

F A R G O

Original Screenplay by
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FARGO

The following text fades in over black:

This is a true story. The events depicted in this film took place in Minnesota in 1987. At the request of the survivors the names have been changed. Out of respect for the dead, the rest has been told exactly as it occurred.

FLARE TO WHITE

FADE IN FROM WHITE:

Slowly the white becomes a barely perceptible image: white particles wave over a white background. A snowfall. Wind whispers. Ominous music builds. With a low chord, a car bursts through the curtain of snow. The car is equipped with a hitch and is towing another car, a brand new blue Cutlass Ciera with the pink sales sticker still showing in its rear window.

As the cars roar past, leaving snow swirling in their draft, the title of the film fades in:

FARGO

Green highway signs point the way to MOOREHEAD Minnesota/FARGO North Dakota; the roads for the two cities diverge; a sign says WELCOME TO NORTH DAKOTA and another just after says NOW ENTERING FARGO ND POP. 44,412.

The car pulls into a Rodeway Inn.

LOBBY

A man in his early forties, balding and starting to paunch, goes to the reception desk. The clerk is a woman of about the same age.

Clerk

And how are you today, sir?

Man

Real good now. I'm checking in, Mr. Anderson.

As she types into a computer:

Clerk

Okay Mr. Anderson, and you're still planning on staying with us just the one night then?

Anderson

You bet.

HOTEL ROOM

The man turns on the TV; it shows the local 5:00 news.

Dave Moore (anchor)

--whether they will go to summercamp at all. Katie Jensen has more.

Katie

It was supposed to be a project funded by the city council; it was supposed to benefit those Fargo/Moorehead children who would otherwise not be able to afford a lakeshore summercamp. But nobody consulted city comptroller Stu Jacobson. . . .

RED LOBSTER

Anderson sits alone at a table eating the surf 'n turf. Muzak plays. A middle-aged waitress approaches holding a pot of regular coffee in one hand and decaf in the other.

Waitress

Can I warm that up for ya there?

Anderson

(absently)

You bet.

The man looks at his watch.

THROUGH A WINDSHIELD

We are pulling into the snowswept parking lot of a one-story brick building. Broken neon at the top of the building identifies it as the Jolly Troll Tavern. A troll, also in nec.. holds aloft a champagne glass.

INSIDE

The bar is downscale even for this town. Country music plays on the jukebox. We track toward two men seated in a booth at the back. One man is short, thin and young. The other man is older, dour. The table in front of them is littered with empty longneck beer bottles. The ashtray is full.

Anderson approaches.

Anderson

I'm uh, Jerry Lundegaard. Uh, Shep Proudfoot said--

Younger Man

Shep said you'd be here at 7:30. What gives, man?

Lundegaard

Shep said 8:30.

Younger Man

We been sitting here an hour. I've peed three times already.

Jerry

I'm sure sorry I. . . Shep told me 8:30. It was a mix-up I guess.

Younger Man

Ya got the car?

Jerry

Yah, you bet. It's in the lot there. Brand new Cierra.

Younger Man

Yeah okay, well siddown then. I'm Carl Rolvaag and this is my associate Gaear Grimsrud.

Jerry

Yah, how ya doin'. So, uh, we all set on this thing then?

Carl

Sure, Jerry, we're all set. Why wouldn't we be?

Jerry

Yah, no, I'm sure you are, Shep vouched for you and all. I got every confidence here in you fellas.

They stare at him. An awkward beat.

. . . So I guess that's it then. Here's the keys--

Carl
No that's not it, Jerry.

Jerry
. . . Huh?

Carl
The new Oldsmobile, plus forty thousand dollars.

Jerry
Yah, but, the deal was, the car first see, then the forty thousand, like as if it was the ransom. I thought Shep told you--

Carl
Shep didn't tell us much, Jerry.

Jerry
Well, okay, it's--

Carl
Except that you were gonna be here at 7:30.

Jerry
Yah, well that was a mix-up then.

Carl
Yeah, you already said that.

Jerry
Yah. But it's not a whole pay-in-advance deal; I give you a brand new vehicle in advance, and--

Carl
I'm not gonna debate you Jerry.

Jerry
Okay.

Carl
I'm not gonna sit here and debate. I will say this, though: What Shep told us didn't make a whole lot of sense.

Jerry

Oh no, it's real sound, it's all worked out.

Carl
You want your own wife kidnapped.

Jerry
Yah.

Carl stares. Jerry looks blankly back.

Carl
. . . You--my point is, you pay the ransom, what, eighty thousand bucks, I mean you give us half the ransom, forty thousand, you keep half, it's like robbing Peter to pay Paul, it doesn't make any--

Jerry
Okay, it's--see it's not me payin' the ransom. The thing is, my wife, she's wealthy, her dad he's real well off. Now I'm in a bit of trouble--

Carl
What kind of trouble are you in, Jerry?

Jerry
Well that's, that's, I'm not gonna go inta, inta--see I just need money. Now her dad's real wealthy--

Carl
So why don't you just ask him for the money?

Grimsrud, the dour older man who has not yet spoken, now softly puts in, in a Swedish-accented voice:

Grimsrud
Or your fucking wife you know.

Carl
Or your fucking wife, Jerry.

Jerry
Well it's all just part of this--they don't know I need it, see. Okay so there's that. And even if they did, I wouldn't get it. So there's that on top then. See, these're personal matters.

Carl
Personal matters.

Jerry
Yah. Personal matters that needn't, uh--

Carl
Okay Jerry. You're tasking us to perform
this mission but you you won't uh, you won't-
-aw fuck it let's take a look at that Cierra.

SUBURBAN HOUSE MINNEAPOLIS

Jerry enters through the kitchen--rear--door, wearing a parka and
a red plaid Elmer Fudd hat. He stamps snow off his feet. He is
carrying a bag of groceries which he deposits on the kitchen
counter.

He calls:

Jerry
Hon? Got the growshries.

Voice
Thank you hon. How's Fargo?

Jerry
Yah, real good.

Voice
Dad's here.

DEN

Jerry enters, pulling off his plaid cap.

Jerry
How ya doin', Wade?

Wade Gustafson is mid-sixtyish, vigorous, with a full head of
gray hair. His eyes stay fixed on the TV.

Wade
Yah, pretty good.

Jerry
Whatcha watchin' there?

Wade
Norstars.

Jerry is looking.

Jerry
 . . . Who they playin'?

Wade
 OOOoooh!

His reaction synchronizes with a reaction from the crowd.

KITCHEN

Jerry walks back in, taking off his coat. His wife is putting on an apron.

Jerry
 (nodding at the living room door)
 Is he stayin' for supper then?

Wife
 Yah, I think so.

Calling through the door:

. . . Dad, are you stayin' for supper?

Wade
 (off)
 Yah.

DINING ROOM

Jerry, his wife, Wade, and Scotty, twelve years old, sit eating.

Scotty
 May I be excused?

Jerry
 Sure, ya done there?

Scotty
 Uh-huh. Goin' out.

Wife
 Where are you going?

Scotty
 Just out. Just McDonald's.

Jerry
 Back at 9:30.

Scotty

Okay.

Wade

He just ate. And he didn't finish. He's going to McDonald's instead of finishing here?

Wife

He sees his friends there. It's okay.

Wade

It's okay? McDonald's? What do you think they do there? They don't drink milkshakes, I assure you!

Wife

It's okay, Dad.

Jerry

Wade, have ya had a chance to think about, uh, that deal I was talkin' about, those forty acres there on Wayzata.

Wade

You told me about it.

Jerry

Yah, you said you'd have a think about it. I understand it's a lot of money--

Wade

A heck of a lot. What'd you say you were gonna put there?

Jerry

A lot. It's a limited--

Wade

I know it's a lot.

Jerry

I mean a parking lot.

Wade

Yah, well, \$750,000 is a lot--ha ha ha!

Jerry

Yah, well it's a chunk, but--

Wade

I had a couple lots, late fifties. Lost a

lot of money. A "lot" of money.

Jerry

Yah, but--

Wade

I thought you were gonna show it to Stan Grossman. He passes on this stuff before it gets kicked up to me.

Jerry

Well you know Stan'll say no dice. That's why you pay him. I'm asking you here, Wade. This could work out real good for me and Jean and Scotty--

Wade

Jean and Scotty never have to worry.

WHITE

A black line curls through the white. Twisting perspective reveals that it is an aerial shot of a two-lane highway bordered by snowfields; one moving shape is a car.

INSIDE THE CAR

Carl Rolvaag is driving; Gaear Grimsrud sits next to him.

After a long beat:

Grimsrud
(softly)

Where is Pancakes Hause. . .

Carl

What?

Grimsrud

We stop at Pancakes Hause.

Carl

What're you nuts? We had pancakes for breakfast. I gotta go somewhere I can get a shot and a beer--and a steak maybe. Not more fuckin' pancakes. Come on.

Grimsrud gives him a sour look.

. . . . Come on, man. Okay, here's an idea.
We'll stop outside of Brainerd. I know a
place there we can get laid. Wuddya think?

Grimsrud squints at Carl through a plume of cigarette smoke.

Grimsrud
I'm fucking hungry now you know.

Carl
Yeah, yeah, Jesus--I'm sayin', we'll stop for
pancakes, then we'll get laid. Wuddya think?

GUSTAFSON OLDS

Jerry is sitting in his glassed-in salesman's cubicle just off
the showroom floor. Across the desk from him sit an irate
customer and his wife.

Customer
We sat here right in this room and went over
this and over this!

Jerry
Yah, but that TruCoat--

Customer
I sat right here and said I didn't want no
TruCoat--

Jerry
Yah, but I'm sayin', that TruCoat, you don't
get it, and you get oxidization problems,
it'll cost you a heck of a lot more'n five
hunnert--

Customer
You're sittin' here, you're talkin' in
circles! You're talkin' like we didn't go
over this already!

Jerry
Yah, but this TruCoat--

Customer
We had us a deal here for nineteen-five. You
sat there and darned if you didn't tell me
you'd get me this car, these options, WITHOUT
THE SEALANT, for nineteen-five!

Jerry

Okay, I'm not sayin' I didn't--

Customer

You called me twenty minutes ago and said you had it! Ready to make delivery ya says! Come on down and get it! And here ya are and you're wastin' my time and you're wastin' my wife's time and I'm payin' nineteen-five for this vehicle here!

Jerry

Well, okay, I'll talk to my boss. . . .

He rises and, as he leaves:

. . . See, they install that TruCoat at the factory, there's nothin' we can do, but I'll talk to my boss.

