

SOMETHING TO DO

by

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BATTLE STREET BOOKS

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PEOPLE IN THE PLAY:

An old man

Paul

Ron

Jackie

Cheryl

Two police officers

Sam

Cheryl's parents

Groups of youths and girls

SETTING

In and around a small town in southern British Columbia.

(TWO YOUTHS ARE SQUATTING BEHIND SOME DENSE BUSHES AT THE EDGE OF A FOREST CLEARING. THEY ARE INTENTLY OBSERVING A SMALL LOG CABIN. AT ONE END OF THE CABIN IS A DOOR, AT THE OTHER END A STOVEPIPE JUTS FROM THE WALL AND RISES TO JUST ABOVE RIDGE LEVEL. ONE WINDOW IS SET IN THE WALL FACING THE YOUTHS. BESIDE THE DOOR IS A CHOPPING BLOCK AND A PILE OF SPLIT ALDERWOOD. AT THE CORNER STANDS A WATER BARREL. AN EAVESTROUGH IS SUSPENDED TO CATCH AND DRAIN WATER INTO THE BARREL. A CLOTHESLINE IS STRUNG FROM THE CABIN TO A CONVENIENT TREE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIX THE EXACT AGE OF THE YOUTHS. RON, BY VIRTUE OF THICK-BODIED AND HEAVY-FACED, APPEARS QUITE MATURE WHILE JACKIE COULD PASS FOR A THIRTEEN-YEAR OLD DUE TO HIS SKINNY BODY AND CHILDISH FACE. IN FACT BOTH ARE SEVENTEEN. THEY WEAR THE USUAL WINDBREAKERS AND JEANS. BEFORE EACH IS A NEATLY ARRANGED PILE OF ROCKS.)

JACKIE: When did you see him, Ron?

RON: I told you before. Me, Paul and Cheryl was driving around in Paul's car when we saw this old guy go into the bush. First off, we think he's taking a shit, but when he doesn't come out, Paul says let's go see where the hell he's gone to.

JACKIE: Why? Did you think he'd come in here to bump himself off or something?

RON: I'm telling you . . . Paul just said . . . let's go see where the old sonofabitch has gone.

JACKIE: You didn't know this shack was here, eh?

RON: Of course not. I'll bet nobody else does either.

JACKIE: Did the old guy see you?

RON: No. (GRINS AT JACKIE) But if you're scared, Jackie

JACKIE: I'm not scared of no old bum.

RON: (STILL GRINNING) You wouldn't have to be scared of this one anyways. He's lamer than a broken-winged coot.

JACKIE: So what! I don't give a shit what he is. (THEY REARRANGE THEIR PILES OF ROCKS) Paul's taking his time getting around to the other side.

RON: Maybe Cheryl delayed him on the way.

JACKIE: You think so, Ron! (THERE WAS A PAUSE WHILE EACH ONE SPECULATES ON WHAT COULD BE GOING ON BETWEEN PAUL AND CHERYL.) She sure sticks close to him, don't she?

RON: Sometimes I think Paul don't like her all that much. But Jesus, if she came around me, I wouldn't stop her getting close. Boy! I'd tell her to get closer.

JACKIE: Me too. (WEIGHS A STONE IN HIS HAND.) You think Paul's getting it off her?

RON: Maybe. I don't know. Why don't you ask him?

JACKIE: Why don't you? You're his buddy. Me, I just tag along.

RON: (HISSING) Shut up! (A WHITE-HAIRED, ELDERLY MAN HAS COME OUT OF THE CABIN. HE IS SHORT AND BARREL-BODIED. ALTHOUGH HE WALKS WITH A PRONOUNCED LIMP AND MOVES SLOWLY, HE STILL MANAGES TO SUGGEST THAT WITHIN HIM LIES A RESERVOIR OF STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE. HE CARRIES A PAIL FILLED WITH CLOTHES, WHICH HE PROCEEDS TO HANG ON THE LINE: A SHIRT, SOCKS AND LONGJOHNS.)

JACKIE: (ROCKING IN SILENT LAUGHTER.) Let's hang out the washing, Ma.

RON: (HIS FACE CLOSE THE JACKIE'S.) Shut up, you fucking fool! He'll hear you. (IN FACT THE OLD MAN HAS STOPPED HANGING UP HIS CLOTHES TO LISTEN. HE IS QUITE STILL, HEAD COCKED TO ONE SIDE, LIKE A LISTENING BIRD. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS HE RETURNS TO HIS LAUNDRY JUST AS A ROCK SLAMS ONTO THE ROOF ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CABIN. THREE MORE ROCKS FOLLOW IN RAPID SUCCESSION. OBVIOUSLY PAUL AND CHERYL HAVE STARTED THEIR ASSAULT. THE OLD MAN LIMPS AROUND THE CABIN TO INVESTIGATE.)

JACKIE: (JUBILANTLY) It's D-Day, men. D-Day! Fire! Load! Fire . . . Fire . . . Fire . . . ! (HE LETS OUT A WOLF HOWL AS HE AND RON HURL ROCKS ONTO THE CABIN ROOF.) I'm going to put one through the window.

RON: No! Save it for the next time.

JACKIE: We plan on coming back, eh?

RON: Sure. We're just letting him know he's got some new friends . . . that the poor old sonofabitch isn't alone in this fucking world.

JACKIE: That's right. We're doing the old bastard a good turn. We're keeping him hopping around so's he won't turn into no vegetable. (THE OLD MAN COMES AROUND THE CABIN TOWARDS THEM.) Keep him hop-hop-hopping around.

RON: Let's go. (MORE ROCKS SLAM ONTO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOF.)

JACKIE: Just one more, then we'll retire, men. (THROWS A ROCK.)

RON: Get going, you dope, before he spots you.

JACKIE: Jesus, look at the old sonofabitch hop. (THEY SLIP AWAY AS THE OLD MAN REACHES THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING.)

OLD MAN: (BREATHING HEAVILY.) All right. Come out. (MORE ROCKS CLATTER THROUGH THE BOUGHS, ONE PASSING CLOSE TO HIS HEAD. HE LISTENS, THEN GOES TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CABIN TO LISTEN THERE. AFTER A WHILE HE ENTERS THE BUSH AND MOVES AROUND LIKE A DOG SEEKING A FALLEN BIRD. HE STOPS, KNEELS AND BEGINS PASSING HIS FINGERS OVER THE GROUND WHERE CHERYL AND PAUL WERE. IT IS APPARENT FROM THE WAY HE LEANS OVER THAT HIS EYESIGHT IS NOT GOOD.) Two here. One guy throwing. The other just squatting and waiting. The one throwing's a fair size. A hundred and seventy-five pounds. Other's smaller . . . more like a hundred and ten. Squats feet apart. Hah . . . it's a girl. That's right. Sits back on her heels. (HE MOVES AROUND THE AREA, SNIFFING.) She's got scent on her. (KNEELS TO PUT HIS NOSE CLOSE TO THE LEAVES.) Probably dabs a bit on her ass like Josie used to. (HE MOVES IN A HALF CIRCLE TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CABIN AND LOCATES THE SPOT WHERE RON AND JACKIE HAD CROUCHED. TOUCHES THE INDENTATIONS.) Two more. Hmhm. One of them's pretty small . . . maybe another girl. (MOVES HIS FINGERS AROUND THE INDENTATIONS MADE BY JACKIE'S RUNNERS.) No, it's no girl. It's a skinny kid. (FEELS THE SPOT WHERE RON HAD SQUATTED.) This one's pretty hefty. Could be a hundred and ninety. (IN THE DISTANCE JACKIE GIVES HIS IMITATION WOLF HOWL.) That's not bad, sonny, though I've heard better from real wolves. And I'll tell you something, sonny, when I set out to trap a wolf, I always got him. But I guess you don't know that yet, do you? (THE OLD MAN STOPS TALKING, BUT HIS VOICE IS HEARD AS HIS THOUGHTS CONTINUE.) That's the funny thing about wolves . . . and people too. They always believe they can run off somewhere and escape. (HE GOES BACK TO THE CABIN AND ENTERS IT. THE INTERIOR IS SPARSELY FURNISHED, BUT METICULOUSLY NEAT AND CLEAN. THE OLD MAN POURS HIMSELF A CUP OF COFFEE, THEN SITS AT THE TABLE, AND, AFTER DRINKING SOME OF THE COFFEE, TAKES UP AN ACCORDION, AND BEGINS PLAYING AND SINGING 'RED RIVER VALLEY'.)

FADE

(RON AND JACKIE STAND BY PAUL'S CAR, WHICH IS PARKED IN THE OVERGROWN ENTRANCE TO A TRAIL. BOTH ARE SMOKING: JACKIE COMPULSIVELY, RON SEDATELY, EXTENDING THE PLEASURE HE GETS FROM THE FLAVOUR OF THE CIGARETTE, LIKE A PRISONER RATIONED TO FIVE CIGARETTES A DAY.)

JACKIE: Maybe the old guy caught up with Paul and Cheryl.

RON: Maybe, maybe, maybe a lot of things. Maybe I'll end up . . . a . . . jerk..like I am now . . . and you'll end up

JACKIE: (HE HAS STUBBED UP HIS CIGARETTE AND NOW HE COMMENCES TO DANCE AROUND, SHADOW BOXING.) . . . a world champ. Move move move. Flick your hand out, Ron, see if I can hit it. (RON JERKS HIS HAND AROUND AND JACKIE GIVES IT SEVERAL HEAVY SMACKS WITH HIS RIGHT FIST.)

RON: Trying to knock it off, or just trying to prove you can hit it?

JACKIE: You're wide open, boy, wide open. You always move to the right. Know that?

RON: So what! I'm not planning to become a world champ.

JACKIE: You move right, then swing left. Always the same pattern. So when you move in on your left, I'd have my little old right hand ready to welcome you.

RON: And what the hell d'you think I'd be doing?

JACKIE: You'd be getting ready to sleep on the floor.

RON: There's once thing I like about you, Jackie. You know it all.

JACKIE: Want me to demonstrate? It won't cost you a nickel! (DANCES AROUND RON.)

RON: Cut it out. Here's Paul and Cheryl. (PAUL AND CHERYL ARE A GOOD-LOOKING COUPLE. HE IS A DARK-HAIRED, LITHE BODIED YOUTH, WHILE CHERYL, ALTHOUGH TOO PUDGY TO BE CONSIDERED GRACEFUL, STILL MANAGES TO BE ATTRACTIVE. WHAT SPOILS BOTH IS THE EXPRESSION OF DISSATISFACTION ON THEIR FACES.) Where've you guys been?

PAUL: Getting here. (OPENS THE CAR DOOR. GETS INTO THE DRIVER'S SEAT.) Does Jackie ever stop doing that? (AS JACKIE AND RON GET INTO THE BACK SEATS.) Do you

do that in bed too, Jackie?

JACKIE: (WHO IS SITTING BEHIND CHERYL.) Depends who I got in bed with me. (HE TUGS HER HAIR.)

CHERYL: Cut it out, Jackie.

PAUL: (STARTS UP THE MOTOR.) Did you guys make out okay?

RON: Sure.

JACKIE: We let him know there's more to life than hanging out the laundry.

CHERYL: So now you can leave him alone.

PAUL: (AFTER SOME FIDDLING WITH THE CHOKE AND GUNNING THE GAS PEDAL HE HAS MANAGED TO GET THE MOTOR GOING.) We'll visit him one more time because he'll expect us to.

JACKIE: (AS PAUL BACKS THE CAR OUT OF THE TRAIL ONTO THE ROAD AND TAKES OFF AT A TIRE-SCREECHING SPEED.) You wouldn't want us to disappoint him, would you, Cheryl? (HE TROTS TWO FINGERS UP THE BACK OF HER NECK. CHERYL SWINGS AROUND IN THE SEAT.)

