

BEST SERVED COLD

screenplay by

Eric C. Dickson

EDixsn1@hotmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. DONNER PASS - NORDEN, CA - DAY

A Union Pacific cargo train speeds along its graveled line and across the Donner Pass.

As the train passes, we see the calm and quiet stillness of the white capped terrain.

AN APARTMENT COMPLEX

plotted into the beautiful landscape. In the busy parking lot sit several patrol cruisers marked "Nevada County Sheriff's Deputy".

INT. APARTMENT - CRIME SCENE - DAY

A MAN lay in bed, a cheese knife plunged into his lower neck and the steady streams of ARTERIAL SPRAY painted on the bedsheets and comforter.

A breakfast tray tipped over. Scrambled eggs, toast, a fruit bowl scattered. And two LONG STEMMED ROSES near the victim's feet.

Inspecting the contents of a nearby work desk is DETECTIVE RAY BOWERS (40s), department issue winter coat, blue rubber gloves. On the other side of the bed is --

SGT. CHRIS MCNULTY (50s), salt and pepper hair, trim beard, gruff, collared shirt, yesterday's sport coat.

MCNULTY

And they said chivalry was dead.

Bowers holds up a thick address book.

BOWERS

This guy's social calendar looks like the white pages.

Bowers flips through the book.

BOWERS (CONT'D)

You gotta see this. Carolyn. Carrie. Chrissy. The list goes on and on.

MCNULTY

Where did you find that?

BOWERS

Face up on the desk. For the whole world to see. Not too smart for a career Casanova.

MCNULTY

Could be she went looking for it.

McNulty spots two long stemmed roses at the foot of the bed. He motions to them.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

Notice the two roses?

BOWERS

Finds out he's been cheating and our boy's got some serious making up to do. Too little, too late from the looks of things.

MCNULTY

Check with the neighbors. Downstairs first. See if our dead guy had any regulars. Maybe we'll get lucky and find out someone's called in a noise complaint about Stabitha here.

Bowers cracks a smile.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

Meanwhile, I'll check with the landlord. See if any names recently got added to the lease.

BOWERS

I'm on it.

Bowers excuses himself. He rubs elbows with a UNIFORM COP on his way in.

UNIFORM COP

(to McNulty)

Excuse me, Sergeant?

MCNULTY

Yeah, what is it?

UNIFORM COP

You got a visitor in the halls. Said he needs to talk to you, right away.

EXT. APARTMENT - HALLWAY

A circle of UNIFORM COPS laugh and giggle as they shoot the shit with GREG FALCO (20s), pretty boy handsome but all muscle in a fancy sports sweater and headband.

UNIFORM COP #1

No, but seriously. My girl's sister and friends are coming in Tuesday. Looking to hit the slopes. You gotta make sure they don't hit every tree on the way down. I'm counting on you to take care of them.

UNIFORM COP #2

He means take care of them. Not take care of them. That means keep your paws to yourself.

They all laugh.

UNIFORM COP #3

No kidding. Haven't you heard the rumors? You gotta be careful with your old lady around this one.

An unamused McNulty watches from the doorframe. He clears his throat as

The cops all disperse.

MCNULTY

What the hell are you doing on my crime scene, Falco?

Falco peeks his head inside the apartment.

FALCO

I heard about your breakfast in bed. I guess it was too late for a nice gesture.

MCNULTY

Yeah, he was a real ladies man. You two must've been pals.

Falco cracks a fake grin.

FALCO

Come on. I gotta talk to you about something. It's important.

MCNULTY

Don't know what else there is to talk about. Denise is gone. I don't know where she is. And if I did, I sure as hell wouldn't tell you.

McNulty turns to the door, about to head in.

FALCO

It's not about Denise. Serious business. No bullshit.

McNulty stops, turns back.

FALCO (CONT'D)

I can tell you or some other cop. I figured I owed you that much.

McNulty just stares back at him. Unsure.

MCNULTY

(unconvinced)

Let's walk.

McNulty heads down the stairs. Falco follows.

ON THE STAIRS

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

Who told you I'd be here?

FALCO

Does it really matter?

McNulty steps out into

THE PARKING LOT

away from the scene. Falco tries to keep up.

McNulty faces Falco, not in the mood.

MCNULTY

Alright. You gonna tell me what's going on or do I have to guess?

FALCO

I've been getting some strange phone calls. Around one and two in the morning. A voice I don't recognize.

MCNULTY

Man or a woman?

FALCO

A man.

McNulty couldn't care less as he sparks up a smoke and plays interested.

MCNULTY

What was her name?

FALCO

(smiles)

That's funny, but no.

MCNULTY

Okay, so who was it?

FALCO

I told you, I don't know. I kept asking and he won't tell me. The first couple times, he just hangs up. A couple minutes later, he calls back. Asks me who I am. I say, "you should know, you're the one who keeps calling".

MCNULTY

Sounds like a man who wasn't sure he had the right number.

FALCO

Yeah. That's what I thought at first. So I finally told him. I'm Greg Falco, asshole. Now, for the last time, who the hell is this? He said "that's impossible. You can't be Greg Falco. If you're Greg Falco, I'm talking to a dead man".

McNulty has a good laugh.

MCNUTLY

You got yourself a real secret admirer.

FALCO

Glad you think it's funny.

MCNULTY

Look. If you ask me, it sounds like you finally got your hand caught in the cookie jar by the wrong guy. Good luck with that.

McNulty slaps him on the arm, heads for the steps.

FALCO

That's not all he said. He said it doesn't have to be that way. He said I had a choice.

MCNULTY

What was that? Quit screwin his old lady?

FALCO

No. He said I could play a little game. The longer I play the game, the longer I stay alive. How long I stay breathing is up to me.

McNulty's looks turns serious.

FALCO (CONT'D)

He also said he heard I was the best. That nobody knows these parts better than me. Then he said "For my sake, he hopes that's true".

(concerned)

What the hell does that mean, Chris?

McNulty thinks it over.

MCNULTY

I don't know, Falco. Maybe he's planning on leaving you for dead.

(smug)

Sorry I can't be more help. Why don't you try the yellow pages.

McNulty heads for the steps.

FALCO

Where are you going? I haven't finished my story.

McNulty heads up the steps.

MCNULTY

Keep your doors locked, Falco. If he calls again, fill out a complaint.

FALCO

He left a little something on my doorstep this morning. Just in case I brushed him off kind of like you're doing me right now.

McNulty stops, turns and faces Falco.

FALCO (CONT'D)

Oh. Do I have your attention now?

INT. FALCO'S LODGE - DAY

McNulty and Bower watch as Falco pulls a ZIPLOC BAG from his freezer. Inside is a bloodied SKI GLOVE frozen solid.

Falco sets it down on a countertop as McNulty and Bower move in to get a closer look.

BOWER

Good God. Is that what I think it is?

FALCO

I don't know. The damn thing was frozen stiff when I found it. I'm afraid to even touch it.

MCNULTY

Falco, this guy dumped it on your doorstep.

(beat)

You're telling us you don't recognize the glove?

FALCO

Yeah, I recognize it. I see a couple hundred pair every day. Are you kidding?

BOWERS

Don't be a smartass. This look like a joke to you?

FALCO

No, it does not. Or maybe it is. I don't know. I'm not a cop. You tell me. Is it real or what?

MCNULTY

And you don't have any idea who this glove belongs to? Because if you do, we need to know right now.

FALCO

You don't think I'd tell you if I did? Let's get something straight here. I'm the one who called you guys. Remember?

Bowers picks up the bag. A real sour grimace.

BOWERS

What the hell's a matter with you? Sticking this in your freezer? This is police evidence.

FALCO

Sorry if I didn't wanna walk into the Sheriff's office with a severed hand. Besides. This guy says if I talk to the cops, I'm a dead man. It's not every day my life is threatened. Present company excluded.

MCNULTY

Wait a second. We don't even know if the damn thing's real. Could've bought it at the novelty store.

McNulty grabs the bag from Bower, inspects every corner of the evidence.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

This whole thing could be a bad joke for all we know. Let's pray that it is. If it isn't, we're in for a real shit storm.

INT. POLICE FORENSICS LAB - NIGHT

A forensics technician inspects the severed female hand, now free of the glove, palm up on a table. The long perfect nails painted a bright RED.

The technician turns to McNulty and Bower.

FORENSICS

It's real. And very disturbing.

(beat)

Where the hell did you find this?

(MORE)

FORENSICS (CONT'D)

Don't tell me out on the slopes again?

McNulty and Bower share a look.

MCNULTY

Yeah. Out on the slopes.

Bower scratches his head, nervous. McNulty motions for him to stop it.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

So what did you come up with?

FORENSICS

Well. The glove itself was about two sizes too big for our girl.

The technician motions to the glove.

FORENSICS (CONT'D)

A men's large. North Face. The inside was packed with snow. Lucky for us, most of the interior material of the glove stayed clear of the skin.

BOWER

So a female hand in a men's large glove? I don't get it.

MCNULTY

He could've put her hand in the glove after the fact.

FORENSICS

Precisely. Take a look at the hand and tell me what you see.

McNulty and Bower walk closer, take a good look. The hand is in near perfect condition, cut off at the wrist.

BOWERS

Freckles. Light complexion. She was a redhead.

MCNULTY

No blood. No tissue damage. Taken off with one clean swipe.

FORENSICS

This wasn't a ski accident or a pack of wild coyotes. This was a clean cut made post mortem.

(MORE)

## FORENSICS (CONT'D)

With something very thin and very sharp.

## BOWERS

Like an axe? Or a hatchet maybe.

## MCNULTY

Right.

## FORENSICS

Look at the fingernails. They're in almost pristine condition.

The technician picks up the hand, shows the long red nails still shining bright.

## MCNULTY

Painted bright red. Not a single chip.

## BOWERS

Who the hell's gonna get their nails done to go skiing?

## MCNULTY

Nobody.

## FORENSICS

I thought you said you found this on the Summit.

Bowers shoots McNulty a guilty look. McNulty dodges the question.

## MCNULTY

Time of death. Any idea?

## FORENSICS

Without a body, and with the hand being frozen, it's gonna make time of death impossible. But one thing's for sure just by looking at the condition of the hand and the fingernails.

McNulty and Bower look up.

## FORENSICS (CONT'D)

This couldn't have happened more than a few weeks ago. Unless of course this guy was keeping it in his freezer or something.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

A mob of REPORTERS with hand mics set up shop in front of the quiet Sheriff's Office.

One of them, CHERYL HARPER (20s), cute fireplug, short hair, spots McNulty park near the front door. She and her CAMERAMAN hurry to his car just as he steps out with coffee in hand.

                  CHERYL  
Sergeant McNulty. Good morning.

                  MCNULTY  
Oh, shit.

                  CHERYL  
Would you care to comment on the severed hand rumored to have been found near Donner Summit this morning?

                  MCNULTY  
No, I would not.

McNulty heads for the front door. Cheryl chases after him.

                  CHERYL  
Are you sure about that?

                  MCNULTY  
I'm very sure.  
(beat)  
And who told you that? Your boyfriend, Falco?

