

(ROUGH RIDERS)
by
(Arthur Martin Jr.)

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FADE IN:

INT. STATE PRISON / CELL BLOCK - DAY

CLOSE ON TRACKER. Big, strong, handsome man in early forties. Convict in prison clothes. He puts a well-worn Stetson on his head and pulls it tight. CLANK! The cell door opens. He follows the GUARD.

EXT. STATE PRISON - DAY

Maximum security prison with barbed wire walls amidst green fields under cultivation. MOVING CLOSER. Excited SOUNDS of a riot? CRANE over concertina wire. Discover "riot" is an EXCITED CROWD at a prison rodeo.

JUDGE John Garrett settles into his seat. Garrett is mid sixties, ailing, needs two canes to walk. Thick glasses make his eyes appear larger than they are.

INT. PRISON ARENA - DAY

Inmates herd horses into bucking chutes. They wear prison clothes. Only one wears a cowboy hat. A BIG HORSE tries to turn back. Two Inmates block his path. He rears and strikes with his front feet.

ANGLE - Garrett

watching with peculiar fascination. A loud CRASH from the chutes draws his attention.

ANGLE - CHUTES

as the devil horse goes over the barrier. Inmates are thrown to the ground. Others scatter to escape flying hooves. One inmate does not turn away. It is Tracker. Tracker jumps to the top rail and grabs the horse's head. With a powerful twist he jerks the head up and grabs an ear in his teeth. The horse struggles, but Tracker drags him to his side of the chute.

Garrett watches. Other Inmates help Tracker. The horse is subdued. Tracker climbs up as saddle comes down to the animal's back. The cinch is tightened. Tracker stands on the rails above the horse and looks down at the men around him.

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TRACKER

This is my last ride boys. Lets do
it right!

He lowers himself to the saddle, grips the rope and measures the neck. He nods. The gate swings open. The horse EXPLODES. Tracker digs in with his spurs then rakes the shoulders.

It is a spectacular ride. The brute twists, sunfishes. Snorting, stomping. The horse rolls, Tracker stays in the saddle. The beast rears over backward, Tracker rolls free then bounds back to the saddle before the horse regains it's feet. A superb display of athleticism. Crowd reacts.

INTERCUT - GUARDS, WARDEN and Public cheer and admire as the horse slows, then stops. Beaten. Tracker swings down.

ANGLE On

Tracker as he walks back to the chutes. Sees Garrett. The look exposes an ambivalent past between these men. Something less than friendship.

EXT. STATE PRISON MAIN GATE - DAY

Tracker walks toward us on the other side of a chain link fence. Prison garb is gone. He wears blue jeans, western shirt, and a felt cowboy hat, pulled low. He carries an old military duffle bag over his shoulder. He stops when he reaches the gate and looks back.

The SOUND of the electric gate turns him toward the CAMERA. Tracker steps from prison onto the parking lot of freedom.

A WHITE FORD TRUCK waits. Tracker sees it. Slings his bag and heads the other way. The Truck pulls forward and along his left side. Judge Garrett is driving. Tracker ignores him. Long awkward silence.

GARRETT

Let me give you a lift.

TRACKER

Don't need anything from you,
Judge.

GARRETT

Just into town.

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CONTINUED:

TRACKER

I'll walk.

GARRETT

It's a ways.

TRACKER

What the hell more you want from me?

GARRETT

Make sure you're OK. That's all.

Tracker stops. Incredulous.

TRACKER

You locked me away for five years!
In a room smaller than your truck!
How could I be OK?

Tracker turns and walks away. Garrett follows.

GARRETT

You got a job?
(Silent look)
Condition of your release says you
need a job.
(Silence)
We need one more wrangler to bring
in some mustangs.
(Silence)
You still sit a saddle like you
grew there.
(Silence)
Fifty a day plus expenses. No more
than a week. Counts on your parole.

TRACKER

Why're you doing this?

GARRETT

Cause you need a job. And I need
the horses. And we both know
justice isn't always fair.

EXT. STREET NEAR HOUSING PROJECT - DAY

Garrett and Tracker moving. Garrett slams the brakes to avoid hitting JASON RODALE (14) and a RAT PACK OF FRIENDS. Jason is big for his age. He flat slams the hood and gives Garrett the bird.

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We get a good look at this face. He is tough and street wise. We will see him again.

JASON

Hey stupid! Learn to drive or get off the road.

Tracker is introspective. Garrett patient.

EXT. YOUTH ROUGH RIDERS RANCH - DAY

The white truck exits the pavement and turns onto a dirt road. It passes a hand painted sign.

ARIZONA YOUTH ROUGH RIDERS, HOME OF THE MUSTANGS

Tracker trades looks with Garrett. Rough Riders is an eclectic mix of old and new but mostly borrowed. Weathered ranch buildings from turn of the century stand in the rocky foothills of the Superstition Mountains.

The truck passes an arena, horse pens, small tack rooms and barns, in various stages of renovation or construction. There are 20-30 people working. Most are teenagers or adolescents. Assorted ethnicity.

Feature LISA (15). She is a shy, mysterious wisp of a girl. Tracker and Lisa connect for a moment. IMAGES fill Tracker's mind.

TRACKER'S MIND'S EYE IMAGE

For a fleeting instant LISA is another teenage girl in another time and place. Only this girl lays on the ground broken and limp.

Garrett stops the truck by a forty foot trailer in the shade of a clump of Mesquite. The JERK brings Tracker back. Wrought iron furniture. Pleasant place. Garrett grabs his canes and struggles out. Tracker follows.

GARRETT

You can stay here tonight. Head out in the morning. Conway will get your gear.

A lanky wrangler named DICK CONWAY arrives. Judge exits.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

Tracker opens the door and throws his duffle inside the

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trailer. Takes a look. Remnants of wranglers past.

MOVING with Conway.

TRACKER

What are all the youngsters doin'
here?

CONWAY

The Judge's way a savin' what's
left of the world.

TRACKER

Where they come from?

CONWAY

Trouble. The courts. Detention.
Messed up homes. Officially they're
"Community Service Volunteers".

Conway and Tracker reach the tack shack. Conway grabs a
weathered A-FORK saddle and plunks it on a rail.

CONWAY (CONT'D)

In truth, they're a bunch a dang
delinquents.

TRACKER

From Garrett's court?

CONWAY

That's it! Sets it up so they can
"do time" workin' here, 'sted a
goin' to jail. One last chance to
get a life, you know!

Conway grabs a bridle and hangs it over the horn.

CONWAY (CONT'D)

That should do ya.

Tracker's reaction to the saddle betrays a painful memory.

TRACKER

Where'd you get this?

CONWAY

Who knows. We take what we get.
It's the one Judge said to give ya.

Tracker touches the scarred leather. Almost reverently. He

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swallows an old emotion.

CONWAY (CONT'D)

Pick yerself a couple of horses
from that bunch there. See ya in
the morning. Be leaving at four.
Ridin' by daylight.

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT -- WILD HORSE - DAY

MOVING. Blur of wild horse's feet enter frame. Reveal BLUE
ROAN STALLION, running hard and low, neck stretched,
ears pinned, teeth bared as he runs directly over us.

EXT. INNER CITY-WILD KID - DAY

CRASH! Jason Rodale smashes into frame. He and the RAT PACK
crash down an ally fleeing an unknown misadventure. They are
winded, laughing, and hell bent for trouble. They sprawl over
a parked Lincoln.

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT - WILD HORSES - DAY

Other horses appear. We are in the middle of a stampede of
wild horses. The horses are driven by Wranglers below and
Helicopter above.

EXT. INNER CITY - WILD KID - DAY

Jason spots keys in the ignition. Scrambles behind the wheel.
The Rat Pack is reluctant. He mocks them.

JASON

Hey chickens.

A couple of them jump in as he starts the engine and slams it
into gear.

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT - WILD HORSES - DAY

A high panoramic shot of the wild mustangs running across the
desert below.

FEATURE Tracker riding hard. FREEDOM!

EXT. INNER CITY - WILD KID - DAY

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The car spins out, smacks a post, and disappears. The rat pack splits in three directions.

INSIDE - Jason is wild eyed.

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT - WILD HORSES - DAY

Tracker rides hard to catch the horses. A BLUE ROAN STALLION breaks away from the herd and runs off at an oblique angle.

EXT. INNER CITY - WILD KID - DAY

The Lincoln sideswipes a cop, clips a parked car and careens away. The stolen auto is progressively trashed in the chase. The cop does a 180, siren blaring.

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT - WILD HORSES - DAY

Tracker follows the Blue Roan. The stallion ducks and dives through the creosote and cactus. Tracker plunges his horse down a hill, defying death.

EXT. INNER CITY - WILD KID - DAY

Jason is a young James Dean playing chicken with the law and his life. The CHASE is on!

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT - WILD HORSES - DAY

Tracker's horse stumbles. He loses fifty meters on the stallion. With a shout of exhilaration, he spurs his horse over a ledge.

EXT. INNER CITY - WILD KID - DAY

Jason is caught up in the rush of the chase. Cops chase the Lincoln onto a narrow street, force it over an embankment and onto the old canal road. Two motorcycle cops erupt from nowhere to head Jason off.

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT - WILD HORSES - DAY

Tracker swings wide to the right, finds an open space where he can unleash his horse and cuts off the stallion.

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EXT. INNER CITY - WILD KID - DAY

Jason sees the trap. He cranks the wheel hard, crashes through the fence and tries to four-wheel up the embankment.

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT - WILD HORSES - DAY

Tracker brings his horse to a stop. The wild horse and Tracker study each other for a beat. The stallion rears, then turns and lunges down a steep embankment into a narrow canyon.

The Blue Roan is trapped in the blind canyon. He turns to attack. Tracker faces him. The Mustang King runs directly at Tracker. Fury drives him. Intelligence stops him.

Wranglers ride in. The helicopter blocks the entrance. The great horse thrashes to and fro.

EXT. INNER CITY - WILD KID - DAY

The Lincoln rolls and ends in the canal with a dusty splash. Jason is caught.

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT - WILD HORSES - DAY

The Stallion runs into the trap, a broad corral of mustang panels that narrow to a three foot chute and open stock trailer attached to a semi-truck.

EXT. INNER CITY - WILD KID - DAY

Jason pops out of the dirty water choking, gagging, spitting. Cops run furiously along the banks and wade in from two sides.

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT - WILD HORSES - DAY

Tracker rides up to the trap. Conway and Todd Williams run furiously to close the end of the corral before the horses can turn and escape. The Blue Roan charges them as they swing the last panel into place. Whew!

TODD

Why didn't you let that broom-tail go? We almost lost the whole herd waitin' for you to get him in.

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CONTINUED:

Tracker slips from the saddle and ties to the rail of a panel.

CONWAY

You must have a death wish ridin'
like that.

TRACKER

Just needed to know if I still
could.

Smith and Conway watch the magnificent stud. Conway breaks out a flask. Offers Tracker a drink.

CONWAY

Well, it was somethin'.

Tracker declines the offer with the tell-tale words...

TRACKER

Not today...

TODD

I wouldn't want to be the first kid
to try to throw a rig on him.

Tracker's look is a question. "What kids?"

CONWAY

That's what these flea bitten
Broom tails are for, ya know?
Garrett's kids!

TRACKER

It's not certain anyone can break
that horse!

TODD

Yeah, well, Garrett's idea a
breakin' a wild kid is givin' him a
wild horse.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS RANCH - DAY

Wild horse bucking. YOUNGSTER trying to stay on it's back.
Staff and Delinquent Teens look on.

MOVING with Todd , Conway and Tracker. They ride to the
corral, dismount and pull saddles. Tracker observes the
action as he walks.

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CONTINUED:

Garrett watches from the rails. Coughs. Holds his chest. Getting worse.

GARRETT

Did it go well?

CONWAY

Same. Another rangy bunch a' broom tails. Few good horses maybe.. one at least. BLM will check 'em and we'll truck them in on Friday.

The YOUNGSTER is thrown and almost stomped by the bronc. TRACKER moves faster than we'd expect. Puts himself between the horse and the kid. Kid gets away. Close call!

MARGARET STYLES enters frame behind Garrett. She sees the whole event. Styles is a bureaucrat you love to hate. Her hair is pinned to her head like a cap with a bun in the back. JOHN CHALET, her demure obedient assistant, hangs back by the car.

STYLES

You won't be happy until you kill somebody will you, Judge?

Garrett is surprised by her comment. Turns.

GARRETT

On the contrary Ms. Styles, I'm trying to keep them from killing themselves.

STYLES

You don't have a single state certified psychologist in the whole place.

GARRETT

I call not having on of those... gentlemen, a good start toward recovery for some of these kids. If we can keep them out they might have a chance!

STYLES

Succeed? Keeping pathological delinquents on the street is all you're doing. The State has legitimate institutions for youth correction.

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CONTINUED:

GARRETT

You think it helps to send children to prison?

STYLES

Rehabilitating disturbed youth is not for "part-time" amateurs.

GARRETT

Well, full-time bureaucrats are not the answer. I have seen your results. A revolving door that leads to bars and cages.

Garrett turns as if the conversation had just ended.

STYLES

You'll make a serious mistake to underestimate me, Judge Garrett.

GARRETT

Do you have any idea what is really going on out here? You see that young man over...

STYLES

Oh, I think I do. I think I really do. Every one else may be willing to look the other way because you're the "grand old Judge of the 12th district", but not me! Not me!

Tracker takes an unusual interest in the conversation. A small circle has gathered.

STYLES (CONT'D)

You'll run out of strings to pull and when you do I'll shut you down and put your precious juvenile criminals behind bars!

Reactions of the teenagers to Styles' comment, "precious Juvenile Criminals". Styles struts to her car. Chalet opens the door. She turns and announces.

STYLES (CONT'D)

If you try to protect one more criminal by trading jail time for a weekend at your "dude camp" I will see you off the bench and them in Jail where they belong.

INT. MARICOPA COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

CLANK! Jail door is opened. A still soggy Jason is shoved inside. CLUNK! Jail door slams closed. The room is occupied by other young hoodlums. Curious ethnic mix. It is dark.

Jason steps on BUSTER, a big boy for his age. Big Mistake. BUSTER leaps up and SMACKS Jason without warning. TWO GANG MEMBERS step from the shadow and grab Jason's arms. BUSTER pounds Jason in the stomach. Then again, and again. He grabs Jason's hair and jerks his head back. Face close.

BUSTER

Watch who you step on, punk!

Cell door CLANGS. Jason pushed aside. He slumps on the floor. JAIL DEPUTY appears at the bars with a slip of paper in hand.

JAIL DEPUTY

Rodale?

Jason half crawls to his feet.

JAIL DEPUTY (CONT'D)

I called the number you gave me.
Your old lady said she ain't coming
down.
(Chuckles))
Says you don't deserve bail.

INT. HORSE BARN/VET CLINIC - NIGHT

Garrett does not look well. He opens a refrigerator, extracts a hypodermic needle, draws insulin and gives himself an injection. He whirls as door THUMPS open. Tracker enters with the old saddle. Garrett feels compromised. Tracker turns to go.

GARRETT

(Finishing)

It's all right. Medicinal purposes
I assure you.

TRACKER

I didn't know.

GARRETT

No one does. Funny thing about
growing old, Tracker. Up here
(taps head)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARRETT (CONT'D)

I'm still 25. But my body has
fallen apart.

TRACKER

How did you get this?

GARRETT

It was in the back of the truck the
night of the accident. After the
trial, well...Judges have their
ways. I figured she'd want you to
keep it.

Awkward moment.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Come on up to the office, I'll get
you paid.

Garrett walks with his canes. At the door he stumbles. His
legs collapse and he tumbles into a corner. Tracker rushes to
him. Garrett's eyes drift. He gulps air then comes around.

TRACKER

You alright?

GARRETT

Yes. Thank you. Just cheated death
once more I guess. If you could
help me up I'd...

Tracker lifts and steadies him. Garrett settles on an old box
to catch his breath.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

It wouldn't be good if anyone - you
know - found out that I...

TRACKER

I got no cause to talk.

GARRETT

The State Juvenile Authority will
be overjoyed to find out I'm
finally on my last legs.

TRACKER

You'll be alright.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARRETT

Those mustangs get here next week.
Nobody could teach more about
breaking horses than you could.

