

THE MOONSHINE RIFT

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - NIGHT

Enter George Washington. Tiny fingers push the Free World's first president into the coin slot, punch a button labeled "Orange Crush," and retrieve the soda from the machine tray.

Seven-year-ol' TARA pops off the cap. The pig-tailed, blue-eyed girl grips her teddy bear, Brando, and guzzles the soda. Off the main road, she watches a Plymouth Gran Fury enter the lot -- fitted out with two cherries on top -- and park just outside the furthest room, next to a chopped Harley Davidson.

That's right, a police car. Meet OFFICER CHIP JACOBSON, late thirties. On the smug side, he sports a weasely cop-stache; and from the look of his uniform to the oversized behemoth he drives, it's evident we're in a late 70's time frame here.

He knocks on the door to the corner room.

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - CORNER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LILLY TACKETT answers. She's mid-twenties; a sinful case of biker-trash wild enough to make outlaws shit their chaps.

LILLY

Why ain't ya said nothin' yet?

OFFICER JACOBSON

Do I need to?

'Course, the cop ain't shitting -- though his effrontery suggests a manner of unease and vigilance. He notes that she packs a piece in the back of her jeans.

INT. SHITTY MOTEL - CORNER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacobson enters. Porno flicks start out like this; the way that Lilly lingers near the door as she sizes up the officer.

LILLY

Randy says your ol' friends.

The room is sparse, mostly biker wear draped about. RANDALL KARDELL exits the bathroom -- thirties, long hair, tattoos...

KARDELL

Yo, Chip. Good to see ya, brother.
Lils, this here's Chip Jacobson.
Known each other since junior high.

LILLY
 (unimpressed)
 A cop? Good looking out, Randy.

OFFICER JACOBSON
 I ain't officially off duty. What
 brings me here, dead of night, with
 two first degree felons wanted for
 armed robbery?

Kardell tosses Jacobson a leather cut from off the bed. The
 patch reads "Phalse Profets." Unveiled underneath, atop the
 comforter, a mason jar half-filled with a clear liquid.
 Kardell then drags CARLOS out from the bathroom -- a twenty-
 something Hispanic man, drunk as hell.

OFFICER JACOBSON
 He a prospect?

KARDELL
 Ain't the right skin color. Hell if
 he ain't loyal to the M.C. though.

Carlos dry-heaves. Kardell points to the mason jar.

KARDELL
 Bastard's been puking that shit
 since we caught up to him. He sells
 it to the club. We got his hooch
 van parked 'round back, too.

LILLY
 (to Jacobson)
 Ya got shiners on your Rio Grande.

CARLOS
 A cop, huh? Ya got a cop here,
 Randall? In for it now, *puta*.
 Profets gonna put a bullet in ya.

LILLY
 Job was clean -- 'till this here
 bloodhound tracked us.

OFFICER JACOBSON
 So if I look them bullets up in
 that piece ya got tucked behind
 your jeans, I won't count one or
 two missing? That kinda clean?

KARDELL
 Chip, this prick *made* us. Back in
 Denver. Christ, ya know he's from
 the Valley here?

OFFICER JACOBSON
 (to Carlos, intrigued)
 That true? What town ya say?

Carlos spits on Jacobson's boots -- flips him the bird.

OFFICER JACOBSON
 Well, why didn't ya say so?

The cop cracks his truncheon against Carlos' shins -- then delivers the baton to his jaw. The boy falls atop the bed -- and there, he receives another mouthful of *lignum vitea*. Jacobson shoves the jar of shine into his face.

OFFICER JACOBSON
 This shit -- who's making it?

KARDELL
 Hey, brother, what's this about?

Jacobson fellatios the billystick deeper down the hombre's throat until the boy is forced to spit rather than swallow.

CARLOS
Chinga tu madre. Ain't nobody
 makin' that shit but me.

OFFICER JACOBSON
 That right, ya shinin'? In my town?

KARDELL
 Yo, Chip -- what's this got to do
 with the Profets?
 (soto, sobersided)
 Or the goddamn *money* he took?

OFFICER JACOBSON
 I got shine runnin' out this place
 like whores from church. If he's
 got a setup in town -- he's got it
 hidden. S'pose for a moment that'd
 be where your stolen cash is.
 (beat)
 Now, hold his legs down.

Together, the men get to work on Carlos. The policeman does something like crush the boy's larynx with his cosh.

LILLY
 Hey -- who's that?

Outside, through the curtain gap, little blue eyes peer into the room -- but dip below the window sill once discovered.

KARDELL

Shit. The smaller the town, the less the privacy.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Ain't safe here for an inquisition anyway. Get this vato in the trunk of my car. I'll deal with him proper. Do it, quietly.

In one fell swoop, Jacobson knocks out Carlos with a slug to the head.

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Tara runs away from the door. She rounds a corner, into a corridor -- a split second later, the cop dives out the room.

INT. SHITTY MOTEL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tara locks the door and dives into bed, under the covers. She startles SCOOTER awake -- her twelve-year-ol' brother. Scooter rolls over and falls back to sleep.

Tara hears footsteps outside. She makes out the policeman's silhouette through the thin curtains. He stops.

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Officer Jacobson lingers, listens. He's near determined to kick down every door. Soon, though, he hears a clangorous bump from back where he came -- and two adult voices that converse louder than they should.

He's forced to settle one problem at a time and goes to assist Kardell and Lilly, and their plight to jam Carlos in the trunk, before they wake the entire goddamn motel.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAN LUIS VALLEY, CO - VARIOUS LOCALES - SUNRISE

The year is 1979. We watch sunlight crescendo over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and enjoy various images of the Valley -- from the Great Sand Dunes to the Rio Grande River. Quiet communities are connected by highways and/or the railroad system, with farmland and forests peppered throughout.

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MORNING

A school pack drops next to the garden hose. A hand enters frame and turns the valve on the spigot, *lefty-loosey*. JOSE, twelve, stomps out a cigarette and hooks the spray-nozzle to his jeans. The boy, with jet-black hair and a fairly muscular build, climbs the farmhouse to the second story lattice.

Away yonder, near the barn, he can see an older man, BRUCE BOWDE, tend to the fields aboard a riding-tractor.

I/E. FARMHOUSE - FORREST'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Through the open bedroom window, we reveal another boy the same age, but fast asleep. This is FORREST. He passes gas. Jose snickers as he arms the garden hose... aims... and--

SPRRRIISSSSHHHHH! -- blasts Forrest awake with a spray of frigid water.

BRUCE (O.C.)
HEY! DOWN FROM THERE!

Jose cuts the water and turns in time to watch the man from tractor leap off it and charge toward him like a Spanish fighting bull. Then, blind-sided, he gets stung hard in the head with a soggy pillow and is knocked off the lattice.

Jose lands in a garden bush. Above, a disgruntled Forrest throws his wet night-shirt at him, too.

INT. FARMHOUSE - UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Quickly, Forrest changes clothes and grabs his school bag. The contents inside clank.

He stops at the next bedroom and peeps through the door. His mother, EMILY, is asleep in the bed.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jose is scooped out the shrubs by Bruce. The man is furious.

BRUCE
The hell you doing, prick? Flooding my house -- think that's funny?
(he spots the cigarette)
Christ, Jose. You're a piece of work. Must run in the family, like that loser brother of yours.
(MORE)

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Keep your shit up and both you
might be swappin' prison stories.

JOSE

Carlos' never been to prison. Just
juvey. And regular jail. Twice.

BRUCE

Learn reserve, boy. You're not as
smart as you think you are.

A beat later, a peculiar buzz sound: *BRRRRR...* it's the tractor; and without its parking brake set, it rolls unmanned in a collision course toward the barn. Bruce nearly sets off after it, but Forrest bursts out the farmhouse first.

BRUCE

Hey son, where you off to?

FORREST

Last day of school, dad.

The farmer's son is a bit scrawny, with brown hair and eyes. Jose grabs his bag and follows Forrest down the driveway.

BRUCE

Be home after? Lot of chores.

FORREST

I don't know. Maybe. I might stay
at Jose's tonight.

CRASH! -- the damn tractor plows into the side of the barn.

BRUCE

Try and make it home before supper!
For your mother, at least.

FORREST

He's an asshole.

JOSE

How's your mom, bro?
(beat, changes subject)
Hey, packin' heat?

Forrest unzips his bag: there's cans of shaving cream, water balloons, soda -- the works. The boys snicker and run off.

Abandoned, Bruce goes to settle affairs with Mr. John Deer.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOBSON'S HOUSE - AMANI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

AMANI applies mascara to her face. Fourteen, tall, dressed in a flannel shirt and jeans, she studies her work in the mirror. Outside her bedroom window, that very familiar Gran Fury, designation number "52," pulls into the driveway. She watches Officer Jacobson circle 'round the squad car.

INT. JACOBSON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A local morning NEWS ANCHOR blabs on the television. RACHEL, Amani's mother, fries up bacon in a hot pan.

NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV)

Authorities are still looking for two culprits responsible for the murder of a Wanda Thesely, a senior manager at First National Bank...

Amani enters and tries to make a dash for it.

RACHEL

Amani, finish this up.

AMANI

Gotta run. Signing yearbooks.

RACHEL

Chip just got home. Help me out. I gotta hit the can.

AMANI

Gross, mom.

Reluctant, Amani takes over the grease and bacon duty.

RACHEL

What's with all the makeup? Ease up. Boys will think you're easy.

Exit Rachel, enter Jacobson. He juggles keys and a work bag.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Hey, tiger. What smells so good?

AMANI

Bacon. The other white meat. To match your uniform.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Watch it. I'll smack that mouth clean off your face.

AMANI

Sure. Sorry, Chip. Extra crispy?

OFFICER JACOBSON

Somewhere 'tween charcoal and dust.

He sets his bag down. For whatever reason, it's unzipped. Amani senses his apprehension.

OFFICER JACOBSON

What've I told ya before, while under this roof? Huh? What was it?

AMANI

I'm late for school.

Amani shrugs and flips black bacon onto a plate. After, she drives past Jacobson but the cop snatches her by the arm. It's then that she spots a mason jar inside his work bag.

OFFICER JACOBSON

My own boy respects me. Your mother even. So why can't you? That so much to ask -- that maybe, every now and then, ya call me "dad?" I been good to you and your mom.

The sting of "awkward" encapsulates the space. Somewhere the T.V. still yaps -- it's more dribble about a bank robbery, possibly linked to a motorcycle gang. Amani checks the mason jar once more. Jacobson studies her.

OFFICER JACOBSON

We all go through some shit. Hope ya know that. Makes us stronger.
(beat)
And I apologize. Okay? I lost my temper. Work stuff. Stress.

AMANI

Signing yearbooks, Chip. You're going to make me late.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Fine, be an asshole. By the way, missed a spot -- on your cheek. Better cake more foundation on. Ya don't want nose friends pokin' fun at ya.

Amani pulls her arm back and bails out the door. As she bypasses the T.V., Kardell's mug appears on screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - ROOM - MORNING

The door cracks open and Tara's blue eyes peep out the slit.

SCOOTER (O.C.)
Okay, dunder, out the way.

SCOOTER, a gangly kid of twelve, slings on a backpack and barges out the room. He sports unkempt hair and an overbite. He drags out his unwilling sister. With her, Brando the bear.

SCOOTER
Come on, slowpoke. I'm supposed to meet the fellahs. Geez, Tara. What's the matter with ya? Oh hey, lemme grab a paper.

The newspaper dispenser sits next to the soda machine. Scooter digs into his pockets with barely enough change.

SCOOTER
Ah poop, where'd all my quarters go? Thought I had more dough.

Tara plays dumb, but soon gets whisked away again. She's led toward last night's creepy room; motorcycle still out front.

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - CORNER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, Scooter buries his nose into the paper as he drags along Tara. He doesn't notice the room door open or a slender stranger exit. He plows face-first into the woman's hips.

SCOOTER
Oh, golly! Hey. Sorry, ma'am.

Scooter 'bout falls head-over-heels in love once he gazes up into the face of that badass broad Lilly.

LILLY
Ya okay, kid?

SCOOTER
Uh, yep. Very okay, ma'am. Just, ya know, last day of school.

KARDELL
Kick ass. Nice goin'.

Lilly holds out a fist. Eventually, the goober catches on and clumsily bumps it back. The woman then lights up a fag. She's a smoker, eh? Right there, a big turn-off for Scooter.

LILLY
Gettin' some tail to celebrate?

SCOOTER
Oh, yeah... um, no. This -- this is my sister, Tara. Uh, yeah...

Long pause. Tara sheepishly hides behind her brother.

LILLY
Cool.

SCOOTER
Yep. Wel'p, okay. Bye.

KARDELL (O.C.)
Lils, who ya talkin' to?

Lilly slides over -- the boy is now in a direct eye-line to a dude who exits the bathroom. Fresh out the shower, the man has a towel wrapped 'round his waist. Scooter's seen that mug before, and no further away than the front page of his paper.

LILLY
(to Kardell)
Jus' chattin' with the neighbors.

Kardell studies the boy, then the small girl behind him. It's a sensitive exchange of glares and stares to be sure.

KARDELL
Chip said he'd take care of that.
Why don't ya come back inside.

LILLY
(to the kids)
Yeah, why don't I? Maybe chase some early morning tail myself. Scram, kids. Don't be late for school.

With a yank, Scooter drags Tara the hell out of there. Lilly watches. She pitches the cigarette and shuts the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - CAMPUS - DAY

Scooter trolls campus. Once again, face buried in his paper.

SCOOTER
Guys won't believe this. They'll
shit themselves--

--wait, where'd she go? Scooter, flummoxed, finally spots
Tara in the grass. There, she studies a butterfly.

SCOOTER
Hey! Wanna keep up?

TARA
Danaus plexippus. Early this time
of year.

SCOOTER
Whoopity-doo, you read a book.
Dammit. Get to class, will ya.

She sneers and insults him back with a flip of the ol' bird.

SCOOTER
Wait for me after! Stay put. Don't
go off chasin' butterflies!

At last, he spots Forrest and Jose hop behind a tractor tire.

SCOOTER
Hey, fellahs!

EXT. SCHOOL - CAMPUS - TRACTOR TIRE - CONTINUOUS

Jose squirms, uneasy that Scooter's discovered him.

JOSE
Christ. The yarn spotted us. Should
I pelt him?

FORREST
Nah, don't waste grenades.

As Scooter rushes toward them -- even as he stumbles and
trips along the way -- Forrest and Jose pack water balloons
filled with shaving cream into their bags.

JOSE
Oh, I'll waste his ass...

Jose pops out behind the tire, live grenade in hand--

JOSE
Scoot, think fast!

His arm swings and Scoot hits the deck. But then... nothing.

JOSE

Like I'd waste one on you! That's two for flinching, yarn.

SCOOTER

Suck it, Jose!

JOSE

You'd like that, wouldn't ya?

Jose jabs Scooter in the arm. Forrest then socks Jose, "Ow!"

FORREST

Ready. We doing this or not?

SCOOTER

Uh, what's the deal, guys?

JOSE

Here. Be a man for once.

Jose tosses Scooter the grenade that was meant for him.

SCOOTER

Wait. Gotta show ya somethi--

--too late, the two boys flee. The yarn hustles to catch up.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL - OUTSIDE GIRL'S RESTROOM - DAY

With military precision, Forrest and Jose assemble quietly outside the door. Scooter nearly blows their operation:

SCOOTER

Guess who I saw at the motel?

JOSE

New digs, eh?

SCOOTER

When I got the dough -- yeah, I'll crash at the motel. Beats the boxcar. Or my house. But fellas, look at thi--

JOSE

(to Forrest)

What ya thinkin'?

FORREST

Soda-bomb. Draw 'em out.

Out from their bags, they hand off and thoroughly shake a few soda cans. Next, they puncture 'em full of holes with a pen and toss the spray of pop inside the restroom.

Their satisfaction is met by screams -- and as a gaggle of girls try and make a quick escape, the boys pelt them with shaving cream-filled ballistics. The girls promptly serve up Forrest and Jose an ass-whoopin'. Even Scooter gets pummeled.

SCOOTER

It wasn't me! IT WASN'T ME!

After they declare that "All boys are retarded," the girls sail to class. Except for one, who knocks the bathroom door wide open. Soda runs down her face, into her flannel shirt.

SCOOTER

Amani -- swear, it wasn't me!

Dispirited by the ambush, Amani zeros in on the malefactors.

AMANI

I know. Forrest, Jose was born an asshole. What, are you taking lessons?

JOSE

Hey, lighten up. Was a joke.

FORREST

Sorry, Amani. It was his idea.

JOSE

Oh, way to snitch, ya rat!

Forrest then spots a purple mark on Amani's face, near where the soda washed away some of the makeup -- close to her eye.

FORREST

Who gave you that? Your ol' man?

Her crystal eyes shiver. Amani pile drives right 'tween them--

INT. SCHOOL - COMMONS - CONTINUOUS

--but the boys barge past other students to keep up.

JOSE

That slimeball. He can choke on
this--
(claps his fist together)
--see how he likes it!

AMANI

He's not my dad. It's not worth it.

JOSE

Bullshit. I'll murder his ass.

AMANI

Stay out of it. All of you, leave it alone. Understand? Leave it.

FORREST

But, Amani--

AMANI

What'd I say all year? I told you I'm fine. I can handle myself. And I don't need you.

(pause, sympathetic)

You're sweet. But... you're a kid. You can't look after me.

(beat)

'Course, if you really want to help... follow me.

Amani leads the boys through an office door.

SCOOTER

Guys, lemme show you this--

INT. SCHOOL - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SCOOTER

--I bumped into that bank robber.

No one pays attention. Amani ushers them to a phone.

AMANI

Jose, I'm sorry I called you an asshole. You're a dick, not an asshole. Still, sorry. Will you call your brother?

JOSE

Gee, thanks. I feel much better. And what ya want Carlos for?

RING! RING! RING! -- not the phone, but the damn school bell.

SCOOTER

Oh shit. We're late for class.

FORREST

So what? Last day of school, dude.

SCOOTER

Ah, butterscotch. But Ms. Lucero's gonna play a documentary in So'sh.

Amani swipes his paper and bops him on the forehead.

AMANI

Then scram, spaz. We've got shine to sell.

SCOOTER

No way.

AMANI

Yes way.

(to Jose)

Call him. Tell him we can have the next batch ready by three.

Jose shrugs and gets crackin' on the dialin'.

FORREST

What's up, Amani?

AMANI

After Chip came home this morning, I saw a jar in his bag.

FORREST

Coulda' been anything.

AMANI

No one else in the Valley shines. It was ours. Definitely ours. Forrest, can you ditch class?

FORREST

Yeah. Um, me and Jose meant to.

JOSE

Yo. No answer.

(slams the phone)

He could be sleeping. It's early.

Amani considers a moment -- then makes like a tree. Forrest and Jose high-five and, likewise, leave along with her.

SCOOTER

Wait. Fellas. What about class?

JOSE

Take notes for me!

CUT TO:

A film that documents the history of the Valley plays at the head of class. Scooter jots notes. Then -- *Fff-whhit!* -- a spitball hits him in the back of the ear. He ignores it.

DOC. NARRATOR (ON FILM)
--an extensive alpine valley, the San Luis covers eight thousand square miles in Southern Colorado.

Fff-whhit! -- another spitball. In the back of class, a few boys snicker. The teacher hushes them.

OC. NARRATOR (V.O.)
...the valley is located atop the Rio Grande Rift, where water flows south and drains into the River.

Spit-wad number three, back of the head. Scooter unveils the balloon Jose tossed him from earlier. Spit-wad four, five...

SCOOTER
 (soto)
 Don't be a pussy, Will... don't puss out... Dammit, knock it off!

Finally, he launches the balloon toward a bully named KEITH. It misses and explodes in Samantha Casey's face instead. Well hell -- Scooter might as well have pissed his pants instead.

SCOOTER
 Have a swell summer, gang!

Posthaste, he escapes out the door. *Peace out, Class of '79!*

CUT TO:

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - DAY

Forrest and Jose swashbuckle; they use gnawed sticks to duke it out 'round and 'tween the bellies of rotted boxcars. Amani walks a steady path and reads the paper she swiped from Scooter. I s'pose she drops some intrigue and exposition:

AMANI
 This Kardell is bad news.

FORREST
 Cardigan? Wait -- who?

AMANI
 Randall Kardell. Trashy motorcycle guy. Bank robber, remember? He and this woman, they killed some lady.

Sticks clash -- *Clack! Clack!* -- as the boys hop over Amani.

JOSE

Christ. No shit? Hey, which M.C.?
Uh, motorcycle club... it say?

AMANI

Hmm -- here, the Phalse Profets.

JOSE

Oh, damn. They're nuts. My brother
told me 'bout them dudes.

Jose corners Forrest -- gets right up in his face...

JOSE

Like, they'll cut your nards off
and feed 'em to your grandma.

...*Clack! Clack!* -- but Forrest escapes inside a boxcar.

FORREST

I wonder how much cash they stole.

He comes 'round, then strikes the back of Jose's thigh, "Ow!"

AMANI

Enough to set off the wrong folks.

Forrest hits Jose in the shoulder and his opponent falls ass-first into a running stream.

JOSE

Dammit, Forrest -- the hell?!

FORREST

Ha! For the hose, douche.

