

AMERICAN RUST

PILOT

Written by

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Based on

AMERICAN RUST, by Philipp Meyer

Platform[™]
ONE MEDIA

An El Jefe joint
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EXT. RIVER - DAY

An ancient-looking RAIL BRIDGE over the dark Monongahela River, lush banks on either side, the stacks of a long-dead COKE PLANT in the distance. Like one of those "100 years after Man" imaginings.

RECORDING (V.O.)
(assured and calmative)
Breathe in. And exhale slowly...

A graffitied FREIGHT TRAIN chugs across it. We're still here.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

VARIOUS SHOTS: Buell, Pennsylvania, a small rust belt river valley town that hasn't seen good days since the '80s. Gray day turning into night over: a dollar store -- a dilapidated diner -- an American Legion -- shuttered storefronts -- once-nice row houses, many boarded up -- lots of "Make America Great Again" signs.

RECORDING (V.O.)
Think of times when you felt wronged, betrayed, misunderstood, cheated. Feel the anger that accompanied it. At people, institutions, the unjust world at large...

INT/EXT. BRONCO - DAY

Driver unseen. POV on green hills, passing homes, then suddenly --

The muddy site and tall spike of a "Pennco Oil & Gas" FRACKING RIG. Lights coming on for night. 24/7 work.

RECORDING (V.O.)
It feels powerful even now. But what did that anger actually do for you but injure you further? Like ingesting poison hoping your enemies fall ill. This is the struggle.

We see now: the driver's plugged-in iPhone, the "Meditation 1" recording playing on the stereo.

JUMP CUTS THROUGH BUELL --

Past an old church -- A "*Drain the swamp!*" bumper sticker on
a truck -- Stray cats -- Liquor Mart --

RECORDING (V.O.)

A wise old man once told his
grandson, "Within each of us a
great battle rages between two
wolves."

EXT. STREET - DAY

Hanging out in front of a defunct APPLIANCE REPAIR SHOP are
two strung out white trash LOW-LIFES. They dress in that
particular style combining urban gang-banger wannabe and
Larry the Cable Guy. Smoking coolly. The window of the closed
shop are full of TRUMP CAMPAIGN SIGNS.

RECORDING (V.O.)

"One is made of darkness and fear
and wrath. The other: light and
hope and compassion."

DOWN THE STREET

The first good look at our DRIVER/LISTENER walking from his
parked Bronco to the gym is a surprising one: a middle-aged
man in a form-fitting black t-shirt and track pants. Solid
build, close-cropped hair, Marine Corps tattoo on his bicep.
A guy who knows how to carry himself. This is BUD HARRIS.

The recording continues playing in his earbuds --

RECORDING (V.O.)

The boy thought on this and asked,
"Which wolf will win?"

Opening the door to the gym, he clocks the Low-lifes -- he is
trained to notice such things.

RECORDING (V.O.)

And the old man replied: "The one
you feed."

INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS

Harris plucks the earbuds out and swipes his card. The GYM
MANAGER behind the front desk rags on him.

GYM MANAGER

Yo Harris, you wearin your little
brother's t-shirts again?

HARRIS
U.S. Steel, baby.

But rather than continue into the gym, he glances once more
out the window.

EXT. STREET - SAME

Low-life 1 nudges Low-life 2, who discreetly follows his
friend's eye-line.

POV SHOT: A young Somali immigrant, dressed in a headscarf,
across the street exiting CONWAY'S DRUG STORE with a
prescription bag.

Both Low-lives rise and stub out their cigarettes.

Unseen by the young Somali woman, they follow her.

INT. GYM - SAME

Harris goes back to the front door.

GYM MANAGER
What's up, Bud?

But Harris ignores him, seeing he is already too late:

POV SHOT: The Low-lives violently pull the Somali woman from
her Honda SUV and shove her to the sidewalk. A car-jacking.

HARRIS
Call 911.

He rushes

OUTSIDE

But the SUV is already taking off. Harris sprints to his
vehicle.

INT. STOLEN SUV - SAME

They gun it, making quick turns down several side streets.
Soon enough they pull over in a bad neighborhood. Some KIDS
drawing hopscotch squares don't even notice them. Home-free.

LOW-LIFE 1
(behind wheel)
It's from Conway's, gotta be
something good in there.

Low-life 2 pulls a packet of BIRTH CONTROL PILLS, tosses them
aside. Something else though, a pill bottle. He withdraws it
from the and reads the label. *

LOW-LIFE 2 *

Doxy...Doxycycline. *

LOW-LIFE 1 *

Will that get you high? *

Low-life 2 shrugs and opens the pill bottle. Low-life 1 holds
out his hand. *

Just then: *

LOW-LIFE 1 *

What the fuck! *

In the rearview mirror: HARRIS'S BRONCO rapidly bearing down. *

He presses the gas and turns the wheel to get out of the way,
but too late-- *

EXT. STREET - SAME *

CRASH! Harris plows into them, sending the SUV nose forward
into a telephone pole. *

"I Walk the Line" plays over the following: *

Harris pulls open the SUV door, and rips a dazed Low-life 1
out, throwing him to the street. *

On the sidewalk, the kids pull out their cell phones. *

Harris eye-locks with Low-life 2, who is struggling with his
seatbelt. *

HARRIS *

Don't make me run. *

Low-life 2 throws open the door and bolts. *

Harris catches him quickly and starts beating on him. *

HARRIS *

What! Did! I! Tell you! *

The Low-life gasping, spitting blood and teeth. Sound of
SIRENS. *

Harris gets ahold of himself, rising, hands still shaking. *

Low-life 2 rolls around on the ground groaning in pain. *

LOW-LIFE 2 *
I'm sorry, officer-- I'm sorry-- *

HARRIS *
I'm not a fuckin' cop. *

CUT TO:

OPENING TITLES

INT. TRAILER - DAY

Local news on the television, on mute: iPhone camera footage of Harris chasing down the carjacker.

Cut to the young Somali woman being interviewed, still no audio, and then a PHOTOGRAPH of Harris in police blues. Banner: "HERO EX-COP."

Cut to Harris, drinking coffee at the kitchenette table.

HARRIS
It's embarrassing. The guys from my old division won't stop busting my balls.

GRACE
If it's so embarrassing why do you keep watching it?

We see the woman cooking breakfast: GRACE POE (mid 30s). The town beauty, but aware she is not getting younger. A hard practicality to her, but that air of sadness of someone who has not entirely let go of the dreams that never came true.

HARRIS
Slow news day.

EXT. TRAILER - SAME

BILLY POE (18) exits an old muscle car that isn't so much vintage as it is shitty. Good-looking kid with a football star's build, the kind of guy who peaks in high school and then hits a rapid decline. (Note: he goes by his surname.)

He walks to the trailer, wobbly, obviously still drunk from the previous night's shenanigans.

INT. TRAILER - SAME

Grace scoops eggs onto plates. Poe enters, the door slapping shut behind him. Harris looks over.

HARRIS
His eminence.

Poe gives him a look, but doesn't respond. He is clearly not the biggest fan of his mother's boyfriend.

GRACE
Hey, baby. Do you want breakfast?

POE
Sure.

He sits at the table. She gets another plate and serves him.

POE
(unimpressed)
Scrambled.

GRACE
Well maybe I could have made them the way you like it if I knew when you were coming home. Or if.

POE
I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

HARRIS
Hard life, carrying on at all hours, getting waited on hand and foot.

POE
(sarcastic)
I manage.

They eat in silence; a domestic dynamic does not come naturally to them.

HARRIS
Big day Saturday.

POE
I guess.

HARRIS
Graduating high school. I'd call that a big day.

Poe shrugs and shovels food into his mouth.

HARRIS
You got plans for the fall?

POE
Rake some leaves.

HARRIS
How about the summer?

POE
Probably go swimming.

HARRIS
How bout next month? Next week?

POE
Stop pretending you give a shit.

GRACE
Billy.

Another awkward silence.

HARRIS
Well, there's always the military.

POE
Or worst case I could always become
a cop.

HARRIS
You have to go to college for that
now.

Poe shoves away from the table and grabs the carton of orange
juice.

POE
I need some sleep.

He skulks into his bedroom and closes the door.

HARRIS
(to Grace)
Does he have plans?

GRACE
Leave him be, Bud. He's under a lot
of pressure.

HARRIS
If you call not having a job,
getting girls pregnant, and going
out drinking a lot of pressure.

Grace doesn't answer.

HARRIS

Well, maybe someday he'll get his
shit together and move out of here.

On Grace's face: in fact, the idea of this flat-out terrifies
her.

She gets up and starts clearing the table.

GRACE

There are worse things than having
a man around the house.

Harris drinks his coffee, pointedly ignoring the implication.

GRACE

So are you coming on Saturday or
not?

HARRIS

I'm busy.

GRACE

Must be hard, carrying on as you
please and still being waited on.

HARRIS

The kids want to go to the ball
game.

GRACE

Since when would you let that stop
you from doing anything?

HARRIS

Low blow.

GRACE

People know we're together, Bud. If
I'm sitting by myself it's
embarrassing.

Harris is quiet.