                  CHERYL  
No, as a matter of fact. Why would he? Does he know something you're not telling me?

McNulty stops in his tracks, gets right in her face.

                  MCNULTY  
Off the record.

Cheryl cues her camera guy to lay off. He lowers his camera.

                  MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
(quiet)  
If I were you, I'd steer clear of Mister Falco.

CHERYL  
I'm a big girl, Sergeant.

McNulty smiles and nods.

MCNULTY  
I'm not asking. Excuse me.

McNulty heads inside.

CHERYL  
Ski season or not, the people have  
a right to know, Sergeant!

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPT. - STEBBINS OFFICE - DAY

McNulty paces on the carpet of DEPUTY CHIEF CHARLIE STEBBINS (50s), ponchy, bald, weather beaten face. Full dress uniform.

MCNULTY  
He told her. The little shit told her. You wanna know when he told her? When she went over there to see him after I told her not to.

STEBBINS  
You wanna stop with your personal life for a second? We got a lot to talk about here.

McNulty ignores him, stares out the glass walls of the Chief's office.

MCNULTY  
Cheats on my oldest. Runs her out of town and now he's going after my baby girl.

STEBBINS  
Knock it off!

McNulty stops pacing, gives Stebbins a nasty stare.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)  
Sit down and cool off!

McNulty slumps down in a chair.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)  
What's this I hear about you  
keeping Falco out of the picture?  
(MORE)

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

The guy's got a girl's hand in his freezer and you didn't feel it pertinent to tell me?

MCNULTY

He asked me not to.

Stebbins rolls his eyes.

STEBBINS

Oh. Well isn't that convenient.

MCNULTY

Whether I like to admit it or not, he's still my son-in-law.

STEBBINS

My point exactly. You know what this looks like. Your daughter split town. One he's trying to reconcile with, and now you're helping him cover up some girl's murder.

MCNULTY

It's ski season. He's head ski instructor. Word leaks he offed a tourist and he's done. And it's not just him we're talking about, Charlie.

STEBBINS

Oh, I get it. So you weren't gonna tell me. Just you and Bowers going at this alone as usual.

MCNULTY

The hand's with forensics. Sorry if I hadn't had time to fill out the official report.

STEBBINS

And when you fill out that report. Are you gonna record that you found that hand out on the Summit just like you told Ed Hollis?

McNulty sighs with exhaustion.

MCNULTY

Look. This guy's been calling him. Every night. For days. We put a tap on his line. If he's lying, we'll find out soon enough.

(MORE)

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
Because if Falco's telling the  
truth, we haven't heard the last  
from this guy.

Stebbins shakes his head, frustrated, walks his office with a  
ton on his mind.

STEBBINS  
I'm afraid, whether you like it or  
not, the cat's out of the bag. The  
Mayor wants us to put that cat  
right back where it belongs.  
ASAP. Any rumors of foul play are  
just that. Rumors. This was most  
likely an accident. Until a body  
surfaces, we have no further  
comment.

McNulty stands to leave.

MCNULTY  
Is that all?

STEBBINS  
No, smartass. That's not all.  
We're debriefing in ten minutes.  
Go over the game plan with the  
troops. For your sake, let's hope  
this isn't a bigger mess than I  
already think it is.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Stebbins enters the near full room of PATROLMEN and BEAT COPS  
ready for roll call. He pours himself a coffee while the  
deputies chat amongst themselves.

McNulty also enters, watches two of his guys chat it up near  
the back of the room. They are

Deputy KEVIN HOFFER (20s), baby face, still wet behind the  
ears and

Deputy MIKE DUGGARD (30s), square jawed ex marine, no  
nonsense.

HOFFER  
This is a fuckin mess.

DUGGARD  
Hell you talking about?

HOFFER  
You haven't heard the latest?

Duggard shakes his head, confused.

HOFFER (CONT'D)  
They just found a woman's hand in  
Greg Falco's freezer and McNulty  
tried to cover it up.

DUGGARD  
Bullshit.

HOFFER  
It was supposed to be this big  
secret. Just between the two of  
them. Well somebody said something  
because McNulty's little girl just  
spilled the whole story on live TV.

DUGGARD  
You're kidding? When was this?

HOFFER  
Like fifteen minutes ago. Did a  
broadcast right here in front of  
the office.

DUGGARD  
Now, why would she do that to her  
own father, dumbass?

McNulty sneaks up behind them.

MCNULTY  
She wouldn't.

They both turn to McNulty.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
As usual, Kevin doesn't have the  
whole story. Not that it ever  
keeps him from running his jaws.

Hoffer cracks a fake smile. Busted.

HOFFER  
Good morning, Sarge.

MCNULTY  
(a dirty stare)  
How's the new apartment? You  
finally finish unpacking?

HOFFER

Yes, sir. All unpacked and moved in.

MCNULTY

That's a shame.

McNulty makes his way to the front row, takes a seat. Duggard slaps Hoffer on his arm.

STEBBINS

Alright. By now, most of you have heard the news. Before any more rumors get spread, here's what's going on. Someone left what appeared to be a severed hand on Greg Falco's doorstep sometime early this morning.

The officers all turn and stare at one another. Some gossiped out looks. Some shocked, some already know.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Upon making this discovery, Mister Falco immediately alerted Sergeant McNulty.

He gives McNulty a sharp stare.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Who immediately reported the discovery to me.

Hoffer smiles at Duggard. None of the officers are buying it and it shows.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Somehow this story got leaked to our very close friends in the press. Who and how it got leaked is no longer important. What is important is finding this scumbag before he strikes again.

Stebbins nods to McNulty who makes his way to the podium.

MCNULTY

A lot of people are gonna be looking at me for answers. For obvious reasons. Most of you are wondering why my own daughter would implicate me in what looks on the surface to be a clear cut case of evidence tampering.

McNulty scoffs at the thought.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

Can't say I haven't thought about that once or twice myself. But like The Chief said, that can't be our primary focus.

(to Hoffer)

You hear me okay back there?!

Duggard shakes his head at an embarrassed Hoffer.

HOFFER

Yes, sir, Sergeant.

MCNULTY

Now, the press will eventually ask each and every one of you the status of this case. So be ready. Until a body surfaces, this is not, and I repeat, not a murder investigation. We're gonna handle this as a missing person's. And when I say missing, I don't mean pulling cold cases from eight months ago. We're talking within the last two weeks. We're looking at a female between the ages of twenty five to thirty...

Hoffer whispers to Duggard.

HOFFER

Whatta you think the odds are Falco killed this chick?

Duggard smirks at the thought.

DUGGARD

I don't know. Maybe McNulty's daughter knows something we don't.

HOFFER

Maybe when we leave here, we should ask her.

Duggard shoots him a nasty stare.

HOFFER (CONT'D)

This is a missing person's case, is it not? We're just two cops investigating. Make the press talk to us for a change.

DUGGARD

I know you're still pissed she  
turned you down and all but don't  
do anything stupid.

HOFFER

Hey. If you don't ask her, I will.

Duggard scoffs.

DUGGARD

Yeah, you do that.

MCNULTY

What are the facts? Yes, Falco  
discovered this hand near his  
apartment. Yes, I was the first at  
the scene. But no one outside of  
this room needs to know about our  
mystery caller. As far as the  
people know, this was nothing more  
than another skiing accident.  
Until the evidence says otherwise,  
that's exactly what it was.

EXT. SKI LIFT - SUGAR BOWL RESORT - DAY

McNulty and his daughter Cheryl wait in line at a hillside  
ski lift. A beautiful sight of calm white snow and a  
bright blue sky.

MCNULTY

(angry)

You fucked us!

A few in line turn and stare back. McNulty spots them and  
turns his back.

CHERYL

(quiet)

I told the truth.

MCNULTY

The truth is what I tell you it  
is. That was our deal and you  
broke it.

CHERYL

That's great, Dad. Can I get that  
on record?

The two crawl into the ski lift and

UP THEY GO

MCNULTY

No one knew about that pathology report but me, Ray and Falco. Not even The Chief. So which one of them spilled? Was it Falco?

CHERYL

(offended)

No, as a matter of fact. Why would he? If he did, it makes him look even more guilty. You know that.

MCNULTY

Okay, then who?

CHERYL

Let's just say I had an interesting chat with one of your deputies. All it took was a few beers and Ed Hollis sung like a canary. Said there was no way this was an accident.

(beat)

You lied to him.

MCNULTY

Would this deputy happen to have the initials Kevin Hoffer?

Cheryl grins, looks away.

CHERYL

I can't give away my source. You know that.

McNulty shakes his head with shame.

MCNULTY

He's got the hots for you. He's looking at Greg for this because he sees the same thing happening that I do.

CHERYL

And what's that?

MCNULTY

You're cozying up to him again. And not even six months since your sister left. What do you think Denise would say?

CHERYL

Look. Greg and I may have a lot of unfinished business but that was a long time ago. I was just a kid. I love my sister. Why do you think I leaked this story?

McNulty turns to her, squints, confused.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

She's been gone four months now and nobody knows where she is. She even stopped answering my calls. The last we talked, she even accused me of trying to get back with Greg behind her back.

MCNULTY

I'm sorry. I didn't know.

CHERYL

She's hurt. Because of what he did to her, she stopped trusting everybody and it's not fair.

MCNULTY

So you think by leaking Greg's story to the press, she'll suddenly come out of hiding and come back home to be by his side? Something like that?

CHERYL

She deserves to know what's going on, Dad. She needs to know if he's guilty of this. And if he's innocent, that's even more reason for her to be here. Because, whether you wanna admit it or not, this story isn't going anywhere soon.

McNulty is strangely quiet as he stares out onto the snow capped hillside.

CUT TO:

EXT. REMOTE SKI SLOPE - HILLSIDE - DAY

A FEMALE SKIER zig zags the white terrain at full speed ahead as she

CUTS a SHARP CORNER and a beautiful spray of ICE and SNOW shoots INTO THE AIR.

Downhill she goes and through a

PATCH OF WOODS

and around SNOW COVERED PINES that stand tall on the sloping hillside.

A GOPRO CAMERA POV

as she follows the thin ski path through the cold forestry. Out of the snow pops up a

MAN IN ALL WHITE SKI GEAR and a SILENCED TWENTY TWO.

ZIP! A long MUZZLE FLARE

BACK TO SCENE

as the BULLET strikes the woman's arm and she tumbles face first into a cluster of thin pines.

The woman CRIES OUT in agony as she grabs at her wounded arm and spots

THE MAN IN WHITE

coming towards her.

SKIER

What are you doing?! Please!

SKIER'S POV

The man slowly aims his weapon at her face. ZIP!

CUT TO BLACK

EXT. MINI LODGE - HILLSIDE - DAY

A make shift log cabin camouflaged in fallen snow is barely visible among the trees.

INT. MINI LODGE - DAY

The dead female skier lay on the ice floor. A single bullet shot between her eyes. A tree stump in the middle of this small, floorless room.

The man in white places the skier's hand on the smooth surface of the tree stump. He holds her fingers down, pulls a SHARP HATCHET from the wood.

