

The Rabbit in Me

by

Julie Rogers and Bart Bryars

an adaptation of the memoir

*The Rabbit in Me*

by

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OVER BLACK:

GUITAR RIFF, a hammered-on melody. R.E.M. meets Black Sabbath.

FADE IN:

EXT. MUSKEGON LAKE - DAY

An ice fishing hole inside a tent shanty with cam-straps flapping. Snowing, working up a squall.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON

A pull-off and slide on a shiny new 1984 Fender Stratocaster.

BART BRYARS (24, white), a towheaded Cajun. Body of an ice hockey goalie sans the height. He smokes and docks the Fender on a deluxe guitar stand.

The room, outfitted with a songwriter's wet dream: a Fender Mustang bass, Ludwig drum set, Tascam 4-track tape machine, mics, stands, cables, and a pool table.

Bart loads a VHS tape labeled MICHIGAN SNUFF into a 13" Panasonic TV/VCR combo. Clicks remote to PLAY. Stands back, smokes, and watches.

ON SCREEN

A silly film. ICE FISHERMAN heaves an augur out of lakeside shelf ice. PERP approaches from behind, 9mm pistol drawn. SHOOTS.

The fisherman falls through the ice, bobs up, scrabbles for the edge. Perp tries to pilfer the augur from him and falls in too.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM - DAY

Bart STOPS the video, REWINDS. Switches to the Mustang bass.

THUMPING on a Mustang bass guitar. Bart PLAYS video again.

EXT. MUSKEGON LAKE - DAY - INTERCUT

A tent shanty perched on the ice.

INT. TENT SHANTY - DAY

FIGURE in parka drills with an ice augur.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM - DAY

Bart packs a suitcase of clothes. He tosses in a shoebox of labeled cassettes: NUKE ATTACK, SANDINISTAS, the like. Hangs a U.S. Coast Guard uniform over a closet door.

PANASONIC TV - ON SCREEN

WEATHER REPORT, a winter storm. Bart SWITCHES OFF TV, docks the bass guitar. Takes one last look around the room before cutting the light.

INT. TENT SHANTY - DAY

FIGURE bores out fishing holes in a square arrangement. Cuts a 28" hole-to-hole square opening with an ice saw. Chips at the edges with a spud bar.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Bart's whitey 'fro and chops, now Vantablack. He smears Vaseline around his eyebrows and dyes them using Q-tips.

INT. TENT SHANTY - DAY

FIGURE pours Jim Beam down the ice fishing hole. Lays the bottle by a tackle box.

CLOSE ON

A sacrificial slice of one thumb on the augur. Blood drips on the ice around the ice-fishing hole.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Black-headed Bart shrugs on a parka, tacks a note on the fridge:

NIKKI! GONE FISHING

EXT. TENT SHANTY - DAY

FIGURE slowly backs out of the shanty.

CLOSE ON

An undertaking, retracing a set of snow boot tracks--*walking backward*. FIGURE totters, goes on.

We see his face now, black-headed Bart. Sweating. He continues backing in his boot tracks toward lakeside woods.

Black dye drips off his face onto the snow. He sees it. Frowns. Turns and hightails it toward the woods.

EXT. 1981 FORD F-150 - MOVING - DAY

Pulls to one side of Muskegon Bus Terminal.

CLOSE ON

Bumper sticker: GO AHEAD, MAKE MY DAY

Snowing harder. Bart gets out of the truck, retrieves his suitcase from the bed. Gives a thumbs-up to the driver.

INT. BUS TERMINAL - DAY

SECURITY GUARD patrols the tarmac. Parka hood up and aviator shades on, Bart averts his gaze and stoops to check his suitcase.

ANGLE ON

The terminal wall behind Bart, a green-and-white JUST SAY NO poster.

The security guard moves on, and Bart straightens.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - PARKED - DAY

Bart chooses an aisle seat.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS - MOVING - DAY

Nor'easter in the works. The 1982 bus takes I-196 going south, a route hugging the shores of Lake Michigan.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - MOVING - DAY

The parka hood stays up, aviator shades on. Bart slides down in his seat and pretends to sleep.

PROFILE, he's eyes-wide-awake and terribly alert. *How did this get so fucked up, anyway?* He stares straight ahead.

EXT. RYERSON CITY BALLPARK, MUSKEGON - DAY (BEGIN FLASHBACK)

SUPER: June 17, 1985

An open field, aluminum bleachers adjacent to a diamond. A softball game setting up, players in Coastie ball caps.

1981 Ford F-150 with GO AHEAD, MAKE MY DAY bumper sticker pulls in behind a 1982 yellow CADILLAC parked on the street.

EXT. 1981 FORD F-150 - PARKED - DAY

Bart and co-worker EDDIE (24, white), dressed to play softball, pile out of the pickup with gloves and gear.

MAN walks a German Shepherd down the sidewalk.

EXT. CADILLAC - PARKED - DAY

JOE MAZAR (58, white), gets out. His GIRLFRIEND (32, Latino), sits shotgun in the Cadillac.

Bart stops.

BART  
Hey, Joe.

JOE  
Hey and howdy-do.

Eddie stops to say "hi" to Joe's girl.

BART  
(to Joe)  
It's in the glove compartment.

Joe glances back at the pickup.

JOE  
Sure. Okay, man.

BART  
Just leave the dough in the Wendy's  
cup on the floorboard and lock up.

Bart and Eddie head out to the diamond.

EDDIE  
How can an old fart afford a ride  
like that, huh?

BART  
He owns a bar.

EDDIE  
(spits)  
I'm talking about the girl.

JOE  
Hey, Bart! I don't see it!

Forty feet behind them, Joe stands by the pickup with the passenger's door chocked open.

BART  
The glove compartment, dude! It's  
in the glove!

JOE  
It's not in here, man! Come back  
and show me!

BART  
Shit.  
(to Eddie)  
Go on, I'll catch up.

EDDIE  
And you're doing this for--?

BART  
I told you, I need a new sound  
mixer.

Bart walks back to the pickup. Joe's rifling through the glove box.

JOE  
Okay--oh.

BART  
Now you see it?

Two oncoming UNMARKED CARS on the street SCREECH to a halt. Four NARCS pile out, guns trained on Bart.

The man walking the German Shepherd spins and draws his gun. Joe's girlfriend jumps out of the Cadillac, gun drawn.

NARC  
Get your hands up, motherfucker!  
Don't move!

Bart's hands are already raised, softball mitt included.

BART  
I--should I put this down?

BART (V.O.)  
That was it, all over in a matter  
of five seconds.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Bart sits across from the NARC at an interview table. Not the first question, and not the last.

NARC  
Where'd you get the cocaine?

BART

I-I told you, man. You got the wrong guy. I'm Coast Guard, and we don't fuck with drugs.

Narc lunges at him, inches from Bart's face.

NARC

Look, asshole. I know what you did, you know what you did, and you are going down. Twenty years minimum. Read my lips: you won't see the waterway or the bulkhead or the fucking daylight again. Ever.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - BOOKING

The strip search. Bart stands nude in a well-lighted, empty room. GUARD faces him.

GUARD

Marion Bart Bryars. Step up to the red line.

Bart complies, haltingly, through all of it.

GUARD

Open your mouth. Stick out your tongue and move it side to side. Up and down.

(beat)

Wipe your hands over yours ears one at a time like this.

(demonstrates)

Bend forward and shake out your hair with your fingers.

(beat)

Both hands on your head now, and stand up. Hands in front, wiggle your fingers.

(beat)

Reach down and lift your nut sack.

(beat)

Drop it. Turn around. Pick up your right foot and wiggle your toes. Now, left foot.

(beat)

Bend over, grab your ass with both hands, and spread your cheeks. Give me two good coughs.

(beat)

Alright. Stand up and turn around. Shut your eyes and your mouth.

Guard sprays Bart all over with aerosol lice spray. Bart tries not to flinch.

GUARD  
Grab your bedroll and your spit  
bag, put on those orange issues,  
and wait over there.

END FLASHBACK

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - MOVING - DAY

Bus pulls into Chicago's Union Station. Time for Bart to switch rides.

INT. AMTRAK TRAIN - PARKED - DAY

Assigned seating on this trip, a coach window seat. Bart stows his suitcase overhead and sits.

EXT. CHICAGO UNION STATION - DAY

Amtrak train leaves the station.

INT. AMTRAK TRAIN - MOVING - DAY

Bart leans against the window but he doesn't sleep.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL CELL - NIGHT (BEGIN FLASHBACK)

Easily one hundred years old, repainted fecal brown many times. Truckstop bathroom vibes.

A four-prisoner capacity, THREE BLACK INMATES lying on their bunks.

GUARD unlocks the cell and Bart goes inside. He looks around.

The digs, a twelve-by-twelve foot cubicle with a metal card table in the center. Two steel bunk beds bolted to the walls.

Threadbare sheets, jail issue wool blankets. Flimsy, flame-retardant vinyl mattresses. No pillows.

BART (V.O.)  
I see now why they deloused me.

The three inmates scope him out.

Bart sets his bedroll on the empty (top) bunk.

BART (V.O.)  
They sorta leave it up to us to  
make this work, I guess?



Bart's bunkmate props up on one elbow and talks to him while he makes his bed.

BART (V.O.)  
 My bunkmate was a small-time burglar.  
 I made friends with him first.

CONTINUOUS

Bart paces and talks while his bunkmate chills on his bed and listens. Other inmates jaw and play cards at the metal table.

BART (V.O.)  
 The other two were always arguing.  
 The bigger one was a wife-beater  
 and the smaller one, a drug addict.

Bigger inmate suddenly jumps up and slaps the smaller one across the face. Hard. Bart freezes.

BIGGER INMATE  
 You just a punk!

Bigger inmate sits back down and resumes playing cards like normal. Smaller inmate starts crying.

CUT TO:

The shitty urinal. Bart drapes his own blanket over a clothesline made from a ripped bed sheet for privacy.

BART (V.O.)  
 After that little altercation, I needed  
 to take my first incarcerated crap in a  
 very big way.

Bart ducks behind the blanket.

BART (V.O.)  
 Our little Slammer Depo remodel for  
 the communal bidet didn't handle  
 sounds or smells, though.

CUT TO:

All three inmates lie on their bunks while Bart continues pacing and talking.

BART (V.O.)  
 They listened to my sob story for  
 the better part of forty-eight  
 hours straight. Poor guys.

CUT TO:

A "new" four-player game of Hearts at the table.

BART (V.O.)  
During the day, we played cards.

Bart picks at his arm. Smaller inmate lays down his cards.

SMALLER INMATE  
Aw. They louse you, right?

BIGGER INMATE  
It's delouse, punk. Pick yo goddamn  
hand up.

Smaller inmate picks up his cards as told.

SMALLER INMATE  
(grinning)  
That louse shit make my balls burn.

KEYS JANGLE outside the cell door. They all turn. A JAILER.

JAILER  
Your attorney's here, Yeti.

The jailer cuffs the bigger inmate and takes him away.

BUNKMATE  
I'm gonna take a leak.

Bunkmate goes to the urinal.

BART  
Shouldn't we stop the game?

BUNKMATE  
(urinating)  
No need, he'll be awhile.

SMALLER INMATE  
Yeah, he looking at basketball  
numbers.

BART  
Huh?

BUNKMATE  
Like his bro in Jackson. Big  
muthafuckas. Get it?

SMALLER INMATE  
He don't get it.

Bunkmate returns to the game and sits.

BUNKMATE

His release date. Number of years  
he got left.

SMALLER INMATE

Eighty-nine, ninety-eight. Like a  
basketball score.

Bart swallows, looks down. His bunkmate glares at him.

BUNKMATE

There you go again. I'm telling you  
man, you be out so fast, you still  
be shitting McDonald's.

CUT TO:

Bart shaves. The cell's "mirror" is a dull steel plate welded above  
the toilet.

BUNKMATE (V.O., POSTLAP)

You talk to yo girl, tell her what shit  
you in, that they squoze you but you  
didn't sing, and yo suppliers, they bail  
you out. End of story.

JAILER unlocks cell.

CUT TO:

Jailer escorts Bart, handcuffed, down the hallway.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - OFFICE - DAY

A changing room. Suited up in civvies, Bart frets with his belt. It's  
too big.

JAILER

Let's go, GQ.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY COURTROOM - DAY

Bart, handcuffed, stands beside the bailiff in front of the judge's  
bench.

JUDGE

Considering the serious nature of  
the offenses, I hereby set the  
defendant's bail at seventy-five  
thousand dollars.

Judge BANGS GAVEL.

INT. JAIL PAY PHONE - NIGHT

Yep, Bart's desperate--in orange issues again, on the phone.

NIKKI (V.O.)  
You need to call your folks right  
now, Bart.

BART  
I don't know, babe. This is--

NIKKI (V.O.)  
You know they'd do anything to help you.

BART  
No. They can't--

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL CELL - DAY

Bart recalls what his bunkmate said over his hand of cards.

BUNKMATE  
You talk to yo girl, tell her what shit  
you in, that they squoze you but you  
didn't sing, and yo suppliers, they bail  
you out. End of story.

INT. JAIL PAY PHONE - NIGHT

BART  
(on phone)  
I'll work this out.

EXT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - DAY

1980 FORD ESCORT pulls into Visitor Parking. Bart walks out wearing the same clothes he was arrested in. Nikki (20, white), a Midwest co-ed with a spiky mullet, jumps out.

NIKKI  
You did it!

They hug, kiss, and laugh.

NIKKI  
You smell like shit.

No news to him. Bart's a bundle of nerves, but free for now.

BART  
Let's get the fuck outta here.

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Bart sits in a chair and waits.

BART (V.O.)  
My co-worker, Eddie, knew a defense  
attorney out of Grand Haven named Joe  
Legatz, who handled a lot of drug crimes.

JOE LEGATZ (37), a thin man dressed for trial in a three-piece suit, walks into the office. Bart stands. When he shakes Legatz's hand, we see the attorney has a prosthetic left eye.

LEGATZ  
Mr. Bryars. Have a seat.

CUT TO:

Bart talks eagerly while Legatz takes notes. Bart pulls out his Coast Guard Miranda Rights card and slides it across the desk.

BART (V.O.)  
I explained that the US Coast Guard  
handles maritime law enforcement,  
and I was card-carrying proof.

Legatz stops taking notes and listens, pen pressed to his lips.

BART (V.O.)  
I don't think he believed me when I told  
him I was a wildcat, that I was  
conducting an undercover investigation on  
a cocaine ring all on my own, though.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. AMTRAK TRAIN - MOVING - NIGHT

Rolls into New Orleans' Union Passenger Terminal in the wee hours. A big and gaudy NOLA Christmas with blend-in events and freedom all around. Safety in numbers.

INT. PUBLIC RESTROOM - NIGHT

At the lavatory, Bart flushes the cut on his thumb with water. Shakes it dry. Reapplies the same gauze.

EXT. LOYOLA STREET - NIGHT

Bart joins the stroll of lights toward Bourbon Street. After all, he may not get to see this again.

EXT. STORE WINDOW - NIGHT

Bart lowers his aviator shades just enough to note the season's toys: Cabbage Patch Dolls and Transformers.

MALE WINDOW SHOPPER (O.C.)  
They're sold out, I checked already.

Bart quickly replaces his sunglasses as he turns toward the voice.

BART  
(to shopper)  
Good to know.

Bart walks on.

EXT. SLIDELL BRICK HOME - SUNRISE

A one-story starter home in a suburban sprawl. Bart KNOCKS on the front door.

A delay. Bart glances around, removes his shades. BRENT BRYARS (27, white), a taller, brunette version of Bart, opens the door. Hiccup: he doesn't recognize black-headed Bart.

Then he does.

BRENT  
Shit man, what'd you do to your...

Brent throws an arm around Bart and pulls him inside.

INT. SLIDELL BRICK HOME - SUNRISE

BRENT  
Suzie! Look who's here!

SUZIE BRYARS (26, white) is a well-tanned, big-curly brunette with a soft heart. She spies Bart's injury off the bat.

SUZIE  
Oh, Bart. What on earth did you do to your hand? Here, come in and eat some eggs.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Brent, Suzie, and Bart eat breakfast at a Formica dining table. Bart has tidy-white bandage on his thumb.

BRENT  
You need to call Mama, you know. She'll worry.

BART  
I did, a couple of days ago.

BRENT  
She knows you got here alright?