GRACE

You don't just get to take me off
the market, Bud. I'm still young
enough to have another kid. I'm
still young enough to do something
with my life.

On Harris, hearing the last thing on earth he wants to hear.

HARRIS

I don't even know what conversation we're having.

GRACE

Sure you don't.

Beat. He stands.

HARRIS

Alright.

GRACE

You're coming to Billy's graduation or you're not coming back here at all.

She scrubs the dishes vigorously.

HARRIS

Jesus, come on.

GRACE

There's plenty of women around here who won't ask anything from you. We can still be friends.

She keeps her back turned to him. A stand-off: this is going to bring out the worst in both of them, and he knows it. But, rather than apologize, he leaves in silence.

INT. HARRIS'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

On Harris, punching the steering wheel.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

STATE SENATOR CHUCK WILTZ (60s) stands before a few REPORTERS, a NEWS CREW, and a group of LOCALS in a post-industrial wasteland, weedy and drab.

WILTZ

--always good to get back down to the Valley with the fine people of Buell. Now let's get to it -- gimme a big welcome to your new mayor: Ray Kubiak!

APPLAUSE -- it's a small crowd but they're all excited, all bright with hope in:

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

RAY KUBIAK (40s), a big guy with a shaved head, tattoos. He looks like a roadhouse bouncer in a suit. *

Ray gives a kiss to his wife TERRI (40, African-American, sharp and affable) and steps up, waving thanks. *

Reveal: behind him on this land stands a LARGE SIGN: "***The future starts HERE! Buell & PENNCO: a match made in AMERICA!***" *

KUBIAK *

Thank you Senator Wiltz. And thank you too to our esteemed Pennco rep Eric Miller -- *

ERIC MILLER (40s), an MBA with Texas good-ol-boy roots, standing with Wiltz, waves. *

KUBIAK *

Most of all, thanks to everyone for coming out on this historic day. *

(beat) *

That big old hulk in the distance behind me, the Franklin Steel Works, is where my father worked for 30 years, and my grandfather worked before him. That was a time of good jobs and safe streets. *

Pan around to broken windows, abandoned homes. *

KUBIAK *

That life went with the steelworks. *

(beat) *

But today we break ground on the future: Pennco's Monongahela Natural Gas Processing Plant. Today we go back to work! *

INT. BRONCO - SAME *

Driving down the road, Harris spies this gathering. Curious, he pulls over on the edge of the field and rolls down his window to listen. *

EXT. FIELD - SAME *

KUBIAK *

We've been on the ropes for a long time in this part of the country. But we never gave up, did we? Today, the American dream gets up off the mat. *

(MORE) *

KUBIAK (CONT'D)

And tomorrow our kids will wake up
with hope. Hope like we had in the
old days.

*
*
*

He pauses a moment, seeing Harris beyond the crowd.

*

KUBIAK

That's why I'm here. That's what
I'm working for. What about you?

*
*
*

The crowd APPLAUDS.

*

INT. BRONCO - SAME

*

Feeling that last line pointed at him, Harris throws the car
in gear and heads on down the road. Cynical, but disarmed.

*
*

EXT. HARRIS'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Establishing. A retired bachelor's wet dream. A log cabin on
a hill with a nice view of the river. Smoke wisping from a
stone chimney.

Various shots of his attempt to live with quiet simplicity:

-- He pours water from a kettle into a mug.

-- He sits on the porch drinking tea and reading a Louis
Lamour western.

-- Now in shorts, he kneels in a well-tended vegetable
garden.

In his earbuds a recorded MEDITATION plays:

RECORDING

If we fall, we don't need self-
recrimination or blame or anger -
we need a reawakening of our
intention and a willingness to re-
commit, to be whole-hearted once
again.

He pauses in his work, guilt eating him over his cavalier
treatment of a good woman. He is not unfamiliar with this
feeling.

HARRIS

Goddamn it.

He throws the spade into the dirt and rises, pulling the
earbuds out.

INT. HARRIS'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER *

Harris gets a tall glass of water and sits heavily at the kitchen table. He glances at the LAPTOP there, as if he doesn't already know what he's going to do. *

He opens it and clicks to FACEBOOK. Types and brings up the page for "SHERYL TAJ ROBINSON": a mid-30s black woman. *

Scrolls and clicks through her photos: she has a new baby, looks happy. He smiles at one goofy pic of them. *

He keeps scrolling, way down. Soon a DIFFERENT KID appears in the photos, maybe five years old. *

Harris's smile is gone. He closes the laptop and steps away. *

INT. ARMORED SWAT VEHICLE - NIGHT

A SWAT team, four white guys, a woman, one African-American, ride in the back. Body armor, M4's, HK submachine guns. *

They pass around pictures of an African American couple. *

ROSCOE *

Believe it or not, the father of that one is a minister. *

PAYNE *

Lives ruined by the demon weed. *

Subdued laughter.

LAMBERT (FEMALE) *

It's a pretty nice street for a dynamic entry, isn't it? *

PAYNE *

A couple of the neighbors play golf with the Chief. Apparently some suspicious characters moved in and set up a drug operation. *

HARMON (AFRICAN-AMERICAN) *

In the best neighborhood in town? *

ROSCOE *

Officers Smoot and Kelman paid the suspects a visit. Suspects refused to let him into the house. The odor of marijuana was detected. *

LAMBERT *
The odor of marijuana? *

PAYNE *
Plus one of the tenants of the *
house has a pistol carry permit. So *
we got drugs, we got guns...what? *

LAMBERT *
Jesus guys. *

PAYNE *
If you two affirmative action types *
don't want to be on the team, you *
don't have to be on the team. *

HARMON *
You fuckin kiddin me, man? *

ROSCOE *
(settle down everyone) *
Guys...the Chief got the warrant *
himself. He wants us to hit the *
house, we hit the fuckin house. *

HARMON *
The chief never leaves his office, *
Roscoe. *

PAYNE *
Well he left his office long enough *
to get us this fuckin warrant. So *
in we go. *

The vehicle comes to a stop. The officers don their helmets. *

PAYNE *
Load, make ready, press check. *

The officers chamber rounds, press check. *

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT *

A quiet, middle-class neighborhood. *

After an establishing shot, we switch to helmet cam footage. *
One by one the officers turn on their helmet cams. *

Two of the SWAT team sneak around to the back of the house. *

HIP HOP MUSIC IS PLAYING FROM INSIDE THE HOUSE. *

At a signal, one of the men breaks a front window while the other breaks down the door with a battering ram.

Another officer tosses a flashbang inside the door. *

At the rear of the house, an officer breaks a window and tosses a flashbang inside. *

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Two tremendous explosions. *

Helmet cam footage as the SWAT team floods the house, shouts of POLICE POLICE POLICE SEARCH WARRANT!

Sound of a baby's screaming. Heavy breathing as doors are kicked open. An figure rises from a couch, is muzzle-thumped in the chest and goes down. *

Shouts of BEDROOM CLEAR, LIVING ROOM CLEAR, KITCHEN CLEAR. SOUND OF A BABY CRYING. *

One by one the lights in the house are turned on. We see two African American males and one African American female, well-dressed, face down on the floor and flex-cuffed. *

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN *

Where's my baby, someone get my baby! *

Wide shot reveals: a house full of books. A poster of Barak Obama. A laptop, a few textbooks. A clean, neat house. Dishes neatly stacked in a dishdrainer. *

Lambert picks up one of the textbooks. And shows it to the other officers. *

LAMBERT *

Fundamentals of Physics. *

On the officers searching the house, not finding anything. The sound of the baby crying continues. *

ROSCOE *

Look what we have here. *

He holds up some rolling papers. *

HARMON *

Rolling papers? *

AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN

Those are for cigarettes, man. Bali shag!

Baby screaming continues. Payne emerges from a backroom holding a pistol.

PAYNE

What about this?

AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN

It's Pennsylvania, man, I got a license to carry a handgun.

Baby crying.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN

Will someone please check on my baby?

Lambert goes to the back of the house to investigate --

LAMBERT

Oh my god.

A smoking BABY'S CRIB with BURNED NETTING near a broken window -- one of the flashbang grenades landed in it.

She picks up the BABY from its crib. Its clothes blacked and burned, it is screaming.

LAMBERT

We need a bus! We need a medic!

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY, MORNING

Kubiak gets a phone call. Goes to his laptop.

KUBIAK

Hang on, I'm looking.

Suddenly he is awake.

KUBIAK

(into phone)

Jesus, Reuters picked this up?

ON THE SCREEN:

A NATIONAL NEWS ARTICLE: *"Police Raid Injures Daughter, Granddaughter of Prominent Philadelphia Minister"* -- With a photo of REVEREND DARIUS CARTER (50s) speaking at a rally.

KUBIAK (O.S.)

Oh shit.

INT. GYM - DAY

Harris and a number of gym patrons crowded around the TV as the mayor gives a press conference.

KUBIAK (V.O.)

After careful reflection and many years of loyal service, Chief Murphy has decided to retire.

OUT OF STATE REPORTER (V.O.)

This is the third incident with the Buell SWAT team in less than a year, Mayor...

KUBIAK (V.O.)