TRACKER

Sounds more like breakin' kids than
horses.

GARRETT

What would it take to get you to
stay around?

TRACKER

To break horses, or baby sit?

GARRETT

I need someone to take over where
I'm leaving off.

Tracker stands up.

TRACKER

You got the wrong man.

GARRETT

No. You're the right man. I studied
you close over the last five years.
You're the man I want.

TRACKER

Why me? Why do you think that I...

GARRETT

Because you're a good man. And you
have a reason to care about what
happens to these youngsters!

Tracker POV - Through the open doorway. Lisa with her horse
GENERAL. He hefts the saddle and turns to go.

TRACKER

I need to be moving on. I
can't...

GARRETT

Just think about it. Why don't you
visit the courtroom tomorrow?

TRACKER

Last time I came to your courtroom,
I got five years.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARRETT

This time you get lunch.

Tracker amused by Garrett's tenacity but shakes his head and exits.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Use the pickup. Be there by ten. Do it for Mandy!

Tracker stops but doesn't look back. Then, slowly walks on.

INT. WRANGLER BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

Tracker sits on his bunk. The door crashes open and JOE SHIPMAN enters. Grey hair and thin beard cover a deeply tanned face from years in the sun. He carries a heavy SOOGAN on his shoulder and a POSSIBLES bag in his other hand. (Soogan: A heavy bed roll used in a bunk house. Not carried behind a saddle.) He throws his load on a bare spot on the floor.

JOE

Judge told me to bunk here with you. Name's Joe.

Tracker, slightly startled, stands and offers his hand.

TRACKER

I'm Tracker. Not much room in here. Only one bunk.

Takes a long look at Tracker's outstretched hand.

JOE

Don't know if I like you yet... An' I don't need no bunk.

He unrolls his soogan, drops his hat on the floor and lays down. Tracker shrugs and sits back on his bunk. Joe is already asleep.

TRACKER

Cowboys!

INT. WRANGLER BUNKHOUSE - MORNING

Joe wakes and stands. Tracker is gone. He rubs his eyes and picks up his possible bag, rummages through and takes out a sheaf of WHITE ENVELOPES. He studies them for a beat, then tucks them under his soogan.

EXT. SHOT MARICOPA COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

The Court House is a large red brick building with white columns supporting a gabled canopy. Carved in granite on the gable...

MARICOPA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Styles and Chalet wait on the steps. They are joined by TWO MEN IN DARK SUITS. Even before they reach her, she turns and leads them inside.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Garrett raps the gavel to quiet a murmur. Jason stands before the bench. He glances at his mother. EMILY RODALE (35) is attractive in a neglected sort of way. She does not acknowledge Jason's pleading look. Jason eyes Buster and five gang members in the custody of the JUVENILE OFFICER.

Tracker enters and takes a seat in the back. Garrett smiles to himself.

GARRETT

Will Emily Rodale come forward
please?

Heads turn. People shuffle. Emily stands and steps forward. She glances about self consciously. Her eyes connect with Tracker and hold a fleeting instant.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Mrs. Rodale. You are the mother of
the defendant. It took five phone
calls and a deputy to get you here.
Can you help me understand that?
Your son is in serious trouble.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY

I don't know why I have to be here at all, he's the one that...

GARRETT

He's been kicked out of school nine times since fifth grade. Today it's Theft, breaking and entering, malicious destruction, unlawful flight to avoid arrest and driving without a license. How old are you Jason?

Jason is silent and defiant. Garrett looks up as Styles, Chalet, and the Two Suits enter the court room.

EMILY

He asked you a question.
(Awkward pause)
He's fifteen next month.

GARRETT

You've admitted to the charges Jason, so I've nothing to do but determine your punishment. But I would like to know what you're thinking.

(beat)

What's wrong, son?

Tracker listens with curious fascination. Styles whispers with Suits. Jason stares ahead. Eyes blank. Ears closed. Mind shut. His hands are stuffed in his baggy pants. Garrett studies him.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Jason? These are serious crimes.
The law allows that..

JASON

I don't care what you do to me.

Garrett trades looks with Emily. She is disconcerted. Too late to be a Mom. Garrett trades looks with Tracker then Styles. She warns him with her eyes.

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CONTINUED:

GARRETT

You are herewith ordered to pay for the damage you caused and sentenced to the youth correctional facility at Adobe Mountain for a period of five years and...

Gloating. Styles thinks she has intimidated Garrett into a proper sentence.

EMILY

But your Honor. I'm the one. I mean the cost of the damages will...

Garrett holds up his hand for silence. Styles goes pale. The Suits buzz and whisper.

GARRETT

Jason, YOU will pay for the damage, but I am suspending your sentence on condition that you perform two years of probation and two thousand hours of community service at a location determined by this court.

Styles stands.

STYLES

If I may address the court your honor.

GARRETT

You may not address the court.

STYLES

The State Department of Juvenile Services can not support your blatant disregard of appropriate Juvenile Corrective Services provided by the State and...

Garrett raps the gavel so hard she stops.

GARRETT

Ms. Styles, when you become a judge in this court you may do whatever you like. Meanwhile, you will sit down... and shut up! Another outburst and you're in contempt!

Tracker smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STYLES

That young man is a criminal. He needs punishment and discipline. He is a danger to society.

GARRETT

Bailiff!

Styles sits abruptly.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

There are some, it would seem, who would like you "hanged". Time will tell who's right. Meanwhile, Mrs. Rodale, you will see to it that Jason reports every day at the time and place given. Fail to show up, Jason, and you go to the youth correction facility at Adobe Mountain. That's a gentle euphemism for "PRISON". Do you understand?

EMILY

I'm a single parent! I've got no time to drive him all over the place. He's the one who broke the law, it's not fair that I'm the one that...

Garrett's eyes sharpen with anger. Bailiff and Recorder exchange knowing looks with a wink.

GARRETT

Mrs. Rodale! You will see me in chambers. Court is recessed for five minutes.

Garrett and Emily leave. Silence in the courtroom. Muffled voices from inside Chambers.

Tracker watches Jason. Jason feels it. Locks eyes with him. Emily exits chambers. She is visibly shaken. Jason steals another look at Tracker

Garrett returns to the bench. THUMPS his gavel.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Be seated! Jason, your mother has agreed to drive you where you need to be, when you need to be there.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARRETT (CONT'D)

You're in your mother's custody--
(under breath)
for the first time it would seem.

(Raps gavel)

Bailiff, take custody of Ms.
Styles. She can begin her 24 hours
for contempt now. Maybe she'll
learn something! Courts adjourned.

Margaret's face turns to stunned stone.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- MARICOPA COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Tracker at the pick up. Sees Emily and Jason. She drags him
toward the car. He fights her. They are yelling. Tracker
hears them as they draw near.

EMILY

Where am I going to get seventeen
hundred dollars? I go on a date
and you go on a rampage that...

JASON

You're always on a "date".

Emily smacks him hard across the face.

EMILY

You watch your mouth! Do you know
what the judge said? If you screw
up I'm the one in contempt of
court. You mess up your life and
I'm the one that pays for it!

Jason aware of Tracker listening. Humiliated. Emily is
likewise suddenly aware of Tracker. She pushes Jason into the
car and SLAMS the door. Tracker impacted.

Garrett hobbles on crutches aided by the Bailiff.

GARRETT

(slaps his legs)

They quit on me. Got all clotted
up. Knew it was coming.

As Jason and Emily drive away.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

You can save that boy's life.

Tracker gives him a hard look. Garrett holds a brown paper
bag aloft.

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CONTINUED:

GARRETT (CONT'D)
Ready for that lunch I promised?

INT. TRUCK - DAY

MOVING. Garrett hands Tracker half a deli sandwich from a brown sack.

GARRETT
Turkey with swiss? I didn't say a
"great lunch", I said "lunch".

Tracker grins, takes the half sandwich and a bite.

TRACKER
You're not the same judge who sent
me to prison.

GARRETT
Sending teenagers to prison has a
way of changing a man. What
changed you, Jake?

TRACKER
It wasn't iron bars.

GARRETT
No, before that I mean.

TRACKER
No value in lookin' back.

GARRETT
Unless it helps us to see ahead.

TRACKER
I don't much like looking either
way.

GARRETT
You paid for your mistake. Right or
wrong. Now you have to forgive
yourself. Your daughter is gone,
but these youngsters are alive.
They still have a chance.

Tracker looks at Garrett sharply. His mind rolls into a ...

FLASHBACK:

EXT. HIGHWAY

Flashes of the auto accident that took Mandy's life. Tracker kneeling on the ground holding a lifeless body. His face twisted in wretched agony.

END FLASHBACK

INT. WRANGLER BUNKHOUSE

Joe stashing his belongings on a makeshift shelf. Tracker storms in slamming the door. Angry.

TRACKER

I knew I never should a come here.
Now he wants me to run this place
for him! Who the hell am I to take
care of these kids?

Joe doesn't stop or look up from what he's doing.

JOE

Yeah? I reckon the only time doing
the right thing counts is when you
don't have too. But then, there's
more to bein' a man than just
callin' yourself one.

He turns without looking at Tracker and leaves. Tracker stares after him.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS - DAY

Emily arrives with Jason. She is late. Garrett checks his watch and scolds her with his eyes. Other NEW ARRIVALS are waiting. Buster among them. He and Jason eye each other warily.

Veteran Rough Riders look on. Feature Lisa. Jason catches her eye. Other "veterans" include BRUISER and CRAIG. Judge hobbles forward to greet them.

INT. TRACKER'S TRAILER - DAY

Tracker is packing his stuff. Considers his old STETSON. Encounters a picture of Mandy with the saddle. It stops him.

INT. HAY BARN - DAY

Jason and new arrivals gather for "orientation". Garrett, Conway and Smith are present.

GARRETT

This is not a prison. This is not juvenile detention or a "youth correctional facility". You are here for "community service".

EXT. DIRT

ANGLE - CLOSE ON Tracker's boots walking.

INT. HAY BARN - DAY

The kids shuffle around not really wanting to be there.

GARRETT

The name "Rough Riders" comes from Teddy Roosevelt and the First Volunteer Cavalry in the Spanish American War. They were heroes of mine. Rough Riders came from different places and different backgrounds. Just like us. They learned to work together, and stick together to the end. We will, too.

EXT. DIRT

ANGLE - Tracker's boots.

INT. HAY BARN - DAY

The kids look at each other like "No way."

GARRETT

I want you to remember one thing. You are here because I believe in you! I believe in you because I know that somewhere inside you have the power to be whatever you imagine in your dreams. That may sound corny to you, but...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tracker looms in the door like an apparition in the dusty sunlight streaming from behind. Moment between Garrett and Tracker.

GARRETT (CONT'D)
 (Feeling his way)
 Tracker here....will help you with
 your horses... and your lives if
 you'll let him!

Tracker, hesitant, unsure of himself, steps forward. He stands quiet for a long BEAT. It turns uncomfortable. Then...

TRACKER
 I know a lot about horses and a
 little about kids. Far as I'm
 concerned whatever happens here is
 up to you.

Tracker walks among the "recruits". Jason lights up. Looks at Tracker with a cocky tilt to his head. In b.g. Joe enters and leans against the wall in a dark corner. He has a rope in his hand that will always be there. Watches Tracker intently.

TRACKER (CONT'D)
 I'm new here myself. I'm not sure
 about all of the rules so I'll be
 making a few of my own.

Tracker roughly snags the cigarette from Jason's mouth. He pulls the pack from his pocket and crushes it in his hand.

TRACKER (CONT'D)
 Now you know one of them. "No
 smoking!"

ANGLE - Conway as he slips a Bull Durham from his lips and snuffs it under his boot.

TRACKER (CONT'D)
 No booze. No drugs. And no cussing!

CONWAY
 (Under his breath)
 I feel like he's puttin' ME on
 probation!

TRACKER
 The number one rule is honesty.
 Tell the truth. You don't lie to
 me, I won't lie to you!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Scanning faces of the Rough Rider recruits.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

I'm an x-con! (Stir) I spent five years in prison. Trust me. You wouldn't like it. If you're honest with me, I can help you make sure you never have to find that out the hard way.

BRUISER, a girl determined to be a tom boy, bursts into the barn - interrupts the gathering. Steals the moment.

BRUISER

Hey, Craig's going for it! Ohhh, sorry.

GARRETT

"Going for it" takes priority!

A stampede as kids run for the door.

EXT. RIDING ARENA - DAY

Todd leads a red roan mustang forward. Everyone gathers to watch Craig ride. Good natured cat-calls come from the growing crowd.

Tracker, Garrett, Bruiser, and the crowd of new recruits from the barn join the spectacle. Jason stands near Tracker, next to Lisa.

CRAIG is a big lanky eighteen year old. He wears boots, hat, jeans and roping spurs. He is a curious contrast to the new recruits in their street gang garb.

TODD

Didn't you get enough yesterday?

CRAIG

Nope! But I'll handle it today. I feel like I can ride anything with hair and four legs.

A crowd gathers as the word spreads. CATCALLS from faceless kids.

AD LIB 1

Hey man, ya gotta hold your mouth right.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Pull your hat down tighter, cowboy!

AD LIB 2

Anybody explain this to the horse?

AD LIB 3

Put some Velcro on your butt,
Craig!

BRUISER

Try not to hurt anything...
important!

Crowd laughs. Craig is obviously well liked. The horse stands, head down, indifferent. Todd hands Craig the rope.

TODD

Step up easy now. Don't plop like
a sack of potatoes. Set her slow
and steady. Grab the off-side
stirrup fast as you can.

Craig gives a nervous nod to Todd. Steps to the stirrup. Tests his weight. Swings to the saddle. The horse doesn't even lift his head.

TODD (CONT'D)

He's plumb gentle today.
Nudge him with your spurs. See if
he don't "wake up" a little.

CLOSE ON Craig as he turns his heels and pokes the horse with the rowels. WHAM! The horse EXPLODES! He catapults himself and Craig straight into the air.

The crowd sprawls for cover from bucking hooves. The horse spins, twists, and jumps. Lisa pulls Jason back. Moment between them. Tracker watches the action with amused delight.

Fans shout. Craig rides. The horse dips and turns. Craig is sitting on air. CRUNCH. He hits the ground hard. He disappears for an instant in a puff of dust. With Craig out of the saddle the horse stops bucking as if nothing in the world happened. Everyone is laughing and applauding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONWAY

You stayed with him longer this time.

CRAIG

The end was the same.

Craig gets up. Dusts off. Todd swings into the saddle and rides the horse toward the pens.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

How do you do that?

TODD

It's the spurs, partner. Some horse don't need 'em. This one won't tolerate the steel.

CRAIG

Why didn't you tell me?

Todd looks at Craig. His face turns serious. He looks at the others gathered around. Gives the lesson.

TODD

He's your horse! I never tell another man about his horse unless he asks me. It's rude. I figured if you wanted to ride bad enough, you'd ask. I only told you so's you wouldn't break your fool neck. No shame in askin' for help or advice when you need it. Only, be sure your askin' the right person. Ask a person who doesn't know any more than you, all you got is blind leadin' blind.

Craig grimaces. When he looks up he's smiling again.

CRAIG

(Shaking his head)

All I had to do was ask!

JASON

You ain't goin' to catch me riding one of those dog food piles a shit.

A CLANK covers the word. We know what he said. Tracker looks at him. Jason bites his tongue. Garrett delighted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACKER

No...that's a horse. But come on,
I'll teach you something about the
other.

Joe stands in the back ground smiling.

INT. STABLES - DAY

An enormous mound of horse manure. Scoop shovel in, manure
out and into a wheelbarrow. A bitter Jason pays the price for
cussing.

INT. GENERAL'S STALL - DAY

Lisa grooming her horse's legs. Jason passes with the
overloaded wheelbarrow. General stretches out and nibble-nips
Jason's ear. It SCARES him to death. He over-reacts, upsets
the wheel barrow, slips on the floor and falls. Leaps up.
Grabs the scoop shovel, draws back for a mighty swing.

Lisa rages from nowhere. She attacks, screams and pounds
Jason with her fists and currycomb.

LISA

Stop that! Are you crazy? You
idiot. What are you trying to do?