The couple watches him go into a nearby cubicle.

Customer

These guys here--these guys! It's always the same! It's always more! He's a liar!

Wife

Please, dear.

Customer

He's a goddamn--

NEARBY CUBICLE

Jerry sits perched on the desk of another salesman who is eating his lunch and watching a hockey game on a small portable TV.

Jerry

So you're goin' to the Gophers on Sunday?

Salesman

You bet.

Jerry

You wouldn't have an extra ticket there?

Salesman

They're playin' the Buckeyes!

Jerry

Yah.

Salesman
You kiddin'!

JERRY'S CUBICLE

As he reenters.

Jerry
Well, he never done this before, but seein'
as it's special circumstances and all he says
I can knock one hunnert off that Trucoat.

Customer
One hundred! You lied to me Mr. Lundegaard.
You're a baldfaced liar!

Jerry sits staring at his lap.

. . . . A fucking liar--

Wife
Please, Bucky--

Jerry
(softly into his lap)
One hunnert's the best we can do here.
'Course you can go out to Hopkins, try to
make a better--

Customer
(disgusted)
Oh for Christ sake, where's my goddamn
checkbook. Let's get this over with.

WIDE EXT TRUCK STOP

There is a restaurant with many big rigs parked around it, and a
motel with an outsize Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox flanking
its sign: BLUE OX MOTEL.

MOTEL ROOM

Carl Rolvaag and Gaear Grimsrud are in the twin beds having sex
with two truck-stop hookers.

Carl
Oh, Jesus, yeah.

His Hooker
There ya go, sugar.

Grimsrud
Nnph.

His Hooker
Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah.

LATER

The couples lie in their respective beds gazing offscreen at the TV set:

Ed McMahon
--Johnny's guests tonight will be Lee Majors,
George Wendt, and Steve Boutsikaros from the
San Diego Zoo so keep that dial--

LUNDEGAARD KITCHEN MORNING

We hear a morning show on the television; Jean Lundegaard is making coffee in the kitchen as Scott eats cereal at the table.

Jean
I'm talkin' about your potential.

Scott
(absently)
Uh-huh.

Jean
You're not a C student.

Scott
Uhn.

Jean
And yet your gettin' C grades. It's that
disparity there that concerns your Dad and
me.

Scott
Uh-huh.

Jean
You know what a disparity is?

Scott

(testily)

Yeah!

Jean

Okay. Well that's why we don't want ya goin' out fer hockey.

Scott

Oh, man!

The phone rings.

. . . What's the big deal? It's an hour--

Jean

Hold on.

She is picking up the phone.

. . . Hello?

Phone Voice

Yah, hiya hon.

Jean

Oh, hiya Dad.

Wade

Jerry around?

Jean

Yah, he's still here--I'll catch him for ya.

She holds the phone away and calls:

. . . . Hon?

Voice

Yah.

Jean

It's Dad.

Voice

Yah. . .

Jerry enters in his shirtsleeves and tie.

. . . . Yah, okay. . .

Scott

Look Dad, there is no fucking way--

Jean
Scott!

Jerry
Say, let's watch the language--

He takes the phone.

. . . How ya doin', Wade?

Wade
What's goin on there?

Jerry
Oh, nothing Wade. How ya doin' there?

Wade
Stan Grossman looked at your proposal. Says
it's pretty sweet.

Jerry
No kiddin'?

Wade
We might be interested.

Jerry
No kiddin'! I'd need the cash pretty quick,
there. In order to close the deal.

Wade
Come by at 2:30 and we'll talk about it. If
your numbers are right, Stan says its pretty
sweet. Stan Grossman.

Jerry
Yah.

Wade
2:30.

Click. Dial tone.

Jerry
Yah, okay.

GUSTAFSON OLDS GARAGE

Jerry is wandering through the service area where cars are being

worked on. He stops by an Indian in blue jeans who is looking at the underside of a car that sits on a hydraulic lift with a hanging cage light.

Jerry
Say Shep, how ya doin' there?

Shep
Mm.

Jerry
Say ya know those two fellas ya put me in touch with, up there in Fargo.

Shep
Put you in touch with Grimsrud.

Jerry
Well yah but he had a buddy there, he uh--

Shep
Well I don't vouch for him.

Jerry
Well that's okay, I just--

Shep
I vouch for Grimsrud. Who's his buddy?

Jerry
Carl somethin'?

Shep
Never heard of him. Don't vouch for him.

Jerry
Well that's okay, he's a buddy of the guy ya vouched for so I'm not worryin'. I just, I was wonderin', see I gotta get in touch with 'em, see this deal I needed 'em for, I might not need it anymore, sumpn's happenin', see--

Shep
Call'm up.

Jerry
Yah, well see I did that, and I haven't been able to get 'em so I thought you maybe'd know an alternate number or what have ya.

Shep
Nope.

Jerry slaps his fist into his open palm and snaps his fingers.

Jerry
Okay, well real good then.

CAR

Carl is driving, Grimsrud staring out the front.

After a beat:

Carl
. . . Look at that. Twin Cities. I.D.S.
Building, the big glass one. Tallest
skyscraper in the Midwest. After the Sears,
uh, Chicago.

Grimsrud looks.

. . . You never been to Minneapolis.

Grimsrud
No.

Carl
. . . Would it kill you to say something?

Grimsrud
Just did.

Carl
"No." First thing you've said in the last
four hours.

Grimsrud shrugs.

. . . That's a, that's a fountain of
conversation, man. That's a geyser. I mean
whoa daddy, stand back, man. Shit, I'm
sittin' here driving, man, doin' all the
driving, whole fucking way from Brainerd,
drivin', tryin' to, you know, tryin' to chat,
keep our spirits up, fight the boredom of the
road, and you can't say one fucking thing
just in the way of conversation.

Grimsrud smokes, gazing out the window.

. . . Well fuck it, I don't have to talk
either, man. See how you like it. Just

total fuckin' silence. Ya know? Two can play at that game. Smart guy. We'll just see how you like it. . . . Uh-huh. . . . We'll just see how you fuckin' like it--

JERRY'S CUBICLE

He is on the phone.

Jerry

Yah, real good, how you doin'?

Voice

Pretty good, Mr. Lundegaard. You're damned hard to get on the phone.

Jerry

Yah, it's pretty darned busy here, but that's the way we like it.

Voice

That's for sure. Now I just need, on these last, these financing documents you sent us, I can't read the serial numbers of the vehicles on here, so I. . .

Jerry

But I already got the, it's okay, the loans are in place, I already got the, the what, the--

Voice

Yeah, the \$320,000, you got the money last month.

Jerry

Yah, so we're all set.

Voice

Yeah, but the vehicles you were borrowing on, I just can't read the serial numbers on your application. Maybe if you could just read them to me--

Jerry

But the deal's already done, I already got the money--

Voice

Yeah but, we have an audit here, I just have

to know that these vehicles you're financing with this money, that they really exist. . .

Jerry
Yah, well they exist all right.

Voice
I'm sure they do--ha ha! But I can't read their serial numbers here. So if you could read me--

Jerry
Well but see, I don't have 'em in front a me--why don't I just fax you over a copy--

Voice
No, fax is no good, that's what I have and I can't read the damn thing--

Jerry
Yah, okay I'll have my girl send you a copy then.

Voice
Okay, because if I can't correlate this note with the specific vehicles, then I gotta call back that money--

Jerry
Yah, how much money was that?

Voice
\$320,000. See, I gotta correlate that money with the cars it's being lent on.

Jerry
Yah, no problem, I'll just fax that over to ya then.

Voice
No no, fax is--

Jerry
I mean send it over. I'll shoot it right over to ya.

Voice
Okay.

Jerry
Okay, real good then.

CLOSE ON TELEVISION

Bill Carlson is standing in front of a counter on a kitchen set in a television studio, wearing an apron.

Carlson

So I separate the--how the heck do I get the egg out of the shell without breaking it!?

CLOSE ON JEAN

Curled up on the couch with a cup of coffee, watching the television.

Woman's Voice

You just prick a little hole in the end and blow!

Jean smiles as we hear laughter and applause from the studio audience. She hears something else--a faint scraping sound--and looks up.

Carlson

Okay, here goes nothing.

The scraping sound persists. Jean sets down her coffee cup and rises.

From the studio audience:

Audience

Awooooo!

THE KITCHEN

We track towards the back door. A curtain is stretched tight across its window.

Jean pulls the curtain back. Bright sunlight amplified by snow floods in.

A man in an orange ski mask looks up from the lock.

She gasps, drops the curtain, turns and runs into--

A taller man, also in a ski mask--already in the house.

We hear the crack of the back-door window being smashed.

The tall man--Gaeear Grimsrud--grabs Jean's wrist.

She screams, staring at her own imprisoned wrist, then wraps her gaping mouth around Grimsrud's gloved thumb and bites down hard.

He drops her wrist; as Carl enters she races up the stairs.

Grimsrud

Unguent.

Carl

Huh?

Grimsrud looks at his thumb.

Grimsrud

I need. . . unguent.

We hear footsteps upstairs. The two men look up.

UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

As the two men enter, a door at the far side is slamming shut. A cord snakes in under the door.

MASTER BATHROOM

Jean, sobbing, frantically pushes at buttons on the princess phone.

The phone pops out of her hands, jangles across the tile floor, smashes against the door and then bounces away, its cord having been ripped free.

With a groaning sound the door shifts in its frame.

BEDROOM

Grimsrud has a crowbar jammed in between the bathroom door and frame, and is working it.

BATHROOM

Jean crosses to a high window above the toilet and throws it open. Snow that had drifted against the window sifts lightly in. Jean steps up onto the toilet.

THE DOOR

Creaking as it moves, as one piece, in its frame.

JEAN

She glances back as she steps up from the toilet seat to the tank.

THE DOOR

The jiggling culminates with the wood around the knob splintering and the knob itself falling out onto the floor. The door swings open.

Grimsrud and Rolvaag enter.

THEIR POV

Room empty, window open.

Rolvaag strides to the window and hoists himself outside.

Grimsrud opens the medicine cabinet and delicately taps aside various bottles and tubes, in search of the proper unguent.

He finds a salve but after a moment sets it down, noticing something in the mirror. The shower curtain is drawn around the tub. He steps toward it.

As he reaches for the curtain there is a scream and it explodes outward, animated by thrashing limbs.

Jean, tangled in the curtain, rips it from its stays and stumbles out into the bedroom. Grimsrud follows.

