

Plunder

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HOME ANKONA, FLORIDA - 4:30 A.M. (AUGUST 1975)

A rundown, two-story clapboard house sits on a sandy, unkempt lot, in a residential neighborhood by the sea.

In the pre-dawn morning, the only sounds are those of crickets chirping and small waves breaking on the nearby shore, o.s. The house is dark.

INT. KUP DONAVAN'S BEDROOM

Trim, but sturdy, KUP DONOVAN, thirty-one, lies fast asleep on rumpled linens in a small, dreary bedroom.

KUP'S DREAM

Alone at sea in a small, wooden, open boat, on an overcast night, Kup's outboard motor dies. He grumbles, suddenly looks down.

BOAT FLOOR

Seawater seeps in between gaps in boards, along with golden, shimmering light emanating from far below.

BACK TO SCENE

Drawn to the mysterious light, Kup peels off his T-shirt, dons a mask and snorkel. The sea is volatile, white caps form and dissipate in quick succession, violently rocking the boat. Kup times his entry, plunges into black water.

UNDERWATER

Kup kicks hard, descends.

KUP'S POV

Shafts of golden light rise from an indeterminate depth.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup dives deeper, struggles in the turbulent water. Kicking furiously, his lean muscular body fights for every foot. Farther and farther he submerges, expelling a thin stream of precious air bubbles. Now far below the surface, the golden light dims. Kup pauses, regroups, senses his strained lungs and dark, ominous surroundings. Fearful, frustrated, he looks upward.

KUP'S FOOT

A grimy, deformed hand, emerges from the blackness, takes a tight grip on Kup's foot.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup panics, struggles to free his foot, loses a mouthful of air. Three hard tugs with his leg and he is finally free. Kup bolts to the surface, lungs scorching for that first breath.

SURFACE

Kup bursts through the churning ocean surface, rips off his mask, gasps. His sense of safety is ephemeral. Astonished, he looks in all directions.

KUP'S POV

There is no boat.

CUT TO:

INT. KUP'S BEDROOM - 4:40 A.M.

Awake, sweat-soaked, hyperventilating, Kup eyes the alarm clock.

CLOCK

4:40 A.M.

BACK TO SCENE

He rises to a seated position, draws knees close to his chin. Kup's breathing slows.

Faint dawn light enters the room's sole, unadorned, dirty window. Kup swings his legs over the side of the bed, cautiously stands.

KITCHEN - SECONDS LATER

Standing at the open, dated fridge, Kup, in shorts and a T-shirt, pulls out two cans of beer, the last two from a six-pack, still in their plastic rings. He puts an empty ring in his mouth, clamps down. Still perusing the fridge's contents, he grunts, slams the door shut, exits the kitchen through the nearby doorway, beers now in hand.

O.s., the sound of bare feet descending cellar steps.

BASEMENT

Kup pulls off a can of beer from the holder, as he enters the dingy basement, pops it open, takes a swig. He sets the remaining can on a battered wooden table, pulls the chain on the overhead single-bulb fixture, illuminates a primitive workshop.

From a drawer beneath the table, Kup pulls out a hand sledge hammer and a bag of metal discs, flings them onto the surface.

PLASTIC BAG

The bag contains irregular, half-dollar-size blanks of silvery base metal. He opens it, places five on the table.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup returns the bag to the drawer, takes a sip of beer. From a corner of the table, Kup picks up, inspects two metal dies. Satisfied with their appearance, he places a blank in one, sets the die in a vise. He picks up the second die, places it atop the first, secures the two together.

Kup picks up the hand sledge, rears back, strikes the top die without reservation. He throws down the sledge, separates the dies, ejects the homemade coin onto the table. Kup scrutinizes it for a second, blows on it, brings it close to his eye, rotates it.

COIN

The front and back of the coin resemble a worn, 18th-century Spanish treasure coin.

BACK TO SCENE

He rubs the coin between his thumb and index finger, thinks, sets it to one side, then repeats the process.

MINUTES LATER

Kup jingles finished coins in his hand, pauses, looks to one side.

OLD VACUUM CLEANER

Kup removes the ancient appliance's collection bag.

BACK TO SCENE

On the work table, Kup unzips the bag, extracts a handful of dust, picks up the coins, rubs the two together. He stops, carefully inspects one coin, takes a deep breath and a sip

of beer. Rays of morning sunlight enter the basement through a small window.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE SAND BEACH, ANKONA - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

SIGNPOST

The sign on the post indicates picnicking is permitted at this scenic spot. Only Kup is present at this early hour. He casually walks past the signpost, onto the beach, stops, sits on the warm sugar-like sand. Kup looks to either side.

KUP'S POCKET

From his shorts' pocket Kup gently removes three newly struck coins, pushes others back in. Between raised knees, he pushes the three into the sand, marks the spot with a snapped twig.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAME BEACH AREA - NOON

A young couple, DAVE and LAURA, in their late twenties, enjoy a picnic lunch on the spot where Kup hid the coins. It is a sunny day, with a light breeze.

NEARBY PARKING LOT

Kup, wearing dark sunglasses, looks in the couple's direction, waits. He looks at the license plate of the only car in the parking lot.

KUP'S POV

A New Jersey license plate.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup returns his gaze to the couple.

MINUTES LATER

Kup walks a few feet in front of the picnickers, stops, looks towards the picturesque surf, then turns, looks in the couple's direction, raises his glasses onto his forehead.

DAVE AND LAURA POV/KUP'S POV INTERCUTTING

KUP DONOVAN
Chamber of Commerce weather.

DAVE
Pardon?

Kup extends his arms, hands palm up, momentarily gazes upward.

KUP DONOVAN
It's like the Chamber of Commerce
ordered this weather -- good for
local business.

BACK TO SCENE

The couple look at each other. Kup comes a step closer.

KUP DONOVAN
Great spot to picnic. You folks
locals?

LAURA
No, out of state -- New Jersey.

Dave takes a bite of his sandwich, chews while speaking.

DAVE
Road trip. Heading to Miami. Not
in any big hurry, even if it is
late in the season.

KUP DONOVAN
Nice 'n easy, that's the way to
travel.

LAURA
Beautiful stretch of beach. You
live here?

Kup lowers his sunglasses, steps closer, nearly to the edge of the couple's blanket.

KUP DONOVAN
Not too far off. Ankona's a place
that's hard to beat. Not too
congested, scenic, even has a
little history to it- Holy crap!

Kup whips off the sunglasses, looks down, steps to the broken twig, a foot from the blanket, squats. The couple recoils, but is intrigued.

BROKEN TWIG

Kup's hand digs down, swishes, pulls out the coins.

BACK TO SCENE

KUP DONOVAN

Holy crap! I don't believe it!
This is the highest up on the beach
yet.

Kup jumps to his feet, hollers, jingles the coins. The couple, excited, rise to their feet. Dave takes a quick bite of his sandwich, tosses it down.

LAURA

What is it? What did you find?

Kup pumps his fist, stamps his foot.

DAVE

It sounded like coins! Is that
what you found -- coins?

Kup puts his closed hand under the couple's noses, springs it open, then immediately closes it.

KUP DONOVAN

You betch'a they're coins!
Treasure coins! And this high on
the beach -- I can't friggin'
believe it!

Dave clears his throat, calms down.

LAURA

Let me see them again, let me see!

Kup opens his hand, picks one coin, holds it by its top and bottom edges.

DAVE

You keep saying, "this high on the
beach." You mean other coins have
been found here?

KUP DONOVAN

Sure, not a lot, though -- mostly
lower down, near the water.

Kup points out to sea.

KUP DONOVAN

If we get a good storm, I mean a
real beauty, it churns the bottom.
It deposits debris from the wreck,
including coins.

LAURA

Can I hold one?

She extends her hand. Kup plunks a coin into her open palm. Laura swoons, turns to Dave, beams.

LAURA

I've never held treasure before!
This is so amazing!

DAVE

What wreck?

Dave inspects the coin in Laura's hand, touches it. Kup reaches, takes it back.

KUP DONOVAN

The Estrella Norte, she went down
about 1688. Nobody's confirmed
it's out there, but believe me,
it's out there. It's the big one.

LAURA

How big?

DAVE

Was it a pirate ship? How much was
she carrying?

Kup smirks, sniffs, scratches the back of his neck.

KUP DONOVAN

More than you could spend in a
lifetime, my friend -- a whole lot
more.

Laura turns petulant, kicks sand.

LAURA

Damn it, Dave! We were practically
sitting right on top of them!
Could have picked them up with my
butt cheeks, if I knew they were
there!

Dave puts his hand on Laura's shoulder, consoles.

DAVE

It's okay, Laura; we got a good
story out of it.

Kup presents the three coins, holds them close to the couple.

KUP DONOVAN

Listen, I, uh, live nearby and I
can always come back to look.
Plus, I've already got half a dozen
(MORE)

KUP DONOVAN (cont'd)
at home. If you'd like to buy
these, I'll be happy to sell them.

Dave and Laura, eager, look at each other, then Kup.

LAURA
That's very nice of you to offer,
but they must be worth a fortune.

KUP DONOVAN
Not these. If they were gold
escudos, then yeah, and believe me,
I wouldn't sell them for any price.
But these here are silver pieces of
eight. They're valuable, but not
like gold.

DAVE
So then, how much, for all three?

Kup looks up, chews the inside of his cheek, ponders.

KUP DONOVAN
Mmm, two hundred.

Dave takes out his wallet, fishes out the bills, hands them
to Kup, who hands Laura the coins.

LAURA
Unbelievable! I will never forget
this!

DAVE
Thanks so much, you really made our
day. What's your name?

Kup hesitates.

KUP DONOVAN
Mark. Mark Sloan.

Dave and Kup shake hands.

LAURA
I'm Laura and this is my husband,
Dave. Nice to have met you, Mark.
Thanks again.

KUP DONOVAN
Likewise, nice meeting both of you.
What line of work are you in, Dave?

Dave picks up his sandwich remnant, takes a final bite.

DAVE
Law enforcement.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAVE CREST LOUNGE & MOTEL - ONE HOUR LATER

The weathered establishment, with walls of peeling aqua paint, sits in a less-than-desirable part of Ankona. Two pick-up trucks and three dated sedans are parked in the large, sand-strewn, parking lot.

PARKING LOT

A panting, flea-infested, stray dog basks in the sun, next to a battered sign reading: well drinks \$2.00 all day, locals welcome.

INT. WAVE CREST LOUNGE

In the dark, modest-sized, paneled room, Kup stands at the chipped, red-lacquer-topped bar, drinks from a beer bottle.

BAR TOP IN FRONT OF KUP

Three empty beer bottles. A cockroach's antennae poke out of one. The bug escapes, crawls down the bottle.

BACK TO SCENE

A drunk COUPLE at one of the lounge's three booths laugh with few pauses. At the end of the bar, the aproned barkeep, BERT, speaks MOS with a BARFLY.

TV

The old, silent TV has a small, yellowish screen. A baseball game is on. Reception is poor; the picture fades in and out.

BACK TO SCENE

KUP DONOVAN

You ever gonna get this TV fixed,
Bert?

Bert pauses from his conversation, wipes his hands on his dirty apron, slaps the bar top.

BERT

I might, Mister Kup Donovan, if you ever paid your goddamn tab.

Kup smiles broadly.

KUP DONOVAN

Well, this is your lucky day, Bert. I am putting twenty dollars towards it.

Kup pulls a twenty from his shirt pocket, crumples it, deposits the bill on the bar. Bert approaches, smiles, displays rotten teeth, picks up the twenty.

O.s, the sound of the bar's front door opening and slamming shut.

BERT

Ladies and gentlemen, we are living in an age of miracles. Kup Donovan has put twenty American dollars towards his substantial bar tab. I can now die a happy man.

Bert straightens out the bill, sticks it in his shirt pocket.

KUP DONOVAN

You'll wish my bar tab was twice what it is, Bert, when I find the big one.

BERT

No need to be greedy, it's already more than the bar is worth.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

As long as you're payin' people, Kup, how about payin' me?

BAR ENTRANCE

Standing just inside the entrance, ED BLACKBURN, does nothing to conceal his anger. The stocky, bearded, six-foot-two man wastes no time, approaches Kup at the bar. Kup smirks, looks at the TV.

ED BLACKBURN

Saw your truck when I was driving by, Kup. I lent you five grand two years ago and I ain't seen one red cent yet!

Kup swigs his beer, sets down the bottle, glances at Ed.

KUP DONOVAN

That's the treasure hunting business, Ed. It ain't like picking oranges in one of your groves.

ED BLACKBURN

When you borrowed the money you said you'd be hauling up treasure in a matter of weeks.

KUP DONOVAN

The lead I was given turned out be a cold one. It happens. How about I buy you a beer to cry into?

ED BLACKBURN

How about I break your jaw?

Ed swings his beefy left fist at Kup's jaw. Too quick, Kup ducks, socks Blackburn in the gut with two rapid blows, one with each hand.

O.s, the couple in the booth keep laughing.

BARTENDER

BERT

You two take it outside. Don't want you turnin' the place into a mess.

BARFLY

The barfly looks around the dumpy place.

BARFLY

How could anyone tell?

BACK TO SCENE

Blackburn recovers, plows head first into Kup's chest. Kup recedes, raises both fists high above his head, brings them crashing down on the back of Blackburn's neck, knocking him to the floor.

FLOOR

Ed, momentarily stunned, recovers, grabs Kup's foot, twists it, stands, dropping Kup to the floor.

