

**"CYCLES"**

An Original Screenplay

By

Josh Becker

INT. SAN DIEGO BUS STATION - DAY

Superimposed title: "SAN DIEGO, MARCH 1946."

There are servicemen everywhere: Sailors, Marines and Air Force, all carrying duffel bags. A Greyhound bus is loading with "New York" lit up on top.

INT. BUS - DAY

VIRGIL MOORE, a tough, square-jawed, muscular, twenty-four year old, Marine Sergeant, wearing dress greens, a stick match flicking in his teeth, gets on the bus. Someone has a radio and Glenn Miller's "String Of Pearls" can be heard. Virgil walks up the aisle. His path is blocked by the back of a SAILOR telling a story to two other Sailors. Virgil waits for a second, then pokes the guy in the back.

VIRGIL

Hey! Swab-jockey! Scram before you get scuttled!

The Sailor turns and faces Virgil.

SAILOR

Take it easy, gyrene. War's over.

Virgil gives him an icy look, puts his finger against the guy's chest and pushes him aside.

VIRGIL

Sez you.

Virgil walks past. The three Sailors watch him go, then look at each other and raise their eyebrows.

The only seat left on the bus is beside another sailor: BUD HOOGENBOOM, a big, blond, twenty-three year old fellow with a beard, reading Astounding Stories Magazine. Virgil finds the choice of seats unfortunate.

VIRGIL

Hey, mate. Mind if I sit here?

Bud looks up and shrugs.

BUD

It's a free country, leatherneck.

Virgil sits down.

VIRGIL

That's what they tell me.

Bud holds out his hand. A tattoo of a snake can be seen on his wrist running up under his sleeve.

BUD

Bud Hoogenboom, Machinist Mate First Class.

Virgil hesitates for a moment, then sighs and shakes Bud's hand.

VIRGIL

Virgil Moore, Gunnery Sergeant—ex.

BUD

(nods)

Right. Ex. Me, too. Ain't that a kick in the teeth. Where d'ya hail from, Virg?

VIRGIL

Detroit. How 'bout you?

BUD

Toledo.

VIRGIL

We're neighbors. Hey, I know what you wanna see—a picture of my sweetheart.

BUD

(not enthused)

I do?

Virgil pulls out a dog-eared, black and white shot of a very pretty, dark-haired girl in a bathing suit. He shows it to Bud.

VIRGIL

Sure you do. Now I ask ya, is she is or is she ain't a dream?

BUD

(nods appreciatively)

She's a snappy lookin' dish all right. What's she doin' with a bum like you?

VIRGIL

(grins)

She's screwy about me, can't live without me. We're gonna get married as soon as I get back.

BUD

Must be nice.

VIRGIL

You got a gal waitin' for you?

Bud looks out the window, pain in his eyes.

BUD

I got the ol' 'Dear John' when I was in the Coral Sea. But she don't mean it. She can't. I know the guy she sent me over for—went to high school with him—*he's* a bum. 4-F. Get the picture? She just has to've forgotten how much she likes me, that's all.

VIRGIL

(nods)

Course. How could a dame like a guy that's 4-F?

Bud nods gravely, then suddenly perks up.

BUD

You wanna see a picture of my *real* sweetheart?

VIRGIL

(confused)

An Oriental gal?

Bud shakes his head, takes out a photo and shows it to Virgil. It's of a motorcycle.

BUD

(proud)

Indian Four—four cylinders, 1200cc's, electric starter—look out! This honey'll never betray me.

VIRGIL

My best buddy had a motorcycle. We used to ride it all the time before the thing.

BUD

Really? What kind?

VIRGIL

I dunno, but it sure went fast.

BUD

(nods)

Yeah. Ain't nothin' like goin' real fast on a bike.

Gets you right in the nuts . . . except goin' into battle, that is.

VIRGIL

(grins)

Right. No more of that, though.

(they both nod and sigh)

Hey, Bud, do me a favor, will ya?

BUD

What?

VIRGIL

(points at Bud's arm)

Lemme see the rest of that tattoo.

Bud grins and rolls up *both* of his sleeves—his arms are completely covered with tattoos. The snake on his wrist winds around the legs of a naked girl on his inner arm.

VIRGIL

(grins)

What'sa matter? You run outta paper at sea?

Bud points out each tattoo and narrates.

BUD

Saipan, Singapore, Manila, Okinawa, San Francisco,

Pusan, Yokohama. I worked in the guts of a ship.

When I saw land it was worth noting. You got any tattoos there, Virg?

VIRGIL

(nods)

Yeah. One.

Virgil rolls up his right sleeve. He reveals the blue globe, anchor and "Semper Fi" of the Marine Corps.

VIRGIL

That's all I need.

BUD

You got a lot of imagination there, Virg. I bet you saw some rugged shit, huh?

VIRGIL

I saw my share. How 'bout you?

BUD

I saw a lot of the inside of an engine room and a lot of sweaty swabbies. I was on three different ships that went down . . . Saw a lot of my good

buddies go down.

VIRGIL

(nods; painfully)

A couple of months ago in the Philippines I sent  
out a patrol and my best buddy took it in the head.  
He's alive, but . . .

Both of them go quiet for a moment, thinking.

BUD

At least we knew what the hell we were doin' when  
we got up in the morning.

VIRGIL

(nods in agreement)

No shit.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE BUS STATION - NIGHT

Many hours later, in the middle of the night, the bus pulls into the station in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Bud's asleep and Virgil is reading "One Of Ours" By Willa Cather. As people are getting back on the bus, a slim, attractive, young woman with long curly hair named LUANNE McMILLAN gets on. There is a defiant, angry look on her face and a coldness in her eyes. She sits down at a window, the seat beside her empty.

Virgil sees her and his eyes light up. He shakes his hand like it's on fire.

VIRGIL

(to himself)

Hubba-hubba.

(turns to Bud, but he's

asleep; Virgil shrugs)

Gotta leave this one to the Marines.

Virgil stands, straightens his uniform and casually saunters over to LuAnne. He stands over her until she glances up.

VIRGIL

Mind if I sit down?

LuAnne checks Virgil out with a cold appraisal and seemingly likes what she sees.

LUANNE

(smiles; sexy Texas drawl)

Now what would a rugged devil dog like you want  
with a li'l ol' gal like me?

VIRGIL

(grinning)

Ask me to sit down and we'll both find out.

LUANNE

All right. Would y'all like to set down?

VIRGIL

My pleasure.

(he sits)

Don't tell me, you're from Texas.

LUANNE

How'd ch'all know?

VIRGIL

I'm a mind-reader. Is that where you're goin'?

LUANNE

Yep. You ever been there?

VIRGIL

Nope. But if all the gals look like you I oughta stop and reconnoiter.

LUANNE

(grinning)

Are y'all makin' a pass at me, Sergeant?

VIRGIL

(grins back)

Smart, too.

LUANNE

Well then, let's get to it.

LuAnne leans over and gives Virgil a big kiss. Virgil can't believe it.

VIRGIL

You Texas gals don't kid around.

LUANNE

Some of 'em may, I don't.

Virgil grins and gives her a kiss back and soon they're seriously necking.

The bus driver sees them in the rear-view mirror and raises his eyebrows; everyone else is asleep.

LuAnne finally breaks away and laughs.

LUANNE

My Daddy's a cop. He wouldn't like this a'tall,

not that I rightly care.

VIRGIL

(shrugs)

Daddy's gotta let go sometime. You're old enough to take care of yourself.

LUANNE

(grins)

That's what I think, but my Daddy says I gotta be eighteen before I take care of myself.

Virgil straightens up and coughs.

VIRGIL

You're not eighteen yet?

LUANNE

(shakes her head)

Not 'til October.

VIRGIL

(smiles)

Could've fooled me.

LUANNE

(grins)

I did.

(She puts her hand on Virgil's arm)

Why don't ch'all just stay fooled 'til I get off in Amarillo, that's purty soon.

Virgil thinks about it for a second, looks around and sees that everyone is asleep, then takes LuAnne in his arms and kisses her. LuAnne's hand moves to Virgil's waistband and begins to slide under his belt. Virgil's eyes pop open, then he grabs her wrist.

VIRGIL

(whispers)

Why don't we just take a rain-check on that 'til, say, October.

LUANNE

When're you ever gonna see me again?

VIRGIL

(grins)

Who knows? It's a big world. Anything can happen.

LuAnne suddenly grabs him and holds him tight, whispering in his ear.

LUANNE

(desperately)  
Take me with you, Sergeant, wherever you're  
goin'? I don' care.

VIRGIL  
(pulls away; shocked)  
What?

LuAnne's embarrassed, but goes on.

LUANNE  
I don't wanna go home. I don't fit in there.

VIRGIL  
(chuckles)  
I'm going back to my parents' house and they'd be  
a little surprised if I brought you in.  
(waves his hand)  
Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad. I brought home this underage  
girl to live with me, is that okay?

LUANNE  
(not kidding)  
I was just kiddin'.

VIRGIL  
Why do you want to get away so bad?

LUANNE  
It don't matter. Forget it.

Virgil tenderly touches LuAnne's cheek.

VIRGIL  
I don't even know you, but if it was any other way  
I'd do it.

LUANNE  
Really?  
(Virgil nods)  
Kiss me, Sergeant. Amarillo's just around the corner.

Virgil takes LuAnne in his arms and kisses her.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. AMARILLO BUS STATION - NIGHT

The bus pulls into the tiny station in Amarillo, Texas. It's a little brick building with a few dusty old cars and a pick-up truck.

INT. BUS - NIGHT



LuAnne straightens her hair, gives Virgil a quick kiss and a conspiratorial smile, then stands to go.

LUANNE

Very nice makin' your acquaintance, Sergeant.

VIRGIL

I'm not a Sergeant anymore. Just Virgil.

LUANNE

Aw right, Just Virgil. My name's LuAnne. Maybe somehow somewhere we'll meet again.

VIRGIL

Like I said, it's a big world, who knows?

LUANNE

(waves)

'Bye.

Virgil waves back and LuAnne hesitantly gets off the bus. Virgil stands and goes back to his seat while watching LuAnne through the window. He sits back down in his seat and Bud wakes up. Virgil points to LuAnne.

VIRGIL

Oh brother, now there's a hot little Texas tamale. You'll never believe what I been up to.

BUD

(snorts)

I don't even wanna hear about it.

Bud goes back to his magazine. Virgil watches through the window as LuAnne is met by a big guy in his forties wearing a Sheriff's uniform. He is SHERIFF ALEX MCMILLAN. LuAnne and the Sheriff don't look particularly pleased to see each other. The Sheriff tosses LuAnne's suitcase into the back of a police car with "Shamrock, Texas, Sheriff" on the door.

VIRGIL

(chuckles)

She wasn't lying.

BUD

(doesn't look up)

Well, there's one for the books. They oughta make it a fuckin' holiday.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

The Police car pulls away from the bus station. LuAnne and the Sheriff ride along in silence for a minute. Finally . . .

SHERIFF

Y'all didn't wanna believe me, but I tol' ya so.

The cold, defiant look has returned to LuAnne's face.

LUANNE

All right, ya tol' me so. So what?

SHERIFF

So, if you'd a listened t' me ya coulda spared yourself the time an trouble of goin' all the way t' Albuquerque. I knew your Ma didn't want ya there, she tol' me so when she left.

LUANNE

I guess I jus' had t' find out for myself.

SHERIFF

I guess ya did. I tell ya though, girl, I don't cotton t' this runnin' away bidness. Don't do it again.

LUANNE

Aw, Daddy, just lemme be. I don' much feel like talkin' right now.

SHERIFF

Ch'all don' need t' be talkin', ya need t' be listenin'. From here on out when I tell ya somethin', I expect ya t' do it.

LUANNE

Why?

SHERIFF

Why? 'Cause I'm your Father an' I know what's right for ya, that's why.

LUANNE

(defiant)

Ya do? You know what's right for me? I don' thank y'all know what's right for yourself, let alone me.

SHERIFF

(suspicious)

What's that supposed t' mean?

LUANNE

(looks at him)

You know 'zactly what I mean.

SHERIFF

What?

LuAnne looks at him a long time.

LUANNE

(finally)

Aw right. Whatever happened after that feller that come into town last year an' spoke at the Goodfellers Hall?

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT

The Sheriff's car swerves over to the side of the road and screeches to a halt.

INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - NIGHT

The Sheriff turns to LuAnne and the two of them glare right at each other.

SHERIFF

What're ya drivin' at here, girl?

LUANNE

Drivin' at? All I know is that feller come ridin' into town on his motorcycle spoutin' his kill-the-Nigras-and-Jews talk and the next thang ya know ever'body's actin' very peculiar.

SHERIFF

You get all this from your Mama?

LUANNE

Mama didn't tell me nothin'.

SHERIFF

So you got it yourself. What of it?

LUANNE

So, what Nigra or Jew got lynched? Or was it one of the Japs down to the relocation center?

SHERIFF

Nobody got lynched, Nigra, Jew or Jap. Ya don' know what your talkin' about.

LUANNE

I don't? How come the next day the road out t' Salt Crick got blocked off an nobody goes out there no more?

The Sheriff suddenly gets very serious.

SHERIFF

I don' know where y'all got these silly notions of yours, but you best clear your head of 'em right smart! Your dead wrong in what your sayin'! I don' cotton t' bein' accused of thangs by my own daughter, an' I won't have no more of it, neither! An another thang, young lady, there ain't no point in your runnin' away no more. Yer Mama don' want'cha, ya gotta face up to that. Like it or not you're stuck with me. Ya may not believe it, LuAnne, but I do love ya.

LUANNE

(sighs; looks away)

I know ya do, Daddy.

The Sheriff nods, fine, it's all settled. He turns the steering wheel.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT

The Sheriff's car pulls back onto the road and drives away.

A moment later the bus comes roaring past. It travels through the dark night up a lonely stretch of Texas two-lane. The moaning and groaning of someone having a nightmare is heard.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

It's Bud. His eyes are closed and he's in a sweat.

BUD

(asleep)

*Get out! You gotta get out! Swim for it! We're goin' down!*

Virgil is woken up by Bud's helpless appeals. Virgil reaches over and shakes Bud's shoulder. He wakes with a gasp, breathing hard, his eyes blank, not sure where he is. Virgil keeps a tight grip on Bud's shoulder.

VIRGIL

It's okay, chum. You're off the ship. We're on a Greyhound bus. We're not goin' down.

BUD

(confused)

Huh? What?

VIRGIL

We're goin' home. The war's over.

Bud figures out where he is, sighs deeply and wipes the sweat from his brow.

BUD

It sure ain't over in my head.

VIRGIL

You and me both, chum. You and me both.

DISSOLVE:

INT. TOLEDO BUS STATION - DAY

Virgil and Bud both get off the bus in the Toledo Bus Station. They arrive at a bus loading up marked "Detroit."

VIRGIL

This is my bus.

Bud suddenly seems very nervous.

BUD

Hey, what'dya say we go toss back a few?

VIRGIL

(shakes his head)

I been waitin' three years for this bus. I don't want to miss it.

BUD

(nods)

Right. You ever get back down here to Toledo, you got my address, make sure and look me up. I'll give ya a ride on my Indian.

Virgil and Bud shake hands.

VIRGIL

Sure thing. And if you ever get up to Detroit...

They put on their hats, hoist their duffel bags and head off in different directions.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. THE MOORE HOUSE - DAY

The Moore family home is a small brick house in a shaded, middle-class neighborhood. A new, '46 Hudson sits in the driveway.

A Yellow cab pulls up in front of the house and Virgil gets out. He swings his duffel bag up onto his shoulder, sighs and marches up to the door. He's about to turn the doorknob, then stops and rings the bell. A muffled voice from within says, "I'll get it." A moment later the door is opened by JASON, Virgil's seventeen year old brother. He's a tall, handsome kid with dark hair. His eyes go wide like he's seeing a ghost.

JASON

*Mom! Dad! It's Virgil!*

VIRGIL

(grinning)

Holy mackerel, look at you. You're bigger'n me.  
Come 'ere.

Virgil grabs Jason and hugs him. They slap each other's backs. When they step apart they marvel at one another. Finally . . .

JASON

(hollers)

*Mom! Dad! It's Virgil! He's home!*

MR. & MRS. MOORE come running up. Mr. Moore is holding the newspaper, Mrs. Moore is wiping her hands on her apron. They are dark-haired, middle-aged, white, middle-class folks. They both grab for Virgil at the same time.

MR. MOORE

Virgil, my boy!

MRS. MOORE

(crying)

Oh, Virgil! Why didn't you call?

Virgil hugs them both and they both start to cry.

VIRGIL

I wanted to surprise you.

MR. MOORE

Well, you sure did.

MRS. MOORE

You might've given me a heart attack, too.

MR. MOORE

Come in, son, come in. The war's over and you're finally home.

They all take hold of Virgil, pull him inside and shut the door.

INT. MOORE HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Virgil, Jason and Mr. Moore sit in the living room by the fireplace. Mr. Moore builds up the fire, Virgil sits smoking and Jason sits on the floor at his feet.

JASON

(eager)

So, was it really as rugged as we kept hearing about?

VIRGIL

(changing subjects)

So how 'bout those Tigers? Think they've got a

chance of taking the series again this year?

Jason looks disappointed. Mr. Moore nods.

MR. MOORE

I think so. They traded Rudy York to the Red Sox and that Jew, Greenberg, wants more money, but nobody can hit Newhouser's fast ball, so I think we've got a good chance. What do you think, Jason?

JASON

I wanna hear about the war.

MR. MOORE

Well maybe your brother doesn't want to talk about it this minute. Everything isn't always about what *you* want, you know.

JASON

All right, all right. Don't blow a gasket. It's just not fair, that's all. If I'd only been a year older I would've made it. I got rooked.

Virgil and his Dad exchange a look. Virgil grins, puts his hand on Jason's head and musses his hair.