Rough Riders materialize from nowhere. Buster among them.
Jeers, laughs. Tracker grabs Lisa's flailing arms.

LISA (CONT'D)

He was trying to kill my horse.

JASON

He bit me.

LISA

Liar!

Lisa pulls free. Eye to eye with Tracker. She turns to
General. Comforting.

Buster throws a small blob of wet manure in Jason's face.

BUSTER

Hey Rodale, you got somethin' on
your face... right here.
(Everybody laughs)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jason smacks him on the side of the head with a hand full of manure. SPLAT! Buster enraged. Steps forward. Tracker steps in.

TRACKER
Go back to work! All of you!

BUSTER
You're toast, pal!

Tracker turns to Lisa and General.

TRACKER
You OK?

Lisa distant. Studies him.

TRACKER (CONT'D)
My name is Tracker. I'm sort of...

LISA
You're helping Judge Garrett until he dies.

Tracker at a loss for words.

LISA (CONT'D)
I'm, Lisa. This is General.

TRACKER
Pleased to meet you, General.
Could sure use an extra wrangler
when we cut those Mustangs. You
handle it?

LISA
We can handle it.

ANGLE - Jason shovelling shit. Really mad. Tracker enters frame.

TRACKER
Tell me your name again.

JASON
Jason.

Tracker pulls up his sleeve. Displays a vicious scar on his hand and lower arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACKER

Ya see that, Jason? Came from taking my anger out on the wrong thing. Lot of energy in anger. Important to learn what to do with it.

(A beat)

Might want to apologize. At least to the horse.

JASON

To he...heck with her horse!

He catches his language in the nick of time.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS-- FRONT GATE - MAGIC HOUR

Jason waits for his Mom to pick him up. Garrett invades the solitude.

GARRETT

Mom picking you up? She's late.

JASON

Don't get her in no trouble, alright?

Jason pushes past the judge on his way to the road.

JASON (CONT'D)

I'll just, you know, meet her part way.

Garrett grabs his arm. Holds tight.

GARRETT

If you go part way, and she goes part way, you can meet in the middle. Life's a lot easier there... You understand?

Jason pulls away. Hold on Garrett who looks back.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Jason walks alone. Tracker passes in the pickup and stops.

TRACKER

Want a ride?

Jason takes a moment to decide. He throws his pack in the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

front seat and climbs in. Tracker pulls out. Awkward silence. Jason picks broken skin from blisters on his hand.

TRACKER (CONT'D)
Badges of honor.

JASON
Huh?

TRACKER
Blisters! Only way to get them is
to earn 'em.

Jason considers Tracker. Tracker opens the glove box and pulls out a well used pair of leather gloves. He tosses them to Jason.

TRACKER (CONT'D)
You did a good job today.

Jason pleased. Unaccustomed praise. The first hint of a smile appears.

EXT. JASON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Low class neighborhood. Small frame house. Peeling paint. Sagging wire fence. Grass needs mowing. Old bike with no rear wheel sits upside down. Pick up truck pulls up.

INT. TRACKER'S PICK UP TRUCK - NIGHT

Jason gets out. Exchanges looks with Tracker. Feature back pack left behind as truck pulls away.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

No pictures on the walls. No frills or nick-knacks. No decorations. No baby pictures on the T.V. No family Bible. No picture album on the coffee table.

Jason enters dark hallway. POV through door into kitchen. Refrigerator door opens. The stark white light introduces us to MERV, pouring booze. Half drunk. Merv is a 40ish, unkempt, transient truck driver type. Armpits. Undershirt. Big belly.

MOVING POV into kitchen. Merv puts his arm around Emily and hands her a drink. Both are startled as Jason enters. Emily compromised and embarrassed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON

You were supposed to pick me up.

EMILY

Oh my gosh. I completely forgot.
Merv came over and I...

MERV

Hey, Jason.

JASON

Screw you.

Merv pokes Jason. Threatening.

MERV

You watch your mouth you little...

Jason knocks his hand away. Hard.

JASON

Get your filthy hands off a me.

MERV

I'll kick your butt is what I'll
do.

Merv shoves him hard into the wall. Jason fights back in frustration and anger. Merv slaps him hard, slugs him and knocks him down. Draws blood. Emily leaps into the fray. Fighting for Jason.

EMILY

Stop it. You leave him alone.

MERV

I'm gonna bust his head.

EMILY

No!

She struggles to keep Merv off Jason. He's rough with her. Shoves her aside.

MOVING - Jason reaches into a secret place on top of the refrigerator. Grabs a hand gun and points it at Merv.

Merv too drunk to be afraid. He picks up a skillet. Emily gets between them. Screaming. Pleading. Crazy moment of panic. Merv with his arm around Emily. His shield. Advances with skillet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERV

Go ahead, shoot you little bastard.
Go ahead! Who you gonna kill, your
mother?

Jason's anger and frustration blinds him. He can't shoot Merv. He turns the gun on himself. Puts it to his head.

EMILY

(hysterical)

Stop it! Please, Jason put it down.

MERV

Do it. You gutless wonder!

EMILY

For God's sake Merv, leave him
alone. Stop it, please!

MERV

Do it! You can't even kill yerself
ya worthless little turd.

CLICK! Jason pulls the trigger. Everything stops. Stunned silence. Emily frozen in time. Merv grabs the gun and twists it from Jason's hand. Jason sags to the floor.

MERV (CONT'D)

Can't blow your brains out with an
empty gun, stupid!

He pops the cylinder. Six shells drop out. SLOW MOTION onto floor. Merv is stunned. No bluff!

KNOCK at the door. Moment of confusion. KNOCK! KNOCK! Merv stuffs the gun. Emily goes to the door. It is Tracker with Jason's back pack.

TRACKER

Jason left his pack in my truck. I
gave him a lift.

EMILY

Oh, I know. I, ah. I'm sorry. I was
supposed to... something came up
and.. I'll be there tomorrow..

Tracker POV - Emily and beyond. Jason rising from the floor wiping blood with the back of his hand. Merv's back as he exits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACKER
Everything all right here?

EMILY
Fine, just a little, you know...

TRACKER
See ya tomorrow Jason. Night.

Tracker knows it's not alright. Door closes.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON shell. Jason's hand picks it up. We see it is dented off center. The pin missed the primer. Fist closes on bullet.

CLOSE ON trembling, troubled boy.

INT. WRANGLER BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

Joe sits on his soogan, his back against the wall. His right foot on his left knee as he ropes it continuously with a PIGGIN STRING. Tracker enters. Exhausted. Flops on his bunk and pulls his hat over his face. Joe grins without looking at him.

JOE
Tough doin' the right thing. Ain't it?

Tracker lifts the brim of his hat and looks at him.

TRACKER
You talk too much!

He jerks his blanket over his head and rolls to his side. Joe ropes his foot one more time. Still grinning.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS - MAIN GATE - DAY

Parents and guardians drop youngsters. Older kids arrive in cars and pick ups. Lisa argues with her STEP FATHER.

STEP FATHER
I don't want you staying out here so much. I've told you that.

LISA
Then General has to stay with us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEP FATHER

Out of the question. The last thing
I need is some horse stinking up
the place..

LISA

Just come and look at him.

STEP FATHER

I just want you to finish your
hours, and come home.
(Uncomfortable sweetness)
Look honey, I just want to take
care of you, not some smelly
animal. Come here.

Tracker POV - Sees Lisa's Step Father hug her. She stiffens
at his touch.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS - NEW ARENA - DAY

Craig lifts a heavy digging bar from the pick-up. He hands
it to Jason - a bit black and blue. It's weight nearly takes
him off his feet. The work crew building the new arena
entails a dozen youngsters, including Bruiser, Chad, and
Buster.

CRAIG

Every place you see a stake we need
a post hole.

The stakes are spaced ten feet apart in an oval a hundred
feet around. Jason sighs.

JASON

How long you been doing this?

CRAIG

Couple a years.

Jason incredulous.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Oh, I finished doing "my time" a
year ago.

JASON

You don't have to be here?

CRAIG

Somebody's gotta show you
greenhorns how to dig holes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lisa arrives. Scowls at Jason. Buster bumps Jason as he passes. Deliberately knocking him off balance and into a hole. Craig grabs Jason. Buster struts for Lisa.

BUSTER

Sorry Dude.

ANGLE - CHAD AND BRUISER

Chad and Bruiser argue as they work. Chad is teasing. Bruiser is mad.

CHAD

They never let the girls ride the rough stock. Only toothless swaybacks!

BRUISER

You are so lame.

CHAD

I'm just an "ole fashioned boy". In the kitchen girls are fine. On a horse? Geez, they don't know a saddle from a skillet.

Bruiser grabs a fence post laying on the ground, swings it like a club - aims for Chad's butt - he dodges too late. She whacks his knee. Chad falls to the ground grabbing his leg.

BRUISER

I know where you're butt is.

CHAD

You could've busted my leg.

BRUISER

Next time I'll bust your head.

CRAIG

Don't cripple him, Bruiser. We got too much corral to build.

BRUISER

Well, I can ride anything he can ride. Anything!

ROAR of trucks interrupts the scene. Three semi tractors with stock trailers arrive in a cloud of dust.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHAD

Here comes your chance to
prove it.

EXT. HORSE CORRALS - DAY

WILD MUSTANGS scramble down the ramp and into the corral. Tracker, Conway and Todd wrangle, drive and separate. Dust, noise, excitement. Lisa helping. Tracker gives her instructions. She nods with new determination.

Magnificent spectacle of horses and wranglers. Excited youngsters pick their favorites.

AD LIBS

That's mine! No way dude.

Look at that one.

I get the white one.

That guy will kick the crap outta ya.

ANGLE - BLUE ROAN

EXPLODES inside the trailer. The last of the Mustangs. Refuses to come out. Kicking, snorting, busting a hole in the side. Rivets everyone's attention. Tracker rides into trailer. Ropes the stallion and pulls him out. He rears and kicks and takes out a section of fence. Another rope from Joe and they stretch the horse between them. It's a perfect thirty foot throw that Tracker notices.

Youngsters scramble.

CHAD

Hey Bruiser, there's your horse.

EXT. MUSTANG CORRALS - DAY

The gathering. Youngsters are slung on trucks and fences. Wranglers are mounted and ready. The mustangs mill about in the corral. The Blue Roan has been isolated in a separate pen. Snorts. Kicks. Wants out. Garrett watching.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARRETT

These are your horses. You'll get your pick according to your number. Choose well.

Tracker passes his hat with numbers on bits of papers. Each takes one and reacts. Bruiser draws number 3.

AD LIBS

I'm first. Yes! 29? No way. Yahoo. Etc.

CHAD

There's one for you, Bruiser.

A sorry old sway back on her last legs.

BRUISER

I got third pick lame brain, and that's the one I want.

A sorrel stud horse, prancing, and throwing his head.

GARRETT

Starting today you and your horse are the same person. You'll feed them, take care of them, saddle break and train them... and you'll do it on your own time!

Groans and AD Libs sweep the greenhorns.

CONWAY

You can sleep in the barn if it helps.

GARRETT

But when you ride out that gate on a horse you broke and trained, your community service is over.

A CHEER goes up.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

And if you stay and work a little harder for one year... the horse is yours to keep. I'll sign the papers over to you.

Lisa strokes General with deep affection. We suddenly understand her connection with this horse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGLE - TRACKER

holds his hat out for Jason. Jason does not take a number.

TRACKER

Making a choice's usually a whole
lot better than taking what's left.

Jason walks away.

SERIES OF CUTS- YOUNGSTERS PICK THEIR HORSES

Youngsters point to the Mustang of their choice. Tracker and Wranglers, with the help of Lisa and "old timers", rope, catch and halter horses. Some are docile. Some are spirited. Some require Wrangler's help. Joe is in the middle of everything, but he always watches Tracker.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

That buckskin mare is ready to
foal. Cut her out.

Todd and Conway rope and separate the buckskin mare. [Same mare that foals later] Garrett looks on satisfied, but not feeling well.

Buster selects the oldest most broken down horse of the lot.

BUSTER

Give me that sorry sucker. I'll
ride him outta here tomorrow.

ANGLE - BRUISER

points to the sorrel stud. Todd mounted by the fence.

TODD

That's a stud darling. He's too
dangerous for you. How about that
little black mare there. She's a
honey.

BRUISER

I want that one!

INT.- HORSE BARN - DAY

Kids and/or Wranglers lead, drive or drag horses to the elaborate old turn-of-the-century horse barn with individual stalls and small yards for each horse. Joe helps Bruiser with

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

her spirited sorrel stud.

EXT. MUSTANG CORRALS - DAY

Jason digging a post hole. All alone. Anger, frustration.
Tracker enters.

TRACKER

Want to give me a hand with your
horse?

JASON

I didn't pick no horse.

TRACKER

Guess the horse picked you, then.
Last one left.

Jason's POV. The BLUE ROAN assaults the fence and bites at
Todd .

TRACKER (CONT'D)

No body wanted him. Ever choose up
sides for baseball and be the last
one picked? Bet he feels like
that. Come on, I'll give you a
hand.

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY

Tracker and Todd with Blue Roan on double ropes. Guides the
horse into a pen and closes the gate. Jason follows. Feels
the first glimmer of fascination with this animal. Resists
the feeling. Tracker writes JASON R. on a white card with a
black marker.

TRACKER

What you gonna call him?

JASON

Nothin!

TRACKER

Sorry name for a good lookin'
horse. Try again?

JASON

I ain't staying around here on my
own time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACKER

Well, that's up to you. Everything is. Course 'til you got that horse lickin' your hand and beggin' ya to ride 'em, you'll be digging a lot of holes. Now.. how about a name?

JASON

How about "Prisoner"? That's what he is. That's what we all are.

Tracker writes PRISONER under the name JASON and nails it to the gate. The Blue Roan thrashes in his stall. Outside: Storm coming in.

MOVING - Tracker points things out.

TRACKER

Water has to stay full, feed twice a day, hays there. You'll clean his pen every day.

Throws him a currycomb. Jason too surprised not to catch it.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

When he lets you use that on him you'll know you're getting close.

EXT. HORSE BARN - DAY (RAIN)

It is Raining. Buster parks his Harley and looks into the Horse Barn.

BUSTER'S POV - A voyeur quality to the image. Lisa alone, grooming General with a currycomb.

INT. TRACKER'S TRAILER - NIGHT (RAIN)

Tracker cleaning quarters. Finds dusty old upright piano under mound of clutter. Hits a key. Keeps working. Opens a cigar box bundle of old photos. Finds one of Mandy. Beyond, his eyes catch a half empty whiskey bottle. He picks up the bottle and looks at it

TRACKER

Not today...

He throws the bottle in a garbage can. We hear it break. He leans the photo against the lamp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGLE - PIANO

rag knocks dust and cobwebs away. Fingers touch the keys. It has been a long time. Tracker closes his eyes, plays. Improvised country blues drift into the desert night. Who would have thought?

EXT. WRANGLER BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

Joe leaning back in a wrought iron chair roping his foot. Listening.

EXT. RANCH OFFICE - NIGHT (RAIN)

Jason on the pay phone. Seen from outside, his gestures mirror his conversation. Music in the distance.

JASON

Yeah, don't come for me. I'm staying over. No, it's OK. Lot a kids do. There's something important I gotta take care of. Yeah, tomorrow. Ok, I know. OK!

Hangs up the phone.

INT. HORSE BARN - NIGHT (RAIN)

Lisa with General. She is startled by Buster who enters the stall behind her. Hair wet. Scary. Country blues in the distance.

BUSTER

Hey, how ya doin'?

LISA

I'm alright.

BUSTER

You staying here tonight?

LISA

(lying)

No.

BUSTER

I heard you always stay here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lisa eyes Buster warily. Ducks under General's belly putting the horse between them. Buster ducks under the horses neck.

BUSTER (CONT'D)
Want a joint?

He lights up. The horse reacts.

LISA
Don't strike fire in here. Are you
crazy?

She reaches out to extinguish the match. Buster grabs her around the waist and tries to kiss her. She tries to get away from his touch.

BUSTER
Come on. I know what you're like.

She ducks and spins away. He grabs her blouse. Rips it off the shoulder. She stumbles into the corner. He traps her, moves on her. She fights, but can't bring herself to touch him with the bare skin of her hands.