Blackburn, about to deliver a decisive blow, is tackled at the waist by a YOUNG MAN (VANCE DONOVAN) in his late teens.

Ed breaks the young man's grip, jams one of his hands into the edge of the bar. Vance cries out, grasps his injured hand. In the instant Blackburn pauses, Kup, back on his feet, spins Ed towards him, delivers a massive belt to the jaw, knocks him out cold.

KUP DONOVAN

Vance, how the hell did you know
where to find me?

Vance winces from the pain in his hand, shakes it.

VANCE DONOVAN

The boat's being repaired. Where
else would you be?

CUT TO:

INT. THE DONOVAN HOME - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

KITCHEN

Faded, light green cabinets bear greasy fingerprints. Cheap, sheer curtains adorn windows with peeling paint. Flickering fluorescent light illuminates the room.

A harsh, scraping sound is heard o.s.

FLOOR

An old, overweight WOMAN in a flowery cotton dress keels on a frayed, folded towel. It separates her swollen knees from the scratched, speckled linoleum floor. She doggedly scrapes off built-up floor wax with the edge of a long, rusty knife.

She breathes heavily, pauses, mops her brow with the back of her flabby forearm, brushes back long, stray gray hairs towards the bun on the top of her head.

Exhausted, the woman grabs the edge of a Formica counter, struggles to her feet, groans, jams fists into the small of her back.

PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES AND VIALS

Wrinkled hands fumble with one of many vials next to the sink.

BACK TO SCENE

She opens the vial, downs capsules with a handful of water taken from the faucet. The woman pauses, resumes her

position on the floor, scrapes.

O.s., the back door opens, shuts. Kup and Vance laugh, joke.

KUP DONOVAN (O.S.)
 You had to see 'em to believe 'em,
 Vance. I don't know how she
 managed to stay upright.

O.s., Vance laughs.

VANCE DONOVAN (O.S.)
 Sounds like a crock, Kup, but
 you're my brother, so I'll
 half-believe you -- maybe one was
 that big!

O.s., they both devilishly laugh harder.

The old woman will now be referred to as CONNIE. She pauses from her chore, looks up.

CONNIE'S POV

Connie sees Vance holding his injured hand. Kup, indifferent, stands, with arms folded.

BACK TO SCENE

KUP DONOVAN
 Havin' a productive day, Fat
 Connie? You keep scrapin' built-up
 wax off that floor, there ain't
 gonna be nothing left.

CONNIE
 Starting in again with 'Fat
 Connie,' Kup? A fine way to
 address your own mother. You must
 be stewed for a change. What's
 wrong with your hand, Vance?

Kup pulls a wad of mail from his back pocket, tosses it onto the kitchen table.

PILE OF MAIL

Kup's addition adds to the already considerable pile of unopened envelopes.

BACK TO SCENE

Connie stands, groans, waves-off help from Vance, blows stray hairs from her face.

CONNIE

MR. OAKLAND called, Vance. He wants to see you straight away.

Vance, disgusted, kicks a chair leg.

VANCE DONOVAN

I was supposed to meet Judy on her break.

CONNIE

Well, he sounded none-too-pleased on account of you missing last week's appointment. And for the second time, what happened to your hand? It looks awful.

KUP DONOVAN

He busted a knuckle. It's nothin'.

Vance opens the freezer, takes out a tray of ice, heads to the sink.

CONNIE

Fighting, no doubt, if you were around Kup. Drinking, too? Kup, your hands looked bruised, as well.

Connie grabs one of Kup's hands, inspects. He pulls it away. Vance places ice cubes in a towel, wraps it around his injury.

CONNIE

I've said it a hundred times, if I've said it once, Vance -- steer clear of your older brother. Learn a trade from Mr. Oakland, while you're still young and forget about treasure hunting. That's strictly for dreamers and fools.

KUP DONOVAN

Fat Connie, you'll be singin' a different tune when I bring in the big one.

Connie sits at the table, sips coffee, sets the cup down with force.

CONNIE

The big one! Your stories are big, and the only thing bigger than your stories are your debts.

Kup bangs the side of the fridge with his open hand.

KUP DONOVAN

Then why do you keep backing me?!

CONNIE

Because I'm afraid of where you'd end up if I didn't! And that's the only reason, my ungrateful son. And, speaking of backing you, it's now four months since you've made any payment at all on the thousands I've already lent.

Kup pulls a hundred-dollar bill from his pocket, slaps it on the table in front of Connie.

KUP DONOVAN

You happy now?!

Connie folds her arms, scowls, does not touch the money.

CONNIE

How did you ever come by a hundred-dollar bill?

Vance unwraps his hand, throws the towel into the sink.

VANCE DONOVAN

I'm outta here.

CONNIE

Make sure you head over and see Mr. Oakland first -- Judy can wait.

VANCE DONOVAN

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Vance exits.

CONNIE

You think of an explanation for the money?

Kup reaches for the bill, but Connie grabs it first.

CONNIE

I'm long past being able to pay for groceries with my good looks.

Kup makes a guttural sound of disgust.

KUP DONOVAN

I'm goin' upstairs and sleep this off.

CONNIE

It's what you do best.

CUT TO:

EXT. OAKLAND'S WELDING - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

A squat, red brick building with an adjoining fenced-in yard resides in the commercial district of Ankona. Partially blocking the business' sign are heaps of rusted, twisted metal.

INT. OFFICE

The dirty, disorganized office has shelves overflowing with technical manuals. An ancient, noisy, room air-conditioner rattles, blows full blast.

BEN OAKLAND

A short, chubby man in his mid-fifties, wearing tight, blue overalls, Ben Oakland, grimly listens to an irate customer on the phone. Sweat drips down from his nearly bald head. As he paces, he periodically adjusts thick, tinted, tortoise shell-framed eyeglasses.

BEN OAKLAND

It'll be there Tuesday, Phil. I swear it on my wife's grave, Tuesday -- not a day later.

He pauses, listens, shakes his head in exasperation. An elderly, female SECRETARY enters the office, motions to Oakland that someone is waiting to see him. Ben nods, points to the phone, rolls his eyes.

BEN OAKLAND

Yes, Phil... Yes. You heard me say Tuesday a second ago, didn't you? Write it down -- Tuesday. Later today, if you're still pissed off, look at what you wrote: Tuesday. That'll remind you that everything will be ready... Tuesday! Goodbye, Phil.

Oakland hangs up, takes a deep breath, puffs.

SECRETARY

Do you really think you can have everything ready for Phil by Tuesday?

Oakland bites his lower lip.

BEN OAKLAND

Not in a thousand years. So, who wants to see me?

SECRETARY

It's that kid, Vance... Whatever... Donovan. He's out on the shop floor.

Oakland exits the office.

SHOP FLOOR

Vance stands off to one side of the spacious shop floor, half of which consists of steel racks loaded with partially completed jobs. Sparks fly, as helmeted welders, at individual tables, work their trade.

VANCE'S POV

Stoic Mr. Oakland walks across the shop floor, approaches. Half way, he stops, inspects a welder's work, points out a mistake. Ben continues towards Vance, makes eye contact, weakly waves.

BACK TO SCENE

BEN OAKLAND

You were supposed to be here twenty minutes ago. I don't tolerate tardiness.

VANCE DONOVAN

Sorry, Mr. Oakland, I-

BEN OAKLAND

No excuses. You interested in doing more than occasionally sweeping up here, or not?

VANCE DONOVAN

I am. I want to learn how to weld.

BEN OAKLAND

Yeah, you and a hundred other kids your age I've heard that same line from. You didn't finish high school, right?

Vance looks askance.

VANCE DONOVAN

I had to quit, we were out of money. I've got no dad.

Oakland places a hand on Vance's shoulder, speaks quietly.

BEN OAKLAND

I know. Your dad was friends with my older brother. I know you've had it rough. He ran out on you and your family. That's why I'm willing to offer you an apprenticeship. It can lead to a lot of good jobs, Vance. Oil companies are hiring welders like crazy to work on rigs in the Gulf. It's hard, dangerous work, but great money, if you know the trade. And they don't hire screw-ups.

VANCE DONOVAN

Yeah, I've heard.

Oakland takes a step back.

BEN OAKLAND

You've got to commit one hundred percent.

Vance nods.

BEN OAKLAND

A nod isn't a commitment. You know damn well where I'm going with this, Vance. You gotta get out from under Kup's thumb. I looked up to my older brother, at one time -- and it was a huge mistake. Don't let it blind you, too. Leave treasure hunting to that douchebag, WES PENNINGTON, and his fat-assed partners. That's no profession for you to build your future on. You can start here next week.

VANCE DONOVAN

Thanks, Mr. Oakland. Thanks for looking out for me.

CUT TO:

EXT. MALKIN'S DRUG STORE - DAY THIRTY MINUTES LATER

The tidy and well-fenestrated drug store is surprisingly large for a small community. The eye-catching sign above the flat roof emphasizes its beginning in 1927 and its motto: Dedicated to Your Health.

INT. MALKIN'S DRUG STORE

At the sales counter of this well-stocked store stands JUDY PENOSKI, a clerk, of high school age. She wears a pink work smock bearing the store's logo and her first name. Judy is petite, has light brown hair tied back in a pony tail. A sour-faced middle-aged customer, MRS. BENYO, stands across the counter from her.

JUDY PENOSKI

Would you like a second pack of cigarettes, Mrs. Benyo? It's twenty cents off each pack, if you buy two?

Mrs. Benyo wrinkles her brow, pouts.

MRS. BENYO

Why do you promote cigarettes?, when the sign on the building says, "Dedicated to your health."

Judy blushes, has trouble finding the right words.

JUDY PENOSKI

I, I don't really know; it's just a sale. I was told to ask.

Mrs. Benyo sighs, displays annoyance.

MRS. BENYO

I'll take eight.

She pays, leaves. Vance approaches the counter, smiles.

VANCE DONOVAN

Hey, Judy.

Judy smiles, shows abundant braces.

JUDY PENOSKI

Hey, Vance. I'll be on break in about five minutes. I'll meet you outside, on the shady side of the building.

VANCE DONOVAN

Okay.

He smiles again, turns, exits.

SIDE OF BUILDING - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Judy exits the store from a side door, hands Vance one of two cans of soda she is holding. They open their respective

sodas, take sips, innocently smile.

JUDY PENOSKI

I thought you'd like something to drink. I got my employee discount on them.

VANCE DONOVAN

Thanks. I was almost late. I had to go see Mr. Oakland.

Judy perks up.

JUDY PENOSKI

Was it about a welding job?

Vance nervously brushes back his straight, black hair. He motions to Judy to stand closer to the building, to avoid passing PEDESTRIANS. Vance stands with his back against the wall, raises one knee, places the sneaker bottom against it.

VANCE DONOVAN

Yeah, we talked about that and other stuff.

JUDY PENOSKI

And?

Vance drinks soda, more out of discomfort than thirst.

VANCE DONOVAN

It's really an apprenticeship. It takes a few years. I wouldn't be paid much, either. The good money comes after that, once I get my certification and get hired full time, someplace.

Vance puts on the pair of sunglasses he removes from his shirt's breast pocket.

VANCE PENOSKI

How do you like these shades? Kup gave them to me.

Judy winces.

JUDY PENOSKI

They're okay, I guess. Yeah, they're nice, Vance. So, what's all this mean, y'know, for us? The things we've talked about.

VANCE DONOVAN

It might delay things a bit.

Judy steps closer.

JUDY PENOSKI

I'll still be graduating high school in under a year. And I'm still planning on secretarial school. That's only a two-year program. If it takes you an extra couple of years to get your welder's license, well, we could always live with my parents. They wouldn't mind, they've got plenty of room.

Vance looks down, momentarily, then away.

VANCE DONOVAN

Yep, I suppose that's so.

JUDY PENOSKI

You don't sound too enthusiastic about the welding job, not nearly as much as a week ago.

VANCE DONOVAN

It's just... I keep thinking.

He lowers his right leg, sets the soda can on the ground, becomes more animated.

VANCE DONOVAN

Welding, it's a big commitment. It's steady, but you spend the whole goddamned day... welding!

JUDY PENOSKI

That's the nature of work; it's repetitive. Being a clerk, being a secretary, being anything.

Judy takes another step towards Vance, put her arm around him, kisses him on the cheek.

CAR

A TEENAGER driving by notices the couple, shouts.

TEENAGER

Hey, Vance! Why don't you two get a room!

BACK TO SCENE

Judy and Vance momentarily giggle over the remark.

VANCE DONOVAN

It's just that there's no excitement. Welding? That's for
(MORE)

VANCE DONOVAN (cont'd)
guys who are forty, half way to
their graves.

JUDY PENOSKI
Do you feel that way about getting
married, too?

VANCE DONOVAN
No, that's different, Judy.

She moves away.

JUDY PENOSKI
So what you're really saying is you
want to work for Kup full time,
treasure hunting. Is that it?
What's that going to lead to?

Vance, angered, kick over the soda can.

VANCE DONOVAN
You, too?! First Mom, then Mr.
Oakland, now you.

JUDY PENOSKI
Yeah, well, there's reasons. How
long has he been at it? What's he
got to show for the years he's been
doing it? Vance, he's over thirty,
owes everyone money, including your
mom, and still sleeps in the same
room as when he was ten.

Vance paces.

VANCE DONOVAN
You don't get it, hardly anyone
does. Treasure hunting isn't like
other jobs. It gets in your blood.
The thought of striking it big,
finding that wreck, that treasure,
that no one else could find for
hundreds of years -- there's
nothing else like it! And the
money! Millions to be made off one
good find -- gold, silver, jewels.

