

THE PLOUGHMEN

Screenplay by Ed Harris

Adapted from the novel by Kim Zupan

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MONTANA 1972

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EXT. COUNTRY ROAD: DAY

Grasshoppers wheel crazily out of the weeds and pale dusty Russian olive trees. The shapes of black cattle on a bluff above swim in the heat's haze.

A yellow school bus that has seen many miles pulls to a stop at the end of a dusty lane, ' ST. MARY'S SCHOOL CARTER, MONTANA' imprinted in fading black letters on its side.

A boy, 12, VALENTINE MILLIMAKI, hops down off the bus carrying several books. The grasshoppers careen off his shirtfront as he walks the hundred yards or so to his house.

Val seems deep in thought. He looks up and sees his father on the Minneapolis-Moline tractor, harrowing a field of dried earth below the bluff that extends beyond the house.

*

INT. FARMHOUSE: MINUTES LATER

IN THE FOREGROUND we're unable to see what is written on a NOTE standing upright between salt and pepper shakers in the shape of smiling pigs.

*

Val heads up the back porch steps, opens the screen door, and enters the kitchen.

Val picks up the note and reads in beautifully rendered handwriting: *Darling - Come to the shed.*

Val takes an apple from a bowl. THROUGH THE WINDOW across the gravelly lot he sees the shed door has been opened a crack.

HE SAVORS EACH BITE of the apple, lost in the thoughts of a 12 year-old fresh home from school.

*

Ext. FARMHOUSE: MINUTES LATER

*

A meadowlark sits atop the lone yard light-pole, warbles and flies off as Val opens the screen door and heads for the shed.

Val pulls open the shed door, its rusty hinges CREAKING..a sound he will live with the rest of his life.

INT. SHED

Out of the bright sunlight Val enters the shed. A filthy old chicken FEATHER floats down in front of him.

He looks up and sees in the overhead gloom the rope looped twice over the beam.

He follows the rope down to the noose and the slow metronomic swaying of his MOTHER, hanging dead. *

He hurries over to the fallen metal step ladder underneath her, rights it, climbs up and cuts his Mother free with his pocket knife. She crumples to the ground. *

Val descends the ladder, goes to his Mother. He stands there looking at her dead body. *

He grabs a grain tarp and covers her as the dust stifles the air. He touches her bare leg, feels its warmth, then heads out of the shed. *

He turns briefly, his shadow stretched across the floor and the tarp, then heads back to the house and disappears inside. *

All is still except the distant SOUND of the tractor and the fluttering of grasshoppers.

Val reappears carrying a worn **SHOE BOX (on the box, in the faded crayon letters of a 6 year-old, 'To Mom, Happy Birthday Your Valentine')** and reenters the barn.

He pulls back the tarp, uncovering bare feet.

EXT. FIELD

Val walks across the shorn fields beyond his home heading for the dust with his Father inside it. *

He stops once and looks back at what his life has been, then keeps walking.

FATHER (O.C.)
It was a mistake.

INT. SHED

Val and his Dad look down at the uncovered corpse.

FATHER
That note was for me. She forgot you'd be getting home early today.

His Father cannot stop shaking his head.

FATHER (CONT'D)

It makes no sense. She never wore them once.

The Mother lies peaceful, arms folded across her chest, Cranberry-Colored SLIPPERS adorn her feet.

Val is silent, cradling the empty shoe-box.

FADE TO BLACK

*

SUPER: 18 YEARS LATER

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL: EARLY MORNING

The sun is just below the horizon. Birds chirping their morning songs.

Into a clearing VALENTINE MILLIMAKI (now 29) and TOM, his German Shepard, make their way up the snow-covered hill.

*

Val plods methodically in his snow-shoes, Tom lunges with difficulty through the heavy snow.

*

VAL

Good boy, Tom.

Val halts briefly, examining fresh deer tracks and they continue on.

TWO HOURS LATER

*

The sun has risen above the tree tops. Val and Tom continue their trek up the timbered hillside.

AN HOUR LATER

*

The sun is higher in the sky. The wind blows dusty snow off the pine branches.

Tom senses something, heads off the trail to the right. Val follows.

*

Leaning against a pine, a topographical map spread across her outstretched legs, her face white as porcelain, the YOUNG WOMAN lies frozen and dead.

Val squats, brushes the dust of snow off her face. Her bare hand lies atop the map.

Val removes his mitten and holds her hand, thinking/wondering what her life had been, would have been.

He stands, takes a deep breath, looks at Tom, who looks at the girl, then at him.

Val takes an **Instamatic** camera from his pack and takes several photos of the girl.

He puts the photos carefully in his pocket.

VAL

Let's go , buddy. She's all right now.

And they head back down the mountain.

EXT. DESERTED COULEE WEST OF THE MISSOURI BREAKS DAY

A tall slender YOUNG ASIAN MAN, terrified, throws up his arms in front of his face as if to fend off a blow. *

The sound of a GUNSHOT is heard and a bullet rips through his forearm and the top half of his right ear.

He turns to flee, is SHOT again in the back of the neck and collapses onto the narrow dirt road. *

JOHN GLOAD, 74, a large man with thick hands and forearms, the .38 looking like a toy pistol in his huge hand, walks over to the fallen Young Man and turns him over. *

From an '85 maroon Chrysler LeBaron parked nearby, SID THE KID (29, oily black hair, snap-button shirt, tight jeans, cowboy boots) climbs out, giggling.

SID

Holy shit.

Gload examines the exit wound below the dead boy's nose. Satisfied with his work, he takes a deep breath, looks back at Sid.

GLOAD

Get over here. Help me out.

Sid walks over, they lift the dead body, and head down the slope.

The camera PANS over the lonely landscape: Time Passage

The Missouri River can be seen in the distance. A flock of SEA GULLS rise and fall over the river, the sound of their SQUAWKING carried on the wind. *

The camera PANS down to Gload as he labors the last few steps up the hillside, a BLOODIED HATCHET in hand. He pops open the trunk of the Chrysler.

There are several good-sized cardboard boxes filled with bubble wrapped objects in the trunk, some clean rags and several plastic gallon water jugs. *

Gload pours water over the hatchet, washing the blood clean with a rag. He tosses the rag on the ground, places the hatchet in the trunk, unwraps one of the bubble-wrapped items.

It is a beautiful rose colored double-handled Steuben amethyst glass ART VASE.

Gload holds it up, letting the sun shine on its beauty, then rewraps it, places it back in the box and closes the trunk.

Gload walks over and squats on the upper ridge of the coulee, sifting the sandy soil through his hands. He looks down the hillside and calls out:

GLOAD (CONT'D)

Deeper. You got to make it deeper!

Below him, in the bottom of the coulee, Sid stands waist-high in the grave he is digging.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

Hear me?

Sid is sweating, throws off his jacket in the brittle weeds.

SID

I hear ya!

Sid continues to dig as Gload rises and makes his way down the hillside, the .38 in one paw, the bloody rag in the other.

EXT. GRAVESITE

The HEADLESS, HANDLESS CORPSE of the dead Young Man awaits the approach of Gload. *

Sid, now chest high in the grave, looks up, sweat pouring down his face. *

Gload nods to him and Sid climbs out, sweat-stained and dusty.

Sid rolls the headless corpse into the hole. Gload tosses the rag into the hole, then with his foot begins to shovel earth over the lifeless body. Sid uses the shovel.

GLOAD

Bears. Grizzly bears right here.

Sid looks up at him.

*

GLOAD (CONT'D)

Used to run around here like gophers. Hundred and fifty years ago they would have had this asshole dug up and ate before we got over the hill.

Gload considers the pistol in his hand.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

This goddamn thing wouldn't do nothing but put a little spring in their step while they ripped your head off. You wouldn't make more than a bitty turd-pile.

SID

(as he fills the hole)

Whaddaya think we'll get for the stuff?

*

GLOAD

He said it was worth seventeen grand. We'll take no less than twelve.

SID

I say we head up to Molly's. Cap things off with a little poontang.

GLOAD

We've got a three hour drive down to Butte to unload the glass. I want to get back tonight. After that you can do whatever the hell you want. Fill that in good and stamp it down.

Gload picks up a blood-stained grain sack heavy with the head and hands of the dead young man, takes a step up the hill.

*

SID

Hell, we could be at Molly's in half an hour, do our thing, still get back tonight. I live for that poontang, Bro. Anytime, anywhere. Might do you some good. Relieves tension, sex does.

Gload stops, turns to Sid.

GLOAD

Do I look tense to you? Do I appear tense?

SID

Okay. All right. They got stuff for that. I could hook you up, pard. Your old lady would be plumb wore out.

*

Gload walks over to Sid, carrying the bloody sack, puts the barrel of the .38 To Sid's ear.

GLOAD

Don't ever talk to me about this kind of shit again. You understand? You don't know nothing about me and never will.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD: DAY

The Chrysler winds it's way along the narrow road heading west along the north shore of the Missouri River.

It pulls to a stop on a ridge overlooking a dam, a long set of wooden stairs descending to the concrete catwalk. Gload gets out of the car and opens the trunk, pulls out the grain sack.

*

Sid watches Gload carry the grain sack down the stairs, out on the catwalk, the river cascading below him. He heaves the heavy grain sack into the roiling water.

*

EXT. SURGEON'S HOUSE: NIGHT

A well-worn Jeep pulls up the drive to this fortress-like house on what used to be ranch land; a number of cars parked in the expansive front driveway.

*

Val hops out, takes off the coat he was wearing on the mountain, revealing his Choteau County Deputy Sheriff's UNIFORM.

He tosses the coat in the Jeep. Tom stays in the car.

Val walks up the stone steps, knocks on the door.

A well-dressed WOMAN answers the door holding an emerald colored drink.

WOMAN

Oh, Gawd, you finally caught up with me!

VAL

(forcing a smile)
My wife is here.

The Woman howls laughing and strides away. Val enters.

INT. SURGEON'S HOUSE

Exotic trophy heads adorn the twelve foot high walls. Well turned-out men and women mill about.

A woman, JEAN (attractive, 30), approaches Val. *

JEAN
Howdy, Deputy, come to arrest me?

VAL
I sort of heard that one already tonight, Jean.

JEAN
Oh, shit. I hate being unoriginal.

VAL
You're forgiven.

JEAN
For everything?

VAL
Sure, why not.

JEAN
You okay? Your eyes look like two piss-holes in a snowbank.

VAL
I'm fine. Long day.

Val looks over and sees his wife, GLENDA (25, pretty, intelligent) cornered by Dr. Gordon who seems to be indicating where an incision might be made on her chest. *
*

JEAN
Our new heart surgeon. This is his welcoming party for all us underlings. What can I get you to drink, Val?

VAL
I think I'll abstain, but thanks.

Glenda sees Val and waves him over.

Val, in turn, waves Glenda over. *

Glenda motions again, insisting.

Val reluctantly heads her way, drawing a few stares from party-goers as he crosses the room.

Glenda turns from the doctor, reaches out for Val taking him by the arm.

Val notices the doctor glance down briefly appreciating the view of Glenda's backside.

GLEENDA
(smiling brightly, a
little tipsy)
You made it! This is Dr. Gordon, our new
heart surgeon. He was kind enough to invite
us all to his lovely home. Dr. Gordon, my
husband, the fearless policeman.

DR. GORDON (35, handsome) offers a hand to Val. *

DR. GORDON
Ralph Gordon.

Val shakes his hand.

VAL
Val.

DR. GORDON
You look like you've had a long day.

VAL
Yeah. It was pretty long.

DR. GORDON
Well, Officer, why don't you have yourself a
drink and relax.

VAL
Well, doctor, I'll tell ya, we have a long
drive home so I think we'll just be heading
out. *

GLEENDA
I was going to stay with Jean tonight.

DR. GORDON
(to Glenda)
Oh, great! So you don't have to leave?

VAL
You're staying with Jean?

GLEENDA
I thought I would. I have to be at work in
eight hours.

VAL
I drove all the way down here.

DR. GORDON
(smiling)
Are we having a little spat?

Val just stares at him.

VAL
(to Glenda)
Can we talk outside for a minute?

He takes Glenda by the arm.

VAL (CONT'D)
(to the surgeon)
Excuse us.

GLEENDA
Val?!

Val leads Glenda through the party out on the porch.

EXT. SURGEON'S HOUSE

GLEENDA
What are you doing?

VAL
I had to get away from that asshole.

GLEENDA
He's not an asshole. *

VAL
(mimicking Dr. Gordon)
'Are we having a little spat?', give me a
break. *
*
*

GLEENDA
Those are my friends and colleagues in there.
You could have tried to be nice. *

VAL
I was trying not to punch him in the throat
for staring at my wife's ass.

GLEENDA
Don't be silly. *

VAL
Well, he was.

GLEENDA
Why don't we just go back in and relax for a while.

VAL
I can't relax in there.

Both are silent a moment.

VAL (CONT'D)
I've been up since 4 AM. Drove down here 'cause you wanted me to and now you're not coming home?

GLEENDA
I didn't think you'd come so late.

VAL
Well, I did.

GLEENDA
Did you find the girl?

VAL
She was dead. Frozen.

GLEENDA
I'm sorry.

VAL
She got lost. Storm that came through last night dropped maybe ten inches of snow up there.

GLEENDA
Are you okay?

VAL
Yeah. I guess.

GLEENDA
(she takes his arm)
Come back inside.

Jean pokes her head out the door.

JEAN
You guys okay out here?

VAL
We're fine, Jean.

GLEENDA
(to Val)
Let's go back inside.

VAL
Let's go home.

GLEENDA
It's an hour home and then another hour in the morning to get to work.

A beat.

VAL
Okay...Well, I'm gonna head home. *

GLEENDA
Are you mad?

A beat.

VAL
No.

She kisses him good-bye, heads back inside.

GLEENDA
Drive carefully.

Jean closes the door leaving Val standing there.

VAL
(to himself)
Yeah, I think I can do that.

EXT. VAL'S CABIN: NIGHT

The Jeep pulls up a winding unpaved road, the Jeep's headlights illuminating the tall fir trees surrounding the isolated cabin.

Val and Tom hop out.

VAL
Just you and me tonight, buddy.

They go up the steps to the porch. Val shoves open the stubborn front door that has settled on its hinges.

It makes a CREAKING sound, eerily like the sound of the shed door where Val found his Mother.

INT. CABIN

Val and Tom enter, he turns on a light, heads into the bedroom.