BEDROOM

Jean rushes toward the door, cloaked by the shower curtain but awkwardly trying to push it off.

UPSTAIRS LANDING

Still thrashing, Jean half-crashes against the upstairs railing, half-trips on the curtain, and falls, thumping crazily down the stairs.

Grimsrud trots down after her.

A PLAQUE:
WADE GUSTAFSON INCORPORATED

INSIDE WADE'S OFFICE

Wade sits behind his desk; another man rises as Jerry enters.

Jerry
How ya doin' there, Stan. How are ya, Wade.

Stan Grossman shakes his hand.

Stan
Good to see ya again, Jerry. If these numbers are right, this looks pretty sweet.

Jerry
Oh, those numbers are right all right, bleemee.

Wade
This is do-able.

Stan
Congratulations, Jerry.

Jerry
Yah, thanks Stan, it's a pretty--

Wade
What kind of finder's fee were you looking for?

Jerry
. . . . Huh?

Stan
The financials are pretty thorough, so the only thing we don't know is your fee.

Jerry
. . . . My fee? Wade, what the heck're you talkin' about?

Wade
Stan and I're okay.

Jerry
Yah.

Wade
We're good to load in.

Jerry
Yah.

Wade
But we never talked about your fee for
bringin' it to us.

Jerry
No, but Wade, see, I was bringin' you this
deal for you to loan me the money to put in.
It's my deal here, see?

Wade scowls, looks at Stan.

Stan
Jerry--we thought you were bringin' us an
investment.

Jerry
Yah, right--

Stan
You're sayin'--what're you sayin'?

Wade
You're sayin' that we put in all the money
and you collect when it pays off?

Jerry
No, no, I--I'd, I'd--pay you back the
principal, and interest--heck, I'd go--one
over prime--

Stan
We're not a bank, Jerry.

Wade is scowling at him.

Wade
What the heck, Jerry, if I wanted bank
interest on seven hunnert'n fifty thousand
I'd go to Midwest Federal. Talk to Bill
Diehl.

Stan
He's at Norstar.

Wade
He's at--

Jerry

No, see, I don't need a finder's fee, I need-finder's fee's, what, ten percent, heck that's not gonna do it for me. I need the principal.

Stan

Jerry, we're not going to just give you \$750,000.

Wade

What the heck were you thinkin'? Heck, if I'm only gettin' bank interest, I'd look for complete security. Heck, FDIC. I don't see nothin' like that here.

Jerry

Yah, but I--okay, I would, I'd guarantee ya your money back.

Wade

I'm not talkin' about your damn word, Jerry. Geez, what the heck're you . . . Well look, this here's a good deal and we got the resources to make it happen. I don't want to cut you out of the loop, but I assume if you're not innarested in this deal you won't mind if we move on it innapendently.

PARKING LOT

We are high and wide on the parking lot of a one-story office park. Jerry emerges wrapped up in a parka, his arms sticking stiffly out at his sides, his breath vaporizing. He goes to his car, opens its front door, pulls out a red plastic scraper, and starts methodically scraping off the thin crust of ice that has developed on his windshield. The scrape-scrape-scrape sound carries in the frigid air.

Jerry momentarily goes into a frenzy, banging the scraper against the windshield and the hood of his car.

The tantrum passes. Jerry stands panting, staring at nothing in particular.

Scrape-scrape-scrape--he goes back to work on his windshield.

FRONT DOOR

Later. A beat, silent but for a key scraping at the lock.

The door swings open and Jerry edges in, looking about, holding a sack of groceries.

Jerry

Hon. . . . ?

He shuts the door.

. . . I got the growshries. . . .

He has already seen the shower curtain on the floor. He frowns, pokes at it with his foot.

. . . Hon?

UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

Jerry walks in, tentative, scowling. He sets the groceries down on the toilet tank.

He looks at the open window, through which snow still sifts in, shuts it.

He picks up the small tube of unguent that sits on the sink, frowns at it, puts it back in the medicine chest.

He looks at the shower curtain rings sitting empty on the curtain rod.

FOYER

Once again we are looking at the shower curtain. Rumpled. Still.

From another room:

Jerry's Voice

Yah Wade, I--it's Jerry, I. . . .

A beat. Then, slightly more agitated:

. . . Yah Wade, it's, I, it's Jerry. . . .

Beat.

. . . Wade, it's Jerry, I--we gotta talk,
Wade, it's somethin'--it's terrible. . .

Beat.

LIVING ROOM

In wide shot Jerry stands, hands on hips, looking down at the phone on a coffee table.

After a motionless beat he picks up the phone, punches in a number, and:

Jerry

. . . Yah, Wade Gustafson please.

BLACK

We hear the rumble of wheels on pavement. A headlit sign rushes at us out of the dark: WELCOME TO BRAINERD--Home of Paul Bunyon and Babe The Blue Ox.

INT CAR

Carl is driving down a deserted stretch of highway. Grimsrud smokes and gazes out the window. From the back seat we hear whimpering.

Grimsrud twists around to look.

Jean lies bound and curled up on the back seat underneath a tarpaulin.

Grimsrud

Shut the fuck up or I'll throw you back in the trunk, you know.

Carl

Jeez. That's more'n I've heard you say all week.

Grimsrud stares at him for a beat, then turns back to the window.

With a loud WHOOP Carl starts and looks back out the rear window. Fifty yard behind them a state trooper has just turned on his gumballs.

Carl turns the car onto the shoulder.

Carl
Ah shit, the tags. . .

Grimsrud looks at him.

. . . It's just the tags. I never put my tags on the car. Don't worry, I'll take care of this.

He looks into the back seat as the car bounces and slows on the gravel shoulder.

. . . Let's keep still back there, lady, or we're gonna have to, ya know, to shoot ya.

Grimsrud hasn't moved. He looks slowly over at Carl.

Carl
Hey! I'll take care of this!

Both cars have stopped. Carl looks up at the rear view mirror.

HIS POV

In the mirror. The trooper is stopped on the snowy shoulder just behind them, writing something in his citation book.

BACK TO CARL

As he twists around in his seat. We hear the trooper's door open.

HIS POV

The trooper is walking up the shoulder, one hand resting lightly on top of his holster, his breath vaporizing in the cold night air.

Carl looks around as the trooper appears at his window.

Carl
How can I help you, officer?

The trooper scans the inside of the car, taking his time. Grimsrud smokes and gazes calmly out the window.

Finally:

Trooper

This a new car then, sir?

Carl

It certainly is, officer. Still got that smell!

Trooper

You're required to display temporary tags, either in the plate area or taped inside the back window.

Carl

Certainly--

Trooper

Can I see your license and registration please?

Carl

Certainly.

Reaching for his wallet.

. . . I was gonna tape up the temporary tag, ya know, to be in full compliance, but it uh, it uh. . . must a slipped my mind. . .

He is extending his wallet toward the trooper, a fifty dollar bill folded and protruding from the billfold.

. . . So maybe the best thing would be to take care of that, right here in Brainerd.

Trooper

What's this, sir?

Carl

That's my license and registration. I wanna be in compliance.

He laughs nervously.

. . . I was just thinking I could take care of it right here. In Brainerd.

Grimsrud looks at him with narrowed eyes.

The policeman thoughtfully pats the fifty into the billfold and hands the billfold back into the car.

Trooper

Put that back in your pocket please.

The nervous smile fades from Carl's lips.

. . . And step out of the car please, sir.

Grimsrud, smiling thinly, shakes his head.

There is a whimpering sound.

The policeman hesitates.

Another sound.

The policeman leans forward into the car, listening.

Grimsrud reaches across Carl, grabs the trooper by the hair and slams his head down across the window sash.

The policeman grunts, digs awkwardly for footing outside, throws an arm for balance against the outside of the car.

With his free hand Grimsrud pops the glove compartment. He brings a gun out, reaches across Carl, and shoots--BANG--point blank into the back of the trooper's head.

Jean screams.

Grimsrud

Shut up.

He releases the policeman.

EXT. CAR

The policeman's head slides out the window and his body flops back onto the street.

INT. CAR

Carl looks out at the cop in the road.

Carl
(softly)

Whoa. . . Whoa Daddy.

Grimsrud takes the trooper's hat off of Carl's lap and sails it out the open window.

Grimsrud

You'll take care of it. Boy, are you smooth, man, you know.

Carl

Whoa Daddy.

Jean, for some reason, screams again. Then stops.

Grimsrud glances in back, then looks at Carl.

Grimsrud

Clear him off the road.

Carl

Yeah...

He gets out.

THE ROAD

Carl leans down to hoist up the body and is caught in the headlights of an approaching car.

TRACK IN

on Grimsrud--his eyes narrowing.

THE CAR

approaching, slowing down.

CARL

With the body hoisted halfway up, frozen in the headlights like a startled deer.

THE CAR

Accelerating and roaring past and away. We just make out the silhouettes of two occupants in the front seat.

GRIMSRUD

Sliding over into the drivers seat. He screams into a U-turn, the driver's door slamming shut from the acceleration.

HIS POV

Small red tail lights fishtail up ahead. The car churns up fine

SNOW.

GRIMSRUD

Takes the cigarette out of his mouth and stamps it out in his ashtray. We hear the churning of the car wheels and the pinging of snow clods and salt on the car's underside.

In the back seat, Jean starts screaming.

HIS POV

Not gaining on the tail lights.

GRIMSRUD

Fighting with the wheel as his car swims a little on the road face.

HIS POV

The red tail lights start to turn--with a distant crunching sound, they disappear.

The headlights only show empty road, starting to turn.

GRIMSRUD

Frowning. He slows.

HIS POV

His headlights show the car up ahead off the road, crumpled around a telephone pole, having failed to hold a turn.

GRIMSRUD

Hits his break.

JEAN

Slides off the back seat and thumps into the legwell.

GRIMSRUD

Sweeps his gun off the front seat, throws open his door and gets out.

EXTERIOR

The wrecked car's headlights shine off into a snowfield abutting the highway. A young man in a down parka is limping across the snowfield, away from the wrecked car.

Grimsrud strides calmly out after the injured boy. He raises his gun and fires.

With a poof of feathers a hole opens up in the boy's back and he collapses in the snow.

Grimsrud walks up next to the prostrate body and fires again.

He turns and walks away.

THE WRECK

Grimsrud throws open the passenger door. A young woman is trapped inside the twisted wreckage, badly injured.

LONG SHOT THE WRECK

Snow swirls in the headlights of the two cars. Grimsrud is a dark figure against the snow. He raises his gun and fires one shot into the wreck.