CHERYL: Look, if you don't keep your goddamn hands off me, I'll tear your eyes out. Get it! (JACKIE RECOILS IN PRETENDED FEAR.)

PAUL: Cut it out, Jackie, will you?

RON: Are we going to Sam's?

PAUL: I don't know. You guys want to go to Sam's for a coke?

CHERYL: I don't. Drop me off at home.

PAUL: Please yourself.

(EACH ONE MOVES TO A CORNER OF THE SEAT AS THOUGH TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY WISH TO GET AS FAR AWAY FROM EACH OTHER AS IS POSSIBLE. AT HIGH SPEED AND IN SILENCE THEY DRIVE ON TOWARDS THE TOWN.)

FADE

(THE OLD MAN IS WALKING ALONG A CREEK. HE REACHES A ROAD, THEN PLODS ALONG IT INTO THE SMALL TOWN. FINALLY HE REACHES A POLICE STATION WHICH HE ENTERS. A YOUNG POLICE OFFICER EMERGES FROM THE REAR OF THE STATION.)

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Good morning, sir.

OLD MAN: Morning. You in charge here?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Sure. Can I help you?

OLD MAN: (TAKES OUT SOME ROCKS AND PLACES THEM ON THE COUNTER.) I had some visitors last evening.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: (CHEERFULLY) Left a few calling cards, eh? (PICKS UP A ROCK) Did you see them, sir?

OLD MAN: No.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Pity. Where d'you live, sir?

OLD MAN: In the bush off Ravine Road.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: (A SUBTLE CHANGE TAKES PLACE IN HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE OLD MAN.) In the bush! Are you shacking there?

OLD MAN: (LEANING OVER THE COUNTER.) I mean that I live there. I mean as I've got twenty acres of land there.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: (READJUSTING) Oh, I see. Just whereabouts on Ravine Road, sir?

OLD MAN: (A FAINT SMILE OF CONTEMPT APPEARS ON HIS MOUTH.) Just beyond the first crossroads at the north end of town.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Well, that's news to me. I thought I knew where most people lived around town.

OLD MAN: There's no road into my place, so it's easy to miss.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Then how'd you get to it?

OLD MAN: I come along the creek to the road.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Oh, I see . . . your property's between the road and the creek.

OLD MAN: You've got it. My cabin's on a little bluff above the creek.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Sounds kind of nice. You lived there long?

OLD MAN: I've had the land for about twenty years, but I didn't come down to live on it 'til about five years ago.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: (SHAKING HIS HEAD.) Well, it sure beats me. I had no idea. Say, how'd you get stuff in to build your cabin?

OLD MAN: I didn't. I used what was there.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: You mean you have a log cabin?

OLD MAN: That's right. (POINTING TO THE ROCKS.) What about these?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: You can't tell me anything about your visitors? You didn't see them?

OLD MAN: No sir, but I can tell you a few things about them. There was four of them. Two each side the cabin. On the side near the creek there was a fellow who weighed about a hundred and seventy pounds and a girl of around a hundred and ten. She's chunky, especially around her ass.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: (POLITELY) You don't say.

OLD MAN: She squats with her feet apart and well back on her heels. I'd know her if I ever met her because I smelled her scent on the leaves. I could always smell where my wife Josie had been because she used to squat like that too.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Is that a fact. You said there were four of them.

OLD MAN: That's right. There was two more on the other side of the cabin. One must weigh a good hundred and eighty, maybe more . . . the other's real skinny . . . and can't keep still.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: How d'you know all this about them if you didn't see them, sir?

OLD MAN: Because I found the places where they'd squatted . . . and their footmarks.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: And you guessed what they looked like from the marks they left?

OLD MAN: There's no guessing, mister. It's the same as knowing the size and weight of a moose or bear from their prints. (ANOTHER POLICE OFFICER HAS ENTERED. SHE IS OLDER. SHE STANDS BY THE YOUNG POLICE OFFICER, LISTENING.)

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Some kids have been bugging this gentleman.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: So I gather. There's not much we can do unless you can positively identify them.

OLD MAN: Listen, if I could have identified them I wouldn't bother to come here.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: You're feeling pretty angry, eh?

OLD MAN: If I came around and pelted your roof with rocks would you go around smiling?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: (SMILING) I'd probably want to take you apart at the seams. The trouble is, it won't get us anywhere with the kids who bugged you.

OLD MAN: These weren't kids. They were punks.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Where do you live, sir?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: He's got twenty acres of bush off Ravine Road.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: I've never seen a mail delivery box there.

OLD MAN: You want me to bring in the deeds to prove I own the land?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: No no. That's okay. (MOTIONS WITH HER HANDS.) I'm just trying to sort of fit you into the picture. Have you had trouble with any kids before?

OLD MAN: No. Occasionally some little kids come up the creek. But they're so busy exploring, they don't even see me or my cabin.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Sure. Funny aren't they? They think nobody's ever gone exploring before.

OLD MAN: Nobody has.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Oh . . . sure . . . sure. Of course, you'd be surprised what some of these little kids can do. A while back an elementary school was torn apart. It looked like a dozen teenagers had gone on a rampage through it. But you know who was responsible? Two nine-year-

old boys.

OLD MAN: That may be. But I'm telling you my visitors weren't nine-year-olds.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Hmhm. The snag is we need something to go on.

OLD MAN: I've given you their weights.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: The weights you give cover just about every teenager in town.

OLD MAN: (MOVES TOWARDS THE DOOR.) The next time they come around I'll ask if I can take their pictures.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Do you have a phone?

OLD MAN: No. I don't have a telephone. I don't have a car. I don't have a mailbox. I don't have a camera. But I'll tell you what I do have. I've the right to live on my few acres any way I want to live. I've never let any guy push me around. And I won't let a bunch of punks do it now.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: I gather this is the first time it's happened.

OLD MAN: The first time'll be the last time.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: You probably won't hear from them again. We know how these kids operate. It's anything for a quick kick. Look, I'll give you some advice. It may go against the grain to follow it, but it's advice I'd try to follow if I were in your shoes. These kids want to see you hopping around. They think it's funny. They needle us too, and try to make us hop. But when we don't do it, they lose interest, because their attention span is short. So, I suggest that if you can't identify them, ignore them.

OLD MAN: (IRONICALLY) That's sure good advice, mister.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Most of the time it works.

OLD MAN: And what happens if they don't give up?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: By that time we will've caught up with them.

OLD MAN: That's good news. (RAISES A HAND.) I'll be seeing you.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: One minute. Could we have your name?

OLD MAN: Why? Why's it so important for you to have my name?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Just for identification.

OLD MAN: (WALKS BACK TO THE COUNTER.) You can call me anything you please. Old guy, old bum, old sweat. Anything you please. I don't give a shit. What I care about is my right to be left alone and not be bugged by four punks who think they have the right to come around and pelt the tin roof on my cabin with these rocks. Get it?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: All we're trying to do, sir, is get information from you.

OLD MAN: You've got all the information you need. (POINTS TO ROCKS.)

MALE POLICE OFFICER: It's pretty skimpy, sir. What about your wife? Does she feel the same way about your visitors?

OLD MAN: (AFTER A PAUSE.) My wife is dead.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Oh, I see.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: You mentioned you'd been living here for five years, sir. Where did you live before that?

OLD MAN: You're mighty curious about me, aren't you? Now if I was in your shoes I'd be curious about those rocks and the punks that threw them.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: They threw them at your house. That's why we're curious about you. We're just trying to establish a connection.

OLD MAN: A while back you told me there was no connection between me and those punks. They just want to see me hop. Right? As for where I lived before I came here, I was up north. I trapped and guided men too lazy to find game for themselves.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: I see. Do you own any guns, sir?

OLD MAN: I have three rifles. And I might use one to take the ear off one of those punks . . . if my eyes were still any good.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: (SHARPLY) I wouldn't get any fancy ideas like that if I were you.

OLD MAN: Miss, I've never had a fancy idea in my life. All I've been concerned with was getting by.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: You don't think it's a fanciful idea to show us a few rocks and the size of some foot prints and tell us to go out and pick up four kids?

OLD MAN: I don't expect anything from you. I just want to be left alone . . . like the yellow jacket.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: We'll see what we can do.

OLD MAN: Sure. You do that.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: (AS THE OLD MAN GOES OUT.) But no promises. (THE DOOR CLOSSES BEHIND THE OLD MAN. POINTS TO THE ROCKS.) What are we supposed to do with these? Mount them!

MALE POLICE OFFICER: (PICKING UP A ROCK.) I had no idea he was living out there in the bush, did you?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: (LOOKING AT THE NOTES THE MALE POLICE OFFICER HAS MADE.) No. But it would be kind of interesting if we could spot four kids that match his description, eh? We'll keep an eye out. Listen, I've just had a report about the two guys that escaped from the Ontario prison (FADE AS THE FEMALE POLICE OFFICER SPEAKS.) You want to take a look at it?

FADE

(NIGHT. PAUL, CHERYL, RON AND JACKIE MOVE THROUGH THE BUSH UNTIL THEY REACH THE OLD MAN'S CABIN. PAUL AND CHERYL STAND TOGETHER, RON AND JACKIE NEARBY.)

CHERYL: I still don't see why you guys can't leave him alone.

PAUL: We're going to let him know he's not been forgotten.

RON: Sure. He'll be pleased to know we've taken time off from doing homework to visit him.

JACKIE: That's right. We're members of the Society for Charity to Bums.

CHERYL: How do you know he's a bum?

RON: He's got to be or he wouldn't live out here.

JACKIE: There's not supposed to be any bums in Canada now. Bums went out of fashion years ago.

CHERYL: There's not supposed to be any stupid people in Canada either. But I know some who get C-Minuses and Ds on every report card.

JACKIE: Okay, genius. You've made your point. You're the founding member and first president of the Society for the Protection of Bums.

PAUL: Cut it out, Jackie.

CHERYL: I'm not coming here again. Ever.

RON: I wonder what the hell he does in there?

CHERYL: He may have someone living there . . . maybe a wife.

PAUL: Don't talk stupid, Cheryl. He wouldn't be living here if he had a wife.

CHERYL: How do you know! I wouldn't mind living here. I'll bet it's real nice in the summer. You could sunbathe

JACKIE: . . . with nothing on and have mosquitos feed on your ass and tits.

CHERYL: (MOVING CLOSE TO JACKIE.) You know why you make everything sound like shit? It's because you're just a nasty little bunch of crap. (TO PAUL.) Why do you let him tag along with us?

JACKIE: (VICIOUSLY) Because I pay for half the oil and gas that goes into Paul's car. That's why. And Ron pays the other half. And what do you pay for your rides, eh?

PAUL: Shut up, Jackie.

JACKIE: Why not tell her to shut up? Every time I open my fucking mouth she spits at me.

PAUL: Okay, okay. Will both of you shut up! Or if you want to fight, bugger off someplace else and let me and Ron give this old guy his treat.

RON: I'd sure like to know what he does in there.

PAUL: Maybe he talks to himself. I saw a TV show about a guy that lived alone who ended up carrying a mirror around and talking to himself.

JACKIE: There's an old lady on our street that talks to herself. Hell, you'd think there was half a dozen women in the place yakking away.

CHERYL: I still think it'd be nice here in the summer. You could make a little pool in the creek to swim in.

PAUL: Let's forget what we're not going to have and concentrate on what we want to do. Right?

JACKIE: Right on, general!

CHERYL: (PRESSING HERSELF AGAINST PAUL.) Paul

PAUL: This won't hurt him any.

JACKIE: That's a fact. It's like the history books say. People don't appreciate peace until they've been through a war. And oh boy! Are they ever peaceful then! There's brotherhood and sisterhood and motherhood and fatherhood and kiddiehood for all time then . . . until the next war comes along. What're we going to do, general.