INT. FALCO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Falco paces his carpet like a nervous wreck while Bowers makes himself a sandwich.

McNulty oversees Duggard who is busy setting up a complicated phone tracking system on his laptop.

FALCO

Now that he knows the cops are involved, won't it be stupid for him to just call back?

BOWERS

I don't like him but he's right, Chris. He knows we're trying to trace him.

MCNULTY

I know he knows. That's why he's gonna be calling from a cellular. Most likely stolen. But none of that's gonna matter because, his phone or not, we can track his location.

FALCO

How's that?

McNulty points to Duggard.

DUGGARD

Yo, Falco. Check this out.

Duggard waves him over. Falco stares down at the computer set-up.

The LED shows a satellite image of the city.

DUGGARD (CONT'D)

This is a map of the entire town. If we trace the number and it's a cellular, we'll know by typing it into the system. The map will give us the general location of where the call was made based on which cell tower picked up the signal.

FALCO

Well well. I saw this on The FBI Files once. Didn't know you guys were hip to that kind of technology out here in the sticks.

BOWERS

Neither did we. Lucky for us, Mike here used to work surveillance. Me? I can't even program the clock on my microwave.

Duggard grabs his coat and stand to leave.

MCNULTY

Appreciate it, Mike.

DUGGARD

No problem. Catch this asshole would ya?

McNulty slaps him on the arm as he heads for the door. Falco throws his hands in his pockets, already anxious.

FALCO

So what do we do now?

MCNULTY

What do you think we do? We wait.

McNulty snatches up half of Bowers sandwich from a plate. Takes a big chomp.

BOWERS

Help yourself.

MCNULTY

I will, thanks.

FALCO

Midnight's a long ways away, fellas. I mean, shouldn't you guys be out there looking for this guy?

MCNULTY

We could if we had something to go on. But our biggest lead in this case isn't giving us shit.

McNulty slumps down on a kitchen stool and cracks open a soda. Falco stares back at McNulty and Bowers who give him the thousand yard stare.

FALCO

I told you guys. I don't have a fuckin clue who this girl is. And I know what you're thinking.

MCNULTY

Really? What's that?

FALCO

That there's been so many women, I lost count. Well, I haven't slept with anyone since Denise left. No matter what she told you, I've been faithful for the last seven months.

MCNULTY

You're right. I don't believe you.

BOWERS

Sounds to me like you're planning on her coming back.

FALCO

(to Bowers)

Not that it's any of your business, but yes.

(to both)

Denise said she needed some time away to think. It was never supposed to be a permanent move.

Falco grows irritated and heads for the

KITCHEN

He grabs a beer from the fridge, takes a chug.

MCNULTY

Some time? And how long was that?

FALCO

I don't know. She wouldn't tell me. Believe me, I asked. Over and over again. We talked maybe two or three times on the phone and she quits calling altogether.

BOWERS

How about this other woman? She out of the picture for good?

FALCO

Look. I don't know what you think you're doing, cop. But this is a family matter.

MCNULTY

Hey! He was bouncing Denise on his knee long before you came along. He is family. And he's not just a cop. He's the cop who's gonna keep you breathing and out of prison.

FALCO

(half hearted)

My apologies.

BOWERS

Forget it.

McNulty watches a frustrated Falco lean on the fridge and rub his tired eyes.

MCNULTY

You know, he's right. This is a family matter.

(to Bowers)

Why don't you give me and my son in law a minute.

Bowers excuses himself.

FALCO

Is this some kind of lame good cop, bad cop trick?

MCNULTY

Never mind my partner. So is she out of the picture or not?

FALCO

Yeah. A long time ago. I broke it off weeks before Denise left. It didn't matter. She said she wasn't sure she could trust me anymore.

Falco laughs nervously. Shakes his head.

FALCO (CONT'D)

Now I'm the one sitting at home at night, wondering and worrying where my wife is and who she's with.

(beat)

I guess I deserve that.

Falco chugs his beer.

MCNULTY

A woman's dead, Greg. Whoever killed her left a part of her on your doorstep. I'm finding it very hard to believe, after what's happened, you've gone back to being the faithful husband.

FALCO

This guy's not some jealous husband!

MCNULTY

How do you know that?

FALCO

Because Lisa wasn't married! Okay?!

This is news to McNulty.

FALCO (CONT'D)

She was staying with her friend at her place and her old man passed away two years ago. An overdose or some shit. She didn't like to talk about it. He was apparently a real asshole.

(beat)

Contrary to popular opinion, I don't mess with married women. At least not since I married Denise.

MCNULTY

What do you mean was staying? Did she split town?

FALCO

After I broke it off, she called the house maybe twice a day. Trying to make trouble. This went on for weeks. Then out of the blue, she quit trying. I haven't talked to her or seen her in months.

MCNULTY

So you don't know where she is?

FALCO

No. Why?

Bowers walks back in. Eyes and ears on Falco. He checks with McNulty who is equally intrigued by this news.

MCNULTY  
You got a photo of this woman?

FALCO  
(unsure)  
Why?

BOWERS  
Let us worry about why. You got a picture of this broad or not?

FALCO  
I might still have one in my phone. I'm not sure.

McNulty snags Falco's phone from the counter, searches the images.

FALCO (CONT'D)  
Hey!

McNulty hands Falco his phone.

MCNULTY  
Show us.

Falco grows concerned as he stares back at the two partners. He finds a pic of Lisa and shows them.

A RED HEAD in full ski gear, out on the slopes. All smiles and a face full of freckles.

BOWERS  
A red head.

McNulty snatches the phone from Falco's hand, rummages through the contacts list.

FALCO  
Hell are you doing?

MCNULTY  
I'm calling her.

McNulty puts the phone on SPEAKER as it DIALS. Someone on the other end answers:

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
Lisa? I'm calling from Greg Falco's phone. He's standing here with me...

KILLER (O.S.)  
Sorry, Sergeant. Lisa can't come  
to the phone right now.

McNulty and the others all share a look of shock.

MCNULTY  
Is this who I think it is?

KILLER (O.S.)  
You catch on quick. That's good.  
After all. Games are only fun if  
you have an opponent equal to the  
challenge.

McNulty shows the phone number to Bowers who runs the trace  
on the laptop.

MCNULTY  
What about Greg Falco? I thought  
you wanted to play with him.

KILLER (O.S.)  
He's just a piece of the puzzle.  
Just like you. You'll find out  
soon enough. I hate to run but  
there's still so much to do. By  
the way, I think Falco has a new  
delivery.

A loud KNOCK at Falco's door startles them.

KILLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Maybe you guys should check that  
out. It just might be the break  
that you're looking for.  
(beat)  
Take care.

He hangs up. McNulty and Bowers pull their guns and race for  
the door. They open and grab a FED EX man by the shirt and  
drag him inside.

Bowers shoves him against the wall.

DELIVERY GUY  
What the fuck, man??

MCNULTY  
What's in the box?

DELIVERY GUY  
How the hell do I know?!

MCNULTY  
(to Bowers)  
Stay with him.

McNulty charges out the door and

EXT. INTO THE STREET - NIGHT

as he stares in all directions for the killer. Oncoming cars HONK and swerve to miss him.

McNulty spots a MAN ON A BENCH watching him with his CELL PHONE ZOOMED IN.

MCNULTY  
(to man)  
Hey!!!

The Man quickly stands and retreats down an alley just as a large BUS PASSES BY.

McNulty impatiently runs around the rear end of the bus and charges up the alley in pursuit.

INT. ALLEY WAY - DUSK

The man from the bench looks over his shoulder at McNulty as he goes full track star toward a chain link fence.

MCNULTY  
Stop!!!

McNulty can't keep up, stops and AIMS HIS GUN.

POW-POW-POW

Three shots fired as the man LEAPS a fence in the near distance.

McNulty runs to the fence, almost out of steam. He spots some BLOOD dripped into the metal grooves.

He stares in both directions. Nothing but trees and deep woods. Our guy is long gone.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPT. - BRIEFING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Stebbins empties the contents of a large fed ex box onto an evidence table.

A bright red sweater, torn, dirty and weather beaten. A red and green headband stained with blood and matching red and green wool gloves.

Falco just watches, his arms folded, quiet. Hoffer watches Falco with contempt.

STEBBINS

So you didn't recognize the glove.  
And now you don't have any idea  
where these clothes came from. Is  
that what you're telling us?

FALCO

I told you I never saw them  
before.

STEBBINS

Right. Because you were so  
truthful with us about your  
girlfriend Lisa Nettles.

FALCO

I never kept anything from you or  
from McNulty. I don't know anyone  
that wanted Lisa dead. I still  
don't. That's the truth.

HOFFER

Maybe we're looking at him.

FALCO

(to Hoffer)

Maybe I'm looking at him. Where  
were you around Five PM?

Stebbins gets in Hoffer's face, points to the door.

STEBBINS

Back off. Go wait outside.

Hoffer looks over Stebbins shoulder at Falco.

HOFFER

I'm onto you, Falco. And I'm  
watching you! Remember that!

Hoffer heads for the door.

STEBBINS

Get out!

FALCO

You need to tell these guys what happened today! That it wasn't me!

McNulty and Bowers step in. Both are tired and whipped.

STEBBINS

No, it wasn't. But he sure seems to know a lot about you. And you don't know anything. And, frankly, that's making us all a little nervous.

FALCO

You think I killed Lisa Nettles?

BOWERS

Even you said she wouldn't leave you alone.

MCNULTY

He left part of her on your doorstep. Now he's sending you her clothes. And here you are still playing stupid.

(beat)

Does he know something about you you're not telling us, Greg?

FALCO

I don't know, Chris. You're the cop. You tell me.

McNulty grabs him by the shirt collar.

MCNULTY

Smug sonofabitch!

Stebbins breaks them up.

STEBBINS

Knock it off!

(to McNulty and Bowers)

Both of you. Wait outside.

Bowers heads out. McNulty doesn't budge.

FALCO

You better get him under control.

MCNULTY

Oh, yeah? Why don't you do it yourself?

STEBBINS  
(to McNulty)  
Shut up!

McNulty smiles and steps out.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)  
(to Falco)  
You let me worry about him. If you know what's good for you, I'd be a lot more worried about what we're doing with you.

FALCO  
What's that supposed to mean? Are you charging me with something?

STEBBINS  
Like the man said. This is a game. He chose you for a reason. He's made his play and now he's waiting for you to make yours. And I'll tell you something, we're all watching.

Falco grabs his coat from a chair, heads to the door, unamused and pissed off.

Stebbins grabs his arm.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)  
Whatever it is you're hiding, you better spill soon. If you don't, it just might cost some other poor girl her life. Just fair warning, if that happens, I won't be so nice next time.

Falco stares down at Stebbins hand.

FALCO  
Am I free to go? I'm a little tired.

STEBBINS  
Don't fuck with us, Falco. Go home.

FALCO  
Yeah, right.

Falco heads out.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPT. - STEBBINS OFFICE - LATE NIGHT

Stebbins steps in. McNulty and Bowers pace the room, angry, anxious, desperate.

