

FREEDOMLAND

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FADE IN:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

SUPER: "LOCUST GROVE, VIRGINIA, PRESENT DAY"

A battered Ford Bronco parks behind a small, timeworn red brick church. Adjacent to the church is a walled-off graveyard with a cast iron gate.

GAGE RANDOLPH, mid-thirties, followed by his huge hound, REBEL, exits the Bronco. He checks his surroundings but sees only fields and trees under the moonlight.

He retrieves a shovel from the back of the Bronco and walks to the gate. Gage glances around nervously before opening it.

The GATE CREAKS. Gage winces in fear. When he closes the gate, it CREAKS MUCH LOUDER.

GAGE

Oh, come on! How is that possible?

EXT. GRAVEYARD - GRAVESTONES - MOMENTS LATER

Gage shines the light on weathered gravestones. It lingers on a gravestone etched with the words: "Arm of Stonewall Jackson May 3, 1863." He pockets the light and begins digging.

Gage's shovel hits *something*, emitting a METALLIC SCRAPING sound. Gage peers into the hole while Rebel sniffs excitedly. Gage suddenly straightens up, listening.

GAGE

You hear something, boy?

Rebel looks up at Gage with concern. A POLICE SIREN can be heard in the distance, getting closer. Gage grabs Rebel's collar and runs over to the graveyard's inner wall.

GAGE (CONT'D)

Shit!

Sitting with his back to the wall, Gage hugs Rebel tightly. As the SIREN gets closer, Gage peeks through the adjacent gate. He snaps his head back and takes deep breaths.

The SIREN blares LOUDER and LOUDER. Gage presses up against the wall, hugging Rebel.

GAGE (CONT'D)
Dammit. How'd I get in this mess?

EXT. FAYETTEVILLE STREET - GAGE'S BRONCO - DAY

SUPER: "ONE YEAR EARLIER"

Parked on a wide city street, Gage's Ford Bronco tailgate bears a "South of the Line - S.O.L." bumper sticker. Gage CRANKS the starter, but the engine does not catch.

EXT. STREET - NEW ANGLE - FACING JUBBLIES

Two men in pinstripes, ATTORNEY #1 and ATTORNEY #2, emerge from a theme restaurant. A large sign next to the restaurant reads "JuBBlies -- Wings, Thighs and... BBreasts."

Deputy Sheriff SAM AUCOIN accompanies the men.

EXT. STREET - REVERSE ANGLE - FACING KNOCKERS - CONTINUOUS

A run-down bar/restaurant with a sign proclaiming "Knockers." The artwork on the "o" and "c" underscores the breast theme. Hands on hips, BUD ROY ROEMER stands at the bar's front door.

INT. GAGE'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Gage adjusts his rearview mirror and sees Sam and the attorneys crossing the street. He CRANKS the starter again.

EXT. STREET - FACING KNOCKERS - CONTINUOUS

Sam and the two lawyers approach Bud Roy.

ATTORNEY #1
Bud Roy Roemer? I represent the
Jubblies Restaurant Corporation.

He extracts a sheaf of legal papers from his jacket.

ATTORNEY #1 (CONT'D)
This writ requires you to cease and
desist from doing further damage to
the Jubblies brand.

BUD ROY
Damage the Jubblies brand? Ya'll do
that all on your own -- your
barbecue sucks.

ATTORNEY #2
Mr. Roemer, please focus. You must
not operate this establishment with
a name that is, ah, breast related.

BUD ROY
(agitated)
Jubblies don't own breasts!

Sam notices a gun-shaped bulge under Bud Roy's jacket.

SAM
Steady, Bud Roy. These are
reasonable people.

BUD ROY
(voice growing louder)
The hell they are! How is it
reasonable that Jubblies can tell
me I can't run a place called
Knockers? How come they get all the
good restaurant names?

ATTORNEY #1
It's the law, sir. And this writ
requires you comply.

BUD ROY
You think waving papers at a
southern businessman is gonna win
the day? If so, you didn't arm
yourself properly for this fight.

SAM
Bud Roy. They're only here to talk.

BUD ROY
I'm done talking. But I know
someone else who wants a word.

SAM
Bud Roy, please. No sudden moves.

Bud Roy pulls a large black object out of his jacket and
shakes it at the lawyer.

A GUNSHOT (O.S.) sound sends the attorneys scattering.

Sam reacts, drawing his gun and shooting Bud Roy. Bud Roy drops slowly, clutching his left shoulder. A large, old, black cordless phone clatters onto the sidewalk.

BUD ROY

Jesus! You Jubblies people are some cutthroat motherfuckers!

ATTORNEY #1

We told you to cease and desist!

Bud Roy squirms on the pavement, bleeding profusely.

ATTORNEY #2

(about to vomit)

You were ruining the good Jubblies name!

Sam runs up, holsters his weapon and applies a folded handkerchief to Bud Roy's bleeding upper chest. Gage appears over Sam's shoulder, looking down with concern.

SAM

Damn it, Bud Roy. Why'd you have to start shooting up the place?

GAGE

He didn't have no gun! It was just a phone to call his lawyer.

SAM

Bullshit! Bud Roy always carries.

Sam pats down Bud Roy, searching for the gun. Nothing. Gage shakes his head "no" and points at the phone. Sam grabs it.

SAM (CONT'D)

Dammit, Gage... I heard a shot!

GAGE

That was my Bronco backfiring. She always has some intestinal distress when I start her up.

Sam looks at Gage, his face slowly registering comprehension. He keys his radio and calls for an ambulance and back-up.

BUD ROY

(rasping, beckoning with a shaking finger)

Gage! Gage!

Gage leans over Bud Roy, his ear close to Bud Roy's lips.

BUD ROY (CONT'D)
 Call... Linus... McTane.

Bud Roy passes out. SIRENS WAIL in the distance.

INT. COURTROOM - PLAINTIFF'S TABLE - DAY

SUPER: "ELEVEN MONTHS LATER"

Bud Roy huddles with his lawyer, LINUS MCTANE. Behind them, in the seating gallery, Gage sits with Bud Roy's fiancée, SHELLEY DEWEESE. Bud Roy and Linus glance at the jury box.

INT. COURTROOM - JURY BOX - CONTINUOUS

Nine women, dressed like they just left church choir practice, eye Bud Roy with contempt. With them -- the three most unremarkable men in Fayetteville.

INT. COURTROOM - PLAINTIFF'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Bud Roy leans over to Linus, whispering.

BUD ROY
 I don't get the impression they
 sympathize with my predicament.

LINUS
 They will when I'm done.

Linus rises and saunters toward the jury box.

INT. COURTROOM - JURY BOX - CONTINUOUS

Linus pauses near one corner of the box's mahogany rail.

LINUS
 Now, you all know the story of
 David and Goliath.
 (beat)
 Well, the Jubblies corporation,
 with its New York headquarters, and
 its 193 restaurants, and comely
 waitress staff, took advantage of
 its resources, power, and position.
 (beat)
 Just like any bully would...
 (MORE)

LINUS (CONT'D)

The Jubblies corporation threatened Mr. Roemer with all manner of corporate harassment simply because my client had the gumption to open a restaurant across the street.

(beat)

But Bud Roy Roemer stood tall, and that was too much for this giant corporation to bear.

Linus walks slowly to the other corner of the jury box, sliding his hand on the rail. He turns and faces the jury.

LINUS (CONT'D)

The Jubblies corporation then sent forth Goliath: two New York lawyers in pinstripes, accompanied by a hulking Deputy Sheriff, quick to take sides against the little guy and even quicker on the trigger.

(beat)

All because of a name.

Linus repeats his deliberate stroll along the front of the jury box. At the corner, he stops and turns.

LINUS (CONT'D)

You may not like Jubblies, and you may not like Knockers. But that isn't why we're here. We're here because the actions of this giant corporation can be summed up in three words.

(beat)

It. Ain't. Right.

The jury slowly nods.

LINUS (CONT'D)

And when the Deputy Sheriff drew his weapon for no good reason and subsequently discharged it for the even less good reason of helping a big corporation bully a small businessman, that wasn't right either... Although...

Linus grins, conspiratorially offers a devilish wink.

LINUS (CONT'D)

... In the deputy's defense, this was not the first time a man messin' around with Jubblies had an accidental discharge.

Linus turns to Bud Roy. Nods and grins. Women on the jury roll their eyes; the men execute face palms. Linus turns to re-face the jury, oblivious.

LINUS (CONT'D)

The Jubblies corporation says there ain't room in this County for both Jubblies and Knockers.

(beat)

But I think you know differently.

Linus pivots and strides back to his chair.

SUPER: "35 MINUTES LATER"

INT. SAME

The jury members file back into the box. The JURY FOREMAN hands the bailiff a folded piece of paper. The bailiff hands it to the judge, who looks at it briefly, handing it back.

Taking the paper, the jury foreman rises and unfolds it. She musters a straight face and reads:

JURY FOREMAN

We, the jury, find in favor of the plaintiff Bud Roy Roemer and award him the amount of one dollar in punitive damages.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - MOMENTS LATER

Bud Roy, flanked by Linus, Shelley and Gage, descends the steps. After other people pass by, he turns to Linus.

BUD ROY

What the fuck, Linus!

LINUS

The jury just didn't break our way.

BUD ROY

No shit! After your little joke, even a jury of strippers wouldn't have broke our way.

LINUS

They hated you before that. Anyone with a pair of breasts would be hard pressed to sympathize.

BUD ROY

I thought I had a right to trial by a jury of my peers.

LINUS

You wanted twelve sexist rednecks?

BUD ROY

I'm serious. That jury's estrogen count was through the roof.

(beat)

And that was the men.

LINUS

Technically, you're the plaintiff, not the one on trial. Don't forget -
- the County coughed up one point eight million for shooting you.

BUD ROY

Linus, I got shot in the fucking clavicle! You know what your clavicle is attached to? Fucking everything. I can't walk, talk, take a shit, or get a blowjob without hurting my clavicle.

Bud Roy turns to his fiancée.

BUD ROY (CONT'D)

Ain't that right, Shelley?

SHELLEY

(eyes shoot daggers)

I can't speak to whether you find blowjobs painful now, but I can promise you it won't be a problem in the future.

Shelley storms off. Linus smiles. Gage winces. Bud Roy rolls his eyes.

GAGE

I've heard you complain plenty, Bud Roy. But, uh, not about blowjobs.

Bud Roy and Linus stare at him. Bud Roy shakes his head.

BUD ROY

Linus, all you did was settle with the County and then piss off a jury. I coulda done that by myself.

LINUS

Take a little time to think about what comes next. With your lawsuit out of the way, Jubblies won't let you re-open. But you're rich, and for the first time in your life, you have real options.

Linus gets in his car and leaves. Shelley, driving a brand new Ford Expedition, motors by, giving Bud Roy the finger.

BUD ROY

Options? Only option I got is to get shit-faced. Come on, Gage.

They shamble off toward Gage's Ford Bronco.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - EVENING

Perched on a barstool, Gage gazes at liberal pundit MONICA MATHERS on the TV. Behind him, a shiny stripper pole occupies the center of a garishly lit stage. Mirrors line the wall.

Bud Roy, returning from the john, glances at the screen, which shows a giant exploratory oil rig, repurposed into a luxury floating palace, in the ocean.

MONICA (V.O.)

(on TV)

...Yes, ladies and gentlemen. Billionaire Zacharias Townsend's shrine to greed and selfishness, FreedomLand, is now cruising thirteen miles off the East Coast. And Townsend is preparing to declare it a sovereign state.

BUD ROY

Why are you watching that?

Gage mutes the TV.

GAGE

Sorry. Uh, you were sayin' Shelley wants to buy a leopard? Why?

BUD ROY

She watches that damn nature show on basic cable. "Chomp" it's called. Shows nothin' but giant cats killin' the livin' shit out of anything that moves.

(MORE)

BUD ROY (CONT'D)

Anyway, she told me if I didn't get her a leopard, we were through.

GAGE

She ain't one to bluff.

BUD ROY

So we're buyin' a leopard. And a freezer full of steaks. And all the shit you need to make sure the leopard don't eat you. Costs even more than the damn cat.

GAGE

I guess ya got plenty of money.

BUD ROY

Not at this rate.

(beat)

We been poor our whole lives. When we finally get some money, we go batshit insane and buy things we can't possibly use.

GAGE

Well, I suppose you could say a leopard is ideal for home defense.

BUD ROY

Shut up and drink, Gage.

Gage gives the TV a last glance and shuts it off.

INT. PARKED AUTO ON CITY STREET - NIGHT

SUPER: "ONE MONTH LATER"

Stringy-haired, hoodie-wearing JACOB KELLY listens to conservative pundit SIERRA DAHLIN on the radio.

SIERRA (V.O.)

(on radio)

Listeners, if you think America has failed you, here at The Firebell --

SFX: GUNSHOT and BELL GONG

-- we all know who's to blame. Tax-loving, culture-cancelling morons like Monica Mathers telling you how to live. But we the people will have the final say, so help me God.

(MORE)

SIERRA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Join us tomorrow night when I give
her what for!

JACOB
(grinning)
You tell 'em Sierra. You tell em!

Jacob reaches over and begins to load metal pipes with colorful wires protruding out of them into an orange duffel.

JACOB (CONT'D)
... Now I'm gonna tell 'em.

EXT. PARKED AUTO ON CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Jacob's silhouette appears through the back window of a 2003 Ford Taurus bearing a Georgia license plate, "SHM-1864."

A large stone building with a sign at the front -- "Internal Revenue Service" -- looms behind the car.

INT. IRS BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Guard JOHN MARKHAM takes a seat at the lobby security station. He opens takeout from *Ben's Chili Bowl*, inhales deeply, then frowns at his station's bank of CCTV monitors.

On the monitor: Jacob, carrying an orange duffel bag, approaches the building's entrance.

MARKHAM
(picking up walkie talkie)
This is John Markham at IRS
Security. You read me?

OFFICER(V.O.)
(on walkie talkie)
Good copy, John.

MARKHAM
Requesting a drive-by. I have a
suspicious person at the
Constitution Avenue entrance.

Markham looks through the glass entrance area and sees Jacob unloading pipe bombs in front of the building.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)
What the... Send him now and send
him fast! Possible bomber!

Markham sprints to the doors and down the corridor.

EXT. IRS BUILDING ENTRANCE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Markham grabs Jacob by the arm. He starts dragging him down the steps, two at a time. Jacob stumbles.

JACOB
Lemme go you --

MARKHAM
-- Finish that sentence and I'll
make you eat those bombs.

JACOB
I wasn't doin' nothin'. You, you
got no right.

MARKHAM
Sure I do. And you got the right to
remain silent.

A police car pulls up with lights flashing. OFFICER SIMMONS
pops out and moves toward the pair, hand on holster.

SIMMONS
John, whadda we got?

MARKHAM
What we got is a probable bomb
about forty feet away!

Simmons draws his weapon and edges toward the pair.

SIMMONS
Let's get cuffs on him...

As Markham reaches with one hand for the handcuffs, Jacob,
frantic, remembers the remote detonator in his fist.

JACOB
Give me liberty or give me --

He closes his eyes and squeezes the detonator.

A crisp POW (O.S.) sound. Not a BOOM. Brown sludge sprays the
trio and the cruiser.

MARKHAM AND SIMMONS
Shit!

Markham and Simmons start gagging. Jacob twists out of
Markham's grasp and takes off.

INT. FBI OFFICE - DAY

AGENT RHONDA CARLSON, coffee cup in hand, stands in front of TV monitor affixed high on a wall. On the monitor: a smartly-coiffed ANCHORWOMAN.

ANCHORWOMAN

(on TV)

They are calling him "The Unacrapper."

Carlson mutes the TV and faces a team (BOMBSQUAD, GEEK SQUAD, FORENSICS and others) waiting for her instructions. Markham and Simmons, in sweats and t-shirts, round out the crew.

CARLSON

Can you believe this? They're calling this guy the Unacrapper. But I assure you: if we don't catch this idiot soon, we're the ones who look like shit.

(then)

Bombsquad! Whaddaya got?

BOMBSQUAD AGENT

I don't even know where to start with this one... As far as we can tell, this guy intended to do a Timothy McVeigh with a fertilizer bomb. Seems he didn't understand making one's a bit more complicated than hot-wiring a turd... he didn't even seal both ends of the pipe like any respectable pipe bomber would do. When the blasting caps detonated, the pipes just discharged their

(makes air quotes)

"fertilizer" out one end.

MARKHAM

Yeah, right at us.

Everyone else LAUGHS.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Wasn't so funny during my four hours in the shower... still isn't.

CARLSON

Geek Squad!

Two Agents, VIDEO ANALYSIS and COMMUNICATIONS, step forward.

VIDEO ANALYSIS AGENT

We got a good capture of the perp's face from the security cams as well as street cam footage of a car, a 2003 Ford Taurus, Georgia plate number SHM-1864, stolen in Banks County, Georgia three days ago.

COMMUNICATIONS AGENT

A trace of cell phones active at the time of the blast shows one number, in particular, belonging to a Jacob Kelly, from Banks County, Georgia. A more recent trace shows Kelly heading south on I-95.