PAUL: Me and Cheryl'll push over the water barrel, you and Ron knock down his chimney.

JACKIE: Let's go, men! (HE DANCES AROUND. MANAGES TO COLLIDE WITH AND PRESS AGAINST CHERYL'S BREASTS. SHE VIOLENTLY THRUSTS HIM AWAY. THEY MOVE TOWARDS THE CABIN. AND AS THEY DO SO THE OLD MAN BEGINS TO PLAY AND SING "SHENANDOAH".)

CHERYL: (TO PAUL.) That's my mother's favourite song. (SHE HUMS THE TUNE. STOPS TO LISTEN.)

PAUL: (PULLING HER ARM.) Come on! (HE PULLS CHERYL ALONG WITH HIM AND SHE HALF-HEARTEDLY ASSISTS HIM TO PUSH OVER THE WATER BARREL, WHILE JACKIE AND RON USE PIECES OF SPLIT WOOD TO KNOCK DOWN THE STOVEPIPE CHIMNEY. THEY QUICKLY RETURN TO THE BUSH AND WAIT. THE MUSIC HAS STOPPED, BUT SO FAR THE OLD MAN HAS NOT EMERGED FROM THE CABIN.)

RON: What the hell's he doing?

PAUL; Maybe he's putting out the stove.

JACKIE: I got a rock handy, a real dandy rock.

PAUL: Drop it on the roof. (JACKIE HURLS THE ROCK ONTO THE TIN ROOF. IT

CLATTERS AND ROLLS DOWN THE ROOF. THEY WAIT, THEIR FACES TENSE WITH EXCITEMENT AND EXPECTANCY)

PAUL: Down! (THE BEAM OF A POWERFUL FLASHLIGHT MOVES AROUND THE CLEARING. THE OLD MAN WALKS AROUND, LOOKS AT THE BARREL, THEN GOES ON TO EXAMINE THE COLLAPSED CHIMNEY. HE MOVES AWAY FROM THE CABIN TO STAND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CLEARING.)

OLD MAN: I know you're out there watching me, and probably feeling pretty pleased with yourselves. Right? Well, maybe that's okay. If you want to feel you've done something important, that's fine with me. But I'm asking you to come out here so we can talk, and where I can see you. I want to know what I've done to you. Maybe I did something to your parents, or your grandparents, or your uncles and aunts. And if I did, then I'd like you to tell me. But if I've never done anything to you or your families, then I want to know why you're bugging me. Would you like it if I did this to you? What would your parents say? Would they like it? (JACKIE GIVES HIS WOLF HOWL.) Funny, isn't it? (PAUL NUDGES RON, AND THE FOUR SLIP OFF INTO THE BUSH. THEY DO NOT HEAR WHAT THE OLD MAN SAYS) You think you're pretty smart wolves, eh? Well, I'm going to tell you guys something. I've known a lot of wolves in my time that thought they was smart too. They thought they was smarter than me, because they had four legs and could run faster than me. They thought they knew a trick or two more'n me. And maybe they did . . . for a while. But you know something? I always caught them. I trapped 'em, I hung 'em, and I skinned 'em . . . and fed what was left of 'em to my dogs. So why don't you stop and think a minute. Maybe you think you're smart wolves but ask yourselves: Has any wolf ever managed to out-smart a good hunter? (THE OLD MAN LISTENS.) Never! (HE LISTENS AGAIN. THEN GOES OVER TO LIFT THE BARREL AND AFTERWARDS STARTS TO REPAIR THE CHIMNEY.)

FADE

(SHOTS OF THE OLD MAN MOVING THROUGH THE BUSH DURING THE DAY DOING A VARIETY OF TASKS USING SAPLINGS, ROPE, AND WIRE.)

FADE

(PAUL, RON, AND JACKIE STAND BESIDE PAUL'S CAR IN THE SCHOOL PARKING LOT. OTHER STUDENTS PASS THEM, GET INTO CARS AND DRIVE OFF.)

PAUL: You think that old guy went to the cops?

RON: So what if he did? They'll only say, 'Just leave it to us, sir', then forget all about him.

JACKIE: (SHADOWBOXING) My old man says if you've got three cars, a big house, and a thirty-foot power boat, then cops slobber all over you. But if you've got nothing but an old truck and six kids in a rented house, they'll sit outside the beer joint on Saturday nights hoping they can pick you up and charge you with drunk driving. My old man should know. He's got six kids, he's never had anything but old trucks, and he sure as hell knows how to get drunk on Saturdays.

PAUL: Your old man's right. Cops protect guys with big bucks from guys that don't have it made. You never hear about cops arresting guys that peddle phoney stock shares or pull smart deals on the stock exchange. Those guys lift millions out of people's pockets and what happens? Another guy says, naughty, naughty, fines them a thousand bucks, and tells them to be good in the future. What a laugh! Those guys must go home and roll on the floor laughing their guts out. But just let some working stiff that hasn't had a job for a couple of years lift a hundred bucks from a bank, and he gets three years in the pen. You know what I'd like to do? I'd like to blow the system wide open and go to work on some of those guys.

RON: I'd sooner go to work on some of their wives and daughters.

JACKIE: Know what I'd like? I'd like to have those sweet millions. And once I'd got those I'd have no trouble getting their daughters' asses.

PAUL: You don't stand a chance. Not a fucking chance.

JACKIE: How do you know what my chances are?

PAUL: Because I know none of us has a fucking chance.

RON: Jackie might make it in the ring.

PAUL: What pissing ring?

JACKIE: For crissake! What a pessimist. I'm young . . . I'm

PAUL: So's fifty million other guys on this goddamn continent.

JACKIE: So what!

PAUL: So what, he says. Christ almighty, a guy doesn't have to be a genius to know where we're heading. We'll either be beating a time clock, or standing around in the nearest unemployment office.

(WHILE THEY HAVE BEEN TALKING, CHERYL HAS EMERGED FROM THE SCHOOL BUILDING AND WALKED OVER TO JOIN THEM.)

CHERYL: What are you guys looking so depressed about?

JACKIE: As our stupid school counsellor would say, we're just passing through a normal bout of normal adolescent frustration.

PAUL: Jackie actually thinks he's going to make a million bucks in the ring. Let's get out of here before I start screaming. (HE GETS INTO THE CAR. CHERYL JOINS HIM.) Coming, Ron?

RON: No. I'll walk with Jackie. You be at Sam's tonight?

PAUL: Probably. (HE AND CHERYL TAKE OFF WITH THE USUAL TIRE-SCREAMING SURGE.)

JACKIE: (AS HE AND RON WALK ACROSS THE PARKING LOT.) What's the matter with Paul? Eh, do you know, Ron? Most of the time a guy can't even talk to him. (THEY MOVE ON TO A ROAD.) The way he carried on you'd think we've got nothing coming to us. (HE BEGINS SKIPPING.) I don't know why he gets so riled up. His old man makes good money. He gave Paul the dough to buy that wreck. For crissake, y'know what I'd get if I asked my old man for a few bucks? A boot in the ass and a yell telling me to go earn some dough myself.

RON: Paul's always been that way.

JACKIE: Well, I just wish he'd lay off me.

RON: Maybe he'd lay off you if you stopped trying to get a feel of Cheryl's tits and ass.

JACKIE: What was it some guy said about a mountain, Ron? He had to climb it because it was there. Well. I feel the same way about Cheryl's tits. If they weren't there, I wouldn't have a vibrating urge to feel them. (VIBRATES HIS HANDS.)

RON: I'm just saying that if Cheryl squawks a little too loud, Paul might lay into you. That's all.

JACKIE: That'd be interesting, eh? (SHADOWBOXES) Wonder which way Paul leads? (THEY WALK ON IN SILENCE.) You think that old guy's got any money, Ron?

RON: Oh sure. He's got a couple of million bucks out there.

JACKIE: (AFTER MORE SKIPPING.) We could roll him. After all, the money's wasted on him.

RON: Forget it.

JACKIE: It was just an idea. Just an idea. (THEY TURN A CORNER WITH JACKIE SKIPPING AND CROONING.) Ambition boys, ambition. You've got to have ambition. You've got to work like hell from seven to four. And just keep on going till you're sixty or more. So what happens then? Why you're booted out. And down you go, even though you protest and shout. But no matter, boys, you've got to have ambition. Yeah! Yeah! Shit!

FADE

(CHERYL AND PAUL ARE SEATED IN PAUL'S CAR PARKED ON A DESERTED ROAD.)

CHERYL: What was the matter with you guys when I came out of school?

PAUL: (SLIPS HIS ARM AROUND HER.) We were talking about how we are not going to make our fortunes. (TURNS HER FACE TO HIS.)

CHERYL: (AVOIDING HIS LIPS.) Why don't you ditch those two, Paul? They're creeps.

PAUL: They're no worse than the rest.

CHERYL: That's not saying much.

PAUL: Do you include me in the creeps?

CHERYL: You think I'd go around with you if I thought you were a creep?

PAUL: (TRYING TO KISS HER.) I don't know what you'd do.

CHERYL: I mean it, Paul. All those guys want to do is bug somebody, like that old guy.

PAUL: For crissake, it doesn't hurt him.

CHERYL: How do you know what hurts and doesn't hurt people? (PAUL WITHDRAWS HIS ARM AND STARTS THE CAR.) Why don't you pick on somebody that's got it made? Maybe you're all too scared. (HE STOPS THE MOTOR AND STARES AT HER, HIS FACE EXPRESSIONLESS.) Forget I said that.

PAUL: You want to know what I think.

CHERYL: I didn't mean that, Paul. Honest.

PAUL: We *are* scared. And that's why guys like me and Ron and Jackie hate guys like that old bum. You know why we hate him? Because we're scared we'll end up like him. When I see a guy that holds down a hundred thousand a year job I'm sick in my gut from envy. I feel like I'm going to throw up. I can hardly stand to look at the guy . . . but I'll always follow him, because I want to watch him and see how he behaves. I followed one of those guys into a restroom once and stood there while he took a shit. I could smell it . . . and I said to myself . . . that's a hundred thousand buck stink. So then I see somebody like that old bum, and I want to tear his shack down and burn it, because he's got no right to let me see him living like that. He's got no right to hang out his fucking longjohns and filthy socks where I can see them. And you know why I hate him? Because he's a picture of what I could be like in fifty years' time. I don't want to look at that picture, any more than I want guys in school telling me what I'm best suited for. All my life I've had guys saying, you'd best do this or that. Every time I see the school counsellor he opens a file and starts at me. Oh Christ . . . you know what I see when he starts talking? I see iron walls being put up around me . . . so I can only go one way . . . the way that guy with my school file wants me to go. Christ, I hate it! Hate it! I hate guys who tell me I can't be a doctor or a lawyer or a fucking executive because I don't have the brains. I hate them, because those guys are so sure of the way my life's going to turn out to be. Doesn't it ever occur to them that maybe I don't want to be a big shot? Doesn't it ever occur to them that all I want is to be left alone, so I can decide for myself what I want to be? But as it is, all I can see in front of me is ending up in a tar-paper shack. How do I know that? Because I've been told it by goddamn counsellors from the day I got into junior high school.

CHERYL: (HOLDING AND KISSING HIM.) Paul. Stop it. I tell you, it won't be like that.

PAUL: How the hell do you know what will happen?

CHERYL: I do.

PAUL: (CONTEMPTUOUSLY) Oh sure. You see only what you want to see. Christ, what a way to be. (HE PULLS HER TO HIM AND GRINDS HIS MOUTH ON HERS.) You know something else. I even hate doing this.

CHERYL: No, you don't honey. You don't.

