

INQUEST

Written by
Kevin McDermott

Contact: kevinmichaelmcdermott65@yahoo.com

FADE IN

EXT. SMALL COUNTRY HOUSE - SUMMER NIGHT, 1968

It's a small, lonely house in the distance, nothing around it but open land and silence. A mid-60's model car sits in the gravel driveway. A light glows in one window.

The night is misty. It's raining gently.

THWACK - a single gunshot rings through the dark.

The quiet returns.

Five seconds pass.

Ten seconds.

Fifteen seconds.

THWACK - a second shot rings out.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAME HOUSE - NIGHT (LATER)

Police activity buzzes around the house. Police cars (1960s models) sit in the driveway, lights flashing, radios chirping.

A civilian car pulls up, driven by FRANK McGRATH. He's in his 40s but looks older, haggard, salt-and-pepper gray. Wears a jacket, no tie.

As he parks, he sees a white truck marked, ``Coroner``.

McGrath turns off his car, then stares straight ahead through his windshield. He takes a deep breath, trying to steel himself. His hands tremble; he steadies them. He takes a second deep breath.

He looks down on his dashboard, to an old picture of a CURLY-HAIRED BOY (about 9) taped next to the radio. He stares a moment. Then he takes one more breath, exits the car, strides toward the house. He slishes through a puddle on his way.

(Wet, liquidy images and sounds will be with us throughout.)

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MARY HAWKINS - late 20s, pretty - sits on the edge of the bed. Close-up of her face, a little sweat around her brow. She's staring straight ahead, talking to someone nearby.

MARY

It's funny how . . . how small a gunshot sounds. Guess I've never heard a real one before. It sounded like someone smacking a wooden table with a rolled-up newspaper.

Mary's 3-year-old daughter, ASHLEY, is sitting on her lap, as SHERIFF CLYDE WILCOX (50-ish, crew cut, hulking) questions Mary. His face and shirt are stained with sweat.

WILCOX

And then you heard the second shot.

MARY (nods)

Then Dennis came in and said it was over. Is - is Dennis in trouble? I mean, the guy was in our house-

WILCOX (shakes head)

Charlie Travis was a walking piece of dog shit, pardon my french. Personally, I'd like to give your husband a medal. But the law says we have to ask the questions, so . . .

The little girl jumps off Mary's lap and starts to wander away. Mary puts out an arm toward her, misses her, then gropes around for her.

Mary is blind.

MARY

Ashley? Ashley, where'd you go, honey?

ASHLEY

I wanna see daddy.

As Mary leans forward toward the voice, Wilcox looks hard at her chest and hips, secure in the knowledge she can't see him staring.

WILCOX

It's okay, Mrs. Hawkins. Your husband's right in the other room.

MARY

Are we done here?

Wilcox glances over his shoulder to make sure they're alone. Then he leans very close to Mary's face - inches from her - and flicks his tongue near her mouth, without touching it. Mary stares straight ahead, oblivious. Wilcox sits back, takes one more overt look at her body, then smirks.

WILCOX

Yeah, Mrs. Hawkins. We're done. I'll call you if I need you.

He rises and starts to leave the room. Then he stops and turns while glancing down at his notebook.

WILCOX

Oh - the first and second shots? How far apart were they?

Mary's blind eyes stare blankly.

MARY

Three seconds. (A beat) The shots were three seconds apart.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Blue lights crawl across the walls. Police mill around, looking hot - shirts open, sleeves rolled up, sweat-stains under arms.

A large puddle of blood stains the carpet in the middle of the room. A brass vase lies in the puddle, covered with blood. Blood stains the couch. White tape on the couch outlines where a body had been sprawled across it.

Sitting on a chair is DENNIS HAWKINS, late 20s, drinking coffee with both hands and shaking. A young deputy, MARK NEELY, interviews him. The conversation is congenial; they know each other. Both look hot and uncomfortable.

NEELY

Did he say anything after the first shot?

DENNIS

No. He just - just kept holding up the

vase. I kept waiting for him to drop
it. Then he went to throw it, and I -
I had to - (Trails off)

NEELY

You all right, Dennis?

Dennis nods, numbly.

Ashley, the little girl, bolts into the room and jumps on
Dennis's lap. He's glad to see her.

DENNIS

Hi, honey.

The front door opens. Frank McGrath enters from the rain. He
looks around the room, his eyes settling on the couch and the
taped outline of the body. He looks down at his feet and sees the
large blood stain.

CU McGrath's face, staring.

Sheriff Wilcox emerges from the bedroom. A second DEPUTY, 30s,
approaches Wilcox and nods in McGrath's direction.

DEPUTY

State's attorney's here.

WILCOX (sarcasm)

Oh, thank goodness.

Wilcox approaches McGrath, barely-concealed contempt in his face.

WILCOX (nods)

Frank. Welcome to the party.

McGrath is staring at the bloodstained carpet. He looks queasy.

McGRATH (quietly)

Christ, that's a lot of blood.

WILCOX

Yeah, we all know how much you like
blood, Frank. There's more on the
couch.

McGRATH

All this from Charlie Travis?

WILCOX

Every greasy drop.

McGRATH

Our boy musta' hit an artery -

Wilcox is already walking away. Neely approaches McGrath. McGrath nods in Dennis's direction.

McGRATH

How's he doing?

NEELY

Pretty shook up.

McGRATH

What happened?

NEELY

Charlie comes in, waves the gun around. Dennis gets it from him. Charlie grabs the vase, goes to throw it. Dennis shoots - twice.

McGRATH

Entry?

NEELY

Back door. It wasn't locked.

McGrath looks at the blood-stained brass vase on the floor.

McGRATH

Where was the vase?

NEELY

On the end-table there.

McGrath looks. It is a small table, with three items standing on it: A family photo in a light stand-up cardboard frame; a paper greeting card, also standing; and a small, vertical desk clock.

McGrath steps toward the table and looks directly down on it. The three items are arranged in a triangle, with a space between them in the center of the table. There is a light coat of dust on the table, with a clean circle in it indicating where the vase had been standing. The whole arrangement is very tight.

A look of confusion crosses McGrath's face.

McGrath turns and sees Dennis sitting across the room. He approaches him, smiling reassuringly.

McGRATH

The things you'll do for a story,

Dennis.

DENNIS (sarcasm)
Oh, that's funny.

McGRATH
You okay?

DENNIS
I didn't wanna kill him, Frank. I mean, I - god, I didn't want to kill him.

McGRATH
I know. (a beat) We're gonna make this as quick as possible. There'll have to be a coroner's inquest, but I doubt it'll go beyond that.

McGrath sits near Dennis, and gives Ashley a little wave. She giggles. Just then, two cops walk by with a stretcher, carrying a covered body. All activity in the room stops, as everyone looks. Dennis turns Ashley so her back is to it.

CU McGrath's face as he stares at the stretcher. In his mind, mixed among the sounds of cops murmuring in the room, a larger sound rises - a sound of military trucks and marching feet.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. PRISON CAMP - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

CU of another stretcher, being carried by two American soldiers in World War Two-era field uniforms and surgical masks. Stacked on the stretcher are several bodies, covered with a canvas, a tangle of stick-thin limbs hanging off the sides. The two soldiers strain under the weight, sloshing through mud.

In the background, other soldiers carry other stretchers, loaded with other bodies. Military trucks rumble among them. It's a gloomy, overcast scene, entirely in black-and-white. It lasts a few seconds.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CU McGrath's face, still watching the stretcher carried by the two officers. Suddenly, one arm (from the corpse) drops over the side of the stretcher and hangs there. It's a man's arm, full of

tattoos. One is a smiling skull framed by the words: ``Say Goodbye''.

Sheriff Wilcox, seeing this, starts chuckling. McGrath stares at him silently.

McGrath turns back and sees Dennis staring at the body on the stretcher, horror in his eyes. The two cops exit with the stretcher.

McGRATH

I guess we better do this by the book,
Dennis. You have the right to remain
silent -

DENNIS

(Upset) Oh, Frank, c'mon - I know my
Miranda. God, please don't read me my
rights in front of my kid.

McGrath looks at the little girl. His face softens. He smiles sympathetically at Dennis, and nods reluctantly.

McGRATH

Okay. Sure. Why don't you just tell me
what happened.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. HAWKINS HOME - NIGHT

Dennis is in the bathroom. He runs his hands under the faucet (closeup of the water as it runs) then he swipes his hands on a towel, and exits.

He walks down the hall, calling into the living room as he does.

DENNIS

Mary, I've got to meet with the city
editor tomorrow, might be late. How
'bout we just plan on going to Macy's
for dinner -

He steps into the living room - and freezes.

Mary is sitting on the couch, trembling with panic, Ashley in her lap. CHARLIE TRAVIS stands over them, holding a gun. He's thin, wears ratty jeans, a t-shirt and a leather vest and boots, long hair in duck-tail, a wispy beard. On his arm is the skull tattoo. He turns and grins at Dennis.

The brass vase stands on the end table next to the couch, the three other items arranged closely around it.

CHARLIE

Macy's! Oh, Macy's sounds great! Love their chicken. I'm there, man!

Dennis is still frozen, looking like he's been kicked in the stomach. He looks at Mary, who is staring straight ahead.

DENNIS

(Weakly) Mary. He - He has a gun.

CHARLIE

I've already explained that to her.

Charlie waves a hand in front of Mary's blind eyes. She doesn't move.

CHARLIE

Wild. I've always wondered, Denny - what's it like to fuck a blind girl?

Dennis is almost faint with terror.

DENNIS

Charlie. Please. They're not involved in this -

CHARLIE

Is it different? Better? Y'know, maybe I'll just find out for myself.

Mary gives a little cry, then steadies herself.

CHARLIE

How 'bout it, lady? You'd like me. Let's see - I'm handsome, muscular, blond hair, nice clean teeth -

Charlie stares menacingly at Dennis.

CHARLIE

And I happen to be available at the moment.

Dennis looks at Ashley, sitting quietly on her mother's lap. He's barely holding it together.

DENNIS

Charlie, I'll do anything. Okay? Just, please, oh god, please, they're not

involved -

CHARLIE

(Exploding) They're involved! (shouts)
You're ALL fucking involved!

Mary jumps, then squeezes Ashley close.

CHARLIE

You can't just walk away from this,
Denny! They almost gave me the rope
because o' you, motherfucker!

Dennis is frozen. Charlie turns, so he has his back to Mary.

CHARLIE

Now, lemme tell you what's gonna
happen. First, Blindy here is gonna
make me happy. Then you're gonna gimme
every fucking dime you got in this
house, plus your car keys.

Mary is listening intently, trying to position Charlie from the
sound of his voice. She quietly slips Ashley off her lap and onto
the couch.

CHARLIE

Then, if you're well-behaved, I might
let your little girl here live.

Mary lunges her whole body forward, toward the sound of Charlie's
voice, and hits him full in the back. He's taken by surprise.

The gun flies; Dennis dives on it.

Mary scrambles back to the couch to find Ashley. Dennis holds the
gun on Charlie as Charlie sits on the floor, stunned.

Charlie stares at the gun a moment, then starts laughing - a low,
breathless surprised laugh.

Mary, terrified, stares into space, waiting for some explanation.

MARY

Dennis?

DENNIS

I've got the gun, Mary.

Charlie is still sitting and still laughing the strange laugh. He
shakes his head, puts a finger to his temple, pretends to shoot
himself, then laughs some more.

Dennis, holding the gun, goes to the phone and dials.

DENNIS

Mary, take Ashley to the bedroom.
Everything's fine, honey.

Mary leads Ashley out of the room. Charlie continues to laugh.

DENNIS (Into phone)

My name is Dennis Hawkins, I live at
401 Luttrell Road, last house on the
lane. I have an intruder here - I'm
holding a gun on him. (Beat) No,
everyone's fine. (Beat) Please hurry.

He hangs up. He and Charlie stare at each other a moment, Charlie
still laughing a little.

CHARLIE

Well, Denny - I guess you win again.

Dennis doesn't answer. He silently holds the gun on him.

CHARLIE

Helluva story for you, huh? `Reporter
catches bad guy.' Bet you'll really
get a headline for this one.

Charlie starts to rise.

CHARLIE

Mind if I stand?

DENNIS

Sit back down.

Charlie stands.

CHARLIE

Sorry, man, got a cramp.

DENNIS (Points gun)

I said, sit down.

CHARLIE

You even know how to use that thing,
Denny?

Dennis is starting to panic.

DENNIS

You sit down, or I swear -

CHARLIE

You swear what, Denny? You gonna shoot me? (A beat) I don't think you're gonna shoot me, Dennis.

Charlie wanders toward the couch. Dennis is unsure what to do.

DENNIS

Sit! I said sit!

Charlie turns and smiles at him. They lock eyes. Sirens rise in the distance.

CHARLIE

You sit.

Charlie grabs the brass vase off the end table and raises it over his head, as if to throw it. Dennis fires. Charlie is hit in the lower chest, blood spattering his t-shirt.

Charlie stands staring at the wound, still holding the vase over his head, unable to believe he's been shot. Dennis continues pointing the gun at him. Blood drips on the carpet at Charlie's feet.

Three or four seconds have passed since the shot. All at once, Charlie makes a guttural cry and brings the vase back to throw it.

Dennis fires again.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

Dennis is sitting on the witness stand, CORONER JERRY JOHNSTON (late 60s, grandfatherly, shirt open at the neck) standing in front of him. Though they're in a court room, there is a casual atmosphere. Neither Dennis nor Johnston wear ties. The judge's bench and attorney's tables sit empty.

DENNIS

The second shot hit him in the eye. He dropped the vase and fell back on the couch. He didn't move after that. I put down the gun, then went and waited with Mary until the police arrived.

The coroner's jury - six men and women - are seated in the jury

box. They look hot and uncomfortable. In the audience, Mary sits in the front row, staring straight ahead, a white cane folded up in her lap. A handful of others are scattered throughout seats in the room, including Sheriff Wilcox. (All clothing and hair, mid-late 1960s).

Frank McGrath sits alone in a seat off to one side of the room, in front of a window. He's splitting his time between listening to the testimony and gazing idly out the window at the street below. It is overcast and wet.

It's a small-town courthouse square. A large fountain bubbles water. McGrath looks at it, then looks at a nearby air-conditioner window-unit, dripping liquid onto the window sill. CU his face.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. PRISON CAMP - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

CU a military boot stepping into a muddy puddle, sending a cascade of water. Pan up: the soldier is carrying one of the stretchers loaded with emaciated bodies.

Pan up further: The soldier is McGrath, much younger (20-ish). On his face is a surgical mask; behind it, a grimace.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

McGrath's face, remembering. Coroner Johnston is still questioning Dennis on the stand.

JOHNSTON

And how much time elapsed between the first and second shots, Mr. Hawkins?

DENNIS

Three, maybe four seconds.

JOHNSTON

And during that time, Mr. Travis was holding the vase, and preparing to throw it?

DENNIS

Yes.

JOHNSTON

Now, Mr. Hawkins, I don't want you to be nervous. This isn't a trial. I just need to ask, for the record: In your opinion, was your life or safety in immediate danger when you fired at Mr. Travis?

Close-up of Dennis's face.

DENNIS

Absolutely.

INT. COURT ROOM - LATER

Our view moves across the room, settling on a CU of a small statue in the corner; it's Lady Justice, blindfolded and holding her scales.

Then we focus beyond the statue, to the witness stand, where Mary sits, staring blindly into space, her white cane in her lap. Coroner Johnston questions her.

JOHNSTON

After you went into the bedroom with your daughter, what did you hear?

MARY

First I heard Dennis finish the phone call. I heard him tell them to please hurry. Travis was still laughing.

JOHNSTON

Now, Travis laughed the whole time your husband had the gun?

MARY

Yes. He started right after I hit him.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

DARKNESS (MARY'S POINT OF VIEW)

The screen is completely black, nothing but the sound of Mary's breathing, with other sounds rising in the background.

CHARLIE (v.o.)

... If you're well-behaved, I might let your little girl here live.

A second later, the sound of contact as Mary hits Charlie in the

back - a hard release of breath by her, a thump as Charlie hits the floor. Then Mary's panicked breathing. The screen is still black.

MARY (VOICE ONLY)

Dennis?

DENNIS (VOICE ONLY)

I've got the gun, Mary.

The sound of Charlie's low, breathless laughter rises in the blackness.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

MARY

It was a strange laugh. Very low. Like he was out of breath.

JOHNSTON

So your husband told you to take your daughter into the other room. What did you hear then?

MARY

After he finished the call, I heard more of the laughing.

Johnston nods.

JOHNSTON

Ok, Mrs. Hawkins, could you tell the coroner's jury about the shots you heard?

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

DARKNESS (MARY'S POINT OF VIEW)

Again, a completely black screen, the sound of Mary's breathing, other sounds behind it.

MARY (v.o. - whispering, panicky)

It's okay, honey. Just stay with mommy.

THWACK - the sound of a gunshot from another room.

Both Mary's voice and the little girl's voice let out little cries.

ASHLEY (v.o.)
Mommy, what was that?

MARY (v.o. Crying and whispering)
Shhh. It's ok honey. Shhh.

Five seconds have passed in the dark since the gunshot. Both Mary and Ashley are whimpering and panicked.

ASHLEY (v.o.)
Where's daddy?

MARY (v.o.)
(Crying) Shhh.

Ten seconds have passed since the shot.

MARY (v.o. - crying)
Everything's o.k., honey. Shhhh.

Fifteen seconds have passed since the shot.

MARY (v.o.)
Stay here, honey. Mommy's right here.

THWACK - the second shot rings out. They both cry out again, startled and terrified.

BACK TO PRESENT:

IN. COURT ROOM - DAY

JOHNSTON
And how much time passed between the
two shots?

Closeup of Mary's face.

MARY
I'd say . . . three seconds.

JOHNSTON
Maybe four?

MARY (Nods)
Maybe four.

CUT TO:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

Small, professional office. McGrath sits at his desk, drinking a cup of coffee (we see it slosh in the cup), and staring out the window. It's overcast and rainy.

Across the street, in the second-story apartment window, he sees an ATTRACTIVE WOMAN, young, notably curvy, wearing a short skirt and serving dinner to her family at a kitchen table - a young husband and two children.