BART  
No, not yet.

SUZIE  
How long do you think they'll keep  
looking for you, Bart?

BART  
Seven years. Give or take.

SUZIE  
Seven?!

BART  
(chewing)  
I looked it up. That's about how long  
it takes after a person just up and  
disappears, you know, for the courts  
to declare them legally dead.

SUZIE  
You don't say.

BART  
If someone vanishes under questionable  
circumstances, like in a tornado or a  
blizzard--

BRENT  
Or an accident--

BART  
(nodding)  
It can be even sooner. They call it  
Proximate Peril.

Suzie lays down her fork.

BART  
I-I won't stay here that long,  
though. I'll find my own place.

BRENT  
You'll need a new identity too.

SUZIE  
But if they think he's dead--

BRENT  
They'll come looking for him, anyhow.

Bart hangs his head.

BART  
I'm so sorry.

SUZIE  
You mean--they won't just assume  
he's dead?

BRENT  
Either way you gotta call Mama.

BART  
I thought we could, you know, see  
what they do first. If a judge  
declares me legally dead, they'll  
stop looking for me eventually.  
(beat, to Brent)  
Won't they?

SUZIE  
And how exactly does that  
happen?

BRENT  
Don't count on it.

BART  
Shit.

SUZIE  
Wait. I know! We could have a  
funeral for him.

BRENT  
And Suzie can sing "How Great Thou  
Art." Jesus Christ, you two.  
(to Bart)  
*Call Mama.*

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING - INTERCUT

Bart talks on a wall phone beside the kitchen counter.

BART  
Hey, Mom.

INT. SUBURBAN RANCH-STYLE HOME - DEN - MORNING

DIANNE BRYARS (44) pecks on an electric typewriter parked on a card table. A TV BLASTS in the background. Dianne radiates consummate Southern hospitality and kindness.

She stops, pressing a TRIMLINE receiver to her ear.



DIANNE  
Honey, are you there?  
(to the room)  
Oh--hey, turn that down, please.  
It's Bart.

BART  
I'm at Brent's for now.

Dianne is visibly relieved.

DIANNE  
If you need anything at all,  
you know--

BART  
I'm so sorry, Mom.

DIANNE  
Let's don't worry about that now,  
okay, dear? You're home.

INT. SLIDELL BRICK HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bart checks the window. Outside he sees a CAR backing up.

BART (V.O.)  
Brent was right, though. The  
paranoia and panic of being hunted  
down was crazy-making.

Bart drops the curtain and ducks behind the window casing.

EXT. SLIDELL BRICK HOME - DAY

The street ends at a washed out bridge.

BART (V.O.)  
Brent and Suzie lived on a dead-end  
road where the bridge was washed  
out. Whenever I heard an engine,  
I'd peek out, and when I saw a car  
or truck turning around...

INT. SLIDELL BRICK HOME - LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Bart dashes into the room, climbs on top of the dryer, and crawls through a ceiling hatch into the attic.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Bart lies on a pile of blankets and pillows, ear to the floor, shotgun at the ready.

BART (V.O.)  
Sometimes I'd stay there for hours.

EXT. ST. ROCH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Hundreds of weathered, above-ground crypts. Bart walks with EDDIE BERT (42, white), a redneck with a perpetual toothpick in his mouth. Eddie uses a pen light, not the best choice.

BART (V.O.)  
My cousin, Eddie Bert, said he  
wanted to show me the ropes.

Among many rows of above-ground crypts, Eddie stops.

EDDIE  
Well, pshaw. I found it a couple  
weeks ago. Let's see--oh yeah,  
there it is.

He shines the penlight toward a smaller headstone. Bart squints to read the inscription: NATHAN THOMPSON.

EDDIE  
Little bugger died before he got in  
the system.

BART  
No Social?

EDDIE  
Nope.

BART (V.O.)  
He saw the kid's obituary and went  
to the health department pretending  
to be his dad.

Eddie pulls an envelope from his pants' waistband.

EDDIE  
Your new birth certificate.

When Bart starts to open it, Eddie stops him.

EDDIE  
Not out here, it's bad luck. Come on.

They walk away.

EDDIE  
You're now Nathan Thompson. You'll  
need to mail yourself a letter,  
apply for a library card.

BART  
Okay.

EDDIE  
You getting your own place?

BART  
When I can, yeah.

EDDIE  
Good enough. Once you sign up for utilities and all, you'll have proof of residence. Use your bill to apply for Social Security. You got that?

BART  
I think so.

EDDIE  
Fine. Cause you're gonna have to do it all over again at some point.

EXT. JOB SITE - DAY

Bart, wearing a hard hat and aviator shades, hauls scraps toward a burn pile. His black 'do has grown out blond.

BART (V.O., POSTLAP)  
I'll be looking over my shoulder the rest of my life, won't I?

A POLICE CAR drives by. Bart turns away and continues working. A furtive glance confirms the cruiser is gone.

EDDIE (V.O., POSTLAP)  
You might, kid. Yep, you just might.

EXT. SLIDELL BRICK HOME - EVENING

Bart, hard hat in hand, walks down the road toward the front yard.

The entire property is now fenced front to back. When Bart approaches the gate, three Chow Chows, a Doberman Pinscher, and a Saarloos Wolfdog rush the fence, BARKING.

BART (V.O., POSTLAP)  
Brent even installed a chain-link fence and got several large dogs.

EDDIE (V.O., POSTLAP)  
That so? Remind me to call ahead before I drop in next time.

Bart opens the gate and pets the dogs. They tag along after him as he walks toward the front door.

CAR approaches on the street. The dogs rush the fence again, BARKING.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING - INTERCUT

Dogs continue BARKING outside. Bart sits on a bar stool, talking on a wall phone to Nikki, hard hat on the counter.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

Nikki's in the bathtub.

NIKKI  
God, I miss you.

BART  
Me too.

NIKKI  
I have four days next month. Come see you?

BART  
Maybe after I move into my own place.

NIKKI  
Shit, Bart. When's that gonna be?

INT. DEN - EVENING

Brent and Suzie are glued to a national TV news update, the space shuttle Challenger explosion. Bart walks in.

BART  
When did that happen?

SUZIE  
After you left for work.

BART  
How?

Brent turns up TV VOLUME with a remote.

BRENT  
Just listen, maybe they'll tell us.

Bart continues watching the footage in dismay.

BART (V.O.)  
The Challenger explosion got the world's attention for a day or so, including The State of Michigan, Coast Guard Intelligence, and some bounty hunters out of Detroit looking for me. Then they resumed their search.

EXT. SUBURBAN RANCH-STYLE HOME - PORCH - DAY

THREE BOUNTY HUNTERS with guns drawn. MARION BRYARS (46), a high school halfback and "scoring demon," takes a baseball bat after them.

BART (V.O.)  
The bounty hunters that showed up  
at my parents' house had another  
thing coming, though.

Bounty hunters back away, hands raised. They make a run for their VAN with Marion on their heels.

MARION  
Get the fuck off my property!

Van PEELS away. Marion grabs the lid off a nearby trash can and throws it after the vehicle with the force of a forward pass.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Bart and Brent stand at the counter.

BART (V.O.)  
Mobile's only a couple of hours  
away, you know.

Brent looks down.

BRENT  
Yeah.

BART  
I gotta move.

EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK - MOBILE HOME - DAY

Bart and Brent cart boxes from Brent's PICKUP into a ratty trailer. Brent hugs Bart, gets in his truck, and drives away.

EXT. NORTH SHORE SQUARE MALL - MORNING

Bart walks across the parking lot.

BART (V.O.)  
A new mall across the street had  
just opened, and I got two jobs  
there, selling music and framing  
art. I was jazzed.

INT. NORTH SHORE SQUARE MALL - PHONE BOOTH - DAY - INTERCUT

Bart talks on a pay phone.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON Nikki on a desk phone.

                  NIKKI  
That's fantastic! So I can come see  
you now?

                  BART  
Sure.

                  NIKKI  
Nathan?  
          (giggles)  
Really?

                  BART  
Right.

                  NIKKI  
That'll take some getting used to.

Bart laughs, and they continue (inaudible) conversation.

INT. CAMELOT MUSIC - DAY

Bart walks back into the store and starts stacking merchandise on the shelves.

                  BART (V.O.)  
I'd managed to stay under the radar  
nearly four months, and for the  
first time since my arrest in June,  
I was happy.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

PULL BACK:

The receiver RATTLES in the carriage as Nikki hangs up. She's sitting in an interrogation room and trying very hard not to cry.

The same NARC who originally questioned Bart slides a pen and notepad across the table.

                  NARC  
Write down everything he told you.

INT. DECK THE WALLS - NIGHT

Bart wipes down a work counter and watches TWO MEN in suits loiter outside the store. A FEMALE COWORKER organizes lithograph prints in an art case nearby.

FEMALE COWORKER  
I'm hungry. Want something from  
Mrs. Field's?

BART  
(watching men)  
A fruit bar?

Bart fishes a couple of dollars out of his wallet, hands them to her.

FEMALE COWORKER  
God, you're killing me. You know they  
have these huge--oh, never mind.

Female coworker grabs her purse from under the register.

FEMALE COWORKER  
Back in a few.

She walks out into the mall. The men in suits amble inside the store,  
pretending to shop. Bart edges his way toward the back of the store.

*Yep, they're feds.* Bart bolts toward a storeroom in back.

INT. STOREROOM - NIGHT

No back door. He could lock himself in the BATHROOM, but for how long?

Only one way to do this. Bart takes a couple of deep breaths and walks  
back into the storefront.

BART  
Can I help you with anything?

The two men walk right up to Bart.

MAN ONE  
Bart Bryars?

Bart feigns confusion.

BART  
Sorry, who?

Neither man answers. Bart swallows. Sweat beads on his forehead.

BART  
I'm Nathan Thompson.

MAN TWO  
Can we see some ID?

Bart looks around. He needs a customer, a distraction, anything. The  
store's mercilessly empty.

But he's defiant enough to play this game.

BART  
Could I see some ID?

Man One fishes out a U.S. Federal Marshal badge, holds it up.

BART  
Okay. Sure.

Bart hands over his wallet to Man Two and waits while both men rifle through bits and pieces of identification.

BART  
What's this about, anyway?

Female coworker returns with the goodies, stashes her purse under the register. She looks on curiously.

Man Two carefully slides each ID card back in its slot and hands the wallet back to Bart. *Okay, then.* Bart sticks the wallet in his back pocket and is about to--

MAN ONE  
He's good.

*So, that means--?* The men exchange glances. An inside joke.

MAN TWO  
But not good enough.  
(beat)  
Bart Bryars, you're under arrest.

Female co-worker freaks out. Hand over mouth, she bursts into tears as the federal marshals handcuff Bart. They march him toward the front of the store.

FEMALE COWORKER  
Nathan? What's going on?

BART  
Call my brother, okay?

INT. LOUIS ARMSTRONG NEW ORLEANS INT'L AIRPORT - NIGHT

A typically high-traffic day. Bart, front-shackled for transport, has a coat draped over his handcuffs, two federal marshals flanking him. They walk the concourse--and no one pays attention.

BART (V.O.)  
The whole process, including the commercial flight to Michigan, was equally surreal.



No one seemed to notice the guy  
holding an overcoat in front of his  
dick in April.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - BOOKING - NIGHT

The strip search again. Bart stands nude in a well-lighted, empty  
room. GUARD faces him.

GUARD  
Step up to the red line.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL CELL - DAY

Bart, dressed in orange issues, shaves using the same dull steel plate  
welded above the toilet as a mirror.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY COURTROOM - DAY

Wearing a suit and handcuffed, Bart stands beside the bailiff in front  
of the judge's bench.

JUDGE  
Considering the serious nature of the  
offenses and the defendant's flight risk  
history, I hereby reset bail to one-point-  
five million dollars.

INT. SUBURBAN RANCH-STYLE HOME - DEN - NIGHT - INTERCUT

Marion and Dianne Bryars are on an '80s conference call, each on a  
separate TRIMLINE phone.

OPERATOR (V.O.)  
Will you accept a collect call from  
Muskegon County Jail?

DIANNE  
Yes, yes we will.

MARION  
Yes.

INT. JAIL PAY PHONE - NIGHT

Bart's going away for a while, and he knows it. His depth of despair  
shows in the way he stoops while he talks.

BART (V.O.)  
No way out this time. Because I ran,  
they put me in Solitary Confinement.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - ISOLATION CONFINEMENT CELL - NIGHT

A six-by-nine concrete hell. No window. The single horizon, a tightly  
enclosed catwalk beyond the bars.

Bart sits on his bunk, head in hands, a non-ashed cigarette burning in his right.

BART (V.O.)

The space of my entire existence. I was alone in there with my failures twenty-four-seven. Man, would I ever get it right?

CUT TO:

Bart stands on the edge of his bunk, a noose made from bedsheets around his neck.

BART (V.O.)

During those first two weeks, my thoughts plunge toward the unthinkable.

He raises on tip-toe. Loops the other end around a cell bar above him. Ties a secure knot. Now, the test. We see strain in Bart's feet and face as he tries to maintain his balance. Knees loosen, noose tightens, face flushes.

Bart stops. Stands again. This ain't easy.

He repeats the process, leaning in more this time. Knees loosen, noose tightens, face flushes. He's teetering on the edge of letting go, a single sling-and-drop...

A moment of clarity. Bart heaves himself upward, grabs the noose, and fights with the knot. At last it disengages. Bart falls back on the bunk, gagging.

INT. SUBURBAN RANCH-STYLE HOME - DEN - DAY - INTERCUT

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Will you accept a collect call from Muskegon County Jail?

Marion and Dianne on their separate TRIMLINE phones again.

MARION

Yes, we will.

DIANNE

Of course.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - PAY PHONE - DAY

Isolation is changing Bart, and it's not corrective. He leans against the pay phone housing, backhanding tears.

BART (V.O.)

I was allowed two phone calls a week. I called them every time.

Marion and Dianne chatter, trying to cheer up their son.

BART (V.O.)  
I found out later that their phone  
bill racked up over a thousand  
dollars a month.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - ISOLATION CONFINEMENT CELL - DAY

BART (V.O.)  
Those phone calls were my lifeline,  
though. And the book cart.

CLATTERING somewhere down the catwalk. Bart stands.

The OLD WOMAN enters the door with a GUARD and rolls a rickety book  
cart right up to the bars. It's filled with old books and magazines  
like *Reader's Digest*, *National Geographic*, and *Popular Mechanics*.

MONTAGE

Bart lies on his bunk reading *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

Bart sits on his bunk and writes a letter.

BART (V.O.)  
Dear Mom, I've read nearly one  
hundred books in isolation.

Bart paces his cell as he reads *War and Peace*.

BART (V.O.)  
Most of them are good, too. Stories that  
broaden my view of the world, its  
history, and the human condition.

Bart reaches page 1290 in *War and Peace* and sees the last six pages--  
The End--are ripped out!

Bart stands at the front of his cell holding *War and Peace* and waiting  
for the book cart.

He talks to the book cart woman and thumbs through the pages of *Don  
Quixote*.

END MONTAGE

Bart's busy tearing pages out of magazines and gluing the letters down  
with toothpaste.

BART (V.O.)  
The magazines gave me another idea...

CLOSE ON

Ransom art: BaRt! WE are waTchiNg you. YoU taLk, yOu Die!

INT. MUSKEGON SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Bart is foot-chained to a desk leg. MUSKEGON SHERIFF sits across from him, Bart's artwork in hand.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF  
Son, I've been doing this a long  
time. Do you think I'm stupid?

BART  
No, sir.

Sheriff tosses a stack of crummy magazines on the desk.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF  
Go ahead. Look at those.

Bart does as told, including the ones he defaced.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF  
I've got a good mind to put another  
charge on you for reporting a false  
crime, you dumb son of a bitch. You  
know our cameras are on you twenty-  
four-seven, right?

BART  
Yes, sir.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF  
Take some advice from me, son. You're  
already in deep shit enough. You've got  
too much rabbit in you, you understand?

Bart's not sure he does.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF  
You like to run, run, run, like a  
goddamn rabbit. I've seen what  
happens to rabbits like you, and  
it's not good.

Bart looks down.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF  
You ain't going nowhere for a long  
time, so get used to it. You need  
to calm the fuck down.