VIDEO ANALYSIS AGENT

A comparison of Kelly's driver's license photo to the security cam capture also looks like a match.

CARLSON

Nice. Forensics!

FORENSICS AGENT

We've conducted a preliminary analysis of the bomb remnants.

CARLSON

What kind of fertilizer did he use? Manure? Something from Home Depot?

FORENSICS AGENT

Well, uh, you see...

Markham and Simmons stare at the forensics agent, waiting.

FORENSICS AGENT (CONT'D)

It appears to be human fecal matter. We assume it's Kelly's own personal, uh, load.

The agents struggle to maintain decorum, but a single STIFLED LAUGH emerges. It's Carlson.

CARLSON

Okay, okay. Because a biological agent was involved, that'll put our boy, Machine-butt Kelly, on the most wanted list for attacking a federal facility with a W.M.D.

(beat)

I gotta go brief the press. Jeez, they're gonna love this.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - TOWNSEND'S OFFICE - DAY

Wood paneling, sumptuous leather upholstery. A humidior, massive bookshelves, and a huge desk. Behind the desk, a high-backed chair faces away.

The office wall has dozens of framed magazine covers each featuring a tall, dark-eyed, angular man: ZACHARIAS TOWNSEND

THE FRAMES ON THE WALL - MONTAGE

-- "Forbes: SOFTWARE MOGUL ZACK TOWNSEND"

-- "Financial Times: FIRST, JANUS DATABASE; NOW, ELIMI-TAX OFFICE SUITE -- ZACHARIAS TOWNSEND'S LATEST"

-- "Wall Street Journal: TOWNSEND: THE \$68 BILLION MAN"

-- "Business Insider: ZACK TOWNSEND: ICONOCLAST"

INT. FREEDOMLAND - TOWNSEND'S COMPUTER - MOMENTS LATER

Fingers type expertly. On the monitor above, a split screen.

On the left side: text with "\$50,000" highlighted.

On the right: a black and white photo of Bud Roy in Civil War garb, kneeling by similarly clad, seemingly dead, Gage.

The mouse cursor clicks on a "send" icon. Unseen, a high-end CIGAR LIGHTER emits a FIERY HISS.

NEW ANGLE - MOMENTS LATER

Townsend walks along a row of hickory and cut-glass display cabinets. He pauses at each to absorb the essence.

THE OFFICE CABINETS - MONTAGE

Each cabinet contains a Civil War artifact identified by a descriptive plate:

-- "JEB Stuart's cutlass"

-- "Nathan Bedford Forrest's pistol"

-- "Nathan Bedford Forrest's field toiletry kit"

Townsend stops at a larger, more prominent case.

CLOSEUP - TOWNSEND'S FACE

Townsend draws on a *Cohiba* cigar and coolly releases the smoke. He looks down at the empty cabinet.

INSIDE THE CABINET

No artifact. Only a bronze plate: "1863 -- Thomas J. 'Stonewall' Jackson's left arm."

INT. TOWNSEND'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Townsend taps the case gently with his fingers before whirling away and striding off.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - LAVISH CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Townsend lopes through a long, carpeted, wood-paneled corridor. He opens a ship's door and steps into bright sunlight and a gentle ocean breeze.

EXT. FREEDOMLAND HELICOPTER DECK - CONTINUOUS

A bright red helicopter, its blades increasing in speed as it powers up, rumbles on the deck. Townsend tosses his *Cohiba* to the side, crouches and boards.

TOWNSEND'S POV

As the chopper ascends, FreedomLand comes into view. Surrounded by blue ocean waters, the refitted oil rig looks like a cross between a tropical island and a layered wedding cake with terraces, balconies, pools and gardens.

"FreedomLand" is painted on the helicopter pad, in six-foot letters. Above it all, a red flag with a skull and crossbones flutters in the wind.

EXT. SUBURBAN BACKYARD - DAY

Bud Roy and Shelley, protected by a high, metal hurricane fence, watch HOWARD THE LEOPARD destroy a hunk of meat.

Bud Roy and Howard are having a stare down. Howard wins.

SHELLEY

Can Howard come inside this evening?

BUD ROY

It's a fucking leopard! It's supposed to live outside!

SHELLEY

It'll be dark outside. He'll get cold and lonely.

BUD ROY

The hell he will. You ask any African what their worst day in Africa was, and I bet every damn one of them will say, "The day a leopard got into my hut."

SHELLEY

When you came to me and said your lifelong dream was to open a restaurant named Knockers, I didn't say nothin'. And when you wanted me to get these ridiculous things installed

(lifts breasts)

I went along with that.

Shelley snaps her fingers at Bud Roy.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

Eyes up here, Romeo. And did you ever think about how you wanting me to get these things made me feel? It made me feel like shit. Like I wasn't good enough for you.

BUD ROY

(chastened)

I'm sorry.

SHELLEY

You just might mean that. Well, having Howard here is my dream.

BUD ROY

Shelley, this cat wants to eat me.

SHELLEY

He's coming into the house, and that's all there is to it. He'll be housebroken before you know it.

Bud Roy heads inside, yelling over his shoulder.

BUD ROY

Housebroken? This ain't no tabby cat. What are you gonna use for a litter box? The bathtub?

INT. BUD ROY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Bud Roy, grabbing a beer, hears his LAPTOP BEEP. He reads the new message, mouth open in disbelief. He pulls out his phone.

BUD ROY
Gage? Meet me at the bar in a few.
I may have something good lined up.

INT. VIRGINIA - CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

On a muted TV, Jacob sees his name and driver's license picture. Rolling text on the screen says:

"FBI - Suspect may have left DNA at the scene."

JACOB
(muttering)
How did I leave DNA?

REVERSE ANGLE

Jacob begins typing on his phone. Over the back of Jacob's left shoulder, we see a FATHER and SON at the store's counter. The son wears a Boston Red Sox hat.

SON
Do we have any movies I can watch?

FATHER
(strong Boston accent)
Got a couple on the laptop. Got yer
Die Hard, Spy Who Loved Me,
Godfadda. Got a Scooby Doc, too.

SON
Those are all Boomer movies.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Jacob discreetly tosses his phone through the open rear window of a Honda C-RV with Massachusetts plates at the gas pump and keeps walking.

INT. FBI OFFICE - DAY

Agent Carlson puts down a half-eaten sandwich as her team gathers in front of her.

CARLSON

We got a hit on Kelly's phone near Richmond. He ran a Google search.

(beat)

Would anyone like to know what his search string was?

Carlson looks over at Officer Simmons and Markham.

SIMMONS

"How to eat shit and die?"

CARLSON

Nah, much better than that... "Do my turds have D.N.A.?"

SIMMONS

My turds?

CARLSON

My turds. He was very specific.

SIMMONS

I bet even Google's not seen that one before. Should narrow the list of suspects to our guy.

MARKHAM

If it doesn't, something is very wrong in downstate Virginia.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - DAY

Gage, seated at the bar, watches Monica Mathers on TV.

MONICA (V.O.)

(on TV)

Tonight, the Monica Mathers Show is coming to you from Chapel Hill North Carolina, where I'll be having a discussion with university students about the issues that will affect their future -- climate change, voting rights, economic security and more...

Bud Roy walks in, glances at the screen.

BUD ROY

C'mon, man, turn that shit off.

Gage mutes the TV.

BUD ROY (CONT'D)

Listen buddy, I know you've been short of funds. But I may have a line on some serious duckets. First, I gotta know one thing -- how do you feel about wealthy benefactors and victimless crimes?

Gage sets the TV remote aside, glancing at Monica.

GAGE

I'm listenin'.

INT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Monica, in a different outfit, stands at a podium in a small auditorium.

MONICA

I have ten minutes for questions.

A YOUNG MAN wearing khakis, a blue blazer, and a pink oxford shirt, approaches a mic stand in an aisle.

YOUNG MAN

You TV pundits spend more time on your hair than on studying the issues. Why should we take any of you seriously?

MONICA

Mostly, you shouldn't. Five years ago, I was a professor of comparative politics, teaching bright students like you. I believed my job was to challenge assumptions and test beliefs. I was naive. Students prioritize the grade over the lesson learned, the diploma over the education.

Monica takes a sip of water.

MONICA (CONT'D)

TV viewing audiences also have their preferences. They want to be affirmed, not educated. TV is their main source of news, and that is incredibly dangerous to democracy.

(beat)

But it doesn't need to be that way.

(MORE)

MONICA (CONT'D)

I didn't give up on my desire to educate - I merely traded in the classroom for a larger platform. I try, every day, to bring a little more intellectual discipline to our national conversation. But, I can't do it alone. As long as people choose to indulge in lies, sensationalism, and casual cruelty, the problem will endure.

The crowd CLAPS.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

BILL SPARK and Sierra Dahlin occupy a V-shaped news desk. Behind them, a large logo of a flame-bordered Liberty Bell. Above the logo: "The Firebell."

SIERRA

... that caller had it right. The only trigger warning we need to respect is the sound of a .357 Python being cocked.

BILL

You got it sister. A real patriot understands the second amendment isn't about guns, it's about respect. Respect for freedom, respect for authority, respect for this great country of ours.

Bill and Sierra both turn toward the (unseen) camera.

BILL (CONT'D)

Tonight on The Firebell --

SFX: GUNSHOT and BELL GONG

-- Sierra takes on liberal snowflake nitwit Monica Mathers.

INT. FBI OFFICE - NIGHT

Three fresh PROFILE TEAM AGENTS brief a tired Carlson.

PROFILE AGENT #1

Kelly is an unmarried, 29 year old sporadically employed welder.

(MORE)

PROFILE AGENT #1 (CONT'D)

On social media, he's an active member of South of the Line, aka S.O.L., a Civil War reenactor group.

CARLSON

Anything to help us understand what happened at the IRS?

PROFILE AGENT #2

His browser history shows little interest in the science of bomb-making. On the other hand, he appears to be infatuated with...

(hands over a photo)

... Sierra Dahlin, a pundit on The Firebell.

SIERRA'S GLOSSY PHOTO

Sierra poses suggestively in front of the U.S. Capitol.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

SUPER: "LOCUST GROVE, VIRGINIA, PRESENT DAY"

Gage, huddled against a wall, hugs Rebel. A SIREN BLARES. Flashing lights zoom past. The SIREN FADES and Gage regains his composure.

Gage returns to the excavated grave. He kneels and extracts a rusty metal box. He brushes the dirt off, opens it, and sees a man's hand and arm bones and tatters of gray cloth.

GAGE

I'll be damned...

EXT. UNIVERSITY PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Monica signs autographs for a group of students, including the young man with the blue blazer and pink oxford shirt.

As the group clears, Monica walks over to a shiny Lexus and pauses by the driver door. She has her phone to her ear.

MONICA

Ponce... I need some help.

INT. NEW YORK OFFICE - NIGHT

JAMES "PONCE" DE LEON sits at a glass and stainless steel desk, using a headset with his phone.

PONCE

I'm here for you. Your best friend
and most intimate confidante.

MONICA (V.O.)

(on phone)

You're my producer, which is
neither of those things. I'm about
to lock horns with Sierra Nut-job
on The Firebell. I need the latest
on the Unacraper.

Ponce types a few keys on a sleek computer set-up.

PONCE

Sending it now. What are you doing?

MONICA (V.O.)

I'm driving to Charlottesville.

PONCE

What about The Firebell?

MONICA (V.O.)

I'll call into it on the way.

PONCE

You should pull over at a rest stop
before you start arguing with
Sierra. She pushes your buttons and
there's enough road rage already.

INT. GAGE'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Through Gage's windshield, the Bronco's headlights barely illuminate a pitch dark, curvy rural road.

Rebel SNUFFLES, WHINES and PAWS noisily at the rusty box on the floorboards. Gage reaches to grab Rebel's collar.

GAGE

Dammit, Rebel! Stop trying to eat
Stonewall's arm. You're a disgrace
to your name.

INT. MONICA'S LEXUS - NIGHT

Monica slurps a soda through a straw as she barrels down a highway. Her PHONE RINGS. She puts on a headset and answers.

MONICA

Yeah, it's me... in five minutes?

Monica's head turns as a green exit sign blows past.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Shit!... What?... No, not you -- I missed my exit. No. It's fine. GPS will get me there.

INT. GAGE'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Gage turns on the Bronco's radio. He pets Rebel.

SIERRA (V.O.)

(on radio)

Jacob Kelly lashed out because our Southern history is being erased and the heritage of this nation...

Gage, fatigued, gives the steering wheel a corrective jerk.

INT. MONICA'S LEXUS - NIGHT

Monica, wearing a headset, barrels along a country road.

MONICA

No, Sierra. Real Americans don't sympathize with Jacob Kelly. There are plenty of Americans who pay their taxes and do so out of a sense of loyalty and gratitude...

INT. JACOB'S CAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Jacob, in a stolen Chevy Impala, peers over his steering wheel and sees Gage's Bronco just ahead. His radio blares.

SIERRA (V.O.)

Maybe you socialist New Yorkers think that, but in real America we don't agree. We're tired of Washington taking what's ours.

Jacob squints intently as he sees, through his windshield, Gage's S.O.L. bumper sticker. Jacob's ENGINE REVS faster.

JACOB
S.O.L. -- Maybe my luck is
changing...

INT. MONICA'S LEXUS - CONTINUOUS

MONICA
My state is a net contributor of
tax dollars. And those dollars flow
to the red states. So don't
complain about how hard it is to
row when you don't even put your
oars in the water...

INT. JACOB'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jacob begins flashing his high-beams at Gage's truck.

JACOB
Come on, come on.

INT. GAGE'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Gage reaches over to restrain Rebel again.

SIERRA (V.O.)
Well, here at The Firebell --

SFX: GUNSHOT and BELL GONG

SIERRA (V.O.)
-- We believe all we should pay
Washington for is a strong military
and a high wall.

Gage raises his hand to shield his eyes from the glare of
Jacob's headlights flashing. He sees Monica's Lexus rounding
a sharp curve, barreling toward him, half in his lane.

INT. MONICA'S LEXUS - CONTINUOUS

About to respond to Sierra, Monica's face is lit up by Gage's
approaching headlights. She swerves -- her headset flies off.

MONICA
(screaming)
AHHHH!

INT. GAGE'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Gage's TIRES SCREECH as he slams on his brakes.

GAGE
(screaming)
AHHHH!

INT. JACOB'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jacob slams on his brakes. TIRES SCREECH.

JACOB
(screaming)
AHHHH!

A LOUD CRASH follows.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

A bend in the road. Silence punctuated by the HISS of STEAM ESCAPING. On the right, steam pours from Jacob's stolen Impala. Gage's Bronco rests intact a few feet ahead.

Across the road, Monica's car points down into a ditch.

Gage exits the Bronco. Jacob also exits his vehicle.

GAGE
What in Christ's name were you
trying to do with them high beams?

Jacob holds his hands up and out.

JACOB
I'm sorry, sir. I saw your S.O.L.
bumper sticker and I wanted to get
your attention so we could, so we
could uh... have a chat.

GAGE
You're from South of the Line?

Jacob nods.

BILL (V.O.)
(on radio)
... Well Sierra, it looks like you
drove Monica off the air.

SIERRA (V.O.)
 Good. She needs to drive herself
 back to New York where she belongs.

Gage walks back and shuts off the radio.

JACOB
 You a fan of The Firebell?

GAGE
 Sometimes. I'm Gage Randolph.

Gage offers his hand. Jacob shakes it.

JACOB
 You a reenactor? We might've met at
 a couple of battles.

GAGE
 26th Carolina. My friend is the one
 with S.O.L. Maybe --

Gage looks over at the Lexus.

GAGE (CONT'D)
 -- Uh, we better see about the
 other driver.

Gage peers thru the car's window. Monica lies on her side,
 knocked out by the airbags. Gage opens the door and reaches
 over. He gently touches her neck to check for a pulse.

GAGE (CONT'D)
 We need to get her an ambulance.

Jacob begins to back away.

JACOB
 Look, I know all about bein' a Good
 Samaritan and all. But I can't hang
 around and wait for the cops...

Gage hears Rebel WHINING and SCRATCHING their graveyard
 treasure.

GAGE
 Yeah, come to think of it, I ain't
 too keen on that either.
 (beat)
 But we can't just leave her here.

JACOB
 I can't stay here, neither. You
 gotta help me out. Please...

Gage ponders the situation, looking Jacob up and down.

GAGE
I don't believe I caught your name.

Jacob takes a breath to steel himself.

JACOB
Jacob Kelly.

GAGE
The Unacrappier?

JACOB
(pleads)
I prefer Jacob.

GAGE
Well, Jacob. Do you have any idea
who that is?

Gage points at the Lexus.

INT. BUD ROY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sitting in his underwear at the kitchen table, Bud Roy multi-tasks -- drinking a glass of milk, eating cherry pie and listening to his phone on speaker.

GAGE (V.O.)
(on phone)
... I was on the back roads in case
the cops put out a dragnet.

