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THE ROCKFORD FILES

THE RETURN OF THE [REDACTED] BLACK SHADOW

by

Stephen J. Cannell

THE ROCKFORD FILES

THE RETURN OF THE BLACK SHADOW

CAST

JIM ROCKFORD
JOSEPH ROCKFORD
DENNIS BECKER

GAIL COOPER
WHISPERING WILLIE GREEN
THOMAS 'ANIMAL' NICHOLAS
CHESTER 'FESTUS' BLAKE
ALAN 'ZORRO' BLACK
GAS STATION ATTENDANT
JOHN COOPER
NURSE
DR. ARNOLD GREENBERG
ROBERT GREIS (BOB)
PHIL DANKUS
DAVID HOLMES
HILLIARD
TINY

SETS

INTERIOR

ROCKFORD'S CAR
TRUCK
HOSPITAL CORRIDOR
 ROCKFORD'S ROOM
 GAIL'S ROOM
 DOCTORS LOUNGE
BECKER'S OFFICE
COOPER HOUSE - GAIL'S ROOM
COOPER GARAGE
BILLYBOB CATERING CO.
 BOARD ROOM
(X) KILROY'S
 DAY-NIGHT MOTEL ROOM
 ROCKFORD'S TRAILER
 PHONE BOOTH
 ROCKFORD'S TRUCK

EXTERIOR

COAST HIGHWAY
FAST FOOD STAND
GAS STATION
CANYON ROADS
COOPER HOUSE
BILLYBOB CATERING CO.
BIKE SHOP
KILROY'S (X)
DAY-NIGHT MOTEL
HOSPITAL & PARKING LOT
VASQUEZ ROCKS PICNIC GROUNDS
HIGHWAY DINER

NOTE: THE NAME SATANS THROUGHOUT THE SCRIPT IS NOW RATTLERS. (X)

THE ROCKFORD FILES

FADE IN

1 EXT. FAST FOOD STAND - COAST HIGHWAY - DAY 1

We open on a huge Swastica. It is riding imperiously atop a chopped hog Harley Davidson which is leaning over on its kick stand, the seat empty, the chrome fork and ape hanger handlebars glistening in the early morning sunlight. It is parked next to fifteen or twenty similar bikes and we can hear the noise of a rowdy bunch coming from inside the little fast food joint. The blue Pacific sparkles in the background. We stay on this shot and then PAN through the Swastica, picking up:

2 EXT. ROCKFORD'S CAR - DAY 2

as it moves past the parked bikes, heading up the Coast Highway.

3 INT. ROCKFORD'S CAR - DAY 3

Rockford is driving with Gail Cooper, a very vulnerable, slightly hesitant girl, seated next to him. She is nervous and fidgets with a scarf tied around her neck. She is John Cooper's sister, age thirty, and headed toward spinsterhood.

GAIL

This was really nice of you...I mean asking me out...

ROCKFORD

It's okay, Gail. I wanted to.

GAIL

Hey, you don't have to say that, Mr. Rockford. I know Johnny made you do it. He says I don't ever date, but I do...I mean, not a lot ...because there's so much extra cataloguing at the University... We're completely re-designing our entire physics research catalogue.

Rockford looks over at her, trying to summon up some interest in this deadly subject.

ROCKFORD

Really...that must be something.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GAIL

Well, it is sort of interesting, because physics is basically a quantitative science. It used to be that it was just called natural physics...but, more recently, it's been broken down into a lot of different classifications...like mechanics and heat and thermodynamics and optics...and then, of course, there are the more highly developed branches like astro-physics and geo-physics.

She looks at him and her face is radiant with all of this.

ROCKFORD

(feigning interest)

Those too...?

GAIL

Absolutely. Most people think that those fields are astrological designations, but they're really physics...pure and simple.

ROCKFORD

Pure and simple.

The conversation hits a brick wall.

GAIL

(hesitantly)

You and Johnny must be really great friends.

ROCKFORD

Yeah. Well, Coop and I share a certain resentment for the establishment.

(a smile)

What makes you say that?