STEBBINS

So. Which one of you clipped this guy again?

MCNULTY

I did. Nailed him in the alley trying to jump a fence. Don't know if it was his leg, back or what. We're checking the ER for all admitted gunshot wounds in the last two hours. So far it's been quiet.

STEBBINS

You can stop your search.

McNulty and Bowers share a confused look.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

According to Hoffer, your guy hobbled into the emergency room at Seven Fifty on the dot. He had quite the story for the admit nurse.

MCNULTY

They got him?

(angry)

What the hell was all that about in there?

STEBBINS

I'll tell you why. Because he's not our guy. You shot some punk grocery store clerk waiting for the bus. Blew his pinky toe completely off his foot.

MCNULTY

The hell are you talking about?

STEBBINS

I'm talking about you running around the street like Dirty Harry and scaring the piss out of this kid.

Bowers shuts his tired eyes, rubs them in defeat.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

He sees a gun and high tails it into the alley. Maybe if you bothered identifying yourself as a police officer, he would've stopped.

MCNULTY

Where is he?

STEBBINS

At the hospital. And I don't want you going over there offering your half-assed apologies. The press is already going nuts over this.

McNulty hangs his head low, turns his back on the others as he makes his way to the window.

BOWERS

Shit, Chris, I'm sorry.

MCNULTY

Could they...ya know?

STEBBINS

Sew it back on? Yeah. From what I hear, they were able to save it.

McNulty shakes his head and stares out the window with shame and exhaustion.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

You know everyone in town is looking at you, Chris. Some have the notion you even helped Falco get rid of this woman's body.

MCNULTY

I know how it looks.

STEBBINS

Good. Cos it looks real fuckin bad. You've brought enough bad press as it is. When they find out it was you who put that kid in the hospital, this thing is gonna explode.

Stebbins also paces the carpet with exhaustion.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Can't wait to see what front page story your daughter has in store for us next.

MCNULTY

I'll talk to her before it comes to that.

STEBBINS

Damn right you will. And when you're done with her, you're on vacation.

BOWERS

Whoa. Chief. He's gone one on one with this guy. That means he's already a part of the game. He can't just...

MCNULTY

No. He's right. I could use the time off.

(to Bowers)

I trust that you'll see this thing through?

BOWERS

Of course.

McNulty heads for the door.

STEBBINS

I mean it, Chris. I don't wanna see you in the city until we close this one.

McNulty half-heartedly nods as he ducks out.

BOWERS

It's just us here. No bullshit. He just lost his job, didn't he?

STEBBINS

He shot an unarmed civilian. What do you think?

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

McNulty quietly parks his car in a far away spot as he spies on the camera crew and news media gathered in front of the ambulance bay.

Cheryl watches her back as she sneaks away and quickly heads to her father's car.

INT. MCNULTY'S CAR - NIGHT

Cheryl steps in, shuts the door.

MCNULTY

So how's this kid doing?

CHERYL

He looks a lot better than you to tell you the truth. He's actually pretty excited by the whole thing. This morning he was a nobody.

(smiles)

He's already showing off his toe to the nursing staff. Who knows. Maybe you'll get lucky and he won't take the department for every dime you guys have.

McNulty laughs and takes a huge belt of bourbon. Cheryl smiles.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Hey. At least you didn't kill him.

MCNULTY

I wouldn't be in any more trouble if I did.

CHERYL

Good news though.

MCNULTY

Good. I could use some.

CHERYL

I heard from her.

MCNULTY

You're kidding.

CHERYL

Well. Sort of. I missed her call about thirty minutes ago.

(MORE)

CHERYL (CONT'D)

She said she's coming home to be with Greg. Can you believe it? She's coming back.

MCNULTY

Funny I didn't get that call.

CHERYL

So, are you out of a job?

MCNULTY

Not officially but it's not looking good.

CHERYL

Look, Dad. Denise is coming home. She's been through enough already with Greg, the separation. I think maybe it's best you lay low for awhile.

McNulty can hardly believe this.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Let Ray handle this one. You're too close to this and I think you proved that today.

MCNULTY

You know, I've been thinking all night about what this guy said to me on the phone.

CHERYL

What?

MCNULTY

He said Greg was only a small piece of the puzzle. Then he said games are only fun when you have an opponent equal to the challenge.

CHERYL

So?

MCNULTY

So maybe it's not Greg he's after.

Cheryl plays confused.

CHERYL

So what is he after?

McNulty stares at the dash, thinks it all over, connects the dots as his eyes dance.

MCNULTY

I don't know. It's like he wants to expose something. Something that's been kept secret. Maybe Greg really doesn't know anything about it.

Cheryl ponders this.

CHERYL

I don't know how that could be. He never even mentioned Lisa's name. Not to me, you or anyone.

MCNULTY

It could be he didn't wanna believe it was her. Or didn't have any reason to think it could be.

McNulty takes another drink. Cheryl jerks the bottle out of his hand, screws the cap back on.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

It's like this guy wants me to dig further. Look past the obvious target. The hand, and now this red sweater.

(beat)

I don't know. It's too easy.

CHERYL

I think it's obvious Lisa's dead, Dad. Even you said this guy answered her phone.

MCNULTY

This guy told Greg he heard he was the best around. He knew these parts better than anyone. It's like he's telling us there's gonna be more bodies. Not just Lisa.

(serious)

And he's daring us to find them.

McNulty shakes his head, rubs his tired face.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

I'm not out of this until he says I am. That's not me being pigheaded or arrogant.

(MORE)

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

If I pull out of this now, it might  
cost another girl her life.

EXT. NATURE TRAIL - HILLSIDE - DAY

Two girlfriends on bicycles MARISOL TURNER (20s) dark, curly hair, and DANA BLACK (20s), bleach blonde, giggle and carry on as they ride the rough and rocky path along a steep hillside.

Tall snowcapped pines align the side of this sloping but scenic mountain road.

Marisol peeks over the side at this gorgeous view of the town below.

Dana drags behind and takes a fork in the path that puts her directly over top of Marisol.

As Marisol stares out into the natural wonder that is Norden, California --

THE MAN IN WHITE

pops up from behind a SNOW COVERED BUSH with MACHETE in hand.

DANA

just happens to stare down at Marisol as

THE MAN IN WHITE

takes her HEAD with the machete.

WOOSH!

Dana SCREAMS out as she witnesses the crime. Her bike careens out of control --

Tumbles DOWN A HILL

and throws her face first into a PATCH OF SNOW. She struggles to get up. Stares behind her.

THE MAN IN WHITE

now in full pursuit.

Dana is able to stand and runs like hell into the thin patch of

WOODS

The MAN IN WHITE is hard to place as he blends in with the snow drizzled forest.

ZIP!

A BULLET hits a nearby tree and sends Dana in a whole new direction.

ZIP ZIP ZIP!

Three more BULLETS strike the SNOW around Dana's feet as she is once again forced in a new direction.

ZIP ZIP ZIP!

And the BULLETS strike all around her. At her feet, around her head. From tree to tree.

Dana is forced out of the woods and back

ONTO THE BIKE TRAIL

where she slips and falls on the ice.

The MAN IN WHITE takes aim. ZIP ZIP ZIP!

Three more BULLETS hit Dana in the shoulder as she TRIPS and FALLS into a row of white bushes.

The MAN IN WHITE slowly walks toward her. Calm. Quiet.

GOPRO POV:

Dana rolls onto the road, spits blood from the bullets in her lungs as the CAMERA hovers over her.

The MAN IN WHITE aims with two hands. ZIP-ZIP

CUT TO:

INT. FALCO'S APARTMENT - REAR DECK - MORNING

Falco sips a coffee and stares out into the beautiful rear lawn covered with white. He stares back inside at

Bowers asleep on the couch.

Falco leans over his deck rail, in deep thought.

EXT. STEEP HILLSIDE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Falco points his finger at an angry LISA NETTLES (20s), red head, red Christmas sweater, red and green headband and matching gloves.

Lisa swipes his finger away.

LISA  
Don't do that! You promised me!

Falco turns his back on her.

FALCO  
I didn't promise you anything!

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. FALCO'S APARTMENT - REAR DECK - MORNING

Falco shuts his eyes with regret.

EXT. STEEP HILLSIDE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Falco turns back to Lisa who is in tears.

LISA  
You said she left and it was over.  
You lied to me!

FALCO  
I thought it was! It turns out it  
wasn't! I didn't lie to you about  
shit!

Lisa SMACKS HIM across the mouth.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. FALCO'S APARTMENT - REAR DECK - MORNING

Falco shakes his head. An angry scowl on his face. A PHONE RINGS inside as

Bowers almost falls off the couch.

BOWERS  
What is it?

Bowers checks the phone and types in the CELL NUMBER into the computer. He tosses the phone to Falco who answers:

FALCO  
Yeah, this is Greg.

KILLER (O.S.)  
Good morning, sleepy head. What's  
the matter? You sound so tired.  
Bad night?

FALCO  
I got your package. Real cute but  
I don't think it's my size. So  
what else you got for me?

KILLER (O.S.)  
Come now, Greg. Don't you think  
that's a conversation you and I  
should have in private?

Falco checks with Bowers who shoots him an accusatory stare.

KILLER (CONT'D)  
You've been doing a real good job  
at keeping our little secret. Hate  
to see you throw away those three  
whole months of suffering for  
nothing.  
(beat)  
But then again, at least it would  
all be off your chest. Who knows,  
Greg. Maybe they won't lock you up  
and throw away the key.

FALCO  
You know, I'd don't feel like  
playing this game anymore. Why  
don't me and you meet face to  
face. Then we'll see who's  
suffering.

A RED DOT marks the spot on the computer as Bowers grabs  
Falco's sleeve and pulls him closer.

Falco covers his phone.

BOWERS  
The bastard's right on top of us.

Bowers sees the reflection of LIGHT from a RIFLE SCOPE on the  
hillside out back.

BOWERS (CONT'D)  
Get down!

POW-POW

Two HIGH POWERED RIFLE SHOTS tear through the SLIDING GLASS DOOR as

Bowers PUSHES Falco to the floor and he's STRUCK IN THE BACK by both shots. He drops to his knees, face plants on the carpet. Dead.

Falco checks his pulse and peeks through the wooden grooves of his rear deck. The white flash of a sniper as he flees the scene.

CUT TO:

INT. RESORT LODGE - FRONT DESK - DAY

The HOTEL MANAGER and an anxious looking ROOM ATTENDENT stand with a DESK CLERK at the front end computer.

Stebbins and Hoffer enter the building with hurried assurance and a dead serious look in their eyes.

The Manager meets them halfway, shakes Stebbins hand.

MANAGER

Chief Stebbins.

STEBBINS

You have something for us?

MANAGER

Two young women. Third floor. Scheduled for a Nine AM checkout. I checked with room service. Apparently they haven't been back to their room in two days.

Stebbins and Hoffer share a quick look.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

That's not all. We got a noise complaint from the room downstairs. Sometime early this morning, someone left the television on full blast. I went upstairs to deal with the complaint and that's when I found it.