PAUL: They've even got me staked out in this. They look at me and think, ten to one he'll get some girl knocked up, and end up either strangling her or marrying her and then kicking the hell out of her and the kid.

CHERYL: It won't be like that. I promise.

PAUL: Who're you trying to fool! (KISSES HER AND THEN PUSHES UP HER SWEATER TO EXPOSE HER BREASTS.) I hate you and everything else that proves what they forecast for

me will be right. Goddamn you. Why don't you hate it too? (CHERYL, TRAPPED BY HER DESIRE TO REASSURE HIM, RESPONDS PREDICTABLY, AND SO REINFORCES EVERYTHING HE FEELS ABOUT HER AND THE SYSTEM WHICH IS CLOSING IN UPON HIM AND TRAPPING HIM. HE PRESSES HER BACK ON THE SEAT, WHILE PULLING AWAY HER CLOTHES.) Don't let me do this. Don't let me do this. I want to rip it apart and say, Okay, what've you got for me now, mister?

FADE

(NIGHT. A PATROL CAR WITH THE TWO POLICE OFFICERS. THE CAR IS PARKED ACROSS THE STREET FROM A CAFE. ABOVE THE CAFE DOOR A LARGE NEON SIGN ANNOUNCES 'SAM'S PLACE'.)

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: You didn't have any trouble finding the old guy's place, eh?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Once you know it's there, it's easy enough to spot. It's real pretty out there.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Was he friendly?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Sure. I don't think he recognized me. Beats me why he doesn't get some eye glasses, because you can see there's something wrong with his eyes. It looked to me like the water barrel had been pushed over. When I got there he was fiddling with the chimney, so maybe he's had visitors again.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: He didn't say anything about it?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: No. I just said that it was a pretty place . . . and he said he'd bought the place from a guy he'd met up north years ago. And that was about it.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Okay. It's just as well to know where he lives. So, let's go and have a look inside Sam's . . . have a cup of coffee. (THEY LEAVE THE CAR, AND LOOK UP AND DOWN THE STREET.) When you stop to think of it we've got ourselves a hell of a job.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: I guess that means we must be nuts, eh?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Something like that. (THEY CROSS THE STREET AND ENTER THE CAFE. IT CONSISTS OF A SINGLE ROOM. ON ONE SIDE IS A COUNTER AND KITCHEN ARRANGEMENTS. ALONG THE OTHER WALL ARE A NUMBER OF BOOTHS AND TABLES. AT THE FAR END IS AN OPEN SPACE. THERE A NUMBER OF GIRLS ARE DANCING TO JUKEBOX MUSIC. CHERYL IS AMONG THEM. THEIR

DANCING IS REPETITIVE AND CURIOUSLY GRACELESS. IT IS NOT SO MUCH A DANCE BUT A MASTURBATORY TESTING OF SEXUAL POTENTIAL. THEIR EMPTY, EXPRESSIONLESS FACES REVEAL THE DEGREE OF THEIR WITHDRAWAL INTO STATES OF SELF-HYPNOSIS THAT ALLOWS THEM TO CONJURE UP DARK ALL-POSSESSIVE IMAGES THAT WILL NEVER FAIL THEM. THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT THE IMAGES ARE, BUT THEY KNOW THAT THEY CAN ALWAYS BE CALLED UP AND WILL NOT DISAPPOINT THOSE WHO CALL THEM. THE YOUTHS SELDOM DANCE. OCCASIONALLY ONE OF THEM WILL GLANCE AT THE GYRATING BUTTOCKS AND SWAYING BREASTS OF THE GIRLS. BUT THEY ARE NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN WHAT IS BEFORE THEM BECAUSE THEY TOO ARE ISOLATED IN A DREAM WORLD OF IMPERSONAL FORCE AND UNLIMITED POWER. FOR THEM, THE SYMBOLS THAT MATTER ARE A PERFECTLY STRAIGHT ROAD AND A CAR OF UNLIMITED POWER. PAUL, RON AND JACKIE SIT IN ONE OF THE BOOTHS, BOTTLES OF POP BEFORE THEM. THE MAN BEHIND THE COUNTER IS MIDDLE-AGED, HEAVY-SET AND DARK-HAIRED. HE HAS A PRONOUNCED ITALIAN ACCENT.)

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Hi there, Sam.

SAM: Hi.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Two coffees. Are the doughnuts fresh?

SAM: Fresh as any doughnut you'll ever have.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: That's not saying much Sam, because I'm not much of a doughnut hunter.

SAM: Well, don't blame me for that. You want two?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Sure. We'll risk it.

SAM: (GRINNING) That is what I call a proof of police bravery. (HE AND THEY LAUGH, AS CHERYL RUNS BACK TO PAUL.)

CHERYL: You have any more quarters, Paul?

PAUL: If you want to go on feeding that monster find yourself a millionaire.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: (PRODUCING SEVERAL QUARTERS.) Here, use these.

CHERYL: Oh, thanks. Is there any special song you'd like?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Anything you pick's fine with me.

CHERYL: Want to dance?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: I'd sure like to . . . sometime when I'm off duty.

CHERYL: (HER MOUTH AN "O" OF PRETENDED SURPRISE.) Do you ever stop being on duty?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: (SMILING) Sure. Occasionally I camouflage myself so well I actually look like Sam here.

CHERYL: I'll bet! (SHE GOES BACK TO THE DANCE AREA, CALLS BACK.) Thanks for the quarters.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: My pleasure.

SAM: (AS THE POLICE OFFICERS DRINK COFFEE AND NIBBLE AT THE DOUGHNUTS.) So. Are you looking for somebody special?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: No. (STIRS COFFEE.) We take a break now and then.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: How're things going with you, Sam?

SAM: About the same. Lots of guys don't like these kids. They say a bunch of kids gives a place a bad name. But I don't mind them. I don't mind the noise. Hell, I worked in a mill for years, and I'm telling you this noise sounds quiet after what went on in there.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: They seem to like your place.

SAM: They got to go somewheres. And they got to have lots of noise. Know what I mean? It hides all the things they don't know how to say. (THE POLICE OFFICERS NOD.) I understand how they feel because when I first come here I'd go to noisy places so guys'ud never know I was making a fucking fool of myself everytime I opened my mouth.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: You've nothing to be ashamed of, Sam. I can't speak Italian.

SAM: So what! You ain't trying to work in Italy. (THE MUSIC BLASTS OUT.) It's like listening to a guy shout something at you when a steel press is going. You open your mouth, wave your arms and shout something back. Don't matter what. Maybe he's telling you he fucked your wife last night, or that the fool crane operator's going to dump ten tons of hot steel on your head, but you don't pay no mind as the goddamn noise has hid your ignorance, and that's all you cares about.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: You've got a point there, Sam.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Do these kids come here regular, Sam?

SAM: I thought you guys was taking a break.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Just curious.

SAM: I know most by sight, some by name. The kid you give quarters to's named Cheryl. She gets around with the good-looking, dark-haired kid in the booth over there.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: You know the guys with him?

SAM: Pretty sure the thin kid's named Jackie. Don't know about the other. He don't talk much.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: It still beats me how you manage to make out with this place, Sam.

SAM: I own the building, that's why. If I had to pay rent I'd be out on my ass in a week.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Any big spenders?

SAM: I thought you guys was taking a break. Look, you either want to know something, or you don't. If you want to know something, then for crissake say so. But don't treat me like I'm a dumb bunny.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: It's nothing much, Sam. We've had a complaint about some kids bugging an old guy who lives in the bush along the creek and we thought you may have heard about it.

SAM: Not me. And that's the first I knowed of anybody living along the creek.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Been there some years. It's nothing to get excited over, but it pays to pinch these things in the bud. Know what I mean?

SAM: Sure thing. I don't go for that stuff. These kids try anything like that in here I throw'em out. Hell, I've forgot more about roughhousing than all of 'em put together. So, I hear anything, I'll pass it along.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Thanks.

SAM: I'll tell you something about these kids. They're full of bullshit. Jesus, I was the same. When I was their age I thought I was the best in the world just because my chin was out and my

prick was up. (POINTS TO HIS HEAD.) Took me a while to figure that there was millions of other chins sticking out and cocks sticking up. Oh brother, there's more of them things than any other goddamn things in this world. But it takes awhile for it to get through most guys' thick skulls. Girls ain't so bad. Every goddamn month they bleed, and pretty soon they find out every other girl's bleeding too. So they look around and think, Jesus Christ, I ain't no different to any other girl in the fucking world. But boys! They go off, take down their pants, look at their pricks sideways and think there ain't been nothing like invented since the world began. (THE POLICE OFFICERS LAUGH.)

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: I guess that's about the cut of it, Sam.

SAM: You're telling me. That's why they're so full of shit. They think they got it made. When any kid starts acting big in here I stick my chin against his and tell him to shut up. Y'know, people take these kids too serious. Goddamn fools get on TV, listen to kids spouting bullshit and think it means something. I hear these kids talking, and they're saying what I was saying when I was seventeen. For crissake! What the hell've we come to! (MOVES ALONG THE COUNTER TO SUPPLY A YOUTH WITH A BOTTLE OF POP.)

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Well, shall I wander around?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: It won't do any harm. But take it easy. (MALE POLICE OFFICER BEGINS MOVING FROM TABLE TO BOOTH AND FROM BOOTH TO TABLE, WHILE FEMALE POLICE OFFICER REMAINS AT THE COUNTER, TALKING TO SAM. MALE POLICE OFFICER HALTS AT THE BOOTH WHERE PAUL SITS WITH RON AND JACKIE.)

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Hi there.

JACKIE: (GRIMACING, STICKING OUT HIS TEETH.) Hi, sir.

PAUL: You mustn't mind him, sir. He's a retard.

JACKIE: But I can't help it, can I, sir?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: I guess not. If you say so.

JACKIE: Thank you, sir. I was wondering if I could join the police force . . . along with all the other retards.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: There's a strong possibility that we might be able to make room for you somewhere . . . although not necessarily in the force. I wonder if you guys've heard anything about an old guy that lives along the creek being bugged?

PAUL: (SHRUGS) News to me.

JACKIE: Did you say old guy, sir?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Sure. He just wants to be left alone.

JACKIE: The old guy wants to be left alone. Is that what you said, sir?

MALE POLICE OFFICER: That's what I said.

JACKIE: Gee! I'll have to revise my thinking. I thought old guys enjoyed company, sir.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: That would depend on the kind of company.

JACKIE: I guess it would, sir.

PAUL: Would you shut up, Jackie!

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Now, there's a guy offering good advice. (SMILES AT JACKIE AND LEAVES.)

PAUL: Why the fucking hell can't you keep your mouth shut, Jackie?

JACKIE: Because I hate those sonsofbitches, that's why.

RON: What I want to know is who does the guy at the bottom bug? (FEMALE POLICE OFFICER PAYS FOR THE COFFEE AND DOUGHNUTS AND GOES TO STAND BY THE ENTRANCE.)

JACKIE: He bugs his old woman. He kicks his boy's ass and fucks his daughters. He kicks his dog's head in and throws his cat into the furnace. And when he finds that ain't enough, he gets into his wreck of a truck, drives like hell along a road, rams into anything he can find and fucks himself for good.

CHERYL: (TO MALE POLICE OFFICER.) Don't forget you owe me a dance.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: (SMILING AT HER AND LOOKING HER OVER.) I won't.

JACKIE: Why do those guys look at you like they suspect you're going to walk out of the joint with the bubble gum machine under your windbreaker?

PAUL: Because you're the kind of guy that looks like he'd try to lift bubble gum machines. (THE OFFICERS LEAVE.)

CHERYL: (SITTING BY PAUL.) What did they want, Paul?

PAUL: Some old bugger's being bugged. (CHERYL SEEMS TO SHRINK. SHE LEANS TOWARDS PAUL, AS THOUGH ASKING HIM TO PROTECT HER.)