GAIL

Well, I mean for you to agree to take me out and everything...

ROCKVORD

I wanted to, Gail.

CONTINUED

3 CONTINUED - 2

GAIL

Johnny made you do it...but I don't mind. I've never been deep sea fishing, so I'm really looking forward to it.

ROCKFORD

(oh, brother!)

Me too.

CUT TO

4 CLOSE SHOT - EXHAUST PIPE

as a chopped Harley Hog roars to life, spitting flame into the camera. WIDEN TO SHOW twenty Hogs, all of them being fired up by a motorcycle gang: denim jackets, long, stringy hair. On their backs are colors, an emblem which reads:

THE RATTLERS

and then the little emblem underneath the one percent emblem that says that they are part of that one percent of the motorcyclists branded as outlaws by the American Motorcycle Clubs.

5 CLOSE SHOT - WHISPERING WILLIE GREEN

He is about thirty nine, his grizzled, pock-marked face hideously delighted over his Hog. He has several patches on his denim: the Red Wings and Black Wings, among others. His belt is a studded chain. He's a real menacing son of a bitch! He's the leader of his group. He looks around at the other riders, all of them laughing and burping and pumping the gas handles of their ape hangers.

6 WILLIE'S POINT OF VIEW - THE BIKERS

They all have Rattler emblems and are dressed like Whispering Bill, but there is one difference, they are all younger. We'll photograph a few of them:

7 CLOSE SHOT - THOMAS 'ANIMAL' NICHOLAS

Twenty-five, a knife wound on his cheek, a Rattler's tattoo on his arm.

8 ANGLE - CHESTER 'FESTUS' BLAKE

Twenty-one, fat as hell, his belly protruding over his

CONTINUED

8 CONTINUED

8

studded belt...a Nazi helmet with a swastica painted on it. He revs his chopper.

9 CLOSE SHOT - ALAN 'ZORRO' BLACK

9

Muscled. He works out in a gym. His stringy brown hair hasn't been washed. His face smiles out from behind a hit-and-miss beard.

10 ANGLE - WHISPERING WILLIE GREEN

10

He pumps his fist up and down a couple of times like John Wayne in any one of his old war movies and then, as the Rattlers yell out a charge, they roar away from the fast food joint, spilling out onto the highway, heading in the direction that Rockford was traveling.

11 INT. ROCKFORD'S CAR - DAY

11

as the physics lecture continues.

GAIL

Actually we're talking more about modern physics and, Jim, there are lots of sub groups...like...solid-state physics...you must have heard of that...

ROCKFORD

(going for the joke)

Sure have. In fact, I've even got a solid state hi-fi.

GAIL

(missing it)

That's not the same thing. Then there's plasma physics, and low temperature physics, and they're really interesting because they both stem in part from the quantum theory, or the theory of relativity. You've heard of that one, I'm sure.

ROCKFORD

Einstein?

CONTINUED

11 CONTINUED

11

GAIL

No, silly, the theory of relativity
is all about in-laws.

She laughs, he laughs, but it's really forced.

GAIL

That's an old physics joke.

ROCKFORD

It's a good one, too.

12 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

12

as the Rattlers pour along the road and come up fast on
Rockford's car. They split into two columns...one passing
him on the left, one on the right.

13 INT. CAR - DAY

13

as the bikes roar past on both sides, Whispering Bill in the
lead. He slows once he's halfway in front of Rockford and
the rest of the bikes slow, surrounding Rockford's car. The
bikers look over their shoulders at him.

14 ON ROCKFORD AND GAIL

14

as they drive along. Rockford is annoyed, Gail is frightened.

ROCKFORD

Well, go on!

They hang with him, the roar of their bikes is deafening.
Finally Rockford beeps his horn several times and Whispering
Willie pumps his hand up and down and they roar off ahead of (X)
him. After a moment all twenty or so bikes have passed,
leaving them in their wake. Gail looks over at Rockford, she
is shaking slightly.

There is a long silence as she looks after them and shivers
slightly. (X)

ROCKFORD

Don't worry about them, they're gone.