He opens a dresser drawer and carefully puts the photos of the dead girl into an old **SHOE BOX, the same shoe box he held his mother's slippers in.** They take their place amongst others. *

On the dresser is a framed PHOTO of Glenda, lying on a blanket in a **lovely meadow,** a creek nearby.

(She is propped up on her elbow amidst a picnic basket and bottle of wine. On her face, a radiant smile. *

A WEDDING PHOTO is there as well: Val and Glenda with beaming smiles. *

EXT. GLOAD'S HOUSE: NIGHT

Set some half mile off the road, the wood shingled house sits. Bone-white smoke rises from the chimney.

Through a yellow rectangle of light a woman passes and repasses. The broad back of Gload COMES INTO FRAME. *

Gload stands among the trees, smoking, watching. He can hear her SINGING. *

He watches his wife, FRANCIE, as she passes by the window one more time, drink in hand.

INT. GLOAD'S HOUSE: MINUTES LATER *

Francie, 65, with the puffy face of a heavy drinker is at the counter preparing dinner. Gload's at the table with a cup of coffee. *

Francie

Do I look any better through a window than I do in person?

GLOAD *

You won't sing when I'm in the room. I like your singing.

FRANCIE

I could have you run in for spying on a lady like that.

GLOAD

For a hell of a lot more than that.

She swirls the ice in her drink, approaches him a little unsteadily and lays a soft cool hand alongside Gload's face. *

FRANCIE

There's some good in you Johnny. And I might be the only one who knows it.

Gload takes her hand from his face and places it atop his own. He's silent for a moment.

FRANCIE (CONT'D)

Thought you'd be home sooner. Was starting to worry you weren't coming back.

GLOAD

Had to go down to Butte for some business.

FRANCIE

What if one time you don't come back? Me out here all by myself...

GLOAD

Have I ever not come back?

FRANCIE

If you never did come back we wouldn't be talking right now about you coming back.

Gload cups his hands over his ears. *

Francie smiles ruefully, pats him softly on the head and goes to get dinner.

EXT. GLOAD'S HOUSE: LATER

The MOON has risen in the east.

Francie and Gload sit on the porch listening to the evening sounds. Francie drinks port wine from a jam jar, holding it steady with both hands.

INT. BEDROOM: LATER

Moonlight filters through the window. The curtains blow gently in the breeze.

Under the cool sheets, Gload and Francie finish making love. Francie moans softly as Gload arches his back.

Gload looks down at his wife who fades from view as a cloud passes in front of the moon.

Francie falls asleep and snores quietly. Gload lies back, resting his head in his hands.

The HOOT of an owl. After a while he shifts his gaze towards the open window and imagines:

GLOAD'S MEMORY:

YOUNG JOHN GLOAD, 12 years old, sits atop a John Deere 3020, running a thirteen foot duckfoot plow around a dry and rocky field. *

INT. BEDROOM: PRESENT *

Gload closes his eyes to sleep. *

GLOAD'S MEMORY: *

Young John whistles easily and takes in the surrounding panorama: sandstone bluffs covered with ancient sage, the pale green of a river bottom, the mountains within an easy day's walk. *

The tractor rumbles perilously on an incline. Young John handles the tractor beautifully as it straightens back to level earth. *

Young John's reverie is broken by the arrival of the GULLS. He throws the tractor into neutral and watches as they swoop down behind the plow, SCREECHING, gorging themselves on whatever the tractor has unearthed. *

INT. BEDROOM

Gload opens his eyes, and lies there, wide awake. *

EXT. COPPER COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT: EARLY MORNING

Val'S JEEP pulls up to the low-lying brick building. He clambers out in his rumpled uniform.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT: VAL'S CUBICLE MINUTES LATER

Val finishes up filling out some forms and heads down the corridor to the Sheriff's Office: SHERIFF HIRAM SORENSON imprinted on the frosted glass door.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

RAYLENE (60ish, red hair piled atop her head) sits at her desk *
in the outer office. She finishes up a call.

VAL
Morning, Raylene.

RAYLENE
Good morning, Valentine. The Old Bull is in
there, help yourself.

Val taps lightly on the open door. Sheriff HIRAM SORENSON
(65, wiry) looks up from his desk.

SHERIFF
Come on in, Val.

Val hands the Sheriff the paperwork and one of the photos he
took of the dead girl.

VAL
She's at the morgue. Her parents identified
her last night.

The Sheriff takes a good look at the photo.

SHERIFF
I know you've had a string of bad luck - *

VAL
Going on about a year. *

SHERIFF
But don't let this eat at ya now, you did all
you could. *

VAL
Yeah....thanks. *

INT. CORRIDOR: CONTINUOUS *

Val heads for the coffee machine when he hears a commotion at
the entrance.

Officer VOYLE DOBEK (44, built like a linebacker, his smooth
dome gleaming) and Officer WELDON WEXLER (34, hair combed,
uniform trousers creased smartly, buckles, buttons, snaps
polished to a luster) roughly haul a handcuffed Sid the Kid
into the station.

(Sid has obviously spent a few bucks on his new wardrobe, looks like a wasted Grand Ole Opry star; a strange purple suit, piped in gold.) *

WEXLER

(smirking)

Hey, Millimaki, heard you and Rin Tin Tin rescued another corpse.

Val calmly stares at him.

WEXLER (CONT'D)

Maybe we should put signs up on all the mountain trails: "If you get lost, don't call Officer Millimaki. You'll be dead when he finds you."

VAL

What prize you got there?

DOBEK

This asshole fucked a minor, smashed her father with a golf club, then totaled a telephone pole.

Dobek hauls Sid into a booking room.

WEXLER

What'd you do, sleep in that uniform?

Val watches Wexler continue down the hallway, limping, favoring first one knee, then the other.

EXT. GLOAD'S HOUSE: TWILIGHT

Gload sits in his chair on the porch, reading the Great Falls Tribune.

Francie drives up in a cloud of red dust and gets out of her car, drunk, walking with great care. *

FRANCIE

Home is the hunter, home from the hills. Home is the hunter, stoned to the gills.

GLOAD

At six o'clock in the evening? *

FRANCIE

Oh, Johnny, be nice. I just had a nice afternoon.

Her lipstick is smeared at the corners of her mouth. She makes it up onto the porch and sits heavily next to him in her rumpled hose. *

GLOAD

It just isn't dignified. A woman your age in a bar.

FRANCIE

Oh, God. Dignity.

GLOAD

Why can't you just stay here? You've got everything you need.

FRANCIE

It's not things, Johnny. I don't care about things. It's people, Johnny. The company of people.

GLOAD

I was people last time I checked.

She sweeps her hair from her eyes with a trembling hand. Gload watches her.

FRANCIE

But you're in your own world. I'm not like you. You could sit here alone in that chair for a week..and it's okay. Really it is. I know you care about me, but I need to see myself in other people. It makes me feel good. How could you not want that for me? *

GLOAD

And who are they? A bunch of dipshit farmers with their fat hands all over you.

FRANCIE

You were a farmer.

GLOAD

I was fourteen.

A beat. *

FRANCIE

I don't need to be touched. That's not it at all.

She reaches over and strokes his cheek. He stares at the ground.

GLOAD

Yeah, well. I'll tell you what they see. A pair of breasts and a vagina.

FRANCIE

(she laughs out loud)

Oh, God, you kill me, John. Vagina. In your way you're such a prude.

She begins to hum,, her head shaking slightly with palsy.

FRANCIE (CONT'D)

(dreamily, eyes half closed)

We're okay now because I'm home to you and we'll have dinner and we can sit and watch the sun go down like two beautiful people in a movie.

She takes both of his hands in hers.

FRANCIE (CONT'D)

Don't be mad at me. I can't take that.

GLOAD

All right. I'm not mad at you.

And they sit there together looking out at the darkening sky.

EXT/INT. VAL'S CABIN: DUSK

Val pulls up in his Jeep, hops out in his civvies, heads to his cabin.

Val shoves open the creaking stubborn front door. Tom greets him. Glenda is on the phone, in her nursing uniform.

GLENDA

He's not a carpenter, Mother...I don't know. It's just the way it is...Yes, Mother, that's very sound advice...Love to Daddy.

She hangs up. Val goes to give her a kiss. She accepts. *

VAL

(having fun) *

Who says I'm not a carpenter?

GLENDA *

I was telling her about our front door.

VAL

What about it?

GLEENDA

How it sticks shut. I practically broke my thumb trying to open it.

*

VAL

Heat must have swelled it.

Glenda laughs.

VAL (CONT'D)

What?

GLEENDA

That door has been that way since we moved in here and you were saying that it must be the heat. It wasn't even that hot today.

VAL

I didn't mean the heat, I meant the sun.

A beat.

GLEENDA

You mean the heat of the sun and not the air.

VAL

Yeah.

GLEENDA

(enjoying this)

Oh.

VAL

What?

GLEENDA

Nothing.

*

*

VAL

I want to know why I'm making you laugh.

*

*

GLEENDA

Just that the door has always been stuck and you're acting like it's something new.

VAL

Well, it hasn't been as stuck as you're saying.

She just gives him a look.

VAL (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay, I'll fix it.

*

GLEENDA

Great.

Val goes to the fridge, gets a beer, closes the fridge door a little too vehemently.

GLEENDA (CONT'D)

What's going on? Why are you so upset?

VAL

I'm not upset.

GLEENDA

Is it the girl you found?

VAL

No, it's not the frozen 'girl I found'. I just don't understand why you were laughing at me. *

GLEENDA

I wasn't laughing at you. *

VAL

It sure seemed like it.

GLEENDA

It's just that...Let's forget it, okay?

VAL

It's just that what?

GLEENDA

You get so defensive. I'm not attacking you.

VAL

No, you're just laughing at me.

Glenda takes a deep breath, exhales. *

GLEENDA

Well, if I was, I apologize. *

Glenda goes back to cooking. *

Val stands there, slightly bewildered. *

INT. VAL'S BEDROOM: LATER THAT NIGHT *

Val pulls open the dresser drawer, takes the lid off the shoe box, removes the photo of the frozen girl and holds it under the lamp, just looking at her.

Glenda, hair wet, in a bathrobe, appears in the doorway behind him. She watches him a moment, then retreats back out of sight. *

INT. GLOAD'S HOUSE: MORNING *

A freshly showered Gload finishes making up their four-poster bed, neat as a pin. He looks in the closet. Francie's clothes arranged perfectly, shoes lined up beneath. *

He crosses through the kitchen. All in order. Spotless. He heads out the front door. *

EXT. GLOAD'S PORCH: CONTINUOUS

Gload takes a seat in his favorite chair and waits...

He looks off in the distance, sees something: *

In the distance a dust trail signals approaching vehicles: PATROL CARS. A slight smile creases Gload's face.. *

INT./EXT. VAL'S PATROL CAR / GLOAD'S HOUSE *

Val drives alone, following another patrol car. OVER Val through the windshield, the cars drive up to Gload's house. Gload remains sitting on his porch. *

The two cars pull to a stop at the end of the lane in front of the isolated house. Gload rises from his chair as if to greet old friends.

Dobek gets out of the car first with his piece drawn. Wexler gets out with a shotgun. Val gets out of his car and watches.

Dobek aims his piece at Gload's midsection.

DOBEK

Sit in the chair asshole.

Gload sits. Dobek and Wexler approach the porch, stopping some ten feet away, the shotgun also leveled at Gload.

DOBEK (CONT'D)

Now on your feet.

Gload stands up, shows his hands front and back.

GLOAD

Up down up down.

DOBEK

Down in the fucking dirt, now! Hands behind.
Millimaki, get the bracelets on him.

Gload descends the wooden steps, lays himself on the ground.

Val walks up slowly, kneels, snaps the handcuffs in place. *

Dobek nods to the others to get Gload on his feet. They do so.

Wexler begins to pat him down, as Dobek reads him his rights.

WEXLER

Nothing.

DOBEK

Who's inside?

GLOAD

No need to holler. I can hear as good as you.

DOBEK

I said who's inside, goddamn it.

GLOAD

Nobody.

DOBEK

Nobody's ass. We'll see.

Dobek nods to Wexler and the two head to the front door.

DOBEK (CONT'D)

Millimaki, keep your piece on this fuck.

Dobek savagely jerks the screen door open, nearly tearing it off and they go in.

GLOAD

Now look what they done to that door.

VAL

It'd be easy enough to fix. *

GLOAD

Its got dry rot, you got to be gentle with it. *

An awkward moment of silence. *

GLOAD (CONT'D)

Mind if I sit down? *

Val nods towards the porch steps.

Gload takes a step back and sits, keeping an eye on Val who takes in the surroundings.

VAL

(looking at the orchard)

You might want to cut those trees back. What kind of apples are they?

GLOAD

Couldn't tell you.

VAL

Probably some kind of Macintosh.

Dobek and Wexler bang out of the house, Dobek eating a pear.

DOBEK

Christ, Millimaki, I said put your piece on him. Did I not say that?

Dobek points his weapon at Gload's back.

VAL

Cuffed and sitting on the steps. Where's he gonna go?

DOBEK

Wexler, did I not say to him, 'Put your piece on this piece of shit.'?

WEXLER

You did, Voyle, definitely.

DOBEK

Fuck's a matter with you?

Dobek comes down the steps in front of Gload, weapon drawn.

DOBEK (CONT'D)

Time was we'd of just dropped a rope over something or other and been done with this sonofabitch..

*

Dobek leans down, runs his gun along Gload's cheek.

DOBEK (CONT'D)

Where's the woman of the house, old man?

GLOAD

Not here.

DOBEK

I deduced that all on my very own, asshole. Where'd she go?

GLOAD

Just gone. Gone off.

Dobek taps his pistol against his thigh. *

DOBEK

Okay, Wexler, get him in the car. And I want the footwear on him too.

Wexler fastens leg chains on Gload, jerks him to his feet.

Val watches as Gload looks around, may be the last time he sees this place.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT: AFTERNOON *

Val enters the anteroom of the Sheriff's office.

Raylene

I hear we've got a new guest. Sounds like a real gentleman.

She nods behind her to the inner office. Val taps lightly on the open door, walks in.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Sheriff is rifling through his desk drawers, looking for something, his glasses atop his head.

SHERIFF

Oh, Valentine.

VAL

Yessir?