VIRGIL

You wouldn't've liked it, Jas. You gotta get up before dawn and do what other people tell you to do. It doesn't sound like your style.

JASON

(dead serious)

I'd of made a good soldier no matter what you both think! I'm not some spoiled kid, for Christ sake!

MR. MOORE

(serious)

Watch your mouth. I won't have swearing in this house.

JASON

Oh, all right.

The doorbell rings. Virgil bolts to his feet.

VIRGIL

I'll get it.

He opens the door and there stands SHIRLEY, twenty pounds heavier and four years older than the bathing suit shot, but still a pretty girl. Virgil isn't sure how to react.

VIRGIL

Shirley?

SHIRLEY

Virgil. Don't you recognize me?

Virgil quickly gets past his initial shock, he is a Marine after all.

VIRGIL

Of course I do. Hi.

He grabs her in his arms and hugs her tight.

SHIRLEY

I guess I've changed a little.

VIRGIL

So have I. It's been a long time.

They hold each other tightly.

Mr. Moore taps Jason on the leg with his foot and nods his head toward the kitchen. Jason makes a face like he doesn't want to go and his Dad kicks him a little harder. They both go into the kitchen.

Virgil and Shirley pull back and look into each other's eyes.

VIRGIL

You can't imagine how many times I thought about this.

SHIRLEY

(breathless)

Yes, I can. Oh, Virgil, hold me.

Virgil takes her back in his arms and holds her. Shirley's eyes are closed and she sighs deeply. Virgil has his arms around her waist. He opens his eyes and looks down—there's a lot of her.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. LOWER-CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAWN

The sun is just rising over a lower-class neighborhood in a hilly section outside Toledo. The small, wooden, two-story houses are scattered around like blown refuse. Old, rusted cars repose on a number of lawns with weeds growing through them. The streets are rough dirt and gravel.

INT. THE HOOGENBOOM HOUSE/BUD'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Bud wakes up with a start, looking all around in a daze. After a quick moment he realizes where he is—his own bedroom. It's the bedroom of a boy in high school, full of sports trophies and pennants. Bud's feet stick off the end of the bed. He rubs his aching, hung-over head, lights a cigarette and wonders . . .



BUD  
 Maybe the war didn't happen. Maybe it was all a  
 dream.

Bud looks down at the knuckles of his right hand and they're all skinned. He gets out of bed and sees his Navy uniform nicely folded over a chair.

BUD  
 No such luck.

He goes to the closet and takes out a white, button-down shirt.

BUD  
 (shakes his head)  
 Of all the crummy things to be—a civilian.

He puts on the shirt, goes to button it and can't get the buttons to the holes.

BUD  
 A big, crummy civilian.

INT. HOOGENBOOM KITCHEN - MORNING

Bud enters the little kitchen in his uniform. His Father, MR. HOOGENBOOM, sits at the table reading the newspaper and his Mother, MRS. HOOGENBOOM, stands at the stove cooking. She is thin, gray and old.

BUD  
 Morning.

Mr. Hoogenboom lowers the paper and he really looks terrible: there are spots and blotches on his skin, his hair has fallen out in irregular clumps and he's so thin he's emaciated. The sight of him shocks Bud.

MR. HOOGENBOOM  
 (smiling; Dutch accent)  
 Goot mornink, Bud. Welcome home.

Mrs. Hoogenboom turns around.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM  
 Welcome home, sweetheart.

His Mother gives him a big hug, then he takes his Father's bony hand and kisses him on the cheek. Mrs. Hoogenboom sees the look in Bud's eyes. Her look tells him to calm down, don't make a fuss.

BUD  
 Something sure smells good.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM  
 Pancakes. Your favorite.

Bud rubs his pounding head.

BUD

Got any coffee?

MR. HOOGENBOOM

Ah, you drink coffee now, eh? You nefer liked it as a boy.

BUD

In the Navy nobody asks you what you like, they just give it to you. And you take it.

His Mother pours him a cup of coffee. She raises a bottle of milk and Bud waves it away. He takes a big slug of black coffee and sighs. Both his parents watch him with great amusement.

MR. HOOGENBOOM

You've grown into a bik man, Bud. I'da nefer t'ought you'd get so bik. And wit da beart. You look like my Papa.

BUD

I don't suppose we got any aspirins around here, huh?

Mrs. Hoogenboom reaches into a cupboard and takes out a bottle of aspirin.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

You didn't used to take aspirins.

BUD

I didn't used to have hangovers.

Bud tosses back three aspirins and washes them down with coffee. His parents both shudder at the sight.

BUD

I musta been a wreck when I got in last night 'cause I don't remember comin' home.

MR. HOOGENBOOM

You came in like it was da day hafter you left. You chust went right to your room and got into bet.

BUD

Sorry.

Bud sits down at the table and his Mother serves him an enormous stack of pancakes. Bud looks at them and tries not to gag. His Mother helps by scooping a giant glob of butter on top.

MR. HOOGENBOOM

Hey, dat's okay. Da war's ofer, you got to celebrate.

Bud glances down at his skinned knuckles.

BUD

Yeah, I guess I celebrated all right. So, how are you two? How ya been?

They both shrug.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

Oh, we've been all right. It's been difficult, you know. There's been a lot of shortages.

MR. HOOGENBOOM

Dat's right. No rubber for tires, no new cars—

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

—Very little meat, or eggs, or butter—

MR. HOOGENBOOM

—And gasoline and motor oil was very hart to get. It's been very hart on us.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

At times we just didn't know what we'd do.

Bud starts to laugh. His parents are surprised at his reaction.

MR. HOOGENBOOM

What's so funny?

BUD

I guess us servicemen never bothered to think how rough it was on all you civilians, particularly the ones that were thousands of miles from the fighting.

This stops the conversation dead.

BUD

I'm sorry. I don't know what I'm saying. I'm gonna take a walk.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

What about your breakfast?

BUD

It looks great, Ma, I just can't eat it right now. I'll see ya in a little while.

Bud stands and leaves. His parents look at each other and shake their heads.

EXT. THE HOOGENBOOM HOUSE - DAY

Bud gets outside and lights a cigarette. He inhales deeply, looks back at the house and shrugs. A moment later

Mrs. Hoogenboom comes outside and walks up to him.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

What's the matter, Bud?

BUD

(concerned)

What's wrong with Dad?

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

What do you mean? You've been gone a long time,  
he's gotten older.

BUD

(shakes his head)

*You've* gotten older, *he* looks terrible.

Mrs. Hoogenboom's eyes quickly water up and she turns away.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

Is it that bad?

BUD

(shocked)

Mom, what's wrong?

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

He's got cancer.

BUD

Of what?

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

Of everything.

BUD

(confused)

How can you get cancer of everything?

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

I don't know, but you can. You remember Mr. Fischer?

BUD

Sure. Dad's friend from the factory?

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

(nods)

He got the same thing. He died last year. And Mr.  
Treszewski?

BUD

That's another friend of Dad's.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

He's got it, too.

BUD

(confused)

But I don't understand.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

Neither do we. But don't say anything. It won't help.

Promise me.

BUD

(hesitant)

. . . Okay.

His Mom hugs him and kisses him.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM

It's good to have you home, Bud. It's been very difficult going through this by myself.

BUD

I'm gonna take a walk, Ma. I'll see ya in a while.

His Mom goes back in the house. Bud walks over to the one-car garage and opens the door. It's dark and jammed full of discarded junk: old bicycles, bald tires, broken lawn chairs. Amidst all of the junk is a canvas tarp. Bud yanks it back to reveal his Indian motor-cycle—dusty but gorgeous.

BUD

(grinning)

Oh, baby. Lookin' good.

He runs his hand over the red gas tank and beneath the layer of dust it shines. Bud scrutinizes the dust on his hand and smears it around with his thumb, his eyes suddenly glazed with anger.

EXT. METROPOLITAN CLEANERS - DAY

Bud steps up to a storefront dry cleaners. He looks through the window and sees his ex-girlfriend, BONNIE. She is a slim, dishwater blonde. She glances up, sees Bud and immediately gets nervous. Bud goes inside.

INT. METROPOLITAN CLEANERS - DAY

Bud steps up to the counter, a very serious expression on his face.

BUD

Just one question. Why?

BONNIE

Oh, Bud. Don't be like this.

BUD

Come on, give out with it. Why?

BONNIE

(sighs)

We were just too young when we started going out. It's been a long time. Arnie works across the street and we just started seeing each other. Things happen, Bud.

BUD

So then there's no chance for us to get back together again?

BONNIE

Bud, Arnie and I are getting married next month.

This hits Bud hard. He turns to leave.

BONNIE

When you meet Arnie again, I just know you'll like him.

BUD

(sarcastic)

Yeah, good old Arnie. I'm sure I'll like him a lot more now that he stole my girl.

BONNIE

Oh, come on, Bud, don't be like that.

BUD

Don't be like what? A sucker?

(furious)

You fuckin' betrayed me you bitch! While I was away at war! That's the lowest thing a woman can do to a man! There's no excuse!

BONNIE

(offended)

Oh yeah? Well, I never loved you and you never loved me! We were kids.

(looks around; whispers)

We never even slept together. I'm sorry you had to go away and fight for three years, but that's not my problem. Don't get sore at me for what happened to you.

BUD

Oh yeah, *well fuck you!*

BONNIE

You're a loud-mouth fool, Bud. Three years in the Navy didn't do you any good at all.

BUD

*Drop dead!*

Bud stomps out of the store and slams the door.

EXT. METROPOLITAN CLEANERS - DAY

When Bud gets outside he doesn't know which way to go.

BUD

I got scrounged. If I'd a been here she'd a grown to love me.

Bud slowly wanders away.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. STAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Virgil, now dressed in khaki work pants, a white shirt, windbreaker and tie, steps in front of a little, brick house. He knocks on the door and MRS. UPLINGER answers. She's about fifty, but looks older. There is great sadness in her face, however she brightens up considerably upon seeing Virgil. She hugs him.

MRS. UPLINGER

Oh, Virgil. It's so good to have you back.

VIRGIL

It's good to see you too, Mrs. Uplinger. How's Stan?

MRS. UPLINGER

(the sadness returns)

He's not so good. He won't do anything. But I know he'll be glad to see you.

VIRGIL

(unsure)

Will he?

MRS. UPLINGER

Of course he will. Why wouldn't he?

VIRGIL

I sent him on that patrol.

MRS. UPLINGER

(waves her hand)

Don't be silly, Virgil, it's not your fault. Come in.

She ushers Virgil inside. He hesitantly enters.

INT. THE UPLINGER HOUSE/STAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mrs. Uplinger opens the door to Stan's room. STAN UPLINGER sits in bed staring out the window, a crumpled comic book in his lap. Stan's curly brown hair is in disarray and is considerably shorter in back.

MRS. UPLINGER

Stan, look who's here. It's Virgil.

Stan turns, sees Virgil and narrows his eyes. He doesn't look pleased. He attempts to say something but can't get his mouth to form the words. Stan's Mother looks like she's going to cry and quickly leaves the room. Virgil steps into the room.

VIRGIL

(timidly)

Hi, Stan. You mad at me?

Stan grabs the edge of the bed, grips it very tight and painfully forces words out of his mouth.

STAN

W-w-why'd y-y-you s-s-send on t-t-that patrol?

I-I-I j-j-just g-g-got off one.

VIRGIL

(hesitant)

I didn't trust that kid, what's-his-name, to lead it.

STAN

H-H-Hoberman.

VIRGIL

Right. He was a fuck-up and a new guy. I just figured that even if you were dead-ass tired the patrol would still be better off with you leading it.

STAN

W-w-we w-w-walked r-r-right into it. I-I-I w-wouldn't've d-d-done that if I-I-I w-w-wasn't so b-b-beat.

VIRGIL

(looks down; ashamed)

I know. I fucked up. I'm sorry, Stan. I'd take it all back if I could. I'd lead the patrol myself. I'm as sorry as I've ever been about anything.

Virgil wrings his hands and stares down at the floor. After a long moment, Stan reaches out and puts his hand on Virgil's shoulder.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. TOLEDO CLOCK COMPANY - MORNING



The work day is about to begin at the Toledo Clock Company, a medium-sized, brick factory. The sign at the top of the building reads, "TOLEDO CLOCK COMPANY, RADIUM DIAL DIVISION."

INT. FACTORY - DAY

Bud, wearing civilian clothes, and his Father, wearing white paint splattered overalls, walk through the factory. Mr. Hoogenboom leads Bud down to the production line, which is made up of several long tables where men and women sit manipulating thin paint brushes, busily painting clock dials. They all dip the ends of the brushes into tubs of white, radium paint and meticulously cover the small numbers and hands of the clocks. When the ends of their brushes are no longer sufficiently pointed they put them in their mouths and renew the point with their lips.

Bud looks closely at the workers. Most of them have spotted skin, clumps of hair missing and open sores on their lips—just like his Father. Bud is shocked. Mr. Hoogenboom speaks proudly to some of the workers they pass.

MR. HOOGENBOOM

Dis is my boy, Bud. He's comin' to work here wid us.

A FEMALE WORKER that looks forty-five years old, with spotted skin, and thin, nearly see-through blonde hair, waves at Bud.

FEMALE WORKER

Hi, Bud. Remember me?

(Bud looks completely  
blank)

We were in Senior civics together. I'm Gwen Karpowitz.

Bud looks like he's seen a ghost. He smiles weakly.

BUD

Gwen. Hi. How ya doin'?

WORKER

Great. I'll see ya later.

BUD

Right.

Bud and his Dad walk away. Bud is panicked and in a sweat. He grabs his Father's arm.

BUD

You'll probably think I'm an awful dope, Dad, but I gotta get outta here.

MR. HOOGENBOOM

But we gotta go talk to da foreman. It's all set up.

BUD

I can't right now. Maybe another time.

MR. HOOGENBOOM

Bud, what's wrong wit you?

BUD

I don't know, Dad. I'll see you at home. 'Bye.

Bud quickly leaves. His Father watches him go with a concerned, stupefied expression.

EXT. COUNTY TWO-LANE - DAY

Bud races his motorcycle up a rural stretch of county two-lane, his head low, moving fast. He rides through the hills outside town, going way too fast and jumping over the tops of the hills. He recklessly cuts off the road and goes bumping off through the woods.

LONG DISSOLVE:

INT. MOORE HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Virgil lounges around the house drinking beer, smoking a cigarette and listening to a radio game show. The doorbell rings and Mrs. Moore answers it. It's Shirley.

MRS. MOORE

Hello, Shirley.

SHIRLEY

Hi, Mrs. Moore. Virgil here?

MRS. MOORE

(nods)

In there.

SHIRLEY

(whispers)

How is he?

Mrs. Moore looks troubled and shrugs. She goes back to the kitchen and Shirley enters the living room.

SHIRLEY

Hi, Virgil.

VIRGIL

Hi, Shirl. Sit down. This gal answers two more questions right she wins five hundred bucks. Tough questions, though. I haven't been able to get almost any of 'em. You know the capital of Wyoming?

SHIRLEY

Cheyenne. I got the date for our wedding. August thirtieth. How does that sound?

Virgil doesn't look up from the radio.

VIRGIL

Fine.

SHIRLEY

(unsure)

It's okay?

VIRGIL

Fine.

SHIRLEY

You sound like you don't care.

Virgil looks right at her.

VIRGIL

I don't.

SHIRLEY

(getting upset)

But this is our wedding we're talking about.

VIRGIL

(flatly)

It's not what *we're* talking about, it's what *you're* talking about. I'm listening to a show.

SHIRLEY

Then you don't want to get married?

Virgil gropes for words that are very difficult for him to find.

VIRGIL

(honestly)

Shirl . . . I don't know what I want. Ever since I've been back I can't focus on anything. I can't even read a book, and you know how much I like to read. When I was stuck in the jungle with Japs everywhere ready to kill me I could read. Now, I don't know what's going on. I kinda just want to put my fist through something.

SHIRLEY

But Virgil, the war's over. We've got to get on with our lives.

VIRGIL

I'd like to, really, but . . .

SHIRLEY

(upset)

But this doesn't make any sense.

VIRGIL

That's just how it is. I've done my best to explain it, Shirl. I don't care. Maybe by August thirtieth I will. Now can we just knock it off for a second? I wanna hear the rest of this.

Shirley is at a complete loss. She stands and goes quickly out the door. Virgil flicks his cigarette butt into the fireplace and takes a big slug of beer.

Jason comes in from school holding a pile of books.

JASON

Hi, Virg.

(yells)

*Mom! I'm home!*

VIRGIL

Hey, what's up?

JASON

I saw Shirley on the way out. She didn't look very happy.

VIRGIL

(shrugs)

How's school?

Jason looks around to make sure his Mom isn't nearby.

JASON

(confiding)

It stinks. I'm failing biology and I don't think they're gonna let me graduate 'cause of it.

VIRGIL

Uh-oh. Mom and Dad know this?

JASON

(shakes his head)

I threw out all the progress reports.

VIRGIL

(sarcastic)

Oh, good move. You know they're gonna find out,

then what're you gonna do?

Just then Mr. Moore gets home from work, sees Virgil and Jason sitting on the couch listening to the radio and frowns. Jason turns to Virgil and waves his hand.

JASON  
(whispers)  
Nix.

MR. MOORE  
Hello Virgil, Jason.

VIRGIL  
Hi Dad.

JASON  
Hi.

Mr. Moore goes into the kitchen where his wife is waiting for him.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Virgil's Mom and Dad watch their sons from the kitchen, look at each other and shake their heads in confusion.

DISSOLVE:

INT. VIRGIL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Virgil is in bed, asleep. Mr. Moore enters all bright and chipper, opens the shade and wakes Virgil up.

MR. MOORE  
Up and at 'em, boy. The day's a wasting.