We're making a full inquiry. This is a good town with good people, and we'll get answers.

On Harris, thinking.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Harris splashes water onto his head. His phone buzzes. He wipes his hands on his pants and removes the phone. Makes a curious face -- doesn't know the number. He answers.

HARRIS

Hello?

ASSISTANT (V.O.)

Mr Harris? Please hold one moment for Senator Wiltz.

On Harris: *the fuck?*

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Mayor Kubiak and State Senator Wiltz are discussing the future of the town. A knock on the door.

SECRETARY

Bud Harris is here.

WILTZ

(to stewing Kubiak)
Give him a chance, Ray.

Kubiak nods to the Secretary. Harris enters the room. *

WILTZ *
(warm, shaking his hand) *
Hello Bud. Good to see you again. *

On Harris: an innate mistrust of men in ties. *

HARRIS *
Nice to see you, Jimmy. *

WILTZ *
This is Mayor Kubiak. *

Harris as intrigued as he is suspicious. Wiltz motions Harris *
toward the couch -- more welcoming than Kubiak, whose posture *
is one of tolerance, no fan of Harris. *

WILTZ *
We're real glad you came, Bud. Have *
a seat. *

Harris sits on the couch. Kubiak pulls up a chair. This *
immediately has the ring of a job interview. *

WILTZ *
You retired from the Philadelphia *
force, what was it, a year ago? *

HARRIS *
Eleven months. *

WILTZ *
And moved back to your hometown, *
bought a house in the country. *
Living the dream, huh? *

KUBIAK *
I had a talk with your old Deputy *
Chief earlier in the week. You have *
quite a record, Bud. *

Harris shrugs. *

KUBIAK *
(reading file) *
Ten years on SWAT. Eight in *
narcotics. Seven critical firearms *
discharges. *

HARRIS *
I was on the SWAT team, sir. *

WILTZ *
(sensing the tension) *
We're not really concerned about *
all that, Bud. Were you ever *
leaning? Did you ever take a *
kickback? *

HARRIS *
No sir. *

WILTZ *
You ever hassle a law-abiding *
citizen? *

HARRIS *
Absolutely not. *

On Kubiak, silent. *

WILTZ *
I'll cut to the chase. This is a *
top-down problem. We need someone *
running the department who is not a *
colossal fuck-up. *

Harris nods his head -- this is indeed a job interview -- *

HARRIS *
In that case you picked the wrong *
guy. *

KUBIAK *
Why'd you leave the force? *

Harris knows Kubiak's asking questions he already knows the *
answers to. And doesn't care for it -- *

HARRIS *
I got injured on the job. But you *
probably already knew that. *

WILTZ *
But you stayed on long enough to *
make Lieutenant. *

HARRIS *
The truth is, I stayed on to make *
my twenty. *

Kubiak shoots Wiltz a look. *

WILTZ *
You stayed on to help your *
community, Bud. *

(MORE) *

WILTZ (CONT'D)

And that is exactly the kind of man we need here. A pipe hitter who changed his ways and rose up through the ranks. Someone the guys will listen to.

KUBIAK

Alot's changed since you grew up here, Mr Harris. We've got big city problems.

HARRIS

Highest overdose rate in the state.

KUBIAK

And now all these out-of-state roughnecks are pulling down a hundred grand a year, and they're blowin it all on women and dope.

HARRIS

Some of them buy new trucks, at least.

WILTZ

(dismissing all this)

This town is about to be the epicenter of natural gas exploration in this entire goddamn state, Bud. A lot of wealth is about to be created here. A lot of jobs. We have a chance to make this place great again.

(gives them both meaningful looks.)

Obviously the department needs new leadership. But we need someone running it who these guys respect. We bring in some politically-correct idiot...we'll end up like Baltimore, crime'll be out of control.

HARRIS

Well, I don't know what to tell you. I'm retired. You got the wrong guy.

Kubiak gives Wiltz a "told you so" glance. Closes the file.

KUBIAK

Appreciate you coming in and confirming that, Bud.

INT. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - MINUTES LATER

Harris sits in the balcony with REVEREND JOEY (40s), their feet on the railing like two high school students (in fact, they have been friends since their own high school days).

Joey lights a JOINT, glances at Harris watching --

REVEREND JOEY
(re: the joint)
What, you said you didn't take the job, right?

Harris waves him on: go nuts. Joey smokes.

HARRIS
I'm tired of hitting people.

REVEREND JOEY
Didn't look that tired when you were beatin' on those two punks. Those meditations I gave you working out pretty well, huh?

HARRIS
I'm trying to get away from that shit, man. That's why I came back here.

REVEREND JOEY
The Police Chief doesn't crack heads. He leads. Maybe that's what you're afraid of.
(offers joint)
You want?

HARRIS
Nah.

REVEREND JOEY
Some people aren't meant to retire, Bud. You're still young and you could do a lot of good.

On Harris. Saying nothing.

PRE-LAP: the sound of A GUNFIGHT -- BAM-BAM-BAMBAMBAM--

INT. HARRIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

BAM -- Harris starts awake, breathing rapidly -- a nightmare.

He sits up. Beat. He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath, then his fingers mark a five-count exhale from fist to open palm. The practice of dealing with PTSD. *

Breathes in and counts out again. Opens his eyes. He won't be sleeping for a while -- *

INT. HARRIS'S GARAGE - SAME *

Harris's Martial Arts training center. *

IN THE DIM LIGHT -- Harris at the Heavy Bag, hitting hard in a solid rhythm. We see his tattoos--USMC...and the names of three officers killed in service in Philadelphia. *

MINUTES LATER *

Harris, at the speedbag, keeping it in a steady rhythm. Sweat cascading down his face and torso. *

MINUTES LATER *

Harris stretching out. He rises and winces, puts a hand to his lower back and the SURGERY SCAR there. *

INT. HARRIS'S HOUSE - LATER *

A single light on in the house. Harris seated at the table with the month's bills spread out, writing checks for each; he's not an online-bill-pay kinda guy. Trying to make his insomnia productive. *

Then he pulls out a fresh envelope and addresses it to "Sheryl Taj Robinson" (the woman from his Facebook search), her Philadelphia address memorized. Stamps it. *

He goes to an old COFFEE CAN and pulls SEVERAL HUNDRED DOLLARS from it and puts them in the envelop. *

Seals it with no return address. *

EXT. STREET - LATER *

Harris now in a hoodie on a midnight jog. Chilly empty streets. Quiet. *

He stops at a USPS MAILBOX on the corner, pulls the envelope to Sheryl from his pocket and slips it in. *

Then turns and jogs back into the darkness the way he came. Routine. *

INT. ENGLISH HOUSE - DAY

On TV: a History Channel glory-of-WWII show.

In front of it, nodded out and hazy, sits HENRY ENGLISH (50), unshaven, in an ancient Steelers t-shirt.

ISAAC ENGLISH (18), small for his age, steps out from his room. Henry's son. He glances at the show as he straightens things up, collects dirty dishes, a newspaper.

The clink of dishes stirs Henry. He is clearly high.

HENRY

Oh, thanks. I was gonna get those.

Isaac barely acknowledges him, taking them to the kitchen.

ISAAC

You get a shower today?

HENRY

Not yet.

(watching TV)

You know the Army designed the hand grenade to be the size and weight of a baseball so American boys would know how to throw it?

(beat, wandering focus)

You woulda knocked 'em dead, son.

Isaac ignores, washing the dishes --

ISAAC

You shower today? You shower yesterday?

HENRY

I don't remember.

Reveal: Henry's in a wheelchair.

HENRY

Your shirt's tucked in. What's the occasion?

Isaac picks up a PRESCRIPTION PILL BOTTLE: OXYCONTIN.

ISAAC

How many of these did you take?

Henry ignores him.

Isaac slips the bottle into his pocket.

EXT. ENGLISH HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER *

Beautiful but profoundly dilapidated. Isaac goes to the mailbox and checks the mail. Mostly junk, a few creditors. Then, a THIN ENVELOPE FROM MIT. *

Hands shaking, Isaac opens the letter and reads eagerly. Beat. The color in his face drains. *

HENRY (O.S.)
My social security come? Isaac? *

He doesn't answer. He starts walking, balling up the letter. He fastballs it into a trash can. He does have talent. *

He continues stalking off into the woods, pulling a hidden pre-tied NECKTIE from his pocket and putting it on. *

INT. TRAILER - DAY *

Grace hurriedly irons a dress shirt, TV on for company in the background. Sound of a shower running O.S. Graduation Day. She goes to check the window--no sign of Harris.

GRACE
You have one minute until I start flushing that toilet on you!

POE (O.S.)
We've got half an hour!

But Grace is staring out the window. No sign of Harris.

On Grace, in mirror, putting final touches on her make up. A few tears she can't control run down and ruin her eyes.

GRACE
Goddamn. Goddamn goddamn goddamn.

She dabs at the makeup.

On Poe, standing behind her in hallway, buttoning his shirt.

POE
I guess he's not coming, huh?

Grace shakes her head.

POE
I'm sorry, Mom.

She is so humiliated she can't face him. She reaches behind her and squeezes her son's hand without looking.