LISA
NO, don't, Oh God, please don't.
Please don't touch me.

She sags to her knees trembling.

BUSTER
Try me, you'll like me.

THUMP of Horse Barn door OS. Buster reacts. Slips out. Jason enters.

Lisa ,curled up into the fetal position, finds a rusty piece of barbed wire in the hay and begins tearing at her wrists.

Jason makes his way to Prisoner. Quietly, he unlatches and opens the gate. Eye to eye with Jason, the big horse trembles. There is a magic moment between them. Jason waves his hand. The Blue Roan leaps from the stall, dashes out of the barn and into the night.

WHINNNNEEEY! Scares Jason half to death. Startles us. It is General in a rage.

Jason goes to General's stall and sees Lisa inside. Opens the gate. Shoos the horse out. Lost in her strange psychosis, Lisa tears at her torn and bloody wrists with barbed wire. Jason tries to stop her. She's repulsed by his touch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Outside. VAROOM of Buster's Harley starting up.

INT. TRACKER'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Tracker's playing interrupted by BANGING at the door.
It is Jason.

JASON

You gotta come, man! Some girl's
trying to kill herself!

Tracker and Jason run from the house. Joe follows.

INT. HORSE BARN - NIGHT

Tracker and Jason run to Lisa. Tracker drops to his knees,
stops Lisa and tries to take the wire away. It is a struggle.
Lisa recoils at his touch. The cuts on her wrists are ragged
and bleeding but not deep.

TRACKER

Let me have it. Give it to me.
Come on Lisa, you'll be OK.
(To Jason)
Hold her!

Jason is wide eyed and scared. He touches her arm. Lisa
shrieks and shrinks away.

JASON

I won't hurt you.

Moment of connection between Jason and Lisa. Stopped by VOICE
OS. "DON'T!" It is Bruiser.

BRUISER

Don't. Don't touch her, I'll do it.

Bruiser runs to them. She cradles Lisa in her arms and gently
takes the wire from her hand. Patting her. Comforting.

TRACKER

I'll call an ambulance.

BRUISER

No don't. And don't call her
father, either. I mean, she'll be
alright. I'll take care of her.
She's only scratched. Go on. She'll
be alright.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jason eyes Tracker. Tracker glances at Prisoner's empty stall but does not react. GULP. Tracker puts a hand on Jason's shoulder.

TRACKER

I got it figured. You just like making life as tough on yourself as it can be... you know, being "bad". But you just saved that girl's life. Think about that.

Jason stares straight ahead, still shaking.

EXT. BARN

Joe watches Buster's motorcycle disappear in the dark.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS RANCH - DAY

Garrett's car arrives. Styles, Chalet and The Suits are waiting. Exchange looks.

EXT. NEAR HORSE BARN - DAY

MOVING - Garrett, now in a wheel chair trying to get away. Styles and entourage following.

STYLES

I'm not asking! I am telling you that Mr. Chalet will come and go as he pleases. You will provide open access to every thing that's going on and to anyone whom he requests.

GARRETT

Siccing your dog on us?

STYLES

Mr. Chalet is a court appointed probation officer for seven of your juvenile criminals, including Jason Rodale.

GARRETT

Ah, so it's more like an "official spy"

STYLES

The legislature is working to shut you down by summer's end.

(Suits nod agreement)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STYLES (CONT'D)

Meanwhile, since you're unwilling to monitor these hoodlums, we will!

GARRETT

You speak English, Mr. Chalet?

CHALET

Look, Mr. Garrett...Judge. I'm just trying to do my job like everybody else. I am sure we can work together, cooperate and...

Garrett whirls around in his chair.

GARRETT

No! I don't think we can! Just because you are too blind, or too ignorant, to understand that your programs are failing does not make me willing to cooperate. You can do what the law allows, but I warn you that....

STYLES

Are you threatening us?

GARRETT

Yes, Ms. Styles. You better be squeaky clean with the law. Just over step a little bit and it won't be for twenty four hours! That's just my way of saying goodbye.

He wheels away.

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY

TRACKER

You gotta finish here in ten minutes. Work starts at nine.

Rough Riders feed, water, and fuss over their new horses. They are picking names, hanging signs, "personalizing" their stalls. Conway, Todd, and Joe help with spirited horses.

ANGLE ON- CHALET

in suit with clip board enters the Horse Barn at the far end. He tries to be inconspicuous. That's impossible. Tracker strolls past the stalls. Interacts with youngsters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE ON hand painted sign on the ground. Jason "Prisoner".

Tracker picks it up. Sees the empty stall. Jason is inside sitting on a box. Long awkward silence.

TRACKER

Why?

JASON

He didn't want to be here.

Lisa passes with General. Her wrists are bandaged. She pauses and listens in. Bruiser is with her.

TRACKER

Never get out the gate without that horse, son.

JASON

He's gone.

TRACKER

Better get him back.

JASON

I can't get him.

TRACKER

Not sitting there.

Lisa is interested and amused by dialogue. She eavesdrops.

JASON

But he's gone!

TRACKER

Won't go far. We got his mares.

JASON

But I don't know how. I mean I can't, I...

TRACKER

Pays sometimes to think about the consequences before ya up and do something stupid.

Tracker throws him a lariat. Loop end goes around his neck. Tracker sticks the sign back on the gate. Then, turning back, puts his old Stetson on Jason's head. Jason jerks it off and holds it in his hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chalet passes Lisa. Stares at her wrist. He bumps into Tracker.

CHALET

Oh! Sorry! I was just... I'm Bruce Chalet, with the, uh, State Juvenile Corrections Department and...

Tracker pushes past.

CHALET (CONT'D)

You look familiar to me.

TRACKER

Easy mistake. All cowboys look the same.

Chalet studies him as he walks away. Dawning of recognition?

EXT. DESERT MOUNTAINS - NEAR RANCH - DAY

Jason with lariat over his shoulder. Surveys the landscape. Endless desert, rocks, arroyos and Superstition Mountains.

SERIES OF SHOTS - JASON SEARCH FOR PRISONER - DAY

Each shot is designed to visually exploit the magnificent landscape. Each SHOT of Jason's search is in a different location. He never sees the Blue Roan.

-- Sun hot.

-- Jason puts the Stetson on.

-- Heat waves rising.

-- No water.

-- Falls. Cuts knees and hands.

-- Encounters a rattlesnake. He runs.

-- Finds hoof prints at a water hole.

-- Last light. Staggering into Rough Riders.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS - LATE AFTERNOON

Jason, exhausted, parched, and tempered, returns. Mom is

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

waiting.

INT. MOM'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

EMILY

I waited over an hour! You think
I've got nothing better to do?
Where were you? I asked around.
Did you ditch out?

Jason sags, so weary of his life.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Damn it Jason, if you screw this up
for me I swear I'll...

JASON

For you? If I screw it up for you!
This isn't about you!

EMILY

You know what I mean.

JASON

Would you like to know what I did
all day? Would you like to know
about this (shows bloody leg). Do
you care one bit about my life?

EMILY

You don't appreciate me at all! I
have no life because of you and
that's the thanks I get.. I...
(Catches herself)
What did happened to your leg?

Jason looks at her a long moment.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I would like to know what you did
all day. Really.

EXT. CAR

Jason doesn't quite trust her. He puts the Stetson on and
Stares out the window. The car pulls away

Tracker steps from behind a bush and muses over mother and
son.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS - DAY

Jason digging post holes. Lisa rides up on General. Lays on the big horse's neck, loving him.

LISA
I know where he is.

JASON
Huh?

LISA
Your horse.

JASON
It's not "my" horse.

LISA
General knows.

JASON
Where?

LISA
I can show you.

JASON
Is your a... you know, your "arm"
OK?

She turns and rides away. Jason picks up his pack, hat and lariat and follows.

The event is not unobserved. Tracker sees it. Buster watches. Chalet steps from the shadow checks his watch and makes a note.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Lisa rides. Jason walks.

ASSORTED ANGLES

Spectacular locations. Different than the day before. Lisa trotting. Jason almost jogging to stay up.

JASON (CONT'D)
Whoa. I gotta stop for a second.

He plops down. Lisa turns back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON (CONT'D)
How about riding double?

LISA
General won't.

They consider each other. Lisa rides on.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE VALLEY OF MUSTANGS - DAY

Lisa rides General down steep embankment. Jason follows, slipping, sliding. Out of breath.

Lisa stops and points down into a narrow red rock ravine.

LISA (CONT'D)
He'll come to the water.

Jason crawls to the edge and looks down. Small box canyon with green grass and a spring.

Jason looks back. Lisa is gone. She and General crest the escarpment and ride away.

EXT. VALLEY OF MUSTANGS - DAY

Jason climbs downward among massive red boulders. He waits on a ledge above the spring. Time passes. Shadows move.

The Blue Roan appears. Jason tense and excited. He creeps along the rocky ledge. Stallion edgy below. Boy loosens the loop. Thinks about it. Wraps one end of the rope around his waist.

Insects sing. Mosquitoes buzz and bite. Jason waits. The Stallion leaves, then returns, and finally walks below the ledge. Jason plants his feet and drops the loop. It lands across the horses face. The stallion bolts and whirls. The noose settles around his neck. The Blue Roan rockets away.

SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY

Jason FLIES from the ledge. He lands in boggy ground at the water's edge and bounces along behind the fleeing horse. He rolls as the rope unwinds and pulls away. He is left in the bottom of the wash; scraped, grated, rasped and bruised, and rolled in mud and dust.

The Blue Roan shakes the rope. He stomps back and glares at

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

the boy. They are eye to eye once again. The Stallion charges; teeth bared, nostrils flared, straight at Jason!

Jason scrambles up the rocks for his life. The Blue roan slings his head. Laughing maybe?

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS - NIGHT

MOVING - Garrett with Tracker, Conway and Todd .

GARRETT

You'd better go find him.

TRACKER

Might do him good to figure it out on his own..

CONWAY

Could be in trouble.

TRACKER

You can grow some from that kind of trouble.

GARRETT

What if he's hurt?

TRACKER

You can grow from that, too. But, like ya said, Judge, I better go find him.

Tracker turns. Joe is standing there with two saddled horses. Hands the reins of one to Tracker.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

(Irritated)

Are you a shadow, or what?

JOE

Yup.

Tracker steps into the saddle. Chalet intrudes unexpectedly.

CHALET

I heard one of your juveniles is lost. Sent into the desert "without supervision".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARRETT

Most of the Rough Riders are lost
Mr. Chalet, one way or the other...
that's why we're here.

CHALET

That man is so familiar to me. What
is his job exactly?

GARRETT

Tracker? Ah... Doctor Tracker? He's
our a... Social psychologist,
brilliant really. Psychologist.

The Judge offers him a "drink".

CONWAY

Ever drink lemonade while you're on
duty, Bruce ?

Chalet grimaces and leaves.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS CORRAL - NIGHT

Jason appears. Tired and thrashed, but strangely exhilarated.
The Stetson is missing. Tracker and Joe ride up to him.

TRACKER

Looks like you found him.

JASON

I can't catch him. No way.

TRACKER

You lost my hat!

JASON

He almost killed me.

TRACKER

Shouldn't of let him go.

JASON

Did my mom come?

TRACKER

Told her you'd be sleeping here.

Jason studies Tracker's face, unsure of himself here. Joe
rides away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON

I can't get him back. It's impossible.

TRACKER

"Impossible" is only impossible if we think it's impossible.

JASON

Well I don't "think" it's impossible, I "know" it's impossible to catch that horse by myself!

TRACKER

Didn't say you had to do it by yourself. Just said you had to do it!

JASON

You guys will help me?

TRACKER

Only if you ask.

JASON

You said it's "my" problem.

TRACKER

It is, but you can't get through life alone. (Beat) No shame in needing help, Jason... shame is not knowing when to ask for it. Ever read the good book?

JASON

The Bible? No.

TRACKER

Saying in there somewhere about; "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.".

JASON

You talking about me or the horse?

TRACKER

Maybe you. Maybe the horse. Could be I'm just talking about me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON
I know where he is.

Tracker pulls the saddle and heads for the tack room. Jason wonders, then GETS IT!

JASON (CONT'D)
Will you help me catch him? Please!
Will you "please" help me!

Tracker keeps walking. Smiling. Stops on "please"

TRACKER
Take more than two of us. Find
anybody else to help you. I'll ride
along.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS -- WORK PROJECTS - NEXT DAY

Rough Riders building corral. Fixing Fence. Working on the Pole barn. Jason talks as they work. Tracker looks on from time to time as:

SERIES OF CUTS - JASON RECRUITING HIS TEAM

-- JASON TALKS TO CRAIG - Craig nods yes

-- JASON TALKS TO CHAD - Chad pantomimes the right way to throw a rope. His way of saying yes.

-- JASON TALKS TO Conway - Nods yes.

-- JASON TALKS TO BRUISER - Shakes his hand and says yes.

-- JASON TALKS TO BUSTER - Buster bullies him a bit. Says no.

-- JASON TALKS TO Joe - The Answer is sure

-- JASON TALKS TO OTHER ROUGH RIDERS - Some no. Mostly yes.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS CORRAL

Lisa with General riding in.

JASON
Where you been?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LISA
Riding.

JASON
How come they let you do your horse
during work hours?

LISA
I finished my hours.

JASON
You can leave? Why do you hang out
here?

Lisa hugs General as if she didn't hear the question.

LISA
Did your horse come to the water?

JASON
Yeah, and then tried to kill me!

LISA
Did you talk to him?

JASON
Talk to him?

LISA
He needs to know what you want.

She hugs General and whispers in his ear. Jason pats General.

JASON
I want him to let me ride him out
of here.

LISA
He needs to know how you feel.

JASON
You want to help me catch him?

LISA
OK.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

MOVING - DUST, NOISE and excitement. The Rough Riders go
after Jason's horse. There are 6 riders, two pick up trucks
and a barking dog. Tracker, Conway, the wranglers, Craig and

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lisa ride. Jason and his "helpers" are in the back of a pick up. Todd drives a stake bed pick up and trailer to bring the Blue Roan home.

SERIES OF SHOTS - ACTION. CUTS

Locations feature beauty of the desert and mountain landscape.

-- LOCATING THE HORSE. TRACKER POINTS OUT TRACKS TO JASON.

-- TRACKER GIVES ASSIGNMENTS WITH ARM MOTIONS TO ROUGH RIDERS ON HORSEBACK AND ON FOOT.

-- TRACKER'S PLAN TO CATCH HIM IN THE SALT RIVER.

-- BLUE ROAN NOT EASY TO TRICK NOR EASY TO CATCH.

-- HARD RIDING.

-- CLOSE CALLS. AT LAST THEY TRAP THE HORSE IN BELLY DEEP WATER.

-- TRACKER HANDS JASON THE ROPE. HE THROWS AND THEY PULL THE HORSE DOWN WHILE TRACKER PUTS ON A HALTER.

-- JASON RETRIEVES THE HAT HE LOST THE FIRST TIME.

-- ROUGH RIDERS URGE THE BLUE ROAN STALLION INTO THE TRAILER.

-- SUN GOES DOWN. EXHAUSTED KIDS AROUND A FIRE AT ROUGH RIDERS. PRISONER IN HIS PEN.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jason eating in kitchen. Emily comes in. Dialogue takes place as Emily works at rearranging some furniture in the small living room.

EMILY

How did you get home?

JASON

Tracker brought me.

EMILY

I don't like you staying overnight.

JASON

It's just easier sometimes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY

Are you up to no good?

Jason shakes his head and takes a bite of sandwich. Emily pokes her head in the kitchen to add emphasis to her question.

EMILY (CONT'D)

What do you do out there at night?

JASON

Nothing.

EMILY

Don't say "nothing". You do something!

JASON

We like, have these horses to take care of.

EMILY

Horses?

JASON

Yeah, they're mostly wild but...

EMILY

I rode when I was little.

JASON

You did?

EMILY

I never had a horse, but my friend had horses. Oh yeah, we used to ride all the time.

JASON

You ever talk to a horse?

EMILY

You mean like "Gitty-up" and "Whoa"?

Emily tries to move the couch. It's very heavy. Jason moves to help her. He grabs one end of the couch. Emily surprised. They move the couch.