SHERIFF

I'm going to need you to walk our new prisoner, Mr. Gload, over to the courthouse in the morning. Remain by his side at all times. You'll be doing this all week. He'll have the irons on, but don't be fooled by him being an old man. You've seen those hands, he could squeeze juice out of a stove log.

VAL

Yessir.

SHERIFF

We've got him in a hospital cell, away from the others.

VAL

Is he sick?

SHERIFF

No, no. Just keeping him there cause of his age and history.

The Sheriff pats down his shirt, feels his pants pockets.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You know, there are cops in this town, hell, all over the state, that if they were to pull John Gload over by accident would just about piss their pants.

The Sheriff hands Val a sheet of paper.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

That's a list of missing persons from this area dating back twenty five-thirty years, about the time Gload showed up in these parts. The ones highlighted in yellow there's reason to believe Mr. Gload had something to do with.

Val peruses the list. There are maybe six or seven in yellow.

VAL

All men.

*

SHERIFF

And they all possessed something of value that disappeared along with their bodies. .

VAL

(going down the list)
Antique watches. Indian artifacts... Stamp collection, thirty grand in cash?

SHERIFF

(rummaging around on his desk)
That was early 80's, right?

VAL

September '81.

SHERIFF

Old rancher lived up in Loma. Cashed out his savings during the recession. Disappeared a week later. Raylene!

Raylene pokes her head in the doorway.

RAYLENE

Yes?

SHERIFF

Have you seen my goddamn glasses anywhere?

RAYLENE

Do they look anything like the ones you have on your head?

SHERIFF

Oh, for God's sake.

He pulls them down on his nose, Raylene retreats.

VAL

And Gload was a suspect?

SHERIFF

With absolutely no proof other than that they frequented the same domino parlor.

Val hands the paper back.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

One body was found four or so years back with no head and no hands and decomposed beyond any possible identification. Anyway, Deputy, don't let your guard down.

VAL

Yessir.

And Val exits the office.

ESTABLISHING SHOT: EXTERIOR VAL'S CABIN NIGHT

INT. VAL'S CABIN: NIGHT

Glenda lies on her side. Val climbs into bed, lies on his back, hands behind his head

*

Glenda lays her head on his chest. Val wraps an arm around her shoulder. They both lie there, thinking their separate thoughts.

*

GLENDA

A penny for your thoughts.

Val doesn't say anything.

GLEENDA (CONT'D)

How about a dollar?

VAL

I'm just lying here.

GLEENDA

Talk to me.

VAL

About what?

GLEENDA

Whatever's going on with you.

VAL

I don't have much to say right now.

GLEENDA

Maybe tomorrow?

VAL

(lets out a little laugh)

Yeah, maybe tomorrow.

They lie there, eyes open, silent.

EXT. COPPER COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT: EARLY MORNING

Val's jeep pulls up. Bright chilly morning.

INT. COPPER COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT.

Val, in uniform, heads for the metal stairs leading down to the jail, his steps echoing against the cinder block walls.

He opens the security door leading to the main part of the jail, inmates mostly asleep.

Val continues to another sally gate and enters the secure hospital wing of cells.

He arrives at the cell where Gload, in semi-darkness, sits on his metal bed, the faint light from the small high window shadowing his face.

GLOAD

I recognize you from the welcoming committee.
The apple expert.

Val leans against the cinder block wall opposite the cell.

VAL

It's a nice place you have out there. Good soil. Out of the wind for the most part. Nice little spot.

*
*
*
*

GLOAD

I appreciate that.

*
*

SOUNDS of a striking match, a tin can sliding. Blue smoke billows out through the bars.

*

SOUND of the heavy security door opening. Another OFFICER, carrying wrist and leg irons approaches.

OFFICER

Sheriff just got the call. Time to chain the old man up.

VAL

Approach the bars.

Gload rises and does so.

VAL (CONT'D)

Hands.

*

Gload keeps the cigarette in his mouth. Val takes the irons, cuffs Gload's hands through the bars, then shackles his ankles.

He draws a chain from the ankles to the wrists and locks it in place so Gload can't raise his hands above his waist.

GLOAD

You got a hood for me too?

The Officer opens the cell. Val enters.

VAL

Not yet. Let's go.

And Val ushers Gload out of the cell.

EXT. COPPER COUNTY COURTHOUSE: MINUTES LATER

Val escorts the shuffling shackled Gload across an expanse of lawn leading to the stately courthouse, a beautiful old structure dating from the late 1800's.

GLOAD

Your compadres have kind of a brisk manner about them. You seem to be the odd man out in that dog and pony show.

*
*
*
*

(MORE)

GLOAD (CONT'D)

That Wexler character acts like he's got a
cattle prod up his ass.

*
*

Val doesn't respond.

*

GLOAD (CONT'D)

You don't mind my asking, how long you been
doing this?

*

VAL

Doing what?

GLOAD

Police work.

VAL

Little over a year.

GLOAD

That explains it.

*

VAL

What?

GLOAD

Why they treat you like shit.

*

Val just keeps leading him on, not wanting to engage.

INT. COPPER COUNTY COURTROOM

Gload, his shackled wrists now resting in front of him on a
table, sits with his LAWYER (60ish, red bulbous drinker's
nose). Val is close by.

Sid the Kid is led into the courtroom, eyes on the floor,
still dressed in his outlandish costume. Gload watches him,
showing no sign of emotion.

EXT. COURTHOUSE: LATE AFTERNOON

Val leads Gload back to the jail across the lawn.

GLOAD

My lawyer is a drunken idiot.

VAL

You could petition for different counsel.

GLOAD

Ain't you on some kind of thin ice, here,
Deputy? Offering legal advice to a felon?

Val doesn't respond. Gload smiles to himself.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

The trouble with being in my business is that all of your old partners are dead or laying up dying slow in the joint somewhere. I was plumb out of good help. Should have slit Sid's throat and put him underground. Wouldn't have cost me more than two hours.

Val looks over at him thinking 'he's dead serious'. They keep walking. *

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD; SUNSET

Val's jeep turns off onto a narrow dirt road leading up into the hills.

INT./EXT. JEEP

Through the windshield we approach a lovely meadow, **the same meadow in the picture with Glenda**. Wildflowers in bloom, a clear ice cold creek gurgling in the near distance.

Val gets out of the jeep, walks into the meadow and begins to pick a variety of wildflowers.

EXT. VAL'S CABIN: EARLY EVENING

Val gets out of the jeep, holding the small bouquet of flowers. Tom, in his pen, is eager to greet his master. Val lets him out and they head inside.

INT. VAL'S CABIN

SAME ANGLE AS FIRST SCENE: in the foreground, a note is propped up between salt and pepper shakers as Val enters the cabin.

Val picks up the note which reads: *Went to the movies with Jean. Casserole in the oven. See you later. (heart) G.* *

Val sets the note down. Nearby is a **newspaper with a picture of Gload on front page**: the headline: LOCAL MAN ARRESTED FOR MURDER *

Val tosses the flowers in a waste can, opens the oven and stares at the casserole.

EXT. COURTHOUSE: LATE AFTERNOON

Val leads Gload back across the lawn.

Gload
So what made you want to be a cop?

VAL
I don't like cows.

GLOAD
You were ranching?

VAL
My uncle's got a farm/ranch outfit couple hours south of here. My cousin runs it. *

GLOAD
And you were working it?

Val nods yes. They approach a park bench. *

GLOAD (CONT'D)
Okay if we sit a minute?

Val motions 'go ahead and sit', which they do.

GLOAD (CONT'D)
Smoke me will ya?

Val reaches into Gload's denim shirt pocket, gets a smoke and lighter and lights a cigarette for him. *

GLOAD (CONT'D)
Do you wisht you was running that ranch?

VAL
Not so much.

GLOAD
You didn't like farming?

VAL
Lived on a farm my whole life. I miss the machinery but I don't like cows.

GLOAD
I like the machinery too. Plowing. I liked it quite a bit. Had to get out of it when I was thirteen, but I'd done a lot of it up to that time.

VAL
I liked the solitude of it.

They sit silent for a spell.

GLOAD
Had a favorite field. It's what I think about
when I can't sleep. I close my eyes and put
my foot on that one step and just ride round
and round, clear as day. Doesn't always work
but it works better than anything else.
Except for the gulls.

VAL
Gulls?

GLOAD
Yeah, I can usually fall asleep before the
gulls show up, screeching over whatever I dug
up with the plow. But once they show up,
it's rough.

Val nods quietly, then rises.

VAL
We gotta get back.

GLOAD
Whatever you say, Depte.

Gload gets up slowly and they head back to the jail.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Raylene looks up.

VAL
What'd I do this time?

Raylene
(she just smiles , shrugs,
nods to the door)
He's waiting for you.

Val enters. The sheriff is once again rummaging in his
drawers for something.

SHERIFF
I've got the finest system in the world for
losing shit I need. Anyway, Val, starting
Monday, I'm going to have to put you on the
night shift.

(MORE)

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Wexler's asking for lighter duty because of his knee, so he's going to take over the escort duty.

Val shakes his head slightly.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

What?

VAL

Not gonna do my marriage much good.

SHERIFF

She'll...goddamn it, I'm sorry, what's your wife's name?

VAL

Glenda.

SHERIFF

Glenda, that's right. She's a nice girl. A nurse, isn't she?

VAL

Yes, sir... and studying to be an Intensive Care nurse.

SHERIFF

Glenda will get used to it, hopefully.

VAL

For how long, sir?

SHERIFF

As long as it takes for our beloved judicial system to find him guilty.

Val just nods, thinking what this will do to his marriage.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Just keep your ears open and maybe even steer him around to talking about his past a bit. Maybe we'll be able to clear up some of these things that have been left unfinished since he showed up in this country. And that was a helluva long time ago.

VAL

Yessir.

INT./EXT. VAL'S CABIN TWILIGHT

At the foot of the steps, in the waning evening light, Val has the cabin door laid across a couple of sawhorses and is planing it's bottom edge with an old jack plane. Tom hanging with him. *

Glenda pulls up in her Datsun, home from work, gets out of her car.

GLEENDA

Hi.

VAL

Hi.

Glenda crosses the hard-pack drive, gives him a kiss.

VAL (CONT'D)

Almost done.

GLEENDA

How was your day? *

VAL

It was alright. *

He keeps working. She watches him a beat.

GLEENDA

Mine was fine. Class went okay. *

Val continues his work.

VAL

Just okay?

GLEENDA

It's a lot to learn. *

Val keeps working. Glenda heads up the porch steps.

VAL

They're putting me on the night shift starting Monday..

That stops Glenda in her tracks.

GLEENDA

You're kidding me.

VAL

'Fraid not.

She goes inside.

Val hefts the heavy wooden door off the sawhorses, carries it up the steps, leans it against the open door frame. Inside, Glenda is getting something out of the fridge.

VAL (CONT'D)

Hopefully it'll just be for a few weeks.

Glenda doesn't respond.

Val gets the door's hinges to align on the doorway.

VAL (CONT'D)

I don't like it any more than you do.

Glenda keeps getting dinner ready, pours herself a glass of wine.

Val finishes hanging the door. He opens and closes it a few times...it's fixed. He goes to Glenda, gently turns her around to face him.

VAL (CONT'D)

Let's go to the creek this weekend. We haven't been there for months.

GLENDA

Don't try and pretend it's all right. It's not all right.

VAL

It's not like I have a fucking choice.

GLENDA

Please don't swear at me.

VAL

I'm not swearing at you.

Glenda is silent. She just looks at him. He returns her look. They stand there, looking in each other's eyes.

GLENDA

I wish we lived in town.

A beat.

VAL

(simply)
Well, we don't.

*

He goes to the fridge to get a beer.

*

GLEENDA

I don't want to end up like your mother.

VAL

What?

GLEENDA

You heard me.

VAL

Yeah, I heard you, but what the hell is that supposed to mean?

GLEENDA

It means I don't want to go crazy living in the middle of nowhere for the rest of my life.

VAL

My mother wasn't crazy. She was depressed.

A beat.

GLEENDA

My mistake.

Val stands there a moment, uncomfortable, then turns to go.

GLEENDA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

VAL

I just need to...go out for a little while.

GLEENDA

What about dinner?

VAL

I'm not that hungry. I'll be back in a little while.

He goes. Glenda remains .

INT. TAVERN: NIGHT

Val sits at the bar alone in this rustic tavern. He takes a drink of beer, chases it with a shot of whiskey. Sits and thinks.

He looks up at the old television rigged up high in the corner. There's some old black and white western playing.

Some cowpokes haul a rustler with his hands tied behind his back up onto a horse.

One of them tosses a rope up over a strong branch above the mounted rustler, the NOOSE dangling in front of him. *

Val turns back to his drink. *

EXT. VAL'S CABIN: NIGHT HOUR AND A HALF LATER *

Val's jeep pulls up to the cabin. He gets out, heads inside.

INT. CABIN

Glenda's at the dining table in her pajamas or whatever she wears to bed..a book and a glass of wine. *

GLEENDA
How was it?

VAL
Okay.

Val goes into the bathroom. Glenda goes back to reading. The toilet FLUSHES. Val exits the bathroom.

VAL (CONT'D)
Did you make anything for dinner?

GLEENDA
Nope. *

Val goes into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

Val is getting undressed. Glenda comes in.

GLEENDA
I'm sorry I said what I did about your Mother.

VAL
Don't worry about it.

GLEENDA
I just don't think I can stay here at night by myself for very long.

VAL
(matter-of-factly) *

Well, I guess you'll find out.

Val grabs a t-shirt out of his dresser drawer. Glenda eyes the shoebox with pictures of the dead.

Val doesn't want to hear about it. *

GLEENDA (CONT'D) *

You think if you rescue somebody somehow
you've atoned for not saving her. *

Val shakes his head 'no'. *

GLEENDA (CONT'D) *

It wasn't your fault. *

VAL *

I stood there in the kitchen eating a fucking
apple while she put a rope around her neck! *

They just stand there, staring at each other. *

GLEENDA *

(quietly) *

Maybe some day you'll forgive yourself. *

Glenda leaves the room. Val stands there, not moving. *

EXT. COURTHOUSE: MORNING *

Val and the shackled Gload walk to the courthouse.

GLOAD

Seems you got the short end of some stick or
other, Deptee. Wexler informed me last night
he's gonna be my new escort. What'd you do to
miss out on baby-sitting me?

VAL

He has seniority and he's nursing a bum knee.