AN OIL PAINTING

Of a Blue-Winged Teal in flight over a swampy marshland. The room in which it hangs is dark. We hear snoring offscreen.

We track off to reveal an easel upon which we see a half-completed oil of a Grey Mallard.

The continuing track reveals a couple in bed, sleeping. The man, fortyish, pyjama-clad, is big, and big-bellied. His mouth is agape. He is snoring. His arms are flung over a woman in her thirties, wearing a nightie, mouth also open, not snoring.

We hold for a long beat on their regular breathing and snoring.

The phone rings.

The woman stirs.

Woman

Oh geez. . .

She reaches for the phone.

. . . Hi, it's Marge. . .

The man stirs, clearing his throat with a long deep rumble.

. . . Oh my. Where?. . . Yah. . . Oh geez. . .

The man sits up, gazes stupidly about.

. . . Okay. There in a jif. . . Real good then.

She hangs up, looks at the man.

. . . You can sleep hon. It's early yet.

Man

Gotta go?

She is getting out of bed.

Marge

Yah.

The man swings his legs out.

Man

I'll fix ya some eggs.

Marge

That's okay, hon. I gotta run.

Man

Gotta eat a breakfast, Marge. I'll fix ya some eggs.

Marge

Aw, you can sleep hon.

Man

Ya gotta eat a breakfast. . .

He clears his throat with another deep rumble.

. . . I'll fix ya some eggs.

Marge

Aw, Norm.

PLATE

Leavings of a huge plate of eggs, ham, toast.

THE TABLE

Marge is now dressed in a beige police uniform. A patch on the arm says BRAINERD POLICE DEPARTMENT. She also wears a heavy belt that holds a revolver, walkie-talkie, and various other jangling police impedimenta. Norm is in a dressing gown.

Marge

Thanks hon. Time to shove off.

Norm

Love ya, Margie.

As she struggles into a parka:

Marge

Love ya, hon.

He is exiting back to the bedroom; she exits out the front door. For a beat we hold on the empty kitchen. Then the front door opens again and Marge enters, stamping snow off her boots.

Marge

Hon?

From off:

Norm

Yah?

Marge

Prowler needs a jump.

HIGHWAY

Dawn. A police car pulls into the foreground and its driver door opens, showing the seal of the BRAINERD POLICE DEPARTMENT.

Marge gets out.

Marge

Hiya Lou.

Another policeman is approaching holding two coffees in cardboard cups.

Lou

Margie. Thought you might need a little warm-up.

Marge

Yah, thanks a bunch. So what's the deal, now. Gary says triple homicide?

Lou

Yah, looks pretty bad. Two of 'm're over here.

They trudge toward the wreck.

WIDER

Laid out in the early morning light is the wrecked car, a pair of footprints leading out to a man in a bright orange parka face down in the blood-stained snow, and one pair of footsteps leading back to the road.

Marge

Ah, geez. So. . .

She looks in the car.

. . . Aw, geez. Here's the second one. . . It's in the head and the . . . hand there, I guess that's a defensive wound. Okay.

Marge looks up from the car.

. . . Where's the state trooper?

Lou jerks his thumb.

Lou

Back there a good piece. In the ditch next to his prowler.

Marge looks around at the road.

Marge

Okay, so we got a trooper pulls someone over, we got a shooting, and these folks drive by,

and we got a high-speed pursuit, ends here,
and this execution-type deal.

Lou

Yah.

Marge

I'd be very surprised if our suspect was from
Brainerd.

Lou

Yah.

Marge is studying the ground intently.

Marge

Yah. And I'll tell you what, from his
footprint he looks like a big fella--

Marge suddenly doubles over putting her head between her knees
down near the snow.

Lou

Ya see something down there, Chief?

Marge

Uh--I just, I think I'm gonna barf.

Lou

Geez, you okay Margie?

Marge

I'm fine--it's just morning sickness--

She gets up, sweeping snow from her knees.

. . . Well, that passed.

Lou

Yah?

Marge

Yah. Now I'm hungry again.

Lou

You had breakfast yet, Margie?

Marge

Oh yah. Norm made some eggs.

Lou

Yah? Well what now d'ya think?

Marge
Let's go take a look at that trooper.

BY THE STATE TROOPER'S CAR

Marge's prowler is parked nearby.

Marge is on her hands and knees by a body down in the ditch, again looking at footprints in the snow. She calls up to the road:

Marge
There's two of 'em, Lou!

Lou
Yah?

Marge
Yah, this guy's smaller than his buddy.

DOWN IN THE DITCH

In the foreground is the head of the state trooper, facing us; peering at it from behind, still on her hands and knees, is Marge.

Marge
Fer Pete's sake. . .

She gets up, clapping the snow off her hands, and climbs out of the ditch.

Lou
How's it look, Marge?

Marge
Well he's got his gun on his hip there, and he looks like a nice enough guy. It's a real shame.

Lou
Yah.

Marge
You haven't monkeyed with his car there, have ya?

Lou
No way.

She is looking at the prowler, which still idles on the shoulder.

Marge
Somebody cut his lights. I guess the little
guy sat in there, waitin' for his buddy
t'come back.

Lou
Yah, woulda been cold out here.

Marge
Heck yah. Ya think, is Dave open yet?

Lou
You don't think he's mixed up in--

Marge
No no, I just wanna get Norm some night
crawlers.

PROWLER

Marge is driving; Lou sits next to her.

Marge
You look in his citation book?

Lou
Yah. . .

He looks at his notebook.

Lou
Last vehicle he wrote in was a blue Cierra at
2:18 A.M. Under the plate number he put DLR
so I got the state lookin' for a Cierra with
a tag startin' DLR. They don't got no match
yet.

Marge
Uh-huh.

Lou
I figure they stopped him or shot him before
he could finish fillin' out the tag number.

Marge
I'm not sure I agree with you a hunnert
percent on your policework there, Lou.

Lou

Yah?

Marge

Yah, I think that vehicle there probly had dealer plates. DLR?

Lou

Oh. . . .

Lou gazes out the window, thinking.

. . . . Geez.

Marge

Yah. Say Lou, ya hear the one 'bout the guy he couldn't afford personalized plates, so he went and changed his name to J2L 4685?

Lou

Yah that's a good one.

Marge

Yah.

THE ROAD

The police car enters with a whoosh and hums on into the background along a straight-ruled empty highway, cutting through a landscape of flat and perfect white.

EMBERS FAMILY RESTAURANT

Jerry, Wade, and Stan Grossman sit in a booth sipping coffee. Outside the window snow falls from a gunmetal sky.

Wade

--All's I know is, ya got a problem, ya call a professional!

Jerry

No! They said no cops! They were darned clear on that, Wade! They said you call your cops and we--

Wade

Well a course they're gonna say that! But where's my protection? They got Jean here!

I give these sons a bitches a million dollars, where's my guarantee they're gonna let her go?!

Jerry

Well, they--

Wade

A million dollars is a lot a damn money! And there they are, they got my daughter!

Jerry

Yah, but, think this thing through here Wade, ya give 'em what they want, why won't they let her go! You gotta listen to me on this one Wade.

Wade

Heck, you don't know! You're just whistlin' Dixie here! I'm sayin', the cops, they can advise us on this! I'm sayin' call a professional!

Jerry

No! No cops! That's final! This is my deal here, Wade! Jean is my wife here!

Stan

I gotta tell ya, Wade, I'm leanin' to Jerry's viewpoint here.

Wade

Well--

Stan

We gotta protect Jean. These--we're not holdin' any cards here, Wade, they got all of 'em. So they call the shots.

Jerry

You're darn tootin'!

Wade

Ah, damnit!

Stan

I'm tellin' ya.

Wade

Well. . . Why don't we. . .

He saws a finger under his nose.

... Stan, I'm thinkin' we should offer 'em half a million.

Jerry
Now come on here, no way, Wade! No way!

Stan
We're not horse-trading here Wade, we just gotta bite the bullet on this thing.

Jerry
Yah!

Stan
What's the next step here, Jerry?

Jerry
They're gonna call, give me instructions for a drop. I'm supposed to have the money ready tomorrow.

Wade
Damn it.

THE CASHIER

As she rings up \$2.40.

Cashier
How was everything today?

Jerry hands her money as behind him, Wade and Stan Grossman shrug into parkas and pull on mittens.

Jerry
Yah, real good now.

PARKING LOT

Snow continues to fall. Jerry, and Stan stand bundled up in their parkas and galoshes next to their beached vehicles. Wade sits behind the wheel of an idling Lincoln waiting for Stan.

Stan
Okay. We'll get the money together. Don't worry about it, Jerry. Now, d'you want anyone at home, with you, til they call?

Jerry

No, I--they don't want--they're just s'posed to be dealin' with me, they were real clear.

Stan

Yah.

Jerry pounds his mittened hands together against the cold.

Jerry

Ya know, they said no one listenin' in, they'll be watchin' ya know. Maybe it's all bull but like you said, Stan, they're callin' the shots.

Stan

Okay. And Scotty, is he gonna be all right?

Jerry

Yah, geez, Scotty. I'll go talk to him.

There is a tap at the horn from Wade and Stan gets into the Lincoln.

Stan

We'll call.

The Lincoln spits snow as it grinds out of the lot and fishtails out onto the snowy boulevard.

SCOTTY'S BEDROOM

He lies on the bed, weeping. Jerry enters and sits uncomfortably on the edge of the bed.

Jerry

. . . How ya doin' there, Scotty?

Scott

Dad! What're they doing? Wuddya think they're doin' with Mom?

Jerry

It's okay, Scotty. They're not gonna want to hurt her any. These men, they just want money, see.

Scott

What if. . . what if sumpn goes wrong?

Jerry

No, no, nothin's goin' wrong here. Granddad and I we're--we're makin' sure this gets handled right.

Scott snorfles and sits up.

Scott
Dad, I really think we should call the cops.

Jerry
No! We can't let anyone know about this thing! We gotta play ball with these guys--you ask Stan Grossman, he'll tell ya the same thing!

Scott
Yeah, but--

Jerry
We're gonna get Mom back for ya, but we gotta play ball. It's a hard row ta hoe but. . . Now if Lorraine calls, or Sylvia, you just say that Mom is in Florida with Pearl and Marty--

Scotty starts to weep again. Jerry stares silently down at his lap.

Jerry
That's the best we can do here. . . .

EXT CABIN

A lakeside cabin surrounded by white. A blue Cierra with dealer plates is pulling into the drive.