Judy shakes her head. Vance comes closer.

VANCE DONOVAN
Welding is always going to be
there. I'm not committing to Kup
for the rest of my life. The
thought of getting old and
regretting not having given it a
decent try-

The side door opens, bangs against the wall. MR. MALKIN, sturdy, crew-cut and perturbed, steps outside, startles Judy and Vance.

MR. MALKIN

Judy Penoski, I am not paying you \$2.15 per hour to chit-chat with your boyfriend. We're very busy; I need you at the cosmetic counter this minute.

JUDY PENOSKI

Yes, Mr. Malkin, I'm very sorry about-

Malkin looks down.

MR. MALKIN

Who knocked over that soda can?

When Vance mumbles, Judy interrupts.

JUDY PENOSKI

I did, Mr. Malkin. I'll clean it right up. Can't have ants in the store, now can we?

Judy goes inside, without looking at Vance.

MR. MALKIN

Absolutely not. The last thing I need is problems with the Board of Health.

Mr. Malkin goes inside, slams the door shut. Vance broods, walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. GLA MARINE CENTER - LATER

EARLY EVENING

Located adjacent to a long, wooden dock, whose slips are mostly empty, the GLA Marine Center is a boat repair and sales business. Its main building is constructed of weathered, corrugated steel and has three repair bays, only one of which is occupied.

The building's exterior lights are on. A profusion of flying insects randomly dance in the fixtures' yellow glow.

Next to the building is an overgrown yard containing a half dozen dated cabin cruisers awkwardly resting on rusted trailers.

WATER

The flat-calm water by the dock is polluted with garbage and discharged oil.

BACK TO SCENE

OCCUPIED REPAIR BAY

A 1962, twenty-five-foot Dorsett Catalina cruiser, in poor condition, sits out of the water atop two steel support beams. A MAN in his thirties, wearing a dirty T-shirt and jeans works with a hand tool in a cramped space beneath the boat. The boat's name is crudely painted on the stern. It reads: The Big One.

The man is GABE, the proprietor of GLA Marine, and will be referred to as such going forward.

O.s., the sound of a pick-up truck coming to a stop on loose gravel.

PICK-UP TRUCK

The dusty, battered, old truck stops. Kup exits, flicks a cigarette butt, heads for the repair bay in long, determined strides.

REPAIR BAY

Kup approaches, glimpses Gabe beneath the hull, stops.

KUP DONOVAN

Time's a wastin', Gabe. I need my boat -- pronto! Only a couple weeks left to prime season.

Gabe hangs his head, raises it, crawls out from under the boat, heavy wrench in hand. As he trudges towards Kup he pushes back the brim of his soiled baseball cap.

GABE

Prime season? Kup, I didn't know there was a prime season for haulin' up flat tires and busted toilets from the bottom of the ocean.

KUP DONOVAN

Save your jokes for when you're a guest on the Tonight Show. If you're done, get her back in the water; I want to get going.

Kup takes a step towards his boat. Perturbed, Gabe raises his empty hand, stops him.

GABE

Just hold up there a second, Kup.
There's the little matter of \$3,800
you owe me for bringing this rust
bucket back from the dead.

Kup's eyes bulge.

KUP DONOVAN

What the fuck are you talkin'
about, Gabe?! You said \$2,500
after you looked her over!

Gabe brings his cap brim back down, spits.

GABE

I also said it could be more, if
there was a problem getting parts
-- and there were plenty. The '62
is a discontinued model. You can't
just run down to Sears and pick up
the parts. Janet was on the phone
for most of a day. Some of 'em
came from as far away as
California. I had to pay whatever
the supplier asked. You think I'm
gonna eat those costs?

KUP DONOVAN

You can eat shit, Gabe. \$2,500
means \$2,500. Now get her into the
water!

Kup takes a step, Gabe blocks him.

GABE

I want a check, a certified check,
Kup, for the full amount, or you
can swim out to your treasure ship.

KUP DONOVAN

How about some shop credit here?

Gabe laughs, pauses, laughs harder, coughs.

GABE

No. There's crabs in this bay that
I'd sooner extend credit to, than
you.

KUP DONOVAN

Well, I gotta have that boat.

Gabe gently, repeatedly taps the head of the wrench in the
upturned palm of his other hand. Kup thinks.

KUP DONOVAN

Look, I can give you a check for \$1,000 right now, and I'll make you a five percent partner on whatever we bring up, going forward, this season and next.

Gabe stops tapping, ruminates. Something comes to Kup's mind. He fishes a pair of phony coins from his jeans, shows them to Gabe.

KUP DONOVAN

Check these out. I'm startin' to have some luck at Clayton's Reef. We're getting close, Gabe.

Gabe stares at, touches the coins in Kup's palm.

GABE

Ten percent -- plus that \$1,000 check.

KUP DONOVAN

You are one hard bargainer, old Gabe. All right, ten percent.

Kup flips one coin to Gabe, pockets the other. They walk towards the office.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANKONA PIER - THE NEXT DAY, 6:30 A.M.

The water and the cloudy sky are a mournful gray. Kup stands inside The Big One, grabs a cooler handed to him by Vance, whose injured hand is bandaged. Other coolers, gear and scuba tanks await loading.

ONBOARD THE BIG ONE

KUP DONOVAN

Where the hell is Lucky? Did you tell that goddamned wetback we're leaving at six-thirty?

VANCE DONOVAN

I did. He said he'd be here.

O.s., the sound of someone whistling on the pier. Kup looks up, while continuing to load.

KUP'S POV

LUCKY RODRIGUEZ, a slim, diminutive Mexican American wearing a white T-shirt and black jeans, waves to Kup. He carries his lunch in a small cooler, walks at a leisurely pace. Lucky is fifty yards from the boat.

One hundred yards behind Lucky, a produce truck bearing the sign, Blackburn's Orchard, slides to a gravel-spraying halt. Ed Blackburn springs from the vehicle wielding a baseball bat. He runs towards The Big One.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup's eyes widen at the sight of enraged, oncoming Blackburn.

KUP DONOVAN

Vance, get in, start her up -- now!

VANCE DONOVAN

What's up?

KUP DONOVAN

Now! We've got company!

Vance leaps in with some gear, drops it, starts the boat. It coughs, sputters.

KUP DONOVAN

Lucky! Look behind you! Get your ass in gear, or I'm leaving you!

LUCKY

Lucky turns serious, looks over his shoulder.

LUCKY'S POV

Charging Ed Blackburn is rapidly closing the gap between the two.

BACK TO SCENE

Lucky gulps, takes flight, dashes towards The Big One.

THE BIG ONE

With Lucky less than fifty feet away, Kup jumps onto the pier, tosses the rest of the gear onboard, casts off.

KUP DONOVAN

It's going to be close, Vance. Get
a few feet away from the pier.

BOAT

The Big One moves six feet, idles. The engine is revved for
a quick getaway. Black exhaust billows.

BACK TO SCENE

Lucky hurls himself from the pier's edge, lands on the back
of the boat, loses his grip on his cooler. It goes over the
side.

KUP DONOVAN

Gun it!

PIER

The Big One heads out, rumbles, leaves a trail of thick,
black, sooty smoke.

Blackburn, furious, flings the bat with all his might.

THE BIG ONE

Everyone ducks. The bat strikes the cruiser's cabin,
smashes a window.

BACK TO SCENE

ED BLACKBURN

I'm getting my money, Kup, or your
hide!

ONBOARD THE BIG ONE

The three men turn their attention to the sea. Kup takes
the wheel from Vance.

LUCKY

He sounded pretty mad.

KUP DONOVAN

I didn't notice.

Kup lights a cigarette.

VANCE DONOVAN

Clayton's Reef today?

KUP DONOVAN

Yeah, I got a feeling today might
be my day.

LUCKY

You say that every day.

CUT TO:

EXT. AT SEA - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Water is getting rough; the boat rocks. A jetty of boulders
with a tight gap leading to the open ocean is close-by .

ONBOARD

Kup works hard to maintain their course.

VANCE DONOVAN

Can I take her through the jetty,
Kup?

KUP DONOVAN

I'm havin' trouble with two good
hands. Some other time.

Vance, dejected, takes a seat opposite Lucky, stares, sulks.

KUP'S POV

Waves crash on both sides of the jetty. The sea beyond is
more volatile than the protected area. The Big One veers
dangerously to the right. Raindrops pelt the windshield.

THE BIG ONE

The boat pitches and rolls. Waves splash its sides; sea foam
sprays.

BACK TO SCENE

KUP DONOVAN

Lucky! Get off your butt and get
starboard! How close are the
fucking rocks?!

Lucky struggles to keep his balance, grabs the rusted chrome
railing. The wind shrieks.

LUCKY

Cut to port, or we're screwed!

LUCKY'S POV

Black rocks smacked by waves are close enough to touch.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup fiercely turns the wheel to port.

THE BIG ONE

It clears the rocks, reaches the open sea.

THIRTY MINUTES LATER

The Big One reaches Clayton's Reef. A few feet of jagged, dead coral repeatedly rise above the ocean's surface, then submerge. A smaller, open boat, anchored, with a single outboard motor is present.

KUP'S POV

Two middle-aged men, TOM SCHULTZ and his ASSISTANT, are aboard. Half out of their wetsuits, they carefully inspect hunks of coral. Totally absorbed, they are oblivious to the advance of The Big One, whose engine has been cut.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup lifts a seat cushion, produces a .22-caliber rifle from the compartment beneath. Gun in hand, he clambers around the cabin, stands on the ship's bow. The Big One is ten feet from the small boat.

KUP DONOVAN

Tom Schultz, what are you doing on my claim?

TOM'S BOAT/THE BIG ONE INTERCUTTING

Startled, both men drop their coral, look in Kup's direction.

TOM SCHULTZ

Mornin', Kup. About your 'claim.'
I checked with Chuck Dulmer two days ago, at City Hall. You got no permit. So I've got as much right to be here as anybody.

KUP DONOVAN
My paperwork is in, Tom. The claim
is as good as issued.

Kup motions to Lucky to get closer to Tom's boat. He releases the safety on the rifle.

KUP DONOVAN
Vance, hop on Tom's boat and grab
whatever it is they found.

TOM SCHULTZ
Like hell!

Kup points the rifle at Tom and his assistant.

KUP DONOVAN
Don't take it so hard. It's just
like the old Westerns on TV. You
jump a miner's claim, you pay the
price.

Tom and the other man raise their hands. As the boats nearly touch, Vance follows Kup's order, returns to The Big One. The boats separate.

TOM SCHULTZ
We're not moving -- no reason to.

Kup lowers the rifle a few inches, fires two quick shots.

TOM'S BOAT

The bullets strike the wooden hull below the water line, create sizable holes.

INT. TOM'S BOAT

Water flows in.

BACK TO SCENE

KUP DONOVAN
Now you do.

TOM SCHULTZ
Asshole!

Tom pulls up the anchor; his assistant starts the motor. In seconds, they depart with Tom bailing.

ONBOARD THE BIG ONE

Kup grabs one hunk of coral from Vance, examines, looks in Lucky's direction.

KUP DONOVAN

Drop anchor here. You and I'll suit up. Vance, you take the wheel.

Vance looks at his piece of coral, runs his fingers over it, glances at Kup's piece.

VANCE DONOVAN

The blue-and-white pieces look like they're from dishes.

Kup is underwhelmed.

KUP DONOVAN

Yeah, fragments. Could be from Holland. Could be from China, too, for all I know.

Kup carelessly tosses his coral onto the deck.

VANCE DONOVAN

Isn't it worth finding out? There must be a lab or some college professor that could tell you what it is.

KUP DONOVAN

What it is? I can tell you what it isn't, which is more important. It's not gold; it's not silver. Pay some lab a thousand bucks to tell me it was from Cinderella's tea set? Great! I haven't got a thousand to spare for that!

Vance trudges to the wheel, sets down his coral.

TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Scuba gear on, Lucky and Kup sit on the boat's stern, give each other a thumbs-up signal, fall backward into the active sea.

UNDERWATER

Both men release air from their buoyancy compensators, descend the fifty feet of anchor line.

NEAR BOTTOM

In moderate visibility Kup produces a small slate, with chalk attached by a string. He writes, shows the message to Lucky.

LUCKY'S POV

North 20 minutes, stay close.

BACK TO SCENE

They proceed. A massive wall of coral, with long, dagger-like projections is covered with anemones and sea fans. Countless, brightly colored, small and medium-sized fish swim about, chasing prey. Kup looks to his side, then down the remaining twenty feet to the sandy seafloor.

KUP'S POV

At the foot of the reef is a mound of lightly colored, rounded stones.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup gets Lucky's attention, points to the find. Together, they swim towards it.

MOUND OF STONES

Both divers scrutinize. Lucky produces his slate, writes, shows Kup.

KUP'S POV

Ballast stones?

BACK TO SCENE

Kup nods. Lucky suddenly looks off into the distance.

LUCKY'S POV

An indistinct, rounded, black form slowly emerges from the vastness beyond the reef. It is coming their way.

BACK TO SCENE

Lucky points, breathes rapidly, sends out plumes of air bubbles.

KUP'S POV

The vague object, now fifteen feet away, appears to be dragging something. Its black form evidences lighter patches. Its motion is listless, non-threatening.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup motions to Lucky. They cautiously approach the mysterious object.

Driven by a sudden surge in the current, the object, now upon the two divers, becomes instantly recognizable. It is the bloated corpse of a diver in a shredded wetsuit.