The woman playfully tousles the hair of one of the kids. CU McGrath's face, watching, no expression.

Then his gaze shifts to the pull-cord on his own window blinds, a thin rope hanging freely. We hear (in his mind) the rising echo of a mob chanting, in German: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t"

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

CU CEILING RAFTERS - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

We're in a darkened barracks, looking at the thick wooden rafters of the ceiling. Below (off-camera) we hear the sounds of an angry mob: 'Rekk-t! Rekk-t!'

One end of a large rope sails up into our view, looping over one of the rafters. It hangs there.

BACK TO PRESENT:

McGrath looks at his desktop. There is a picture of the Curly-Haired Boy (about 9) - the same one in the snapshot in his car. He stares at it, his face rigid. Then he stands and starts to exit the office.

Coroner Johnston appears at the door, a file in his hand.

McGRATH (Nods)

Jerry.

JOHNSTON (Nods)

Frank.

Johnston glances out the window, and catches a glimpse of the Attractive Woman in the apartment across the street, seated at the table and laughing with her family.

Johnston (absently)
Boy, that Mrs. Cratchett - bet she's
some cook, huh?

Johnston's gaze lingers out the window a moment longer, until
McGrath conspicuously clears his throat.

JOHNSTON
(Reacting) Oh. Yeah. I was wondering
if you could testify at the inquest
this afternoon?

McGRATH
Testify?

JOHNSTON
About the Travis brothers, the Dorothy
Phelps trial, Dennis's problems with
Charlie. All that.

McGRATH
I dunno, Jerry. Is this really
relevant? -

JOHNSTON
I just want to establish the setting
for justifiable homicide.

McGRATH
The guy was in their house. There
isn't any question about
justification, is there?

JOHNSTON
I think some of the jurors are
wondering why there were four seconds
between the shots. (A beat) And --
well -- I'm supposed to be leaving on
a fishing trip tomorrow.

McGrath laughs and shakes his head.

JOHNSTON
All right, look - you and I both know
this was justified. They're gonna
reach that conclusion either way. They
might reach it quicker if they have
all the background about that shitbag.
All I'm asking you to do is explain
why he was after Dennis.

McGRATH

(Shrugs) Okay. Sure, Jerry. (A beat)
How's Dennis holding up?

JOHNSTON

Seems okay. A little eerie how okay he seems, considering. I'm surprised he hasn't had any relatives come in for the inquest. Usually they do.

McGRATH

Dennis doesn't have any relatives. Parents died when he was young. He grew up in an orphanage.

JOHNSTON

I didn't know that.

Johnston holds out the file.

JOHNSTON

You want to see the autopsy?

McGrath takes the file and holds it up to his forehead, closing his eyes, then does a dramatic psychic impersonation.

McGRATH

He died of - of - a gunshot wound!

McGrath hands the folder back.

McGRATH

I'll pass.

Johnston smiles, and drops the folder on McGrath's desk. As he does, a photo slips out of the file and onto the desk.

JOHNSTON

File it, then. It's your copy.

Johnston exits. McGrath starts to leave, then looks down at the photo that has fallen out of the file. It's a close-up of the brass vase from the shooting scene, lying on its side in the blood puddle, blood splattered on the side facing up.

He picks it up, stares, a confused look in his eyes.

The look turns to annoyance. He folds the photo in half, creases it hard, and drops it in the trash can by his desk.

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

McGrath is on the stand, Johnston in front of him. Dennis and Mary sit next to each other in the audience.

JOHNSTON

I want to apologize again for the heat, ladies and gentlemen. It's an old building. (To Frank) Please state your name and occupation for the record.

McGRATH

My name is Frank McGrath. I'm the state's attorney for Lewis County.

JOHNSTON

And Mr. McGrath, you knew the deceased, Charles Travis?

McGRATH

Yes.

JOHNSTON

How did you first meet Mr. Travis?

McGRATH

The usual way.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. DIFFERENT COURT ROOM - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

Charlie Travis and another man - about the same age as Charlie, long-haired, tattooed - are being brought into the room in handcuffs. Both wear jeans and leather. They stand next to HAL MARLEY, a grizzled public defender.

Seated at the bench is the JUDGE, elderly. McGrath stands nearby.

JUDGE (reading)

Case number 68-CF-117, people versus Charles Travis and James Travis, first appearance.

McGRATH (v.o.)

Charlie and his brother, Jimmy, were frequent guests of the Lewis County criminal justice system. We saw them a few times a year. Drugs, bar fights, bad checks.

Charlie, still cuffed, addresses the Judge, as his brother,

Jimmy, stands next to him (also still cuffed).

CHARLIE

I just want to say for the record
Judge - and I mean this, sincerely - I
thought she was eighteen.

JIMMY (Long pause, considering strategy)

Me, too.

McGRATH (v.o.)

They had numerous and diverse
interests. No one was all that
surprised when we ended up charging
them both with murder last year.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JOHNSTON

You also had occasion to meet Dennis
Hawkins?

McGrath smiles paternally at Dennis, who smiles back from the
audience.

McGRATH

Yeah, I've known Dennis about four
years.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

McGrath is seated. Deputy Neely comes in with Dennis.

NEELY

Frank McGrath, Dennis Hawkins. Dennis
is the new correspondent for the
Herald.

They shake hands.

McGRATH (Smiling)

Will you be misquoting me as much as
your predecessor did?

DENNIS

I'm certainly going to try, sir.

McGRATH

Oh, a comedian.

McGrath and Dennis smile politely at each other, then both glance at Neely - to see that he is looking out McGrath's window (in the direction of the Attractive Woman's apartment, across the street), his jaw slack.

McGrath and Dennis share a silent smirk, then both innocently drop it when Neely looks back at them, startled.

NEELY (defensively)

What?

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

INT. SOMEONE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Seated around a table playing poker are McGrath, Dennis, Deputy Neely, Hal Marley (the public defender) and a few others. Bills are on the table. Smoke fills the air. Sudsy beer sloshes in glasses (but not McGrath's).

McGRATH (v.o.)

I got to know Dennis during trials,
and in - um - social settings. Turns
out we went to the same college -
though I was there a bit earlier than
him.

McGRATH (IN FLASHBACK)

I'll stay.

NEELY

I'm out.

McGRATH

Dennis?

Dennis glances at his cards, making no face at all. Then -

DENNIS

Raise five.

``Oohs'' and ``Aaahs'' around the table, as McGrath tries to stare Dennis down. They both stare a long time.

McGrath finally breaks into a grin, then flings down his cards.

McGRATH

Fucker.

Laughter. Dennis scoops up the bills, a small smile on his face.

NEELY

God, Dennis, how do you always do that?

McGRATH

Did you have it?

DENNIS

What do you think?

They stare at each other again, McGrath looking for a sign. Dennis's face is a statue.

McGRATH (laughs, shakes head)

Fuck if I know.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JOHNSTON

And there were others present at these - these social gatherings, Mr. McGrath?

McGRATH

Yes.

QUICK-CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. SOMEONE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

One of the players seated at the table, laughing with the others, is Coroner Johnston.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JOHNSTON

Would you describe yourself as a close friend of Mr. Hawkins?

McGRATH

I would describe myself as a friend.

Dennis mainly hangs around with the younger crowd.

CU Dennis, in the audience, thinking.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. STRIP JOINT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Dennis and Deputy Neely are seated in front of the stage as a half-nude woman gyrates to pounding music. Neely (in civilian clothing) is laughing it up; Dennis is uncomfortable.

NEELY

Lighten up. Go get some dollar bills.

DENNIS

C'mon, man, I'm married.

NEELY

It's not like you have to give her an official report, Dennis.

Dennis shakes his head. Neely relents, tucks one more dollar into the stripper's g-string, then starts to lead Dennis out.

STRIPPER (Calling)

You leavin', Deputy?

NEELY (Pointing)

He's married.

STRIPPER

It's not like he has to give her an official report.

Dennis, reacting to the stripper's comment, stares at Neely as they exit together.

DENNIS

You come here a lot, don't you?

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

INT. QUIET BAR - LATER (BLACK/WHITE)

Dennis and Neely are seated at a booth in back.

NEELY

So. You been here a month. What you

think of ol' Lewis County?

DENNIS

I've lived in worse places.

NEELY

Not more boring ones, I bet. (Drinks)
Whataya think of Frank?

DENNIS

Nice guy, I guess. Little quiet.

NEELY

Yeah, he is.

Neely leans forward, confidentially.

NEELY

Heard his nick-name yet?

DENNIS

'Body-bag'? (Laughs) That's awful.

NEELY

Know how he got it?

DENNIS

I figured it was from all the guys he's
sent to Death Row.

Neely shakes his head, drinks. He pauses, savoring dark gossip,
then speaks, quietly.

NEELY

No. This was before. Frank was in
Germany, in the war. He's never talked
to anyone about what he did over there,
but some of the other guys from town who
went over, they heard - (a beat) Frank
was assigned to one of those camps,
after we drove out the Nazis. You know,
one of those death camps?

Dennis is riveted. Neely is almost whispering now.

NEELY

Shit, no wonder he never told no one
about it. Frank's job was to clean up
the bodies, to bury them. (A beat) And
that explains a lot, 'cause Frank's
about the most weak-stomached
sonofabitch you've ever seen. Guy can

barely look at a rare steak without fainting.

Neely laughs. Dennis hesitantly joins in.

NEELY

So Frank comes back from the war with a wife. German. Well, that was real popular around here, as you can imagine. But they did okay. He gets his law degree, they have a kid. A boy. (A beat) He was about nine years old at the time of the accident.

Neely drinks as Dennis waits, tensely, for the rest.

NEELY

This woulda been about fifteen years ago - Well, it was the year we had all that snow. Him and his wife and the kid are in Olympia for a movie, but they're in separate cars for some reason - Frank had to go up late, or something. Anyway, they're driving back, his wife and kid in one car, Frank driving behind them, and it's snowing hard. They come on a curve and a drunk comes from the other direction, hits the wife's car head on.

Dennis is dumbstruck.

NEELY

Wife and kid are killed instantly. Drunk was dead, too. They said Frank saw the whole thing, start to finish. Saw the drunk comin' at 'em, saw them crash. All he could do was watch from his car.

DENNIS (Quietly)

Jesus.

NEELY

The thing is - I was a kid, but I remember this part - the weather was so bad? Roads stopped up and all that? It took an hour for the rescue squads to get there. (Shakes head) Frank had to sit there with the bodies for an hour. Just sit there in the snow.

Dennis is staring, speechless.

NEELY

Well, Frank left town. He was gone for a few years - hell, I think I was through high school before he came back. Not sure where he went, but he came back looking and acting a lot different. Harder. Ran for state's attorney right away, and won. Sympathy vote, some people said. Pretty soon, it's clear that he's become this hard-ass. No plea bargains that don't involve time. Pushing for the death penalty every chance he gets. (Laughs) Frank McGrath, sending people to the noose.

DENNIS (shrugs)

That's what prosecutors do.

NEELY

Yeah, but this is Body-Bag McGrath we're talkin' about. Guy sees a bloody nose and he get queasy.

Neely laughs again. Dennis looks down, a little sheepishly, then joins Neely's laugh. Then they both drink quietly for a moment.

DENNIS

He's been alone ever since?

NEELY (Nods)

Works and sleeps. And loses at poker now and then.

Dennis mulls this.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

CU Dennis, remembering. Johnston is still questioning McGrath.

JOHNSTON

Now, Mr. McGrath -- are you aware of what type of relationship existed between Mr. Hawkins and the deceased?

McGRATH

Yes. I would describe their relationship as confrontational

JOHNSTON

You know this first-hand?

McGRATH (Nods)

I personally saw Mr. Travis threaten Mr. Hawkins' life. In court.

JOHNSTON

When was this?

McGRATH

Last month. At the end of Travis' murder trial.

JOHNSTON

Could you fill us in about that trial, Mr. McGrath? For the record?

McGrath pauses, looking bothered at having to discuss this.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

Police officers and others are slowly walking in a row on a misty, overcast day, searching the ground. Another officer leads a dog, searching underbrush.

McGRATH (v.o.)

Dorothy Phelps had disappeared on her way home from work one day. They found her car, abandoned, north of the county line. Her blood was in it.

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

INT. PHELPS HOME - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

McGrath and other officials are sitting in the living room, talking in hushed tones to a distraught MR. PHELPS. Someone pours coffee into a cup, the liquid sloshing loudly. A picture of the young, pretty MRS. PHELPS stands on the coffee table.

McGRATH (v.o.)

It was one of those situations where you have to tell the people there is still some hope, when you know very

well there isn't.

McGrath, in the living room, looks over to a hallway and sees two young children standing there, a boy and girl, 3 and 4 years old, watching the activity in the living room with wide-eyed worry. McGrath stares at them a moment, trance-like, then looks down

McGRATH (v.o.)

She was dead. We knew that. It was just a matter of finding her. And finding out who did it.

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

INT. GARAGE - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

Police technicians comb through Mrs. Phelps' car. McGrath watches.

McGRATH (v.o.)

Of course, we employed all the usual investigatory techniques, with the usual results - a lot of half-clues and partial information. In my experience, most killers end up solving our cases for us, if we're just patient. (A beat) That's where the Travis boys came in.

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

Trashy little place, country music playing. Beer splashes loudly from a spigot into a glass.

Most of the patrons are watching a table in the back of the room, where Charlie and his brother, Jimmy, are seated, arguing drunkenly with each other. Both are hot and sweaty.

JIMMY

That's bullshit man! I was there!

CHARLIE

You were there, but I did it.

JIMMY

Man, you're so fuckin' stupid, you don't even unnerstant the law, Charlie! Long as I'm there when you

shoot someone, I'm just as responsible!

CHARLIE

Bullshit! I'M the one who pulled the trigger! You just sat there like a little pussy, going (high voice) 'Oh, Charlie, the blood, look at all the blood, oh don't get the blood on me!'

JIMMY

I did not! I just said you shouldn't get it on your clothes, 'causa evidence, man! You don't know nuthin' about the law, Charlie!

CHARLIE (High voice)

'Oh, Charlie, the blood, oh so much blood!'

Around the bar, the patrons and bartender are all staring at the two brothers in open-mouthed amazement.

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

Charlie and Jimmy Travis are being led into the courtroom in prison jump-suits, hands cuffed behind them.

McGRATH (v.o.)

They were not the brightest boys I've ever met.

The courtroom is crowded, reporters and cameras in the doorway. McGrath stands by the prosecution's table. Jimmy and Charlie are standing with Hal Marley, the public defender from the poker game. Dennis is in the audience, taking notes. Same elderly judge as before.

JUDGE (reading)

Case number 96-CF-268, people versus Charles Travis and James Travis. This is a capital case.

Jimmy turns to Hal and whispers a question. Hal whispers back. Jimmy's eyes go wide, and he looks over at McGrath. McGrath gives him a cold smile as the judge continues talking.

The Judge pours himself a glass of water from a pitcher. It sloshes in the glass.

JUDGE

I have to apologize for the heat, folks. It's an old building. (a beat) Mr. McGrath, you don't have a body, is that correct?

McGRATH

That is correct, your honor. But the sheriff's department found a shoe on the suspects' property that has been identified as having belonged to the victim. And we have thirteen witnesses who will testify that the defendants publicly discussed details of the murder.

McGRATH (v.o.)

But we still didn't have a body. We had enough to get them to trial, and I was hoping that would shake something else loose. It did.

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

EXT. SMALL RURAL HOME - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

Dennis is standing at the front door, as an old man opens it. It is overcast and drizzling outside.

McGRATH (v.o.)

The sheriff's department was - (pause) - less than diligent in interviewing the Travis brothers' neighbors. Dennis was more thorough.

DENNIS (To old man)

Hi. My name's Dennis Hawkins, I'm with the Herald. Could I talk to you about your neighbors over there?

OLD MAN

I was wondering when someone was gonna ask me 'bout them boys. Did you guys ever find out why they were doing all that digging?

DENNIS (Long pause)

Um . . . digging?

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

Distant view, through the door. Dennis and McGrath are talking. We don't hear what they're saying.

McGRATH (v.o.)

There is a unique relationship between prosecutors and the press - it fluctuates somewhere between adversarial, and mutually beneficial. (Pause) The deal was, Dennis would give us his information, in exchange for an exclusive story.

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

EXT. WOODS - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

Police and other officials are extracting a half-decomposed body from the ground. It is raining, hard. McGrath and Dennis watch from a short distance. McGrath is grimacing and looking away. Dennis is staring in open horror.

McGRATH (v.o.)

He got more `story' than he expected.

Dennis turns, walks quickly to the side of a police car, doubles over and vomits. McGrath approaches, putting himself between Dennis and the cops so no one else can see it.

DENNIS (Weakly)

I'm sorry.

McGRATH (Shrugs)

I barf all the time.

DENNIS

She was Mary's age.

Dennis shakes his head. McGrath watches patiently.

DENNIS

God, how could someone. . . ? (Pause) I just wish that - that -

McGRATH

That you hadn't seen it?

Dennis nods.

McGRATH (v.o.)

There is a side of life most people don't ever have to look at -- the side the Travis brothers come from, and people like them. It's an insane place, unfathomable to most of us - a place where a human life is worth less than a car ride, or a few dollars in a purse. That was Dennis's first look at that side of life.

McGrath puts an arm on Dennis's back.

McGRATH

You won't sleep for awhile. Then you'll start sleeping again.

They start to walk away from the scene.

McGRATH

You know, it is nice to see you lose your cool for once.

DENNIS (amiably)

Fuck you.

As they walk away, McGrath looks over his shoulder at the gaping hole. His face is suddenly still and pensive.

Pull in slowly to a CU of the earthen hole, McGrath staring at it, as his voice-over comes back in.

McGRATH (v.o.)

The body made the case, as bodies tend to do. They pulled a bullet from the skull. Ballistics showed it had come from one of the guns found in the Travis brothers' home.

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

INT. COURT HOUSE - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

The two brothers - both still in jail jump suits, both still handcuffed -- are lunging at each other and shouting insults in a hallway, as two deputies hold them back.

CHARLIE

You told 'em, didn't you, you little pussy?!

McGRATH (v.o.)
Brotherly love blossomed at that
point.