BART  
Okay.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF

You're an asshole dope dealer and an even  
a dumber convict. Now go back to your  
hole, you shit-for-brains.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - ISOLATION CONFINEMENT CELL - NIGHT

Bart lies on his bunk and reads *A Tale of Two Cities*.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - THE HOLE - DAY

SUPER: FOUR MONTHS LATER

An array of three cells twelve feet tall. JAILER escorts Bart into his  
new digs and locks him inside.

Still small, cement, and crappy--but a blessed catwalk in front. Bart  
looks around. He can't see his block mate but he hears him TALKING.

ANDRE (O.C.)

Yo, fish. What you in fo?

BART

Running coke. You?

ANDRE (O.C.)

I'm a paper killer.

BART

Huh?

ANDRE (O.C.)

I kills for hire.

Bart sits on his bunk. *This could get interesting.*

BART

Who'd you kill?

ANDRE (O.C.)

Nobody. Not this time.

*Or confusing.*

BART

What'd they charge you with, then?

ANDRE (O.C.)

Stupid shit.

(beat)

They say I hit a lick on a gamblin' house  
and popped two niggas on the way out.

BART

Did you?

ANDRE (O.C.)

Fuck, man--what I just be sayin'?  
 Fuck, no.

CUT TO:

Bart sits on his bunk and writes a letter.

BART (V.O.)

Dear Mom, the hit man next door named Andre just explained to me how insulted he is to be publicly accused of a low-level crime. Sure, he's killed over a dozen people in Detroit alone, but they were all professionally done, he said.

Bart crumples up the letter and stuffs it under his mattress.

CUT TO:

Bart walks to the front of his cell. A JAILER escorts an INMATE (16, white), down the catwalk toward the shower. He shuffles along, head down, toting state-issued toiletries.

BART (V.O.)

The next day they placed a young White kid in the hole named Steven, sixteen years old. He slept the first day or so until Andre struck up a conversation.

Bart paces his cell and listens.

ANDRE (O.C.)

Yo, fish. What you in fo?

STEVEN (O.C.)

(sniveling)  
 Robbery.

ANDRE (O.C.)

Fuck. You out in a minute. What you bitchin' fo?

STEVEN (O.C.)

We-we messed her up.

BART (V.O.)

Turns out, Steven was in a gang tripping on LSD that attempted to rob an old woman who lived alone.

They beat her into a coma and, a few days later he got news that his charges had been upgraded to murder. He'd just gone from doing a year or two to basketball numbers.

INT. CATWALK - DAY

Jailer escorts STEVEN, still whimpering, in full transport restraints past Bart's cell.

CUT TO:

Bart's reading on his bunk.

INT. CATWALK - DAY

Jailer escorts a veritable giant past Bart's cell, another INMATE (27, Black).

BART (V.O.)  
Then in comes Willie.  
(beat)  
*Willie Fucking Nelson.*

ANDRE (O.C.)  
'ey, Willie? What you in fo this time?

CUT TO:

INT. CATWALK - NIGHT

Two strands from ripped bedsheets drop out on the floor in front of Bart's cell--from either side, Andre and Willie.

WILLIE (O.C.)  
I tellin' you, man. I know downtown like the back of my hand. We get us over to the docks and Gilligan here can steal a boat and take us out on the lake.

ANDRE (O.C.)  
Then what?

Bart fishes for Andre's strand and nabs it.

WILLIE (O.C.)  
Then we split up in the woods and run, you know, to each his own.

Bart ties the strand around a candy bar and drops it through the bars.

BART  
Clear.

A delicate operation. A series of short tugs ensure the candy bar reaches its destination.

Bart goes back to his bunk and continues sketching out a city map on a small piece of paper.

ANDRE (O.C.)  
No shit? An' how far is that?

BART  
Looks like about six blocks.

WILLIE (O.C.)  
That's right. It's so close, I can smell the water from here. We go down that alley behind Pine and--

ANDRE (O.C.)  
No, fuck no. That's the wrong way.

WILLIE (O.C.)  
Hey! What did I tell you? The back of my hand. Don't you listen to him, Gilligan.  
(beat)  
You about done with that kite?

BART  
Almost.

WILLIE (O.C.)  
Shoot it over then, and I'll get us outta here.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER

Six hundred glorious square feet shared with fourteen inmates. Eight bunks on three walls, bars facing a catwalk on the fourth.

A 27" TV is mounted in a box by the bars, a metal table in the center. Skinny windows. Same toilet situation.

"Ain't Nothing Like The Real Thing, Baby" (Marvin Gaye, Tammi Terrell) PLAYS, a Burger King TV commercial.

Bart's the only white guy, demanding survival of the fittest.

While several inmates watch TV and others play Spades, Bart takes laps around the table. He drops to the floor for a set of push-ups.



BART (V.O.)  
I was so happy about having space, I  
wasn't complaining.

Three INMATES playing cards SING ALONG LOUDLY with the commercial.

CUT TO:

Bart reads on his bunk. Several inmates are transfixed on the daytime soap GENERAL HOSPITAL. Others play cards.

KEYS JANGLE outside the cell door. Bart looks up as the door flies open. Willie Nelson sticks his head inside.

WILLIE  
Yo, Gilligan! Let's go, let's go!

Bart jumps up, grabs his deck shoes, and takes off down the hallway after Willie. Andre runs ahead of them.

Bart rounds the corner at the end of the hallway and freezes.

ELEVATOR ANTEROOM - DAY

A SECURITY CAMERA is trained on the anteroom.

Willie fumbles with a mess of keys, trying them one-by-one in the elevator's lock. Andre looks on. *If only they knew which key.*

The camera rotates--*toward Bart*. He jerks out of sight and flattens against the wall.

ANDRE (O.C.)  
Hurry up, muthafucka! Here, let me try.

Bart carefully slips on one shoe, then the other. Scopes the hallway behind him. He takes off down the hallway.

ELEVATOR ANTEROOM - DAY

Andre gives up and runs off with the keys.

HALLWAY - DAY

Bart freezes. *Which way?* He takes off running again.

ANDRE (O.C.)  
Come on out all you muthafuckas,  
you free!

Cell doors CLANG behind Bart. Feet THUDDING. He takes off down the next hallway, glancing over his shoulder.

Bart SLAMS into an open cell door. Sees stars. Recovers, takes off.

EXT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

Nobody but Bart took the bait. His cellmates poke their heads just past the open cell door.

Bart runs inside, yanks off his deck shoes, and tosses them under his bunk. Dives in, faces the wall, pulls up the covers. Listens.

HALLWAY - DAY

MAYHEM. Andre runs to the next cell on the row and pops the door. Inmates crowd into the hallway. Some SHOUT and run back toward the anteroom. Others take off toward the stairwells. SIRENS.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

A couple of card players climb onto the table, trying to see outside.

INMATE ONE

Shit man, a bunch of muthafuckin' police just pull up out there!

INMATE TWO

It's the fucking goon squad!

Bart closes his eyes and pretends to be asleep. BOOTS MARCHING down the catwalk. BATON THUDS. SCREAMS.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Bart sits at the table, handcuffed to a restraint bar. He has a blunt force bruise on his face.

BART (V.O.)

A couple of hours later, they began taking us down to central booking one at a time.

In walks the Muskegon Sheriff, of course. He doesn't sit.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF

So. Here we are again, Br'er Rabbit. Nice shiner you got there.

Bart looks at him, but he doesn't reply.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF

Did you leave your cell at any time this afternoon?

BART

No, sir.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF

Several inmates say they witnessed you leaving.

BART

They're lying.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF

We checked the security cams.

*Oh, shit.* Bart waits for it...

MUSKEGON SHERIFF

Didn't see you, but I'm thinking I ought to go ahead and charge you with an attempted escape and tack on another five years.

(beat)

You're one dumb son-of-a-bitch, you know that?

Bart doesn't answer. The sheriff walks to the door.

MUSKEGON SHERIFF

I'll give you one more chance to kill that rabbit, you hear me?

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

Bart's reading on his bunk.

BART (V.O.)

Then Steven joined our cell, just one more example of our small world of rotating prison recidivism.

Steven actually smiles and gives Bart a fist bump.

CUT TO:

Inmates around the card table SING the refrain from "Oh Sheila" by Ready for the World.

Steven joins Bart's afternoon exercise routine. He's got a ways to go with his flaccid trot around the card table after Bart, monkey-see-monkey-do.

BART (V.O.)

He was naive and scared, so he latched onto me for a few days until he decided the female jailer had a thing for him.

CUT TO:

Mail call. A cute, brunette FEMALE JAILER stands on the catwalk handing mail through the bars and talking to Steven. Other inmates hang out near the front to chat her up too.

Bart's got a letter. He returns to his bunk and opens it.

Female jailer moves on. Steven strains to see her as long as he can.

STEVEN

(to Bart)

You see the way she's making me, huh?

BART

(reading)

We all love her twice a week, kiddo.

Steven looks confused. He has a letter too.

BART

You going to read that?

STEVEN

Oh. Yeah.

Steven opens the letter. Bart continues reading his own. Several other inmates have mail today as well.

BART (V.O.)

Normally it was the quietest part  
of the week.

Steven's eyes grow wide as he reads his letter. He pulls out something very small and starts dancing around and waving the mail.

INMATE

Yo, fish. Keep it down. We tryin'  
to read in here.

STEVEN

Fuck me. Hey, guys! You know what  
this is?

Steven keeps dancing around. Pretty soon everyone's watching.

STEVEN

I got a letter from Officer Cherry.

INMATE TWO

You trippin'. The mail bitch?

Steven stops dancing and reads the letter to the room.

STEVEN

I can't wait to meet up with you. I like it kinky, I just get wet thinking about you. Here's a little reminder...

Steven tosses the letter on the floor, stretches the item no one can see under his nose and sniffs it, then holds it overhead again.

STEVEN

Look at this!

Steven starts dancing around the room again.

INMATE

What he got there?

INMATE TWO

Looks like pussy hair.

Steven circles the room again, waving the glorious evidence.

STEVEN

See? She wants to fuck me!

Low SNIGGERING from a couple of inmates grows into full blown HOOTING and HOLLERING within seconds. A few more moments of glory before...

INMATE

Muthafucka, that's my pubic hair!

That inmate collapses back on his bunk in laughter.

INMATE TWO

He mail that to you, white boy!

Steven, crestfallen, stops dancing and looks around the room. Inmates roar with LAUGHTER. Bart smiles and shakes his head.

INMATE

How's my pube smellin', bitch?

INMATE TWO

Like that sweet-ass jail soap?

Bart uncaps a jail-approved marker and starts another letter.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - DAY ROOM - DAY

Fifteen inmates seated in chairs in a semi-circle. A PASTOR and his ASSISTANT work the crowd.

BART (V.O.)

Dear Mom, I signed up for Bible study once a week, anything to get out of the cell for a few minutes. Steven comes along when he feels like it.

The assistant passes out Bibles and religious tracts while the pastor preaches.

Under the gall of fluorescent tube lighting, the tracts look like comic books. Steven thumbs through his and tucks it under his thigh.

The pastor prays with one of the inmates, stroking the inmate's neck as he talks.

BART (V.O.)

They spend a lot of time bashing Catholics and other denominations and massaging prisoners in the name of Jesus. Probably not the best idea to mention I grew up Catholic, either, because nitpicking the finer points of theology ultimately has no meaning behind bars. But if it could get me out, I'd pretty much worship a bologna sandwich.

Stephen pulls out his tract and starts making a paper airplane.

BART

(under his breath)  
Have you ever read the Bible?

STEVEN

(attentively folding airplane)  
Nope. You?

BART

In isolation. Twice.

Inmates stand. It's over.

BART (V.O.)

I know one thing for sure now, Mom.  
God isn't in here.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

Bart continues writing his letter. A JAILER walks down the catwalk and stops at the cell.

JAILER

Bryars, come with me.

*Huh?*

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY COURTROOM - DAY

Bart shuffles into the court in orange issues and full transport restraints. He's escorted to a bench behind the PROSECUTOR'S table and seated beside two more INMATES.

Behind them, FOUR SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES escort Willie Nelson into court. He glares at Bart and finally sits down at the defendant's table.

TWO ATTORNEYS walk past the first row to their respective sides.

Bart whispers to the other two inmates.

BART  
What's this?

INMATE  
Shit if I know.

BAILIFF  
All Rise!

Bart stands and looks around. A skeleton crew. The JUDGE comes in from chambers and takes the bench.

BAILIFF  
The honorable Joe Carlyle presiding.  
Hearing is now in session. Be seated.

BART (V.O.)  
Only one thing makes sense. We've just been hauled in as bluff witnesses because they're charging Willie with an attempted escape.

Willie shifts in his chair.

BART (V.O.)  
Up to this point, they hadn't asked me for a formal statement against Willie. Now, we were there to make him assume we'd testify against him if it went to trial, to coax him to plea out. I'd just unwittingly gone from being a rabbit to being a rat.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

Bart wads up the letter, takes it to the urinal, and flushes it.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Bart, still in orange issues, walks into the room. He's beaming.

His parents and younger brother, PEPPER (12), are seated inside.

Smiles turn into tears. Bart and his parents group hug and cry for a bit. Pepper, nervous, stands aside.

Bart extends his hand--

BART  
Hey, buddy...

--and Pepper finally gives him a bear hug.

CUT TO:

The four sit at the table, talking.

DIANNE  
We've got some good news for you.

BART  
Really?

MARION  
Yeah, we think so. It looks like I  
can get some help from our  
prosecutor in Mobile, maybe even  
the State Attorney General.  
(beat)  
If you're willing to turn in those  
contacts of yours, you know.

*Another rat?* Bart sits back.

DIANNE  
It could get you out sooner--

MARION  
Now, let's don't go making promises  
we don't know about.

BART  
They want me to snitch?

MARION  
That's right.

BART  
Oh. I don't know, Dad.



MARION

It'd get you transferred closer to us.  
 (beat)  
 Better prison conditions, you know.

DIANNE

And a shorter sentence.

MARION

I wish you'd stop saying that,  
 Dianne. Getting his hopes up.

Dianne ignores him. It's all about her son.

DIANNE

I know for a fact a letter to the  
 right judge about your cooperation  
 will shorten your sentence.  
 (to Marion)  
 The DA told me so.

MARION

(dismissive)  
 Well, anyway--this attorney you got up  
 here? I don't know, son. That asshole  
 won't even look me in the eye.

BART

(pointing)  
 You know, I think he only has--

MARION

I think you should trust our  
 resources at home instead.

A tough call. Ratting had consequences, like *Willie-fucking-Nelson*.

BART

Let me think about it, okay?

CUT TO:

Bart, his parents, and Pepper group hug at the door and cry again.

INT. GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

Bart sits on his bunk and opens a shoe box, a pair of running shoes  
 for the rabbit.

INT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Scutter basketball on a half court. Bart runs around the perimeter of  
 the court in his new running shoes.

BART (V.O.)

My parents drove over a thousand miles to visit me that day. They also met with my presentence investigator, who wouldn't look them in they eye, either.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - GENERAL POPULATION CELL - NIGHT

Chow time. The food line winds around the card game table to a pass-through door at the front. Inmates eat from plastic meal trays on their bunks or at the card table.

Bart sets a half-eaten tray aside.

STEVEN

Hey, you gonna eat that?

Bart hands him the tray.

BART

Knock yourself out.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Bart sits across the table from two men in suits.

SPECIAL AGENT CARTER

I'm DEA Special Agent Gary Carter, and this is my partner Special Agent John Turner. We work in the southern distract of Alabama, which includes Mobile.

BART

Okay.

SPECIAL AGENT TURNER

We're here because your parents contacted the DA's office there and expressed that you have some information you'd like to volunteer concerning illegal drug activity in our jurisdiction. Is that correct?

BART

Yes. But these guys are connected way up, I mean--that's really why I ran after I got busted in the first place. They'll come after me if I flip. Do you think you can get me into witness protection?

SPECIAL AGENT CARTER

Sure. We can do that, and more--if what you have is worth it.

BART

If you can get me out of here, I could work undercover for you. I completed FBI firearms training in the Coast Guard, you know--I'm trained for stuff like this.

SPECIAL AGENT TURNER

Good to hear, but let's not get ahead of ourselves. We can arrange a number of things, depending on what kind of information you have.

SPECIAL AGENT CARTER

Why don't we just start with what you know and we'll see what we can do to help, maybe even get you out of here?

More than Bart ever imagined at this point.

