

R e d

by
Stephen Susco

Adapted from the novel
by
Jack Ketchum

First Draft
January 20, 2004

INT. LUDLOW'S BEDROOM - MORNING

We open on a wooden wall. Painted a thick, deep red.

Over OPENING CREDITS, we begin to move slowly down the wall --
-- to a rough patch. The wood here is scarred and twisted,
as if SCORCH MARKS have been painted over.

Then, just below this, the HEADBOARD of a bed. Here sleeps --
LUDLOW (60s). Handsome, strong face. Deep grooves in his
skin betray eyes that have seen perhaps too much.

He stirs, eyelids fluttering. Shifts to glance over at --

A DOG sleeping at his feet. An old hound with intelligent
eyes. Watching him. He's been waiting for Ludlow to awaken.

The dog's tail whacks the footboard with a THUMP.

Ludlow smiles. Gives the dog's forehead a scratch.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

The first floor is small, and decorated solely for comfort.

The dog sits on an old cushion, his napping spot. His ears
are perked, he's listening to RUMMAGING SOUNDS coming from --
-- an open BASEMENT DOOR. The sounds become footsteps,
heading back upstairs.

Unsteady in his age, the dog gets to its feet as Ludlow
emerges from the basement, carrying a pole and tackle box.

The dog lets out a bark and scratches at the front door.

LUDLOW
Sorry to keep you waitin'.

EXT. LUDLOW'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

Ludlow's old pickup truck pulls up to a small store, set at
the edge of a thick wood -- "*LUDLOW'S GENERAL STORE*".

Ludlow gets out of the truck, glancing across the street at a
small HARDWARE STORE. A hand-written sign on the door reads,
dramatically: "*CLOSED FOREVER*".

As Ludlow turns back to the general store, he sees --

EMMA (50s), dirty jeans and cowboy boots, a kind of elegant ruggedness. Walking down the steps, she holds a cooler.

EMMA
You'll be wanting this back?

LUDLOW
You read my mind, Emma.

She drops the cooler in the back of Ludlow's truck. Then she pulls something out of it: a large bone.

EMMA
Read his, too.

She reaches in the window, giving Ludlow's dog the bone, along with a firm scratch behind the ears.

EMMA
He came by to see my Evangeline
late last night.

Ludlow looks over at the store to see a large BLACK LABRADOR in the doorway, wagging her tail.

Ludlow's dog seems happy to see the Lab. They're "pals".

LUDLOW
Did he, now? Good boy.

EMMA
I keep hopin' maybe one day you'll
take after him, Av.

Ludlow smiles, shy. He turns away, to the Hardware Store.

LUDLOW
What's up with Jerry's place?

EMMA
Dunno. Guess after forty years he
finally got tired of it.

She heads back up the steps to the shop.

EMMA
You want to share your catch with
someone, you give me a call, Av.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Ludlow fishes on a stool by the edge of a stream. Two fish, mouths still gasping, lie in the cooler by his tackle box.

The dog lays in a sunbeam nearby, dozing.

After a moment, it raises its head, looking up a WORN PATH leading up out of the gully.

Ludlow doesn't notice. But he too, a moment later, turns to look up the path, as if sensing something.

He glances at his dog, shakes his head.

LUDLOW

Amateurs.

Ludlow turns back to his fishing, casting his line further downstream. A beat.

Then we hear the sound of movement over the rise. Dry leaves underfoot, the rustling of foliage. And VOICES, laughter.

THREE BOYS appear over the rise. More like young men -- seventeen, eighteen years old.

DANNY, the oldest, has a shotgun slung over his shoulder. He sees Ludlow and stops.

DANNY

(calling down:)

Hey, Old Timer! Gettin' any bites?

Ludlow doesn't turn.

LUDLOW

A couple in the cooler. Took a lot of convincing to get 'em there.

Danny says something to his friends, and starts down the path with PETE (17), lean and tan. HAROLD (17), a bit overweight, follows reluctantly.

The dog watches Danny as he kneels down by the cooler.

DANNY

Not bad. Good size.

LUDLOW
 You can pull 'em five pounds or
 more out here every now and again.
 These'll do just fine, though.

Danny stands, stretching his back.

DANNY
 We've been out here all morning,
 haven't seen a single deer. Wish
 we had your luck.

Ludlow turns to look at Danny. His eyes pause on the kid's
 shirt: "*STOLEN FROM MABEL'S WHOREHOUSE*".

LUDLOW
 It's not luck. It's your gun oil.
 I smelled it before I heard you.
 Which wasn't so difficult either.
 You should swab it down a whole lot
 better. Anything you aim to shoot
 can smell you coming over a mile.

Danny glances over at his friends, embarrassed.

DANNY
 I sup'ose if they have a nose as
 good as yours, that could very well
 be the case.

He looks down at the dog, who's watching him closely. He
 stares right back at the dog. A long beat.

DANNY
 This your dog?

LUDLOW
 Mmmm-hmmm.

DANNY
 Good boy.

But his words are dry. The dog just regards him blankly.

DANNY
 Pretty old, isn't he?

LUDLOW
 We both go back aways.

DANNY
 He's a raggedy old fella. Ten,
 eleven years?

LUDLOW
Fourteen.

DANNY
Fourteen. Now that's an old dog.

Danny looks around casually. Considering something.
Harold, uneasy, glances at Pete. Who's smiling.

DANNY
We've been walkin' around out here
for hours. Pretty tired. Real
hungry. How 'bout you, Pete?

PETE
Yeah. I'm famished.

Ludlow's face changes. But he doesn't turn.

LUDLOW
If you want to stick around a few,
I should have enough for four.

DANNY
Nah. I think we'll eat in town.
You got any money, Pete?

PETE
Nope. Flat broke.

DANNY
How 'bout you, Harold?

Harold realizes what's happening. Nervously:

HAROLD
I've -- got about ten dollars --

DANNY
I don't want shitty fast food. I
want a real sit-down meal.

He steps towards Ludlow.

DANNY
How about you, old man? You got
any money?

Ludlow's dog raises its head, letting out a guttural GROWL.

Danny stops dead in his tracks.

LUDLOW

Red.

The dog immediately quiets. But keeps its eyes on the boy.
Ludlow turns, calm, his face a blank. No sign of fear.

LUDLOW

How much money do you need?

DANNY

Whatever you've got in your wallet
will work just fine.

Ludlow's eyes drop to the shotgun. It's pointed halfway
between him, and the ground.

LUDLOW

Wallet's in my pickup. In the
glove compartment. You passed it
coming down here.

PETE

Bullshit.

LUDLOW

I don't take it with me. Not much
use for cash down here, is there?

Ludlow turns his even gaze back to Danny.

LUDLOW

There's twenty, thirty dollars in
it. I won't say you're welcome to
it, but I'm not going to argue with
a shotgun, either.

PETE

You got any credit cards?

LUDLOW

Don't use 'em.

DANNY

Harold. Check his rig.

The heavysset boy, trying to avoid Ludlow's gaze, opens the
tackle box and examines the flies inside.

DANNY

Worth anything?

Harold glances up at Ludlow before looking away nervously.

HAROLD

It's all old stuff. Shitty flies.
Nothing really worth taking.

DANNY

You got a beat-up pickup and a
wallet with twenty bucks in it and
a rig that ain't worth jack shit.
A couple fish. And a god-damned
dog. You got nothing, mister.

Ludlow reaches into his pocket, holds out his keys.

LUDDLAW

Smallest one opens the dash.

But Danny's attention is on the dog. A grin on his lips.

DANNY

"Red"? That's his name?

LUDDLAW

Uh-huh. He lost some of his color
as he got older --

BLAM! The shotgun blast smashes through the tranquility of
the woods, echoing in the distance.

Ludlow jumps, startled. Looks to the side to see --

RED. His head has been destroyed. Everything above his jaws
has been blown back into the tree behind him.

The hound wobbles on his feet for a moment. A horrific
shudder passes through his body.

Then he drops.

DANNY

Red! Look at that! Red!

He laughs. Peter laughs with him.

Ludlow tenses -- but the shotgun swings up, pointing at him.

DANNY

He sure is 'red' now, isn't he?

Harold steps away, mouth open, eyes fixed on the quivering
mass of the dying dog. He looks like he's about to vomit.

DANNY

Next time remember to keep a little more cash around, old man. Then stuff like this maybe won't happen to you.

He glances back at his friends.

DANNY

Let's get out of here.

Keeping the gun trained on Ludlow, he backs up the trail. Pete walks with him. But Harold is frozen.

DANNY

Harold. C'mon.

Harold's eyes meet Ludlow's. He opens his mouth, as if about to say something. Then he turns and runs up the path, joining his laughing friends.

They disappear over the rise.

Ludlow stares down at Red. Gently lays down his fishing pole and kneels down next to his dog.

He lays a hand on Red's side. No movement. Thankfully.

Ludlow's eyes drift over to something nearby.

It's a SHELL CASING. Now just a worthless piece of plastic.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Ludlow appears over the rise, breathing hard. He's carrying Red, whose head is wrapped in Ludlow's bloodstained shirt.

Ludlow struggles with the body, laying it as delicately as possible in the back of his pickup truck.

Then he sits on the ground, the energy leaving his body.

He looks up at Red's PAW, hanging limply from the truck bed.

A shudder shakes Ludlow's body. It overtakes him, tears filling his eyes, as he sobs silently.

Alone, with his dead dog, in a clearing in the woods.

EXT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - DAY

A small, old house at the top of a hill overlooking a field of goldenrod. A large oak tree sits next to it. Quaint.

Ludlow's truck drives up a path at the side of the hill.

He gets out. Takes a deep breath.

Then he looks up at the oak tree.

Ludlow closes the truck door and walks towards a shed.

EXT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - LATER (DUSK)

Ludlow finishes digging a deep hole near the tree.

He pulls himself out and stares down at his work.

Then he walks to his truck and lifts Red's body from the back. Struggles with the weight as he returns to the grave.

He kneels down, laying the dog by the edge. Gently places a hand on the body, in-between the bloodstains.

After a moment, he slides Red inside. Picks up his shovel, and begins refilling the grave.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Ludlow enters, sweaty and dirty, holding his cooler. He stands there, uncomfortable. Unaccustomed to the quiet.

He walks to the small kitchen. Takes the fish from the cooler, wraps them in foil, and lays them in the freezer.

Then he reaches into his pocket, removing the SHELL CASING.

He studies it. Raises it to his nose, smells the powder.

Ludlow walks to the basement door and opens it. He hesitates a moment, looking down at --

-- deep GROOVES towards the bottom of the door. It's covered with them. They look like claw marks.

Made by something trying to get through the door.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DUSK

Ludlow comes down into the dark space. He pulls a cord hanging from the ceiling, and a bare bulb illuminates --

-- a CRAMPED ROOM. Wood panels hang unevenly on the walls. It looks like Ludlow dug this basement himself.

The bulb hangs over a work table, with a CABINET above.

Ludlow delicately lays the spent shell on the work table. Then he reaches up and opens the cabinet. Takes out a book: a CATALOG of various models of shotguns.

He flips through it, finally stopping on one. The gun that killed his dog. A Browning Auto-5.

NEW ANGLE: now we can see what's inside the open cabinet above Ludlow's work table --

-- GUNS. A half-dozen. Shotguns and rifles. And boxes of ammunition to match.

A beat. Then Ludlow gently reaches up and turns off the light. Leaving us in complete darkness.

EXT. MOODY POINT - DAY

Ludlow's truck drives through the small rural town.

INT. SPORTING GOODS STORE - DAY

The MANAGER studies his ledger. Shakes his head.

MANAGER

Sorry, Av. Like I said, I've never stocked that one.

LUDLOW

Thanks for checkin'.

As he turns to go:

MANAGER

You might wanna try Downtown Guns and Ammo, out on the 9 towards Northfield. They like to stock the more expensive guns for those Weekend Warriors.

INT. FRANK'S DINER - DAY

Ludlow sits at the counter, staring off into space. His steak and eggs untouched.

GLORIA (40s), a waitress, approaches with a coffee pot.

GLORIA
Looks like you could use another
shot.

Ludlow nods absently, and she leans over to refill his mug.

Her shirt sleeve rides up, revealing a series of ugly
BRUISES. There are more near her breastbone.

Gloria sees Ludlow looking. She quickly straightens,
adjusting her sleeve.

Ludlow raises his mug to his lips. Without looking at her:

LUDLOW
You alright, Gloria?

GLORIA
I'm okay, Av. Thanks.

She manages a faint smile and walks away.

EXT. ROUTE 9 - DAY

Ludlow's truck drives on the breed of New England 'main road'
that just seems to amble on aimlessly.

A strip mall appears on the right. The largest shop is the
one he's looking for.

INT. DOWNTOWN GUNS & AMMO - DAY

Ludlow enters. The place is nearly empty.

A BEEFY CLERK (30s) reads a magazine by the cash register.
An OLDER CLERK (60s) stocks a shelf nearby.

BEEFY CLERK
Help ya?

LUDLOW
I'd like to know if you've sold a
Browning Auto-5 to a boy of about
seventeen, maybe eighteen years old
recently.

The Beefy Clerk glances back at the Older Clerk.

LUDLOW
Tall boy, on the thin side, short
blond hair.

A beat. The Beefy Clerk stares at him, crossing his arms.

BEEFY CLERK
You police?

LUDLOW
No.

BEEFY CLERK
Lawyer? P.I.?

Ludlow shakes his head.

BEEFY CLERK
Then why are you askin'?

LUDLOW
Let's say it's a private matter.

BEEFY CLERK
"Private matter", huh?

LUDLOW
That's right.

The Beefy Clerk's brow furrows.

BEEFY CLERK
Sorry. We can't be dealing with
private matters here, friend.

Ludlow looks over at the Old Clerk, who's watching him.

LUDLOW
This boy I'm looking for. He used
the Browning on my dog. He didn't
have a reason.

The Older Clerk's expression changes.

BEEFY CLERK
I'm sorry to hear about that,
mister. But like I said --

OLDER CLERK
Your dog. He dead?

LUDLOW
The boy shot him in the head.

The Older Clerk turns to the Beefy Clerk.

OLDER CLERK
Check the ledger, Jimmy.

BEEFY CLERK
But --

OLDER CLERK
Check it.

The Beefy Clerk reaches under the counter, angry.