Amani shakes her head, *Whyíd I ever partner with these goons?*

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - BOXCAR DISTILLERY - CONTINUOUS

Amani pulls opens the side door to reveal the boxcar's guts--

AMANI

Dweebs want to make our own cash?

--a Wicked Willy Wonka Wonderland. But it ain't for baking
cookies -- no, this here paradise is set up for moonshining.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 160 - DAY

Scooter runs toward the highway, a skip in his step. It may be due to the rush of having nailed the cutest girl in class (albeit with shaving cream), but he pays small attention as he jogs 'cross the road -- even as a car speeds toward him.

His feet tangle, he free-falls, eats it, then -- *SCREECH!*

His first-ever kiss was almost the bumper of a Plymouth Gran Fury. He can taste the wisp of burnt rubber. He jumps back onto his feet and makes eye contact with the driver -- we know him as Officer Jacobson; and his patrol, Squad Car 52.

Maybe hours go by in which Scooter lingers, frozen in place -- most likely his stomach boiling. But when the cop makes no attempt to confront him, only then does he steady slide the rest of the way 'cross the street.

At last, Scooter relieves himself as the cop heads down the highway again. He pats himself for piss. Thankfully, all dry.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXCAR DISTILLERY - DAY

The shine equipment is mostly a hodgepodge of scavenged materials, but Amani gets to work like a pro: she instructs Forrest to crank the gas-powered water pump (placed outside) while Jose fills the thumper and worm drums.

She uncovers buckets of ripe mash, then dumps the fermented contents into the copper still and lights a burner underside. Forrest and Jose sort out bottles on a table. In midst of the mess, Jose finds two ratty sleeping bags.

JOSE

Ah, hell. How often does Scoot crash here?

AMANI

Come off it. Wouldn't you?

JOSE

Shit -- Scoot's parents? I'd make 'em take a hike. They can try and shoot up with my foot up their ass if they gave lip about it.

AMANI

You're a real tough-guy, Jose.

JOSE
Malarky. Forrest, what'd you do?

FORREST
Sleep here. Wouldn't have to deal with them. Or anyone.

JOSE
You're such cheese, dude. Act like ya got it worse than us.

FORREST
Bite me, bro. You've seen him -- my ol' man's an ass--

JOSE
--asshole. Yeah, got it. 'Cause he's on the sauce since your mom got sick. Big deal.

FORREST
What would you know?

JOSE
My ol' man had a mountain fall on him. What would you know? Or hey -- how 'bout that shiner Amani's got?

Amani rips away the bags and shoves a mason jar at Jose.

AMANI
Ladies, grow a pair. You act like you're on your periods.

She returns to the copper still.

SCOOTER (O.C.)
Hey, fellas. Hey! I made it.

Outside the distillery, Scooter runs his way towards them--

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - BOXCAR DISTILLERY - CONTINUOUS
--he stumbles once or twice, but hey... that's his charm.

JOSE
Bullshit. Ya actually ditched?

SCOOTER
Uh-huh. Won't believe who I saw.

FORREST
How was class?

SCOOTER

Class? Oh, um -- it was good! Teach played this documentary 'bout the San Luis Valley. All this, right. We're located in this rift -- the Rio Grande Rift, it's called. And Jose, I got notes for ya.

JOSE

Oh, yeah? Wow! Got somethin' for you, too!

Scooter sours when Jose gifts him with a Radio Flyer wagon.

SCOOTER

Serious? The hell for?

FORREST

We're bottling. You're on delivery.

Inside the distillery, Amani opens the tap at the bottom of the worm drum. Shine slowly trickles out, into a jar.

AMANI

Focused action beats brilliance.

Scooter doesn't squeeze out so much as a "Huh" when Forrest presents him with his next gift... a girl-seated bicycle.

FORREST

Your carriage, sir -- to ride your ass through the "rift."

Forrest and Jose snicker. Scooter ain't none too pleased. We cue non-diegetic music... proceed with montage accordingly:

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. MONTAGE: KIDS HUSTLE THAT SHINE, MAKE THEM ENDS

-- Boxcar Distillery: Amani fills mason jars. The boys package product. Scooter hauls everything off on the bike.

-- Back Alley: Scooter knocks on seedy doors, shine for cash.

-- Trailer Park: Scooter knocks on seedy doors...

-- Boxcar Distillery: Amani barks instructions to Forrest and Jose. Scooter arrives for another pickup.

-- Bar: Scooter stacks a few boxes for the bar owner.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Ding-Ding! -- enter Scooter, wagon in tow. The place is dead, save for an older man who peruses the isles and a woman behind the register. The young hustler targets her.

Before Scooter has time to drop his sales pitch, the owner flashes a toothless grin and nods toward the customer, "Can't chance it today."

SCOOTER

Oh, come on. It's my last run.

She spits out a gooey black mass of dip and resumes her knitting. Defeated, Scooter hauls the wagon back outside--

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

--and ties it up to his pathetic excuse for a bicycle.

DUMARS (O.C.)

What's the proof on that, boy?

It's the man from inside: late fifties, greying-red hair -- dressed like a scant Humphrey Bogart.

DUMARS

In the boxes, there. What's the percent of alcohol?

SCOOTER

Oh. Um, I don't know. All of it, I guess. Hundred.

DUMARS

Your daddy make it?

Scooter stays mum about its origin.

DUMARS

How much for a jar?

SCOOTER

Oh, wel'p -- five bucks.

The man digs out a special money clip -- at once, the boy's face turns green: that's right folks, a Denver P.D. badge.

DUMARS

Relax, kid. I'm not a rat. The badge doesn't mean shit anyway. Far as I'm concerned, your business is yours. Mine is mine. Here...

He slips Scooter a five -- but as a bonus, his business card gets passed along, too: *PETER DUMARS: Private Investigator.*

SCOOTER

Whoops. Want this back?

DUMARS

Keep it. If you ever need a P.I. -- my current profession. That number reaches back to my daughter in Denver. I check in with her every few hours or so.

Scooter shrugs. He gives DuMars the shine, pockets the card.

SCOOTER

Hey, mister. Time is it?

DUMARS

(checks his watch)
Quarter after three.

SCOOTER

Butterscotch! Forgot my sister.

And in that exemplum, Scooter hops his bike and rides away. DuMars watches, completely oblivious to the shitstorm that kid and his pals will eventually put him through.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - PICKUP AREA - DAY

Alone, Tara reads a book with Brando. Minding herself, she never expected to -- *POP!* -- get hit in the head with a shaving cream-filled balloon. The culprit: an eight-year-ol' schmuck named TAYLOR; whose last name happens to be Schmuck.

TAYLOR

Ha! Pegged ya good, trailer-trash.

TARA

Schmuck! You brat. I'll get you.

Taylor taunts her, but Tara reels back her arm and lays one on thick. The punch knocks him onto his butt. Still out for blood, however, Tara goes Clockwork Orange on Taylor Schmuck.

WHOOP! WHOOP! -- a police siren; Squad Car 52. But Tara's too engrossed in ass-kicking to heed that it's Officer Jacobson.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Okay, he's had enough.

Jacobson approaches and rips the girl off a bloodied Taylor.

TAYLOR

Trailer trash! You're gonna get it.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Ease up, boy. Ya clearly lost.

The cop sets Tara free, but hangs onto the boy -- maybe to help suppress his embarrassment in a lost fight to a girl.

TARA

He was askin' for--

--but now she regards him: the policeman; from last night. Maybe a cop's eyesight is like the T-rex, based on movement -- and he won't see her if she doesn't move...

OFFICER JACOBSON

Ya okay, darlin'? Hey, cutie -- I'm really glad I found ya. Wanna know why? To clear the air... 'bout last night.

TARA

I -- I don't kno--

OFFICER JACOBSON

--It was grown-up stuff, ya understand? We were jus' talkin'.

TARA

Didn't look like it.

At this point, it's odd that Jacobson still grips Taylor.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Where ya supposed to be, anyhow?
Who ya waitin' on?

TARA

My brother. He picks me up.

TAYLOR

Um, can I go now?

OFFICER JACOBSON

Your brother, eh? He does a fine job takin' care of ya. Motels. Soda pop. Where's he get the cash?

TARA

Ask him yourself. He'll be here.

OFFICER JACOBSON

S'pose he don't come, 'least not
anytime soon? Where'd we find him
at, us two -- so that you, me, and
him can have ourselves a chat? Say,
'cross the highway, somewhere?

TAYLOR

Sir, you're hurting me.

Jacobson pinches Taylor's arm -- the boy winces.

TARA

Wha -- what's across the highway?

OFFICER JACOBSON

I think ya know already. That's why
I want ya to take me there. Like I
said, we're only gonna talk.

TARA

No. No way, I can't.

The policeman adds more pressure -- he twists Taylor's arm,
bends it up behind the boy's back. The boy yelps.

TARA

Hey, leave him alone.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Will do. Ya jus' help me out first.

Tears swell in Taylor's eyes. The cop applies even more pain.

TARA

Stop! You're hurting him.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Make me stop. Ya can make me stop
anytime.

Unable to combat the brute, Tara relents...

TARA

I'll show you, k! I'll show you.

The cop throws the boy across the yard like a rag doll.
Taylor spits out a heap of grass, cries, and runs away.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Let's go for a ride then.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - STREET - DAY

Moonshine in tow, Scooter pedals on the bicycle down the road. Once he spots Tara, up ahead, he nearly shits himself. From his vantage point, he can see a policeman force her into the backseat of a squad car -- the same prick from earlier.

Scooter slams the brakes, but the wagon missiles right by him. It reaches the end of its rope, physics commandeer, and both boy and shine slingshot somewhere left of Albuquerque.

Coincidentally, the crash puts him out of view of the main road. A moment later, Ol' 52 drives past, just out of range. Scooter cuts the rope and tails after the fuzz.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - BOXCAR DISTILLERY - DAY

Jose sparks a fag. Amani hangs over him, but within the boxcar.

AMANI

Hey, lazy. Wanna help clean?

JOSE

Yeah, yeah. Don't get your panties in a bunch. I'll be there.

She flips him off. He blows her a kiss and chuckles.

EXT. HIGHWAY 160 - DAY

On bicycle, Scooter tails the squad car -- careful to stay a comfortable distance behind. As it crosses the highway, its turret lights flash. Oncoming traffic allows the car to pass.

SCOOTER

No, no... where ya goin'?

Just a few paces up the road, it turns off the main highway and clears an ol' maintenance junction, headed for the woods.

Scooter pedals over an embankment, then down another path.

INT. BOXCAR DISTILLERY - DAY

Forrest peers inside the still and bangs on the outer drum.

FORREST

We done?

Amani throws him a newly minted jar of shine. Forrest stacks it onto the worktable with other leftover product.

AMANI

For now. We have plenty mash that's ready, but we can't do much else without more containers.

Lit cigarette 'tween his lips, Jose hops back inside the car.

AMANI

Outside with that, newb! Trying to catch the place on fire, blow us to smithereens?

JOSE

Wicked. That could happen?

FORREST

She's right. Smoke the fag outside.

JOSE

Christ, relax. How 'bout the burner under the still -- we light that to shine, don't we?

Jose jumps atop the table and plucks a kerosene lamp that hangs from the ceiling and monkey-jumps it off the fag.

AMANI

It's controlled.

JOSE

You're controlled.

JOSE

And we light the lamp all the time. How 'bout that, huh? I'm only tryin' to shed light on your situation, see--

He swings the lamp at Amani, then back at Forrest. It's all Tom Foolery and ballyhoo 'till the handle breaks off -- the result of which sees the lamp crash through a few bottles of shine, then ignite there on the floor. One unbroken bottle manages to roll outside...

In a flurry, all at once -- whilst he gets his ass chewed out -- Jose flies 'cross the room to stomp out the blaze. His britches catch fire in the act.

FORREST

I'll crank the outside pump!

AMANI

Wait -- that won't work!

Too late -- with the front exit near the inferno, Forrest lobs open a trap door at the back and dives through it.

EXT. FOREST - DIRT TRACK - DAY

Camouflaged by foliage, the boy ramps off a boulder -- and like a fart pinched off aboard a first class flight, Scooter's airborne. He lands the bike a mile away, determined to outrun the law.

Squad Car 52 keeps to the scenic route, on the dirt track. It pushes deeper into the brush, and draws ever closer to--

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - BOXCAR DISTILLERY - DAY

Forrest crawls out from beneath the boxcar underbelly and scrambles to the water pump. He yanks at the starter cord--

FORREST

Almost got it!

--but then finally, *b-b-b-BRRRRR!*

INT. BOXCAR DISTILLERY - CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, Amani grabs the bundle of ol' sleeping bags. First, she tends to the flames spread about the floor.

JOSE

The hell, woman? I'm on fire!

Once extinguished, she throws the second bag over Jose's pant-legs and successfully snuffs out the fire. Late to the game, Forrest dives in with the hose and blasts them with water.

AMANI

No, don't!

JOSE

Dumbass! The fire's already out!

AMANI

Christ, Forrest! You're so tyro. You can't put out an oil fire with water.

FORREST

Why not?

JOSE

Why not?

AMANI
You just can't.

FORREST
(to Jose)
Science shit, I guess.

JOSE
Here's science for ya.

Jose pushes Forrest out the boxcar.

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - BOXCAR DISTILLERY - CONTINUOUS

Forrest, on his back, rolls over and groans.

JOSE
Gravity, *puta*.

FORREST
You're a piece of shit, dude.

SCOOTER (O.C.)
Hide. Guys, get out of there. Hide!

In the distance, atop a hill, Forrest sees Scooter on bike. He rides toward the boxcar as if on the run from the cops. On the main path, from out the weeds, bursts exactly that:

AMANI
Oh, shit. Forrest, hide!

It's a Plymouth Gran Fury -- fucking Squad Car 52.

FORREST
Amani, wait!

Too late -- she slides shut the distillery side-door.

*BEGIN ONE-TAKE:

INT. SQUAD CAR 52 (MOVING) - RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - DAY

Yep, Officer Jacobson saw the boxcar panel close.

OFFICER JACOBSON
That your brother? Don't seem like
we're all that welcome, does it?

Visibly careworn, Tara pouts and crosses her arms.

SEGUE:

INT. BOXCAR DISTILLERY - CONTINUOUS

Camera pushes inside the distillery -- already, Jose frog-kicks his way to the trapdoor. He beckons Amani.

JOSE

We gotta boogie. Amani, hey!

She doesn't move from the main door, crippled by fear. Forrest pops up at the bottom of the trapdoor.

FORREST

What's the hold up?

JOSE

Check your girlfriend.

Jose bounces. Forrest enters instead.

FORREST

We have to go.

Amani touches the bruise at the corner of her eye.

FORREST

Amani, he's not seen us yet. Let's go -- let's run. Trust me. C'mon.

AMANI

We can't run. He'll get us.

FORREST

No way. Promise. Amani, trust me.

AMANI

You're just a kid.

SEGUE:

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - CONTINUOUS

Turret lights flash. Ol' 52 parks and Jacobson exits.

OFFICER JACOBSON

(to Tara)

Stay put. Don't skedaddle now.

Through the window, Tara shines him the middle-finger. All casual-like, Jacobson walks to the water-pump. The motor still churns, loud as a lawn mower.

SEGUE:

EXT. BOXCAR DISTILLERY - UNDERCARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

Behind the rail wheel, Jose spies on the cop. He whispers above, through the floorboard slits, to his friends inside:

JOSE

Psst! Psst! Yo, get the hell out.

FORREST

Amani won't come.

JOSE

Leave her ass.

Back inside the distillery, Forrest dismisses Jose.

FORREST

We're going to get in trouble.

AMANI

I -- I'm scared.

FORREST

I know. Follow me, okay?

He offers his hand, but at the same time shit goes quiet. Gut-wrenching quiet. The water pump has been shut off. Seconds later: *THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!*

Outside, Jacobson pounds his fist on the boxcar door.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Police! Come out. Hands up.

He muses -- then heeds a few drops of water that trickle out the bottom of the door-jam, onto his boots. That's when he spots a mason jar in the mud. Scrupulous, he scoops it up and takes a whiff. In trice, his whole demeanor shifts; from cocky and playful to dead serious. He slides out his baton.

Behind the rail wheel, Jose vigils the officer sort out the damning evidence. He signs the Holy Trinity to himself.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Someone makin' shine in there?

Back outside, Jacobson awaits an answer. He's met by silence. Slowly, he treads backwards toward Ol' 52.

Inside the distillery, Forrest notes the cop's actions. He holds Amani's hand.

FORREST

We gotta split. Now.

Fucking stealth, he nudges her in direction of the trapdoor.

At the squad car, Jacobson taps the police radio, pulls taught the curly-cord, and presses the speaker to his mouth.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Hey, Tiff. Jacobson. Ya there?

TIFF

(beat, police radio)

For another fifteen. Headed home soon to take care of them little assholes on summer break. S'up?

OFFICER JACOBSON

I'm out in the ol' boxcar field. Potential 10-94. Got anyone?

TIFF

Well, shit. Garcia and Roberts clocked out no more than ten. Liew's on a 415. Emergency?

OFFICER JACOBSON

(pause, to Tara)

Who's really in there, darlin'?

(beat, to radio)

Second thought, Tiff, don't bother.

He tosses the speaker back inside the car and holsters the baton in exchange for his piece. It's Vietnam all over again.

He aims the .45 Colt Automatic at the distillery, then drifts 'round the back-end of the vehicle -- and leaves the driver's door open and engine running. He imparts an ever subtle wink to the trunk. Afterwords, it's all business as he approaches:

OFFICER JACOBSON

Found this little girl wanderin' alone after school. Wonderin' who she was belonging to?

(beat)

Her brother in there? Daddy, maybe?

(beat)

Listen, how... how 'bout we make a deal. Okay? I saw the shine. Let's say that's all I saw. Ya get my meanin'? I wasn't here, providin' ya tell me who ya sellin' to?

The boxcar is silent. Jacobson blinks at the trunk once more, then slowly eases in on the distillery, cautious.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Jus' a name... Carlos. He buy from ya? Carlos Martinez. I recognize the shine. Only one in the Valley.

Behind the rail wheel, Jose staggers. Did he hear the cop mention his brother? He 'bout bumbles, but a slight tug felt on his ankle reels him back into reality: it's Forrest. However, he's alone. Jose mouths the name, *îAmani?î*

Forrest nods at the above floorboards. Jose follows his gaze. But that means if Forrest is down here, than Amani must be--

--inside the distillery, alone; left to her own devices the moment Jacobson rips open the door, damn near ready to put a bullet in her. Turns out, Amani is an unexpected surprise.

OFFICER JACOBSON

What. The. Fuck... Amani?

AMANI

It's not what it looks like.

OFFICER JACOBSON

My daughter... shinin'. That there's what it looks like.

She mumbles something inaudible, her vocals clenched...

OFFICER JACOBSON

What's that, now? Couldn't quite make that out what ya said.

AMANI

I'm not your daughter.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Young lady, I believe there's a pardon I needn't beg of ya. Seems ya misspoke.

AMANI

You heard me.

OFFICER JACOBSON

No. I ain't heard ya.

(pause)

Your mom's deadbeat husband got killed runnin' this Kentucky-hooch. Ya forget that? It's why I took the both ya in. So when ya plaster on all that makeup, ya don't show the respect I ask for. So no, I ain't heard ya. Tell me again.

Meanwhile, under the boxcar, Forrest and Jose notice Scooter, as he cuts into a womb of a smashed-up railroad cars. Forrest gives the signal: they're 'bout to try something stupid.

Back inside the distillery, Amani's pupils recoil, slightly, as she catches two shadows move out from under her. Jacobson senses the nuance.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Who's with you?

AMANI

Just me. I'm alone.

The officer kneels and inspects the underbelly, but it's all clear. Even behind the rail wheel: empty.

OFFICER JACOBSON

I know it ain't jus' you. Come here, girl. I said... COME! HERE!

An eternity passes, but the girl bends so close to the pig's face she can smell stench of swine. He holds her by the neck.

OFFICER JACOBSON

You're a goddamn liar.

The cop casts her aside, lunges inside the distillery, and ransacks the place in effort to unveil another conspirator.

Near the smashed-up railroad cars, the three boys rendezvous.

SCOOTER

He's got my sister.

JOSE

Wel'p now he's got Amani.
(to Forrest)
Dude, ya left her.

FORREST

Did not -- Did not -- Did not!

JOSE

Did too -- Did too -- Ya got a plan, Han Solo?

Forrest seizes the stick he earlier conquered Jose with, then dashes out toward the squad car.

SCOOTER

What a dunder. Where's he going?

JOSE

Ain't going anywhere without me.

Jose runs after him. Scooter cusses, then joins the suicide.

Inside the distillery, Jacobson flips the table over. He spots the trapdoor. The way he grips his gat and turns to Amani, like he were Smaug-incarnate, would make even the bravest of Hobbit spoil their knickers. "Precious" or no.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Ya disrespect me, and ya lie to me.
Ya do it all to my face. If that's
the way it is, then no -- I ain't
your daddy no more.

(beat)

So tell me, darlin', how ya want me
to treat ya then?

He sets down the .45 Colt Automatic and pops a jug of shine. He splashes it contents over her face.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Ya wanna act a criminal I'll treat
ya like one.