EXT. BUELL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

High school graduation. Proud parents, happy faces, generally ignoring the environmentalist VALEDICTORIAN, a freckled girl with glasses and green streaks in her hair, reads from *The Lorax*:

VALEDICTORIAN

"I am the Lorax, and I'll yell and I'll shout for the fine things on earth that are on their way out."

In the audience, Isaac and Poe are sitting together with their parents. Poe leans to Isaac.

POE

Yer girlfriend *would* be dropping some tree-hugging bullshit.

ISAAC

She's not my girlfriend.

POE

You shouldn't hold it against her that she's a lesbian.

Isaac shoves him. The two are like brothers.

GRACE

Boys.

EXT. PNC PARK - EVENING

*

VARIOUS BALLPARK SHOTS: Advertisements for the shale gas companies sponsoring the park, then fans, players in the field, Jumbotron idiocy.

In the stands--Harris with his two nearly-grown sons PETER (20) and LIAM (early twenties). Peter has long hair, wears a tie die shirt and baggy shorts. LIAM wears a "FEEL THE BERN" t-shirt. Both are products of their mother.

*

*

*

None of the three are happy to be there. Harris is distracted because he knows he should be at Poe's graduation. Meanwhile, his two kids resent him for being absent all their childhoods, and see right through his inconsistent attempts to make up for it now.

Harris to Peter, cautious:

HARRIS

I guess that hair gets pretty hot in the summer.

PETER
(checking his phone)
Yeah, I'm going to the barber
tomorrow to get a high and tight.

HARRIS
Really?

LIAM
He's fucking with you, Dad.

HARRIS
Oh.
(drinks from his beer)
Heh.

He checks his phone again. No messages from Grace.

PETER
Who are you waiting for?

HARRIS
Oh, this lady.

PETER
The one with the blue hair?

HARRIS
No, that's been over for a while.

Peter looks at his father disdainfully. Even at 20, correctly *
sizing up his father's lifetime of lack of commitment to
anything but himself, and his job.

PETER
Don't you think you should be
sticking with just one at your age?

On Harris's face, hurt.

EXT. HOUSE, POOL - EVENING

Graduation party. The house is recently renovated, with a
well-cultivated lawn and newly installed in-ground pool
around which kids are getting blitzed.

The host, JAKE SPADA (18), is a shirtless jock wearing his
mortarboard. He is good-naturedly spraying people with a
SUPER SOAKER full of beer.

Isaac and Poe and stand together with red plastic party cups.

ISAAC

Fuckin' Spada. Soon as they find
gas under his old man's land he
thinks he's the Wolf of Wall
Street.

The valedictorian -- her name is BETH -- approaches.

BETH

Well if it isn't Lennie and George.

Poe regards her green-streaked hair.

POE

Can I ask you something?

BETH

Does it contain the word "carpet"
or "drapes"?

Beat. Outmaneuvered.

POE

I need a refill.

He walks away. Beth's disdainful look.

ISAAC

So...Oberlin, right?

She smiles--unable to contain her pride.

ISAAC

That's great.

BETH

What about you? I never heard where
the school genius ended up.

Isaac shrugs and looks at his feet.

BETH

You were on the wait-list at MIT,
right?

ISAAC

Not anymore, I guess.

Beat.

BETH

Well, there's plenty of other
places.

He looks off.

BETH

Right?

(beat)

No. That can't be the only place
you applied to.

ISAAC

My sister got in to Yale. How could
I not get into MIT?

BETH

Oh my god, Isaac. What are you
going to do around here?

Isaac shrugs and smile and drinks, but her pity guts him.

EXT. HOUSE, POOL - SAME

VARIOUS SHOTS: the party in full swing -- the camera settles
on Isaac and Spada, off in a corner.

SPADA

You got anything for me today, bro?

Isaac looks around. Everyone is distracted. Holds out his
hand. SPADA examines his take. FIVE OXYCONTIN PILLS.

SPADA

Little graduation discount, maybe?

ISAAC

One fifty.

SPADA

Thirty dollars a fuckin pill?

ISAAC

You think you can get forty mil
pills somewhere else, go ahead and
do it.

SPADA

Alright man, fuck.

Spada slaps money into Isaac's hand.

SPADA

Love ya, bro. Happy for ya. MIT,
right?

On Isaac's stricken face.

EXT. HOUSE, POOL - SAME

Spada and a Girl and some other kids play a game: one puts a beer can on his head, the other shoots it with a pump BB gun. Then they chug the foaming beer. Dumb redneck fun.

NEARBY

Isaac and Poe stand together with red plastic party cups, amused at the stupid antics. The Girl aims the BB gun at a beer on SPADA's head.

POE

(shouts)

Don't shoot his dick off!

RICKY (O.S.)

Yeah right.

RICKY WILLIAMS approaches, smoking a joint. 19, lanky, and handsome in a doesn't-give-a-fuck kind of way. He passes the joint around.

RICKY

William Tell couldn't hit that dude's dick.

POE

RickyMotherfuckinWilliams.

Handshakes all around. Isaac is clearly uncomfortable.

POE

Aren't you a little old for this shit?

RICKY

Sheeeeeit, dawg. You bitches are legal meat now.

Ricky checks to see that the cop is still occupied, then passes Poe a small glassine bag of powder in a handshake.

RICKY

Gratis, gentlemen. Welcome to your future.

He moves on, slapping hands with another PARTY-GOER, furtively exchanging a small bag of powder for cash. Poe looks at it.

ISAAC

Since when is Ricky slinging coke?

POE

Since there are roughnecks from
Texas who buy it.

Ricky is indeed in high demand. Poe looks at the glassine bag
in his hand, then flicks it off into the bushes.

On Isaac's glance, following the bag of coke.

EXT. PNC PARK - SAME

Harris in awkward silence even in the noise of the ballpark.

HARRIS

(to Liam)

So...law school, huh?

*
*

LIAM

Yup. Studying for the LSATs.

*
*

HARRIS

What about you? Any big plans?

*
*

PETER

I'm joining the Peace Corps when I
graduate.

*
*

Beat. It clear to Harris that his kids' goal is to become
anyone but him.

*
*

HARRIS

That's great. Public service is
good for a man.

Liam says nothing, disinterested in his father's approval.

PETER

I'm gonna get a soda. You guys want
anything?

HARRIS

Here. Get whatever you want.

*

Harris opens his wallet and hands over a twenty, but Peter
refuses to take it.

PETER

I've got my own money.

On Harris, stung. Peter walks off.

*

HARRIS *
(off Peter) *
Here I always thought you were the *
liberal. *

LIAM *
I'm a moderate compared to him. *
(beat, uncurious:*) *
So...what's new in your world? *

HARRIS *
Not much... They asked me to be *
police chief of that town. *

LIAM *
Is that where the cops threw a *
grenade at a baby? *

HARRIS *
It was a stun grenade. *

LIAM *
Still a grenade. *

Harris doesn't say anything. We can see this bothers him. *

LIAM *
Isn't violent crime at it's lowest *
rate since, like, the 70s? *

HARRIS *
Yeah? So? *

LIAM *
So why are the cops throwing *
grenades and carrying submachine *
guns? *

HARRIS *
That's what they issue now. To SWAT *
teams, anyway. *

LIAM *
Didn't you used to just carry a *
revolver or a shotgun? *

Harris sips his beer, dodging -- *

LIAM *
You know, in England, most of the *
cops don't even carry guns. They're *
trained to de-escalate. *

HARRIS
We get that training, too.

LIAM
Doesn't seem to work very well.

Harris glances at his son, part frustrated, part impressed --

HARRIS
You're gonna make a hell of a
lawyer.

EXT. HOUSE, POOL - SAME

Everyone is shitfaced. Last party of the year. Girls and guys
coupling up, eyeing each other.

Meanwhile, Poe and Isaac standing with a group watching a
video on an iPhone of Harris beating up the crackheads.

RICKY
Daaamn. He took they ass to school!

POE
Whatever.

RICKY
Is that how he gives it to your
mom?
(feminine falsetto)
I broke the law! I broke the law!

Poe shakes his head. A hot girl slides up under his arm.

HOT GIRL
Billy Poe, I've been trying to get
you to handcuff me all year.

On the faces of the crowd: Daaaaaaammnnn.

On Isaac, at the other side of the pool, drinking alone.
Watching his friend score--again.

On Spada is standing on the diving board, pants around his
ankles, swiveling his hips.

On the valedictorian, about to kiss some jock.

On Isaac, tossing his drink aside.

EXT. DOWN THE ROAD - MINUTES LATER

Isaac walking by himself. Burning with frustration and anger. How did he fuck things up so badly.

He picks up a rock and does a perfect pitcher's windup, hurling it -- shattering the driveway light of a neighboring house. He clearly played on the team, despite his small size.

But now angry tears are flowing down his cheeks.

INT. POE'S CAR - NIGHT

Poe in the backseat with the girl in his lap, kissing his neck. A scene he has enacted dozens of times. But he senses that this one will be his last. After this night he's a no one. Graduated and off the team. His best years behind him. He is staring out the windshield with a distant expression.

INT. HARRIS'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harris starts awake, breathing rapidly -- another nightmare.