BEEFY CLERK
Suppose he goes and shoots the kid?
What then, Clarence?

The Older Clerk sizes up Ludlow.

OLDER CLERK
He ain't gonna do that.

The Older Clerk steps off his footstool, motioning down to a
GERMAN SHEPHERD curled up at his feet. Ears pricked,
watching Ludlow.

OLDER CLERK
You a hunting man?

LUDLOW
Sometimes. You?

OLDER CLERK
All my life. Since I was ten years
old. Couple years back I did
something damned foolish. Forgot
the safety for the first time in
forty-some years. Tripped over a
bush, my finger on the trigger --

He raises a pant-leg, revealing a prosthetic foot and ankle.

OLDER CLERK

Blew it clean off. Hurt like I'd never imagined. I used my jacket as a tourniquet but the blood was just pumping outta me. I was losin' it, couldn't remember which way the road was. Fadin' fast.

He nods down towards the dog.

OLDER CLERK

This guy started barkin', runnin' a few paces, barkin' again. Like he was encouraging me. I'd pass out, he'd bark in my ear. I pulled myself almost a mile before I blacked out. And then he dragged me the rest of the way, to the edge of Route 9.

He leans over, scratches the Shepherd behind the ear.

OLDER CLERK

That's the day I threw the Alpo away. Been top sirloin ever since.

The Beefy Clerk looks up from the ledger.

BEEFY CLERK

Here it is. Sold it last week. Boy came in with his father. Real snappy dresser, the father. Kid had a crew cut, right?

Ludlow nods. The Beefy Clerk reads the entry:

BEEFY CLERK

'Danny C. McCormack'. Just turned eighteen years of age.

LUDLOW

Got an address there?

BEEFY CLERK

Clarence, you sure about this?

OLDER CLERK

Mister, if anybody asks you...

LUDLOW

I happened to spot him on the street. I followed him home. I guess I got lucky.

OLDER CLERK
That'll do for me. Jimmy?

Beefy Clerk sighs. And rotates the ledger to face Ludlow.

EXT. NORTHFIELD - DAY

A "second-home" New England retreat community, out of sync with any sense of authenticity. Wealth, power, privilege.

Ludlow drives through a tree-lined Main Street: the finest retail stores and coffee shops. His pickup stands out amongst the BMWs, Mercedes, Jaguars.

Then, past the town center: beautiful and spacious houses, old and new, with immaculately-maintained lawns.

EXT. MCCORMACK RESIDENCE - DAY

Ludlow pulls to the curb in front of a stately house that could hold four, maybe five of his own.

He walks up a sloping fieldstone path, looking up at the white inverted columns that pretend to support the structure.

Ludlow stops at the front door. He stares at the knocker, an inverted brass horseshoe.

He rings the bell instead.

The door is answered by a BLACK MAID.

LUDLLOW
Good afternoon, ma'am. I'm here to see Mr. McCormack.

MAID
Is he expecting you?

Ludlow glances at her left hand: it's withered, and discolored with white from the wrist to the knuckles.

LUDLLOW
No, ma'am.

The maid opens the door, instinctively sliding her crippled hand behind her back. But she seems to do it for his benefit -- if she's ashamed by her infirmity, she's not showing.

INT. MCCORMACK RESIDENCE - FOYER - DAY

Ludlow steps inside and the maid closes the door.

MAID
Your name?

LUDLOW
Avery Ludlow.

MAID
Wait here one moment, please.

He nods, and she disappears down a side corridor.

Ludlow looks around the magnificent foyer. Plush furniture, fourteen foot-high ceilings, wood burning fireplace. But there's no warmth -- this room feels designed to intimidate.

The maid reappears in the hallway.

MAID
Mr. McCormack will see you.

INT. MCCORMACK RESIDENCE - STUDY - DAY

The maid leads Ludlow to a large study. Wall-to-wall carved oak, a large walnut desk at one end. Behind which sits:

MICHAEL MCCORMACK (late 40s). Tall, broad-shouldered.

He stands and walks over to greet Ludlow, holding out a hand, a wide, good-natured smile.

MICHAEL
So you're Av Ludlow? Happy to meet
you. Please, have a seat.

He gestures to a large leather chair across from the desk. Ludlow sits, looking around at --

-- the MOUNTED HEADS on one of the walls. A five-point white-tail buck. A coyote. A timber wolf. A small black bear.

MICHAEL
I've been by your store. Ludlow's
General, right?

LUDLOW
That's right.

MICHAEL

Nice to put a face to the name.
Would you like a drink, Av?

There it is again -- the casual use of his shortened name.

LUDLOW

No, thank you.

Michael pours himself a scotch.

LUDLOW

I'm here about your boy, Mr.
McCormack.

Michael sits down behind the desk, leans back casually.

MICHAEL

"Michael", please. Which boy is
that, Av?

LUDLOW

Danny.

MICHAEL

Okay, Danny. What about him?

LUDLOW

Danny owns a Browning Auto-5
shotgun. He used it yesterday to
kill my dog.

Michael looks at Ludlow in complete disbelief.

MICHAEL

He what?

LUDLOW

I was fishing out by Miller's Bend.
He came along with two other boys.
They wanted money. I told them
there was twenty or so in my
pickup. I suppose twenty wasn't
enough. So your boy shot my dog.

A beat. Michael, stricken, shakes his head.

MICHAEL

Danny wouldn't do that.

LUDLOW

I'm afraid he did, Mr. McCormack.
I'm sorry, but sometimes a man
doesn't know his boy as well as he
thinks he does.

MICHAEL

Are you sure it was Danny? Not one
of the other boys, who --

LUDLOW

Danny did all the shooting. The
other boys just stood by and
watched, and then they laughed when
it was all over.

MICHAEL

They *laughed*?

LUDLOW

That's right. They seemed to think
shooting a dog to death is a pretty
funny thing.

Michael puts down his drink. Completely stunned.

MICHAEL

So you're telling me, what, the dog
went after him or something?

LUDLOW

The dog was sitting where I told
him to sit. He wasn't the kind to
disobey.

Michael shakes his head, stands.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. That's just not my
boy's behavior.

LUDLOW

Does Danny have a shirt that says:
"STOLEN FROM MABEL'S WHOREHOUSE?"

Michael coughs out a laugh, reflexively.

MICHAEL

I don't know.

LUDLOW

Maybe you'll check for me.

Michael sizes Ludlow up. He sits on the edge of his desk.

MICHAEL

What is it you want, Mr. Ludlow?
Money?

A beat. Ludlow almost seems taken aback by the suggestion.

LUDLOW

No, sir. I'm after whatever justice I can see coming out of this thing. All I want is to know the boy admits to what he's done, and that he's been made to feel damn sorry for what he did, that he's punished as any decent person would want to see him punished. That would be where you come in, Mr. McCormack. He's your boy.

MICHAEL

Punished? Do you mean jail?

LUDLOW

He's not my boy. But if I were you, sure, I'd turn him in. Before he gets to thinking he can do this again, anytime he likes. I doubt he'd spend any time in jail, though perhaps he should --

MICHAEL

You haven't gone to the police yourself?

LUDLOW

Not yet, no. I was hoping you and Danny would want to do that for me. It'd go better for him, don't you think?

Michael considers. Sits back down behind his desk.

MICHAEL

How do I know what you're telling me is true? Do you have proof?

Ludlow reaches into his pocket, removes the shell casing.

LUDLOW

The Sheriff's office could match this to your son's gun, if it needs to come to that. But why not just ask him?

Michael stares down at his desk, thinking. Then he picks up his phone, presses a button.

MICHAEL

Carla, where is Danny now? -- All right, you go on up and tell both of them to come down to the study. Tell them I said right away.

He hands up. Folds his hands. Sizes up Ludlow evenly.

MICHAEL

You ever consider selling your store?

LUDLOW

Excuse me?

MICHAEL

Your store. Ever consider selling?

LUDLOW

No, I can't say I ever have.

MICHAEL

What is it, an acre of land? A little over? You've got a good location there, for another store, or just about anything. If you should ever think about selling, my associates and I would be interested.

LUDLOW

I'll keep that in mind.

MICHAEL

It must be a lot of work for a man your age, the upkeep and all. Probably not a sizeable net at the end of the year.

LUDLOW

That what you do for a living, Mr. McCormack? Buy up other people's stores?

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL

Among other things. Some friends and I develop property every now and then. We just finished a deal for a new Home Depot complex out on Highway One. I'm afraid in a year or so they're going to give you some heavy competition.

Just then the door opens. Danny and Harold enter.

Danny recognizes Ludlow. But the look on his face quickly changes to one of puzzlement.

DANNY

What's up, Dad?

MICHAEL

You know this man, Danny?

DANNY

No. Why?

He's a good liar. But not Harold: his eyes are on the floor.

MICHAEL

How about you?

Harold just shakes his head.

MICHAEL

Never seen him before?

DANNY

Nope.

MICHAEL

Absolutely sure?

DANNY

Positive.

MICHAEL

This is Mr. Ludlow, Danny. He's been telling me a pretty amazing story. Says you tried to rob him yesterday. Then you shot his dog.

DANNY

Us? Are you kidding?

MICHAEL

I don't think Mr. Ludlow's kidding, no. Did you take the Browning out yesterday?

DANNY

No. We drove to Plymouth. Ask Carla. She saw us take the car.

MICHAEL

With who?

DANNY

Just us and Pete.

MICHAEL

And you didn't go anywhere else? You didn't go to Miller's Bend?

DANNY

No. Why would we want to go to Miller's Bend?

MICHAEL

Do you have a shirt that says "PROPERTY OF MABEL'S --"

LUDLOW

"STOLEN FROM."

Danny glances at him. A smile on his lips.

MICHAEL

Right. "STOLEN FROM MABEL'S WHOREHOUSE." You own a shirt like that?

DANNY

If I did, I'd probably wear it. But I don't.

Michael swivels to face Ludlow. His face a blank.

MICHAEL

I have to tell you, Av. I thought this all sounded pretty far-fetched. I've got a couple of good boys here and they wouldn't be involved in anything like what you're describing to me. I'm sorry about your dog. I truly am. But I'm afraid you've just got the wrong pair of kids, that's all.

A long beat. Ludlow turns to look at --

LUDLOW
It's 'Harold', right? Danny said
your name yesterday.

Harold just stares at him.

LUDLOW
I want to thank you for lying to
your brother about my flies. They
could have brought a couple hundred
dollars or so. And you knew it.
Nice of you not to mention that, I
appreciated it. But suppose now
you tell your dad about my dog.

Harold holds Ludlow's gaze for a moment. Then, quietly:

HAROLD
I don't know anything about your
dog, mister.

Ludlow doesn't blink. Harold does, looking away.

LUDLOW
The truth would swallow a whole lot
easier, son.

No response.

LUDLOW
I heard all three of you laughing
all the way up the hill. Heard you
for a long time. You know that?

Harold looks like he's about to cry.

MICHAEL
I think that'll be enough, Ludlow.

Michael stands. All the good-naturedness is gone.

MICHAEL
If they say they didn't do it, then
that's that. I'm afraid you're
mistaken.

He walks to the door and opens it. Ludlow is dismissed.

Ludlow looks at Danny. Who is smiling, slightly.

Ludlow slowly stands. Walks over to Michael.

LUDLOW

I'm asking you to do the right thing here.

MICHAEL

It could have been the right thing, maybe. If you'd had the right boys.

LUDLOW

I've got the right boys, Mr. McCormack. It's you who's got the wrong boys. You've had them wrong all these years, and I think you know that. I guess I have some work to do. Thank you for your time.

As he starts to exit, he pauses.

LUDLOW

You've been looking at my land for a while now, haven't you? You've been interested. I bet you bought the hardware store across the street. That's how you knew I go by 'Av'.

MICHAEL

That's a fact, to tell the truth. How'd you know?

LUDLOW

You let me in your house. You had to have some reason. I guess you're different from your boy that way. Danny didn't need a reason at all.

Ludlow exits. Michael turns to face his sons.

A long beat. Then he closes the door, obscuring our view.

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

SAM (late 60s) stuffs tobacco into his pipe. He's a country lawyer -- flannel and suspenders instead of Armani.

He shakes his head, lights his pipe. Takes a drag.

SAM

Ten days. A hundred dollars.

Ludlow stares at him, incredulous.

SAM

It's your word against theirs on the attempted robbery. So what you've got is a case of cruelty to animals, maybe reckless conduct with a firearm. Class D crimes in this state. Misdemeanors.

LUDLOW

Misdemeanors?

SAM

Under the law, an animal's just property. Not just in Maine, but in every other state in the Union. Cruelty carries a mandatory hundred-dollar fine --

LUDLOW

He didn't just give the dog a kick, Sam. He killed it.

SAM

'Cruelty to animals', Av. That's all the Law has to say about it. You can ask for up to three hundred and sixty-four days in prison. But practically speaking, no prosecutor in their right mind would request more than thirty, and they wouldn't get more than ten. And if this kid is under 18... then the most he'll get is a stern look from the Judge. Won't even go on his permanent record.

Ludlow stares at his shoes. Sam leans forward.

SAM

It gets worse. I hate to tell you this, but in god's truth, I don't know that they'd even want to prosecute. It costs the State more than a hundred dollars just to serve the damn subpoena, never mind the cost of dragging his sorry butt into court.

LUDLOW

The Sheriff could arrest him. He could do that much, anyhow. Put the fear of god into that kid.

SAM

Nope. Sheriff would've had to have seen him pull the trigger to bring him in.

LUDLOW

That's all the Law has to say about it?

SAM

All this time, work and expense for an old mongrel dog you already buried. That really what you want?

LUDLOW

That mongrel dog was Mary's gift to me on my fifty-seventh birthday. And they made a joke about killing him.

A beat. Sam slowly nods.

SAM

I know, Av.

He pulls a pad of paper in front of him and starts writing.

SAM

I'll file the complaint with Tom Bridgewater. He'll pass it on to the D.A.'s office. Meanwhile I'll put a few feelers out, see what I can find out about Michael McCormack and his family. What was that other boy's name, the one they claimed they spent the day with?

LUDLOW

'Pete'.

SAM

All right. I'll take a look-see.

LUDLOW

Thanks, Sam.

Ludlow gets to his feet, heading for the door.

SAM
 You might have to dig him back up
 again, you know. If they go for
 this.

LUDLOW
 I'll do what I have to do.