BUD ROY
For Stonewall Jackson's left
fucking arm? That no one was
keeping an eye on for the last 150
years? That no one saw you dig up?

GAGE (V.O.)
I can see your point now, but I'm
new to grave robbing.

Bud Roy looks at the ceiling, exhales slowly.

INT. GAGE'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Gage, Rebel and Jacob crowd the front seat of the Bronco as they speed along a back road. Jacob looks back. Monica lays on the back seat, unconscious but beginning to stir.

GAGE (CONT'D)

Anyways... a short ways before the state line, I ran into two cars. Which is highly ironical as we were the only three fucking cars on the road.

BUD ROY (V.O.)

Gage, it's 2 a.m. I'm assuming there's a point to all this...

GAGE

The other two drivers was that TV lady Monica Mathers and that Unacraper bomb guy.

JACOB

Jacob...

GAGE

That's him...

BUD ROY (V.O.)

He's with you! What the hell!

GAGE

His car was totaled. Monica Mathers was knocked out. We couldn't leave her. She's in the back, still out.

INT. BUD ROY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

BUD ROY

Lemme get this straight. You think kidnapping a liberal TV pundit and adding her and America's most wanted shit-bomber to your carload of Confederate general arms is the best way to avoid the cops?

INT. GAGE'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

GAGE

Not kidnapping. We're just giving her a lift to the hospital... Like I said, we couldn't leave her. And between the Crapper and Stonewall's arm, we couldn't stay neither.

JACOB

Name's Jacob...

GAGE

It's okay now. We're going to drop her off at the nearest hospital, and then I'll drop off the Crapper.

BUD ROY (V.O.)

How are you gonna manage that? The hospital will have security cams, people, questions to answer...

Monica's eyes open. She groans and sits up and sees Gage, Rebel and Jacob. She screams.

JACOB

Lady, don't be alarmed! We're takin' you to the hospital.

Jacob reaches back to reassure her. Monica backs up on the seat, curls into a protective ball, and kicks Jacob in the face with both feet.

Jacob YELPS, covering his nose with both hands as blood runs down his face.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Ow! Jesu Quwist! I dink she boke by nobe!

BUD ROY (V.O.)

What the Sam Hill is going on, Gage?

GAGE

Sorry, Bud Roy. Monica Mathers just woke up and kicked the Unacrapper... Jacob... in the face.

JACOB

Goddabbit, Gabe do you hab to idebify ebbyone in da car? Why don you intouduce her to dis fuggin' houn ath well.

Rebel excitedly sniffs Jacob's bloody face.

MONICA

So the driver is Gabe and the guy on the phone is Bud Roy, and that's the Unacrapper.

GAGE

Gage, not Gabe.

BUD ROY (V.O.)
 For fuck's sake, Gage! Why don't
 you give her our social security
 numbers while you're at it?

GAGE
 Change of plans, Bud Roy. We need a
 place to hole up and think. And you
 know where I mean.

Jacob opens the glove compartment, pulls out a rag, places it
 against his face to stanch the bleeding. Then he sees
 something else in the glove compartment.

BUD ROY (V.O.)
 (long beat)
 Just get in before dawn.

A CLICK as Bud Roy hangs up.

MONICA
 I'm not going anywhere with any of
 you! Let me out right now!

Jacob pulls out a .357 Magnum from the glove compartment. He
 points it at the enraged Monica. She sees it. Gage sees it.

GAGE
 (to Jacob)
 Aww, shit, man... why'd you... now
 we're really fucked.
 (looks at Monica in the
 rearview mirror)
 Ma'am, I'd be most appreciative if
 you would be quiet. I didn't ask
 for this, but we're in deep now. I
 need to do some thinking...

Monica stares at the gun, nods a curt "yes."

GAGE (CONT'D)
 (looking at Jacob)
 Put it away.

Long beat. Jacob slowly lowers the gun.

INT. KNOCKERS - THE BAR - DAY

Their backs to the mirrored stage, Jacob and Gage sit atop
 barstools, listening to The Firebell on the radio.

BILL (V.O.)
 (on radio)
 ...Bobby from Lone Jack, Missouri,
 thanks for telling us how poor
 little Monica Mathers's staged
 disappearance is a direct result of
 vaccines and 5G tracking chips.

Jacob nods thoughtfully.

JACOB
 Makes sense to me...

INT. KNOCKERS - STAGE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Monica sits, hand-cuffed to the stripper pole. The cuffs have fuzzy pink padding on them. She furtively twiddles a hairpin in the lock mechanism. The hairpin breaks.

MONICA
 Dammit!

Gage and Jacob look up at her. Jacob swigs a long neck beer.

JACOB
 You're just mad 'cuz Sierra Darlin'
 beat you so bad, you staged your
 own disappearance.

MONICA
You made me disappear! You were
 there when it happened! Are you
 seriously buying into the
 fucknuttery of a guy you never met
 from Jackoff, Missouri --

GAGE
 -- Lone Jack, Missouri.

Gage takes a gulp from his coffee mug. Monica rattles the cuffs on the pole and kicks her legs in frustration.

MONICA
 Earth to wanted felons! This
situation --
 (holds up the cuffs)
 -- is not sustainable. You better
 figure out a way to get me to the
 little strippers' room, pronto.

FAYETTEVILLE SHOPPING SPREE - MONTAGE

MUSIC - A military SNARE DRUM sets the beat.

-- Gage exits a hardware store carrying loops of shiny metal link chain and strips of metal plate. He puts them in the Bronco.

-- Gage exits a welding shop, carrying a freshly hammered, shaped, welded leg manacle. He throws it in the Bronco.

-- Gage, standing in an aisle of a Marshall's clothing store, a basket hanging from his elbow, studies a shopping list.

-- Gage, embarrassed, watches a clerk ring up a series of bras, underwear, blouses.

The SNARE DRUM begins a crescendo.

-- Gage, outside a CVS drugstore, reads a list, takes a breath to steel himself, strides into the store.

-- Gage eyes shelves of tampons. He reaches for some maxi pads. A uniformed man appears next to Gage's hand.

RECORD SCRATCH sound. The music abruptly stops.

INT. CVS DRUGSTORE - CONTINUOUS

Sam Aucoin stands next to Gage, eyeing Gage's basket laden with beauty and feminine products. He looks up at Gage.

SAM

Morning, Gage. Shopping for a girlfriend, or just trying something out?

GAGE

Very funny. I'm just pickin' up some notions for a woman I know.

SAM

(waves hand at basket)

Must know her well. Hell, I've been married eight years and my wife still doesn't trust me to do this kind of shopping. You sure this all isn't for you? No shame in it.

GAGE

A lot you don't know about me. Maybe I got me a girlfriend, and maybe she's laid up. And maybe I'm helpin' her out. Any problem?

SAM

A lot of maybes in there, Gage.

GAGE

Just like there are in life. And I'd like to get back to mine, if you don't mind.

SAM

Not at all. You take care.

Sam gives the basket a last glance, nods goodbye. Gage watches him leave, exhales.

EXT. KNOCKERS BAR - NIGHT

Gage's truck gathers dew in a lot next to Knockers. A hand touches the hood. Sam pulls his hand away from the wet surface and looks at Knocker's side door.

He walks to his car, parked on the street by the front entrance, and keys the radio.

SAM

Dispatch, this is Bravo 12.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

(on radio)

This is Dispatch, Bravo 12. 10-20?

Sam looks up and mouths, silently, "Fffuuuccckkk." He glances across the street at Jubblies.

SAM

Uh, Bragg Boulevard, 13165.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

Copy, Bravo 12. Confirming your 20 at Jubblies. How are the hot wings?

SAM

Dispatch, Bravo 12. Proceeding to investigate a suspicious vehicle.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

Bravo 12, make and model?

SAM
 Dispatch, it's a 1985 Ford Bronco,
 North Carolina plates JAL-1821.

Sam waits, gently resting his forehead on the steering wheel.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
 Copy, Bravo 12. This particular
 1985 Ford Bronco is registered to
 Mr. Gage Randolph. Is this not the
 same Ford Bronco that provoked you
 into shooting one Bud Roy Roemer,
 resulting in none of us getting
 raises this year so the county
 could pay off the lawsuit?

SAM
 Affirmative.

The radio burps out SQUELCH sounds and some LAUGHTER.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
 Bravo 12. Best you leave it alone
 before you end up shooting the
 mayor or drilling a nun hugging an
 orphan holding a kitten.

SAM
 Dispatch, the car is sitting in the
 parking lot of a shuttered
 business. It's suspicious.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
 Copy, Bravo 12. Exercise extreme
 caution. This vehicle is known to
 be loud and possibly upsetting.

SQUELCH noises and LAUGHTER again. Sam looks defeated.

SAM
 Fuck this...

Sam closes his door and slowly drives off.

INT. DINER - MORNING

Sitting at a window booth, Gage and Bud Roy talk in low
 tones. Traffic passes by outside.

GAGE
 ... We can't kill her.

BUD ROY
 (chewing a biscuit)
 I agree. But she knows our names.

GAGE
 (sheepishly)
 To be honest, she knows a bit more than that. When we got to Knockers she asked, "What is this place?" in the way them northerners have. I said, "It's Bud Roy's place. He worked real hard to make a go of it." Just trying to defend you.

BUD ROY
 Sweet Jesus, Gage!

Bud Roy stabs a piece of ham and chews it without pleasure.

BUD ROY (CONT'D)
 There's something wrong with you. I think you're afflicted with, with some sort of criminal version of --
 (snaps fingers)
 -- Tourette's syndrome. That's it exactly. You suffer from criminal Tourette's. You blurt out vital information law enforcement professionals will use to throw our asses in jail.

Gage considers the diagnosis for a moment before moving on.

GAGE
 I've been pondering a solution.

BUD ROY
 Does it involve you, me, and the Unacraper standing in a circle and shooting each other?

GAGE
 I've spent a couple of days with Monica now. She don't like the Crapper, but I don't think she hates me.

BUD ROY
 (begins counting off on his fingers)
 You kidnapped her. America's most wanted terrorist pointed your gun at her.

(MORE)

BUD ROY (CONT'D)

You chained her to a stripper pole,
and worst of all, you been feeding
her Jubblies hot wings three meals
a day.

(beat)

You think this was just another
night out for her?

GAGE

I think she's in the first stages
of Helsinki syndrome.

Bud Roy grasps his left clavicle and grimaces.

BUD ROY

Helsinki syndrome? Is that a
disease? Cancer or something else
useful that will kill her so we
don't have to?

GAGE

Nah. Remember in Die Hard -- the TV
guy was interviewin' an expert, and
he was sayin' the hostages would
start identifyin' with the hostage
takers? Called it Helsinki
syndrome. That's what she's got. I
just got to give her more of it.

Bud Roy stares at Gage.

BUD ROY

That was a movie. I don't know if
there even is a Helsinki syndrome.
I think I've heard of a Stockholm
syndrome. But what the hell do I
know? And who the hell knows if we
can give her more of it.

GAGE

Do you have a better idea?

Gage sees Sam park his police cruiser in front of the diner.
Gage motions his head toward Sam's car.

GAGE (CONT'D)

Cuz we need one A.S.A.P.

Sam, standing next to his car, stares up at Bud Roy and Gage.

INT. DINER - MOMENTS LATER

Apprehensive, Gage and Bud Roy gaze upward at Sam as he looms next to their table.

SAM

Boys. How are you this morning?

BUD ROY

Fair to middlin'. My left clavicle's been acting up.

Sam ignores Bud Roy. He looks at Gage.

SAM

Gage, I noticed your truck parked at Knockers last night. Why are you frequenting a closed establishment?

Gage looks at Bud Roy, then at Sam.

GAGE

I parked it there to meet Bud Roy. We been out on the town.

SAM

All night? In Fayetteville?

BUD ROY

I own the property. Told Gage to park there. That against the law?

SAM

Nope.

BUD ROY

Well, unless you've come here to shoot me in my other clavicle, why don't you leave us be? We're just tryin' to finish our breakfast.

Sam forces a small smile.

SAM

Gentlemen...

Sam turns and walks further into the diner. Gage looks at Bud Roy and blows out some air.

GAGE

We dodged a bullet there.

Bud Roy polishes off his biscuit and takes a swig of Coke.

BUD ROY
We need help. I'll make a call.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - DAY

Gage and Jacob lean on the bar. On the stage, Monica lazes on an old recliner, wearing new clothes and reading a magazine. A leg manacle and chain connect her to the pole.

JACOB
(to Gage)
... and the show a few weeks ago,
where Sierra was complainin' about
taxes? That's what inspired me.

MONICA
Tell her that when she visits you
in jail. Oh wait, that will never
happen because not even she would
waste a second on your loser ass.

JACOB
Why d'ya gotta be so impolite?

MONICA
(holds up chain)
Asks man who pointed a gun at me
and chained me to a stripper pole.

GAGE
Jacob, why don't you go back to the
office and watch a movie.

Jacob retreats to the office.

MONICA
(to Gage)
Thanks. At least you haven't
pointed a gun at me.

Gage grabs two longnecks from the bar fridge. He hands Monica one and sits on the edge of the stage. Monica takes a small sip and looks at the bottle, considering it.

MONICA (CONT'D)
What's your plan? You know you
gotta let me go.

GAGE
I know. But I'll be damned if I
have a solution that don't end up
with me in jail. And who'd take
care of Rebel?

MONICA

I'll tell them it was all Jacob's fault. You'd get off easy.

GAGE

It's a little more complicated than that. They'll throw the book at me when they find out about the arm.

MONICA

The arm?

Gage slaps his head.

GAGE

(to himself)

Dammit.

MONICA

The sooner you let me go, the better off you'll be.

Gage shakes his head.

GAGE

No. It may take some time, but I'll find a way out.

Monica looks at Gage and nods slightly. It's time to escape.

MONICA

You don't seem like a bad person.
You can trust me.

Monica takes a long, seductive drink from her bottle and gazes into his eyes, sending him an invitation. Gage leans closer. Monica slams the longneck into his forehead with a loud THUMP. The bottle does not break. Gage yelps in pain, steps out of reach, cradling his forehead in his hands.

GAGE

Fuck! That really hurt! Goddammit!

Monica studies the bottle for a moment.

MONICA

I thought it would break on your head, knock you out, and I could get the key and escape.

GAGE

Glass only breaks like that in the movies. Jesus! Be careful, you could really hurt someone.

MONICA

I'm trying to hurt you! You kidnapped me and chained me to a stripper pole.

GAGE

Not on purpose!

MONICA

That doesn't make it better!

GAGE

Bullshit. Intent, I guess that's what you call it. Intent matters. Are you tellin' me you'd rather be chained to a stripper pole by a guy who meant to do it instead of by guy who didn't?

MONICA

Why are those my only two options? Why are those the only two options for every fucking woman in America?

GAGE

Fine, you're upset. I get it.

Rubbing his still sore forehead.

GAGE (CONT'D)

You had me goin' there. Here I am planning to give you Helsinki syndrome, and you do the same damn thing so you could pound a bottle into my coconut.

MONICA

Helsinki syndrome? I have no clue what you're talking about.

GAGE

Like hell you don't. You was Helsinki-in' the crap out of me.

Monica raises her hands, signals surrender.

MONICA

Just tell me how this ends.

GAGE

Well it don't end with you beating me senseless with a Budweiser.

Monica waggles the empty bottle at Gage.

GAGE (CONT'D)

More? You've gotta be kidding me.
If Jack the Ripper lost his knife
you think I'd go to the kitchen and
get him a new one?

MONICA

I'm not going to try that again. I
think we've proven it doesn't work.

GAGE

Yeah, by giving me a concussion.

MONICA

All scientific progress has a cost.

She waggles the empty again. Gage sighs, goes to the bar and
retrieves two more longnecks. He opens them and very
carefully gives one to Monica. She drinks hers; he rolls the
cold bottle on his head before taking a long swallow.

MONICA (CONT'D)

You trying to give me... what did
you call it? Helsinki Syndrome?
That didn't work. And won't. Me
trying to brain you didn't either.

GAGE

At least I practiced non-violence.

MONICA

Again, chained to a stripper pole.

She sighs.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Point is, it looks like we're in, I
guess, a Mexican standoff.

GAGE

I don't think you can say it like
that anymore.

MONICA

Gage --

GAGE

No more Chinese fire drills either.
Hell, probably can't even give
someone a Dutch oven.

MONICA

Just tell me how this ends.

GAGE

Still figurin' that out. We're getting advice. Bud Roy's friend, Linus McTane, is one helluva--

Gage slaps his head.

GAGE (CONT'D)

Dammit!... Oww!

MONICA

The way you blab, I don't think your heart's in this kidnapping. Anything else you want to tell me?

GAGE

Bud Roy says I got criminal Tourettes.

INT. FREEDOMLAND DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Townsend and his wife BARBARA, tall and intimidating, stand at the end of a long glass and stainless steel dining table.

Barbara accepts a huge martini from a waiter. She swirls the four-olive drink and forces a smile for Bill and Sierra.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - DINING ROOM TABLE - 30 MINUTES LATER

The two couples sit across from each other. Waiters set servings of lobster in front of them.