He sits up. Beat. He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and does his five-count exhale from fist to open palm.

After a moment, he rises and winces, puts a hand to his lower back and the SURGERY SCAR there.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He shakes out a pill from a bottle of VICODIN. Considers the pill a moment before popping it in his mouth.

INT. HARRIS'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Harris puts the kettle on the stove and ignites the burner.

Drowsy but sleepless, he stares dully out of the dark window, waiting for the water to boil. Listening to the hot breath of the gas flame...

It takes him/us back to --

INT./EXT. CAR - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The roar of HEAVY RAIN. A run-down Philadelphia neighborhood. A hunched figure hustles through the downpour and into the backseat of a waiting CAR --

The figure shakes the rain from his head, and we now see:
it's HARRIS -- shaggy hair, two-week beard, dressed like a
dirtbag biker.

HARRIS
(re: the rain)
Motherfucker...

Seated up front: two BLACK MEN. The Driver looks at Harris in
the rearview --

DRIVER
What, you too hard for an umbrella,
man? Ain't no shame in one.

HARRIS
I'm just a glutton for punishment.
(beat)
Where's Dex?

PASSENGER
He runnin' late.

Rain drums the car, everyone just staring out the foggy
windows.

DRIVER
Lemme ask you something, Mike.

HARRIS
...What.

DRIVER
When was you gonna tell us you're a
fuckin' cop?

WE SEE THE PASSENGER HAS PULLED A GUN AND IS POINTING IT AT
HARRIS -- HARRIS DUCKS -- BOOM! -- THE SHOT BLOWS A HOLE
THROUGH THE REAR WINDOW --

-- HARRIS REACHES UP AND GRABS PASSENGER'S GUN -- BOOM THE
GUN GOES OFF AGAIN-- BLOWING OUT ANOTHER WINDOW

--HARRIS GETS HIS OWN GUN DRAWN AND FIRES THROUGH THE
PASSENGER SEAT, KILLING THE PASSENGER

HARRIS TURNS TO THE DRIVER -- WHO IS GONE!

THE DOOR IS OPEN AND THE DRIVER IS RUNNING DOWN THE STREET.

On Harris: fear turning into fury --

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Harris dashes out into the rain after him -- sprinting across a weedy lot -- down an alley. Harris pauses and aims, but Passenger whips around the corner of an

APARTMENT BUILDING

Harris after him -- sees Passenger duck into an open APARTMENT DOOR --

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Harris runs in -- THE PERP SHOOTS AT HIM, THEN jumps/trips over a couch and falls. Harris FIRES MULTIPLE SHOTS into the back of the couch.

Quiet now, save the TV. Harris steps up, gun ready, and sees:

On the other side of the couch: Passenger lies dead -- along with a FIVE-YEAR-OLD BOY who was watching TV on the couch, shot through the chest. The boy looks at him, wheezing his last breaths.

Harris frozen.

He hears VOICES of neighbors outside. Backs up.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Harris shuffles out. Neighbors peeking out doors. He runs, disappearing into the downpour. A SCREAM from the apartment.

INT. CAR - LATER

Soaked Harris driving in a daze, wipers intensely swinging in front of him. Windows fogged.

Harris: dull-eyed, dripping. Linger on him for a long time in the lulling sound of the rain and wipers.

Then we see but he doesn't -- a RED LIGHT ahead --

He blows through it -- the grill of a TRUCK suddenly appears to his right -- tires SCREECH -- BOOM --

INT. HARRIS'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

The kettle SCREAMING. Harris turns off the burner.

He looks at the steaming spout. Then holds his hand over it until he can't take it.

EXT. PENNCO'S BUELL TOWNSHIP OFFICE - DAY

Establishing shot. An old hardware storefront, faded sign still above it, now the PENNCO FIELD OFFICE.

GRACE (PRE-LAP)
(phone-filtered)
And this is a well water system,
correct?

INT. PENNCO'S BUELL TOWNSHIP OFFICE - SAME

Grace, an assistant, on the phone with a frustrated WOMAN.

WOMAN (V.O.)
(filtered)
*Yeah, that's right. It still tastes
like kerosene, same as the last
time I called. Did I talk to you
before?*

Grace's cell phone BUZZES on her desk. She glances over: "Bud calling". Beat --

GRACE
I'm not sure, ma'am. Let me
transfer you over to our lease
manager. His name is Mike.

WOMAN (V.O.)
*Well I know I talked to Mike
already.*

GRACE
Yes ma'am, just a moment.

She hits a button, transferring the call, and hangs up. Picks up her still buzzing cell phone, considering answering --

ERIC (O.S.)
Hey, Grace?

She looks up. Eric Miller (the Pennco executive from the groundbreaking ceremony) leans out of his office.

ERIC
You have the Wilson lease file?

GRACE

Yes. And I've got another water
quality complaint on the McKenna
property. Should I...

ERIC

...Transfer it to Mike?

GRACE

I did. But--

ERIC

Don't worry, I'll look into it.
Thanks.

He takes the file and vanishes back into his office. She
turns back to her phone just as it stops vibrating. Picks it
up, waiting for a voicemail.

INT. HARRIS'S TRUCK - SAME

Harris with the phone to his ear.

VOICEMAIL

You have reached Grace Poe, please
leave a message--

He presses "End". Hits the wheel and turns on the truck. The
meditation recording begins playing.

He angrily shuts it off. Anger at himself. Beat. Then he
takes a deep, purposeful breath.

He turns the meditation back on and puts the truck in gear.

INT. RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

DING -- Harris enters with the newspaper and takes a seat at
the counter. He waves off the menu from the WAITRESS.

HARRIS

Coffee and a number four, please.

WAITRESS

You bet.

MAN (O.S.)

Put that on my check, Angie.

Harris looks over to find three stools down: REVEREND DARIUS CARTER (50's), the activist and father of the girl the police assaulted, finishing his meal. He sits with an intense-looking MAN in a suit, a bodyguard.

HARRIS
No need, Reverend.

CARTER
Please. I doubt they'd let you pay anyway if you tried. But they'll let me pay sure enough.
(to the Suit)
Give us a minute, Sean?

Sean steps outside. Carter sits by Harris.

These two have history. And mutual respect; they've both seen some shit, often on opposites sides of the fight.

HARRIS
I'm sorry for what happened to your girls, Darius. I hope they make some changes around here.

CARTER
I'm surprised to hear you say that, Bud. Of all people.

HARRIS
(embarrassed of his past)
Times change. People change.

CARTER
I can drink to that.

Harris offers "cheers" with his coffee, sips. Carter comes off less a reverend and more like a seasoned detective: canny and perceptive in a way that makes Harris uncomfortable.

HARRIS
You and the cameras planning to leave anytime soon?

CARTER
The cameras'll follow whatever's bleeding. But I expect I'll be around plenty. How about you and your cameras? Hell of a citizen's arrest, Mr. YouTube star.

Carter begins to chuckle --

CARTER

I can just imagine that Somali woman's face, ready to get her car back -- only to find out it got buttfucked by a Bronco. Welcome to America!

Carter cracks up. Less amused, Harris nonetheless develops half a grin. Carter's laughter quickly dies.

CARTER

Almost totalled them boys too.

Harris looks into his coffee. Carter is playing him like a marionette.

CARTER

How's the search going for the new chief?

HARRIS

Don't know anything about it.

CARTER

Well whoever ends up replacing him, I'll be watching him. These hillbillies think it's still Jim Crow down here.

HARRIS

I'll let em know.

Carter chuckles and rises. Leaves some money.

CARTER

I hope I don't see you in the news anymore, Bud.

He pats Bud on the back and leaves.

EXT. HOME DEPOT, GARDENING DEPT. - DAY

Harris listlessly pushes a cart loaded with bags of soil through the rows of plants. He stops, looking disinterested at them all.

A GARDEN EMPLOYEE steps up with a smile --

GARDEN EMPLOYEE

Help you find what you're looking for?

Harris barely regards the young man. Beat, more to himself:

HARRIS
...I don't think so.

His phone rings. He takes it, hoping it is Grace. Seeing the number, an exasperated look on his face. But he answers.

HARRIS
Yessir?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. STATE SENATOR WILTZ'S TOWN CAR - SAME

Wiltz talking into his headset.

WILTZ
Heya Bud, was thinking if you weren't busy maybe you and me could swing down to the station for a little tour.

HARRIS
(hesitating)
I've been thinking on it and I'm going to have to respectfully--

WILTZ
Bud, I'm gonna stop you there. Let me ask you: would you say I've always been a friend to Pennsylvania law enforcement?

HARRIS
I would.

WILTZ
Always stood up for an officer whenever he was in a jam? Defended him?

Harris uncomfortable with this line of questioning.

HARRIS
...Yes.

WILTZ
Then do me this one favor: come with me, meet the boys. If you're not interested after that, we'll shake hands and call it square between us. No pressure.

Harris regards the tiny potted cacti before him. *

HARRIS *

Alright. I'll meet em. *

INT. ENGLISH HOUSE - EVENING *

On TV: cable news, pundits arguing politics.

Henry, displeased, tries to change the channel, but the remote doesn't work.