SAM
 I don't doubt that.

CUT TO:

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Ludlow opens the freezer door, taking out one of the foil-wrapped fish. He gently starts to unwrap it.

EXT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - PORCH - DUSK

Ludlow sits in a chair outside, drinking a beer, watching the sun dip down below the hillside. His fish sits in a plate on his lap. It's hardly been touched.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ludlow stands by a bookshelf, perusing the titles. He selects a volume from Churchill's memoirs and walks o.s. --

-- but we remain, MOVING IN on the wall next to the shelf.

Visible underneath the paint, as in the bedroom upstairs, the wood is SCARRED AND WARPED. Almost from floor to ceiling.

INT. LUDLOW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ludlow enters, laying the book on his bed.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ludlow brushes his teeth. He spits, rinses. Then his eyes drift up to meet his reflection. He looks old, and tired.

INT. LUDLOW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ludlow re-enters in sleeping clothes. He picks up his book --

-- and pauses. Looking down at the INDENTATION in the blanket at the foot of the bed. Where his dog used to sleep.

FADE TO BLACK.

IN DARKNESS, a sound: a distant, muffled RUMBLING. Again, only closer. Then a sudden BOOMING --

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ludlow wakes with a start. He's been sleeping in a recliner in the living room, the Churchill book open on his lap.

He catches his breath. Turns to look out a window as THUNDER RUMBLES in the distance.

EXT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The first floor goes dark as Ludlow turns off the lights. He opens the back door and looks up at --

The night sky. A flash of CHAIN LIGHTNING hops from cloud to cloud, THUNDER marking its passage.

LUDLOW'S POV: a lightning flash reveals a SILHOUETTED FIGURE standing by a tree further up the hill. Watching the house.

Ludlow squints. Did he just imagine that?

Another FLASH, and the figure is gone.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - NIGHT

After a moment, Ludlow turns to see --

-- THE SHOTGUN SHELL. On the kitchen table, by a window.

He glances back outside. Then he closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - MORNING

Ludlow makes coffee in his kitchen, on the phone:

SAM (ON PHONE)

They're hedging. They want you to sign a statement, and they want the shell casing.

LUDLOW
Will they prosecute?

SAM (ON PHONE)
All I could get out of them is
"we'll see." Which I guess is
better than "no way." Oh, I also
think I found out who your third
boy is. Word is Danny and Harold
hang with a kid named Pete Daoust.

Ludlow grabs a piece of paper and a pencil.

LUDLOW
'Daoust'. Spell it.

SAM (ON PHONE)
'D-a-o-u-s-t.' You good to meet
up, say, 'round noon? Get this
ball rolling?

Ludlow glances at the clock. Then at the name he's written.

LUDLOW
Noon sounds good.

SAM (ON PHONE)
Frank's place. See you then.

Ludlow hangs up. Then reaches for a book: the WHITE PAGES.
Covers the whole county and it's still not very thick.

He flips through the pages until he finds 'DAOUST'. Only one
listing. Phone number and address.

EXT. THE DAOUST HOUSE - DAY

A small place, wedged between two other similar houses. A
slightly sagging roof, peeling paint. The house looks tired.

Ludlow pulls up in his truck. Gets out, walks towards the
front door. The PATH is overgrown with crabgrass, almost
hard to find in the tall weeds of the unkempt lawn.

Ludlow glances at a rusty WASHING MACHINE next to the house,
an old MATTRESS and box spring leaning against it. On the
other side of the house an old V-8 ENGINE sits on a stump.

He reaches the door and knocks. After a moment, PETE'S
FATHER (50s) appears. Wire-rim glasses, balding. T-shirt
and suspenders.

He stares evenly at Ludlow, not addressing him. A beat.

LUDLOW
Mr. Daoust? I'm Avery Ludlow --

PETE'S FATHER
I know who you are.

LUDLOW
I guess you've talked to Mr.
McCormack, then.

PETE'S FATHER
McCormack don't talk to any out-of-
work carpenter. His boy called my
boy.

Pete's Father shifts in the doorway, uncomfortable.

PETE'S FATHER
Listen, Ludlow. Pete says they
drove to Plymouth. Hung out at a
mall there, even bought a couple
CDs. Didn't say anything about any
shotgun or anybody's dog.

LUDLOW
Did he say this before or after
Danny called him?

He doesn't expect a response. He doesn't get one.

LUDLOW
Maybe they did drive to Plymouth.
Before, or after, I wouldn't know
about that. But at about four in
the afternoon they were at Miller's
Bend, and when they didn't get the
money they wanted from me, Danny
McCormack shot my dog, and your son
stood there with him laughing about
it.

Something passes over the face of Pete's Father. Disbelief?
Anxiety? Before he can say anything --

PETE'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Mr. Ludlow.

Pete's MOTHER (50s) steps into the doorway. Looks angry.

PETE'S MOTHER

I've heard every word of this. And I want to know just what you think you're doing coming out here like this. If you have a complaint with the McCormacks, then you take it up with them.

LUDLOW

I'm sorry, ma'am. But if you heard what I said, then you heard that your boy was party to an attempted robbery. That he thought it was funny his friend shot my animal.

PETE'S MOTHER

Pete didn't shoot your dog.

LUDLOW

He was there. And he saw the boy who did. I want him to say that.

PETE'S MOTHER

Maybe he's sorry. Ever think of that?

LUDLOW

Excuse me ma'am, but how can he be sorry, if he denies it ever happened?

Pete's Mother's glare hardens. But she says nothing.

Ludlow pulls his pad and pencil from his shirt pocket. As he writes something down:

LUDLOW

You're right. It wasn't your boy who fired the weapon. And I'd be willing to forgive him if he shows the nerve and decency to own up to his part in it, and tell the Sheriff what happened. What Danny McCormack did. This is my phone number.

He holds out the piece of paper. They stare at it.

LUDLOW

I know that a boy can be hard in his heart sometimes and then regret it later on. I only want the truth from him.

After a moment, Pete's Father opens the screen door -- just a crack -- to take it.

LUDLOW
Tell him to do what's right.
That's all I'm asking --

Pete's Mother closes the door in his face.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S DINER - DAY

Ludlow and Sam enter, nodding to FRANK, cooking in the back. They pick a table in the center of the nearly-empty place.

SAM
Friend of mine over at the Chamber of Commerce knows McCormack. Says he's been on the social fast-track since he inherited Daddy McCormack's fortune. Buys lots of gold, likes to play with real estate. Word is his wife's a drunk. A fancy drunk, but a drunk nonetheless.

LUDLOW
What's with this land-development business?

SAM
Mostly a hobby, I guess. He sure doesn't need the cash. Just seems to like buying up nice old tracts of land and turning 'em into shopping malls, chain-store complexes, restaurants. But not in his own backyard, of course. Anyway, all in all there's plenty of money and political clout there, but underneath it all McCormack's nothing but redneck, one generation removed, who fancies himself as a gentleman farmer.

SHERIFF BRIDGEWATER (40s) approaches with JACKMAN (30s).

SHERIFF BRIDGEWATER
Afternoon Sam. Av.

LUDLOW
 Sheriff.

SHERIFF BRIDGEWATER
 This is Phil Jackman, Assistant
 D.A. for the County.

Ludlow stands, shakes Jackman's hand. Jackman sits quickly, impatient. Like he's got a thousand places he'd rather be.

SHERIFF BRIDGEWATER
 Sorry about your dog, Av. Terrible
 thing.

Ludlow nods. Glances at Jackman, rummaging in his briefcase.

SHERIFF BRIDGEWATER
 You got that shell casing for me?

Ludlow takes it from his pocket, hands it over.

SHERIFF BRIDGEWATER
 You mind if I hold onto this?

LUDLOW
 I think it's safer with you than
 with me.

The Sheriff waits for Ludlow to elaborate. He doesn't.

Jackman finds the sheet of paper he's looking for. Slides it in front of Ludlow, holds out a pen. Expectantly.

SHERIFF BRIDGEWATER
 This is a statement, a complaint
 against the McCormack boy. I'd
 like you to look it over and see if
 it's accurate or if we've missed
 anything.

Ludlow takes the pen. Keeps his eyes on Jackman.

LUDLOW
 This mean you're going ahead?

JACKMAN
 It means the office is considering
 charges.

LUDLOW
 'Considering'.

JACKMAN

I have to consult the District Attorney. It's his decision.

LUDLOW

But you, Mr. Jackman. What would you like to do?

JACKMAN

Right now it's your word against theirs. Three to one.

Ludlow starts reading the document as Frank approaches, breathing hard, exasperated. He holds out some menus.

FRANK

You know what you want, or you need these?

SHERIFF BRIDGEWATER

Pullin' double-duty, huh Frank?

FRANK

Gloria called in sick. Again.

Bridgewater shakes his head. Ludlow looks from Frank to the Sheriff. Sharing a silent frustration.

Jackman glances at his watch. Fidgeting.

JACKMAN

That look alright to you?

Ludlow takes his time reading. Then he signs the bottom. Jackman immediately stuffs it in his case and stands.

JACKMAN

I'll be speaking with D.A. Phelps this afternoon. Soon as we've discussed it, I'll get back to you. Meanwhile, no further visits to the McCormacks'. And no contact with the Daoust boy, either.

LUDLOW

I already contacted him.

JACKMAN

What?

LUDLOW

I talked with his mother and father before I came here.

(MORE)

LUDLOW(cont'd)

I guess I thought they might be
willing to help us.

Angry, Jackman glances at Sam, who just shrugs.

JACKMAN

That wasn't very smart, Mr. Ludlow.
They could sue for slander.

He storms off.

SHERIFF BRIDGEWATER

Probably not a good idea to do that
again, Av.

LUDLOW

I don't intend to. I just wanted
them to see that there's a person
involved here, somebody real. Not
just some fellow by the name of
Ludlow.

SHERIFF BRIDGEWATER

All the same, best to let the Law
run its course.

Ludlow nods an agreement.

INT. LUDLOW'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

Emma is at the counter, ringing out a customer. Av enters.

EMMA

As I live and breathe. Thought you
were dead. And here I was, gettin'
ready to order a new sign.

Av gives her a nod, walking behind the counter. She can
sense something's wrong.

EMMA

Haven't seen you in a few.

LUDLOW

Been under the weather.

EMMA

Where's Red?

LUDLOW

(taking a breath)
He's gone, Emma.

EMMA

Gone?

LUDLOW

Boy shot him. Back by Miller's
Bend on Sunday.

EMMA

Oh my Lord. Why would --

LUDLOW

Wasn't any sense to it. Just
meanness.

She lays a hand on his shoulder.

EMMA

You see Sheriff Bridgewater?

(Ludlow nods)

I'm sorry, Av. Red was a good old
dog. I'll miss him. Meantime, I
hope Tom jails that son of a bitch
and throws away the key.

INT. LUDLOW'S GENERAL STORE - OFFICE - DAY

A small back room. A cluttered desk by a corkboard covered
with receipts. An old computer perched on the corner.

Ludlow sits, staring at the monochrome screen.

As if trying to keep from looking at something else.

He finally reaches for the keyboard and gets to work.

We PULL BACK TO REVEAL the corner, next to the desk. A worn
QUILT is laid out, a half-chewed bone laying on it. The wall
varnish is worn and faded from years of tail collision.

It's Red's corner.

EXT. LUDLOW'S GENERAL STORE - DUSK

The sun slips below the treeline, casting an orange glow over
the small town.

INT. LUDLOW'S GENERAL STORE - DUSK

Av steps out of the office, frowning at papers in his hand.

LUDLOW

Hey, Em - we get that special order
in, the whole bean coffee for Dave?

EMMA

Should be in tomorrow.

Ludlow pauses. Something in the terseness of her response.

Then he notices THE CUSTOMER Emma's ringing up. A woman,
wearing a silk shawl around her head. Her back to Ludlow.

On the counter in front of her: Emma's bagging up two
bottles. Cheap whiskey. Equally cheap vodka.

The customer quickly grabs them and heads for the front door.
Keeping her face turned away from Ludlow.

Emma's eyes meet his. Sadness fills her face.

EXT. LUDLOW'S GENERAL STORE - DUSK

Ludlow steps outside to see the customer fumbling in her
purse for the keys to her car.

LUDLOW

Gloria?

The customer freezes. Her shoulders slump as she hears
Ludlow walk down the steps. She slowly turns. It's --

GLORIA. Hollow, scared eyes. She unconsciously pulls the
scarf forward on her left cheek.

GLORIA

He didn't mean it.

Ludlow stops in front of her. Gently raises a hand.

LUDLOW

Let me see.

Gloria's silence is an affirmation. Ludlow reaches forward,
pulling the scarf aside.

An ugly purple bruise discolors her jaw, spreading down to
her neck and across her cheek. Blood fills her eye.

LUDLOW

My God, Gloria...

The HONK of a horn o.s. Ludlow turns to see a pickup truck pulling into the lot -- Sam and a pretty YOUNG WOMAN get out.

Gloria takes advantage of the distraction to get into her car. She quickly drives off. Ludlow watches her go.

SAM
Hey, Av. Got a sec?

Ludlow turns back, nods absently.

SAM
You alright?

LUDLLOW
Yeah.

SAM
This is Carrie Donnel from WCAP
News over in Portland.

CARRIE (late 20s) pulls a hand from her faded jeans and sticks it out a hand. Ludlow takes it.

LUDLLOW
Miss Donnel.

CARRIE
'Carrie' will do just fine, Mr.
Ludlow. Sorry to hear about Red.

SAM
I've got an idea I want to run past
you, a modified course of action.

LUDLLOW
What's wrong with our current
'course of action'?

SAM
Jackman's declined to prosecute.
McCormack's already got a lawyer,
fellow by the name of Cummings.
He's good. You, uh, ever throw
Danny McCormack out of your store?

LUDLLOW
I never laid eyes on him before
Sunday.

SAM
Course not. But what they're
saying is, you did.
(MORE)

SAM(cont'd)

Threw him out for trying to steal a penknife a few months back, or some damn thing. They're trying to make out like you're some kind of crank, got a grudge against Danny.

LUDLOW

Both boys said right in front of their father that they didn't know me. If that's the case, then how could anyone believe --

He trails off, seeing the look on Sam's face.

SAM

Boys are saying they've known you for awhile now. That you always gave them a hard time in the store.

LUDLOW

What about their father?