JIMMY
Oh, fuck you, Charlie, I told you to
throw away the gun! You don't
unnerstant nothin about the law, you
dumb motherfucker!

McGRATH (v.o.)
It was truly touching. Within half an
hour of finding the body, we had to
get the Travis boys separate
attorneys. Within half a day, they
were both trying to cut deals with me.

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

INT. COURT HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

McGrath is seated on a bench, Jimmy (in cuffs) next to him, with
an armed guard nearby. Jimmy watches as Charlie (also in cuffs)
is led into a room down the hall by a defense attorney and
another guard. Charlie looks at Jimmy just before disappearing
behind the door, smiles, holds up his cuffed hands and gives him
the finger.

Jimmy fumes. He is agitated, keeps looking down the hall. The
guard reads his newspaper. Jimmy leans towards McGrath.

JIMMY
You know, this really was Charlie's
fault. I didn't have nuthin' to do
with it.

McGrath is staring straight ahead, not acknowledging him.

JIMMY
That motherfucker's been getting me in
trouble my whole life. Now he's in
there getting' me in more trouble,
isn't he? (A beat) isn't he?

McGrath doesn't answer. Jimmy gives up and sits back.

JIMMY
Well, I don't care. I don't give a
fuck, 'cause you know what? I'm gonna
kill him. (Nods) I already decided,

I'm gonna kill the motherfucker. (A beat) That's just between me and you.

McGrath looks over at him, stoically. Jimmy's getting worked up.

JIMMY

He's been ruinin' my whole life, always getting me in trouble. You know he steals all the money I ever get? Just steals it every time, then pretends he didn't. Like I'm not gonna figure it out - we're the only ones livin' in the house! (Shakes his head) And now this thing. That sonofabitch. I already decided - I'm gonna kill him. Gonna be smart about it, too - not like this last one. (slow, emphatic) I'm gonna kill him and no one's ever gonna figure out who did it.

McGrath still is staring at Jimmy in quiet amazement.

JIMMY

Not sure when. Right now, they got us in sep'rate cells. (Pause, thinking) Maybe I can kill him in prison. I mean, if we don't get the noose. You think they'll send us to the same prison?

McGrath stares a moment longer, expressionless. Then -

McGRATH

I'll see what I can do.

Jimmy nods, satisfied with himself.

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

EXT. DENNIS'S FRONT PORCH - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

McGrath, Deputy Neely, Dennis and Mary are all sitting there, drinks in hand, talking. A light rain falls, misting the air around them. Mary and Dennis share the porch swing, Mary holding his arm, her eyes staring sightlessly forward. All have beers, except McGrath, who's drinking a soda.

It's hot. They're all sweating. The cans they hold drip with condensation.

Mary's blind eyes stare off at nothing for a moment, as she listens, intently, to the night. A small smile arrives on her lips.

MARY

Hummingbird.

The three men listen, but here nothing except the patter of the rain. They look in confusion at each other.

McGRATH (v.o.)

We had the body, we had the bullet, we had the weapon. We had it won. Hell, I was congratulating myself before the trial even started.

McGRATH (in flashback)

You know why it is that most murderers get caught?

NEELY (Laughs)

Oh, c'mon - MOST?

McGRATH

Most murderers get caught, yes. I mean, maybe not in big cities, maybe not in New York or Chicago, but that's just because there's too many murders to go around. In normal places, places where you can devote the proper time to investigating each murder, they almost always get caught. Hell, we haven't had an unsolved murder in this county in thirty years. You know why that is?

MARY (smiling)

A brilliant state's attorney?

Dennis and Neely laugh.

McGRATH (Nods)

That has been the reason for the past six years. But before that? You know why?

Pause. Everyone waits for the answer.

McGRATH

Because murderers are stupid people. That's why. They're all morons.

Laughter from the others.

DENNIS

C'mon, Frank, you gotta do better than that.

McGRATH

No, no, I'm serious about this. The people who commit murder, by and large, are among the stupidest people in any given community. Don't ask me why. I'm not a sociologist. I guess whatever it is that just happens to make them murderers also just happens to make them stupid. Or vice-versa. Whatever. Point is, they are always of notably low intelligence.

The others are laughing it off, but McGrath presses on.

McGRATH

Think about it. How are most murderers caught? Fingerprints? Gimme a break. Most are caught the same way these boys were caught - because they go out in public and they talk about what they did. They talk about it! That's how ninety-nine percent of these guys get caught, shootin' off their mouths in some bar. If that's not stupid, what is?

MARY

You make it sound like it'd be easy for a smart person to get away with murder.

McGRATH

Mary, it'd be easy for most people to get away with murder. You know how much has to happen - you know how badly the killer has to screw up - for an investigator to be able to look at a dead body and figure out 'who-dun-it'? That that ever happens is astounding. It should be impossible. Because anyone with an ounce of common sense can cover his tracks and never get caught. Luckily, most murderers don't have any common sense. Most murderers happen to be unusually stupid people.

DENNIS

Or vice-versa.

Laughter. Dennis gets himself a new beer from a cooler, water dripping off it, and puts one in Mary's hand. She flicks some of the liquid off the top of the can and opens it.

MARY

Frank, you need a beer?

McGRATH

No, I've got a soda, thanks, Mary.

Tension crosses Dennis's face at this. McGrath moves back on topic.

McGRATH

Anyway, if a person of high or even average intelligence were to, for some reason, commit murder, that person could very easily avoid getting caught. You wouldn't even have to be terribly brilliant about it. All you'd have to do is not be terribly stupid.

NEELY

Don't talk about it in the bars.

McGRATH

Bingo. Don't talk about it in the bars. Don't tell your neighbors, don't tell your poker buddies, don't tell a cab driver who you don't even know - I actually had that happen once.

Laughter.

McGRATH

Don't tell your husband, don't tell your wife, don't tell your mom or dad. Just keep your damned mouth shut and you've eliminated the one avenue that leads to ninety-nine percent of the murder convictions out there.

DENNIS

And if we keep our mouths shut? Then what?

McGRATH

As a prosecutor? I go to plan B.

MARY

Which is?

McGRATH

I ask them if they did it.

Hysterical laughter from the other three.

McGRATH

I'm serious here. I take 'em aside, after they've been shaken up a bit by the process, feeling lonely and scared, looking for a friend, and I say - 'Hey, enough of this. Just tell me what happened, okay, buddy?' (Starts laughing) And they almost always do.

They're all laughing now. Dennis puts an arm around Mary and pulls her close to him. She reaches up with one hand, finds his cheek with her fingers, then kisses him there, smiling. McGrath, seeing this, looks wistfully at them a moment, then down at his can of soda.

McGRATH

When you get right down to it, the fact that criminals are more stupid than the norm is all that keeps us in control of civilization. It's all that keeps it from falling apart. If smart people were to wake up one morning and realize how easily they could get away with murder, we'd all be in trouble, my friends. People would commit murder the way they break the speed limit, and they'd get away with it just as often.

McGrath gives a little laugh. He and Dennis look at each other a moment.

McGRATH

Save this quote for the record, Dennis
- The day I come across a smart
murderer is the day I quit this job.

At that moment, a hummingbird flies across the porch, buzzing frantically, startling McGrath and Dennis.

McGrath smiles, and looks at Mary in wonder

STILL IN FLASHBACK:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

The Travis brothers are wearing shirts and ties, seated with their two attorneys (Hal Marley is one). Dennis is in the crowded audience, in shirt and tie, writing.

McGrath, sitting at the prosecution table, takes a long sip of water from a glass (we watch the movement of the water a moment), then stands.

McGRATH (v.o.)

All that was left was for the jury to make a decision on the sentence - life in prison, or death by hanging.

McGrath walks to the jury box and stands there a moment.

McGRATH (v.o.)

We all have our views on that particular subject. And I'm not about to apologize for mine.

McGRATH (in flashback, to jury)

What is justice? (Long pause) Is it compensation? No, it's more complicated than that. (A beat) Is it vengeance?

McGrath shakes his head.

McGRATH

It's more noble than that. Vengeance is justice's ugly cousin. (Pause) Folks, to me, justice is defined by one strong, simple belief. It's a belief that is at the center of our court system, and at the core of all faith. You won't find it in the Bible or in any law book. It isn't written down anywhere, and we don't usually say it. But no one who looks into the face of evil - as you ladies and gentlemen have during this trial - can deny that it is true. (Pause) It is simply this: That the living have a responsibility to the dead.

In the audience, Dennis is listening intently.

MCGRATH

Now, we could spend a lot of time today talking about the value of the life of Dorothy Phelps - the value of the life that was taken. We could talk about the two young children who will grow up without their mother. The husband who will spend the rest of his days without his wife. I could spend the whole day showing you how much Dorothy Phelps mattered, and how much she deserves justice - it wouldn't be hard, believe me.

McGrath pauses at the prosecution table and glances at the pitcher of water sitting there, condensation on the glass. Then he looks back at the jury.

McGRATH

But what I want you to keep in mind most of all about Dorothy Phelps, ladies and gentlemen, is that she's dead. She was alive, and now, because of these two defendants, she - is - dead. That fact alone makes her deserving of our justice. (Pause) The living have a responsibility to the dead.

McGrath reaches over to the pitcher and pours a glass of water. We watch it level in the glass. He takes a sip, then sets it back down and turns back to the jury.

McGRATH

Now some of you will wonder whether justice is even possible here, and you're right - that's a real question. The laws of the state of Washington and the United States of America do not allow us to terrorize the defendants, Charles and James Travis. The law doesn't allow us hold a gun against the backs of their heads, and push their faces into a car seat while they cry and plead for their lives, and then pull the trigger.

Some jurors squirm at this.

McGRATH (Anger)

The law does not allow us to drag

their lifeless bodies across the dirt
and dump them into a shallow hole like
so much garbage. So, no, ladies and
gentlemen, in the strictest sense,
true and full justice for this
innocent wife and mother is not
possible here.

McGrath walks over and stares Charles Travis in the eyes.

McGRATH

But we can certainly try.

He stares Charlie down a moment longer, noting the skull tattoo
on his arm ('Say Goodbye'), then turns and walks back toward the
jury.

McGRATH

You have already determined that the
defendants murdered Dorothy Phelps in
cold blood. Murdered her for her car.
(A beat - then shouts) For her car!
Before you hesitate to trade a life
for a life, just remember that these
monsters traded a life for a piece of
machinery!

McGrath stands in front of the jury, collecting himself.

McGRATH

Evil exists, ladies and gentlemen. It
isn't an abstract principle. It's a
living, breathing thing, and it's
sitting right in front of you. And
when we identify evil, as we have done
in this trial, we have an obligation
to deal with it. You've come halfway.
Don't turn your backs on Dorothy
Phelps now.

He turns to stare once more at the brothers.

McGRATH

The living have a responsibility to
the dead, ladies and gentlemen. I'm
asking you to fulfill that
responsibility.

McGRATH (v.o.)

I could see it in their eyes. It was
over. They were going to send Jimmy
and Charlie Travis to death row as

surely as I'm sitting here.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JOHNSTON

And that was when you saw Charles
Travis threaten Dennis Hawkins?

McGrath smiles dryly, and nods.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

The last of the jurors are leaving the jury box and disappearing behind a door. Charlie and Jimmy Travis are being led out of the room. Charlie glares at Dennis, in the audience, as he passes.

McGRATH (v.o.)

I'll say this for him: At least he
waited until the jury was gone.

Charlie lets out a throaty scream and lunges at Dennis, momentarily breaking free of the guards and plowing through the audience, hands cuffed in front of him. He hits Dennis full-force and they both go tumbling down to the floor, Charlie holding his cuffed hands to Dennis's throat.

CHARLIE (Screaming)

How's this for a story, Hawkins?!

The guards finally get hold of Charlie and haul him away from Dennis. Jimmy Travis is watching the whole thing, wide-eyed. Charlie is still screaming. Dennis's face is expressionless.

CHARLIE

You're dead, motherfucker! Dead! Your
wife's dead! Your kid's dead! Dead!
Dead!

Dennis stares a moment longer. A little trickle of blood runs from his nose - but his face is utterly, eerily calm.

DENNIS (evenly)

I'd say you're the one who's dead,
Charlie.

They both freeze a moment as they stare at each other; Charlie is

taken aback at Dennis's stoic calmness. McGrath notices it too; he stares at Dennis, curiosity in his eyes.

The guards lead both Travis brothers away. Dennis casually wipes at his bloody nose with his fingers, a picture of icy calmness. McGrath continues to look at him in wonder.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

McGRATH

Dennis didn't press charges, and I didn't encourage him to. At the time it seemed a silly notion - filing a battery charge against someone headed for death row.

JOHNSTON

But Mr. Travis did not, in fact, go to death row, did he, Mr. McGrath?

McGRATH

As it turns out, no - he didn't.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

McGrath, Hal (the public defender), and the second defense attorney are gathered around the judge's desk.

McGRATH (irritated)

You have got to be kidding!

HAL

I don't like this any more than you do, Frank. But the shoe -

McGRATH

Fuck the shoe! We didn't even need the shoe! We have the body, we have the murder weapon!

JUDGE

Everybody calm down. Now, Mr. Marley, what you're telling me is that the shoe Deputy Lennon said he found on the defendants' property was not, in fact, found on the property?

HAL

That's correct, your honor. Deputy Lennon is now prepared to admit under oath that the shoe was, in fact, discovered in the parking lot where Mrs. Phelps disappeared, that he kept it in his car, and that he produced it three days later, while searching the Travis brothers' property, to help build the case against them.

McGRATH

Judge, I knew nothing about this, and clearly an investigation is warranted - but you can't seriously be thinking mis-trial over this! We didn't talk about that damned shoe more than two minutes!

JUDGE

I am aware of that, Mr. McGrath, but those particular two minutes happened to be during the arraignment. My decision to proceed with this matter was based on your representation to me that the shoe was found on the defendants' property, and now we learn that it wasn't.

McGRATH

I thought it was, your honor. In any case, the subsequent discovery of the body on the defendant's property rendered the shoe unnecessary - I'll take it out of evidence right now -

HAL

Great, Frank. My client will really be comforted by that little gesture while they're slipping on the noose.

JUDGE

I cannot sanction an 'end-justifies-the-means' approach to evidence, Mr. McGrath - you know that. This trial began with a perjury, and as such, its verdict is invalid. (Troubled pause) I'm declaring a mis-trial. Defendants will be held over for a new trial to be scheduled as soon as possible -

HAL

Judge, in light of the fact that my client has been in jail for five months, and now faces another long trial, I would renew the defense motion for bond. My client has deep roots in the community -

McGRATH (bitter laugh)

Yeah, he's got roots all right. He's robbed every gas station and fucked every 15-year-old from here to Oregon-

HAL

- and we would seek a recognizance bond or, barring that, a reasonable amount -

McGRATH

Your honor, you can't set bond! We have information that a relative of the defendants has agreed to put up his farm. If you set bond, these monsters are gonna walk!

JUDGE (explodes)

You shoulda thought of that before you brought tainted evidence into my courtroom, Frank! (Pause) I'm setting bond at five-hundred-thousand dollars.

McGrath's face goes still.

McGRATH (v.o.)

Charlie and Jimmy Travis bonded out two days later.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JOHNSTON

Would it be safe to say you were upset with this development?

McGRATH

That would be safe to say.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

McGrath is having a full-blown tantrum. He shoves everything off his desk with one sweep of his arm, kicks his chair, then his wastebasket. He stands fuming.

Sheriff Wilcox stands in front of the desk, watching, disinterested. McGrath is so angry he can barely speak.

McGRATH (fuming quietly)
I want to make sure I'm clear on this. Your deputy removed evidence from a scene. Planted it on a suspect. Made an improper arrest. Lied under oath. And now our conviction has been thrown out.

WILCOX (shakes head)
God damned liberal judges . . .

McGRATH (yells)
What the hell kinda ship are you running down there, Clyde?! We had this won! We had it won!

WILCOX
The boy was just trying to make sure we got the bastards, Frank.

McGRATH
Yeah, well I'm gonna make sure the `boy' goes to prison over this, and maybe you should go there with him!

WILCOX
You're not suggesting I had something to do with this?

McGRATH
I'm suggesting you are the most ethically challenged public official I've ever met, Clyde!

Wilcox stalks toward the door.

WILCOX
I don't have to listen to this crap.

McGRATH (Sarcasm)
Well, Sheriff, thanks for stopping in. Oh, and thank you for setting the Travis boys free. The whole state

thanks you for that.

Wilcox stops dead in the doorway, stands there a moment, then speaks (looking away), barely audible:

WILCOX

Fuck you. (A beat) Body-bag.

McGrath storms over to him, shouting.

McGRATH

You wanna say that to my face, you
shit-kicking redneck?!

Wilcox is taken aback. He stands there a moment longer, glaring at McGrath, then steps around him and exits.

McGrath stands alone a moment. He sets his trash can back in its spot, then thinks better of it and kicks it across the room. Dennis enters, notebook in hand, just in time to watch it sail.

DENNIS

Ok, I'll keep this short.

McGRATH

Hi, Dennis. (Laughs) I don't suppose
there's some positive spin you could
put on this thing?

DENNIS

'County No Longer Has To Feed Travis
Brothers.'

McGrath looks at him, then breaks into a frustrated laugh. He shakes his head.

McGRATH

That redneck bastard.

DENNIS

Is the redneck bastard gonna be
investigated, Frank?

McGRATH

The deputy's admitting perjury, and
I'm gonna nail him as hard as I can on
that. That's as far as it goes.

DENNIS

You're kidding, right? No one really
thinks that kid dreamt this up on his
own. I just talked to two judges who

want Wilcox suspended.

McGRATH
You're gonna print that?

DENNIS
You're damn fucking right I'm gonna
print that. What's with you, Frank?
You know he was involved.

McGrath pauses, frustrated. He walks over and closes the door.

McGRATH
Off the record?

DENNIS
(Pause, thinking) Okay.

McGRATH
I mean it, Dennis. This shows up
anywhere, and you and I are done
talking.

DENNIS
We're totally off.

McGRATH (pause)
Sheriff Wilcox is under investigation
by the FBI.

Dennis's eyes widen.