HOFFER

Found what?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The Manager lets in Stebbins and Hoffer as all three enter the room. Stebbins spots an image FROZEN on the TV. It's a young woman on a mountain bike (Marisol).

The Manager grabs a dvd remote, hits play as the still image returns to normal speed.

GOPRO POV:

Marisol follows a thin nature trail on her bike as the killer watches.

KILLER (O.S.)

There she is. A free spirit at one with nature. Not a care in the world. Such a childlike innocence about her. If she only knew the big bad wolf was waiting around the corner. Waiting to steal her innocence.

The footage CUTS TO

Dana as she spits blood and squirms in the snow. Our killer hovers over her.

STEBBINS

Oh-my-God.

Dana stares at the CAMERA. Spits her last few breaths.

KILLER (O.S.)

It's a crazy thing. Watching someone die before your very eyes. It changes you. It changes how you view life and death...

The footage CUTS TO

SKIER GOPRO POV:

as she burns down the steep hill and into a patch of trees.

KILLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

For the first time, you begin to accept your own mortality...

The MAN IN WHITE pops up, out of the snow and SHOOTs the skier as she careens out of control and INTO THE TREES.

KILLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 You begin to embrace death. Just  
 like any other part of life.

The MAN IN WHITE walks toward her, gun in hand.

KILLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Until it becomes an obsession. And  
 you try to control it.

FEMALE SKIER  
 Oh, God! Please!

KILLER (O.S.)  
 In that moment...You become God.

The MAN IN WHITE hovers over her, aims his weapon at her  
 face.

The Manager pauses the image.

HOFFER  
 Whatta you think, Chief?

Stebbins PHONE RINGS. He answers:

STEBBINS  
 Yeah, Mike. What is it?

EXT. WOODS - FALCO'S REAR LAWN - DAY

Stebbins, Duggard and Hoffer search the wooded area with  
 rubber gloves and flashlights. Stebbins finds a RIFLE  
 CASING and picks it up.

STEBBINS  
 Found it. Looks like a Remington  
 308.

Stebbins motions to a blistered tree trunk.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)  
 Probably held up behind this trunk  
 here.  
 (to Duggard)  
 How the hell did he not see him  
 from here?

McNulty charges up the hill, angry as hell.

MCNULTY  
 Where the hell is he? And don't  
 jerk me off, Charlie

STEBBINS

At the morgue. Where do you think,  
Chris?

MCNULTY

I mean Falco! Where is he?!

STEBBINS

You're staying out of this,  
McNulty. If I have to put you on a  
bus myself.

MCNULTY

If you think you're putting me on  
the bench again, forget it.

STEBBINS

It's not up to you!

McNulty hands Stebbins a hand written letter.

MCNULTY

You're right. It's up to him.

INSERT - LETTER

Stebbins reads aloud:

STEBBINS (O.S.)

Now it's just you and me.

BACK TO SCENE

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Sonofabitch. The bastard thinks he  
killed Falco.

MCNULTY

That's right. And Ray's dead  
because I didn't play his game.  
With Falco out of the picture,  
it's just me and him.

STEBBINS

Not if I have anything to say about  
it. As soon as we find Falco,  
you're both going to a safe house  
until we find this prick.

Stebbins rushes down the hill with his bagged evidence.  
McNulty follows.

MCNULTY

You can't find him.

STEBBINS

Really? Why's that?

MCNULTY

Because he won't let you. This guy's all about the game. The one me and Falco started. You take me out, he'll pick off every one of you. Just like he did Ray.

STEBBINS

You shouldn't be out here, Chris. For all we know, he could be planning on taking you out next.

McNulty grabs him by the arm, spins him around. Stebbins shoves him back.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)

Keep your hands off of me! You wanna help?! Go home, lock your doors and keep your gun handy! Maybe we'll get lucky and he'll come to you!

McNulty gives up and rushes off. Stebbins keeps a close eye on him. Duggard comes down the hill.

DUGGARD

Where does he think he's going?

STEBBINS

Let him go. Whatever happens now it's not on us.

CUT TO:

INT. MCNULTY'S CAR - DAY

McNulty crawls in, letter still in hand. He looks at it again and then down at a PHOTO OF NORDEN taken from a remote mountain.

He flips it over: *Happy Anniversary 12/23/16* in red ink.

McNulty stares at the message with pure hatred. Throws it in the backseat and cranks the engine.

CUT TO:

EXT. REMOTE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Falco walks to the edge of this very remote hillside and stares down at the town of Norden. It's the exact same spot where the photo was taken.

Falco tears up.

REMOTE MOUNTAIN - (FLASHBACK)

Falco walks away from Lisa (red and green sweater and headband) as she chases after him.

LISA

This isn't over! You can't keep walking away whenever you feel like it, Greg! Or, I swear to God I'll tell her every little thing you've been up to since she left! She's gonna know what a liar she's married to!

Falco laughs her off.

LISA (CONT'D)

Did you hear what I said?!

Falco turns, furious, points his finger in her face.

FALCO

Stay away from me. And you stay away from her. Or I'm gonna take this to the next level.

LISA

What's that? Your cop daddy gonna put a restraining order on me?

FALCO

You need serious help. Really.

Falco turns his back on her.

LISA

We're not done here.

Falco laughs her off.

LISA (CONT'D)

I said where are you going?!

She reaches for his shirt as he pushes her off. She slips on the ice and falls over a steep hill.

LISA (CONT'D)  
 Help!!! Help me!!! Greg!!!

Falco runs to the side of a very steep and deadly cliff where Lisa hangs on by a weak tree branch.

Falco extends his hand.

FALCO  
 You gotta take my hand! Take it or  
 you'll fall!

LISA  
 Please. Don't let go.

FALCO  
 I won't, sweetie. You gotta trust  
 me. We don't have much time.

Lisa grabs his hand as his SKI GLOVE slides completely off  
 and

Lisa plunges hundreds of feet into a dark cave as her SCREAMS  
 echo the mountainside.

Falco bursts into tears.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. REMOTE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Falco stares down into the dark forest in which Lisa fell to  
 her death. The sound of FOOTSTEPS behind him.

He turns.

McNulty stands with the PHOTO IN HAND. He walks to Falco,  
 hands it to him.

MCNULTY  
 Happy Anniversary. December Twenty  
 Third.

McNulty stares over the side of the cliff.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
 Red and green sweater. Matching  
 gloves and headband. Just like  
 Christmas. All the clues were  
 there, right in front of me.

Falco still in tears.

FALCO  
Where did you get this?

MCNULTY  
Your boy mailed it to me. Along  
with a message. Now it's just you  
and me.

FALCO  
He thinks he killed me back there,  
doesn't he?

MCNULTY  
So today makes exactly two months  
since Lisa died.  
(stares over the side)  
I take it this is where it  
happened?

FALCO  
You hear to arrest me?

MCNULTY  
Can't do that. I'm not a cop  
anymore.

FALCO  
Aren't you gonna ask me if I killed  
her?

MCNULTY  
I don't know if you did or not.  
Only you know that. Besides.  
They have no case.

FALCO  
So, in other words, you don't care.

McNulty slowly moves toward him, his eyes locked in on Falco,  
angry, unflinching.

MCNULTY  
Oh, I care. Because of you,  
three more girls are dead. Maybe  
even more.

Falco backs up a step, stares behind him as he comes close to  
the edge.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
Your boy left us a nice little home  
movie of his latest victims.

FALCO  
Who were they?

MCNULTY  
A couple of girls from out of town. Tourists. It looks random. The third girl they're still working on. I think what our guy wants is pretty clear.

FALCO  
You want me to turn myself in?

MCNULTY  
I don't see any other way to stop this. Do you?

Falco stares over the cliff, reflects back on that fateful day as McNulty watches.

FALCO  
It was an accident. She slipped on the ice. I tried to help her.

MCNULTY  
No one's gonna believe that. Not for a second.

FALCO  
Why?

MCNULTY  
Because she's been dead for two months. You're my son in law. You're in bed with the cops. Because you involved me.  
(beat)  
In short, we don't have a fuckin leg to stand on.

FALCO  
So what do we do?

McNulty smiles, walks to Falco.

MCNULTY  
The only thing we can do. We find this asshole and put him in the ground.

Falco nods with assurance. McNulty's PHONE RINGS. He answers:

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

Yeah?

(listens)

Yeah, I understand. I'll be there right away.

McNulty hangs up. A sad look about him.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

Remember that kid I clipped in the foot?

FALCO

Yeah.

MCNULTY

He's coming after the department for damages. And that's not all. The DA is throwing everything but the kitchen sink at me. Behavior unbecoming, assault, aggravated battery. They're even talking attempted murder.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT HOUSE - DEPOSITION ROOM - DAY

McNulty and his attorney ROBERT RANDALL (30s), cheap suit, low rent police lawyer, sit across from ETHAN BECK (22), severe facial scars, beady eyes, and his attorney MICHELLE LANDIS (30s), slick, elegant, business suit.

Stebbins sits at the head of the table while D.A. WALLACE (50s), perfect suit and tie, occupies the chair at the other end.

MICHELLE

Sergeant McNulty is the center piece of an ongoing interdepartmental investigation. Including colluding with a murder suspect and evidence tampering. I don't think it would take much convincing for a jury to believe he tried to set up and murder my client.

RANDALL

That's all baseless speculation, rumors and hearsay. My client isn't being investigated for anything.

MICHELLE

Thank you, counselor. That's very very interesting. Indeed.

Michelle jots down some notes. McNulty gives the death stare to Randall.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Did you know that seven shell casings were found in that alley? Seven. Nobody's gonna believe The Sergeant was just firing a warning shot.

Randall slumps in defeat.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

You know as well as I do that if this goes to court, my client could walk away with a very substantial amount of money at the city's expense.

MCNULTY

What do you want?

STEBBINS

If I were you, I'd keep quiet, Sergeant.

MICHELLE

My client has requested a compromise.

MCNULTY

What kind of compromise?

MICHELLE

Three hundred thousand. And Sergeant McNulty's public resignation and formal apology to Mister Beck.

Beck smirks at McNulty. A real deviant smugness about him.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

That's not even a fraction of what we'd get if this went to court and you know it. Sergeant McNulty gets to save face and still retain his dignity.

(stares at Wallace)

I think the decision here is simple, gentlemen.

Stebbins and Wallace share a look. They nod in agreement.

DA WALLACE

I agree.

MCNULTY

I still have some questions.

DA WALLACE

No, you don't.

MCNULTY

You're a little older than The Chief described. What? You about Twenty Two, twenty three?

BECK

Twenty five.

MCNULTY

Twenty five. A lot older than nineteen. I guess I heard that wrong.

MICHELLE

What does my client's age have to do with anything?

MCNULTY

(to Beck)

Tell me. You ever do any skiing?

Beck just smiles back at him.

BECK

A little. How about your son in law? He ever do some skiing?

Beck laughs at him. McNulty ready to take his head off.

MICHELLE

That's enough.

(to DA Wallace)

You have our offer. We'll be in touch.