VIRGIL  
(groggy)  
What time is it?

MR. MOORE  
Six-thirty. Now look, I spoke with my manager at Ford's and got you a job on the line. It's a good job, it pays well and could lead to a better position, with my influence, of course. Better get a move on, you don't want to be late your first day.

Virgil looks up at him and shakes his head.

VIRGIL  
No thanks.

Mr. Moore puts his hands on his hips and becomes stern.

MR. MOORE

Virgil, you've got to do something with yourself. You can't lie around the house drinking beer all the time, your Mother and I won't have it. Look, I fought in the first war, I understand what you're going through. But enough's enough!

Virgil sits up and gives his Dad an intense look.

VIRGIL

You understand what I'm going through?

MR. MOORE

Yes, I do.

VIRGIL

Dad. You were in Europe for five months behind the lines at a hospital cleaning shitty sheets. I just spent three years all over the Pacific killing Japs. Lots of 'em. A hundred. Two hundred. Probably more. And you wanna know what? I'm good at it. I'm a trained professional. I once threw a grenade down a hole that put away twenty-five or thirty of 'em in a single pop.

(snaps his fingers)

I don't wanna work at Ford, Dad. Unless I can get a job killing Japs, I just wanna go back to

Virgil rolls over and pulls the blanket over his head. His Dad is speechless. He quickly leaves Virgil's bedroom.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Virgil walks through his neighborhood of brick houses and apartment buildings on a bright, chilly, early spring day. He sees little boys playing Army with plastic helmets and guns. He sees a Twin Pines milkman dressed in white on his route. The milkman waves to him and he waves back.

As he walks along a car goes by and backfires. Virgil instinctively dives to the ground and covers his head. He looks up and sees the little boys in their Army helmets looking down at him. Virgil takes a deep breath, sits up and foolishly smiles at the kids.

EXT. THE UPLINGER HOUSE - DAY

Virgil steps up in front of Stan's house and finds Stan sitting on the porch in a winter coat, mittens and a hat. He is staring into space, a comic book in his lap.

VIRGIL

Heya, Stan.

Stan slowly looks up and sees Virgil. It seems to take him a second to focus. Stan painfully forces words out of his mouth.

STAN

H-h-hey, Virg.

Virgil thinks for a second, the match in his teeth flicking against his nose.

VIRGIL

Is your old motorcycle still in the garage?

(Stan shrugs)

What'dya say we get it runnin'?

Stan tries to answer and his face contorts and twists and as hard as he tries no words will come out. It keeps getting worse and worse and finally Stan grabs the sides of his head and presses so hard his fingers turn white. Virgil doesn't know what to do.

VIRGIL

(helpless)

Hey, it's okay, Stan. Doesn't matter. Skip it.

Stan face twists and turns and he finally gets out . . .

STAN

D-d-definitely n-n-needs n-new t-t-tires and  
sp-p-park p-plugs.

VIRGIL

(grins)

So let's go get 'em.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Virgil and Stan ride Stan's old, 1931 Norton along a woodsy, two-lane road. The sky is deep blue and the trees are starting to bud. Stan drives fast and Virgil hangs on for dear life. They're both having a great time.

EXT. EIGHT MILE ARMORY - DAY

The Eight Mile Armory is a long, low brick building with Army tanks and cannons parked on the front lawn. A sign hanging from the gun barrel of a tank reads, "U.S. Military Surplus Auction, April 12-14. Veterans' discount."

INT. ARMORY - DAY

Inside the large armory a military auction is being held. The armory is loaded with now defunct and useless military equipment. An Army CAPTAIN stands on stage behind a podium, auctioneering. Virgil, Stan and Jason are in the crowd. They watch as Willys Army Jeeps are sold for \$150 each. The captain stops for a moment and checks the list in front of him.

CAPTAIN

All right, that's the last of the Jeeps. Now, we've got a hundred Harley-Davidson WLA 45 motorcycles. These are part of the last lot produced for the military and are unassembled, in the crate. Bids will begin at one hundred dollars—that's fifty dollars to you veterans.

Virgil raises his hand.

VIRGIL

(yelling)  
Fifty dollars!

CAPTAIN

(smiles)  
You mean a hundred dollars.

VIRGIL

(confused)  
But I'm a veteran, you said we only pay fifty.

CAPTAIN

(nods)  
But you have to bid a hundred.

VIRGIL

(to Stan & Jason)  
That's the military for you.  
(yelling)  
A hundred dollars!

CAPTAIN

Sold! All right, I've got ninety-nine of these Harleys left . . .

EXT. BEHIND THE ARMORY - DAY

In the parking lot behind the Armory is where all of the equipment is stored. There are rows of Jeeps and stacks of crates. Our guys talk to a broad-chested, uniformed, black Staff Sergeant, DEWEY H. LONGFELLOW, sitting behind a desk made of crates. He looks up from the receipt he's filling out.

DEWEY

I bought one of these Harleys myself. Best deal in the whole damn Army as far as I'm concerned. I jazzed mine up a little, though—bored out the heads, increased the compression, you know.

Virgil, Stan and Jason all look at each other blankly—they haven't got a clue what he's talking about. Dewey sees this and smiles.



DEWEY

If ya have any trouble puttin' it together lemme know. It was a bitch for me an' I been workin' on these things for years. I muster out of the service next week, so I'll be around.

(hands them a piece of paper)

Here. You can call me at this number if ya need to. Name's Dewey Longfellow.

Virgil's impressed. He puts out his hand.

VIRGIL

Hey, thanks a lot. I'm Virgil Moore, this is Stan Uplinger and my brother, Jason.

Dewey shakes all their hands.

DEWEY

(shrugs)

Nice to meet'cha. Us ex-servicemen that likes motorcycles gotta stick together.

(points at a stack of crates)

There they are. Go take one. Careful of your backs, sucker's are heavy.

Virgil, Jason and Stan step up to one of the crates stenciled "U.S." They each grab an edge, lift and get it an inch off the ground before dropping it.

Dewey is watching over his shoulder. He chuckles and turns to the next guy.

EXT. THE MOORE'S BACKYARD - DAY

MONTAGE:

Virgil, Jason and Stan assemble the Harley. They grease up the pieces and bolt them into place; they run the brake and throttle cables; they pump up the tires and bolt them in place, spinning them to make sure they're centered; they screw on the front and back lights and test them to make sure they light up; they drink beer and smoke cigarettes as they work.

Mr. and Mrs. Moore watch from the window, not looking pleased at what they're seeing.

When the bike's all put together there are five engine parts left over.

They load the Harley and the extra pieces into a pick-up truck.

EXT. THE LONGFELLOW HOUSE - DAY

Dewey's house is near downtown Detroit in a black neighborhood. It's a small wooden house in need of painting. A number of little black kids and teenagers begin showing up and watching as Virgil, Stan and Jason unload the motorcycle from the truck.

Dewey Longfellow, now a civilian wearing pleated pants and a colorful shirt, takes over. He quickly pulls the engine apart and shows them where each of the missing parts fit. When he's done they gas up the bike, give it a kick and VROOM!! it starts right up. They all turn to Dewey, impressed. The watching kids applaud. Dewey holds up his hands like it's nothing.

Dewey gets his Harley out of the garage. It's a beauty: high gloss paint, extra chrome, three headlights, tooled leather saddlebags. Virgil, Stan and Jason are *very* impressed.

VIRGIL

Me and Stan are talkin' about maybe takin' a road trip out to California this summer. Visit some service buddies in Dago, maybe go up to Oakland. Interested?

Jason turns away looking hurt.

DEWEY

(frowns)

I don't think so. I jus' got out after three years. I mean, I got seven younger brothers and sisters and my Daddy's dead. I just gotta make some money somehow. Sounds like a great idea though. Thanks for askin'.

VIRGIL

(waves his hand)

You won't have any trouble gettin' a job. You're a first-class mechanic. You're a helluva lot better trained than me. I can't do anything.

DEWEY

(smiles)

Like my Mamma says, from your mouth to the Lord's ears.

INT. CARL'S CHOP HOUSE - NIGHT

Carl's Chop House is a very nice steak house. Every table is filled with well-dressed, upper-class, white people. Their orders are taken by white waiters in tuxedos. The food is cooked by white chefs. The tables are bussed and the dishes are washed by blacks. Dewey is among the dishwashers wearing a food-spattered apron, up to his elbows in soapy water. All does not look right with the world by his expression.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. THE MOORE'S BACKYARD - DAY

It's a beautiful summer day. Virgil and Stan hang out in the backyard drinking beer, their motorcycles parked nearby. Mr. Moore comes out the back door of the house wearing a scowl and marches up to Virgil.

MR. MOORE

Virgil, I have to tell you quite frankly that your Mother

and I have had it! I don't know what's gotten into you?  
 You act so angry, always ready to fight, like someone  
 owes you something. Well, we don't owe you anything.  
 And as long as you live under our roof you're going to  
 live by our rules. Do you understand?

VIRGIL

(tolerant)

Yeah, Dad, I understand.

MR. MOORE

First of all you're gonna go out tomorrow and start  
 looking for a job. The job I got you isn't available  
 anymore.

(Virgil shrugs)

Second, no more lounging around all day drinking  
 beer. Your Mother can't stand the sight of you anymore.

Mrs. Moore watches and listens from the kitchen window.

VIRGIL

(sighs)

Yeah, what else?

MR. MOORE

We don't want you spending so much time with your  
 brother. You're a bad influence on him.

It's now gone too far for Virgil.

VIRGIL

Oh, yeah? Well, ya know what Dad, I really don't  
 give a shit what you think about that. Jason's his own  
 man, he's gonna do whatever he's gonna do and neither  
 you or me has anything to do with it.

At that very moment Jason arrives pushing an old, beat-up, 1929, single cylinder, Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

JASON

(grinning)

Hi. Look what I got.

They turn and look. Virgil looks embarrassed, Mr. Moore is furious and Stan hides a grin.

MR. MOORE

That's the limit!

(points at Jason)

You're gonna get rid of that thing tomorrow, mister,  
 you hear me! And if you think your Mother and I  
 are such fools that we don't know what's going on  
 with your grades, you've got another thing coming!  
 You're grounded for the whole summer! The only

time you're going out is for summer school!

(points at Virgil)

You know what your Mother and I think about profanity in this house! If you ever speak to me like that again you can just pack your bag and hit the road! And another thing, if you intend to keep that motorcycle of yours, you're gonna keep it somewhere other than this house!

(points at Stan)

That goes for you, too! I've absolutely had enough of these stupid motorcycles!

Just then there is the very loud sound of a motorcycle pulling up the driveway. It's Dewey on his snazzy Harley, full saddlebags, a sleeping bag strapped to the back. Everybody turns and looks at him. It's a weird moment and Dewey can feel the tension.

DEWEY

'Scuse me, am I interruptin' somethin'?

VIRGIL

(grins)

Nah. How ya doin' there, Dewey? What brings you to these parts?

DEWEY

Well, I decided to take you up on goin' out west, there's a few buddies I wouldn't mind seein'. I know you fellas prob'ly planned to go later, but I gotta shove off right now.

Virgil looks at his stone-faced Father and nods.

VIRGIL

I know what you mean. Lemme get my gear.

JASON

Me, too.

MR. MOORE

(to Jason; dead serious)

Oh no you're not!

JASON

Why shouldn't I?

MR. MOORE

Travel across the country on a motorcycle? Why shouldn't you? Because I said so, that's why! Besides, you're grounded, didn't you hear me?

JASON

You know what, Dad? I don't care about your rules. I'm

eighteen and I'm going.

MR. MOORE

(flatly)

If you go, don't come back!

JASON

(shrugs)

Fine. I won't.

Mr. Moore turns to Virgil with burning fury in his eyes.

MR. MOORE

Look what you've done to him! You've turned my own son against me!

VIRGIL

(amazed)

Me? Bullshit!

Mr. Moore has just been pushed too far. He moves in on Virgil with his hand upraised to smack him.

MR. MOORE

(furious)

I told you never to speak to me that wa—

Before Mr. Moore's hand makes contact with Virgil's face, a deadly cold expression appears in Virgil's eyes. His hand clamps on his Dad's wrist very hard. Virgil expertly and automatically bends his Dad's arm down driving him to his knees while simultaneously cocking his fist back ready to punch him in the face.

Mrs. Moore sees this from the window, looks absolutely horrified, and comes running out of the house.

Stan steps between Virgil and his Father. He looks Virgil right in the eye.

STAN

L-l-let him g-g-go, Virg! D-d-do it! *Now!*

Virgil blinks several times, recognizes Stan, takes a deep breath and lets go of his Father's wrist. Mr. Moore drops to the ground. Mrs. Moore runs up and puts her arm around her husband's shoulders. She stares at Virgil like she's afraid of him.

MRS. MOORE

Virgil, for God's sake what's wrong with you? This is your Father.

Virgil is breathing hard and has no answer. Mrs. Moore helps her husband to his feet and they walk back into the house. Virgil looks at Jason who is intently watching his parents' departure.

VIRGIL

(sincerely)

I can't ever come back here, Jas. You want that, too?

JASON

(pleading)

You already left me behind once, Virg, please don't do it again. Please.

Virgil grabs Jason's shoulder.

VIRGIL

I won't. Let's go get our stuff. I gotta call a buddy of mine.

(to Dewey)

We'll be right back. Sorry about the scene.

DEWEY

Hey, don't mind me.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. U.S. 24 SOUTH - DAY

When the four men on their motorcycles reach a sign that reads "Toledo City Limit" they are met by a smiling Bud Hoogenboom on his loaded Indian. He pulls up beside them.

VIRGIL

Hey, matey. It didn't take a lot of convincing to get you to go.

BUD

It's good you called when you did, I was about to just leave on my own. Where'd you get the Harley?

VIRGIL

Army auction. Fifty bucks. Meet the guys. This mug is my brother, Jason, this palooka is my buddy, Stan, and this is a new recruit, Dewey. This is Bud.

JASON

(nods)

Hey, Bud.

BUD

(salutes)

Hey, guys.

Bud looks at Dewey suspiciously.

BUD

I didn't know your kind rode motorcycles.

DEWEY

(flatly)

My kind?

BUD

Yeah, Negroes.

Everybody suddenly seems uncomfortable.

DEWEY

(challenging)

Why wouldn't we?

BUD

I don't know, I just thought you people avoided complicated mechanical things.

DEWEY

(defensive)

And leave 'em to people like you?

BUD

Hey, don't get touchy. I'm just makin' conversation.

Dewey looks away. It suddenly seems like it's going to be a long road trip.

Bud grins and looks over the selection of motorcycles.

BUD

You guys got some nice motorcycles here, but since I'm the only one with an Indian, I guess you can all just follow me.

Bud grins, guns it, pulls a wheelie and goes blasting up the road. He waves as he gets farther and farther ahead. The other guys look at each other, then they all go racing after him.

Dewey immediately pulls ahead of the others, quickly gaining on Bud. In seconds Dewey catches up to Bud, salutes, and passes him. Bud looks really angry and waves his fist. Dewey slows down until he's beside Bud.

DEWEY

(casually)

Your engine's outta tune.

BUD

(defensive)

What? How do you know?

DEWEY

I'm a mechanic. That's the problem with havin' four cylinders. You gotta tune 'em all the time. Maybe your kind of people don't know that.

BUD  
(embarrassed)  
I think I knew and forgot.

DEWEY  
Yeah. Well, I got my tools with me, when we stop  
I'll tune it up for you.

BUD  
(honest)  
Really? Thanks.

DEWEY  
That's okay.

EXT. U.S. 25 SOUTH - DAY

The very first motorcycle gang (with no helmets) cruises up the road. Jason has a portable radio strapped between his handlebars. Tommy Dorsey's "Opus One" can be heard. Everybody that they pass looks twice, their expressions saying, "What the hell is that?" And indeed they are a strange looking lot; unshaven, shaggy hair, Army boots, a lot of tattoos—nobody's ever seen anything like them.

They drive along through farm country, past fields of alfalfa, pastures full of fat cows, silos and barns, rolling hills and big, leafy trees. They keep playing a game where one guy will pull ahead, then someone else will catch up and beat them pulling even further ahead. Sometimes, as they're building up speed, they can't help but scream and holler as loud as they can.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. ROADSIDE PARK - NIGHT

They've stopped for the night off the side of the road. With the bikes parked in a line, their sleeping bags (all are green Army surplus) rolled out and a campfire burning, they eat dinner out of cans. They all feel very good. Nobody's telling them what to do; they're their own men. There's no need for talk. As the fire smolders, they leisurely light up cigarettes and pass around a bottle of whiskey. Jason's radio quietly plays "On The Sunny Side Of The Street."

DEWEY  
Oh brother, but it's great t' be out on the road. I was  
at my limit back there in the city.

Everybody nods at that.

BUD  
Yeah, you know, you spend all that time overseas  
thinkin' if I was only home everything'd be swell,  
then ya get here and it all stinks.

VIRGIL  
Nobody gives a good goddamn that we just shit  
away a big chunk of our lives. They want ya to



just pick back up like it didn't happen. Hell, I'm not the same person as when I left.

STAN

I-I-I s-sure c-can't p-pick back up. W-w-what'm I s-s-supposed t-to do now?

VIRGIL

You could get a job as a radio announcer.

Stan punches Virgil in the arm.

STAN

F-f-fuck you.

DEWEY

Durin' the war it always made me real mad that most Negroes weren't allowed to fight. That we had to work in the mess or supply or the motor-pool. But in the motor-pool I was the Sergeant, a respected man by everybody—colored or white. I said jump to a white corporal an' he jumped. White officers would come to me when they needed to know somethin' about the vehicles an' if I told 'em they could or couldn't do somethin', that's what they did. So what do I end up doin'? Washin' dishes for rich white folks. An' if I work long and hard, they make me a busboy.

They all shrug and shake their heads.