McGRATH
Apparently, he's been making a nice
little profit on the side, running
guns out of Portland. They're in the
middle of an undercover sting. I have
been asked not to do anything that
might make the good Sheriff --
jittery. So, in answer to your
question, no, there will be no
investigation.

Dennis doesn't know what to say.

McGRATH
I'm trusting you here, Dennis.

DENNIS
(Nods) It won't go anywhere, Frank.

McGRATH

You'll have the exclusive when it happens, okay?

Dennis nods. CU Dennis' face: Sincerity.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

LILLY JENKIN, the medical examiner, sits in the witness chair. Coroner Johnston questions her.

JOHNSTON

Ms. Jenkins. Have you been able to form an opinion as to which of the two shots killed the deceased, Charles Travis?

LILLY

Yes. The second shot entered the victim's left eye socket, tore through the brain and lodged in the rear of the skull. That was the fatal shot.

As she talks, McGrath sits off the side of the room, looking idly out the window. It's drizzling. On the sidewalk outside the courthouse, he see a dozen young men and women, quasi-hippie clothing and hair, holding signs and shouting slogans protesting the Vietnam War.

McGrath stares. CU his face: In his mind, the sound of another crowd rises: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. PRISON CAMP BARRACKS - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

Again, we're looking at the big wooden rafters in the ceiling. The rope is still draped over one of them. The crowd noise (Rekk-t! Rekk-t!) is growing louder, rising in anger.

Our view pans down from the ceiling just enough to glimpse the tops of a few raised fists - on bare, stick-thin arms.

Quick-cut to a close-up of Young McGrath. He's in the barracks, in uniform, rifle in hand, nervously surveying the mob.

Off-screen we hear a frantic male voice scream:

MALE VOICE (o.s.)

Goddammit, Frank, shoot!

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

CU McGrath's face. Coroner Johnston is still questioning Lilly Jenkins.

JOHNSTON

So the first shot - the one that entered in the upper portion of the abdomen - would not have been fatal?

McGrath casually looks over at Dennis and Mary in the front row, holding hands. Just as he looks, he sees Dennis slowly, silently lean over and kiss Mary on the cheek. It takes her by surprise; she smiles warmly (her eyes still staring off into nothing), brings up her hand, finds his cheek, and gently touches it. McGrath politely looks away, but is clearly moved.

LILLY

No. It was definitely the second shot that caused death. The first bullet wouldn't have been immediately fatal. It didn't hit any organs or arteries.

McGrath wakes up from his trance, and stares at Lilly, confused.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT MORGUE - DAY

Lilly is standing at a metal table, doing paperwork and eating a fast-food hamburger and slurping (loudly) from a milk-shake. McGrath enters, holding a crime photo.

McGRATH (Nods)

Lilly.

LILLY

Hi, Frank.

McGRATH

Hey, uh - the autopsy. You're sure the first shot didn't hit an artery?

LILLY

Positive. Why?

McGRATH

Well, it's just - there was awful lot of blood at the scene.

LILLY (Shrugs)

You can produce an awful lot of blood without hitting an artery. Just takes a little longer.

McGRATH

Well, that's the thing - there wasn't that much time.

He holds out a photo showing the blood-stained carpet.

McGRATH

See, this is where he was standing for the first shot. Stood there bleeding a few seconds - three or four seconds - then the second shot knocks him back on the couch. So all this blood had to come from the first hole, while he was standing there.

Lilly, still eating her burger, leans over and looks at the photo - then shakes her head conclusively and steps away to file her papers.

LILLY

No way.

McGrath is taken aback.

McGRATH

'No way'? (Small laugh) What do you mean, 'no way'? This is how it happened, Lilly. (A beat) You're sure it didn't hit an artery?

LILLY

Not even close.

She pulls her own photo, an autopsy photo of Charlie Travis' midsection. McGrath glances away from it, squeamishly. Lilly points to it as she talks through a mouthful of hamburger.

LILLY

See - here's the hole. Closest artery would be here (points). We followed the bullet path all the way through and it was clean. Nothing but meat.

She takes another bite of burger. McGrath is thoroughly confused.

McGRATH

Then where the hell did all this blood come from?

LILLY

I'm not saying it didn't come from the first wound. But it wouldn't have bled that fast. He'd have to have been standing there ten, fifteen seconds, anyway, to make a puddle like that. (Beat) You sure he's telling the truth about the time?

McGRATH (baffled)

Why would he lie about that? He's already admitted firing both shots. (Pause) This is Dennis we're talking about.

LILLY

I don't know what to tell you, Frank. All I know is, that hole (points at autopsy photo) did not produce that much blood (points at crime-scene photo) in four seconds.

She shakes her head conclusively one more time, then exits. McGrath is left standing there with a look of confusion.

CUT TO:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

McGrath is sitting back, his feet up on his desk, the trash can next to him. He's holding the photo of the blood-stained vase - retrieved from the trash - up to his face, staring hard at it. It is creased in the middle from where he had folded it earlier.

He stares at the photo, then stares off, concerned

CUT TO:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

McGrath is back in his seat by the window - with the same grave, concerned look on his face. He's staring at the back of Dennis's head. Dennis turns to look at him.

QUICK-CUT TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. PRISON CAMP - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

CU STARVED BOY'S face. He's about 11, sunken eyes, shorn hair, turning and staring directly into the camera. He's marching in a line with others. He wears rags, and a military compass on a chain around his neck.

Our view passes him, unsteady, with dust rising behind, as if we're looking at him from the back of a passing vehicle.

He stares briefly, and coldly, his gaze following us as we pass him. Despite his starved look, there is something menacing in his eyes.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

The Boy's face is replaced by Dennis' face. He is twisted around now, staring at McGrath with a tired smile.

McGrath smiles reassuringly back at him -- but hardness sets into his face as soon as Dennis looks away.

Sheriff Wilcox is on the stand, Coroner Johnston questioning him.

JOHNSTON

The footprints were near the rear entrance to the home?

WILCOX

Yes. Ground was wet, but we got a few. Size-ten boots with the same sole design as Travis was wearing. Looks like he was standing out there for a few minutes before he went in.

JOHNSTON

You also had occasion to examine the vase that the deceased had attempted to throw at Mr. Hawkins?

WILCOX

Yes. We found it on the carpet, lying in the blood stain. He stood there holding the vase, bleeding from the first wound. The second shot knocked him back on the couch. That's when he

dropped the vase. It landed in the blood stain on the carpet.

JOHNSTON

When the vase landed, the blood of the deceased got on it?

WILCOX

There was blood on it. We assume it was his. (Smile) It was the only blood around.

Uncomfortable pause in the court room at Wilcox's crass manner.

JOHNSTON

Thank you, Sheriff. That's all.

McGrath stands.

McGRATH

Mr. Coroner?

JOHNSTON (Surprised)

Yes, Mr. McGrath?

McGrath motions at Wilcox.

McGRATH

May I?

Dennis twists in his seat to look at McGrath, surprise and concern in his eyes.

JOHNSTON

Uh - certainly. Ask away, Frank.

Wilcox, on the stand, smirks. McGrath ignores it.

McGRATH

Sheriff, were Travis' fingerprints on the vase?

WILCOX

We didn't fingerprint the vase.

McGRATH (Surprised pause)

Could I ask why not?

WILCOX

Didn't see any reason to. Mr. Hawkins' story was supported by the physical evidence at the scene.

McGRATH

Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but the blood that was on the vase - wasn't it on the side that was facing up, when you found it?

WILCOX

Yeah, I suppose it was.

McGRATH

So, if - if the vase got blood on it from falling into the blood stain, why was the blood on the top side of it, instead of the side facing down?

WILCOX (annoyed)

Maybe it rolled.

Dennis, in the audience, is staring at McGrath with worry and confusion.

McGRATH

What about the gun? Have we established that Mr. Travis was the owner of the gun?

WILCOX (shrugs)

Travis brought it into the house with him.

McGRATH

Whose fingerprints were on the gun, Sheriff?

WILCOX

Well, I'd assume Travis and Hawkins both had prints on it, since they both held it.

McGRATH (Astounded)

You didn't fingerprint the gun, either?

WILCOX (Losing patience)

Why would we fingerprint the gun when we've got the perpetrator lying right there? Travis comes in with the gun, Hawkins gets the gun, Travis grabs the vase, Hawkins shoots him, end of story.

McGrath stares at Wilcox, thinking. Dennis is still staring urgently at McGrath, waiting for some explanation.

CUT TO:

INT. EVIDENCE STORAGE ROOM - DAY

A crime technician sets the bloody brass vase on the counter. McGrath looks at it. Dried blood covers one side, but not the other.

McGRATH

Lot of blood.

TECHNICIAN (Smiles)

Yeah, we all know how much you like
blood, Frank.

The technician walks away. McGrath keeps staring at the vase.

INT. STORE COUNTER - DAY

McGrath is buying a greeting card, a cardboard picture frame, a standup clock, a white ceramic vase (about the same size and shape as the brass vase from the crime scene), a yellow plastic squirt gun, and a small can of red paint.

CLERK

Twelve ninety-eight, please.

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

We're looking at a small end table, in one corner of the office. The greeting card, cardboard picture frame and clock are arranged tightly, just as the similar items had been at the crime scene.

McGrath carefully sets the ceramic vase down right in the center of the arrangement.

He steps back, surveys the table for a moment. Then he quickly grabs the vase by the neck and snatches it off the table. The motion knocks off the clock. The card and picture frame both fall.

McGrath stands holding the vase and looking at the fallen items.

EXT. McGRATH'S BACKYARD - DUSK

Small house, rural area. McGrath is all by himself, still in his suit. He has spread a few sheets of newspaper on the grass and is standing above them, squirting red paint on them from the squirt gun. In his other hand he holds the ceramic vase.

The paint falls onto the paper in shiny wet globs and streams.

After creating a good-sized puddle of paint, McGrath drops the vase onto it. Then he picks it up and examines it. There is a little red paint on two spots, where it made contact with the paper, but nothing like the drenching that the brass vase had gotten.

CUT TO:

INT. MCGRATH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

He is sitting alone in a reclining chair, little light in the room, staring intently at the ceramic vase (the two small spots of blood on it).

He glances off to a far corner of the room, where his dress shoes are sitting. He sees that a spot of the red paint has gotten on one of them.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. ARMY TENT - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

CU army boots, lying in the corner of the dark tent, mud on them.

Young McGrath and two other young soldiers are lying in folding canvas cots in t-shirts and boxer shorts, not quite asleep. A middle-aged SERGEANT enters the tent, in field uniform. One of the soldiers sees him, jumps up from his cot and stands at attention; a moment later, McGrath and the other soldier do the same.

In dim light we see the Sergeant's face: Mouth slack, eyes wide, looking like he's in shock. It takes him a moment to notice the three soldiers standing there at attention.

SERGEANT (quietly)

At ease.

The three soldiers relax, and stand waiting. The Sergeant has gone to his own cot and is putting his gear away, his face still slack, not acknowledging the other men.

The three soldiers look at each other, impatiently. Finally, the FIRST SOLDIER (blond hair) addresses the Sergeant.

FIRST SOLDIER

Sir. Did you -- ? um -- Did you see it?

The Sergeant has stopped putting things away; he's standing, just staring down at his bunk, at nothing, no expression on his face. The three soldiers again look at each other. McGrath, clearly the youngest, is waiting on the other two to do something.

SECOND SOLDIER (dark hair) finally tries to address the Sergeant.

SECOND SOLDIER

Sir. We heard we're going in. To the
Nazi camp? `Buchenville'?

The Sergeant is still staring at his cot.

SERGEANT (numbly)

Buchenwald.

FIRST SOLDIER

You were there today, sir? (A beat) Sir?
What's in there?

The Sergeant slowly turns his head and stares at the standing soldiers. His face is taut and haunted.

CU Young McGrath, watching the devastated Sergeant in wonder.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. MCGRATH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CU McGrath's face, remembering. Then he picks up the vase and goes to set in on a shelf nearby.

As he does, he stops and stares at a photo in a frame: The Curly-Haired Boy (about 9), his dead son, smiling at him. With a close-up of McGrath's stony face, we -

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Dennis is seated on a stool at the counter, drinking coffee and reading a paper. He sets the coffee cup down and a little of it spills over the side of the cup.

McGrath approaches, hesitation in his face. Dennis is stoic.

McGRATH (smiles)
Your usual stool.

DENNIS
Frank, what was all that about,
yesterday? Am I being charged with
something?

McGrath looks down.

McGRATH
Oh, c'mon, Dennis. (Small laugh) The
guy was in your house. No, I'm
just . . . I'm just confused about a
few of the details, that's all.

DENNIS
Maybe I can clear them up for you.

McGRATH (Long pause)
Okay. I'm - I'm confused about the
vase. He grabbed it off the coffee
table?

DENNIS
That's right.

McGRATH
Just - just grabbed it.

DENNIS
Yeah, Frank, he grabbed it. If the
sheriff had bothered to fingerprint
the thing, he'd have found that. I bet
his prints are still there.

McGRATH (nods)
I'm sure they are. It's just
that . . . okay, he grabs the vase, he
goes to throw it, you shoot once - and
he drops the vase?

DENNIS
No. He didn't drop the vase until the
second shot. I already told you that.

McGRATH
But - but there was blood on the vase.

DENNIS
Right. It landed right in the blood.

McGRATH

But he didn't bleed on the vase?
You're sure about that?

DENNIS (long pause)

How could he have bled on the vase,
Frank?

McGRATH

So you're sure he didn't drop the vase
until the second shot?

DENNIS

Yeah.

McGRATH

And the second shot was - how much
later was it?

Long, tense pause. Dennis stares hard at McGrath. The warmth
between them is evaporating.

DENNIS

What the hell is this, Frank?

McGrath looks down.

McGRATH

A lot of it just isn't making sense.
(A beat) Something you want to tell
me, Dennis?

Dennis stares.

DENNIS

Yeah, Frank, there's something I want
to tell you. That fucker was in my
house. In my house!

Other patrons look. Dennis sees this and lowers his voice.

DENNIS

He was a killer, he was in my house, I
did what I had to do.

McGRATH

I'm just trying to make sure I'm clear
on everything -

DENNIS

Well, be clear on this, Frank - I had
the right to protect my family. You

really think that piece-of-shit career criminal is worth doing this to me?

McGRATH (startled)
That's not really the issue, Dennis.

Dennis stands.

DENNIS
No, the issue is this - he was in my house!

Dennis exits. McGrath watches him go.

CUT TO:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

McGrath is again staring at the end table, the vase, card, picture frame and clock arranged there. He again tries to snatch the vase off the table without disturbing the other items. He again fails.

Deputy Neely walks in, carrying a file and looking tense.

NEELY
Hey, Frank. (Nods) Nice vase.

McGRATH (nods at file)
Is that it?

NEELY
Um - yeah.

Neely hands him the file. McGrath opens it, begins reading.

NEELY
Most of the stuff about Dennis was sealed. Juvi laws. Just got the name of the place, a few of the staff names. Not much really. (A beat) If you need all that stuff, why don't you just ask him?

McGRATH (reading file)
You didn't ask him about any of this, did you, Mark?

NEELY
No, 'course not. It's just -

McGRATH

Don't.

CUT TO:

EXT. McGRATH'S BACK YARD - DAY

He's spread out more newspapers. He lays the ceramic vase on the clean papers, then stands above it and starts squirting red paint at it from the squirt gun. He covers the area. Then he bends down and gingerly picks up the vase.

The vase is completely spattered on one side with red, but not the other, just as the brass vase had been. On the newspapers, within the puddle of red paint, is an hour-glass-shaped area where it's clean, where the vase had been laying.

McGrath stares at the vase.

INT. McGRATH'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

McGrath is driving out of town, talking on the radio.

McGRATH

Have Mickey fill in for me at that nine o'clock arraignment. I should be back by five tomorrow.

WOMAN'S VOICE (on phone)

Where'll you be staying, Frank?

McGrath drives past a sign: ``Seattle, 100 miles.''

McGRATH

I dunno. I'll call when I get there.

It's starting to rain.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT DOOR OF HOUSE - NIGHT

It's storming and raining. McGrath knocks. An OLD MAN answers. He's in a wheelchair, has no legs from the knees down.

McGRATH

Hi. I'm sorry to bother you, sir. Are you . . .

McGrath looks down at the file in his hand, and reads.

McGRATH

. . . Are you Murray Wykoff?

WYKOFF

Yes, I'm Murray. Can I help you?

McGRATH

My name is Frank McGrath. I'm the state's attorney in Lewis County. Down south of Olympia? I need to talk to you about one of the kids who used to live at the center. Dennis Hawkins?

The old man's face freezes.

McGRATH

I - I know you can't legally tell me very much, but I can't get anyone at the orphanage to talk to me, and I was just hoping -

WYKOFF

Is someone dead?

CU McGrath's face - startled.

INT. WYKOFF'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cozy, old-fashioned place. McGrath drinks coffee. Wykoff wheels his chair to a fish tank and squirts a little red liquid into it. McGrath watches it spread through the water.

WYKOFF

This was - oh, close to twenty years ago. Before the cancer. (He nods toward his legs). Dennis was probably the smartest boy I ever saw come through that place. And there was something else, besides his intelligence - a kind of central morality that I found comforting. He was always befriending the smaller boys, the ones who got picked on. Dennis hated bullies, hated them worse than anything. (A beat) Do you know how his parents died?

McGrath shakes his head.

WYKOFF

They were killed during a bank robbery. They were waiting in a line at the bank when it started. Police rushed in, the robbers shot three of the hostages. Dennis's parents were two of them. (Shakes his head) Dennis's mother died there at the bank, his father died a few hours later.

McGRATH

God.

WYKOFF

Dennis was there. He was a baby, two years old. Just sitting there on the floor crying when the officers found him. I've often wondered if there's any way he remembers . . . (Pause) Anyway, Dennis had a keenly developed sense of justice, and I've always assumed that was why. And I have to say it appealed to me. He was a defender of those who needed defending. I liked that. (Smiles) Maybe it's the Jew in me. Do you know much about Judaism, Mr. McGrath?

McGRATH (Tense)

A little. (A beat) Mr. Wykoff, that question you asked me when I came in - about someone being dead? Why did you say that?