BART

For real? That'd be great!

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

Bart sits on his bunk and writes another letter.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - LAW LIBRARY - DAY

Bart pulls a codified legal volume from the shelf and sits at a table.

BART (V.O.)

Dear Mom, it does sound promising. But before I jump for joy, I'm going to review Michigan's state-recommended sentencing guidelines.

He thumbs through and finds the dot plot graph and traces two columns with his index fingers. His fingers follow the ratings for OFFENSE SEVERITY: DELIVERY OF COCAINE and PRIOR ARRESTS OR CONVICTIONS: NONE.

He traces both index fingers up to the numeric value, his RECOMMENDED SENTENCE...

12-24 MONTHS

Bart stares at the legal book in delighted disbelief.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

Bart continues his letter to his mom. His inmates jaw, the usual 24/7 in the hoosegow.

BART (V.O.)

I guess you could say I'm conflicted all the way around. They're calling me "Kingpin" in here, since most of my discovery hearings air on the five o'clock news. These guys are begging me to get them started with an ounce or two of coke when they get out and promising to double my investment. Piles of cash all week any week.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

HENRY CZERWON (52, white), Bart's presentence investigator in a mismatched polyester suit. He fills in a bubble answer sheet as he questions Bart.

BART (V.O.)

This man, Henry Czerwon, is tasked with creating the report that recommends my judicial punishment. That report will go to the sentencing judge.

CZERWON

Raised by both parents?

BART

Yes.

CZERWON

Any siblings?

BART

Yes, six.

CZERWON

Prior convictions?

BART

None.

Czerwon stops and looks up at Bart. *Like he believes that.*

CZERWON

Arrests?

BART

None.

Czerwon doesn't believe that, either.

CZERWON

You're telling me you never distributed cocaine before now? Not even once?

BART

Never.

Czerwon grudgingly fills in the bubble, tosses the file in his satchel, snaps it shut, and stands. Mumbles something inaudible and walks out.

INT. GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

Bart continues writing his letter.

BART (V.O.)

The whole interview lasted maybe ten minutes.

Bart wads up the letter, takes it to the urinal, and flushes it.

INT. MOBILE REGIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Typical daytime traffic. Bart is dressed in civvies and front-shackled for transport, a coat draped over the handcuffs. TWO FEDERAL MARSHALS flank him. They walk the concourse, and people are looking.

BART (V.O.)

Dear Mom, they're flying me commercially again to a grand jury in Mobile. For some reason people are staring this time.

EXT. AIRPORT RESTROOM - DAY

A federal marshal escorts Bart into the public restroom.

INT. AIRPORT RESTROOM - DAY

Bart goes to the lavatory to wash his hands. Looks in the mirror. His face is gecko green.

INT. FEDERAL COURTROOM - DAY

Sprawling, '60s-era courtroom with high ceilings. Typical stark design, three tiers of jury seats and 24 jurors. The raised podium in front has a witness box.

Bart sits in the witness box while a FEMALE PROSECUTOR paces the floor in front. U.S. ATTORNEY JEFF SESSIONS stands by a wall and watches.

FEMALE PROSECUTOR

Mr. Bryars, explain to the jury how you distributed to your buyer, and how he paid you.

BART

Yes, ma'am. I'd deliver two ounces at a time in paper lunch bags, and he'd pay me in cash.

FEMALE PROSECUTOR

How much did he pay you for each delivery?

BART

Four thousand dollars.

FEMALE PROSECUTOR

And how often was that?

BART

Once a week at first. Then he wanted more, so two or three times a week was pretty normal.

FEMALE PROSECUTOR

And how long did you sell to this buyer?

BART

Four months.

FEMALE PROSECUTOR continues questioning Bart before the jury. Jeff Sessions listens to his testimony.

BART (V.O.)

I knew you were trying to take this to the federal level, Mom, but I had no fucking idea who Jeff Sessions was.

INT. U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Marion and Dianne Bryars meet with Jeff Sessions in his office, a friendly but intense conversation.

BART (V.O.)

I knew I had to agree to be charged a *second* time, and at the federal level.

INT. GENERAL POPULATION CELL - DAY

Bart reads an report titled MUSKEGON COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT. *Not good.*

BART

Shit.

INMATE playing cards glances over at Bart.

INMATE

What up with that?

BART

Nothing.

KEYS JANGLE outside the cell door. A JAILER unlocks it.

JAILER

You got a visitor, Bryars.

Bart folds the report, puts it back in the envelope.

INT. GENERAL VISITATION - DAY

A designated no-contact area where inmates and visitors are physically separated by glass partitions.

Bart sits across from Eddie, his former Coast Guard co-worker. They pick up their conference phones.

EDDIE

How you holding up?

BART

I'm fucked, Eddie.

EDDIE

Yup, I'd say so. With Sluggo, anyways. He claims he got frostbite on his dick after we dove out there in the lake looking around for your body, you know.

A pile-on of trouble, amusing though it may be.

BART

You're shittin' me.

Eddie grins.

EDDIE

He got over it, obviously. Sent you some cigarette money.

Bart hangs his head.

EDDIE

Hey. What's eatin' you, man?

BART  
I just got my presentence report.

EDDIE  
Oh? What'd it say?

Bart takes a breath.

BART  
Well, you know--the stuff about my family was pretty tame.

EDDIE  
Yup.

BART  
And Chief Sandy's evaluation...  
'reliable and responsible, but not a barn-burner?'

Eddie chuckles.

BART  
I mean, what the hell is that?  
Let's ride around and hassle the nice family of four in their twenty-three foot Chris-Craft?  
(gestures)  
A 'courtesy' boarding inspection with lights and siren?

EDDIE  
Yup.

BART  
It doesn't stop there. According to the prosecutor, I'm a major cocaine supplier with no respect for the courts or any remorse for my crimes. In fact, he says I smirked at him in court.

EDDIE  
(laughing)  
Well, didja?

BART  
What do you think?

BART  
Let's see if I can remember the rest. 'The defendant had a normal childhood and possesses above-average intelligence.'



He has family and community support. He pled guilty to selling and distributing a large amount of cocaine in the Muskegon area, and claims to have been involved in the business for only a four-month period, which is highly unlikely.'

Eddie's gawking. *How does Bart remember all that?*

BART

'Considering all the factors gleaned for this investigation, although his severity versus prior record scores him in the twelve- to twenty-four-month range, it is recommended that defendant Marion Bart Bryars receive a lengthy prison sentence.'

EDDIE

That's an unquestionable shitload of brass tacks. How did you--?

BART

I read it, like fifteen times.

EDDIE

Okay, then. So, what's next?

BART

Two sentencing hearings. One for the drug distribution charges, and one for absconding bond.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY COURTROOM - DAY

The courtroom is nearly empty. Prosecutor TONY TAGUE is already seated. He thumbs through a folder and chats with his ASSISTANT.

Across the aisle, Joe Legatz sits incommunicado beside Bart and stares blankly at the judge's bench. His hands rest resignedly on top of his briefcase, dead weight. He doesn't look alive and busy with his job like Tony Tague.

TWO SHERIFFS DEPUTIES sit on the spectator bench behind Bart.

BAILIFF stands at parade-rest to the left of the bench.

JUDGE enters from chambers and approaches the bench. Everyone stands.

BAILIFF

All rise! The Honorable James M. Graves Junior is presiding. Court is now in session. Please be seated.

JUDGE GRAVES

Alright, before the court today we have docket number 85-CR-0463(JG), in which the defendant, Marion Bart Bryars, has pled guilty to three separate actions of delivering less than fifty grams of a mixture containing cocaine, MCL 333.7401 and 2A4, and two counts of conspiracy to deliver cocaine, MSA 14.15 (7401) and 2A4. All five original charges were for more than fifty, but less than 225 grams of cocaine, and carry a mandatory minimum sentence of ten to twenty years. As a result of the defendant pleading guilty to the lesser charges, the penalties now carry zero to twenty years.

(beat)

So, it is now completely at my discretion and no longer a mandatory ten- to twenty-year sentence.

(beat)

Now, before the court imposes the sentence, I'll give the prosecution a chance to address the court and the defense attorney, the same. I'll lastly give the defendant an opportunity to address the court as well. Let's start with the prosecutor. Mr. Tague?

Prosecutor Tague stands.

TAGUE

Yes, Your Honor. As our office has examined these charges, we cannot help but continue to note that the defendant put a large amount of a very dangerous drug on our streets without pause over a four-month period. He was indicted fairly early in this operation while his number of sales were doubling and tripling every week. The people of Muskegon believe he deserves to serve the maximum sentence and that's what we're requesting.

JUDGE GRAVES

Mr. Legatz?

Attorney Legatz stands.

LEGATZ

Your Honor, I'd like to remind the court that this young man has no prior record. I believe the likelihood of him repeating this activity ever again is highly remote. His employment history with the U.S. Coast Guard is commendable before his misstep into this enterprise. He also has cooperated with federal law enforcement agencies and testified against his suppliers in court in his hometown of Mobile, Alabama. For these reasons, the defense requests leniency when sentencing this young man.

JUDGE GRAVES

Defendant Bryars?

Bart stands.

BART

Your Honor, I'm very sorry for all this. I now understand more completely about the damages I caused, and I obviously didn't realize the serious nature of this crime at the time, or I'd never taken part in it. I don't use drugs, and I don't intend to. I only delivered cocaine for four months, start to finish. In retrospect, I'd like the opportunity to help put away more suppliers like the ones I just did. And I ask for the mercy of this court.

Bart takes a seat. Judge Graves holds up a stack of letters.

JUDGE GRAVES

Mr. Bryars, in all my years on this bench, I've never received such a voluminous amount of letters written on behalf of a defendant. There must be over fifty here, quite an impressive lineup. A chief of police, a county DA, U.S. Marshals, a federal prosecutor. I even received a call from a congressman.

(beat)

But I can't consider only who you were before these crimes. You harmed a great many people in our local community with your crimes. And beyond that activity, you ran. You went on the lam from my court and hid out on the Gulf Coast.

(beat)

For that reason, I am significantly departing outside the state's sentencing guidelines, which by law, I can.

Judge Graves nods at the bailiff.

BAILIFF

All rise!

JUDGE GRAVES

It is therefore the determination of this court that you, Marion Bart Bryars, be remanded to the custody of the Michigan Department of Corrections for a period of eight to twenty years. That is all.

Judge Graves BANGS his gavel.

INT. SUBURBAN RANCH-STYLE HOME - DEN - NIGHT - INTERCUT

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Will you accept a collect call from Muskegon County Jail?

Marion and Dianne talk to Bart on their TRIMLINE phones.

DIANNE                      MARION

Yes, yes we will.              Yes.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL - PAY PHONE - NIGHT

The crappiest of news. They all talk and cry.

BART (V.O.)

The second hearing didn't go any better. Between 'Hanging Judge' Ronald Pannucci and a court-appointed attorney I'd just met, the kick-your-ass determination of that ruling was that I, Marion Bart Bryars, should not have run. Because I did, I was staring down a consecutive term and up to four more years. I'll be fifty years old before I am free.

EXT. MICHIGAN COUNTY JAIL TRANSPORT VAN - AFTERNOON - PARKED

Bart is one of a ten-inmate CHAIN GANG in full transport restraints. They board a van flanked by FOUR GUARDS. He squints, one last look at the local confinement.

BART (V.O.)

So I'm off to the real deal, the infamous Jackson State Penitentiary, the largest walled prison in the world.

The chain gang is loaded. The transport van drives away.

EXT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY SALLY PORT - EVENING

Buckled down tight with concertina wire, guard towers, walls beaten down by 150 years of Michigan winters.

The transport van pulls in after the first gate slides open and stops. Two more gates ahead.

INT. CELL BLOCK EIGHT - NIGHT

Bart's new home, a block of 800 cells five stories high. An atrium with bolted-down metal dining tables and chairs in the middle.

An open ceiling with broken windows. PIGEONS and BIRDS flutter in the rafters. Filled to the brim with INMATES. LOUD.

INT. BART'S CELL - NIGHT

Another six-by-nine shitty cell three stories up. Before Bart settles in, he looks across the atrium toward a cell directly across from his, two levels down.

*Willie Fucking Nelson.* Bart quickly steps back out of view.

A RAT skitters across the floor behind him and under his bunk.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Bart sits at a standard metal desk in a room filled with other INMATES also seated at desks. All inmates have bubble answer sheets and No. 2 pencils. GUARDS flank the room.

BART (V.O.)

Dear Mom, I just spent a couple of  
afternoons in psychiatric evaluations.  
The whole thing is quite bizarre, if  
not downright creepy.

A PROCTOR wearing a suit walks in, sits at a desk, and TURNS ON a cassette player. A MALE VOICE booms with the expressionless cadence of a third-grade hygiene lesson.

MALE VOICE

I...am...a...good...person.

Bart glances at the inmate to his left. He can almost see how he's answering. *Then again, better not.*

BART (V.O.)

The taped voice asks a question,  
followed by three minutes of  
silence, giving everyone ample time  
to ponder their answer: always,  
often, sometimes, and never.

MALE VOICE

I...want...to kill...my...father.

INT. CELL BLOCK EIGHT - MORNING

Bart stands at his cell door.

GUARD (O.C.)

Open Floor Three, East Side!

Bart's cell door opens with the rest on Third Floor, East Side.

BART (V.O.)

I don't have any writing supplies  
in here, so I'm doing this in my  
head. Chow time is a well-oiled  
operation that takes a couple of  
hours, three times a day.

The entire floor--eighty inmates--walk down to the atrium.

CUT TO:

ATRIUM

Plastic food trays on large pallets stacked six feet high.

Bart's working on some scrambled eggs and minding his own business  
when something white lands on his food tray. He looks around, then  
looks up.

He shows his tray to a GUARD stationed near his table.

BART

Can I have another tray, sir? One  
of those birds up there just shat  
on mine.

We see the guard answer him, and it's not a yes.

BART (V.O.)

You see, everybody calls those  
birds the Jackson Air Force for a  
reason. They look on down us and  
say 'bombs away, you shitheads.'

EXT. JACKSON YARD - DAY

Bart files outside with 200 other inmates into a crowded, one-acre recreational yard. Dirty snow over cement this time of year. He heads toward a pay phone line.

Twenty guard-regulated pay phones in a row. All the lines are long. Bart's inches forward.

Across the yard, Bart spies Willie Nelson right before he vanishes into the crowd.

BART (V.O.)

At intake they told me I had a flag in my jacket, a written warning not to house me and Willie together. Yet there he is, all six-fucking-ten-serial-raping inches of him. I'm a sitting duck in here, Mom...anytime, anywhere.

Bart steps out of the pay phone line and heads toward the opposite side of the yard.

Shotgun REPORTS, BOOM-BOOM-BOOM. Buckshot kicks up snow in another rec area less than twenty-five yards away. Bart jumps and scrambles over to the fence.

LOUD SPEAKER

No congregating! Break it up!

Bart white-knuckles the fence. Glances at the inmate beside him.

BART

Shit! What was that?

INMATE

See those homies?

A clump of TWENTY INMATES in the yard next door casually disperse like it's a stroll down the promenade. Bart nods.

INMATE

That's Seven Block, where the real muthafuckas at, you know, life without. They hang around too tight and too large, po-lice bust 'em up like that. Gotta stay spreaded out.

Bart looks up at the GUARDS in the tower, shotguns still combat ready.

BART

No joke.

INT. BART'S CELL - MORNING

Bart reads on his bunk. NOISE across the atrium. He stands and looks.

Willie's standing at the front of his cell waving his arms through the bars and YELLING.

TWO GUARDS walk up to Willie's cell. Bart can see now he's got a small milk carton in one hand.

WILLIE

I fuck every one of ya! Every last muthafucka, you come on! Come at me and see what I got, huh, you pussy-ass screw!

Willie flings something brown in their faces.

BART (V.O.)

Willie evidently has a major beef going on with one of the guards, and that ain't chocolate milk, either.

INT. CELL BLOCK EIGHT - MORNING

CHEERS and UPROAR on the entire cell block, GYMNASIUM LOUD. A GOON SQUAD rushes Willie's cell and pepper-sprays him. Bart watches in alarm as they take big Willie down with baton blows.

BART (V.O.)

You've heard the expression 'saved by the bell'? I was. Willie just went into Ad Seg.

