brother and goes to his  
booth.

CAMERON

Any luck?

Sheriff Robert shakes his head. Cameron sits down.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Sal couldn't have been the only  
person that saw him.

CAMERON

Maybe Sal's memory isn't as good as  
it used to be? Sheriff Robert  
shrugs.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I just wanted to talk to you for a minute.

(hesitating)

I kind of feel like I'm playing both sides- and I hate it.

SHERIFF ROBERT

The truth, that's the only side.

CAMERON

I know, and you're my brother... but they're Niles' heirs and he was my client, so I'm just kind of caught between a rock and a hard place.

SHERIFF ROBERT

What is it?

CAMERON

I know you think they killed Niles, so I hate to even mention this--

SHERIFF ROBERT

(interrupting)

--What is it?

CAMERON

It's probably nothing, so I hate to even mention it.

SHERIFF ROBERT

(growing more eager)

Yes?

CAMERON

Yesterday, when I was over there... Ellen was just sitting on the porch, smoking, like she was catatonic. I'm sure they had nothing to do with her uncle's death, but it was a little strange.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Maybe he's the one behind the whole thing?

CAMERON

No, nothing like that. Alice arrives at the table to refill Sheriff Robert's coffee cup.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Sheriff Robert and Cameron hold their tongues.

ALICE

Hi, Zach.

CAMERON

Hello, Alice. Nice to see you. Cameron flashes his award-winning smile.

ALICE

Aren't you going to say anything about my hair?

SHERIFF ROBERT

(interrupting)

--Alice, do you mind? We have some business to talk about. Alice looks at the sketch of Edward.

ALICE

Who's that?

SHERIFF ROBERT

Let me guess, you've seen him. Alice takes the sketch and looks at it closely.

ALICE

Yeah, I've seen him. Talked to him. He was kind of cute.

FLASHBACK:

INT. JOE'S DINER - DAY

Alice looks out the window at the bus station as Edward steps off a bus and walks into the diner.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. JOE'S DINER - DAY

Cameron takes the sketch and looks at it.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Are you sure, Alice?

ALICE

Yeah. What'd he do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF ROBERT  
What did he say to you? Alice  
primps her hair.

ALICE  
I don't know... said he had a  
girlfriend.

This excites Sheriff Robert, but Alice's stalling annoys him.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Damn it, Alice, what else?

ALICE  
Why don't you go over to the Howard  
Johnson's? That's where he said he  
was staying. Sheriff Robert gets  
up, puts his hat on, and points at  
Cameron as he leaves.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
I haven't forgotten what we talked  
about.

Sheriff Robert exits.

ALICE  
Your brother's a rude S.O.B  
sometimes.

CAMERON  
He's under a lot of pressure. You  
sure you saw that guy?

ALICE  
Yeah, why?

CAMERON  
Just... curious.

Cameron shrugs and stares after Sheriff Robert.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Mary still sits in exactly the same position. John drives up,  
gets out of the car and slowly walks up to the porch. He sits  
down next to Mary. Mary ignores him. John starts to say  
something but then stops. Mary chugs her bottle of whiskey  
and takes a drag off a cigarette. Finally:

JOHN  
Mary... I think you should leave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

(almost the way a rabid  
animal responds to  
advance)

Screw you!

JOHN

Damn it, Mary! Listen to me...  
please. I love you, and I think  
you should leave. I'll stay and  
get our money. Trust me. Mary  
ignores John and goes back to her  
bottle. John waits in the  
darkness... The phone RINGS. John  
goes inside to answer it.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John enters. The phone RINGS again and John gets to it:

JOHN

(into phone)

Hello?

(beat)

Hello?

(shouting)

Hello!

There's no one on the other end. John SLAMS the phone down  
and goes into the kitchen.

INT. CAMERON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

as Cameron sets the phone down. He pulls out a PEARL HANDLED  
pistol and starts to load it with bullets.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

John sits down at the table. He's sweating quite profusely  
and in desperate need of some sleep. He slumps down on the  
table. The letter box sits in front of him and then something  
clicks in John and he's pulling out his wallet, excitedly  
now, spilling its contents onto the table. He grabs the scrap  
of paper that Belle gave him and pulls an envelope out of the  
letter box. He holds the two pieces together comparing them,  
Belle's name and address on the scrap of paper, Niles' name  
and address on the envelope. The handwriting is clearly the  
same. Belle was Niles' lover.