His mask missing, the diver's hood now serves as a container filled with an active swarm of small marine creatures eagerly devouring paltry, fleshy remains.

The tears in the suit are the result of repeated attacks by larger fish. The trailing object is the undone weight belt, entangled with the remnants of a fishing net, wrapped around the victim's waist.

Kup spits out his regulator, vomits, puts the regulator back in his mouth, clears it. Lucky, repulsed, looks away, kicks at the corpse to distance it from himself.

Kup, now composed, approaches for a closer look.

KUP'S POV

Chewed flesh protruding from the torn wet suit is pure white. A small eel squirms out through tissue, digs into a nearby gash.

BACK TO SCENE

As Kup circles the corpse, his attention is drawn to the one remaining arm and its closed fist. Lucky comes closer, pulls out his slate, writes, shows it to Kup.

KUP'S POV

Raise it with your float bag.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup nods, produces an inflatable bag, along with an attachment. He secures it to the body, adds air from his

back-up regulator. The body ascends; the divers follow.

ONBOARD - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

The three men, aghast, stand around the putrefied remains, hold cupped hands over their noses and mouths. Vance can't look at it for more than a few seconds at a time.

KUP'S POV

Something metallic protrudes from the closed fist.

BACK TO SCENE

Reluctantly, slowly, they lower hands from their mouths.

LUCKY

What the fuck? Who is it?

KUP DONOVAN

Some unlucky bastard. Too late to tell at this point. He's just fish food.

Kup pulls out his dive knife, squats near the closed, glove-covered fist.

VANCE DONOVAN (O.S.)

Don't we have to report this to the police, or the Coast Guard?

KUP DONOVAN

We ain't reporting shit!

Kup pokes at the fist with his knife's tip.

LUCKY (O.S.)

What the fuck you doin', Kup?

KUP DONOVAN

He's holding something. I want to know what it is.

VANCE DONOVAN (O.S.)

This is wrong. This is so wrong. Kup-

KUP DONOVAN

Shut up, Vance.

KUP'S POV

The knife edge, forced into the closed fingers, twists repeatedly, as if opening an oyster. The fingers break open with a sickening crack.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup stands. Vance turns, runs to the railing, pukes over the side. Kup, knife still in hand, inspects the fist's contents, now in his palm. A thin, short, gold chain dangles.

KUP'S POV

A gold locket, of contemporary design, with an attached chain. Kup's fingers pry it open, reveal a photo of a young woman.

BACK TO SCENE

LUCKY

What is it?

KUP DONOVAN

Nothin'.

Kup pulls the tiny picture from the locket, crumples it, throws it over the side.

LUCKY

C'mon, you got something there.
Looked like gold.

Kup gives the locket a quick vertical toss, grabs it midair, stuffs it into his wetsuit sleeve.

KUP DONOVAN

Once I hock it, it'll be beer
money. Now let's get rid of Diver
Dave here.

VANCE DONOVAN

Why won't you do the right thing
and report this?

Lucky rolls his eyes, steps away, lights a cigarette.

KUP DONOVAN

'Cause there's too many questions
that'll get asked that I don't know
the answers to. And the more I
say, "I don't know," to the cops
and the Coast Guard, the more
suspicious they're gonna get. So
quit the cross examination and help
me get him over the side!

Vance turns away, walks to the steering wheel. Kup turns to Lucky.

KUP DONOVAN

Lucky, give me a hand.

Lucky crosses himself, bends over the body, starts to remove the weight belt.

KUP DONOVAN

Good idea, the belt's worth fifty bucks. Wait! No, leave it on; the body's got to sink.

Together, the two men lift the corpse, push it into the ocean. They both take a deep breath, turn away from each other.

VANCE DONOVAN

What now, Kup?

KUP DONOVAN

Head over to Parrot Reef. I heard that Wes Pennington is out of town, at his place in Palm Springs. Let's see what's doin' on his claim.

CUT TO:

INT. KUP'S BEDROOM - SAME MORNING 10 A.M.

Exhausted, Connie changes bed linens, stops, sits, catches her breath, stands, resumes her task.

O.s., the sound of a hammer banging wood. Drawn to the noise, Connie steps to the room's lone window, peers out.

CONNIE'S POV

A white truck, its engine running, is parked by the curb. A YOUNG MAN finishes placement of a wooden post, just over the property line separating Connie's house from the empty lot next door. He returns to the truck, picks up a large, painted wooden sign, walks to the post, begins attachment.

BACK TO SCENE

CONNIE

Whatever could that be?

FRONT OF THE DONOVAN HOME - ONE MINUTE LATER

Connie opens the screen door, steps onto the porch, holds the iron bannister for support.

CONNIE

You there, what are you doing?

YOUNG MAN

He pauses hammering, notices Connie.

YOUNG MAN

Public notice, m'am.

YOUNG MAN'S POV

Unsteady Connie carefully descends the steps to the walkway, advances.

CONNIE

Public notice of what?

SIGN POST

Connie looks at the young man suspiciously, then the sign.

CONNIE'S POV

Official-looking sign reads: Public Notice, condemnation by eminent domain. Beneath the headline are paragraphs of legalese.

BACK TO SCENE

The young man resumes attachment with hammer and nails.

CONNIE

Condemnation? I don't understand.

YOUNG MAN

Your lot and this empty lot next door, m'am. Weather monitoring station going in.

CONNIE

They can't just take a person's home. Weather station? No!

YOUNG MAN

Ain't you been notified? Did you get anything in the mail?

Connie, wide-eyed, stunned, shuffles towards the house.

KITCHEN

Connie scavenges through the pile of mail, throws advertisements aside. She grasps two white envelopes that catch her eye, flops into a chair, opens them.

CONNIE'S POV

Two official notices of impending condemnation by eminent domain.

CUT TO:

EXT. AT SEA - LATER THE SAME DAY

The Big One comes to a fummy stop in choppy water. Lucky drops the anchor into the sea.

ONBOARD

KUP DONOVAN

All right, let's suit up. Going to make this short and sweet, ten minutes, tops. Vance, you up for it?

Vance hesitates.

KUP DONOVAN

Lucky-

VANCE DONOVAN

I'm ready. I'll go.

Vance takes off his shirt, unwinds the bandage from his hand, grabs a wetsuit. Kup shows approval, dons his suit and gear.

KUP DONOVAN

Good, I was concerned you were going to chicken out on treasure diving, become a welder -- a fat, settled, middle-aged man, at the ripe old age of nineteen.

Vance fumes.

VANCE DONOVAN

Well, I still might.

KUP DONOVAN
Is that a threat?

VANCE DONOVAN
No.

Lucky helps both men with their tanks, turns on air.

KUP DONOVAN
Lucky, I'm gonna attach a warning
flag to the lower anchor line. You
see anything, start tugging. Old
Wes, if he's about, isn't as polite
to poachers as I am, but I gotta
see what he's been workin' on.

Off the stern, Wes and Vance time their entry, dive feet
first into the gray, undulating water.

UNDERWATER

The divers quickly descend the anchor line. Kup attaches a
flag six feet above where the anchor has wedged itself into
craggy coral.

Kup beckons Vance. They begin exploring the reef.

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Vance looks at his air pressure gauge, then his watch. He
grabs Kup's elbow, points upward. Kup produces his slate,
writes, shows Vance.

VANCE'S POV

A little longer.

KUP'S POV

Vance evinces dissatisfaction.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup continues along the reef, pokes with his knife. Vance
eventually follows.

ONBOARD THE BIG ONE

Lucky sweeps, pauses, looks over his shoulder.

LUCKY'S POV

A large, speeding boat is distant, but heading their way -- fast.

LARGE BOAT

A million-dollar, state-of-the-art dive boat effortlessly cuts through waves at terrific speed.

BACK TO SCENE

Lucky stumbles, gets to the anchor line, tugs mightily.

UNDERWATER/TOPSIDE INTERCUTTING

Vance and Kup are fifteen feet from the anchor line. Kup spots something of interest embedded in coral, begins extraction with his dive knife. Vance, restless, looks about.

VANCE'S POV

The anchor line and flag rise and fall vigorously.

BACK TO SCENE

Vance gets Kup's attention. He looks in the line's direction, returns to his task. Vance tugs Kup's arm, gets an aggressive shrug.

Lucky, exhausted, keeps tugging.

LUCKY'S POV

The incoming boat is noticeably closer.

BACK TO SCENE

Vance sticks his dive watch in Kup's face, taps its crystal. Kup brushes it aside.

Lucky stops tugging the line, dashes to the ship's wheel, starts and revs the engine.

LUCKY

C'mon! C'mon! Get your lily-white
butts up here!

O.s., the blaring sound of the oncoming ship's air horn.

Kup dislodges the desired object, sheaths his knife, heads to the anchor line with Vance. They ascend.

THE WATER'S SURFACE

Bubbles break the surface, followed by Vance's and Kup's masks. They are immediately met with shotgun barrels.

O.s., a hearty voice with a strong Southern accent greets the pair.

WES PENNINGTON (O.S.)

My, my, if it isn't Captain Nemo
and Jacques Cousteau. Such an
honor to meet two legends of diving
on the same day.

Kup and Vance pull up their masks.

KUP DONOVAN

Hey, Wes, thought you were in Palm
Springs.

ZODIAC INFLATABLE BOAT

Two of Wes' DECKHANDS point shotguns, stand in an inflatable support boat along side Wes' ship. Wes stands by the polished chrome railing, motions for the deckhands to raise their barrels.

Wes, a tall, slim man in his fifties, wears a blue double-breasted blazer, an open-collared white shirt and white slacks. A captain's hat bearing a tasteful amount of gold braid fashionably rests, slightly tilted, on his head.

WES PENNINGTON

Most apparently, I am not in Palm
Springs, brothers Donovan.

ONBOARD WES' SHIP

Their tanks and fins off, Vance and Kup stand at the stern of the immaculate craft. Wes casually rests one arm on the railing, holds Kup's find in his hand. The armed deckhands stand at the ready.

WES PENNINGTON

Just had new stabilizers installed,
at considerable expense. Worth
every dollar, the ship hardly
rocks.

KUP DONOVAN
 Mine are back ordered.

Wes chuckles, turns serious.

WES PENNINGTON
 What bring you to my
 fully-permitted claim, Kup?

KUP DONOVAN
 Just wanted to see what progress
 you've made.

Wes looks over Kup's find, glances upward, weighs the rock
 in his hand.

WES PENNINGTON
 And this?

KUP DONOVAN
 I got bills to pay, just like
 anyone else -- well, almost anyone.
 There's no date on the coin stuck
 in there, so there's no proof it's
 from the Estrella Norte. Can't be
 worth forty bucks.

WES PENNINGTON
 So you expect me to let your
 trespassing slide?

Wes makes eye contact with one deckhand, who moves directly
 behind Kup. Kup notices, uneasily clears his throat, then
 spits on the deck. The deckhand promptly strikes Kup in the
 lower back with the butt end of his shotgun. Kup groans,
 drops to one knee. Vance flinches. Wes steps forward to
 Kup, bends at the waist.

WES PENNINGTON
 I've seen your pissant boat around
 here a number of times, but this is
 our first up-close business
 meeting, Mr. Donovan. Let me make
 myself Bahama blue-water clear:
 Don't cross my path out here again.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANKONA PIER - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

The Big One pulls up to the dock she departed from that
 morning. A portly man, CHUCK DULMER, wearing a Panama hat,
 suit pants, dress shirt and a bow tie, awaits the arrival,
 briefcase in hand. With the boat three feet from the dock,
 Lucky jumps from the deck, secures a rope to a cleat.

Dulmer sets down his briefcase, removes his hat, wipes the sweatband with a handkerchief retrieved from a back pocket. The hat donned, he picks up the briefcase, opens the top, extracts a manila folder. Vance and Kup disembark, approach Dulmer.

CHUCK DULMER

How do, gents?

Kup rubs his lower back, grimaces.

KUP DONOVAN

You got my permit there, Chuck?

Chuck wets his lips, adjusts eyeglasses.

CHUCK DULMER

Well, I am here about said permit.
I can say that much.

Kup blinks hard, runs his calloused hand through matted hair.

KUP DONOVAN

Spit it out, for Christ's sake.

Dulmer, hand shaking, tenders the folder.

CHUCK DULMER

Not only is the form incomplete,
Mr. Donovan, it is the wrong form.

Kup slams the folder onto the deck, papers spill out. Vance and Lucky turn away. Dulmer takes a step back.

KUP DONOVAN

Shit! What kind of bullshit
runaround is this?! In person,
downtown, I asked what form I
needed, goddamn it!

CHUCK DULMER

Well, you didn't ask me, I am sorry
to say. I have included the
correct form in that folder.

Dulmer points to the folder. Vance corrals the papers just as the wind picks up. Kup grabs them from Vance, glances at the new form.

KUP DONOVAN

It must be twenty fucking pages!

CHUCK DULMER

Twenty-two to be precise, and it
must be notarized in four places
before submission. I regret the
mishap, Mr. Donovan. I wish you
luck. Good day.

Dulmer departs.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DONOVAN HOME - ONE HOUR LATER

Kup's truck pulls up in front of the house, ten feet shy of the sign, then rolls right up to it. Kup and Vance slowly get out, approach it, silently read. Vance heads in. Kup looks left, then right.

KUP'S POV

Oncoming young woman pushes a baby stroller.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup lowers his fly, urinates on the post.

KITCHEN

Connie's head rests on the table in the crook of one arm. In the hand of her other arm are the condemnation notices. She sobs.