GLOAD

From chasing bad guys. Honest to Christ,
that's what he told me.

(Gload grunts a laugh)

Seems to get around pretty good unless
somebody's watching him. Wants me to call him
Weldon. Thinks we're gonna be pals. Sorry-
assed little turd.

VAL

He's a fellow officer.

GLOAD

Doesn't mean he's not an asshole.

Gload looks to Val for a response. He gets none. *

They keep walking...

*

EXT. BUBBLING CREEK: AFTERNOON

A beautiful afternoon. Breezy, sun is shining.

Val's jeep pulls up to the grassy meadow. He and Glenda exit the jeep, Val carrying a quilt and picnic basket. Tom tags along.

They walk without speaking to the SAME SPOT OF THE PHOTO, stretch out the quilt. Val lies down on his back, head resting in his hands. Glenda sits, arms wrapped around her knees.

TIME PASSING: The creek gurgles along its verdant path.

LATER: SUNSET

Val is asleep on the quilt. Glenda nowhere to be seen.

Val wakes, looks around for his wife. He gathers the quilt and untouched picnic basket and he and Tom head back to the jeep.

*

Glenda is curled up like a child in the back seat, asleep, or pretending to be. Val and Tom get in without waking her and drive off.

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT: EXTERIOR JAIL NIGHT

INT. JAIL: NIGHT

Val sits at the jailer's desk. He looks around, bored.

*

Clock on the wall reads 8:47.

*

He sits, staring at nothing.

*

Clock on the wall reads 10:20.

*

He's roused by the appearance of Dobek and Wexler dragging a slight figure across the polished floor to the sally gate, the MAN'S wet shirt leaving a shimmering trail.

*

*

VAL
(to Wexler)
Thought you were on the day shift.

WEXLER
Overtime, pal.

DOBEK

Just stick your ass right there, Millimaki,
and buzz us in. We'll take care of this
blanket-ass..

The Man is mumbling:

MAN

I didn't do nothin', I didn't do nothin'.

DOBEK

Shut your trap!

Val just watches them head for the cells. Then turns back,
trying to stay awake. *
*

INT. JAIL CELLS: LATER THAT NIGHT

The corridor of cells is quiet. The ECHO of Val's boots
precede his appearance.

He walks down the hallway past the row of cells. He carries a
prison blanket, sweatshirt, and a cup of coffee.

He stops at the cell where the MAN Dobek brought in sits
shivering on his bunk with a rough wool blanket wrapped monk-
like over his head, his wet shirt in a pile on the floor. *

He opens the cell door, offers the Man the coffee.

VAL

Drink that.

Man

I ain't drunk. Them sons of bitches said I
was drunk but I ain't.

VAL

I know you're not. Just drink the coffee.

The Man takes the coffee, has a sip. Val gives him the
sweatshirt and the blanket. The Man puts the sweatshirt on
over his bare torso. *

MAN

It's too big.

VAL

So sue me.

Val leaves the cell and starts back the way he came, then
stops. *
*

He turns around, and continues on to the sally gate separating the main cells from the hospital wing. *

Clock above the gate reads: 12:35. *

INT. HOSPITAL WING CONTINUOUS

Val enters the short corridor of cells. He stops for a moment, hears the strangling sound of an inmate snoring. *

GLOAD (O.C.)

What was all that ruckus about earlier?

Val approaches Gload's cell. Only Gload's legs and huge hands and wrists visible in the slanting light.

The hands disappear and Gload's visage appears briefly in the glow of a match.

VAL

Dobek and Wexler hauled in some guy who'd had a fight with his drunk wife from what I gather. They'd dragged him through some puddle or something. Poor guy was sopping wet, shaking like a leaf.

GLOAD

Wexler is the worst kind of asshole. I would bet any money you care to name he was a little picked-on turd his whole life and now he's got a little whack and he's trying to make everybody pay for it.

VAL

I told you, he's a fellow officer.

GLOAD

He may be, but I'm right, ain't I.

VAL

I wouldn't know.

GLOAD

You wouldn't know. Don't bullshit me, Deputy. I thought we were friends.

VAL

We're friends, John, inasmuch as you're in here for possibly killing somebody and I'm out here making sure you stay alive to be punished for it.

Gload remains in the shadows. *

GLOAD

I would put him in a hole in the ground, Val.
I would put him under and you or nobody else
would find his ass until his bones were white
as Custer's.

*

VAL

I don't -

*

*

GLOAD

(cuts him off)

Thanks for the visit.

*

*

Val stares into the cell for a moment, then leaves.

EXT. DESERTED COULEE (WHERE GLOAD'S VICTIM WAS BURIED):
MORNING

Forgotten yellow crime scene tape blows twisted among the
weeds.

Val's Jeep pulls to a stop up on the ridge. Val gets out,
walks down the hill, taking in the crime scene.

He sits on the ground near the burial site, sifts a handful of
dirt through his fingers, feeling the sun on his face.

EXT. VAL'S CABIN: LATER THAT MORNING

Val enters, sees Glenda in the kitchen, in street clothes,
loading up a few things in a brown paper bag.

VAL

Hey. How come you're not at work?

GLENDA

It's my day off.

VAL

Is it Thursday? Man, my head is all screwed
up.

She has not turned to look at him.

VAL (CONT'D)

What's Tom doing locked up?

GLENDA

He kept following me around. Every time I
made a trip to the car he followed me, then
followed me back. I just got tired of it.

Val stands for a bit looking at her, then heads out to the porch.

EXT. PORCH

Val can see clothes hung up in the back seat of Glenda's Datsun.

He lets Tom out of his pen and goes back inside.

INT. CABIN

 GLENDA
Where have you been?

 VAL
Went up north of town and looked at a site.
Really, I forgot it was your day off.

 GLENDA
A site.

 VAL
We found a body up there.

Glenda turns to face him.

 GLENDA
Oh. Well. A body.

 VAL
What's going on, Glenda?

She's silent.

 VAL (CONT'D)
I want you to tell me what's going on.

 GLENDA
I'm going to stay in town. With Jean.

 VAL
Tonight?

 GLENDA
Tonight. For a while.

 VAL
How long a while?

 GLENDA
I don't know.

VAL

Isn't this something we ought to have at least talked about?

GLEENDA

We kind of did. I'm not going to spend the next month alone at night in this cabin.

VAL

I thought you loved it here.

GLEENDA

I did. Now I don't.

Val doesn't know what to say.

GLEENDA (CONT'D)

This place is swallowing me up. It's part of you, Val, but it's swallowing me up. And now you're not even here.

VAL

I'm right here.

GLEENDA

We barely see each other.

VAL

We both work hard... that's just the way it is right now.

A beat.

GLEENDA

Well, I need a break so I'm going to stay at Jean's.

Val takes a deep breath, big sigh.

GLEENDA (CONT'D)

No comment?

VAL

What's there to say?

GLEENDA

Nothing, it seems.

She picks up the loaded bag, passes by him heading outside.

INT. JAIL CELLS: NIGHT SHIFT DESK

Val sits at the desk. It's quiet. He simply sits. Staring into space.

LATER THAT NIGHT:

The hospital wing is deathly quiet.

The sally gate door opens and Val enters, his footsteps echoing softly.

GLOAD (O.C.)
Evenin' Deptee.

Val almost jumps out of his skin.

VAL
You scared the shit out of me, John. Thought everybody was asleep.

GLOAD
I don't sleep much, kid.

Gload puts aside a yellow legal pad he's been writing on and leans forward into the light.

Snoring man down the hall cries out in his sleep. *

Gload gets up, coming forward into the light. He leans against the bars.

GLOAD (CONT'D)
The good deputy Dobek stopped by earlier to tell me how I'm gonna piss my pants when they drop the trap and that my eyes are gonna pooch out of my head and stuff like that. Hell, they ain't hung nobody in this state for twenty-four years, but it was sort of sweet of him to stop off and share that with me just the same.

VAL
Sorry about that.

GLOAD
Dying is something I ain't afraid of, Val. But I will say this - I don't much care for the idea of dying in lock-up. That's just pitiful. You're dead in a field of other loser cons like you, thrown in a landfill.

VAL

Only if the family doesn't claim the remains.

GLOAD

First you got to have family.

VAL

You have someone, right? Your wife, is it?
The woman out at your place?

GLOAD

Nope. No one.

VAL

Dobek and Wexler said they saw a woman's stuff
when we came to get you.

Gload retreats back into the darkness of his cell.

GLOAD

I ain't saying she wasn't there. But she's
gone. She's not comin' back.

VAL

She's your wife?

Gload draws deep on his smoke.

*

VAL (CONT'D)

No other family?

GLOAD

Only one there ever was was my dad.

A beat. Val waits.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

When he died it was really the end of anything
you might call a normal life for me.

VAL

When did he die?

GLOAD

Had to have been some sixty years ago now.
Sixty-four years to be exact, and yeah, I was
just a kid, but I remember clear as yesterday.
We lived in east Fergus County on the Judith
divide. My dad ran a few black cows there in
the foothills of the Snowies. That's where I
did the farming, mostly on my own. My dad
made money from poaching and poker.

Val leans against the cinder block wall opposite Gload's cell.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

We were in this hunting shack. My dad and two of his buddies were butchering a couple of mule deer they'd shot the day before. It was snowing heavy. The wind was howling, blowing snow through the cracks. My dad's buddies headed out of there and me and my Dad finished loading up the butchered meat in his '24 Chevy pick-up. Was the worst storm I remember. We'd gone about four miles, had made it to the top of this ridge when the truck just stopped. Felt like it dropped two feet through the hard pack.

*
*

Val listens quietly as Gload continues his story.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

He tried for an hour or so to dig us out. Would climb back in and we'd move a foot or two, then sink down again. We were too far to go back. He said there was a ranch house not far to the west, just down through this little bit of timber. Not more than a little hike. He told me to stay in the truck. Don't get out. Run the engine every once in a while to stay warm. He hopped out and gave me a smile through the window then disappeared in the blinding snow. He gave me that smile just so I wouldn't be scared. I do believe that to be true.

Val is still, listening to the disembodied voice.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

He didn't get too far, Val. I guess he was a little turned around. Nearest house in that direction was ten miles it turned out. By the time they found me I was almost done in myself. Lost a couple toes on this one foot.

Gload shifts into the light, lifts up his right foot.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

I went from there to a hospital to an orphanage run by these strange ladies dressed up in black, all in the matter of a few weeks. Was a tough old time for a kid.

A beat.

VAL

I imagine it was. My old man went down for a nap and just kept sleeping and that was bad enough.

GLOAD
When did this happen?

VAL
Five years ago.

GLOAD
And your mother? Where is she?

VAL
Gone a long time now.

GLOAD
Bet she run off on you all, didn't she? Same
as mine.

A beat.

VAL
Like I said, it was a long time ago.

GLOAD
We're just a couple of hard-luck orphans,
ain't we Valentine.

A rough cough is heard from a cell down the hall.

GLOAD (CONT'D)
Like a goddamn TB ward in here. Why don't you
move over just a bit closer so we don't keep
these assholes awake. Unless you got better
things to do.

Val checks his watch out of habit.

VAL
I'm good here.

GLOAD
Still don't trust the old man.

VAL
Policy, John, you ought to know that.

Gload leans forward, looks Val in the eyes.

GLOAD
Val, I'm going to tell you some things and you
can tell the old bull but I suspect it won't
make no difference to me at this point.

VAL

You know I'd be obligated to report anything concerning illegal activities, so you might want to stick to safe subjects..

GLOAD

Well, you let me worry about that.

VAL

Just wanna be clear.

GLOAD

You are perfectly clear, Deputy.

VAL

Okay.

GLOAD

I didn't last but three months in that orphanage. Had a lot of fights. I pretty much learned how to tear a kid's face apart.

*

Gload lights a smoke with the flare of a match.

Val squats down against the wall..

GLOAD (CONT'D)

That place was in Utah. I ran off. They didn't care. I'm sure they were glad to get rid of me. I hitchhiked and walked, back to Montana, ended up in a little town just northwest of here.

GLOAD'S MEMORY: SMALL TOWN: DAY

Young Gload (14) has walked into this small town. He is hot and tired. Boys his age ride past him on bicycles.

He walks on, turns a corner. Two boys his age are walking towards him with fishing poles on their shoulders. They stare at him as they pass. Gload has the wolf in his eyes.

*

Across the street, an OLDER WOMAN in her bathrobe, is kneeling down turning the soil of her garden, a tiny Pomeranian sits near her in the shade of a lilac.

*

He watches the Woman stand up and stretch, walks across the street several houses away, and cuts through an alley to the back of the woman's house.

He goes in through the back gate and silently enters the back door.

Young Gload walks silently through the house, looking for nothing in particular. He pockets a hairbrush, a watch and some change from a china bowl.

He enters the living room and is drawn to the mantle and the family photos atop it.

The Woman comes in the room, and just gazes open-mouthed at this intruder. The Pomeranian starts yipping crazily and bites Young Gload on his bare ankle.

Gload, without thinking, snatches the little dog and throws it against the wall. The Woman begins to SCREAM.

Gload picks up a table lamp, swings and hits the Woman above the left ear with the heavy metal base of the lamp. She goes down hard and fast. Dead.

Young Gload stands there, surprised at how fast she went down. He looks at the bloodstain on the wall where the dog hit, then looks at the Woman.

He straightens her legs, takes a pillow and places it under her head.

He lays down on top of her, wraps his arms around her. He just lies there a few moments.

He gets up to leave, grabs an apple off the kitchen counter and heads out the back door.

INT. CELL: PRESENT

Val has been listening intently.

GLOAD

Funny, ain't it Val. I started out the way I did on account of a little Pom dog.

VAL

You took an apple?

GLOAD

Yeah, why not. But that's not important, Val, here's the deal. By the time I ate that apple, I didn't feel a thing about that woman.

Val sits still, takes in what he just said.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

I knew right then I'd never have to do a regular day of work again.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT EARLY THAT MORNING

The early morning sun casts long shadows. Val exits the building, exhausted. He stands near the front door, breathing in the morning air.

Wexler pulls up in his '85 Mustang. Val watches him get out of his car, right his nightstick and holstered sidearm, then stoop to adjust his hair in the car 's side mirror.

Wexler walks across the parking lot affecting a slight limp.

WEXLER

You can go home to your wife now, Millimaki. She's a little wore out but otherwise just fine.

VAL

You know, Wexler, even if I liked you that wouldn't be funny.