CONTINUED

14 CONTINUED

14

GAIL

(a smile)

You're very nice, Jim...and I appreciate your taking me out. I know Johnny....

Rockford holds up his hand, stopping her.

ROCKFORD

Stop apologizing for yourself, Gail. You're an educated, attractive woman...and we're going to have a very nice time together.

GAIL

Did Johnny tell you I put him through law school? Our parents died and I worked in a shoe factory. No kidding, I did, and I put him through college.

(a smile)

I think it's the best thing I ever did. I'm really proud of Johnny.

(a beat)

You won't believe this, but he used to be like them.

ROCKFORD

Like those bikers?

GAIL

(smiles)

After our parents were killed, he went kinda crazy. He had a bike, and friends like that...it lasted almost two years. Didn't he ever show you his tattoo?

ROCKFORD

Tattoo?

GAIL

Yes...he was in a club. They all had to wear tattoos. They called themselves The Vincent Black Shadow.

ROCKFORD

After the old classic motorcycle?

GAIL

Yeah. I guess so.

(X)

(beat)

You know when Johnny finally became an attorney it was, for me, the biggest moment of my life. When he stepped

CONTINUED

14 CONTINUED - 2

14

GAIL (cont'd)
up and got that certificate, I
cried and I couldn't stop. People
were looking...

Rockford smiles at her.

ROCKFORD
(meaning it)
You're okay, Gail.

GAIL
You're just saying that.

ROCKFORD
That's right, but I mean it, too.

She smiles, not sure he really does. This is an insecure
girl. Hold for a beat and:

CUT TO.

15 EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

15

It is on a deserted spot on the Coast Highway. Rockford is
pumping his own gas. The attendant is in the office.
Rockford finishes with the gas and moves into the office to
pay the attendant. As he does, we hear a roar of motor-
cycles coming back down the road in the direction of the
station. As we watch, the Rattlers, with Whispering Willie in
the lead, roar into the gas station. Astonished, Rockford
looks up as several of the bikers move to his car. It appears
that they have some sort of plan. Whispering Willie gets off
his bike as Rockford comes out of the office. Two or three
of the bikers have mamas riding with them.

WILLIE
(to Rockford)
Your horn works...try your lights.
(to another biker)
Hey...try his lights.

A biker gets off his bike, opens Rockford's door and looks
in at Gail. This is Animal.

ANIMAL
Hi, Mama.

GAIL
(scared shitless)
Hi.

He gets into the car, turns it over and revs it hard. The
engine screams.

CONTINUED

15

CONTINUED

15

ANIMAL

(to Whispering Willie)

Lights work...mind if I take it
for a spin?

He throws it in gear and it squeels out of the parking area.
He throws it sideways, it hits a pole...he puts it in reverse
and roars backwards.

16

ANGLE - ROCKFORD

16

He runs toward the car with Gail still in it and two bikers
grab him. Rockford shakes one off and takes a swing. He's
quickly subdued by the other guys. They crumple him up with
a quick flurry of punches and he goes down.

WILLIE

(to attendant)

We're giving his wheels a little
test and he turns into Tarzan!

Bill kicks Rockford once in the ribs while he's being held down
by two Rattlers, then he turns and looks at the gas station
attendant who is frozen in terror in the office.

WILLIE

You got a problem, citizen?

ATTENDANT

No...no, sir!

WILLIE

'Cause if you was to have a problem,
I sure wish you'd let us know.

ATTENDANT

I got no problem.

WILLIE

'Cept you're a geek. Right?

ATTENDANT

Yes sir.

Willie leans down and looks at Rockford.

WILLIE

How 'bout you? Hey...!

He grabs Rockford by the hair.

CONTINUED

WILLIE

Hey, horn-honker...you got a problem?

Rockford says nothing.

WILLIE

He's got no problem.

(to Rockford)

You mind if I borrow your wheels?

ROCKFORD

Look!! Just leave us alone!

(X)

WILLIE

I ain't hurting nobody.

(to attendant)

Am I hurting anybody?