INT. PRISON TRANSPORT BUS - MORNING

A modified school bus, bench seats separated by an aisle. Metal grills over the windows. NINE handcuffed PRISONERS with Bart sit side-by-side, feet cuffed to the floor. FOUR GUARDS ride inside a cockpit cage in front.

BART (V.O.)

Three weeks later, I'm off to Kinross. We're all riding in a chain gang again, headed to Michigan's Upper Peninsula and an old Air Force base they recently converted into a medium-security prison. It's six hours away.

Bart stares between window grills at the snow-covered countryside.

BART (V.O.)

The entire time, the rabbit in me, well...



EXT. PRISON TRANSPORT BUS - MORNING - MOVING

The prison transport bus suddenly SKIDS out of control, SLAMS into a VEHICLE in the next lane, and SLAMS into the guardrail. The bus is airborne, a full series of rolls down the highway embankment.

INT. PRISON TRANSPORT BUS - ROLLING

The guards in the cockpit cage are Shake 'N Bake as the bus flips and the engine BURSTS into flames.

Inmates are a tub of marionettes at the mercy of a state-sponsored Zero-G experience, hanging by their ankles as the bus tumbles.

EXT. PRISON TRANSPORT BUS - CRASHING

The bus makes one final flip and SLAMS onto the embankment.

INT. PRISON TRANSPORT BUS - MORNING - MOVING

Bart snaps out of his daydream and shifts in his seat.

BART (V.O.)

I was desperate enough to dream up even that.

EXT. PRISON TRANSPORT BUS - AFTERNOON - MOVING

Kinross Correctional Facility. The prison bus pulls past double-tall concertina-wire at the security gate. Through a sally port. Continues past multiple rows of old barracks. Administrative buildings. Finally, up to a huge and windowless sheet-metal building.

INT. BART'S CUBICLE - AFTERNOON

A GUARD escorts Bart to a four-inmate cubicle with bunk beds on either side and double-tier lockers at one end. Bart looks around his new digs. No bars, no cells. *Freedom a rabbit can love so much, wide open.*

All around this open-air cubicle are twenty-four more just like it.

His CELLMATES in this parlor of freedom: RICO (27, Latino), WILL (35, white), and TEX (29, white).

BART (V.O.)

My new cellies are Rico, a Puerto Rican thief, Will, a small white dude walking down the last five on an eighteen-year bit for murder, and Tex, a countrified dope-dealer from the Lone Star State.

Rico, Will, and Tex chitchat with Bart while he puts away his duffle.

BART (V.O.)  
None of them are from Michigan, and  
they all like to talk.

LATER

Curfew and lights out. The pole-barn unit is pitch-black inside. Tex and Will saw Z's, Rico rearranges his mattress, and Bart flip-flops toward sleep until his eyes adjust.

INT. ADJACENT CUBICLE

A small INMATE slips out of bed, something dangling from his hand.

Another INMATE snores on his bunk. The side of his head suddenly EXPLODES, a bloody mess. THWOP, THWOP, THWOP.

INT. BART'S CUBICLE

INMATE (O.C.) SCREAMS. Bart sits straight up, followed by Will and Tex. Rico walks over to the edge of their cubicle.

The entire unit's tube lights CLICK on in sections, an UPROAR in the making. Bart's section CLICKS on. He sees:

INT. ADJACENT CUBICLE

INMATE lying and MOANING on his bunk, blood gushing from his head over his eye socket. FOUR GUARDS run past. Bart stands by Rico and watches. Tex joins them. Will hangs out on his bunk.

BART  
What just happened?

RICO  
Dude got a lock-in-a-sock.

BART  
A what?

WILL  
Combo lock in a sock.  
(slingshot swing)  
David and Goliath.

BART  
You're kidding me.

WILL  
Nope.

TEX  
Looks like they smashed him up  
good too.

INT. KINROSS MESS HALL - NOON

Bart, Tex, Will, and Rico sit at a table eating from food trays.

One table over, OLD BIKER INMATE eats alone.

Bart watches the biker meticulously maneuver red Jell-O onto a soup spoon, a feat requiring way more time than normal.

RICO

Janx, he hear something about that  
dude that got slocked last night.

TEX

That so? Do tell.

Bart's attention is divided between the latest news about the lock-in-a-sock and the biker jiggling the Jell-O.

RICO

Janx says he ran up a gambling debt  
with the ragheads, they had it out  
for him. One guy waits until he's  
asleep and whack him on the head.

BART

Just like that?

RICO

Lock-in-a-sock.

TEX

Upside the head.

WILL

I heard they smashed in his skull  
bones around his eye, you know.  
They had to fuse 'em, screws and  
pins, brain bleed, nasty stuff.

TEX

Leaky brains? Shit. That's  
fucked up.

Bart's still mystified by the quivering Jell-O show--now almost to the biker's mouth--before the gelatin slips off and plops onto his plate. He starts the process all over again.

RICO

He'll get out soon, anyways.

BART

Really?

TEX  
I thought he wuz a lifer.

WILL  
Nope. Fifteen to twenty-five.

TEX  
Oh, well. Guess they'll transfer him out, then.

RICO  
Nah, man. That's what I'm telling you. This dude, he sues the DOC, don't you get it?

BART  
He can do that?

WILL  
Shit, yeah. Where you been?

Bart glances over at the Jell-O operation again.

RICO  
We're talking--what's that word?

TEX  
Massive.

RICO  
Jes! Massive money, and he settle out-of-court for less time, maybe even skip the last five or so.

BART  
Years? For real?

TEX  
Yup. This prison, shitty and all, is legally responsible for your safety and well-being.

The Jell-O is almost in the hangar. It drops again.

TEX  
(to Bart)  
Are you even listening to me?

WILL  
(about biker inmate)  
Dude's probably on Thorazine.

BART  
What's that?

WILL

A psychotropic. Slows down motor control.

(watching biker inmate)

Like that.

TEX

He gets pretty jacked up otherwise.

Bart's dumfounded. *The biker-zombie guy?*

BART

That so?

RICO

Fuck yeah, man. That dude over there's your lock-in-a-sock funeral.

TEX

We ain't shittin' you, Bama.

(beat)

Your DOC guardian angels at work.

INT. BART'S CUBICLE - DAY

Bart sits on his bunk and writes a letter.

BART (V.O.)

Dear Mom, Rico just gave me an idea, maybe the best one yet.

EXT. KINROSS YARD - DAY

Bart and Rico walk around the recreation yard.

BART (V.O.)

I'm going to enlist him to help me think up a way to get hurt, and--

INMATE limps past clutching his side, his coat growing dark with blood.

BART (V.O.)

It has to be an injury serious enough to cost the DOC some real money and an amount significant enough to bargain for my freedom. And the DOC has to be one-hundred-percent liable.

INT. BART'S CUBICLE - DAY

Bart and Rico play cards and talk.

BART (V.O.)

We kick around scenarios for days because I have one condition: it has to be something I can do by myself. If I've learned anything, the only way not to get ratted out is D-I-Y. After all, I sold cocaine to one customer, and he was one too many.

INT. KINROSS PRISON SHOWER STALL - DAY

A bar of soap drops on the concrete.

BART (V.O., PRELAP)

Slip and fall, maybe?

INT. BART'S CUBICLE - DAY

RICO

Not unless you plan to whack your head.

An alarming idea.

BART

You mean--brain damage?

Rico looks at Bart over his card hand.

RICO

Fuck yeah, man. Massive injury, massive money, get it?

EXT. KINROSS MESS HALL - MORNING

Light snow. Bart and Rico walk along the roadway leading from mess hall toward their pole-barn. A passing car HONKS, followed by the steady BEEP-BEEP-BEEP of an approaching PRISON VAN.

Bart and Rico step into snow piles recently banked off the roadway. The van drives past, kicking up dirty snow.

RICO

You freaking kidding me? How fucked up is this, huh? In the real world you have sidewalks, *no?*

BART

It's like they actually want us to get--

*Eureka.* They both look at each other and start laughing.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. KINROSS MESS HALL - MORNING

Snowing harder. The plan's in full swing. Bart and Rico walk along the same stretch from mess hall toward the pole-barn. We hear the BEEP-BEEP-BEEP of an approaching PRISON VAN.

Bart, Rico, and other INMATES move to either side of the roadway to allow the van through. Some go left, Bart and Rico go right.

The van inches by. Bart waits--and pratfalls under the rear axle, extending his right leg under the tire. The rear wheel rolls over his leg with a THWOMP.

Bart collapses under the sheer weight and closes his eyes.

UPROAR, inmates SCREAMING and HOLLERING, BEATING the sides of the van with their fists. Van stops.

Rico bends over Bart.

RICO

You did it, man! Just lay here,  
they're coming.

INMATE (O.C.)

Shit, they just ran over that  
muthafucka. Damn, that nigga gonna  
get paid, yeah?

LAUGHTER.

BART (V.O.)

The driver said he never saw me. He  
thought he hit a pothole.

EXT. AMBULANCE - DAY

TWO ARMED GUARDS move Bart, wearing a cervical collar and handcuffed to a backboard stretcher, into an ambulance.

Rico loiters, monitoring the operation.

ARMED GUARD

(to Rico)

Move it on out, Pinto.

Rico shrugs and walks away.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Bart raises the head of his hospital bed for a look at his knee.

BART (V.O.)

There's a nine-inch bruise the width of a tire across the top, and it swelled a lot. You can see the tread too, like a Roadrunner cartoon. They didn't take any X-rays, and all I got for pain was Tylenol.

INT. KINROSS GYM UNIT - DAY

Bart's in a wheelchair. He rolls into a gymnasium crowded with bunk beds, one hundred INMATES in all.

BART (V.O.)

I'm trying not to buy into a bad feeling about this, Mom, but the first thing I noticed was a lack of documentation. And I guess this is the DOC's idea for rehab.

LATER - LIGHTS OUT

Bart lies wide-awake on his bunk. There's some COMMOTION and CAT CALLS on the other side of the gym.

BART (V.O.)

It's places like these where I fully expect to get slocked.

INT. U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Marion and Dianne Bryars meet with Jeff Sessions in his office. Dianne lifts a Confederate Flag from a keepsake box, pointing out various features of the Stars and Bars to Sessions.

INT. PRISON PAY PHONE - DAY - INTERCUT

Bart talks on the phone to his brother, Brent.

INT. SLIDELL BRICK HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Brent's eating ice cream.

BRENT

Mama said they met with Sessions again.

BART

And?



BRENT

(smacking)

You know. She spun a yarn about Antebellum times, gave him a flag, they worked out a deal.

BART

Let me guess. I plead guilty, and he petitions for a concurrent federal sentence.

BRENT

Sounds like you went over that one with Mama already.

EXT. PRISON TRANSPORT VAN - MOVING - MORNING

Transport drives past the KINROSS CORRECTIONAL FACILITY entrance sign, outbound.

Through one of the van's windows, we see Bart is aboard.

Prison transport van heads toward I-75 South.

BART (V.O.)

Now I'm headed back to Mobile, Alabama to testify for the Feds.

EXT. USP TERRE HAUTE - EVENING

Transport van pulls past the last gate at the sally port. FIVE ARMED GUARDS with shotguns surround the van. A chain gang of INMATES including Bart disembarks, flanked by GUARDS.

BART (V.O.)

Another cross-country chain gang with a few stops along the way.

INT. USP TERRE HAUTE - EVENING

A maze of dimly lit hallways and tunnels with old cement, pipes, and exposed wiring overhead. Very noir. Two different chain gangs drop inmates one-by-one along a quarantine corridor.

EXT. BART'S CELL - EVENING

Bart goes inside just after a WHITE INMATE (40) arriving with another chain gang. The inmate is covered in tats, Aryan Nation SS Lightning bolts on his neck. He quickly tosses his bedroll on the bottom bunk.

BART (V.O.)  
 I might be a fish, Mom, but I ain't  
 dumb. He can have the bottom bunk.  
 And how long was he in for?

CUT TO:

Bart climbs onto the top bunk while the Aryan unpacks and talks.

ARYAN INMATE  
 All day and a night. Extortion and  
 an accident, you know.

He hands Bart a book, pulls another from his bedroll, and stretches  
 out to read.

BART (V.O.)  
 Yep, life without. Turns out he'd  
 kidnapped someone's girl from a  
 rival motorcycle gang and  
 'inadvertently' buried her alive.

Bart opens the book, *The World According to Garp*, and begins to read.

EXT. CESSNA SKYHAWK - PARKED - DAY

A single-prop, four-seater airplane. TWO FEDERAL MARSHALS escort Bart  
 across the tarmac toward the airplane.

INT. CESSNA SKYHAWK - PARKED - DAY

Bart buckles into a rear seat beside one of the marshals.

BART (V.O.)  
 So, I survived an evening with a homicidal  
 Aryan and was feeling pretty all-important--  
 until we flew into a shitstorm.

EXT. CESSNA SKYHAWK - AIRBORNE - DAY

Dark thunderclouds with turbulence begin to engulf the small plane and  
 toss it around.

PILOT RADIO (O.C.)  
 Mobile, this is November niner  
 eight six one zero.

CONTROL TOWER RADIO (O.C.)  
 November niner eight six one zero  
 we have heavy precipitation moving  
 eastbound, so once you get closer  
 in if we need to go vectors around  
 it, we'll accommodate you.

PILOT RADIO (O.C.)  
 Alright, thanks for the heads up.

INT. CESSNA SKYHAWK - AIRBORNE - DAY

Knee-knocking dips and bobs. Bart, handcuffed, white-knuckles his own hands and leans forward into brace position. The Marshal beside him fishes in the co-pilot's seat pocket for a barf bag.

EXT. CESSNA SKYHAWK - AIRBORNE - DAY

The plane continues bouncing its way through the thunderstorm.

BART (V.O.)  
 I'm wondering--if we go down, does  
 it qualify as massive money and a  
 reduced prison term?

CONTROL TOWER RADIO (O.C.)  
 November niner eight six one zero  
 traffic, descend and maintain flight  
 level five zero. Expect moderate chop.

PILOT RADIO (O.C.)  
 Roger, we're pickin' that up a bit.

Hail SLAMS against the plane.

INT. CESSNA SKYHAWK - AIRBORNE - DAY

Hail PUMMELS the windshield.

MARSHAL  
 What's goin' on?

PILOT  
 We're into it now, no going around.

MARSHAL  
 In this fucking cloud hopper?

EXT. CESSNA SKYHAWK - AIRBORNE - DAY

Visibility rapidly deteriorates. The plane is violently tossed around as hail SLAMS into it.

CONTROL TOWER RADIO (O.C.)  
 'Kay November niner eight six one  
 Mobile approach, it will be vectors  
 runway two six left.

EXT. MOBILE CITY JAIL - DAY

A sunny day in Mobile with Mardi Gras in full swing. Gaudy floats and buffoonery crowd Main Street. The parade marches past the historic Mobile City Jail, a decrepit Romanesque display of justice.

INT. MOBILE CITY JAIL CELL - DAY

Here's a depressing dump of a jail, a cell shared with NINE INMATES. Bart stands on tiptoe to look through clerestory windows. He can only see the top third of the parade.

EXT. TOMMIE'S TERMINAL - DAY

A family style diner on the waterfront in Mobile.

INT. TOMMIE'S TERMINAL - DAY

Marion Bryars takes a chair across the table from ROY FLOYS, a sports contemporary and competitor. A polite exchange that's prickly in some places.

ROY  
How goes it there, Nat?

MARION  
Well, tomorrow's the big day.

WAITRESS comes over.

WAITRESS  
Hi, Roy. Marion. You want your usual?

MARION  
Yes'm. But hold the creamer today,  
please.

WAITRESS  
Sure, gotcha.

She flips his coffee mug, pours coffee straight-up, tops off Roy's.

ROY  
What's this? Old GI acting up on  
you again?

MARION  
I've had some distress, yeah.

Roy regards him with a mixture of disdain and pity.

ROY  
You seen Bart yet?

MARION

Last weekend. Dianne, the week before. I already told you that.

ROY

Oh yeah, that's right. How's he holding up?

MARION

He's still hopeful.

ROY

Well, he should be. I talked to my buddy Howie again for you. And Mel up there in Montgomery.

MARION

Mel Jones? He's a U.S. Marshal?

ROY

That's right.

MARION

How long's he been up there?

ROY

Since eighty-one, I think.

MARION

Well, shit.

Waitress returns with breakfast plates: eggs-over-easy, biscuits, bacon, the fixings.