JACKIE: Know something? We should go out there right now and take that old bum's joint apart.

PAUL: Listen to our resident genius. You know something, Jackie? Those cops don't have much on the ball, but they sure know how to handle guys like you. All they have to do is look at you, drop a hint and you rise like a fish to a lure.

JACKIE: What's that mean, Paul? Are you saying I'm chicken?

PAUL: Christ, No. I'm saying you've got no more sense than an old hen!

RON: Cut it out both of you.

JACKIE: So, do I have to sit here and listen to Mister Bigshot say anything he pleases?

PAUL: You don't have to listen to anything I say. You can get up and leave.

JACKIE: Until next week, when you want to fill up your gas tank.

PAUL: (GETS UP.) Come on, Cheryl. I'm going. (HE AND CHERYL LEAVE.)

RON: You've sure got a talent for riding guys, Jackie.

JACKIE: Me! What've I done?

RON: You drove Paul off. That's what you done, Jackie. He was real pissed off at you.

JACKIE: You don't say! Gee, ain't that too bad! Hey, tell me something, Ron. Was Paul pissed off when I paid for two tanks of gas with dough I stole from my Mom? No sir. Thanks, Jackie, he says when I fork out the dough. So now he's pissed off with me. Only the difference is he's got enough gas in his to drive someplace and fuck Cheryl and leave me and you to wish we could get a feel of her tits.

RON: Can it, Jackie.

JACKIE: Like hell I will. I'm pissed off too.

RON: Look, what's the point getting mad at Paul? He's our friend, ain't he?

JACKIE: I dunno what he is. (THE JUKEBOX PLAYS AGAIN.) Hey, why don't you and me fix that old bum, Ron?

RON: Jackie! Didn't you hear what Paul said?

JACKIE: Hell, he's chicken. Besides you could see he wanted to get a piece of Cheryl. (PAUSE) I'll bet that bum's got a pile of dough hid somewheres, Ron.

RON: Forget it.

JACKIE: You drop a few rocks on the roof, and when he comes out I tap him one. Nothing to it. He won't even feel it. He'll just lie down and have sweet dreams about lady bums. (JACKIE SMILES PROVOCATIVELY.) I'll bet you a hundred bucks he's got a wad hid in that shack, Ron.

RON: (AFTER A PROLONGED PAUSE.) No.

JACKIE: (LYING ON THE TABLE, WATCHING RON'S FACE.) Supposing he had a thousand bucks, Ron.

RON: He doesn't.

JACKIE: A thou. (MOVES HIS HANDS, AS THOUGH DEALING CARDS.) One buck for you, one for me. One for you, one for me. Five hundred waiting for you to claim, Ron. (GIGGLES) Waiting for you to take it, Ron. Just like the ass of that dame you and me got in a corner last year. Remember her, Ron? You was a bit reluctant to start. Remember? But once we got started, you found she couldn't get enough of what we had to offer. Remember, Ron? (MOVES HANDS AGAIN) One buck for you, one for me. You know what I figure, Ron? When you want something, you got to take it, because nobody's going to give it to you. That's what I figure about Cheryl. She's never going to offer. So, one of these days, I'll have to take . . . and take. And that's what I figure about that old bum. He's not going to offer me what he's got. So I have to go and take it. (HE LIES ACROSS THE TABLE AND GRINS AT RON.) Right, pal?

RON: (HAVING TROUBLE TALKING.) Let's get out of here.

JACKIE: Sure thing. You bet. (AS THEY LEAVE THEY PASS TWO GIRLS. JACKIE MANAGES TO BRUSH AGAINST THEM.)

GIRL: Fuck off!

SAM: Hey, just watch your lip, kid.

GIRL: Then tell that creep to stay away from me.

JACKIE: (SKIPPING SIDEWAYS.) I'm going. I'm going. (OPENING DOOR.) I'm gone.

FADE

(THE INTERIOR OF THE OLD MAN'S CABIN. THIS SCENE IS SHOT PRINCIPALLY IN THE DARK, THE ONLY LIGHT AVAILABLE BEING THE OLD MAN'S SMALL LAMP. WE SEE SHAPES RATHER THAN FACES, BUT WE CAN HEAR THE VOICES OF JACKIE AND RON: VOICES FILLED WITH A COMPOUND OF FEAR, GREED AND FRUSTRATION. WE HEAR THEM AS THEY TRAMPLE ON THE OLD MAN'S POSSESSIONS.)

JACKIE: It's got to be somewhere.

RON: There's nothing.

JACKIE: There's got to be! The old bastard can't live on nothing.

RON: I told you he wouldn't have nothing.

JACKIE: (HOLDING A RIFLE.) I'll bet this cost a mint.

RON: Try selling it for a mint and see what you get.

JACKIE: (PICKING UP THE OLD MAN'S ACCORDION.) Hold this.

RON: There's nothing in it. (HE HOLDS AND PRODUCES A NIGHTMARISH DISCORD.)

JACKIE: (SLASHING THE ACCORDION.) Sonofabitch!

RON: Let's go. There's nothing here.

JACKIE: What about this table? (HE UPENDS THE TABLE AND LETS OUT A CRY OF TRIUMPH.) See, I told you! (THE OLD MAN HAS CONSTRUCTED A CUBBY HOLE UNDER THE TABLE WHICH APPEARS TO BE FILLED WITH PAPERS AND ENVELOPES. JACKIE PULLS THEM OUT AND TEARS THEM APART AS HE FRANTICALLY SEARCHES. HE HOLDS UP A PHOTOGRAPH.) Hey, look at that. (HANDS IT TO RON. LOOKS AT ANOTHER PICTURE.) The horny old bastard!

RON: There's some writing on the back of this one. (HE SLOWLY READS.) *'Have just got around to developing the films.'* Christ, why doesn't the guy write so's you can read it? *'Something trip. We often talk about it. Don't think I've ever seen two women looking lovelier than Ruth and Josie did . . . blah blah . . . by the hot springs. Hope to see you again in the not too distant . . . blah blah . . . take another walk through the mountains with my camera . . . better than any gun . . . Our love to Josie. P.S. Ruth says those weeks were the happiest ones of her life. Mine too. If you never hear from me again, Bill, remember that.'*

JACKIE: Jesus, look at this one. (TURNS IT OVER. READS.) *"Josie at the hot springs. Doesn't do her justice."* (SNIGGERS) Wouldn't say that, would you, Ron? Look at her.

RON: Shut up! I want to get out of here.

JACKIE: You want to keep these pictures?

RON: (VIOLENTLY) No. I'm leaving.

JACKIE: Old bastard. I'll bet he's got dough hidden somewhere. (JACKIE TEARS THE PICTURES INTO PIECES.) Maybe we could've got a couple of bucks for them.

RON: I don't want them, I said! (HE MAKES FOR THE DOOR. AFTER PAUSING TO COMPLETE THE RIPPING OF PICTURES, JACKIE FOLLOWS.)

FADE

(MORNING. THE OLD MAN SITS AT THE TABLE. ON IT HE HAS PILED HIS SHATTERED BELONGINGS. HE SITS QUITE STILL AND COULD BE DEAD, EXCEPT FOR ONE FACT. HE IS SILENTLY CRYING. THE REASON IS CLEAR. ON THE TABLE BESIDE HIM ARE THE TORN PHOTOGRAPHS. IN THE DISTANCE WE HEAR A SLOW THUD. THE SOUND INCREASES AND BECOMES A HEAVY THROB, LIKE THE SOUND OF A MAGNIFIED HEART BEAT. THIS IN TURN CHANGES UNTIL IT BECOMES THE WORD 'WHY?'.)

FADE

(THE SCHOOL PARKING LOT. PAUL AND RON STAND BY PAUL'S CAR.)

PAUL: I guess I always thought you were capable of stopping to think for thirty seconds. But I was wrong.

RON: I guess you were. (CHERYL WALKS ACROSS THE LOT TO JOIN THEM.)

CHERYL: (AFTER LOOKING AT PAUL'S TIGHT FACE.) What's the matter?

PAUL: Him and Jackie rolled that old guy last night.

CHERYL: (HER FACE BECOMES A MASK OF FEAR.) You must've been crazy.

PAUL: Jackie hit him with a piece of wood. (CHERYL COVERS HER MOUTH.) He was still out when they left with the million bucks they'd found.

CHERYL: Oh, god!

PAUL: For all they know he could be dead. (TWO YOUTHS APPROACH.)

RON: Shut up. (THE YOUTHS PASS, FOLLOWED BY SEVERAL GIRLS.)

CHERYL: (WHISPERING) How could you do that, Ron?

PAUL: Because Jackie told him the old guy had some dough stashed away there. Right, Ron?

CHERYL: Where's Jackie?

RON: He got a detention.

PAUL: If he's not more careful, he's going to end up in permanent detention. And you could be there with him, Ron.

CHERYL: I'm going.

RON: (GRINNING TO HIDE HIS APPREHENSION.) Scared, Cheryl?

CHERYL: Yeah. And I wish I'd stayed clear of you guys.

RON: You didn't say that when we were bugging the old guy. Or maybe you tagged along because you wanted to get Paul in the bush with you?

(CHERYL STRIKES AT HIM, BUT HE EASILY AVOIDS THE CLUMSY BLOW. PAUL COMES AROUND THE CAR, AND AS RON SWIVELS HE RECEIVES A BLOW ON THE FACE FROM PAUL. HE MOVES TO ONE SIDE AND RETALIATES. A CROWD QUICKLY GATHERS TO WATCH THE FIGHTING YOUTHS, IMPARTIALLY AND SILENTLY, MUCH AS THEY WOULD OBSERVE A PAIR OF FIGHTING DOGS. PAUL'S HEIGHT

GIVES HIM AN INITIAL ADVANTAGE, BUT RON'S SOLIDITY AND GREATER WEIGHT ALLOW HIM TO SLOWLY DRIVE PAUL BACK.)

CHERYL: (SCREAMING) Paul! Ron! Stop it! (TO THE CROWD.) Stop them! (SHE IS IGNORED. JACKIE STROLLS UP.)

JACKIE: Well, well. It's good to see somebody doing some exercise around here. (RON KNOCKS PAUL DOWN.)

CHERYL: Jackie, stop them!

JACKIE: Why? They're not hurting each other. (PAUL CLIMBS TO HIS FEET. HIS MOUTH IS BLEEDING.)

CHERYL: Paul! Ron! Stop it!

JACKIE: Scared Paul'll hurt his beautiful face, Cheryl? You can always switch guys. (CHERYL TRIES TO PULL PAUL AND RON APART. SHE IS KNOCKED DOWN.) There. You see what happens to girls? They always end on their backs with their legs spread. Okay, you boys, break it up. (IMITATING A POMPOUS TEACHER.) We can't allow fighting on school property. It's too valuable. (HE EASILY PARTS THEM.) I want you two boys to shake hands now and make up. How do you expect to get on in the world and impress your boss who is going to pay you less than the minimum wage, if you can't discuss matters calmly with your peers? You have to learn to co-operate in this world, boys.

PAUL: (WIPES BLOOD FROM HIS NOSE AND LIPS.) Shut your mouth, you little piss! (PAUL GETS INTO HIS CAR, FOLLOWED BY CHERYL. THEY DRIVE AWAY.)

JACKIE: (PRETENDING HORROR.) Really! What is the youth of today coming to! (WAVES A HAND AT THE CROWD.) Goodbye, boys and girls. Remember to brush your teeth and read the Bible before you go to bed. (LOOKING AFTER PAUL'S RECEDING CAR.) I have serious doubts about that youth's future. (LOOKING AT RON'S LEFT EYE WHICH IS SWOLLEN AND CLOSED.) See what happens when I'm not here to control things?