WEXLER

I think we woke the neighbors with all the moaning and screaming.

VAL

What do you know about Dobek paying a call on Gload?

WEXLER

What's the problem, did we upset your pet killer?

VAL

Don't be an asshole.

WEXLER

Listen, pardner, let me put it this way: I intend to get information out of this Gload that clears up God knows how many open cases. If by scaring this suspect we can get him to talk then I will do that.

VAL

For Christ sake, Wexler, this guy has been letting blood out of people for half a century. You really think you can scare anything out of a man like that?

Wexler stands erect, legs spread, posing as if he's in front of a mirror.

WEXLER

Valentine, if I can't scare him, I'll be his
buddy. Just like you.

Wexler puts his two crossed fingers in Val's face.

WEXLER (CONT'D)

This tight. Asshole buddies.

Wexler heads inside. Val shakes his head and goes to his
jeep.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX MORNING

Val sits in his jeep, parked half a block away from a modest
apartment complex. He sits still, watching.

Jean and Glenda come out of a second story apartment dressed
in their nurses uniforms. They are talking, smiling.

Val starts to get out of the jeep, changes his mind, and
watches as they get in Jean's car and drive away.

Val sits for a moment, then starts his jeep and drives off.

EXT. VAL'S CABIN: MORNING

WIDE SHOT of Val's cabin set back in the woods. His jeep
pulls up. Val gets out, greets Tom as he lets him out of his
pen. The two of them enter the cabin.

INT. CABIN: CONTINUOUS

Val gets a beer out of the fridge. *

He walks back into the 'living room', sits heavily on the
couch and takes a good drink of beer...lost in fatigue and
thought. *

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT SUNSET

Val arrives back at work.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Val enters the anteroom where Raylene sits at her desk reading
a romance novel.

VAL
Evening, Raylene.

RAYLENE
You look like hell.

VAL
Thanks.

RAYLENE
(nodding to the sheriff's
office)
He's all yours.

Val enters the Sheriff's office. The Sheriff regards him over his glasses.

SHERIFF
Did I send for you?

VAL
Sort of sir. You told me last week to come
talk to you. About Gload. If I heard
anything.

SHERIFF
So what do you have?

VAL
He told me about an old woman he killed.

SHERIFF
The hell he did.

The Sheriff, suddenly very interested, rifles through his top drawer, pulls out a small brown pipe, sticks it in the corner of his mouth.

VAL
Don't know if this is what you had in mind.
It was over East, in Wibaux I think.

SHERIFF
And? That doesn't make any difference.

VAL
He was fourteen.

SHERIFF
Fourteen years old?

VAL
Yessir.

SHERIFF

That would have been, what, sixty-some years ago.

VAL

Sixty-five.

SHERIFF

Well, that doesn't do us a lot of good, does it.

VAL

Nossir.

Sheriff just nods his head.

SHERIFF

Well, at least you've got him talking.
What's with you two anyway. You seem to get
along pretty well.

*
*
*

VAL

We talk about farming.

*
*

SHERIFF

Farming, huh? Well, hopefully he'll let you
in on some of his more recent exploits.

*
*

The Sheriff takes a good look at Val.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You don't look so good.

VAL

Can't sleep.

SHERIFF

Have yourself a beer or two when you get off.
It's not too early when you're on graveyards.

VAL

Doesn't seem to help much. Gives me a
headache.

SHERIFF

Have a roll with Gail when you get home.

VAL

It's Glenda.

SHERIFF

Glenda, sorry. The two of you doing alright?

VAL
Everything's fine.

SHERIFF
Your mouth says fine but your face says otherwise.

VAL
She's having a hard time with me being on nights.

SHERIFF
It's tough. I know..

The Sheriff looks at his watch.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
Oh, shit. I almost forgot. I did intend to send for you. I need you to get over to the courthouse and escort Gload back here. They're running late today. Dobek should have been off duty ten minutes ago.

VAL
Dobek? I thought Wexler was on escort duty.

SHERIFF
He called in sick this morning.

Val turns to go.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
And Val, this business with your wife. It'll be fine. Kind of like breaking a horse. It's tough on everybody at first and then pretty quick all parties involved don't think anything of it.

VAL
I might choose not to tell her that comparison if it's all the same to you.

And Val exits.

EXT. COPPER COUNTY COURTHOUSE: SUNSET

As Val approaches the courthouse, Gload, led by Dobek, exits the building followed by a few men in suits. Dobek brings Gload, shackled feet and hands, over to Val.

DOBEK
Where the hell you been, Millimaki?

VAL
Sheriff forgot to tell me til just now.

DOBEK
He's all yours.

Dobek strides off.

Val and Gload begin their slow walk across the lawn.

GLOAD
You know what 'turpitude' means?

VAL
Sure don't.

GLOAD
Prosecutor used that word today.

VAL
I'll look it up for you.

GLOAD
You look like a goddamn scarecrow, Val, you know that?

VAL
I've been hearing that a lot lately.

GLOAD
Your missus not taking care of you? Is that the deal?

VAL
Something like that.

GLOAD
Smoke me, will you please, Deputy?

Val takes a smoke out of Gload's shirt pocket, lights it, hands it to Gload.

GLOAD (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Your friend Wexler called in sick today from what I understand.

VAL
So I heard.

They approach the park bench.

GLOAD
Okay if we sit a minute?

VAL
Maybe a minute.

They sit.

GLOAD
Wexler wants to be my boyfriend. He seems pretty intent on stealing your thunder.

VAL
I don't have any thunder to steal, John.

GLOAD
You got to see this through that shitbird's eyes. He knows you've got the Old Bull's ear. This turd, Wexler, he figures it ought to be him who's the number one son. He's been around longer and him being such a spit and polish asshole.

VAL
He has seniority.

*

GLOAD
He'll try and take the legs out from under you, Val. Make no mistake about it.

VAL
Wexler doesn't worry me.

GLOAD
He should. I'm dead serious.

Val just shrugs.

GLOAD (CONT'D)
Anyhow, I got a feeling he got his ass full of prickly pear today.

VAL
Why would you have a feeling like that, John?

GLOAD
Here's the deal, Valentine. Wexler's got it in his head there's bodies buried all over the place out there, other side of the river. A regular goddamn battlefield. Figures if he can find them he'll be the man of the hour. Detective first grade. And especially if he's the one finds them instead of you.

Gload gives Val a sly smile.

VAL

What did you do, John?

GLOAD

Drew him a little map.

VAL

You shouldn't have done that. He could make it bad for you.

Gload begins to shudder with his version of laughter, snorting and grunting.

GLOAD

Oh Lord. Oh Christ Almighty, it'd be worth it. I got this picture in my head of him running up and down them hills with his notebook and spade. Running and writing and digging and running some more. Oh sweet Christ on a crutch.

Small tears begin to leak from the corners of Gload's eyes.

Val watches this strange violent man not sure what to make of him, as he leans forward, shaking and swinging his head like a great bear. *

GLOAD (CONT'D)

Good Lord.

VAL

We've got to get back.

They rise and head back to jail, Gload still grinning.

INT. JAIL: SHORT TIME LATER

Val walks Gload through the main cell block. An Inmate, MURPHY, his narrow head nearly fitting between the bars, is standing hissing a disjointed litany of obscenities.

MURPHY

Mothafucka!

Val swings his baton viciously against the bars just above the man's head. It's the first violent move we've seen him make. *

VAL

Get back to your goddamn cot, Murphy, or I'll come in there and crush your head. *

Murphy shrinks back to his cot. Gload gives Val a look... *

Val and Gload continue on to the sally gate entering the hospital wing to Gload's cell.

Val opens the cell and Gload enters. Through the bars, Val unlocks the handcuffs and leg irons.

GLOAD

Would you like to talk about it, Val?

No response.

*

GLOAD (CONT'D)

You might want to get it off your chest, whatever it is that's eating at you.

Val is silent. Gload retreats to his cot, lights a cigarette.

*

GLOAD (CONT'D)

I'll be here should you feel the need to talk.

Val leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL: NIGHT

*

The nurses' station phone is ringing. A black NURSE picks it up.

Nurse

Copper County Hospital, ICU unit, may I help you?...one minute please. (she calls to Glenda who is drawing a curtain around a patient's bed) Glenda. Phone.

Glenda takes the receiver.

GLEND A

Yes, this is Glenda.

CROSS-CUT BETWEEN GLEND A AND VAL AT HIS NIGHT SHIFT DESK.

VAL

It's me.

GLEND A

(hesitates))

Hi.

VAL

I tried you at Jean's. You're working late.

GLEND A

Double shift.

VAL
How are you?

GLEENDA
Fine.

VAL
When do you think you might be coming home?

GLEENDA
I don't know.

Both are silent for a few beats.

DR. GORDON(O.C.)
Glenda.

GLEENDA
Val, I've got to go now.

VAL
All right.

GLEENDA
I'll see you.

VAL
When?

GLEENDA
I can't say a time. I'll just see you.

VAL
I could come by there.

GLEENDA
No, that's not a good idea.

The good-looking SURGEON (from the party) approaches Glenda.

DR. GORDON
Glenda? (he motions that he needs her)

Val reacts to the male voice.

GLEENDA
Val, I have to go.

VAL
Fine.

He waits a beat, saying nothing, then hears Glenda hang up the phone.

*
*
*

*

Val SLAMS down the phone, staring into space.

INT. GLOAD'S CELL: LATER THAT NIGHT

Val approaches the cell. Gload is barely visible, writing on his yellow pad.

VAL
(reading off his palm)
'Basenes, vileness, depravity'.

Gload looks up.

VAL (CONT'D)
The definition of 'turpitude'.

GLOAD
Well, thank you. I didn't figure it to be anything complimentary.

VAL
Nope. I guess you could have figured that much.

Val just stands there, not sure wether to go or stay.

GLOAD
You haven't had a lot to say these days, Deputy. What's on your mind?

VAL
Very little sleep, John. Sleep is on my mind.

GLOAD
You should try my little trick. Imagine back to when you were alone on the tractor, plowing the field.

VAL
It's three in the morning and you're awake talking to me. Not the best advertisement for it.

GLOAD
Thought you might want to talk.

VAL
So you stayed up to talk to me.

GLOAD
Sorry after what we been through you'd be surprised by that. Yes, Deputy, I stayed up to talk to you. Why not sit for a bit.

Val squats against the wall.

VAL
It's my wife.

GLOAD
You sorta had that look.

VAL
She's been staying in town with a girlfriend.
I hardly saw her before. Now I never do.

GLOAD
Another man?

VAL
Don't think so.

GLOAD
But you're not sure.

A beat.

VAL
Might be this doctor.

GLOAD
What doctor?

VAL
New surgeon at the hospital. Lives in one of
those big fancy houses they built north of
town.

Gload lights a cigarette, approaches the bars.

GLOAD
How long you been married?

VAL
Year and a half.

GLOAD
Still in the discovery phase, huh? You two
need to spend more time together.

VAL
Little tough me working nights.

GLOAD
If I was to add up the days I was gone while I
was with Francie, I'd say it was damn near two
of the five years. I don't recommend it.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

*

VAL

I don't have much choice at the moment.

A beat.

VAL (CONT'D)

Francie. That's your wife?

GLOAD

You asked me that before and I never answered you. Never had the need to describe her to anybody.

VAL

Girlfriend?

GLOAD

I guess 'wife' would be best. It's how I feel about her anyway.

VAL

And she left you?

GLOAD

What I said was...Yes, she did. She left me for something better.

Val waits for more. There is none. *

VAL

I need to get up and get moving before I crap right out here.

Val gets up slowly, placing a hand on the flat horizontal bar of Gload's cell. **Gload lays his thick paw over Val's hand.**

Val makes no move to pull away. Gload leaves it there a moment, then pulls away and retreats back into the darkness.

GLOAD

Thanks for your time, Deptee.

VAL

Goodnight, John. *

Val leaves Gload sitting alone in his cell. *

Gload talks quietly to himself.

GLOAD

My wife Francie. (he smiles softly) I marry you now. Before whatever God you pick, it don't matter. You're my wife and I'm your husband.

GLOAD'S MEMORY:

EXT. GLOAD'S HOUSE LATE MORNING

Gload sits in his chair, reading the paper. FRANCIE'S CAR IS NOT THERE.

CLOSE ON: Mug shot of Sid the Kid, with the headline: LOCAL MAN ARRESTED FOR RAPE OF 15 YEAR OLD GIRL IN SHELBY MOTEL: *Beats father with golf club.*

GLOAD
(to himself)
Golf club.

He sits thinking. He makes a decision. He heads down the porch steps and ambles in his odd sailor's gait to a tool bin behind the house.

He grabs a shovel, an axe, a long iron pry bar.

EXT. ORCHARD: SHORT TIME LATER

The CAMERA PANS DOWN from the sunlit sky onto the Orchard where in the midst of the trees, Gload is digging a hole.

INT. TOOL SHED: HOUR LATER

Gload enters, sweaty and dirty, leans the shovel and pry bar against the wooden slats, then takes a folded piece of **yellow paper** and places it in a rusty coffee can.

EXT. APPLE ORCHARD: LATER MID-AFTERNOON

Through the trees, we see Gload come out on the porch, freshly showered. *

He takes a seat in his favorite chair, takes out a cigarette and lights up.

Francie's car pulls up. *

He watches as she studies her face in the rear-view mirror, then gets out of the car.

She has dyed her hair somewhere between red and auburn. Her cheeks are rouged and her lipstick freshly applied.

GLOAD
Now what did you go and do?

FRANCIE

I thought it might make your old hag look a little younger.

GLOAD

It's red.

FRANCIE

Auburn, Johnny. You don't like it.

She walks up on the porch unsteadily.

GLOAD

I do like it. I like it quite a bit.

He rises and helps her up the last step. *

GLOAD (CONT'D)

You look like a million bucks..

EXT. ORCHARD

Through the trees once again, Gload leads Francie inside.

INT. GLOAD'S HOUSE: LATER

Francie sips the last mouthful from her glass of wine as she and Gload have dinner. She smiles at him. He smiles back.

EXT. PORCH NIGHT

Francie has refilled her glass of wine. Francie's hand trembles as she takes a drink.

She and Gload listen to the night sounds, looking out into the darkness.

FRANCIE

I do love you, Johnny.

GLOAD

I love you too.

Francie's not sure what she just heard. She looks over at Gload who continues to look out.