ATTENDANT

No sir.

WILLIE

(to Rockford)

I'm takin' your car and your mama.

'Zat okay with you, Tarzan?

ROCKFORD

If you touch her...!!

Willie hits him, even though Rockford is being held dow.

WILLIE

Howzat again?

ROCKFORD

I said...

It happens again.

WILLIE

I can't hear you.

Rockford says nothing.

WILLIE

Okay, then, everything works for Tarzan, so it works for me.

(a beat)

You honk a horn at a Sattler and you eat it, Jack! And that's how it goes!

(X)

(calling)

Festus!

16

CONTINUED - 2

16

The fat guy lumbers in.

WILLIE

Tell Animal this horn-honker's
mama is gonna pull a train. We'll
take her up one'a those canyons.
Let's go.

They jump on the hogs and roar out. Rockford's car, still
being driven by the Animal, is surrounded by Rattlers. Gail
Cooper, her eyes wide with fright, is still in the front seat.

17

INT. CAR - ANIMAL AND GAIL

17

Animal looks over at her and grins. He is missing two front
teeth. The knife scar is deep across his cheek. There
couldn't be any two people any further apart than these two:
this frail girl with her doctorate in physics and Animal,
a two hundred and ten pound pile of gristle, with the morality
of a desert scorpion.

ANIMAL

Relax, mama, you're gonna dig it.

18

EXT. BIKER RUNBYS - DAY

18

as the twenty bikes and Rockford's car roar up the highway,
make a turn up onto one of the canyons off the coast.

19

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

19

Rockford, being helped to his feet by the attendant, is
doubled over from the blow to the stomach. There's blood
trickling on his forehead and lip where Willie cheap-shotted
him. Rockford seems in real pain.

ATTENDANT

(X)

You okay?

ROCKFORD

You got a car?

ATTENDANT

You ain't going after them!!

Rockford looks at him and coughs. He spots a tow truck off
to one side, parked by the garage.

CONTINUED

19

CONTINUED

19

ATTENDANT

You mighta broke a rib, buddy.
That guy kicked ya hard. Let's
call the cops.

ROCKFORD

(indicates truck)

Is that yours?

ATTENDANT

Look, let's just call the sheriff.

ROCKFORD

(grabs him)

Gimme the keys!

The attendant reaches into his pocket and hands Rockford the keys. Rockford moves to the truck and, as he does:

ROCKFORD

Call the cops. Tell 'em to look in
the canyons!

Rockford runs to the truck, grabs a tire iron off the back and gets behind the wheel, wincing with pain as he does. As he (X) starts the truck and roars off, the attendant goes to the phone.

20

EXT. CANYON ROAD - DAY

20

as Rockford pulls the big brute up the canyon.

21

ROCKFORD'S POINT OF VIEW - CANYON

21

as Rockford follows the winding road.

22

ON ROCKFORD

22

We can see that he's really hurting. He's breathing with some difficulty, maybe has internal hemorrhaging.

DISSOLVE TO

23

INT. TRUCK - LATER

23

as Rockford continues up the canyon. As he does, we hear the rumble of the bikes a second before they appear, coming the other way. They are roaring down the canyon.

24

ON ROCKFORD

24

He throws the big truck into a sideway stop and the two lead bikes go off the road in an attempt to miss it. Willy is on one of them.

25

EXT. TRUCK

25

Rockford gets out of the truck, holding his side with his left hand, the tire iron in his right. Willie is scrambling up and Rockford goes after him with the tire iron swinging. Willy jumps back and two bikers rush Rockford. He whips the iron around and they jump back.

(X)

ROCKFORD

(to Willy)

Come on, tough guy!

(a beat)

You wanna eat this?!!

He whips it in front of Willie again and Willie jumps back.

(X)

ROCKFORD

Where is she?!

WILLIE

Take him! Take him!!

(X)

The rest of the Satans charge. Rockford gets one or two, and then he's buried under a crush of Rattlers. In the distance we can hear the sound of a siren.

WILLIE

Let's go! Let's get outta here!