HENRY

Goddamn it.

He rolls himself to the kitchen. Looking for something. Opens every drawer.

HENRY

Isaac? You seen my pills?

He then sees out the window: Isaac sitting on the front porch reading *Breakfast of Champions*. Absorbed Isaac chuckles at something he just read.

Henry just watches his son as the pundits rattle on in the background. An overwhelming look of sadness.

EXT. ENGLISH HOUSE - SAME

On Isaac. *HONK-HONK* -- he looks up from his book --

Poe's car on the road. Isaac puts down the book and goes to Poe's open window.

POE

(smirks)

Get in, Professor. We're celebrating.

EXT. POLECATS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - EVENING

It looks about as glamorous as it sounds. But among the number of expected beat-up cars and trucks are several new SPORT CARS and FLASHY PICK-UPS; new money's here and more is coming -- but not to all. Yet another MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN sign.

ENTRYWAY

The BOUNCERS perk up to see Poe (not so much Isaac) approach.

BOUNCER #1

The 15 -- the 10 -- the 5 --
touchdown, motherfucker!

Poe shares tough-guy greetings with them, old football teammates, these guys a couple of years ahead of him. A few patrons head in and out throughout the following exchange, the Bouncers lazily checking IDs:

BOUNCER #2

William T Motherfuckin' Poe. How
the fuck you been?

POE

(jerk-off motion)
Graduated.

BOUNCER #1

Sorry to hear, brother.
(re: his job, the place)
Welcome to the big suck. Soon
you'll be wishing you got held back
a year. *

Poe shrugs this off.

POE

She working?

BOUNCER #2

Working? Shit, she banking. All the
girls is these days.

This digs at Poe but he heads for the door. Silent Isaac follows -- until Bouncer #2 stops him cold.

BOUNCER #2

Whoa, whoa. You got some ID, little
man?

Isaac unsure what's going on --

ISAAC

...No, I'm with--

BOUNCER #2

(cracking up)
I'm fucking with you, dude. Get in
there.

He opens the door releasing a roar of AC/DC and roughly ushers Isaac in.

INT. POLECATS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - CONTINUOUS

They enter -- the place is indeed jumping. Fracking has brought a lot of out-of-town roughnecks with money to burn.

ISAAC

Why are we here? This place sucks.

But Poe's not listening, his eyes on the gorgeous girl writhing on stage: CRYSTAL (19). In this moment not even he can hide all his desire and heartbreak. History here.

They grab a table near the stage. She sees Poe and locks eyes with him, her movements slowing -- but just for a beat -- then she breaks that gaze and whirls away in the song winds down -- walking off stage without so much as a glance back.

A frazzled WAITRESS swings by in a rush, collecting bottles.

WAITRESS

Hey, Billy. Usual?

POE

(clearly hurt)

Yeah.

INT. BUELL POLICE STATION - EVENING

Like many other buildings in the valley, the police station is run down: Ceiling tiles stained and broken, wires dangle. *

Harris stands with Wiltz, who is addressing a cop about Harris's age. An equally hard-looking man. *

WILTZ *

This is Lieutenant Johnson. Whom I hear you know.

HARRIS

We played football at Buell High.

JOHNSON

Mr. Big Shot comes home, huh?

HARRIS

Couldn't stay away.

JOHNSON

Well, it ain't the place you left. So whatever you think you're coming back to, it ain't that.

On Harris, sizing up Johnson. Some long-buried animosity between them. Wiltz senses something is amiss.

*
*

HARRIS

That's what they keep telling me.

*
*

JOHNSON

This is Smoot. He'll show you around.

Emerging from behind a desk: OFFICER TROY SMOOT (late 20s).

*

SMOOT

Heard a lot about you, sir.

INT. LONG HALLWAY OF POLICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

They pass empty offices, then the arms room. They pause and Smoot finds the key, opens the door for Harris. He is clearly proud of their arsenal. Harris steps in and whistles.

HARRIS

Lotta hardware for such a small force.

SMOOT

Homeland Security grants, sir. They basically give the stuff away, all you have to do is fill out the forms.

HARRIS

Jesus. You got enough shit in here to outfit an infantry company.
(picks up a worn M4)
This looks like it came straight from the sandbox.

On racks of M4's, shotguns, sniper rifles, 40mm grenade launchers, riot gear.

SMOOT

If you don't take it, you won't get anything you ask for in the future.
(laughs)
Ho's working on getting us an armored truck.

HARRIS

Who's Ho?

SMOOT

This whack-job Chink who plays too much Call of Duty. You'll probably meet him tonight. He's got a heavy trigger finger.

He makes a trigger-pulling motion with his hand.

SMOOT

We goin' for a ride or what?

INT. ACES AND DEUCES LOUNGE - SAME

A commonplace bar in all the good ways: pool tables and cheap beer, Tom Petty on the juke box. Lively.

Grace sits drinking with friends: JENNIFER, KELLY, and DANA. All three wearing wedding bands and diamond rings.

JENNIFER

Oh come on, girl. You're free! Go hop up on one of those Texas boys.

She nods at a group of rowdy men at the bar: ROUGHNECKS.

JENNIFER

--They're not bringing much to town, but they're good for that.

GRACE

Oh you know?

JENNIFER

Hey, I slept with a Texas boy once: best 30 seconds of my life.

KELLY

I think you gotta come at this with a perspective of gratitude.

JENNIFER

Here comes AA...

KELLY

(ignoring)

I'd love to be free like you. You got no-one tying you down since what, since Billy was born?

This makes Grace feel worse.

DANA

What about Chester? He's still mooning over you. He'd marry you in a heartbeat.

GRACE

(hesitant)

I dunno. I just...I didn't want to settle, you know?

(looks at her friends)

Is that what you have to do? You have to settle?

Her friends all look at each other.

JENNIFER

Honey, at a certain point in your life you realize that the men you fall for are not the ones you marry.

KELLY

(changing subject)

Remember how you used to talk about going to Mexico? What was it, Baja California? Live on the beach?

Dana gives Kelly a "shut up" glare. Kelly continues.

KELLY

Hell, if I could ever get rid of Jim, I'd go straight to Paris.

Dana nudges her.

KELLY

What?

GRACE

(embarrassed)

Maybe when I save up some money.

Awkward silence.

KELLY

Well, hell, Billy'll have to move out soon, won't he? Get a job and all?

No one says anything. Suddenly a bottle Hammers the bar --

LOUDMOUTH ROUGHNECK

Wake up, y'all! A round for
everyone on me, and two for the
ladies!

Some light applause from the locals -- they have mixed
feelings about these guys -- but a small group of YOUNG WOMEN
hoots and hollers in flirty support.

JENNIFER

I was wrong: they're good for two
things.

Grace spies a HANDSOME ROUGHNECK among that crew who looks
more on the quiet side. He gives her a nod and smile.

She flashes a smile back, then looks away. Kelly observes:

KELLY

Just do it, girl. Live for the rest
of us.

JENNIFER

Show those underage bitches how a
real woman does it.

DANA

Hell, I'm getting our free beers.

Dana goes to the bar. Grace looks back at the guy. It's on if
she wants it.

INT POLECATS CLUB - SAME

Isaac and Poe have been drinking since we last saw them.

Just entering the club: Eric Miller, the Pennco Oil executive
(and Grace's boss). Swagger and charisma over a brittle ego,
he is clearly a whale--a big spender--everyone gives him back
slaps like he's the fuckin' mayor. It's plain the guy is a
coked-up powder keg. He's with a couple of flunky friends.

Girls are already waiting for them at a reserved table,
drinks already arriving.

It gets worse for our boy Poe. Crystal--the same girl Poe has
been clocking all night--sees Eric and gives a sorority girl
squeal, then runs over and jumps in his lap.

ISAAC

Looks like there's a new sheriff in
town.

Crystal sits comfortably with Eric. Smiles, long looks, playing a game with each others fingers. Actual tenderness. Anyone can see they're hooking up.

Poe--young, virile, handsome, and going absolutely nowhere-- pounds his beer and whiskey. Isaac pushes his own beer over and Poe pounds it as well. Raises his hand for more. A fuse has been lit. Isaac looking nervous.

WAITRESS

Two more?

POE

(indicating Eric)

Who's the douchebag? *

WAITRESS

Some big shot with Pennco.

POE

Can't be that big if he's working here.

The waitress shrugs and looks over wistfully.

WAITRESS

They say he's the lead man on that gas processing plant coming here. I'd call that big. *

On Isaac, watching Poe nervously. *

INT/EXT. SQUAD CAR - EVENING *

An overlook by the Monongahela River. The cruiser is idling but the lights are off. Harris and Smoot watch the river reflect the moonlight. A tranquil evening scene. *

HARRIS *

When I was a kid this whole sky would be lit up with fire from the mill. We couldn't hang our laundry outside, there was so much soot in the air. *

SMOOT *

My dad worked there. *

HARRIS *

He get any benefits when it closed. *

SMOOT *

Yeah. He shot himself. *

HARRIS *
Sorry. *

SMOOT *
(shrugs) *
I was still a kid. *

HARRIS *
How'd you get on the force? *

SMOOT *
Deputy Chief Johnson knew my Dad. *

On Harris, nodding at the mention of his old rival. *

HARRIS *
Johnson's got a lot of pull, huh? *

SMOOT *
(picking his words) *
Johnson, uh, Johnson runs the *
department, sir. The chief barely *
left his office. *

RADIO DISPATCHER (O.S.) *
All units, 10-32, 419 Deer Valley *
Drive. All units respond.