Francie turns back and smiles to herself.

INT. GLOAD'S BEDROOM: LATER THAT NIGHT

Gload, in the doorway, watches Francie at her vanity.

She massages her hands with lotion, patting underneath her chin with the back of her hands. She pulls back her hair, erasing the creases around her eyes.

She touches the corners of her lips, then drops her hands to the vanity as if they were too heavy.

Her tremors cause the tiny vials of perfume and oils to chitter softly as Gload continues to watch her.

EXT. A WANING MOON RISES IN THE EAST

INT. GLOAD'S HOUSE: NIGHT

The moonlight filters through the thin beige draperies riffing on a breeze. Francie is fast asleep.

Gload removes a pretty green dress from the closet, and sits on a chair near the bed.

GLOAD
(whispers)
I always liked this on you.

Gload rises, lays the dress on the chair.

He takes a pillow and presses it down on Francie's face.

She squirms and bucks until she is dead. *

He removes the pillow. Francie lies peacefully, eyes half-opened. Gload gently eases her eyelids shut, then with his brutal hands begins to undo her nightgown.

EXT. APPLE ORCHARD: NIGHT

Through the trees, one last time, Gload comes out of his house, carrying Francie in her green dress. He crosses the moonlit yard toward us.

Gload gently lays Francie down on the ground beside the perfectly dug grave, the edges of the hole sharp and plumb, and clambers in. He lifts her gently and lays her in the deep hole.

He arranges the folds of her dress around her legs, crosses her arms gently, caresses her cheek, removes a lace handkerchief from his pocket and carefully drapes it across her face.

INT. GLOAD'S CELL: NIGHT PRESENT TIME

Gload sits on his bunk quietly.

EXT. FORT PECK RESERVOIR: AFTERNOON

A fishing pole, slanted on a forked branch sitting idle, the line twisted and balled up disappearing into the lake.

Val in his rumpled uniform, tired as hell, with Tom at his side, stands talking to a YOUNG COUPLE at a dusty camp site on the shore of the lake. *

An outboard motor boat pulled up on the sand, a camper-shelled pick-up, a tent, TWO YOUNG KIDS sitting nearby batting a beachball around. *

(NOTE: THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE MAY OR MAY NOT BE HEARD-MIGHT BE SOME MUSIC)

MAN

I set him up with a pole and a gob of worms and then we took the boat out. We weren't gone more than an hour and he's nowhere. I've spent half a day hiking around looking for him.

Woman

I know where he went. He's gone out looking for Mother. She's been gone three years and he's out there looking for her in the hills.

The Woman is in tears. Her Husband tries to console her.

VAL

I'm going to need a piece of his clothing, something that has his scent on it. *

The Man hands Tom an old sweater draped over a camping chair near the fishing pole. Val offers it to Tom, who gets a good scent.

LATER:

Tom leads Val along a dry stream bed, through deep troughs and cutbanks.

They walk for some time, heading out of the streambed winding their way through juniper and exposed sandstone.

They head up a small rise where there is an abandoned homestead cabin. *

Tom pulls Val into the cabin where there's a circle of footprints...they head back out and continue.

LATER: SUN IS SETTING

Tom starts wagging his tail as they near a pile of deadfall. Val takes note of the footprints.

He looks into the distance and can see a snatch of white far ahead. Tom leads him in that direction.

A magpie stands upon an OLD MAN'S back, pulling at his shirt. It flies off as Val and Tom approach.

The OLD MAN lies dead, face burned from the sun. A purple and yellow baseball cap lies in the dust nearby.

The Old Man's trousers are stretched tight over a swollen leg, discolored by thin fluid seeping from a wound. The Old Man holds a five-foot long rattlesnake in a death grip, wound around his arm.

Val takes photos of the grisly scene.

INT./EXT. JEEP: NIGHT

Val, exhausted, drives the lonely stretch of road, Tom asleep in the passenger seat.

INT. JAIL: NIGHT

Wexler strides down the main cell corridor. Several of the inmates whistle at him as he walks by, looking straight ahead.

He passes through the sally gate, walks to Gload's cell.

Gload looks up from his bunk where he's been scribbling on his pad.

GLOAD

Where's Val?

WEXLER

Driving back from Ft. Peck I imagine. Heard he and Rin Tin Tin rescued another dead body.

(MORE)

WEXLER (CONT'D)

(he laughs) The Old Bull's got me on double shift so I'll be your company tonight.

Gload gets up and approaches the bars. Wexler backs off.

GLOAD

Hell, I don't bite, Wexler.

WEXLER

Never said you did.

GLOAD

Val sits right up here close.

WEXLER

That's against policy. I could have him wrote up for that,

GLOAD

I wish you wouldn't do that as a personal favor. I kind of feel sorry for the kid.

WEXLER

Yeah, well, you ought to. Rumor has it his wife is fucking some big shot doctor.

*

Gload says nothing, clenches his fists, takes a deep breath.

WEXLER (CONT'D)

Any trouble he has he brings on himself. Tramping around with that dog of his, dirty boots like a farmer, wrinkled slacks, dirty fingernails. Thinks he has the Old Bull's ear, but he doesn't.

GLOAD

He has let himself go. Yes, indeed.

WEXLER

Anyways, that's what I want to talk to you about, John. Don't waste your time on Millimaki. I'll be your man, John. You cooperate with me it could be to your benefit.

GLOAD

I believe I have been cooperating. What about the map?

WEXLER

Map didn't amount to shit, John. I think you know that. You were fucking with me.

GLOAD

Nossir. I wouldn't do any such thing. I'm an old man, Weldon. My memory ain't so good. The bodies are out there. It wasn't exactly yesterday, you know.

Gload hangs his head like he's ashamed.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

You get me a topo map and I know I could find 'em.

WEXLER

You could do it with a topo?

GLOAD

I'm sure of it.

WEXLER

Let me think about that.

GLOAD

Then we could go out there and I could pretty well show you exactly what you want.

WEXLER

Take you out? I don't believe I can do that.

GLOAD

Right, right. The Old Bull would probably want Val to take me out, if at all.

WEXLER

I outrank Millimaki. Time and grade.

GLOAD

I'm just going by what I hear.

WEXLER

Like what?

GLOAD

Like he was going to let Val take me out there in a set of leg chains, that's all. (Gload chuckles to himself) As if an old sonofabitch like me could leg it out anyways.

Wexler chuckles along with him, thinking....

EXT. COPPER COUNTY HOSPITAL NOON

*

Val's jeep pulls into the parking lot of Copper County Memorial Hospital.

Val gets out, hasn't slept, motions for Tom to stay in the Jeep, walks toward the entrance, determined.

*

INT. HOSPITAL

Val enters, follows the signs to ICU, searching for Glenda.

In the ICU waiting room, Val takes a seat across from an elderly lady, so tired his eyes close as he sits slumped.

A few moments later, he opens his eyes and sees Glenda coming out of the restricted area door, one arm stuck in her coat like she's heading off somewhere.

He gets up and she sees him. Her hair is cut differently, shorter. Val goes to her.

*

*

VAL

Let's go to lunch.

She stands frozen, looking at him, one arm still in her coat.

VAL (CONT'D)

What do you say? I haven't seen you in two weeks.

Glenda takes a moment to decide.

GLENDA

I don't have much time. We can eat in the cafeteria.

She heads off. Val follows.

INT. CAFETERIA

Val grabs a grilled cheese sandwich, puts it on his tray. He grabs a bottle of water, pays the cashier.

VAL

You're not eating?

GLENDA

I don't care to.

Val follows her to a table in the middle of the crowded room. She drapes her coat over a chair. Val sets down his tray.

VAL

How are things going?

GLEENDA
They're going fine.

VAL
Were you going out to lunch somewhere?

GLEENDA
Not really..

VAL
Not really? You were or you weren't.

GLEENDA
Don't talk to me like that, Val. I'm not an investigation.

VAL
No, it's just that you were going somewhere because you had your coat so you were going out. I don't have to be a cop to figure that out.

She breathes deeply.

GLEENDA
I'm so tired of it, Val.

VAL
If you could tell me what 'it' is, I'd appreciate it.

GLEENDA
It. Struggling. I'm tired of struggling.

Val studies her across the table. He notices a tiny SILVER DOLPHIN on a thin chain around her neck.

GLEENDA (CONT'D)
We seem to struggle at everything. Just to talk. To find out who we really are together.

VAL
I know who I am. But maybe you're making yourself into somebody else.

GLEENDA
That's it exactly. You've always known who you are. But I was..I don't know... just a part of you-

VAL
Was?

*

GLEENDA

- and that's not enough.

VAL

And that's my fault?

GLEENDA

I'm not saying that. If it's anybody's fault, it's mine. I've just gone along with whatever you decided.

VAL

Like what? *

GLEENDA

Like the cabin. You bought the cabin, said that's where we're going to live. You were all excited about it. You never even talked to me about it.

VAL

You said you liked it.

GLEENDA

What choice did I have?...It wasn't fair. *

VAL

Fair. Jesus.

Val bows his head like he's praying.

VAL (CONT'D)

This isn't really about that anyway, is it? It's about some other motherfucker.

GLEENDA

What? *

VAL

It's a doctor. Am I correct? Maybe he's the bwana with all the dead heads in his house and the fucking tassled shoes.

GLEENDA

What are you talking about?

VAL

And he gave you that chain, right? That fish.

Her hand goes reflexively to her throat.

GLEENDA

It was my birthday yesterday. It was a present. At least someone remembered.

VAL
Take it off.

GLEENDA
No.

Glenda takes a breath.

GLEENDA (CONT'D)
He's just a friend.

VAL
You're married to me. You don't need a
'friend'.

A paunchy SECURITY GUARD (60) gets up from a nearby table and stands next to Val. Val looks up at him.

VAL (CONT'D)
We're having a private conversation.

SECURITY GUARD
Not that private, Deputy, because I could hear it pretty clearly.

VAL
It's private.

SECURITY GUARD
Maybe this isn't the place for this sort of business.

GLEENDA
We're just leaving.

VAL
We're not just leaving.

SECURITY GUARD
Deputy, the conductation of this business is to be done elsewhere.

VAL
That's not even a word.

SECURITY GUARD
Deputy.

GLEENDA
Val, stop it.

VAL

Fuck your conductation. (to Glenda) And it's a doctor. Couldn't it at least have been a janitor?

GLENDA

It doesn't matter who it is. He's a friend.

VAL

A doctor. I should have known. Some asshole thinks he's the fucking king of the hospital.

SECURITY GUARD

I'm asking one more time.

VAL

Take it off!

Glenda buries her head in her hands.

GLENDA

My God, Val, you're scaring people. You're wearing a gun. Please stop.

SECURITY GUARD

Sir, you're going to have to leave.

Val leans closer to her, whispers harshly in her ear.

VAL

How about I take this gun and shove it up your doctor's ass? I could do that. I could do that in a heartbeat.

GLENDA

(whispering harshly back)
That's enough, Val!

SECURITY GUARD

(hand on his mace
cannister)
Like the lady says, pardner. No more. This is a public place.

VAL

Yeah, right. A public place, and you thought you could bring me here so I wouldn't embarrass you. Well, you are so very wrong.

Val stands up and proclaims for all to hear.

VAL (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, can I have your attention!

(MORE)

VAL (CONT'D)

I am a Copper County Sheriff's Deputy, an officer of the law and my wife has just informed me that she has a new 'friend'. Please remain calm. I assure you all that should this someone be present in this room I will not at this time discharge my firearm into the anal region of the medical professional who is fucking my wife.

*

Glenda is too shocked to speak. And Val walks out.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Val strides to his jeep, the world tilting on him. He gets in, drives off.

INT. GLOAD'S CELL: NIGHT

Val sits wearily. Gload at the bars finishing a story.

GLOAD

I could tell the rings were expensive 'cause he kept twirling them around while he was playing. So he gets up after winning a big pot and heads out. I excuse myself to go to the head, catch him in the alley and strangle the life out of him. Dumped him in the trunk of my car. That Chinaman must have been eating a lot of salt cause later I had to cut his fingers off to get the rings they were so swelled up.

Val doesn't even react, he's so wiped out. He starts to get up.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

Let me tell me you this one other thing, Valentine. Sit down.

Val takes a deep breath, sits heavily back down. Gload retreats back in his cell.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

I was in this little town once some years ago over east of here and every day I'd walk by this place for old people. A whatyacallit - old folks home, this line of old people sitting in their wheel chairs just looking out. A week I went by there every morning on the way for a paper up the street and back and I seen them there, heads moved all of a piece to follow me just like cattle.

(MORE)

GLOAD (CONT'D)

They were just waiting it out, Val, see what I mean? I was the best part of their day. *

And one day I just turned and went in. *

They were just sitting there, didn't look at me, didn't turn their heads at all cause the window was where their world was. Blankets on their laps, hair standing up every which way. I just stood there. I folded up my paper and put it in my back pocket. I thought about a half minute I could snap their necks one two three down the line and then this pogue comes in eating a chicken leg in his dirty white jacket and says can I help you and that was that. *

VAL

I'm tired, John. Maybe you could help me see your point.

GLOAD

Now you're the best part of my day, Valentine. I'm the same as those pitiful sonsofbitches looking out the window. People at the end of the line. They would have been better off dead, is my point. *

Val's had enough. He gets up and leaves. *

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPT. LOCKER ROOM: EARLY THAT MORNING *

Val has changed into his civvies. He sits on a bench lacing up his boots. He doesn't look up as Dobek and another OFFOCER enter the room. *

Voyle Dobek stands over him. *

DOBEK

Been meaning to tell you, I seen you sitting on the bench a few weeks back.

Val doesn't look up, keeps lacing his boots.

DOBEK (CONT'D)

How can you sit and talk to a piece of shit like that?

VAL

Which exactly piece of shit would we be talking about, Voyle?

DOBEK

Your old psycho. Sitting out there.

VAL

You pretty much nailed it, Voyle. Two guys sitting on a bench.

DOBEK

That ain't the way you do it, asshole. Not out there. There's a right way and a wrong fucking way is what I'm telling you and you don't sit out there in public with a psycho piece of shit for the citizens to see. It looks bad on us.

VAL

I'm very sorry Officer Dobek. To make you look bad would just about ruin my entire day.

DOBEK

Fuck you. I had you pegged as a smart-ass the minute you come on.

Val says nothing.