BUD

You know, during the war I used to feel pretty damn lucky. I mean, I was on three ships that went down. On my fourth ship guys would just touch me on the way to battle stations thinkin' that I was good luck. I don't feel lucky anymore.

VIRGIL

Yeah. Like when Stan and me were in the Philippines, we went on this march into the jungle with no food 'cause they were gonna re-supply us with drops from the air. The day after we leave all the supply planes get bombed. So we're out there with Japs all around us for fifteen days without food, eatin' anything, plants, bugs, rats, anything—

STAN

(nods)

—L-l-lotta b-big b-bugs.

Everyone grimaces at the thought.

VIRGIL

Brother, you ain't lived 'til you've eaten a big, hairy, foot-long centipede. Anyways, they finally get a supply plane in the air and drop a couple of big, heavy crates of K-rats. One of my guys that's gone nuts from hunger, Chester Rawlins from Raleigh, North Carolina, goes runnin' out like he's gonna catch one of these goddamn things, but instead, he gets konked right on the head and dies. Talk about luck, will ya.

STAN

A-a-at t-t-the end of-f-f t-that m-m-march was w-w-when I-I-I t-t-took it in t-t-the head. I-I-I w-w-was r-real lucky f-for the whole w-w-war, 't-til I w-w-wasn't anymore.

VIRGIL

I'll tell ya, everybody can complain about what a terrible war it was and how everything was so awful during it, but at least I knew who I was and who the enemy was. Now, I don't know. I mean, for a while there it seemed like the enemy was my Dad, and I came damn close to bashing his face in, but . . . I love him. He's my Dad. He's not the enemy.

JASON

I guess he's not my enemy, either. But there were days I sure wanted to bash his face in, too.

BUD

Everybody on the ship knew what their job was, what was expected of them, where their battle stations were and why they were there. Everybody had a purpose. Now, the only purpose, I guess, is makin' money.

VIRGIL

Yeah, and gettin' married and havin' kids and all that. I just don't want to do it now. Maybe when I get older, like when I'm thirty. Now I just want to live a little.

Everyone nods and grunts in agreement. They flick their butts into the fire, sigh, crawl into their sleeping bags and go to sleep. Virgil, however, just sits up staring at the fire and smoking a cigarette.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. ROADSIDE PARK/LATER - NIGHT

Virgil's still up, smoking and reading "The Lost Lady" by Willa Cather. Bud starts to moan and move around—he's having a nightmare.

BUD  
*No! Get out! Swim for it! Ya gotta get out!  
 We're goin' down!*

Virgil reaches over and shakes Bud's shoulder, waking him.

BUD  
 (groggy)  
 Huh?

VIRGIL  
 Go back to sleep.

Bud sits up and lights a smoke.

BUD  
 Thanks. In a while.

Soon Stan starts to moan from a nightmare. He talks in his sleep and doesn't stutter.

STAN  
*Jesus Christ, they're everywhere! They're  
 behind us, too! We gotta get outta here!*

Bud reaches over and shakes Stan's shoulder waking him up, too. Bud hands him the lit cigarette and Stan takes it.

STAN  
 T-t-t-thanks.

The three men sit up smoking, not very interested in going back to sleep. Suddenly, Dewey springs up, looking all around blankly.

DEWEY  
 (panicked)  
*Where the fuck am I?*

Stan hands Dewey the cigarette. As Dewey takes the smoke it all comes back to him.

DEWEY  
 Oh, yeah.

Virgil glances over at Jason, dead asleep and snoring. Virgil looks back at the other guys and they all grin.

BUD  
 Man, I used to sleep like that, too.

VIRGIL  
 We all did.

Suddenly, bright lights hit them in the face. They all hold up their hands to shield their eyes and see what's going on. Two Ohio State TROOPERS come walking up wearing Smokey the Bear hats.

TROOPER #1  
What're you fellas doin' out here?

VIRGIL  
We're camping.

TROOPER #2  
I don't see no tents.

VIRGIL  
What have tents got to do with it?

TROOPER #2  
You can't camp without tents.

VIRGIL  
Who says?

TROOPER #1  
We say.

BUD  
You guys got any other camping tips for us? Like what kinda plants we shouldn't eat?

TROOPER #1  
Don't get smart with us, friend.

BUD  
I can't get any smarter'n I already am and I ain't your friend.

Stan puts his hand on Bud's shoulder.

STAN  
C-c-can it, B-B-Bud.

TROOPER #1  
That fella has sense. You listen to him.

TROOPER #2  
Just pack it up and move it out. This is a day park, no camping. Try readin' the signs next time.

The Trooper aims the beam of his flashlight at a sign nailed to a tree, "No camping." The guys wearily get to their feet and begin rolling up their sleeping bags. The Troopers stroll back toward their car.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SHAMROCK, TEXAS - DAWN

The sun is just starting to rise over the small town of Shamrock in the panhandle of Texas on Route 83, about a mile south of Route 66. It's a dust-blown little town with a few shops, The Panhandle Saloon, an outrageously art deco Fina gas station with the Drop Inn Cafe attached to it. The entire town exists on about a half a mile of road with most of the houses right behind the businesses. About a half a mile south of town are a few oil wells and a small refinery.

EXT. McMILLAN HOUSE - DAWN

The black Chevy with "Shamrock, Texas, Sheriff" written on the door is parked in front of a little, windblown wooden houses. Sheriff McMillan steps out the front door of the house. He takes a deep, hearty breath of morning air, starts to violently cough and hocks up a big goober. He then unwraps a fat cigar, tosses the wrapper on the ground, bites off the end and spits it, then plugs the stogie in his mouth. He gets in the car and drives away.

A moment later LuAnne comes out the front door. She nervously looks in both directions, then hurries up the street.

EXT. DROP INN CAFE - MORNING

LuAnne arrives at the Drop Inn Cafe, goes around back and knocks on the screen door. It is opened by a worn-out, middle-aged woman with unruly black hair named RUTH. She looks surprised to see LuAnne.

RUTH

Why, LuAnne, I didn't think you'd atchually come.

LUANNE

(determined)

I said I would an here I am.

RUTH

You shore this is all right with your Daddy?

LUANNE

What's my daddy got t' do with it? 'Sides, there ain't no other jobs to git here in Shamrock and I jus' gotta make some money of my own.

RUTH

Whata'ya need money for, LuAnne?

LuAnne's eyes blaze for a second.

LUANNE

To git the hell outa this town, that's why.

RUTH

(nods)

I kin un'erstand that. I been wantin' t' get outa this town for twenty years an' I never made it.

Ruth takes LuAnne's shoulder and leads her inside.

INT. DROP INN CAFE/KITCHEN - DAY

Ruth hands LuAnne a white waitress uniform.

RUTH

You'll have t' wear as it is today. Y'all kin bring it home with ya tonight and take it in and let it out where ya need t'. Just 'member, the tighter it fits the better the tips you'll get. An I thank you'll get some good ones.

Ruth and LuAnne exchange a smile.

DISSOLVE:

INT. DROP INN CAFE - DAY

The Drop Inn Cafe is open and doing brisk breakfast business. Ruth and LuAnne are taking the orders and bringing the plates of eggs to a crowd of all men wearing cowboy hats and boots. Most of them are at least fifty, just a few are in their twenties or thirties. All of them, however, are extremely amused to see LuAnne working there.

A lean, fifty year old, grey mustached, intense-looking man wearing expensive cowboy gear, MR. BUFORD, grabs hold of LuAnne and pulls her down on his lap.

MR. BUFORD

Damn, LuAnne, I 'member when you was born. Seems like it was 'bout three years ago. Now you'se all growed up, an' lookin' real good, too.

LuAnne tolerantly peels his hands away and stands up.

LUANNE

Now, Mr. Buford, don't be grabbin' me like that. I ain't even eighteen yet.

MR. BUFORD

(grins)

Shit! I married my first wife when she was fifteen. I was seventeen.

LUANNE

Yeah, but that was back in the last century when things was different.

This gets a big laugh from everyone in the vicinity. At first Mr. Buford looks angry, but he decides to go with it. As LuAnne starts to walk away he grabs her hand.

MR. BUFORD

Now jus' hold on a minute there, girl. Don' go rushin'

off, I ain't done.

LUANNE  
(tolerantly)  
What?

MR. BUFORD  
Why didn't ch'all come t' me if you was lookin' for a job?  
I'da made ya my secretary down t' the refinery. Make a  
helluva lot more money'n here.

LUANNE  
I ain't got enough iron in my blood t'put up with ya chasin'  
me around the desk all day. I'd get plumb wore out.

This gets another laugh. Mr. Buford pulls LuAnne back down on his lap.

MR. BUFORD  
Honey, I'd catch ya in no time an' you'd get wore out  
for other reasons than me chasin' ya.

LuAnne tries to stand, but he's not letting go.

LUANNE  
Leggo.  
(he doesn't)  
Come on, Mr. Buford, leggo.

MR. BUFORD  
(grinning)  
Uh-uh.

LUANNE  
I'll tell my Daddy an' he'll make ya.

MR. BUFORD  
(laughs)  
Your Daddy? Make me? Your Daddy can't make me  
do nothin', or anyone else for that matter, prob'ly not  
even you.  
(he pushes LuAnne away)  
Now go get my food afore it gets cold.

Mr. Buford smacks LuAnne on the ass. LuAnne straightens her dress and heads back toward the kitchen. She and Ruth exchange a look saying, "Men, Jesus!"

That's when Sheriff McMillan comes walking in. He sees LuAnne and blows a gasket.

SHERIFF  
(furious)  
What the hell's wrong with you, girl!? I didn't say  
you could get no job!

LuAnne turns around balancing four plates. Everyone in the cafe goes silent, tensely watching the scene.

LUANNE

Y'all don't say I kin do nothin'. An' ya won't gimme no damn money, ya cheapskate, so what'm I s'posed t' do?

The Sheriff turns red and looks around, totally embarrassed.

SHERIFF

Your s'posed t' do what I tell ya t' do, that's what! Now git your butt home! Ya wanna job? Clean the goddamn house! It's a pig-sty!

LuAnne is on the verge of tears.

LUANNE

(begging)

But Daddy, please . . .

The Sheriff grabs LuAnne's arm causing her to drop all the plates and drags her out the door.

SHERIFF

Goddamn you, girl! I'm gettin' sick and tired of your gum! Now git home!

EXT. DROP INN CAFE - DAY

The Sheriff drags LuAnne outside, then goes back in. LuAnne stands there in her ill-fitting white uniform, tears streaming down her cheeks. She feels utterly helpless and finally turns and runs away.

INT. DROP INN CAFE - DAY

The Sheriff addresses the attentive crowd.

SHERIFF

I apologize for the disturbance ever'one. Go on with your bidness.

(to Ruth)

I'll pay for them dishes, Ruth.

RUTH

Damn right ya will.

Ruth bends down to clean up the mess. The Sheriff sits down at the counter and re-lights his cigar. Mr. Buford calls out.

MR. BUFORD

That gal a yer's is lookin' good, Alex. Spunky's all git out.



The Sheriff doesn't turn around.

SHERIFF

She's got a bad attitude, just like her ma. I'll tell ya this much, mouthy women're a curse.

All of the men in the restaurant grunt and nod in agreement. Ruth, on her knees with her hands full of dirty food and broken dishes, rolls her eyes in wonderment.

MR. BUFORD

Ya know, Alex, that little girl a yours embarrassed me in front of ever'one.

The Sheriff turns around, his cigar halfway to his mouth.

SHERIFF

What she say?

MR. BUFORD

(enjoying himself)

She said that you were gonna make me do somethin'.

The tension has returned.

SHERIFF

What?

MR. BUFORD

I don't thank it matters what. Are you gonna make me do somethin', Sheriff? Anything?

SHERIFF

(carefully)

Let's just say I'm not of a mind t' try t' make you do anything.

MR. BUFORD

(pushing)

What if you were of a mind? What then?

SHERIFF

(quietly)

I wouldn't be.

MR. BUFORD

(nods)

That's right. Now why don't you bring me one of them cigars a yours, would ya please? Sheriff.

The Sheriff hesitates, then finally stands, walks over and hands Mr. Buford one of his cigars. Buford takes it and peels off the wrapper. The Sheriff sits back down at the counter.

MR. BUFORD

You're a good man, Alex. A fine law officer. Got a light?

A look of distress affixes itself on the Sheriff's face. He sighs deeply, takes out some matches, goes over and lights Mr. Buford's cigar. Ruth watches from the kitchen and disgustedly looks away. Everyone in the cafe looks ashamed. Mr. Buford looks up at the Sheriff through the cloud of smoke and winks.

MR. BUFORD

Thanks.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SPRINGFIELD, OHIO - DAY

The guys on their motorcycles drive south of U.S. 68, Jason's radio is playing "East Of The Sun (West Of The Moon)" with Frank Sinatra singing. Just as they're nearing the city of Springfield they encounter a crown-topped, black and white road sign that states, "Route 66, Ohio." They all look at each other and grin.

BUD

California here we come.

They turn right, heading west.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER - DAY

The motorcycles cruise over a huge, old suspension bridge spanning the mighty Mississippi River. Jason tunes his radio and picks up black men playing the blues on both stations. Jason shrugs and leaves it.

JASON

Hey, dig these crazy tunes.

When they get to the western end of the bridge they pass two MOTORCYCLE COPS with "St. Louis Police" on their gas tanks, parked on both sides of the road. The Cops both do double-takes, look at each other, shake their heads and start their bikes.

Our guys glance over their shoulders and see the two motorcycles approaching fast. They all look at each other, now what? The Cops pull up on either side of them.

MOTORCYCLE COP #1

Where you fellas goin'?

VIRGIL

California.

MOTORCYCLE COP #1

(amazed)

California? On motorcycles?

(to the other Cop)

You hear that, Bill?

MOTORCYCLE COP #2

(nods)

Yeah, sounds great. Wanna go?

MOTORCYCLE COP #1

Shit! We should.

MOTORCYCLE COP #2

You fellas vets?

(they all nod except Jason)

Me, too. Patton's Fifth.

VIRGIL

(impressed)

Rugged. 2nd Marine Division.

Both Cops look impressed.

STAN

(pokes his chest)

M-m-me, t-t-too.

BUD

Navy, 7th Fleet.

DEWEY

Army. Staff Sergeant 87th Battalion.

Cop #2 looks at Dewey in disbelief.

MOTORCYCLE COP #2

You were a Staff Sergeant?

DEWEY

Motor-pool.

The Cop nods and Dewey looks bugged.

Cop #1 turns to Jason.

MOTORCYCLE COP #1

What about you?

Jason points at Virgil's back.

JASON

I'm his brother.

VIRGIL

So, what's a good, cheap place to eat in St. Louis?

MOTORCYCLE COP #1

Brown's is good.

MOTORCYCLE COP #2

It sure is, but doesn't really make a difference since you guys ain't stoppin'.

VIRGIL

(tightens)

We're not? How come?

MOTORCYCLE COP #1

'Cause we're ridin' you out to the city limits.

BUD

(tense)

And why's that?

Both Cops shrug.

MOTORCYCLE COP #1

Why not?

MOTORCYCLE COP #2

Right. I mean, we gotta do something, don't we? But don't sweat it, we don't mean anything by it. It's our job.

Our guys all nod. They all ride up the road.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Dewey and Bud work on Stan's motorcycle on the side of the road. They have the engine in pieces. Dewey is busily cutting out a piece of a coffee can to use as an engine part. Bud shakes his head in disbelief.

BUD

You really think that's gonna work?

DEWEY

(shrugs)

For a while. It worked on tank engines.

BUD

You sure?

DEWEY

Hey! Did the tanks get t' Berlin? Did we win the war?  
All right then.

The other guys are hanging out smoking cigarettes.

A fellow in dirty overalls holding a lunch pail comes limping up the road. His name is HORACE BERGER. His right leg is stiff, the right side of his face is scarred and burned and his head is cocked to the left. As he gets near and sees all the motorcycles a look of amusement and interest crosses his face.

HORACE  
What're you fellers up to?

VIRGIL  
(defensive)  
What's it to you?

HORACE  
It ain't nothin' t' me. I jus' like motorcycles s'all.

VIRGIL  
(nods)  
We're heading out to California to visit some of our  
service buddies.

HORACE  
I got service buddies in California.

JASON  
You in the service yourself?

HORACE  
(nods)  
Shoot . . . I was a captain in the damn Air Force, pilot  
of a B-17. I flew twenty-seven missions 'til I got shot  
down over Germany.

JASON  
(interested)  
What happened?

Virgil taps Jason on the arm and whispers.

VIRGIL  
Nix.

HORACE  
(waves his hand)  
S'okay. Spent the rest of the war in a hospital in France.  
They put me back together pretty good, too. Didn't have  
all that much t' work with, that's a fact. The name's Horace Berger.

Dewey looks up from the motorcycle engine.

DEWEY

What'cha doin' now, Horace?

HORACE

I'm a janitor over t' the high school. It ain't very hard an' the pay's all right.

(nobody says anything;

Horace coughs)

Ya know, I gotta motorcycle. Triumph. Ain't touched it in years. Not since before the war, anyway.

VIRGIL

If you wanna come along, you're more than welcome.

HORACE

(chuckles)

Shoot . . . Ride t' California on a motorcycle? I dunno about that . . . I don't even walk too good no more . . .

But thanks.

Horace hobbles away, throwing a number of glances over his shoulder. Dewey finishes working on the engine. Stan kicks the starter and it fires right up. Dewey turns to Bud and nods, see? They all hop aboard their machines, kick them to life and head up the road.

EXT. OLD FARM - DAY

As they pass a dilapidated farm house about a mile up the road, they see Horace out in front of a barn sitting on a dusty Triumph kicking it and kicking it. He's now wearing a brown, leather bomber jacket.

HORACE

(calling out)

Hey! Hold up!