BILL

...then I told the lib protestor that the only problem with eating a whale was finding a big enough bun.

Townsend and Barbara laugh.

Bill works on a lobster claw, struggling.

SIERRA

Bill's an expert on social media and feeding the echo chamber.

As Sierra says this, Barbara extends her bare foot under the table, dexterously maneuvering her toes around Bill's crotch.

TOWNSEND

(leering at Sierra)

I think he had some other sources of inspiration.

Bill, flummoxed by Barbara's toes, applies too much force to his lobster fork, rocketing a claw into Townsend's right eye.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Fuuuuuuuuck!

Bill looks at his empty fork in slack-jawed bewilderment.

BILL

I'm... the claw... I didn't mean to shoot it into your eyeball.

Barbara and the waitstaff move to assist Townsend. Welded shut, his eye waters profusely.

BARBARA

Honey, let's get you to the doctor.

Barbara gives Bill a quick wink as she leads Townsend out of the room. A WAITER appears.

WAITER

That concludes dinner.

EXT. FREEDOMLAND BALCONY - NIGHT

Bill and Sierra gaze at the ocean from their room's balcony.

SIERRA

What the fuck happened back there?

BILL

You're not going to believe this, but Barbara tried to give me a hand job with her foot.

SIERRA

Her? You? A foot job? Bullshit.

BILL

I swear. She's got some seriously talented toes. Could probably make one of them origami paper cranes with those toes.

SIERRA

That bi--

On the other side of the glass door, Townsend, wearing a black eyepatch, KNOCKS. Bill and Sierra turn to face him.

SIERRA (CONT'D)

Oh, Zack. Are you okay?

TOWNSEND

A scratched cornea. Doctor says I have to wear this for a few days.

BILL

I'm so sorry.

TOWNSEND

Not at all. I'm not going to let a crustacean to the eyeball keep us from changing the world.

(beat)

On your first broadcast from FreedomLand, you will announce you are joining Barbara and me in seceding from the United States.

The three turn to gaze outward. Hands on the rail, they peer up. The red pirate flag ripples in the blustery wind.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Now, if you will excuse me, I have some business. Shaping the future requires us also to honor the past.

Nonplussed, Bill and Sierra shrug as he takes his leave.

INT. BUD ROY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sitting in front of an open laptop, Bud Roy ponders his next move. Gage and Rebel stand behind him. A rusty metal box sits next to the laptop.

Bud Roy begins to type, narrating for Gage's benefit.

BUD ROY

We have the arm. The price is now \$250,000 or we get another buyer.

Bud Roy pops the "Enter" key with his index finger.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - TOWNSEND'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

TOWNSEND

Greedy moron.

Townsend pounds his reply on the keyboard.

BUD ROY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Bud Roy reads Townsend's reply.

BUD ROY
 You keep playing games, I'll tell
 the world you stole the arm.

Gage and Bud Roy chuckle. Bud Roy types/narrates.

BUD ROY (CONT'D)
 I'd be scared if you knew who I am.

A FaceTime call cue appears on Bud Roy's screen. The computer emits a REPEATING RINGTONE. Bud Roy and Gage both jump.

Bud Roy clicks the green "answer" icon.

Townsend's face, eyepatch and scowl, fills Bud Roy's screen.

TOWNSEND (V.O.)
 (on computer)
 Your name is Bud Roy Roemer.

BUD ROY
 How do you know that?

TOWNSEND (V.O.)
 Your photo and phone number are on
 the S.O.L website.

BUD ROY
 That's a secure website.

TOWNSEND (V.O.)
 Not really. The Admin password is
 "Robert E. Lee."

BUD ROY
 And just who the fuck are you?

TOWNSEND (V.O.)
 Zacharias Townsend.

BUD ROY
 The billionaire? Hell, in that case
 a quarter mil ain't near enough.

TOWNSEND (V.O.)
 C.N.N. is calling the thief of the
 arm "the Ulnagrabber." I can have
 your face on TV with that label
 underneath in ten minutes.

BUD ROY
 Fake news! Ulnagrabber? We didn't
 steal no lady parts. Just the arm.

Onscreen Townsend holds his head in his hands for a moment.

TOWNSEND (V.O.)

The ulna is a bone in the forearm. You are confusing it with the vulva. Historians are unanimous in their assessment Stonewall Jackson did not have one of those.

BUD ROY

Your point?

TOWNSEND (V.O.)

Ah yes, my point. I can have the Feds at your door in five minutes.

BUD ROY

Go ahead and call 'em. There are plenty of computer records of you talkin' to me in this chat room.

TOWNSEND (V.O.)

The chat room records will show what I want them to show.

On the computer screen, Townsend drinks some scotch, setting it carefully on a silver-bordered leather coaster.

TOWNSEND (V.O.)

And I have an army of lawyers to back me. What do you have?

Gage and Bud Roy glance at each other. Bud Roy shrugs. Gage leans into camera view, pulling Rebel next to him.

GAGE

We got two things. We got the arm. And we got this here dog.

Bud Roy grins at Gage, picking up on his tactic.

BUD ROY

Now, you may be asking, what does that have to do with anything? Let me explain it to you in simple words, like you used for us.

Bud Roy takes a swig of Coke and sets it carefully on an empty Cheetos bag, mimicking Townsend's mannered performance.

BUD ROY (CONT'D)

See, Rebel here... well, he wants nothing more in life than to eat Stonewall Jackson's arm.

Gage opens the box and leans it forward so Townsend can see.

BUD ROY (CONT'D)
(pointing with thumb)
This arm, as a matter of fact.

Townsend involuntarily reaches toward the morbid treasure. Rebel makes his own play for it. Gage tugs Rebel's collar.

GAGE
Goddamn it, Rebel. Not yet!

BUD ROY
In less than five minutes, we can have Rebel destroy the evidence -- it will be just another pile of dog shit on the street.

Gage pats Rebel's head. Bud Roy swigs his Coke and belches.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - TOWNSEND'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Townsend's screen fills momentarily with a hi-definition close-up of Rebel's snout.

TOWNSEND
You fuck with me and I'll scoop out your brains with a melon-baller and piss in your empty skull.

INT. BUD ROY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Bud Roy leans back in shock.

BUD ROY
Damn, dude. Sounds like you have some issues. I... I... uh...

Gage leans toward the laptop.

GAGE
You don't scare me. You can't hurt me more than life already has.

TOWNSEND (V.O.)
Didn't you hear what I said about the melon-baller?

GAGE
It's getting late and Rebel's hungry. The arm can be yours for two-fifty. You want it or not?

Long beat.

TOWNSEND (V.O.)
Fine. When do I get it?

The apparent closing of the deal reanimates Bud Roy.

BUD ROY
We wanna swap cash for bones at the reenactment of the Battle of Bentonville this Saturday. It seems fitting, that bein' the place where the South stood tall one last time.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - TOWNSEND'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

TOWNSEND
Deal.

BUD ROY (V.O.)
Pleasure doing business with you.

Townsend cuts the connection. He opens his desk drawer and takes out a handgun, looking down the barrel.

TOWNSEND
It's never been a pleasure doing business with me.

INT. FAYETTEVILLE STEET - SAM'S CRUISER - DAY

Sitting in his cruiser parked a half-block from the diner, Sam peers thru binoculars for a few seconds. He puts them down and reads a copy of The Fayetteville Observer.

The headline: "SEARCH FOR MONICA MATHERS CONTINUES."

Sam folds the paper over.

Another headline: "THE HUNT IS ON FOR STONEWALL'S ARM."

He puts the paper aside.

SAM
Monica Mathers and Stonewall's Arm both on the same night? Gage and Bud Roy acting weirder than usual? Naah... No fucking way.

Sam reads both headlines again.

SAM (CONT'D)

Goddammit. What are you boys up to?

He raises the binoculars and spies three men seated at the diner: Linus, Bud Roy, and Gage.

INT. DINER - DAY

Bud Roy, Gage, and Linus deliberate over breakfast.

BUD ROY

... suppose, *hypothetically*, two guys know where Monica Mathers and the Unacraper are.

Linus stops chewing and glares at Bud Roy for a long moment.

LINUS

You know, I was enjoying my biscuits and gravy. I rarely get a proper southern breakfast. The current Mrs. McTane serves only granola for breakfast. I guess because she's mistaken me for a fucking blue jay.

(pushes plate aside)

But now... What in the name of Christ have you boys been up to?

GAGE

It's a long story.

LINUS

With you two being, *hypothetically*, upstanding citizens, I suggest you share your knowledge with the proper law enforcement authorities.

BUD ROY

It's a skidge too complicated for that.

LINUS

I'm sure.

GAGE

I was tricked into helping the Unacraper kidnap Ms. "M"...

Gage makes air-quotes with his fingers.□

GAGE (CONT'D)

... after we all ran into each other on a back road in Virginia. Now they're hiding out at Knockers.

LINUS

That goddamn bar...

Linus pulls his plate over and shakes salt onto his food.

LINUS (CONT'D)

Fuck it. If I die of a heart attack before this conversation is over, I'll come out ahead. Keep going.

Linus shovels biscuit and gravy into his mouth.

GAGE

I suppose you've heard about Stonewall "J"'s left arm.

Gage makes air-quotes again.

LINUS

Gee, Gage. Gonna need an Enigma machine to break your code. I am assuming you are the person now known as the "Ulnagrabber"?

GAGE

I dug it up. There's a buyer, a really rich guy, and we need your help closing the sale. I'm also hopin' he can help me in some way with our first hypothetical.

LINUS

By doing what?

Gage throws up his arms in a gesture of exasperation.

GAGE

I dunno. Whatever it is rich people do to avoid punishment for all the shit rich people do.

Linus drains the last of his orange juice.

LINUS

Who's the buyer?

BUD ROY

Zacharias Townsend.

Linus whistles and leans back in his chair.

LINUS

You two are runnin' with the bulls
now, ain't ya?

Linus pauses as the gears turn in his head.

LINUS (CONT'D)

I'm gonna let you buy me this
breakfast, which I will consider a
retainer for my legal services.

Gage and Bud Roy wait patiently as Linus eats.

LINUS (CONT'D)

I need to think. While I do, please
don't make things worse.

Linus slides his check in front of Bud Roy.

LINUS (CONT'D)

One other thing. Bud Roy, you and
Shelly stop by my office this
afternoon. There's something we
need to discuss.

Linus leaves. Outside the window, Sam's cruiser glides past.

INT. AUCOIN RESIDENCE - DAY

Sam enters the kitchen and smiles at his wife, REBECCA
AUCOIN, who is leaning against the center island.

SAM

There's something going on with
Gage and Bud Roy.

REBECCA

You think about Bud Roy more than
you do me. That isn't healthy.

SAM

Becks, they're up to something.

Sam grabs a beer from their fridge. He opens it with a well-
practiced twist using his wedding ring as an opener.

SAM (CONT'D)

I just saw them with Linus McTane
at the diner.

REBECCA

Friends eating at a diner? Better call INTERPOL. Tell me this isn't about the shooting.

SAM

It's not.

Rebecca gives him a skeptical look.

SAM (CONT'D)

Okay. Maybe. All I want is to take that moment back. I doubt myself every time I go out on patrol. I hate that feeling.

Rebecca puts her arms around Sam.

REBECCA

I know.

SAM

(gives her a kiss)
Well, here's something I don't doubt. Gage Randolph is not a man who would buy -- and I'm quoting from memory here -- *Hydra Zen Neurocalm Detoxifying Moisturizing Multi-Relief Anti-Stress Gel Essence*.

REBECCA

Gage has a girlfriend?

SAM

If he had one, she wouldn't use face goo that costs sixty bucks.

INT. LINUS MCTANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Apoplectic, Bud Roy and Shelley glare at Linus.

BUD ROY AND SHELLEY

(in unison)
... What the fuck, Linus?

SHELLEY

Two-hundred grand in taxes! Why's Bud Roy got to pay taxes on money the state had to pay him because they shot him in the left clavicle?

BUD ROY
Yeah. Which fucking Democrat made
left clavicle money taxable?

LINUS
The County's reporting \$600,000 of
the settlement as punitive damages.

Bud Roy and Shelley stare blankly.

LINUS (CONT'D)
Which means, that part of the
settlement is now taxable.

Shelley stands up, grabs Bud Roy and pulls him toward the
door. Shelley glares back at Linus.

SHELLEY
This ain't over.

LINUS
Don't I know it.

INT. BUD ROY'S FORD EXPEDITION - MOMENTS LATER

SHELLEY
Linus has fucked us so many times
we oughta marry him.

Bud Roy, smart enough to stay silent, turns on the radio.

BUD ROY
Two-hundred grand in taxes puts me
in the mood for The Firebell.

BILL (V.O.)
-- the IRS and I disagree about how
much of my hard-earned money I
should get to keep.

SHELLEY
Welcome to our world, Bill.

BILL (V.O.)
... I did not ask Uncle Sam for a
helping hand in the pursuit of
happiness. I used my own hand.

Beat. Bud Roy and Shelley look at each other.

BILL
...to fight back, I've put my trust
in Elimi-Tax.
(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

And now Zacharias Townsend is
putting his trust in The Firebell --

SFX: GUNSHOT and BELL GONG

BILL (V.O.)

-- to help all of us fight
Washington overreach.

Shelley turns down the radio.

SHELLEY

This gives me an idea.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - EVENING

Monica bites into a Big Mac.

MONICA

This is better than Jubblies', but
I'm gonna need some veggies soon.

GAGE

You got fries.

MONICA

Your colon must be a sight to see.

JACOB

You oughta be happy we're feedin'
you at all.

MONICA

What's this "we" Crapper? I don't
recall you offering to help pay.

JACOB

I'm between jobs. Gage knows I'm
good for it.

MONICA

How can you be between jobs if
you've never had one? It's like
saying you're between dates with
Scarlett Johansson.

Sulking, Jacob gets off the barstool and heads to the office.

MONICA (CONT'D)

He's a real charmer...

GAGE

You don't exactly help.

MONICA

He's everything I despise, rolled up into one greasy ball of Crisco and stupid.

GAGE

He's got his reasons, I suspect, for being angry. It's hard to get to a point in life and realize you'll never be more than you are. If you ain't much to begin with, it can beat a man down.

Monica considers Gage for a moment.

MONICA

Coming from the world's most inept kidnapper, that's insightful.

GAGE

Maybe not bein' able to realize my own dreams helps me understand him.

MONICA

And what, besides a bank balance requiring the use of a comma, is your dream?

Gage stares at the ceiling, ponders whether to share.

GAGE

I want to run my own restaurant.

MONICA

But you eat at Jubblies.

GAGE

Only recently. I could certainly improve their ribs. Sauce is weak.

He smiles at Monica.

GAGE (CONT'D)

I wanted to be Bud Roy's cook and turn this place into a genuine eatery, but he didn't listen.

Monica surveys the seedy, empty room.

MONICA

He should've. And, you're right about Jacob. People are never only one thing.

GAGE

(smiles)

Oh, I don't know. Sometimes people
are just assholes

MONICA

And sometimes a man listens to the
better angels of his nature.

Gage raises his coffee cup to her.

GAGE

That may be the nicest thing you've
ever said to me.

Monica returns the salute.

MONICA

Don't let it go to your head.

INT. LINUS MCTANE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Linus lounges happily behind his oak desk. Bud Roy and Gage
laze in client chairs with glasses of Coca-Cola in their
hands. A mid-morning sunbeam shines onto the office carpet.

LINUS

Gage, these run-ins with Aucoin are
troublin'. How did you explain your
basket of tampons and face cream?

GAGE

Said it was for my girlfriend.

LINUS

Do you actually have a lady friend?

GAGE

I'm workin on it.

Linus looks confused. Bud Roy sighs.

BUD ROY

He's wooin' Monica Mathers.

LINUS

The one ya'll got chained to a
stripper pole at Knockers?

BUD ROY

As opposed to the women we got
chained to stripper poles
elsewhere?

LINUS

With you two, I've learned to request specificity.

GAGE

Point is, she doesn't hate me.

LINUS

That comes after you're married.

GAGE

But she definitely hates the Crapper. We need to move him. Might be hard. He feels safe at Knockers.

LINUS

Getting a young terrorist to leave the lair and take his first steps out into the big, scary world can be a challenge. I'm sure you and the missus are up to it, though.

The three sit, watching dust motes dance in the sunbeam.

BUD ROY

Linus, ya got any ideas that aren't all smart-ass and don't involve us surrendering to the authorities?

Linus leans back in his chair.

LINUS

Boys, I've spent considerable time pondering our present vexation.

He leans forward and smiles.

LINUS (CONT'D)

Lemme tell ya what I'm thinkin'.

INT. FAYETTEVILLE COUNTRY CLUB BAR - DAY

Sam and his financial advisor, HOLLIS TURNBULL, fresh off a round of golf, sip from tumblers of iced bourbon.

HOLLIS

You missed every fairway. Got something on your mind?

SAM

Hollis, I've got a situation and I need your help untangling it.