Near the squad car, Forrest and Jose stalk the distillery. Scooter sneaks over to Tara, confined inside the vehicle. He gingerly lifts the handle to release her from the backseat.

Ahead, with weapons in hand, the other two boys continue their assault, unseen by their target -- that is until:

TARA

Hey mister, leave her alone! You're
a very bad policeman!

To be bagged masturbating to an ol' Playboy would be less abashing: Forrest, with his little stick in hand; and Jacobson, at the point of spontaneous human combustion.

The officer cuts Amani with a look that suggests, "You move, you die." He unholsters his baton and hops out the boxcar -- and yet, leaves the gun behind. The boys slowly back away.

JOSE

(to Forrest and Scooter)

Dude, cop car. The cop car! Get in.
Go! Go!

Scooter shoves his sister -- together they lock themselves in the backseat of Ol' 52. Forrest and Jose both scramble inside the squad car, too, with the former in the driver's seat and the latter on the passenger side.

Doors slam. The car is locked.

Jacobson eyeballs them through the windows, like a ravage bear in search of fresh meats. He wants inside and taps the truncheon on the glass.

SCOOTER

Seriously -- this is so jacked up!

Chirp! -- it's the police radio:

TIFF

Jacobson, how ya doin'? Liew called in. Should I send him to meet ya?

(beat)

Chip, ya copy?

Outside, Jacobson rounds the entirety of the car -- passenger door to driver's side door. He taps the glass more indurate this time. The loud bangs rattle inside Forrest's eardrum.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Finding myself getting really pissed off.

He strikes the glass even harder. And harder. It finally cracks. But with one more blow -- ergo Jacobson reaches obstreperous-overdrive -- the window busts open. The ultimate money shot: Forrest and Jose facialized with shards of glass.

Jacobson dives in -- hellbent to send the boys to hell.

BANG! -- A crack of thunder ends the feud. In unison, the company averts all focus, beholden to the source of the boom:

It's Amani. With the .45 Colt Automatic. Fired into the air. But now, she aims it at Jacobson -- spang on his porn-stash.

OFFICER JACOBSON

Amani, darlin', what, uh -- what do ya think you're doing?

AMANI

Don't. Touch. My. Friends.

If this turns out to be a bluff, Jacobson calls it:

OFFICER JACOBSON

I'm fixin' a mess here. The one you made. The same mess I been cleanin' since your momma brought ya to me. It's what I do.

AMANI

You're the mess. I hate you.

Inside the squad car, the Rifiers watch -- flabbergasted.

JOSE

She's gonna do it. Forrest, she's gonna click her ol' man.

FORREST

(soto)

Amani, don't. Don't, don't...

Outside:

OFFICER JACOBSON

I'm the law, sweetheart. Ya don't have to like me. Jus' obey. And I'm tellin' ya, sure as shit, ya best put that piece down or we're gonna have a real problem. And five holes I'll be diggin' come sundown.

Her black-eye is unmasked, as tears run down Amani's cheeks.

Squad car:

JOSE

Dude, look. She's gone loco.

Forrest's knuckles burn white on the steering wheel. Sweat pours down his brow. His foot dangles over the gas pedal...

Outside:

OFFICER JACOBSON

I own you. And ya ain't gonna shoot your daddy. Now are ya?

AMANI

YOU'RE NOT MY FUCKING DAD!

But on the word "dad," nearly a gnat's cock away from pulling the trigger, Amani's voice is cut short by a loud SCREECH!

In that instant, a combustion of dust and smoke spew out behind Ol' 52. It rockets 'cross the graveyard as if it were the Challenger Space Shuttle -- and Jacobson, helpless, watches it as suddenly a two-ton bullet cracks into him.

The car rips him 'cross the yard and slams him head-first into the distillery wall -- his body becomes nothing more than a crunch of flesh and bone.

*END ONE-TAKE

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Dim store lights glow overhead. Hunched next to the pay phone is Scooter Tate, business card in hand. Headlights snake the empty lot, crawl up his body, and separate him from the dark.

It's a station wagon; Peter DuMars at the helm. He takes a hit off his cigarette as the boy demurely looks back at him. For the ol' man... we cue the shitstorm.

CUT TO:

INT. STATION WAGON (MOVING) - TOWN ROAD - NIGHT

DuMars drives and discards the cancer stick. Passenger seat, solemn, Scooter peers out into the void of night.

DUMARS

Catch up to that sister of yours?

SCOOTER

Who was that on the phone? I called and, uh, a girl picked up.

DUMARS

That'd be my daughter. She works for me -- sort of my secretary.

SCOOTER

She sounded sad.

DUMARS

Oh. Yeah. Been a rough couple of days for her. Whole family, really.
(beat)
How about you, kid? You look sad.

Scooter looks down, pinches his thumb.

SCOOTER

Did ya know that, um, your thumb has its own pulse? I -- I didn't know that, before...

DUMARS

Help me out -- what's going on?

SCOOTER

You're a policeman?

DUMARS

Former cop. I do private investigation now.

(MORE)

DUMARS (CONT'D)

The badge -- it's what I use to get
what I need out of folks. Not
exactly legal.

(beat)

Like you selling shine.

The boy bends to the accusation, peers out the window.

DUMARS

You in some kind of trouble, kid?

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - BOXCAR DISTILLERY - DAY

Did you catch the transition element? This is a flashback --
and it picks up right when Squad Car 52 snatches up Officer
Chip Jacobson and slams him into the boxcar like a pancake.

Birds flutter. It takes the lifespan of the Mesozoic Era
before the dust settles. We push in on the triple-nine
through the haze, the body warped ineptly over the car hood.

Uncloaked, from whence the fog, Amani approaches the officer.
The .45 Colt Automatic twitches 'tween her fingertips. She
drops it. Horror pierces deep into the bone of her pupils.
She feels a hand tap her shoulder, but knocks it away -- it's
Forrest Bowde, careful not to get too close again.

AMANI

Don't. Don't you dare, Forrest.

Jose Martinez jumps atop the hood to diagnose Jacobson.

JOSE

Holy moly -- he got capped, dude.
We're dead meat, ain't we?

Amani buries her face inside the palms of her hands.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. STATION WAGON (MOVING) - TOWN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Scooter rubs his face. DuMars notes the red in his eyes.

DUMARS

Where's your folks tonight? They
responsible for you selling?

The boy shrugs. For the P.I., it's like pulling teeth. DuMars
hands Scooter his jar of shine, 'bout a third empty.

SCOOTER

They don't know. I jus' use the money. I pay for things. Mostly a place to crash, if I got the dough.

DUMARS

Like the motel you're taking me to, I gather? Don't miss your own bed?

SCOOTER

I try not to think 'bout it?

DUMARS

But it's summer. No school. You can sleep in if you want.

SCOOTER

I like school.

It's no lie -- after all, he planned to give Jose his notes.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - BOXCAR DISTILLERY - DAY

Jose retrieves the piece. He dashes toward a clearing.

JOSE

This is retarded. We oughta split.

FORREST

No kidding, Einstein!

Forrest is crouched next to Amani, both near the rail wheel. She heaves, but no morsel of fluid follows.

AMANI

Forr -- is he still alive?

FORREST

You're kidding, right?

AMANI

Check his pulse.

FORREST

I ain't touching that!

AMANI

DO IT!

Okay, best not to fuck with her. Forrest eases up on the corpse and jabs his thumb into Jacobson's neck, waits...

AMANI
Not your thumb.

FORREST
Why? Who cares? There's nothing.

AMANI
Thumbs have a pulse. You don't
listen in class. Use your fingers.

She signs the method. He copies the technique onto the body.

FORREST
I don't know. Still nothing.

Jose returns.

JOSE
'Cause he's a corpse, dude.
Seriously, guys -- the radio! We
gotta bolt! 'Nuther cop might show.

AMANI
Then what, smart guy? He's dead.
Don't you see that? You want to
leave my dad here--

--Whoops! Too late: Freudian-slip. Amani can't take it back.

JOSE
A minute ago he wasn't your dad!

The tears nearly burst, but Amani fights back the waterworks.
And there's something else, too, that she promptly spots to
reinforce composure; it sits alone next to the squad car:

AMANI
Hey... where's Tara? And Scooter?

It's Brando, the leftover teddy bear.

JOSE
Hell, I ain't seen 'em. Punks
prolly bailed. Scoot's such a puss--

--then... an unexpected shocker: *thump -- thump -- thump!*

FORREST
Guys, hear that?

JOSE
It's coming from the trunk!

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. STATION WAGON (MOVING) - TOWN ROAD - NIGHT

DuMars watches Scooter pick encrusted vomit off his shirt.

DUMARS
How'd that happen?

SCOOTER
Oh, um -- wasn't feelin' well.

DUMARS
Not gonna get me sick, are you?

SCOOTER
No. No, I'm fine. Happened earlier.

Scooter gags as he peels back a chunk.

DUMARS
How many years you have, boy?

SCOOTER
Huh?

DUMARS
How old are you?

SCOOTER
Yep. Got it. Twelve. Well -- more like twelve and a half. You?

DUMARS
Maybe I'm clocking in fifty or sixty. Never count 'em.
(beat)
Some advice, son: count your money, baseball cards, the socks in your dresser -- anything someone can steal. But your years... nobody wants them. No way to lose them. So, needn't bother counting.

SCOOTER
Oh. Is that all?

DUMARS
Is there something else?

Neon lights, from outside, flood the interior cabin.

SCOOTER
We're almost there.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. RANDOM BOXCAR - RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - DAY

Hidden, 'tween an open wall slit, Scooter spies on his friends outside. Via his POV, he observes a replay of events:

Jose dashes toward the distillery. He meets up with Forrest and Amani at the rail wheel...

JOSE

'Cause he's a corpse, dude.
Seriously, guys -- the radio! We
gotta bolt! 'Nuther cop might show.

AMANI

Then what, smart guy? He's dead.
Don't you see that? You want to
leave my dad here--

Back on Scooter -- as an abrupt queasiness betides him, and he hunches over and vomits -- right in his sister's face. He uses his shirt to clean up, but Tara Tate is hardly clement.

TARA

Oh, gross! You're a jerk.

SCOOTER

Hey, shut up. We gotta go.

TARA

I don't wanna. Brando's out there.

SCOOTER

Who's Brando? Oh, yeah. Your stupid
bear. Forget it, we're outta here.

Tara fights back, but her older brother wrangles her.

SCOOTER

Owe -- stop it. Listen you lil'
brat, it's my job to take care of
ya -- and I say ya can't be here.
So forget your dumb teddy bear.

From outside: *thump -- thump -- thump!*

FORREST (O.C.)

Guys, hear that?

JOSE (O.C.)

It's coming from the trunk!

Scooter eyeballs the situation again. His POV:

JOSE
Should I open it?

FORREST
Careful, numbnuts! We don't know
what's in there. Let me do it...

Forrest and Jose sneak 'round the backside of Ol' 52.

AMANI
Boys! Stop. Leave it alone.

JOSE
Relax, Imma cover him. Do it, Forr.

Jose points the piece. Forrest nods and pops the trunk...

As we cut back to Scooter, we watch his eyes widen. He stumbles -- all the while, he can hear confused voices transpire outside: "Watch out," "Holy shit," "Stay back!" No bullshit, he grabs Tara and escapes out the back.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Scooter tugs Tara through a blurry sea of brown verdure.

TARA
Where we going?

SCOOTER
Motel. Gonna make it to the motel.

TARA
I want Brando. Quit yanking me!

SCOOTER
Don't be such a slowpoke!

He pulls her in one direction, then back toward another. At some point, she loses his hand. Scooter hustles. Every so often he peeps over his shoulder to spot Tara behind him.

TARA
Wait up! I'm little.

SCOOTER
I'm right here. Come on!

He waves at her -- but the second he steps off path, he trips (go figure, right?). By then, he takes a nasty tumble down a steep slope -- and just like that, lights out.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The station wagon parks. Exit DuMars and Scooter.

DUMARS

So this is how you spend your cash?

SCOOTER

Yeah. 'Bout eight-fifty per night.

DUMARS

Damn Hilton compared to my digs. So why we here, kid? Why not your folk's place?

SCOOTER

Oh, um, checking in on my sis'.

DUMARS

You got her cooped up here?

SCOOTER

Yeah, I guess. It'll jus' be a sec.

The boy scurries off. Meanwhile, DuMars rubs his neck and digs out a silver Washington for the soda dispenser. "Orange Crush." Pass. Instead, he opts for a plain "Coke."

Near the far-end of the motel, two people exit the room -- out of focus from this distance, but still audible.

LILLY

This don't sit right, Randy.

KARDELL

That's why ya best sit tight.

As he reaches for the soda, DuMars ganders over his shoulder.

LILLY

Why'd he let him go?

KARDELL

Shit, Lils -- I ain't no mind reader. Maybe Carlos came to his senses, and Chip cut him loose.

LILLY

Or Chip's a holiday ham.

Shit! It's Randall Kardell and Lilly Tackett! DuMars dives behind the soda dispenser. He peeps 'round the corner to spy on the action. From his POV, we watch the couple move from room to chopper. There, Kardell preps it.

LILLY

Take this.

She shoves her piece at him. The gun "piece," I mean.

KARDELL

Christ, don't be flashin' this.

LILLY

Shit hits the fan, ya shoot it.

Then, at the worst possible moment, Scooter's return:

SCOOTER

Mister, no luck. She ain't here.

The boy stops, confused -- *where'd the ol' man go?* But by now, Scooter's perfectly visible to Kardell and Lilly. And it's definitely a gun he can see the biker conceal. He plays dumb and walks ahead -- that's when he spots DuMars behind the dispenser. The P.I. waves him past.

Back at the chopper, Lilly is suspicious of the kid.

KARDELL

Easy. Chip said he'd handle him and the girl. I bet that's what he did.

LILLY

Don't mean them lil' teapots won't whistle. Secrets ain't for keepin'.

KARDELL

Lay low. All goes accordin', we roll out this shit-hole asap.

LILLY

'Till we don't. Might have every Profet waitin' on ya down the road.

Kardell kisses her. He hops his hog, hammers the starter, and hits the road. Lilly stays cautious. She hides in the room.

Back at the soda dispenser, DuMars confronts Scooter.

DUMARS

Kid, you've seen them before? You know who they are?

SCOOTER

Uh, sorta. Saw them in the paper.

DUMARS

You never went to the authorities?

SCOOTER

I guess not. I kinda forgot.

DUMARS

Forgot?

SCOOTER

Well, I was tryin' to tell the fellahs at school -- but then the bell rang. They all ditched and I was thinking I'd get to so'sh 'cause -- 'cause the teacher was showin' a documentary, and maybe I could take notes for them. And also, I ain't had an absent before--

DUMARS

They mentioned you. You hear that? You and your sister. Where is she?

SCOOTER

Don't know. Not here, like I said. Why'd they mention her?

DUMARS

That's what I'd like to know.

From a holster, hidden in his trench coat, underneath his armpit, DuMars retrieves a small pistol.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 285 - EDGE OF TOWN - NIGHT

A patrol car. Is it Officer Liew on duty? Doesn't matter -- 'cause his story isn't told in this movie. It drives past. Seconds later, the signal: small bursts of light off the highway, almost like Morse code. This is Jose, flashlight in hand. Down the road, headlights flash and bank toward him.

Forrest hops the median and makes a dash for his buddy.

FORREST (O.C.)

Ain't gonna keep that, are ya?

JOSE

The flashlight? Why not?

It's a pro-grade flashlight, police-issued. Forrest grunts.

JOSE

Don't get your panties in a bunch -- I'll give it back. S'up? Feel okay?

FORREST

I feel sick. Like, my gut, man. We shoved him in there, ya know -- it's not the Jedi way.

JOSE

Chill pill, nerd. Neither was that shit with Carlos.

01' 52 flanks the boys. Dolly in on the driver to reveal:

CARLOS

Yo, *hermano*. We good?

Carlos Martinez... the same cat from the teaser.

JOSE

One cop. He's splits-ville now.

CARLOS

Badass. Imma park it.

Amani's in the backseat. She has Tara with her, asleep.

EXT. SILO - HIGHWAY 285 - CONTINUOUS

True to his word, Carlos parks the squad car. He exits.

CARLOS

Sure we're cool out here?

FORREST

Road's dead at night.

CARLOS

And the drive-in?

Jose points Carlos north.

JOSE

Up that way, half a mile. What's the plan?

CARLOS

Nah, bro. I got it. Ya shits stay put 'till I say so. *Comprende?*

(beat)

Who's got the time?

FORREST

(checks watch)

Nine-twelve.

Anyway, howbeit, Carlos is satisfied. He dives back into the squad car and rummages through shit; all their earthly possessions are accounted for, including a jar of moonshine. He regards Amani: a tender storm of rain clouds.

CARLOS

Frowny face, what's up?

She's malcontent, but strokes Tara's hair. Forrest answers:

FORREST

The body. We never been 'round one.

CARLOS

Look here -- y'all are my heroes.
That badge, he's what I call a *hijo de perra*. He tortured my ass --
locked me in the trunk to suffer.
Damn *marrano cochino*.

(beat)

I heard him, the way he was talkin'
shit to ya. He got what was comin'.
S'matter, 'fraid to get caught?

Amani wipes away tears. She shakes her head, no.

CARLOS

Yo, listen -- y'all did me a solid.
I owe ya. Ain't none of us gettin'
caught. It's fate, ya see -- ya got
me out a jam. So, Imma get you out.

AMANI

Then... what're we doing here?

Carlos cracks a smile. He flushes it with a swallow of swill.

CARLOS

The odds, eh? My lil' bro -- you
guys. I'm tellin' ya, it's fate.

Amani winks at Forrest, Forrest to Jose. Something's fishy...

CUT TO:

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - CORNER ROOM - NIGHT

The window curtains are shut. The door is locked, too. DuMars waves Scooter over. He hands the boy his badge.

DUMARS

Flash this at the clerk. Get me the
key to this room.

Reluctant, Scooter surrenders to the request and hurries toward the main office. Pro tempore, DuMars sneaks 'round to the next outside window -- the bathroom vent -- but it's small and fogged up. He can hear the shower run.

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The ol' P.I. saddles into the station wagon and takes a hit of shine. One, it's liquid courage. Two, it mirrors Carlos.

SCOOTER

Got it! Hey, I got it!

DUMARS

Lighten the hell up. The whole motel's going to hear that racket. What'd you say your name was?

SCOOTER

Scot -- um, I mean William. Will.

DUMARS

Will, huh? Listen, I'm getting into that room. You stay put -- no matter what goes down. Stay put?

The boy nods. DuMars treks back to the corner room, gun ready. He slides the key in and pushes the door open.

INT. SHITTY MOTEL - CORNER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is vacant, save for similar supplies described in the teaser. DuMars follows the sound of shower water into the bathroom. He pulls the curtain open -- but the tub is empty.

He backs out, and that's when the attack occurs -- as Lilly bursts out the closet and pile drives into the ol' man. They fall into a physical a struggle -- both vie for the gun. It goes off -- *BANG!* -- yet DuMars holds onto it. No bodily harm to either, but Lilly escapes out the front.

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Inside the station wagon, bored, Scooter takes a whiff of the shine. He gags. Right then, Lilly sprints past. It's a relief she didn't notice him--

--until she does. The woman looks back at the boy. Scooter slides down the seat in hopes to camouflage himself with the upholstery. That's when the P.I. pops out the room -- in turn, Lilly sets sail toward the main office. DuMars pursues.

During any part of their chase we INTERCUT Scooter, soto:

SCOOTER

Easy, Will. He said stay put. So,
yeah, just stay put. Or, hey, puss
out. Puss out like always.

He takes a deep breath, pops the car door--

INT. SHITTY MOTEL - MAIN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lilly comes in like a wrecking ball. She never hit so hard in love -- not as she hops over the desk, knocks over the water cooler, and rams anything else in sight to build a blockade.

Enter DuMars. He navigates the wreckage -- even past the poor desk clerk caught in the middle of it. He follows Lilly--

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - STAIRWELL / 2ND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

--back outside, which leads him up the flight of stairs, through the corridor, down the hall, etc.

I'm sure the stunt team and director will block out a fine action sequence. However, the apex of the chase finds our characters here:

EXT. SHITTY MOTEL - POOL - CONTINUOUS

Lilly and DuMars are separated on opposite banks of the pool.

LILLY

You a cop or somethin'?

DUMARS

Yeah. Something.

Make note, however, that Lilly is underneath the 2nd floor platform -- and up there, unbeknownst to her and DuMars, we see Scooter. He quietly tiptoes to a spot over her head.

Anyway, ground level, Lilly hurls a lifebuoy at him and attempts a getaway. It might have worked, 'cept Scooter lands atop her shoulders. The both of them splash into the pool.

DUMARS

Goddammit! What'd I say, boy?

DuMars drops his piece and jumps in after them. At last, he shimmies Lilly to the shallow end and wrangles her under the surface -- long enough to prove he's in control.

LILLY
I relent! Jesus, take it easy.

DUMARS
Kardell -- where's he riding to?

LILLY
The sunset.

DuMars drowns her some more, this time a coon's age.

LILLY
Give it a rest! I'll talk, creep.

DUMARS
Convince me. Talk!

LILLY
So what -- ya got beef with Randy.
Join the club. He split, hit the
road. But I could take ya to him.

DUMARS
I look green? Why'd I let a broad
like you tag along?