Vance walks in, followed by Kup.

KUP DONOVAN

So what's for dinner, Fat Connie?

He slaps her on the shoulder, grabs the notices, gives them a cursory read, tosses them on the table. Connie raises her head, sits up.

CONNIE

Are you blind to the situation, or profoundly stupid?

KUP DONOVAN

I know that I'm hungry and so is Vance. A little condemnation notice after the day I had? Shit, it's practically like winning the lottery.

Vance opens the fridge, takes a quick look, shakes his head, closes it.

VANCE DONOVAN

I'm headin' over to Judy's. I'll get something to eat with her.

He pauses for a few seconds.

VANCE DONOVAN

Uh, Kup? I haven't been paid in over a month.

Kup takes a seat on Connie's left, looks up.

KUP DONOVAN

Yeah, I'd say that sounds about right.

CONNIE

There's a twenty in the knife drawer, Vance, under the tray. Take it.

Vance opens the drawer, finds the bill, sticks it in his jeans pocket. He goes to the back door, exits half way, stops.

VANCE DONOVAN

Thanks, Ma.

Vance departs.

KUP DONOVAN

Fat Connie, you are spoiling that boy.

CONNIE

Better Vance spending it on his girlfriend, than you betting it on some long shot at the dog track.

Connie stands, goes to the fridge, pulls out a pot and a covered dish, moves to the stove. Kup gives the public notices a second, brief look, tosses them back in the mail pile.

CONNIE

Vance won't continue working with you. You know that, right?

Kup leans back in his chair, stares straight ahead.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAVE CREST LOUNGE & MOTEL - NEXT DAY (11 A.M.)

Heavy rain falls. The few scraggly plants out front repeatedly bend and straighten in response to the wind. Two vehicles are parked near the entrance.

INT. BAR

Kup and Lucky stand at the bar, sip from beer bottles, half a dozen empties before them. Lucky turns, rests his back against the bar's edge. O.s., the sounds of the storm.

LUCKY

When I was in the navy, on days like this, they'd work us twice as hard, outside.

KUP DONOVAN

You get a medal for it?

LUCKY

If I did, I wouldn't have slugged that chief petty officer with a wrench.

They both laugh. Kup takes a long sip of beer.

KUP DONOVAN

And that's how you got your dishonorable discharge?

LUCKY

Yeah, after five months in the brig.

Kup snickers.

LUCKY

You're no better, Kup. Why'd they kick you out of the army?

Kup wanders over to the jukebox, looks at selections, runs his index finger over the dusty glass, wanders back to the bar.

KUP DONOVAN

I signed up because I thought they wanted killers. Turns out all they really wanted was guys who could stand up straight and keep their boot laces tied. Wasn't for me, and I let 'em know.

An uncomfortable silence develops.

KUP DONOVAN

I need an investor, Lucky. Someone with deep pockets. Someone who's patient to a fault.

LUCKY

Is Fat Connie tapped out?

KUP DONOVAN

Nah, I think she's still got a few bucks stashed away someplace, but she's hangin' onto it, in case Penney's has a sale on wrinkle cream.

Amused, Lucky slaps the bar top, wakes Bert, who sits on a stool at the end of the bar. Bert glances over, closes his eyes.

KUP DONOVAN

No, I'm talkin' about someone with positive cash flow. Someone who's got a profitable business to run. That way they're not worrying minute-to-minute about me.

LUCKY

You know, my two brothers, DOMINIC and MARIO, they're doing pretty well now. They might be interested, and they live in San Antonio, so they wouldn't be looking over your shoulder. You want me to ask?

Kup finishes his beer, nods, belches.

KUP DONOVAN

Ask for plenty. My watch stopped. Is it 11:30 yet?

Lucky checks his watch.

LUCKY

Just about.

KUP DONOVAN

Good, I got an appointment.

Kup exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD, KUP'S TRUCK - TEN MINUTES LATER

Kup's beat-up truck cruises the commercial part of Ankona. The storm has passed. Small businesses are open. PEOPLE, shopping, maneuver around standing water.

The truck approaches the side of Malkin's Pharmacy, just as Judy exits and walks to the nearby bus stop. Kup pulls up to where she waits.

KUP'S POV/JUDY'S POV INTERCUTTING

KUP DONOVAN

Hey, Judy. How you doin'?

Judy looks askance before looking at him.

JUDY PENOSKI

Oh, fine, I suppose. Just got off work. Yourself?

KUP DONOVAN

Never better. You need a lift?

She looks away again, then back at Kup.

JUDY PENOSKI

No. Bus should be along in a few minutes I imagine.

Kup pushes back the abraded brim of the faded cap he's wearing.

KUP DONOVAN

I wouldn't be too sure about that. The flash flood we just had swamped every street west of Pompano Drive. Buses will be runnin' late, if at all.

Judy bites her bottom lip.

JUDY PENOSKI

Mmm... I dunno.

KUP DONOVAN

Clouds are rollin' in again. You don't wanna be standin' here, waitin' for a bus that ain't comin'.

JUDY PENOSKI

I suppose you're right. You going in my direction?

Kup playfully taps the top of the steering wheel, smiles.

KUP DONOVAN

Wouldn't matter if I wasn't. It's not that big a town.

JUDY PENOSKI

Okay then.

She smiles, pauses, gets in.

KUP'S TRUCK

The truck drives off.

INT. TRUCK

KUP DONOVAN

I guess you're lookin' forward to school wrappin' up this coming year.

JUDY PENOSKI

Oh, yes, definitely. I'm planning on starting secretarial school right after graduation.

KUP DONOVAN

You certainly have big ambitions, for a tiny gal.

JUDY PENOSKI

My goal is to become a legal secretary. It's interesting work and they make good money.

KUP DONOVAN

Sounds like all work. I thought you and Vance had plans?

JUDY PENOSKI

We do. While I'm in secretarial school, Vance will be learning the welding trade from Mr. Oakland.

KUP'S TRUCK

The truck stops at a traffic light at a quiet intersection, makes a left when it turns green.

BACK TO SCENE

KUP DONOVAN

Yeah, yeah... Y'know, Vance is a key man for me in my business. He's a hard worker, smart, and he's someone I can trust, which means a lot in my line of work.

JUDY PENOSKI

You don't pay him as if he is.

Kup forces a laugh.

KUP DONOVAN

Treasure huntin' isn't like a drug store, Judy. The money doesn't just come walkin' in the front door. It requires sacrifice, patience.

JUDY PENOSKI

Well, there's a lot to be said for
a steady, predictable paycheck.

KUP'S TRUCK

The truck comes to the Wave Crest Lounge & Motel, slows
down.

BACK TO SCENE

KUP DONOVAN

I'd like to talk to you more about
Vance's future, but I am as thirsty
as all get-out. Why don't we stop
in here? I'll buy you a soda pop
and we can hash things out.

JUDY PENOSKI

I don't go to bars, Kup. I'm
underage. It wouldn't be-

KUP DONOVAN

Oh, we won't sit at the bar.
We'll sit a table, all
respectable-like, and you'll have a
soft drink. That's perfectly
legal.

Rain strikes the windshield.

KUP DONOVAN

C'mon, before there's another
cloudburst.

EXT. TRUCK

Kup gets out, takes a few steps towards the entrance, turns
and waves to Judy. The rain intensifies. Guardedly, Judy
exits the vehicle.

INT. WAVE CREST BAR - MINUTES LATER

Kup faces the bar, sits opposite Judy in a secluded corner.
They are the only customers.

KUP'S POV

Bert, behind the bar, walks in their direction, sees Kup.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup raises two fingers high in the air.

KUP DONOVAN

Bert, two Cokes and two shots of
bourbon.

Judy starts to get up. Kup motions for her to sit back
down.

KUP DONOVAN

The bourbons are for me. You get a
Coke.

Judy sits.

JUDY PENOSKI

I can't stay long. What's on your
mind?

Bert comes to the table sets down the drinks, places one
bourbon and one soda in front of each of them. Judy slides
her bourbon towards Kup.

JUDY PENOSKI

(to Bert)

Aren't you concerned about my age?

O.s., thunder rolls.

BERT

Not as long as you're double
digits.

Bert departs. Kup pours his bourbon into his cola, takes a
sip.

KUP DONOVAN

You asked me what's on my mind, and
I'll tell you. A person only gets
one ride on the Big Merry-go-round,
Judy. It's not some rehearsal for
somethin' else. A young man
deserves a shot at somethin'
that'll satisfy his need for
adventure, somethin' great that can
set him up for the rest of his
days. If he settles down too
quick, he lives a life of regret,
for passin' by what might have
been.

Judy sulks.

JUDY PENOSKI

Did Vance tell you that? Are those
his words? Does he think of me as
someone who's killing his dreams?
That I'm suffocating the best part
of his life?

JUDY'S POV

Kup purses his lips, raises his eyebrows, exhibits reticence. He looks down, rotates his half-empty glass on its coaster.

BACK TO SCENE

KUP DONOVAN

It's not right for me to speak for Vance, especially when he's not present. But, uh, he's human, young and male.

Saddened, Judy extends her hand, touches the rim of the shot glass, withdraws it.

JUDY PENOSKI

Maybe I'm pushing too hard. I don't want Vance to be miserable. I don't want him blaming me forever.

Judy picks up the bourbon shot, pours it into her soda, drinks half the glass, looks down. Kup raises two fingers high over his head.

KUP'S POV

Bert makes eye contact, grins, pours two shots.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup moves his chair to Judy's side, sits uncomfortably close. He undoes her pony tail, runs his fingers through her brunette hair, whispers in her ear.

O.s., the storm strengthens.

CUT TO:

EXT. AT SEA - MORNING

(THE NEXT DAY)

Aboard The Big One, Kup, at the wheel, and Lucky, cruise along on a choppy sea.

INT. THE BIG ONE

LUCKY

Heading back to Clayton's Reef?

KUP DONOVAN
Yep. I'll tell 'ya, I am
pissed-off about Vance.

Lucky lights a cigarette.

LUCKY
I can tell. He's at the welder's
today?

Kup nods.

KUP DONOVAN
You talk to your brothers?

LUCKY
I did. I told them about you, the
boat, the claim, the treasure --
every damn thing.

KUP DONOVAN
And?

LUCKY
They're interested, very
interested.

KUP DONOVAN
How much?

LUCKY
Thirty, maybe forty thousand -- in
cash.

KUP DONOVAN
My favorite four-letter word.

Kup pounds the top of the steering wheel, approvingly.

KUP DONOVAN
What size cut are they lookin' for?

LUCKY
They want a third, and not just for
the season. They want a third, no
matter what year you find treasure.

Kup's mood sours. He turns to Lucky.

LUCKY
They say it's non-negotiable.

Kup returns his gaze out to sea.

KUP DONOVAN
Let 'em know they're in the
treasure-hunting business.

TWENTY MINUTES LATER

The Big One nears Clayton's Reef. Tom Schultz's boat is back.

TOM'S BOAT

The boat is empty, anchored. Crude wooden patches are visible where Kup's bullets struck. A diver's flag, attached to an inflatable ring, bobs in the water. Air bubbles break at the surface.

BACK TO SCENE

KUP DONOVAN

Can you believe that?! That son of a bitch, Tom Schultz is back, after I shoot his damned boat!

LUCKY

What's left to-

Kup guns the engine, goes full throttle. Lucky hangs on to the nearby seat back.

THE BIG ONE

Kup's boat blasts through the surf, heads directly for Tom's much smaller craft.

KUP'S POV

The Big One is nearly upon Schultz's boat. At the last second, Kup cuts hard to port.

THE BIG ONE

Kup's boat swerves, barely misses Tom's, generates a substantial wave that crests over its side, swamps it. Tom's boat, inundated, sinks. The Big One turns, heads back the way it came.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DONOVAN HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

Kup, alone, pulls up behind a spotless, red, convertible Mercedes parked at the curb, lightly taps it.

Wes Pennington coolly sits on the house's top step. He wears a striped dress shirt, white slacks and his signature gold-braided cap.

Kup exits his truck, approaches Wes, stops at the foot of the steps.

KUP DONOVAN

What brings you out, Wes?
Slumming?

WES PENNINGTON

Business, Kup, strictly business.

KUP DONOVAN

Well thank goodness for that. For a second I thought you might be stoppin' by for supper, just when the household silver is out bein' polished.

WES PENNINGTON

Very amusing.

Kup lights a cigarette.

WES PENNINGTON

From what I hear, it sounds as though you are up to your neck in crocodiles lately.

KUP DONOVAN

That's nothin' new.

WES PENNINGTON

Regardless, I might be in a position to help.

KUP DONOVAN

I'm listenin'.

Wes pushes back the brim of his cap.

WES PENNINGTON

Ed Blackburn would like to see you turned into shark bait. I could get him off your back. The same could be said for Tom Schultz. Oh! Did you know poor Tom's boat sank

(MORE)

WES PENNINGTON (cont'd)
out at Clayton's Reef today?
Fishing boat picked him up, saved
his life.

KUP DONOVAN
How lucky -- that's news to me.

WES PENNINGTON
Uh-huh. In any case, I can cool
his heels, too. And I am pretty
sure I can forestall this house's
pending condemnation, for a spell.

Wes points to the sign.

WES PENNINGTON
Plus, it is common knowledge you
owe money to nearly every merchant
in Ankona. Some folding money
could quickly cure that, too,
couldn't it?

Kup discards the cigarette, places one foot on the first
step, leans in towards Wes.