SAM

He's backing them, lying all the way. They've closed ranks. Tight.

Ludlow considers this. But his face betrays no emotion.

LUDLOW

Pete Daoust too?

SAM

Him too.

LUDLOW

I thought his parents might pull him around.

SAM

McCormack works fast. It wouldn't surprise me if there was money involved. The father's out of work, you know.

Carries watches Ludlow closely. He might be devastated, but he's not showing it.

SAM

I think maybe we can turn it around. We've got a shot, anyhow.

LUDLOW

How's that, Sam?

Sam smiles, gesturing to Carrie.

SAM
Cause we've got us a secret weapon.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Ludlow, Sam and Carrie sit in a corner booth.

CARRIE
-- they got an anonymous call, and the Sheriff's office went out to investigate. They found two dogs, barely alive, chained outside in the yard. In the dead of winter. No food or water. The owner had been on vacation in Florida for a week. The D.A. wasn't going to prosecute... until the local papers got hold of it. Then she suddenly changed her mind.

LUDLOW
So what happened?

Carrie hesitates. The answer is obvious. And not positive.

SAM
Look, Av. The bad guy got away that time. But the point here is that the public opinion forced them to prosecute. Once it hit the news, they had to go ahead.

LUDLOW
You're telling me you want to report all this on television?

CARRIE
I want you to report it, Mr. Ludlow. I want to take a film crew down to where it happened, and interview you right there.

LUDLOW
What about 'slander'?

CARRIE
You won't name any names. You'll just tell your story.
(MORE)

CARRIE(cont'd)

What those boys did, and what the
D.A.'s office isn't willing to do.
I want to piss people off about
this!

She slams her beer glass to emphasize the point.

Ludlow studies her. Impressed.

LUDLOW

I don't suppose you've got a dog,
do you Carrie?

CARRIE

Cats, Mr. Ludlow. Three of them.

Ludlow smiles.

LUDLOW

'Av' will do just fine, Carrie.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Same spot as before -- Miller's Bend. A CAMERAMAN and SOUND RECORDIST maneuver as Ludlow leads Carrie through the events leading up to his dog's death. Sam watches from nearby.

We PAN TO REVEAL someone crouching behind the treeline --

-- Pete Daoust. Watching with dread on his face.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ludlow is in his chair, reading his Churchill. Lights wash over the windows as a car pulls up front.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Ludlow opens the door and looks outside, to see --

-- Carrie, making her way up to the porch, struggling with a television set. It's not huge, but not portable either.

CARRIE

Sam told me you didn't have a tv.
Wouldn't want you to miss the show.

Ludlow just stares at her, surprised.

CARRIE
This thing's heavy. Hold the door
for me, will ya?

LUDLOW
Let me help you with that --

CARRIE
Appreciate the chivalry, Av. But
the door'd be just fine.

Ludlow stands aside, holding the door open, as she enters.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ludlow re-enters. Carrie glances around the place.

CARRIE
Where should we put it?

Ludlow points to a chess table in the living room. She puts
the tv down and leans against the sofa, catching her breath.

CARRIE
The report ran a few hours ago, but
it should run again on replay.
Where's your cable connection?

No response. She looks over her shoulder.

CARRIE
You don't have cable.

LUDLOW
Nope.

CARRIE
How about an antenna? You got any
wire hangars?

LUDLOW
You can try the closet, past the
kitchen.

She walks off, and Ludlow slides the chess table closer to an
electric outlet. Plugs the tv in. Nothing but static.

Carrie walks through the kitchen and opens a door. It's a
pantry. Nothing of use there.

She turns to another door and opens it.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - SIDE ROOM - NIGHT

Carrie hits the lightswitch, revealing a small side room.

She steps inside and looks around. The centerpiece is a DISPLAY TABLE, covered with framed photographs.

Carrie walks over and studies them, absently trailing her finger along the edge of a folded AMERICAN FLAG in a triangular case. A SILVER STAR is displayed next to it.

Then her eyes fall on one photograph in particular. She picks it up.

THE PHOTO is of a proud FATHER helping his young SON button up the front of a military uniform. The kid can't be more than sixteen or seventeen years old.

The face is unmistakable. The kid in the uniform is Ludlow.

Carrie turns to see Ludlow in the doorway, holding a hangar.

LUDLOW

Found one.

CARRIE

You were a soldier?

Ludlow approaches, taking the picture from her. He puts it back on the table without even a glance.

LUDLOW

Korea.

CARRIE

"The Forgotten War."

LUDLOW

A lot of things been forgotten since then.

He stands in the doorway. She gets the hint and steps out.

And now Ludlow's gaze drops to the photograph.

After a beat, he switches off the light and closes the door.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ludlow and Carrie watch the NEWS REPORT on television -- she's interviewing Ludlow by the edge of the water:

CARRIE (ON SCREEN)
"And the dog was a birthday gift?
From your wife?"

LUDLOW (ON SCREEN)
"That's right, 'bout fourteen years
ago now."

CARRIE (ON SCREEN)
"Your wife, Mary, she's gone now,
isn't she?"

LUDLOW (ON SCREEN)
"A few years after that. She never
got to see Red all grown."

The report jumps to a one-shot of Carrie, by a courthouse.

CARRIE (ON SCREEN)
"So far the District Attorney has
refused to prosecute the case.
Nationwide, for the killing and
violent abuse of animals, offenders
are fined on average only 32% of
the maximum fine possible, and
spent a mere 14% of the maximum
jail time. Most offenders never
even come to trial."

She pauses for an editorial headshake. It's subtle, and
compassionate. She's darn good.

CARRIE (ON SCREEN)
"Ghandi once said that the
greatness of a nation and its moral
progress could be measured by the
way it treats its animals. Here in
York County, it might also be
measured by the justice it seeks
for Avery Allan Ludlow, and his
dog, Red."

End of report. Carrie switches off the tv and smiles.

CARRIE
So? What'd you think?

She turns to Ludlow for a reaction. He's still staring at
the blank tv screen, eyes glazed. Seems genuinely touched.

LUDLOW

I don't know if it'll do any good.
But what you said, you sure said it
well. Means a lot to me.

A moment between them. Then --

-- the phone RINGS. Ludlow answers.

LUDLOW (INTO PHONE)

Hello? -- Hey, Pop. You saw the
news, huh? -- Yeah, I know, I'm
sorry. I didn't want to tell you
until --

(he smiles, glances at
Carrie)

Yeah, she's pretty alright. You
should see her in person --

CRASH! The window next to Carrie suddenly SHATTERS.

Carrie screams, falling from her chair --

Ludlow instinctively drops the phone and drops down to his
knees, covering his head as --

-- pieces of glass fly into the room, peppering their bodies.

There's a THUD as something hits the floor near Ludlow.

And then it's all over.

Ludlow looks to Carrie, crouched below the window, shaken.

LUDLOW

You okay?

She nods, collecting herself. Then her eyes fall on --

-- the object that was thrown through the window. A LARGE
ROCK, with a piece of paper wrapped around it, held in place
by rubber bands.

Ludlow gets to his feet and looks out the window.

HIS POV: a dark car, lights off, kicks up dust as it races
away from the house.

Ludlow walks back to the phone, picks it up.

LUDLOW

Everything's all right, Dad. I'll
call you back.

He hangs up as Carrie picks up the rock. Slides out the piece of paper and hands it to Ludlow. He unfolds it.

THE LETTER is typewritten: **'YOU LOOKED GOOD ON TV YOU OLD FUCK. YOUR ONE AND ONLY APPEARANCE. HA HA HA'**

LUDLOW
I guess we got their attention.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam smokes his pipe, Carrie and Ludlow sit across the desk. The mood is decidedly somber.

SAM
I talked to Phelps this morning.
He's still declining to prosecute.

CARRIE
Even after last night.

SAM
There weren't any prints on the
rock, or the letter. Anybody could
have done it.

LUDLOW
Nobody else had reason to.

SAM
I know that and you know that. The
court's a different story.

LUDLOW
That letter implied a threat, Sam.
Maybe that would help --

SAM
Not necessarily. But what it could
mean is that Carrie had better call
into work, ASAP.

Carrie realizes what he's getting at.

CARRIE
Fuck.

She pulls out her cell phone and dials, leaving the office.

LUDLOW
So that's that?

SAM
No. We could still sue. Hire our
own forensics man, subpoena the
shotgun. Maybe they'd even settle.

LUUDLOW
But that's just money, right?

SAM
Just money.

He gives Ludlow a moment to process this.

SAM
You still want to go ahead with
this?

LUUDLOW
Of course I do.

Sam seems a little surprised. But he takes it in stride.

SAM
You know I can't do this for free,
but I'll try to keep costs down.

LUUDLOW
Thanks, Sam. I appreciate it.

They shake hands and Ludlow leaves. Sam sits back down,
draws in a pull, brow furrowed. This isn't going to be easy.

EXT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Ludlow walks outside to find Carrie pacing, speaking angrily
into her cell phone:

CARRIE (INTO PHONE)
-- c'mon, Barry. We can't just lay
down and -- We're the only division
that has the freedom to go after
stories like this. If we give in --
(listening, giving in:)
Yeah. Okay, Barry. Fine. No, no,
I understand.

She hangs up. Then throws her phone against the building.

Ludlow approaches as sits on the steps, dejected.

CARRIE

That was my Editor. He wants me to cover some apartment-building fire instead. A goddamn fire that didn't even injure anyone.

LUDLOW

He got ordered off.

CARRIE

Damn right he did. This is a decent guy. He's one of the reasons I still work there. He's embarrassed as hell.

She gets to her feet and picks up her phone, furious.

CARRIE

It must have been the station owners. Or pressure from a sponsor. I don't know who applied the screws, but there's some kind of old-boy thing going on here.

Ludlow walks over, puts a hand on her shoulder.

LUDLOW

It's okay, Carrie. It's not your fault.

She turns to him, her face filled with frustration.

CARRIE

I can't just walk away from this.

LUDLOW

But you have to.

She slowly nods.

CARRIE

I'm sorry, Av.

INT. MCCORMACK RESIDENCE - STUDY - NIGHT

Michael leans back in his chair, reading the *New York Times*. Without even looking up:

MICHAEL

Let me guess: you've thought about it, and you want to sell the place.

Ludlow stands across from his desk, the Maid next to him.

LUDLOW
The store's fine as it is.

MICHAEL
You should think about it. You
don't take much out of it.

LUDLOW
Enough for me to get by.

Michael's eyes flick up to the maid. He sighs.

MICHAEL
What is it, Edie?

MAID (EDIE)
The rugs in the foyer need
vacuuming, Mr. McCormack.

Michael just stares at her.

MICHAEL
And?

MAID (EDIE)
I didn't want to disturb you.

MICHAEL
So instead of disturbing me with
the vacuum, you've decided to
disturb me by asking my permission
not to disturb me?

MAID (EDIE)
I'm... sorry, Mr. McCormack.

She leaves. Michael turns back to his paper.

MICHAEL
So. I hear you're suing me.

LUDLOW
I'd rather not.

MICHAEL
I don't know why you'd want to
bother. Won't be worth your time.
Or money. But then, that's what
this is all about, isn't it?

LUDLOW
I'm not interested in your money.

MICHAEL
What then?

LUDLOW
I guess it would be about word
getting around as to what your boy
did. And what you're doing.

MICHAEL
And what exactly am I doing?

LUDLOW
Nothing.

Michael finally glances at him from over his newspaper.

MICHAEL
I suppose you'd probably like me to
give him a good whuppin'. That it?

LUDLOW
It's a thought.

MICHAEL
Well I don't know where you're
from, Av. But that doesn't happen
here.

LUDLOW
I guess you're just more civilized
than me.

MICHAEL
I guess that's a possibility.

Ludlow's eyes drift up to the mounted heads on the wall.

LUDLOW
You shoot all these by yourself,
did you?

Michael locks eyes with him. Then sighs, folding his paper.

MICHAEL
Is there a point to all this, Av?
Because I really --

LUDLOW
Are you proud of your son, Mr.
McCormack?

Michael's expression goes dark.

LUDLOW

Because if you're not, then something's wrong between you and your boy. Something maybe you can still do something about if you care to. While he's still here with you. Before he goes out on his own to do God knows what to who. Instead of just hiring your lawyers and covering up for him.

Michael slowly stands. Jaw clenching.

MICHAEL

I don't need a lecture from you. My boys are my boys and I'll handle them any damn way I see fit. Here's the bottom line, Ludlow. You go ahead and sue if you want. It might cause me a little embarrassment in some places. But not very much. You go right ahead. Because you can't win.

LUDLOW

That might be so.

Michael walks out from behind his desk, up to Ludlow.

MICHAEL

And even if you could, what would you get? The value of the dog. A goddamn mutt from the goddamn pound. And you know what I'd do then? I'd sign that check for you with a smile. Might even tack on some interest. For quality time lost. You know why? Because I wouldn't care less. About you, or that dog. You understand that?

LUDLOW

I suppose I do.

MICHAEL

Good. Now. Don't you come back here. And don't go snooping around after my boys anymore, or I'll have the Sheriff on your tired old ass before you know what hit you.

He waits for a reaction. But Ludlow just holds his gaze, his face a complete blank.

MICHAEL
 You have yourself a real nice day,
 Ludlow. You know where the door
 is.

INT. MCCORMACK RESIDENCE - FOYER - NIGHT

Ludlow enters the foyer, heading for the front door.

He pauses, and turns to see A WOMAN watching from a railing on the second floor. McCormack's WIFE (CARLA).

A drink in her hand. Pain and sadness on her face.

Ludlow stares up at her for a moment. Nods. Then exits.

EXT. CONVALSCENT HOME - NIGHT

Ludlow's pickup drives through a stately gated entrance. A sign reads: **York County Convalescent Home.**

THE HOME is a beautiful old Victorian on a prominent rise.

INT. CONVALESCENT HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ludlow walks with a NURSE (40s):

LUDLOW
 How's he been?

NURSE
 His health, or his attitude?

LUDLOW
 Both.

NURSE
 I don't know which one to explain
 away his roaming hands. But as for
 his health, same as always.

They stop at a door. Ludlow seems saddened by her words.

NURSE
 Don't fret. He may teeter on the
 edge occasionally. But that man
 will never quit.

She opens the door. Ludlow's FATHER (late 80s), watching CNN's Crossfire with a scowl, glances over.