RON: The fight was over you.

JACKIE: I knew it had to be about something important. You got no style, Ron.

RON: Thanks.

JACKIE: Want me to give you some lessons?

RON: No.

JACKIE: You're wide open on your left and blind on your right.

RON: Can't you think of anything except your goddamn mitts?

JACKIE: (HOLDING UP HIS FISTS.) Why shouldn't I think about them? They're like a film star's tits. My hope for the future's centred on them. I'll give you lessons for nothing, Ron. (DANCES AROUND.) I'm a real charitable guy. You know that, Ron. Always ready to help the needy. Just like the Salvation Army. All I need's a bell to hang on my prick to go tinkle tinkle tinkle.

FADE WITH RON HUNCHING HIS WAY ALONG THE STREET AND JACKIE DANCING AND SHADOWBOXING AROUND HIM.

(PAUL AND CHERYL ARE SITTING IN PAUL'S CAR OUTSIDE CHERYL'S HOUSE. THE HOUSE IS REASONABLY WELL KEPT AND HAS HALF A DOZEN SHRUBS PLANTED AROUND A LAWN. A WOMAN LOOKS OUT OF A WINDOW.)

CHERYL: I have to go. That's the third time Mom's looked out.

PAUL: (LICKING A SWOLLEN LIP.) Okay with me.

CHERYL: So you won't go out there with me to see if the old guy's all right?

PAUL: I've told you. I'm through.

CHERYL: But Paul, what if he's hurt?

PAUL: (SULLENLY) I'm through.

CHERYL: I'm going.

PAUL: And you think he'll thank you for coming to see him?

CHERYL: I don't know what he'll say.

PAUL: Have you any idea what Ron and Jackie did to his shack? They tore it apart.

CHERYL: I don't care. I just want him to know I didn't help them do it.

PAUL: For crissake, Cheryl. He doesn't even know you.

CHERYL: I don't care. It's something I feel about myself.

PAUL: Look, what're you trying to prove? (LICKS BLOOD OFF HIS LIP.) He probably doesn't even know there was a girl there.

CHERYL: It's what I feel inside. I . . . feel . . . dirty.

PAUL: The guy doesn't even know you exist.

CHERYL: That doesn't matter. Can't you understand that I feel as if I've done something hurtful to myself?

PAUL: He wouldn't know you even if he saw you in the street.

CHERYL: (OPENS THE CAR DOOR.) I don't care. You won't come with me?

PAUL: I told you, I'm through. (CHERYL GETS OUT OF THE CAR. PAUL LEANS ACROSS THE SEAT TO LOOK AT HER.) What'll you tell him?

CHERYL: That I'm sorry about what happened.

PAUL: Suppose he tells the cops, eh? Suppose the cops come after you? Will you tell them about me?

CHERYL: I'll tell them whatever I tell him.

PAUL: I'll bet you will. Anything to make yourself look good. (CHERYL TURNS TO WALK TOWARDS THE HOUSE.) Goddamn bitch!

CHERYL: (TURNING AND SPITTING AT HIM.) You needn't come around ever again.

PAUL: (SNARLING) That's a fact. I won't. (HE TAKES OFF ALONG THE ROAD AT A CRAZY SPEED.)

CHERYL: (HYSTERICALLY SCREAMING.) Go to hell, you sonofabitch. (CHERYL RUNS TO THE HOUSE, OPENS THE DOOR AND COMES FACE TO FACE WITH HER MOTHER.)

MOTHER: Get inside.

CHERYL: (PUTTING ON AN ACT.) That's what I intend to do if you'll let me. (HER MOTHER MOVES AND CHERYL ENTERS THE HOUSE.)

MOTHER: I suppose you think it's wonderful to stand in the street screaming obscenities.

CHERYL: I didn't scream.

MOTHER: Oh, was that somebody else's voice I heard outside my door?

CHERYL: (EXHIBITING THE PATIENCE ADOLESCENTS USE TO HANDLE UNREASONABLE PARENTS.) All right. So it was me.

MOTHER: So it was you. So, for a change you can listen to me.

CHERYL: I'm listening.

MOTHER: I can see you are. Your ears are wide open and your brain's closed. But I'm going to say what I have to say anyway, because if I don't, I'm liable to explode. And so is your father. We've sat around while you have two-hour telephone conversations with that boy. We've said nothing when he screeches around corners at night waking everybody in the neighbourhood up.

CHERYL: How do you know he wakes people up?

MOTHER: How do I know? Because I've been told. Now, you may not have any consideration for us, and he may not have any --

CHERYL: I don't care. (TRIES TO PASS HER MOTHER.) I want to go to my room.

MOTHER: (HOLDING CHERYL'S SHOULDERS.) You'll listen to me. I'll not have you standing in the street screaming obscenities at a no-good punk.

CHERYL: He's not a punk.

MOTHER: Oh, then just tell me what he is.

CHERYL: (WITH EXTREME POLITENESS.) If you will excuse me, I want to get to my room. So may I get past?

MOTHER: (WITHOUT WARNING HER MOTHER GIVES HER A FLAT-HANDED SLAP ACROSS THE FACE.) You want to get to your room! Who do you think you are? Who do you think you're speaking to! You want to get to your room! You mean your pigsty I spent two hours cleaning this morning.

CHERYL: (WITH AS LITTLE WARNING BURSTING INTO TEARS. SHE RUNS PAST HER MOTHER AND STOPS AT THE DOOR TO HER ROOM TO SHOUT.) And if I get

pregnant you'll have something else to nag me about! (GOES INTO HER ROOM AND SLAMS THE DOOR.)

MOTHER: Oh, my god! Oh, my god!

FADE

(THE PULSING THROB RETURNS AND WITH IT WE ARE BACK IN THE OLD MAN'S CABIN. THE OLD MAN IS STILL SITTING BY THE TABLE STARING AT THE WRECKAGE OF HIS LIFE.)

OLD MAN: (TO HIMSELF) They've got to hate me for something I did. Or maybe they hate me just because I'm alive . . . like some people hate spiders or snakes. Would they go on hating me if I died? Maybe. Maybe they'd hate me for the way I died. Or maybe they hate me because that was all I had to show for the way I've lived. Maybe they hate me because I don't ask for anything except to be left alone. Or maybe they just want me to be afraid, like some people want dogs to tremble every time they look at them. Maybe they hate me because I had this. (TOUCHES THE ACCORDION.) Maybe they couldn't stand to know I'd paddled around lakes and hiked mountains with Josie. Why would they hate me because I have some pictures of my wife sitting in a hot springs? I don't understand it. Or maybe they hate me because they have to hate something that can't strike back at them. They're like little kids that'll pull feathers out of birds, or cut up worms and snakes. Or maybe . . . hate's all they can give . . . maybe it's all that's left for them.

FADE

(CHERYL WALKING ALONG A DARK ROAD. HER UNEASINESS IS APPARENT. SHE HALTS, GLANCES IN BOTH DIRECTIONS ALONG THE ROAD, THEN ENTERS THE BUSH. BEING ALONE FRIGHTENS HER. SHE MOVES SLOWLY, HANDS OUT BEFORE HER, PUSHING ASIDE TWIGS THAT RE IN HER PATH. HER HANDS TOUCH A BROKEN BRANCH. SHE MOVES SLIGHTLY AND PUSHES IT ASIDE. THE NEXT MOMENT SHE LETS OUT A CRY OF TERROR AS HER FEET ARE CAUGHT AND SHE IS SWEEPED BACKWARDS SO THAT HER HEAD AND SHOULDERS ARE JAMMED BETWEEN TWO TREES. HER TERROR IS SO GREAT THAT SHE LOSES CONSCIOUSNESS.)

FADE

(THE OLD MAN'S CABIN. HE IS GOING OVER THE PICTURE FRAGMENTS AND TRYING TO PIECE THEM TOGETHER. HE HOLDS EACH PIECE CLOSE TO HIS EYES BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO FIT IT TO ANOTHER FRAGMENT. HE HEARS A SCREAM IN THE DISTANCE AND BECOMES VERY STILL. THEN HE QUICKLY LEAVES THE CABIN AND WALKS THROUGH THE BUSH TO THE SPOT WHERE CHERYL LIES.)

OLD MAN: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. (HE RELEASES HER, TAKES HER UP AND CARRIES HER TO THE CABIN. LAYS HER ON THE BED. HUNTS AROUND UNTIL HE FINDS THE FLASHLIGHT, WHICH HE USES TO EXAMINE HER. HE MANIPULATES HER LEGS AND ARMS) Seems all right. (HE LOOKS AT HER SHOES AND REMOVES ONE. THEN HE GOES OUT TO THE SPOT WHERE CHERYL HAD CROUCHED WITH PAUL. THE OLD MAN PLACES THE SHOE IN ONE OF THE INDENTATIONS) Probably the same one. (RETURNS TO THE CABIN TO SIT AT THE TABLE, WATCHING CHERYL.)

FADE

(THE CABIN. MORNING. THE OLD MAN SITS AT THE TABLE DRINKING TEA. CHERYL MOANS, OPENS HER EYES. SHE TURNS HER HEAD, SEES THE OLD MAN, AND CLOSES HER EYES AGAIN.)

OLD MAN: Would you like some tea?

CHERYL: (WHISPERING) Yes. (PAUSE) Please. (THE OLD MAN FINDS ANOTHER MUG, POURS TEA INTO IT AND TAKES IT TO HER.) My legs hurt.

OLD MAN: Nothing's broken. Can you sit up? (SHE MANAGES TO GET HERSELF UP.) You'll be achy for a couple of days. Here. (SHE TAKES THE MUG AND DRINKS SOME TEA. THE OLD MAN RETURNS TO SIT AT THE TABLE.)

CHERYL: It . . . wasn't me . . . that did . . . this.

OLD MAN: That so?

CHERYL: (SHE TRIES TO GET OFF THE BED.) There's something wrong with my legs and with my hips!

OLD MAN: The muscles got pulled a bit. That's all.

CHERYL: How do you know? You're not a doctor. (PANIC IS RAMPANT IN HER VOICE.)

OLD MAN: That's true. But I've cut up enough animals to know when bones are dislocated. There's a feel to the way the legs move. Drink that tea while it's hot. (CHERYL TRIES TO MOVE, AND GROANS.)

CHERYL: I could've been killed.

OLD MAN: (THERE WAS A SUGGESTION OF AMUSEMENT IN HIS VOICE.) That's true, you could have been killed. Hm. I didn't think of that.

CHERYL: Well, you should have.

OLD MAN: I guess I should. More tea?

CHERYL: (LEANING OVER AND PRESSING HER STOMACH.) I have to go to the bathroom.

OLD MAN: You'll have to go outside. (SHE TRIES TO STAND. HE GOES OVER TO HELP HER OUT OF THE CABIN. AFTER A PAUSE THEY RETURN AND THE OLD MAN HELPS CHERYL SIT ON THE BED AGAIN.)

CHERYL: (NERVOUSLY) How long have you lived here?

OLD MAN: About five years. I used to live up north. Now I wish I'd stayed there.

CHERYL: Is that where you hurt your leg?

OLD MAN: Yes.

CHERYL: I've never been north. Is it nice there?

OLD MAN: It's fine. But it's no place for lame guys.

CHERYL: I suppose you're retired now.

OLD MAN: Sort of. More tea?

CHERYL: No, thank you. It was very nice. (THERE IS A PROLONGED SILENCE.) Did you hurt your leg on your job?

OLD MAN: I suppose you could say that.

CHERYL: My father works in a lumber mill. Is that what you did?

OLD MAN: No. I was a trapper and big game guide.

CHERYL: Oh, I see. Was it difficult work?

OLD MAN: Well, you have to know what you're doing. but that's true of lot of jobs, isn't it?