JASON

You want help, all you gotta do is ask.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He sounds for all the world like a miniature Tracker.

JASON (CONT'D)
Any chance you can get me there
early tomorrow?

Emily stares, too stunned to say anything. She nods.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS - DAWN

Jason alone. Walks into Horse Barn.

INT. HORSE BARN - DAWN

Feeds and waters the Blue Roan. Buster rides his motorcycle into the barn. Horses go crazy.

BUSTER
You seen Lisa around?

JASON
Turn that thing off!

BUSTER
So who's going to make me?

He revs the engine louder. Horses panic, kick stalls, jerk tethers.

WHIRLING SOUND.

A rope settles over Buster and in one snap he is jerked from his bike. He lands in pungent slime of the horse barn floor.

The Harley tips over with a crunch; sputters and dies. Joe holds the other end of the rope. Buster comes off the floor, ready to fight.

JOE
I'm gonna make you! I see that bike
in here again, it's going to
disappear.

Buster pulls the rope off and gives Jason the evil eye. Buster lifts his bike. It's heavy. No offer of help from Joe.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS/CORRAL - DAY

WHOMP! Bruiser's sorrel stud hits the fence. Conway has a

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

rope round front legs. Joe heels him and pulls him down. Both dismount. Todd snubs his back legs off to a post.

Bruiser is the first of a small group of Rough Riders who gather to watch. Chad joins her.

CHAD

What they doing to your horse.

BRUISER

I don't know, they said he needed a minor "surgery" or something.

Chalet arrives in his car. Gets out and walks to the fence. Conway holds the animal down. Todd prepares a curious instrument.

The Wranglers are castrating the horse! The horse is not in favor. It kicks, bites, struggles. Before it's over Conway and Todd are battered and bruised.

CHAD

They're castrating him.

BRUISER

What?

CHAD

They're cutting his balls off so you can ride him. (Laughs)

Bruiser dives into the arena. Chalet watches from the shadows.

TODD

Stay back! Don't let him kick you!

BRUISER

What are you doing?

JOE

Just calming him down a bit, darling.

BRUISER

You can't do that! I want him wild.

TODD

Just turning down his batteries a little is all.

BRUISER

I can ride him the way he is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TODD

Too dangerous. Not just for you,
darling. Risky for anybody. It's
against the law to ride a stud with
other horses.

ANGLE - BRUISER

reacts as the operation is completed.

CHAD

Give him a lobotomy while you're at
it. Make him perfect for a girl.

ANGLE - CHALET

dials the pay phone outside the office.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS -- ARENA -- SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY

Conway and Todd help youngsters with horses. Tracker and
Garrett looking on. Tracker looks toward the Horse Barn.

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY

Jason, weary from work, opens gate and enters the pen with
halter. Prisoner retreats then charges. Jason tumbles
backward lashing out with the halter rope in involuntary self
defense.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS -- NEW CORRAL - DAY

Jason working with others on the pole barn. Buster bumps him
on purpose. The aggression does not escape Tracker who is
working beside them. Garrett arrives in his Bronco with
MacDonalds hamburgers and drinks for everybody.

GARRETT

Anybody hungry?

A whoop goes up.

ANGLE - JASON

by himself to one side. Lisa appears and kneels down beside
him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LISA
Want to see something?

JASON
What?

LISA
I'm not going to tell.

ANGLE - BUSTER'S

POV as Jason follows Lisa. His jealousy shows.

INT. MARE'S BARN - DAY

One of the old ranch buildings. Shafts of dusty light. Lisa enters. Jason follows.

POV - NEW FOAL

Minutes old. Tries to stand. It's a blue roan. Teeters, falls, gets up again and suckles mother. Magic moment. Jason and Lisa smile at each other.

LISA
I wonder how many horses were born
today in the whole world?

JASON
A bunch I bet.

LISA
But this is the only one we care
about.

JASON
It's the only one we know about.

LISA
What if it dies?

JASON
It's not gonna die!

LISA
How do you know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON

Look. See? It found it's Mamma.

POV - THE FOAL -- Beginning to nurse.

LISA

I like horses more than people.

JASON

It's because you talk to horses
more than people.

It isn't funny to Lisa. She looks hurt. He takes her hand.
Wrists still bandaged.

JASON (CONT'D)

It's a joke. Sorry. It was dumb.

LISA

A horse never betrays you the way
that people do.

JASON

I like horses.

She looks at his hand touching her. Then pulls consciously
away, on purpose, but not reactively. Lisa leaves. He touches
the new colt.

MATCHED CUT TO:

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY

Jason contemplates the Blue Roan. It trembles.

JASON

I'm not going to talk to you, so
forget it.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS RANCH -- POLE BARN - DAY

Jason working. Sees Lisa. Exchange of looks.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - DAY

MOVING - SMALL GROUP of animal rights activists hurry to a
meeting. T-shirts tell us who they are.

INT. LT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

as activists enter. Styles, Chalet and The Suits have LT. GOVERNOR'S undivided attention.

STYLES

To highlight the report, Lt. Governor, may I point out that...

LT. GOVERNOR

The rumors that I can't read Ms. Styles are greatly exaggerated.

STYLES

Well, of course, but I thought...

LT. GOVERNOR

(To activists)

Come on up here.. right here by me.

A photographer snaps a picture. FLASH. The Lt. Governor is more interested in good press. He adjusts himself and poses for the camera.

LT. GOVERNOR (CONT'D)

How about a one minute summary?

STYLES

Mr. Chalet spent three weeks documenting events at the so called, "Rough Riders". In that time we have documented an Attempted suicide, a boy sent into the desert alone, violation of child labor laws, sanitation violations, 9 violations of OSHA regulations and several instances of serious animal abuse.

Activists mugging the camera with the Lt. Governor.

STYLES (CONT'D)

That's why I alerted both Friends of Animals and the SPCA. The methods of discipline are irrational. The programs experimental. No clinical basis at all. In short, not only are they coddling juvenile criminals, they are abusing the land, abusing

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STYLES (CONT'D)

animals, and I've saved the best for last. Mr. Chalet, please...

CHALET

The man identified by Garrett as chief "social psychologist" is in fact, an x-convict, from Arizona State Prison! He has absolutely no business with disordered juveniles. Personally sir, I think the man is dangerous.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS RANCH - ARENA - DAY

CLOSE ON Tracker. Laughing. Being liked by all. He puts a Snub line on Chad's horse. Todd clings to his neck. Conway throws a saddle aboard. The horse jumps. Chad is white. Garrett watches from his chair.

TRACKER

Can't train a horse until he's saddle broke. Lot of arguments 'bout the best way to do that. This is the way my grand daddy did it, so I figure it's good enough for me. Chad?

CHAD comes forward. Climbs aboard with Tracker's help. Todd lets go. The horse bucks. Chad sails with the first jump.

THUMP. He lands hard. CU SLO MO crash! Bruiser is there to help him up. Grinning.

BRUISER

Give you a hand, Chad?

CUT TO:

Bruiser's sorrel stud. Same preparations.

TODD

Why don't ya let one of us have a go at him first, Darling?

BRUISER

What? Do you like, think you see a dress on me or something?

Climbs aboard. Closes her eyes. Prays. Grips the rope and saddle horn with "all four hands" and nods. Todd lets the horse go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The horse leaps high. She stays in the saddle. A CHEER goes up. Then so does she. CRUNCH. CU SLO MO crash.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ROUGH RIDER takes a turn. Gets jolted and dumped to cheers and laughter.

CUT TO:

Buster climbs on a broken down nag. The ride is no problem. He flaunts his "superiority". Rough Riders boo and laugh.

CUT TO:

Craig's turn to try again. Todd holds the horse. Tracker gives him advice.

TRACKER

He comes up quick, stay back, don't
be getting on his neck this time.

Craig climbs aboard. Catches Lisa's eye. Grins, grabs an ear and whispers something to the horse, then winks. Lisa smiles. Jason sees this.

BOOM. Horse explodes. It jumps and spins and twists. It is a great ride. The horse settles down.

CRAIG

Open the gate!

Arena gate swings open. Craig rides out of the arena, around the yard, and out the main gate..

JASON'S - POV AND VISION

Images SLOW to dream like quality. In Jason's dream, it is him on the Blue Roan riding to freedom.

CHEERING. Back to reality.

TRACKER

Who's up for tomorrow?

THREE OR FOUR ROUGH RIDERS raise their hands. Yell the name of their horses.

MALE ROUGH RIDER 1

Steve Andrusolo on Dogmeat

FEMALE ROUGH RIDER 2

Patty Roman on Gingerbread

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jason raises his hand and steps forward.

JASON
Jason Rodale on Prisoner!

AD LIBS
No way. Not that horse. Jason's
dead meat!

TODD
We gotta get you a different horse
son. That Blue Roan too valuable
to be cutting the pepper out of
him.

JASON
He's my horse.

TODD
Well, we say that, but...

JASON
(quoting Tracker)
" and the number one rule is
honesty."

TRACKER
Horse is the boy's responsibility.
It's his call.

JASON
I'm riding him tomorrow... outta
here!

AD LIBS
Whoops and hollers. No way.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Emily's car headed home. Passes Burger King.

INT. EMILY'S CAR - NIGHT

Emily and Jason. Awkward silence.

EMILY
What happened today?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON
Nothing.

EMILY
Hungry?

JASON
Starved!

INT. HAMBURGER RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Hamburgers served to Emily and Jason.

EMILY
Want to see something funny?

JASON
What?

Emily pulls a small snapshot album from her purse.
CLOSE on TWO GRINNING GIRLS sitting on a horse.

EMILY
That's me.

JASON
So that's the "good old days" huh?

She whacks him with affection (for a change)

JASON (CONT'D)
No, that's cool. You ever ride
alone?

She turns the page. CLOSE ON EMILY AS CHILD on a horse.

JASON (CONT'D)
Ever get bucked off?

Emily smiles, remembering.

EMILY
Oh yeah.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS / TRACKER'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Tracker playing the old piano. Joe watches from under his hat
brim.

INT. HORSE BARN - NIGHT

Tracker rides his horse into the barn with a coiled rope in his hand.

EXT. HORSE BARN - NIGHT

Tracker rides out of the barn with the Blue Roan in tow.

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

Blue Roan snubbed to a post. Saddle put in place. Horse frightened. Tracker swings into the saddle.

SERIES OF CUTS - RIDING THE BLUE ROAN

MOVING ACTION - The horse explodes. Tracker rides. Gets bucked off. Lands hard. Gets up and rides again. Over and over he climbs back in the saddle.

INT. HORSE BARN - NIGHT

Tracker closes the gate and limps out of the barn. The sun is coming up. A rooster CROWS. Tracker heads for his trailer.

INT. TRACKER TRAILER - DAWN

He settles his beaten body into his bunk. Joe, from his soogan...

JOE

Sure the judge is payin' enough?

TRACKER

Shut up! I think I need a doctor...

KNOCK at the door. Incredulous! At this hour! KNOCK. Painfully to the door. Opens it. It is Jason.

JASON

I need your help.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOVING - Tracker exits with a plate of breakfast. Jason is "riding" the barrel, a 50 gallon steel drum hung on inner tubes, mounted with a saddle. Tracker jerks the rope and the drum "bucks" and "jumps". Jason hangs on. Tracker shakes it harder until Jason is thrown. THUD into the dirt.

TRACKER

Never a horse that couldn't be rode. Never a cowboy couldn't be thrown. It's mostly right here. (Taps head) Balance. Forty percent of your weight in the stirrups, sixty on your butt and keep your mind in the middle.

CUT TO:

ANGLE - SERIES OF CUTS - BARREL

-- TRACKER SHOWS HIM HOW TO SIT THE SADDLE. THUMP!

-- HOW TO HOLD THE ROPE. THUMP!

CUT TO:

ANGLE - TRACKER AND JASON EATING BREAKFAST.

TRACKER

A hurt horse knows two things, fight or flight! If you don't hurt him, he doesn't need either one of 'em. You got to understand what the horse is feeling at any given time. He has a language, and he's talkin' all the time. The way his ears move, the way he moves his body, everything he does is a message for you.

CUT TO:

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY

Tracker shoeing horses. He stands and holds his fist like a boxer.

TRACKER

Put your hand over my fist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jason does. Tracker throws a punch. It merely pushes Jason backward.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

When you walk around behind a horse, keep your hand on him so he knows where you are. The closer you are, the less power he'll have in a kick. It'll still hurt, mind you, but you stand a better chance of walkin' away.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

Preliminary hearing in session. Attorney droning on. Features Garrett distracted. In pain.

ATTORNEY

.. so it is impossible to assume that the defendant was even in the automobile that collided with the armored vehicle, and certainly nothing we've heard today would justify conjecture that...

GARRETT

With apologies counselor, I'm afraid I've taken ill. Court is adjourned until 9:00 tomorrow.

Bailiff helps Garrett to chambers.

INT. CHAMBERS - DAY

Bailiff hands Judge Garrett a glass of water.

GARRETT

Just need to lie down for a few moments. I'll be fine. Thanks.

Bailiff exits. RITA appears at the other door.

RITA

Is there anything you need Judge Garrett?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARRETT

If I doze off, wake me so I get to
Rough Riders by five.. I don't want
to miss... (drifts off)

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS -- ARENA - DAY

CRASH. The Blue Roan is snubbed to a post. Saddle tightened.
Jason, stone faced and determined.

ANGLE - MAIN GATE

Rita arrives in Garrett's car.

ANGLE - ARENA

CLOSE ON Jason. Everyone unusually helpful. Lisa watches with
unusual interest. So does Buster.

TODD

Tracker tell you it's mostly in
your head?

Jason confirms with a nod. Looks at Tracker. Grinning.

CONWAY

Well, it ain't'! It's mostly
hangin' on for dear life!

TRACKER

If you start to go, jump clear.

Jason swings onto the stallion. Too fast. The horse bolts.
Jason falls between the horse and post. The horse panics.
Jason scrambles under trampling hooves. Tracker's hand comes
down. He grabs it.

Tracker pulls him out by one arm. Jason's head is bleeding.
His face streaked in dust. Conway tries to calm him down. He
jerks away. Frustrated, angry.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

Why don't you do this later, son?

JASON

Cause I want to get out of here..
even if it kills me!

He jumps onto the saddle and grips the rope and horn. The

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

horse bolts. Todd is knocked down.

Images become SLOW MOTION.

It is terrifying. Jason clings like a man possessed. He is thrown on the neck, falls back, thrown high, crunched on the saddle. He is tossed sideways and clobbered by the horses thrashing head.

He floats up and away. Carried in a slow motion dream. Then CRUNCH! The hard reality of earth.

The Stallion stops. Muses over his fallen master as if to say, "Hey, what're you doing down there?"

As Tracker moves in the roan takes a defensive posture over Jason. Tracker backs away. The horse lowers his head. Nuzzles Jason's hair, then slowly backs to the rail.

TRACKER
(Muttering)

I'll be...

He carries Jason out of the corral.

INT. BUNK HOUSE -- DAY

Jason semi-conscious on a bunk. Stripped to his pants. Clothes thrown over a chair. Joe plays paramedic. Bruiser helps. Tracker and Rita are at the window conversing in low tones.

Jason stirs.

JOE
You OK?

JASON
I think so.

TRACKER
You did well.. really pretty amazing!

JASON
I lost your hat.

EXT. ARENA - DAY

CLOSE ON Tracker's hat thrashed and stomped in the dust. Lisa's hand retrieves it, shapes it, cleans it. Looks up.

ANGLE - MAIN GATE

Two black cars enter.

EXT. BUNK HOUSE -- BARN - DAY

Conway pokes his head in the door.

CONWAY

Better come out here. He Ok?

TRACKER

He's tough.

Jason loves hearing that.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS OFFICE - DAY

Tracker, Todd and Rita cross to Styles. A small group of Rough Riders gather and follow asking about Jason.

AD LIBS

Is he Ok? Will he be alright etc.

TRACKER

He'll be OK.

They reach Styles and company.

STYLES

Where's Garrett?

TRACKER

Is this a social visit, Mrs. Styles?

STYLES

Are you presuming to be in charge?

TRACKER

We kind of all work together here.

STYLES

We know who you are!

Turning to small group gathered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STYLES (CONT'D)

Do they know who you are?