SMOOT *
No shit.

RADIO DISPATCHER (O.S.) *
...10-32 at 419 Deer Valley...

SMOOT *
(throwing the cruiser into *
gear) *
Fuck yeah!

HARRIS *
Shooter?

On Smoot, nodding, punching the lights and siren.

EXT. DIRT DRIVEWAY OFF A COUNTRY ROAD - MINUTES LATER

Squad car pulls up to a crime scene still in progress.

A single police car is parked on the road. Way back in the *
woods is a COMPLETELY DILAPIDATED HOUSE. The cruisers *
spotlight is shining onto the house. Crouched behind the *
engine bay is a portly Asian cop: STEVE HO (late 20s). He has *
a military style rifle.

Harris and Smooth get out, sprinting low to get behind the other cruiser. Harris scoots up next to Ho. Ho is carrying a tricked out M4, variable power scope, PEQ-2 IR laser sight. *

HARRIS
Who's in there? *

Ho regards him. Then goes back to his scope.

HO
Some crazy asshole. *

HARRIS
What's he carrying?

HO
Shotgun. *

HARRIS
Well he can't hit us out here, can he? Even with buckshot. *

Commotion behind them. An ambulance pulls up, lights flashing.

HARRIS
(concerned)
Someone hurt? *

HO
This motherfucker in here is about to be.
(nods at ambulance)
Just figured I'd call 'em first.

Ho goes back to the rifle scope, scanning the windows. Harris takes a beat.

Then Harris picks up a megaphone on the ground, walks around from behind the of the car, and stands out in the open. *

HARRIS
Hey asshole. I got a crazy cop out here with a sniper rifle just dyin' to put a round in your fuckin' head. So I suggest you walk out here with your hands up. Otherwise we're gonna turn your house into fuckin' Fallujah.

After a pause, we see the shotgun fly through the window onto the lawn. The man steps out with his hands up. *

On Ho -- obvious disappointment.

MINUTES LATER

The perp, a disoriented OLDER MAN in a camo t-shirt and piss-stained boxer briefs, is escorted to a cruiser.

HO
That asshole shot at me, man!

HARRIS
Lucky guy.

On Ho, growing more incensed.

HO
That would have been a good shoot!

Like a child whose toy was taken from him.

HARRIS
He's an old man. He probably went
off his meds.

On Ho, stunned -- who does this guy think he is?

HO
This isn't like the big city, man.
We're by ourselves out here. It's
the Wild West. Someone shoots at
you, you send a fuckin message.
Otherwise, tomorrow, they do it
again.

But Harris has stopped paying attention. He regards the scene. A piece of plywood propped up in the yard -- the spotlight hits it -- a makeshift sign. In paint we see: "VETERAN NO BENEFITS PLEASE HELP" and a WEATHERED TRUMP CAMPAIGN SIGN.

INT. SQUAD CAR - LATER

Smoot driving back with Harris.

SMOOT
You saved that crazy old fucker's
life back there.

Harris shrugs.

HARRIS
I used to think we were at war, you
know. Someone pulled a weapon, I
made em pay.

SMOOT *
What changed? *

HARRIS *
I realized the war wouldn't end. *

Harris goes quiet, pensively staring at the town whipping by. *

HARRIS *
Why'd you become police, Smoot? *

Smoot glances at Harris, pretty sure this is a test. *

SMOOT *
To uh...To serve my community. *

HARRIS *
Yeah I used to say that shit to the *
bosses too. To myself even. 20 *
years I said it. *
(beat) *
I'd like to mean it for once. *

INT. ACES AND DEUCES LOUNGE - SAME *

The booze-fueled roughnecks have taken over the energy of the *
bar: loud and crude, dancing with various girls. One trying *
to buy an entire bottle of whiskey. A pool game between a *
roughneck and a locals getting heated. A growing shitshow -- *

DRUNK ROUGHNECK *
You know what I say, boys: Fight, *
Fuck, or Die Trying! *

Shots slammed on the bar. FIGHT FUCK OR DIE! *

Grace winds her way through this crowd, swatting away a hand *
on her ass, unsure who it belonged to -- finally reaches her *
girlfriends. *

They are drunk, happy, surrounded by men who are hitting on *
them. *

HANDSOME ROUGHNECK *
So just how married are you? *

JENNIFER *
(smiling but) *
I'm very married. *

GRACE *
(to everyone) *
I gotta go. *

EXT. BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Grace gets into her car. Rests her head on the steering wheel. Takes out her phone. Considers calling Bud. Decides against it.

INT. POLECATS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - NIGHT

Poe is now several more rounds in. Watching --

ACROSS THE ROOM

Crystal dances on a very drunk, coked-up Eric, whose hands-off charisma has devolved into possessiveness and aggression. Some darker side coming out. She's tolerating it. The bouncers eye-check her every once in a while to make sure it's not getting out of hand.

Eric attempts to stick his hand down the front of her bikini bottom.

CRYSTAL

Come on baby, you can't do that.

Crystal gets up but he holds onto her. Now the bouncers have noticed.

CRYSTAL

Let me go, sugar.

On Poe, watching every move.

CRYSTAL

Let me go.

ERIC

Let 'em watch.

Crystal jerks her arm free. Eric, too drunk to adjust his balance, falls out of his chair in the exact opposite direction.

On Crystal--OH SHIT--how is he going to take this?

CRYSTAL

Are you okay?

ERIC

What the fuck is wrong with you.

CRYSTAL

Come on, let's go outside.

Eric waves everyone off and picks himself up. Crystal steps over to help, but he isn't having it. He shoves her away too hard and she stumbles back over a chair. Girl down. *

BAM --

A fist comes from offscreen and connects with Eric's jaw -- Eric goes down hard. General commotion, girls screaming, things falling over as people scramble out of the way.

Eric, quickly back on his feet, takes a swing, which Poe dodges, then cracks him in the mouth again. Eric now down for the count. Poe wheels to face his friends.

CRYSTAL

Poe! Goddamn it! *

On Eric, on his hands and knees, blood, glass, a mess.

The bouncers have Poe roughly by both arms.

POE

(indicating Eric)

What about him!

EXT. POLECATS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Poe struggles but he doesn't have a chance as he's tossed.

BOUNCER #1

School's out, man. Sorry.

Crystal runs out. The Bouncers leave him to her: she's gonna give it to him worse than they could.

Outside the disorienting sideshow of the club, everything that just went down now seems that much more extreme.

CRYSTAL

Are you out of your fucking mind?

POE

You're gonna defend that asshole?

CRYSTAL

That asshole was paying for this entire night. *That* asshole is a very big deal for someone like me and for every other girl who works here. So yes, thank you, thank you very much for fucking that up. *

Beat, calming.

POE
You alright?

CRYSTAL
Am I alright? Yeah I was fine until
YOU showed up.

POE
He hit you.

CRYSTAL
He pushed me. I embarrassed him.

On Poe, disbelieving.

CRYSTAL
I'm pulling down three grand a
week, Billy. I keep this up for a
few more years, my retirement's
paid for, my college is paid for,
everything is paid for.

*
*
*
*

POE
You're nineteen-years-old.

CRYSTAL
Women age in dog-years, asshole.
And they age even faster in there.
Unlike you, I'm doing something
with my life! I've got a financial
advisor and everything!

*
*
*

POE
A financial advisor.

CRYSTAL
This is all going to pass, Billy.
These guys will stop coming here
and the town will go right back to
the way it was.

*
*
*
*
*

He smirks. She flips him off and heads back in, just as Isaac
comes out.

ISAAC
Let's go.

Isaac stalks away. Beat. Poe reluctantly follows.

*

INT. POLECATS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB, MEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS *

Eric pukes in toilet. When he is done he rinses his mouth, the residual blood. Examines his cut lip. Dabs a bit of cocaine onto it. *

He does a few more bumps of coke off his key, stares at himself in the mirror.

INT. POLECATS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Crystal watches from another customer's lap: Eric walks up to Bouncer #1, both talking close. A handshake. A tip. Eric is out the door. *

EXT. POLECATS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - MOMENTS LATER *

Crystal runs out to find Eric's BMW peeling out of the parking lot.

INT. ERIC'S BMW - MOMENTS LATER *

Eric drives aggressively, loud hip-hop playing. He slows down to look at a pair of young men on the street. Wrong guys. He speeds up again. Eric is clearly hunting. *

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT *

On the coffee table: A dog-eared old TRAVEL MAGAZINE open to a spread on "*Cozumel: Crown Jewel of the Yucatan*". A pen and piece of paper with a number of CALCULATIONS on it: monthly budget, numbers crunched. *

Grace lies asleep on the couch beside it all. *

INT. HARRIS'S TRUCK - SAME

Harris sits idling, Lucinda Williams soft on the stereo. *

His POV: Grace's trailer, the lights on inside.