FATHER
Why do you always come in the
middle of my show?

LUDLLOW
Sorry, Dad.

His Father jabs out with his cane, hitting the "OFF" button.

FATHER
Feelin' like I wanna strangle both
of 'em tonight, anyhow.

EXT. CONVALSCENT HOME - NIGHT

Ludlow and his Father sit in rocking chairs on the porch, looking out over the quiet night. The rolling hills and the town below illuminated by the light from the full moon.

FATHER
Well, I'm sorry son. That's just
about the worst story I've heard in
a while.

Ludlow nods. Rocks in silence for a moment. Then:

LUDLLOW
Pop, I think I might be going to do
something stupid.

His Father chews on this. Chair creaking.

FATHER
You ever taste an animal's blood?
It tastes exactly like your own
does. You tell me why a man's
blood's any better or any more
precious than a dog's.

Ludlow nods. No argument.

FATHER
Red was family to you. I figure
you owe something to family. And
you do too, else you wouldn't be
out here wanting to talk to me
about it. So what're you askin'
me?

LUDLOW

I don't know.

FATHER

I do. You need somebody to tell you that you're not just howling at the moon right now. Well, you're not. Or else I am too. And so's pretty much everybody else I like, or ever did like. And as far as I'm concerned, we can go right along doing it just for the pretty sound it makes. To hell with what people think.

He shivers. Stands unsteadily, leaning on his cane.

FATHER

S'gettin cold. Let's go inside.

Before Ludlow can stand, his Father places a meaty, calloused hand on his shoulder. Leans in.

FATHER

You go on about your business son. Do what you must do. You hear me?

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

STUDENTS pour out of the school, embracing the weekend.

Danny appears, wearing a letterman's jacket. A cute CHEERLEADER is on his arm, enraptured by his every word. A small crowd buzzes around them, drawn into Danny's gravity.

Danny and the cheerleader break away from the group, walking towards his sleek BMW. He uses his remote to unlock the door, not bothering to open the door for the girl.

As he opens the driver's side door, he notices --

-- LUDLOW'S TRUCK. Parked just outside the school.

Ludlow is behind the wheel, watching Danny.

Danny holds his gaze for a moment, then gets in his BMW. He doesn't look amused.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

It's a packed house. All high school-aged kids.

Danny and the same girl are watching a HORROR FILM. He's taking advantage of her fear -- his fingers are roaming.

The movie ends and everyone gets up to go. Danny and his girl squeeze into the crowded aisle. But Danny suddenly tenses as he sees --

-- LUDLOW. Sitting towards the back of the theater.

Watching Danny. He gives a little nod in recognition.

Danny's face darkens. He looks like might say something, but his girlfriend, not noticing Ludlow, whispers in his ear. Something tantalizing, from the look of it.

But Danny's eyes stay on Ludlow as he exits the theater.

EXT. MOODY POINT - TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A town hall courthouse sits prim and proper in the center of a square lined with shops.

Ludlow emerges from a bakery with coffee and a Danish. As he heads for his truck, he notices someone leaning against it --

HAROLD MCCORMACK. He straightens as he sees Ludlow coming.

Ludlow casually lays his breakfast on the trunk as he fishes in his pocket for his keys.

Harold stuffs his hands in his pockets. He looks skittish.

HAROLD

I saw you comin' down Main Street.

LUDLOW

Oh?

HAROLD

Danny didn't. But I did.

LUDLOW

Where is he?

HAROLD

Hittin' balls down at Jamison park.
I told him I needed cigarettes.

(MORE)

HAROLD(cont'd)

He'd be pretty damn mad if he knew
I was talking to you.

LUDLOW

He get mad alot, your brother?

HAROLD

Listen, Mr. Ludlow. I'm not gonna
say everything's all buddy-buddy
between Danny and me. But that's
not the point.

LUDLOW

What is the point, then?

Ludlow takes a bite, washing it down with coffee. Giving
Harold some time.

The boy glances over his shoulder. Takes a step closer.

HAROLD

I wanted... I wanted to tell you
that I'm sorry. About your dog.
For what we did. That's why I'm
here. To say that.

LUDLOW

The one I need to hear that from
most's your brother. But I'm still
glad to hear it from you. The
question is, what now?

HAROLD

What?

LUDLOW

You gonna keep lying for him?

HAROLD

What do you expect me to do? First
you ask me in front of my father,
then you get it on tv --

LUDLOW

I expect you to tell the truth,
son. Just like you're doing now.
But to your father, and then the
police, if it comes to that.

Harold shakes his head, growing animated.

HAROLD

You don't get it.

LUDLOW

Get what?

HAROLD

That's just not gonna happen. You don't understand.

LUDLOW

Then suppose you make me understand.

Harold looks over his shoulder again, nervous.

HAROLD

I gotta go. If Danny sees me here--

LUDLOW

Who're you afraid of, Harold? Your brother? Your father? You were man enough to come down here and say what you just said to me. Far as I'm concerned, that makes you a bigger man than both of them. I don't think you have all that much to worry about from either of them.

A beat. Then Harold slowly smiles. It's not a good smile.

HAROLD

Mr. Ludlow, believe me, you haven't got a clue. I don't know what you're trying to do, following him around all the time. Following *us* around. But you should quit it. If you're smart.

He turns to go. Stops after a few steps.

HAROLD

You saw Edie? Our maid? You saw her hand, right? I want you to consider why my father would hire a maid with a crippled hand, Mr. Ludlow. Out of all the help available 'round here, my father chose her. Just think about that.

Harold jogs off down the street. Ludlow watches him go.

EXT. JAMISON PARK - DAY

A baseball diamond takes up this corner of the park. Danny and Pete hang out on the pitcher's mound, chatting.

Harold walks around the wire backstop, lighting up a cig.

DANNY

Jesus. Took your fuckin' time.

Harold shrugs, picking up a bat. Danny takes position behind the plate, and Pete gets ready to pitch.

They don't notice Ludlow's truck pulling up nearby.

Ludlow gets out, watching Harold hit a few. He's good.

Ludlow's eyes move to a nearby SWINGSET, where a MOTHER plays with her SON.

Then to a trio of TEENAGE GIRLS reclining under a tree, watching the boys and whispering to one another.

Then to the TOWNSPEOPLE by the shops across the street. A YOUNG COUPLE with a baby carriage talks to an OLDER MAN.

Perfect.

Ludlow slams the door to his truck. Loud enough to make a few people notice, and turn away again.

He casually approaches the backstop as Danny takes over batting duties.

Ludlow watches, lacing his fingers through the wire fence, as Danny swings at everything that comes his way. Missing most of them. Getting mad when he notices THE GIRLS giggling.

Danny curses, slamming his bat down on home plate.

LUDLOW

Just can't stand to see that ball
get past you, huh?

Danny turns. Eyes narrowing.

LUDLOW

How's it going, Danny?

DANNY

I'm gettin' real tired of you
poking around my business --

LUDLOW
Why would I want to do that?

DANNY
You'd better cut it out.

LUDLOW
Are you threatening me, son?

DANNY
I'm telling you.

LUDLOW
I wouldn't be threatening anyone if
I were you. Not unless you can
fight a whole lot better than you
can swing one of these things.

DANNY
You stupid son of a bitch! Who the
hell do you think you are?

Danny starts to move, but Harold grabs his shoulder.

HAROLD
Let's just take off, Danny. Let
Dad handle things.

PETE
Yeah. Fuck this jerk.

Ludlow looks at THE BAT still clutched in Danny's hand.

LUDLOW
You've got a good swing, Harold.
Good eye, too. Not like Miss
McCormack here.

Danny turns a darker shade of red. About to blow.

Ludlow nods at the girls watching nearby.

LUDLOW
Maybe it'd suit you better to go
and join that tea party over there.

That does it. Danny pushes Harold aside and heads around the
backstop. Eyes burning with hate.

Ludlow immediately turns and heads back for his truck.
Sending quick glances at THE TEEN GIRLS. They're watching.

DANNY
Hey! Fuckhead!

Now the YOUNG COUPLE and the OLDER MAN look over. So does the WOMAN with her SON in the playground.

Perfect.

Ludlow picks up the pace, walking quickly.

Danny catches up, POKING him from behind with the bat. Hard. Ludlow stumbles, almost falling.

DANNY
Where you going, old man?

Ludlow abruptly stops. Turns.

DANNY
You gonna run now, that it?

HAROLD
Danny, don't --

Danny sends the bat forward for another poke --

-- and Ludlow grabs it. And PULLS.

Danny instinctively holds onto the bat.

Which is exactly what Ludlow hoped would happen.

Ludlow's hands slide down the handle, grabbing hold of one of Danny's wrists. With a fluid motion --

-- he swiftly and expertly WRENCHES it.

Danny cries out in pain and surprise, dropping the bat --

-- as Ludlow JAMS DANNY'S ARM in a wrist-lock, forcing him towards the ground.

Danny SWINGS WILDLY with his free arm, hitting Ludlow's shoulder. Ludlow pulls back --

-- and DRIVES A FIST INTO DANNY'S GUT. He gasps and drops, his body going limp.

Still twisting Danny's wrist, Ludlow glances up at Harold and Pete. They're not moving. Mouths agape.

Ludlow kneels down next to Danny, doubled over in pain, eyes watering, mouth gasping for air. Softly:

LUDLOW

You've just been suckered, boy.
I've got witnesses all over this
street who saw you go at me first,
with a weapon. Some of them are
old friends of mine. So don't go
trying to make a fuss over this. I
just gave you what your father
should have given you and wouldn't.

DANNY

You -- you fucking --

Ludlow tightens his grip on Danny's wrist. The boy's body convulses in agony.

LUDLOW

It's not going to bring my dog
back. But maybe you'll think
twice, maybe you'll think of me and
Red, before you let that mean
streak of yours out again.

He lets go of Danny, getting to his feet. Nodding at the Older Man across the street. The Man gravely nods back.

Ludlow turns to Harold and Pete.

LUDLOW

I think he hurt his ribs a little.
You'd better give him a hand.

Then he turns and walks back to his truck.

Pete and Harold help Danny to his feet as Ludlow drives off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sam taps dead ashes from his pipe, frowning at Ludlow.

SAM

I imagine this'll do for you then.

LUDLOW

Yes.

SAM

So forget about the lawsuit.

LUDLOW
That's right. I don't see as it
would get me anywhere, do you?

Sam picks up a file on his desk and dumps it in the trash.

SAM
You never intended to sue them, did
you? You just thought you'd
distract me, so I wouldn't see what
was going on.

LUDLOW
I'll pay you for your time, Sam.

SAM
I don't give a flying fuck about --

LUDLOW
You'd've tried to talk me out of it.

SAM
I would indeed. You were on pretty
shaky ground as far as the Law's
concerned. And that boy could have
done a bad number on you.

LUDLOW
I know it.

SAM
This is the end of it now. Right?

LUDLOW
Right.

SAM
You sure?

LUDLOW
I'm satisfied, Sam.

Sam stuffs tobacco into his pipe and lights it. Unsure.

SAM
I ate Chinese last night, Av.

LUDLOW
I'm sorry to hear that.

SAM

Got a funny fortune cookie.
 "Nothing in the world is
 accomplished without passion."
 Pretty damn good, huh?

LUDLOW

Sure.

SAM

But I figure passion's like the
 wind in the trees out there. Blows
 hard for awhile, feels strong and
 clean. Like it's an essential part
 of you. Something you can't
 imagine living without. But it's
 got to pass, eventually. So you
 can get on with things, without all
 the confusion of that wind in your
 hair. Know what I mean?

He strikes a match, holds it to his pipe.

SAM

You can't even light your pipe in a
 heavy wind.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Ludlow sits at the same corner booth. Staring off into
 space. An empty glass in front of him.

A cute WAITRESS approaches.

SERVER

You sure you don't want a beer or
 somethin'?

LUDLOW

Another Coke will be fine, thanks.

As she walks off, we realize that Ludlow's not just staring
 off into space. He's watching someone, sitting at the bar --

-- JED (late 40s). Ratty military jacket. Dirty baseball
 hat. Unshaven. Several sheets to the wind. Seems to be
 studying his reflection in the mirror behind the bar.

He sways on his stool unsteadily, reaching into a rear pocket
 for his wallet. Fumbles out a few twenties, knocking over
 one of his empties. Then he stumbles for the door.

BARTENDER

Jed, you shouldn't be drivin'--

Jed waves a hand without looking back, disappearing outside.

Ludlow gets up from his table.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

A handful of vehicles are parked around the corner of the bar. The streetlight is broken. It's dark.

Jed staggers towards an old truck. Ludlow's is next to his.

As he peers at his keys, a voice comes out of the darkness:

LUDLOW (O.S.)

Jed.

Jed swings his head back where he came from. Ludlow stands there. His hands stuffed into his jacket pockets.

JED

Who's that?

Ludlow slowly walks towards him. Face obscured by darkness.

LUDLOW

You don't know me.

JED

Oh, yeah? Do I wanna?

He snorts at his joke. Ludlow keeps coming.

LUDLOW

No. You don't.

Even through his alcohol haze, that gives Jed pause.

He takes a step backwards. Ludlow advances, eyes piercing.

LUDLOW

You hear them, don't you?

JED

Hear what?

LUDLOW

The voices. The ghosts. From in-country.

Jed's face quivers. His jaw drops open.

LUDLOW
The ditches filled with Mr.
Charles. The G.I.s in Glad bags.

JED
You hear them too?

LUDLOW
Sometimes they come back. At
night.

Ludlow slowly reaches out a hand. Places it on Jed's
shoulder. The man recoils slightly.

But Ludlow's grip is gentle. And his voice softens:

LUDLOW
You don't strike me as a man who
wants to beat his wife. Am I
wrong? That really the kind of man
you are, Jed?

With these words, Jed is transformed. His body slumps. His
breath comes in heaving gulps. His eyes fill with tears.

JED
No, sir. I don't mean to be that
kind of man.

LUDLOW
But you are, aren't you?

JED
Yes. I am.

LUDLOW
And it doesn't help, does it? The
voices keep coming, don't they?

JED
I want them to stop.

He starts sobbing uncontrollably, sliding down the side of
the truck he's backed into.

Ludlow regards him for a moment. Then kneels down.

LUDLOW
You look at me now, Jed.

Jed slowly raises his head. Eyes on Ludlow.