DOBEK (CONT'D)

Heard about your little performance at the hospital. Guess if my wife was fucking some doctor it might make me out to be a smart-ass too.

Val comes off the bench and nails Dobek in the balls with a vicious uppercut.

Dobek crumples to the floor as Val jumps astride him and presses his nightstick against his throat.

Before he can crush Dobek's windpipe, the other OFFICER pulls Val off. *

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE: SHORT TIME LATER

The Sheriff rubs his hands over his head.

SHERIFF

I cannot have my officers killing each other in the locker room. Raylene!

Raylene's head appears in the doorway.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Raylene, would you please get me some aspirin.

RAYLENE

There's some right in front of you, in the drawer.

SHERIFF

Oh, for God's sake.

The Sheriff finds the aspirin, pops two in his mouth and swallows them dry.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You're taking two days off. I've got to go down to Butte tomorrow anyway and Dobek will be in charge here, so it's good timing for you not to be here. And my suggestion, from the look of you, would be that you try and get some sleep.

VAL

Okay, sir.

Val turns to go.

SHERIFF

Your behavior is unacceptable, Deputy Millimaki. That being said, I would have done the same thing to that big prick and if a word of that leaves this room other than in your thick head I would not recommend you for a crossing guard.

VAL

Yessir.

SHERIFF

Now get your butt out of here.

INT. GLOAD'S CELL: MINUTES LATER

Val in his street clothes approaches Gload's cell.

GLOAD

That's a better outfit. Suits you. You look like a farmer.

VAL

Just wanted to let you know I won't be around for a few days.

GLOAD

I figured. Don't get yourself strung out on account of me.

VAL

What the hell are you talking about?

GLOAD

Heard about your little dust-up. And I do appreciate it. Don't get me wrong.

VAL

It had nothing to do with you and furthermore it's none of your goddamn business.

GLOAD

Woman troubles, fellow cop troubles, if I was on the outside I'd make it my business and help you out.

VAL

I don't need your kind of help.

GLOAD

Whatever you say Deptee.

Val leaves. Gload watches him go.

*

EXT. VAL'S CABIN: LATER THAT MORNING

Tom is excited as Val lets him out of his pen and they head into the cabin.

INT. VAL'S CABIN: NIGHT

*

Val and Tom enter the quiet cabin.

*

Val goes into the bedroom, pulls open his dresser drawer, removes the shoe box with photos of the dead and places it atop the dresser.

*

*

*

He puts the photo of the dead old man in the shoe box with the others. Looks at the crayon writing on the box a moment, then places it back in the drawer.

*

*

*

Val wanders into the main room, sits on the couch, staring at nothing. Tom looks up at him eagerly, wanting some action.

*

*

EXT. CABIN

Val goes to his jeep, reaches for a book in the back seat as Tom jumps in the vehicle.

VAL

Not now, buddy. Come on, out of there.

Tom dejectedly jumps out and they head back in.

INT. CABIN: SHORT TIME LATER

Val is trying to read. Tom next to him, panting, relentless in his need to do something.

Val finally, exasperated, gets up, Tom following and they go outside once again.

EXT. CABIN

Val grabs Tom by the collar and ushers him into his pen. Tom whines as Val heads back inside.

INT./EXT. CABIN: LATER THAT NIGHT

Fire embers glow in the fireplace. Val lies awake on the couch, covered by a quilt. He can't sleep. *

He gets up, drapes the quilt around himself and heads outside in the chilly night air.

He lets Tom out of his pen, clambers back on the porch, and sits on the porch swing, quilt wrapped around him.

Tom lays down at his feet. Val finally closes his eyes and sleeps.

ALL IS BLACK

THE RINGING OF A PHONE

EARLY MORNING; SUN ABOUT TO PEEK OVER THE HORIZON

Val opens his eyes, still on the porch. He orients himself, then rises and goes into the cabin to answer the phone.

INTERCUT WITH SHERIFF IN HIS OFFICE:

VAL

Yes? *

SHERIFF

You remember reading about that young gal up in Conrad that was raped by a bunch of her classmates?

VAL

Yeah. *

SHERIFF

She's had a rough time, bullied incessantly. She seems to have disappeared. Her car was found outside town, no trace of her. I know I gave you a couple days off, but I need you to get up to Pondera County and see what you and Tom can do. I've got to get my ass down to Butte, Raylene has the details.

Val just listens, trying to wake up.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You there, Val?

VAL

Yes, sir, I'm here.

SHERIFF

You don't have to go. I could call over to Helena and have them send someone.

VAL

It's all right, Sheriff, Tom could use the work.

SHERIFF

Alright then. Good luck. I'll be back later tonight. Let me know how it goes.

VAL

Will do.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT EARLY MORNING

The sun has yet to rise as Wexler's Mustang arrives around the rear of the building.

Wexler gets out, in street clothes, but armed...unlocks the back security door and enters the building. *

INT. JAIL

Wexler comes through the sally gate making as little noise as possible. Gload is asleep on his cot. Wexler taps on the bars with his keys and whispers.

WEXLER

Gload, wake up.

Gload stirs.

GLOAD
What the hell.

WEXLER
(whispering)
Get dressed, John. I'm taking you out. I got
your topo maps for north of the river.

GLOAD
You're taking me out?

WEXLER
That's right. On my own time. No more dicking
around.

Gload, now fully awake, approaches the bars in his boxers.

GLOAD
And you got maps?

WEXLER
You're gonna find me some bodies. Get dressed.

Gload begins to do so.

EXT. BARLEY FIELD: MORNING

Val's jeep pulls off the two lane highway onto a ranch road.

Yellow crime scene tape flutters along the road for a good
ways, cordoning off a vast field of uncut barley.

Val drives until he sees a Pondera County Sheriff's car, a
young officer with flaming RED hair leaning against it.

Beyond him is a small blue car parked up against the field. *

Val gets out of the jeep. The young officer offers his hand.

Red
Malmberg. They call me Red.

VAL
Where'd they come up with that?

RED
Yeah, go figure.

VAL
What's with the tape? Must be half a mile of
it.

RED

Yeah, no shit. I strung it myself. Old farmer Voldseth wanted to roll in here and start cutting. Says he's got like a bazillion dollars sitting here and needs to get it cut right away. Only way I could keep him out.

Val looks out over the field.

RED (CONT'D)

You know about her, right?

Val nods.

RED (CONT'D)

Helluva thing. She'd grown up with every one of those kids.

VAL

(pointing to the blue car)
That her vehicle?

RED

We been all through it. Tracks go in by her car there, head out into the field, then just stop and don't come out. It's like she just flew away.

Red's radio comes to life in his car. He goes to answer. Val lets Tom out of the jeep.

RED (CONT'D)

Sorry. Got to run. Got a domestic. Good luck.

Red drives off. Val leads Tom to the blue car. He looks in the window, then out over the countryside. Not a telephone pole, house or shed visible.

Val gets in the driver's seat, runs his hands lightly over the steering wheel. From the rear-view mirror hangs a small dream-catcher and a plastic rosary.

He picks up a schoolbook from the passenger seat, flips it open.

A sheet of stationery with flowered edges lies inside. On it is written in the circular script of a teenage girl:

*Alas, for me, it has become quite clear
My only recourse is to disappear
Penelope Anne Carnahan*

VAL
(to himself)
Penelope Ann Carnahan. Your name is like a
poem.

He opens the back seat door and Tom jumps in, sniffing around
the floorboards, nuzzling a hooded sweatshirt. *
*

VAL (CONT'D)
That's her, Tom. That's our girl.

EXT. MISSOURI BREAKS: LATE MORNING

Gload , his hands cuffed behind him, leg irons on, leads
Wexler along a game trail. Wexler carries a spade in one
hand, the topographical map in the other.

Gload, out of breath, stops for a moment, orienting himself.

GLOAD
Let me take a look at that map again.

Wexler holds it open. *

WEXLER
(finger on map)
We're about here, yes?

GLOAD
Oh, shit. You sure? I thought we were
farther east.

WEXLER
No, we parked the car right here.

GLOAD
Okay. Yes. We've just got to head over that
ridge (he nods east) and we'll be there.

WEXLER
For God's sake, John.

GLOAD
Well, I'm sorry, Weldon. It's been a few
years, you know. Won't take long.

And Gload heads off on the trail. Wexler in his pressed jeans
follows.

EXT. BARLEY FIELD: MORNING

Tom, on leash, leads Val through the barley field, following the girl's tracks.

In the middle of the field, they suddenly come to a halt. Not a sign of continuation anywhere.

Tom pulls at the leash, heading back the way they came.

VAL

Just hold on a minute.

Val restrains Tom as he takes a closer look at the ground. Stands up, looks around.

VAL (CONT'D)

Okay, boy. Maybe you're right.

And they head back towards the car. *

VAL (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Bright girl...bright girl.

As they come out of the barley, Tom is pawing at the ground, eager to head off further down the hard-pack ranch road. *

VAL (CONT'D)

(undoing Tom's leash)

Okay, then, if you insist. *

And Tom bounds down the road, vanishing behind the barley where the road meets a boundary fence. Val takes off following.

EXT. MISSOURI BREAKS: DAY

Gload, wrists cuffed behind his back, struggles to maintain his footing as he leads Wexler down the steep bank of a coulee. *

He leads Wexler through the sagebrush to a good sized rock in a clearing.

GLOAD

This is it, under that stone.

Wexler, excited, shoves the map in his back pocket, lays down the spade and crouches to move the rock.

Gload squats down quickly, his back to Wexler, reaches his cuffed hands over Wexler's head and pulls the short chain of the cuffs tight around his throat.

Wexler struggles but Gload has leverage and stands up, dragging Wexler by the throat until his body falls limp.

Gload frees his hands from Wexler, notices the dark stain on his victim's trousers.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

You weren't no surprise, Deputy. I figured there was nothing to you.

Gload manages to get the keys from Wexler's pocket, with difficulty undoes his cuffs and leg irons.

He takes Wexler's service revolver and the clasp knife from his belt.

He takes the spade and begins to dig.

EXT. BARLEY FIELD: DAY

Tom is sniffing by the ditch that runs lengthwise along the far side of the field. Weed stems, thistle growing here.

Val notices the few inches of a PLASTIC STRAW sticking up out of the earth. He pulls at it, but it seems to be stuck.

He digs away gently at its base and uncovers the girl's lips, the straw clenched tightly in her teeth. He realizes he's kneeling on her chest and rises quickly.

VAL

Oh Christ, oh Christ.

EXT. MISSOURI BREAKS: DAY

Gload, soaked in sweat, is chest high in the grave he is digging. *

He tosses the shovel aside, grabs the dead Wexler by his feet and hauls him in. *

EXT. BARLEY FIELD: DAY

Val has donned a pair of latex gloves, removing squares of sod that the girl evidently had cut out and placed atop herself.

He brushes the loose soil off her clothed body, sees an empty pill bottle, small plastic water bottle, and a large kitchen knife lying beside her, the straw still clenched in her teeth.

He lifts her arms out of the earth, notices her torn and broken nails.

VAL

God, it must have taken you hours.

He leans down and gently blows the loose earth off her face. He sits looking at her. He removes a glove and takes her hand in his. And sits.

EXT. MISSOURI BREAKS: LATE AFTERNOON

Wexler's clothes are piled up near the grave. Two SEVERED HANDS lie on the pile of clothes. *

WE BARELY SEE Gload who's in the grave, working away at something. *

He rises, shirtless, lifting Wexler's SEVERED HEAD by the hair, and plops it near the hands. *

Gload climbs out of the grave, exhausted, his bare arms covered in blood. He grabs the shovel and begins to fill in the grave. *

EXT. BARLEY FIELD: LATE AFTERNOON

A CORONER examines the dead girl's body, the straw still clenched in her teeth. Val is with two DETECTIVES.

DETECTIVE ONE

Looks like she cut these sections of sod, dug herself a grave. I figure she took a bunch of pills, covered herself up before she faded, breathed through the straw until she was dead.

Val just nods his head.

EXT. MISSOURI BREAKS: SUNSET *

Gload clambers down an incline to Wexler's car carrying the shovel and Wexler's head and hands wrapped up in the bundle of clothes. *

He pops the trunk of the Mustang, sees a burlap sack with tire chains in it. He dumps out the chains, stuffs the bloody bundle of clothes in the sack, and heads down to the river. *

EXT. MISSOURI RIVER: MINUTES LATER

Gload reaches the river, finds a good size rock, puts it in the sack, rips a piece off the bloody shirt, ties up the sack and tosses it as far as he can into the river.

He crouches down and washes the blood from his hands and arms.

EXT. BARLEY FIELD: SUNSET

A local patrol car drives up as the girl's body is loaded into an ambulance. A YOUNG COP gets out.

YOUNG COP
(to Val)
Are you Valentine Millimaki?

VAL
Yeah, what's up?

YOUNG COP
Your boss called in. Needs you to call him ASAP. Extremely urgent. You can follow me back to the station.

EXT. MISSOURI BREAKS: EVENING

Gload has jacked up Wexler's car and removed the rear tire.

He pops the hood and disconnects the battery.

INT. SHELBY MONTANA POLICE STATION: EVENING

Val is on the phone.

VAL
What do you mean, he's 'gone'?

(INTERCUT WITH SHERIFF)

SHERIFF
Just that. I got back from Butte an hour ago. Gload is not in his cell and nobody seems to know where Wexler is. Dobek thought they were in Court. You know anything about this?

VAL
No sir, I sure don't.

SHERIFF

We've got an APB out for Wexler's car but I need you back here ASAP.

VAL

It'll take me a couple of hours.

SHERIFF

Well, hang up the damn phone and get moving.

Val does so.

EXT. MISSOURI BREAKS: NIGHTFALL

*

An old Ford pick-up is coming down the road. Gload waves for it to stop. It does.

Gload approaches the truck, an OLD FARMER in the driver's seat. Gload pulls Wexler's pistol from his pants.

GLOAD

I ain't gonna hurt ya, but I need your truck. Get out.

The Farmer is scared shitless, doesn't say a word. Gload leads him to Wexler's car and puts him in the driver's seat, handcuffs him to the steering wheel.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

Somebody'll come along and help you out, my friend. Just relax.

Gload gets in the pick-up and drives off.

INT./EXT. VAL'S JEEP: NIGHTFALL

*

Val speeds along the lonely two-lane highway. Tom asleep on the passenger seat.