INT. SLY WHEATON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sly sits at his desk, pours himself a drink and toasts in the  
air with an imaginary woman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A ROCK comes crashing through the window, shattering it. Incensed, Sly gets the rock and throws it back out the window, yelling:

SLY  
Stupid kids-

CLOSE - PEARL HANDLED PISTOL AS IT FIRES

BANG! BANG! BANG! and three shots blast through the window into Sly, blowing his lifeless body backwards over his desk.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

John exits the house, showered and shaved. Mary glares her hatred at him. He continues off the porch to his car. He gets in and drives away.

EXT. SLY WHEATON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Two police cars and an ambulance are parked in the alley outside of Sly's office. Cameron pulls up next to them.

INT. SLY WHEATON'S OFFICE

Sheriff Robert, Earl, and the two Officers examine the scene as a POLICE PHOTOGRAPHER takes pictures. Two MEDICS are packing up Sly's body. Cameron enters, surveys the scene.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
You know Dad was sheriff of this town for more than forty years, and he never had one murder. Now in a week I've got three.

CAMERON  
You're handling it very well. The medics pass Cameron and Sheriff Robert with the body.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
No one in this town is going to miss any one of these guys, but that still don't make it right. Cameron moves closer to Sheriff Robert so the others won't hear him.

CAMERON  
The weasel called me last week trying to tell me Niles was going to give him "Power of Attorney."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF ROBERT

We already got that covered.  
Sheriff Robert lifts a file off  
Sly's desk. Blood drips off it.  
Cameron quickly takes it.

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)

(continuing)

He was starting a file on the  
Niles' when he was killed.

EARL

Niles, Jamie, and Sly, who's next?  
Hamilton?

The two Officers and photographer crack up.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Shut your hole, Earl.

EARL

It's the "dregs of Tremo killer."  
Are we going to arrest him or thank  
him?

The laughter grows and Sheriff Robert lays into Earl,  
knocking him into the bookcases.

SHERIFF ROBERT

That ain't funny! The laughter  
stops. Cameron pulls Sheriff  
Robert outside as Earl cautiously  
gets to his feet.

EXT. SLY WHEATON'S OFFICE

as Cameron walks Sheriff Robert to his car.

CAMERON

Did you go to the Howard Johnson's?

SHERIFF ROBERT

Yes I did.

EXT. TREMO - STREET - NIGHT

The streets are empty, except... John as he pulls up in front  
of Sal's Convenience store and goes in.

INT. SAL'S CONVENIENCE STORE

as John enters. Sal nods politely to John, until he gets a  
good look at him, and then Sal's expression changes, hardens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sal's son and two other YOUTHS are at the refrigerated drink section.

JOHN  
You know where Laurel Street is?

SAL  
Why?

Sal's tone stops John.

JOHN  
Just asking. Is that a crime? The three youths start to notice John.

SAL  
You're with the Niles girl, aren't you?

John doesn't answer.

SAL (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
Yeah, I recognize you. I ain't got nothing to say to you. Sal watches, and he looks to the youths, who are also watching as John exits.

SAL (CONT'D)  
(continuing; to his son)  
Why don't you take out the trash?

EXT. SAL'S CONVENIENCE STORE

John exits, looks down the street, looks down the other side of the street, takes off on foot toward the center of town. The youths exit, and take off behind John.

EXT. TREMO - STREET

John walks down the street, looking at all the street signs. The youths shadow him.

FURTHER UP  
John stops...

The youths stop, now about twenty yards back. John slowly turns around and sees them. He keeps walking, only a little faster... and the youths stay right behind him, closing in on him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STILL FURTHER

as John's brisk walk becomes a slow jog and then an all out sprint.

The youths stay right behind. John rounds a corner, ducks into an...

ALLEY

John gets to the end: no way out...  
The youths round the corner, see John and slowly move toward him.

JOHN

What do you want?

SAL'S SON

Nothing... why you running? John looks around: three youths in front of him, a high chain link fence behind him. John takes the fence... The youths close in, grab for John but... John's fast and climbs over the fence, catching his shirt on the top.

ON THE OTHER SIDE

John drops to the ground, cut up a little, but out of reach of the youths. He looks around, he's in someone's back yard. He looks back through the fence, the youths are gone. He runs through the gate at the front of the lawn...

STREET

as John comes racing out of the backyard ... and here come the youths again, this time hell bent on getting to John. John starts off again, running as fast as he can down the street.

INTERSECTION

John tears toward the intersection. He sees the sign: LAUREL STREET, and turns down it.

LAUREL STREET

as John runs down the street he takes out Belle's scrap of paper, starts looking at the numbers on the houses...

but the youths are right behind him... Youth #1 dives at John... John sees the number he's looking for, turns...