Wykoff sits silently a moment, collecting himself.

WYKOFF

When Dennis was twelve, they transferred a boy to the center, one who really didn't belong there. He had been in some trouble. These were orphans we had, not delinquents. The new boy - he was fourteen - he picked on some of the others. Especially the small ones. Well, Dennis, of course, stood up for them, and he and this boy were enemies from the first day. The boy wasn't there a week before he had beaten Dennis up, badly. It looked like we were going to be able to get rid of him because of it, in fact.

Wyckoff leans toward the coffee table and picks up a cup of hot tea. McGrath patiently watches him sip it up. The another moment passes, as Wyckoff seems to be collecting himself.

WYCKOFF

One morning, we found this new boy lying on the outside steps of the library, dead. He had gone out through the second-floor window, broken through it. We and the police talked to all the other boys, and they all claimed not to have seen anything. Of course, we especially questioned Dennis, and he had us convinced immediately that he knew nothing. He has this face, this frozen look - you know, where you can't tell anything about what he's thinking?

McGRATH

Yeah, I've seen it across a card table a few times.

WYCKOFF

A few days later, some of the boys finally got scared and started talking. Turns out one of them had seen Dennis come out of the library that night. When we questioned Dennis again, he admitted he had been there. Said the new boy had trapped him there, they were fighting, and that during the fight, defending himself, Dennis shoved him backwards through the window. (Long pause) The police were just fine with that explanation. So that's as far as it went.

McGRATH

You weren't fine with that explanation?

Wyckoff leans forward.

WYCKOFF

No. I wasn't. Dennis never did explain exactly how he ended up trapped in the library with this boy in the middle of the night. He was vague about that. And the dead boy - I saw him myself on the steps that morning. He had glass

cuts on his face - on his face. He went out through that window face-first.

McGRATH

Did you point this out to anyone?

Wykoff shrugs, uncomfortable. Then he looks down and shakes his head.

WYKOFF

It's. . . it's funny the things we can convince ourselves of -- the things we can accept - when asked to by the right person.

McGRATH

Did you believe Dennis's story?

Wykoff pauses, troubled, wanting to say something. He looks down at the stubs of his legs. He continues staring at them as he speaks, very quietly.

WYKOFF

What I believe, Mr. McGrath, is that in one way or another, we all pay for our injustices. (Pause) Not just those we commit, but also those we tolerate.

CU McGrath. The comment has hit him.

CUT TO:

INT. McGRATH'S CAR - DUSK

He's driving, and staring at the photo in his car, of the Curly-Haired Boy. His eyes well up. He shakes his head violently to clear them. He steps on the gas, and the car engine rumbles.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. MILITARY TRUCK - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

The enclosed transport truck rumbles. Young McGrath and a dozen other soldiers are standing in an enclosed transport truck as it moves, rumbling. It's dark inside. The truck stops. The rear door opens. Sunlight floods in.

The soldiers look out at a sea of emaciated men, women and children, their limbs and faces skeletal, gray rags hanging off

their bodies.

The crowd presses toward the truck, hands out, weakly but insistently begging (in German). In the background stand low red-brick buildings with smoke-stacks rising over them.

A moment later, the stench hits the soldiers. All of them, including Young McGrath, cover their mouths and turn from it. Several of them double over and vomit.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. McGRATH'S CAR - DUSK

McGrath is still trying to clear his eyes. He's having trouble keeping the car steady. In his mind he hears the German mob: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. PRISON CAMP BARRACKS - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

CU the ceiling rafter with the rope draped over it. The sound of the mob shouting in German ("Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"). Then, a close-up of Young McGrath, holding his rifle and looking nervously around the room, unsure what to do.

We see a BLOND MAN, about 21, muscular, terrified as a dozen skeletal arms swarm over him. His hands are bound behind his back. He looks toward the camera, his eyes imploring.

CU of Young McGrath again, watching in panic.

A frantic male voice comes in from off-screen, rising above the mob noise:

VOICE
Goddammit, Frank, shoot!

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. McGRATH'S CAR - DUSK

McGrath's losing it. He looks again at the boy's photo, then puts one hand on his face, the other clinging to the steering wheel as the road blurs by.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. A DIFFERENT CAR - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

The driver is McGrath - younger, but not as young as the soldier. He's in civilian clothes and a winter coat, peering forward through his windshield with rising panic at something happening ahead of him in the dark.

Headlights suddenly illuminate his face. He leans forward toward the windshield and SCREAMS -

McGRATH

NOOO!!

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. McGRATH'S CAR - DUSK

It cruises back into town, past the ``Seattle, 100 MILES'' sign, weaving badly. The tires spray a puddle as it passes.

CUT TO:

INT. McGRATH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

McGrath sits alone, flipping through files. One of the pictures near him, in a standing frame, shows McGrath, Dennis and Mary sitting on Dennis's front porch, smiling. Nearby is the framed photo of the Curly-Haired Boy.

On the table next to McGrath's couch is the squirt gun, filled with red paint - and a bottle of whiskey covered with dust.

McGrath pours some of the whiskey into a glass, then looks, expressionless, at the amber liquid as it levels. He drinks, then returns to the file.

He sees: The crime scene photo showing the vase; a diagram showing Dennis's living room; documents, one marked ``AUTOPSY''.

McGrath takes another sip, the whiskey sitting wet on his lips. He looks at the photo of Dennis and Mary, looks back at the file - then, after a long pause, grabs one of the pages, wrinkles it into a ball, and tosses it into a nearby trash can.

A moment later, he dumps the whole file into the same trashcan.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAWN

McGrath stands alone in the cemetery. The sun is just coming up,

breaking through clouds. The grass is wet with dew.

He's staring down at two tombstones. He stares, as the sun begins lighting his face.

Finally, he looks up, directly into the rising sun. His eyes well with tears. They turn into racking sobs.

After a moment, he looks back down at the tombstones and takes a deep breath, calming down. Then a second breath. Then a third.

Resolve fills his face. He turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

McGrath slaps the autopsy file down on his desk, smoothing out the top page that he had crumpled up.

Deputy Neely, Coroner Johnston, and Medical Examiner Lilly stand around him, looking like they're not sure why they're there.

(Neely, standing near the window, is surrepticiously peeking out the window blind, in the direction of the Attractive Woman's apartment)

McGRATH

Mark, I want the vase and the gun fingerprinted. Get the lab going on that this morning.

Neely, startled, turns quickly away from the window.

McGRATH (continued)

And I want you to go back over there and interview every neighbor in the area, anyone we might've missed. If anyone heard those shots, I want to know about it. Lilly, I want new diagrams of the autopsy - bullet paths, extensions to show where everyone was standing. Every second of Dennis's story, I want it checked against the physical evidence. Jerry -

JOHNSTON (Annoyed)

I have a fishing trip, Frank.

McGRATH

I'm tired of hearing about your damned fishing trip. I need your help. I want

you to slow down the inquest, don't close it yet. I want to get at as much of this stuff as possible now, while we got him on the stand.

JOHNSTON

Why?

McGRATH

(Startled) 'Why'?

JOHNSTON

Yeah, Frank, why? The guy came into Dennis's house, Dennis shot him, end of story. I'd have shot him, too. This is Charlie Travis we're talking about, the guy was a walking rectum -

McGRATH (Explodes)

I am sick of hearing that!

The other three freeze at the outburst.

McGRATH (shouting)

I don't want to hear one more person tell me what a fucking shitbag Charlie Travis was, all right? I know he was a shitbag! (Pause, calming) Our job isn't to determine whether the dead guy deserved it. Our job is to determine why he's dead. I just wanna know why he's dead, okay?

McGrath looks at them. They all nod uncomfortably. Silence.

NEELY

Um - should I, uh, should I talk to Sheriff Wilcox about -- ?

McGrath shakes his head and points.

McGRATH

I don't want Wilcox near this, you understand? I don't even want him involved. Anyone asks, you're on detached duty for the state's attorney's office.

McGrath looks around at them again. They don't want to do this.

McGRATH (Quietly)

Let's just find out what happened. The

guy was in his house - how bad can it be?

They don't have an answer. Uncomfortable silence. Neely and Johnston exit. Lilly remains. McGrath tries to concentrate on something on his desk, until it becomes clear she isn't leaving.

McGRATH
(Annoyed) Yes?

LILLY
What's this about, Frank?

McGRATH
Someone's dead. (Shrugs) I think it'd be nice to know why.

LILLY
You know what I mean. (Pause)
Jerry's right, y'know. The guy was a walking rectum.

McGrath glares, considering whether to confront her.

LILLY (continued)
Frank - why does this one matter so much?

He considers this. He looks down.

McGRATH
(Quietly) Because. If this one matters - maybe they all do.

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

Coroner Johnston stands before the jury box.

JOHNSTON
Ladies and gentlemen, as members of a coroner's jury, you have been asked to perform a thankless task - to determine how a life ended.

Dennis and Mary sit in the audience, with Hal Marley, the public defender, next to them. McGrath sits in back.

JOHNSTON
I know I told you at the beginning of these proceedings that this would be a two-day affair, and it has already

gone longer than that. And I'm afraid it's going to go longer still. There are . . . there are questions that need answering. I'm asking your indulgence. (Uncertain pause) I think it would help, perhaps, if we reviewed the statutes that dictate the system under which this inquest operates.

Johnston picks up a large statute book from the table.

JOHNSTON
This will take awhile.

Hal Marley stands.

HAL
Objection.

JOHNSTON (Surprised)
'Objection?'

HAL
There is absolutely no reason to draw these proceedings out any longer, Mr. Coroner. You don't need to read us the statutes. The purpose of this inquest is to determine the cause of death, and there is no debate on that point. There's no reason you can't conclude this hearing today.

JOHNSTON
I'm sorry, Mr. Marley, but - what is your interest in these proceedings?

HAL
I am here as Mr. Hawkins' attorney.

Johnston isn't sure what to think. He looks to McGrath, who shrugs.

JOHNSTON
Well, Mr. Marley, objection or not, it's my prerogative as coroner to introduce whatever facts I believe are relevant. We're going to go over the statute.

INT. COURT HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

McGrath is coming out of the court room. Hal and Dennis catch up to him. McGrath and Dennis stare at each other a moment.

McGRATH

Hi, Hal.

HAL

What the hell are you doing, Frank?

McGRATH

Going to my office.

HAL

The inquest - what's going on?

McGRATH

You'll have to talk to Jerry about that.

HAL

He's stalling this because you've told him to. You're using this process to lay groundwork for a criminal charge -

McGRATH

I'm watching the inquest in case it produces any facts relevant to a potential criminal charge, yes, Hal. What's your point?

HAL

My point is, you're abusing the process. If you got a charge, file it - stop this fishing expedition. You're legally required to shit or get off the pot, Frank.

McGRATH (smiles)

Is that your legal opinion?

HAL

Why are you doing this? Travis was in his damned house.

McGRATH

That justifies a lot of things. But not everything.

DENNIS (to McGrath)

What do you want from me, Frank?

McGRATH (long pause)

I want to know if you executed that man.

DENNIS

You're the one who tried to execute him, remember?

McGRATH

That was a court room. This was your living room.

DENNIS

Yeah, Frank, my living room!

Dennis stops, calms himself.

DENNIS

I was defending my family. God, why are you doing this?

McGRATH

Tell me again how many seconds there were between the shots, Dennis.

A long, tense moment between McGrath and Dennis.

HAL (to Dennis)

Don't answer that.

Hal leads Dennis away. McGrath watches them go. As he does, he sees, down the hall, a small group of boys, early teens, standing and waiting with a bailiff in front of a door marked 'Juvenile Court.'

Several of the boys are staring toward McGrath, curious about the confrontation they've just seen. McGrath stares back.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. PRISON CAMP - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

In the distance stands a small group of young boys, former prisoners - shorn hair, emaciated - watching a handful of American soldiers who are standing guard outside a supply tent. One of the young soldiers is Young McGrath.

One of the group, the Starved Boy of about 11 (from earlier flashback) moves closer to McGrath, watching him intently. McGrath, uncomfortable, pretends not to notice. He fiddles with his gear, paces, then pulls out a military compass on a chain and starts examining it.

The Starved Boy continues watching. McGrath finally looks at him and smiles. A hint of a smile crosses the Boy's face.

McGrath looks at his compass, then at the Boy, and sees he is curious about the compass. He steps toward the Boy, who instinctively steps back.

McGrath slowly holds the compass out to the Boy, who takes it after a moment's hesitation.

The Boy holds the compass in his palm, peering down at it and trying to figure out what it is. McGrath, amused, reaches over and FLICKS the floating needle on the compass, making it spin wildly.

The Boy, watching this, lets out a small laugh. McGrath laughs, too. The Boy looks once more at him, still smiling, then wanders off, intently studying the compass in his hand.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

McGrath is sitting in the back of the courtroom, watching as Johnston reads aloud from the statute book.

JOHNSTON

``It shall be the duty of these jurors to inquire how, in what manner, and by whom or what, the said dead body came to its death -

CUT TO - EXT. TRAILER HOME - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Overcast and misty. Deputy Neely knocks on the door; an old man answers. They talk (as Neely jots in a notepad), but we don't hear what they're saying. Johnston's voice-over continues.

JOHNSTON (v.o)

`` - together with all material circumstances related to or connected with said death, and make up and sign a verdict, and deliver the same to the coroner -

CUT TO - INT. CRIME LAB - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

A lab technician is dusting the bloody brass vase for prints.

JOHNSTON (v.o.)

`` - As part of its verdict, the jury
may make recommendations for criminal
prosecution -

EXT. SECOND RURAL HOME - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Deputy Neely, holding his pad and pen, knocks at another door. A young, pretty woman, wearing a bathrobe, answers. A surprised, delighted smile slowly spreads across Neely's face.

JOHNSTON (v.o.)

`` - Any witness appearing at the
inquest shall have the right to be
represented by counsel.

INT. MORGUE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Close up, photo of Charlie Travis' bloody corpse. Lilly, the medical examiner, studies the photo and takes notes, while eating a hot dog dripping with chili and mustard.

JOHNSTON (v.o.)

`` . . . Every coroner shall enter the
name, if known, of each person upon
whose body an inquest is held . . .

EXT. THIRD RURAL HOME - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Deputy Neely - looking disheveled now - knocks. A nerdy (middle-aged, thin, thick glasses, big teeth) answers, and gives him a goofy grin. Neely says something to him, pulls out the notepad, the starts fishing around for his pen, but he can't find it.

JOHNSTON (v.o.)

`` . . . After the inquisition the
coroner may deliver the body of the
deceased to his friends, if there be
any, but if not, he shall cause him to
be decently buried . . .

Neely is still fishing around in vain for his pen. The Nerd, still grinning goofily, produces one from a bunch of them in his shirt pocket and offers it.

INT. CRIME LAB - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Another technician is using a magnifying glass to examine photos of boot-prints in mud. Nearby sits a plaster cast of a boot

print.

JOHNSTON (v.o.)

`` . . . If a person is implicated by the inquest as the unlawful slayer of the deceased, the coroner shall apprehend such person and immediately bring him before a judge of his county, to be dealt with according to law."

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

McGrath is watching Johnston from the back of the room. From his position, he only sees the back of Johnston's head.

In McGrath's mind, he hears the chant of the mob come in over Johnston's words: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. PRISON CAMP - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

CU the back of a boy's shaven head. The head slowly turns to look into the camera. It's the Starved Boy.

It's outdoors and sunny, but we hear - dubbed over the scene - the sound of the mob from the dark barracks: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

Young McGrath is standing in the transport truck with other soldiers, driving past a marching line of former prisoners, looking at them. CUT TO The Starved Boy, in the marching line, looking back at McGrath coldly, the compass around his neck.

The overdub continues: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

Close on McGrath's face, still watching the proceedings.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY OF McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

McGrath enters, carrying a file. He sees the nerd (the one Neely had been talking to) sitting in the waiting area. The nerd has a machine of some kind on his lap (looks like a large tape-

recorder) and a thick, unruly bunch of papers under his arm.

McGrath looks at him, then looks around.

McGRATH

Can I help you?

NERD(smiles)

I'm the seismologist.

McGRATH (uncertain pause)

Seismologist. Um, earthquakes?

NERD(smiling)

Right.

McGrath stands there, not knowing how to answer this. So he smiles politely and exits into his office.

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

McGrath enters, startling Deputy Neely, who is peering out through the window blinds (toward the apartment of the Attractive Woman) with a pair of binoculars.

Neely lurches away from the window, almost falling over the desk as he does, and clumsily hides the binoculars behind his back.

McGrath lays his file open on his desk and starts going through it, barely noticing Neely.

NEELY (still flustered)

Frank - um - we may have something.

McGRATH (distracted)

Yeah, we do. They dusted the vase. Travis's prints were on it, all right, but just the thumb and two fingertips. And look where they were. On either side of the rim, like this.

McGrath holds one hand sideways, then clamps his thumb and two fingers on either side of the hand.

NEELY

That's Mr. Connor in the lobby. He lives near Dennis.

McGrath is examining the white vase on his table. The vase is still surrounded by the picture frame, greeting card and clock.

McGRATH

Now if you're gonna grab a vase to throw it at someone, you'd grab it by the neck, wouldn't you?

NEELY

Mr. Connor is a seismologist.

McGRATH

(Distracted) Yeah, I met him. I assume you'll be explaining to me shortly what the hell earthquakes have to do with this. (Pause) Why would he grab the vase with the tips of his thumb and two fingers? You couldn't get a good grip like that.

NEELY

Mr. Connor has a machine, it measures ground vibrations in the area.

McGrath looks at the vase a moment longer - then GRABS it, quickly, by the rim, using his thumb and two fingers. He jams his fingers on the vase as he does, and drops it, shaking his hand in pain. The vase bounces on the floor. The greeting card and picture frame fall over.

Neely looks at the items in confusion, then presses on.

NEELY

He had the machine running the night of the shooting.

McGrath stops and looks at Neely, as if seeing him there for the first time.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP OF SEISMIC READOUT

It's a squiggly line, peaks and dips, crawling horizontally across perforated paper. A man's finger traces along it, to a spot where it peaks sharply.

McGRATH (v.o.)

Number one.