(X)

26

ANGLE - ONE OF THE BIKES

26

Holding onto the back is Gail, her eyes are wide, her face is bruised. She is clutching the metal chickie stick as Animal climbs into the saddle.

ANIMAL

(to Willie)

Whatta you wanna do with her?

(X)

WILLIE

Leave her.

(X)

Animal gives her the butt of his hand and she falls off the bike and lands in the dirt. Rockford is bent over in a heap next to the tow truck as the Rattlers roar off down the canyon.

- 27 ANGLE - ROCKFORD - DAY 27
lying on the ground, watching them go.
- 28 ROCKFORD'S POINT OF VIEW - WILLIE'S BIKE 28
its rear license reads: 9Z-9951. (X)
(X)
- 29 ANGLE - TWO POLICE CARS - DAY 29
coming up the road. They are split by the bikes that roar
down past them. They can't turn on the narrow road.
- 30 ANGLE - ROCKFORD AND GAIL 30
She is sitting not too far from him. He looks up at her.
ROCKFORD
Gail?
She says nothing.
ROCKFORD
Gail?
Still nothing. She's not there. She's in some kind of deep
shock. Hold on Rockford for a moment. He tries to get up,
then passes out.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN

31 EXT. COUNTY HOSPITAL - ESTABLISHING 31

32 INT. COUNTY HOSPITAL - DAY 32

as we watch, John Cooper is quickly coming down the hall and moves to a hospital receptionist. He is worried.

COOPER

I'm John Cooper. I understand my sister Gail and my friend Jim Rockford were brought in here a while ago. I'd like to see them.

NURSE

(a beat)

You'd better talk to doctor.

COOPER

Are they okay? I just got a call from the hospital administrator. He won't tell me anything.

NURSE

You'd better talk to doctor.

(a beat)

Just a minute.

She picks up a phone and dials a number.

NURSE

Doctor...Mr. Cooper's here...yes...yes....

She hangs up and looks at Cooper.

NURSE

He'll be right out.

COOPER

(leaning over)

Would you tell me if they're alive? You can certainly tell me that much.

NURSE

She's unconscious. Mr. Rockford is bleeding internally.

COOPER

What happened?

NURSE

You'd better talk to....

CONTINUED

COOPER

(interrupting)

Yeah, yeah...talk to doctor. Right.

On that, a door at the end of the hall opens and Dr. Arnold Greenberg comes down the corridor. He looks tired and he shuffles slightly. Cooper sees him and moves toward him, almost at a run.

GREENBERG

Mr. Cooper? I'm Dr. Greenberg.

COOPER

Yeah...how is she? The nurse said she was unconscious.

GREENBERG

She's been sexually assaulted more than once. She's not injured physically...but mentally, she is in a deep emotional trauma.

There is a beat as Cooper looks at him.

COOPER

Just what the hell does that mean, doctor?!

GREENBERG

It means that she is in emotional shock. Her eyes are open, but she doesn't hear or respond to questions. Right now she's in P.I.C. They're looking her over.

COOPER

P.I.C.?

GREENBERG

I'm sorry...Psychological Intensive Care...

(a beat)

We'll know more about her condition in a few hours.

Cooper looks at him for a beat.

COOPER

Sexually assaulted? Raped?!

(a beat)

How?

CONTINUED - 2

GREENBERG

Apparently, Mr. Rockford and your sister were accosted by a gang of motorcyclists. Mr. Rockford was badly beaten trying to protect her. She was taken into the hills.

Cooper looks at him like he can't believe what he's hearing.

COOPER

Raped?? Gail?
(a beat)

(X)

Where's Rockford? Can I see him?

GREENBERG

I suppose...the police have finished talking to him. But don't be too long, Mr. Cooper. He's not in great shape, either. He's got a rib tha 's punctured his lung.

COOPER

Yeah...okay. Which way?

GREENBERG

(motioning)

Room 415.

CUT TO

INT. ROCKFORD'S ROOM - DAY

Rockford is propped up in bed, looking really trashed. He reacts as the door opens and Cooper enters and moves to the bed. There isn't much to say. Play the moment.