Michelle stands to leave. Beck takes his merry time as he smiles back at McNulty.

BECK

Tell Cheryl I said Hi.

Beck turns to leave. McNulty jumps from his seat, goes after him as DA Wallace holds him back.

DA WALLACE

Whoa whoa! Hold it, Sergeant! I think you've done enough for one week!

McNulty composes himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRESS ROOM - CITY HALL - NIGHT

McNulty stands at a podium, mic in his face. The crowd before him stand several CAMERAMEN and news and media types holding notepads.

Cheryl stays out of it as she stands near the rear exit with extreme sadness in her eyes.

MCNULTY

Because of snap judgment. Because of my own anger. And because of my personal stake in this investigation....  
I was unable to assess the situation with a clear head.

McNulty reads off of a written paper.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

And, as a result of this, an innocent young man was seriously injured.

CAMERAS FLASH as reporters record his statement. Cheryl can no longer watch and quietly ducks out.

McNulty spots her leaving as the door shuts behind her.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

I know it won't fix what happened, but I'd like to sincerely apologize to Ethan Beck for my gross mishandling of this situation. And I am sincerely hoping and praying that the Nevada County Sheriff's Office, as well as our neighboring agencies, will continue their investigation with much more patience and care than I was able to give. And may they bring justice to these four women.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY HALL - NIGHT

McNulty, completely enraged, charges away from the building as Cheryl tries hard to keep up.

MCNULTY

You leaked the video.

CHERYL

I didn't leak anything.

MCNULTY

Then who did?

CHERYL

I don't know. All I know is it was someone in the department. All the sudden, no one's telling me anything.

MCNULTY

Surprise surprise. You know it makes Greg look even guiltier. This guy's picking girls off on the slopes. He's head ski instructor with a checkered past with women. And your friends in the press just hung him.

CHERYL

I hear you went after Beck. And almost knocked Wallace over in the process. Is that true?

MCNULTY

I think I've talked to the press enough for one night.

Cheryl walks ahead of him, gets in his face.

CHERYL

I'm not the press! I'm your daughter! Is Beck the guy or isn't he?

McNulty stops.

MCNULTY

I don't know yet.

CHERYL

So you went after him even though you're not sure. For the second time. What the hell, Dad.

McNulty rubs his bloodshot eyes, reaches for a smoke and lights one up.

MCNULTY

I called your sister three times today and no answer. Where the hell is she?

CHERYL

She called this morning.

(beat)

She's scared, Dad. Scared Greg did this. Scared everyone's gonna stick a mic in her face as soon as she gets here. Including me.

MCNULTY

Maybe she should stay away. At least until we get a fix on this guy.

CHERYL

So you're thinking it's Beck? Let me do some digging. After your little incident with him at the courthouse, they're gonna be looking to connect Beck with these girls or die trying.

MCNULTY

They come up with anything, you bring it to me first.

CHERYL

Of course.

MCNULTY

Meanwhile, I'll try Denise tonight. Let her know to stay clear for a couple more weeks.

CHERYL

Just so I don't sit up all night wondering. There's zero chance of you staying out of this case, right?

MCNULTY

Off the record?

Cheryl smiles.

CHERYL

Of course.

MCNULTY

No comment.

CUT TO:

INT. MCNULTY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

On McNulty's large flat screen, the killer's POV murder video plays out as

Falco watches from the couch. McNulty, arms folded, anxious, paces the floor.

MCNULTY

I wan't you to tell me what's wrong with this video. Anything you see peculiar.

Falco keeps watching. Marisol, Dana and now the third victim as she speeds down the hill.

GOPRO POV:

The MAN IN WHITE pops out of the snow and SHOOTs the skier. A large MUZZLE FLARE.

She careens out of control and ends up in the trees. The MAN IN WHITE walks toward her as she struggles to move.

McNulty pauses the video as THE MAN IN WHITE hovers over her, gun aimed.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

It took me two or three times watching this before it hit me.

FALCO

The first two victims. He used a GoPro. In the third, the victim was wearing it.

MCNULTY

Bingo.

FALCO

What does that mean?

MCNULTY

It means he most likely killed the skier first. Maybe that's how he got the idea to record the other two women.

FALCO

He took her camera. Used it to record those bikers.

MCNULTY

Right. Now if I'm right, which I usually am about most things, it's what our guy was trying to tell us.

FALCO

If she was killed first, when was she killed? And more importantly, who was she?

MCNULTY

I need you to listen real hard. Think back. See if you recognize this woman's voice.

FALCO

Rewind it.

McNulty rewinds a few seconds. Plays it back.

FEMALE SKIER (O.S.)

Oh, God! Please! Why are you doing this?!

Falco thinks real hard. It hits him all at once.

FALCO

Katie.

MCNULTY

Who?

FALCO

Katie Ashton. She's one of the best downhill skiers in the state. Would've made the Olympic team if she didn't break her leg ten years ago.

MCNULTY

And how do you know her?

FALCO

She was Lisa Nettles roommate. They were like best friends.

MCNULTY

If Lisa died in December and she hasn't been home since, Katie would've been looking for.

(MORE)

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

She would've gone to the cops a long time ago.

FALCO

So how come we haven't heard anything from her in two months?

MCNULTY

Maybe he killed her before she could file a missing person's.

FALCO

If that were true, the only person who knew Lisa was dead was...

MCNULTY

...Was you.

McNulty reads Falco's face.

FALCO

Guess what? I didn't shoot your partner. So stop looking at me all weird.

MCNULTY

Someone knew what happened to Lisa. They knew from the moment it happened.

Falco thinks back.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

Are you sure you two were alone on that hill?

FALCO

I'm positive. It was just us. That day kind of stands out in my mind.

McNulty's PHONE RINGS. He answers:

MCNULTY

Hey, sweetie. What do you have?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CHERYL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cheryl opens a bag of popcorn as she flips through some printed internet files.

CHERYL

Found some real interesting reading  
on one Ethan Beck.

Speaker PHONE:

MCNULTY (O.S.)

What's that?

CHERYL

He wasn't just a grocery stock  
clerk from Norden. He did a year  
in the marine core and got wounded  
in Afghanistan during his first  
tour. He moved back home to Norden  
in early January to reconnect with  
his old girlfriend. Unsuccessfully  
from what I hear.

MCNULTY (O.S.)

And this girlfriend's name?

CHERYL

Don't worry. She's still  
breathing. Alive and well and very  
pregnant.

MCNULTY (O.S.)

So he comes back in January, which  
puts him in town right after Lisa  
died. He's got no prospects for  
work, no girlfriend and a real  
bad case of PTSD. Hardly the poor,  
no nothing grocery clerk Stebbins  
made him out to be.

Cheryl laughs.

CHERYL

Yeah. Doesn't quite add up, does  
it?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MCNULTY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

McNulty still on the phone.

MCNULTY

No, it adds up perfectly. I think it's time our friends in the press ask The Chief a few more questions about Beck. Can you set it up for tomorrow morning?

CHERYL (O.S.)

Already done.

MCNULTY

Good. Keep me posted. I love you. Bye.

McNulty hangs up.

FALCO

What the hell's going on, Chris? Are they protecting this guy?

MCNULTY

We're about to find out.

BUMP BUMP BUMP

McNulty and Falco turn to the door. Three hard KNOCKS catch their attention.

HOFFER (O.S.)

Yo, Sarge! Open up! It's Kevin!

FALCO

What the hell's he doing here?

MCNULTY

Probably following you.

McNulty heads to the door. Answers.

HOFFER

How you holding up, Sarge?

MCNULTY

Is that why you swung by? To check on me?

HOFFER

I'm not here for you. I'm here for Falco. Is he here or not?

MCNULTY

Depends. What do you need him for?

HOFFER

Falco goes into protective custody. Tonight. And that's per The Chief. So do me a favor and don't break my balls, okay?

MCNULTY

I don't have the energy to argue. Come on in.

Hoffer steps inside. Falco stands, a bit defensive.

HOFFER

Are you gonna be a pain in the ass about this? I kind of wanna get this done so I can watch the game.

FALCO

Where are we going?

HOFFER

It's a safe house. If I tell you where it is, it sort of defeats the purpose.

MCNULTY

In other words, The Chief doesn't want me anywhere near you.

Hoffer points at McNulty.

HOFFER

What he said.

FALCO

I'll need to swing by my place. Get a few things.

HOFFER

It's done. Packed you a bag and everything. All I need is for you to get in the car. So do me a solid and get in the car.

Falco checks with McNulty.

FALCO

Yeah, okay.

Hoffer pops a piece of gum, as unenthused as it gets. Falco heads out the door. Hoffer nods to McNulty as he follows behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAFE HOUSE (LOG CABIN) - NIGHT

A Sheriff's Deputy patrol car pulls to the front of this very remote two story cabin.

Out steps Hoffer and Falco, bag in tow.

FALCO

You're right. I couldn't find this place again if I tried.

HOFFER

That's the idea. Come on. This is cutting into my tv watching time.

Hoffer heads for the door.

FALCO

You're a real go getter, Hoffer. You know that?

Falco follows behind. Hoffer stops at the door, plays with his busy key ring and finds the right one. Sticks it in the lock.

Falco watches with suspicion. They head in.

INT. LOG CABIN - NIGHT

Hoffer tosses the keys in a small bowl by the door. As if it were a regular ritual. Falco watches him carefully.

FALCO

Been here once or twice?

HOFFER

Place belonged to my old man. Used to go skiing up here. I'm talking weeks at a time. Absolutely no one else around. It was great.

Hoffer grabs a tv remote from the armrest of the couch and turns on the television. A football game in session.

FALCO

Oh, yeah? I didn't think you were from here.

HOFFER

I left for a little while. But, what can I say? This will always be home.

Falco spots a pair of expensive SNOW SKIS by the door. Some ice starting to melt on the floor.

FALCO

When was the last time you hit the slopes? You probably still try to get out as often as possible I assume.

HOFFER

Not as much as I'd like. Been a little busy trying to find the right girl, to be honest.

(beat)

Gets a little lonely and quiet out there by yourself.

FALCO

Yeah, I heard you've been putting the moves on Cheryl.

Hoffer loses his smile. He slowly turns angry.

HOFFER

She tell you that?

(scoffs)

Of course she did. She tells you everything. After all those years, she's still got it for you bad. With Denise out of the way, I guess you two can be together again.

FALCO

It's not like that.

HOFFER

No?

FALCO

We both miss her a lot. We just want her to come home. That's all.

HOFFER

No need to get defensive. Plenty of other fish.

FALCO

You got your eye on anyone in particular?

HOFFER

I might. Why don't you relax.  
We're not going anywhere for  
awhile.

Falco takes his bag and heads up the stairs.

HOFFER (CONT'D)

First room on the left.  
Everything's already set up.

INT. LOG CABIN - BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Falco walks in, shuts the door with a look of panic. He  
thinks back.

EXT. REMOTE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Lisa drops her SMART PHONE as Falco shoves her back and she  
tumbles over the cliff.

Lisa falls to her death.