*

*

EXT. HOSPITAL: NIGHT

*

Gload drives into the parking lot in the pick-up. He parks, gets out, and heads for the entrance.

INT./EXT. JEEP: NIGHT

*

Val continues to drive....

*

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX: NIGHT

The Blue pick-up comes to a stop across the street from Jean's apartment building.

Gload gets out, ambles across the street, up the stairs to Jean's apartment.

EXT. COPPER COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT: NIGHT

Val's jeep pulls up.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Val enters the station. The Old Man whose truck got hijacked, sits in a chair. Clock on the wall reads 9:30.

Val strides down to the Sheriff's office. Door is open. Sheriff is on the phone.

SHERIFF

Well, I understand that but we need to cover as many of the arteries heading out of town as possible....Yes, A dark blue 1962 Ford pick-up. License MG 222....Yes, Thanks.

He hangs up. Looks to Val.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Highway patrol. See that old man out there?

VAL

Yeah.

SHERIFF

Gload hijacked his truck thirty miles east of here out by the river and handcuffed him to the steering wheel of Wexler's Mustang. Said he was sitting there a good three hours. Somebody finally stopped and called in. Sent two cars out there. Just brought him back ten minutes ago. Dobek is still out there searching the area.

VAL

Wexler's probably in a hole in the ground.

SHERIFF

Or keeping the trout company. And your pal is God knows where driving around in a '62 Ford pick-up.

VAL

He's not my 'pal'.

SHERIFF

Well, whatever the fuck he is, we've got to find the sonofabitch.

INT/EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX: NIGHT *

THROUGH THE WINDOW OF A SECOND STORY APARTMENT, a late model Jaguar pulls up and parks in front of the modest two-story complex. *

THE SILHOUETTE OF JOHN GLOAD'S head and right shoulder come into frame, as he watches: *

Dr. Gordon hops out from the driver's seat. Glenda gets out the other side. *

They walk to the foot of the stairs leading up to Jean's apartment. *

WE CAN'T HEAR what they are saying. Glenda smiles, offers her hand. Dr. Gordon smiles back, shakes her hand. *

Glenda heads up the stairs. (She is NOT wearing the silver dolphin chain). Dr. Gordon gets back in his car. *

Glenda reaches the second floor landing, when Dr. Gordon gets out of the Jag, calls to her holding up a scarf. *

Glenda quickly goes back down. Dr. Gordon hands her the scarf. *

She heads back up the stairs. *

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX *

When she reaches the landing, she looks back down as the Jag drives off. *

When she turns around, Gload is standing 15 feet away, in front of her closed apartment door. *

They lock eyes for a brief moment before Gload walks towards her. *

She passes by him to her apartment as Gload heads down the stairs. *

She goes to unlock the apartment door. It's unlocked. *

Concerned, she looks down below and sees Gload crossing the street to the pick-up. *

She opens the door, calls inside: *

 GLENDA

 Jean?

No response. She looks back down, sees the pick-up head off in same direction as the Jaguar. *

She enters the apartment, closing the door. We hear the CLICK as she locks it. *

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE CORRIDOR

The phone rings on the Sheriff's desk.

 SHERIFF

 Yes?....Yes, He's right here...put her through. (he hands the phone to Val) It's your wife.

INT. GLENDA'S APARTMENT/SHERIFF'S OFFICE: INTERCUT WITH VAL AND GLENDA ON PHONE

 VAL

 Glenda?

 GLENDA

 (near hysteria)

 Val, that murderer, the man you have in your jail, I think I saw him.

 VAL

 Whoa, whoa, calm down. You saw him where?

 GLENDA

 Here, at Jean's apartment. Dick drove me home and he was right outside the door, I think he may have ben in here. *

 VAL

 Okay, okay. Please calm down. Who is Dick?

 GLENDA

 Dr. Gordon, who drove me home.

 VAL

 When was this?

GLEENDA

Just a few minutes ago. I didn't realize who he was until just now.

*

VAL

Is Jean with you?

GLEENDA

No. Val, I'm scared. He got in a pick-up truck and headed off in the same direction as Dick. I'm afraid he might do something terrible.

*
*
*
*

VAL

Listen, just stay there. Make sure the doors are locked. Where does this doctor live?

GLEENDA

You know, that big house north of town, where the party was.

*

VAL

Right. Okay. I'll run out there. Just try and stay calm.

GLEENDA

Okay. Okay. Bye.

He hangs up.

VAL

Gload was at her apartment. Minutes ago.

SHERIFF

Oh for Christ's sake.

VAL

She said Gload drove off after this doctor who brought her home. I'm going to drive out there. Send someone over to Glenda, will you.

SHERIFF

What a nightmare.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

*

Val hurries out, hops in the Jeep and takes off.

*

EXT. NORTH OF TOWN

*

Gload's pick-up drives slowly up the hill, past expansive new homes set back off the road.

*
*

It slows to a stop at the top of the hill. *

The Jaguar can be seen parked in front of Dr. Gordon's home at the end of a long driveway. *

The pick-ups headlights go off. *

INT./EXT. VAL'S JEEP: NIGHT

Val speeds through the outskirts of town. *

EXT. SURGEON'S HOUSE *

The pick-up slowly heads up the driveway, lights off. *

INT. JEEP *

Val is driving as fast as he can. *

EXT. SURGEON'S HOUSE *

Gload's truck pulls up next to the Jag. He gets out, gun in hand. Heads to the front door. *

Val's jeep roars up the drive of the sprawling home. *

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD, Val sees Gload at the front door of the house about to enter. *

He turns and sees the Jeep, Val driving, screech to a halt.

He and Val look each other in the eye, then Gload throws his entire weight against the door, smashing it open and enters.

Val hops out of his Jeep, draws his gun, runs into the house. *

INT. SURGEON'S HOUSE

Val enters. He sees Gload at the end of the long hallway, in the kitchen, gun at his side; Dr. Gordon backed up against the sink. *

VAL *

John! *

Gload does not turn around. *

GLOAD *

I'm doing this for you, Deptee. *

Val takes a step forward, his weapon trained on Gload'S back. *

VAL *
Drop the gun, John. *

GLOAD *
I'm doing this for you. *

Dr. Gordon turns to the counter, grabs a large knife from a *
wooden-block knife-holder. *

Gload raises the gun at the Surgeon. *

Val fires a split second before Gload pulls the trigger. *

Gload is hit in the right rear shoulder, Dr. Gordon's right *
arm turns red from Gload's shot. *

Gload manages to take the gun from his dangling right hand *
with his left, raises it at the Surgeon.

Val shoots him twice. One behind Gload's left knee, the *
second in his lower left back.

Gload goes down, the gun clattering on the floor.

Dr. Gordon in a state of shock. *

Val walks to Gload, pistol raised. *

He stands over Gload, staring down at him. *

GLOAD (CONT'D)
Finish the job, Depte. Please.

Val glances over at Dr. Gordon. *

VAL *
You okay? *

The Doctor nods yes. *

Val looks back to Gload, pistol still pointed at his face. *

GLOAD *
Do it, Val. *

Val holds the gun, aimed at Gload's head, the two men locked *
in a silent frozen moment. *

SIRENS wail. Val doesn't look up. *

GLOAD (CONT'D) *
Please. *

Behind them, through the open front door, two cop cars and an ambulance roar up the drive. *

The two men remain locked in their moment. *

BLACK OUT

SUPER: EIGHTEEN MONTHS LATER:
MONTANA STATE PENITENTIARY AT DEER LODGE

INT. STATE PEN: DAY

Val walks slowly down a long corridor in civilian clothes. He appears relaxed, clear-headed, like weight has been lifted off his shoulders. *

A sally gate slides open. Val enters the visiting room. *

He walks down the row of booths, the first few filled with wives/girlfriends, talking to their imprisoned loved ones. *

He comes to an empty plastic seat, through the plexiglass, is the face of John Gload. *

Gload is thinner, his eyes sunken. His still thick hands rest flat on the table. His face is pale with band-aids on his forehead and cheek.

GLOAD

My, my, Depte. You're looking good.

Val takes a seat on the other side of the glass.

VAL

Hello, John. *

A beat. *

GLOAD

You should have killed me.

VAL

You can't always get what you want.

Gload grins, exposing a dead tooth, the color of oak. He reaches for a cigarette, his hands quivering a bit.

Neither speaks for a moment or two. *

GLOAD

Kind of thought you might have stopped by and said good-bye before they shipped me out.

VAL

They put me on two weeks leave after that.
You were gone by the time I got back.

A beat.

GLOAD

How's the wife?

VAL

She moved back home to Oregon.

GLOAD

(shaking his head)
Don't tell me that.

A beat.

VAL

I quit the force six months ago.

GLOAD

You go back to farming?

VAL

(shakes his head 'no')
Haven't figured out what I'm gonna do. Me and
Tom might head out west.

A beat.

VAL (CONT'D)

How about you? How you making it?

GLOAD

I don't sleep much. You know how it is. Just
living it out, like I told you once.

VAL

What about the farming dream?

GLOAD

That gets harder and harder - color has begun
to fade and sometimes I can't hardly see it no
more. Except for them gulls. Sonsofabitches
are clearer than ever.

Another moment of silence. Gload puts out his cigarette.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

I told you about a lot of things, Val, in the time we had together and I know you passed some of the shit onto the Old Bull and I do not hold it against you in the very least 'cause that was your job. But I'm going to tell you one last thing and I need your promise before I do. Your word that this is just between you and me.

VAL

How in the hell can you ask a promise of me after all that's happened.

GLOAD

Because we're friends, Val, aren't we? Can you sit there and deny that we're friends?

VAL

I don't know what we are.

GLOAD

Friends, by God. Friends is what we are.

VAL

John, I don't know if you can be friends with somebody who you think might cut your throat if the opportunity arose.

Gload sighs deeply. Looks straight at Val.

GLOAD

Think about this, Deputy. Think about how many times we walked out there in the park, often with nobody around and you turned your back on me. Just like Wexler did. Many times. Many times I could have got hold of you. So, yes, friends is what we are.

*

VAL

Friendship then, because you didn't kill me.

GLOAD

It does not, Deputy, get truer than that.

Val takes that in, breathes deeply.

GLOAD (CONT'D)

I want you to claim me when I cash in, and bury my ashes.

VAL

For Christ sake, I can't do that. Has to be family.

GLOAD *
I ain't got none. *

VAL *
How about your wife? *

GLOAD *
I told you, Francie's gone. *

VAL *
Well, then - *

GLOAD *
(cutting him off) *
I did a little research and found out I can *
appoint a 'personal representative' to do it. *
And so I done that and that's you, Valentine. *
It's all set up and legal as God. *

VAL *
I won't do it. *

Val looks away. Gload watches him, reaches for another
cigarette, nodding his head.

GLOAD
Here it is then, Val. I was hoping you'd do
this for me out of pure friendship, but....

Gload leans closer to the partition, opens the collar of his
work shirt revealing the tiny silver chain girdling his thick
neck, the SILVER DOLPHIN nestled at the hollow of his throat.

Val just stares in disbelief.

GLOAD (CONT'D) *
This was my other gift to you, deputy *
Millimaki. I gave you her life. I could have *
took it but I chose to give it. Lots of times *
I thought I should have took it because she *
caused you a lot of pain - *

VAL *
(cuts him off) *
My pain wasn't her doing. *

GLOAD *
It hurt me to see you thataway, it truly did. *
But I didn't do it. For you. And then I ask *
this tiny favor of you and you say you can't *
do it. You say you won't. Tell me how that's *
right, Valentine. Tell me how that's anywhere *
near fair. *

VAL

How did you find her? Get that close?

*

GLOAD

Don't be a fucking cop when I need you. It took nothing, Val. I got talents.

VAL

You were in her place? Her apartment?

Gload drops his head wearily, grinds out his cigarette....looks up to Val with ravaged eyes.

GLOAD

I don't know that I have a thing you'd call a soul, Val, but I recognize it in other people. You have such a thing. I seen it smudged across your face first time I seen you. So I know you'll do this thing for me. Just put me up there next to Francie.

VAL

Where? Up where?

GLOAD

In the orchard. That's where I put her.

*

Val realizes what Gload is saying.

*

GLOAD (CONT'D)

And that's where I need to be too. In the apple orchard.

*

*

*

The two men sit silently.

*

BLACK OUT

SUPER: SIX MONTHS LATER

EXT. GLOAD'S HOUSE: DAY

Val's jeep pulls to a stop in the overgrown yard. He and Tom get out of the jeep. Val holds a tin cannister.

The house has been neglected: clapboards hanging loose, wasps nests adorn the eaves, Gload's chair falling apart.

Val looks around, walks to the shed.

INT. SHED

Val goes to the rusted can on the work table, wiping cobwebs from in front of his face. He takes the yellowed paper Gload has left, looks at it.

CLOSE ON PAPER: a crude map showing the sight of Francie's grave.

Val takes a spade and heads out.

EXT. ORCHARD

Val enters the orchard, looks at the map, locates a gnarled tree and begins to pace off steps leading to an old stump. Tom always by his side. *

EXT. ORCHARD: SHORT TIME LATER

FROM A DISTANCE we see Val digging a hole.

CLOSER:

The hole is some three feet deep.

Val wipes the sweat from his brow, kneels down, opens the cannister. *

He sifts through the ashes and bits of bone with is hand. *

He pours the contents into the hole, dust billowing up. *

He stands, wipes a pale gray smear on his jeans, tosses the map in the hole and just stands there looking down. *

He reaches in his pocket, takes out the silver chain with the dolphin and drops it into the hole.

He begins to shovel earth back into the hole.

BACK AT VAL'S JEEP

In the orchard, Val shovels the last bit of earth, tamps it down with his foot, and heads toward us, Tom at his heels.

When he reaches the Jeep, he takes a crumpled envelope out of his back pocket: '**For Val**' written on it.

A THIN CRY IS HEARD

Val looks up and sees drifting from the river: The GULLS. two or three at first, and then a dozen, circling and squawking.

Val waves his arms, holding the letter trying to shoo them away.

VAL

Git! You sonsobitches. Git!

The Gulls fly away.

Val opens the letter and reads:

GLOAD (V.O.)

Thanks for coming, Valentine. I hope you have
a good life from here on in. Your FRIEND
John X Gload P.S. I was yours even if you
wasn't mine.

*

Val takes one last look around.

*

He and Tom get in the Jeep and drive off into the Montana countryside.

*

THE END