CHERYL: I suppose. (PUTS THE MUG ON THE FLOOR.) Would you mind if I lay down again? My legs hurt when I sit like this.

OLD MAN: Go ahead.

CHERYL: (SHE PAINFULLY ARRANGES HERSELF ON THE BED. LICKS HER LIPS.) I -
- (STOPS) Did you hurt your leg when you were trapping?

OLD MAN: No. I got that from having a disagreement with a mountain.

CHERYL: Oh.

OLD MAN: It wasn't even my fault. It was the fault of a guy that thought he knew more about piloting a plane than I did.

CHERYL: You were a pilot too?

OLD MAN: I had a float plane for years. That was the way I used to get around. I sold it when I came south. I'd flown into that valley dozens of times and knew exactly what to do. But the fool guy wouldn't listen to me. There's a lot of guys like that in the world. They think they know everything. (LAPSES INTO A BROODING SILENCE.)

CHERYL: What happened?

OLD MAN: They think they know so much that nothing bad can touch them. Maybe other guys drown, fall down cliffs, or die of frost bite, but it's never them. I was that way myself for a bit. You think nothing can touch you. Nothing can hurt you. But it doesn't last. I didn't want to fly with the guy because I didn't trust him. But he insisted his plane was better than mine. Bigger and with more power. (THE OLD MAN KNEELS BESIDE THE BED AND PULLS OUT A BOX.) Your pals missed these.

CHERYL: It wasn't my fault. I didn't know about it until yesterday.

OLD MAN: Maybe. But you was here a couple of times before.

CHERYL: I know, but I'd never do anything like this. Honest.

OLD MAN: But you don't object to throwing rocks, eh?

CHERYL: I didn't even do that. Honest.

OLD MAN: That's right. You just squatted and waited while the other guy chucked them. Right? (SHE MISERABLY NODS.) What's the difference?

CHERYL: I -- (SHE STOPS AND MUTELY SHAKES HER HEAD.)

OLD MAN: Hm. (HE TAKES A MAP FROM THE BOX. OPENS IT.) I helped make these maps. There's a lot of work to making one of them. Do you know how to read maps?

CHERYL: Not very well.

OLD MAN: (HE SITS ON THE BED WITH THE MAP OPEN ON HIS KNEES.) These are contour lines, each one represents five hundred vertical feet. So, when you see them close together it means the incline's pretty steep, like it is here. See? Now, look. (THE NARRATIVE THAT FOLLOWS COULD BE VISUALLY SUPERIMPOSED AS THOUGH A FILM IS BEING SHOWN IN THE CABIN.) There are two ridges. One on the right, one on the left. Ahead of you is a mountain. Off to the left is a valley. To reach it you have to make a sharp turn. But a prettier valley you never did see. What's more the lakes in it are filled with fish, and there's lots of game in there on the mountains. So, what happens? Two guys want to hunt goat in a hurry. The guy has his own plane and he wants to use it, because he doesn't like the look of mine. So we stow the gear and me and Josie get aboard with the two guys.

CHERYL: Who was Josie?

OLD MAN: My wife. She was Indian. She taught me almost everything I know about trapping and hunting. She was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. I'd show you her picture, but your pals tore them up.

CHERYL: I'm sorry. (BEGINS CRYING.) Honest.

OLD MAN: I'd flown into the valley enough times to know that it took twenty minutes to fly from this point to this point here at a hundred and twenty miles an hour. Then I'd make a sharp left turn. I'd flown it at night and in cloud. So I gave the guy directions and speed and told him not to change anything. So then we come in between these ridges. See? And we go into cloud. He wants to climb. I told him to maintain speed and direction and I'd tell him when to turn. So what does he do? He tells me he's flying the place, begins climbing and we lose air speed.

CHERYL: What happened?

OLD MAN: Oh, we go up a thousand feet, and my brain turned around in my head ten times,

because I'm trying to figure out how long it'll be before we hit the mountain. Then the guy asks me when we turn. I tell him he's the pilot. Not me. I'd made my calculations and he's bugged them up. He says I have to make adjustments and figure it out. For God's sake, I thought I'd already figured it out. And I *had* figured it out, except for one thing. I hadn't counted on running into a guy who thought he knew everything about flying. I mean, the guy don't want me for a pilot, but still he wants me to get him out of his fix. Mind you, I'll give him credit. He would've got the plane turned if it hadn't been for this chunk of rock. See where those lines bend? That's a great hunk of rock that sticks out like a nose on the mountain. The right wing hit it, and over we went.

CHERYL: What did you think about?

OLD MAN: (HE LETS OUT A BARKING LAUGH.) Think? I don't remember. I just remember I tried to grab Josie, because I wanted to be with her when we died. But she went one way and I went the other.

CHERYL: (AFTER A PAUSE.) They should have listened to you.

OLD MAN: Think so? (HE CONTINUES TO STARE AT THE MAP.)

CHERYL: Were you rescued?

OLD MAN: No. I didn't even believe I was alive when I came to. It was a shock. A bigger shock when I found out my leg was broken in two places. I didn't want to live if Josie was dead. But I had to find that out, because she might still be alive. I pulled myself around until I managed to find some of my gear. I made a half-assed splint for my leg. It took me three days of crawling before I found her. She was gone. She was only fifteen when we got married. She was so beautiful. She was the only woman I ever had. Only one I ever wanted. I had some pictures of her. A guy from New York took them. He thought Josie was beautiful too. Your pals tore them up, or I'd show them to you. I talked to her picture all the time. She knew I wouldn't leave her lying there. I put rocks over her.

CHERYL: It must have taken a long time.

OLD MAN: I suppose so. I don't remember.

CHERYL: Did somebody come to find you?

OLD MAN: No. I crawled out. (LOOKS AT THE MAP.) I knew the way. Makes a difference when you know which way to go.

CHERYL: Did you find the others?

OLD MAN: No. Course, I didn't look so hard for them. More than likely they were burned up in the plane.

CHERYL: It must have been awful. Were you scared?

OLD MAN: Oh sure. But it never hurts anybody to be scared. Just makes you look any situation over a few more times. Of course, when you get in a mess like that you've got a choice. You can fight and try to live, or lay down and die. Mind you, even if you decide to fight you could still end up dying. But I figure it's best to put up a fight.

CHERYL: I'm sorry it happened.

OLD MAN: It happened because some guy was stupid. (NODS AT THE CABIN.) Like this.

CHERYL: I'll try and replace everything for you.

OLD MAN: (LOOKING AT HER.) I don't want anything. Nothing. Once you get away from here I never want to see you again.

CHERYL: But I want to.

OLD MAN: If you bring anything around here I'll throw it in your face. I don't object to living in a world where there's skunks and rats, but I don't plan to associate with them.

CHERYL: I've said I'm sorry, haven't I? What more d'you want? (THE OLD MAN GETS UP, GOES TO THE TABLE AND PICKS UP A HANDFUL OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC SCRAPS)

OLD MAN: You could replace these.

CHERYL: I wouldn't know how.

OLD MAN: Then how you ask me what I want?

CHERYL: You could tell me.

OLD MAN: Okay, you tell me why you and your pals decided to come around here and make my life a misery, and I'll tell you what I want.

CHERYL: I . . . don't know why . . . I guess . . . it was just . . . something to do.

OLD MAN: Something to do? (THE OLD MAN SITS BY THE TABLE WAITING FOR HER TO LEAVE. CHERYL FINALLY PUSHES HERSELF UP OFF THE BED AND HOBBLER TO THE DOOR.)

CHERYL: Is there any more traps in the bush?

OLD MAN: No.

CHERYL: I never wanted them to come here. I asked them not to.
(WHEN HE DOES NOT RESPOND SHE LEAVES, UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND SO
IMPLACABLE A REJECTION. THE OLD MAN REMAINS AT THE TABLE. THE PULSING
SOUND COMMENCES. NOW THE SOUND IS TRANSFORMED INTO THE WORDS,
'SOMETHING TO DO.')

FADE

(THE POLICE STATION. CHERYL'S PARENTS STAND AT THE COUNTER. HER
MOTHER LOOKS WORRIED, HER FATHER, A THICK-GUTTED, BALD-HEADED MAN,
LOOKS AND SOUNDS ANGRY.)

FATHER: I'm not trying to make Cheryl out to be any better than she is. But what I'm saying is that she went out there and offered to replace the stuff those other jerks had wrecked. That's all.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: We've made a note of it, sir.

FATHER: That stupid old fool damn near killed her.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: I don't think he did anything of the kind. Though he may have given your daughter a scare.

FATHER: Look. Don't try that blarney on me. I pay plenty of taxes in this town. And let me tell you, if in the first place the police were on the ball, these things'ud never happen.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: You mean you want us to teach your daughter the difference between right and wrong?

FATHER: I'm saying that if you guys got out a little more, instead of sitting here on your asses, then this sort of thing'ud never happen.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: And maybe if parents had a little more control over their kids it wouldn't happen either. Maybe if you'd prevented your daughter from hanging around with three punks --

FATHER: -- See here!

MOTHER: Harry, stop it!

MALE POLICE OFFICER: -- then a lot of things wouldn't have happened.

FATHER: For crissake! They chucked a few rocks on the old bum's roof. Every kid does that once or twice.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: That `old bum' owns twenty acres of land, which is probably worth more than what all of us own put together. He's not a bum. He lives out there because he wants to. He's got a right to live as he pleases on the land he owns. You agree with that, sir?

FATHER: You can tell him from me that I'll fix his place for free.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: I don't think he'd be interested in your offer. Now, what's the name of the boy your daughter goes out with?

FATHER: Now, look here

MOTHER: His name's Paul.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Does he have two pals named Ron and Jackie?

MOTHER: Yes.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Thank you, ma'am. (BUSIES HERSELF WITH SOME PAPERS, WHILE MALE POLICE OFFICER GOES INTO ANOTHER ROOM.) We'll be in touch.

FATHER: Jesus! (GOES TOWARDS THE DOOR. CHERYL'S MOTHER HESITATES BEFORE SPEAKING.)

MOTHER: (QUIETLY) I just want to say that I don't agree with everything my husband says.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Just so, ma'am.

MOTHER: I'm not sure, but I think Cheryl has learned some things about herself and other people because of what has happened.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: (POLITELY) I'm glad to know that, ma'am. (AFTER A PAUSE THE MOTHER, UPSET AND FRUSTRATED, LEAVES.)

FADE

(SAM'S CAFE. PAUL AND RON IN A BOOTH. THE USUAL GATHERING OF YOUTHS WITH A COUPLE OF GIRLS, DANCING.)

RON: You mean they won't let you see Cheryl?

PAUL: Her old man told me to get to hell off his property or he'd make so much trouble for me I'd end up in a reform school.

RON: Jesus. What're you going to do?

PAUL: I don't know. Maybe nothing. (PAUSE) I don't know why the hell we did such a stupid thing.

RON: Maybe because we're stupid.

PAUL: Oh, for crissake, can't you think of something smarter to say than that! (RON SHRUGS.) I'm sick of this place. Sick of looking at the same people every day of my life. I'd like to get in my car and bugger off.

RON: Why don't you?

PAUL: Because I don't have the money.

RON: You know where I'd like to go? California, maybe Mexico.

PAUL: You and fifty million more jerks. When I get a few bucks I'm going north. (THE POLICE OFFICERS ENTER. GO TO THE COUNTER.)

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: We're going to borrow a couple of kids from you, Sam.

SAM: I don't want no trouble.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: We want to ask them some questions.

PAUL: Where's Jackie?

RON: I don't know. Maybe his old man finally hit him over the head with an axe.

PAUL: I sure hope so.

SAM: Well, just remember I co-operated with you.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Sure, we'll remember. (THE OFFICERS GO TO THE BOOTH WHERE PAUL AND RON SIT.) Hi. Are you Paul and Ron?