INT. TRAILER - SAME

Grace's eyes crack open, as though sensing this.

INT. HARRIS'S TRUCK - SAME

Long beat. Can he make himself apologize? No. He drives off. *

EXT. ABANDONED STEEL MILL - LATER *

The hulk of dead industry looms behind a starkly lit row of empty 40 oz. BOTTLES lined up in the gravel parking lot.

A ROCK flies just over them, skittering into the darkness.

POE AND ISAAC

Standing a good distance away by the headlights of Poe's car, music playing on the radio. Poe regains his drunken balance after his throw.

POE

Shit.

He sips from a fifth of bourbon. From the abundance of bottles and other detritus, it is clear this place is a hangout for the homeless and/or teenagers.

Isaac rolls his rock in his hand, takes a pitcher's stance, perfect windup, release -- *SMASH*.

POE

Okay, okay...

Poe throws again with plenty of strength, little grace -- misses.

ISAAC

You throw like a running back.

Isaac takes another rock, fires again -- *SMASH*.

Poe waves off his turn and drinks. Isaac winds-up again -- whip -- *SMASH*.

POE

Fuckin' Gerrit Cole over here.

Isaac's in the old zone. Perfect form, another throw -- *SMASH*.

POE

The ninety-mile-an hour kid.

Isaac takes down yet another bottle, deadshot -- but there was distraction in that one, a loss of form.

ISAAC

No. I barely broke eighty.

He hurries his next wind-up and throws hard and wild at the final bottle -- MISSES. Stares at it a beat. Poe belches. *

POE

Can't win 'em all.

Isaac leans on the car, pensively looking at the dark mill. *

All the weight of this, both their failures, their mutual futurelessness, comes crashing down.

ISAAC

I never thought this would happen, man.

POE

What?

Isaac waves his arms at the river, the town, the sky overhead. At LIFE, which they have just entered.

POE

Lets get some beers. I think Ed at the Dakota'll serve us.

ISAAC

Nah. I gotta go.

POE

(checks his wrist)
Oh shit, is it vagina o'clock already? C'mon. Stick around a bit, I'll (belch) give you a lift.

ISAAC

(waves him off)
I need to walk.

Isaac starts away. Poe stumble-toes the gravel. He doesn't want to say it, but --

POE

Hey.

Isaac halts, turns.

POE

Tell your sister I said hi.

Isaac flips him off. The way teenage boys say "I love you." *
Isaac heads off into the dark.

Poe now alone. Out of whiskey. He looks at the old mill.
Stares a minute.

He pulls out his cheap cell phone. Scrolls through to
"CRYSTAL." Almost calls.

He slaps the phone shut, clenches it, sees his beat-up
knuckles. This is it. End of something good. Beginning of a
shitshow. He reaches the car. Something comes over him. *

POE

Fuck!

He kicks the tire, then kicks in the fender, the door. *

Behind him: the sound of tires on gravel -- headlights wash
over the scene.

He turns, squinting against the new light. Then the lights go
off. The BMW's door swings open --

Eric stepping forward.

Poe can't make out anything. Takes a step forward, shielding
his eyes against the headlights. Then sees who it is. *

ERIC

I knew a little sucker-punching
faggot like you back in Houston.

Poe shrugs. He is no more intimidated by this douchebag than
he was in the strip club.

ERIC

You know where he is now?

We now see: Eric's holding a HANDGUN behind his back.

ERIC

Nowhere. Just like you. Went back
down the drain he came from.

Poe just looks at him. Turns and walks back to his car. *

ERIC

I get a rematch, don't I?

Poe, without turning around, throws up a middle finger.
Reaches his car and is opening the door when --

BOOM! Eric has fired the gun in the air.

POE

(more tired and beaten
than scared)

What do you want, man? You got the
girl. You got a nice car. *

(shrugs, as if to indicate
how obvious this is)

You got everything. *

A flash in Eric's eyes. Relishing this.

ERIC

(pointing the gun at Poe)

Say it again, big man.

WHOOSH -- a ROCK hurled from behind smashes into the back of
Eric's head --

He drops like a sack of meat.

Poe looks up: Isaac standing at the edge of the darkness.

Both look at each other for a moment. Poe walks forward. *

POE

Eric. Hey Eric!

Isaac walks up with less urgency, in a daze. Poe shakes the
wounded man. *

POE

Hey man. You okay?

Poe rolls him over. Eric's face is revealed in a SOFT LIGHT --
Isaac holding his cell phone --

The jaw is slack. Pupils dilated and fixed. Poe's hand is
soaked in blood and his pants are bloody from kneeling near
Eric's head. They see the back of Eric's head: cracked open
and spilling more than blood.

PRELAP:

KUBIAK (V.O.) *

Raise your right hand.

TIME JUMPS INTERPOLATED OVER FOLLOWING:

-- A razor carefully rakes away stubble.

KUBIAK (V.O.) *

Repeat after me: I, state your
name.

HARRIS (V.O.)
I, Bud Harris.

EXT. ABANDONED STEEL MILL - NIGHT

Isaac staring at the dead man. Sinks to his knees.

ISAAC
I saw the gun.

Poe leaps to his feet, head on a swivel. Confirms they're alone.

POE
Get the fuck up, Isaac.

Isaac picks up the gun.

ISAAC
Should we take this?

Poe grabs Isaac by the collar. They fast-walk to Poe's car.

KUBIAK (V.O.)
Do solemnly swear.

*

INT. CITY HALL ROOM - DAY

TV camera lens adjusts focus, operator gives a thumbs up.

HARRIS (V.O.)
Do solemnly swear.

EXT. ABANDONED STEEL MILL - NIGHT

Poe's car fires up and rips out in reverse.

POE
(to himself)
Easy. Easy easy easy.

They reach a paved road. He looks both ways. No traffic. Deep breath. He pulls onto the road.

KUBIAK (V.O.)
That I will support, obey, and defend.

*

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Steam. Harris doesn't shower so much as stand in the water. *

HARRIS (V.O.)
That I will support, obey, and
defend.

INT. BEDROOM OF OLD DILAPIDATED HOUSE - NIGHT

Isaac lying in bed. For a long time, his eyes are fixed and motionless. Finally he blinks.

KUBIAK (V.O.)
The constitution of the United
States of America. *

HARRIS (V.O.)
The constitution of the United
States of America.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Police dress blues set out on the bed, immaculate.

KUBIAK (V.O.)
The constitution of the
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. *

HARRIS (V.O.)
The constitution of the
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

EXT. BACK PORCH OF TRAILER - NIGHT

Poe, drinking another beer. He looks up at the night sky.

Grace steps out. *

GRACE
Everything okay?

POE
Sure? Why wouldn't it be? *

KUBIAK (V.O.)
The laws of Allegheny County. *

HARRIS (V.O.)
The laws of Allegheny County.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

City council suits and Mayor Kubiak shake hands and bullshit. *

KUBIAK (V.O.) *

And that I will faithfully and
impartially discharge--

HARRIS (V.O.)

And that I will faithfully and
impartially discharge--

INT. CITY HALL ROOM - DAY

Harris, sharp in those dress blues, holds up his right hand in front of Mayor Kubiak and a podium. Before them: city and police officials, reporters and news teams, and a few others gathered in this unremarkable space. *

KUBIAK *

The duties of Buell Chief of
Police.

HARRIS

The duties of Buell Chief of
Police.

KUBIAK *

To the best of my skill, ability,
and judgement.

HARRIS

To the best of my skill, ability,
and judgement.

They shake hands. Some light applause. Kubiak turns Harris toward the weak crowd. *

KUBIAK *

May I be the first to introduce you
to the new Buell Chief of Police,
Bud Harris.

Harris conservatively nods to the rising applause.

EXT. BUELL POLICE STATION - DAY

Harris pauses outside, taking it all in. And then enters for his first day on the job.

INT. STATION BREAK ROOM - DAY

Harris passes by. On the TV, Johnson and a few others are watching Reverend Darius Carter speaking with local reporters. Harris stops. A banner at the bottom of the screen reading "Father of Assault Victim." *

CARTER

After what happened to my daughter, for the town to hire a man like Bud Harris...this is like putting out a fire with gasoline. Chief Harris can rest assured that my eyes will be on the back of his neck. *

Johnson looks at Harris and gives a mocking salute.

JOHNSON

Howdy, boss.

But activity down at dispatch gets Harris's attention.

COP OVER RADIO

Dispatch this is car eleven.

RADIO DISPATCHER

Go ahead eleven.

COP OVER RADIO

I've got a 10-39 at the old mill. I think we'll need the staties on this one.

EXT. ABANDONED STEEL MILL - DAY

A soft belling noise--the kind that is made when a car door is open and the keys are in the ignition. We realize it is coming from the BMW. RICK ROSS is on the stereo, still playing. The driver's door is open.

From the driver's door we pan to Eric's body. Face down, head to one side, eye open. Then on to the slow, indifferent river, flowing along. RICK ROSS gets louder.

From the river we pan up to a pair of legs, a duty-belt, then finally to a cop's face. Harris.

A handful of other officers milling about behind him.

CREDITS

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