The guys all slow down and watch.

Horace is in a sweat as he keeps kicking the starter and turning the throttle.

HORACE

(aggravated)

Shoot!

As he comes down on the starter with all his weight, one of the bolts holding the front wheel on drops of into the grass. Horace doesn't see this. The engine hesitantly catches, sputters, then revs. Horace grins as he puts it in gear, guns it, sprays dirt and grass out behind him and rides up to the others.

VIRGIL

What changed your mind?

HORACE

You ever cleaned a urinal?

VIRGIL

Yeah, during basic. I didn't like it much.

HORACE

(nods)

Me, neither. 'Sides, ridin' sure as hell beats walkin'.

VIRGIL

Well, Horace, you're the ranking officer in the bunch.  
In fact, you're the only officer in the bunch.

HORACE

I hope ya don't hold my bein' an officer against me,  
fellas. These days I see myself more as a janitor  
than a Captain.

BUD

You're still a Captain.

HORACE

If you say so, but I thought the war was over.

DEWEY

If you say so.

HORACE

(pauses)

I don't know that I do.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. ROUTE 66/MISSOURI - DAY

Lightning flashes in the sky over Route 66. Rain is pouring down in buckets and no one is on the road. At the side of the road, under a stand of evergreen trees, the bikes are all parked in a line. The guys are sitting under picnic tables waiting out the storm. Jason looks nervous.

JASON

Ya know, being under trees is about the worst  
place to be in a lightning storm.

Everybody shrugs. Big deal. Bud points at Stan.

BUD

It ain't the trees I'm worried about, it's Stan's head.  
I hear those steel plates're like lightning rods.

DEWEY

(grins)

Yeah, I heard that, too. I think I'll jus' slide away  
here.

Dewey and Bud both slide over an inch.

VIRGIL

Yeah, maybe if you get hit in the head with lightning  
you'll get super-powers like in the comic books.

STAN

L-l-like S-S-Superman. T-t-then I'll j-just f-fly t'  
C-California and l-l-leave you a-a-assholes here.

A big bolt of lightning flashes and comes down very near, followed by an Earth-shaking crash of thunder.  
Everybody looks at Stan, then they all slide away from him and start to laugh.

STAN

(smiling)

F-f-fuck all of y-y-you.

Dewey crawls over to his motorcycle, reaches into one of his saddlebags and pulls out a red can of Prince Albert  
tobacco. He crawls back to the others. Dewey gets back to his spot under the table and opens the tobacco can.

DEWEY

Any a you white boys ever smoke any hooch?

They all look at him blankly.

DEWEY

Ya know, Jive? Marijuana?

Bud grins and nods his head.

BUD

Oh, sure. In Bangkok once. I woke up back on  
the ship and it was the next day.

Dewey pulls out cigar-sized bomber, puts it in his mouth and lights up.

DEWEY

Let's see if you wake up back on the ship again.

Dewey takes a big hit and passes it to Horace. He takes it and holds like an alien object.

HORACE

Now, what do I do with this thing?

DEWEY

Smoke it. Hold it in.

Horace takes a puff like a cigarette. He smacks his lips.

HORACE

Shoot . . . That's nice an' sweet. If cigarettes tasted



like this I think I'd take 'em up.

He hands it to Bud. Bud takes a hit, starts to cough and passes it to Jason.

JASON

I heard about this at school. Some of my friends  
smoked some down at a jazz show. Duke Ellington.  
I was supposed to go, but my Dad wouldn't let me.

Jason takes a hit, immediately starts to cough and hands it to Virgil. Virgil eyes it suspiciously.

VIRGIL

And what's it supposed to do?

Dewey is already lighting another one.

DEWEY

It's gonna make you not give a damn for a little  
while.

VIRGIL

I already don't give a damn.

DEWEY

Then it'll make ya not give a damn that you don't  
give a damn.

VIRGIL

(grins)  
Gung ho!

Virgil takes a hit. The joints go around and around. Everybody's eyes get red and drop to half-mast. They're all quiet, each one totally absorbed in something: the dripping water from between the table slats, the veins of a leaf, a caterpillar, a knife into the table leg. Dewey watches all of them with great amusement and reaches into his coat pocket.

DEWEY

I don' suppose any of you guys wanna share these  
with me.

Everyone looks up from what they're doing.

VIRGIL

Share what?

Dewey's hand slowly comes out of his pocket with . . . Two Baby Ruth bars. Everybody screams and attacks him.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. MOTEL - DUSK

The motorcycles are parked in a line in front of a little, roadside motel, The Missourian Motel. Jason comes out the door of one of the rooms, hops on his bike and rides away.

DISSOLVE:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

All the guys are crammed into one room. They are sitting on the floor in their skivvies playing poker and drinking beer.

Jason comes walking in with a white bandage on his forearm. Everyone, particularly Virgil, looks up and notices the bandage.

VIRGIL

(concerned)

Hey! What happened?

Jason grins and peels back the bandage. He shows them a tattoo of a three-headed dragon.

JASON

It's a Chinese dragon. It means good luck.

Everybody's impressed—it's a nice tattoo—except Virgil, that is, who looks baffled.

VIRGIL

Why'd you go and do that?

JASON

(shrugs)

Why not? All you guys got tattoos.

VIRGIL

(shakes his head)

But we were in the service.

JASON

Who cares? There's no rules, Virg. Jesus, gimme a beer.

Jason sits down and joins the game. Horace gets dreamy.

HORACE

I got a tattoo. A beautiful, redheaded gal give it t' me in England. She really thought I was somethin'. Sybil Shears was her name. Reddest hair you ever saw. Freckles, too. But she weren't one of them ugly redheads that looks like they got a rash all over 'em. She was the prettiest gal I ever seen. Sybil . . .

Horace drifts off into a nostalgic dream. Everyone else is just looking at him.

BUD

So, let's see the tattoo.

Horace returns to reality.

HORACE

(embarrassed)

Huh? Oh, no.

They all look at each other.

DEWEY

Why not?

HORACE

(serious)

I just can't, that's all.

JASON

Was Sybil a bad tattoo artist? Is it really crappy looking?

HORACE

Aw, no. It's beautiful. Sybil was top-notch. Prob'ly still is.

VIRGIL

(impatient)

So let's see it.

Horace looks embarrassed, then finally stands and lowers his his boxer shorts. He reveals a colorful, complicated tattoo of a naked women with bright red hair and a banner that says, "Sybil" nearly covering one whole cheek of his ass. Everybody bursts out laughing. Horace pulls up his pants and sits down, blushing red.

JASON

Wow! It looks like it took a month to do.

HORACE

(grins)

Two months. Ever'day.

BUD

(laughing)

That gal made sure you'd never forget her.

HORACE

Damn straight, and the tattoo had nothin' to do with it.

(grabs a beer)  
 Shoot ... I'm poppin' a mean woody jus' thinkin'  
 about it.

Horace puts the cold beer bottle between his legs.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. MOTEL - MORNING

All of the guys mount their bikes preparing to leave. Bud takes a knife from his Army boot and cuts off the sleeves of his jacket. Now it's a vest. The multitude of tattoos on his arms are clearly visible. Jason does the same thing, peels off the bandage and tosses it. With their beards and hair growing out, Horace's leather bomber jacket, the vests and the visible tattoos, they're really beginning to look like a motorcycle gang.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SALT CREEK ROAD - DAY

A rusty, bent street sign riddled with bullet holes reads "Salt Creek Road." It stands out sharply against the deep blue sky; the town of Shamrock is in the distance across Route 66. Salt Creek Road is a thin little dirt road in the desert. At the point where it intersects a wider dirt road there is a wooden road-block.

LuAnne comes riding up on her bicycle and stops. She has a crumpled brown paper bag in her basket. She looks all the way around, then quickly pedals past the road-block, up Salt Creek Road.

LuAnne rides up to a winding groove in the sand that was once a stream. She gets off her bike, reaches into the bag and removes a green, U.S. Army surplus entrenching tool. She wanders slowly along the edge of the creek.

LuAnne arrives at an unusually large mound of dirt. She unscrews the head of the tool, pulls the shovel halfway out and tightens it into a hoe. LuAnne swings the blade of the tool into the dirt and starts digging. Three scoops down the blade clangs against something hard. LuAnne pushes the dirt away to reveal the rusted handlebar of a motorcycle. It pokes out from the dirt like a twisted root.

LuAnne scans the vicinity, shading her eyes from the sun. Right nearby is another mound, this one covered with colorful wildflowers.

EXT. LONE STAR REFINERY - DAY

The Lone Star Petroleum refinery is about a quarter of a mile east of Shamrock, just off Route 66. It's a small business with just a few oil derricks, some dusty machinery and a wooden shack housing the office. A corrugated tin fence surrounds the whole thing. Mr. Buford comes out the door of the office and gets into a pick-up truck with "Lone Star Petroleum" on the door. He drives away from the refinery up a bumpy dirt road toward Route 66.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - DAY

Mr. Buford makes a left on Route 66, grinds the gears and heads west. Way in the distance, shimmering in the heat haze, Mr. Buford sees someone on a bicycle crossing Route 66 riding into town.

From Mr. Buford's expression we can see that he finds this an odd, unsettling sight.

When he arrives at the turn-off into town, he looks to his left, toward Shamrock, and can see the person on the bicycle in the distance riding up Main Street.

Mr. Buford looks to his right. The sign on the dirt road north of Route 66, where the bicycle just came from, says, "Salt Creek Road."

Mr. Buford's eyes go wide with panic. He slams the truck in gear, kicks up a cloud of dust and barrels into town.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Mr. Buford drives along Main Street, apprehensively looking in both directions. No bicycle, no people, no nothing. The old farts in front of the drugstore all wave, but Mr. Buford pays no attention. The old farts all appear a bit hurt at being ignored.

EXT. McMILLAN HOUSE - DAY

As Mr. Buford slowly cruises past the McMillan house, LuAnne comes out the front door, a paperback book in one hand ("The Postman Always Rings Twice" by James M. Cain), a brown paper bag in the other. Mr. Buford stops the truck, gets out and steps up to the porch.

MR. BUFORD

What'cha got there, LuAnne?

LuAnne sits down on the porch swing.

LUANNE

A book.

Mr. Buford comes up the steps.

MR. BUFORD

I mean, in the bag?

LUANNE

What bidness is it of yours?

MR. BUFORD

It's my bidness 'cause I say it is!

He grabs the bag, opens it and takes out a bottle of Coca-Cola. Mr. Buford looks confused.

MR. BUFORD

What were ya jus' doin' over t' Salt Crick?

LUANNE

(innocently)

I wasn't at Salt Crick.

MR. BUFORD

(flatly)

But I saw ya.

LUANNE  
Ya saw *me*? Ya shore?

MR. BUFORD  
(confused)  
Well, I saw someone on a bicycle.

LUANNE  
T'weren't me.

Mr. Buford looks befuddled. He starts looking up and down Main Street.

MR. BUFORD  
I ain't s'shore I believe ya, LuAnne.

INT. McMILLAN HOUSE - DAY

We can see Mr. Buford through the screen door standing on the porch. Through the front window we can see LuAnne on the porch swing.

In the foreground, sitting on the kitchen table, is a rusty, cracked motorcycle headlight.

LUANNE  
Ya know what, Mr. Buford, I don't give a good goddamn what'cha believe.

MR. BUFORD  
(offended)  
How dare ya talk t' me like that! I'm twice your age—

LUANNE  
—At least. More like three times.

Mr Buford looks inside through the screen door. LuAnne stiffens.

MR. BUFORD  
Is your Daddy home?

LUANNE  
Nope.

EXT. McMILLAN HOUSE - DAY

Mr. Buford turns to LuAnne.

MR. BUFORD  
Well, I'm gonna speak t' him about you. You got no respect for your elders.

LuAnne places the edge of the Coke cap on the porch rail. She smacks it and the cap pops off the bottle.

LUANNE

Damn tootin'. I got a theory 'bout respect, Mr. Buford, ever'body gets jus' as much as they deserve, an' not a speck more.

Mr. Buford furiously stomps back to his truck.

MR. BUFORD

Why don' ya jus' shut your big bazoo, li'l girl!  
(muttering)  
Kids these days!

He gets in his truck and drives away.

LuAnne glances inside through the window, sighs and takes a big slug of Coke.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. ROUTE 66/OKLAHOMA - DAY

The gang of motorcycles drive across the endless flat plains through a raging dust storm. All the guys have bandannas and T-shirts tied across their faces. They pass a Route 66 sign that says, "Oklahoma."

EXT. THE O.K. BAR - DAY

The motorcycles pull up in front of small, roadside bar. Most of the others vehicles are dusty pick-ups and beat-up old cars. Dewey doesn't get off his bike.

DEWEY

I aint goin' in there. Bring me out a beer, wouldja?

BUD

Why not?

DEWEY

Are you kiddin'? That's a redneck, asshole bar if I ever seen one. I got better sense'n that.

Bud waves his hand.

BUD

Aw, go on. You can't act like that about everywhere we go.

DEWEY

Don't tell me how t' act, little Dutch boy. You don't even know what I'm talkin' about. There's no place in this whole damn state "my kinda people" would feel welcome.

BUD

You aint gonna let me live that down, huh?

DEWEY

Hell no. And the sooner we get through here and Texas the happier I'll be.

BUD

You think Arizona or New Mexico'll be any better?

DEWEY

(nods)

Sure. At least they got Indians there, so they used t' havin' colored folks around.

The guys all shrug and head inside.

INT. O.K. BAR - DAY

From the minute the guys enter the dark little bar they are the center of attention for all of the older, pot-bellied men wearing cowboy hats. Our guys step up to the bar. Everyone slides away from them on both sides. The fat BARTENDER shakes his head.

BARTENDER

(flatly)

Uh-uh. No service.

Our guys are reaching the ends of their ropes. The guys all look at each other and start to laugh. Virgil addresses everyone in the place.

VIRGIL

(angry)

Now hold on just a second. Last time I checked, Oklahoma was still in America, right?

BARTENDER

Yeah, so?

VIRGIL

We just fought a war for freedom, didn't we? So where's the fuckin' freedom? You think it doesn't apply here?

That's when two Elk City LOCAL COPS stand up from a dark back table. Virgil turns to them.

VIRGIL

Just the guys I wanted to see. Enforce the fuckin' law! Make this asshole serve us?

Both cops shake their heads and put their hands on their guns.

LOCAL COP #1



That asshole's my cousin.

BUD

(aside)

Figures.

LOCAL COP #2

You fellers lookin' for trouble? Is that it?

HORACE

We're lookin' for a drink is what we're lookin' for.  
We're all pretty dry.

LOCAL COP #1

You weirdies were just on your way out.

Virgil looks at his buddies and they all shake their heads in astonishment.

VIRGIL

Weirdies?

It's a tense moment. Everyone is looking at everyone else. Who's going to start it?

VIRGIL

Has everyone gone outta their fuckin' minds since  
the war?

LOCAL COP #2

What's that got t' do with shit? We're just simple, law-  
abiding folks. We're not lookin' for any trouble, but it  
sure looks like you fellas are.

VIRGIL

(points)

Don't serve me in a public place and you're definitely  
looking for trouble, pal!

The Cops unsnap their holsters.

LOCAL COP #1

If it's trouble you're lookin' for, you're gonna get it!

VIRGIL

Swell.

Stan, as usual, steps in.

STAN

(shrugs)

F-f-fuck t-this place, Virg. Let's j-j-just g-g-go.

Stan walks right out the door. Virgil throws up his hands and he and the others follow Stan out, the cops right behind

them.

EXT. O.K. BAR - DAY

They get outside and find three, teenaged, local yokels sitting on the motorcycles messing around and three more surrounding Dewey brandishing broken bottles and baseball bats. Dewey is holding them off with a crescent wrench.

The locals spot our guys and the Cops and take off at top speed. Bud runs after them. Jason and Horace go up to Dewey who lowers the wrench.

JASON

You okay?

DEWEY

Yeah, fine.

Virgil turns to the cops.

VIRGIL

Simple, law-abiding folks, huh? Why don't you stop bothering us and try bringing some law and order to your own people?

LOCAL COP #2

Why don't ya mind your own bidness.

(to Dewey)

Ya sure you're okay there, boy?

VIRGIL

(interjecting)

Hey! Does he look like a boy to you, or a man?

LOCAL COP #2

I ain't talkin' t' you, boy, I'm talkin' t' him. Y'okay?

DEWEY

(flatly)

Yeah. Great.

LOCAL COP #2

Ya wanna press charges?

DEWEY

(laughs)

Fuck no.

LOCAL COP #1

(to Virgil)

Why don't ch'all do ever'body a favor, get on your motorcycles and go.

VIRGIL

(pushing)

That would be our fuckin' pleasure. No reason to stay in a shithole like this a minute longer than we have to.

LOCAL COP #2

Don't push me, boy.

VIRGIL

Or what? I'm standin' here.

Virgil and the Cop face of for a second, then both Cops get in their car and speed off in the direction the teenagers just left.

Bud comes walking back up, winded and out of breath.

BUD

Little shit-heels!

Dewey gets on his bike.

DEWEY

Like I said, the sooner we get through here and Texas the happier I'll be.

BUD

Damn right.

They all climb on their bikes.

EXT. ROUTE 66/OKLAHOMA - DAY

Our guys drive slowly up the road wearing very serious expressions. Dewey pulls ahead, then Bud, then Virgil. Soon they're riding fast, whooping and hollering. Finally, it's just Jason and Horace racing each other. Jason gets way ahead, raises his hand and gives Horace the finger.

HORACE

(grinning)

Oh yeah?

Horace crouches low and zooms way ahead. He's doing over seventy when he passes Jason. He's probably doing eighty when he hits a pothole, pops a wheelie and loses his front tire. Horace and his bike go ass over tea kettle for about a quarter of a mile up the road. When the Triumph and Horace finally stop rolling there's no hope for either of them.