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Youth #1 eats the pavement. John gets to Belle's porch, grabs for the doorbell, but it's too late... The youths grab John and wrench him from the porch. John screams as they drag him to the side of the house. Youth #1 and #2 hold John as Sal's son moves in to sucker punch him. Wiping blood off his nose:

SAL'S SON

You got a lot a money but you ain't got much else. The three boys laugh as Sal's son... belts John in the stomach... and then WHACK! John takes one in the head... and John's screams have grown louder and the lights go on in Belle's house and... another WHAP! as John takes another one in the jaw and spits blood.

BOOOOM! A shotgun blast lights up the night sky. The youths jump and look up: A NURSE stares, unnerved, leveling a shotgun at them.

NURSE

Now get!

They drop John to the ground taking a few last hits, and run off, howling and laughing as they go.

BLACK SCREEN

There's the SOUND of running water and then footsteps approaching.

CLOSE - NURSE

is wiping the blood off John's face. His face is patched with dried blood.

INT. BELLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John is lying on a small couch in Belle's tiny living room. His clothes are torn to rags. The nurse helps John to drink from a small flask. John's expression sours as he swallows the liquid.

JOHN

What is it?

NURSE

Let's just say it's not Witch Hazel...

The nurse goes into the kitchen and fetches some ice for John's face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Belle sits in a chair across the room looking at John.  
Belle's house is modest but littered with cheap furniture.

JOHN

You know those kids? Belle shakes her head. The nurse re-enters and applies the ice to John's face. John winces.

NURSE

I called the police.

JOHN

You had a child with Niles...  
Didn't you?

Belle shakes her head and whispers:

BELLE

No.

NURSE

Why don't you be quiet. She's not feeling very well.

The nurse goes back into the kitchen to rinse the bloody rags.

JOHN

You've got to tell me where he's at... I think he... he killed Niles.

Belle shakes her head and begins to weep. John tries to get up and the front door swings open. It's Sheriff Robert. As Sheriff Robert enters the smallness of the room becomes much more obvious. He has to move a few chairs out of his way to get to John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'd like to file a complaint.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Go down to the station. Maybe you can find someone to file it with. John tries to sit up, winces in pain, lies back down. Sheriff Robert pulls out the sketch of Edward, shows it to John.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)

You know who this is? The nurse re-enters, sees the Sheriff and disappears back into the kitchen. John shakes his head, "no."

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)

I think you better look again, boy, because I think you know exactly who it is. John looks again, only this time he starts to realize it's the dead guy under the porch.

BELLE

Leave the poor boy alone. He's been beaten.

SHERIFF ROBERT

I'll handle this.

JOHN

Who the hell is he?

SHERIFF ROBERT

He's the guy that stole Sal's car. And if my hunch is correct, he's the guy that helped you kill Niles. Belle is shocked.

BELLE

No one killed Niles.

JOHN

What are you talking about? John's head spins, he drops back down onto the couch.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You've got no proof I've ever seen him.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Maybe we should ask your girlfriend, since I got three witnesses down at the Howard Johnson's that saw them together last week...

It takes a moment for this to sink in with John.

FLASHBACK:

INT. HOWARD JOHNSON'S - DAY

Waitresses watch through the front window as... Edward passionately kisses Mary, leaning against the yellow convertible, which is loaded with groceries.

EDWARD

I'm tired of this. I followed you all the way across the country and I can't stand him being with you any longer.

Mary Kisses Edward.

MARY

Then we can do it today. He's already showed me how to sign Ellen's name.

EDWARD

Are you sure?

Mary nods and kisses Edward again.

MARY

By this time tomorrow, honey, we'll have the money and everything we need. You've got to do it today.

Kissing Mary one last time.

EDWARD

I can't wait anymore. Edward watches as Mary drives off. Sal and his son drive by in the El Camino.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. BELLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John is now tripping over a few pieces of furniture as he exits.

EXT. BELLE'S HOUSE

as John exits and keeps moving across the street, stumbling and limping. Sheriff Robert is on top of him, yelling:

SHERIFF ROBERT

You're not going to get away with this!

Belle pulls at Sheriff Robert's coat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BELLE  
Stop it. Stop it.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Mama, shut up.

And this seems to physically hit John, he stumbles, hitting the ground hard.

JOHN  
Mama?

BELLE  
Now look what you've done. Sheriff Robert shrugs. He doesn't get it. John slowly gets to his feet.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Yeah... so?

Belle runs back inside.

JOHN  
--and Cameron's your brother... Sheriff Robert stands there for a moment and John takes off running down the street and then he remembers how mad he is.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Hey! You're not going to get away with this!

EXT. TREMO - STREET - NIGHT

John stumbles down the street toward his car.

FLASHBACK:

INT. NILES' HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

as two hands pull the plastic bag taught over Niles' face and Niles tries to fight back but he's too old and frail and the hands belong to... ZACH CAMERON; his face emotionless as he suffocates his

FATHER.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. TREMO - STREET - NIGHT

John gets into his car and drives away.