LUDLOW

You go home tonight, and apologize to your wife. You tell her how much you love her. And you promise, on that love, that tomorrow you're going to find yourself some help.

JED

Yes. I will.

LUDLOW

You give me your word on that, Jed?

(Jed nods)

Good. Because if I see one more mark on that woman's body, you're going to have to answer to me.

He sticks out an arm. After a moment, Jed grabs it. Ludlow helps him stand.

LUDLOW

C'mon. I'll give you a ride.

EXT. JED'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ludlow sits behind the wheel, watching as --

Jed embraces HIS WIFE on the porch of his house. His body wracked with sobs. She turns to look at the truck --

-- it's GLORIA. She nods to Ludlow, managing a smile.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Ludlow's truck stops at an intersection between two fields.

He hits his left turn signal. Then looks up out the window.

Ludlow turns off his lights. Draws an admiring breath.

It's a beautiful, clear evening. The sky is riddled with stars, the full moon illuminates the countryside.

Ludlow takes in the night air for a moment. Then he switches his lights back on, about to pull forward --

-- when he hears a distant SIREN. Growing louder.

NEW ANGLE: a FIRE TRUCK careens around the bend, lights flashing. It whizzes by the truck at top speed.

Towards a FLICKERING LIGHT in the distance.

Ludlow considers. Then turns right, following the truck.

EXT. LUDLOW'S GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Ludlow's truck pulls to a stop. A half-dozen others are parked every which way, poking out into the street.

Violent, flickering light from a blazing fire reflects in his eyes. VOICES from all around, hurried, barking orders.

But Ludlow is in a world of his own. A world of numbness.

He slowly gets out of his truck, his eyes never leaving --

-- HIS STORE. It's completely engulfed in flames.

The chaotic sounds fade away, the SHOUTING voices and ROARING fire dwindling to a muffled murmur, as Ludlow turns and walks slowly towards the pyre that is his consumed store.

His lips begin to move slowly, numbly:

LUDLOW

Oh no... Mary... no...

Smoke rises from the burning grass. The front of his cap is singed by the intense heat.

But still he advances, a mere silhouette before the inferno.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CARRIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A small studio. A desk in the corner is surrounded by reading material and coffee mugs. Clothes lie on the floor.

Carrie, in bed, wakes as her phone RINGS. She glances at the clock, angry. Her three cats, curled up with her, don't look so pleased either. She groggily reaches for the phone.

CARRIE

What.

Her eyes clear as she listens. She sits up.

CARRIE

Oh my God. -- No, it's alright Sam, I'll be right there.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Carrie walks quickly down a hallway, finding Sam waiting by a closed door.

SAM

He'll be okay. Thankfully he didn't take in too much smoke. He's no spring chicken anymore. Got himself one heck of a sunburn, though --

The door opens and a DOCTOR (40s) steps out.

DOCTOR

He's okay to leave, Sam. He just needs to rest, and I think he'd be better off in his own home. Though it'd be good if you could stick around, keep an eye on him.

SAM

I think I can clear my schedule.

DOCTOR

I'll get you something to apply to his burns. And...

(writing something down:)

Here's my cell phone. It's always on. I want you to call me if you notice anything strange.

SAM

Strange?

DOCTOR

A few people swore he was going to walk right into that fire. Didn't even slow down. Took three firemen to hold him back.

Sam just nods. Carrie watches his reaction.

CUT TO:

INT. LUDLOW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ludlow is asleep. Carrie sits next to the bed, applying lotion to his reddened arm.

She studies his lined face for a moment. Then she reaches for the quilt and pulls it up to his chin --

-- his hand gently grabs her arm. He's still asleep, but he murmurs a name, insistently:

LUDLOW

Mary...

Carrie lays her hand on his, and he releases her arm. Her eyes drift up to the painted-over BURN MARKS above the bed.

EXT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Sam sits in a chair, drinking his third beer, looking out over the hillside.

Carrie comes out and sits next to him. Notices the empties.

CARRIE

You okay?

SAM

Somebody torched the place, alright. We found two gas cans.

CARRIE

Jesus. I can't believe they'd take it this far.

SAM

We don't know it was them.

CARRIE

Who else would it have been?

SAM

They weren't even in town, Carrie. I checked. They were at their vacation house on Cape Elizabeth throwing an eighteenth birthday party for Harold. A couple dozen witnesses, and every one of them reliable --

CARRIE

C'mon, Sam. They're all family friends. What else are they going to say? And you know as well as I do they could have easily gotten someone else to do it for them.

Sam takes another swig of his beer. He's a bit buzzed.

SAM

No. They'd have done it themselves. They must have.

He pulls another beer from a cooler and hands it to Carrie.

SAM

Sorry. Guess I don't like the feeling that I might have helped stir this all up.

CARRIE

You didn't stir anything up, Sam. It was already happening.

SAM

I've known Av all my life. Ever since we were kids. A guy like him, after all he's been through, he just doesn't deserve this. None of it.

CARRIE

I saw his medals. He's the first person I've ever met who was in Korea.

SAM

He wasn't just "in" Korea. He was dropped into that shit-storm at the beginning, when the Generals back home still thought it was going to be a walk in the park. He'd been promised six weeks of training. Instead they gave him three days to learn how to fire his 75 mm rifle, and put him on the front lines to stand down the North Korean tanks. He was eighteen years old.

He opens up another beer. Takes a pull.

SAM

He was only there a week before the North Korean forces ambushed his Division.

(turning to Carrie:)

You ever hear of the Tiger Death March?

Carrie shakes her head. Sam snorts.

SAM

'Course not. American POWs were forced to march through the mountains in sub-zero temperatures. One hundred and eight miles. If they stopped or fell, they were shot. If they were going too slow, they were shot. Over half of them died along the way. And when they finally made it to Hanjang-ni, there was no heat, food or medical attention for the survivors. So even more died at the camp, after having survived the March. But not Av. He came home.

Carrie is stunned. But can't bring herself to speak.

SAM

It just makes you wonder. After surviving that, and then Mary, and his son, and now this... it just really makes you start to doubt that there's anyone watching over us, keeping checks and balances. 'Cause Av's seen enough heartache to last three lifetimes.

CARRIE

I didn't know he had a son.

Sam just stares at her. A beat.

SAM

'Has.' He has a son.

CARRIE

What happened to his wife, Sam?

Sam puts down his beer, gets to his feet.

SAM

That's something you shouldn't hear from anyone but Av himself.

(checking his watch:)

It's gettin' late. Take the other bedroom upstairs. I'm fine with the couch.

He enters the house without looking back.

CUT TO:

INT. LUDLOW'S BEDROOM - DAY

Carrie sits in a rocking chair next to the bed. She's trying to focus on a book, but is on the verge of falling asleep.

Then she notices: Ludlow's awake. Watching her, eyes clear.

LUDLOW
I only see you when something
disappears.

Carrie smiles.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ludlow pours two mugs of coffee. Carrie watches him.

CARRIE
Did you put the lotion on?

LUDLOW
Yes, I put the lotion on.

He walks to the table, hands Carrie a mug and sits. A beat.

LUDLOW
You sure you don't want to sleep?

CARRIE
I'm okay. Just haven't pulled an
all-nighter since college.

LUDLOW
I'm feeling fine, Carrie. You
don't need to watch over me. Sam
said he'd stop by later --

CARRIE
I'm not watching over you. I'm
just here for the company.

Ludlow smiles. She smiles back. Then:

LUDLOW
I suppose it's safe to assume your
Editor won't cover this story,
either.

Carrie's smile fades. She shakes her head. Ludlow stands.

LUDLOW
 Help yourself to what's in the
 fridge. I'll be back in a few.

CARRIE
 Wait a second. You're supposed to
 be resting, remember?

LUDLOW
 Resting makes people old.

He grabs his keys and pulls on his coat.

CARRIE
 Okay. But I'm coming with you.

EXT. THE DAOUST HOUSE - DAY

Ludlow and Carrie walk up the path to the front door. But before they reach it, Ludlow pauses. Something's different.

The LAWN, which was previously overgrown, has been expertly MOWED. And the house is now FRESHLY PAINTED.

Ludlow looks at the side of the house. The washing machine, mattress and V-8 engine are all gone. A shiny new KUBOTA RIDING MOWER sits in their place.

LUDLOW
 Huh.

CARRIE
 What is it?

Ludlow turns back to the front door. Pete's Father stands in the open doorway, watching them.

PETE'S FATHER
 You're trespassing.

LUDLOW
 Is Peter home, Mr. Daoust?

PETE'S FATHER
 No. Please leave.

LUDLOW
 Went up to the Cape for the party
 last night, did he?

PETE'S FATHER
That's right. He didn't have
nuthin' to do with...

He trails off, catching himself. Uncertain of his own words.

PETE'S FATHER
He was there all night. Didn't
leave once. There were lots of
people there who --

LUDLOW
He must go up there pretty often.
Being such good friends with the
McCormack boys and all.

Something changes in Pete's Father's eyes. Defensively:

PETE'S FATHER
First time they invited him.
Special, for the party. So what?

LUDLOW
I see you've been making a few home
improvements.

PETE'S FATHER
Yeah, well it was about time. It
piles up on you. You know.

LUDLOW
Sure. I know. Only a mower like
that doesn't come cheap. And what
I'd heard was, you were out of work
these days.

PETE'S FATHER
Well, you heard damn wrong, Av.

LUDLOW
Let me guess: McCormack put you
onto something, gave you a job,
didn't he? And maybe a little on
the side as well?

Pete's Father turns red. More shame than anger.

PETE'S FATHER
Fuck you, Ludlow. Get off my
property or I'll call the police.

He steps back inside and slams the door shut.

EXT. MCCORMACK RESIDENCE - DAY

The door opens. The Maid stands in the doorway. Her face drops as she sees Ludlow. He's alone.

LUDLOW
It's Edie, right?

EDIE
Mr. McCormack's not home right now,
Mr. Ludlow.

LUDLOW
I know. I came to see you.

Eddie looks nervous. Glances up and down the street.

EDIE
I don't think that's a good idea,
Mr. Ludlow --

LUDLOW
I parked a few blocks away. No one
saw me walking. And you can call
me Av. My father's 'Mr. Ludlow.'

Eddie still seems unsure.

LUDLOW
You heard what happened last night?

Finally Edie steps aside, letting Ludlow in.

INT. MCCORMACK RESIDENCE - FOYER - DAY

Eddie closes the door and turns to Ludlow.

EDIE
I'm sorry about your store. It's a
terrible thing.

LUDLOW
Yes, it is.

She's uncomfortable, having trouble looking him in the eye.

EDIE
I already talked to the police.
They wanted to know if anyone was
here last night. Mr. McCormack, or
the boys.

LUDLOW
And you told them no.

EDIE
That's right.

LUDLOW
And that was the truth.
(off her look:)
I'm not questioning what you told
them. I just wanted to hear it
from you.

EDIE
I was here all night. Alone.

He nods, believing her. Then:

EDIE
Danny did what you say he did,
didn't he? Shot your dog.

LUDLOW
Yes. He did.

EDIE
I wish I could say you were
surprising me. I've been here
going on six years now. Been
tempted to leave, many times.
There aren't many jobs out there
like this one for a crippled woman.

LUDLOW
I imagine Mr. McCormack had that in
mind when he hired you.

EDIE
I imagine you're right. But I stay
on 'cause I figure Mrs. McCormack
needs me. She tries hard to make
this a home, a good family, but...
well, I know she sure needs
somebody. She can't handle all
them alone.

Her eyes move up to his.

EDIE
I don't reckon anyone can.

Ludlow holds her gaze. But doesn't reply. Edie nods.

EDIE
 Alright, then. What is it that you
 need from me, Mr. Ludlow?

EXT. STREET / INT. TRUCK - DAY

Carrie sits in the passenger side of Ludlow's truck,
 struggling to stay awake.

She's startled as Ludlow opens the door and gets in.

CARRIE
 Any luck?

Ludlow shakes his head. He stares out the window, thinking.

CARRIE
 I've gotta get some caffeine in my
 system. I'm fading fast.

LUDDLAW
 I think I'm in the mood for
 something stronger.

CARRIE
 You're on.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - DAY

Ludlow and Carrie are at the bar. She's stacking up her
 empty shot glasses, a bit tipsy. Ludlow isn't.

CARRIE
 For eighteen years my Dad was a
 cop. New York City, upper west
 side. Safest precinct in
 Manhattan. Then one night my
 mother found him in the living
 room. Just staring into the dark.
 He said he couldn't do it anymore.
 So we up and moved to Maine.
 That's how I ended up here, in the
 boondocks, with you country folk.

Ludlow smiles. Gestures to the bartender, who puts out two
 more shot glasses.

CARRIE
 Whoa. I think I'm full.

LUDLOW

One more.

CARRIE

You gonna be able to drive home?

The Bartender gives Ludlow a look. Ludlow just smiles.

They clink glasses and Carrie downs her shot. But Ludlow JUST SIPS HIS, watching her closely.

LUDLOW

So how'd your parents handle
country living?

Carrie's smile fades.

CARRIE

He died after eight months. He was
only forty-eight. I think what
killed him was that he never really
knew what he wanted. He became a
cop because his father was a cop.
He just drifted into it. And once
that was gone...

(turning to Ludlow:)

What about you, Av? What do you
really want?

LUDLOW

The truth.

CARRIE

The truth about what?

Ludlow stares at his hands. He's not used to giving details.

Then he stretches out his fingers, studying them.

LUDLOW

When Red was just a puppy, he used
to stare at my fingers for hours.
He was fascinated with them. As
though he knew my hands and what
the hands could do were the only
thing that made us different from
each other.

Ludlow picks up his shot glass and finishes it off.

LUDLOW

After I lost Mary, all I had left of her was our house, our store, and Red. Those boys took nearly all that away. I guess I just want to understand why.

CARRIE

What if you can't find the answer you're looking for, Av? What if there just is no answer? When do you stop trying?

Ludlow pulls out his wallet, lays bills on the bar.

LUDLOW

The most important thing I learned in Korea was that you can't ever stop trying. You keep fighting with everything you've got, with anything you can get your hands on. But you don't ever stop. The moment you do is the moment the world rolls right on over you.

He stands, pulling on his coat, and heads for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Ludlow and Carrie drive home in silence. She glances over at him, about to speak. But thinks better of it.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - DAY

Ludlow and Carrie enter. He takes off his coat, hanging it on a hook on the inside of the basement door.