Grimsrud climbs out of the passenger seat as Carl climbs out the other side. Grimsrud opens the back door and, with an arm on her elbow, helps Jean out. She has her hands tied behind her back, and a black hood over her head.

With a muffled cry she swings her elbow out of Grimsrud's grasp and lurches away across the snow of the front lawn. Grimsrud moves to retrieve her, but Carl, grinning, lays a hand on his shoulder to stop him.

Carl
Hold it.

They both look out at the front lawn, Grimsrud expressionless, Carl grinning.

With muffled cries the hooded woman lurches across the unbroken snow, staggering this way and that, stumbling on the uneven terrain.

She stops, stands still, her hooded head swaying.

She lurches out again, in an arbitrary direction. She is going downhill, reels, staggers, falls face first in the snow, with muffled weeping.

Carl

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Jesus!

Grimsrud, still expressionless, breaks away from Carl's restraining hand to retrieve her.

BRAINERD POLICE HQ

We track behind Marge as she makes her way across the floor greeting various officers. She holds a small, half-full paper sack.

Beyond her we see a small glassed-in cubicle. Norm sits at the desk inside with a box lunch spread out in front of him. The following is lettered on the cubicle's glass door:

BRAINERD P.D.
CHIEF GUNDERSON

Marge enters and sits down behind the desk, detaching her walkie from her utility belt to accomodate the seat.

Marge

Hiya hon.

She slides the paper sack toward him.

Norm

Brought ya some lunch, Margie. What're those, night crawlers?

He looks inside.

The bottom of the sack is full of fat, crawling earthworms.

Marge

Yah.

Norm

Thanks hon.

Marge

You bet. Thanks for lunch. What do we got here, Arbie's?

Norm

Uh-huh.

She starts eating.

Marge

. . . How's the paintin' goin'?

Norm

Pretty good. Found out the Hauptmann's are entering a painting this year.

Marge

Aw hon, you're better'n them.

Norm

They're real good.

Marge

They're good, Norm, but you're the best.

He leans over and kisses her.

Norm

Thanks hon.

Marge

Ahh, ya got Arbie's all o'er me.

Lou enters.

Lou

Hiya Norm, how's the painting goin'?

Norm

Not too bad.

Marge

How we doin' on that vehicle?

Lou

Blue Cierra, dealer plates, none of the motels had one last night. But--the night

before--two men checked into the Blue Ox registering a Cierra and leavin' the tag space blank.

Marge

Geez, that's a good lead. The Blue Ox, that's that trucker's joint out there on I-35?

Lou

Yah.

Marge

Geez.

A TROPHY

It is a silver trophy topped by a silver tractor-trailer; it is inscribed to THE BLUE OX MOTEL from the U.S.A. TRUCKER'S HOST ASSOCIATION.

A finger taps at it.

Voice

Yeah, third year in a row we won for I-35 establishments. Woulda been five years, but four years ago they give it to the Brainerd Ramada. I suspect some money changed hands.

We are tracking along the hotel's reception desk.

Marge's Voice

Geez, ya think?

Voice

Yeah, well I could be wrong on that.

Marge's Voice

Any rate, those two fellas--

Voice

Yah, I remember 'em, here night before last...

The track has found the owner of the voice, a burly man resting his elbows on the desk.

... And they had company.

BOWLING ALLEY

We are on a mezzanine overlooking the bowling alley. Vending machines that dispense coffee, cigarettes, potato chips, etc. line the opposite wall.

Marge is sitting at a small iron table next to the mezzanine railing with two young women.

Marge
Where you girls from?

Hooker One
Chaska.

Hooker Two
LeSeure. But I went to High School in White Bear Lake.

Marge
Okay, I want you to tell me what these fellas looked like.

One
Well. . . the little guy, he was kinda funny-looking.

Marge
In what way?

One
I dunno. Just funny looking.

Marge
Can you be any more specific?

One
I couldn't really say. He wasn't circumcised.

Marge
Was he funny looking apart from that?

One
Yah.

Marge
So you were having sex with the little fella, then.

One

Uh-huh.

Marge

Is there anything else you can tell me about him?

One

No. Like I say he was funny looking. More'n most people even.

Marge

And what about the other fella?

Two

He was a little older. Looked liked the Marlboro man.

Marge

Yah?

Two

Yah. Maybe I'm sayin' that 'cause he smoked Marlboros.

Marge

Uh-huh.

Two

A subconscious type thing.

Marge

Yah, that can happen.

Two

Yah.

One

They said they were goin' to the Twin Cities.

Marge

Oh yah?

Two

Yah.

One

Yah. Is that useful to ya?

Marge

Oh you bet, yah.

FADE IN FROM WHITE
THE LAKE

A blanket of snow covers the frozen lake. The white is broken only by the odd ice-fishing hut, each with a car parked nearby.

There are also a few isolated houses spread along the shore.

EXT HAUS

A lakeside cabin. A Ciera with dealer plates is parked in the drive.

INT HAUS
TRACKING IN

on Jean Lundegaard, who sits tied in a chair with a black hood over her head. As we track in we hear inarticulate cursing, intermittent banging, and loud static.

TRACKING IN

on Gaear Grimsrud, who sits smoking a cigarette and expressionlessly watching.

TRACKING IN

on Carl Rolvaag, who stands over an old black-and-white television which plays nothing but snow, banging on its top, muttering to himself:

Carl
 . . . days. . . be here for days with a--
 DAMNIT!--a goddamn mute. . . nothin' to do. .
 . and the fucking--DAMNIT! . . .

The "damnits" are accompanied by fist slams on the TV set.

. . . TV doesn't even. . . plug me in, man. .
 . Gimme a--DAMNIT!--signal. . . Plug me in to
 the ozone, baby. . .

TRACKING IN CLOSER

on Jean in the black hood, as the curses and banging continue off.

Plug me into the ozone--FUCK! . . .

With one last bang we cut:

BACK TO THE TELEVISION SET

In extreme close-up an insect is lugging a worm.

TV Voice-Over

The bark beetle carries the worm to the nest.
 . . . where it will feed its young for up to
 six weeks. . . .

A pull back from the screen reveals that we are in Marge's house.

Marge and Norm are in the bedroom, in bed, watching television. From the TV we hear the sound of insects chirring.

After a long beat, silent except for the TV, Marge says, still looking at the set:

Marge

. . . Well, I'm turnin' in, Norm.

Also looking at the TV:

Norm

. . . Okay hon.

LATER

The bedroom is dark. Norm is snoring. The phone rings.

Marge gropes in the dark. Finally.

Marge

Hello?

Voice

Yah, is this Marge?

Marge

Yah?

Voice

Margie Olmstead?

Marge

. . . Well, yah. Who's this?

Voice
This is Glen Yanagita. Ya know--Glen
Yanagita. Remember me?

Marge
. . . . Glen Yanagita!

Glen
Yah!

Marge sits up a little next to the still sleeping Norm.

Marge
Yah, yah, 'course I remember. How are ya?
What time is it?

Glen
Oh, geez. It's a quarter to eleven. I hope
I dint wake you.

Marge
No, that's okay.

Glen
Yah, I'm down in the Twin Cities and I was
just watching on TV about these shootings up
in Brainerd, and I saw you on the news there.

Marge
Yah.

Glen
I thought, geez, is that Margie Olmstead? I
can't believe it!

Marge
Yah, that's me.

Glen
Well how the heck are ya?

Marge
Okay, ya know, okay.

Glen
Yah?!

Marge
Yah--how are you doon?

Glen
Oh, pretty good.

Marge
 Heck, its been such a long time, Glen.
 It's great to hear from ya.

Glen
 Yah. . . Yah, yah. Geez Margie!

LOW SHOT THE ROAD

It is great grey northern dawn.

The blue Cierra whooshes into frame, the only car on the road.

SHOTGUN HOUSE

Gaeear Grimsrud opens the front door and enters. It is very early morning.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

We follow him as he goes to the living room. He stoops down near a large Sony Trinitron TV and unplugs it. He puts both hands under the TV and straightens, grunting under its weight.

A young woman is entering, knotting the belt of her bathrobe.

Woman
 . . . Gaeear? What're you doeen?!

A three-year-old boy in dirty flannel pyjamas clutches at her leg and looks up at Grimsrud. He is wordlessly trying to squeeze past, with the TV, the woman at the door.

. . . Put that down! Where're my checks?!
 You're behind two checks, you sonofabitch!
 Put that down!

She starts batting at him. He tucks his chin down and hunches his head away from the blows, walking down the hall. She follows, kicking at him.

. . . You fuckeen asshole! Put that down!

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Gaeear bangs out the front door, the young woman still swatting a:

his back. She does not follow him out into the snow.

As he awkwardly gropes for the car's back doorhandle, she screams at him from just inside the house:

Woman

You owe me money you fuckeen fuck!

The child clutching at her leg is now weeping.

. . . . You selfish fuckeen asshole! What is Kyle supposed to watch? Your own flesh and blood!

The child screams hysterically.

. . . . What is Kyle supposed to watch?!

The child shrieks.

WADE GUSTAFSON OLDS

Jerry is on the sales floor showing a customer a vehicle.

Jerry

Yah, ya got yer, this is loaded here, this has yer independent, uh, yer slipped differential, uh, yer rack-and-pinion steering, yer alarm and radar, and I can give it to ya with a heck of a sealant, this Trucoat stuff, it'll keep the salt off--

Customer

Yah, I don't need no sealant though.

Jerry

Yah, you don't need that. Now were you thinking of financing here? You oughta be aware a this GMAC plan they have now, it's really super--

Another Salesman

Jerry, ya got a call here.

Jerry

Yah, okay.

JERRY'S CUBICLE

As he sits in and picks up his phone.

Jerry
Jerry Lundegaard.

Voice
All right, Jerry, you got this phone to yourself?

Jerry
Well. . . yah.

Voice
Know who this is?

Jerry
Well, yah I got an idea. How's that Cierra workin' out for ya?

Voice
Circumstances have changed, Jerry.

Jerry
Well, what do ya mean?

Voice
Things have changed. Circumstances, Jerry. . .
Beyond the, uh. . . acts of God, force majeure. . .

Jerry
What the--how's Jean?

A beat.

Carl
. . . Who's Jean?

Jerry
My wife! What the--how's--

Carl
Oh Jean's okay. But there's three people up in Brainerd who aren't so okay, I'll tell ya that.

Jerry
What the heck're you talkin' about? Let's ju finish this deal up here--

Carl
Blood has been shed, Jerry.