INT. CAMERON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A match ignites. Cameron lights a burning gas bar in his office fireplace. He pulls out a BROWN ENVELOPE and opens it up. It's filled with letters...

addressed to Belle, from Zachary Niles. One by one, he throws the letters into the fire. He moves to his desk and sits down. Out of the top drawer he pulls the envelope marked "Niles." He pours the contents of the envelope onto his desk. It contains John's police sheet, pictures of John and Mary, and a fax of a newspaper clipping, with "NYC ATTY NILES' DAUGHTER 32, FOUND DEAD," highlighted in bright yellow. He moves to the fireplace and tosses John and Mary's picture into the fire. The phone RINGS, Cameron picks it up.

CAMERON

Hello?

SHERIFF ROBERT (V.O.)

Something's up with them Niles'.

CAMERON

What now?

Cameron looks at John's police sheet, tosses it into the fire.

SHERIFF ROBERT (V.O.)

That John, he was just over at  
Mama's.

CAMERON

What'd he want?

SHERIFF ROBERT (V.O.)

I don't know. He's a smart one. I  
got three murders and not one piece  
of evidence leading back to him.

CAMERON

Look, if it would make you feel any  
better, why don't you call Ellen's  
parents in New York. I'm sure  
they'll have something nice to say  
about John.

SHERIFF ROBERT (V.O.)

Yeah... okay.

CAMERON

I think I got their number around  
here somewhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cameron opens up a cabinet and takes out a tumbler and a bottle of vodka. He pours himself a drink.

CAMERON (CONT'D)  
 (continuing)  
 Maybe not... wait a minute...  
 Cameron drinks the vodka and tosses  
 the newspaper clipping into the  
 fire.

CAMERON (CONT'D)  
 (continuing)  
 Yeah, here it is... I thought I had  
 it written down.  
 (recites from Memory)

The newspaper clipping slowly disappears into flames.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

John staggers toward the door, hesitates, looks over to where he last saw Mary. She's not there and John goes inside.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

John stands in the doorway and takes in the sights and... smells. The room is dark but light flows in from the kitchen, and from John's position, he can see Mary cooking.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN

Delicious smells waft off the stove from the numerous dishes being prepared, and Mary is dressed "up."

JOHN  
 What's for dinner? Mary turns,  
 startled by John, who's standing in  
 the doorway. John looks awful.

MARY  
 What happened to you?

JOHN  
 You don't wanna know.

John moves to the sink. Mary watches as John washes his hands and face and tries to cool down.

MARY  
 I'm fixing dinner. It's your  
 favorite.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

John looks at all the food on the stove and exits.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Mary and John sit at the candle lit table. John has changed clothes and cleaned up and washed the smell of death off him. John is devouring his plate of food. Mary drinks only wine for dinner.

MARY

Want some more?

JOHN

Yeah- yeah, this is great. John keeps eating. Mary moves to the kitchen...

KITCHEN

Mary moves to the refrigerator, opens it...

INSIDE THE REFRIGERATOR

Edward's pistol lies on a plate. Mary covers it with a rag and pulls out more salad.

DINING ROOM

as Mary moves back into the dining room.

MARY

You know I've been thinking about my family.

Mary puts more salad onto John's plate. He smiles and keeps eating.

MARY (CONT'D)

(continuing)

-and I think I'm going to give them almost all my money.

JOHN

Oh- okay- good. It's your money. John nods his head and keeps eating.

MARY

In fact, I'm going to give them the whole wad.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

JOHN

All right... this is really  
(referring to the food)  
...great.

Mary pulls out a cigarette and lights up. John keeps eating. Mary blows smoke at John. Still no reaction. She pours herself some more wine.

MARY

You want some?

John looks at Mary, trying to hide his agitation.

JOHN

Sure.

Surprised, but trying to hide it, Mary pours some wine into John's glass. She fills it to the brim. John takes a big sip. Mary is visibly shocked. John keeps eating.

MARY

You know I think we should quit.  
Give it all up.

JOHN

I already told you to leave.

MARY

Well, I think we should leave. I'm  
no whore, but I could get a sugar  
daddy or something. You know, sex  
for money.

John nods. Mary looks hatefully at John as he begins to eat again. Finally:

MARY (CONT'D)

I can live without a boyfriend.

JOHN

(as if he's humoring a  
small child)

I know you can, Mary. I know you  
can.

Mary's almost to a boil. She stands up and smiles and grabs John's half-full plate while John is in mid-bite.

MARY

Ready for dessert?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHN

All right.

Mary goes into the kitchen.