LILLY
Can't leave me here. And I reckon'
ya ain't the killin' kind. Not with
a kid 'round ya, anyway -- 'else
I'd be dead already. I say you're a
fella' at the end of his rope. Why
else would ya be here? Up to you if
ya wanna tie a knot and hold on.

SCOOTER
Roosevelt said that.

LILLY
Lincoln, actually.

DuMars debuts a pair of handcuffs from his trench.

DUMARS
(to Scooter)
Kid, grab my gun.
(to Lilly)
If I reach for this rope and feel a
snake instead, I'll blow your head
off before it bites.

Lilly smirks, *Whatever you say, asshole.*

CUT TO:

EXT. SILO - HIGHWAY 285 - NIGHT

The stridulating song of crickets fill the night air. Forrest stares at the trunk of Ol' 52 -- dialed in on the shadows entombed inside. Meanwhile, inside the car, the same chatter of critters lullaby Carlos into a coma. He hits the booze.

From 'cross the street, Jose returns. He zips up his pants.

JOSE
Clean and fresh.

Jose jumps atop the hood of the squad car, next to where Amani already sits. She inches away from him.

JOSE
I ain't contagious.
(to Forrest)
Yo -- ya holdin', too?

Forrest blows past the car and crosses the highway. He disappears into some shrubs.

JOSE
If ya squat, watch what ya wipe on!

CARLOS
(to Amani)
You and that kid a, uh, thing?

JOSE
Her and Forr? Oh, hell no. She's holdin' out for a real man.

AMANI
When I find one, I'll let you know.

CARLOS
Take your time. Don't rush into nuthin' you ain't ready to raise.
(takes a shot of hooch)
This moonshine shit, keep the hooch comin'. Treat me like a damn hero at the M.C. And the *dinero*...

JOSE
(to Amani)
I still think he short-changes us.

CARLOS
Eh, what'd you know? I pay out.
(beat)
So, like, what's it made from? Ya brew it or somethin', too. Right?

Another sip of the white whisky. Pro tem, Jose rubs an aggressive wearisome from his eyes.

AMANI

"Distill." We use corn meal to make our mash. That's the proper way. Water, sugar--

JOSE

--and it sits there forever, too. Like, weeks -- while it, uh...

AMANI

Ferments. That's why we add yeast to it -- to agitate the sugars. The moon won't shine if the yeast can't dine. That's what my dad said. My real dad, anyway.

JOSE

Damn. No kiddin'? What was he like?

AMANI

Reckless.

JOSE

Sounds cool to me.

A distant memory forces Amani to kill the convo.

EXT. MAINTENANCE SHED - OFF HIGHWAY 285 - NIGHT

Forrest zips up, fresh and relieved. Deep breath, and tries to march himself back toward the highway -- but something's wrong, and he can't keep his stance. For some cold reason, he cries. Silent. Painful. Necessary.

EXT. SILO - HIGHWAY 285 - NIGHT

By now, Carlos has dozed off. Nothing's changed since we last left Amani and Jose -- except the Sandman takes them too.

However, against the horizon, a lone white shimmer disrupts the night. Before long, it streaks 'cross the highway -- as a chopped Harley -- followed by the roar of its V-twin engine.

It startles the company wide awake -- no more so than Carlos. In fact, he cranks over the V-8 and pops Ol' 52 into gear -- it's a juggernaut of a jolt felt by Amani and Jose.

JOSE

Carlos, wait-- !

He guillotines the gas, batters the brakes -- and chucks the children forthwith from the hood. The younglings yield, unscathed. But a second acceleration later, Carlos creates a counter conundrum and inadvertently collides into Forrest. The boy endures a hit to the gut, soars, and bangs his head.

CARLOS

Yo, my bad! Make sure he's okay.
You fuckers stay put.

Before an onslaught of protest, Carlos quickens to 88/mph. Amani diametrically shouts loud enough as her voice decrees:

AMANI

Jose! Jose -- he has Tara!

With Carlos gone, Jose's now the girl stood up on prom night.

JOSE

Yeah. Got it. I'll get her -- I'll go after Carlos.

Amani throws a fit, but it's too late: Jose runs after his fool's errand, already a blur down the road.

EXT. MOTORCYCLE (MOVING) - HIGHWAY 285 - NIGHT

"Phalse Profets." That's what that back of his cut reads. As an outcast member of the M.C. or not, Kardell looks bitchin'. But from behind, the flash of turret lights -- *Fuck, a cop.*

He pulls off the main road--

EXT. DESERTED DRIVE-IN - CONTINUOUS

--and into the scene heading indicated above, within leftover rubble and debris of derelict theater gear. Kardell feels the car ease in, several yards away. He covers up his piece.

Inside Squad Car 52, Carlos checks the .45 Colt Automatic (Jacobson's piece). He polishes off the moonshine. But from the backseat, behind the partition glass:

TARA (O.C.)

Where are we?

CARLOS

Shit. Shit! Forgot about ya,
niŌita. Stay here, don't move.

TARA

What's goin' on? What're you doin'?

CARLOS
Don't. Come. Out.

Carlos exits. Tara tries the handle, but it won't click.

Back at the motorcycle, Kardell listens to the rhythmic patter of footsteps. It's only when a shadow bears down on him that he reaches for his gat--

CARLOS
Wouldn't do that, *hombre*.

Carlos points the gun at Kardell's *frente*.

KARDELL
This a setup? Chip back there?

CARLOS
I don't do business with *jodas*. Yo, toss the piece.

Kardell cuts the motor. He unsaddles and faces Carlos. Following instruction, he drops his gat. Satisfied, Carlos steers him toward the open expanse.

EXT. SILO - HIGHWAY 285 - NIGHT

Forrest groans, coming to after his run in with a Gran Fury. Amani shakes him out of his stupor.

FORREST
I get kicked in the nards?

AMANI
You'd need a pair first. Ready to get up, Sleeping Beauty? Carlos went after that -- that guy.

He sits up, but doesn't process exactly what Amani means.

AMANI
The guy from the papers. Carlos lied to us. I don't think he planned to help hide the car. Your brain-dead boyfriend ran after him. Tara's with them. Dry up, we have to go get her.

FORREST
I wasn't crying, ya know. It was a big-ass car that hit me, is all.

Amani abates. Together, her and Forrest trek down the road.

EXT. DESERTED DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

Kardell bends a knee, hands on his head. Carlos holds the gun to him, notes the patch on his vest: a wolf skull and wings.

CARLOS
Ya still wear the cut. Ain't
deservin' of it.

KARDELL
How stupid are ya, brotha? Ya ain't
ever gonna prospect. You're a
pissin' post. Poor dark-skinned kid
tryin' to play a "whites only" gig.

CARLOS
Nah, bro. Ain't like that. Don't
need to play in their yard no more.

KARDELL
So I'm a loose-end, eh? Ya take the
money and run?

CARLOS
Not jus' that... but respect.

KARDELL
That what this is about? Ya sell
toilet-water to the M.C. That ain't
respect, *cabrûn*. That's bitch-work.

CARLOS
'Till they see what's in the trunk.

Kardell faces Carlos, briefly, until he subtly spots one of those drive-in speaker boxes, loose, attached to its cord.

KARDELL
Chip. He dead?
(pause, realization)
Goddamn ya, Carlos.

CARLOS
Watch it, *puta!*

Carlos wallops him upside the head. Kardell falls forward -- now a fingertip's reach away from the speaker box. Softly, however, they both hear a faint sound: *clap -- clap -- clap!*

From the squad car, inside, Tara bangs on the glass.

CARLOS
I told ya, girl -- stay down!

TARA

I want out! Lemme out!

'Cause of her inattention, Carlos is not prepared when a blunt object cracks him in the face. Blood spurts. Said weapon clobbers him again, right to the skull. Before he registers that the biker swung the speaker box, Carlos drops like a lead balloon. The .45 exchanges hands.

Kardell carries it, now, as he treks toward the squad car.

CARLOS

Pinche puta. Creede -- bastard. She -- she made me hide it.

The Profet peeps into the backseat -- there, he can see the girl, terrified. His real occupance, however, is the trunk. He pops it open -- and is greeted by its contents: Officer Chip Jacobson's mangled body jammed into the compartment.

Sure, Kardell's addled. A rage burns -- but even so, all that dissipates when he sustains a speaker pole hard to the hip -- *WHACK!* It's unexpected, and he drops to a knee. Rules state two for flinching: so he endures another shot to the chest.

Reveal Jose -- his Little League Baseball coaching in full display. He swings another home run -- Kardell falls ass-first into the trunk and drops the piece inside it. The speaker pole gets lodged in there, too.

The boy slams the trunk-lid on him, over and over again. He lets up after he hears a shrill whistle. It's Carlos, who waves him over. Kardell crawls away. Jose joins his brother inside the squad car. Carlos fumbles to get it started.

CARLOS

I fucked up, bro.

TARA

Lemme out, you bozos!

It's a millennium before Carlos finds the remix to ignition -- but by then, Kardell stumbles to the driver's side window, personal gat in hand, and -- *BANG!*

Carlos screams -- as blood spurts out his right shoulder. Tara screams. Jose screams. Also, Carlos can no longer reach the PRNDL. Fuck it, Jose can -- and he drops it to "Drive." Then, he dives atop Carlos' leg which, in turn, jams the gas.

Outside, Ol' 52 blasts off, trunk wide open, and rips onto some farm land. Kardell almost takes another shot but hesitates. Instead, he mounts his chopper, and rides out after them. Oh, and he still has the speaker box, for fun...

INT. SQUAD CAR 52 (MOVING) - FARM LAND - CONTINUOUS

Inside Ol' 52, Jose manages to both steer and ride shotgun. It's rough terrain. Carlos bleeds. And Tara braces herself.

CARLOS

Where'd ya come from, *hermano*? Ya gotta swear to me, man, swear ya ain't comin' after me again.

JOSE

Dude, I swear. Geez! How 'bout helping drive first!

Through the back windshield, a spot of light envelops Tara.

TARA

Hey -- um, you guys...

CARLOS

I got a stack of cash, like -- it's fuckin' sweet, dude. 'Member where pop died? The mines up in Creede?

At passenger side, Kardell appears. He swings the speaker box -- it smacks against the glass, startles Jose.

CARLOS

Shit -- I told him everything.

JOSE

Told him what, dude?

CARLOS

Ya swore, man -- so ya gotta split. Ya make for the mine-shaft. That's where I hid the dough. Shit, stash the whole cherry-top in there, too!

TARA

Dummies, look out!

Kardell reappears, driver's side. Enter speaker box -- it clobbers Carlos again.

JOSE

That guy's loco!

CARLOS

His ol' lady packs a meaner punch.

Speaking of the biker's ol' lady:

CUT TO:

INT. STATION WAGON (MOVING) - HIGHWAY 285 - NIGHT

Lilly rides shotgun, her hands cuffed 'round to whatever's convenient. DuMars drives. Scooter sits in the back.

DUMARS

How much further?

LILLY

Ain't my ol' stompin' grounds. I'm as lost as a blind man lookin' for his girlfriend in a fish market. How lucky you must feel that I brought my charm and conversation.

To fuck with him, Lilly rests her head on DuMars' shoulders and bats her eyes. He responds with a thwack to the mouth, delivered via Elbow-Express Incorporated. The act startles Scooter, but Lilly simply chuckles.

SCOOTER

'Bout half a mile up. I think.

LILLY

See, kid knows his way 'round.

She laps up the trickle of blood at the corner of her mouth.

EXT. HIGHWAY 285 - JUNCTION - NIGHT

Forrest and Amani keep to the shoulder. As they walk, they may engage in serious convo (*cough* -- *Forrest's mom*) -- but are interrupted by the buzz of a motorcycle. In addition, they notice a pair of headlights, yonder down the road.

FORREST

Car's coming. Better hide.

They dissolve into the brush; a fleeting and all but brief scene, right? So why do we still dwell on it? That's 'cause a beat later, shafts of moving light suddenly ignite 'tween the stalks -- and Forrest and Amani abandon their camouflage--

--and hop right back out onto the highway. It may have been two honks or three, but there's no escape from their original plight -- a station wagon -- as it swerves 'round them, only to get side-swiped by a Gran Fury, ergo the farm field.

Inside the station wagon, DuMars loses all control. Together with his passengers they ramp a cattle guard, smash through a gate, and nose-dive into a gully. The woman subsists as the boy falls 'tween the seats. DuMars gets knocked the fuck out.

Inside Squad Car 52, Jose fights the steering wheel, course corrects, and puts the vehicle on track. But holy shit, *Was that Forrest and Amani?* Carlos ejaculates a different angst:

CARLOS

Maldecir mi suerte! That was her.

JOSE

Hit the brakes, dude!

Jose dives into the control space and manually pushes the brake pedal with his own two hands.

Back outside, Forest and Amani watch the squad car screech to a halt. Jose jumps out of it and calls to them.

JOSE

Hey, catch up! He's comin'!

The motorcycle buzz from earlier... it's louder now. Shafts of light dance 'tween the stalks once more. Forrest and Amani take it as their cue -- they run toward the squad car. Next, the Phalse Profet joins the arena, saddled upon his chariot.

Inside the station wagon, Lilly rouses. She sees Kardell in midst of the road. To wrestle his attention, she bangs her head on the glass and screams out to him. He sees her, but opts to make after the squad car.

A bit vertiginous, Scooter also peeps outside, *Is that Forrest and Amani on the run from a motorcycle?*

Okay, back along the highway -- Forrest and Amani indeed fly for their lives. Kardell quickly closes the gap on their lead -- but something worse happens: Squad Car 52 suddenly peels out like a rocket, and it leaves them and Jose behind.

JOSE

Shithead! Mom was right, you suck!

At that moment, Kardell bypasses all three kids -- instead, he makes after Carlos. Already, the squad car bites off the road, into a ditch irrigation facility.

JOSE

What're we waitin' for -- let's get after them!

AMANI

Jose, we can't--

But it's no use, for fear they'd all be separated again, and to rescue Tara, they make for the facility. After all, the closer you are to danger the further you are from harm.

EXT. DITCH IRRIGATION FACILITY - NIGHT

The three Rifiers move toward the sounds of car screeches and motorcycle rumbles.

FORREST

We cool ditching that other car?
Think those people need help?

AMANI

That's the woman from the papers.

JOSE

We ditch her. Let's help Carlos.

FORREST

Why, exactly?

JOSE

His plan for the car -- take it to
Creede. Burry it in the mines.

FORREST

Where your dad got killed? How?

JOSE

Drive it through all the back
roads. Plus -- *get this!* -- plus,
there's a stash of cash Carlos hid!

AMANI

Oh, bother -- you're full of it.

JOSE

I gotta explain everything to ya
knuckleheads? Them biker creeps --
that's what they're after.

Vroom, Vroom! -- the motorcycle appears on the ridge of a nearby ditch bank. But right then, directly behind the Rifiers, headlights spark and blast towards them. They dive out the way, just as Squad Car 52 highballs past--

INTERCUT:

EXT. DITCH BANK - CONTINUOUS

--and ramps up the slope. Kardell and his Harley are t-boned by the vehicle's front bumper. He's ripped 'cross the bank. At last, he and the bike are thrown into the ditch water. There, the current pulls both chariot and rider along the swath -- out beyond the unknown darkness.

Back at the facility Forrest, Amani, regroup -- and make their way onto the ditch bank and toward the car. They notice the driver's side empty, the door wide open. However, they chance upon one signum of relief inside:

TARA

Get me the fuck out of here!

FORREST

Hey, where the hell did Carlos go?

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 285 - GULLY - NIGHT

Inside the station wagon, Scooter pokes DuMars -- the ol' man groans but is still incapacitated.

LILLY

Kid -- he's hurt bad. Real bad.

SCOOTER

What, um, what do we do?

LILLY

I can help, okay. List'n to me -- reach in his pocket, get the cuff keys. We gotta get him out, lay him down. Ya can't do it on your own.

Maybe the direness of the situation allows Scooter to drop his guard, but he nods and starts searching for the key. When he finds it, tucked inside DuMars' trench, he assists Lilly.

Once the locks snap, and Lilly's freed, a hand suddenly reaches out and grabs her arm. It's DuMars, still sluggish, but onto the woman's antics. Haphazardly, she slugs him in the jaw. He reaches for his gun, but Lilly stampedes him out.

The violence only desists when the passenger door pops open and Lilly is pulled from her confines. Her attacker: Carlos -- bloodstained and carnally fractured. The enervating subtext 'tween the two hint at more than casual acquaintances.

LILLY

What? Why ya here, Carly? Think you're gonna have me say "way to go, good job, ya did it?" 'Cause ya blew it, Carly. YA BLEW IT!

CARLOS

I'm done with ya. Understand me? We're through.

LILLY

That s'posed to be a threat?
Outlawin' ain't for ya. I can't be
with someone who ain't livin' the
real world. Who can't hold his own,
or take care of a woman.

CARLOS

Put a mentirosa.

A wounded puppy, Carlos walks away from his leash-master.

LILLY

Where is it? Where's the money?

CARLOS

Find it your goddamn self, bitch.

Lilly extends her arm and in her hand is something that makes her preciously dangerous -- something I failed to mention moments ago -- as she handles, now, DuMars' gun.

Inside the station wagon, Scooter withstands the horror as he watches Lilly shoot down Carlos in cold blood -- *BANG!* -- and for the second time today, bears witness to someone's untimely death. Squeamishly, he empties out the car--

--and bolts as fast as he can through the gully. But his escape is short lived as he slams into Kardell. Scooter braces for the worst -- but he suddenly experiences something aberrant: freedom. It's 'cause Kardell discards him in favor of Lilly -- and all the while he screams at her:

KARDELL

Goddammit, Lils? The hell ya do?
The hell's the matter with ya? Drop
the gun, let's go. We gotta jam!

It's one bit of advice Scooter takes on for himself: he jams, the goddamn hell out of there--

EXT. DITCH IRRIGATION FACILITY - HIGHWAY 285 - MOMENTS LATER

--until he's almost run over later by a Gran Fury. Squad Car 52, to be precise. It's full of familiar faces -- like Forrest (driver), Jose (shotgun), Amani and Tara (backseat).

SCOOTER

Hey. Um, can I go with you guys?

Seems the crew is reunited once more.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Through the heat haze, against the horizon, Squad Car 52 appears. It kicks up dust in its wake.

INT. SQUAD CAR 52 (MOVING) - DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

An eerie sedation umbrellas the Rifiers. Jose Martinez tampers with the radio. A catchy pop tune breaks the tension. One-by-one they hum a sing-along. Unbeknown to them, however, the needle in the gas gauge dips way below "E." At last, they feel a putter. Forrest Bowde pulls the car to the right.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SMALL BLUFF - CONTINUOUS

Jose drops out and kicks the tire before the car fully stops. Forrest lets out Amani from the backseat. The Tate siblings, Scooter and Tara, follow. And by God, it's hot as hell.

JOSE

Perfect. Science fails us again!

AMANI

That's not it. We're out of gas.

JOSE

Ain't that science?

FORREST

Easy fix. We fill her up.

JOSE

Ya see a gas station anywhere, Obi-Wan? Or ya gonna use your Jedi powers and beam us out?

FORREST

Those aren't the same, numb-nuts!

JOSE

But we're still stuck out here.

FORREST

This ain't my fault! Silver mine. Bag of money. What a crock of shit.

JOSE

Ya callin' my brother a liar?

FORREST

I'm callin' you a tambourine. Anyone can play you, dude.

JOSE

You are callin' him a liar!

FORREST

I'm callin' you a sucker!

AMANI

SHUT UP! Both of you. Christ --
you're worse than the cheerleading
squad. We need gas. Bitching won't
help us find it any faster.

(beat)

We must be near South Fork by now.
If we head up this road--

JOSE

--Walk?! You off your gourd? It
could be miles. Take us forever.

SCOOTER

Hey, guys. My sister... she scamper
off somewhere?

It's true, lil' Tara has vanished. A beat later, she turns up
atop the bluff, not more than ten feet above them.

TARA

Hey, dunderheads! Found somethin'
if ya wanna shut up and look.

It's an easy climb, so the Rifters get to work--

EXT. ATOP BLUFF - CONTINUOUS

--and join the little girl. The hill slopes upward and they
spot a junk yard, more or less. Within it, an ol' weathered
house and barn. This is the Schmuck Property.

JOSE

In there? Bunch of beater cars.
Ain't gonna find shit.

Not impressed by the balderdash, Jose turns 'round.

FORREST

The hell -- you gonna bail?

JOSE

Yeah, I'm bailin'. That cool, oh
high and malted leaded? Someone's
gotta watch the car. Got a body in
it. Shit could happen, couldn't it?

AMANI

"Exalted." You said "malted leader." You meant exalted leader.

JOSE

Screw you guys. If you find gas -- which I doubt -- I'll be down here.

He shows off a fag and heads back down. Scooter follows him.

FORREST

Oh, you too, Scoot?

SCOOTER

C'mon, guys. In there? I'm sick of adventures. Let's go, Tara.

Instead, Tara hands her older brother the teddy bear.

TARA

Watch Brando for me, k?

SCOOTER

You ditched me once, you're gonna ditch me again? It ain't safe.

JOSE

Ya ditched first, if ya remember.

TARA

Brando will look after you. Says you and Jose are both wussies.