KUP DONOVAN
Well thank you, Jesus Christ.
Look, the only reason you'd do all
that for me, Wes, is to get me to
stay away from Clayton's Reef --
and I won't give up my claim.

WES PENNINGTON
Wake up, son, you have no claim. I
know for a fact your paperwork was
rejected.

KUP DONOVAN
The new forms are done, ready to be
notarized, in four places. You got
clout at City Hall, Wes. Why don't
you pay your lawyers a little
overtime and have them muscle you
in ahead of me?

WES PENNINGTON
Cause I know a claim on Clayton's
Reef is the one thing in this world
you'd fight tooth and nail for --
and I know how you fight.

Kup straightens up, climbs the remaining stairs past Wes,
stops at the front door. Wes, seated continues to look
straight ahead, towards the street.

WES PENNINGTON
I deserve an answer, Kup.

Kup turns in Wes' direction, takes two strides, kicks off his hat from behind, then turns back and enters the house.

CUT TO:

INT. DONOVAN HOME - MINUTES LATER

KITCHEN

Connie stands at the stove, stirring a cast iron pot, ingredients close at hand. Kup enters, heads to and opens the fridge. Connie stops stirring.

CONNIE

Whose sports car is that out front?

Kup pulls out a beer, opens it.

KUP DONOVAN

It's Wes Pennington's.

CONNIE

What ever did he want with the likes of you?

KUP DONOVAN

Wanted to know if we could spare a cup of black caviar. I informed him that all we had was red.

Disgusted, Connie puffs, resumes stirring. Kup exits, heads down the basement stairs.

CONNIE

You have any money for me?

KUP DONOVAN (O.S.)

Yeah, sure, I'm going to print some up right now.

BASEMENT

Kup sets down his beer, pulls out his phony coin-making supplies, goes to work.

KUP DONOVAN

Ol' Wes won't be so interested in Clayton's Reef, when these turn up on his site.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANKONA PIER - MORNING (ONE WEEK LATER)

Rain falls, thunder rolls, wind blows. The Big One pulls away from the pier, with a crew of three.

INT. THE BIG ONE

Lucky steers in rough water; Kup checks the straps securing tanks of compressed air.

KUP DONOVAN

Last day of the season, guys; let's make the most of it. The big one is out there.

VANCE DONOVAN

Last day of the season was five days ago for everyone else. We must be the only ones heading out.

KUP DONOVAN

You rather be welding?

A wave breaks over the ship's side, douses the men. Vance struggles to maintain his balance.

VANCE DONOVAN

Mr. Oakland's going to be plenty pissed that I called in sick. You serious about paying me everything you owe - all that back pay - for coming out today?

Kup nods.

KUP DONOVAN

Vance, I am flush with cash, I am happy to say -- right, Lucky?

Lucky turns towards Kup and Vance, gives the okay sign.

LUCKY

Thanks to my brothers, there's plenty to spread around!

STONE JETTY

The Big One approaches the break in the jetty.

BACK TO SCENE

LUCKY

You want to take the wheel, Kup?

Kup looks at Vance.

KUP DONOVAN

You up for it?

Vance, caught off-guard, smiles.

VANCE DONOVAN

Hell yeah!

Vance takes the wheel. Lucky steps away, turns toward Kup, shrugs. Kup pays no attention to Lucky, focuses on Vance.

VANCE'S POV

Huge sprays of water explode off the rocks, when the waves crash down on them. The gap in the jetty, dead center, is twenty feet away, closing fast. The ship's bow rises and plunges.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup and Lucky hold on to secured gear, move with the ship's metronome-like rocking

JETTY

The Big One clears the jetty, presses on.

BACK TO SCENE

VANCE DONOVAN

Son of a bitch! I did it!

Kup approaches, pats Vance on the back.

KUP DONOVAN

Nice goin', Vance! Damn-near perfect! Now take her out to Pelican Reef.

Confused, Vance knots his brow.

KUP DONOVAN

Yeah, Pelican first, then Clayton. I gotta make a deposit.

PELICAN REEF

The Big One, pitching severely, pulls into position, slows down. No other boats are present. The sky is black.

ONBOARD

VANCE DONOVAN

Kup, this is crazy. What's the point? We shouldn't even be out here. I'm feeling really sick.

KUP DONOVAN

'The point' is to seed Wes' site with these.

Kup produces a felt bag containing a dozen phony coins. He pours them into his palm, shows Vance and Lucky.

LUCKY

Looks like a good batch, Kup.

The wind howls. Kup stashes the bag of coins in his wetsuit.

KUP DONOVAN

Damn right they do.

VANCE DONOVAN

How can you be sure Wes' team will find them?

KUP DONOVAN

Remember the broken crockery, near where I dug out that coin the last time?

Vance nods.

KUP DONOVAN

They're working that area, which means they'll begin there at the start of the new season. That's where I'll plant the coins.

LUCKY

And when they find them, he'll focus his effort at Pelican and lose interest in Clayton Reef.

KUP DONOVAN

That's the plan. Suit-up, Vance. You get in the water, you won't feel so seasick.

Vance bends at the waist, stands upright, holds his stomach. Lucky laughs.

LUCKY

Vance, you look greener than my
momma's salsa verde.

VANCE DONOVAN

Shit, I dunno, Kup.

KUP DONOVAN

Do it! Lucky, get an anchor over
the side, take the wheel. Keep the
engine idling and try to keep this
tub from going under.

Lucky staggers, gets the anchor overboard. Vance and Kup
suit-up, stumble their way to the stern. Once there, Vance
hesitates. Kup lightly shoves him into the churning sea,
then follows.

UNDERWATER

Immediately below the surface the water convulses. Kup and
Vance miss the jumping anchor line on the first try. Kup
grabs it on his second attempt, reaches out, latches onto
Vance's hand, secures it above his. As they descend, the
sound of the ship's engine fades.

BOAT PROPELLOR

With the ship idling, the propellor is still. The sound of
the motor is muffled, but audible.

BOTTOM

Kup leads, Vance follows. Kup points to the spot with the
broken crockery.

CROCKERY SHARDS

Shards of pottery are mixed in with coral.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup pulls out the bag of coins, deposits the phonies, stows
the empty bag in his wetsuit. Vance gives Kup the thumbs up
signal. The two men return to the anchor line.

ANCHOR LINE

The line shimmies wildly.

ONBOARD THE BIG ONE/UNDERWATER INTERCUTTING

Buffeting waves stagger the boat. Lucky, thrown from the wheel seat, hits his head on the deck. Groggy, he rises, falls forward, remains prone.

Kup and Vance take hold of the line, ascend, battle to hold on, as the water grows more turbulent.

Lucky shakes his head, tries to stand. Foamy water breaks over the side, sloshes onto the deck. Lucky topples, hits the gear shift with his forearm. The engine engages the propellor.

The propellor spins. Vance loses his grip on the line, extends his hand to grab it. A surge of water pushes him, hand first, into the the moving propellor blade.

Fingers fly off. The water is red with blood that quickly darkens to brown, dissipates, and then replenishes with red. Vance screams into his regulator. Kup reaches out, grabs Vance's fin, pulls him away from the propellor.

ONBOARD THE BIG ONE - MINUTES LATER

The sea is roiling; the sky, a shroud of charcoal gray. Vance screams incessantly, sits and rocks on a diving gear crate.

VANCE DONOVAN

My fucking hand! My fucking hand!
My fucking hand is gone!

Lucky, wobbly, holds a bloody towel to his head wound. He can only observe the chaos.

Kup wraps Vance's wound in towels, pounds the wheel seat with his fist, glares at Lucky.

KUP DONOVAN

Lucky, what the fuck happened
here?!

Lucky remains silent, his eyes flutter as he weaves. Vance shrieks. Kup, eyes bulging, turns his attention back to Vance.

KUP DONOVAN

Vance, you gotta get control of
yourself!

Waves continue to pound The Big One. Vance wails. Kup lunges for the anchor line, pulls it up, loses his grip. He unsheathes his dive knife, cuts the line.

Vance's blood-soaked towel falls away, reveals the mutilated remnant of his right hand. He howls. Kup charges towards Vance, knocks him out with a blow to his chin. Kup takes the wheel, heads in.

CUT TO:

INT. VANCE'S TRUCK - DAY NOVEMBER (THREE MONTHS LATER)

On this sunny, fall day, Judy drives Vance's truck. Vance sits next to her, his hand bandaged. Silence reigns.

JUDY'S BELLY

Judy's belly slightly bulges.

BACK TO SCENE

JUDY PENOSKI

I'm glad you agreed to see Mr. Canfield. He's a fine prosthetics specialist. Mr. Malkin highly recommended him.

Vance turns away, looks out the window. Judy wipes away a tear.

VANCE DONOVAN

What else have I got to do?

JUDY PENOSKI

You can think about being a dad.

Vance, placid, looks in Judy's direction, down at her belly, back out the side window.

CUT TO:

INT. DONOVAN HOME - AFTERNOON (THE SAME DAY)

CONNIE'S BEDROOM

Amidst stacks of cardboard boxes, Connie packs. She moves lethargically, inspecting each item pulled from drawers, before gently lowering them into place in a container..

A recovered five-by-seven framed photo causes her to pause in her solemn work.

PHOTO

The old photo shows young Connie and her estranged husband, JACK.

BACK TO SCENE

Connie tenderly runs her fingers over the image.

CONNIE

Jack, you coward, you knew the boys
needed a father, but ran off
anyway. I have cursed your name
every day since. I hope they have,
too.

She starts to put the photo in the nearby box, stops, returns it to the drawer, closes it. Connie takes a deep breath, resumes packing.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANKONA CITY HALL - DAY

City EMPLOYEES and VISITORS enter and exit the two-story, white stucco building. Kup bounds up the exterior's steps. He approaches the glass-enclosed directory to the right of the door, pauses, runs his finger along the glass, quickly enters city hall.

INT. CITY HALL

HALLWAY

Kup walks down the hallway. At the very end, he finds the door he seeks. Kup lightly taps the glass twice, enters.

INT. OFFICE

The room, small and windowless, is sparsely furnished with the minimum: a desk, chairs and file cabinets. It is devoid of personal items or decoration. Chuck Dulmer sits behind the desk, which is cluttered with open manuals and paperwork.

KUP'S POV

Dulmer reads a stapled, voluminous report, does not acknowledge Kup's presence.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup clears his throat.

KUP DONOVAN

Mr. Dulmer, thanks for seein' me.

Dulmer looks up, lowers the report, removes his glasses, cleans them with a tissue.

CHUCK DULMER

What exactly brings you here?

Kup takes the seat in front of the desk.

KUP DONOVAN

It's been fully three months since I submitted the correct form you gave me.

Dulmer, apathetic, puts his glasses back on.

CHUCK DULMER

Time flies.

KUP DONOVAN

Yes, but I was hoping to get an early start on the new season and-

CHUCK DULMER

You were rather abrupt with me that day, out by the pier, as I recall, even threatening.

Kup lowers his head, momentarily.

KUP DONOVAN

I'll admit I did lose my temper, but it was not directed personally at you, Chuck. Just blowin' off a little steam after a particularly bad day at the office.

Dulmer points to the accumulated clutter on his desktop.

CHUCK DULMER

As you can plainly see, yours is not the only file I have to process, Mr. Donovan. And, as you can also see, I do not have the luxury of a secretary. Furthermore, my initial perusal of your resubmission indicates considerable incompleteness, which does not bode well, for the outcome, at all.

Kup nods, pulls his chair closer, lowers his voice.

KUP DONOVAN

I'm sure you've noticed, Chuck, that I am not an educated guy, like yourself. And I am not exactly what you would call corporate material, either. Y'know, just the thought of havin' to wear a shirt and tie to work would be enough to keep me in bed till noon.

Kup gives a weak laugh; Dulmer remains icily silent.

KUP DONOVAN

Truth is, I'm a bit of a misfit, but, uh, I am a very determined misfit.

CHUCK DULMER

Well, thank you so much for that candid self-appraisal, but it's not going to speed things up.

Dulmer picks up the stapled report he was reading earlier, flips pages, looks for where he left off.

KUP DONOVAN

I know, but I'm hoping this will.

Kup reaches down.

KUP'S FOOT

Kup pulls up his jeans' pants leg, reaches into his sock, pulls out a wad of hundred-dollar bills.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup slaps the money onto the center of Dulmer's desk. Dulmer observes, puts the report back down.

KUP DONOVAN

One thing I forgot to mention is that I'm not very subtle, not very subtle at all. There's five thousand there, Chuck, and there'll be another five thousand, if I get my permit in forty-eight hours. Is that gonna speed things up?

Dulmer stares at the money, bolts to his feet, advances to the office door, opens it, looks back at Kup.

CHUCK'S POV

Kup's eyes bulge.

KUP DONOVAN
You turnin' me in?

BACK TO SCENE

Chuck closes the door, locks it.

CHUCK DULMER
Shit no! Just want to make sure no
one barges in.

Chuck takes his seat, slides open the desk drawer, sweeps in
the cash, closes and locks it.

CHUCK DULMER
Sure took you long enough to figure
out how things work in this town,
Kup.

Kup breathes a sigh of relief, wipes his brow.

KUP DONOVAN
Like I said, I'm not an educated
guy. So, forty-eight hours then?

CHUCK DULMER
Less, I've got a wife that spends
money like the Russians have
missiles in the air.

Kup stands.

KUP DONOVAN
All right then. Now I got a little
boat shoppin' to do.

CHUCK'S POV

Kup walks to the door, undoes the lock. He opens the door a
hair's breadth.