KITCHEN

She reaches inside the refrigerator and uncovers the pistol. She turns to John.

MARY

You're gonna love this. She wraps her hand around the pistol and hesitates, trying to pull together the courage... She spins around and FIRES at John... and the chair that John was sitting in explodes into splinters...

John's gone. Mary's eyes dart around.

JOHN (O.S.)

The sheriff saw you and Edward together.

Mary's eyes follow the voice into the living room.

MARY

'Bout time you figured it out. He'd a killed you if it weren't for your blind luck.

JOHN (O.S.)

Why, Mary? What about my plan?

MARY

It was never your plan.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM

Darkness. Mary enters, pistol extended in front of her in one hand, a large butcher knife in the other. Mary squints to see through the darkness.

MARY

Just think about Ellen.

JOHN (O.S.)

Ellen?

FLASHBACK:

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ellen's passed-out in the recliner. Mary prepares a large dose of herion. Mary gives the syringe to Edward. He injects the lethal dose of heroin into Ellen.

MARY (V.O.)

You think she just died on her own?  
No one's that lucky. Edward turns  
and kisses Mary passionately.

BOOM!

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM

as Mary fires at a shadow moving in the living room, misses.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

John hides in the shadows.

MARY (O.S.)

I'm going to live without a  
boyfriend, John. The sound of  
Mary's footsteps, CLUNK, CLUNK, are  
getting closer. John looks  
around... no way out. John wraps  
his hands around one of the large  
wooden chairs, waits for a moment,  
and... charges back through the  
entrance...

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM

as John comes around the corner with the chair in front of  
him, yelling. Mary gets a shot off... and it pierces the  
chair but misses John and before she can shoot again... John  
rams the chair into Mary, knocking her across the dining  
room. The pistol flies out of her hand... and John's on her  
like a cat. He keeps swinging and swinging and Mary tries to  
stab him with the knife but he pounds his fists into her  
face. Blood starts to gush and her struggling stops but John  
keeps hitting her and hitting her and finally he stops after  
her body has been completely limp for quite some time...  
John's hands are bloodied. And as John stands up, it's clear  
that his whole body is covered in blood.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Mary's body lies in a puddle of blood in the dining room. John sits on the couch, still lathered in blood. The phone RINGS, breaking John's trance. He answers it.

JOHN

Hello?

CAMERON (V.O.)

Hello, John? How's it going?

JOHN

It's going good, why?

CAMERON (V.O.)

Just wondering.

JOHN

Hey... good news... I found a letter written by Niles, stating that he didn't want anyone other than Ellen getting the inheritance.

CAMERON (V.O.)

Oh, well, good. I'll be by tomorrow to pick it up.

(pause)

John... it seems you gave me the wrong tape.

JOHN

I did?

CAMERON (V.O.)

I'd really like to have that tape of Niles.

JOHN

Are you bringing any money tomorrow?

CAMERON (V.O.)

How much do you want, John? Five thousand?

JOHN

Cash.

CAMERON (V.O.)

Yeah, okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Click. The phone goes dead. John is left alone. John's eyes land on the painting that still sits on the mantel. John pulls it down and takes it out of the frame.

EXT. CAMERON'S OFFICE - STREET - NIGHT

Cameron exits his office as Sheriff Robert pulls up. Cameron gets into the police car.

INT. POLICE CAR

as Cameron gets in.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
I talked to Ellen's parents.  
Cameron says nothing.

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
Ellen's dead.

CAMERON  
What? Who are...

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Meridith Johnson and John Brody.  
They were her two roommates.

CAMERON  
No.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Her parents hadn't talked to her  
for five years, said she'd fallen  
in with the wrong crowd and became  
a junky. And this Brody guy, he  
spent some time in jail for  
forgery.

CAMERON  
I can't believe it.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Not to say I told you so, little  
brother, but I knew something was  
up with them two.

CAMERON  
You were absolutely right. Cameron  
takes a deep breath, says:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

But there's more. We've got another problem. I can barely talk about this... it's horrible... John gave me this.

Cameron hands Sheriff Robert an envelope. Sheriff Robert opens it and takes out Belle's letter.

SHERIFF ROBERT

What the hell is this?

CAMERON

John gave it to me. They found it in the house.

Sheriff Robert reads the letter.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Niles didn't have no son. It's probably a forgery.

CAMERON

Look at the writing. You know who's writing that is. Sheriff Robert stops-- it's just like getting punched in the gut.

SHERIFF ROBERT

I don't know nothing.

CAMERON

You know as well as I do who the only woman he ever saw was.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Don't even talk like that.

CAMERON

Mom used to spend a lot of time over there.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Stop it.