(A faint, surreal GUNSHOT echoes somewhere in the background)

McGrath's hands unfurl the paper to a second sheet - then a third - then the finger moves all the way to the end, where there is a

second peak.

McGRATH (v.o.)

Number two.

(A second faint GUNSHOT echoes.)

We're in MCGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY. The seismic readout is on his desk. Hal and Dennis sit in front of the desk, McGrath stands behind it. Deputy Neely stands to one side, looking like he doesn't want to be there. McGrath is addressing Dennis.

McGRATH

Seventeen seconds between the shots.
Not three. Not four. Seventeen.

McGrath turns and pours himself some coffee from a pot (it splashes loudly into the cup) as Hal and Dennis study the seismic readout. Hal is concerned; Dennis is stoic.

HAL

This doesn't prove shit. Those could be anything. Those could be a damned CAR backfiring, for all you know.

McGRATH

Our seismologist is strongly of the opinion that those are gunshots.

HAL

And I could bring in another seismologist to say it's a sonic boom followed by a loud fart. You're not really gonna file something based on THIS, are you, Frank?

McGRATH

It's not just this.

HAL

(Sarcasm) Oh, that's right. `Too much blood.' C'mon, Frank. We could show those pictures to ten doctors and get ten different explanations for that blood pattern. You know that. (A beat) What do you want?

McGRATH

The truth.

HAL

He's already told you what happened.

He fired once, Charlie wouldn't drop the vase, so he fired again. Why is this so fucking complicated?

McGRATH

He told us he fired the second shot because he felt threatened. Now we find out Travis was standing there for seventeen seconds with a bullet in his gut, bleeding all over the place - SEVENTEEN SECONDS. Just how much of a threat could he have been at that point?

HAL

He was still holding the vase.

McGRATH (LONG pause)

Right.

Dennis, who has been listening silently, turns calmly to McGrath.

DENNIS

What are you asking?

McGRATH

I still believe there's an explanation for all this, Dennis. I just want to hear it. I don't want to file charges against you. The inquest is still pending - just get back up on the stand and clear this up, before it goes any further.

Neely watches Dennis, curious about his reaction. Dennis thinks. Then he speaks, staring straight ahead impassively.

DENNIS

If I do that . . . I'm admitting perjury. Aren't I?

Neely is stunned.

McGRATH

I'm willing to agree to no perjury charges based on anything that's been said up to this point.

Dennis thinks. Neely stares, numb with shock.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. DENNIS'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dennis is holding the gun on Charlie Travis and talking on the phone.

DENNIS (into phone)
My name is Dennis Hawkins, I live at
401 Luttrell Road, last house on the
lane. I have an intruder here - I'm
holding a gun on him. (Pause) No,
everyone's fine. (Pause) Please hurry.

He hangs up. He and Charlie stare at each other a moment, Charlie still laughing a little.

CHARLIE
Well, Denny - I guess you win again.

Dennis doesn't answer. He silently holds the gun on him.

CHARLIE
Helluva story for you, huh? Bet you'll
really get a headline for this one.

Charlie starts to rise.

CHARLIE
Mind if I stand?

DENNIS
Sit back down.

Charlie stands.

CHARLIE
Sorry, man, got a cramp.

DENNIS (points gun)
I said, sit down.

CHARLIE
You even know how to use that thing,
Denny?

Dennis is starting to panic.

DENNIS
You sit down, or I swear -

CHARLIE
You swear WHAT, Denny? You gonna shoot

me? (A beat) I don't think you're gonna shoot me, Dennis.

Charlie wanders toward the couch. Dennis is unsure what to do.

DENNIS

Sit! I said SIT!

Charlie turns and smiles at him. They lock eyes. The sound of sirens rises in the distance.

CHARLIE

YOU sit.

All at once, Charlie grabs the brass vase off the end table and raises it over his head, as if to throw it. Dennis fires. Charlie is hit in the lower chest, the blood spattering his t-shirt.

Charlie stands there, staring at the wound, still holding the vase over his head, unable to believe he's been shot. Dennis continues to point the gun at him. Blood drips on the carpet around Charlie's feet.

Charlie stares at the wound.

DENNIS

Drop the vase.

Five seconds have passed. Charlie continues to stand, holding the brass vase, staring at him, anger rising.

DENNIS

Drop the vase!

Ten seconds have passed. Charlie, breathing hard, trance-like anger in his eyes. He still holds the vase. He's bleeding everywhere.

DENNIS

DROP THE VASE!

Charlie stares a moment longer. He makes a guttural cry and brings the vase back to throw it. Dennis fires.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

Dennis is on the stand, Johnston questioning him.

DENNIS

The second shot hit him in the eye.

JOHNSTON

And there were - HOW MANY seconds
between the shots?

DENNIS (pause)

About seventeen.

JOHNSTON

Mr. Hawkins, you stated very clearly
before that there were three to four
seconds between the shots. You're
saying now that that isn't true?

DENNIS

Yes.

JOHNSTON

Could I ask why you lied?

Dennis looks at Hal, then McGrath, both in the audience. Mary is
there, too, listening, staring into space, looking tense.

DENNIS

I - I was afraid how it would look. I
mean, all that time, him standing
there, bleeding. I knew it would look
bad - like, 'how could he have been a
threat?'. It's hard to explain how
threatened I still felt. He was still
holding the vase, still looking at me
like that. I kept yelling, 'drop the
vase, drop the vase,' but he wouldn't.
(Pause) Afterward, I . . . I talked to
Mary. I told her it I knew it was
justified, but it was going to be hard
to explain that second shot. I . . . I
strongly suggested that maybe the two
shots were closer together than we
both thought.

Johnston turns to look at McGrath in the audience.

JOHNSTON

Questions, Mr. McGrath?

McGrath stares at Dennis. Dennis stares back, poker-faced.

QUICK-CUT TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. PRISON CAMP - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

The Starved Boy, in the marching line with the compass around his neck, is staring, eyes cold, hint of menace on his face, watching McGrath as he passes in the transport truck with other soldiers.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

Dennis is still staring at McGrath. After they lock eyes a moment longer - just as in the earlier poker game - McGrath looks at Johnston and shakes his head `no.'

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY (LATER)

Mary is on the witness stand. Coroner Johnston questions her.

JOHNSTON

So your earlier testimony was incorrect, Mrs. Hawkins?

MARY (nearvous)

Um - yes.

JOHNSTON

The amount of time between the two shots wasn't three seconds?

MARY (very softly)

No.

JOHNSTON

It was more like --?

Mary's blind eyes stare out at the courtroom, waiting for some sound of guidance. Hal, sitting by Dennis, speaks up.

HAL

It's ok, Mary. Go ahead and answer.

MARY

It was about fifteen seconds. Seventeen, I guess.

JOHNSTON

And during that seventeen seconds, what were you doing?

MARY

I was crying, and trying to console Ashley. She was crying, too.

JOHNSTON

Did you hear anything during that time? Anything from the other room?

MARY

Well, I - I heard something. I heard Dennis's voice, yelling something at Travis. I'm not sure what.

JOHNSTON

You didn't mention that before.

MARY

I was crying, Ashley was crying - I wasn't really listening.

Johnston sits, and looks to McGrath.

McGrath rises.

McGRATH

Coroner Johnston, with the permission of this inquest, could I ask Ms. Hawkins a few questions?

JOHNSTON

Go ahead, Frank.

McGrath approaches Mary. He's reluctant about what he has to do.

McGRATH

Hi, Mary.

MARY (smiles)

Hi, Frank.

McGRATH

Mary, I've got to ask you something. Now, I've already agreed that we're not going to prosecute you or your husband for perjury, so I don't want you to be nervous about this, ok?

MARY

Ok.

McGRATH

Mary, what exactly did Dennis say to you after the shooting, before the police arrived? About the timing of the shots?

Mary is very nervous. Dennis speaks up from his seat.

DENNIS

It's ok, honey.

MARY

He - um - he told me Travis was dead. He told me he had to shoot him, he was going to hit him with the vase.

McGRATH

And?

MARY

And - um - he said it was totally self-defense. I know it was - I heard it all, I heard the guy laughing. But-

McGRATH

But what, Mary?

MARY

Um - Dennis said he - he could explain everything, except the time between the two shots. He was worried it would seem like a lot of time between the shots. He said he was scared, he said Travis wouldn't put down the vase even after he shot him - he HAD to shoot him again. But - But -

McGRATH

But what, Mary?

MARY

But he was still afraid it would look bad. He wasn't sure he could explain it.

McGRATH

And what did he ask you to do, Mary?

Her eyes well up. She's frozen.

DENNIS

It's ok, Mary. Go ahead, honey.

MARY

He asked me to say it was just three seconds between the shots.

McGRATH
Instead of seventeen.

MARY
Yes. Instead of seventeen. (Pause -
tear falls) He's- he's my husband.
McGrath turns and walks toward a window, about 20 feet from her,
and looks out. Dead silence. Then McGrath speaks, very softly -
almost inaudibly - toward the window.

McGRATH (softly)
Mary?

Mary turns toward the sound.

MARY
Yes?

McGrath approaches her again, smiling, friendly.

McGRATH
You heard that? That was good, Mary. I
bet most people in this room didn't
hear that.

Mary, Dennis and Hal are all confused by this turn.

McGRATH (friendly)
Is it true that blind people tend to
hear better than those of us who are
sighted?

MARY
So they say.

McGRATH
In fact, your hearing's damn near
perfect, isn't it, Mary?

MARY (shrugs)
I - I suppose so.

HAL
Where are you going with this, Frank?

McGRATH
Yet you didn't hear your husband in
the next room, as he shouted over and
over (yells, pounds on table): `Drop
the vase! Drop the vase! Drop the
vase!'

Hal bolts up from his seat.

HAL
You sonofabitch!

McGRATH (still yelling)
You didn't hear THAT, Mary?

MARY (panic)
I - I - I was crying! I wasn't
listening-

HAL
Mr. Coroner, this isn't a goddamned
trial, I want this stopped NOW!

McGRATH (yelling)
You didn't hear it because it didn't
HAPPEN, Mary! You heard a SHOT -

(He SMACKS the table with his open hand, and at that instant Mary
hears an echoing GUNSHOT in the darkness of her mind, and she
FLINCHES.)

McGRATH
- and seventeen seconds later you
heard another SHOT -

He SMACKS the table again. Mary again FLINCHES, hearing a GUNSHOT
echo in the dark.

McGRATH
-- and there was NOTHING in between,
was there?!

MARY
There was! I mean, I - I - there was
SOMETHING! I just couldn't hear-

HAL (livid)
Frank, you're DONE! I want this whole
FUCKING line of questioning stricken
from the record!

McGrath stops and stares at Mary, who is crying now.

McGRATH (softly)
I'm sorry, Mary. But you would do
anything for your husband, wouldn't
you? You would even make yourself
believe you heard something you didn't
hear - wouldn't you?

HAL

Frank, you ask her one more goddamned question and I swear I'll have your license.

McGrath turns and looks at Dennis. They lock stares, both sets of eyes filled with rage.

EXT. COURT HOUSE - DAY

It's misty and overcast. McGrath is sitting alone on the front steps, watching children play splash in puddles across the street. Hal comes out the door and sits next to him. They both continue watching the town fountain as they talk, quietly.

HAL

Helluva stunt, Frank.

McGRATH

He executed a man, Hal. Executed him. Am I supposed to just pretend I don't know that?

HAL

You DON'T know that. He was in his house - you have to overcome an awful lot to get by THAT. (A beat)) We had a deal, did we not?

McGRATH

The deal was that your client come clean. He's still lying. He didn't yell at Charlie to drop the vase. He didn't yell anything.

HAL

He's acknowledged the second shot was questionable. He was scared. He was in his own house -

McGRATH

I'm not talking about the second shot, Hal - I'm talking about the FIRST one. I'm talking about the unlocked door. I'm talking about the fact that Charlie bled on TOP of the vase - on TOP of it. I'm talking about ALL of it. This just - just doesn't FEEL right. It hasn't felt right from the beginning.

HAL

C'mon, Frank. What've you got? Blood patterns. The timing of the shots. Vague questions about what Mary did or didn't hear. Does any of this really sound to you like a case? So Mary lied about the shots. You KNOW she's not lying about the rest. She really believes Charlie broke in there to kill them. If Dennis set this up, why wouldn't he tell her?

McGRATH

Because he's smart. And being smart means telling no one, not even your wife. Think about it - what better accomplice to back up your story than someone who really believes it?

They sit silently, as Hal ponders this. McGrath is still watching the kids play.

McGRATH

Would you say Charlie was a coward?

HAL

They're ALL cowards. You know that.

McGRATH

Can you really picture a coward like Charlie Travis laughing up the barrel of a gun?

Hal again ponders this. Then he looks McGrath in the eyes.

HAL

Frank, I'm only gonna say this once, and I'm never going to admit having said it. Charlie was my client. I did my duty by him. But I don't have any problem with the way he died.

McGRATH (appalled laugh)

Jeez, Hal. If I ever need an attorney, remind me to hire someone else.

HAL

I know it's not what the system calls 'justice' - but I also know there's more to justice than just the system.

(Long pause) I'm asking you as a friend, Frank - let this thing go.

Long silence. McGrath watches the children playing in the puddles across the street. One of them is a boy of 8 or 9. a young married couple emerges from a store and calls to him. He runs over to them, stomping on puddles the whole way. The dad laughs, scoops him up and swings him around.

The small family wlk's away. McGrath watches them, riveted. Hal, seeing McGrath's longing stare, looks down uncomfortably. A moment later, McGrath, still lost in thought, speaks, as if to himself.

McGRATH

Do you think we pay for the injustices we tolerate?

Close on McGrath.

CUT TO

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

McGrath is standing behind his desk flipping through papers and photographs. Seated around the room are Coroner Johnston, Lilly the medical examiner, Deputy Neely, and the Lab Technician who had been examining the vase for fingerprints.

McGrath finally speaks to Neely, confused.

McGRATH

A second set of boot-prints? A SECOND set?

NEELY (nods)

Right next to the first set. Outside Dennis's back door, where Charlie was standing before he went in. Similar boots - but these had a big nick in one side. Definitely two different people.

McGRATH (stunned)

Someone else was there?

JOHNSTON

The ground was wet. The sheriff's people just missed it.

McGRATH

Surprise, surprise. (A beat) Any ideas on who this mystery witness is?

NEELY

A good bet it's Jimmy Travis. It's certainly enough to revoke bail.

McGrath is shaking his head, frustrated.

McGRATH

Jimmy knew Dennis was lying about the shots, and he didn't come forward? Why?

LILLY (shrugs)

If he was there, he was involved. That would violate his bond, put him back in jail.

McGRATH (shakes head)

I know Jimmy - he wouldn't care. As soon as he had a chance to stick it to Dennis, he'd have done it, even if he screws himself in the process. He's LIKE that. (A beate) This doesn't make any sense.

McGrath puzzles a little longer. Then he looks at the Technician.

McGRATH

You did the gun?

TECHNICIAN (nods)

Charlie and Dennis both had prints on it.

JOHNSTON (muttering)

Just like you'd expect.

McGRATH

Whose prints were on the cartridge?

TECHNICIAN

No one's. Cartridge was clean.

McGrath again gives a puzzled look. The Technician shrugs, and nods.

TECHNICIAN

It's a little odd.

McGRATH

How do you load a cartridge into a gun
without getting prints on it?

TECHNICIAN

I guess you wear gloves.

McGRATH (Frustrated laugh)

You wear gloves to load up, but then
you take the gloves off and get your
prints all over the outside of the
gun? Does that make any sense?

None of them answer.

McGRATH

None of this makes any goddamned
sense.

All the others in the room have looked past McGrath, to his
office door. Now McGrath turns and looks.

Mr. Phelps - the husband of the dead Dorothy Phelps - stands in
the doorway, staring at McGrath. His two small children (boy and
girl, seen in earlier flashback in his living room) stand next to
him.

PHELPS

You're right - NONE of this makes any
sense.

McGRATH (startled)

Mister Phelps. (Long pause) Oh - we
had a meeting, didn't we?

PHELPS

Yes, Mr. McGrath, we did. But I hear
you've got more important things to
do? Investigating the guy who shot
Charlie Travis?

Dead silence descends. McGrath is speechless.

PHELPS

Is this true? Are you really trying to
bring charges against that kid?

McGRATH (cowed)

Mr. Phelps, I - I have to review any
instance of violent death in which
there are suspicious circumstances.
That's part of my job-

PHELPS (overlapping)
You let that monster free, and now
you're investigating HIS death?...

McGRATH
. . . Justice had to be for EVERYONE,
otherwise it means nothing. . .

PHELPS (overlapping)
. . . While the other man who murdered
Dorothy is still roaming
around? . . .

McGRATH (overlapping)
. . . otherwise it's just a mob with a
rope - it's just more killing. . .

PHELPS (overlapping, shouting)
THAT'S your job, Mr. McGrath? To work
for people like Charlie Travis?!

McGrath is silent.

PHELPS
What happened to all that stuff you
said in the trial? `The living have a
responsibility to the dead'? (Screams)
Where's your responsibility to my
Dorothy?! What's HER justice?

Phelps' voice breaks. McGrath continues standing silently, unable
to say anything. He glances at the two Phelps children, watching
silebtly. The others in the room are petrified.

PHELPS (sarcasm)
Well, Mr. McGrath, if you happen to
get some time, after you're done
seeking `justice' for Charlie Travis,
I'd still like to talk about the new
trial. (Pause - he's close to tears)
You know where to find me.

Phelps scoops up the little girl, takes the boy's hand, and
exits. McGrath watches them go - momentarily locking eyes with
the little girl, her face bobbing over her father's shoulder.

Silence hangs over the room. McGrath picks up the file from his
desk, stares at it, and drops it in the trash. He speaks quietly
- to no one in particular - as he steps toward a rear exit.

McGRATH
Drop it. Just drop the whole fucking

thing.

McGrath exits. The assembled four people sit there, looking at each other, relief in their faces.

JOHNSTON

Thank GOD.

CUT TO:

INT. McGRATH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

He's in his chair, staring at nothing, scotch in his hand the bottle next to him is half-empty.