CHUCK DULMER (O.S.)
There's something you should know.

Kup closes the door, relocks it, raises his eyebrows, steps
towards Chuck.

BACK TO SCENE

CHUCK DULMER
You didn't hear this from me, and
I'll deny it if anyone says you
did, but there's no weather station
going in where your house is.

KUP DONOVAN
What the hell is?

Dulmer fusses with his collar and tie.

CHUCK DULMER

It's not just the what, it's the who. Wes Pennington, ultimately, will end up owning the properties through a complex series of transactions involving a Bermuda-based corporation he heads. When all is said and done, he's going to build condominiums there, and on the adjacent lots he already controls. If that isn't disturbing enough, the mayor is a ten-percent partner.

KUP DONOVAN

And I thought I was bad.

Kup exits, closes the door.

HALLWAY

Kup takes a few steps, stops, reads the sign indicating a men's room, enters.

INT. MEN'S ROOM

While Kup stands at a urinal, Wes Pennington exits a stall, stops at a sink adjacent to the urinals, washes hands. Kup looks to his left, recognizes Wes.

KUP DONOVAN

Our paths sure do seem to cross a lot.

WES PENNINGTON

I'd say, for good or ill, but it always seems to be for the latter.

Kup finishes, goes to the sink next to Wes', washes up. Wes adjusts his boating cap.

KUP DONOVAN

And today is no exception.

WES PENNINGTON

How so?

KUP DONOVAN

Hope you got your cap on tight.

Wes takes a cautionary step away.

KUP DONOVAN

'Cause I got my permit to Clayton's Reef. And I'm pickin' out a new boat today -- the best.

Kup approaches Wes, pokes him in the shoulder.

KUP DONOVAN

My name and the wreck of the Estrella Norte are going to become inseparable, Wes. I'm haulin' in the big one.

WES PENNINGTON

Well, good for you, Kup. Nothing quite beats a story about a local boy making good.

Wes mockingly chuckles, heads for the door.

KUP DONOVAN

Make sure you stay out of my way, Wes.

Wes pauses, looks back at Kup.

KUP DONOVAN

I know more about you than you think.

CUT TO:

INT. VANCE'S TRUCK - MORNING (THREE DAYS LATER)

On a clear morning, Judy drives Vance's truck.

JUDY PENOSKI

We lucked out; this is the first Sunday in weeks without rain.

VANCE DONOVAN

Yep, sure is. Never heard you suggest going on a picnic before.

JUDY PENOSKI

Just trying to think of some different things to do for fun.

Vance sighs.

VANCE DONOVAN

Yeah, our choices have become pretty limited.

JUDY PENOSKI

I didn't mean it that way. Being together is the important part, no matter what we do.

VANCE DONOVAN

At least this gets me out from the scrutiny of your parents.

JUDY PENOSKI

C'mon, Vance. You're living with us now. It's only natural for them to ask questions and take an interest in our future.

Vance grits his teeth, nervously taps the dashboard with his good hand.

VANCE'S TRUCK

The truck comes to a stop sign, pauses, makes a right turn towards the ocean. Moored boats are visible in the distance.

BACK TO SCENE

VANCE DONOVAN

Why'd you turn right? I thought we're headed to Gorman's Park?

Judy smiles.

JUDY PENOSKI

I've got a little surprise.

VANCE'S TRUCK

The truck winds down the road leading to the Ankona pier. She pulls into a parking spot near the boats, gets out, grabs the picnic basket. Vance gets out, vacillates, follows Judy.

VANCE'S POV

Judy passes a dozen boats of various sizes.

VANCE DONOVAN (O.S.)

Where are you going?

JUDY PENOSKI

Keep following. Like I said, it's a surprise.

BACK TO SCENE

Judy approaches a sparkling, new forty-foot boat. O.s., voices can be heard onboard. Vance catches up to Judy, takes hold of her arm.

VANCE DONOVAN

What the hell?

KUP DONOVAN (O.S.)

C'mon aboard! Check her out.

VANCE DONOVAN

(to Judy)

No. No way.

THE BOAT

Kup waves, Lucky exits the cabin, winds rope. Kup vaults over the railing, joins Judy and Vance. Vance's mouth is agape.

KUP DONOVAN

Let's take her for a spin, have lunch out on the water.

VANCE DONOVAN

Who'd you steal her from?

Kup smirks.

KUP DONOVAN

I'm leasing it for two years.

Vance blanches, shakes his head. Judy hands him the picnic basket, takes a few steps away.

JUDY PENOSKI

You guys go out. There's enough food and beer for three, not four. I'll hang out on the pier until you get back. Have some fun, Vance.

Kup extends his hand, takes a step toward his new craft.

KUP DONOVAN

C'mon, Vance, get back on the horse.

Vance sets the basket down, puts his good hand over his mouth. Tears well up.

LUCKY (O.S.)

Vance, I brought my famous enchiladas.

Kup grins.

KUP DONOVAN

That seals it -- now you gotta. We won't go out far.

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

The new boat slices through clear, calm water at a modest pace. The Ankona pier is still visible in the distance.

ONBOARD

At midship, Vance and Kup munch sandwiches, sip beers while Lucky steers.

VANCE DONOVAN

You paid my medical bills -- and leased this boat? How much money did you fall into?

KUP DONOVAN

Plenty, though there isn't quite as much as there was.

Kup points out various features of the new boat.

KUP DONOVAN

She's forty feet, with a nine-foot beam. Twin inboard, V8 motors -- a real rocket.

VANCE DONOVAN

How big's the gas tank?

Kup laughs.

KUP DONOVAN

Three hundred fifty gallons. I damn near thought I'd drop dead when I filled her up.

VANCE DONOVAN

Wow!

KUP DONOVAN

Cost me an arm and a leg.

Vance turns away.

KUP DONOVAN

Lighten up, Vance.

Vance raises his injured hand, covered by a black leather glove, looks at it, then Kup.

VANCE DONOVAN

Thanks for reminding me, Kup. For a minute there I forgot the lighter side of career-ending mutilation.

Kup lowers, shakes his head, looks back up.

KUP DONOVAN

Look, thousands of guys came back from Vietnam with all kinds of horrible injuries. They had to decide if the injury was going to be a crutch that held them back, or-

Vance throws his can of beer over the side.

VANCE DONOVAN

I don't need your fucking lecture, Kup! You're whole and never amounted to shit, so spare me the pep talk.

Kup turns his back on Vance, addresses Lucky.

KUP DONOVAN

Lucky, let's head in.

Lucky gives the okay sign, sharply turns the wheel.

VANCE DONOVAN

Sorry. I'm sorry, Kup. I didn't mean to jump down your throat. It's not easy getting used to this.

Kup looks over his shoulder at Vance, nods, but evidences displeasure.

VANCE DONOVAN

At the pier, you mentioned getting back on the horse. How about letting me bring her back in?

Kup turns, faces Vance, smiles.

KUP DONOVAN

That's more like it, brother.

He pats Vance on the shoulder. They meet Lucky at the wheel.

KUP DONOVAN

Lucky, slow it down, Vance is going to take over.

Lucky brings the boat down to a crawl, steps away.

LUCKY

Smoothest ride ever, you'll love
it. Responds like a
thousand-dollar hooker.

Lucky laughs, heads to the stern. Kup points to various
gauges, buttons.

KUP DONOVAN

There's a shit-load of upgrades and
special features, but the basics
aren't a hell of a lot different
than on The Big One. Go ahead.

Vance takes the wheel, places his gloved hand on the gear
shift, gives the boat some gas.

BOAT

The craft picks up speed, heads in the direction of the
pier, one mile distant. White spray erupts off both sides
of the bow.

BACK TO SCENE

KUP DONOVAN

Is that awesome, or what?

Vance beams.

VANCE DONOVAN

Holy shit, Kup!

KUP DONOVAN

We're gonna start our season early,
and it's gonna be the one I've
always deserved.

BOAT/ONBOARD INTERCUTTING

Now one-half-mile from the dock, the boat maintains a steady
speed.

KUP DONOVAN

Another couple hundred yards, then
slow her down, Vance. I don't want
any trouble with pier management.

Vance nods.

VANCE DONOVAN

Can you grab me a beer?

KUP DONOVAN

Sure thing.

Kup heads to the stern.

STERN

Kup opens an ice chest, grabs two beer, talks to Lucky MOS.

BACK TO SCENE

Vance looks over his shoulder for an instant, refocuses on what is ahead.

VANCE'S POV

The pier is quickly approaching.

BACK TO SCENE

Vance shifts gears, guns the engine.

STERN

Lucky and Kup are knocked off their feet. The beers and other small items fly into the air.

KUP DONOVAN
Holy fucking shit! What are you
doing, Vance?

Kup struggles to his feet, fights his way forward a few steps.

KUP DONOVAN
Stop the fucking boat!

BACK TO SCENE

Vance cuts the wheel hard to the right.

The vessel arcs in towards the lengthy, empty portion of the wooden pier, now forty feet away.

Kup manages to get within a few feet of Vance, who looks over his shoulder.

VANCE'S POV

Kup, furious, draws his knife.

BACK TO SCENE

Vance turns the wheel hard again, steers the boat directly into and along the pier.

BOAT

Wooden planks and chunks of fiberglass blast into the air, as the port side of the ship disintegrates. It continues on, along the pier's edge, for twenty feet before coming to a halt. The boat lists steeply in the water, but stays afloat.

A crowd of gawkers assembles on the damaged pier.

CUT TO:

INT. WAVE CREST LOUNGE & MOTEL - DAY (ONE WEEK LATER)

Alone, head down on a table in a dark corner, Kup hums a contrived tune. A half-full bottle of bourbon, a shot glass and five empty beer bottles are within reach. Bert approaches, picks up empties.

KUP DONOVAN

And how's your week goin', Bert?

BERT

Not bad, not bad. Some drunken asshole in here last night accidentally left a winning lottery ticket on the bar.

KUP DONOVAN

(head still down on the bar)

Great, you gonna sell the place, move to Beverly Hills, start dating Raquel Welch?

BERT

Not on four bucks.

Bert pulls a bar rag out of his back pocket, blows his nose, wipes off the back of an empty chair, jams the rag back into his pocket.

BERT

From what I hear, sounds like my week beat yours.

Kup raises his head, displays cuts, bruises. He rests it in the palm of one hand, elbow propped up on the table.

KUP DONOVAN

You could say that. Had my permit revoked before the ink on it was dry. They said I neglected to mention my dishonorable discharge from the army.

Kup pours himself a shot of bourbon, downs it, takes a deep breath.

BERT

Why the hell should that make a difference to the town?

Kup toys with the empty shot glass, shakes his head.

BERT

You think your 'buddy', Wes, was behind it?

KUP DONOVAN

If he wasn't, I'm the fucking King of England.

Bert scratches his ear, wrinkles his brow, bites the tip of his tongue.

BERT

Not sure I get that, but whatever you say, Kup. You want some coffee?

Kup pours another shot.

KUP DONOVAN

Fuck no.

Bert heads back to the bar. O.s., the sound of the entry door opening and closing.

LUCKY (O.S.)

Kup, where the hell are you?

ENTRANCE

Lucky looks around for Kup, makes eye contact with Bert, who points towards Kup's table.

BACK TO SCENE

Lucky advances to Kup's table, remains standing.

KUP DONOVAN

Well, what'd they say?

Lucky shakes his head.

LUCKY

They said, no fucking way. They want all the money back now, plus fifteen percent.

Kup mockingly cackles, pours and downs yet another drink.

KUP DONOVAN

Fuck that. I thought you said they're businessmen. If they are, they should be more flexible.

LUCKY

Not in their line of work.

Kup leans all the way back in his seat, turns serious.

KUP DONOVAN

What are they, janitors or gardeners?

Lucky, offended, leans forward, speaks quietly, intensely.

LUCKY

They're cocaine dealers, one of the biggest in San Antonio -- with gang connections. You don't fuck with them, Kup, unless you want your balls cut off and sewn into your mouth.

Kup moans, leans forward, repeatedly slaps his palm on the table top.

KUP DONOVAN

No, no, no! You could have told me!

LUCKY

You said you needed money and you weren't particular about where it came from.

KUP DONOVAN

So how much time have I got until they reach Ankona?

Lucky takes a step back.

LUCKY

None. I gotta go, so should you.

In the air, Lucky makes the sign of the cross, exits. Kup, with difficulty, gets to his feet, staggers toward the door.

BERT (O.S.)

That's forty bucks, Kup. I need you to put something on account right now, while you still can.

Kup fumbles for his wallet, extracts bills, crumples them, throws them on the floor.

BERT (O.S.)

Did you have insurance on that fancy boat?

Kup pauses, exits without answering.

CUT TO:

INT. KUP'S TRUCK - MINUTES LATER

KUP'S POV

Weaving badly, Kup's truck sways over the median, over and over, barely misses plunging into a ditch alongside the road.

O.s., the sound of an approaching siren grows louder.

KUP'S TRUCK

The truck slows down to a near stop, drifts toward the side of the road, knocks down a flimsy, wooden, A-frame sign advertising fortune telling.

O.s., the siren intensifies. The source, a fire truck, passes Kup's truck, speeds along. Kup's truck resumes its meandering path, accelerates.

EXT. DONOVAN HOME - TEN MINUTES LATER

Kup's truck pulls up to within one house of his own, comes to a jerky stop. The fire truck that passed him is directly in front of the Donovan home, which is ablaze.

Kup partially exits the vehicle, hangs onto the open door. A second fire truck pulls up from the opposite direction. FIREMEN try to advance towards the house, are repelled by intense bursts of flame.