CAMERON

Robert--

SHERIFF ROBERT

(interrupting)

--Don't say it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAMERON  
I'm that son!

SHERIFF ROBERT  
You better shut up.

CAMERON  
You want to hear it from her?  
Sheriff Robert trembles.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Okay.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The television is on. It's Jamie and Niles riding around naked on the motorcycle... John sits by the coffee table, writing, constantly looking back at a letter sitting next to him. The letterbox is on the floor. He holds up his letter, compares it with the other one. Satisfied he gets up.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - NIGHT

John exits the house and goes to the barn.

INT. BARN

John enters, gets a shovel, and exits.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

John sets the shovel at the base of the porch, as he goes inside.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

John drops Mary's body on the ground and picks up the shovel. He raises the shovel, preparing to strike the earth.

INT. BELLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Belle speaks slowly, on the verge of tears.

BELLE  
I never wanted you to find out.  
Robert Senior raised you. He's  
really your father. Cameron and  
Sheriff Robert surround Belle.  
Cameron stands up and feigns utter  
disbelief.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
I'm sorry, Zach.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

My life is nothing but lies.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Now that's not true. This causes Belle to weep harder.

CAMERON

A life built on lies and the only people I've ever trusted... the perpetrators of these lies. How would you feel if I lied to you?

BELLE

No...

SHERIFF ROBERT

Who's going to get the inheritance? Could you?

CAMERON

How can you even talk about that at a time like this? The nurse enters.

NURSE

I think it's time for you to leave. Your mother has had a hard day.

EXT. BELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

as Cameron and Sheriff Robert walk briskly toward the police car.

SHERIFF ROBERT

I'm rounding my boys up now and we're going down and arresting those imposters.

CAMERON

No. I don't think that's a good idea. I told them I'd be by tomorrow to give them some spending money.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Well, I don't want them skipping town.

CAMERON

Why would they leave? They think I'm coming over with some of the money.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Sheriff Robert considers this.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Look, John said he had a letter for me. Supposedly it says Niles didn't want to give any illegitimate children any of the inheritance.

SHERIFF ROBERT

A forgery?

CAMERON

Probably. If we show up now they'll know something is up. Sheriff Robert hesitates. They arrive at the car.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Don't act rashly. You know you have a problem with acting rashly.

SHERIFF ROBERT

I know.

CAMERON

I just don't want to see anymore people getting hurt. They get into the car and drive away.

INT. BELLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Belle sorts through the bookcase. The Nurse appears in the doorway.

NURSE

Come on, ma'am. It's time for bed.

BELLE

No, no, not yet.

The Nurse moves next to Belle and tries to help her up but Belle refuses and continues searching through the bookcase.

NURSE

What are you looking for?

BELLE

I have to find my letters... they were in a brown envelope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE

No, they're gone... I saw your son Zachary take that bundle of letters a few weeks ago. A look of horror covers Belle's face and she starts crying, again.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The moonlight dances across the sand. The wind blows. Coyotes howl in the distance. John has built a huge pile of wood and shrubs. He picks Mary's body up and heaves it onto the top of the pile. The pile teeters and Mary's body compresses it. John takes out a match. Strikes it. It lights, but the wind quickly blows it out. John tries again, only this time closer to the pile. The match lights, and the yellow flame grows from the match to the shrubs at the bottom of the pile, and slowly the flame turns more red as it climbs up the pile into the night sky. John watches as Mary's body is engulfed by the searing red flame. HISSSS as Mary's body starts to burn. John turns and starts walking away as the flame gets brighter and brighter and hotter and hotter.

EXT. DESERT - DAWN

A pile of ashes lie on the ground where the fire was and a fierce wind blows and the ashes fly up, across the dried up riverbed, toward the Hamilton Ranch.

EXT. NILES RANCH - DIRT ROAD - DAY

Cameron drives down the road, followed by two police cars. The police cars stop just as the house comes into view. Cameron keeps going.

EXT. NILES RANCH - DAY

already shimmering with heat. The house looks vacant. John's car is not visible. The barn door flaps in the breeze.

INT. POLICE CAR

Sheriff Robert turns off the engine. Earl spits a huge wad of tobacco out the window.

SHERIFF ROBERT

You know that stuff causes mouth cancer?

EARL

I ain't worried. My dad's been chewing for forty years. Ain't nothing ever happen to him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EARL (CONT'D)

Sheriff Robert shakes his head.  
Earl reaches into the back seat and  
pulls up a machine gun.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Where did you get that?

EARL

My daddy gave it to me. Earl snaps  
in a clip and grins.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE

as Cameron pulls up. He takes a long look around before he  
gets out of his car. Cameron goes up to the front porch and  
starts knocking. No answer. Cameron pokes his head into the  
house, calls:

CAMERON

Hello? Anyone home?