HOLLIS
My pleasure... financial?

SAM
Nah. Thanks to you, Becks and I are in good shape. I need you to tell me about Civil War reenacting. I don't get it.

Hollis chuckles. Takes a sip and sets his tumbler down.

HOLLIS
The Civil War bug afflicts all kinds. Reenacting groups are a genuine economic melting pot. Wealthy, intellectual, professional-class snobs, such as yours truly.
(points at his belly)
But there are just as many blue-collar types.

SAM
Is it a hobby or a passion?

HOLLIS
(grunts)
Passion would be a, uh, prerequisite for spending money a lot of 'em don't have on costumes and weaponry, and walking about in that getup in the summer heat.

Hollis takes a sip, remembering the experience.

SAM
Would that passion extend to digging up Stonewall Jackson's arm?

Hollis drains his bourbon and signals for another.

HOLLIS
Read about that. Passions still run hot for some. I think that's part of your answer. Some of us just want a tactile connection to the subject matter. Others? Well...

Hollis turns his glass, studying it.

HOLLIS (CONT'D)
... someone who would dig up Stonewall's arm... that is a man with a very unhealthy reverence for a past best left dead and buried.

SAM

Could Gage Randolph be that man?

HOLLIS

(shrugs)

I know Gage a bit. He's a very good reenactor.

SAM

Is that good or bad?

HOLLIS

He's not an asshole neo-Confederate. I've seen him leave a room when the talk turns ugly. He doesn't try'n stop it. He just doesn't want to be around it.

SAM

Not being evil is not the same as being good.

HOLLIS

So I've been told. Gage is a decent man, at a loss for decent friends. I suspect he's being buffeted by forces he doesn't comprehend.

SAM

Him and three hundred million other Americans. So he wouldn't do it?

HOLLIS

Someone would have to supply a reason.

SAM

Could Bud Roy Roemer be that someone?

HOLLIS

Got a history with him, don't you?

Sam nods.

HOLLIS (CONT'D)

His daddy was in the Klan. That does not seem to trouble him. Bud Roy's too lazy and angry to take on the tough work required to overcome that legacy. He is, for lack of a better phrase, an unfinished human.

SAM

Maybe the job's never finished. All of us... we keep moving forward... our eyes locked on the accident in the rearview mirror while we collide with the next disaster.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - NIGHT

Gage and Jacob share a table next to the stripper stage. Bourbon and shot glasses are out. Monica sniffs her bourbon.

JACOB

I'm gonna catch The Firebell.

MONICA

Empty intellectual calories.

JACOB

I don't even know what that means.

MONICA

You would if you didn't listen to The Firebell.

Jacob stomps off and Monica turns her attention to Gage.

MONICA (CONT'D)

This reenacting thing. Why do you guys dress up and play soldier?

GAGE

It ain't dress-up. We're serious. Because of us, people understand what the soldiers went through.

MONICA

It's edutainment, not history. It doesn't ask you to think.

GAGE

This from a cable TV pundit.

MONICA

Touché.

GAGE

I've seen your show. Mostly 'cause you're good lookin'. Didn't agree, but it wasn't a waste of time.

MONICA

The contradiction of TV in America:
you must look a certain way to get
a job -- which stops people from
taking you seriously when you do.

GAGE

Yeah, I'm having a hard time
identifying with your, uh,
predicament there. You hate being
good-looking, rich, and on TV?

MONICA

No, I like all of those things.
What I hate is not mattering.

GAGE

None of us matter all that much.
Hell, one reason I reenact is that
people watch us, ask me questions,
and treat me like I'm somethin'
rather than nothin'.

Monica scratches her neck. Gage points at her arm.

GAGE (CONT'D)

How'd you get that scar?

MONICA

This?
(points at small scar)
Bicycle accident when I was 8.
Three stitches.

Gage rolls up his pant leg and displays an inch-long keloid
scar across his kneecap.

GAGE

My bike wreck. Trying to be Evel
Kniefel when I was 11. Five
stitches.

MONICA

You win. But have you got any of
these?

Monica pulls down her sock and points to a small greek Theta
tattoo on her ankle.

GAGE

What's that supposed to be?

MONICA

It's a Theta -- a Greek letter.

GAGE

Christ. Even when a liberal is cool enough to get a tattoo, you get a snobby one.

Gage pulls down his sock. On his ankle: a tattoo of Saturn.

GAGE (CONT'D)

I was 12. I was into planets then.

Monica is taken aback.

MONICA

I was expecting Foghorn Leghorn.

GAGE

I was lucky Saturn was my favorite. Can you imagine if I'd walked into a tattoo parlor in North Carolina and asked for a tat of Ur-anus?

Monica laughs.

MONICA

I suspect your parents had a few words when they saw your ankle.

Gage issues a small smile, tinged with sadness.

GAGE

I'd a given anything if they'd been around to see it.

Monica realizes her mistake.

MONICA

Oh... Gage, I didn't know.

GAGE

Dad was a welder. He and mom were going out to dinner in his work truck. They did date nights before those were a thing. He hit a pothole... one of the tanks in the bed came loose, fell and exploded.

Gage lets out a long sigh.

MONICA

I'm sorry.

GAGE

Me too. Grandma took me in, but she didn't have the stamina to raise a twelve-year-old boy. Did the best she could, but it wasn't much.

Monica reaches out to Gage's hand, but he withdraws it.

MONICA

She did fine. And so did you.

Gage smiles, returning to the present.

GAGE

Except for kidnapping you and aiding America's most-wanted terrorist, you mean.

Monica laughs. Which surprises them both.

MONICA

Yeah, your mom would frown upon you chaining me to a stripper pole.

GAGE

She wouldn't have liked it if I'd brought the Unacraper home for dinner, either.

Gage regards her for a long moment.

GAGE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry you're in this mess. I'm doing what I can.

MONICA

I know. As kidnappings go, this is more than I could've asked for. I'll give you a rave review on Yelp!

GAGE

Always nice to be appreciated.

He turns serious.

GAGE (CONT'D)

No one is going to hurt you. I promise. If I can't find a way out of this soon, I'll turn myself in.

He and Monica drain the last of their bourbon.

MONICA
I believe you.

Gage puts away the bottle and smiles, a glint in his eye.

GAGE
Got any more tattoos?

MONICA
(laughs)
I do, actually. And I'm starting to believe Helsinki Syndrome might be a real thing. But it isn't strong enough for me to go that far.

GAGE
Well, now I'm genuinely curious.

He places his hands on the table and stands up.

GAGE (CONT'D)
I gotta use the john. You may be right about all the hot wings. Might be time to switch up.

He heads to the bathroom. Monica sees his cell phone on the table. She picks it up.

INT. OFFICE IN NYC - NIGHT

James "Ponce" De Leon picks up his ringing phone.

PONCE
Go for Ponce.

MONICA (V.O.)
(on phone)
Ponce! Oh thank God!

PONCE
Monica!?

MONICA (V.O.)
Yes! It's me!

PONCE
Ohmigod! Did the police find you?

MONICA (V.O.)
No. I'm calling from Fayetteville, North Carolina.

PONCE
 Fayetteville? Are you using the
 town phone?

INT. KNOCKERS - STAGE AREA - CONTINUOUS

MONICA
 Shut up and listen. Proving God is
 an eleven-year-old boy, I'm being
 held captive in a bankrupt topless
 bar called Knockers.

PONCE (V.O.)
 (on phone)
 That's a terrible name.

MONICA
 It's fitting given the setting.
 I've spent the better part of the
 week chained to a stripper pole.

PONCE (V.O.)
 Did they, uh, make you strip?

MONICA
 Jesus, Ponce. What is wrong with
 you? One of the kidnappers got
 drunk and he left his phone out.

PONCE (V.O.)
 God, what a story.

Monica glances around for Gage or Jacob's return.

MONICA
 (sarcastically)
 I'm fine, thanks.

PONCE (V.O.)
 You know I'm worried. But just
 think of the ratings!

MONICA
 It gets better. The Unacraper is
 another one of the kidnappers.

PONCE (V.O.)
 (squeals excitedly)
 I -- I mean we... have hit the
 motherlode! I'll call 911.

MONICA

No! If I wanted the police here, I would've called them myself.

PONCE (V.O.)

Wait, what? I don't understand.
What do you want?

Monica is silent for a moment.

MONICA

This is where it gets complicated.

INT. OFFICE IN NYC - MOMENTS LATER

Ponce takes notes, nodding as he listens to Monica.

PONCE

Mmm-mmh... Yeah... Okay. Are you sure this is the way you want it?

Ponce listens and nods.

PONCE (CONT'D)

I can be there by morning.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - CONTINUOUS

MONICA

Thanks, Ponce.

Monica hears the TOILET FLUSH in the back room.

MONICA (CONT'D)

I gotta go.

Monica ends the call and puts the phone back on the table. She hurries back to her recliner, pulls a blanket over halfway, and pretends to be passed out.

Gage returns and gently covers her with the blanket. He picks up his phone, looks at it, and puts it in his back pocket.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - BACK OFFICE - NIGHT

Gage walks into the office. He sees Jacob masturbating to a picture of Sierra on the internet. Jacob hears him, slams down the laptop screen, and tries to act casual.

Gage pulls up a chair next to Jacob.

GAGE

Well, I guess that explains why
some of the keys stick.

JACOB

I wasn't --

GAGE

Sure. Look, I got a plan to get you
out. But understand the risk I'm
taking. Mess this up and I'll shoot
you, nurse you back to health, and
shoot you again. Got it?

Jacob nods.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - DAY

Gage and Jacob wear full Confederate regalia as they stand
before Monica. Jacob's face is swathed in grimy bandages. The
tip of a glued-on walrus mustache protrudes on the right
side. Two folded bath towels under his jacket provide a
prodigious beer belly.

JACOB

(seeing himself in the
mirrored wall)
I look ridiculous.

GAGE

We'll say you're suffering from
powder burns.

MONICA

And pregnant.

GAGE

(to Jacob)
Get your stuff together.

Jacob shuffles back to the office. Gage turns to Monica.

GAGE (CONT'D)

This is almost over. I would take
it as a personal favor if you
didn't escape today.

MONICA

It's not like I have much choice.

GAGE

There's movies on the laptop. No
internet, of course.

Gage reaches into his period satchel and retrieves a book.

GAGE (CONT'D)

I thought you might like to read. I went to the library. Got you this.

Monica takes the book and raises her eyebrows in surprise.

MONICA

Emma? I guess Jane Austen is appropriate given two men stuck in the 19th century are holding me captive.

Gage smiles. He and Jacob depart.

INT. FAYETTEVILLE STREET - PONCE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Ponce watches two men, wearing Confederate Civil War uniforms, pile into an old Ford Bronco. They leave. Ponce looks at his watch, tapping the steering wheel nervously.

EXT. KNOCKERS BAR - 30 MINUTES LATER

Ponce gingerly tests Knocker's front door handle. Stymied, he walks around the corner to the back door.

EXT. KNOCKERS BAR - BACK DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Ponce extracts an eight-inch plastic shim from his jacket pocket. He puts his weight against the door, slips the shim in and opens the door.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - BACK AREA - CONTINUOUS

Ponce cautiously creeps down a long, dark hallway with an office and storerooms on his left and a large kitchen on his right. He hears a FAINT GUNSHOT and freezes.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - CONTINUOUS

Monica watches The Godfather.

CLEMENZA (V.O.)

(on laptop)

Leave the gun, take the cannoli.

Ponce emerges from the hallway, sees Monica, strains to see/hear anyone else.

PONCE
(softly)
Monica!

MONICA
Ponce! You came!

Monica her chain played out, stands to hug Ponce.

MONICA (CONT'D)
It's okay. How'd you get in?

Ponce twirls the plastic shim.

PONCE
Two years as a P.A. on Cops, ya
learn a few things.
(beat)
How much time have we got?

MONICA
Hours.

PONCE
How do you know?

MONICA
They're reenacting the Civil War.
Probably got to saw off a
gangrenous leg, swill some white
lightning, and bang a cousin back
at camp so people can understand
how hard it was in the olden times.

PONCE
Not a fan, I take it.

MONICA
Not hardly. Did you bring a phone?

Ponce pulls out a phone and hands it to her.

PONCE
I programmed my number along with
the police and the FBI.
(beat)
So, what do we do now?

MONICA
I don't know. Just stay close.

INT. BENTONVILLE PARKING LOT - GAGE'S TRUCK - DAY

Through the windshield, Gage can see Bud Roy in a Confederate uniform, Shelley and Linus nearby. Townsend's helicopter rests in a grassy field farther back. Gage turns to Jacob.

GAGE

Let us do the talkin' and we might
get you out of here today.

EXT. BENTONVILLE FIELD - DAY

Gage, Jacob, Rebel, Bud Roy, Linus and Shelley walk toward an enormous, elaborate tent. They enter it as a group.

INT. TOWNSEND'S TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Both Townsends, clad in expensive outdoor clothing, stand waiting by a large camp table surrounded by chairs.

TOWNSEND

You brought groupies?

BUD ROY

We got a few wrinkles in the deal.

Townsend scans the group.

TOWNSEND

I can apply plenty of heat and
pressure to remove any wrinkles.
Where's the arm?

GAGE

In a safe place.

Linus steps forward.

LINUS

Mr. Townsend, my name is Linus
McTane. I represent Mr. Randolph
and Mr. Roemer in this matter.

TOWNSEND

Oh fuck. A lawyer? I hate lawyers.

Townsend sits down. No one else is invited to do so.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Barbara, can you be a dear and get
me one of the guns I keep handy for
shooting lawyers? A big one.

Barbara sits down next to Townsend.

BARBARA

At least hear them out before you start shooting.

Linus takes a seat near them.

TOWNSEND

Go ahead, Counselor. Confound me with your legalese.

LINUS

No legalese. Just a simple quid pro quo.

TOWNSEND

Half that sentence was in Latin!

LINUS

Occupational hazard. Here's the thing -- law enforcement is searching for two people -- Monica Mathers and Jacob Kelly. It so happens both of them are entangled in the procurement of Stonewall's arm.

Townsend tilts his head slightly to his right, but says nothing. Shelley, eager to advance her agenda, butts in.

SHELLEY

The fat guy here with the stupid mustache is Jacob Kelly.

Townsend raises an eyebrow.

GAGE

We're hoping you can get him out of here.

LINUS

We also need your help persuading Monica Mathers not to press charges against Gage.

TOWNSEND

How do you think I can do that?

LINUS

Offer her an exclusive interview, tour of FreedomLand, the works... Maybe some money?

TOWNSEND

Christ, more money? Why?

LINUS

First, you want Stonewall's left arm. If you're willing to pay two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for a few musty old bones, then you are prepared to do more.

(beat)

Two, securing Jacob's absence and Ms. Mather's cooperation keeps the police out of everyone's business.

TOWNSEND

Finally, you're making sense.

Shelley jumps back in the fray.

SHELLEY

Bud Roy and me want citizenship on FreedomLand. We know you're offerin' citizenships to Bill Spark and Sierra. They said so on their radio show.

TOWNSEND

We're doing that to make a statement. Why do you want to be citizens of FreedomLand?

SHELLEY

The Feds is tryin' to take two hundred thousand dollars of Bud Roy's money he got for gettin' shot in the clavicle.

TOWNSEND

Shot in the what?

BUD ROY, GAGE, LINUS, SHELLEY

(in unison)

The clavicle!

TOWNSEND

How does one get shot in the clavicle?

BUD ROY

One gets the Jubblies Corporation mad at one by opening a bar and grill named Knockers.

TOWNSEND

And I thought Silicon Valley was
cutthroat...

SHELLEY

Anyway, we plan to fight the Feds
by usin' Elimi-Tax. We want you to
back us up with your lawyers -- a
test case or somethin' like that.

Townsend taps his cheek with his index finger. Thinking.

TOWNSEND

Story could be compelling.
Americans don't understand tax law,
but they understand being shot.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

(to Linus)

So what's the deal?

LINUS

You get Jacob here off to
FreedomLand today. Tomorrow, we
bring the arm, your new citizens,
and Monica Mathers.

Townsend looks at Barbara, who shrugs.

TOWNSEND

Okay. But there is no way in hell
Jacob is getting citizenship on
FreedomLand. We will, however, give
him safe passage to somewhere else.
I have a few government officials
around the world on my payroll.

SHELLEY

We gotta bring Howard, too. And he
can't fly.

TOWNSEND

Who the fuck is Howard?

BUD ROY

Howard is more a "What the fuck"
than a "Who the fuck."

Townsend is past exasperation. His composure dissolves
momentarily.

TOWNSEND

Fine! I got a guy with a boat.

Townsend pauses to regain his grasp of the details.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

One thing. Ms. Mathers may not be willing to forgive and forget. I'll do what I can, but no promises.

LINUS

Understood. We have a deal.

Everyone shakes hands. Gage and his group, minus Jacob, move toward the battlefield. Townsend points at Jacob and whispers instructions to his bodyguards.

EXT. BENTONVILLE FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Townsend and Barbara stroll alone toward the battlefield.