The cycles all pull up and stop. The guys get off their bikes and stand there staring down at the human and mechanical wreckage.

BUD

Shit on a stick!

DEWEY

That boy's dead, no question 'bout it.

VIRGIL

Deader'n shit.

Stan shakes his head and blinks. Jason looks like he might vomit.

DEWEY

(accusing)

Those fuckin' redneck kids, they're the ones was messin' with the bikes!

BUD

Those little fuckers!

VIRGIL

(angry)

Goddamnit! Ever since we left it's been a stinking shit storm!

BUD

Yeah, while we were gone everybody in the country went nuts.

JASON

(totally shocked)

This is horrible! What're we gonna do?

VIRGIL

I guess we'll ride into town and tell the friendly local coppers.

JASON

(panicking)

But what are we gonna do about Horace?

Virgil puts his hand on Jason's shoulder.

VIRGIL

Jason, there's nothin' we can do. He's dead.

JASON

But . . . How can you be sure? I mean, maybe they can operate or something. Nobody's even checked his pulse.

Virgil looks at the others.

VIRGIL

We've all seen enough dead guys to know one when we see one, Jas. He's dead.

JASON

But . . . This is so awful! It's the worst thing that ever happened!

The others all shrug, they don't know about that.

VIRGIL

Look, your time comes, that's that.

Stan, Bud and Dewey all nod their agreement.

JASON

But what if it was a mistake? What if it wasn't really his time?

Dewey, Virgil and Bud all answer at the same time.

DEWEY, VIRGIL & BUD

(simultaneously)

It was his time all right.

STAN

D-d-definitely.

VIRGIL

Face it, life's short, Jas, and for some it's even shorter.

Jason's all shaken up and turns away. Virgil keeps his hand on Jason's shoulder but faces the others. They all exchange a look that says, this has gone too far.

VIRGIL

The next motherfucker that gets in my face better think twice!

Everyone but Jason nods.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Horace's front tire continues to roll up the road. It finally loses momentum, wobbles, then falls over. All is still except the wind and dust.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SHAMROCK/MAIN STREET - DAY

Sheriff McMillan cruises through Shamrock in his police car. As he passes the drugstore he waves to the group of old guys hanging out on the porch smoking and chewing tobacco. They all wave back. Mr. Buford is among them, but he doesn't look happy and keeps his arms crossed.

EXT. McMILAN HOUSE - DAY

The Sheriff pulls up to his house and finds LuAnne seated on the porch reading her book. A frown settles on the Sheriff's face as he gets out of the car.

SHERIFF

What the hell're ya doin'?

LuAnne doesn't look up from her book.

LUANNE

I'm readin' a book, what does it look like I'm doin'?  
Course, how'd y'all know since ya never read one.

The Sheriff grabs the book out of her hands and throws it.

SHERIFF

Goddamn ya, girl! An' I s'pose you ain't made no  
supper, neither, huh? Even though I tol' ya too.

LuAnne points inside with her thumb.

LUANNE

There's somethin' on the kitchen table for ya, but it  
ain't supper.

The Sheriff drops the hard edge and tries being honest.

SHERIFF

Why ain't you cookin' my meals like I ast ya, LuAnne?  
I said it nice. I jus' don't un'erstand ya no more.

LUANNE

(flatly)

I ain't your wife. She left ya. I will too, soon as I'm  
allowed.

He quickly gets angry again.

SHERIFF

You ain't goin' nowheres! Gettin' jobs, lippin' off!  
What's next?

LUANNE

Why don' y'all go on in an' see what's on the table.

SHERIFF

What?

LUANNE

Go look for yourself.

LuAnne goes down the porch steps and picks up her book. The Sheriff goes inside. LuAnne sits back down on the porch swing.

The Sheriff steps out the door holding the headlight, his face a study in total panic. He looks quickly around and keeps the headlight down out of sight.

SHERIFF

Where'd ya find this?

LUANNE

Out t' Salt Crick.

SHERIFF

(seriously)

And so what is it ya think ya know now?

LUANNE

I know that when I ast ya in the car comin' back from Amarillo whether you an' the other good ol' boys killed any Japs or Jews or Nigras ya tol' me the truth. Ya didn't. Ya killed the white feller on the motorcycle.

The Sheriff steps up to LuAnne with a deadly serious expression.

SHERIFF

Let's jus' get one thang good an' straight—I didn't kill nobody! I weren't even there.

LUANNE

Where was ya?

SHERIFF

I was at the Panhandle Saloon and there was a whole bunch a boys there that saw me.

LUANNE

(confused)

But I don' un'erstand. Why the feller on the motorcycle? I bet at least half the folks in town agreed with ever' word he said? It don' make no sense.

The Sheriff pauses for a long moment, staring off across the burning flatlands. He squints as though he sees something way off in the distance—like maybe a guy on a motorcycle wearing a black leather jacket, goggles and gloves riding west on Route 66. Finally, the Sheriff shakes his head and sighs. There's nothing on Route 66 but a heat haze.

SHERIFF

That was the day that Mr. Bruford got the telegram sayin' Jimmy'd been killed in France. That he got hit by a nazi shell an' his body was so chewed up they couldn't even send it home.

LUANNE

I 'member that.

SHERIFF

(nods)

That was the same day that feller come into town. So, he was talkin' 'bout killin' Japs and Jews and Nigras an' ever'body got all excited, ready t' go out an' kill someone right that second, from what I hear. 'Course there ain't many Jews or Nigras in these parts and the Jap relocation center was nearly a hundred miles away. Well, then that feller goes on t' say that Hitler was right an' ever'body should be listenin' to him instead of fightin' him. Well . . . Talk about losin' your audience, Mr. Buford jus' upped an' shot the poor, dumb bastard. Then ever'body else with a gun shot him, too, jus' t' make Mr. Buford feel better, I guess. That feller was purty chewed up when I got there.

LUANNE

An' what did ya do about it, Daddy?

SHERIFF

(plaintively)

I didn't do nothin'. What was I s'posed t' do? Arrest ever'body in town?

LUANNE

How 'bout jus' Mr. Buford?

SHERIFF

His boy'd jus' got killed. 'Sides, he runs the whole damn town, LuAnne. Ain't nobody gonna testify agin him. What's the point?

LUANNE

The point is a man got murdered. An' jus' 'cause ever'body did it don't make it right.

SHERIFF

(frankly)

I seen wronger thangs in my days, tha's for sure. That feller was jus' askin' for it.

LUANNE

That's not the point. Nothin' ya can say should cause ya t' git killed.

SHERIFF

(factually)



They still shoot traitors, don't they?

LUANNE

Yeah, but they get trials first.

SHERIFF

(sarcastic)

An' when was it y'all went t' law school? Seems t' me ya jus' barely graduated high school.

LUANNE

Ya don' need t' go t' law school t' know what's right. An' y'all thank 'cause ya say ya weren't there that your innocent?

SHERIFF

(intensely)

I wasn't there and I *am* innocent.

LUANNE

If ya know that ever'one in town's broken the law an' ya ain't done nothin' 'bout it, then your jus' as guilty as all the rest of 'em.

SHERIFF

An' jus' what'dya thank your gonna do now, LuAnne? Y'all could get a lotta folks in this town in trouble.

LuAnne grabs her purse, puts her book under her arm and goes down the steps.

LUANNE

I ain't gonna do nothin'. But I sure ain't gonna listen t' y'all tell me what's right no more. Ya wouldn't know what was right if it came up an' bit ya on your fat butt.

LuAnne goes past her Father. Suddenly he grabs her arms.

SHERIFF

Oh, yeah, Miss Know-it-all! *My* not doin' nothin's no different than *you* not doin' nothin, an' don' thank it is!

LuAnne pulls her arm back and walks away. The Sheriff is left standing in the street holding the headlight. He glances down at the damning evidence, looks as though he'd like to throw it, but doesn't. He quickly goes inside and slams the door.

LuAnne walks up the street with a troubled expression on her face.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SHAMROCK/MAIN STREET - DAY

Our guys roar up the main street of Shamrock on their motorcycles. As they pass the drugstore all the old guys sitting on the porch nearly fall off their chairs. They all look at each other with the guiltiest expressions imaginable. Mr. Buford grabs one of the guy's arms.

MR. BUFORD

Go find the Sheriff. Quick!

The guy runs off. Everybody on the porch rises to their feet and watches.

One by one the cycles drive past the Fina gas station, pull up in front of the Drop Inn Cafe and park. Virgil, a stick match in his teeth, leads the way in.

VIRGIL

What'dya say we give this joint a workout?

INT. DROP INN CAFE - DAY

The guys all seat themselves in a line at the counter. Ruth steps up to serve them with a stupefied expression.

RUTH

You fellers sure ain't from around here.

BUD

(doing John Wayne)

That's a fact, Ma'am. We'd all like some coffee, if you please. Strong and black like my friend here.

Bud points his thumb at Dewey. Ruth laughs.

RUTH

I don't thank Shamrock's never seen nothin' like you boys.

BUD

(still imitating the Duke)

You can bet your bottom dollar on that.

Jason, at the far end of the counter, hears a click behind him. He glances over his shoulder and sees LuAnne sitting in a booth by herself with her book. She has just opened her purse and taken out a pack of Luckies. Jason's eyes light up and a grin appears on his face. He taps Bud on the shoulder. Bud turns, sees LuAnne and he too grins. He taps Dewey who taps Virgil. Virgil's eyes light up as he recognizes LuAnne.

LuAnne takes a cigarette out of the pack, places it between her lips, then searches for a light. Virgil walks over to LuAnne. He takes the match from his teeth, lights it with his thumbnail and holds it out to LuAnne's cigarette. LuAnne looks up at Virgil and the moment of recognition is electrically charged. They both grin. LuAnne puts her hand over Virgil's as he lights her smoke.

LUANNE

So, Sergeant, we meet again.

VIRGIL

It's a small world.

LUANNE

If I recall correctly, las' time we met y'all said it was a big world.

VIRGIL

Exactly. Mind if I sit down?

LUANNE

I don' mind a'tall.

VIRGIL

(sits; grinning)

If I'm not mistaken I've got an unpaid raincheck with you.

LUANNE

(grins back)

That's right. Wanna go?

VIRGIL

(shrugs)

Sure. When did you turn eighteen?

LUANNE

I ain't yet.

VIRGIL

(honestly shocked)

What? How can that be? Nobody stays seventeen that long.

LUANNE

Sometimes I thank I'm stuck bein' seventeen forever.

VIRGIL

(shrugs)

Worse things could happen.

LUANNE

(points)

Hey, it aint *me* that's makin' an issue outa bein' eighteen.

VIRGIL

I know. But you've gotta have some standards in your life, even if they don't mean anything.

Virgil glances at the LuAnne's book.

VIRGIL

That was good. You like it?

LUANNE

(impressed)

Yeah, I do. Y'all like readin' books, Sergeant?

VIRGIL

Virgil. Yeah, I do. You ever read any Willa Cather?

LUANNE

(shakes her head)

Uh-uh. I don't know who that is.

VIRGIL

She wrote "O Pioneers?"

(LuAnne shakes her head)

"One Of Ours?"

(still blank)

Well, she's great. You ought to try her.

LUANNE

(embarrassed)

See, a lotta books don't never git here t' Shamrock.

Jus' what's on the rack at the drugstore.

VIRGIL

I got a real good one out at my bike. I'll let ya borrow it.

LUANNE

Really? I'd appreciate it.

VIRGIL

You like ridin' on motorcycles?

LUANNE

(shrugs)

I never been.

VIRGIL

Well come on. I'll give ya a ride and lend ya the book. Two birds with one stone.

LUANNE

What about your raincheck?

VIRGIL

I guess I'll just keep waitin' for that. Come on.

LuAnne pauses for a minute. She glances over at the counter and all the guys turn away. Ruth looks straight

back at her and raises her eyebrows. LuAnne turns back to Virgil.

LUANNE

Let's go.

EXT. DROP INN CAFE - DAY

Virgil kick starts his Harley, revs the throttle, then beckons LuAnne to get on. LuAnne's grinning and shaking her head, not at all sure.

LUANNE

Is that thang safe?

VIRGIL

(smirks)

Sure it is.

She shakes her head.

LUANNE

I don' know.

LuAnne glances across the street to the drugstore where every old fart on the porch is watching her intently, particularly Mr. Buford.

Virgil lets go of the throttle, shrugs and reaches into his saddlebag.

VIRGIL

That's okay.

(he pulls out his copy  
of "The Lost Lady" and  
hands it to her)

Here. You can have it.

LuAnne takes the book, looks from it to Virgil, then to the old fellows on the porch. She quickly climbs on the bike.

LUANNE

Aw, what the hell.

Virgil grins, guns it, shifts the stick to first and blasts up the street. LuAnne grabs Virgil's shoulders, tight.

LUANNE

(hollering)

How come you read books by women?

VIRGIL

What's the difference?

LUANNE

I don' know.

Meanwhile, across the street at the drugstore, the head of every old guy on the porch follow the cycle up the street. When it's gone they all look at each other in panic. Mr. Buford is fit to be tied.

MR. BUFORD

Goddamn that girl! I knew she knew all along,  
an' now she's gonna tell!

OLD FART

If them fellers don' already know. They look like  
they's that other feller's friends.

That wasn't what Mr. Buford wanted to hear. Just then the black Chevy police car pulls up. Sheriff McMillan asks out the window.

SHERIFF

Hey, any a you boys seen LuAnne?

MR. BUFORD

Didn't Barney find you?

SHERIFF

Uh-uh. Why?

They all look at one another, then simultaneously point across the street. The Sheriff looks where they're pointing and sees the line of motorcycles. His heart misses a beat and his mouth drops open. He gets out of the car.

SHERIFF

Who're they?

MR. BUFORD

(snotty)

Why don' ya jus' guess! An' by the by, your LuAnne  
jus' rode off with one of 'em.

SHERIFF

(horrified)

She did? Which way?

Mr. Buford points toward Route 66—and Salt Creek.

MR. BUFORD

*That way. Out toward Salt Crick!*

The Sheriff looks sick to his stomach.

SHERIFF

Oh, shit!

MR. BUFORD

What does that little girl of yours know?

SHERIFF

(pause)

She don' know nothin'.

MR. BUFORD

Ya shore? I thank I saw her ridin' her bike out at Salt Crick today.

SHERIFF

(defensive)

Ya thank ya saw her, or ya saw her?

MR. BUFORD

I ain't shore.

SHERIFF

Then don't be accusin' her of nothin'! Y'hear?

MR. BUFORD

Y'all startin' with me agin? I mean, Jesus, Alex, what the hell're them motorcycles doin' here?

The Sheriff turns and looks.

SHERIFF

Oh, that. Well, I don' know.

MR. BUFORD

Well, why don' ya go do your damn job an' find out?

The Sheriff nods.

SHERIFF

I better go git the deputies, there might be trouble.

MR. BUFORD

Why don'tcha git the Army and the Navy, too?

SHERIFF

Why don'tcha mind your own damn bidness!

He gets in the car, pulls a U-turn and quickly drives away. The men on the porch look at each other, then shrug and sit back down.

MR. BUFORD

Jesus H. Christ! What a goddamn day!

EXT. ROUTE 66/TEXAS - DAY

Virgil and LuAnne turn onto Route 66. Virgil yells loudly over his shoulder.

VIRGIL

I'm gonna open it up a little, okay?

LuAnne is giddy with excitement.

LUANNE

Ya mean it goes even faster?

VIRGIL

(grins)

Honey, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

Virgil guns it and the Harley takes off. LuAnne hangs onto Virgil's shoulders for dear life. Soon they're up to 80 mph. Virgil hollers back.

VIRGIL

Scared?

LUANNE

(shakes her head)

Uh-uh.

VIRGIL

Then let's go faster.

Virgil floors it. As the sun drops toward the vast expanse of flat Texas horizon, the Harley tears past in a dusty, roaring blur.

EXT. DROP INN CAFE - DUSK

The police car pulls up in front of the cafe. The Sheriff and three middle-aged, itchy-looking, uniformed and armed DEPUTIES get out and inspect the line of motorcycles. They look at each other, then go inside.

INT. DROP INN CAFE - DUSK

None of the guys at the counter notice them at first, they're too busy eating. But Ruth certainly does and straightens up, sensing trouble. One by one the guys stop eating and turn around. Dewey glances at the others, his expression saying, "I told you so."

SHERIFF

What're you boys doin' here?

They all shrug.

BUD

Eatin' dinner.

SHERIFF

(correcting)

Dinner's at noon, boy. This is supper.



BUD  
 (rolls his eyes)  
 All right, we're eatin' supper.

SHERIFF  
 An' what're ya figurin' on doin' after supper?

BUD  
 (grins)  
 Have a smoke, maybe another cup of coffee, a piece of pie. Why? You sellin' Girl Scout cookies or something?

SHERIFF  
 (dead serious)  
 Don't get funny with me, boy! Is there somethin' you're plannin' on doin' here?

BUD  
 We were thinkin' about maybe spending the night, that okay?

SHERIFF  
 (suspicious)  
 Spendin' the night? Why?

BUD  
 'Cause it's getting dark and we're tired. Is that good enough?

SHERIFF  
 There's nothin' your lookin' for here?

DEWEY  
 What would we be lookin' for? There ain't nothin' here.

The Sheriff nods.

SHERIFF  
 So then you boys jus' stopped here for the night and no other reason?

They all shrug and shake their heads. The Sheriff takes a new tack.

SHERIFF  
 What ch'all think about Hitler?

The guys all look at each other—this is getting weird.

BUD  
 He's dead, what's there to think about?

SHERIFF  
You think he was right?

BUD  
In dyin'? Absolutely.

SHERIFF  
(getting angry)  
No! In what he said!

BUD  
(amazed)  
Hitler? What is this, a quiz show? What do I win if I answer right?