No answer. Cameron turns back toward Sheriff Robert and the  
other policemen, who are now getting out of their cars,  
carefully watching Cameron. Cameron shrugs, knocks some  
more. Still no answer. Cameron enters.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM

Cameron looks around, no sign of John but he notices the  
empty picture frame on the mantel. Cameron looks at the  
picture of Ellen and Uncle Niles on the bureau.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - BARN

On foot the four policemen make their way to the side of the  
barn. Earl watches the house as Sheriff Robert looks in the  
barn window.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Everyone in this town thinks he's  
so damn smart.

Sheriff Robert points to the El Camino.

EARL

Yep.

SHERIFF ROBERT

I'm the one that figured this thing  
out, right? Earl turns toward  
Sheriff Robert.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EARL

Isn't this your brother's? Earl holds up the monogrammed belt buckle with the big "C," torn from the belt.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Where'd you get that?

EARL

I found it.

SHERIFF ROBERT

Where?

EARL

At Jamie's cabin. Sheriff Robert stares hatefully at Earl.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Cameron turns and starts to exit.

JOHN (O.S.)

Zachary?

Cameron turns around. John stands in the kitchen doorway. Cameron is shocked at the sight and sound of John.

CAMERON

You must be crazy to still be here. And now it's John's turn to smile. The tape is in his back pocket and the pistol is tucked into the back of his pants.

JOHN

Did you bring the money? Cameron nods and swings his briefcase up onto the table. He pulls out a manila envelope and holds it out to John.

CAMERON

You got the tape? John throws the tape onto the table.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

This the right one? John nods and takes the envelope and looks at it. Five thousand cash. Cameron quickly puts the tape into his briefcase and shuts it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON (CONT'D)

I hope you can spend all that before they arrest you.

JOHN

You killed him didn't you?

CAMERON

He was trying to cut me out completely and permanently. He wouldn't even acknowledge me.

JOHN

How did you know about Ellen?

CAMERON

I didn't, at first. But I figured it out pretty quickly. I usually do.

Cameron starts to back away.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

You know, John, I like you. I respect you. I tried to help you. I gave you a chance to run but now... you're going to jail for murder.

JOHN

I don't think so. You can't prove I killed the old man, 'cause I didn't.

CAMERON

No, but they already got enough to prove that Jamie killed him.

JOHN

Who?

CAMERON

That guy that tried to steal the video.

JOHN

You can't link me to him.

CAMERON

I don't know. They're going to find your boxing tape about three feet from where he was killed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Cameron smiles, but not his usual killer smile, a more sympathetic smile.

JOHN

Yeah, well you're not getting the money either. I got a letter here that keeps anyone from getting the inheritance except Ellen. John holds up the forged letter.

CAMERON

Come on, John. You're a convicted forger. That letter's not going to do anything but help my case.

JOHN

Yeah, well, you're not the only lawyer in town.

Cameron shakes his head, says:

CAMERON

You know, John, you got balls but you got no brains... he's dead, too.

Cameron lets this sink in. John stares at him. Checkmate. Game over.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

What can I say... I'm a bastard. Cameron carefully takes the PEARL HANDLED PISTOL out of his pocket with a handkerchief and... John whips out the gun and fires and Cameron dives into the living room but he takes a bullet in the hip.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE

Sheriff Robert, Earl, and the two other Officers are racing toward the house, guns drawn. Through the window John can be seen moving into the dining room. BAM! BAM! BAM! as Earl unloads the machine gun on John.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - DINING ROOM

The window shatters. Glass and bullets are flying. The envelope is shot out of John's hand, spreading money everywhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

John dives toward the kitchen as the picture of Ellen and Uncle Niles is riddled with bullets and crashes to the floor.

INT. NILES' HOUSE - KITCHEN

as John hits the linoleum floor. John looks back and sees the money lying on the floor and... the police running toward the house.

BAM! BAM! BAM!

He scrambles toward the back door.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

as Sheriff Robert and Earl run up the porch steps and in the front door.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - BACK

John rushes off the porch and stumbles down the stairs. He runs to... THE YELLOW CONVERTIBLE and gets in and takes off... Sheriff Robert and Earl exit the house and start firing at the car... bullets hit the yellow convertible... tires explode... the engine bursts...

INT. YELLOW CONVERTIBLE

as bullets whizz through and the car rolls to a stop.

EXT. NILES RANCH

as John gets out of yellow convertible and returns fire...

BAM!

John runs off into the desert.

He reaches for his shoulder. Blood.

AT THE BACK PORCH

Sheriff Robert runs back into the house. Earl keeps firing his machine gun... and the yellow convertible explodes... KABOOM!