BARBARA

You caved. Not like you at all.

TOWNSEND

An interesting bunch. They have the arm, and the Roemers could be just the case Elimi-Tax is looking for.

BARBARA

And what if they become more trouble than they're worth?

TOWNSEND

(smiles at Barbara)
It's a deep ocean.

EXT. BENTONVILLE BATTLEGROUND - DAY

Sam and Rebecca stop to watch a unit of reenactors march off to battle. Sam spies Hollis, resplendent in a Confederate general officer's uniform. They stride over to greet him.

SAM

Hollis, you look dashing today.

Sam extends his hand. Hollis shakes it, gives Rebecca a peck on the cheek, and gazes at the units taking the field.

HOLLIS

Glad you could make it.

SAM

When's the battle start?

HOLLIS

Soon. Should be quite a show.

SAM

Where, in all this, do Gage
Randolph and Bud Roy play a role?

HOLLIS

Gage will fall in the
counterattack.

(points sword)

Bud Roy will be nearby... You gotta
see Gage play dead. He bloats up
like a corpse rotting in the sun.

EXT. BENTONVILLE BATTLEGROUND - COUNTERATTACK LOCATION - DAY

A photographer, clad in period-authentic clothes, uses an
ancient mounted box camera to photograph a "dead" Gage.

A YOUNG BOY and his Mother watch Gage bloat and pretend to be
dead. Sam and Rebecca also watch.

YOUNG BOY

Momma, that fella looks like Uncle
Clyde did at his funeral after the
tractor flipped on top of him.

The Mother takes the Young Boy's hand and pulls him away from
the macabre scene. Sam turns to Rebecca.

SAM

I've fished bodies out of the river
that didn't look as bad as Gage
does right now.

REBECCA

He's a good-looking man, but now he
looks... well, lifeless.

Gage finishes playing dead and reanimates his lifeless
features. He gets up to a smattering of applause from
onlookers. He catches Sam's eye and gives a curt nod and
makes his way across the battlefield toward Townsend's tent.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

He's not happy to see you here.

SAM

Gage isn't happy to see me
anywhere.

They watch as Gage joins Townsend, Bill, and Sierra in front of Townsend's tent.

SAM (CONT'D)

Spark, Sierra, and Townsend... that group I can understand. But what in the hell is Gage doing there? He walked up like he knew he belonged.

Sam and Rebecca see Gage whisper in Townsend's ear for a moment. Townsend replies into Gage's ear.

REBECCA

It's like watching a butler sit down to tea with the Crowleys on Downton Abbey. It's not right.

As the HELICOPTER FIRES UP, they see the Townsends, Bill, Sierra, and a fat Confederate board it.

SAM

Look at the gut on that fella. That is one hefty Confederate.

They see Bud Roy, Shelley, Linus, Gage view the departing helicopter from their vantage next to Townsend's tent.

REBECCA

There's nothing wrong with your cop instincts, Sam.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

Jacob removes his wig, bandages, and mustache, and extracts the bath towels from beneath his tunic.

TOWNSEND

(to Bill and Sierra)
Folks, this is Jacob Kelly.

BILL

The Unacrappier?

TOWNSEND

One of the conditions of FreedomLand citizenship is that you overlook the occasional oddity.

JACOB

Sierra, I'm a huge fan of yours. You inspired me to take a stand.

TOWNSEND
More like "take a shit."

JACOB
C'mon! I did the best I could.

TOWNSEND
Truer, sadder, words were never
spoken.

Bill and Sierra look at Jacob, unsure of what to say.

INT. FAYETTEVILLE - BAR - DAY

Gage, Bud Roy and Linus share a drink.

BUD ROY
I don't like it. Sam Aucoin was at
the battle today watchin' us.

LINUS
With good reason. You two have done
grievous injury to the penal code.

BUD ROY
If Aucoin's staking out Knockers,
we are most assuredly fucked.

LINUS
Time to go on offense. I'll pay
Sheriff Hawkins a friendly visit.

INT. SHERIFF HAWKINS OFFICE - DUSK

Sam walks into the office of his boss and mentor -- SHERIFF
JOHNNIE HAWKINS. Hawkins motions to Sam to sit.

SHERIFF HAWKINS
Sam, you're my best damn deputy and
my biggest goddamn headache.

SAM
Johnnie, I swear, I didn't shoot
anyone today.

Hawkins leans back in his chair.

SHERIFF HAWKINS
Linus McTane called --

SAM

Bet he did. Just today he was up at the Bentonville reenactment -- with Gage and Bud Roy.

SHERIFF HAWKINS

Since when are you interested in Civil War reenacting?

SAM

Wanted to see what all the fuss was about. Kind of an interesting day.

SHERIFF HAWKINS

Liked the battle, did you?

SAM

No. It was stupid. What was interesting was watching the three of them hang out with Zacharias Townsend. Sound odd to you?

Hawkins peers at Sam over his cup of coffee.

SHERIFF HAWKINS

Any crime being committed?

SAM

Most likely.

SHERIFF HAWKINS

Do you have any evidence that has been, you know, developed through dogged police work?

Sam leans back in his chair, and sighs.

SAM

No.

SHERIFF HAWKINS

Then back off. I can't cover for you if Linus presses on this.

They face each other while Sam absorbs the message.

SHERIFF HAWKINS (CONT'D)

Just let 'em be for a while. Okay?

SAM

Sure thing, Boss. Anything else?

Hawkins shakes his head "no." Sam gets up and heads for the door. Hawkins smiles as Sam leaves the building.

SHERIFF HAWKINS

Yeah... He ain't gonna leave it be.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - NIGHT

Gage returns to the bar. He sits and removes his boots.

GAGE

Well, it's done.

MONICA

Where's the Crapper?

GAGE

On his way to Texas with a reenactor friend.

MONICA

Texas? Helluva plan. The Feds will never think to look for an IRS bombing neo-Confederate there.

GAGE

Do you lefties ever wonder why you don't win in the South?

Gage gets up and stretches.

GAGE (CONT'D)

You know what? You've earned a treat. I'm gonna do some shoppin', and cook you a meal.

MONICA

Not sure I'm up for grits and HoHos.

GAGE

I can manage better than that.

MONICA

And we'll talk about letting me go?

GAGE

You bet.

Gage departs. Monica fishes out her phone and calls Ponce.

MONICA

Jacob Kelly is making a run for Texas. Let the police know.

PONCE (V.O.)
 (on speaker phone)
 Not sure how I do that without
 getting grilled about how I know
 all of this...

MONICA
 Find a pay phone and leave an
 anonymous tip.

PONCE
 A pay phone? Where do I find one of
 those? 1986? Maybe I could also
 send a fax.

MONICA
 Very funny. Try the bus station.

PONCE
 I'm on it.

INT. KNOCKERS BAR - NIGHT

Gage and Monica tuck into a homemade meal.

MONICA
 This is incredible. You made this?
 What is it again?

GAGE
 Blackened salmon. A Cajun dish. The
 key ingredient in the salsa is
 Philippine mangos. Those are the
 best. Also, onions, lemon, salt,
 coriander, and those little bitty
 hot peppers that spice up a bowl of
 pho. Those things give it a kick.

MONICA
 You sure you didn't buy this
 somewhere and then bang around a
 bunch of pots in the kitchen
 pretending to cook?

Gage shrugs.

GAGE
 I told you I like to cook. Kinda
 sexist to think a guy can't do it.

Gage switches the topic.

GAGE (CONT'D)

Anyways, the plan is to leave at three in the morning.

MONICA

(worried)

Gage, nothing good happens between midnight and six a.m.

Gage puts up his hands.

GAGE

Trust me. We're going to meet someone who can offer you something for your trouble.

MONICA

(between mouthfuls of salad)

Do you know what it would take to make this week in paradise worthwhile? This guy would have to be richer than a Rockefeller.

GAGE

Got it covered. Now finish up, put on your super-expensive face goo, and get some sleep. Helicopter's coming early tomorrow.

MONICA

(mouth full of food)

Helicopter?

INT. SHERIFF HAWKINS' OFFICE - DAWN

Hawkins is wide awake, his uniform crisp and his face without a hint of stubble. He hands Sam a mug of coffee.

SHERIFF HAWKINS

Turns out you're not crazy. I got a call from an Agent Johnson at the FBI field office in Charlotte.

Hawkins leans back in his desk chair.

SHERIFF HAWKINS (CONT'D)

Got an anonymous tip claiming Jacob Kelly left Fayetteville yesterday wearing a Confederate uniform.

Sam sets his coffee down.

SAM
Now I'm awake.

SHERIFF HAWKINS
Thought that might get your
attention.

SAM
Son. Of. A. Bitch. I saw him,
Johnnie. I watched him get on a
helicopter with Zacharias Townsend.

SHERIFF HAWKINS
Could be what we law enforcement
professionals call a clue.

SAM
You gonna tell Agent Johnson?

SHERIFF HAWKINS
Not right away. This one's for you.

Hawkins opens his office door to signify the meeting is over.

SHERIFF HAWKINS (CONT'D)
Would be a nice feather in our cap
if we could catch the Unacraper
before the Bureau does.

SAM
So I got a little leeway on this?

SHERIFF HAWKINS
Some. But keep me up to speed.

SAM
I'm gonna do this without the
uniform or the cruiser, if you
don't mind. Just a badge and a gun.

SHERIFF HAWKINS
Sounds like a plan. What's first?

SAM
Doughnuts. Whatever needs to be
done, best it be done on a full
stomach. Then I'll let you know.

INT. DINER - DAWN

Ponce, alone at a table, fidgets with his phone. At table nearby, Sam prepares to enjoy his doughnuts and coffee. Ponce sees Sam's gun and badge. Sam sees Ponce staring at him.

SAM
Help you?

PONCE
You're a policeman?

SAM
Deputy Sam Aucoin, Cumberland
County Sheriff's Department.

PONCE
I'm James De Leon, Monica Mathers's
producer... the missing TV star?

Sam nods. His doughnuts lay untouched, his coffee forgotten.

PONCE (CONT'D)
Monica got hold of a phone and
called me in New York --

SAM
-- When?

PONCE
Two days ago. She said the
Unacrappier and another guy
kidnapped her and were holding her
at a place called --

SAM
-- Knockers?

PONCE
Yes. Jesus, how did you guess?

Sam moves into Ponce's booth, leaving his breakfast on the
other table. Seething, he leans across the table.

SAM
You knew where the Unacrappier was
and you didn't tell us? You knew
where Ms. Mathers was and you
didn't tell us? What kind of
asshole are you?

PONCE
I... I'm a cable news producer.

SAM
A big one, then. Anything else you
wanna share?

PONCE

I saw Monica, two guys and a big dog leave on a helicopter this morning from a farm outside of town. She told me the Unacraper left yesterday.

SAM

Are you the guy who called in the tip about Kelly heading to Texas?

Ponce nods.

PONCE

You think you'll find him?

SAM

Oh, we'll find him. But won't be in Texas. You're coming with me. I know just where to start looking.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - CONTROL ROOM - DAWN

A GUIDE provides Gage and Monica with a tour of FreedomLand's hi-tech control room.

MONICA

This thing can move on its own?

GUIDE

Yes, ma'am. We can raise or lower it with ballast tanks and move anywhere we want at eight knots.

MONICA

What about the storm out there?

GUIDE

When it gets rougher, we'll add more ballast to make the rig ride better.

MONICA

When do we get to meet the owner?

Townsend enters the room.

TOWNSEND

How about now, Ms. Mathers?

Monica, momentarily speechless, quickly recovers.

MONICA

So you're the one who is supposed to make me forget about being chained to a stripper pole?

TOWNSEND

I heard about that. Mr. Randolph here has asked if I can help make up for any inconvenience.

MONICA

And how do you know Mr. Randolph? In my experience, billionaires don't run with, uh, hundredaires.

Townsend laughs. Gage rolls his eyes.

TOWNSEND

Gage and I have a transaction we will conduct later today.

MONICA

Stonewall Jackson's arm.

Townsend looks at Gage, who shrugs.

GAGE

Lucky guess.

TOWNSEND

Well then, why don't we discuss the details over breakfast.

INT. FREEDOMLAND DINING ROOM - DAWN

As Townsend, Gage and Monica eat, Bill and Sierra walk in.

SIERRA

Oh, look who's quit hiding in shame after the beating I gave you.

MONICA

Dream on, Apartheid Barbie. Being impervious to logic, reason, and facts doesn't mean you win debates.

BILL

I'm glad you're okay, Monica.

MONICA

Thanks, Bill. Seems like you've landed on your feet.

(nods toward Townsend)

(MORE)

MONICA (CONT'D)

Got a new investor in your radio show, I hear.

TOWNSEND

Bill condenses my politics into bite-size chunks for the masses.

MONICA

Yeah, well, blowing massive chunks over the airwaves is Bill's forte.

EXT. WILMINGTON DOCKS - DAY

Sam and Ponce walk toward the Marlinspike, a seventy foot Hatteras Sportfish, at its berth. From a distance they can see CAPTAIN JOHN PURDY busy swabbing the deck.

PONCE

Why are we here?

SAM

Trust me. Between the helicopter, the information we found at Bud Roy's house, and a bunch of other stuff, this is where we need to be.

PONCE

Okay, but why am I here?

SAM

Because I haven't decided whether to arrest you.

Sam and Ponce approach the boat. Purdy looks up.

SAM (CONT'D)

Captain Purdy?

PURDY

I'm John Purdy.

Sam displays his badge.

SAM

Deputy Sam Aucoin, Cumberland County Sheriff's Department. We need to ask you a few questions.

PURDY

Come aboard, and pardon the smell.

Sam and Ponce step onto the boat as Purdy stows his mop.

INT. THE MARLINSPIKE - MOMENTS LATER

Purdy leans over to a cooler and takes out three Sprites. He passes a couple to Sam and Ponce.

SAM

We're interested in a charter you ran early this morning.

PURDY

The Roemer couple. Yep, I took them. And don't forget Howard. I know I won't.

SAM

Howard?

PURDY

Howard the leopard.

SAM

A leopard?

PURDY

A fucking leopard.

SAM

Can't imagine he enjoyed the ride.

PURDY

Stuff was coming out of every orifice on that animal. I'll tell ya -- leopard piss don't smell like Old Spice.

SAM

Really? A leopard?

PURDY

My reaction exactly. It didn't seem too happy to be going out to sea. The lady, Shelley, she seemed to like it better than Bud Roy did.

SAM

Did Roemer or DeWeese mention why they were going to FreedomLand?

PURDY

Said they were working on a deal and had friends out there.

Sam ponders the situation, decides.

SAM

Captain Purdy. We need you to take us to FreedomLand. Now.

PURDY

You don't have a leopard with you, do you?

SAM

Just a cable news producer.

PURDY

Not much better, but I'll allow it.

EXT. FREEDOMLAND HELICOPTER DECK - DAY

Bud Roy, Shelley and Townsend stare at Howard the Leopard, who is now confined to FreedomLand's tennis court.

TOWNSEND

You brought a leopard to an oil rig?

SHELLEY

He's part of the family.

Howard snarls and jumps at Townsend, but is stopped by the tennis court fence.

TOWNSEND

(jumps back)

Jesus! Part of the Manson Family, maybe.

SHELLEY

He's just a little hungry. Howard likes steak. And he won't be any trouble, he's a good leopard.

BUD ROY

The hell he is.

TOWNSEND

Animals are neither good nor bad. They just are. Like most people.

Townsend snaps up his wrist and looks at his watch.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Well, I guess every country needs wildlife.

Townsend strides off.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - FIREBELL STUDIO - DAY

Excited to be in the middle of a new, state-of-the-art recording studio, Bill and Sierra hover close to their mics.

BILL

You're listening to The Firebell --

SFX: GUNSHOT and BELL GONG

BILL (CONT'D)

-- coming to you live from our new home in the sovereign state of FreedomLand. On the line, we got Phil from Toledo. Phil, how are ya today, buddy?

PHIL (V.O.)

(on radio)

Not too good. For one thing, I live in Toledo.

BILL

Toledo gets a bad rap.

PHIL (V.O.)

Not bad enough. City's got too many taxes and too many people who aren't real Americans. So, how can I move to FreedomLand?

BILL

You're not the only one asking that question. And there's no one better to provide an answer than the man who has just joined us in the studio, Mr. Zacharias Townsend.

Townsend sits next to Bill and dons a pair of headphones.

TOWNSEND

Phil is it? What is your question?

PHIL (V.O.)

Sir, I wanna move to FreedomLand. How do I do that?

TOWNSEND

What do you do for a living, Phil?

PHIL (V.O.)

I'm between jobs at the moment.

TOWNSEND

Uh-huh. And what jobs are you between? Neurosurgeon? Astronaut?

PHIL (V.O.)

I worked a little construction, but that's kinda seasonal.

TOWNSEND

Phil, I don't think you understand what freedom means.

PHIL (V.O.)

Sure. It means doin' what you want.