SHERIFF  
(angry)  
Goddamnit anyway, you're makin' me mad! Now, just answer me, did you like Hitler?

BUD  
Sure. He was my best buddy. We grew up in Toledo together.

SHERIFF  
(fuming)  
You're a smart-ass, boy!

BUD  
So what?

Getting nowhere, the Sheriff turns his attention to Dewey, then to Ruth.

SHERIFF  
Why's this Nigra sittin' at the same counter where I eat?

Dewey's eyes narrow. Ruth seems very uncomfortable with Dewey sitting there in front of her.

RUTH  
When the war ended, Sheriff, all them signs came down.

SHERIFF  
The signs came down, but that don't change nothin'. All right, y'all, time t' git.

BUD  
But we're not done eatin' our lunch.

SHERIFF

Oh yes ya are! And when ya get on them bikes of your's, keep a-goin' right outta town. I don't know what you fellers thank you are, but we don't want none of it here in Shamrock!

The guys all look at each other, then stand to go. They don't look happy about what they're doing. Stan, however, doesn't move. The Sheriff points at Stan.

SHERIFF

You, too, boy.

STAN

(shakes his head)

I-I-I'm n-n-not d-d-done.

SHERIFF

Boy, what'sa matter with ya? Ya jus' weevil-brained an' butt-stupid? I jus' give ya a chance t' up and go, now go!

STAN

N-n-no.

Stan continues eating. Dewey, Bud and Jason look impressed. The Sheriff is livid and confused. What do they know?

SHERIFF

(to Stan)

Git up and git outta here, boy! Before ya 'cause me t' do somethin' I don' wanna do.

Stan doesn't turn around, his mouth full.

STAN

F-f-fuck you!

SHERIFF

(explodes)

That stutterin' fool's just bought hisself a night in jail, how 'bout the rest of ya?

Two of the deputies step up on either side of Stan. It's a very tense moment and no one moves. All fists are clenched.

BUD

Then what happens tomorrow?

SHERIFF

(shrugs)

He'll go talk to the judge. And if he can get a civil word outta his mouth, maybe the judge'll let him go.

BUD

And then again, maybe he won't.

They Sheriff looks straight at Bud.

SHERIFF

Ya never know.

BUD

Oh, I know. Don't worry about a thing, Stan.

Stan doesn't look worried. The Sheriff points at Bud.

SHERIFF

And if y'all see that other friend of yours, the  
one with my little girl, you tell him git her home  
and then git while gittin's good. Y'hear?

Bud indicates the door and he and the guys leave, glaring back at the cops and throwing Stan sympathetic looks.

EXT. DROP INN CAFE - DUSK

The guys go outside, get on their bikes and start them up. The Sheriff and one of the deputies follow them out and get in the police car. Mr. Buford comes running up and opens the passenger door of the police car.

MR. BUFORD

(to the deputy)

Git in back.

DEPUTY

(shakes his head)

Uh-uh. I always ride shotgun.

MR. BUFORD

(exasperated)

Fine.

Mr. Buford climbs in back. The bikes drive slowly up the street, the police car trailing right behind them.

Stan and the two deputies beside him watch from the front of the cafe.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Mr. Buford leans forward on the seat facing the Sheriff.

MR. BUFORD

So?

SHERIFF

So, I don' know. I mean, I questioned 'em and they  
didn't seem like they knew nothin', but then again,

maybe they do.

MR. BUFORD

So you arrested one of 'em?

SHERIFF

He lipped off t' me, what was I supposed t' do?

MR. BUFORD

Get 'em all outta town, that's what I thank. But now that y'all got one of 'em, make shore ya arrest that other one, the one with LuAnne.

SHERIFF

For what?

MR. BUFORD

I don' give a damn for what, jus' do it!

The Police car stops abruptly in the middle of the road near the edge of town. The motorcycles keep going and slowly turn left on Route 66.

SHERIFF

(upset)

Now look here, Gus! Don' ya be tellin' me my job now! I'll do what I thank is right!

MR. BUFORD

Shit, Alex, have y'all gone plumb crazy? We could all be in a lotta trouble, an' that includes you! Now arrest that boy and find out what he knows! We'll question both of 'em separate, that way we'll be shore t' git the truth.

Mr. Buford gets out of the police car and slams the door. The Sheriff and the Deputy sit there in the stationary automobile. They watch as the motorcycles disappear from view driving west on Route 66.

EXT. ROUTE 66/TEXAS - DUSK

When the bikes get out of sight of the town along Route 66 they stop and turn around. Jason looks concerned.

JASON

What about Virgil?

BUD

He's gotta be back soon. We have to wait for him. Can you believe that? Of all the dames he goes an picks up the Sheriff's daughter?

JASON

They acted like they knew each other.

BUD

How would Virgil know a girl from this podunk town?  
It's not possible.

DEWEY

What we got us here, fellas, is a situation.

JASON

We can't let 'em keep Stan. He'll do time for sure.

BUD

(nods)

Let's just wait a few minutes and see what happens.

They all nod and take out their cigarettes.

EXT. DROP INN CAFE/MAIN STREET - DUSK

The two Deputies escort Stan away from the cafe and his motorcycle. They march him up the street, each deputy with a hand on Stan's shoulders. Stan glances at each of them and they're both facing ahead, not taking Stan seriously.

Stan sees his moment. He grabs each of the deputy's wrists, snaps the right deputy's arm down hard throwing him off balance while simultaneously pushing the other one out and away. Stan kicks the deputy to his left solidly in the balls, then lets him go and he drops to the ground.

Stan grabs the other deputy's wrist with both hands, spins him around in a full circle and lets go. The deputy catapults through a store window with a tremendous crash.

The deputy on the ground takes his hand from his crotch and goes for his gun. Stan kicks him solidly in the nose, then hastily takes off running back toward the cafe.

Stan jumps on his motorcycle, rolls it off the kick-stand, kicks the starter, turns the throttle, it putters and doesn't catch. Stan looks up and sees . . .

. . . The deputy on the ground holding his bloody nose and pulling his pistol. The other deputy comes staggering out the door of the shop he crashed into, dazed and covered with blood.

Stan kicks the starter again, it putters, coughs and dies. The deputy with the bloody nose rises unsteadily to his feet, his pistol raised and fires a shot.

The bullet whizzes past Stan's ear. Stan kicks the starter again and still nothing.

Now both deputies are charging toward him.

Stan pulls the choke, gives it another kick and it starts. The engine revs, the furious deputies are getting close, another shot is fired, Stan floors it, fishtails and speeds down the street away from his pursuers. Several blocks up the street Stan sees the police car just sitting there a quarter of a mile up. Stan frowns, pulls a quick U-turn heading back toward the bloody, pissed-off deputies.

Stan ducks low as both deputies open fire on him. One bullet hits Stan in the thigh, another shatters one of his

mirrors. He veers away from the deputies and drives up a thin alley between two buildings.

EXT. THIN ALLEY - DUSK/NIGHT

Stan is going way too fast. He's holding the handlebars with one hand, the other tightly grasping his wounded leg. As he tears up the thin alley with garbage cans lining both sides he goes out of control plowing into the garbage cans.

EXT. DESERT - DUSK/NIGHT

Stan comes out of the alley with cans rolling out in front of him, then blasts out into the vast expanse of open desert.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The deputies both take shots at Stan up the alley, but he's too far away and rapidly getting farther and farther. Both deputies are furious.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Stan's got the motorcycle flat out, head down, tearing across the darkening flatlands. Suddenly—BOOM!!—the engine blows. Flames erupt and he loses all power. Stan jumps off the moving motorcycle, lands on his good leg, hops several times, then falls on his face.

The bike rolls along on its own momentum and the gas tank explodes. It keeps rolling off into the darkness, a bouncing ball of flame. It finally becomes a small yellow spark, then falls over.

Stan pounds his fist on the hard dirt.

STAN

S-s-son of a b-b-b-b . . . *Shit!*

EXT. THE PANHANDLE SALOON - NIGHT

The Panhandle Saloon looks like an old western saloon: fancy woodwork, wooden sidewalk, bat-wing doors. Virgil's Harley is parked in front.

INT. PANHANDLE SALOON - NIGHT

Inside, Glenn Miller is playing on the jukebox and a bunch of young people are Jitterbugging—LuAnne and Virgil among them. The two of them dance very well together and do a lot of snazzy between-the-legs and over-the-shoulder moves. They're the best dancers in the joint. The older folks watch from the security of their seats. Virgil and LuAnne perform a big finale and the song ends. It's replaced by a slow number and most of the young people, LuAnne and Virgil included, sit down. Several older couples get up and dance.

LuAnne and Virgil sit at a table and take big swigs of beer.

LUANNE

Where'd y'all learn t' jive like that?

VIRGIL

In the Marines.

LUANNE

Is dancin' part of basic trainin' now?

VIRGIL

Naw, when we were out in the middle of nowhere and there's nothing to do, we'd practice dancing sometimes.

LUANNE

Ya mean, two boys?

VIRGIL

They're not boys, they're Marines, and generally there's no gals around and a lotta spare time.

(shrugs)

Where'd you learn to dance?

LUANNE

With one a my girlfriends. None of the boys in this town know how, as you just saw.

VIRGIL

So what's it like living here? What's there, five hundred people?

LUANNE

There's five hunert an' seventy-three. Well, there ain't much t' do here an' ever'body's purty closed-minded 'bout most ever'thang, so . . . I thank it all stinks. Ya see, this place's even worse'n it seems. Somethin's eatin' it up from the inside out. That's why I don't wanna live here no more. That's why I want ya to take me with you when ya go. 'Member, y'all said ya would?

Virgil looks right at her, then nods.

VIRGIL

I remember. Okay.

LUANNE

(surprised)

You will?

VIRGIL

I just said I would, didn't I?

(curious)

Now, what it is that's eating this town up?



LuAnne looks long and hard at Virgil.

LUANNE

Well, 'bout six months ago, this feller come ridin'  
into town on a motorcycle and . . .

The bat-wing doors swing open and in steps the Sheriff and his Deputy. The Sheriff looks around, spots LuAnne and Virgil, and he and the deputy march up to their table. The Sheriff takes LuAnne by the wrist.

SHERIFF

Come on, girl, you're goin' home!

LuAnne yanks her arm away.

LUANNE

No! Uh-uh!

Virgil just watches.

The Sheriff considers the situation, then nods to the Deputy who steps up to Virgil.

SHERIFF

That's jus' fine, LuAnne, ya do what ya want, but  
I'm takin' this boy t' jail.

The Deputy reaches toward Virgil who quickly jumps to his feet and backs off, his hands up in front of him.

VIRGIL

Now hold on a second. What're you talkin' about?  
I didn't do anything.

LUANNE

(emphatically)

That's right!

The Sheriff steps up to Virgil.

SHERIFF

This little girl ain't of legal age, mister.

VIRGIL

We were just dancing, there's no law against that,  
not even in Texas.

SHERIFF

You bought her liquor. That's aidin' t' the delinquency  
of a minor. Careful I don't add statutory rape. As it is  
you'll prob'ly only do thirty days.

VIRGIL

(laughs sardonically)

Thirty days, huh? How much you wanna bet?

SHERIFF

Now look here, I already got your stutterin' friend in jail.  
How'd the two of you like t' do some real time?

Virgil's hit his limit. His jaw muscles knot and his fists clench.

VIRGIL

You've got *my* friend in *jail*?

The Sheriff nods. The Deputy's hand goes to his pistol.

Virgil takes a step up to the Sheriff so that they're face to face. Virgil points in his face.

VIRGIL

(intense)

I'm gonna walk right out of here, go over to your  
jail and get my friend! Then me and the rest of  
my buddies are gonna ride outta this little piece of  
shit town of yours! And I'd just try and stop me if  
I were you!

Virgil starts to walk toward the door. The Deputy makes a move to grab him. Virgil swiftly snaps his elbow into the Deputy's throat, kicks him solidly in the stomach, then grabs him by the hair and slams his face down onto the table.

The Sheriff has his gun out and is just bringing it up as Virgil swings his fist in an upper-cut smack into the Sheriff's jaw—BAM!! The Sheriff sails across the bar, hits a table, flips over backward and lands on the floor with a thud. Both cops are momentarily knocked senseless.

Everyone in the bar is in stunned silence.

Virgil looks into LuAnne's helpless and pleading eyes and indicates the door. She makes no move to leave. Instead, she dashes over to her Father.

Virgil's out the door.

EXT. PANHANDLE SALOON - NIGHT

Virgil comes running outside, leap-frogs onto his bike, kicks the starter, twists the throttle, sprays gravel across the front of the saloon and blasts up the street.

INT. PANHANDLE SALOON - NIGHT

LuAnne takes her father's head and puts in her lap.

SHERIFF

Daddy, please, y'all right?

The Sheriff sits up rubbing his jaw as the Deputy, now sporting a broken, bloody nose, also sits up. The Sheriff looks at LuAnne and grimaces.

SHERIFF

(disdainfully)

You're just like your Mama—a tramp! Ready to run off with the first stranger you see! Git away from me!

LuAnne stands, looking down on her Father, pain in her eyes.

LUANNE

Y'all don' un'erstan' nothin'! I truly did love ya till just this very minute, but I don' no more! An' you'll never see me again!

She bolts out the door.

EXT. PANHANDLE SALOON - NIGHT

When she gets outside Virgil is long gone. LuAnne looks all around, not knowing which way to go or what to do. She runs up the street with tears streaming from her eyes.

INT. PANHANDLE SALOON - NIGHT

The Sheriff and the deputy are both on their feet. The Sheriff makes an announcement to everyone in the bar.

SHERIFF

I need as many deputies as I can git tonight. I'm gonna put all a these weird-lookin', motorcycle boys in jail. If you wanna help, go get a gun and meet me at the police station.

All of the older men immediately head for the door, their women in tow. All of the younger men and women stay where they are.

The Sheriff doesn't like what he's seeing.

SHERIFF

What's a matter, ain't you young-uns got no guts?

A YOUNG MAN wearing a natty sweater, a bolo tie and a crew cut speaks up.

YOUNG MAN

We young-uns didn't kill that feller on the motorcycle, y'all did. Now y'all kin deal with his friends.

A girl wearing bobby socks and saddle shoes drops a nickel in the jukebox. Artie Shaw comes blaring out. Several couples get up and start Jitterbugging.

The Sheriff and the bleeding Deputy stomp out of the saloon.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Virgil tears up Main Street, occasionally throwing a glance over his shoulder. As he passes the police station

he sees two deputies, both wearing bandages, standing on the porch. Virgil zips right by as they yell at him.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT

As Virgil nears Route 66 he sees flashing lights to his right. It's the other guys on their bikes flashing their headlights.

Virgil rides over to them.

VIRGIL  
They arrested Stan, huh?

They all nod.

JASON  
How do you know?

VIRGIL  
The Sheriff told me.

BUD  
(surprised)  
He did?

VIRGIL  
Yeah, right before I kicked the shit outta him.

DEWEY  
(smiles)  
All right, Marines!

JASON  
Now what're we gonna do?

VIRGIL  
(simply)  
We're go gonna get Stan outta there.

DEWEY  
I betcha they're puttin' a whole goddamn army  
together right this very minute.

VIRGIL  
I bet they are.

They all look at each other, then each of them, except Jason, reaches into his saddlebag or rolled-up sleeping bag. One by one they all pull out Army-issue .45 caliber pistols. Dewey pulls out two. Jason is shocked.

JASON  
Hey! What the hell is this all about? We can't  
take on a whole town.

VIRGIL

Really? Why not?

JASON

(confused)

Well, I don't know.

VIRGIL

Look, nobody's gonna fuck with one of our buddies and get away with it. Am I right?

Everybody nods.

DEWEY

Fuck these guys!

BUD

Absolutely! Fuck 'em!

Jason is in a panic.

JASON

But Virg, we just can't!

VIRGIL

(dead serious)

We've both known Stan our whole lives. He's got that plate in his head 'cause of me. I let him down once, I'm not doin' it again.

Virgil reaches into his saddlebag and comes up with a .38 snub nose. He holds it out to Jason.

VIRGIL

You can wait right here if you want. No loss of honor. And I'd prefer it.

Jason looks at all of them, then nods and reaches for the pistol.

JASON

Nobody's leaving me behind.

Jason takes the gun and snaps out the cylinder.

Everyone else pops their clips, checking to make sure they're loaded. They are. They all snap the clips back in and cock their weapons.

VIRGIL

We got anything else worth havin'?

DEWEY

I did a little reconnoiterin' while you were gone an' found these.

Dewey holds up a case of long-neck beer bottles and a rubber tube.

Bud begins to cut a shirt into strips with his knife.

Virgil puts a new stick match in his teeth.

VIRGIL

Let's take this fuckin' town out!

DEWEY

Let's do it for Horace!

EVERYBODY

(they all nod)

Yeah!

Jason hesitantly reaches out and touches Bud's shoulder. Bud turns to see what Jason wants, but all Jason wanted to do was touch him. Bud gives Jason the O.K. sign and winks.

VIRGIL

All right. Listen up. These guys are gonna be bunched up, you can just bet on it. Dewey, you'll take the south side of town, Bud, Jason, the center, I'll take the north. Here's what we're gonna do . . .

EXT. POLICE STATION/MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Twenty-five middle-aged and older men, all wearing cowboy hats and boots and holding hunting rifles, stand on the street in front of the police station in a group. They look nervous, fingers on the triggers, eyes darting all around. The Sheriff is out in front. The left side of his face is black and blue and swollen. The three deputies beside him look like the walking wounded.

SHERIFF

Let's jus' spread out here a little bit. Your all bunched up like a herd o' cows.

The men begrudgingly do as they're told and slowly move out along the street in both directions.