Jerry sits dumbly. The voice solemnly repeats:

. . . Blood has been shed.

Jerry
What the heck d'ya mean?

Carl
Three people. In Brainerd.

Jerry
Oh geez.

Carl
That's right. And we need more money.

Jerry
The heck d'ya mean? What a you guys got
yourself mixed up in?

Carl
We need more--

Jerry
This was s'posed to be a no rough stuff type
deal--

Carl
DON'T EVER INTERRUPT ME JERRY! JUST SHUT THE
FUCK UP!

Jerry
Well, I'm sorry, but I just. . . I. . .

Carl
Look. I'm not gonna debate you, Jerry. The
price is now the whole amount. We want the
entire eighty thousand.

Jerry
Oh for Christ sakes here--

Carl
Blood has been shed. We've incurred risks,
Jerry. Have the money ready. I'm coming
into town tomorrow.

Jerry
Now we had a deal here! A deal's a deal!

Carl
IS IT, JERRY?! You ask those three poor

souls up in Brainerd if a deal's a deal! Go ahead, ask 'em!

Jerry
 . . . The heck d'ya mean?

Carl
 I'll see you tomorrow.

Click.

Jerry slams down the phone and immediately it rings again. He angrily snatches it up.

Jerry
 Yah!

Voice
 Jerome Lundegaard?

Jerry
 Yah!

Voice
 This is Reilly Deifenbach at GMAC. Sir, I have not yet received those vehicle ID's you promised me.

Jerry
 Yah! I . . . those are in the mail.

Voice
 Mr. Lundegaard, that very well may be. I must inform you however that absent the receipt of those numbers by tomorrow afternoon I will have to refer this matter to our legal department.

Jerry
 Yah.

Voice
 My patience is at an end.

Jerry
 Yah.

Voice
 Good day, sir.

Jerry
 . . . Yah.

WIDE THE SHOWROOM

We are looking at Jerry's cubicle from across the showroom. With the noise muted we watch him slam down the receiver, rise to his feet, fling the phone to the floor, raise his desk blotter high over his head with pens and pencils rolling off it, and slam it onto his desktop.

He stands for a moment, hands on his hips, glaring.

He then stoops and picks up the phone, places it back on the desktop, starts picking up the pens and pencils.

TRACK

On steam-table bins of food, each identified with a plaque: BEEF STROGANOFF, SWEDISH MEATBALLS, BROILED TORSK, CHICKEN FLORENTINE.

COMPLEMENTARY TRACK

On a tray being pushed along a buffet line. It is piled high with many foods.

MARGE AT A TABLE

Lost in thought, her salad plate piled high with a veritable Annapurna of greens, meats and hot vegetables.

A hip with a hissing walkie enters frame and Marge looks up.

Gary

How ya doin', Margie. How's the fricasee?

Marge

Pretty darn good, ya want some?

Gary

No, I gotta--where's Norm?

Marge

He went ice-fishing up at Mille Lacs.
Whatcha got there?

He hands her a flimsy.

Gary

The numbers y'asked for, calls made from the lobby pay phone at the Blue Ox. Two to Minneapolis that night.

She looks at the paper.

Marge

Mm.

Gary

First one's a trucking company, second one's a private residence.

Marge

. . . Yah, okay, I think I'll drive down there.

Gary

Oh yah?

Marge

Yah, why not. Haven't been to the Twin Cities a while.

KITCHEN OF LUNDEGAARD HOUSE

Jerry, Wade, and Stan Grossman sit around the kitchen table. It is night. The scene is harshly toplit by a hanging fixture. On the table are the remains of coffee and a cinammon filbert ring.

Wade

Damnit! I wanna be part a this thing!

Jerry

No, Wade! They were real clear! They said they'd call tomorrow, with instructions, and it's gotta be delivered by me alone!

Wade

It's my money, I'll deliver it--what do they care?

Stan

Wade's got a point there. I'll handle the call if you want, Jerry.

Jerry

No no, see--they, no, see they only deal with me. Ya feel this, this nervousness on the

phone there, they're very--these guys're dangerous--

Wade

All the more reason! I don't want you--with all due respect, Jerry--I don't want you mucking this up.

Jerry

The heck d'ya mean?!

Wade

They want my money, they can deal with me. Otherwise I'm goin' to a professional.

He points at a briefcase.

. . . There's a million dollars here!

Jerry

No, see--

Wade

Look Jerry, you're not sellin' me a damn car. It's my show here. That's that.

Stan

It's the way we prefer to handle it, Jerry.

THE DOWNTOWN RADISSON

Marge is at the reception desk.

Marge

Hi, how ya doin'?

Clerk

Real good, how're you today ma'am?

Marge

Real good. I'm Mrs. Gunderson, I have a reservation.

Typing into a computer console:

Clerk

You sure do, Mrs. Gunderson.

Marge

Is there a phone down here ya think?

LOBBY CORNER

Marge is on a public phone.

Marge

. . . Detective Sibert? Yah, this is Marge Gunderson from up Brainerd, we spoke-- . . . Yah. I just wanted to let you know I'm in town now. . . Yah, thanks a bunch, you uh, you were gonna run a check for me on Mr. Proudfoot. . . Yah. . . Yah. . . No, I can find that. . . Well thanks a bunch. Say, d'you happen to know a good place for lunch in the downtown area? . . . Yah, the Radisson. . . Oh yah? Is it reasonable?

A GREEN FREEWAY SIGN

Pointing to the exit for the MINNEAPOLIS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

A tilt down reveals Carl behind the wheel of the Ciera taking the turn.

An airport sign reads LONG TERM PARKING

Carl takes a ticket and drives up the parking ramp.

THE ROOFTOP

As Carl drives up and stops. There are only a few snow-covered cars on the windswept rooftop.

Carl gets out of his car with a screwdriver, quickly scans the lot, then kneels down in the snow at the back of a parked car and starts unscrewing the license plate.

THE EXIT BOOTH

As Carl pulls up and hands the attendant his ticket.

Attendant

That's four dollars.

Carl

No, I just came in. I decided not to park here.

Attendant

What do you mean you decided not to park here?

Carl

I decided not to--I'm uh, I'm not taking the trip as it turns out.

Attendant

I'm sorry, sir, I have to charge you the four dollars.

Carl

I just pulled in here. I just fucking pulled in here!

Attendant

Sir, there's a minimum charge of four dollars. Long-term parking charges by the day.

A car behind beeps. Carl glances back, starts digging for money.

Carl

I guess you think, ya know, you're an authority figure. With that stupid fucking uniform. Huh buddy?

The attendant doesn't say anything.

. . . King Clip-On Tie here. Big fucking man.

He is peeling off one dollar bills.

. . . . You know, these are the limits of your life, man. Ruler of your little fucking gate here. There's your four dollars. You pathetic piece of shit.

GARAGE AREA

Jerry is staring up, mouth agape, at the underside of a car on a hydraulic lift. Bewildered, he looks about, then asks a mechanic passing by, his voice raised over the din of the shop:

Jerry
 . . . Where's Shep?

The mechanic points.

Mechanic
 Talkin' to a cop.

Jerry looks.

Jerry
 . . . Cop?

Marge and Shep face each other at the other end of the floor in a grimey and cluttered glassed-in cubicle.

Mechanic
 Said she was a policewoman.

Marge and Shep silently talk.

Jerry stares, swallows.

INSIDE THE CUBICLE

Marge
 --Wednesday night?

Shep is shaking his head.

Shep
 Nope.

Marge
 Well you do reside there at 1425 Fremont
 Terrace?

Shep
 Yep.

Marge
 Anyone else residing there?

Shep
 Nope.

Marge
 Well Mr. Proudfoot, this call came in past
 three in the morning, it's just hard for me
 to believe you can't remember anyone calling.

Shep says nothing.

. . . . Now I know you've had some problems, struggling with the narcotics, some other entanglements, currently on parole--

Shep

So?

Marge

Well associating with criminals, if you're the one they talked to, that right there would be a violation of your parole and would end you up back in Stillwater.

Shep

Uh-huh.

Marge

Now, I saw some rough stuff on your priors, but nothing in the nature of a homicide. . .

Shep stares at her.

. . . . I know you don't want to be an accessory to something like that.

Shep

Nope.

Marge

So you think you might remember who those folks were who called ya?

JERRY'S OFFICE

Jerry is worriedly pacing behind his desk. At a noise he looks abruptly up.

Marge has stuck her head in his door.

Marge

Mr. Lundegaard?

Jerry
(tensely)

Huh? Yah?

Marge

I wonder if I could take just a minute of your time here--

Jerry
What. . . What is it all about?

Marge
Huh? Do you mind if I sit down--I'm carrying quite a load here.

Marge plops down in the chair opposite him.

. . . You're the owner here, Mr. Lundegaard?

Jerry
Naw, I. . . Executive Sales Manager.

Marge
Well you can help me, my name's Marge Gunderson--

Jerry
My father-in-law, he's the owner.

Marge
Uh-huh. Well I'm a police officer from up Brainerd investigating some malfeasance and I was just wondering if you've had any new vehicles stolen off the lot in the past couple a weeks--specifically a blue Cutlass Cierra?

Jerry stares at her, his mouth open.

. . . Mr. Lundegaard?

Jerry
. . . Brainerd?

Marge
Yah. Yah. Home a Paul Bunyan and Babe The Blue Ox.

Jerry
. . . Babe The Blue Ox?

Marge
Yah, ya know we've got the big statue there. So you haven't had any vehicles go missing then?

Jerry

No. No ma'am.

Marge

Okey-dokey, thanks a bunch, I'll let you get back to your paperwork then.

As Marge rises Jerry locks blankly down at the papers on the desk in front of him.

Jerry

Yah, okay.

He looks up at Marge's retreating back. He looks back down at the papers. He looks over at the phone.

He picks up the phone and dials four digits.

Jerry

. . . . Yah, gimme Shep. . . . The heck d'ya mean? Well where'd he go?--it's only--
. . . . No, I don't need a mechanic--oh, geez--
I gotta talk to a friend of his, so uh. . .
have him, uh. . . oh geez. . .

HOTEL BAR

Marge is entering. She looks around the bar, which is a rather characterless lowlit meeting place for business types.

Voice

Marge?!

It is a bald paunching man of about Marge's age, rising from a semicircular booth halfway back. His features are broad, friendly, Asian-American.

Marge

Glen!

He approaches somewhat carefully, as if on his second drink. They hug and head back towards the booth.