In his mind, the sound of the German mob rises : "Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. PRISON CAMP BARRACKS - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

Young McGrath is standing with his rifle in front of him, nervously looking around the crowd, amid the chants: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

A moment later we see he's not alone. Next to him are two others we saw earlier, in the army tent: The young, dark-haired SOLDIER who had been sleeping, and the emotionally shaken, middle-aged SERGEANT who had entered the tent. They, and McGrath, stand with rifles amid the noise of the crowd, unsure what to do.

The mob is swarming. The soldiers catch a glimpse of the young, muscular Blond Man, his hands bound, the mob all but carrying him. They're moving him to the center of the room.

The Sergeant turns to the Soldier.

SERGEANT

Who is he?

The Soldier is listening intently to the sounds of the mob, picking out words.

SOLDIER

Falterknecht . . . Schaf-. . .

Young McGrath and the Sergeant both are watching the Soldier now, waiting, as he tries to translate. The mob is growing louder.

SOLDIER

Schaffner . . . Guard. (A beat) My God,
he's one of their guards.

All three soldiers look at the Blond Man, who is now being hoisted by the mob up onto a table.

CU the wooden rafter, above. The rope sails up and over it.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. McGRATH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Same exact position - seating, staring at nothing, glass in his hand - except now the bottle next to him is empty.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Surreal scene. It's a desolate highway on a wide, snowy plain, in the midst of a nighttime snow storm. Wind howls. Snow blows like liquid across the road. No traffic, houses, or trees.

Our view moves until we see we're in the aftermath of a horrible car accident. In the foreground is a tire, spinning slowly on a car that has overturned. In the distance, a second car lays in a twisted wreck, deep tracks in the snow showing where it careened off the road. The only sound is the wind howling over the whole setting.

A moment later, a third car drives into view and skids to the side of the road. The driver leaps out, leaving it running with lights on, and staggers toward the overturned car. He's hysterical, screaming, ``No! No!``, baying in the wind.

It's McGrath. With the headlights of his stopped car illuminating him in the snow, he runs and falls repeatedly, as he makes his way to the wreck, sobbing, howling, screaming ``No! No!`` He's completely incoherent. No other people, or headlights, are anywhere in sight.

While he staggers toward the wreck, McGrath inadvertantly kicks aside a few pieces of debris - including the blood-covered brass vase. It lands right in our foreground view, some of the blood from it staining the snow.

McGrath finally reaches the overturned car and begins tugging on the door, hysterically screaming. He's completely lost it. Finally, the door pops open, and a man's arm falls out, the rest of his body hidden inside the wreck.

McGrath's screaming stops. He stares at the bare arm, long and hard. His face - buffeted by wind and snow, lit in his car's headlights - is frozen in panic and confusion.

On the arm is the skull-and-swastika tatoo, with the inscription, ``Say Goodbye.``

Suddenly, the body attached to the arm sits up from inside the wreck. It's Charlie Travis. He smiles wildly and stares at McGrath with his right eye; where his left eye is supposed to be, there is a gaping, bloody hole.

CHARLIE

Hi, Frank!

CUT TO:

INT. McGRATH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

McGrath's eyes pop open and he gasps for air. Then he lays in the dark, staring at the ceiling and trying to calm his breathing.

CUT TO:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

Close-up of McGrath's wastepaper basket, as he reaches into it and retrieves the file he had dropped there the day before.

He sits back and flips through the file. Neely appears at his door.

NEELY

He's here.

INT. ATTORNEY MEETING ROOM - DAY

A small room with a table. Jimmy Travis sits on one side, and his DEFENSE ATTORNEY (the one who had been working with Hal Marley) sits next to him. Jimmy looks sullen and defiant.

McGrath and Neely enter.

JIMMY

What the hell is this, McGrath? I got bail, fair and square! This is harassment!

McGRATH

Your bond agreement requires you to obey the law while you're out, Jimmy. You haven't done that.

JIMMY

Oh, bull-SHIT! I been a holy fuckin' ANGEL, man! Not even a fuckin' PARKING ticket!

ATTORNEY

Frank, I really have to protest this attempt at intimidation. My client-

McGRATH

Your client witnessed a fatal shooting and failed to report that fact to the police. That's called obstruction of justice - and THAT'S assuming he wasn't actively involved in the break-in.

JIMMY

BULLSHIT! I wasn't anywhere NEAR the place, McGrath!

McGRATH

I think you were, Jimmy. I think you heard the whole thing. Maybe even SAW it.

Jimmy sits back in his chair and kicks his feet up onto the table. He's wearing boots. On the bottom of the left one, a big nick has been taken out of the sole.

JIMMY

You're full 'o shit, McGrath. You can't prove I ever been anywhere NEAR that fuckin' house.

McGrath casually hands Jimmy a photo. Jimmy takes it, a scoff on his face, and looks at it.

The photo shows a plaster cast of a footprint, a nick in the sole.

Jimmy's eyes widen, and he quickly drops his feet the floor with a loud thump. He looks around at the others, who are all staring at him and his boots. Then he folds his legs and casually leans back in the chair, trying in vain to pretend nothing happened.

The Defense Attorney closes his eyes and gives a tiny shake of

his head. Neely stifles a laugh, making it sound like a cough. McGrath glares at Jimmy.

McGRATH

Something you wanna tell me, Jimmy?

Jimmy, frustrated, throws the photo on the table.

JIMMY

Fine. Send me back to the jail. They're about ready to name the fuckin' place after me, anyway.

McGRATH

It doesn't have to come to that. I might be willing to overlook the bond violation if you'll walk us through this - tell us everything, from the beginning.

ATTORNEY

Jimmy, don't answer. (To Frank) Let's talk about the new trial. If you'll agree to go to second-degree-

McGRATH

I'm not negotiating on the Phelps trial.

ATTORNEY

-or at least agree not to go for the death penalty-

McGRATH

I'm NOT negotiating on the Phelps trial. Period. He's going to trial. Only question is whether he stays out of jail while he's waiting. (Pause) What about it, Jimmy? Should we go talk to the judge about your little late-night excursions?

Jimmy mulls this.

JIMMY

You just wanna know what I saw?

McGRATH

I just want you to tell us what you should've reported in the first place. That's all.

JIMMY

No charges?

McGRATH

No OBSTRUCTION charges. But I find out you were in that house, and we're on a whole new subject.

Jimmy mulls some more.

JIMMY

I wanna sleep on this. Before I decide.

Neely starts laughing.

NEELY

Oh, right. Like we're gonna let you walk outta here!

But the request has struck a chord with McGrath.

McGRATH

Ok. That's fine, Jimmy. Go home. Think about it. Come back in here tomorrow.

The other three in the room stare at McGrath, not sure what to make of this. McGrath rises.

McGRATH

See you at ten?

McGrath and Neely exit.

INT. COURT HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

McGrath and Neely step out of the room. They see Dennis down the hall, next to the elevators, ending a conversation with Hal Marley.

NEELY (to Frank)

Should I take Jimmy back through the stairs?

McGrath stares at Dennis.

McGRATH

No. Take him to the elevator.

Neely disappears into the room, then comes out with Jimmy and the Attorney. The three of them walk toward the elevator. McGrath

follows, a few paces behind. Dennis notices the procession just as he and Jimmy are almost face-to-face.

Dennis and Jimmy stand there, glaring at each other, trying to stare each other down. Dennis's poker face is on full-blast, and Jimmy wavers.

Neely finally nudges Jimmy along, into the elevator with his attorney, then steps back out and lets it close.

Dennis is still staring at the elevator door.

DENNIS (To Frank)
What's HE doing here?

McGRATH (coolly)
Good news. Turns out Jimmy was standing right outside your house the night of the shooting.

Dead silence from Dennis.

McGRATH
He should be able to corroborate your whole story. Who knows? Maybe he even heard you yelling at Charlie to drop the vase. We'll know tomorrow, when he makes his statement.

DENNIS (long pause)
Good.

Dennis turns and walks away. McGrath turns to Neely.

McGRATH
Watch him.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEELY'S SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

Neely is sitting, parked, on the shoulder of a rural road. Across a small field sits Dennis's house. Lights are on inside. It is raining softly.

Neely sips coffee from a cup, and flips through a magazine by the light of the dashboard. He glances up at the house and, through the window, he sees Dennis inside, carrying his pajama-clad daughter to bed.

Close on Dennis' house.

INT. SHERIFF WILCOX'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Wilcox is in the midst of a poker game with a bunch of guys who look pretty much like him - big, boorish middle-aged hicks. Deep laughter and cigarette smoke fill the air. Wilcox is just wrapping up a joke as the phone RINGS.

WILCOX

- and the Catholic says, ``I thought
YOU paid her!''

A few of the players laugh - Wilcox laughs loudest - and he walks to a hallway and picks up the phone.

WILCOX (into phone)

Yeah?

MALE VOICE (filtered, whispered)

Hi, sheriff. How are you tonight?

Wilcox scowls.

WILCOX

I'm fine. Who's this? How'd you get
this number?

VOICE

Sheriff, I'd like you to meet me at
the lumberyard on sixth street, by
yourself, in one hour, and bring five-
thousand dollars with you.

SHERIFF

And why would I want to do that?

VOICE

Because I know about the gun-running.

Long pause. Wilcox looks shaken for the first time. He glances down the hall at the poker game, and speaks back into the phone, quietly.

SHERIFF

Who the hell is this?

VOICE

That's not really important, is it,
sheriff? I KNOW - and others are going
to know unless you show up at the
lumberyard tonight. Alone. Five-
thousand dollars.

SHERIFF

You think I got that kinda money just sittin' around here?

VOICE

Yes, sheriff, I do. (A beat) One hour.

The caller hangs up. Then Wilcox hangs up, looking worried.

CUT TO

INT. LUMBERYARD - NIGHT

It's deserted and dark, drizzling softly, as Jimmy Travis enters, wearing his nicked boots. He looks around, seeing no one.

JIMMY (calling)

Hello? (Pause) HELLO?

He looks around some more, getting frustrated.

JIMMY

HELL-O?! I'm HEE-ERE! What was so goddamn IMPOR-TANT?

A creaking sound emanates from one dark corner. Jimmy looks at it, peering, trying to see what's there. He steps toward it.

JIMMY

Denny? . . .

Wilcox emerges from the dark, eyes furious, gun raised. He FIRES five times in quick succession.

CUT TO:

INT. LUMBERYARD - MORNING

CU the nicked sole of Jimmy Travis' boot, protruding from under a fray piece of canvas draped over his body.

Cop cars are parked, lights flashing, officers milling. It's overcast, and puddles gleam everywhere. McGrath pulls up, jumps out of his car and stares at a tarp where several cops are gathered. A little blood is spattered on the ground around it.

Neely, already at the scene, approaches McGrath.

NEELY

Frank. You heard.

McGRATH

Jimmy Travis?

Neely nods.

NEELY

Chest and head. Four shots at least.
Real mess.

McGrath is hyperventilating. He leans weakly on his car.

McGRATH

He did it. That stone-faced
sonofabitch, he REALLY did it. (Pause)
I LET him do it.

NEELY

I watched him all night, Frank. He
never left the house.

McGRATH

Then he HIRED someone to do it.

NEELY

When? That's not the kind of thing
where you just pick up the phone.

McGrath is at a loss. He looks at Neely, looks over at the tarp-
covered body, then looks at Neely again, frustration boiling
over.

McGRATH

Helluva fucking coincidence, don't you
think?!

Neely stands silently while McGrath fumes some more. Then -

McGRATH

Where's Wilcox?

NEELY

Dunno. I haven't seen him today.

McGRATH

Prob'ly sleeping off a bender. Just as
well. You handle this - I want
everything printed and bagged, no
fuck-ups this time, ok?

Another car pulls up in the distance. Dennis climbs out and walks
toward McGrath, grave concern on his face.

DENNIS (to Frank)

Is it true?

McGrath nods toward the tarp. Dennis looks.

DENNIS

Shit.

McGrath stares at him.

McGRATH

Yeah. Shit. (Pause) You know anything about this, Dennis?

Dennis stares back.

DENNIS

I don't believe this. What, am I automatically the chief suspect now every time someone gets killed?

McGRATH

Just seems strange that the only witness to the shooting . . . gets shot. Know what I mean?

He and Dennis are locked in their stare. Movement in the distance breaks their standoff. A few of the officers, preparing a stretcher, flip the tarp back to reveal Jimmy's bloody, twisted body.

McGrath grimaces and looks away. Then he notices that Dennis is looking at the body with a calm, almost icy facial expression, unfazed by the gore of it.

Dennis stares at the body, while McGrath stares at Dennis.

INT. LUMBERYARD - LATER

Dennis is gone. McGrath is climbing back into his car to leave, Neely standing nearby. The Technician (from the earlier scene) walks up.

TECHNICIAN

Frank, we might have something. A partial tire track, about a quarter-mile up the road. Car was pulled off the shoulder. Odd spot to park, nothing there. Looks like it coulda been made last night.

McGRATH

Think we can match it?

TECHNICIAN

Maybe. It's an unusual track - extra wide, a diamond-pattern tread. Looks like some kinda sports tire.

NEELY

A mudding tire.

McGrath and the Technician look at Neely.

NEELY

The diamond pattern - that's what was on the mudding tires the sheriff had us put on his squad car. Everyone was laughing about how stupid the things looked.

McGRATH

Has the sheriff checked in yet?

NEELY (shakes head)

No one's seen him today.

McGrath sits in his car seat and stares out the windshield, his door still open. He's thoroughly confused.

McGRATH

Wilcox? (Pause) Why Wilcox?

He looks up at Neely, who shrugs.

McGRATH

None of it makes any damned sense.

McGrath closes his door and drives off. As he does, he looks at the empty shoulder of the road, remembering.

QUICK-CUT TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. PRISON CAMP - DAY (BLACK/WHITE)

Young McGrath, in the back of the transport truck, watches the former prisoners marching alongside the road. He sees the Starved Boy, wearing the military compass. The boy looks at him, icy stare, as the truck moves by.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. McGRATH'S CAR - DAY

He's driving, still remembering. In his mind, the echoing chants of the German mob: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. PRISON CAMP BARRACKS - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

The chant continues: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

Again we're looking at the Starved Boy - this time he's standing among the mob as it hoist the young, muscular Blonde Man up to the rope. The Boy is unsure what to make of it. McGrath's compass dangles from the boy's neck.

Young McGrath is surveying the crowd, holding up his gun with uncertainty. The mob is shouting: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

To his side stand the Soldier and the Sergeant. The Soldier has started to panic.

SOLDIER

Sergeant - they're gonna do it. (A beat)
Oh, Jesus, they're gonna do it . . .

The Soldier is looking to the Sergeant for a response, but isn't getting one. The Sergeant is watching the scene, rifle at this side, his face slack.

The mob is fixing the rope to the Blond Man's neck.

SOLDIER (urgently)

Sergeant? SERGEANT! They're gonna kill
him!

Still getting no response, the Soldier raises his rifle and prepares to fire a shot over the mob.

CU the muzzle of the Soldier's rifle. A hand grabs it and pulls it aside.

It's the Sergeant's hand. The Soldier looks over at him, confused. The Sergeant stares back, his face still stoic, wordlessly preventing the Soldier from firing.

Close on Young McGrath, watching the exchange.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

The FOREMAN of the Coroner's jury is standing in the jury box. Coroner Johnston stands nearby. McGrath, Hal, Dennis, Mary and the rest are all assembled (except Wilcox).

FOREMAN

In the matter of Charles Travis,
deceased, we the coroner's jury
determine the cause of death to be
justifiable homicide.

In the audience, Mary breathes a sign of relief and leans against Dennis, who gives Hal a little smile. McGrath sits across the room, watching them.

JOHNSTON

I want to thank the jury for its time
and effort in this matter. You are
discharged.

Johnston bangs a gavel on the table - then immediately reaches under the table to pick up a fishing tackle box.

INT. COURT ROOM - LATER

The place is clearing out. Mary is hugging Dennis.

MARY

It's really over?

Dennis looks across the room, and sees McGrath stop Hal and whisper something to him. Hal protests. McGrath shakes his head sternly, glances over at Dennis, and exits. Hal turns and gives Dennis a concerned look.

DENNIS

It's over, honey.

CUT TO:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

McGrath sits behind his desk. Hal is seated in front of it. Dennis stands nearby, staring out a window.

HAL

What are we doing here, Frank? You

already agreed no perjury charge.

McGRATH

I didn't agree there wouldn't be a MURDER charge. (Long pause) I might be willing to talk manslaughter. But only if your client agrees to stop lying through his damned teeth.

Dennis keeps looking calmly out the window. Hal is suddenly sheepish, as if he's about to say something he'd rather not say.

HAL

There's not gonna be any murder charges, Frank.

McGRATH

Oh? And why not?

HAL

You questioned my client the night of the shooting. During that interview you obtained relevant information and evidence.

McGRATH

So?

HAL (reluctantly)

He - He wasn't properly Mirandized.

McGrath's eyes go wide. He slowly looks over at Dennis, who is still staring out the window.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. DENNIS'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

Dennis and McGrath are sitting on the couch in Dennis's living room on the night of the shooting, Ashley on Dennis's lap, cops milling around. Exact re-play of their conversation:

McGRATH

I guess we better do this by the book, Dennis. You have the right to remain silent -

DENNIS (upset)

Oh, Frank, c'mon - I know my Miranda. God, PLEASE don't read me my rights in front of my kid.

McGrath looks at the little girl. His face softens. He smiles sympathetically at Dennis, and nods reluctantly.

McGRATH

Ok. Sure. Why don't you just tell me what happened.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - DAY

HAL

We will argue that my client was, technically, under arrest at that point --

McGRATH (stunned)

, my God.

He again stares at Dennis, who is still looking out the window.

McGRATH

You knew. (A beat) Even then, that first night, while the rest of us were just going through the motions - you knew we might end up having this conversation. And you took out a little insurance policy just in case, didn't you?

QUICK-CUT TO:

CU the Curly-Haired boy, McGrath's dead son, standing by the same window, looking out it, his face turned away. Bright, surreal lighting flows in from the window.

The boy turns and smiles innocently.

BACK TO PRESENT:

CU Dennis, turning from the window to look at McGrath, not smiling at all.

DENNIS

You didn't read me my rights, Frank.