LuAnne comes walking up the street. She's been crying, but looks more disturbed than sad. She sees all of the men in the street and it's a moment of decision for her. Finally, she walks up to her Father.

LUANNE

Daddy, what're y'all doin'?

SHERIFF

(flatly)

I thought I weren't ever gonna see you agin? Shore didn't last long.

LUANNE

What's goin' on?

SHERIFF

Those friends a yours are lookin' for trouble, and they're gonna get it, too.

LUANNE

They weren't lookin' for no trouble, you started it with them. If ya just tell ever'body t' go home they will.

SHERIFF

I'm sick and tired of you an' ever'body else tellin' me what t' do! Now you go home an' let me do my job!

LUANNE

(pleading)

But Daddy, ya can't do this!

SHERIFF

Can't I? I aint lettin' no city fellers on motorcycles punch me in the face an' get away with it, ya can count on that! Now git!

LuAnne looks like she's like to say more, but can't figure out what. She runs away up the street, then suddenly stops. Where is she going? She turns around and there is the store with the shattered front window. She goes into the store and watches the street.

Mr. Buford in his Lone Star Petroleum truck drives up to the crowd and stops in front of the Sheriff.

MR. BUFORD

Jesus Christ, Alex, what happened t' you?

SHERIFF

I had a little run-in with that feller with LuAnne.

MR. BUFORD

(anxious)

Did ya talk to him? Find out what he knows?

SHERIFF

I talked to him. But he weren't very cooperative with his answers.

MR. BUFORD

An' jus' what'cha thank's gonna happen now? That these five fellers're gonna come back and attack a big group like this? Y'all gotta go after 'em.

SHERIFF

(infuriated)

I do, huh? Since you an' ever'body else is so big about tellin' me my job, why don't you git down here an' help?

MR. BUFORD

'Cause it ain't my job, it's yours.

SHERIFF

Then stop tellin' me how t' do it! I ain't responsible for any of this anyhow, you are! And if they do know, it's 'cause *you* killed their friend.

MR. BUFORD

T'weren't jus' me. Ever'body shot him.

SHERIFF

But you shot him first. I shoulda done somethin' about it at the time and damn I'm sorry I didn't. I honestly don't think these motorcycle fellers know a damn thing about what happened here. But whatever it is we gotta deal with it. Now get down here an' help!

MR. BUFORD

(panicking)

I thank you're plain wrong and ya know what, I'm gettin' outta here.

Mr. Buford starts his truck and is about to put it in gear when there is the loud sound of a revving motorcycle to their right, somewhere in the darkness. All the men stop moving and turn right. Then there's the sound of a motorcycle to their left. Some men turn left, some don't. Then there's a motorcycle somewhere in front of them, then another one.

The Sheriff, Mr. Buford and all the others are looking back and forth, all around, feeling surrounded and trapped. And then there is the sound of a gunshot. Every man in the street opens fire all at once in every direction. Mr. Buford ducks down in the cab of the truck.

Virgil and Dewey are at either end of the street, behind the edges of buildings, revving their throttles. Virgil has his smoking .45 in his hand aiming upward. Bullets slam into the bricks and through windows all around them.

Jason and Bud are behind the buildings across the street from the police station, also revving their engines. A bullet comes through the back window of the building beside Jason. Yep, those are real bullets, all right. This is no game. Jason gulps and nervously pulls back the hammer of his .38.

The good old boys are in a shooting frenzy, slamming their bolts back and forth, shells flying, blue smoke filling the air. There is the distinct sound of a ricochet and the fellow next to the Sheriff is hit in the chest and drops dead.

SHERIFF

(yelling)

They're shootin' back!



The shooting frenzy continues.

Virgil can't believe what he's seeing. He takes the match from his teeth, strikes it on the wall and lights a Molotov cocktail. He puts a new match between his teeth and throws the Molotov cocktail.

It smashes into a pool of fire at the feet of several of the old men. Panic sets in and the ones nearest the fire run back toward the others.

Dewey throws his Molotov cocktail from the opposite direction. It explodes sending them back the other way.

Jason and Bud let theirs fly.

Fireballs come sailing over the buildings, one smashing on the ground right in front of the Sheriff, the other going through the police station window. The building rapidly ignites.

Bud looks at Jason in exasperation.

BUD

Stan's in there.

Jason looks embarrassed.

JASON

Shit! Sorry.

Virgil lights another Molotov cocktail, replaces the match, and throws this one across the street, through a store window. The building goes right up in flames. Three more Molotov cocktails come sailing out of the darkness, smashing through the windows of businesses.

The mob of armed men panic and run for the safety of any building they can get into, burning or not. The Sheriff and the deputies dash into the flaming police station.

Virgil puts his index and baby fingers in his mouth and whistles really loud.

The roar of motorcycles is deafening as they come blasting in from four directions, pistols blazing. Anyone in the street is shot down. Jason has a guy right in sights, but doesn't shoot. He seems horribly confused as he goes past.

Mr. Buford, still ducking down in the cab of his truck, sees his moment. He grinds the stick into gear and takes off up the street.

The motorcycles come back through for another pass, this time with more Molotov cocktails. They throw them through all the business windows that aren't already on fire.

A man in the street is down on his knee, his rifle leveled and tracking Virgil. Just as he's about to pull the trigger, Jason comes by from behind and shoots him. The man falls back, dead. Jason drives away holding the smoking .38, breathing fast, his eyes blazing.

Bud, having just thrown his Molotov cocktail, finds Mr. Buford in the pick-up truck driving straight at him. Bud reaches for the pistol in his belt, but there's no time as the truck swerves to hit him. Bud hastily veers out of the way, jumps the curb and crashes right through the plate glass window into the billowing flames of a

burning business.

Mr. Buford grins and makes a hard left into a thin alley.

EXT. THIN ALLEY - NIGHT

It's the same thin alley as before, clogged with garbage cans. The truck smashes right into the cans, refuse and can lids flying everywhere, then exits the alley.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The pick-up truck comes crashing out of the alley covered in garbage.

A moment later Bud on his Indian explodes through the back door of a burning store, covered with soot but no worse for the wear.

Bud sees Buford high-tailing it across the desert and goes after him.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Most of the buildings of Shamrock are in flames.

As armed men run from the burning buildings the motorcycles roar past and pick them off.

Shots ring out from the police station. Jason takes a bullet in his side and slides out on his bike.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Flames are quickly engulfing the building. The Sheriff snaps the bolt back on his rifle.

SHERIFF

I got one of the little bastards!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Virgil sees Jason on the ground and his face knots up.

VIRGIL

(hollering)

*JASON!!*

Jason waves back, obviously still alive.

Virgil drives straight at the police station, bullets whizzing past him. Virgil jumps the curb and smashes right through the barred window.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The steel bars come right down on the Sheriff, then Virgil's Harley drives over him. The three deputies are pressed against the walls, their weapons raised, flames consuming the building around them. Virgil spins around with his .45 and takes all three of them out without missing a beat.

Virgil looks around, then drives through a doorway to the one and only jail cell. He doesn't see Stan and cranes his head around.

VIRGIL  
(yelling)  
*STAN! STAN!*

There's no answer. Virgil looks hurt and incredibly angry. He pops the clip on his .45, snaps in a new one, seemingly uninterested in the fact that the building is burning down around him. He rides back through the doorway into the main room and sees the Sheriff feebly attempting to crawl from beneath the steel bars and broken glass. Virgil grabs the Sheriff's wrist with one hand while turning the throttle with the other. He crashes through the door and out of the burning police station, the Sheriff in tow.

EXT. POLICE STATION/MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Virgil comes back out onto the street, lets go of the moaning Sheriff, guns it, patches out and tears up the street.

A group of old men come barreling right at Virgil in a black Ford, firing their rifles from the windows. Virgil takes a bullet in the shoulder and flies off his bike. Dewey and Jason level their guns and both fire at once.

The windshield of the Ford explodes. The car goes careening out of control and veers directly into. . .

EXT. FINA GAS STATION - NIGHT

. . . the Fina gas station, smashing through both pumps and plowing into the office. Two geysers of gasoline spew into the air.

EXT. GOODFELLOWS HALL/MAIN STREET -NIGHT

Shots ring out from the front windows of a brick building with a sign that says, "Goodfellows Hall." A cloth banner reads, "All-U-Can-Eat Pancake Supper, June 28th."

Our guys in the street hit the dirt. They are pinned down behind their motorcycles.

EXT. LONE STAR REFINERY - NIGHT

The refinery is encircled by a corrugated tin fence. Mr. Buford is doing 90 mph toward the closed and locked gate.

Bud is tearing up from behind him, his .45 leveled. He pulls the trigger over and over, spent shells flying, emptying the clip into the back of the truck.

Mr. Buford's pick-up bursts into flames just as it crashes through the refinery gate.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Mr. Buford screams and covers his face as a pumping oil derrick rapidly fills his view through the windshield.

EXT. DESERT/OUTSIDE REFINERY - NIGHT

Bud swerves away from the refinery just as there's a loud crash followed by an enormous, Earth-shaking

explosion. The concussion is so powerful that it knocks the motorcycle and Bud to the ground.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Virgil, Dewey and Jason, all pinned down behind their bikes, bullets constantly thumping in. They turn and see . . .

. . . A giant fireball, not unlike an atomic bomb's mushroom cloud, rising from the desert.

They're awe-struck faces are momentarily lit in orange.

EXT. PANHANDLE SALOON - NIGHT

We can see through the front window of the Panhandle Saloon that all the kids are up and dancing to the loud sounds of Benny Goodman's "Sing, Sing, Sing" and its pounding Gene Krupa tom-toms.

In the distance behind the saloon the fireball rises majestically through the dark blue sky.

No one inside notices.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The shooting has stopped for a second. Virgil, Jason and Dewey look at each other. Virgil slaps Dewey on the arm.

VIRGIL

Clean 'em out. We'll cover you.

Dewey nods, jumps to his feet and takes off running in a zig-zag pattern toward the Goodfellows Hall. Virgil and Jason open up on the front window of the building. Bullets hit the dirt all around Dewey's feet. He gets to the edge of the building, out of range, and keeps going.

EXT. GOODFELLOWS HALL/BEHIND THE BUILDING - NIGHT

Dewey sneaks around behind the building. He's flat against the wall, his two .45's raised and ready. He spins around, kicks in the back door and enters, his pistols blazing.

INT. GOODFELLOWS HALL - NIGHT

Eight men with rifles all turn just in time to see Dewey charging toward them blazing fire. He hits five of them sending them sailing against the walls and back through the big front windows.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Virgil and Jason, both wounded and crouching behind their motorcycles, see the old cowboys come crashing out of the front window of the Goodfellows Hall into the street. Both brothers are supremely impressed.

VIRGIL & JASON

(together)

*Choice!*

INT. GOODFELLOWS HALL - NIGHT

The other three guys Dewey didn't get all fire simultaneously shooting Dewey three times in the chest with big slugs.

Dewey hits the wall, his head slumps, the pistols drop from his hands and he slides to the floor leaving a big bloody smear on the wall.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jason and Virgil hear the shots inside the Goodfellows Hall. Bud comes riding up out of the darkness. He pulls up beside Virgil and Jason on the ground. Virgil points at the Goodfellows Hall.

VIRGIL

Dewey's in trouble in there. Check it out.

Bud nods, turns his throttle and drives toward the Hall. Jason and Virgil both continue to shoot at the shattered front window laying down cover fire.

EXT. GOODFELLOWS HALL - NIGHT

Bud swerves around the bodies littering the front of the building, blasts up the steps and crashes through the front door.

INT. GOODFELLOWS HALL - NIGHT

The three other men inside turn around just in time to see Bud shoot them. They each drop in their spots.

Bud rides over to Dewey's slumped body sitting against the wall. He's dead. A look of anguish crosses Bud's face.

BUD

Thanks for tuning my bike, pal.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

More bullets come pounding toward Jason and Virgil from the other direction. They both quickly scramble to the other side of their bikes.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Muzzle flashes are coming from the survivors of the crash into the gas station. There are three men crouched behind a tow truck.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Virgil puts his foot on the starter of the bike which is lying flat on its side, kicks it, revs, stands the bike up, jumps on and roars up the street.

EXT. MAIN STREET/GAS STATION - NIGHT

Virgil drives straight at the gas station, swerving back and forth to avoid the bullets being fired at him, while simultaneously emptying the clip of his .45 at the tow truck.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Bullets zing and ricochet off the metal skin of the tow truck. The men behind it crouch low, covering their heads.

Gasoline is spewing up from the destroyed pumps. Virgil goes right past the station, takes the match from his teeth, lights it off his thumbnail and tosses it into the river of fuel. Flames shoot along the gas like a fuse and when they hit the pumps the whole station goes up in a giant fireball.

EXT. PANHANDLE SALOON - NIGHT

All of the young folks of Shamrock hear this explosion, stop dancing and come running out of the Saloon to see what in hell is going on. They find their town in flames.

EXT. GAS STATION/MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Virgil turns around and stops. No shots are being fired. Suddenly it's very quiet. Virgil looks up Main Street.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Flames light the sky from almost every building in town. Bodies litter the street, among them the moaning Sheriff, his pistol in his hand.

LuAnne can be seen hiding inside the store. She hesitantly steps out the door.

EXT. GAS STATION/MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Virgil puts a new match in his teeth and grins.

VIRGIL  
(to himself)  
Goddamn, it's great to be alive!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Bud comes riding back up to Jason. Jason looks around, stands and raises his motorcycle back up. Bud looks at Jason sadly.

BUD  
Dewey's dead.

A look of pain twists Jason's face. He and Bud both turn toward Virgil who is at the other end of the street.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Virgil sees Bud and Jason, grins and waves.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The Sheriff raises his pistol, aims and fires.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The bullet hits Virgil right in the heart. His whole body goes slack, the match drops from his teeth and he and his bike falls over sideways.

Jason and Bud both fire their pistols at the same time. The bullets hit the Sheriff lying on the ground, his body lurches and he's dead.

LuAnne comes running up to her dead Father. She stands there in shock looking down, then quickly dashes over to Virgil.

Jason and Bud ride over to Virgil.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Virgil is lying on the ground beside his Harley, blood pouring from his chest. He's still alive, but his eyes have a glazed look. LuAnne gets to him and gets down on her knees, tears streaming from her eyes. Virgil look up at her and smiles weakly.

VIRGIL

I never got that raincheck. I guess I never will.

LUANNE

(desperately)

Yes ya will.

Slightly shakes his head.

VIRGIL

(weak)

Uh-uh. Not a chance.

Jason and Bud ride up. Jason dashes over to his brother, crying.

JASON

(panicked)

Oh, Virgil! Jesus Christ! You're really hurt bad!

Virgil reaches out and grabs Jason's hand.

VIRGIL

Do me a favor, will ya Jas?

JASON

What? Anything.

VIRGIL

Take LuAnne with you. I promised her.

JASON

Sure. Of Course.

VIRGIL

And tell Mom and Dad I love 'em.

JASON

(sobbing)

No, Virg. You tell 'em. When you get home.

Virgil's face twists in pain.

VIRGIL

Oh, shit!

(opens his eyes)

See ya, Bud.

BUD

See ya, Virg.

Virgil shakes his head sadly.

VIRGIL

(hurt and angry)

This whole fuckin' town wasn't worth Stan's life!

Blood gurgles out of Virgil's mouth, his head drops to the side and he dies.

Everyone desolately look away.

Just then Stan comes wandering up the street and calls out . . .

STAN

H-h-h-i.

They all turn and look at Stan in utter disbelief.

JASON

(astounded)

You're alive!

STAN

Y-y-yeah. I g-g-got away.

They all look at each other in complete and utter disbelief. Stan steps up to them and sees Virgil's body. Stan blinks several times, then shuts his eyes and shakes his head.

The second gas pump at the gas station blows up behind them. Another giant fireball rises into the sky.

All of them look at the burning town, then at each other.



Bud speaks everyone's thoughts.

BUD

Fuck this place! Let's get outta here!

Everyone nods in agreement. Stan picks up Virgil's Harley, LuAnne gets on Jason's bike, they kick their starters, rev their engines and slowly cruise up the blazing embers of Main Street.

At the end of Main Street they encounter the group of young people from the saloon. This is a very tense moment as they all face each other. Our guys all have their weapons out and ready. A Young Man steps forward.

YOUNG MAN

Who started it?

BUD

Who do you think?

YOUNG MAN

(nods)

What're ya gonna do now?

BUD

Ride outta here.

YOUNG MAN

Are you goin' with 'em, LuAnne?

LUANNE

Yeah, I am. This town had it comin' and you all know it!

(points at Jason)

His brother's dead and my Daddy's dead. You gonna start somethin', Billy?

The Young Man Looks back at the rest of the young folks and they all gravely shake their heads. He turns back to LuAnne and the bikers.

YOUNG MAN

Go ahead. Get outta here.

Our guys nod, lower their weapons and ride forward. The crowd of young people parts and the motorcycles drive slowly through them.

The young people all come back together in a group, their faces lit by the flickering orange flames of their burning town.

The motorcycles cruise up to Route 66.

EXT. SALT CREEK - NIGHT

We can see the motorcycle gang coming toward us, silhouetted against the flames engulfing the town of Shamrock. The bikes turn right on Route 66, the engines roar and they tear away.

As we follow them the rusty, root-like handlebar of the buried motorcycle become visible in the foreground on the right. The flaming town is on the left. The motorcycle gang disappears from view.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. A HILLY ROAD - DAY

The three motorcycles appear over the rise of a distant hill in a bright, shimmering heat haze. They ride over the top the hill, then drive down and disappear from view.

Jason and LuAnne reappear coming up the next hill, then Bud, then Stan . . .

A moment later more bikers follow after them—dressed in black leather and chains and the whole regalia—at least a hundred of them, probably more. They are the future and they just keeping coming up the hill, roaring past, more and more and more . . .

FADE OUT:

THE END