TRACKER

Perhaps we should arrange a time when Judge Garrett and you could...

STYLES

You haven't told them! Your "Mr. Tracker's" real name is Jacob Trenk. At the moment, in violation of his parole from Arizona State Penitentiary.

Tracker turns and walks away.

STYLES (CONT'D)

We know what's going on here. We'd like to take statements ...

Everybody follows Tracker. Tracker turns back. Face hard with anger.

TRACKER

Get your records straight! I'm not on parole! I served my time...every damned minute of it.

CRAIG

He told us he'd been in prison the first day he got here!

Tracker walks away. Styles slaps her clipboard. Frustrated again.

INT. BUNK HOUSE -- DAY

Lisa enters. Joe is gone.

LISA

Is he OK?

BRUISER

Got a hard head.

Jason half sits. Lisa goes to him.

BRUISER (CONT'D)

Be right back, okay?

Lisa nods, sits on the bunk. Gives him the hat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LISA
I brought your hat.

JASON
Thanks.

LISA
There's a better way to break your horse.

JASON
With a gun maybe.

LISA
I thought you were dead!

JASON
Me to.

LISA
Do you ever wish you were?

JASON
Dead?

LISA
Uh, huh.

Jason laughs.

LISA (CONT'D)
You're making fun of me.

Jason touches her bandaged wrist.

JASON
No, I'm not... honest. I have
before... thought about being dead.

Jason digs in his pants pulls the misfired bullet. Shows it to Lisa. She takes it.

JASON (CONT'D)
Ya see that?

ECU dented bullet. Lisa's face.

JASON (CONT'D)
That's the difference between
living and dying! My whole life is
right there, in that little tiny
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON (CONT'D)
dent the pin made. It didn't fire.

He groans and moves and touches his battered head.

JASON (CONT'D)
Come that close to getting killed
again and living gets real
important.

CLOSE ON Lisa as she slips her arm away and hands the bullet to Jason.

JASON (CONT'D)
You keep it.

She looks at the bullet.

LISA
Things can happen in life that are
even worse than dying.

JASON
No more dying, OK? You gotta help
me with Prisoner.

EXT. DESERT - DUSK

Tracker and Judge riding. The sun is going down.

TRACKER
You better find somebody else.

GARRETT
There is no one better. I believe
that! I'm taking my last horseback
ride with you. Can you imagine what
will happen to these kids if Styles
gets her way?

TRACKER
She seems pretty determined to stir
up trouble over my being in prison.

GARRETT
But she misses the whole point.
There's not a "real" social
psychologist in the whole world
who can talk about the reasons to
stay out of prison like you can. If
you want something really screwed
up right, call in an expert!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACKER

I may be a little more willing to
kick butt and knock heads.

GARRETT

Never give in to these People.
These youngster's lives are too
important. I won't be here long. I
need to know you'll at least try!
Promise me!

Tracker's visage is noncommittal for a long beat. Then, an almost imperceptible nod.

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY

Lisa gives Jason a sack of apples. She puts one on a post. Prisoner eats. Jason gets closer and closer until Prisoner takes one from his hand. Tracker looks on with a weary eye.

TRACKER

There's a difference between
feeding a mustang by hand and a
domestic horse. He'll come to
expect that apple. You walk up with
your hand out to touch him and
don't have it, he might take your
arm off. Remember one thing. Ten
percent of your horse's brain stays
wild! You never know when, or how,
it's going to show up.

SERIES OF CUTS - BREAKING OF THE STALLION

-- JASON - FIRST TOUCH. PUTTING ON THE HALTER AND ROPE.
TRACKER SHOWS HIM HOW.

-- GETTING PRISONER ACCUSTOMED TO THE WEIGHT OF THE SADDLE.

-- TAKING THE BIT. TRACKER AND JASON.

-- RUNNING ON LUNGE LINE. TRACKER AND JASON

-- JASON ALONE WITH THE STALLION.

-- JASON SLEEPING IN THE STALL BESIDE THE STALLION.

-- JASON "SNEAKING" AN APPLE TO PRISONER.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Tracker and Jason with Prisoner in the SALT RIVER. Jason in the saddle. Lisa watches. The water inhibits violence.

Prisoner thrashes, but Jason can stay in the saddle. Tracker yells instructions. Before the stallion is exhausted, Jason slips off.

ANGLE - BLUE ROAN

gets an apple from Lisa.

TRACKER

You're going to make a liar out of me yet.

Lisa doesn't understand.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

Training horses with apples.

LISA

Didn't you ever give your kids treats? To make them be good.

Tracker taken aback.

TRACKER

I gave them treats *after* they were good. As a reward.

LISA

You have kids?

TRACKER

I did...once...

He turns quickly. Walks away without finishing.

INT. HORSE BARN - NIGHT

Jason pats The Blue Roan. Strokes him with the currycomb. Slowly slips it under his belly. The leg twitches. The hide trembles, but he allows it.

EXT. ROUGH RIDER'S ARENA - DAY

Tracker holds the saddled and bridled sorrel stud. Bruiser

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

stands nervously beside him.

TRACKER

Get on him. Sit down easy in the saddle. Don't plop down like a sack of potatoes.

Bruiser's foot in the stirrup. She swings lightly and settles.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

I don't care what's going on in your head right now, but I want you to relax from the waist down. Just sit!

Bruiser with deep breath. Tries to relax. Tracker urges the horse to take a step. Talking softly. The horse gives a step. Then another. Tracker continues until the horse is following him around the corral.

Bruiser suddenly realizes she's riding. A fearful smile. They walk easily around the rail. Several turns, then... Bruiser looks down. Sees that Tracker isn't holding the horse at all.

She's really riding all by herself!

Tracker steps a little further away from the horse and stops. The stud continues walking around. Tracker moves to the center of the arena and watches Bruiser.

Her face is ecstatic.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

Gently pull back on the reigns and ask him to stop by saying, whoa.

Bruiser complies. The stud shakes his head. Continues to walk. Bruiser looks at Tracker. A little frightened.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

It's all right. Let him walk a little more and do it again. Keep asking him until he responds. Don't get nervous...relax from your waist down. He can feel every move you make through the saddle and reins.

Another revolution. Bruiser lifts the reins again and whispers so low WE can't hear. The stud stops and stands. It's a big accomplishment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bruiser wants to shout triumph but controls it. Tracker with a rare smile.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

Fine...that's fine. Now urge him to take a step and walk again. Move the reins up his neck and urge him with your heels. Don't kick him! Just touch him.

Bruiser obeys. The stud steps sideways, confused. She tries again. He starts moving around the corral again. Tracker goes to the rail and climbs through.

Bruiser glances fearfully. Her security blanket is gone.

BRUISER

What do I do now?

TRACKER

Stay calm and practice what you just taught him. He learns by repetition. In about twenty minutes you can put him up. Today we taught him "whoa and go". Tomorrow we'll teach him right and left. We practice them every day until his response is instant.

ANGLE - ENTRANCE

Emily arrives early and parks her car. WE notice that her hair is fixed nicely and she has makeup on. She makes her way to the arena. Tracker greets her with a nod. She watches from the rail. Jason hasn't seen her.

Bruiser and Joe lead the sorrel from the corral.

ANGLE - ARENA

Lisa rides into the corral on General. A saddled Prisoner follows on a lead line dallied off to her saddle horn. He's nervous and crowds General to get closer. Muscles flex. Beautiful coat shimmers in the bright sun. He defines the image of "wild" that we all carry in our minds eye.

Lisa gives an excellent display of horsemanship as she handles both horses at the same time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACKER

Jason, get in here.

Jason sweating a little too much. Crawls through the rails.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

Lisa, give us a little slack.
 Jason, Lisa is gonna pull
 Prisoner's head as close as she can
 to the saddle horn when you get on.
 If Prisoner can't get his head down
 he can't buck, you understand?
 He'll jump when you swing up, but
 there isn't much he can do. General
 can hold him. You sit as quiet in
 the saddle as you can until he gets
 used to you being there. When he
 settles, she'll start leading you
 around.

Lisa grins at Jason. Thoroughly enjoying this.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

This is where you find out who your
 friends are. I sure hope Lisa likes
 you! If she lets him go...well,
 I'll dial "9-1" right now and the
 other "1" when you hit the ground.

Lisa's face is red. Not from the sun. Jason's face is white.
 From the crawly things in his stomach.

CRAIG

(From the rail)

Jason, if you have any romantic
 feelings for Lisa, now's a good
 time to mention 'em!

HOOTS and HOLLERS from the spectators. NOW Jason's face is
 red.

TRACKER

Go ahead. Get on.

Jason steps to the stirrup. Misses the first attempt. Makes
 it on the second and swings up.

Lisa draws the lead rope tight, pulling Prisoner's head
 close. The action distracts him long enough for Jason to find
 the offside stirrup. He settles in the seat, instinctively
 gripping the saddle horn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Prisoner pulls back. The lead rope stops him. He tries to drop his head to buck but can't.

Prisoner crowds close to General, using Lisa's horse as his security blanket. As Lisa urges General to walk around the corral, Prisoner makes one or two protests against the weight on his back, then settles into a choppy, half-cooperative walk.

Tracker spots Emily and smiles encouragingly at her. She smiles back. Their eyes linger on each other. Tracker forces his gaze back to the drama in the corral.

Slowly, Prisoner begins to relax.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

Now give him a little more slack,
Lisa. Don't let him drop his head
too far and be ready to suck him up
again if he takes the bit in his
teeth. Jason, loosen the reins and
let him have a little more head.

As they comply, Prisoner relaxes more. In a moment he's walking around the corral beside General with no notice of the rider on his back.

Lisa gives him more lead rope. Jason starts to relax more in the saddle.

BAM!

It happens so fast neither Lisa or Jason have time to react. Prisoner launches himself into the air. Sends Jason flying into a heap in front of his mother. The lead rope snaps taught, then flies from Lisa's hand.

Tracker trying hard not to laugh. Spectators excited and yelling. Emily concerned.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

Never want to relax too much with a
mustang. Remember that ten percent
that's wild and always there? You
just saw it! Lisa, catch him up and
start again.

Tracker pulls Jason to his feet.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

You may not believe it, but you did
a great job.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACKER (CONT'D)

I don't think I could have stayed
with him when he made that jump.
You're learning to ride! Game for
another try?

Jason smacks dirt from his jeans. Fire in his eyes. Lisa captures Prisoner.

JASON

I'll ride him or...or...

Tracker slaps him on the shoulder. Shoves him back toward the horses and climbs through the rail beside Emily. They watch as Jason gets back on Prisoner.

TRACKER

You may not think so right now, but
if we don't let go he's gonna be
all right!

EMILY

If the horse doesn't kill him!

TRACKER

No. What I'm talkin' about doesn't
have anything to do with the horse.

She looks at his face, closer, penetrating, understanding... with renewed interest.

ANGLE ON

Buster climbing up on the top rail. Jealousy shows in his face. It's growing, becoming unbearable. FEATURE a rock in his hand.

As the two riders pass, he slings the rock into Prisoner's flank. Prisoner slams into General. Both horses go down. Lisa rolls free. Jason is pinned between the animals. They struggle frantically to regain their feet.

Tracker vaults the fence. Jason pulls free and rolls away from the horses. He grabs Lisa and pulls her toward the rail away from the horses as they regain their feet.

Buster thinks it's funny. Whoops and hollers. Tracker grabs Buster and jerks him from the rail to the ground. Buster hits mad and humiliated. Scrambles to his feet.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

You got no brains? You might have
killed that girl!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tracker shakes him hard. Checks his anger. Throws him into the fence. Walks away. Buster picks up a board and SMACKS him across the back. Tracker goes down. Buster swings again, Tracker dodges. From nowhere Jason plows into Buster.

SERIES OF CUTS - THE FIGHT

Buster recovers and hits him in the face. Jason bounces back. The Fight stumbles into water troughs, manure piles, building supplies, and horse pens. Jason is SO mad, his anger so focused, he eventually turns the fight around. It's more wrestling match than fight.

Buster tries to crawl away. Tracker drags Buster over his knee. Joe hands Tracker the board Buster hit him with. He smiles with anticipation.

TRACKER

Only problem with you son, is you never had a spanking.

Tracker is too strong. Holds him down and SMACK!

BUSTER

What, are you crazy!

TRACKER

Apologize!

BUSTER

It's over man!

SMACK! - With the make-shift paddle

BUSTER (CONT'D)

You can't ...

SMACK! - With the make-shift paddle

BUSTER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry!

TRACKER

To her, not me!

BUSTER

Come on, Geez, I didn't mean nothing, I was just..

SMACK! - With the make-shift paddle

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Buster can't get up. He looks up. Lisa looms over him.

BUSTER (CONT'D)
Sorry I hit your horse.

SMACK! - With the make-shift paddle. Lisa's eyes are a bit glazed.

BUSTER (CONT'D)
Look, what do you want me to say?
I'm SORRY!

Buster humiliated. The Rough Riders just stare at him. He has violated an unspoken trust. Crossed an invisible line. Harmed a horse to vent his feelings. Tracker releases him. Buster runs away from the ridicule.

EXT. OLD GARRETT HOMESTEAD - DAY

A FORD BRONCO slides to stop.

INT. OLD GARRETT HOMESTEAD - DAY

Tracker and company enter. The bed is mussed, but empty. MRS. Garrett sits alone. She says nothing, only looks to the open door leading to the back patio. The Judge is sitting, back to the door, looking over desert valley below. His head is drooped.

MOVING with Tracker and friends, we circle the Judge and look into his face. He is dead! Conway turns away. Todd sits beside him as if sharing the view. Tracker looks on.

CLOSE ON writing pad on his lap. A pen still in his hand. Rita lifts the pad. Hands it to Tracker.

RITA
It's for you.

Tracker scans the page. Tears it off and folds it gently.

EXT. WRANGLER BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

Joe sits on his soogan roping his foot. Tracker enters. Goes to his bunk and sees a stack of white envelopes on the blanket. He picks them up.

TRACKER
What's this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
Somethin' for you.

Tracker reads the addresses on the front of the envelopes and grows stiffer with each one. His voice turns hoarse.

TRACKER
Where...did these come from?

Joe drops the piggin string and stands. His face is grim and hard.

JOE
I brought 'em for ya. Figured it was time you read 'em.

Tracker looks at Joe with hard, but fearful eyes.

TRACKER
Who the hell are you?!

JOE
I'm Joe... Joe Shipman. I am Lynn's Uncle. We never met because I was as stupid as you are when I was young. Got in so much trouble I had to change my name to get a job.

Tracker's legs go weak and he sags to his bunk. Horrible emotions cross his face. The envelopes fall from his hand and splay across the bunk. There is a long, deafening silence. Tracker's eyes close and his shoulders tremble. His voice is soft, almost inaudible when he speaks.

TRACKER
When they told me Lynn had brain cancer, I couldn't handle it. I stayed with her for a few days... I felt so helpless. There was nothing I could do... nothing anyone could do. I had to tell Mandy that her mother was dying. That she only had a month or so... before...

Joe goes to Tracker and stands beside him.

TRACKER (CONT'D)
I got drunk. Real drunk! I picked Mandy up at school. I was trying to tell her when... we crashed. She was dead before I could get to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

(Voice harsh.)

Why didn't you answer Lynn's letters? Was that too much trouble for you?

TRACKER

I know she wrote to me. Even during the trial! I could only guess how she hated me! I killed her daughter! I couldn't stand that... couldn't stand hearing what she must have thought of me. I sent them back unopened. Six months after I went to prison they stopped, and I knew she was gone.

JOE

I was the last of her family. I was there the night before she died. She gave me those returned letters and told me to give them too you. Told me, "Make sure Jake reads these. Make sure he understands how I feel. It'll help him." She died the next morning.

Tears are streaming down Joe's face. He kneels beside Tracker and places his hands on his shoulders. Shakes him hard.

JOE (CONT'D)

You read those letters. Every damned one of them! She knew what you were going through, Jake. She loved you... right up to the end! I waited for you to get out. I came here to put you in the ground. But I've seen something. There are fifty-two kids here. That's fifty-two chances for you to make things right.

He shoves Tracker back and stomps out. Tracker watches him leave. Sits up and slowly opens an envelope.