WAITRESS

Here you go. Anything else?  
Tabasco?

ROY

Not for him.

MARION

Oh hell, no.

Both men dive into their food.

ROY

Good thing is, Mel says the Feds got minimum lockups all over the country and he'll vouch for your boy to keep him close by, no farther north than Montgomery. Maybe even over there in that low-security camp they got at Eglin Air Force Base. Either way, he says he'll put in a good word for him.

MARION  
He said that?

Marion chews and listens.

ROY  
(nods)  
They're good for it, trust me. Mel  
and Howie, they're the ones who  
ultimately decide where he'll go.

MARION  
And it's one of those two places  
for sure?

Roy grins.

ROY  
You know I can't exactly tell you  
that. Security and all.

INT. VISITOR BOOTH - DAY

Bart sits in a chair inside a visitor booth, door open. A once-pretty  
HAIR STYLIST cuts his hair, and she's not wearing a bra. A GUARD  
stands outside.

BART (V.O.)  
Dear Mom, do you remember Lila Boudreaux  
from our old neighborhood in Wildwood?  
They didn't have a barber in jail, so I  
called her instead.

When she leans forward, he can see down her shirt. He takes it in.

EXT. JOHN CAMPBELL U.S. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - DAY

A Renaissance Revival colossus since 1935. Usual traffic out front.

INT. JOHN CAMPBELL U.S. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - DAY

GUARDS escort Bart, dressed in a suit and shuffling along in full-  
restraint leg and belly chains.

Marion, Dianne, and a group of RELATIVES congregate by the courtroom.  
As Bart approaches, YOUNG FEMALE RELATIVE bursts into tears. Dianne  
takes her hand and starts crying too.

BART  
It's okay y'all, don't worry.

Bart shuffles past them into the courtroom.

EXT. FCI TEXARKANA - DAY

A huge complex with guard towers, concertina wire, and an electric fence. White stucco with a Spanish-tile roof.

A PRISON TRANSPORT VAN rolls past the entrance sign, rumbles along to the first gate at sally port, and stops.

SALLY PORT - LAST GATE - DAY

The chain gang including Bart disembarks the van. FIVE ARMED GUARDS with shotguns are stationed around the van.

BART (V.O.)  
 Roy Floys is full of shit. I'm not  
 on my way to minimum lockup at all,  
 and this ain't Alabama.

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - F UNIT - BART'S CELL - DAY

A six-by-nine cell designed to house one prisoner. A bunk bed and a metal locker. A small desk and chair. A toilet and a sink. An open-door policy during the day, though.

Inside is a white and unassuming cellie, TIM (35).

When Bart enters the cell, Tim stands and offers his hand to shake. Bart does likewise--with some trepidation.

BART (V.O.)  
 Wow. Federal lockup is much more  
 neat and tidy than county or state.  
 I may just survive.

Bart sits on his bunk, Tim, in the chair. They talk.

LATER

Bart's writing another letter.

BART (V.O.)  
 Tim's an international yacht thief  
 walking down the last half of a six-year  
 sentence. For years he broke into yachts,  
 changed their identifiers, and ferried  
 them down to South America for resale. He  
 says he was undone by a snitch like the  
 rest of us. The Feds call him the 'Hot  
 Yachter' and just hired him to advise  
 them about catching boat thieves. Maybe I  
 could do something like that--

Bart wads up the letter, tosses it in the toilet, pulls out another sheet of paper.

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - BAND ROOM - DAY

Bart checks out the Band Room. A rag-tag group of FOUR INMATES attempt a soulful rendition of Albert King's "Born Under a Bad Sign."

The lead guitarist, MALTE DOLLINGER (27), is a six-foot-seven, lanky German with a meticulously trimmed mustache. He riffs on a dazzling white Stratocaster.

He holds up a fist, and the playing drops off. He nods at Bart.

MALTE  
(to band)  
Shall we pick up here tomorrow?

The other inmates talk among themselves, tidy up, and walk out.

Malte extends his hand to shake.

MALTE  
Malte Dollinger. Do you play?

BART  
Yes, I do. Bart Bryars. Nice piece.

MALTE  
Oh, she does alright. No playbill here, we do a bit of this and that. Care to join up?

Astonished by Malte's congeniality, Bart follows him into the hallway.

BART  
I-I'd enjoy that.

MALTE  
Come by my house later for coffee?  
To tell me your story, you know.

Another new freedom; a lot to take in.

BART  
I-I can do that?

MALTE  
You're in F Unit, aren't you?

Bart and Malte continue talking as they walk down the hallway.

INT. F UNIT - MALTE'S CELL - DAY

Bart walks up to an open cell. Malte stands and offers him his chair. He remains standing until Bart sits, then sits on his bunk opposite Bart while they talk.



BART (V.O.)  
 Malte's from Germany, very old-school  
 manners. You'd like him, Mom. He's  
 obsessed with American blues. You know,  
 B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Buddy Guy.

CUT TO:

Malte serves coffee in Styrofoam cups while they continue talking.

BART (V.O.)  
 He's fluent in seven languages, but  
 still learning how to play guitar.

Malte pulls out the Stratocaster from underneath his bunk and hands it  
 to Bart, who plays free-form while they talk.

BART (V.O.)  
 I told him my music story, how I started  
 out on drums after my tone-deaf and  
 rhythmically-challenged dad brought home  
 that three-piece trap-set when I was  
 eleven. Remember?

EXT. SUBURBAN RANCH-STYLE HOME GARAGE - DAY

BEGIN FLASHBACK MONTAGE

Twelve-year-old Bart practicing his SNARE ROLL and CRASH.

CUT TO:

Two guitars docked in front of Bart's drum set. Thirteen-year-old Bart  
 RIFFS on a Dreadnought acoustic guitar.

BART (V.O.)  
 And how I decided after starting out on  
 drums that girls didn't pay attention to  
 guys who sat?

CUT TO:

Bart sits curbside and practices on a Yamaha acoustic guitar. A  
 NEIGHBORHOOD DRIFTER with *Sling Blade* vibes sits alongside and  
 listens. Lights a cigarette, offers one to Bart.

BART (V.O.)  
 And our first band, Captain  
 Schmedley and the Deadly Medley?

The deadly-afroed-medley teen gang plays in Bart's garage, Bart on  
 lead guitar.

END FLASHBACK MONTAGE

INT. F UNIT - MALTE'S CELL - DAY

MALTE  
Did you play blues?

Bart chuckles.

BART  
More like Led Zeppelin and Aerosmith.

MALTE  
Ah--

Bart segues into another improvisational solo.

MALTE  
Did you write your own stuff?

*Did he ever.* Bart smiles.

BART  
Oh, I thought so. Mostly songs about  
frogs and mosquitoes and getting stoned.  
Dumb shit.  
(beat)  
Not for the band, though.

MALTE  
Where did you play?

BART  
Pep rallies, skating rinks, parties...

MALTE  
Oi--

BART  
And eventually, covers at a rock-and-roll  
joint called The Sahara Club.

MALTE  
You're good. Did you study at the university?

BART  
You mean--college?

MALTE  
Yes.

BART  
I dropped out.

Bart stops playing.

MALTE

Could you show me how to do that?

CUT TO:

INT. F UNIT - BART'S CELL - DAY

A wadded letter goes flying toward the toilet and misses.

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - ELECTRONIC SHOP - DAY

A ten-by-twelve foot room with raised counters along both sides.

The morning check-in includes FIVE INMATES besides Bart. TOPPER, a bespectacled native Alaskan Aleutian, supervises.

Bart dismantles a small radio, feeling his way along. Topper stops by--

TOPPER

You got to rotate it out here, see?

--before moving down the line. Bart continues working.

BART (V.O.)

My daily grind is eight to four and five days a week under the watchful eye of an Alaskan named Topper--all for twelve cents an hour. Eight-to-twenty of this? I'm going to need a monotony buster.

INT. BAND ROOM - DAY

Bart plays drums with stripped-out tuning lugs and busted heads jury-rigged with duct tape. Everything in here is held together by shoestrings or bubblegum.

Topper's Fender Jazz bass is nice enough, but he butchers the poly-rhythms in "Down on the Corner."

CUT TO:

Bart shows Topper the ropes on the Fender. He plays better--it's just that obvious.

BART (V.O.)

Topper's in for murder--so I can't exactly inform him that he sucks at this.

INT. BAND ROOM - DOOR - DAY

An OLD INMATE (83) peers through the bottom half of a window in the door. Bart can just see the top of his head.

EXT. BAND ROOM - DOOR - DAY

Old inmate stares through the window a moment longer before he shuffles away.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Bart totes the Stratocaster as he and Malte walk and talk.

BART  
How many bands are in here?

BEGIN MONTAGE

A rotating group of prison-proud musicians in the band room:

A BIKER BAND with iron-pumped arms and tats.

MALTE (V.O., POSTLAP)  
Oh, a dozen or more.

A JAZZ BAND, sax and trumpet included.

THE METALHEADS, with vertical fretboards and whiplash.

ALL-BLACK SOUL, six a cappella singers.

THE COUNTRY-WESTERN GROUP authenticated by trucker ball caps.

MEXICAN MARIACHI with castanets, guitarrón, and an accordion.

NATIVE AMERICANS wearing wide bandannas and emulating Motley Crue.

END MONTAGE

INT. BAND ROOM - DAY

Bart's playing Malte's Stratocaster. Malte's on keyboard. TWELVE, a Black inmate, breaks out funky bass. Another inmate, RIGOBERTO, matches his tempo on drums.

BART (V.O.)  
Our band changed. Topper was out,  
and Twelve, a bank robber who likes  
to get funky, was in.

CUT TO:

DAVE, a clean-shaven version of Malte, straps on a tattered Fender bass. Guitar 101 with Bart in the band room, a private lesson.

DAVE  
It's only got four strings, right?  
How hard can it be?

He plays an erratic riff, noticeably off-key. Strikes a pose.

BART (V.O.)  
Dave loves punk rock as much as I  
do, but he makes Topper sound like  
Bootsy Collins.

EXT. BAND ROOM - WINDOW - DAY

Bart recognizes the tiny old eavesdropper shuffling along the hallway. He catches up with him and offers an arm.

BART  
Help you, sir?

The old man grins at him and takes his arm.

OLD INMATE  
You're from bayou country.

BART  
South Alabama, yes sir.

They start upstairs at the end of the hallway, a tedious process.

OLD INMATE  
I heard you back there. You're very  
good, kid. Keep it up.

BART  
Thank you, sir.

EXT. FCI TEXARKANA - BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY

Bart plays left fielder in a softball game, end of the second inning.

DAVE  
Hey, Spud!

Dave stands by the coach's box with a book. Bart jogs over.

BART (V.O.)  
Dave's Mensa material, a weekend warrior  
on the tennis courts who drops acid like  
gummies. He introduced me to alternative  
literature and thought: Vonnegut, Kafka,  
*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Dave hands Bart a copy of *Mein Kampf*.

DAVE

Don't forget the prize inside.

Bart looks. Wedged between some of the front matter is yellow blotter paper, LSD.

BART (V.O.)

I do what I always do. I flip the LSD and fake like I'm tripping when Dave comes by my cell later to write lyrics for our punk songs.

INT. F UNIT - BART'S CELL - DAY

Thumping on Malte's Stratocaster. Bart's convincingly slouched on his bunk, picking out a deranged tune while Dave sits at the desk and scribbles away.

DAVE

(singsong)

My second wife, she just turned nine.

BART

Oh, that's sick.

Bart hammers on a crazy melody.

BART

She and the baby are doing fine...

INT. F UNIT - HALLWAY - DAY

An acoustic echo down long row of cells. No one in sight.

BART & DAVE (O.C.)

I'd like to see them but I'm serving time for taking what I thought was mine, I'm a pedophile! Fuckin' A, Sieg Heil!

INT. F UNIT - BART'S CELL - DAY

A wadded letter goes flying toward the toilet and misses, joining several others on the floor.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Bart trots to catch up with the same old inmate and offers him an arm.

BART

A little help, sir?

OLD INMATE  
 Don't mind if I do.  
 (beat)  
 You play bridge?

BART  
 Uh--no sir, I don't know how.

OLD INMATE  
 My bridge partner just got released.

So easy to be jealous.

BART  
 Lucky him.

OLD INMATE  
 Not so much. He did twenty.  
 (beat)  
 I could teach you.

BART  
 It's a pretty complicated game, isn't it?

OLD INMATE  
 Don't worry, son. You'll be a pro  
 by the time you get out.

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - MESS HALL - MORNING

Bart stands in line for chow. Someone taps him on the shoulder, somebody bigger.

INMATE (O.C.)  
 What the fuck you doing in here, man?

Bart spins, braced for anything. It's--JAY CARTER--an old friend from Mobile? Jay's six-eight, a giant of a guy. He sports a Travolta Welcome-Back-Kotter do.

BART  
 Homeboy Jay! What the fuck?

They shake hands.

INT. TV ROOM - DAY

A 32" TV mounted in box on the wall. Bart, Jay, and other INMATES jaw and laugh as they watch Pee-wee's Playhouse.

BART (V.O.)  
 Dear Mom, you remember Jay from  
 Mobile?

He's in for armed robbery, but more importantly, he's in charge of the TV Room schedule.

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Short guys' basketball with streetball brutality and wild plays. Bart's on a team with NATIVE AMERICAN INMATES. Jay referees.

BART (V.O.)  
Jay formed this five-nine and under basketball league. It's a real hoot, but it's bloody.

Bart comes down from blocking a double curl holding his head, a cut over his right eye.

CUT TO:

Bart's back with stitches for the next game. Jay meets him at the baseline, takes him aside.

JAY  
Okay, four fouls by halftime or you ain't playing second half, hear me?

BART  
Sure thing.

Bart jogs onto the court.

CUT TO:

The basketball game's cracking as Jay transports Bart off the court using a fireman's carry.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Bart's under. ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON makes a small incision in his right knee with a scalpel.

BART (V.O.)  
Yep, the same knee I threw under the bus back in Michigan.

INT. FCI TEXARKANA ELECTRONIC SHOP - DAY

Bart stumps in, knee ACE-wrapped and on crutches. Topper's handing out work orders to other inmates.

TOPPER  
Welcome back to hell.

Bart grins and sits at his station, now outfitted with a typewriter.



BART (V.O.)  
And eight long weeks before any  
more monotony busters.

Bart feeds a sheet of paper into the typewriter. Neatly lined up at his station are rows of Sanka instant coffee packets and packs of cigarettes.

BART (V.O.)  
I started typing up lawsuits and appeals in  
exchange for bags of Sanka and cheap smokes.

DON YARBROUGH (45), a white-collar politician, KNOCKS on the wall by the door. Bart turns.

BART  
Hey, Don. Come on in.

Don sets aside his lobby broom and its standing dustpan as he chats with Bart.

BART (V.O.)  
Malte's cellie happens to be Don  
Yarbrough. You know, the disgraced Texas  
Supreme Court justice serving time for  
bribery? How fortuitous is that?

INT. F UNIT - BART'S CELL - DAY

Don sits at the desk and looks at the paperwork.

DON  
I think you need to base your  
appeal on Wharton's Rule.

BART  
What's that?

DON  
It prohibits the prosecution of two  
persons in conspiracy with each other.  
(beat)  
You, and your buyer. The rationale is,  
the crime cannot occur without a  
conspiracy, so conspiracy cannot be a  
separate crime in this instance. It's  
part of the main or substantive crime.

BART  
So--you mean the conspiracy charges  
don't count?

DON

If two or more people agree to commit a crime that can only be done by that number of people, they cannot be charged with conspiracy.

BART

Wow. Tell that to Judge Graves.

Don chuckles and continues reading the casework.

DON

Now, your assigned appellate attorney--

BART

Chari Grove.

DON

Yes. She's only dealing with half your problem in Michigan. An appeal that you received double enhancement of your sentence due to absconding, that your sentencing should 'shock the conscience' of the court is--well, it's reaching.

BART

I'm fucked, then.

Don smiles sympathetically.

DON

Don't get me wrong, it could still work. Meanwhile, here's something else you can do.

Don flips through the forms.

DON

You can proceed *in pro se* and file your own lawsuit against the Michigan Department of Corrections about your little accident up there.

BART

Really?

Don glances at Bart's knee, the crutches.