JOSE

She can take a hike. Let's split.

Heckled, Scooter swipes the bear. With the girls in tow, Forrest heads up the hill toward the property. Jose and Scooter break off to rejoin Ol' 52.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHMUCK PROPERTY - JUNK YARD - DAY

Forrest, Amani, and Tara prowl the property. It's more a hodgepodge of hoarded hunkers than a scrap yard. After the inspection of a few chassis and tanks, Forrest admits:

FORREST

Jose's right. No gas 'round here.

Amani taps him on the shoulder and points out the barn.

FORREST

Someone could be home, ya know?

AMANI

Does it look it? Come on -- else
we'll never get back on the road.

Amani leads the company yonder. They inch past an ol' bus,
propped up on stilts to keep it from rolling down the hill.

FORREST

Jus' so you know, Scissor-Tooth
Suzie lived in a place exactly like
this. She killed a thousands girls.

She bats Forrest an "Oh, brother" look and proceeds forward.

TARA

Who's Suzie?

FORREST

Ol' Scissor-Tooth. And it's true.

The three Rifiers move charily, but are oblivious to the few
sets of eyes that watch them from inside the bus.

INT. SQUAD CAR 52 - TRUNK - DAY

We start on black. A gradual flood of light fills the void.
Jose and Scooter peer into the cavern; maybe a member of Chip
Jacobson's corpse hangs into frame. They both cringe as Jose
reaches in, claws 'round, and retrieves the .45 Colt Auto.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Jose slams the trunk shut to reveal Brando.

SCOOTER

I don't think this is a good idea.

JOSE

Grow a pair. I'm startin' to regret
lettin' ya hang with me, deserter.

SCOOTER

I came back, didn't I? And why ya
wanna mess with that?

JOSE

We're practicin'. So grab the bear.

Jose marches out into the lavender field.

EXT. SCHMUCK PROPERTY - EDGE OF HOUSE - DAY

The malaise presence of the home sends a shiver down Forrest's spine as he recalls the time he and Jose once snuck into the theater to watch "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre." Amani pays no mind, but Tara tugs on Forrest's shirt-tail.

TARA

Who's Scissor-Tooth?

FORREST

An ol' loony from Santa Fe. She was a serial killer in the thirties. She had a baby, you see. But she couldn't take care of it -- like, um, she couldn't feed it. She had no, uh, boobs.

AMANI

Good lord, Forrest.

Amani pays close attention to a water well a few yards ahead.

FORREST

No, well, okay -- she had boobs. Right? She definitely had, you know, knockers. But... she was missing the nipple part. The actual nipples. Born without them, k?

AMANI

Hey, she's impressionable. Don't be so lewd. Use the scientific term, at least. Papillae.

FORREST

Uh, okay -- so like I was saying, Scissor Suzie had this kid, right, and she couldn't breast feed. Um, nurse him. You know what that is?

TARA

Duh. I'm seven. I know what it is.

FORREST

Good. So here she is, and this baby -- always hungry and cryin' -- and it drove her mad, you know, to see it suffer. Made her berserk. 'Cept she didn't want no one else to take care of it 'cept her.

(MORE)

FORREST (CONT'D)

So she'd take her scissors, 'cause she sewed a lot, and she'd attack girls at night. She'd cut off their nip -- er, uh -- I mean pah, pah--

TARA

Papillae.

FORREST

Right, their pap-il-ars -- and she'd cut them off with the scissors, see. Then, she'd sew 'em back on to her own boobs. And that way, she hoped, she could nurse.

TARA

No way... ?

FORREST

Yeah way.

TARA

And it worked?

FORREST

No. But she kept trying to make it work. So she'd just kill and kill all these girls -- cutting off their paps, and sewing 'em back onto herself, until her whole body, head-to-toe, was covered with them.

TARA

Ew. But the baby... it live?

FORREST

Yeah. It did, actually. Because it got so hungry that it had to eat all the dead bodies Suzie murdered with her scissors.

Tara gags -- exactly the outcome Forrest had hoped for. But business at hand, Amani notes a hand-crank water pump inside the well and that lead from it to the barn.

AMANI

Knock it off you two. We might be in luck after all.

Amani races toward the barn. Forrest and Tara promptly follow -- but right then, out the corner of his eye, Forrest spots a peculiar blur move 'tween the jungle of rotted clunkers...

EXT. SCHMUCK PROPERTY - BARN - CONTINUOUS

...although, it may have been Forrest's imagination.

FORREST

Guys see that? Thought I saw something, by those cars.

AMANI

Enough ghost stories. I think we may have found something.

FORREST

What's in the barn, Amani?

Amani slides the rustic door open...

INT. SCHMUCK PROPERTY - BARN - CONTINUOUS

A smile cuts 'cross her jaw. Inside, a familiar playpen; one for any age who posses the skill to distill moonshine

AMANI

Jackpot.

EXT. LAVENDER FIELD - DAY

Brando sits alone in the desert -- doesn't sweat so much as a bead. Scooter, on the other hand, downpours. He steadies the gun and zeros in on the plush toy.

SCOOTER

I can't shoot my sister's doll.

JOSE

Ya ain't gonna hit it anyway. C'mon, let's see what ya got. Bet ya a pack of smokes you'll miss.

SCOOTER

But she loves that bear.

JOSE

Bro, she thinks you're a pussy.

SCOOTER

Ain't true. I'm older. She knows.

JOSE

"Brando'll look after you. Says you're both pussies."

SCOOTER
She called us "wussies."

JOSE
Same difference, dummy! You're a
pushover is what I'm gettin' at!

SCOOTER
Think so? Well, watch this...

Scooter squeezes the trigger -- *BANG!* -- he blows out his eardrums and flinches. Jose erupts in boisterous laughter.

SCOOTER
You're an asshole, Jose!

JOSE
Huh? Couldn't hear ya.

SCOOTER
You're an asshole!

JOSE
What?

SCOOTER
I said you're an ass--

BANG! -- Scooter accidentally sets off the gun again. The bullet just barely rips left of Jose and blows out the back windshield to the squad car.

JOSE
What are you -- crazy?!

SCOOTER
Please don't tell Amani!

INT. SCHMUCK PROPERTY - BARN - DAY

Amani notes the boom that ricochets outside the barn walls.

AMANI
How much you want to bet that was
the Katzenjammer Kids?

Forrest shrugs -- the reference lost on him. By now, Amani falls into her rhythm. She preps the cooker, thumper, and worm drums -- all joined by copper piping and ready to shine.

AMANI
Don't stand there. Get to work.
Find where the mash is stored.

FORREST

You're fooling yourself. What's the big deal? So what. The guy shines.

AMANI

Exactly. And made properly, shine is nearly ninety-five percent pure grain alcohol. Which is what?

Stupefied. Forrest is better off explaining Relativity.

AMANI

Christ, Forrest -- it's ethanol.

"Special" Relativity.

AMANI

Gas, you troglodyte. It's gas.

FORREST

Bullshit. We sell gas? To drink?

TARA (O.C.)

Found something! These smell like your cruddy ol' boxcar.

Forrest joins Tara 'cross the barn. There, she points out several large buckets covered with burlap. He whips the blanket off to expose the vomitus contents inside.

FORREST

Hey, we got mash here.

AMANI

Find one with the thickest foam on top, not bubbling. That's the one most fermented.

Back at the still, Amani operates on a propane tank. It's attached to a hose that connects its other end to a burner positioned underneath the cooker (similar to an oil drum). She opens the valve, and sparks the self-light burner.

Meanwhile, Forrest drags the bucket over. With Amani's help, they pour the mash into the cooker and seal the lid.

AMANI

The thumper and worm drums are bone-dry. There's a hand-crank out by the well. Pump me some water.

FORREST

Serious? Them pumps are shit.

AMANI

How do you think this works? When the mash comes to temp, we need to act fast. If we don't cool the vapor, then what? Last I checked, the car's not steam-powered.

Begrudgingly, Forrest exits the barn.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Jose sparks his fag and admires the windshield damage on Ol' 52. Scooter is less impressed.

JOSE

Ya done it now, bro. Shit's wicked.

A breeze catches exhaled smoke and wafts into Scooter's face.

SCOOTER

Ugh. Why ya pretend to smoke those?

JOSE

Pretend? Dude, I'm addicted.

SCOOTER

I seen addicts. You're a poser.

JOSE

Ya couldn't handle it. Admit it. A tired-out piece of yarn -- you'd piss yourself, like with the gun.

SCOOTER

Bullshit. I shot it, didn't I?

Scooter swipes the fag. He takes a long hit. It's regrettable -- and marks the second time Jose laughs at his expense.

JOSE

Don't inhale all the way.

SCOOTER

That's how it works, dope! And they're disgusting, F.Y.I.

The outside world evaporates as Jose snickers, but Scooter's sober enough to notice a dust cloud form upon the horizon. He jabs Jose in the shoulder -- if only to steal his attention.

SCOOTER

What's that? In the road?

Jose turns white. They run back into the lavender field, hide under the brush. An unknown vehicle draws near...

EXT. SCHMUCK PROPERTY - WATER WELL / PUMP - DAY

Forrest elbow greases the water pump. He wipes sweat off his brow. Finally, Amani pokes her head out the barn:

AMANI

Got it! The mash is heating fast.

Excited, she disappears again. Forrest stretches out and looks 'round the property. He spots something -- again -- beyond the junk-heap. He hears a *clank-clank*, then spots another blur pass 'tween the spaces of a few beater-cars.

FORREST

Who's messin'? Someone out there?
Not looking for trouble. Honest.

To his left, a *knock*. His right, a *thump, thump, thump*.

CRACKLY VOICE (O.C.)

We're gonna make trouble for ya.

--shit, it sounds like fucking teenagers! Next -- "Incoming!" -- Forrest looks up to spot a blitzkrieg of dirt clods fall from the sky. Ambush! Every direct hit hurts like hell, too.

FORREST

Ow! Knock it off, shitheads!

From behind the well a teenage girl, GLENDA, surprises him.

GLENDA

Who ya callin' shitheads, dickface?

She grabs him by the hair. At last, Forrest is overtaken and pulled over the edge into the well... or the likes thereof.

EXT. LAVENDER FIELD - VIEW OF DIRT ROAD - DAY

Cicadas buzz. Jose's strains to both listen and spectate the arrival of a tow truck. It stalls a few yards away from Squad Car 52. Flaked lettering on the door reads "Schmuck Salvage."

SCOOTER

Oh, man -- we must be on Ol' Man
Schmuck's property. Horse biscuits.

Jose and Scooter lay flat on their bellies. Everything that occurs on the dirt road is from their POV.

Take for example the country bumpkin -- OL' MAN SCHMUCK, I suppose -- who drops out the truck cab to investigate the squad car.

And yes, that'd be a shotgun the clodhopper carries with him. First, he explores the busted-out windows, the fresh glass. Next, the smashed-up front-end and blood on the front seat.

But what if he finds the gun... ? What a minute, the piece! Scooter still has it. Both boys meet the same realization.

JOSE
(super soto)
Give. Me. The. Piece.

SCOOTER
Wait... He. Might. Leave.

Schmuck slavers a snarl of chew. He kicks the tires and sizes up the situation. It's not long before he meets the rear end of the car. He knocks on the trunk, gives it a listen.

Jose scrutinizes Scooter. He wants the gun. Now.

INT. SCHMUCK PROPERTY - BARN - DAY

Amani taps the still. Tara watches her work.

AMANI
That's pretty much to temp.

TARA
What's it doing?

AMANI
We heat up the mash, see, in the still. The liquid inside turns to steam. That gets forced through this tube and into the next drum.

She points out each item to the captivated little girl.

AMANI
This is called a thumper. We added water to it -- that helps filter the steam. It ensures a higher yield of alcohol. By volume. A.B.V. Make sense? Basically, it purifies it. Makes the shine, uh, stronger.

TARA
What's the curly tube?

AMANI

That's called the worm. Steam gets pushed from the thumper into this barrel. Water cools it back down into a liquid as it goes 'round and 'round the copper tube. Then--

Amani turns a valve at the bottom of the worm drum. Sure enough, clear liquid drips out the opening of the valve.

TARA

--then moonshine! Wow, neat!

Amani stands proud, like a mother teaching her offspring.

TAYLOR (O.C.)

Ya trailer-trash, bozo! That belongs to pop-pop.

Tara spins to face here nemesis:

TARA

Taylor Schmuck! You lil' worm.

And it's not solely young Taylor who migrates out of the shadows, but his teenage kinfolk -- twins GARRETT and Glenda.

EXT. LAVENDER FIELD - VIEW OF DIRT ROAD - DAY

It's a sigh of relief the trunk on Squad Car 52 is locked. But Ol' Man Schmuck sets down his shotgun and returns with a crowbar. From the boys' POV, they watch the man slip the pry into the trunk-jam and give it a crank. Jose to Scooter:

JOSE

The. Fucking. Gun.

Scooter yields -- just as they here a *CLICK-CLANK!*

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Schmuck busts the bolt. Next, he need only lift the lid...

JOSE (O.C.)

Don't touch that!

The ol' man doesn't bat a lash -- even as a young boy exits the lavender field, joins him on the road. What's more, the lad has a gun pointed at him.

OL' MAN SCHMUCK

And who'd be sayin' so?

JOSE
Who it look like? I say so.

OL' MAN SCHMUCK
How ya figure? You a cop?

JOSE
I ain't no fuzz, so back away!

OL' MAN SCHMUCK
Why ya here, boy? Road's private.

JOSE
Nothin'. We're jus' passin'.

OL' MAN SCHMUCK
"We," eh? Who ya got with ya?
Ollly olly oxen free! C'mon out.

Sheepishly, Scooter and Brando poke out from the lavender.

SCOOTER
Told ya this was a bad idea, Jose.

JOSE
Dammit, dude -- ya blew my cover.

OL' MAN SCHMUCK
Jose, is it? Sure, I seen ya. One
of 'em Martinez runts. Your mama
works the diner.

JOSE
Don't talk about my mom.

OL' MAN SCHMUCK
Feisty ol' broad. She gettin'
pecker a time or two? 'Bout ready
for some lovin' since your daddy
croaked, I reckon.

JOSE
I swear to God, I will shoot you!

OL' MAN SCHMUCK
Knew your ol' man, too. Got killed
diggin' 'round tunnels for scraps.

JOSE
No kiddin'. He was a miner.

OL' MAN SCHMUCK
Boy, ain't been a proper company
since the mid-sixties.

(MORE)

OLÍ MAN SCHMUCK (CONT'D)

No ore to be found in 'em hills these days. It's why I started my own salvage. But your daddy -- he figured he could get rich thievin' 'round ol' caves.

JOSE

He wasn't a thief. Take it back.

Ol' Man Schmuck pops open the cab of his truck and digs through the trash inside. He finds a jar of moonshine.

OL' MAN SCHMUCK

Your ol' man was thief as they come. Lootin' and pawnin' -- 'till one day the mountain says, fell. Bit of bad luck, I s'pose. I reckon your pop hadn't the luck of the Irish on his side. Ya Irish, maybe?

Awkwardly, Scooter raises his hand, "I'm Irish."

OL' MAN SCHMUCK

If you're gonna keep me here all day, kid, I need a sit. I need a drink -- and chat 'bout ya boys comin' 'cross this here car. 'Lax stinkers -- one way or 'nuther, I'll be satisfyin' my curiosities.

The clodhopper has himself a fine swallow of hooch.

INT. OL' BUS - SCHMUCK PROPERTY - DAY

Forrest, Amani, and Tara: confined to rotted ol' bus seats. Lil' Taylor plays prison guard. He and Tara silently scowl at one another. And just outside, the twins bicker -- obviously over the Rifters' fate. They possess, too, the jug of shine.

The way Forrest ogles Glenda -- in her tank top and shorts -- he may feel a tingle of sorts. Amani punches him in the ribs.

AMANI

We seriously taking bullshit from the Schmuck's?

FORREST

They're bigger than us.

AMANI

No, the guy Carlos called out last night -- from the papers -- he was bigger than us.

FORREST

Yeah, but they're teenagers, Amani.

AMANI

You pathetic sad little boy. We're leaving, and I'm taking the shine.

Amani treads toward the front with Taylor unable to stop her. However, to inhibit her, enter Garrett and Glenda. The male slams the shine down.

GARRETT

Okay, piss-ants -- you're on mountain time now. That means ya obey mountain law. One, ya was trespassin'. Two, ya was thievin'. That means someone's gotta pay.

GLENDA

Him. Yeah, you...

Forrest looks 'round -- as if Glenda meant for someone else. She pulls him through the aisle, boots him out the bus.

GARRETT

Ladies. This'll all be over soon.

Garrett winks at Amani. She sneers and folds her arms in discord, *Fucking Schmucks*. Then, he and Taylor join the company outside -- but not before he padlocks the door.

EXT. SCHMUCK PROPERTY - JUNK YARD - CONTINUOUS

For whatever odd reason, Forrest doesn't seem too bothered by Glenda man-handling him up the hill, to the ol' tire area.

TAYLOR

I say we pelt him with dirt clods as punishment.

FORREST

Nope. No way. Those sting to hell.

GLENDA

Fine, twerp. How 'bout that?

She points to a tractor tire only slightly bigger than he is.

FORREST

What? I don't get it.

GARRETT

The Roly-Poly. I like it.

GLEENDA

Eh, twerp? Best retribution 'sides
a peltin' by clods.

Glenda inches up on him. Christ, what is it about this girl
that makes Forrest agree to stupid shit--

FORREST

Sure, I'll do it.

--that permits her to trick him 'tween the innerliner of a
tractor tire, to await whatever fate has in store for him?

If you do a quick cut back inside the bus, you might notice
the girls watch the madness like a bad soap. Amani fumes:

But back outside, Forrest braces for an easy ride. Taylor and
the twins position his trajectory.

FORREST

Just down the small path, yeah?

GLEENDA

Sure, kid. Or the big one.

Forrest hardly mutters, "Wait, what?!" when his world gets
flipped -- and he's pushed down the longest stretch of hill.
Brazenly, the Schmucks laugh in the face of their chicanery--

--until it takes a unexpected turn; seen by Amani and Tara,
inside the bus, as the tire accelerates toward them. Then --
CLANK! -- it smashes the stilts into pieces. The girls feel a
slight tug... as the bus soon follows down the hill.

The tire charges down the mound; the bus trails the tire; the
Schmuck's race after the bus...

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SMALL BLUFF - CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, Ol' Man Schmuck finishes off a steamy piss. He
zips his overalls and wanders back to Jose and Scooter.

OL' MAN SCHMUCK

I give up, fellas. Unless you're
hidin' a body of some cop, I'd very
much like to know why ya in title
to this here vehicle.

Jose keeps the piece on him. Scooter bites his lip.

JOSE

Hey! Piss off, ol' man!

A split second later, the clodhopper pulls a small pistol on the boy (probably hidden in his overalls). Now what... ? The ol' man's called his bluff. Schmuck then tilts the trunk-lid open, slightly, but a sudden force pulls down his shoulders--

--as it turns out to be Scooter, hopped onto his back. The bumpkin flips him and the boy is body-slammed atop the trunk.

OL' MAN SCHMUCK
Ya lil' prick.

Next, a peculiar high-pitched whine -- but its origin unclear. However, it dilates in volume... and that's when -- sure as shit -- a massive fucking tractor tire breaches the ridge of the bluff. Schmuck dives for his life--

--meanwhile, still in harm's way, Scooter screams as the tire falls toward him. 'Cause of coincidence, he's able to roll himself through the busted back windshield -- just as the mass of rubber crashes atop the trunk-end of Squad Car 52.

The tire bounces -- and Jose's next to clear its path. It rolls a yard behind the car, then topples over like a coin. Forrest emerges from the innerliner and promptly vomits. Jose is left dumbstruck. But it's what Forrest stares at next that leaves Jose with a pinch in his gut.

He looks back at the ridge -- just as Forrest dizzily runs opposite him -- and hence, takes the cue to levant as well.

The school bus ramps off the bluff. It floats for an eternity... then lands like an epic atop the tow truck.

Dust swirls as we do a cinematic push-in, right up to the bus door. It endures a bastinado from the inside -- *BOOM, CLANK!* -- and at last the lock breaks off, the door opens, and Amani emerges with Tara. Oh... and the jug of moonshine!

AMANI
Let's get the goddamn hell off
mountain time.

She pushes the shine onto Jose. He goes to work filling Ol' 52's gas tank. Amani retrieves Forrest and employs him in the driver's seat. Next, she helps Tara in, who finds her Brando.

It takes a few tries before the engine turns over -- but eventually, it works. Atop the bluff, Amani realizes the Schmuck kids. She directly flashes them her middle finger. Her and Jose then join the Rifiers, and the car peels out.

Ol' Man Schmuck 'rounds the bus, and shakes his fist.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIVE BAR - PARKING LOT - DAY

The growl of motorcycles. Barely mid-afternoon and already the place overflows with bikers. A brown station wagon parks. Peter DuMars, of course. He makes his way to the bar -- notes the same patch on each biker's cut: "Phalse Profets."

INT. DIVE BAR - COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

Cutting through a mix of barflies and bikers -- some play pool, others shoot darts -- DuMars saddles into a stool at the head counter. He orders a whiskey.

BRUCE (O.C.)