Carrie drops down into a chair at the table.

LUDLOW

You okay?

CARRIE

Yeah. Just tired.

Her eyes go to the painted-over SCORCH MARKS on the wall. Then to the CLAW MARKS on the basement door.

CARRIE
Sam told me you have a son.

Ludlow freezes. Doesn't turn.

CARRIE
Will you tell me what happened, Av?
To your wife and son?

He turns to her. A long beat.

CARRIE
You were saying her name in the
hospital. I've seen the burn marks
on the walls, down here, and
upstairs over the bed. She died in
a fire, didn't she?

Ludlow slowly walks to a drawer, and pulls out a picture
frame. Hands it to Carrie.

LUDLOW
Mary took this. She was always
good with a camera.

THE PHOTO is of a handsome YOUNG MAN, smoking on the porch.

LUDLOW
We had him late. I was forty-
eight, Mary was forty-two. He was
kind of a surprise to both of us.

CARRIE
What was his name?

Ludlow looks up at her, almost surprised. It's a word his
lips haven't shaped in quite some time:

LUDLOW
Billy. He was a good boy, an easy
boy. But he had a problem.

MOVING IN on Billy's photo: now we can see something behind
Billy's eyes. A distant, faraway look.

LUDLOW (O.S.)
He was always lying, making things
up. Here at home, and to other
people. He dropped out of high
school, had trouble keeping a job.
So he joined the Navy. Nine months
later he was out on a Section
Eight. You know what that is?

CARRIE (O.S.)
Mentally unstable.

LUDLOW (O.S.)
'Unfit' is the word they use. We made the mistake of taking him in again. There was more shouting than talking going on in this house back then. One day he just left. We didn't hear from him for a week. Then one night, I came home from work...

ON LUDLOW: he's struggling, having trouble continuing.

LUDLOW
When he told the story later, he'd lie. But it was confused lying. Like he couldn't remember exactly what happened. We pieced together that he'd come around the house earlier, looking for money. Mary had been napping. She was tired. She told him no.

His eyes go to the open basement door. As we MOVE IN on the CLAW GOUGES at the bottom, on the inside:

LUDLOW (O.S.)
He locked Red in the basement. Then he went to the woodshed, got the can of fuel for our lantern.

ON CARRIE: she realizes where this is going.

CARRIE
Oh, my God.

Ludlow pauses, leveling his gaze towards her.

LUDLOW
God wasn't around on that day.

INT. LUDLOW'S BEDROOM - SAME (DAY)

We DRIFT UP from the bed, above the headboard, to the TWISTED WOOD under the thick red paint:

LUDLOW (O.S.)
Oil doesn't burn as hot as gas or kerosine.
(MORE)

LUDLOW(cont'd)

So when he went upstairs, and poured the oil all over the bed and lit a match -- all that burned was the mattress. And Mary. Not even the drapes caught.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - SAME (DAY)

Carrie listens, shielding her emotions, as Ludlow finishes his story:

LUDLOW

He poured some oil down here, tried to burn down the place, make it look like an accident. They had his prints all over, on the gas can, the doors, everything. But he denied it. I told him I'd stand by him even after what he'd done, if he'd just tell the truth, tell me why he did it, why he had to go and kill his mother. He never did. And I suspect, until he dies in that prison, he never will.

Carrie lays a hand on Ludlow's arm, tears in her eyes.

CARRIE

Av, I'm sorry. What can I do?

Ludlow shakes his head. He picks up the picture and brings it back to the open drawer.

Carrie follows him. Puts a hand on his shoulder.

Ludlow stops. Draws a breath. Without turning around:

LUDLOW

You can answer a question for me, Carrie: what are you doing here?

CARRIE

What do you mean, Av?

He turns around, facing her.

LUDLOW

What do you want with a man like me?

CARRIE

You mean with an *old* man like you. A man old enough to be my father.

LUDLOW
And then some.

Carrie smiles. She steps towards him.

CARRIE
Av, the only problem with a man
your age is that sometimes he
starts thinking like a young fool
again.

LUDLOW
That's no answer.

CARRIE
How about I think about it, and
give you an answer another time?

LUDLOW
Promise?

CARRIE
Cross my heart.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LUDLOW'S BEDROOM - DUSK

Carrie is bed, still dressed, sleeping soundly. Ludlow stands in the doorway, watching her.

After a moment, he steps into the hall and closes the door.

EXT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - DUSK

Ludlow walks toward the large oak tree. He carries a shovel in one hand, and a quilt in the other.

At the tree, Ludlow drops the shovel, gets to his knees and carefully spreads out the quilt.

Then he stands, looking down at Red's grave.

Ludlow picks up the shovel and begins to dig.

EXT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - DUSK

Ludlow arranges something in the back of his pickup truck before closing the bed door.

He walks to the driver's side and is about to get in --
 -- he pauses, seeing something at the top of the hillside.
 It's Emma's BLACK LAB. Sniffing the air. Watching Ludlow.
 After a moment, Ludlow gets behind the wheel.
 Thinks for a moment. Considering what he's about to do.
 Then he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a piece of
 paper. An ADDRESS in "*Cape Elizabeth*" is scribbled on it.

EXT. CAPE ELIZABETH - DUSK

Ludlow's truck drives along a narrow cliff-side road,
 overlooking the Maine coastline.
 Magnificent HOUSES are perched in the bluffs above the road,
 surrounded by a dense forest. Prime real estate.

EXT. MCCORMACK WEEKEND HOME - DUSK

A beautiful, three-story white clapboard house sits at the
 rise of a hill, surrounded by acres of pristine gated lawn.
 Ludlow drives through the gate and stops by the front door.
 He gets out and walks to the bed of his truck, glancing at A
 WINDOW -- the lace curtain FLUTTERS with movement.
 Ludlow lowers the flatbed gate and picks up the large BUNDLE
 wrapped in the quilt. Heads for the front door.
 It opens as he walks up. CARLA, McCormack's wife, stands
 there, holding a hand towel, mouth open in shock.

CARLA
 Oh, my God.

LUDLOW
 I need to speak with your husband,
 ma'am.

Carla's eyes go to THE PAW hanging limply from the quilt.

CARLA
 Oh, my... my God --

LUDLOW

I'm sorry. It's your husband who needs to see this. Not you.

CARLA

Why are you doing this to us?

LUDLOW

I don't mean any disrespect, but I'm afraid you've got that wrong. I mean about who's done what to who.

Carla has fear in her eyes. But not fear of Ludlow.

CARLA

If you know what's best, you'll turn around and get back in that truck. Let this thing end, right here and now.

LUDLOW

I'm afraid I can't do that, ma'am.

After a moment, Carla steps forward, across the threshold.

CARLA

Do you see this?

She swings her hair forward, revealing an ugly blue and yellow BRUISE on her neck.

CARLA

I got this last night, Mr. Ludlow. All I did was ask about you. This was the answer I received.

Suddenly self-conscious, she pulls her hair back into place.

CARLA

This wouldn't have happened if you hadn't... please, can't you just let this go?

LUDLOW

I'm sorry, Mrs. McCormack. But I need to see your husband. Can you tell me where he is?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

I'm right here.

Carla gasps and turns, as her husband steps into the doorway.

MICHAEL
You're a goddamn lunatic.

LUUDLOW
Maybe.

MICHAEL
There aren't any 'maybes' about it,
friend.

Ludlow notices movement behind Michael. Shadows in the dark hallway, watching. His sons DANNY and HAROLD, with PETE.

LUUDLOW
Sometimes the only way to know a
thing is to know it first hand.
See it. Taste it. Smell it. Then
you know it.

He gently sets the quilt down and unwraps it. Carla recoils at the sight of Red's body, his destroyed head.

Michael doesn't.

LUUDLOW
A few nights ago, someone threw a
rock through my window. Last
night, someone burned my store
down. But I'm not here about any
of that. I'm here about this.

MICHAEL
Jesus H. Christ, Ludlow --

LUUDLOW
It all comes down to this.

MICHAEL
Get that goddamned thing out of
here!

LUUDLOW
In a minute. After you tell me
what you're going to do about it.

MICHAEL
I'm not going to do shit about it.
You're trespassing --

LUUDLOW
I know.

MICHAEL

Then you also know I could damn
well shoot you.

LUDLOW

I know that, too.

A beat. Then, as Michael is about to say something --

-- DANNY suddenly steps forward, past his father. Face
twisted in a mask of rage.

Raising a gun.

DANNY

You stupid old fuck! You just
don't fucking LISTEN!

MICHAEL

No! Goddammit, Danny --

It happens fast.

Ludlow reaches for Danny's arm, grabbing it as --

BLAM! The gun ROARS. One shot.

Ludlow falls backwards, hitting the ground, still holding
Danny's arm. Danny falls with him.

There's blood. On Ludlow's face.

But he doesn't notice. Instead, he VIOLENTLY TWISTS Danny's
gun arm. Danny HOWLS in pain. And drops the gun.

Ludlow fumbles for it, getting to his knees and pulling Danny
in front of him as --

-- Michael steps towards him, HOLDING A .44 MAGNUM.

Ludlow keeps his eyes on Michael, but he's slightly
disoriented. As he gets to his feet, we can see Ludlow's
LEFT EAR has been ripped apart, reduced to tatters.

DANNY

YOU FUCKING ALMOST BROKE MY ARM!!!

Ludlow ignores him, watching as Michael, breathing hard,
makes a decision -- he points his gun at Ludlow.

Ludlow raises Danny's gun, putting it to the boy's temple.

LUDLOW
 You got more damn mistakes in you
 than any kid I ever knew.

MICHAEL
 Ludlow, for God's sake --

Ludlow cocks the gun.

LUDLOW
 You're going to kill a man, you
 kill him. Or he's going to think
 hard about killing you.
 (to Michael:)
 Put it down.

After a moment, Michael lowers the gun. But doesn't drop it.
 Harold and Peter step outside, watching in disbelief.

LUDLOW
 Ma'am? Would you throw me that
 towel please?

Carla steps forward, shaking. Hands it to Ludlow. He
 presses it to his ear.

LUDLOW
 I'm taking him into town. Think
 the police might want to have a
 chat with him.

MICHAEL
 You were trespassing, Ludlow.
 We've got witnesses. Five to one.

LUDLOW
 I never knew anybody to shoot an
 intruder in the ear at point-blank
 range in broad daylight. Doubt the
 police have either.

The two men stare each other down. Michael tenses, livid.

LUDLOW
 We might even make the papers this
 time, Mr. McCormack. You never
 know.

Ludlow walks Danny towards his truck. Without turning:

LUDLOW

Ma'am, I'd appreciate it very much
if you'd cover up my dog for me.
I'll be back for him.

They get in the driver's side. Danny slides across the front seat, his eyes never leaving his father's. A silent message.

INSIDE THE TRUCK: Ludlow closes the door and starts the ignition. Then he switches the gun to his right hand and slides it into Danny's lap, against his crotch.

Danny immediately straightens, drawing a breath.

LUDLOW

No screwing around, Danny.

Michael watches as the truck pulls away from the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. WINDING ROAD - NIGHT

Ludlow tries to keep his eyes on the road as he squeezes the hand towel between his shoulder and his bleeding ear.

A pot-hole jars the truck, the towel falling out of place.

DANNY

Bumpy road, huh?

Ludlow ignores him.

DANNY

You're crazy, Old Man.

LUDLOW

Then you'd do well not to push me.

DANNY

Would it help if I said I was sorry
about the dog?

LUDLOW

It might have once. But I think
we're way beyond that now.

Bright lights suddenly wash the inside of the truck. Ludlow looks up in the rear-view to see AN SUV gaining on them.

Danny turns and sees it coming.

DANNY
Looks like my Dad wants another
word with you.

The SUV flashes its brights.

DANNY
You'd better pull ove--

WHAM! The SUV suddenly SLAMS into the back of the truck.
Ludlow almost loses control, tires scrabbling on gravel.
Danny's confidence seems to slip. Fear sneaks in.

DANNY
Listen, Mister, I really think you
should pull over --

LUDLLOW
Shut up.

DANNY
He's not going to stop. I know
him, he won't --

LUDLLOW
He'd better. He'll kill us both.

OUTSIDE THE TRUCK: the SUV accelerates again. WHAM!

DANNY
Jesus Christ! I'm fucking telling
you! We've got to pull over!!!

The inside of the truck suddenly dims. The headlights are gone. Ludlow turns, looking out the side window.

Michael has pulled up next to Ludlow, matching his speed. Hands gripping the wheel tightly. A grim expression.

Ludlow's face is blank. Unflinching. Waiting.

And Michael JERKS the wheel.

The SUV slams into the side of the truck, a SCREECH of metal on metal. The pickup swerves to the right --

-- and a FRONT TIRE BURSTS. The pickup rocks on its axle --

-- careening down an embankment, bounding quickly down a steep incline --

INSIDE THE TRUCK: Danny SCREAMS as the edge of the woods rushes towards them like a towering green wall --

CUT TO BLACK:

IN THE DARKNESS, a muffled voice:

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Just find the goddamn thing!

HAROLD (O.S.)
We're looking, Dad!

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Well look harder for God's sake!

SLOW FADE IN ON:

EXT. WOODS' EDGE - NIGHT

Ludlow's eyes flutter open. He's on his stomach, face-down in the rich earth. Thrown through the windshield.

Amber light pulses rhythmically on his face. A busted turn signal, hanging limply from --

THE REMAINS OF THE TRUCK. Ludlow lays right in front of it. It's not much more than a MISSHAPEN BLUR through his vision.

Ludlow's body shifts. He's trying to move.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Try over that way. Did you double-check the truck?

DANNY (O.S.)
Yes, I checked the goddamn truck!

Ludlow MOANS as he rolls onto his side. Tries to clear his vision. Blood and caked dirt smear his face.

PETE (O.S.)
Jesus Almighty.

That sounded close. Ludlow's POV shifts as he sees --

-- Pete Daoust. Standing above him. Mouth wide.

PETE
He's... he's alive.

Danny appears next to Pete. An eerie calm illuminated on his face by the flashing amber light.

DANNY

You just don't know when to give
up, do you Old Man?