A panicked Falco picks her phone out of the snow as he runs  
off in tears.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. LOG CABIN - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Falco pulls his phone. He immediately dials McNulty.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MCNULTY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

McNulty flips through some channels on his couch. All news  
reports on Ethan Beck and McNulty's apology.

His PHONE RINGS. He answers:

MCNULTY

Falco. I'm surprised they're  
letting you call.

FALCO (O.S.)

They're not. I'm upstairs.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LOG CABIN - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Falco on the phone.

FALCO

I need you to go to my place.  
Lisa's cell phone is in the  
night stand next to my bed.

MCNULTY (O.S.)

Hell are you talking about?

FALCO

She dropped it just before she fell  
over the cliff. I need you to turn  
it on and check all outgoing calls  
from December Twenty Third.  
Anywhere between Three and Four  
PM.

(beat)

I think our guy heard the whole  
thing.

MCNULTY (O.S.)

I'm on it.

McNulty hangs up. Falco stares down at the bed. He sees a  
SMARTPHONE on the comforter. He quickly snags it up, opens  
and sees LISA staring back at him.

A picture of her in a red and green sweater. Her Christmas  
wallpaper.

Falco quickly turns, faces

Hoffer at the door.

HOFFER

Hand over that phone, Greg. Both  
of them.

CUT TO:

INT. FALCO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

McNulty enters, rushes to the

BEDROOM

and heads to the nightstand. He pulls the drawer from the  
stand and dumps the contents on the sheets. No phone. He  
dials Falco from his cell.

Nothing but a dial tone.

MCNULTY  
Where the hell are you?

It goes to voice mail.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
Falco, I've been calling you for the last five minutes. I don't see any phone. If I'm looking in the wrong place, call me back and tell me.

McNulty hangs up. Another call comes in. He answers:

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
Yeah, Cheryl. What is it?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CHERYL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cheryl's popcorn bag sits empty as she lay on her couch. A phone to her ear.

CHERYL  
Got some more news about Ethan. I don't think you're gonna like it.

MCNULTY (O.S.)  
What? Spit it out already.

CHERYL  
Found out how he got wounded back in Afghanistan. He took shrapnel to both of his knees. The guy can barely stand, let alone do it on a pair of skis.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. FALCO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

McNulty on the phone with Cheryl.

MCNULTY  
Impossible. It's gotta be him.

CHERYL (O.S.)  
I'm not done with the bad news.

MCNULTY

What're you talking about?

CHERYL (O.S.)

He suffered severe trauma to the head from a mortar explosion. The guy's legally blind. He can barely see.

MCNULTY

Bullshit.

CHERYL (O.S.)

Look, they spoke with his VA doctor. It's on record. He's completely blind in his right eye.

McNulty thinks back.

EXT. WOODS - FALCO'S REAR LAWN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The MAN IN WHITE sets up his Remington Sniper rifle on an old tree stump. He stares into the scope with his RIGHT EYE.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. FALCO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (PRESENT)

McNulty on the phone.

CHERYL (O.S.)

Hello?

MCNULTY

Yeah, baby. Thanks. I'll call you back.

McNulty hangs up. He dials a new number. Paces on the carpet as he waits.

DUGGARD (O.S.)

Sarge? It's like Ten o'clock. Everything alright?

MCNULTY

I need you to meet me at The Office.

DUGGARD (O.S.)

You know you can't go down there anymore. This shit can get me fired.

MCNULTY

Do it or Falco's a dead man. You get the picture?

Duggard sighs out loud.

DUGGARD (O.S.)

Yeah, okay. I'll be there.

Duggard hangs up. McNulty races for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPT. - RECORDS ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Duggard follows DONNA (60s), uniform skirt and silver badge, into a back room full of police records and employee files.

DONNA

It's not every day one of our deputies requests the file on another officer.

DUGGARD

Yes, Donna, I know.

DONNA

But since I'm getting the feeling Chris sent you, I'll do it.

(beat)

Always thought he should be Chief if you ask me.

Duggard smiles and nods.

DUGGARD

I'll let him know.

Donna opens a long file drawer. Digs through the records.

DONNA

And this is for Deputy Hoffer?

DUGGARD

Right.

DONNA

I don't know. I'm not seeing it here. It has to be here. I haven't moved anything.

DUGGARD  
Could it be in another drawer?  
Somewhere else?

DONNA  
No way. Everyone in the building  
should be in this tower.

DUGGARD  
Maybe if you checked under a  
different last name. Maybe it got  
filed wrong.

Donna dips her glasses down, shoots Duggard a hard stare.

DONNA  
I was a librarian for twenty five  
years. That's impossible. So  
someone either took it or it  
doesn't exist.

Duggard makes his way out.

DUGGARD  
Thanks, Donna.

DONNA  
Why am I looking for Hoffer's file  
again?

Duggard heads out.

DONNA (CONT'D)  
Hey!

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

McNulty at his car as he has a smoke. He watches Duggard  
rush toward him.

MCNULTY  
What's the word?

DUGGARD  
His file's missing. Like somebody  
pulled it.

MCNULTY  
Or maybe he never had one to begin  
with.

DUGGARD

I don't get it. He's gotta be on file. Are you gonna tell me what this is about?

MCNULTY

You're about to find out.

McNulty crawls in the driver's seat.

DUGGARD

Ya know, you always say that right before you talk me into something stupid.

Duggard gets a call. He answers:

DUGGARD (CONT'D)

Yeah?

(listens)

No kidding.

(listens)

Yeah, I'm on my way.

He hangs up.

MCNULTY

What is it?

DUGGARD

They just found an abandoned car off of Highway Thirty Three. Found a little something extra in the glove box.

McNulty huffs with exhaustion.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY THIRTY THREE - LATE NIGHT

A compact two door import parked on the side of the road. An out of state tag.

Two patrol cruisers already on scene as a couple deputies stand and sip coffees.

McNulty and Duggard park some twenty feet behind it and step out with flashlights.

Duggard flashes the tag.

DUGGARD  
Texas plate.

Duggard walks to the driver's side as McNulty takes the passenger door. He opens as Duggard watches and smacks the roof.

McNulty looks up.

DUGGARD (CONT'D)  
Do you mind? This is a crime scene. Wait over there.

MCNULTY  
Why's that? So you can fuck it up? I don't think so.

McNulty ducks in the car. Duggard checks with the other on scene Deputies.

DEPUTY #1  
We didn't see anything.

Duggard rolls his eyes and crawls in.

INT. ABANDONED CAR - LATE NIGHT

McNulty immediately spots a BLOODY X painted on the glove box. He opens.

DUGGARD  
What the hell?

MCNULTY  
X marks the spot.

McNulty reaches in and pulls a ZIPLOC BAG WITH A SEVERED HAND. Number two.

DUGGARD  
Now how did I know that was gonna be in there?

CUT TO:

INT. FORENSICS LAB - LATE NIGHT

Our forensics tech from earlier now has BOTH SEVERED HANDS on a table, side by side. One right, one left. Both with RED fingernail paint.

## FORENSICS

We got two different hands. Which, at first sight, appear to be a perfect match. You take away the red nail polish and freckles, they clearly aren't. Different skin tones, lines, shape.

The tech points out several tan lines around the rings of the second victim's fingers.

## FORENSICS (CONT'D)

You notice the tan lines? This one wore a lot of jewelry. On a daily basis.

(beat)

Where was this found again?

## MCNULTY

Our guy dumped a car out on Highway Thirty Three. He painted a red X on the glove box. Just in case we forgot to look.

## FORENSICS

X marks the spot. So who is she?

## MCNULTY

The car was registered to a Dana Black. Matched her DMV photo to the second victim on the video.

McNulty stares at the hands. A bright complexion with plenty of freckles but still different.

## MCNULTY (CONT'D)

Let me see that picture of Dana again.

Duggard hands him the printout. She is obviously a bleach blonde. Dark roots.

## MCNULTY (CONT'D)

No freckles. Dark hair. Neither Dana or Marisol match our mystery girls.

## DUGGARD

Okay, so let's say this new hand belongs to Kate Ashton. We still don't have a name to put with our first victim.

MCNULTY

He's testing us. To see if we'd even notice the difference.

He stares at the two hands.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)

Who the hell are they?

CUT TO:

INT. SQUAD ROOM - LATE NIGHT

McNulty and Duggard sit at Duggard's desk, on the computer. They stare at a full color image of KATIE AHSTON (20s), auburn hair, pale skin, freckles. Her left hand rested under her chin. The photo is taken from her Facebook page, raw and not touched up.

MCNULTY

Look at this. Notice all the rings on her fingers?

DUGGARD

Just like the tan lines on our second hand. So if our second girl is Ashton, where the hell did that first hand come from?

McNulty thinks this over. He jumps to his feet, grabs his phone and speed dials a number.

DUGGARD (CONT'D)

What're you doing?

MCNULTY

Just give me a second!

DUGGARD

Okay. No problem.

McNulty paces the floor, almost in tears.

MCNULTY

Pick up!

It goes to voice mail.

DENISE (O.S.)  
 Hi, you've reached Denise. Sorry I  
 can't take your call but if you  
 leave your name and number, I'll  
 get back to you as soon as  
 possible. Thanks.

Beap.

MCNULTY  
 Denise, call me back right away if  
 you get this! I know you're there  
 so pick up!

Duggard sneaks up behind him and BOP! Pistol whips him over  
 the head. Knocked out.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEP WOODS - LATE NIGHT

McNulty lay in the snow, hands cuffed in front and his feet  
 tied together.

A deep hole dug through the snow and into the ground.

Duggard hovers over McNulty, gun in his belt.

DUGGARD  
 You're still alive. Thought maybe  
 I killed you.

Duggard tosses a thick manila envelope onto the ground next  
 to McNulty.

DUGGARD (CONT'D)  
 Hoffer's file. I sent him to your  
 place to get Falco. Per Chief's  
 request of course. I figured you'd  
 be calling me when you found out  
 Beck could barely see or walk.

MCNULTY  
 Where is she?

DUGGARD  
 Denise?

Duggard shrugs his shoulders.

DUGGARD (CONT'D)  
 Can't tell you that now, Sarge.  
 It might ruin the game.  
 (MORE)

DUGGARD (CONT'D)

But I'll give you a hint. After I kill you, you can ask her face to face.

McNulty stares into nothingness in a state of sheer catatonia.

DUGGARD (CONT'D)

Aren't you gonna ask me why I did it? Come on. Don't check out on me yet, Chris. Not yet. We've come too far.

MCNULTY

You're lying. She just called. Today.

DUGGARD

Did she?

Duggard holds up a cassette recorder, presses play.

DENISE (O.S.)

Hey. Cheryl. It's me. Just saw the report on the news. Listen, I'm coming home. I think I'm coming home. Look, I know I should be there, but everything inside of me says don't do it. God, I have so many questions to ask Greg. Look, just tell Dad not to worry, okay? I'll talk to you soon.

Duggard presses STOP. McNulty's eyes well with tears.