Small towns -- they're like
shitting yourself: only you get the
warm feeling it brings, while the
rest of us get the stench. I tell
ya, this place never stunk so bad.

Bruce Bowde tips his hat to the riffraff 'round the bar and chugs a beer -- already deep one bottle too many.

DUMARS

Shit or no, anywhere ya go stinks.

BRUCE

You, a professor or something? One
of them, uh, U-F... uh, Ufologists?
Think that's the name.

DUMARS

Never heard of it.

The bartender offers up DuMars the whiskey.

BRUCE

No? Could have sworn you were one
of them Ufologists. Weird shit goes
on 'round here. Flying saucers, cow
mutilations... I've seen folks look
like you come in, chat with all the
crazies. Lot of anal probe talk.

DUMARS

You? Seen any UFOs?

BRUCE

Oh, hell no. My wife once -- she'd
be into that, um, astrology stuff.

DUMARS

Zodiac. That sort of thing?

BRUCE
The other thing. Astrol -- uh...

DUMARS
Astronomy. Study of the night sky.

BRUCE
That's the one. All that science
shit. Stars and galaxies.

DUMARS
Ah, I see. And your wife, um, I
presume you're no longer married?

BRUCE
Say again?

DUMARS
You said, "your wife once." Took it
for past tense. Apologies if not.

BRUCE
Not a worry. No, she's bedridden.
Leukemia. Getting worse, too.

DUMARS
Sorry to hear. How about one on me?

DuMars requests the bartender for another round. They toast.

BRUCE
How about you, professor. Wife?

DUMARS
Yes. Well, uh, we hit a rough
patch. Never really worked out our
grievances before she passed.

Bruce sympathizes. Again, a round is ordered. It's a tender
moment -- but gets cut short by the raucous biker bunch.

BRUCE
Hey, would ya keep it down? Some of
us like drinking in peace.

Probably not the best course of action to call out big burly
bikers. DuMars calms the situation and changes the subject:

DUMARS
Any kids?

BRUCE
Got a boy. Twelve. Handful. Hoping
puberty shakes him out.

DUMARS

I got two, myself -- boy and a girl. Both out on their own.

(beat)

But if you get a two a.m. call, pray it's 'cause your kid busted the bathtub faucet, needs you to bring over a water key and shut off the pipes before the house floods. If you ask me, that beats a late night call to bust 'em out of jail.

They toast, they drink.

BRUCE

What do they do?

DUMARS

Both in school. The boy's out of state -- Albuquerque, of all places. Daughter's still in Denver.

(beat)

Speaking of -- I need to check in with her. Sort of my secretary. Side job I got going. Excuse me.

DuMars makes his pardon and the bartender instructs him to a rotary phone, 'round the corner. He dials, speaks to phone.

DUMARS

Hey, sweetie. Anything new... Okay, Wait -- say again. Creede... ? No -- sounds familiar. I'll check a map. This happened when, you say... ? Yeah, got it. Yep -- thanks, Allie. Hey, doing okay?

There's shouts and insults that explode back 'round the corner. The P.I. is forced to investigate, only to narrowly prevent a rumble 'tween Bruce and a few unsympathetic Profets. DuMars quickly intervenes, hoists Bruce out of his stool and excuses him and the drunk:

DUMARS

Gentleman, not looking for trouble.

(to Bruce)

I'm gonna get you home? Try not to get us killed.

(looks at watch, grunts)

Dammit.

Together, they exit the bar and avoid further confrontation.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREEDE MINING MUSEUM - DAY

Scooter exits with a bag of snacks. He happens upon a pay phone. There, he looks at it and retrieves the business card he had all along, *îPETER DUMARS: Private Investigator.î*

SCOOTER

Dammit. Shouldn't called ya again.

He tosses the card into a trash bin. Afterwards, Scooter races up the hill, toward the mines hidden in the mountain. No more than a second later, a white van enters...

CUT TO:

INT. MINE - ADIT - DAY

Start on black. We hear voices, "This can't be it" and "Trust me, it is." Next, the crack of wood. One by one, slivers of light breach the cavernous interior. A wall swings inward...

Silhouettes of four Rifiers move forward: Forrest, Jose, Amani, and Tara. Jose points out a list of person's names etched into the gnarled struts of the wood on the door. One particular name stands out, "Javier Martinez."

JOSE

That's my pop. He died in here. It happened, like, way underground.

All peer through the blackness with the same internal thought, *You want us to go in there?!*

FORREST

Whatever, dude. Can we pull the car in and ditch this place? Please.

JOSE

Sure, bro. C'mon, kids! Let's spit it, hit it, split it, and quit it.

Jose clicks on the flashlight.

EXT. MINE - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Forrest snorts -- very much aware that he bears the responsibility to drive the vehicle inside. He makes for Ol' 52 just as Scooter enters the scene.

SCOOTER

Hey, fellas. Brought snacks.

Intolerant and uninterested, Forrest blows past him. Scooter joins Jose and Tara. Amani catches up to Forrest.

AMANI

Hey. We made it.

FORREST

Guess so. What could go wrong now?

AMANI

Exactly. What could go wrong?

(beat)

You okay?

At the car, Forrest pops the door handle but hesitates.

FORREST

Are any of us okay, Amani? I just wanna get out of here.

(beat)

You know what sucks? I don't even care. About any of it. Of this.

That should feel weird, right?

Like, I should feel something.

(kicks the car)

It's this stupid thing. I hate it.

I'm not sad and I won't miss it.

AMANI

If you hadn't, you know -- if it wasn't you, it'd be me. I'd have done it myself, Forrest. The car...

if you hadn't driven into him, I

think I would've shot him. I

remember wanting to. I would have.

No matter what. I... I owe you.

FORREST

That's the thing, Amani...

(pause)

It. Wasn't. Me. Jose -- he pushed my leg down... on, on the pedal. No way I coulda stopped it. I didn't do it, see? Not really, anyway.

The mood is like daddy just punched mommy at the dinner table. She looks back at Jose near the adit. He calls out:

JOSE

Yo! We're burning daylight.

To Amani, Jose appears more maniacal, contrasted fittingly against the open belly of the mine entrance. Forrest slithers into the car. He pops the headlights and pulls forward.

INT. MINE - ADIT - CONTINUOUS

The mine is just wide enough to drive the Gran Fury inside. Forrest eases it in. Scooter and Tara explore the forefront.

AMANI

Tara, let's wait here. This isn't a place for little girls.

TARA

No way. I'm big. I can go.

JOSE

Shit could fall -- knock ya right out and bust your head to mush.

Scooter winces -- himself not happy with the situation. Jose sneaks him a wink, *Shut up -- just go with it.*

SCOOTER

Yeah, uh, stick with Amani. Ya ain't gonna tag along and get hurt.

Reluctant, Tara abides. But it's what Jose offers Amani that's most concerning: the .45 Colt Auto. At first, she rejects it. Jose sighs. He swipes Tara's teddy bear and slips the piece inside Brando's back jammy-pouch.

JOSE

In case there's trouble. Got it? Geez, tryin' to help.

Tara hugs her armed plush toy. Amani watches the boys disappear into the dark -- as the car's red taillights dwindle in luminosity the deeper it goes into the smoky dust.

INT. MINE - TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Jose and Scooter walk ahead, their path lit by Ol' 52.

SCOOTER

This is somethin' creepy, ain't it? Like the "Paths of the Dead."

JOSE

Is that nerd gibberish?

SCOOTER

Tolkien.

JOSE

Thought so. Yo, Forrest -- how ya doin' back there?

Forrest, from the car, answers back with his middle finger. Jose brushes it off. It's then that his foot gets caught and his leg sinks through a rotted floorboard to the knee. Scooter tries to help him out, but Jose struggles on his own.

Inside the squad car, Forrest barely makes out the kerfuffle ahead. Refracted light and dust make it hard to see. Next, he sees Jose's shadow emerge. The boy waves the car in.

JOSE

Forrest, you're clear. Move up.

Forrest proceeds. He feels the car tug and slide over gravel. Up ahead, the headlights reveal a wood slatted barricade -- but a second later, however, Forrest feels a bump.

Outside in the tunnel, a front tire falls into the broken floorboard and locks the car. Anxiety spikes 'tween three boys who all shout, "Back it up," "Pop it into 'drive," etc.

Forrest floors it. The wheels spin... catch hold... and, 'cause of physics, the car shoots like a bullet. Jose shoves Scooter out of the way. Quick goat-thinking, Jose jumps and lands atop the hood. The car crashes through the barricade--

INT. MINE - UPPER CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

--then comes to a screeching halt. Jose slingshot 'cross the widened space. He lands near a shaft lift. There's groans. Coughs. Ultimately, the trio converge 'round Jose.

JOSE

Fuck me. That's smarts.

SCOOTER

Ha! Frodo lives!

FORREST

Jose! You all right, dude?

JOSE

Landed on my balls. But hey, never better, numskull. Oh, shit--

--Jose spots something crammed into the shaft. The bulky object is precisely lit by the car headlights.

JOSE

--sweet fried monkey tits...

He reaches in the pulls out an overstuffed duffel bag.

CUT TO:

EXT. MINE - ENTRANCE - DAY

Amani gently picks up a *danaus plexippus* off a shrub.

AMANI

Tara, come take a look at this.

TARA

This sucks. I wanna go in the cave.

Oh, well... so much for butterflies. Amani releases it.

AMANI

It's dangerous. And they're boys.

TARA

So! They're not better, are they?

AMANI

Of course not. They're... you know, it's dark in there. Scary place.

TARA

So they're more brave?

AMANI

If anything, they're more stupid. It's a stupid thing to go in there.

TARA

So now I'm stupid?!

AMANI

I didn't mean it like that. Wait -- where're you off to?

With Brando, Tara strides down the mountain.

TARA

To do something stupid.

AMANI

Wait, it's dangerous.

TARA

No duh. Everything's dangerous and stupid. That's why we're out here.

At the bottom of the hill, Amani chases Tara onto a trail--

EXT. BACHELOR LOOP - CONTINUOUS

--before she's able to catch up.

AMANI

What's the matter with you?

The tears swell in the young girl's eyes.

TARA

I coulda been braver, ya know.

AMANI

You are brave. You shouldn't think a mine is going to prove that.

TARA

No. I mean the man -- in the car trunk. He scared me. So I took him to the secret clubhouse -- even though I wasn't s'posed to.

AMANI

Honey, he tricked you. Because he was a policeman, and police are supposed to be good.

TARA

No. He's not police or anything. He hurt Jose's brother. I saw it. He was bad. So are the other creeps.

AMANI

Forget Chip. And the man on the motorcycle. We're going home after this. You won't see them again.

Right then, a white van breaches the slope, down the road. It stops. The driver's side door opens, and it's fucking Randall Kardell! Now, Bachelor Loop ain't feelin' so lonely anymore.

AMANI

Tara, hold my hand. We're going to run. As fast we can. Got it?

Yep, all clear. So as agreed, Amani and Tara hit the trail, hard sprint. Kardell dives into the van and burns after them.

INT. MINE - UPPER CHAMBER - DAY

It's the greatest discovery short of the Ark of the Covenant; and in awe, Jose and Scooter gaze upon the duffel bag. Loth, Forrest stands further away. The first two unzip the pouch...

...and discover the whole gang inside: Hamilton, Jackson, Grant -- shit, even Franklin; stacks of dead bureaucrats.

JOSE

Ain't never seen nothin' like this.
Dude, we're on easy street. Forr,
take a look.

FORREST

Yeah. See it. Yee-haw.

JOSE

The matter, bro? Ain't ya excited?

FORREST

Thought I'd be. But it's just
money, isn't it?

JOSE

Yeah. A lot. What's your deal?

FORREST

What can we do with it? Buy Bazooka
Joe? Twinkies? We can't spend it.

JOSE

What can't, eh? Scoot could --
'cause it means no more sleepin' in
boxcars 'cause he ain't got dough
for a motel. Means I can do right
by my brother, see?

(beat)

Your mom, dude. She's sick -- now
you get her one of them pricey-ass
narrow-surgeons.

FORREST

"Neon" surgeon.

SCOOTER

"Neuro" surgeon.

FORREST

Whatever. That's not what's wrong
with her. You don't have a fucking
clue, Jose. 'Cause you're stubborn.
You don't give a shit about anyone.

JOSE

Take it back, asshole. *La familia*.

FORREST

Amani? Is she family?

JOSE

'Course she is! I don't care, bro --
she likes you, you like her.

(MORE)

JOSE (CONT'D)

I'm over it. You're the hero, ain't ya -- even though I kicked your foot down? Too much a pussy to do it yourself. So whatever -- I'm the dickhead, or asshole, or whatever.

FORREST

You didn't do it for me. You kicked my foot 'cause you like her.

JOSE

So what? Like I said -- over it. Because I got this now.

Jose holds the bag o' money tightly. Metaphorically, this creates a "rift" 'tween him and Forrest.

FORREST

The bag, give it. I'll dump it.

JOSE

Hell you are, *puto!*

The two boys literally play grab-bag. No longer a children's quarrel, or a simple game of tag, Jose wrestles the duffel away from Forrest. He locks himself in the car, shotgun.

JOSE

Go suck an eggplant, Forr.

FORREST

Get out! You get out now!

To further his asshole reputation, Jose sets off the turret lights, but worse... the police siren: *WHOOOP! WHOOOP! WHOOOP!* Forrest and Scooter cup their ears. The noise reverberates...

EXT. MINE / WOODS / BACHELOR LOOP - DAY

...where it reaches the entrance and blows out the adit like a bullhorn... to carom 'tween the forest trees... and settle upon Bachelor Loop: like an industrial howl of a sick coyote.

INT. VAN (MOVING) - BACHELOR LOOP - CONTINUOUS

Kardell cuts a hard left. Then right. Lilly sits next to him. A few yards out, two small girls run for their lives.

LILLY

There they are! Go, go!

Kardell's foot slams the gas pedal. The engine grinds.

EXT. BACHELOR LOOP - CONTINUOUS

Full scurry, Amani leads Tara through a track of mud. The elder looks back in time to witness the van nose-dive into the sippy substance. It fishtails. The girls race down a steep decline -- with the van still hot on their heels.

Whoop! Whoop! Whoop! -- the sound catches Amani's attention.

AMANI

Wait. Listen...

The van, too, stops. Kardell and Lilly crack the windows.

KARDELL

Ya hear that?

LILLY

'Course I do. Round up them girls.
Handle that. I'll track the sound.

Already, Lilly jumps out the vehicle. She scampers back up the hill. Kardell spots Amani and Tara on a path toward the colossal Commodore Refinery; a structure built entirely of wood and corrugated tin-sheets.

KARDELL

Dammit. Leave me the girls. Boys I can handle. Girls, not so much.

Kardell cuts the van 'round and accelerates down the hill.

INT. MINE - UPPER CHAMBER - DAY

The cave blares and blinks like a shitty Miami nightclub. Forrest and Jose haven't yielded. Scooter hates them both.

FORREST

Scooter! Get me the pepper spray!
Goddamn pepper spray! In the trunk!

Scooter shrugs, *The fuck is Forrest saying...* ? He hesitates, but finally he pops the trunk -- and there's the dead body... in all its glory and shit. At last, Jose cuts the siren.

JOSE

What ya up to, pussy?

FORREST

I'm gonna mace you out.

SCOOTER

I don't see where it is.

FORREST
Christ, Scoot! On his belt.

SCOOTER
Oh, here it is--

--at once, the boys feel (and hear) a chilling vibration.

SCOOTER
Uh, what was that?

The ground beneath them trembles. Next, the floorboard gives way -- the front-end of Ol' 52 drops into the lower chamber. Jose goes down with it, but Scooter gets dumped into the trunk. Forrest remains only barely out of the way.

Forthwith, the lasting ground snaps -- the back end of the car descends. It lands with a firm thud and forces shut the trunk lid. Scooter gets locked inside; he screams. Forrest peers over the top edge, into the lower chamber. Jose escapes the squad car.

FORREST
Ya hurt?

JOSE
Startin' to hate this place.

FORREST
Help out Scoot, would ya? I'll find something to climb out with.

'Course, when Forrest spins 'round to backtrack the tunnel, he's surprised by an unexpected foe: Goddamn. Lilly. Tackett.

LILLY
Hey, kittens. I sure as hell can oblige a hand.

From somewhere, she's received a shovel (it's a mine after all). With it, she swings for the bleachers -- cracks Forrest tight in the chest. Forrest back flips over the precipice; his shoe and foot get caught on a splintered board. There, he hangs upside-down from the ceiling, above the car.

JOSE
Dumb broad! What're ya, crazy?!

LILLY
Ya have to go on and be crazy. Craziiness is like heaven.

JOSE
Great. Crazy and a phil-sopher.

LILLY

"Philosopher." And would it kill ya to play Hendrix every now and then? Christ, you're 'bout as dimwit as your older half was. He was the worst sorta crazy -- 'cause he had no smarts. Somethin' both ya share.

JOSE

What ya mean by that?

LILLY

Money, dimwit. Where's. The. Stash?

Lilly brandishes a gun.

EXT. COMMODORE DISTRICT - ORE REFINERY - DAY

Amani and Tara slide down a rocky gullet -- and narrowly escape the van. What tricks they used to outwit it, only mere moments before, I'll leave to the storyboard artist.

However, even on the outside deck, the girls are open targets. They spectate the van bank left, buckle right, and run through a patch of potholes. After all that, it maneuvers 'round a bump, goes airborne, and rams into a wall of stone.

The van scrapes against the rock face -- then bellies over a dip in the road and blows out a tire. Not enough time elapses for Amani and Tara to escape inside the refinery. Already, both dour and sour, Kardell exits and kicks the flat tire.

INT. ORE REFINERY - GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Amani and Tara extend into the dark reaches of the building. They cut through slats of light and hide in dusky areas.

TARA

We don't have anything. He should leave us alone. I'm tired.

Amani punctually hushes her. The unwelcomed guest -- the Fallen Profet -- enters the paddock. Quietly, they spy his bulky frame, framed dead-center 'tween the door-frame.

INT. MINE - UPPER CHAMBER / LOWER CHAMBER - DAY

Lilly glowers at Jose. He's yet to give up any secrets.

FORREST

Can someone get me down?

Oh, that's right -- Forrest still hangs there, suspended upside-down. He curls his abdomen and reaches for his ankle, but Lilly swats at his fingers with the shovel. Wood cracks.

FORREST

Watch it, lady! That's gonna hurt.

LILLY

Ain't s'posed to tickle.

The two go back and forth like this -- with Forrest reaching to undo his shoe and Lilly taking shots at him. At last, she smites a bit too hard. The flooring breaks loose -- Forrest lands atop the car trunk and Lilly into the lower chamber.

Jose attempts to aid Forrest -- but Lilly, unscathed by the fall, puts the kibosh on his plan; she flashes her piece.

LILLY

Back away. No time to be a hero.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! -- the sound echoes inside the trunk. Lilly moves toward Squad Car 52. There, she rolls Forrest through the busted back windshield and into the backseat.

Lilly undoes the latch... lifts the lid... and -- *SPRISH!* -- receives a hardy spray of mace to the face. She recoils. Scooter, the malefactor, holds down the trigger as he escapes the trunk. It's potent stuff, so both boys cough as well.

SCOOTER

Dimwit! Money's in the front seat!

JOSE

Yo, Scoot! Shut the hell up. C'mon, let's check out of here.

Jose dives into the driver's seat as Scooter takes shotgun next to the duffel. The engine still runs so Jose hits the gas. Together, they drive deep into the lower tunnel.

Teary-eyed, Lilly admits the car's escape. She takes a few shots at it -- *BANG! BANG!* -- and pops the back brake light.

INT. SQUAD CAR 52 (MOVING) - MINE - LOWER TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

The blown out taillight really irks Jose.

JOSE

That bitch is--

SCOOTER

--crazy! I know.

Scooter flinches -- right as the outer shell of Ol' 52 grinds against the rock wall. In the backseat, Forrest wakes up to the taste of pepper spray.

FORREST
Hell just happened?

JOSE
Yo, Forr! Hey, dude, we made it!

BANG! -- a bullet penetrates the cab. It cracks the partition window, inches from Forrest's head. He dips behind the seat.

Outside, Lilly catches up on foot. Like a Fellbeast of Mordor, she swan dives and crash lands atop the trunk. Jose cuts the car left, then right -- useless endeavors to dispose of her. What he fails to notice is the massive support beam ahead -- *CRASH! BOOM! CRACK!*

The squad car rips into it -- the vehicle grinds to a halt. Lilly buckshots into the backseat. A cave-in squashes the turret lights, separates the front end from the back.

Jose tries the door. It's jammed. Scooter tests his side -- it pops. Before they slide out, a knock on the clear divider calls their attention. Regrettably, it's Lilly. Worse, she has the gun propped against Forrest's head.

JOSE
We got the money! Hands off him.

But 'cause of the cave-in and the acrylic plastic partition, both phenomena make an exchange impossible.

FORREST
(to Jose)
Burn it. Don't hand her the dough.
Amani. Tara. Don't give 'em pricks
shit without the girls. *La familia*.

Lilly delivers: Elbow-Express Inc., right to Forrest's gut.