COOPER

Somebody told me you tried to take on twenty guys...

(a beat)

What are you, nuts?

ROCKFORD

I'm sorry, John, I...

Cooper holds up his hand.

COOPER

You did the best you could.

(a beat)

How you doing?

CONTINUED

ROCKFORD

Terrible.

Cooper nods his head.

ROCKFORD

How's Gail?

COOPER

They got her in P.I.C. They wouldn't let me see her.

ROCKFORD

P.I.C?

COOPER

It's a...it's a head ward. I guess she's blanked out, or something.

(a beat)

They...these guys, they...took her up in that canyon and...and they...

ROCKFORD

Yeah...I know.

There is a long moment as the silence fills the small hospital room.

COOPER

You talk to the cops?

ROCKFORD

Uh-huh.

COOPER

And...?

There is another long silence. Then:

ROCKFORD

Listen, John...

COOPER

And...?

ROCKFORD

(after a beat)

They're working on it.

COOPER

Good.

(a beat)

What'd you tell 'em?

ROCKFORD

Leave it alone, Coop. The cops will turn something. Dennis Becker took the case right offa Chapman's desk.

Cooper looks at Rockford for a long beat.

COOPER

Suppose...suppose that's Rocky in there...they're showing him little boxes and triangles...and he's staring right past 'em at a wall...

(a beat)

You're gonna let the cops handle it?

ROCKFORD

I don't know...

COOPER

You never lied to me, Jim...
What would you do?

Rockford shifts uneasily under Cooper's stare. He coughs for a moment, then:

ROCKFORD

Let's suppose you catch 'em...what then?

COOPER

(after a beat)

I turn 'em over to the cops.

ROCKFORD

Is that what an ex-motorcycle gang member does when his sister gets raped?

(X)

There is a moment and Cooper smiles slightly.

COOPER

She told you about that.

ROCKFORD

Yeah.

COOPER

Well, I'm not a Black Shadow anymore, Jim. I'm a graduate of the West Virginia Law School. I don't

CONTINUED

COOPER (cont'd)

hit guys with sprocket chains...
at least, not anymore.

Silence again.

COOPER

Okay...I'll put it to you this way:
I'm going after 'em. You can tell
me what you know, or you can hold
onto it. It doesn't change my move.
It just maybe keeps me from walking
into an ambush.

(a beat)

It'd really be a shame to see the
whole Cooper family wiped out by one
gang.

ROCKFORD

Or one friend.

A long moment.

COOPER

It's not your fault...but what
happens to me, could be.

Rockford says nothing then Cooper nods and heads toward the
door. Rockford watches him go.

ROCKFORD

Coop.

Cooper turns at the door.

ROCKFORD

They were called The Rattlers. There
were about twenty of them...maybe
twenty-five. They were one-percenters.

(X)

COOPER

I figured that. What else?

ROCKFORD

I picked up one plate: 9Z-9951.

COOPER

Any names?

ROCKFORD

Animal...and Festus....

33

CONTINUED - 4

33

COOPER

Who was on the point?

ROCKFORD

Big guy...he was older than the rest...maybe thirty-nine or forty. The rest of them were late teens... early twenties...'least, as far as I could tell.

There is a long moment.

COOPER

It's not much. 'Cept for the plate, it's almost nothing.

ROCKFORD

You tell Gail I'm sorry.

COOPER

(a beat)

Rest easy.

Rockford starts to reply, but Cooper is gone. Rockford is not sure he's done the right thing. Hold on his troubled expression as we:

CUT TO

34

INT. GAIL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - ON GAIL

34

She is in the hospital mental ward and is staring straight ahead. As we watch, the door opens and Greenberg leads Cooper into the room. He moves up to her, kneels down and takes her hand.

COOPER

(softly)

Gail...

Nothing.

COOPER

Gail...

Still nothing. We move in on Cooper's face as he takes her into her arms and hugs her...then we move in on her vacant expression, over his shoulder. Play this moment for as long as possible and:

CUT TO