Close on McGrath's eyes - quiet fury and frustration), we hear the German mob: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. PRISON CAMP BARRACKS - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

The chanting is louder: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t!". The muscular Blond Man, rope around his neck, attempts, in terror, to throw himself off the table. The mob catches him, lifts him so the rope is slack. Then they slowly lower him. As he begins strangling, the shouting from the mob intensifies.

To one side, the Soldier is trying to pull his rifle free from the Sergeant, who is still gripping the muzzle, preventing him from dispersing the crowd.

The Soldier, increasingly panicked, looks at the hanging, half-strangled Blond Man, surrounded by the mob. Then he looks over his shoulder at McGrath.

SOLDIER

Frank! Shoot! SHOOT!

Young McGrath, rifle in front of him, is unsure what to do. He looks at the Sergeant, who is gripping the end of the Soldier's gun and staring, riveted at the mob and its victim.

McGrath looks at the mob, shouting louder and louder as the Blond Man dangles, limbs twitching. The mob is jabbing fists in the air, chanting, "Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

McGrath says it quietly ("Rekk-t") then looks at the soldier questioningly for a translation.

SOLDIER (urgently)

'Recht!' - 'Justice!' They're saying
'Justice.' (A beat) Frank, fire over
them!

McGrath looks down at his rifle, then out at the chanting crowd.

The Soldier, near hysteria, is still trying to pull his rifle away from the Sergeant.

SOLDIER (screams)

Goddammit, Frank, SHOOT!!

In the mob, McGrath again sees the Starved Boy - who is now jabbing one thin fist in the air, shouting with the mob: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!". The boy's eyes are livid.

CU Young McGrath's face, stunned.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

McGrath awakens with a start. His head had been on his desk. It's dark, just one little desk-light glowing.

Eyes groggy, he looks over to the photo of his dead son.

A noise CREAKS in the other room. McGrath looks. He hears it again. Someone is coming. McGrath pulls a ring of keys out of his top drawer, fumbles with them, trying to open the bottom drawer.

A figure enters - it's Sheriff Wilcox. He holds a gun at his side. He's drunk.

WILCOX

Frank. Fancy meeting YOU here!

McGrath, looking at the gun, speaks with deliberate calmness.

McGRATH

Hi, Sheriff. How are you?

WILCOX (smiling)

How AM I? I'm a fucking fugitive,
THAT's how I am - BODY-BAG.

McGrath keeps looking calmly at Wilcox, while, behind his desk, he slowly tries to open the bottom drawer. Wilcox sways drunkenly.

WILCOX

Don't take this wrong Frank, but I've
always hated your fucking guts, you
know that? Your fucking smug,
legalistic bullshit.

McGrath, staring at Wilcox, slowly lifts a pistol from the drawer.

McGRATH

Sorry you feel that way, Sheriff. I've
always thought we worked pretty well
together.

WILCOX

You talked to the feds about me,
didn't you?

McGrath has the pistol by his side (behind the desk).

McGRATH

The feds? I don't know what you mean,
Sheriff.

WILCOX

You fucking Jew-loving bastard, you
turned me in.

Wilcox reaches across the desk and points his gun right at
McGrath's head. McGrath stares stoically.

WILCOX

Stand up - Body-Bag.

McGrath slowly stands. As he does, he RAISES his own gun and puts
it right at Wilcox's forehead.

They stand there like that for a long, tense moment, each with a
gun pointed at the other's head, the desk between them. McGrath's
eyes are hard, and Wilcox starts to quiver.

Finally, Wilcox flings his gun down and backs away, hands up.
Anger rises in McGrath's eyes and he looks as if he might fire.
Wilcox, cowering away now, starts sobbing - a low, breathless
sobbing of panic and terror.

McGrath looks surprised by the sound of the sobbing, like
something has just occurred to him.

McGrath, still holding the gun on the sobbing Wilcox, looks over
at the ceramic vase, sitting on the end table, the card, picture
frame and clock arranged around it. He thinks a moment. Then -

McGRATH

Pick up the vase.

WILCOX (terror and confusion)

Wh - what?

McGRATH (shouts)

PICK UP THE VASE!

Wilcox, still sobbing and crying, gingerly grasps the vase by the
rim with his thumb and fingertips, and slowly lifts it off the
table. None of the things around it are disturbed.

McGrath watches this, his eyes filled with revelation - then with
more anger.

Wilcox stands there crying, waiting, both arms out, vase in one
hand, as McGrath continues to point the gun and stare at him.

McGrath's face is twisted in fury. In his mind, the mob chants:
"Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"`

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. PRISON CAMP BARRACKS - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

The deafening souts of the emaciated ex-prisoners shake the walls: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

The muscular Blond Man is dangling, dead, from the rafter his body slowly turning.

Pan past the Starved Boy, jabbing his fist and shouting viciously with the rest of them.

Pan to a CU of a hand. It's a fist, jolting slightly to the rhythm of the mob's chant.

Pan up. It's Young McGrath. He's staring at the hanging corpse, his eyes intense. His rifle, unused, in is hand

He is whispering in time with them, through clenched teeth:
"Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. McGRATH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

We hear the mob's chant continue in McGrath's mind: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

McGrath's arm, holding the gun, begins to shake, almost uncontrollably, rage in his face. Wilcox closes his eyes, certain he is about to die.

We see Wilcox still is openly sobbing, but we don't hear him anymore. All we hear is the German mob, its roar rising louder and louder in McGrath's mind: "Rekk-t! Rekk-t! Rekk-t!"

CU McGrath's livid eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. DENNIS'S HOUSE - DAY

SLAM - a moving-van door closes hard.

Dead silence.

It's an overcast day. Dennis is loading boxes into a moving van in his driveway. As he slams shut the van door, he comes face-to-face with McGrath.

They stare at each other.

DENNIS

Hi, Frank. Here to help me move?

McGRATH

Charlie Travis wasn't laughing when you shot him. He was crying. Wasn't he?

Dennis ignores him and starts lifting more boxes into the side door of the van.

McGRATH

Mary said she heard a strange laugh. Did she come to that conclusion on her own, Dennis? Or did you help her out on THAT one, too?

DENNIS

Should I have my lawyer here for this?

McGRATH

I thought you'd like to know - we arrested Wilcox last night. He confessed to everything. The gun-running, shooting Jimmy.

Dennis is still packing, not looking at him.

DENNIS

Congratulations.

McGRATH

Wilcox seems to think Jimmy was going to turn him in on the gun-running. I'm not sure how that's possible, though, since me and you were the only two people around here who knew.

DENNIS

Well, maybe old Jimmy was smarter than you thought, Frank.

McGrath gives a small laugh and shakes his head. He speaks as if enjoying a joke.

McGRATH

Know what Jimmy's last word was? This is according to Wilcox, now. (A beat) 'Denny.'

Dennis's face doesn't react at all.

McGRATH

He walks into the lumberyard, and says it, just like that - 'Denny?' Like he was expecting to find someone there named Denny.

McGrath is still waiting for a reaction from Dennis.

McGRATH (friendly smile)

Why . . . why would he say that, do you think?

DENNIS

I dunno, Frank, why don't you dig him up and ask him?

Dennis is still packing. McGrath's grin falls off.

McGRATH

You think I'm just gonna let this go?

DENNIS

Why shouldn't you?

McGRATH

Because two people are dead and I don't have a satisfactory explanation for it.

DENNIS

Sounds pretty satisfactory to ME, Frank. The Travis brothers are both dead, Wilcox is going to prison. Seems everyone is right where you wanted them to be in the first place. (A beat) Some would call that justice.

McGrath can't believe his ears. He stares long and hard at Dennis, stunned. He speaks gently, almost paternally.

McGRATH

Justice isn't just a place you go, Dennis. It's a way of getting there.

They stare at each other in silence for a moment.

McGRATH

He said your name. That opens up a whole new line of inquiry. Maybe this is the part where I should read you your rights?

DENNIS

You're gonna try me on the words of a dead murderer - as quoted by a LIVE murderer?

Dennis gives an annoyed laugh and shakes his head.

DENNIS

GREAT case, Frank.

McGrath smiles. Then laughs.

McGRATH

You're right. The case sucks. I'd never get past arraignment.

McGrath laughs some more. Dennis still isn't joining him.

McGRATH (friendly)

So why don't you just tell me what happened?

Dennis stops and stares at him. McGrath has a look of desperation in his eyes. Dennis seems for a moment as if he's going to open up to him.

Then the moment passes, and Dennis's face hardens again.

DENNIS

I already did.

Dennis turns and walks into the house, leaving McGrath standing alone on the driveway.

After a moment, McGrath walks to his car, climbs in, pulls away.

INT. McGRATH'S CAR - DAY

He's driving away on Dennis's lane. He glances down at his son's photo on the dashboard, then looks back at the road, his face hard. The radio crackles. McGrath answers.

McGRATH

Yeah?

SECRETARY (filtered)

Frank. You coming back in this afternoon?

McGRATH

Yeah, I'll be there in a bit. What's up?

SECRETARY (filtered)

Manning was just here. From the party? Says it's time to start thinking fundraisers. You believe that, election time already? He wants to sit down with you this afternoon.

McGrath drives on silently, staring stoically at the shoulder of the gravel drive. It's empty.

A moment later, his mind's eye sees (in full color) the Starved Boy from the prison camp, walking along side the gravel drive, alone, the compass around his neck.

McGrath stares out the window as he drives past. The Starved Boy stares back, just as before. His face is as cold and remorseless as a statue.

McGrath shows no reaction at all. He watches until he has passed the boy, then glances at his rear-view mirror - to see the empty road behind him.

The Secretary's voice crackles over the radio.

SECRETARY (filtered)

Frank? You there?

McGrath looks down at the photo his curly haired son on the dashboard. Then he raises the radio to his mouth.

McGRATH

Tell him I'm not running for re-election.

McGrath's car pulls out of Dennis's lane and drives away.

FADE OUT (Begin rolling CREDITS)

INTERRUPT credits (FADE BACK IN)

EXT. DENNIS'S HOME - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

Distant view of the house, same as the opening scene. Wet and misty.

CUT TO

EXT. BACK DOOR - NIGHT

Charlie Travis is standing there, looking in the window.

A moment later, we see that Jimmy is standing there as well, right next to Charlie.

They stand silently for a moment, Jimmy looking expectantly at Charlie. Then Charlie shakes his head.

CHARLIE

Fuck this shit. I'm just gonna boost his car.

Charlie starts to walk away. Jimmy calls after him.

JIMMY

Who's the little pussy NOW, Charlie?

Charlie stops, turns and walks back.

CHARLIE

They're gonna know we did it.

JIMMY

They still have to prove it. He almost got us the rope, Charlie. That fucker almost killed us both.

Charlie looks into the house, hesitantly. Then he nods.

CHARLIE

Ok, I'm goin' in. I'm gonna do it.

Jimmy pulls aside his shirt, to reveal a gun tucked in his belt. He stands there looking at Charlie, waiting. After a moment of staring at the thing, Charlie reaches over and pulls it out of Jimmy's belt.

Charlie pulls a small crowbar out of his back pocket and reaches for the door. Then he turns to Jimmy, surprised.

CHARLIE

It's open.

JIMMY

It's a SIGN, man. (Pause) I'll be right here if you need me. No survivors.

Charlie nods.

CHARLIE

No survivors.

Charlie slips in through the door and disappears.

Jimmy stands there a moment. In a window behind him, a curtain parts and Dennis peers out, looking right at Jimmy.

Jimmy turns and sees Dennis looking through the window. They're about three feet apart. They lock eyes for a moment.

A long, calm stare.

Jimmy turns and walks away. Dennis watches him go.

INT. DENNIS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dennis walks down the hall. He's wearing black gloves and holding a gun. He checks that it's loaded, then tucks it behind his back.

As he does all this, he is walking and calling casually ahead into the living room.

DENNIS

Mary, I've got to meet with the city editor tomorrow, might be late. How 'bout we just on going to Macy's for dinner -

He steps into the living room.

Mary is sitting on the couch, trembling with panic, Ashley in her lap. Charlie is holding Jimmy's gun. He grins at Dennis.

The brass vase stands on the end table next to the couch, the three other items arranged closely around it.

CHARLIE

Macy's! Oh, Macy's sounds great! Love their chicken. I'm THERE, man!

Dennis stares. His hands are to his side and slightly behind him. He speaks as if in a panic - but his face remains stoic and unshaken.

DENNIS

Mary. He - He has a gun.

CHARLIE

I've already explained that to her.

Charlie waves a hand in front of Mary's blind eyes. She doesn't move.

CHARLIE

Wild. I've always wondered, Denny - what's it like to fuck a blind girl?

Dennis again speaks as if scared, but his face is still stoic, like he's an actor going half-heartedly through his lines.

DENNIS

Charlie. Please. They're not involved in this -

CHARLIE

Is it different? Better? Y'know, maybe I'll just find out for myself.

Mary, genuinely terrified, gives a little cry, then steadies herself.

CHARLIE

How 'bout it, lady? You'd like me. Let's see - I'm handsome, muscular, blond hair, nice clean teeth -

Charlie stares menacingly at Dennis.

CHARLIE

And I happen to be available.

DENNIS (wooden)

Charlie, I'll do anything. Just - please, oh god, please, they're not involved -

CHARLIE

They're involved! (shouts) You're ALL fucking involved!

Mary jumps, then squeezes Ashley close.

CHARLIE

You can't just walk away from this, DENNY! They almost gave me the chair because o' you, MOTHERFUCKER!

Charlie turns, so he has his back to Mary.

CHARLIE

Now, lemme tell you what's gonna happen. First, Blindy here is gonna make me happy. Then YOU'RE gonna gimme every fucking dime you got in this house, plus your car keys. Then, if you're well-behaved, I MIGHT let your little girl here live.

Just as Charlie finishes saying this, Dennis calmly raises his own gun, in his black-gloved hand, and aims it at Charlie. Charlie's eyes go wide. He's so stunned he can't move.

A moment later, Charlie quickly raises his own gun in front of him, trying to threaten Dennis with it.

Dennis dips his free hand into his pocket and produces a small black cartridge. He holds it up for Charlie to see. Charlie gawks at it. He checks his own gun and realizes there's no cartridge in it.

Dennis and Charlie lock in a long, silent stare - Charlie confused and disoriented, Dennis expressionless.

Suddenly, Mary lunges her whole body forward, hitting Charlie full in the back and knocking him down. He drops his gun. Dennis watches, surprised; this wasn't part of the plan.

Dennis quickly stoops down and snatches Charlie's gun off the floor. Then, in one quick motion, he tucks his own gun into his pants, snaps the cartridge into Charlie's gun, peels both black gloves off with his teeth, and turns to point Charlie's own (now loaded) gun at him.

Charlie, sitting on the floor, stares at the gun a moment, then starts crying - a low, terrified, breathless sobbing that could almost be mistaken for laughter.

Mary stares urgently into space, waiting for some explanation.

MARY (terrified)

Dennis?

DENNIS

I've got the gun, Mary.

Charlie is still sitting and sobbing. Dennis, holding the gun, goes to the phone and dials.

DENNIS

Mary, take Ashley to the bedroom.
Everything's fine, honey.

Mary leads Ashley out of the room. Charlie continues to sob.

DENNIS (into phone)

My name is Dennis Hawkins, I live at
401 Luttrell Road, last house on the
lane. I have an intruder here - I'm
holding a gun on him. (Pause) No,
everyone's fine. (Pause). Please
hurry.

He hangs up. He and Charlie stare at each other a moment, Charlie
still sitting on the floor and sobbing in terror. Dennis's face
is stone.

DENNIS

Stand up.

Charlie does, gingerly, still crying.

DENNIS

No technicalities this time, Charlie.

At that, Charlie's sobbing intensifies.

DENNIS

Did you really think you could
threaten my family? Did you really,
REALLY think I was going to just sit
around here and hope you didn't do it?
(A beat) How could I take that chance,
Charlie?

Charlie is about ready to faint with confusion and terror. He's
almost incoherent as he speaks.

CHARLIE (sobbing)

J- J- Jimmy? . . .

DENNIS

Never mind Jimmy. Right now we're
talking about YOU, Charlie. (Pause)
Pick up that vase.

Charlie, still sobbing, looks over at the vase. He's confused.

CHARLIE

Wh - what?

Dennis jams the gun toward him.

DENNIS (clenches teeth)
Pick up the VASE!

Charlie lets out a little cry, then gingerly picks up the vase, using his thumb and two fingers on the rim. He lifts it carefully off the end table, not disturbing any of the things around it.

Charlie stands there holding the vase out to his side by his fingertips, like it might explode. He stares at Dennis and continues sobbing softly. Dennis's face remains expressionless.

DENNIS
Charles Travis, you have been sentenced to death for the murder of Dorothy Phelps - and the attempted murder of my family. Do you have anything to say for yourself before the sentence is carried out?

Charlie starts losing it again.

CHARLIE (sobbing)
I - I - I -

The sound of sirens rises in the background.

DENNIS
Sorry. Time's up.

Dennis FIRES, hitting Charlie in the lower chest. Charlie immediately drops the vase; it bounces on the carpet. Charlie stares down at his wound, sobbing uncontrollably, arms to his side. He just stands there, staring at the blood and sobbing louder and louder.

Dennis is holding the gun far in front of him, staring angrily, preparing to shoot again.

Charlie still stands, sobbing and bleeding. Blood drips all over the carpet and douses the vase laying on the floor.

Five seconds have passed since the first shot.

Dennis's icy exterior has cracked; he's still holding the gun up, still ready to fire again, but he's starting to panic. He can't quite do it. His arm, holding out the gun, starts shaking.

Charlie is staring right down the gun barrel, standing and bleeding and sobbing. We see drop after drop of blood splash onto

the vase and the carpet.

Ten seconds have passed.

Dennis, still poised to shoot, calms himself with an effort. His arm stops shaking. Stillness settles back into his face.

Fifteen seconds have passed. Dennis speaks, almost in a whisper.

DENNIS

The living have a responsibility to
the dead, Charlie.

EXT. DENNIS'S HOUSE - NIGHT (BLACK/WHITE)

Distant view of the house, same as the opening scene. Mist and rain around it.

The second shot rings out.

FADE OUT (Finish credits)

End.