LILLY
(to Jose)
He's right, ya know. Got your lady
friends. Chance to see 'em again --
I get what I came for. *Comprende?*

FORREST
Dude -- split. Take the money, get
the hell out. She won't hurt us if
you got the stash--

"OOF!" Forrest gasps. It's another jab to the stomach.

JOSE
Knock it off, lady! Or ya won't see
the money. Ever.

LILLY
How ya gonna rectify me?

JOSE
Boxcar. Nightfall. We'll give ya
the money. No tricks. We jus' want
our friends back. How 'bout it?

Forrest and Scooter share an odd look, *The boxcar...* ?

LILLY
This a road ya really wanna ride,
cowboy? Once ya break the horse,
she's your mare for life.

JOSE
Giddy-up.

Jose grabs the duffel and nudges Scooter out the squad car.

INT. MINE - LOWER TUNNEL / EXIT - CONTINUOUS

Together, Jose and Scooter make for a pinpoint of light,
clear ahead. Each take a turn to peer back at Forrest as each
are purposely forced to leave him with the powers that be:
The scoundrel Lilly Tackett.

INT. ORE REFINERY - GROUND FLOOR - DAY

Amani and Tara hear floorboards creak. Could the sounds be
all the souls Kardell has claimed, or the soles of his boots?
Furthermore, if the girls sneak to another covert, is it
enough to give the ex-Profet the slip?

KARDELL (O.C.)
I hear y'all breathin'. Help me out
then -- poke your lil' heads up an'
say howdie.

But every stealth maneuver the girls make, it's as if Kardell
closes in on them. They hide behind a stack of pallets. For
the longest time, the space is dead quiet -- but in three...
two... one, the pallets get knocked over -- and by coercion!

Kardell reaches inside and nearly snags Tara. Amani catches
hold first, and together they race up a flight of stairs --
splintered and rotted away nearly to oblivion.

INT. ORE REFINERY - 2ND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Somewhere beneath them, Kardell can be heard smashing through pallets. Amani leads Tara to the far end of the floor -- this time to another staircase, but even more decayed.

Enter Kardell. The girl's perpetually exhaust themselves as the trapped mice, not clever enough to evade the cat. With limited cubbies and holes to burrow into, Amani sends Tara up the next set of stairs.

The plight ends when Amani attempts the ascent herself -- only to land in anguish once the steps obliterate underneath her. Kardell's there to pick up the pieces.

KARDELL

Easy, girl. Take it easy.

Unreachable, now, Tara watches powerless from the 3rd floor.

AMANI

Tara -- stay up there. Don't come down 'till we're gone.

Kardell forces Amani out the exit in a chokehold.

INT. ORE REFINERY - 3RD FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Now it's just Tara and Brando (btw, she kept her teddy bear all along) -- helpless, stuck, and fishing for ideas. She searches the mighty refinery for another route. A few dead-ends and boarded up corridors later, she finds an ore-chute.

From outside, she hears two adults bicker: "Boxcar..." -- "...pricks have our money -- "...lil' one's inside, good as dead up there..." -- "...time to hit the road..." -- etc.

For now, Tara avoids the chute. She peers out the window. From her POV, on the ground, she spies Lilly load Forrest and Amani into the van. Kardell changes the tire.

She hugs Brando. Something rough spikes her in the chest. Tara removes the .45 Colt Auto from his back pouch. She aims the gun out the window... her hands begin to shake.

Tears swell. At last, she pulls the trigger. Nothing. The safety's on -- thank God for the that. Tara crouches down -- gun in one hand, Brando in the other -- and she softly cries.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HILL - DAY

Like a technicolor image borrowed out of a Western, a wobbly blur swells against the bulbous hill. As it moves closer to camera, a familiar cast emerges: the chit buckaroo Tara Tate.

She's disheveled -- and in one hand dangles her teddy bear, Brando. In the other, a .45 Colt Automatic. Note to cinema: this should be the most iconic shot in the movie.

EXT. HIGHWAY 149 - CONTINUOUS

With one of two options, Tara begins her trek east. It leads her away from the mountainous terrain and toward the Valley.

CUT TO:

INT. STATION WAGON (MOVING) - HIGHWAY 149 - MOMENTS LATER

The car's cigarette lighter pops. Peter DuMars reaches for a fag and jumps it accordingly. By chance, the wagon hits a pothole and the lighter slips. He bends over to fish for it.

But just in time, he responds to an external plight: a tiny physique, which walks dead-center of the highway, forces him to cut the wheel hard right. He narrowly avoids begetting human road kill.

The car ramps off the shoulder and into the embankment. Rattled at the end of it, DuMars comes to -- with a minor gash to his forehead. From the rearview, he spots the girl.

EXT. HIGHWAY 149 - CONTINUOUS

The youngest Rifter never so much as shutters; Tara walks on, as if her young life were already forfeit.

Exit DuMars. He calls out to her:

DUMARS

Hey! Hey... didn't you see me? Wait a minute now...

Tara ignores him and instead wipes snot from her nose. He hustles himself to catch up -- then takes heed of the piece.

DUMARS

Whoa, now. Where'd you get that?

(beat)

Tara, right? Hey. Hey, remember me? I was with your brother. Will.

DuMars gets a bit too close -- Tara spins and aims the gun right 'tween the eyes. The man backs off.

TARA

Safety's off. I know it is.

DUMARS

Easy, now. Not going to hurt you. Making sure you're okay, is all.

TARA

I'm. Fucking. Hungry.

DUMARS

Looks like you've had a long day. You, um, mind easing up on that?

Eventually, she retracts the piece.

DUMARS

That's better, isn't it? I feel better -- don't you? Now... would you like to, maybe, give it here?

In response, Tara holds it over her heart as if she were to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Now that's fucking American.

TARA

It's mine.

DUMARS

I see that. Keep it. I don't have use for it.

Somewhere off in the distance, a train whistle blows--

DUMARS

So, um -- saw a diner a few miles back. How about it... ?

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN CAR (MOVING) - DAY

--and howls within the chamber of the boxcar: *CHOO! CHOOOO!*

Jose Martinez latches onto Scooter Tate. The latter hangs out the car -- barely able to hold on as the train moves. Jose interlocks his hand underneath his armpit, then drags Scooter safely inside.

JOSE

Christ, why ya such a goober?

SCOOTER
 (coughing)
 Eat me. Fucking zero charisma.

JOSE
 What'd you say?

SCOOTER
 Zero charisma -- Zero
 charisma!

JOSE
 Zero supremacist! Zero
 supremacist!

Scooter collapses. He hacks and wheezes.

JOSE
 Quit panting. We made it.

SCOOTER
 It's asthma.

JOSE
 Good grief. You don't have asthma.

SCOOTER
 Do too! Peeper spray. Or chasing a
 moving train. That kinda shit.

JOSE
 Oh, come off it -- how come I ain't
 never seen ya with an inhaler?

SCOOTER
 Can't afford it.

JOSE
 Oh, really? Can now.

He kicks the bag of money -- stacks of crisp Benjamins stick out the open pouch. Repulsed, Scooter begins to throw fistfuls of bills out the train car. Appalled, Jose ropes him back with a chokehold. Scooter punches him in the stomach.

JOSE
Oof! Your ass is grass!

Jose tackles him at the knees. At last, two powder kegs of prepubescent anger, built up over the entire picture, break one another down in essentially a schoolyard fight. They eventually exhaust themselves, but with no clear winner.

JOSE
 Bro, I don't give a shit 'bout the cash. We need it, k? Forrest and Amani... they're counting on us.

Scooter sits himself down and faces toward the outside.
 Scenery shifts to the inner guts of a shitty trailer park.
 Scooter spots a small filthed-up girl, doll in hand.

SCOOTER

My sister. Think she's all right?

JOSE

Yeah. Of course. We're gonna show them creeps ya can't mess with family. Not your sis, not Carlos. Boy, if he were here. But he split, huh? Don't know why he'd do that? Leave us on our own?

Ugly pause. Scooter picks at something to avoid feedback.

SCOOTER

Runnin' from somethin', I guess.

JOSE

No kiddin'. I'd be, too, if I had that kinda heat. I was jus' hopin'... that he'd want to take me with him. Same as how ya take care of your sis -- keep her 'round.

SCOOTER

La familia, bro. Aint' that what you and Forrest said?

JOSE

You're such a cheese, dude.

Jose and Scooter smile and crack-wise. The train rolls on...

CUT TO:

INT. VAN (MOVING) - ROAD - DAY

Randall Kardell drives. He blows a glob of snot out the window. Lilly Tackett shakes her head, disapprovingly.

LILLY

Christ, Randy. That's disgusting.

KARDELL

It's dust.

LILLY

Yeah, but ya ain't on a chopper -- use a tissue.

FORREST (O.C.)

I need a tissue.

In the backseat, Forrest Bowde and Amani sit side-by-side, their hands bound. Forrest snorts a loogie and spits it back right onto the window. He beams. Lilly turns away, repulsed. Amani balks. It's enough to make him hang his head low.

LILLY

(to Forrest)

You're sweet on her, ain't ya?

AMANI

We're friends.

LILLY

Hon, he's got them gah-gah eyes.
Best ya could do it use it, ya see?

FORREST

Gah-gah eyes? I do not.

LILLY

(to Amani)

If ya ain't careful, men'll use ya to feast. They see a pretty face, a tight body, and some urge inside 'em makes 'em dismantle it -- bit by bit. Don't ever allow that. That's what a tool is -- it's only for fixin' things. Things break. Now, if ya got a noggin' up there, ya learn to be a weapon. 'Cause a weapon gets whatever she wants.

KARDELL

Christ, Lils. Fillin' her head with nonsense. And I haven't so much as once played ya like a tool.

LILLY

Nope. You're my kinda fixer-upper.

Lilly sneaks Amani a sly wink, *boys are dumb...*

KARDELL

(to Forrest)

Southfork still have that catfish fry on the forth? How is it now?

FORREST

Sucks. Fish tastes like antifreeze.

KARDELL

Some things don't change.

(to Lilly)

Ya never ate anything so deep-fried to hell -- like chewin' breaded rocks smothered in tarter sauce.

LILLY

Think I'll pass, darlin'.

KARDELL

Nah, it's fun. Fireworks show at the end of the night. Always wanted to do that -- be one of them dudes who sets 'em off. The big ones.

LILLY

Why didn't ya?

KARDELL

Wel'p... jus' forgot about it. Mentioned it once to Chip until he set me straight.

LILLY

Straight shot to a gun and badge.

Howíd she know that... ?

LILLY

Ya might have done some good 'till ya went south. Ya certainly had the Profets fooled for a time. But me -- I ain't as think as you drunk I am.

KARDELL

So you knew I was undercover?

LILLY

Peek-a-boo! One-four-seven written all over ya. Don't be surprised. I see things. It's how I survive. Any woman to make it out the M.C. unbroken has gotta embrace the chaos. Jus' so happens, I fell for it.

KARDELL

A weapon, huh?

Lilly winks at Amani with another powerful nictitate.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - BOOTH - DAY

DuMars stares intently at the girl as he stirs his coffee. Tara puts away Salisbury steak. On the table, by her side, is the .45 Colt Automatic. Seated next to her, Brando.

The diner's only real novelty are the regulars who eat here. However, if you look in the background, you'll see a few Phalse Profets rabble-rousing at another booth.

The WAITRESS sets down a fresh glass of "Orange Crush" (keep in mind that the server could be Jose's mom). It's hard for her not to notice the piece on the table.

WAITRESS

Ain't loaded, is it?

DUMARS

Water pistol. Girl likes her toys.

WAITRESS

Looks real. Ya sure? 'Cause ain't no guns allowed in here.

DuMars flashes his badge. The server eases up.

DUMARS

Water pistol. Now, how about a slice of that apple pie from the display case?

WAITRESS

Best damn apple pie you'll ever have. Comin' right up, peach.

DUMARS

And the check.

The server makes for the pie. DuMars lingers on her ass.

DUMARS

Suppose I maybe settle on that peach pie instead?

TARA

Huh? How should I know?

DUMARS

Yeah, what was I thinking -- sex advice from a six-year-old.

TARA

I'm seven.

DUMARS

My mistake.

(pause)

So, the "water gun" -- where'd you
get a toy like that?

He reaches for the piece, but Tara quickly claims it first.

DUMARS

My bad. Was curious -- since, as
mentioned, you're seven. I take for
granted the Valley being full of...
colorful characters.

DuMars steals a subtle peak at the Profets.

DUMARS

Hey, did you know your thumb has
its own pulse? Pretty neat, right?

TARA

What's that supposed to mean?

DUMARS

Nothing. Figured, you know, that
you learned that in school or
someplace. Silly trivia, I guess.

TARA

I guess.

DuMars is patient with her. He stirs his coffee some more.

TARA

Not in school. I knew that already.

DUMARS

Say again?

The apple pie lands -- *CLANG!*

WAITRESS

One hot apple pie. And one check.
What else can I get ya, sugar?

DUMARS

That'll do. Thank you.

WAITRESS

More coffee?

DUMARS

I'm good. Thanks.

WAITRESS

(to Tara)

'Nuther refill on that soda?

DUMARS

No, please. We're good, thank you.

WAITRESS

Ya got it. Holler if ya need me.

The server bounces. Tara shovels spoonfuls of gravy down her gullet. DuMars holds his breath...

DUMARS

How'd you know that? Your thumb?

(beat)

Do you know what a pulse is?

Tara shrugs, then nods her head -- nonchalant.

DUMARS

What it is?

TARA

It means, um, that you're not dead.

DUMARS

That's right. Exactly right. But you didn't learn it in school? How'd you know? You see it, maybe? Someone... who had no pulse?

The girl shakes her head, no.

DUMARS

Hear it? You -- hear someone say those words?

She nods, yes.

DUMARS

Who? Where?

TARA

A secret clubhouse.

DUMARS

A place William would go? Your brother. Maybe his friends... ?

TARA

They all call him Scooter.

(pause)

Is my brother in trouble?

DUMARS

Yes, he is. Those people from last night are still looking for him.

Tara averts her gaze and abruptly lingers on the Profets.

TARA

The bad man -- are those his friends, too? They look like him.

DUMARS

No. Not anymore.

The ol' man meets her steely blue eyes. He senses an odd opacity to them -- as if Tara, right here and now, has aged beyond her years. She swallows Salisbury, grabs the gun, and makes for the exit. DuMars pays up and swiftly follows.

We linger here on the booth... then slowly push in over the tabletop to reveal a once treasured companion, sat alone and quiet, with no more adventures to come: an always loyal Brando -- a teddy bear whose friendship has met its end...

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN DEPOT - SUNSET

Two boys sneak off the train car. Jose slings the heavy duffel bag over his shoulder as Scooter scurries to keep up.

SCOOTER

What's at the store that we need?

JOSE

Provisions, *cabrûn*. Need supplies.

SCOOTER

Yeah. What's that mean?

JOSE

Them *pendejos* -- they're packin' heat, right? We gotta strap-up.

They crosscut toward a local grocery--

EXT. LOCAL GROCERY - BACK DOCK - CONTINUOUS

--but make a wrong turn that puts them in direct path of three hoodlums, same age: Keith and his two nameless cronies. Remember the kids who hocked spitballs at Scooter in class? Same twerps; up to no good -- probably graffiti or some shit.

KEITH

Check it out, queer alert! Hold up now -- where ya fags off to?

JOSE

'Nuther time, baboso. Go back to your circle-jerk.

Jose and Scooter try and pass, but the thugs block their way.

KEITH

Funny, Jose. I ought to pop ya in the kisser right now.

Keith's cadence is a bit slow. Jose has chance to whiff his breath -- it's then he and Scooter spot a jar of shine in the hands of the second bully.

SCOOTER

Y'all are drunk, ain't ya? Where'd ya get that jar? That's ours.

KEITH

What, ya mental, Scoot? Swiped it from the ol' man's liquor cabinet.

Jose jabs the yarn square in the shoulder, *Shut the fuck up.*

KEITH

What's in the bag, Cheech?

SCOOTER

None of your business, peckerhead!

KEITH

Wasn't talkin' to ya, stig. I'll pop ya too, Scoot. Think I won't?
(to Jose)
Now let's see what's in there.

JOSE

Ease up, Keith. I'll knock ya back.

KEITH

The bag, Jose. Or I'll make ya wish you'd never been born.

Keith snaps his fingers -- at once, his goons armlock our Rifter heroes. But then, one bully might retort, "Keith, bro, I don't feel so hot."

KEITH

Keep it together, will ya?

But he can't. And a wicked rush of drunkenness takes hold -- the bully projectile-vomits all over Keith.

Jose steps on the boy's toe and gets loose. Another incredible trick later, and Scooter's free. Together, they make for the grocery entrance, followed by Keith & Co.

INT. LOCAL GROCERY - CONTINUOUS

Let's just call it as we see it: this is what hell looks like when it all breaks loose--

--as Jose and Scooter enter. Not only do they penetrate the store, they hit multiple aisles with purpose. To add fuel to the flame, Keith and his drunk cohorts deploy in effort to make sport.

Exciting stuff (property damage!), but more to the point:

Scooter -- hygiene aisle -- loads shopping bags full of shaving cream canisters. Meanwhile -- in toys -- Jose stuffs his pockets with water balloon packages. Once armed with provisions, the boys beat Keith to the next display--

--where casualties are unavoidable: such as end-caps knocked over, produce stations bumped, apples avalanched, and planogrammed pyramids of pickles purloined -- but, at last, the Rifiers' pursuers predictively get pummeled.

Jose and Scooter aren't without conscience, though, even as a few brave cashiers try and block their exit. Instead, Jose tosses one of them a bundle of dough. It's enough to confuse the clerk, yet pay for the pilferage and egress the store.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - EVENING

The brown station wagon parks out front, directly next to several Harley motorcycles. DuMars softly waves Tara to wait. He enters the store alone.

Moments pass. Casually, Tara turns 'round to watch the road, mostly void of traffic. It's only when she faces the storefront again that a white van streaks by.

Exit DuMars. He rejoins the girl. Seconds pass -- at last, the matching number of Profets to bikes empty the store. One briefly glances at the P.I. They all hop on their hogs and ride out.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN - RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Kardell rolls the van onto the property. He stops short of where Squad Car 52 once had been, just outside the boxcar distillery -- the only structure that produces an eerie flicker of orange light 'tween its cracks and edges.

His eyes meet Forrest's. Next, Amani's -- her black-eye still prevalent. Sitting shotgun, Lilly nudges him the gun. Kardell rejects it. He exits the vehicle.

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - BOXCAR DISTILLERY - CONTINUOUS

Kardell slowly makes the trek from the van to the distillery, careful to stay in bounds of all areas the headlights brighten. He's keenly acute to every noise -- be they crickets or the crunch of earth beneath his boots.

He comes to the door. Steadily, he opens it...

INTERCUT:

INT. BOXCAR DISTILLERY - CONTINUOUS

One kerosene lamp is lit -- but to outdo its luminance is a bonfire lit inside a large metal tub. Jose stands behind it, duffel bag slung over his shoulder. Kardell savors the space.

KARDELL

When I grew up, I wasn't allowed to touch the stove -- even to bake cookies. Not so much a wire on your pricks -- and y'all are shinin'.

JOSE

Yeah, we're antra-newers. Cut to the chase -- where's our friends?

KARDELL

Entrepreneurs.

JOSE

Dammit. What'd I say?

KARDELL

Antra-newer. And as far as cuttin', your best buds are back at the van. But we seem to be missin' one. Where's the pipsqueak?

Jose holds the bag over the flames.

JOSE

I dozed the inside with lighter fluid. Go get my friends now.

KARDELL

Doused. Got it? Ya "doused" it. And if that's true, ya need to back... your shit... up.

JOSE

I'll do it, *puto!* I'm *loco*.

KARDELL

Hold on, kid. No need. We're cool.

Kardell waves at the van. Next, Lilly removes Forrest and Amani from the back seat.

KARDELL

We good, yeah? Hand me the bag.

JOSE

Yeah. Good like piss and shit.

Jose tosses the bag into the flames -- then, jumps through the trap door. Like a bulldozer, Kardell shoves himself inside -- eager to rescue the goods.

At the van:

LILLY

Randy! What's goin on--

SPLAT! -- an a-bomb of shaving cream detonates upon Lilly's face, perfectly 'cross eyelids. At the other end of the yard, Scooter springs out behind some debris and hoots for joy.

SCOOTER

Oh, snap! Jose, I pegged her!

INTERCUT:

EXT. BOXCAR DISTILLERY - UNDERCARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

Jose wiggles and crawls his way toward safety.

JOSE

Great, kid! Don't get cocky.

We dolly from him to Kardell, inside the distillery. In his haste, the man bumps the table -- the kerosene lamp falls and shatters on the floor. It, too, catches fire.

Back at the van, Forrest jams his shoulder into Lilly. She trips, falls back inside the vehicle. He instructs Amani:

FORREST

Hit up Scoot. I'll grab Jose.

AMANI

Don't do anything stupid.

He smirks, but Amani knows better. They split up.

At the distillery, Jose rolls to his feet. His plan: slide the door shut, seal the biker inside. Does it work? Almost -- if not for Kardell's quick thinking; he fishes out the fiery duffel and tosses it perfectly 'tween the door and jam.

JOSE

(to Forrest)

I can't lock it, dude!