PAUL: I don't know.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: If I ever met up with some kids who actually know their names, I'd probably faint from shock.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: We'd like to talk to you two.

PAUL: Go ahead.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Not here. At the station.

PAUL: You can't do anything with us without first notifying our parents.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Since when have you had so much consideration for your parents, Paul?

PAUL: (GETTING UP.) Okay. Let's go.

RON: I'm not going anywhere. You got no right to come in here and push us around.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Would you like us to bring your parents in on this, Ron? We could get them down here right away.

PAUL: (TO RON) Don't you have enough sense to know these guys are setting us up?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: That's right, Paul. Your parents are waiting down at the station. Where's Jackie?

PAUL: Jackie. What Jackie?

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Here we go again. If it wasn't so monotonous, it might be funny. Okay. Let's go, boys. (THE OFFICERS WAIT WHILE RON SLOWLY FINISHES HIS BOTTLE OF COLA, BUT THE WAY THEY STAND AND THE EXPRESSION ON THEIR FACES REVEALS THE FRUSTRATION AND FURY THEY FEEL WHICH THEY CAN NEVER REVEAL. A GIRL DANCES OVER TO THEM.)

GIRL: (TO MALE POLICE OFFICER.) Dance with me.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Some other time.

GIRL: No. Now.

MALE POLICE OFFICER: Another time.

GIRL: (FOLLOWING THEM AS THEY GO OUT WITH PAUL AND RON.) When will that be? When I'm on my deathbed? Or when you take me off to jail? (THE DOOR CLOSSES BEHIND THE OFFICERS, PAUL AND RON.) Shit on you! (DANCES BACK TO THE FLOOR.)

FADE

(THE BUSH NOT FAR FROM THE OLD MAN'S CABIN. JACKIE MOVES THROUGH IT, MOVING WITH A MILITARY CAUTION. WHILE DOING SO HE CARRIES ON AN INTERNAL MONOLOGUE.)

JACKIE: Okay, men. We'll be on the beach in a few minutes. We know the area's mined, and there's lots of anti-personnel junk around. So watch your step and don't touch nothing. (LOOKS AT HIS WRIST.) Minute to go, men. Just remember you guys are showing the chicken shits what can be done. (LOOKS OVER HIS SHOULDER.) And no more fuckups this time, Lieutenant Paul, eh? Let's bring our men back to the right beach, eh? Once the job's done I don't want to keep my men waiting around again. So remember, men. No talking. No fooling around. No wolf-calls. Nothing. Just get in there, do the job and get back to base. (LOOKS AT HIS WRIST.) Okay. Twenty seconds. Ten. Five, four, three, two. Zero. (HE MAKES A WAVING MOTION WITH HIS ARM, TAKES A PIECE OF HEAVY RUBBER TUBING FROM HIS POCKET.) Go! (JACKIE RACES ACROSS THE CLEARING TO THE OLD MAN'S CABIN. LISTENS, THEN KICKS THE DOOR OPEN AND RUSHES INSIDE. THE INTERIOR HAS NOT BEEN ALTERED. A LAMP IS ON THE TABLE. BUT THE OLD MAN IS NOT THERE. JACKIE SWINGS AROUND TO FIND THAT THE DOOR HAS BEEN CLOSED. THE REALIZATION HE HAS BEEN TRAPPED FILLS HIM AND HE RUSHES TO THE DOOR AND TRIES TO OPEN IT. WHEN HIS TUGGING HAS NO EFFECT HE SWINGS A CHAIR AT IT. THE DOOR IS STRONGER AND THE CHAIR BREAKS. HE RUNS TO THE WINDOW, ONLY TO FIND IT HAS BEEN BOARDED UP. JACKIE RUNS AROUND THE CABIN LOOKING FOR SOMETHING THAT WILL HELP HIM ESCAPE FROM THE CABIN. FINALLY HE STOPS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM, PANTING AND LISTENING. THE LAMP FLICKERS AND GOES OUT, LEAVING HIM IN DARKNESS. WITHOUT WARNING ROCKS BEGIN TO HIT THE ROOF. THEY STOP, AND A WOLF CALL IS HEARD. JACKIE SCREAMS.) Let me out! (LISTENS) Let me out! (THE ROCKS POUND ON THE ROOF AGAIN.) You fucking old sonofabitch, let me out of here! You hear me! Let me out! (A HEAVY CALIBRE RIFLE BULLET SMASHES THROUGH THE UPPER

PART OF THE DOOR. JACKIE SCREAMS AND DROPS TO THE FLOOR. THE FIRST BULLET IS FOLLOWED BY A SECOND AND A THIRD. JACKIE LIES ON THE FLOOR WITH HIS FACE BURIED IN HIS ARMS. A ROCK HITS THE ROOF AND JACKIE TENSES IN EXPECTATION. NOTHING HAPPENS AND HE RELAXES, ONLY TO SPASM WHEN ANOTHER ROCK FALLS ON THE ROOF, FOLLOWED BY MORE ROCKS HITTING THE WALLS AND DOOR. SUDDENLY EVERYTHING STOPS AND JACKIE WRIGGLES ALONG THE FLOOR TO THE BED, FEELING HIS WAY. FOR A FEW MOMENTS HE SLEEPS, ONLY TO BE VIOLENTLY AWAKENED BY ROCKS HITTING THE ROOF. HE SCREAMS.) Stop it! Stop it! Stop it! (THE SEQUENCE CONTINUES, UNTIL HIS LAST CALL TRAILS OFF INTO A SOBBING APPEAL.)

FADE

(MORNING. JACKIE ON THE BED, SLEEPING. A SHUTTER IS REMOVED FROM THE WINDOW. THE DOOR OPENS AND THE OLD MAN ENTERS. HE CARRIES A RIFLE AND STANDS BY THE TABLE LOOKING AT JACKIE. FINALLY HE KICKS A PAN. THE RATTLE AWAKENS JACKIE.)

OLD MAN: Get up. (JACKIE TURNS HIS HEAD TO STARE AT THE OLD MAN WHOSE EYES EXPRESS NOTHING BUT HATRED. THE OLD MAN SWINGS THE RIFLE UP AND FIRES. THE BULLET ENTERS THE LOGS JUST ABOVE JACKIE'S HEAD.) I said, get up! (JACKIE JUMPS UP AND STANDS BY THE BED.) You did this? (THE OLD MAN POINTS TO THE MESS IN THE CABIN.) You answer me in five seconds or I'll blow the top of your head off.

JACKIE: You wouldn't dare.

OLD MAN: One. Two. Three. Four

JACKIE: (HIS VOICE SHRILL.) There was another guy with me (HE TRIES NOT TO LOOK AT THE TERRIFYING END OF THE RIFLE BARREL.) He did more than me. I tried to stop him. You can ask him.

OLD MAN: Why did you do it?

JACKIE: I don't know.

OLD MAN: (THE BARREL COMES UP.) I said, why did you do it?

JACKIE: Me . . . and him . . . we

OLD MAN: Think, boy . . . and think fast.

JACKIE: We didn't think you had the right to have it made. We thought you'd have some dough here . . . like other old bums do.

OLD MAN: Think . . . boy . . . think.

JACKIE: It's true, what I'm saying. It's true. We didn't think you had the right to be happy, because you've done nothing in your life.

OLD MAN: So you think you can decide what I've done and not done, eh?

JACKIE: It's only guys that've got it made that should have the right.

OLD MAN: What right? Answer me. What right?

JACKIE: To do what they please.

OLD MAN: You don't know what you're talking about. You don't know anything about me. You don't know what I have. You don't know what I've done. You think because I'm old and don't move fast that you can kick me around? Answer me!

JACKIE: I guess so.

OLD MAN: You guess so. You think trying to howl like a wolf turns you into one? Answer me!

JACKIE: No.

OLD MAN: Have you ever stopped to think why there's more hunters in this world than there are wolves? Have you?

JACKIE: I don't know.

OLD MAN: But I know. And I'll tell you right now that you wouldn't last long as a wolf, and you won't last long as a man unless you smarten up.

JACKIE: I'll get by. (HE MANAGES TO GRIN.)

OLD MAN: You won't get by anything. When you came through the bush last night, I was ten feet behind you. (JACKIE'S GRIN FADES.) Maybe you thought you was doing real good. But what you think isn't important. It's what you *do* that counts. And that doesn't amount to much, does it? I said: does it?

JACKIE: (WHISPERING) No.

OLD MAN: You think because I'm old now that I wasn't young once. So you thought you could push me around. But I'm telling you, I've met big and little guys who thought they were tough and I never let any of 'em push me around.

JACKIE: You've got a gun. That's why you can talk like that.

OLD MAN: And once you had a pile of rocks and a pair of fast feet. (PUTS THE RIFLE ON THE TABLE.) So, now I don't have a gun. (JACKIE LICKS HIS LIPS AND HESITATES.)

JACKIE: I don't want to fight you.

OLD MAN: That's right. You just want to see me hop around, eh, and get a laugh out of it. So now I'm the one that's making you hop. (TAKES UP THE RIFLE AGAIN.) You wrecked something I valued. I want it replaced.

JACKIE: I can't.

OLD MAN: That's right. You can't. So what are you going to do?

JACKIE: I don't know.

OLD MAN: (THE RIFLE BARREL COMES UP.) You'd better know . . . in five seconds. One, two, three

JACKIE: (HIS VOICE SHAKES WITH TERROR.) I don't know. I tell you. I don't know . . . I don't. Don't! Don't! (THE OLD MAN SLOWLY WALKS TOWARDS HIM, AND JACKIE CRINGES. THE OLD MAN THRUSTS THE RIFLE BARREL INTO JACKIE'S STOMACH AND HE COLLAPSES ON THE BED, WHIMPERING.) Leave me alone, leave me alone.

OLD MAN: Get up. (PRODS JACKIE.) I said, get up! (JACKIE GETS UP.) Now get out. And if you ever show your face around here again, I'll kill you. Get out, fast, before I do it now. (JACKIE RUNS. THE OLD MAN FOLLOWS HIM FROM THE CABIN AND HASTENS HIS DEPARTURE BY FIRING A SHOT INTO THE GROUND. JACKIE RACES THROUGH THE BUSH, THEN STOPS AND SNATCHES UP A ROCK FROM THE GROUND.)

JACKIE: (SCREAMING) You . . . ! (HIS ARM COMES UP TO THROW THE ROCK AND THERE IT STAYS, POISED. HE CONTINUES ON THROUGH THE BUSH AND SUDDENLY HALTS. SITTING ON A ROTTING TREE TRUNK IS A CHIPMUNK. IT REMAINS THERE EYEING JACKIE WITH CONSIDERABLE CURIOSITY. JACKIE WHISPERS.) You fucking old sonofabitch. You goddamn old bum. (HIS ARM SLOWLY COMES UP AND FREEZES. THE ROCK DROPS FROM HIS HAND. THE CHIPMUNK,

AFTER WRIGGLING HIS NOSE, DISAPPEARS UNDER THE LOG. JACKIE SAGS, HIS MOUTH IS COMPRESSED, AND TEARS OOZE FROM HIS CLOSED EYES. HE WHISPERS.) I'll make it, you hear me. I'll make it. (JACKIE CONTINUES ON THROUGH THE BUSH UNTIL HE EMERGES ON THE ROAD. THE PATROL CAR IS PARKED THERE. FOR A MOMENT JACKIE IS POISED TO RUN. THEN HE SAGS, AND WAITS.)

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER: Hi there, Jackie. Want a lift back to town? (HE CROSSES TO THE CAR AND CLIMBS INTO THE BACK SEAT.)

FADE WITH THE CAR MOVING ALONG THE ROAD TOWARD TOWN.

THE END.