DON

After this? You bet. Request your surgical files and images, they'll serve as supporting exhibits.

EXT. FCI TEXARKANA - RECREATION BUILDING - NIGHT

A card table set up near the rec checkout window. Bart plays bridge with the old inmate and two other INMATES.

BART (V.O.)  
Bridge turns out to be the new  
monotony buster, and my old friend  
seems to enjoy teaching me.

CUT TO:

The bridge game is over. The old inmate slowly walks away with other INMATES as Bart hobbles around on one crutch, stacking chairs against the wall. Jay walks up.

JAY  
(lowered voice)  
Spud, you know who that is, right?

BART  
Nope, didn't ask.

JAY  
That's Carlos Marcello!

BART  
Holy shit! Really?

Bart watches the old inmate shuffle away.

BART (V.O.)  
The New Orleans godfather, the man  
who runs the Deep South.

INT. F UNIT - BART'S CELL - NIGHT

Bart reads a letter on his bunk and wipes tears from his eyes.

BART (V.O.)  
Life goes on, doesn't it, Mom? I got your  
letter that Grandpa and great-Gran are  
gone. And I'm still stuck in here.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Dianne, Marion, Pepper, Suzie, Brent, and MOURNERS gather graveside. A PRIEST officiates the ceremony and reads from the Bible.

PRIEST  
There is a time for everything, a season  
for every matter under the heavens.

## MONTAGE - VARIOUS

The takedown at Ryerson City Ballpark. Bart's hands are raised, softball mitt included.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to be born and a time to die.

Bart watches a GUARD and a NURSE ATTENDANT transport Carlos Marcello on a gurney toward a prison van.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to plant and a time to uproot,

A sacrificial slice of one thumb on the augur. Blood drips on the ice around the ice-fishing hole.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to kill and a time to heal,

DECK THE WALLS female co-worker, hand over mouth, bursts into tears as federal marshals march Bart, handcuffed, out of the store.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to weep and a time to laugh,

Bart and Jay laughing at *Pee-wee's Playhouse* cartoons in the TV room.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to mourn and a time to dance,

Steven dances around the gen-pop cell in Muskegon waving his mail while his cell mates LMAO.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to embrace and a time to refrain,

Bart and his parents group hug in visitation while Pepper, nervous, stands aside.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to search and a time to give up,

Bart peers around the corner at Willie and Andre, the circus at Muskegon County Jail's elevator. *If only* they knew which key.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to keep and a time to throw away,

Bart goes under the bus at Kinross. The rear wheel rolls over his leg with a WHOMP. Bart collapses under the sheer weight.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to tear and a time to mend,

Bart pulls a wad of chewing gum from his mouth and helps Rigoberto reinforce the snare drum stand.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to be silent and a time to speak,

Bart pleads for the mercy of the court before Judge Graves in Muskegon County Courthouse.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time to love and a time to hate,

Bart's arrival in a chain-gang at Jackson Pen and its five-story Cell Block Eight, brimming with inmates. Pigeons in the rafters.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
A time for war and a time for peace.

Bart lies on a pile of blankets and pillows in Brent's attic, ear to the floor, a shotgun nearby.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Dianne Bryars holds her son Pepper's hand and weeps.

BART (V.O.)  
I'm unable to be there for any of you  
because of my own greed and stupidity.

PRIEST  
I have seen a burden laid on the human  
race. Everything is made beautiful in its  
time, for He has set eternity in man's  
heart; yet no one can fathom what He does  
from beginning to end.

END MONTAGE

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - BART'S NEW CELL - DAY

Shock and awe. Bart, Dave, and Jay walk inside a spacious new cell and drop their duffels. Bart's no longer on crutches.

BART (V.O.)  
A brand new unit opened up at FCI  
Texarkana, and Dave, Jay, and I  
applied to be cellies. It smells like  
a new house and it's fucking amazing.

CUT TO:

Settled in, snug as a bug. Malte stops by to check out the new digs. He gawks.

MALTE  
Totally rad, man.

JAY  
Ain't it, though?

MALTE  
Hold that thought, I think I need  
to go reapply.

They laugh and shake hands. Malte sits at the table with Jay and Dave.

BART (V.O.)  
Things are looking up, Mom. Besides  
being on a songwriting tear--

Bart pulls a new Telecaster out of his locker.

MALTE  
What the fuck, man?

BART (V.O.)  
The electric guitar I ordered a  
couple of months ago finally  
arrived, and our band's preparing a  
big show to stage my originals.

Bart plays a lively riff.

JAY  
He's gonna knock 'em dead.

Bart stops playing.

BART  
I'm--not so sure about that.  
(to Malte)  
Maybe we ought to stick to covers  
this time around?

DAVE  
Bullshit. I liked "White Meat."

Malte starts laughing.

MALTE  
Which got you both the broom.

Bart hangs his head. Not one of his finer moments.

INT. PRISON AUDITORIUM - DAY (BEGIN FLASHBACK)

Bart, Dave, and DRUMMER jam on a platform stage. Their audience: a handful of INMATES bored with punk rock and "White Meat."

CHAINSAW, a buff and tatted biker inmate, strolls onstage and takes a broom to Bart's feet, Apollo Theater style.

END FLASHBACK

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - NEW CELL - DAY

JAY

I missed that one somehow. Who was it?

DAVE

That biker asshole, Chainsaw.

MALTE

Who can't play worth shit himself.

DAVE

We've got too many fucking bands,  
that's what's wrong.

MALTE

Maybe, maybe not.

They all look at Malte.

MALTE

You just--need to play for everyone.

BART

Come again?

MALTE

Think about it. The Blacks. What do they like?

DAVE

They like Twelve.

BART

Funky bass.

MALTE

That's right. The Brownies?

BART

Percussion.

JAY

Salsa.

DAVE

Well, shit. I think he may be onto  
something--

BART

What about white guys?

Should be a no-brainer--

DAVE  
Like the fuckin' Chainsaw.

JAY  
Metal?

MALTE  
Solos.

BART  
Guitar solos?

MALTE  
(nodding)  
Lead guitar. Step on your fuzz pedal and  
rock on, man. They'll love you.

JAY  
Jimi Hendrix.

DAVE  
Eddie Van Halen.

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - DAY

Bart makes rounds posting chroma-screaming flyers: the TV ROOM,  
RECREATION CHECK-OUT, BAND ROOM, ELECTRONIC SHOP, MESS HALL.

CLOSE ON FLYERS

Magazine ransom art again: FREE SHOW! Free PoPCORN and COkES. royAL  
cOMMAND PeRfoRMAncE aS SEeN on TV. BaNNeD iN 88 cOuNTRIEs. yOU WoN't  
bELiEve youR EaRS.

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - AUDITORIUM BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Frenetic tuning, rigging, and repairing.

Something's amiss with Rigoberto's single conga. He rips off a piece  
of duct tape with his teeth.

GINO RAGUSA, the drummer, and TWO LATINO INMATES help Rigoberto with  
the repair, all chattering away in Spanish.

RIGOBERTO  
¿Verás? Sostén esto para mí. Allí.

Malte checks his Casio speaker connections. Twelve, his bass amp.

The band is outfitted in prison-issue khakis and T's.

Bart sports camo pants, a new Mohawk, and a temporary tattoo (PEACE)  
on this right arm. He peers between the curtains.



INT. FCI TEXARKANA - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Showtime. Self-segregated INMATES sit in folding chairs: Blacks, whites, Latinos, and other camps tenuously unified by free popcorn and Cokes. Stare-downs, whispering. The tension is palpable.

TWO GUARDS flanking the entrance door alternately speak into their walkie-talkies.

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - AUDITORIUM BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

BART

Shit.

He closes the curtains, puts on a pair of Ray-Bans, and checks in with his band crew.

BART

Ready?

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The curtains open to SILENCE. Bart walks up to his mic and swallows. He can pick out his mortal enemies--and friends--in seconds. Jay, Chainsaw, Dave, Topper, Don.

BART

Dudes! Thanks for coming out. All these songs we're gonna play are brand new. We wrote them together. We, uh, hope you like 'em.

Bart turns from the mic and gives the (inaudible) countdown.

Twelve takes center stage with a loud and nasty BASS FUNK RIFF SOLO, quickly joined by Gino's THUNDERING DOWNBEAT.

BLACK INMATES in the audience stand slowly--*an exodus or a riot?*--and they jive!

Rigoberto adds in AFRO-CUBAN STYLE CONGA. His Latino percussion team adds CLAVES and MARACAS.

LATINO INMATES perk up, leave their seats, and salsa.

Bart jams to the intro a few more seconds before joining center stage. He stomps on the fuzz box and rips into a rock-and-roll solo, Hendrix style.

WHITE INMATES jump up, YELL, and pump their fists in the air.

Bart takes the mic and sings.

BART

Her lips are cherry red like a  
sixty-five mustang, I'm gonna fill  
her up with my high octane, Sleek  
and low like a Corvette Stingray,

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

Bart (V.O.) continues SINGING (background) "She's My Muscle Car."

The sandwich hustle in the prison kitchen. An INMATE working here wraps up the last of twenty sandwiches and stashes a dozen behind the tray dumping station.

Another INMATE worker in the kitchen rinses a gallon jug of bleach.

Bart tosses a half-empty packet of cigarettes into a trash can inside his cell. He proudly marks the wall calendar's date with an X. He and Jay high-five, and Bart walks out.

INMATE loads a large tray of biscuits in the prison kitchen oven. He curls a small pinch of biscuit dough into his palm before he shuts the oven door.

Jay fishes out Bart's cigarettes from the trash, lights up, stashes the half-pack under his own mattress.

Bart dumps his meal tray in mess hall and stashes the twelve sandwiches inside his socks and pockets.

Same bleach jug sits on the floor inside a broom closet beside two crushed 6 oz. grapefruit cans.

INMATE PORTER ONE stops by, switches out his mop, and adds another 6 oz. peel-top can of grapefruit juice to the jug. Shuts the door.

Bart unloads the dozen sandwiches into his house locker.

Same bleach jug sits on the floor inside the broom closet.

INMATE PORTER TWO stops by and drops the pinch of biscuit dough into the bleach jug. Shuts the door.

Bart's on a running jag, round and round and round the track.

Day Four without smoking. Jay marks it on the wall calendar. Another high-five for Bart.

Bart hawks two sandwiches to Chainsaw for a dollar each. He stuffs the money into his sock.

Same bleach jug sits on the floor inside the broom closet.

Jay ducks in the broom closet and pours some nasty-looking hooch into a Cremora container. Replaces the jug and shuts the door.

A block of Velveeta sits on a card table in the TV ROOM.

Bart, Malte, Dave, Jay, and a several other INMATES watch music videos on TV and drink from their Cremora containers.

LOUD SPEAKER (V.O.)  
Count time.

Attention! Bart, Malte, Dave, and Jay stand up at once, teetering drunk.

END MONTAGE

INT. FCI TEXARKANA AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The band winds down their first number to an auditorium full of jive moves and APPLAUSE.

BART  
She's my muscle car,  
She keeps her motor clean,  
She's my muscle car,  
My supercharger queen,  
She's my muscle car,  
She keeps her motor clean,  
She's my muscle car,  
My supercharger queen.

INT. BART'S NEW CELL - DAY

Bart sits at the desk drawing custom cartoon cards with Magic Markers and colored pencils: Snoopy, Garfield, and Ziggy.

Malte stops by. He's jazzed, but he's just passing through.

MALTE  
Did you hear yet?

BART  
Hear what?

MALTE  
Chainsaw told Jay. We stopped a riot last night.

Bart puts his pencil down.

BART  
You're shittin' me.

MALTE

I am not. Bikers and Muslims.  
They'd planned a fight, and our  
show killed it.

BART (V.O.)

That's when I realized. Malte had  
handed me an idea that changed  
everything.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Don Yarbrough sweeps using a lobby broom and standing dust pan. Bart approaches with a document and an ear-to-ear grin.

BART

I won! I won my fucking appeal!

Don parks his broom in the dust pan.

DON

Here, let me see.

Don reads the letter and chuckles.

DON

I've never known this to work  
before, but it looks like it will.

Bart is beside himself with joy.

BART

Holy shit!

Laughing and high-fives. Bart takes the letter back from Don and dances down the hallway. Don smiles, but there's some well-versed misgiving in his eyes.

BART (V.O.)

The ruling stated that the amount of  
time I received for my crimes from  
both Muskegon judges shocked the  
conscience of the court. I had no  
priors and a spotless prison record.

INT. FCI TEXARKANA - PAY PHONE - DAY - INTERCUT

Bart's parents join his excited conversation from their TRIMLINE phones in their den.

BART (V.O.)

I'll very likely be given time  
served.

The same holds true for my federal sentence under Rule 35, which allowed these two sentences to be served concurrently. I'd been locked up three years now, and freedom was finally in sight.

INT. BAND ROOM - DAY

Bart, Malte, Gino, Rigoberto, and Twelve jam their sets.

BART (V.O.)

For the next few months, I floated.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Bart running 'round and 'round. He's thinner and his hair, longer.

INT. ELECTRONIC SHOP - DAY

Bart types a legal document, his hand-drawn greeting cards in progress nearby. His hair's grown into a short mullet.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

INMATES of all colors and creeds dancing and jamming to the music. On stage, Bart and his band have managed to rig some cheap, but effective lighting effects.

BART (V.O.)

We continued the same musical M.O., performing two concerts a month. Me? I'm giving some serious thought about pursuing a life of music.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Don Yarbrough sweeps using a lobby broom and a standing dust pan. Bart approaches with a document. He's troubled.

BART

I got this today.

Don parks his broom in the dust pan.

DON

Here, let me see.

Don reads the letter.

DON

*Un-fucking* believable.

BART  
Ain't it?

DON  
So--the Muskegon prosecutor--

BART  
Tony *fucking* Tague.

DON  
Nice ring to that, by the way.  
(reading)  
He's suing the department of  
corrections over who's going to  
foot the bill to transport you?

BART  
That's right. And it looks like  
he's appealing my appeal, too.

Don looks up, considering it for a moment.

DON  
Yep. He can do that. Shit.

INT. BART'S NEW CELL - DAY

Bart sits on his bunk re-reading the notice from Muskegon, as if that could make it go away. He finally lays it aside and starts another letter.

EXT. FCI TEXARKANA - MORNING

BART (V.O.)  
Dear Mom, I gotta do something.

Bart and Malte shuffle in a chain gang toward the sally-port exit. They pass Jay and Dave in the hallway just outside MESS HALL.

BART (V.O.)  
FDC Oakdale is looking for inmates to  
populate their newly rebuilt prison,  
you know, the one the boatlift Cubans  
burned down last year. Malte and I  
applied. We have to say goodbye to Jay  
and Dave, though.

INT. PRISON TRANSPORT BUS - DAY

The usual luxury trip in a sweatbox, forty INMATES in full transport chains, linked to each other and their seats in an armored school bus. Louisiana-swelting hot.

INT. FDC OAKDALE RECEIVING - DAY

Bart stands in line in the receiving office. He looks around. It's new, it's shiny--just as promised. An arrival kit plops onto the receiving desk as he steps up.

An attractive FEMALE CLERK (23, white) with a big '80s do and too much makeup looks out at him. She smacks Dubble Bubble and has a thick Cajun accent.

FEMALE CLERK

Your box of personal effects will be here for you to pick up tomorrow morning. It has to be checked for contraband. And that guitar ain't allowed.

Bart can just see the neck of his guitar case in the pile of luggage.

BART

Wait, what?

FEMALE CLERK

So just write down an address on this form where you want it sent, and we'll take the postage out of your commissary account.

BART

Look, I just bought that guitar a few months ago. From y'all! This is the BOP, right?

FEMALE CLERK

Well yeah, boo. Technically. This is a new facility, though. No musical instruments allowed with new inmates. Them's the rules.

BART

But I'm not a new inmate. I-I've been locked up by y'all for some time now. And I paid a twenty-five percent handling fee to the BOP to get this guitar. A hundred fucking dollars!

FEMALE CLERK

Well, there's nothing I can do about that. Sorry.

BART

This is crazy! I'll file a lawsuit as soon as I get to my cell. You can't do this.

## FEMALE CLERK

Tell you what. I'll put it in our overflow closet back here and hold it for you for a few days. I ain't supposed to, but I will. Now, you're holding up the line. Next inmate, step forward!