Glen

Geez! You look great!

Marge

Yah--easy there--you do too! I'm expecting, ya know.

Glen
I see that! That's great!

A waitress meets them at the table.

. . . What can I get ya?

Marge
Just a Diet Coke. . .

Again she glances about.

. . . This is a nice place.

Glen
Yah, ya know it's the Radisson so it's pretty good.

Marge
You're livin' in Edina then?

Glen
Oh yah, couple years now. It's actually Eden Prairie--that school district. So Chief Gunderson then! So ya went and married Norm son-of-a-Gunderson!

Marge
Oh yah, a long time ago.

Glen
Great. What brings ya--are ya down here on that homicide--if you're allowed, ya know, to discuss that?

Marge
Oh yah, but there's not a heckuva lot to discuss. What about you, Glen? Are you married--you have kids?

Glen
Well yah, I was married, I was married to-- you mind if I sit over here?

He is sliding out of his side of the booth and easing in next to Marge.

. . . I was married to Janet Cooksey--

Marge
No, I--Glen--whyncha sit over there, I'd prefer that.

Glen
Huh? Oh, okay, I'm sorry.

Marge
No, just so I can see ya, ya know. Don't have to turn my neck.

Glen
Oh sure, I unnerstand, I didn't mean to--

Marge
No no, that's fine.

Glen
Yah, sorry, so I was married to Janet Cooksey--ya remember Janet? She was a year behind us.

Marge
I think I remember Janet, yah. She was--yah. So things didn't work out, huh?

Glen seems slightly distracted.

Glen
And then I, and then I been workin' for Honeywell for a few years now.

Marge
Well they're a good outfit.

Glen
Yah, if you're an engineer, yah, you could do a lot worse. Of course it's not, uh, it's nothin' like your achievement.

Marge
It sounds like you're doin' really super.

Glen
Yah, well I, uh. . . it's not that it didn't work out--Janet passed away. She, uh. . .

Marge
I'm sorry.

Glen's composure is slipping.

Glen
Yah, I, uh. . . it was a long, it was a tough, uh. . . it was leukemia. She fought. . . It was, uh. . .

Marge
I'm sorry, Glen.

Glen
Oh, ya know, that's, uh--what can ya say. . .

He holds up his drink.

. . . Better times, huh?

Marge clinks it.

Marge
Better times.

Glen
It was so. . . I been so. . . and then I saw
you on TV, and I remembered, ya know. . . I
always liked you. . .

Marge
Well I always liked you, Glen.

Glen
I always liked ya so much. . .

Marge
It's okay, Glen--should we get together
another time ya think?

Glen
No--I'm sorry! It's just--I been so lonely--
then I saw you, and. . .

He is weeping.

. . . I'm sorry. . . I shouldn't a done this.
. . . I thought we'd have a really terrific
time, and now I've. . .

Marge
It's okay. . .

Glen
You were such a super lady. . . and then I. . .
. I been so lonely. . .

Marge
It's okay, Glen. . .

CARLTON CELEBRITY ROOM

Carl Rolvaag is sitting at a small table with a tarty-looking blonde who is almost spilling out of a low-cut gown. Each is holding a drink.

Carl

Just in town on business. Just in and out.
Ha-ha! A little of the old in-and-out!

Woman

Wuddya do?

Carl looks around.

Carl

Have ya been to the Celebrity Room before?
With other, uh, clients?

Woman

I don't think so. It's nice.

Carl

Yeah, well it depends on the artist. You
know, Mac Davis, ya got no complaints.
Waiter!

THEIR POV

The backs of many many people, sitting at tables between Carl and the very distant stage, where Mac Davis, very small, sits on a spotlit stool and plays. The accoustics are poor.

CARL

Still signaling.

Carl

Waiter!

He holds up and points to his glass.

. . . So, uh, how long you been with the
escort service?

Woman

I don't know. Few munce.

Carl

Ya find the work interesting, do ya?

Woman

. . . What're you talking about?

DIRTY BEDROOM

Carl is humping the escort.

We hear the door burst open.

The escort is grabbed and flung out of the bed.

Carl

Shep! What the hell are you doing! I'm
banging that girl! Shep! Jesus Ch--

Shep slaps him, hard, forehand, backhand.

Shep

Fuck out of my house!

He hauls him up--

Carl

Shep! Don't you dare fucking hit me, man!
Don't you--

--punches him, and flings him away.

Carl hits a sofa and we see his bare legs disappear as he flips
back over it.

Shep enters frame to circle the sofa and kick at Carl behind it.

Shep

Fuck outa here. Put me back in Stillwater.
Little fucking shit.

There is a knock at the door.

Voice

Hey! Come on in there!

Shep strides to the door, flings it open.

A black man in boxer shorts stands in the doorway.

Man

C'mon, brother, it's late--Unghh!

Shep hits him twice, then grabs both of his ears and starts banging his head against the wall.

The hooker runs by clutching her clothes and Shep kicks her in the ass as she passes.

He spins and goes back into the apartment.

Carl is hopping desperately into his pants.

Carl

Stay away from me man! Hey! Smoke a fuckin' peace pipe, man! Don't you dare fuckin--
Unghh!--

After hitting him several times Shep yanks Carl's belt out of his dangling pants and strangles him with it from behind, lifting Carl's feet off the floor. Carl gurgles. Shep knees Carl repeatedly from behind as Carl purples, then dumps him onto the floor and starts whipping him with the buckle-end of the belt.

PHONE BOOTH

Inside a Red Lobster restaurant. Carl listens to the phone ring at the other end. His face is deeply bruised and cut.

Finally, through the phone:

Voice

. . . Yah?

Carl

All right Jerry, I'm through fucking around.
You got the fucking money?

JERRY'S KITCHEN

He is at the kitchen phone; through the door to the dining room we see Wade listening on an extension.

Jerry

Yah, I got the money, but uh--

Carl

Don't you fucking but me Jerry. I want you with this money on the Dayton-Raddison parking ramp, top level, thirty minutes Jerry and we'll wrap this up.

Jerry
Yah okay, but uh--

Carl
You're there in thirty minutes or I find you,
Jerry, and I shoot you, and I shoot your
fucking wife, and I shoot all your little
fucking children, and I shoot 'em all in the
back of their little fucking heads. Got it?

Jerry
. . . Yah, well you stay away from Scotty now--

Carl
GOT IT?!

Jerry
Okay, real good then.

The line goes dead.

A door slams offscreen and Jerry looks up.

EXT LUNDGAARDHAUS

Wade, briefcase in hand, gets in his Cadillac, slams the door and
peels out into traffic.

INT CAR

Wade's jaw works angrily as he glares out at traffic. He mumbles
to himself as he drives:

Wade
Okay. . . here's your damn money, now where's
my daughter? . . . Goddamn punk. . . where's
my damn daughter. . .

He pulls out a gun, cracks the barrel, peers in.

. . . You little punk.

JERRY'S HOUSE

Jerry sits in the foyer, trying to pull on a pair of galoshes.

Voice from upstairs
. . . Dad?

Jerry
It's okay, Scotty.

Voice
Where're you going?

Jerry
Be back in a minute. If Stan calls you just
tell him I went to Embers. Oh geez--

Thunk!--his first boot goes on.

RADISSON

Marge sits on the bed in her hotel room, shoes off, massaging her feet. The phone is pressed to her ear and, through it, we hear ringing.

Voice
. . . Hello?

Marge
Norm?

MILLE LACS LAKE

It is late evening, blowing snow. A leisurely pan across the bleak gray expanse finds a little hut in the middle of the frozen lake with a pickup truck parked next to it.

Marge's voice
They bitin'?

INT HUT

Norm has a cellular phone to his ear. His feet are stretched out to an electric heater. The interior is bathed in soft orange light.

Norm
Yeah, okay. How's the hotel?

Marge
Oh pretty good. They bitin'?

Norm
Yeah, couple a muskies. No pike yet. How

d'you feel?

Marge

Oh, fine.

Norm

Not on your feet too much?

Marge

No no.

Norm

You shouldn't be on your feet too much, you got weight you're not used to. How's the food down there?

Marge

Had dinner at a place called The King's Table. Buffet style. It was pretty darn good.

Norm

Was it reasonable?

Marge

Yah, not too bad. So's it nice up there?

Norm

Yah it's good. No pike yet, but it's good.

DAYTON'S RADDISON RAMP

The top, open, level. Snow blows. A car sits idling.

Another car pulls out of the ramp onto the level. It creeps over to the parked car and stops. It continues to idle as the door opens and Wade steps out, carrying the briefcase.

The door of the other car bangs open and Carl bounces out, hopping up and down.

Carl

Who the fuck are you?! Who the fuck are you?!

Wade

I got your damn money, you little punk. Now where's my daughter?

Carl
I am through fucking around! Drop that
fucking briefcase!

Wade
Where's my daughter?

Carl
Fuck you, man! Where's Jerry? I gave simple
fucking instructions--

Wade
Where's my damn daughter? No Jean, no money!

Carl
Drop that fucking money!

Wade
No Jean, no money!

Carl
Is this a fucking joke here?

He pulls out a gun and fires into Wade's gut.

Is this a fucking joke?

Wade
Unghh. . . oh geez. . .

He is on the pavement, clutching at his gut. Snow swirls.

Carl
You fucking imbeciles!

He bends down next to Wade to pick up the briefcase.

Wade
Oh for Christ. . . oh geez. . .

Wade brings out his gun and fires at Carl's head, close by.

Carl
Oh!

Carl stumbles and falls back, and then stands up again. His jaw
is gouting blood.

. . . Owmm. . .

One hand pressed to his jaw, he fires down at Wade, several
times. Blood streams through the hand pressed to his jaw.

. . . Mmmmmphnck! He fnkem shop me. . .

He pockets the gun, picks up the briefcase one-handed, flings it into his car, gets in, peels out.

THE DOWN RAMP

Carl screams down the ramp. He takes a corner at high speed then swerves, just missing Jerry in his Olds on his way to the top.

INT JERRY'S CAR

Jerry recovers from the near miss and continues up.

Oh geez!
Jerry

EXIT BOOTH

As Carl squeels to a halt at the gate, still pressing his hand to his bleeding jaw.

Carl
Ophhem ma fuchem gaphe!

Attendant
May I have your ticket please?

RAMP ROOF

As Jerry pulls to a halt next to Wade's idling Cadillac. He gets out and walks slowly to where Wade's body lies prostrate in the swirling snow.

Jerry
Oh! Oh geeeee!