TOWNSEND

No. It means having the opportunity to do what you are able to do. Phil, you are a loser. You need to stay in your little hole in Toledo. Those of us who are smart and talented will, when the mood strikes us, drop scraps from the table. Those scraps are for you.

A moment of silence.

PHIL (V.O.)

Well, fuuu --

Bill hits the kill switch to mute the mics.

BILL

That was one way to handle it.

TOWNSEND

Put us back on the air.

BILL

(complying)

Okay listeners, I'm sure you're all wondering what just, uh, transpired between Phil and Zacharias Townsend. I think Zacharias was practicing some tough love on Phil.

TOWNSEND

No, I wasn't. Phil was looking for a handout. He's not a winner. He's a loser. The rest of you, go out and be winners.

BILL

Ya know, it's time for us to cut to a commercial. Here is a message from, uh, Concerned Christians for a Coal-Fueled Tomorrow.

OMINOUS VOICE (V.O.)

(on radio)

Global warming. Climate change. These are terms straight from Satan's playbook...

Bill shuts off the volume and swivels to face Townsend.

BILL

Why'd you do that? There are a lot of Phils in my audience.

TOWNSEND

Your listeners are angry and looking for scapegoats. We can't tell them to blame the blacks, or the Mexicans, or women. At least not directly. But, you can crap on as many Phils from Toledo as you want. No one in your audience will think you're talking about them.

Townsend fixes Bill and Sierra with a gaze that betrays nothing. No feeling, no soul, no empathy.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

People believe they can be rich, despite all evidence to the contrary. It's called the American Dream for a reason. There are only a select few who can achieve it. The rest are too stupid.

Townsend looks at his watch.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Finish up. Then come to my office.

Townsend leaves. Bill and Sierra, unsettled, gaze after him.

SIERRA

Wow. He talks like he owns us.

BILL

He does.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - KITCHEN - DAY

The HEAD CHEF hands a tray of raw steaks to an ASSISTANT.

HEAD CHEF

Take these steaks and feed the cat
living in the tennis court.

The chef walks away. The assistant looks at the tray full of steaks with disbelief.

ASSISTANT

Feed the cats? *Cuantos gatos hay?*

EXT. FREEDOMLAND - TENNIS COURT - MOMENTS LATER

In his makeshift enclosure, Howard turns to the sound of a gate being opened -- the sound of food.

ASSISTANT

Come kitties. *Tengo mucho carne...*

Howard the Leopard springs into action, loping toward lunch. The assistant sees Howard bearing down on him.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Aaaaaah! Aaaaaah! Aaaaaah!

The assistant throws the platter of meat at Howard. Howard grabs the nearest steak and begins working on it.

The assistant runs out of the tennis court, slamming the gate. The gate bounces open. The assistant does not notice.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - JACOB'S QUARTERS - DAY

Jacob walks to his door and pulls on the handle. Locked.

JACOB

FreedomLand, my ass...

Jacob pounds on it. After a moment, a short-statured, armed GUARD opens the door.

GUARD

How can I help you, sir?

JACOB

I wanna get some fresh air.

GUARD

Try the balcony off your room, sir.

JACOB

I have a... friend here I'd like to see. She's probably waiting for me.

GUARD

Sorry, sir. Mr. Townsend's orders. You are not to leave the room.

Jacob tries to step into the hallway. The guard blocks him and reaches for his gun. Jacob takes a wild swing, missing the guard. His awkward follow-through carries him a step closer. Jacob stumbles, clumsily head-butting the guard.

The guard collapses, unconscious. Jacob follows him down, clutching his head in pain.

JACOB

Jesus, that hurts!

Jacob rolls over on his side in the fetal position. The unconscious guard's broken nose begins to swell.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Ensign "ROMCOM" VERGARA faces a bank of control panels.

ROMCOM

(to hand-held radio)

Opening port-side ballast tank valves... Flooding tanks...

RomCom does not notice the control room door swing open.

Howard lets out a RESONANT GROWL.

RomCom pivots to see a Howard perched on a small table.

ROMCOM (CONT'D)

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Howard snarls and takes a half-hearted swipe at RomCom.

ROMCOM (CONT'D)

Nice kitty.

Howard snarls and moves closer. RomCom quickly crosses himself and takes a fire ax from below the control panel. He takes a huge backswing with the ax.

The momentum carries the ax backwards into a control panel, labeled "Backup Control." SMASH! Sparks fly, smoke rises.

Fueled by adrenaline and panic, RomCom wrenches the ax from the panel and sends the blade toward the leopard's flank.

Howard dodges the blow. The ax SMASHES another control panel, labeled "Main control panel." Smoke and sparks erupt.

As Howard swipes again, RomCom jerks his head back violently, smashing his head on a low-hanging pipe, and sinking to the floor. The room fills with smoke. Howard slinks out the door.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - TOWNSEND'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Rebel sniffs at Townsend's newest display case as nine bemused people watch him from a conference table.

Townsend slides a small duffel across the table to Gage.

Gage opens the duffel, sees the cash, and closes it.

TOWNSEND

Now we need to explore how we keep Mr. Randolph free to enjoy his newfound wealth.

MONICA

Good luck. Even in North Carolina, chaining me to a stripper pole for a week has to be at least a misdemeanor.

SIERRA

Why do you always have to tear down the South? The South has a code and morals. And we respect 'em.

MONICA

What's this "we" stuff? You're from Lindstrom, Minnesota, for Christ's sake. You were on the high school curling team. Rumor has it you were conceived when Ann-Margret lost a bar bet to Bo Svenson.

SIERRA

I guess if I were really old I would get the reference.

LINUS

Ann-Margret. Gorgeous. And Bo Svenson was great in Walking Tall.

BUD ROY

I thought that was Joe Don Baker.

Townsend SLAMS his hands on the table. Everyone jumps.

TOWNSEND

Focus! Or I'll dose you all with Ritalin!

All eyes lock on Townsend. His composure returns.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Monica, you have suffered an, uh, inconvenience.

Monica raises her eyebrows but says nothing.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

How can we make it up to you so you leave Mr. Randolph and his friends out of this messy business?

MONICA

Let's not forget you and your, uh, jones for bones.

Monica points to the case containing Stonewall Jackson's arm.

TOWNSEND

Oh, I'm big enough to take care of myself. But let's leave me out of it, too. What would it take?

Everyone leans toward her, waiting.

MONICA

I want two things.
(holds up an index finger)
Number one: I want an exclusive. I want to sit down on camera with you and discuss why you love America so much you can't wait to leave it.

TOWNSEND

Done. I look forward to educating your viewers on the proper role and the proper size of government.

MONICA

Great. I bet your explanation of why a multibillionaire thinks he is above paying taxes will resonate with the working class. Now for number two --

(takes a deep breath)

-- I want them --

(MORE)

MONICA (CONT'D)
 (points at Bill and
 Sierra)
 -- repatriated. Permanently.

BILL AND SIERRA
 What!

LINUS
 Hoo, boy.

SIERRA
 We just announced we're moving
 here! We'll look like idiots.

MONICA
 That's why I'm insisting on it.
 Stand on your own, just like you
 always tell your audience to do.

All eyes in the room shift to Townsend.

TOWNSEND
 Deal.

BILL
 You can't do that!

TOWNSEND
 Sure I can. You'll still get legal
 support and my advertising dollars.

SIERRA
 She's out to ruin our credibility.
 This is about who we are.

TOWNSEND
 Well, who you are, are my
 employees. Do as you're told.

MONICA
 See? Easy.

Monica smiles and winks at Bill and Sierra.

The office door opens. Barbara walks in, a taut look on her
 face. Behind her, a security guard with his hands in the air.

Jacob follows, a gun in each hand and an epic bruise on his
 forehead. He pistol-whips the guard, who falls to the floor.

Jacob turns to the object of his affection -- Sierra.

JACOB
 I heard yelling, Sierra. You okay?

INT. FREEDOMLAND - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

RomCom opens his eyes as MARVIN STEVENS, his boss, shakes him awake.

MARVIN

RomCom! What the fuck happened here, son?

ROMCOM

Big cat. Huge cat. Angry cat. Tiger. Attacked me.

MARVIN

Did you finish flooding both sets of ballast tanks?

ROMCOM

Port side only. Still open...

RomCom passes out. Marvin motions to two other staff to take him away. Marvin stands up and surveys the control panels.

MARVIN

That explains the list to port. Mighta been nice if he hadn't shredded both sets of controls.

EXT. THE MARLINSPIKE - DAY

Purdy's boat plows through heavy seas toward FreedomLand.

SAM

Is it just me, or does the thing look like it's tilting?

PURDY

The nautical term is listing, and yes, she's definitely tilting.

PURDY (CONT'D)

Problem is how I get you on board with her listing like that.

SAM

Well, I gotta get on.

Purdy studies the structure with a pair of binoculars.

PURDY

There may be a way.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - TOWNSEND'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

TOWNSEND
(to Jacob, calmly)
You appear to have our attention.

JACOB
First things first. Gage, lose the
iron. I know you're carrying.

Gage releases his grip on Rebel, slowly opens his denim jacket, puts his hand inside, and extracts a .357 Magnum with a four-inch barrel. He places it on the floor.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Now you and Rebel step back.

Gage and Rebel do so. Jacob turns to Bud Roy and Shelley.

JACOB (CONT'D)
I bet you two are carrying. You
first, Bud Roy.

Bud Roy reaches behind and extracts a Colt Defender 45.

GAGE
Nice piece.

BUD ROY
Thanks.

Bud Roy puts his gun on the floor. Jacob gestures at Shelley.

JACOB
Now you.

Shelley opens her small handbag and removes a 9mm Ruger LC9 and places it next to Bud Roy's pistol.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Now you, legal eagle.

Linus lays a chrome-plated 38SPL Colt Cobra on the floor.

BUD ROY
Kinda teeny tiny, ain't it, Linus?

LINUS
If you're shooting from over three
feet away, you're doing it wrong.

MONICA
Jesus Christ. Did you people stop
off at a gun show on your way here?

BUD ROY

Oh, look. Monica Mathers bringing liberal outrage to a gunfight. How's that working out for you?

MONICA

About as well as you bringing an actual gun to a gunfight. Lotta good yours is doing you now.

Monica turns to Townsend.

MONICA (CONT'D)

You having the Crapper here cancels the deal. I should've known you were mixed up with this asshole.

Barbara lets out a LOUD SIGH.

BARBARA

They're starting to bore me.

Townsend smiles and opens his desk drawer, pulling out a Glock handgun.

TOWNSEND

Agreed.

JACOB

Don't move. I'll shoot. I've got nothing to lose.

TOWNSEND

That's for sure.

Townsend points his gun at Jacob. Jacob tries to fire one of his guns. Nothing. He tries the other. Nothing.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Fingerprint-enabled safeties. Keyed so only the guard assigned the weapon, my wife, or I can fire it.

MONICA

I doubt the NRA would approve.

TOWNSEND

The NRA's insane. I don't want people like Mr. Kelly here to have the right to vote, much less to bear arms. Letting poor people have guns is fine as long as they shoot one another, but eventually they turn on their betters.

MONICA

I finally understand your politics. You've taken the worst of the right and left and warped it to fit your Ayn Randian worldview. You're not Republican or Democrat. You're just an asshole.

Townsend shrugs, then motions with his gun.

TOWNSEND

I need you all in front of me, please. Barbara, why don't you retrieve that lovely Colt Defender there and help me cover our guests?

Barbara picks up Bud Roy's pistol. She casually switches off the safety and points the pistol at the group.

Jacob moves to Sierra's side. He tries to take her hand.

JACOB

Don't worry. I'll get us out of this.

Sierra yanks her hand, arm, and body away from Jacob.

SIERRA

Get us out of this? You moron. You're the one who disarmed everyone except for the bad guy.

Rejected yet again, Jacob lashes out and lunges at Townsend. Townsend shoots him in the left shoulder. Jacob collapses.

BUD ROY

Ooow. Right in the clavicle.

Jacob writhes in pain on the floor as Linus tries to help.

GAGE

Anyone think the floor is tilting?

A RED PHONE on the walls RINGS.

EXT. THE MARLINSPIKE - CONTINUOUS

Purdy signals his crew to put out the fenders. He gooses the engines as he gauges his approach. Purdy hands Sam a radio.

PURDY

Set to a private channel. Tell me when and where, and I'll be there.

SAM
Thanks, Cap'n.

Sam moves to the bow along with Ponce. Purdy maneuvers the boat closer to the underside of FreedomLand.

PONCE
Why do I have to go first?

SAM
Because if I go first, you'll wimp out. Get ready.

Purdy's noses the Marlinspike close to the pontoon. Attached to the pontoon leg is a fixed ladder.

Ponce reaches out, grabs the ladder's lower rung, and kicks furiously until his feet gain purchase.

Sam reaches out at the crest of the next wave, grabs the lowest rung, and moves up the ladder via a series of effortless pull-ups until his feet find the bottom rung.

Ponce climbs through a hatch. Sam pauses for a moment to wave to Purdy. He disappears into the hatch.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - TOWNSEND'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Concerned, Townsend cradles the red phone next to his ear.

TOWNSEND
What do you mean we're sinking?

MARVIN (V.O.)
(on phone)
A freak accident fried both the main and backup ballast controls. May have something to do with a tiger that's running loose.

TOWNSEND
A tiger?

MARVIN (V.O.)
Control room operator said a tiger attacked him. The controls got damaged when he was fighting it.

TOWNSEND
(gives Bud Roy and Shelley a murderous stare)
Jesus! Can we save her?

MARVIN (V.O.)

The tiger?

TOWNSEND

No, goddamn it! FreedomLand.

MARVIN (V.O.)

Nope. She's at nine degrees and the cocks are wide open. A manual shutdown will take too long.

TOWNSEND

How much time do we have?

MARVIN (V.O.)

Maybe an hour. Maybe less. The storm ain't helping.

Townsend slams his fist on the desk.

TOWNSEND

Get the crew off. Abandon ship.

MARVIN (V.O.)

Copy.

A KLAXON BLARES and a LOUD SPEAKER announcement gives the order: "Abandon ship, this is not a drill."

Townsend looks at his prisoners. Monica finishes arranging her sweater into a sling and compress for Jacob.

TOWNSEND

Bad news, good news, and more bad news. The bad news is FreedomLand is sinking. It seems the designers left her vulnerable to leopard attacks.

(shakes head in disbelief)

I don't blame them. None of us saw that one coming.

SHELLEY

Howard got loose? Is he okay?

TOWNSEND

I fucking hope not!

Townsend steadies himself and regains his icy demeanor.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

The good news: Freedomland's equipped with state-of-the-art lifeboats.

(MORE)

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

The crew, Barbara and I, will be just fine. Lloyd's of London won't be too happy, though.

LINUS

And the other bad news?

Townsend offers a twisted grin.

TOWNSEND

You are going to die today. But not here. Get moving.

The group heads toward the door, following Townsend, who walks backward with his gun leveled at them.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Tell your dog to stay, Gage, or I'll shoot him.

Gage bends down and gives Rebel a kiss, telling him to stay. Rebel obeys. Gage points to the guard on the floor.

GAGE

What about him?

TOWNSEND

His fate is up to him.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - CORRIDOR - DAY

Sam and Ponce pause as they hear the klaxon.

PONCE

How are you going to find Monica?
This place is huge.

Sam spies a large man making his way down the current corridor from the opposite end.

SAM

Easy. I'm gonna ask directions.

Marvin Stevens stops as he sees Sam and Ponce coming toward him. He lets them get closer.

MARVIN

Who are you two?

SAM

(shows his badge)
Cumberland County Deputy Sheriff
Samuel Aucoin.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm looking for Zacharias Townsend.
I suspect he's harboring a
fugitive. And you are?

MARVIN

The chief engineer. Marvin Stevens.
(beat)
A bit outside your jurisdiction,
ain't ya, Sheriff?

SAM

Not today.

Stevens looks at Sam for a moment, makes a decision.

MARVIN

This rig's gonna roll inside an
hour. Then I'm unemployed. So fuck
Townsend.

Sam and Ponce wait for more.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

Head topside. His quarters are on
the side that's sinking. Don't
dawdle. If you're on board when
this thing rolls, you're screwed.

SAM

What about you?

MARVIN

Checking for strays and laggards.
(looks at watch)
I better get moving.

SAM

We have a friend out there in a
charter boat. He's called the Coast
Guard. Help is on the way.

Sam offers his hand. Marvin takes it.

MARVIN

Good luck... Oh, one more thing.
Watch your asses. I'm pretty sure a
tiger is running around loose.

SAM

Leopard.

MARVIN

Huh?

SAM

It's a leopard. Not a tiger.

MARVIN

I doubt that matters when it's trying to eat your face.

SAM

Good point.

Sam and Ponce head up the corridor.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - NICE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The Townsends march the group through a tilted corridor. Monica and Gage each labor to keep Jacob ambulatory.

MONICA

(to Townsend)

I am amazed how lightly the prospect of killing people rests on you. Seems you haven't been told "no" in so long, you don't think there is anything you can't do.

TOWNSEND

Proven by a lifetime of always being right.

GAGE

I know who you are.