## INT. FDC OAKDALE - ELECTRONIC SHOP - DAY

Bart's new (old) work assignment, typing up work orders. His co-workers are LEBANESE INMATES. To one side he crafts a letter.

## BART (V.O.)

Dear Mom, I filed a formal grievance with intent to sue, and that got some attention. Within a week, not only did I get back my guitar--I got a peace offering. A battery-powered mini-amp.

## INT. FDC OAKDALE - RECREATION BUILDING - DAY

Bart jams with his Telecaster and mini-amp with THADDEUS "T-FUNK" JACKSON (30, Black), a gifted bass guitarist who plays a Doublecut 4 plastic guitar. T-Funk cuts a complicated lick while Bart listens.

## BART (V.O.)

My new friend, T-Funk, likes to jam on new songs. I've never played with a bass player of his caliber. He's traveled on George Clinton's and Parliament's Atomic Dog World Tour where he shared the stage with funk idols like Bernie Worrell and Garry Shider.

## INT. FDC OAKDALE - ELECTRONIC SHOP - DAY

Bart types at his station and crafts letters to home on the side.

## BART (V.O.)

I know you're keeping track of all this, Mom. I've been in prison four years now, two of them with an overturned sentence. I just got word that the Muskegon prosecutor's appeal of my appeal--the one contending I'm not their responsibility to transport--has finally been denied at the State Supreme Court level. They just sent for me, in fact.



EXT. FDC OAKDALE - BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY

Bart and T-Funk watch a prison softball game from the bleachers. A heated competition brews on an adjacent soccer field, the MEDELLIN COLUMBIAN SQUAD vs. the ASIAN SQUAD.

BART (V.O.)

While I've been waiting on the appeal of my appeal, though, some of my friends got cushy work assignments.

INT. FDC OAKDALE - CLASSROOM - DAY

Malte directs a CREW on installing a flight simulator.

BART (V.O.)

Malte started a flight school and volunteered to pay for an honest-to-God flight simulator.

CUT TO:

Malte passes out written exams to several STUDENT INMATES.

BART (V.O.)

All of his classroom instruction is somehow accredited, and he says he's going to let the BOP keep the simulator when he gets released.

INT. FDC OAKDALE - ELECTRONIC SHOP - DAY

Bart types at his station. Colorful illustrations of Cent A. Pede, Waldo Worm, and Beula Butterfly lay beside his typewriter. A book cover illustration exploding with color: *The Tales of Ittybittyville*.

BART (V.O.)

I'm still at my day job typing up work orders, appeals, grievances, and lawsuits for the general population. I hope you like my illustrations for your children's book.

EXT. FDC OAKDALE - BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY

Bart and T-Funk look on curiously as a COLUMBIAN INMATE sprints around the backstop toward the dugout. He grabs a baseball bat and darts back onto the soccer field.

T-FUNK

*Jesus*, not again.

BART (V.O.)  
 Another friend opted for soccer  
 commissioner, a huge deal. He's in  
 charge of maintaining the whole prison  
 league with five Columbian teams  
 alone, fifteen to twenty teams.

COLUMBIAN INMATE starts chasing a REFEREE around the field with the  
 baseball bat.

BART (V.O.)  
 It's really the only real violence  
 I've seen at Oakdale, I promise.

EXT. OAKDALE SALLY PORT - DAY

Bart's on another chain-gang transport. He steps up into a large  
 PRISON VAN.

EXT. MUSKEGON COURTROOM - EXT.

Bart arrives once again in civvies and transport chains. CHARI GROVE,  
 outside the courtroom, walks up to meet him.

MS. GROVE  
 A pleasure to finally meet you, Mr. Bryars.

BART  
 Thank you for your hard work.

MS. GROVE  
 Let's hope it pays off.

BART  
 And in we go.

The courtroom is nearly empty. Prosecutor TONY TAGUE is chatting with  
 the BAILIFF. They abruptly end the conversation when Tague sees Bart.

Bart takes a seat on the defense side next to Chari.

BAILIFF stands at parade-rest to the left of the bench.

JUDGE enters from chambers, approaches the bench. Everyone stands.

BAILIFF  
 All rise! The Honorable James M. Graves  
 Junior is presiding. Hearing is now in  
 session. Please be seated.

JUDGE GRAVES

Today's hearing is for docket number 85-CR-0463(JG), in which the defendant, Marion Bart Bryars, pled guilty to three separate actions of delivering less than fifty grams of a mixture containing cocaine, MCL 333.7401 and 2A4, and two counts of conspiracy to deliver cocaine, MSA 14.15 (7401) and 2A4. All five original charges were for more than fifty, but less than 225 grams of cocaine, and carry a mandatory minimum sentence of ten to twenty years.

(beat)

Ms. Grove? You have the floor.

MS. GROVE

Your Honor, I'd like to remind the court that this young man has no record prior to his first sentence. He cooperated with federal law enforcement agencies and testified against his suppliers. His prison behavior record over the past four years is spotless. For these reasons, the defense requests leniency when resentencing Mr. Bryars.

Chari Grove returns to her seat.

CUT TO:

Bart watching as Prosecutor Tague presents his argument.

BART (V.O.)

Tony Tague, the bane of my existence.

CUT TO:

Judge Graves nods at the bailiff.

BAILIFF

All rise!

JUDGE GRAVES

When considering this appeal and all the constituents involved, I am more confident than ever in the original determination of this court.

Marion Bart Bryars, you will continue to be remanded to the custody of the Michigan Department of Corrections for a period of six to twenty years.

Judge Graves BANGS his gavel.

INT. MUSKEGON COUNTY JAIL CELL - DAY

GUARD escorts Bart, in orange issues, back to his holding cell.

BART (V.O.)

A deep and unnatural hatred for those two guys surges through me, Mom. In the last four years I've learned that I do hate really well. And I hate that. I hate that I hate so well.

EXT. FDC OAKDALE - RUNNING TRACK - DAY

It's raining bullets. Bart runs hard, pounding hatred on the track.

INT. FDC OAKDALE - RECREATION BUILDING - DAY

SUPER: SIX WEEKS LATER

T-Funk's set up to jam. Bart walks in with his Telecaster, the mini-amp, and a document. He hands the letter to T-Funk.

T-FUNK

(reading)

Shit, man. June 1991? You ain't fuckin' with me, are ya?

BART

My new out date. One year.

They both start laughing. A high five. T-Funk rereads the document.

T-FUNK

(poker face)

They ain't fuckin' with you, are they?

BART

Believe me, I'm still wondering how that happened. I'm eligible for work release *right now*.

INT. FDC OAKDALE - TV ROOM - DAY

Malte, T-Funk, and several other INMATES have a send-off party for Bart. It's not without emotion.

BART (V.O.)  
Which means I have to say goodbye  
to all my buddies once again and  
head north.

EXT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY - SALLY PORT - EVENING

PRISON TRANSPORT VAN pulls in after the first gate slides open and stops. Two more gates ahead.

BART (V.O.)  
My new out date is June 1991. After a  
stopover at bird-shit-fucking-Jackson,  
I'll serve out a year in some minimum  
security camp in the Upper Peninsula.

EXT. PRISON VAN - PARKED

Bart exits the van with the chain gang.

INT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY - CELL BLOCK EIGHT - NIGHT

Same block, 800 cells. Five stories high. An atrium, bolted-down metal dining tables and chairs. Same broken windows, same PIGEONS (Jackson Air Force) in the rafters. Filled to the brim with INMATES. LOUD.

INT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY - BART'S CELL

Same six-by-nine shitty cell on four stories up.

INT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY - CLASSROOM - DAY

Bart sits at a standard metal desk in a room filled with other seated INMATES. The room is flanked by GUARDS. All inmates have bubble answer sheets and No. 2 pencils.

Suited PROCTOR walks in. Sits at a desk, TURNS ON a cassette player.

BART (V.O.)  
It seems dumb to have to go through  
all this stuff again.

INT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY - BART'S CELL - MORNING

Chow time. Bart puts on his prison-issue flip-flops and waits at his cell door.

INT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY - CELL BLOCK EIGHT - LEVEL FOUR - MORNING

The entire deck of cell doors on this level SLIDE open all at once. All except Bart's.

INT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY - BART'S CELL - MORNING

Bart looks up and down at the bars in dismay. Steps in closer. INMATES on either side of him step out onto the catwalk.

INT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY - CELL BLOCK EIGHT - LEVEL FOUR - MORNING

The entire deck of cell doors on this level SLIDE closed at once. The INMATES begin walking in line down the catwalk past Bart's cell. Bart talks to them through the bars.

BART

Hey, my door malfunctioned. Can you send a guard up?

INMATES continue walking by, mostly ignoring him.

BART

Hey, hey!

Bart can see INMATES from his level sitting down in the atrium with their trays already.

BART

(louder)

Hey! I need an officer up here! Help!

Bart yanks off one of his flip-flops and starts RAKING it across the bars while he continues YELLING.

BART

Officer! Up here! Help!

GUARD lunges out of nowhere, mug up to the bars.

GUARD

Shut the fuck up, you fucking shithead! That's a goddamn ticket for you, you piece of shit!

INT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY - THE HOLE - DAY

Back to solitary. Bart sits on his bunk and reviews his ticket.

BART (V.O.)

For that disorderly conduct, Mom, I got ninety days tacked onto my out date. And just when I think it can't get any worse...

CLOSE ON TICKET

The "original" release date (according to this) is June 1992.

BART  
That's fucking *ninety-two*.

Bart stares at the ticket in disbelief. *How did that happen?*

INT. JACKSON PENITENTIARY - PAY PHONE - DAY - INTERCUT

Bart talks with his mom.

INT. SUBURBAN RANCH-STYLE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Dianne rifles through documentation on her kitchen counter.

BART  
Does yours say ninety-one or ninety-two?

DIANNE  
It says ninety-one, honey.

Bart hangs his head and squeezes back tears.

DIANNE  
Bart. Bart, listen to me. We'll get through this, okay? Just like we did the rest, hon. Just like we did the rest.

Dianne continues reading the documentation to him.

BART (V.O.)  
You called Lansing about it, and as it turns out, 1991 was an MDOC typo by an unspecified secretary. I've just based my whole decision about leaving a safer federal system in Louisiana for a state system in Michigan one year too soon. A whole extra year for a fucking typo.

EXT. MICHIGAN DEPT OF CORRECTIONS PRISON VAN - MOVING - DAY - INTERCUT

Rolls along a winding and hilly rural logging road in Upper Peninsula.

EXT. WALL - THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR MONASTERY - DAY

Dianne is on a kneeler facing the wall's visitation booth. She talks to a NUN.

BART (V.O.)

When you hit a particularly low point one time, Mom, you told me you visited a nun at The Little Sisters of the Poor.

INT. MICHIGAN DEPT OF CORRECTIONS PRISON VAN - MOVING - DAY

CLOSE ON Bart, riding in standard prison issues *unshackled* with NINE INMATES. Bart takes in the sign, CAMP OJIBWAY MDOC, as the van rolls past rows of WW2 army barracks bordered by a 10' high hurricane fence.

EXT. WALL - THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR MONASTERY - DAY

The nun talks to Dianne.

BART (V.O.)

After you told her about me, the nun said that perhaps God was sitting me down in one place for a while so I could discover who I was.

INT. CAMP OJIBWAY - WOODSHOP - DAY

A few standard workbenches in the middle of the room. FIVE inmates work on projects like custom jewelry boxes and clocks.

Bart comes in, safety goggles in hand. Walks around bundles of wood scraps piled near the door. Looks.

The shop's equipped with a table saw, a routing table, a bandsaw, drill-press, planer, scroll saw, and lathe.

BRAD STARKWEATHER (37, white), WHINES a board through a planer. Ear-splitting. He stops and looks at Bart. Kills the planer, raises his goggles. Shifts the Skoal in his lower lip. Extends his hand.

BRAD

Brad Starkweather.

Bart shakes his hand.

BART

Bart Bryars.  
(about board)  
Shit, that's smooth.

Brad blows off the sawdust and holds it up.

BRAD

Cherry. It come from that pallet over there.

He points to two crappy pallets leaning against the wall.



BART  
What? For real?

BRAD  
Yep.  
(pointing, bundles by door)  
We toss the pine and scrap wood by the  
main gate. She's piling up on us today.

He puts the board back on the planer.

BRAD  
Hey, why don't you run a bundle out there  
for me? When you get back, I'll show you  
around.

Brad doesn't wait for an answer. The planer KICKS ON.

EXT. CAMP OJIBWAY - MAIN GATE - DAY

Bart carries a bundle under each arm toward a large wood pile near  
the gate. Sets down one, hurls the other on top. Picks up the  
other bundle and--he sees the front gate is open.

*Un-fucking believeable.* Bart looks around. No guards on point,  
nothing. *He could just--*

EXT. WALL - THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR MONASTERY - DAY

The nun talks to Dianne.

BART (V.O.)  
You said she mentioned it's hard to  
decide sometimes. You know, Mom, I  
think she might have a point.

EXT. CAMP OJIBWAY - MAIN GATE - DAY

Bart stares through the open gate across the parking lot toward the  
woods, the great beyond. *He could just--*

Bart closes his eyes, takes a deep breath. A NOISE. He opens his eyes.

A RABBIT darts through the main gate and runs along the edge of the  
hurricane fence. Bart follows it with his eyes. He tosses the second  
bundle on top, turns, and walks back toward the woodshop.

CUT TO:

SUPER: TWO YEARS LATER

EXT. SIGMA PHI OMEGA FRAT HOUSE - NIGHT

A keg party in full swing. COLLEGE CO-EDS hang out on the front porch drinking from red SOLO cups or making out.

INT. SIGMA PHI OMEGA FRAT HOUSE - NIGHT

Packed, standing room only.

INT. SIGMA PHI OMEGA FRAT HOUSE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

A large clubbing area with high ceilings and a stage. A BAND is cued to start. Three mic stands are draped in pink and blue feather boas, tube lights.

On stage, a neon lip backdrop over sequin drapes. Neon palm trees. A spinning overhead disco ball.

Par-64 can lights and vertigo multi-colored lights cast over the dance floor, the CROWD.

LEAD GUITAR PLAYER in stage costume with parachute pants and platinum spiked hair stands with his back toward the audience.

An attractive blonde female lead singer, JENNIFER PRICE (19, white), steps up to the mike and sings the intro to Madonna's "Like a Prayer."

JENNIFER

Life is a mystery,  
Everyone must stand alone...

Sorority girls standing four-deep along the stage SING with her.

JENNIFER

I hear you call my name  
And it feels like home...

LEAD GUITAR

*One, two, three, four...*

Lead guitar player turns. He's wearing gold-rimmed Elvis sunglasses and--*it's Bart!*

BART

(playing, singing in unison)  
When you call my name, it's like a little  
prayer, I'm down on my knees, I wanna  
take you there, In the midnight hour, I  
can feel your power, Just like a prayer,  
you know I'll take you there...

And the party goes on.

## POSTSCRIPT WITH STILLS

Bart Bryars was released from minimum security Camp Lehman on July 6, 1992.

He bought a houseboat with \$40,000 from his personal injury lawsuit against the Michigan Department of Corrections.

Bart's houseboat was destroyed during hurricane Erin in 1995.

Bart later married Jen Price, who ended up joining his band as the lead female vocalist.

Malte Dollinger owns Swiss Aviation Group AG Airline in Switzerland and has chartered flights for the British band, Iron Maiden.

"Homeboy" Jay Carter is a career car salesman in Mobile, Alabama.

Thaddeus "T-Funk" Jackson is the producer of All Funk Radio Show, an all-Black party band in Dallas.

Bart and Jen's band, Read My Lips, performed note-for-note covers of classic '80s hits along the southeastern seaboard.

Tragic Kingdom followed suit as a tribute band with shows staged for festivals and college town events.

Sunday Night Social showcased Bart's original rock songs in several notable New York nightclubs including Kenny's Castaways, Sullivan Hall, and The Bitter End.

Sugar Beat, a funk band, performed in smaller venues around Manhattan and Brooklyn like Rockwood Music Hall, The Bowery Electric, and Arlene's Grocery.

Bart currently plays lead guitar with The Feels, a Nashville-based band that incorporates jazz, blues, rock, funk, and progressive.

Bart also wrote two full-length musicals and the libretto to an opera while living and performing in New York City.

All of his bands produced albums, singles, videos, and soundtracks.

FADE OUT