EXT. FUNERAL - SMALL RURAL DESERT CEMETERY - DAY

Rough Riders are gathered. Conway, Todd, and the other wranglers.

Mrs. GARRETT places a horseshoe on the casket. Tracker steps

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

forward.

TRACKER

It may be a little peculiar for somebody other than a preacher to say something at a funeral, but Judge Garrett was a little peculiar.

Ripple of light laughter.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

When Theodore Roosevelt formed the original Rough Riders, he recruited "volunteers"; cowboys, miners, and college athletes. It's a fitting legacy for us to follow. Judge Garrett had his own way of "recruiting volunteers" and making something of their lives. Roosevelt got his face carved on a mountain. Judge Garrett is carved in our minds and hearts. I never thought that the man who sent me to prison could end up a friend of mine. He asked me to read this.

Tracker unfolds the note paper from Garrett's pad.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

For my wife and friends...
In life, I cherished you dear,
Francis. In death, I'll wait for
You.

FEATURE - Mrs. GARRETT, noble, strong and proud.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

To my children who have given me such joy. I tried to teach you correct principles, and you learned to govern yourselves.

FEATURE - The Garrett Children, RAYMOND and CAROLYN

TRACKER (CONT'D)

As I face death, my heart is with my family, but my soul is with Rough Riders. Whatever may be said of me, remember only this...
(beat)
I believe in you! You can be what you see in your dreams.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Funeral is over. People are leaving.

ANGLE - LISA

talking to her father.

STEP FATHER

I just want to take care of you,
sweetie. You need to come home.
This thing with horses will pass.
It's part of growing up, a kind of
teenage girl fantasy.

He strokes her hair. She shudders.

STEP FATHER (CONT'D)

I called the probation office. You
Finished your time long ago,
(firmly)
and I want you to stay home.

Buster glares from a distance. What ever his feelings for
Lisa before, they have turned to hatred.

INT. WRANGLER BUNKHOUSE - DAY

Tracker enters. Looks at the floor. Joe's soogan is gone.

INT. HORSE BARN - NIGHT

SOUND of a motorcycle stopping outside.

A DARK FIGURE slips into the barn. Horses stir. He opens
General's stall. CLOSE ON a knife flashing in the pale yellow
light.

INT. JASON'S CAR -- ROUGH RIDERS ENTRANCE - MORNING

A DARK STORM brewing. The wind is blowing. Dark clouds loom
on the horizon.

JASON

You could come here and ride
sometime if you wanted.

EMILY

I'd like that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON

OK.. Bye.

EMILY

Bye.

Jason kisses his Mom's cheek, then bails out of the car before she can react. As he runs away, her hand goes to the spot.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Oh, my...

Her eyes fill with tears.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS MORNING

Tracker's POV. A TAXI pulls up and stops. Lisa gets out and dashes to the Horse Barn.

EXT. HORSE BARN - DAY

Lisa, happy, excited, in a hurry. Passes Butch working on old station wagon. Revs engine. Backfires. BOOM!

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY

Lisa POV. General's stall is open. SOUNDS. Movement. MOVING with Lisa; faster and faster until. GASP! We see General! His rear tendons have been cut. He is alive. Trying to stand. Crippled in a thrashed matt of bloody straw.

Shock, and disbelief. She throws herself on his neck. Tries to help him. Sobbing, begging, delirious. Knowing there is no help for him.

INT. EQUIPMENT ROOM-OFFICE / HORSE BARN - DAY

CLOSE ON - Lisa removes a 30/30 carbine from an antler rack. Fumbles in drawer for shells.

INT. HORSE BARN/GENERAL'S STALL - DAY

Lisa holds the rifle to General's head. She is nearly comatose with shock. Her movements are short, like an automaton. BOOM!

EXT. HORSE BARN - DAY

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOOM! Engine backfires as Butch revs the engine.

INT. BARN - DAY

Lisa stares at General in stunned shock. The shot has been fired. The SOUND snaps her back to reality. New Resolve. She strides from the barn. Dark STORM brewing. WIND blows dust and hay.

EXT. BACK OF HORSE BARN - DAY (WIND)

Lisa leaps in the old Ranch Station wagon. Butch still under the hood. Stomps the accelerator. He is knocked clear. Smacks his head.

Station wagon slides around the barn. Hits a ditch. The hood closes. She crosses the main yard, out the gate and heads north.

Pulling off the main road, the old Wagon bounds across the creek and heads into the desert.

EXT. POLE BARN -- CONSTRUCTION - DAY (WIND)

Jason and Chad working. Jason sees Station Wagon careen through Creek and bounce away into cactus.

EXT. ROUGH RIDER'S RANCH -- OFFICE - DAY (WIND)

Step Fathers big car slams to a stop in front of the office. DEPUTY GALLAS follows in a Sheriff's Department 4-wheel Bronco. Tracker steps out to meet them. Bruiser by office door.

STEP FATHER

Where is she?

TRACKER

Where should she be?

STEP FATHER

I want her back, right now!

TRACKER

Bruiser! Tell Lisa her father is here.

STEP FATHER

You don't tell her anything. Just get her here!

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY (WIND)

Bruiser bounces in.

BRUISER
Lisa? Lisa!

POV from General's stall. Bruiser enters frame. Horrified
Stunned. Appalled.

EXT. HORSE BARN - DAY (WIND)

TRACKER POV - Bruiser appears with all the calm she can
muster.

BRUISER
Can I talk to you a moment?

Tracker holds the others in place with a look and strides to
the barn. Step Father starts after Tracker. A LOOK from
Tracker stops him in his tracks.

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY (wind)

Tracker enters. Bruiser falls into his arms and loses
Control.

TRACKER
What happened? Are you alright?

Bruiser points to the stall.

ANGLE - TRACKER

discovers the dead horse. Looks at the slashed tendons and
gunshot wound.

TRACKER
Aww, no!

Bruiser enters.

TRACKER (CONT'D)
Why did she do this?

BRUISER
You think SHE did this? She loved
this horse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tracker's face admits his quick conclusion. Jason arrives moments later.

TRACKER
Go get her father!

BRUISER
No! Don't you know anything! He's the one that makes her crazy! If she did this, it's his fault.

Tracker takes Bruiser by the shoulders. She pulls away.

TRACKER
Come on. We'll sort it out. We've got to tell her father.

BRUISER
(deliberate -- sobbing)
Don't you see what he's done? How he's... She's terrified of him... of any man!

Tracker and Jason stunned. Sudden realization.

BRUISER (CONT'D)
That's why she wants to kill herself. He's as bad as Buster. Her life's a nightmare!

EXT. DESERT - DAY (WIND & DUST)

The station wagon racing on a desert track. Lisa transfixed behind the wheel. She looks at the 30/30 on the seat beside her.

EXT. ROUGH RIDER'S RANCH -- OFFICE - DAY

Tracker, Step Father and Deputy GALLAS.

TRACKER
I'm not sure where she is.

STEP FATHER
You better know where she is!. So help me if anything...

Tracker struggles to control his temper. Can't. Tracker grabs the startled man by his shirt and SLAMS him into the car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACKER

If anything what? If anything "bad" happens to her! You got no clue what happens to guys like you in the pen! When we find Lisa, we're gonna sort this out. I give you my word of honor that if the law doesn't take care of you... I will!

Deputy GALLAS pulls Tracker back. Out of earshot.

DEPUTY GALLAS

What is going on here?

TRACKER

Take a look in the barn, then go find Buster Kaufmann, he's one of our kids. When I get back with the girl, we'll... take care of some more business.

Tracker walks away. Deputy GALLAS goes into the office. Step Father stumbles into his car.

STEP FATHER

You haven't heard the end of it, not by a long shot!

Tracker turns and smiles at Step Father. It isn't pretty. A warning of impending doom.

TRACKER

You're right! It's not over! I don't think you're gonna like it when it is.

INT. STABLES - DAY (WIND)

Tracker saddling his horse. Loading gear. Tucking radio in saddle bag. Todd , Conway, Bruiser, Chad, Jason and Butch, his forehead still bloody.

TRACKER

Organize a search party. I'll be on channel 1. How long she been gone?

BUTCH

Not sure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON

Twenty minutes, maybe longer.

TRACKER

Which way?

JASON

Across the creek and out the old Dutchman road.

TODD

Into the Superstition mountains!

Tracker exits.

INT. EQUIPMENT ROOM-OFFICE / HORSE BARN - DAY (WIND)

Tracker reaches for the 30/30 carbine from the antler rack. Missing! Sees shells on floor. Moment of dread.

INT. STABLES - DAY (WIND)

Tracker swings into saddle.

TRACKER

We've got until dark.

TODD

Might already be too late.

Tracker nods. Kicks his horse into a lope.

INT. STATION WAGON - DESERT - DAY (WIND)

CLOSE ON carbine bouncing on the seat. Lisa's hand resting on the stock.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

The Station Wagon carves a snake in the desert dust.

INT. STATION WAGON - DESERT - DAY (FLEETING TRACE OF RAIN.)

First drops of RAIN on the dusty windshield. Streaked by the windshield wipers.

EXT. US NATIONAL FOREST SERVICE/ HELIPORT - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

A search and rescue helicopter lifts off the pad.

INT. USNFS HELICOPTER - DAY

RADIO

Severe storm front estimate arrival
at 1800 hundred. High winds,
gusting to 65 miles an hour, flash
flood warnings.

PILOT

Roger. Sounds grim!

RADIO

It is grim. Don't take any chances.

PILOT

She shouldn't be too hard to find.

RADIO

Juvenile authority just reported
the girl is armed and may be
dangerous to herself.

USNFS Helicopter lifts off and heads into a blackening sky.

EXT. DESERT TRACK/SUPERSTITION MOUNTAINS - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

Station wagon among strange rock formations. Steam billowing
from under hood. Wagon airborne on rutted road. Slams hard.
Tire blows. Lisa remains transfixed in her death wish.

EXT. DESERT TRACK - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

Tracker riding hard into the storm. Following the track.
Storm rising. Wind, serious RAIN begins.

EXT. DESERT SKY - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

USNFS Helicopter swooping low over the desert.

EXT. DESERT TRACK - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

The Station Wagon plows into the rugged country
"off-road". Careens over a bluff and noses into a dry wash.

CLOSE ON nose of car. First rivulet snakes around buried

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

bumper. Lisa's foot into frame as she abandons the car and heads into the desert mountains on foot. She takes the rifle.

EXT. SUPERSTITION MOUNTAINS - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

Lisa exhausted. Pushing into wind and rain. SOUND of helicopter. She ducks under a rocky ledge just out of sight. The chopper swoops low just over head and disappears.

BZZZZZZZZZZ! Startles her. Rattle snake coiled two feet away. She jerks back in terror. Scrambling, hands and knees. Runs, falls.

INT. USNFS HELICOPTER - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

PILOT

I got serious turbulence. No sign of the girl. Is a ground search underway?

RADIO

Nobody that crazy. Not in this storm. Getting too dark.

EXT. SUPERSTITION MOUNTAINS (WIND & RAIN)

Tracker soaked by storm. CLOSE ON radio. Cackles with static. No signal. Tracker stuffs it back into the saddle bag. Spots station wagon.

POV - Door is open. Rifle gone. Shells scattered across the seat and onto the ground.

CLOSE ON - Water rising on the bumper. Tracker splashes across the stream and follows well defined footprints in the wet desert.

INT. ROUGH RIDERS / HORSE BARN - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

Todd, Conway and Wranglers saddle up. Craig and a couple of the "veterans" ride with them. Bruiser as spokes-person for the younger Rough Riders pleads their case.

BRUISER

Let us go with you. We'll be alright.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TODD

That horse of yours's nowhere near ready.

Sorrel Stud nervous. The Blue Roan jumpy. LIGHTNING and THUNDER.

EXT. HORSE BARN - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

The Rough Riders have rallied to the crisis. They are gathered under eaves, in doorways, loft windows, or stand in the rain holding assorted covers over their heads. Todd, Conway and the Search Party lead their horses from the barn. Bruiser still protesting.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS -- ENTRANCE - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

A caravan of cars, trucks and vans enters main gate. Police, Trucks with goose neck horse trailers marked SPCA. 15 passenger vans marked: State Department of Juvenile Corrections. Local TV van and crew. Styles with Chalet and The Suits in her black G-car and the Governor's limo with state seal decal.

Styles exits her car, stares at Todd and the Search Team.

STYLES

Where's Tracker.. Mr. Trenk?

Todd and Conway exchange looks. Styles nods to her Suit One attorney. He steps forward and waves a fist full of paper.

SUIT ONE

This is a court order, authorizing us to take custody of all juveniles remanded to Rough Riders for Community Service. Please get your personal belongings and report to one of the green vans.

Wave of disbelief sweeps through the Rough Riders. Jason exchanges looks with Bruiser.

SUITE ONE

The SPCA has received instruction from BLM to retrieve any and all animals provided by them on the basis of abuse and mistreatment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TODD

We can argue about that later
Ma'am. Right now we've got a crisis
and...

STYLES

The Government has taken over the
search for the girl you've lost!

Step Father exits a patrol car. Sheriff Deputies take
intimidating stances.

SUIT ONE

The Sheriff's department is here
only to insure peaceful compliance.

ANGLE - LT. GOVERNOR

A pompous, but not altogether unpleasant man.

SUIT ONE

The Lt. Governor of the State is
here to evaluate the scope of these
problems. Don't let this get ugly.

INTER/CUT - SPCA trailers are backed, opened and prepared.
SPCA WRANGLERS go after horses. STERN MATRONS open doors to
passenger vans.

SPCA Wranglers use uniform halters to take possession of BLM
Mustangs. They begin with the ones in front of the barn.

Saddles and bridles are dropped to the ground.
Craig's horse taken from him. Awful moment. Todd and Conway
feel helpless.

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

Jason backs into the shadows of the Horse Barn. Passing
Bruiser, Chad and the young Rough Riders not allowed to go on
the search.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE SEARCH / PARALLEL ACTION (WIND & RAIN)

-- Lisa staggering onward.
-- Tracker following Lisa's trail, crosses Flash Flood Wash.
Passes landmark we recognize later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERIES OF CUTS - DESERT SEARCH (WIND & RAIN)

USNFS Helicopter navigates among rocky pinnacles. Buffeted by high winds. Hovers. Searching.

ANGLE - LISA

hiding from the eyes of the chopper above. So close the prop wash blast her with slashing rain and wet sand.

INT. HELICOPTER- DAY

PILOT

No sign of the girl. Storm is closing fast. We're coming in.

RADIO

Roger that.

The helicopter swings up and away.

ANGLE - TRACKER

follows tracks in the failing light.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS/MAIN YARD - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

Horses are put into trailers. Kids are put into vans. Tears are shed.

INT. HORSE BARN - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

Young Rough Riders scramble to saddle their horses. These are mustangs! It is tense. SPCA Wranglers move toward the barn. There is an immediate threat of discovery.

An SPCA Wrangler closes the back door to the barn. Young Rough Riders exchange anxious looks. Look to Jason.

ANGLE - JASON AND BLUE ROAN

Jason cinches the saddle in place.

JASON

We've never really "talked", and I don't know if you can really understand anything, but you gotta help me. You've gotta let me ride.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON (CONT'D)
Right here and right now!

He looks eye to eye with the Stallion. Puts his hand on the thick neck and whispers in his ear.

JASON (CONT'D)
(Whispers)
Right now!

Worry over-rides fear.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS - MAIN YARD - DAY (WIND & RAIN)

Deputy GALLAS arrives in his Bronco. He passes the caravan and stops in front. Wonders what is going on.

INSIDE - Buster is in custody. GALLAS snaps a cuff on Buster, hooking him to the cage. Steps out. Sees Step Father.

ANGLE - STEP FATHER

talking to the press. Local TV Cameras roll.

STEP FATHER
They screwed with her head. They didn't rehabilitate her, they made her dependent. She couldn't leave, and now they don't know where she is.

EXT. SUPERSTITION MOUNTAINS - DUSK (WIND & RAIN)

Lisa, lost and alone. Stumbling forward.

ANGLE - TRACKER

off his horse, kneeling, his eyes inches from the ground looking for Lisa's trail in gathering darkness.