Forrest, upon arrival, and still bound by cable-ties, hops the lip of the boxcar and kicks at the bag -- this, while Jose tries to keep the door from slipping. No use -- Kardell pokes him hard in the neck with a broomstick.

After that, the Profet leaps out the distillery and tackles Forrest to the ground. He spouts something like, "Why ya boys wanna do everythin' the hard way?" when suddenly -- *BANG!* -- a gun shot goes off, near the van.

Who's responsible? Do you even need to ask? We join Lilly for a moment, armed and dangerous, as she wipes foam from her eyes and runs after the younger woman.

INTERCUT:

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - TRAIN REFUSE - CONTINUOUS

But Amani catches up to Scooter. Both duck and cover after another gun shot -- *BANG!* -- blasts something close by.

SCOOTER

Sufferin' succotash! She shootin' at us?

AMANI

What's your first clue?

Scooter digs into his goodie bag and throws a couple of balloons in Lilly's direction. Amani shakes her head.

SCOOTER

It's all I have!

Together, they hide deeper inside the train offal and find cover. It provides the perfect vantage point, coincidentally, for Amani to glimpse activity which occurs at the distillery.

Via her POV, she watches Kardell load Forrest and Jose into the burning paunch belly of the boxcar.

AMANI

Scot, I'll distract the woman.

SCOOTER

Say again?

AMANI

I'll lead her toward the stream.
You help the boys.

He shakes his head, no.

AMANI

Don't bitch out on me.

Amani pulls him in, plants a big ol' kiss on his lips -- this is her body as a weapon moment. For Scooter, not bad.

AMANI

Don't screw up.
(to Lilly)
Hey, biker trash! Come and get me!

Amani runs away. Lilly pursues her voice. Scooter takes a deep breath -- nut up or shut up -- and is distillery bound.

INTERCUT:

INT. STATION WAGON - RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - CONTINUOUS

Did DuMars witness shots fired? I'll be curious how the editor perceives the sequence, but for now he simply parks. Abruptly, a young girl, just outside, scurries past. The ol' man looks back at Tara, *Did you just see that?* Next, an older woman runs by.

DUMARS

Stay down, kid. Don't come out --
not for anything.

Exit the P.I.

Back inside the distillery, the oily flames spread to all corners -- particularly, underneath the still pot. Kardell sacks Jose next to Forrest. He reaches for the scorched duffel bag. The boys watch in suspense as he unzips it...

...unpleasantly, Kardell dumps several kilos worth of phone books onto the table -- most are burnt to a fine crisp.

JOSE

Easy, man. That's all was in there.

KARDELL

Kid, ain't none of us willing to do stupid shit over phone books.

Kardell snatches up a jar of leftover shine (sure is plenty extra, seems like). He flips the cap, takes a whiff.

KARDELL

S'pose how much of this I gotta drink to get violent. What's it take to rough ya up? Put a fist in your face, break your nose -- and not feel shame in hurtin' kids?

No answer. Kardell takes hit of hooch. Silence. Another swig.

KARDELL

Call it a night, boys. The money?
WHERE'S THE STASH?!

FORREST

Keep going, asshole.

The remark smolders. Kardell responds, surely, with a shot.

FORREST

It's the Valley. Everyone drinks. So what, you do too. May as well be another broke farmer. Or -- a shit cop who hits girls. Don't matter. No one's got reserve.

KARDELL

I ain't your ol' man, boy. Shouldn't talk that way to me.

FORREST

Don't have to be. I'm stuck with mine. But you -- I can tell ya to FUCK. OFF. And not give a shit.

His hand clenches into a fist, and Kardell grows even more fierce. But luckily for the two boys -- *SPLAT!* -- a third boy enters the arena: Scooter, armed with grenades; although the last balloon, meant for Kardell, missed and hit the wall.

SCOOTER

Balderdash! Thought I had it.

KARDELL

Think you're helpin'?

SCOOTER

Got somethin' ya might like.

Scooter flashes a stack of Benjamins. Kardell sneers. Quickly, the boy climbs up the outer wall -- to lure away the biker. Kardell looks back at Forrest and Jose, grunts, and polishes off the shine. He jumps outside, locks the door.

Cut back to train refuse -- rusted rail wheels, engine parts, passenger cabs -- and Amani in a predicament she'd rather have avoided: her ankle caught 'tween strap-cable, stuck.

Lilly shows up, gun in hand (weapon), and revels. She clears the remainder of shaving cream out her eyes. Amani grabs for a scrap of rebar (tool) to ward her off.

LILLY

Tools. And weapons. Now -- who ya think's gonna get what they want?

AMANI

Shut the hell up, you exhausting bitch.

Originally, I wrote a bit where DuMars sneaks up and wallops Lilly from behind -- but there's already so much of that going on, I find it all a bit cliché. So until we see a set design, DuMars and Lilly indeed square off--

--but the confrontation is settled when he disarms Lilly and shoves her into an ol' train compartment bunker. He locks it.

DUMARS

(to Amani)

You okay? Let me help you.

The ol' man assists the young lady. Together, they cut the nylon straps 'round her wrists. Then, quiet reserve; a restrain befalls Amani's physiognomy as she rests her gaze toward the distillery -- a fuming beast of orange and smoke.

AMANI

Forrest. Jose. They're both inside.

The boxcar serves as one exigency. The other -- wel'p, that takes place the tops of a row of train cars, where two figures run along the roofs. DuMars and Amani skidoo.

INTERCUT:

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - TRAIN CAR ROOFTOPS - CONTINUOUS

Scooter hops the void -- an empty space 'tween one train car and the next. However, his path nears the end -- 'cause now, surely, there are too few cars left to spring atop. Kardell closes in on him.

Scooter empties his bag -- ripe grenades carpet the platform. Kardell unwittingly enters -- balloons snap and pop, and make too slick a surface for him to keep steady. He slips. Scooter retreats. Kardell reaches for him, but the boy wiggles free.

The chase continues, but it leads back to its origin:

Inside the distillery, too many flammable materials make it impossible for Forrest and Jose to snuff out the flames. The former uses a blunt object (maybe the broom) to smash the seam of the trapdoor. The latter rams the main door.

FORREST

Ya had to lock the trapdoor?

JOSE

Plan was to lock in the creep.

Cut to rooftops, Scooter sprints toward the distillery: run, jump... four cars away -- run, jump... three cars away, etc.

Distillery, Forrest makes progress as part of the trapdoor splinters. The space provides just enough room for escape.

FORREST

Got it! Let's bail.

He grabs Jose and shoves him headfirst into the opening. How tragic it is when Jose's pant legs snag on a piece of smashed wood and get him stuck, hung halfway out the boxcar.

Rooftops, Scooter's one car away. The Profet trails unfavorably close. The boy jumps -- but purposefully misses perching. He falls within the gap, lands badly, and twists his ankle. And Kardell, confused, his trajectory askew--

--he still jumps, lands hard atop the distillery, and barrel rolls. Beneath him, the roof buckles -- then collapses.

Distillery, Forrest narrowly escapes Kardell's surprise plunge. The boy tries to escape through an already crowded trapdoor, along with Jose, but damn it to hell if he doesn't feel a hand grab his ankle and it pull him back toward peril.

Outside the distillery, on the ground, DuMars encroaches. He signals Amani to keep away. After a few beats, he undoes the latch on the door and slowly slides it open...

...to reveal Forrest and Kardell inside -- the elder with a long shard of mason jar glass held to the boy's throat. But DuMars is armed, too, with a gun -- aimed at Kardell's head.

KARDELL

Damn kids -- so much energy...

DUMARS

Close to their bedtime. Let's send them home.

Amani spots Scooter -- hunched against the distillery's coupler. Quietly, she goes to his aid. He's fine -- or pretends to be, at least. Rather, Scooter shows her Jose -- the boy still immobilized underneath the boxcar.

Back to DuMars and Kardell, Forrest stuck 'tween their feud.

KARDELL

Wanna scrap, ol' man? Or ya put a bullet in my brain -- make it easy?

DUMARS

Bullet. Same as you did my wife. Curious, did ya even know her name?

KARDELL

The bank robbery. I... hurt someone ya loved, didn't I?

DUMARS

Her name was Wanda. Thesely. DuMars. She was a good woman. She enjoyed her job, loved her kids. Had her whole life ahead.

KARDELL

What -- could I do? The Profets made me, knew I was undercover. I was meant to be their fall guy. But me an' Lils -- all we wanted was to vanish. Disappear. No one was s'posed to get hurt. I flinched.

INTERCUT:

EXT. BOXCAR DISTILLERY - UNDERCARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

Amani and Scooter snake toward Jose. He waves them away.

JOSE

Hey, dopes. Get a move on. I got shine burnin' in the still.

AMANI

How do you mean?

JOSE

How ya think? I setup the leftover mash -- put the burner on high.

AMANI

Christ, Jose. The valve open?

JOSE

Hell no. Why'd I do that?

AMANI

Idiot. Undo your pants. Let's go.

Fantastic idea! Jose unzips with incredible urgency. Amani and Scooter work to slip him out his jeans.

Cut to distillery, Forrest feels a drop of blood trickle down his neck, barely nicked by the broken glass. More apropos, however, he listens to a *crick, crick, crick* reverberate within the heart of the still pot -- *And why's the burner on?*

KARDELL

Take your shot, ol' man. Rather you than some pussy club prospect.

Outside, DuMars resists the urge of ejaculatory inevitability and instead settles for blue balls. He lowers his piece.

DUMARS

Let the boy go, Kardell. It's over.

But is it? From whence the dark, Lilly return-eth -- her vengeance forsooth the moment she sticks DuMars from behind with a sharp object (knife, rebar, etc.). Freshly emerged, from the under the boxcar, the three Rifiers watch in horror.

Inside the distillery, Kardell and Forrest bear witness -- neither able to process the act. Both stagger as Lilly drops DuMars. She steals the piece from his grasp, despite his whimpers. The Rifiers move away as she stalks toward Kardell.

Their eyes meet, two outlaws. Lilly smiles at Kardell. But slowly, her sunken grin morphs into a parlous scowl; he knows her intention at once -- but though he shoves Forrest aside, Kardell's unable to reach to door in time--

--in which, from the outside, Lilly slams it shut and locks both Profet and boy inside. As the woman ushers in the apocalypse, she walks away in glory -- unrepentant to Amani's screams, whilst Jose and Scooter physically hold her back.

How many beats pass before the big *KA-BOOM!* only the composer of the musical score will count. Amani drops to her knees and sobs. Jose, appalled, is powerless to look away. Scooter bows in defeat. But Lilly -- too cool to look back at explosions -- converges upon the children. Silent. But deadly.

If no one else will take action, Scooter does: limping, he sets off to one end of the yard, retrieves an item hidden in some cubby, comes back, and throws it at Lilly's feet. It's a grocery bag.... filled with cash. He does this three more times and drops three more bags of cash.

LILLY

That all of it?

Scooter doesn't bat a fucking lash. He holds steadfast and badass. Satisfied, Lilly snags the groceries; this is her farewell. Briskly, she walks passed the Rifiers.

SCOOTER

She hurt your brother, Jose. I saw it -- she killed him.

Lilly stops, turns 'round. She bullseyes Jose:

LILLY

I used him. Got what I needed from him. That's love, I guess.

She glazes softly at the burning boxcar -- but doesn't reminisce long. Parting is such sweet sorrow, after all...

Broken, demoralized, and pant-less, Jose allows the rage to build in his heart. He's on the cusp of doing something stupid -- to attack Lilly in some way and get himself killed.

But the most blatant perversion of Spielbergian-cinema happens next -- and it begins with majestic blue and white lights that suddenly penetrate 'tween the forrest trees. Fog heightens the experience; almost as if E.T. were landing.

But the visual beauty is reduced to a sinister rumble. The source of light yields to a ghoulish fleet of Harley choppers. The war machines puncture the woods and surround the distillery; each bear a Phalse Profet for a rider.

DUMARS (O.C.)

It's over, Tackett. They're here for the money.

In gasping pain, DuMars sits up. He holds his bloodied side.

DUMARS

And you.

Lilly has one power play left and she knows it. In front of all, she drops the grocery bags and preys on Dumars. She digs the barrel of the gun into his skull and speaks to the M.C.

LILLY

It's him, here, boys. He's a cop.
And in there--
(points to distillery)
--was your NARC.

DUMARS

I called them here. Told them everything. They know you double-crossed them.

LILLY

I'll prove it, boys -- I ain't all bad. Ya want blood? How 'bout his -- the cop? What's the difference?

But no deal is struck. However, there is a gunshot -- *BANG!* -- and every burly Profet in sight pulls out their piece. 'Course, Lilly never squeezed the trigger -- in fact, it's her own shirt that soaks up with blood.

Wading through the sea of motorcycles, a lil' pig-tailed and blue-eyes girl emerges: Tara Tate. She holds the smoking gun. For Lilly, however, distress wins out -- she stumbles to the burnt distillery, marks her own coffin.

DuMars signals for the piece. Tara relents -- simultaneously, she gives up the gun along with her innocence.

DUMARS

(to the Rifiers)
I might be an old man -- the best years behind me -- but you have your whole life ahead. Give them boys the cash -- let them count that instead of your years.

Each Rifter, including Tara, pick up a bag and hand it off to a separate Profet. DuMars' sacrifice: his ol' DPD badge.

DUMARS

(to the Profets)
Get a move on, boys. It's a long ride back to Denver.

Now loaded with dough, the Profets holster their weapons. However, before they fire up their bikes, one member (perhaps the V.P.) spots movement near the torched boxcar. He points it out -- and immediately, the Rifiers take action--

Amani, Jose, Scooter, and Tara remove debris and wreckage. They clear space from out the undercarriage. Wonder -- joy -- and disbelief befall each of them when they find their prize. It's Forrest -- covered in soot, but otherwise unscathed.

AMANI

What... How... ?

FORREST

My ass ain't as big as Jose's.
Slipped right through the trapdoor.

United again, the young boys and girls celebrate, laugh, and hug. Amani might sneak Forrest a kiss. And you'd be hard pressed not to catch one or two Profets tearing up, the fucking softies. Or DuMars, for that matter.

On that note, the club spark their choppers and circle 'round. Into the night, the army retreats -- back to their hornet's nest from whence they came.

DUMARS

Argh. Well I'm beat.

By the looks of them, the Rifters share the same sentiment.

JOSE

Oh, shit! The M.C. We shoulda hitched a ride with 'em!

DUMARS

What's stopping you, kid?

Agape, Jose stares at DuMars, *Are you serious?* But there's nothing in the P.I.'s candor to say otherwise. Jose bouts a wide grin -- it's shared by Scooter and Tara. Quickly, the three run right into the woods and chase after the Profets. That only leaves DuMars, with Forrest and Amani.

DUMARS

What about you?

FORREST

We just wanna go home.

It's a fine answer.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHOPPERS, VARIOUS (MOVING) - HIGHWAY 160 - NIGHT

We hear a loud and joyous wail. It's Jose, on the back of a Harley Davidson. To his left -- Tara, saddle in another bike.

She beams. To his right, Scooter also rides bitch. The boy holds on for dear life -- but gives the thumbs-up anyway.

The flock of bikers accelerate. They bypass a station wagon. But inside that... DuMars -- along with Forrest and Amani.

The car, however, soon turns off the road...

INT. STATION WAGON - JACOBSON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

...and parks along the front street of the house. Amani grips Forrest's hand.

AMANI

What do I say to my mom?

Forrest reverts the question to DuMars.

DUMARS

Nothing. Or everything. You'll know. You'll feel a lump in your throat, and you'll know.

AMANI

It's funny, I always wished -- every day I came back here -- that he wouldn't be home. Now he won't be. Somehow, I still feel empty. Is that normal?

FORREST

I think so. But you have a pop. I mean, um, you had a real one. So, maybe, when you feel sad or empty -- maybe you could think of him. Maybe, uh, you try and miss him -- not think about the other stuff.

Amani kisses Forrest on the cheek.

AMANI

See the moon? Amazing tonight.

FORREST

Moon won't shine if the yeast can't dine.

AMANI

Sounds so corny.

Amani exits the car. Forrest and Dumars watch her to the door. It swings open before she can reach the knob. Some young punk pokes his head out. It's Keith. Yep, THAT Keith.

KEITH

Who dropped ya off?

AMANI

None of your business, Keith.

KEITH

Better tell. Dad might like to know, when he gets home.

Amani pushes herself inside. And that's the end of it -- at least from Forrest's perspective. He sits back. DuMars pops a cigarette and puts the car into gear.

CUT TO:

INT. STATION WAGON (MOVING) - HIGHWAY 160 - NIGHT

The scene is reminiscent of DuMars and Scooter from earlier, but now Forrest sits shotgun:

DUMARS

Penny for your thoughts, kid. And don't tell me it's that girl. I know it's that girl. But what else is scrambling your brain?

FORREST

Nothing. My dad's probably going to make me fix the barn tomorrow.

DUMARS

Bullshit.

FORREST

Yeah, shit. It's not even my fault!

DUMARS

Think he's too hard on you? Sorry, son -- but that's a father's job. Prerogative. At least he's there.

FORREST

I know. That's why it ain't fair. I got an ol' man. The others -- they don't. Not really. Feels shitty, I guess. I feel shitty. He's my pop -- and I don't want to like him.

DUMARS

Boy, I'll tell you this: you won't ever like him until you forgive him.

(MORE)

DUMARS (CONT'D)

And maybe that'll be another few years, until you're old enough to share a bottle of that shine you brew -- to really open up.

FORREST

Distill. Beer you brew. The moonshine stuff, that's distilled.

DUMARS

I stand corrected.

DuMars turns off the highway--

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

--and the station wagon enters Bowde property. Forrest exits.

DUMARS

(soto)

This place looks familiar.

(to Forrest)

Hey -- that shit at the boxcar -- don't think that shit's over. I can pin only so much on the Profets. So long as you have a tail on your ass, there's always someone there to bite it. Take care of yourself.

FORREST

Yessir. I will, sir.

DuMars is still wounded, of course, so maybe he drives himself off to a hospital. For now, his story is over.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Enter Forrest. The T.V. is on. His father, Bruce Bowde, is passed out on the couch. Empty beer bottles litter the coffee table. Forrest tries to snake toward the stairs.

BRUCE

Hey, buddy. Time is it?

FORREST

I don't know. Late.

BRUCE

One hour after the sun sets. You be home by then. Hear me? Christ. You smell like a camp fire. What you get up to this weekend?

FORREST

Oh. Well, um, nothing. Not much.

BRUCE

Bullshit. Hey -- tomorrow... barn
duty. No lip. Got it?

Forrest nods, heads up the stairs. Bruce passes back out.

INT. FARMHOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Forrest tiptoes into the room. A moonlit glow highlights a woman in bed: EMILY... Forrest's mother. She rouses.

EMILY

Hey, kiddo. Dad on the couch again?

Forrest, shy, seems unable to answer her.

EMILY

Are the stars out tonight? I hope
so. Come sit by me.

The boy abides. At this point, we barely see her face. She's probably mid-thirties, but for some reason looks much older.

EMILY

I like them, you know. The stars.
Every one of them. They remind me
that time is precious. Little
twinkling miracles.

FORREST

I don't know. Sounds hokey.

EMILY

But they're us, Forrest. They're
you, my little rascal. When
they die they'll explode. They go
out kicking and screaming. But it
makes new elements, and those
elements become you. They remind us
of where we came from and that life
is short. You can't stop living,
son. Even if it kills you.

Silence. Reflection. Wonder...

EMILY

Give me a kiss.

Forrest plants one softly on her cheek. Emily smiles, closes her eyes, and is back to sleep almost instantaneously.

He walks to the window -- there, he peers out into the Universe. However, it's the moon that's the most lovely tonight...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - FORREST'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Young Forrest is asleep in bed. At the window, Jose and Scooter lean inside. The boys snicker as they hand off grenades. They aim -- and in three, two, one --
SPRRIISSSSHHHHH!

Both receive a blast of icy water on their backsides, from outside. Forrest rouses in time to watch his two pals slip and fall. He runs to the window, pops his head out--

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

--and we reveal Tara as the culprit with the garden hose. But next to her, egging her on, is ol' Bruce. He laughs.

BRUCE

C'mon, Forrest. Barn duty. Get going before I whip all your asses.
(to Tara)
Go on. Wake that boy up a bit.

And there you have it -- the girl turns on Forrest. He, too, receives a blast of water to the face. He slams the window.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Exit Forrest, dressed in work clothes. But as a surprise to him, sitting on the porch swing, is Amani. They don't speak, but instead share a sweet and serene, "Hi..." -- "Hey."

EXT. FARMHOUSE - BARN - CONTINUOUS

Silhouettes. All five Rifters. Slo-mo. Their small bodies contrasted against a brilliant sunrise as they head toward the busted-up barn. The shot holds a visceral quality -- despite bits of all their childhood forever lost.

And so what if an unfamiliar cop car pulls into the property? It could be Officer Liew, or another. We're hopeful, however, that so long as the kids remain unaware, all will be okay...

FADE OUT.

POST-CREDITS:

EXT. RAILROAD CAR GRAVEYARD - DAY

Stashed away -- but not too hidden -- the camera dollies in on a leftover stash of money. That means, originally, there were five bags. So why is this important? I don't know -- maybe it's to set up a sequel. Or maybe it's a metaphor: five bags of money, five Rifters. You get the idea...