DUGGARD

I recorded this with Denise all the way back in January. She was here. In town. Ready to come back and forgive Greg. Start over. Isn't that something? She was here that whole time, right under your nose and you couldn't save her.

McNulty lay in a state of shock.

DUGGARD (CONT'D)

Had this gun to the back of her head the whole time. Had to make sure she stayed in character.

(smiles)

Smart, huh?

McNulty wiggles to break free.

DUGGARD (CONT'D)  
 I sat there and listened to her  
 scream and beg for her life just  
 like Lisa when she fell to her  
 death.

McNulty stares up at him.

DUGGARD (CONT'D)  
 She was my wife. My everything.  
 She called me about thirty seconds  
 before Falco tossed her over that  
 cliff. Just when he thought he was  
 getting away with it.

EXT. REMOTE MOUNTAIN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Falco pushes Denise back as her SMART PHONE falls to the  
 ground and she tumbles over the cliff.

INSERT - PHONE

The name MIKE on the caller ID.

DUGGARD (V.O.)  
 I had to sit there and listen to  
 her die. I hear those screams  
 every time I shut my eyes. I hear  
 them in my sleep...

The screen on the phone goes BLACK just as Falco reaches down  
 and picks it up.

Falco stares at the phone, pockets it, runs off.

DUGGARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I hear them when I'm awake. And it  
 never ever goes away.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - LATE NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

McNulty forces a fake laugh to mask his obvious pain.

MCNULTY  
 So concerned for a woman who  
 claimed you were dead.

Duggard's sad face turns angry.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
 That her ex was a drunk asshole who  
 slapped her around and then  
 overdosed.

A sore subject for Duggard as his lips and face twitch and contort.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
 You're mad because you moved back  
 to town to be with her and she  
 wanted nothing to do with you. She  
 wanted him. That's what really  
 hurts. Doesn't it, Mike?

Duggard also tears up.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
 That's why you really hurt those  
 girls. That's why you hurt Katie.  
 Because she knew you better than  
 anyone. A drunk asshole and a  
 woman beater who can't get it up.

Duggard shoots him in the knee. And then the other knee as McNulty SCREAMS out in agony.

MCNULTY (CONT'D)  
 She used you, Mikey! She used you  
 for sympathy because Falco wanted  
 nothing more to do with her! And  
 you moved back here for nothing!

Duggard shoots him in the stomach as McNulty grabs his bleeding gut in excruciating pain.

He rolls to his side and spits BLOOD onto the snow.

DUGGARD  
 Any last words, Sergeant?

McNulty spits more and more blood. He stares up at Duggard with pure hatred.

Duggard kneels down, close to his face.

DUGGARD (CONT'D)  
 I can't hear you. What was that?

McNulty spits in his face and laughs. Duggard stands, aims at McNulty's face.

POW-POW

Two shots finish him. Dead.

CUT TO:

INT. LOG CABIN - DAWN

The morning news plays on a flat screen as Hoffer cooks some scrambled eggs and sips a beer.

Falco comes down the steps.

FALCO

Where's The Chief? I thought you said he'd be here first thing in the morning.

HOFFER

Relax. He'll be here. Right now, he's out looking for McNulty.

FALCO

Chris is missing? Since when?

HOFFER

Nobody said he was missing. You know Chris. He's probably out following up a lead.

FALCO

And he hasn't called me all night. Is that what you're telling me?

HOFFER

He hasn't called. I promise.

FALCO

Any word on Duggard's location?

HOFFER

If there was, you think I wouldn't tell you about it?

FALCO

I don't know. You guys are pretty tight.

HOFFER

I worked with him for six months. It's not like we're life long buddies or anything. I didn't even know he was married.

(beat)

(MORE)

HOFFER (CONT'D)

But, either way, we are gonna give him the benefit of the doubt.

FALCO

Come on! He left her phone on the bed! Who else could it be?! It's him! Call Stebbins. Something's wrong. He would've called by now.

HOFFER

Look, I agree there's some weird shit going down. But we're safe up here. Nobody knows where this place is except...

Hoffer thinks about it.

FALCO

Except who?

POW-POW-POW

Three shots from a HIGH POWERED RIFLE crash through the stained glass windows and straight through Hoffer as

Falco DIVES for cover behind the couch.

FALCO (CONT'D)

Kevin!

Falco peeks around the corner of the couch and spots Kevin's lifeless eyes staring back at him.

FALCO (CONT'D)

Shit.

Falco eyes the PAIR OF SKIES by the front door and crawls toward them.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOG CABIN - HILLSIDE - DAY

Duggard, dressed IN WHITE, runs with rifle in tow down a short but icy slope and rushes toward the cabin.

He KICKS in the back door and runs --

INT. LOG CABIN - DAY

Duggard aims his 308 police issue Remington into the living room and spots Hoffer dead on the wood floor.

He hovers over the body.

DUGGARD  
Sorry, brother.

Duggard ditches the rifle on an oak wood dinner table and grabs the pistol from Hoffer's belt.

He spots the spiral staircase and jets up them with an efficient quickness.

INT. LOG CABIN - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

Duggard does a quick sweep of the first room and runs to the window.

Falco jets down a steep hillside on skis.

Duggard crawls out the window.

EXT. LOG CABIN - UPSTAIRS WINDOW - DAY

Duggard leaps from roof to roof and --

-- to the ground as he spots his SNOW MOBILE in the near distance.

He jumps on, cranks it up and SPEEDS OFF. In pursuit of Falco.

CUT TO:

EXT. REMOTE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Falco avoids a barrage of snow tipped pines and other natural wildlife as he careens down the hill.

The SNOW MOBILE has almost caught up. Falco hears the buzzing of the small motor and peeks behind him.

Duggard AIMS his pistol.

POW!

The first shot misses Falco by a mile. Falco takes a sharp detour into a crowded cluster of

PINE TREES

as he shoots SNOW AND ICE into the air.

The SNOW MOBILE cuts too hard and tumbles over as --

Duggard flies into a SNOW BANK. He stands, tries to gather himself.

PINE TREES

Falco skis face first into some thin but weak tree branches and is also knocked to the snow.

He slowly stands and spots --

Duggard chasing after him. He stops, aims his gun and fires.

POW-POW-POW

Three shots hit random trees and snow banks around Falco's head as he rolls himself

DOWN A HILL

and into the shallows of a RIVER BED. He lay limp and motionless as

Duggard runs to the edge of the hill overhead. He spots Falco by the water and slips and slides his way down the snowy bank.

Duggard walks to Falco, gun gripped in both hands.

Falco stares up at him and shuts his eyes. Scared to death.

DUGGARD

Look at me. I want you to see this coming.

FALCO

Or what? Are you gonna shoot me?

Duggard laughs.

DUGGARD

I heard you were funny. You're pretty fuckin funny. Too bad you're gonna die crying like a pig.

Falco opens his eyes.

FALCO

It was an accident, you know?

DUGGARD

I guess we'll never know. Will we?

FALCO

She tripped and fell on the ice.

DUGGARD

Yeah, well, this bullet slipped out of my gun.

Duggard's smile turns angry. He pulls the trigger. CLICK.

Before Duggard can react --

Falco grabs his legs, tackles him INTO THE WATER. As they toss each other around --

Duggard pulls a sharp hunting KNIFE from his snow boot but Falco pins his shoulders against some rocks.

Duggard manages to DRIVE THE KNIFE into Falco's leg as he SCREAMS OUT in pain.

Falco grips Duggard's neck and squeezes. The two stare each other down as the color slowly fades from Duggard's face.

Falco releases him as Duggard chokes and gasps for air with both hands on his neck.

Falco pulls the blade from his leg as --

Duggard charges him full speed. Hate in his eyes.

Falco DRIVES THE KNIFE into Duggard's throat as BLOOD SPEWS from his neck and mouth.

Duggard stumbles backward into the heavy current and down the river he goes.

Falco, exhausted, watches as Duggard slowly disappears into the flowing rapids.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESS ROOM - CITY HALL - DAY

This time Falco is at the podium. CAMERAS FLASH amongst a room full of news and tv personnel. Cheryl, eyes full of tears, sits in the front row.

FALCO

I believe Mike Duggard chose me for obvious reasons. The first would be for my first hand and extensive knowledge of the area.

(MORE)

FALCO (CONT'D)

And second, for my familiarity with the victims. Although I had only briefly spent time with Dana Black and Marisol Turner out on the slopes, they both seemed like very special young women. Not only on the outside but on the inside.

Falco refers to his written notes.

FALCO (CONT'D)

I had known Kate Ashton for years. She was such an amazing contributor to the sport. And an amazing woman all around. There is no reason why anyone would wanna harm her. But apparently, Mike Duggard had his reasons. And what those reasons are, I'll never know or fully understand.

Falco tears up for the cameras.

FALCO (CONT'D)

Just as I'll never fully understand why he chose me.

(angry)

It could be that he saw some special connection between me and these women. Something that he wished he had. And decided to use me as his target of frustration. But, as I said, this is all just speculation. I wish I had more answers for you. But I don't.

Cheryl stands, mic in hand, eyes red and flushed and fighting back the onslaught of tears.

CHERYL

Mister Falco, to your knowledge, have investigators procured any new leads which may prove substantial in identifying this still unknown fourth victim?

Falco stays strangely quiet. Cheryl stares him down, accusatory, angry, full of hate.

FALCO

Not to my knowledge. If they have it would be news to me. I think that's a question you'll have to ask The Chief.

Stebbins stands near the back. All eyes turn to him.

FALCO (CONT'D)  
If you all will excuse me, it's  
been a long day.

Falco retreats out a side door as Cheryl shoots him a hateful stare and look of distrust.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKI LIFT - SUGAR BOWL RESORT - DAY

It's a beautiful and bright day. Lots of tourists and skiers on the slopes.

The ski lift full and busy.

FALCO (V.O.)  
It took me a few days before I came  
clean with Chief Stebbins about  
Lisa's death. But with all that's  
happened since and with Chris  
dying...we agreed it would've been  
too much for Cheryl to handle.

CUT TO:

EXT. REMOTE SKI SLOPE - DAY

A young couple zig zag each other as they burn down the hillside.

FALCO (V.O.)  
This used to be my sanctuary. A  
place where nothing could touch  
me. Where all things difficult  
ceased to exist. Just me,  
scraping the horizon and coming  
one step closer to God.

ON THE MALE SKIER

as he jumps a hill and gets some serious air time. He nails a perfect landing.

FALCO (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
But now it's become a place where  
nightmares are made. Where I hear  
the screams of four people, begging  
me for help. Only I can't find  
them.

(MORE)

FALCO (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
No matter how close I think I'm  
getting, I can't reach them. And  
the screams just seem to get  
farther and farther away.

CUT TO:

EXT. REMOTE MOUNTAIN - DAY

We're back at the scene of Lisa's tragic death. A nature  
trail a bit too close to a cliff.

FALCO (V.O.)  
It's the place that reminds me,  
every second of every day of my  
life, that there are certain noises  
you can't drown out. No matter how  
hard you try.

Lisa's SCREAM barely audible on the other side of the cliff.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END