INT. NILES' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

The two Officers sit by Cameron. Sheriff Robert enters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Where's the girl? Sheriff Robert  
points upstairs and Officer #1  
takes off up the stairs.

Sheriff Robert kneels down beside Cameron.

SHERIFF ROBERT (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
You all right?

CAMERON  
(barely audible)  
Yes.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
(to officer #2)  
Call an ambulance. And Officer #2  
moves to the phone. Earl enters.

EARL  
He ran off into the desert. Officer  
#1 runs back down the stairs.

OFFICER #1  
There's no one up there.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
Come on!  
(to Officer #2)  
You make sure nothing happens to  
him, you here me? Sheriff Robert  
exits with Earl and Officer #1.

EXT. DESERT

as John stumbles along, bleeding.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - BACK

Sheriff Robert looks at the trail of blood left by John.  
They look out into the vast empty desert. John has already  
disappeared over the first ridge.

SHERIFF ROBERT  
He's not going to get very far.  
Sheriff Robert moves off into the  
desert.



EXT. DESERT

The policemen walk through the desert. The sun and wind has started to beat them down. Up ahead, they can see John as he tumbles into the dried up riverbed.

EXT. DESERT - RIVERBED

John lies in a pool of blood. The sun still relentlessly beats down on him. Coyotes howl in the distance. John holds his hand over the bullet wound trying to stop the flow of blood. John gets up and stumbles further down the riverbed.

EXT. DESERT

as the policemen arrive at the top of the riverbed. They look down at the dried blood spot left by John. Coyotes scurry around.

OFFICER #1

(to Sheriff Robert)

Maybe we should wait for backup?  
Sheriff Robert holds his hand up to his face, trying to block the sand and debris being blasted at him by the fierce wind.

SHERIFF ROBERT

No, come on.

Sheriff Robert starts to move into the riverbed.

EARL

You know, Sheriff... it might be better for some people in this town if we just let the desert kill'em.

Earl tosses Cameron's belt buckle to Sheriff Robert. The wind continues to swirl and Sheriff Robert stares out into the desert. He looks at the buckle in the palm of his hand, puts the buckle into his pocket, and turns back.

EXT. DESERT - RIVERBED - LATER

John is several steps closer to death. The howls of the coyotes and the cries of the vultures ring out. John struggles to remain conscious. He looks at his

GUN.

EXT. DESERT

as the policemen walk back toward the Niles Ranch. A shot RINGS out, barely audible through the fierce wind. Sheriff Robert looks at Earl and Earl shrugs.

EXT. DESERT - RIVERBED

John looks up, aiming the gun. A FIGURE looms over him. John can barely make it out because of the blinding sun. John aims again, hands still shaking. CLICK, empty... the figure descends on John and disarms him.

FIGURE

I guess we's even now. And it's Samuel Hamilton, smiling his toothless smile. He tucks the pistol into his pants. Hamilton sits John up and lets him drink from his canteen. John mouths the words "thank you" to Hamilton and drinks and drinks and pauses and drinks some more and says:

JOHN

I guess I spent a little too much time in the sun. They both smile and start laughing and their laughter reaches a raucous crescendo and the two men are in hysterics together.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But I still got this picture... John reaches into his jacket and... pulls out the PAINTING. It's covered with blood. He unrolls it, it's tattered with bullet holes.

HAMILTON

That ain't worth nothing...

Hamilton points to the signature in the corner: "SAMUEL

HAMILTON."

HAMILTON

(continuing)

I painted that.

John releases the painting and the wind takes it out across the desert.

EXT. DESERT - HAMILTON'S RANCH - DUSK

Hamilton drives the Willys Jeep into the Hamilton Ranch.  
John's in the back.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - DAY

Blue sky. A beautiful day.

CAMERON (V.O.)

How can you ever really know if you  
gave your all? He gave it, but I  
got the inheritance... The word  
SOLD rests on top of a FOR SALE  
sign. A shabby coat of paint  
covers the once exposed wooden  
sides of the house.

EXT. NILES' HOUSE - PORCH

A young COUPLE stands on the porch with Cameron.

WOMAN

Did you live here long?

CAMERON

Never. I didn't even know he was  
my father until a few weeks before  
he died.

The MAN shakes Cameron's hand and then the couple shares a  
huge hug. Cameron limps down the porch with the aid of a  
cane and gets into his car and drives away. Cameron's car  
disappears into the desert.

UNDER THE PORCH

Edward's body is in an accelerated state of disintegration.  
The wind blows just right and...

BLACK SCREEN

WOMAN (V.O.)

What's that smell?

FADE OUT.

THE END