He bends down and picks something up. We don't see what it is until he raises it over his head --

-- a broken TREE BRANCH. He swings it down and we --

CUT TO BLACK:

IN DARKNESS, a sound: a distant, muffled RUMBLING. And muffled GUNFIRE. From all around, growing closer.

VOICE (O.S.)

Get up... get up... keep moving...

EXT. WOODS' EDGE - NIGHT

ON THE TRUCK'S HOOD: a bloody HAND reaches up into frame, scrabbling for purchase on the delicate hood ornament.

The dimming headlights of the totaled pickup truck illuminate A FIGURE pulling himself to his feet. Slowly, unsteadily.

The VOICE is Ludlow's. His words are slurred, tangled:

LUDLOW

Keep... get going...

He's a mess. Half his face is nearly concealed with blood. His eyes are unfocused, and drifting without direction.

He shakes as he clutches the truck, steadying himself.

Then he glances down at the spot his body landed.

DANNY'S GUN is embedded in the earth. He'd landed on it.

Ludlow slowly reaches down, picking up the gun. He slides it into his pocket.

Then he turns towards the embankment. Starts to limp towards it, his head tilted slightly back, mouth ajar, lips moving.

EXT. EMBANKMENT - NIGHT

Ludlow takes the incline slowly, still dazed. The SOUNDS continue, in Ludlow's mind, the sounds of his past: muffled yelling VOICES, staccato bursts of GUNFIRE and the WHIZZING of bullets, the BOOMING of distant explosions.

But still he marches forward, limping unsteadily.

He pauses halfway up the incline, at a small gully. Looks down at the ground, hesitant.

Then, as he finally continues forward, we PAN DOWN --

-- to the BODIES that fill the gully. Dozens of them. Almost knee-high in places. Soldiers, slaughtered in battle.

But Ludlow keeps going. He raises his eyes to the sky as --

-- A FLARE bursts high above, illuminating the landscape with a deep red glow. His eyes open wider, clear, like a young boy watching fireworks above.

A new SOUND swells as the light suddenly changes from red to white, becoming --

EXT. WINDING ROAD - NIGHT

-- the glare of HEADLIGHTS washing over Ludlow. The new SOUND is that of a HONKING HORN. A passing car. He's reached the top of the incline.

Ludlow stands there for a moment, dazed and disoriented.

Then his eyes focus, and he realizes he's not alone --

-- a MANGY DOG stands across the road, watching him. The animal is a sorry sight: matted hair, badly malnourished.

Ludlow and the dog observe each other for a beat. As if an understanding passes between them. Then the dog turns and, limping, slips into the woods across the road.

Ludlow takes a breath. Then, also limping, he begins to walk along the edge of the winding road. He walks with more purpose now, less dazed.

He's heading back the way he came.

EXT. MCCORMACK WEEKEND HOME - NIGHT

It's late. All the lights in the house are out.

But HAROLD sits on the front steps, smoking a cigarette. Lost in thought, his mind a tumult.

Then he slowly raises his eyes.

Ludlow stands before him. Swaying slightly.

The cig falls from Harold's hand. He stands, mouth agape.

HAROLD

You're... you're not...

Harold steps forward, relieved. But then:

HAROLD

What the hell are you doing back here?!?

LUDLOW

My dog. I came back for my dog.

HAROLD

They threw him into the woods. Around back.

Anger crosses Ludlow's face. A wave of dizziness passes over him. He reaches out a hand, clutching Harold's arm.

LUDLOW

Take me there.

HAROLD

You're hurt bad. You don't know what -- oh Jesus, oh God --

LUDLOW

Don't you worry about god. Just take me to my dog.

HAROLD

Then will you get out of here?

Ludlow nods. Harold glances up at the windows, nervous.

HAROLD

All right. Come on. But be quiet.

He leads Ludlow around the front of the house.

EXT. MCCORMACK WEEKEND HOME - BACK LAWN - NIGHT

Ludlow has trouble keeping up. He staggers for a moment, and Harold helps support him.

They pause at a shed by a massive swimming pool behind the house. Harold grabs a flashlight from the low shelf.

Then he leads Ludlow furtively towards the treeline.

INSIDE THE HOUSE: a FIGURE stands by a window on the third floor, looking down on the sprawling lawn.

FIGURE'S POV: the full moon clearly illuminates HAROLD and LUDLOW heading for the woods.

INT. WOODS - NIGHT

Harold finds a dirt path leading into the dense wood. He switches on his flashlight, gesturing for Ludlow to follow.

HAROLD
I hope I remember where it is.

LUDLOW
You'll remember.

The trail cuts into the deepening forest. Darkness descends. Harold pauses, swinging his light around.

HAROLD
I think -- it was right around --

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Harold?

Harold freezes, eyes wide. He switches off his flashlight.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
I saw you come in here, boy.

Sounds of MOVEMENT are growing closer. More than one person. Two flashlight BEAMS appear, scanning the woods.

Ludlow can see Harold's face in the dim light. Sheer panic.

One of the BEAMS finds Harold. The other finds Ludlow. He looks like he's on the edge of death.

Three figures stand on the trail -- Michael, Danny, Pete.

All of them hold weapons.

MICHAEL
Good flying Jesus.

HAROLD
Dad --

MICHAEL
Shut up, Harold.

The figures move closer.

LUDLLOW
All I want's my dog.

MICHAEL
You came all the way back here.
For your dog.

Michael swings his light off the trail to a nearby bundle.

MICHAEL
There's your goddamn dog. Tomorrow
we were going to bury the damn
thing. I guess now we got to do
the same for you.

Ludlow doesn't react. But he slips a hand inside his pocket.

MICHAEL
You want the dog? Well, you can
have him now. For all fucking
eternity, you stupid son of a
bitch.

HAROLD
Dad, please, isn't this enough?
Can't we just --

DANNY
Enough with this old fuck.

As Danny raises his gun, Ludlow SWINGS AN ARM onto Harold's flashlight, and falls to the ground behind a tree.

A GUNSHOT rings out.

And a body falls to the ground next to Ludlow. It's HAROLD. Eyes wide, jaw working. Neck blown open by Danny's rifle.

DANNY (O.S.)
I think I got him!!!

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Hold on, stay back, Danny --

DANNY (O.S.)
I shot the old fuck in the...

As Danny advances, his flashlight beam finds Harold's body.

DANNY
Harold? No...

Ludlow leans out from behind the tree, raising his own gun. Smoothly FIRES a round. One of Danny's knees EXPLODES.

Danny cries out and falls to the ground.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Danny!

Danny, seeing Ludlow zeroing in, tries to reload his rifle --

DANNY
He's over there! Shoot him!

Michael and Pete immediately OPEN FIRE.

Ludlow pulls back behind the tree as BULLETS rip through the area. Fragments of bark are blown into splinters.

Then there's a THUD. A bullet striking meat, not wood.

The firing finally stops. Silence takes over. The sound of people BREATHING harshly, in the darkness.

MICHAEL
Harold? Danny?

No response.

MICHAEL
Pete? Where are you?

PETE
Over... over here.

MICHAEL
You hit?

PETE
No.

Michael picks up his flashlight. Scans the area.

MICHAEL
 Danny? Answer me, boy.

LUDLLOW (O.S.)
 I don't think he can.

Michael tenses. Tries to follow the voice with his light.

LUDLLOW (O.S.)
 To the left. And down.

Michael follows Ludlow's advice. And his light reveals DANNY, trying to crawl towards him.

MICHAEL
 Dan-- Danny...

He stays low, crawling to his son. Rolls him over.

Danny's hands are clutching what remains of his stomach.

LUDLLOW (O.S.)
 He's gut-shot, I think. Dying.

Ludlow's voice came from a different place than before.

MICHAEL
 You bastard. You killed my boy --

LUDLLOW (O.S.)
 I didn't kill anyone. That was
 your bullet, McCormack.

Michael looks back at his son. Realizes Ludlow's right.

PETE
 Mr. McCormack? --

Michael turns, his face filled with pain and rage, to see:

Ludlow. He's stepped out of the woods, next to Pete.

LUDLLOW
 (gently)
 Give me the gun, son.

Pete looks to Michael, then back to Ludlow.

And hands over his gun.

Ludlow turns back to Pete.

LUDLOW
There's a chance he'll live. If we
call an ambulance.

Michael just stares at Ludlow. A long beat.

Then Michael suddenly whips up his gun --

-- but Ludlow moves faster. His arm is a blur as his gun
comes up. His expression doesn't change as he FIRES.

And hits Michael in the forehead. He's knocked off his feet,
disappearing into the brush.

Finally, Ludlow collapses, dropping to the ground.

Pete, frozen in place, finally finds the will to move. He
kneels down next to Ludlow.

PETE
I'm sorry... I'm sorry --

LUDLOW
You did the right thing. You were
the only one.

PETE
What can I -- Jesus Christ --

LUDLOW
Calm yourself, son. Then run back
to the house, call the police.

Pete nods, turning and disappearing into the woods.

Ludlow lays on the ground. Fading fast.

Then he turns to THE BUNDLE across the trail.

He slowly crawls towards it, pulling himself towards Red.

Then, draping an arm over his dog, he turns his eyes to the
sky, The tips of the trees reaching for the stars beyond.

And Ludlow closes his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

SOFT LIGHT slowly penetrates the darkness before us,
overtaking it. Focus resolves, a room appears:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

LUDLOW'S POV: soft morning light streams in through an open window. A soft wind blows. It's peaceful, tranquil.

VOICE (O.S.)
You did fine, son.

Ludlow's gaze moves from the window to HIS FATHER sitting in the corner of the room, watching him.

FATHER
I didn't know you had that damn
hard a head on your shoulders. But
you did just fine.

The image softens as Ludlow loses consciousness once more.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - DUSK

Ludlow stands by the oak tree, leaning on a pair of crutches, watching Sam as he finishes shoveling dirt into a hole.

Sam walks over to Ludlow, who nods. Eyes on the grave.

After a beat, Sam removes his hat. A silent prayer for Red.

EXT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - PORCH - DUSK

Ludlow and Sam sip beers in silence, watching the sun dip below the hillside.

SAM
Well. 'Bout that time.

He puts his beer down, and stands.

LUDLOW
Thanks Sam. For everything.

SAM
You don't even have to say those
words, Av.

He steps off the porch, walking to his car.

SAM
Oh, almost forgot.

Sam reaches through the window, pulling a MANILA ENVELOPE from the passenger seat. Hands it to Ludlow, who opens it.

Inside is a NEWSPAPER, the Portland Press Herald. It's opened to an OLDER PHOTO -- a smiling Ludlow, kneels next to Red, his wife Mary behind him.

SAM

She said a national magazine wants to reprint the story. Newseek, Time, somethin'.

The headline reads: "**A Man and his Dog**".

SAM

She says it's up to you. Whatever you decide, it'd be best to wait until after the hearing.

He gets into his car and drives off. Ludlow scans the article, notices a NOTE clipped to the inside. He opens it.

CARRIE (V.O.)

Av -- as promised, I've got an answer to your question. You said it yourself: a lot of things have been forgotten since you were younger. And a lot of those things are what a girl like me thinks about, when I imagine the kind of person I'd like to share my life with, and grow old with. The kind of things I hoped, but never thought, I'd ever find in a man. Thank you for reminding me.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LUDLOW'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Ludlow stirs, waking as the morning light fills the room.

He sits up, eyes reflexively moving to the foot of the bed, where Red used to sleep. As if it was all just a dream.

He takes a deep breath of the morning air. Then he reaches for his crutches.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Ludlow enters slowly, heading for the coffee maker. But he pauses to look down at --

-- Red's CUSHION. Worn with age. A half-chewed bone inside. Then his eyes go to THE WALL, the painted-over BURN MARKS.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - MORNING

Ludlow kneels down by a plastic STORAGE CONTAINER. Red's cushion is now inside it, along with his bone, a few chew toys, and a leash.

Ludlow looks down at the DOG COLLAR in his hands. Runs his fingers over Red's name. For the last time.

Then he puts the collar inside and seals the plastic lid.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ludlow, standing on a step ladder, uses a SANDER to wear down the burn marks on the wall. He strains with the effort.

INT. LUDLOW'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ludlow applies fresh paint to the wall above the bed's headboard. The burn marks have been completely removed.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - SIDE ROOM - DAY

Ludlow stands by the DISPLAY TABLE. He looks down at the American flag, the Silver Star, the picture of himself as a younger man.

Then he moves them slightly aside, making room for a new frame -- the photo of his son, BILLY.

The sound of a HORN makes Ludlow look up.

EXT. LUDLOW'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Ludlow steps outside to see Emma's pickup truck approaching, her black lab in the back. She waves. Ludlow waves back.

Emma pulls up and gets out, holding a basket. She smiles, lifting up a copy of Carrie's newspaper article.

EMMA

Looks like we got ourselves a local celebrity.

LUDLOW

God forbid. Want a beer?

He starts to get up, reaching for his crutches.

EMMA

Don't think you're getting out of that chair to get my beer. I can manage for myself.

She lays the basket on a table next to Ludlow. A blanket covering whatever's inside SHIFTS, something moving under it.

Ludlow looks up at Emma, who's beaming.

EMMA

Got a present for ya.

She reaches under the blanket and pulls out A PUPPY. She places him in Ludlow's lap. The dog immediately starts licking his hands playfully.

Stunned, Ludlow stares at the puppy.

LUDLOW

He... he looks just like Red.

EMMA

He should. That old dog of yours, up to no good to the very end. Evangeline had herself a litter of four. Two black like her, and two of 'em red.

LUDLOW

You're giving him to me?

EMMA

No, Avery Ludlow. I drove over here just to show you what a pain in the butt your dog turned out to be. Of course I'm giving him to you, you old fart.

LUDLOW

Emma, I hadn't planned on --

EMMA

I don't give a damn what you
planned. Just look at him.

The puppy is poking its nose into Ludlow's hands, sniffing,
as if entranced by his fingers.

LUDLOW

I don't know if...

EMMA

You don't know what, Av?

LUDLOW

He's just a puppy, Emma. I'm an
old man.

Emma regards him for a moment. Then:

EMMA

You can't think about things that
way. Or else there's nothing in
life you can have that's anywhere
near worth having. You give him
what time you can. He'll do the
same. And you'll both do just
fine. Now. How about that beer.

She walks inside the house. After a moment, Ludlow slowly
raises the puppy. Looks into his eyes.

LUDLOW

So. What'll we call you?

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END