TOWNSEND AND MONICA

Who?

GAGE

Karl Stromberg. The bad guy in The Spy Who Loved Me... had a big undersea lair. Kinda like you're gonna have once this thing sinks.

TOWNSEND

Clever.

MONICA

The Spy Who Loved Me? Jesus, Gage. Did you get that on VHS or Betamax?

GAGE

It's on iTunes...

MONICA

So what happened to Stromberg?

GAGE

Bond gut shot him.

LINUS

I thought Bond dropped him off the Golden Gate Bridge.

GAGE

That was Christopher Walken in A View to a Kill.

LINUS

Christ, that movie was awful. Roger Moore must've been about seventy-five when he made it. No way a guy that age was getting laid that often by that many young women.

MONICA

75 or not, James Bond never gave one woman an orgasm.

ALL THE MEN

What?!

Monica's proposition jolts Jacob to full consciousness.

BUD ROY

No way! He's James Bond.

MONICA

Bond has sex the way a man thinks a woman would want a man to have sex if a man were a woman.

The women nod their immediate agreement with Monica. The men silently process the algorithm in Monica's statement.

LINUS

You're losing us. There was an awful lot of, uh, whaddya call it? Fluid gender identity in that sentence.

BUD ROY

I surely don't like them trannies.

SHELLEY

(to Bud Roy)

This ain't about trannies. Shush. You might learn something useful and you won't need Howard to help me get off.

BILL
Who's Howard?

SHELLEY
Howard's our pet leopard.

BILL
(giving a low whistle)
You have threesomes with a leopard?

SHELLEY
No. Howard jumped on Bud Roy's ass and tried to eat it when we were making love. Musta thought Bud Roy was a dying wildebeest or something, way he was moaning. Gave Bud Roy an extra boost that, well, hit the right spot. For once.

BUD ROY
I regret I have but one ass to give for your orgasm, Shelley.

The group reaches the exit door.

TOWNSEND
God, I can't wait to kill you idiots...

Townsend opens the door to the sloping deck of FreedomLand. A blast of wind, rain, and salt spray greets the group.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)
... and James Bond isn't coming to save you.

INT. FREEDOMLAND EXIT TO HELICOPTER DECK - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Ponce, crouching behind a door frame, watch a small knot of people at the downhill end of the sloping deck.

SAM
That tall guy is Townsend. Looks like he has a gun. And the woman behind them, I think she's his wife. She's armed, too.

Sam draws his weapon.

PONCE
Can you shoot them from here?

SAM

Not with a handgun at this distance
and in this weather. With my luck,
all the bullets would hit Bud Roy.
We need to get closer. Follow me.

EXT. FREEDOMLAND HELICOPTER DECK - CONTINUOUS

The Townsends and their hostages approach a hatch. Townsend
gestures with his pistol at Bud Roy and Linus.

TOWNSEND

You two open the hatch.

LINUS

What's your plan?

TOWNSEND

You're going to perish trying to
find your way out of FreedomLand. A
terrible misfortune.

LINUS

(stops)

Why should we march to our deaths?

Townsend points his pistol at Linus' crotch.

TOWNSEND

Because if you don't I'll shoot you
in the groin.

Bud Roy and Linus undog the hatch and struggle on the sloping
deck to lift the heavy door against both gravity and wind. It
falls against the bulkhead with a heavy CLANG. Townsend steps
into the hatchway.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Everyone line up and follow me.

EXT. FREEDOMLAND HELICOPTER DECK - OPPOSITE SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Ponce use objects on the deck to mask their approach.

SAM

(whispering loudly)

I'll take the lead and come up fast
behind Mrs. Townsend. If I hit her
right, she'll go down quietly.

PONCE

Jesus...

SAM

Ain't gonna save us. It's up to us.
We move when she steps through. If
you're not behind me, this will be
the worst day of your life.

PONCE

Already is.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

As the last of the group enters the corridor, Townsend, still walking backward, makes an announcement.

TOWNSEND

We're just about there. If you're
gonna pray, do it now --

A low guttural GROWL emanates from the shadows.

Howard attacks, locking his jaws on Townsend's left arm just below the elbow and biting savagely through flesh and bone, twisting with his strong neck and removing the forearm.

Townsend SCREAMS and sinks to the floor, looking at the gun, still in the hand of his severed forearm.

Howard bounds past the stunned group toward the open hatch.

Sam sees Howard and dives, losing his gun when he hits the deck. Howard slams into Ponce, knocking him out as he flees. Barbara, recovering her senses, sees Sam scrambling to recover his gun. She aims her weapon at him.

Sierra sucker punches Barbara on the side of the head just as she prepares to shoot.

Dazed but not out, Barbara hits Sierra with a vicious backhand, knocking her into a wall. Barbara lifts her pistol.

Before she can fire, Monica delivers a right-hand punch into Barbara's stomach and an open-palm strike from her left to the tip of Barbara's nose.

Barbara SCREAMS as blood spurts from her broken nose. Her pistol clatters to the floor. She kicks Monica, doubling her over. Sierra grabs Barbara's hair, jerking her head back, slamming it against the wall. Barbara collapses.

SIERRA

(standing over Barbara)
Fucking stay down this time.

Sierra and Monica, breathing heavily, shake their heads in unison like they agree on something, at last.

MONICA
Jesus, she was tough.

SIERRA
What a bitch!

MONICA
But nothing compared to us.

Monica puts out her hand. Sierra gives her a low five. They look up to see the men have formed a semicircle around the combat area, gazing at them open-mouthed.

MONICA (CONT'D)
Thanks for the help, guys.

Sam steps forward, holds out his badge.

SAM
Most of y'all are under arrest. I recommend exercising the right to remain silent so we can get the hell off this thing.

TOWNSEND (O.S.)
I don't think so...

Shelley looks down the corridor, SCREAMS. Townsend, his belt serving as a tourniquet on his severed arm, unsteadily aims the pistol in his remaining hand.

Gage steps in front of Monica, shielding her from Townsend's gun. Sierra does the same for Bill.

Sam pushes Linus aside and sends three rounds downrange into Townsend's chest so fast it SOUNDS LIKE ONE SHOT.

Townsend drops dead.

LINUS
Nice shooting.

BUD ROY
Missed the clavicle, though.

Ponce, groggy, stumbles into the corridor and surveys the odd gathering of people in various states of injury and/or death.

PONCE
Did I miss anything?

INT. FREEDOMLAND - LIFEBOAT STATION - MINUTES LATER

Sam helps Jacob, Bill and Sierra board a lifeboat. Linus and Ponce drag the unconscious Barbara.

GAGE

I'm going back to get Rebel.

SAM

Gage, if you think I'm gonna let you out of my sight --

GAGE

-- Deputy, my best friend in the entire world is waiting for me. He trusts me. I won't let him down.

MONICA

I'm going with him.

SAM

Now, wait a second --

MONICA

-- You need to get these folks back home. We'll be right behind you.

SAM

Okay. Go.

GAGE

Thanks, Sam.

Gage and Monica jog off to find Rebel.

SHELLEY

Well, if he gets to go, Bud Roy and me are gonna go find Howard.

BUD ROY

The hell we are. Did you see what that fucking leopard did to a guy with eleventy billion fucktons of money? Imagine what he'll do to us.

SHELLEY

Howard was protecting me.

BUD ROY

Howard had no idea who we were. That cat attacked Townsend because he was first in line.

SHELLEY

(wailing)

I'm afraid he won't get off in time!

BUD ROY

And I'm afraid he will!

SHELLEY

(begins to stomp off)

We're going! Bud Roy. Deputy, if you want to shoot us, do it now.

SAM

We're not done, Bud Roy. But go ahead. My advice is don't look for Howard too hard.

BUD ROY

Tell me somethin' I don't know.

Bud Roy turns to follow Shelley. Sam boards the lifeboat and keys the radio.

SAM

Marlinspike, this is Aucoin. Do you copy?

INT. FREEDOMLAND - NICE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Monica and Gage jog through a hallway.

FRANTIC BARKING comes from down the corridor.

GAGE

Rebel!

Gage breaks into a run. Monica follows at her own pace. She enters Townsend's office.

INT. FREEDOMLAND - TOWNSEND'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Gage and Rebel share a moment of joyful reunion.

MONICA

Okay, are we ready?

GAGE

You bet!

Gage grabs Rebel's collar and heads for the exit. Monica holds up her hand.

MONICA
Aren't you forgetting something?

GAGE
What? Stonewall's arm?

Monica smiles.

MONICA
Rebel really was all you wanted.

GAGE
Sure. He's my dog.

Beat. Monica points at the duffel.

GAGE (CONT'D)
Oh. Right.

Gage walks back, picks up the duffel, slings it over his shoulder. He gives the display cabinet with Stonewall's arm a perfunctory glimpse. Shakes his head.

GAGE (CONT'D)
Let's get out of here.
(pauses near the exit)
Damn it. My gun.

MONICA
(touches Gage's arm)
Gage... leave the gun. Take the money.

Gage makes a "you-first" gesture toward the door.

EXT. FREEDOMLAND - TERRACED DECK AREA - CONTINUOUS

Bud Roy and Shelley search for Howard. FreedomLand emits METALLIC CREAKS and GROANS as it slowly dies.

BUD ROY
We got to get off this thing, hon.

Bud Roy gazes around the deck. FreedomLand is in ruins. The red pirate flag standard and pole CRASHES LOUDLY to the deck.

SHELLEY
You're right. Just promise me
you'll buy me another leopard.

Bud Roy grabs Shelley's hand and pulls her toward a lifeboat.

EXT. FREEDOMLAND - LARGE LIFEBOAT - CONTINUOUS

Bud Roy studies the control setup.

BUD ROY

This one's bigger than the others.
I bet it was for Townsend.

Bud Roy sees a toggle/switch labeled "LAUNCH" and presses it. CABLES and GEARS WHIR as the boat descends toward the water.

EXT. LARGE LIFEBOAT - ON THE WATER - MOMENTS LATER

Bud Roy disconnects the cabling.

BUD ROY

We gotta get this thing running.

Bud Roy moves toward the open hatch in the boat's small conning tower. As he enters, he hears a low, familiar GROWL.

BUD ROY (CONT'D)

Oh, fuck me...

EXT. SAM'S LIFEBOAT - DUSK - 30 MINUTES LATER

Sam is on the radio with Purdy.

SAM

(talking loudly to be
heard over the weather)
... Soon as we hit the water, the
boat's engines kicked in. It's
steering a course for the mainland.

PURDY (V.O.)

Copy. I just got off the radio with
the Chief Engineer. He says they're
like self-driving cars...
programmed to go the nearest port.

SAM

Have you heard from Gage Randolph
or Bud Roy Roemer? They were
supposed to be right behind us.

PURDY

Randolph called in. Nothing from
Roemer.

EXT. GAGE'S LIFEBOAT - CONTINUOUS

Gage stows the lifeboat's radio. He looks at Monica.

GAGE

So what happens now?

MONICA

Gage, you are the reason I survived all of this. Granted, you're also the reason I was in it to begin with.

GAGE

It was a bit complicated.

MONICA

You don't say. But you did your best. And, your best is not too bad. If the Crapper drags you into this, it will be my word against his. And I'll win.

GAGE

I believe you. I've known you were on my side since you called your friend with my phone. I knew it before then. That's why I left the phone for you in the first place.

MONICA

You mean... did you Helsinki me? Was I really outsmarted by a guy who relies on Die Hard to get him through life?

GAGE

Well, Die Hard and faith in good people.

He smiles. Monica smiles, but shivers from the rain and cold. Gage beckons her over. They rearrange Rebel to share his warmth. Gage nestles Monica into his shoulder.

GAGE (CONT'D)

I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

MONICA

Your movie references are getting better.

GAGE

Now, about that other tattoo...

They laugh.

EXT. WILMINGTON DOCKS - DUSK

Sheriff Hawkins, FBI Special Agent Carlson, and an army of reporters from every network watch the flotilla arrive.

Sheriff Hawkins and Sam hand over a hand-cuffed Barbara Townsend to an FBI reception party helmed by Agent Carlson.

Linus McTane holds court in front of a bank of microphones.

LINUS

Jacob Kelly may be misguided, but he deserves a sound defense. And, on behalf of all those who suffered at the hands of the Townsends today, I'm gonna sue the ever-lovin' shit out of his estate.

Sam escorts the wounded Jacob Kelly to an ambulance. Jacob turns to the cameras, weirdly elated:

JACOB

(yells to the media)
It was all me that done it! I bombed the IRS. I kidnapped Monica Mathers. I'd a gotten away with it, too, if it hadn't a been for Gage Randolph and that dog of his.

Bill and Sierra walk over to Gage and Monica.

BILL

I'm glad to see you both made it out. Rebel too.

GAGE

Thanks, Bill.

SIERRA

(to Monica)
For a liberal wimp you pack a pretty good punch.

MONICA

Thanks for being on my side back there.

BILL

We, all of us, almost got killed back there, and over what? How much we should pay in taxes?

SIERRA

What Bill's trying to say, is we should be having a conversation. Not a shouting match.

MONICA

I agree. And you're both welcome on my show at any time to have that discussion.

SIERRA

Back at ya.

Reporters clamor. Gage, Monica, and Rebel make a hasty retreat into Sam's car as Bill and Sierra get ready to tell their story. Ponce joins them to make sure he gets air time.

INT. SAM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Gage, Monica, and Rebel share the back seat. Sam gets in the front and turns around to Gage and Monica.

SAM

I have my suspicions about what happened. But, the right people are going to jail...

(Sam looks at them for a moment)

...and the right people aren't.

MONICA

You have good instincts, Deputy.

SAM

People are gonna want to talk to you both. I assume your stories will correspond...

MONICA

(looks at Gage)

We know what happened.

SAM

Gage, I'm sorry about Bud Roy and Shelley. It doesn't look good.

GAGE

Thanks. They aren't by no means perfect. But they're my friends. And they stood by me.

SAM

Bud Roy and I have had our differences. But he sticks by his friends. I'll give him that.

They drive off.□

EXT. NORTH CAROLINA - BROWN'S ISLAND - SWAMPY INLET - DAY

A lifeboat is washed up on a beach. Bloodstains cover the interior. Shelley's legs, unmoving, protrude from the hatch.

Bud Roy crawls along the beach. His left arm, severed at the elbow, is tied off with piece of electrical wire. He flops over, facing the sun, delirious.

BUD ROY

Let us cross the river, and rest...
under the shade of the trees.

Bud Roy smiles, the light fading from his eyes. A crow CAWS.

EXT. FLORIDA STATE LINE - DAY

SUPER: "3 MONTHS LATER"

Howard the Leopard emerges from the underbrush and stops in front of a sign reading "Welcome to Florida." He pauses, as if reading it. He ROARS and steps across the state line.

MAIN TITLE: "FREEDOMLAND"

EXT. TWELVE GAGE SOUTHERN BBQ - NIGHT

SUPER: "18 MONTHS LATER"

Sam Aucoin pulls his cruiser into a jammed parking lot, across the street from a shuttered Jubblies.

INT. TWELVE GAGE SOUTHERN BBQ - MOMENTS LATER

Sam enters and finds Gage behind the bar, monitoring every detail. Rebel rests on the floor next to him.

Sam looks around. The place, totally refurbished, is packed.
MUSIC BLARES.

GAGE
Sheriff.

Gage slides a mug of coffee down the bar to Sam.

GAGE (CONT'D)
Nice of you to drop by.

SAM
Since you ran Jubblies out of town,
where else can I get barbecue?

GAGE
Best in the state.

SAM
That's what I hear. I also hear
you're opening a place in Durham.

GAGE
I've got an angel investor on that
one.

SAM
She is that.

Sam raises his mug to the TV behind the bar, tuned to The
Monica Mathers Show. A PORTLY MAN next to Sam grimaces.

PORTLY MAN
You like her? Damn liberal commie --

GAGE
-- That she is. Possibly the most
infuriating person I know.

PORTLY MAN
You know that --

GAGE
(holds hand up)
-- Know her and like her, despite
being correct in her opinions maybe
two percent of the time.
(looks at the man, no
humor on his face)
But I'll bet you five bucks she can
knock you on your ass. And I'll bet
you ten I can do the same if you
finish that sentence.

PORTLY MAN

Sheriff, you gonna let him threaten
me like that?

SAM

Only if you keep runnin' your
mouth.

The man heaves himself off the stool and waddles off.

GAGE

(tilts head to TV)
Truth be told, maybe she's
convinced me of a few things. Don't
tell her that, though.

SAM

We're all a work in progress.

Gage surveys his diverse clientele, their differences put on
hold, enjoying the food.

GAGE

I'd like to think so.

Sam moves off to join Rebecca Aucoin, six months pregnant, a
giant pile of ribs in front of her. Sam gives his wife a kiss
and sits next to her.

Gage watches and smiles. He turns around and watches Monica
sign off from her show. He picks up a large, ancient black
cordless phone and starts dialing 2-1-2...

GAGE (CONT'D)

Yippee ki yay, Ms. Mathers...

FADE TO BLACK.