ANGLE - LISA

Stumbles and falls. Wind. Rain. Misery. Drags herself into a pile of rocks. Grips the carbine. Numb. Opens the breach to chamber a shell. Cartridge gleams in the dark. It speaks to her. She opens her other fist.

CLOSE ON Jason's bullet. CLOSE ON Lisa's face. SOFT VOICE from the darkness.

TRACKER
Hello, Lisa.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lisa jumps, frightened, but too weak to run. Strains to see into the dark.

LISA
No! Go. Leave me alone.

Tracker hunkers down three feet from Lisa.

TRACKER
I can't.

Offers her a canteen.

TRACKER (CONT'D)
Thirsty?

Her tongue touches her dry lips. She takes it tentatively.

LISA
I'm not going back.

TRACKER
Your choice.

He walks to his horse. She is perplexed. He returns with a jacket. Hands it to her. Lisa looks at the carbine.

TRACKER (CONT'D)
Shootin' jackrabbits? That's a pretty big gun. Packs a wallop when it goes off. Kicks pretty hard, too.

LISA
I fired it.

She sobs.

TRACKER
I know. You did the right thing, Lisa. Nothing could have saved him. It was a hard, brave, thing to do.

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS / MAIN YARD - DAY

Styles is being interviewed on TV.

STYLES
.. what's more, these people have no idea how to rehabilitate disordered teenagers. The State is the one who must deal with juvenile
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Governor. Lt. Governor considers Buster attached to the cage.

EXT. DESERT MOUNTAINS - DUSK

Tracker and Lisa. Lisa has the coat over her shoulders.

TRACKER

Guy I knew in prison decided to kill himself.

Lisa shocked by Tracker's direct approach. Unconsciously touches her wrists.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

Couldn't talk him out of it. He figured it was his business. He was wrong. He had two kids. A woman that still cared for him.

LISA

Nobody cares about me!

TRACKER

I do. Bruiser does. There's Jason, Chad, Craig...pretty much everyone back at the ranch. Your step father...

LISA

I hate him!

TRACKER

Don't like him much myself. That's something we're going to take care of if you go back with me. What happens to you affects more people than you know. Question is, do you care enough about them to try one more time?

Lisa drawn inexorably by the tone of his voice. Reacts to Tracker's revelations.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE CHASE

Jason and the Rough Riders riding hard.

The Bronco in pursuit.

Jason leads them from the road.

Bronco follows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EXT. STATION WAGON WASH - DUSK

Rough Riders SPLASH across rising flood waters. Lisa Station Wagon now submerged to it's windows. Bronco plows thru the deep water. Apprehensions. Turns lights on.

TV Van follows the Bronco tracks and gets stuck. The crew scramble out and begin to push it out the other way.

INT. BRONCO - DUSK

Lt. Governor looks out the back window. POV - Stranded TV van and fading photo OP.

LT. GOVERNOR
Maybe we should let them go?

STEP FATHER
They're the only ones who knows where Lisa is. Why would she do this to me? Why.. I've given her everything!

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE CHASE

Rough Riders riding. Jason's Blue Roan Stallion floats ahead of the rest.

The bounding Bronco trying not destroy the under carriage completely.

EXT. DESERT MOUNTAIN - DUSK

Tracker and Lisa under a ledge. Tracker has a fire burning.

LISA
I don't want to go back. Leave me alone and let me die.

TRACKER
Could be I came here to save myself.

Lisa looks at Tracker's face. Drawn out of herself. He curls up beside her. She looks at him.

LISA
What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACKER

I lost my girl. My wife, too. It was my fault. Couldn't bear the thought of losing you, too.

Her expression searches for meaning.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

She was about your age. I had no idea how much she meant to me, until.... I was a pretty poor excuse for a husband and father.

LISA

What happened?

TRACKER

Car wreck. I was drunk. She... uh, she was killed... I killed her.

Lisa stunned by the pain in this tough man. She reaches out. Roles reversed. Almost touches him. Can't quite.

TRACKER (CONT'D)

There's so much life ahead for you. Don't throw it away. There's always hope. Death steals hope.

LISA

What if I convince you?

TRACKER

I'll stay with you until it's over.

LISA

You would really do that?

TRACKER

If I fail you, like I failed my wife and daughter...won't be any reason for me to go back either.

Lisa studies his face. Sees truth in his eyes. Stares into the sand. Struggles with the contradictions in her feelings. Looks at him again, tears streaming.

LISA

You can't do that!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACKER

Then... let's go home. If you
don't... who's going to raise that
new baby colt?

He stands and offers his hand. CLOSE ON Lisa's face over Tracker's massive hand. Slowly she takes it. She touches him and he lifts her up.

He picks her up in his arms. Unafraid, she puts her arms around his neck. He embraces her with the warm platonic hug she has missed so much of her life. CLOSE ON: rifle slips from her hand, clatters unnoticed to the ground.

SERIES OF CUTS - THE CHASE

-- ROUGH RIDERS ENTER THE REALMS OF PECULIAR ROCK FORMATIONS--

-- BRONCO FOLLOWS.

-- ROUGH RIDERS GO UP STEEP EMBANKMENT.

-- BRONCO TAKES THE LONG WAY AROUND.

EXT. SUPERSTITION MOUNTAINS - DUSK

Tracker and Lisa riding double through the storm.

EXT. FLASH FLOOD WASH - DUSK

Rushing FLOOD WATERS. Rough Riders pause at the edge. Look back. Lights bounding toward them. Jason turns the horse. He plunges into the water. The others follow. Serious water. They make it.

POV - FROM INSIDE BRONCO

Bouncing spot light illuminates Rough Riders scrambling up the opposite bank.

Bronco SPLASHES into FLOOD WATER. Half way across the engine Sputters and fails.

ANGLE - UPSTREAM

Flash flood with rocks and debris crashes downstream.

INT/EXT. BRONCO

Occupants of the Bronco look up. Too late to abandon "ship". CRASH! The Wall of Water hits the Bronco, knocking it on it's side and washing it down stream.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGLE - ROUGH RIDERS--OTHER SIDE OF THE WASH - NIGHT

ROAR causes Jason to glance back..

JASON

Hold it!

They rein in. Look back. CRASH! The Wall of Water hits the Bronco. Knocked on its side. Washed down stream.

CHAD

Yahoo!

BRUISER

Shut up! They're in trouble.

CHAD

Forget 'em!

BRUISER

We gotta help them, Jason!

Jason debates. Then turns the Stallion back and rides down the slope.

INT. FLASH FLOOD WASH -- BRONCO - NIGHT

Lights underwater cast eerie glow to scene. Great panic. Every man for himself.

BUSTER

Unhook me man! Get these off!

SERIES OF CUTS - MOVING WITH ACTION - INTERCUT

Lt. Governor climbs out on top. Step Father is disoriented with a bump on the head.

Deputy GALLAS struggles to unlock Buster. In his desperate struggle to save himself, Step Father claws at GALLAS making it impossible to loosen Buster.

The Bronco SMASHES into a dead fall dam. The impact knocks GALLAS away. GALLAS drops the keys underwater. The flood rushes in.

Step Father is sucked through a window. GALLAS reaches for him. Gets a brief handful of jacket. RIP! GALLAS loses his grip and is sucked after Step Father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Buster screams for help. His cries lost in the ROAR of water.

GALLAS and Step Father swept along by the current. GALLAS trying to grab the panicked Step Father.

EXT. FLASH FLOOD WASH -- ON SHORE - NIGHT

SERIES OF CUTS - MOVING WITH ACTION - INTERCUT

Young Rough Riders not sure what to do. Jason throws a rope to LT. GOVERNOR. No idea who it is. It takes two tries. Bronco breaks loose, floats away and begins to sink. Lt. Governor jerked into water by the rope.

Jason dragged to water's edge. Bruiser, Chad and others scramble to help.

Bruiser wraps the end around her saddle horn. Rides the Sorrel Stallion upstream. Rough Riders on the rope fall away.

Lt. Governor suddenly surfing up stream. Dragged ashore, coughing, sputtering, disbelieving.

Rough Riders fall on their butts in relief.

LT. GOVERNOR
(coughing - choking)
There's a kid still in the car..
hand cuffed, hooked inside!

INT. FLASH FLOOD WASH -- BRONCO - NIGHT

Buster chained inside. Water rising. Close to nose and mouth. Bronco floating away. River rushes through windows. Buster goes under water.

SERIES OF CUTS

Jason and Bruiser ride after the Bronco.

The Bronco hangs up on a rock and teeters there.

Jason ties one end of the rope - same as saved Lt. Governor-- around his waist. He gives the other end to the Rough Riders and leaps into the water upstream of the Bronco. He swims hard. Swept downstream. Snags the bumper.

UNDERWATER - CLOSE ON Buster's fingers. Straining to reach the submerged keys. Just short.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gasps for breath. Buster's almost held under by cuffs. Gulps air, goes under again.

Jason makes it inside. Jerks Buster's head above water. Jason is face to face with Buster. Crazy moment.

BUSTER

The key man, get the key!

Long beat. Disconcerting irony. Jason dives for the keys.

UNDERWATER - Jason's face. Eerie light from car. Outstretched fingers groping. Finds the keys.

Jason emerges. Gasping. Fumbles with the lock. Jerking Buster's head above water.

UNDERWATER - Lock hard to open. Fumbling. Drops keys. Catches them again.

EXT. FLASH FLOOD WASH - NIGHT

Rough Riders holding the rope. Log smashes into Bronco. Bronco knocked loose.

SERIES OF SHOTS - INTERCUT

Bronco tumbles, Jason and Buster both go under water.

UNDERWATER - Jason fumbling with lock. Out of time.

The Riders try to hold the rope. It burns their hands. They are dragged along the bank. Rope goes taut against saddle horn. Sorrel stud jerked sideways, turns and plants his feet.

CLOSE ON - Jason's hands, key and cuffs. SNAP. The cuffs pop open.

SLAM! The rope jerks Jason backward. He is wedged against the window. The breathe is squeezed out of him.

Rope strains, stretches. Buster cuts the rope with the KNIFE we recognise from the figure in the barn. The Bronco rushes away in the flood.

EXT. FLASH FLOOD WASH - NIGHT

Tracker arrives. Lisa is riding behind him. She has both arms around his waist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRUISER

Jason's in that car!

Tracker's assessment is swift. He swings Lisa down and rides hard after the Bronco.

SERIES OF CUTS - INTERCUT

A rope flies through the air and catches the spare wheel. JOE holds the other end. Joe wraps his end around a tree. The rope snaps tight. The Bronco stops.

Jason and Buster burst to the surface. Lungs exploding.

Coughing, choking, disoriented. They climb out the window and perch on the side of the precariously bobbing Bronco.

Tracker grabs the lead rope of the Blue Roan and plunges into the torrent. He swims his big mountain horse to the Bronco. The Stallion follows.

As the horses come close. Buster leaps for Tracker. Jason leaps for the Stallion.

Tracker turns his powerful horse to shore, coaxing, pleading, and riding like no man ever rode before.

The powerful animals fight the deep, swift current, and slowly struggle through the flood and back to shore.

EXT. FLASH FLOOD WASH - NIGHT

Tracker slips from his horse in exhaustion. He turns to find himself face to face with Joe. Joe holds out his hand.

JOE

I only shake hands with men I like.

They shake hands, but Joe turns before Tracker can say anything. He disappears into the stormy night and is gone.

Everybody hugs everybody. Jason hugs his horse. A soggy Deputy GALLAS comes slogging in. He has nothing to show for his efforts to save Step Father but a fragment of the drowned man's coat.

Lisa takes it. Stares with mixed emotions. Jason comes to her. There is a private moment between them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON

You OK?

LISA

I think I will be...soon.

She violently throws the remnant back into the raging water.

LISA (CONT'D)

Now! Now I can be better.

Jason helps her into the saddle and climbs up double behind. CLOSE ON his hands reaching around her. She gives him back his dented bullet. The touch lingers a moment.

Jason smiles, then slings it into the water with all his might.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FLASH FLOOD WASH / SUNRISE

Desert morning. Beautiful. Quiet. ENGINE WHINE prelude as USNFS helicopter erupts over hill. Flies low over Flash Flood Wash. Hovers over half submerged Sheriff's Bronco. Flood Waters subsided. Turns and flies away.

INT. COURT HOUSE - DAY

MOVING - COURIER through the hall. Into conference room marked CRIMINAL JUSTICE. Styles and others seated around a large table. Courier's note is passed along and given to the Presiding Bureaucrat. A bit peeved. Addressing Styles.

PRESIDING BUREAUCRAT

I'm only saying, you took great pains to get the Lt. Governor involved in this. I would simply like to hear his reactions before we implement your recommendations.

STYLES

Well.. the recommendations speak for themselves. I'm not certain the Lt. Governor could add anything substantive even if he were here, and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A door SLAMS.

LT. GOVERNOR
May I try, Ms. Styles?

Attention turns. GASP!

The Lt. Governor has not changed clothes since being rescued from the flood. Tracker is behind him. He tips his hat to Styles.

PRESIDING BUREAUCRAT
Uhh... would you like us to recess.
Give you a chance to uh, clean up a
little.

LT. GOVERNOR
Nope! The way I look is exhibit
"A" to reinforce what I'm about to
say.

STYLES
Sir, you...

LT. GOVERNOR
I greatly appreciate you getting me
involved Ms. Styles. I've learned
something about these delinquents
you've pigeon-holed in our juvenile
system. Last night they saved the
lives of three people, including
mine, at considerable risk to their
own. They didn't have to. They made
a conscious decision. Those weren't
the decisions of juvenile
delinquents.

You are right about one thing.
After talking to them individually,
I've learned those actions were a
direct result of the influence the
Rough Rider program and the Judge
had with them. How proud he must be
of them right now!

STYLES
But, Sir, you...

Styles is numb. Presiding Bureaucrat is amused. Others
enjoying the show.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LT. GOVERNOR

I'm suspicious Ms. Styles. If what I have heard is true, and I think it is, you have gone out of your way to insure that some of these kids never get out of the system! Be assured I'll check into every case under your control. All I can do is recommend some one to watch over this program the Judge created. I think I've found the man. I'd like to introduce you to Jacob "Tracker" Trenk, the new director of Rough Riders...

STYLES

If I may, Lt. Governor, Mr. Trenk...

TRACKER

Call me Tracker.

Laughter.

STYLES

Mr. Trenk is hardly an exemplary role model for...

LT. GOVERNOR

I'm well aware of his history. It doesn't change my mind. You fight fire with fire! And his results seem much better than yours. When Tracker talks to these kids about the horrors of prison and what got him there, they believe him because they hear the truth in his voice...see it in his eyes. All they hear from you Ms. Styles, is some one reciting from a book they were told to read to qualify for a job.

Jason, Lisa, Chad, Craig and the Young Rough Riders quietly enter the room. They are disheveled from the adventures of the night.

STYLES

They're all runaways!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LT. GOVERNOR

Are they? Are you sure you didn't drive them away? No matter! They're also the ones who saved my life! They stated their case far more eloquently than yours. I plan to see to it that they have the chance to say more. I hope you have gainful employment lined up. Now! If everyone would turn and look to the back of the room, I'd like you to meet for yourselves...the "Rough Riders"!

Laughter. Applause. Styles hangs her head. Defeated.

REPORTERS, others from the table rise and move toward the Rough Riders, smiling, shaking hands with them...accepting them.

CLOSE ON Lisa's fingers as she slips them into Jason's hand and takes Tracker by the arm.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS - DAY

A group of new recruits are gathered. In the B.G. Feature LISA with yearling colt that looks remarkably like General.

ANGLE BEHIND - THE COWBOY

MOVING - CAMERA slowly circles as The Cowboy gives them "what for".

THE COWBOY

I'm new. In some ways, I'll be learning same as you. We only have a couple a rules.

A TOUGH LOOKING kid lights up a cigarette. The Cowboy slaps the cigarette from the boy's mouth. REVEAL the cowboy is Jason! He pulls the pack from a pocket and crushes it in his hand.

JASON

Now you know the first one; "no smoking!" .

ANGLE ON JASON

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pulls Tracker's well worn Stetson down tight. In B.G. Tracker stands beside Emily, his arm around her waist, hers around his as they watch and smile.

FADE OUT