POLICE keep ONLOOKERS back. Two stray dogs bark incessantly, dodge in and out of the growing crowd.

KUP'S POV

The first and second stories are completely engulfed in flame.

Observing the crowd, Kup espies Vance and Judy. Vance glances in Kup's direction, then back towards the house.

BACK TO SCENE

Kup stumbles into his truck, closes the door.

BURNING HOUSE

Jets of water hit the house, to no avail. The second story collapses into the first, sends up a black cloud of smoke percolating with orange, glowing embers.

KUP'S TRUCK

A POLICE OFFICER approaches, taps the glass. It rolls down.

KUP'S POV/POLICE OFFICER'S POV INTERCUTTING

POLICE OFFICER
You're Kup Donovan, right?

KUP DONOVAN
Yeah.

POLICE OFFICER
Is anyone in the house?

KUP DONOVAN
Ma, probably.

POLICE OFFICER
You don't seem too upset.

KUP DONOVAN
Give me a minute; I'm workin' up to it.

The officer's facial expression darkens.

POLICE OFFICER
And you have a younger brother?

KUP DONOVAN
Vance, he doesn't live here anymore. I saw him; he's in the crowd, across the street.

Kup points in Vance's direction.

POLICE OFFICER
Where you coming from?

Kup lights a cigarette.

KUP DONOVAN
Board of directors meeting.

POLICE OFFICER
Uh-huh. Make sure you stay in
town, Kup.

Kup salutes, takes a drag on the cigarette.

BACK TO SCENE

The officer departs, walks in Vance's direction, puts in a call on his walkie-talkie.

VANCE AND JUDY

The same police officer approaches the couple. Vance, upset, wipes away tears. Judy places her arm around his shoulder.

POLICE OFFICER
Vance Donovan?

Vance nods.

VANCE DONOVAN
My mom... I can't believe what I'm
seeing. Everything, gone.

POLICE OFFICER
Are you certain she was home?

VANCE DONOVAN
She only went out to shop on the
weekend. She never went anywhere
else.

POLICE OFFICER
Well, we still don't know for sure.
We'll have to go through the rubble
once the fire is out. I'm very
sorry for your loss. Listen, let's
move somewhere quieter and talk --
just the two of us.

The officer points to a nearby area devoid of onlookers. Judy, surprised, removes her arm from Vance's shoulder. Vance and the officer proceed to the more private space.

QUIET AREA

POLICE OFFICER

I spoke to your brother a few minutes ago. He's clearly drunk and not terribly concerned by all of this. Anything you can tell me?

Vance swallows hard, composes himself.

CURB

An unmarked police car pulls up to the nearby curb. A gray-haired DETECTIVE gets out, walks up to the two men.

BACK TO SCENE

The officer waves to the detective, who joins them, flashes his badge. The detective will now be referred to as DETECTIVE SIMMS, and the police officer as OFFICER MUELLER.

OFFICER MUELLER

Detective Simms.

DETECTIVE SIMMS

Officer Mueller. And you are Vance Donovan?

VANCE DONOVAN

Yes, sir.

DETECTIVE SIMMS

Vance, I'd like to ask you a few questions down at headquarters. Would you please get in the car?

VANCE DONOVAN

I'm here with my girlfriend and-

DETECTIVE SIMMS

I just want to talk to you, alone, now.

Vance looks towards Judy.

VANCE'S POV

Judy runs towards the threesome.

BACK TO SCENE

Judy joins the men.

VANCE DONOVAN

I'm going downtown, just be a little while.

JUDY PENOSKI
Why? What's wrong?

CAR

Detective Simms steps to the car, opens the rear passenger door.

BACK TO SCENE

VANCE DONOVAN
It'll be all right, really. I
won't be long.

Shocked, Judy covers her mouth, cries. Vance walks to the car, gets in. The detective closes the door, gets in behind the wheel, departs.

KUP'S TRUCK

Kup's truck backs up, turns, goes back the way it came.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

DETECTIVE SIMM'S OFFICE

Vance sits on a metal, straight-backed chair, in front of a desk that is conspicuously neat. The room is brightly, uncomfortably illuminated with sunlight pouring in through open blinds. Detective Simms sits on one corner of the desk, sips coffee.

DETECTIVE SIMMS
You want some coffee?

VANCE DONOVAN
No, no thanks.

DETECTIVE SIMMS
I'll get right to the point. Your
brother's response to this tragedy
is suspicious, to say the least.
Can you shed any light on that?

VANCE DONOVAN
I can. He's desperate for money.
I mean, no matter how much he
borrows, he just burns through it.
He borrowed and spent almost every
dollar Ma had. He kept giving her
(MORE)

VANCE DONOVAN (cont'd)
excuses every time she asked for
even the smallest payment, just to
keep the lights on and put food on
the table.

DETECTIVE SIMMS
And it all went to pay business
expenses? Treasure hunting, right?

VANCE DONOVAN
Yeah. Well, that's what he wanted
them to believe, Ma and all the
rest of the private investors he's
screwed, over the years.
Truthfully, it actually was
expensive keeping that
piece-of-shit boat he owns in
repairs, but he blew plenty at dog
races, bars and on hookers, too.

Simms notices, points to Vance's glove.

DETECTIVE SIMMS
Why do you wear that glove?

Vance looks away, then glares at Simms, pulls off the glove.

VANCE'S HAND

Three middle fingers are prosthetic. The thumb and pinky
are missing tips.

BACK TO SCENE

VANCE DONOVAN
I wear it to hide this... This
'souvenir', courtesy of my driven
brother.

Detective Simms looks away; Vance puts the glove back on.

VANCE DONOVAN
We didn't have to do the dive! The
season was over. Conditions were
rough, worse than I ever dived in.
But all Kup wanted to do was plant
phony coins at Wes Pennington's
claim site -- couldn't be talked
out of it. It cost me my hand, my
future!

Simms stands, puts down the coffee cup.

DETECTIVE SIMMS
Who's making the phony coins?

VANCE DONOVAN

Kup. He makes phony treasure coins, mostly sells them to tourists. He planted some at Wes' site to keep him away from Clayton's Reef.

Simms writes notes in a pad, pauses.

DETECTIVE SIMMS

And you think he torched the house? You're not just trying to get even for your injury?

Vance sighs, thinks.

VANCE DONOVAN

No, I'm not trying to get even. Kup is ruthless enough to do it. He wanted the condemnation money that would have gone to Ma, but the fire insurance policy she kept on it was for more than the city was gonna pay. Knowing Kup, he did the math and struck a match.

DETECTIVE SIMMS

With the house gone, where do you think we could find him?

VANCE DONOVAN

He owes too much at the Wave Crest, that just leaves his old boat, The Big One, down at the pier.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CROSSROAD IN ANKONA - TEN MINUTES LATER

CAR

A black, unmarked sedan with tinted glass comes to a stop at an intersection marked with a sign reading: Ankona Pier, Turn Right.

The car turns, follows the road, comes to a stop on the shoulder, after a short distance. The vantage point has a view of the entire pier. Two THUGS emerge -- muscular, tattooed, armed. The bald OLDER THUG (#1), retrieves binoculars from the car, scans the pier.

THUG #1's POV

Assorted boats pass through the field of view, until The Big One is found. Kup loads boxes, assorted supplies.

BACK TO SCENE

THUG #1

Found the bastard! Looks like he's
going to make a run for it.

THUG #2, younger, bearded, with long hair tied back in a ponytail, slams the car's roof.

THUG #2

Time to make some chop meat!
Vamonos!

O.s., the sound of approaching cars. Thug #1 looks back, up the road.

THUG #1's POV

Two oncoming police cars, lights flashing, without sirens.

BACK TO SCENE

The thugs dive back into their car, as the squad cars speed by.

PIER

Kup loads the last few boxes, runs to untie the boat, as the two police cars screech to a halt. Two COPS bolt out of the first car, charge Kup just as he finishes freeing his vessel.

Kup slugs the closest COP, (#1), in the jaw, knocking him to the ground. He is slow to get up.

THE BIG ONE

Untethered, the boat, spewing smoke, drifts a few feet from the dock.

BACK TO SCENE

The second COP, (#2), draws his pistol, attempts to club Kup with its butt end. Kup evades the blow, kicks the cop's arm. The gun falls, hits the dock, discharges one round. Cop #2 groans, grabs his gut, crumples, collapses.

COPS #3 and #4, from the second car, tackle and subdue Kup.

THE BIG ONE

The boat, now twenty feet from the pier, drifts aimlessly. The motor sputters, quits. Smoky fumes dissipate from the silent craft.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRISON - DAY

(FOUR MONTHS LATER)

A roadside sign identifies the Douglas County Correctional Facility, set back one hundred yards from the street. An abundance of razor wire is seen atop concrete walls and layers of of chain link fencing. Vance's truck passes the sign. Judy drives.

ENTRANCE, PRISON PARKING LOT

The truck pulls up to the guardhouse, stops. A GUARD steps out, speaks to Judy and Vance MOS, marks down information on a clipboard. He puts away the clipboard, retrieves a pole with an attached, circular mirror, inspects the underside of the truck, then puts away the instrument. He returns, checks the bed of the truck, re-enters the guardhouse. The gate opens; the truck proceeds.

PARKING LOT

Judy parks the truck, exits, as does Vance, carrying something the size of a basketball, wrapped in heavy burlap. Judy's stomach is flat.

VISITOR'S ENTRANCE

Judy enters, followed by Vance.

INT. PRISON

At the visitor inspection post, visitors are processed one-by-one by prison staff. Pocketbooks are opened, their contents inspected. All visitors are patted down.

Vance sets the unknown object down on a long table. Partially obscured by Judy, the item is unwrapped, inspected, re-covered and returned. Vance and Judy proceed down a corridor labeled with an arrow pointing the way to Prisoner Visitation.

PRISONER VISITATION

Two armed GUARDS stand by the entrance, allow entry to Judy and Vance. One of the guards escorts them into the heavily monitored room and to their seats in an open cubicle. Thick, yellowish, bullet-proof glass separates them from the prisoner's side and its empty seat. Vance holds the wrapped object in his lap.

VANCE'S POV

Through the glass, the prisoners' entrance is visible. A GUARD releases several bolts, slides open the heavy, metal door. Kup shuffles in, attended by an ADDITIONAL GUARD. He wears an orange jumpsuit and has manacles around his ankles and wrists that are attached by a chain. Head lowered, he is guided to his seat. The guard flips a switch, activating a microphone, then steps away and observes.

Kup raises his shaved head, reveals assorted bruises, old and new.

KUP'S POV/JUDY AND VANCE'S POV INTERCUTTING

KUP DONOVAN

I never expected visitors,
especially you two.

VANCE DONOVAN

It's not what you'd call a social
visit.

KUP DONOVAN

Some 'big news?' You a momma now,
Judy?

Judy's face reddens; her lips quiver.

JUDY PENOSKI

We decided on an abortion. No
portion of you should continue.

Kup looks away, but for only a second.

KUP DONOVAN

Well, maybe that's best. So, how
you payin' the bills these days,
Vance? You become famous for bein'
a one-handed welder?

Kup laughs. The nearby guard approaches, taps Kup on the shoulder with a billy club.

GUARD

Keep it down.

KUP DONOVAN

Yes, sir.

The guard steps away.

VANCE DONOVAN

I work for Wes Pennington now, Kup.
He's got a claim on Clayton's Reef.
He hired me because I know it as
well as you do.

Kup, stone-faced, takes a deep breath, releases it slowly.

KUP DONOVAN

I'm guessin' that relates to what's
sittin' on your lap. When you
walked in, I was hopin' you brought
me a cake with a file in it.

Kup starts to laugh, quickly stifles it. Vance sets the item on the chipped counter adjacent to the glass. He pulls away the burlap, reveals an old, rusted, ship's bell, encrusted with coral. Kup draws close, eyes wide. His face an inch from the glass, Kup's mouth drops open.

VANCE DONOVAN

I found this yesterday, at
Clayton's Reef.

Kup jerks back, breaks into a devilish smile, fails at holding back suppressed laughter.

GUARD (O.S.)

Last warning, Kup. You interested
in spending another month in
solitary?

KUP DONOVAN

No, sir.

Kup composes himself, puts one hand over his mouth temporarily. He leans in towards the glass once again.

KUP DONOVAN

Congratulations, you found the
phony I planted three years ago.

Vance turns ashen; Kup giggles, o.s.

KUP DONOVAN

I gave it plenty of time to
corrode. Back then I figured it
(MORE)

KUP DONOVAN (cont'd)
would, someday, be an expensive
souvenir for some future sucker.
Never thought it would be you.

Kup lightly claps three times, slaps his knee, grins.

KUP DONOVAN
Wasn't easy engraving the ship's
name, and then wear it down. Left
off the date, though -- it seemed
like overkill. I wish I could see
Wes' face when you break the news.

Vance and Judy look at each other. Judy slowly rotates the
bell. After half a turn, a large, somewhat worn date is
readable: 1684.

Kup is thunderstruck.

VANCE DONOVAN
We found your bell, too, Kup, about
ten feet from this one. Wes knew
right away yours couldn't be legit,
based on the amount of coral on it.

Kup lowers his head; a tear rolls off his chin.

VANCE DONOVAN
Just thought you'd like to know the
Estrella Norte did sink at
Clayton's Reef. The treasure's
there, too.

Vance raises his gloved hand. The guard approaches.

VANCE DONOVAN
(to guard)
We're done.

FADE OUT:

THE END