He looks around desperately at the deserted roof ramp, the lights of the city twinkling in the distance. He bends down, picks Wade up by the armpits and drags him over to the back of the Cadillac. He drops Wade's body, walks to the driver's side of the car, pulls the keys and walks back to pop the trunk. He wrestles Wade's body into the trunk, slams it shut and walks back to the scene of the shooting.

CLOSE ON JERRY'S FEET

Jerry

Okay.

Scott's Voice

... Is everything okay?

Jerry

Yah.

Thoonk--the first boot comes off.

Scott's Voice

Are you calling Stan?

Jerry

Well. . . I'm goin' ta bed now.

CARL'S CAR

Carl mumbles as he drives, underlit by the dim dash lights, with one hand now holding a piece of rag to his shredded jaw.

Carl

... Fnkn ashzh. . . Fnk. . .

THE ROAD

Low, looking down the road. Carl's car roars into frame, violently swirling the snow. Its red tail lights fishtail away.

FADE OUT

HOLD IN BLACK

HARD CUT TO:

BRIGHT--LOOKING THROUGH A WINDSHIELD

It is a starkly sunny day. We are cruising down a street of humble look-alike houses.

We pan right as we draw towards one house in particular, in the driveway of which a man in a hooded parka shovels snow. He notices the approaching car and gives a brief wave.

REVERSE

Gary, the Brainerd police officer, is driving. He gives a

finger-to-the-forehead salute and begins to pull over.

OUTSIDE

As Gary slams his door shut and the other man plants his shovel in the snow.

Man
How ya doon.

Gary
Mr. Mohra?

Man
Yah.

Gary
Officer Olson.

Man
Yah, right-o.

The two men, both in snorkel-hooded parkas, talk in the driveway without shaking hands and without standing particularly close. They stand stiffly with their arms down at their sides and vaporized breath streaming out of their hoods. Each has an awkward leaning-away posture, head drawn slightly back and chin tucked in, to keep the face from protruding into the cold.

. . . So I'm tendin' bar there at Ecklund & Swedlin's last Tuesday and this little guy's drinkin' and he says So where can a guy find some action--I'm goin' crazy out there at the lake. And I says What kinda action and he says Woman action, what do I look like. And I says Well what do I look like, I don't arrange that kinda thing, and he says I'm goin' crazy out there at the lake and I says well this ain't that kinda place.

Gary
Uh-huh.

Man
So he says So I get it so you think I'm some kinda jerk for askin', only he doesn't use the word jerk.

Gary
I unnerstand.

Man

And then he calls me a jerk and says the last guy who thought he was a jerk is dead now. So I don't say nothin' and he says What do ya think about that? So I says, well that don't sound like too good a deal for him then.

Gary

Ya got that right.

Man

And he says, Yah, that guy's dead and I don't mean a old age. And then he says, Geez, I'm goin' crazy out there at the lake.

Gary

White Bear Lake?

Man

Well Ecklund & Swedlin's, that's closer ta Moose Lake, so I made that assumption.

Gary

Oh sure.

Man

So ya know he's drinkin' so I don't think a whole great deal of it but Mrs. Mohra heard about the homicides out here and she thought I should call it in so I called it in. End a story.

Gary

What'd this guy look like anyways?

Man

Oh he was a little guy, kinda funny-lookin'.

Gary

Uh-huh--in what way?

Man

Just a general way.

Gary

Okay, well thanks a bunch Mr. Mohra. You're right, it's probably nothin' but thanks for callin' her in.

Man

Oh sure. They say she's gonna turn cold tomorrow.

Gary
Yah, got a front movin' in.

Man
Ya got that right.

CLOSE ON CARL ROLVAAG

In his car, now parked, staring down at something next to him in the front seat. One hand still holds the rag pressed to his mangled jaw.

He is motionless.

HIS POV

His other hand holds open the briefcase. It has money inside--a lot of money.

BACK TO CARL

He takes out one of the bank-wrapped wads, looks at it.

Carl
. . . Mmmphh.

He starts pawing through the money in the breifcase, figuring the amount.

. . . Jeshush Shrist. . . Jeshush fuchem
Shrist!

Excited, he counts out a bundle of bills and tosses it onto the back the car seat.

He tries to take the rag away from his chin but the layer pressed against his face sticks, its loose weave bound to his skin by clotted blood.

He pulls very gently and winces as blood starts to flow again.

He carefully tears the rag in half so that only a bit of it is left adhering to his jaw.

EXT THE CAR

It is pulled over to the side of an untraveled road. The car door opens and Carl emerges with the briefcase.

He slogs through the snow, down a gulley and up the embankment to a barbed-wire fence. He kneels at one of the fence posts and frantically digs into the snow with his bare hands, throws in the briefcase and covers it back up.

He stands up, trying to beat the circulation back into his red, frozen hands, and looks to the right.

A regular line of identical fenceposts stretches away against unblemished white.

He looks to the left.

A regular line of identical fenceposts stretches away against unblemished white.

He looks at the fencepost in front of him.

Carl

Mmmphh. . . .

He looks about the snowy vastness for a marker. Finding none, he kicks the fencepost a couple of times, failing to scar or tilt it, then hurriedly plants a couple of sticks up against the post.

He bends down, scoops up a handful of snow, presses it against his wounded jaw, and lopes back to the idling car.

HOTEL ROOM

Marge has a packed overnight bag sitting on the unmade bed; she is already wearing her parka, ready to leave, but is on the phone.

Marge

Ya think he's all right? I saw him last night and he's--

Voice

What'd he say?

Marge

Well it was nothin' specific he said, it just seemed like it all hit him really hard, his wife dyin'--

His wife? Voice

Janet. Marge

No. Voice

Janet Cooksey? Marge

No. No. No. Voice
They weren't--he, uh, he was
bothering Janet for about, oh for a good
year. Really pestering her, wouldn't leave
her alone.

So. . . they didn't. . . Marge

No. No. Voice
They never married. Glen's had
psychiatric problems.

Oh. Oh my. Marge

Yah, he--he's been struggling. Voice
He's living
with his parents now.

Oh. Geez. Marge

Yah, Janet's fine. Voice
You should call her.

Geez, I-- Marge

There is an electronic bleating sound.

. . . Geez--hold, hold on Valerie, my other
line's ringin'.

She punches two buttons.

. . . Yah?

Chief Gunderson? Voice

HALLWAY

A handheld camera follows behind Marge as she walks down a brightly toplit modern institutional hallway. Marge is still wearing her outdoorswear; the nylon of shell of her parka goes SHWEEK-SHWEEK-SHWEEK as she walks.

We follow Marge to a door marked HOMICIDE, and in. The large room has a counter behind which people work at randomly placed desks.

Marge asks an officer at the counter:

Marge
Is Detective Sibert here?

Perched on a nearby desk is a woman sharing a loud laugh with the officer seated behind it. She reacts upon hearing Marge and steps up to the counter, still chuckling.

Woman
Chief Gunderson?

Marge
Yah--Detective Sibert?

Woman
Yah. Why dontcha come over ta my desk then.

FOLLOWING

We are following Detective Sibert through the room as she talks casually back over her shoulder, without ever really looking back.

Detective Sibert
Well, Shep Proudfoot is now wanted for assault and parole violation. He clobbered a neighbor of his last night and another person who could be one of your perps, and he's at large. Cup a coffee?

Marge
Oh no thanks, I'm good. So somethin's goin' on.

Detective Sibert
Yah. I called his employer, this Wade

Gustafson, ta see if he'd missed any work last week but I haven't heard back from him yet.

Marge

I talked to a salesman over there yesterday-- Lemme run over and talk to him again.

She rises.

Detective Sibert

Yah, couldn't hurt.

Marge

And then I guess I'll head back up to Brainerd. I just can't thank you enough, Detective Sibert, this cooperation has been outstanding.

Detective Sibert

Ah well we haven't had to run around like you. When're you due?

Marge

End a April.

Detective Sibert

Any others?

Marge

This'll be our first. We've been waiting a long time.

Detective Sibert

That's wonderful. Mm-mm. That's terrific.

Marge

Oh yah, we're just, we're just on pins and needles. You have children?

Detective Sibert leans forward to turn two framed photographs to face Marge.

Detective Sibert

I thought you'd never ask. The older one is Janet, she's nine, and the younger one is Morgan.

Marge

Oh now he's adorable.

Detective Sibert

He's three now. Course, not in that picture.

Marge
Oh, he's adorable.

Detective Sibert
Yah, he--

Marge
Where'd you get him that parka?

JERRY LUNDEGAARD'S OFFICE

Jerry is at his desk using a blunt pencil to enter numbers onto a form; beneath the form is a piece of carbon paper and beneath that another form copy which he periodically checks. The carbon-copy form shows thick, smudgy, rather illegible entries. Jerry hums nervously.

Glass rattles as someone taps at his door.

Jerry looks up and freezes, mouth hanging open, brow knit with worry.

Marge is sticking her head in the door.

Marge
Mr. Lundegaard? Sorry to bother you again.
Can I come in?

She starts to enter.

Jerry
Yah, no, I'm kinda--I'm kinda busy--

Marge
I unnerstand, I'll keep it real short then.
Do you mind if I sit down--I'm carrying a bit
of a load here.

Jerry
No, I--

But she is already sitting into the chair opposite, with a sigh of relieved weight.

Marge
Yah, it's this vehicle I asked you about
yesterday. I was just wondering--

Jerry
Yah, like I told ya, we haven't had any vehicles go missing.

Marge
Okay, are you sure, 'cause the reason we're concerned is that an employee here I talked to yesterday is now a fugitive from justice, and we know the perpetrators were driving a car with dealer plates. So it'd be quite a coincidence if this employee and this car weren't connected here.

Jerry
Yah, I see.

Marge
So are you sure that car isn't--have you done any kinda inventory recently?

Jerry
It's not from our lot, ma'am.

Marge
But do you know for sure it's not from your lot without--

Jerry
Well I would know. I'm the Executive Sales Manager.

Marge
Yah, but--

Jerry
We run a pretty tight ship here.

Marge
I know, but--well how do you establish that, sir? Are the cars, uh, counted daily, or what kind of--

Jerry
Ma'am, I answered your question.

There is a silent beat.

Marge
. . . I'm sorry, sir?

Jerry
Ma'am, I answered your question. I answered

the darn--I'm cooperating, here, and I. . .

Marge

Sir, you have no call to get snippy with me.
I'm just doin' my job here.

Jerry

I'm not, uh, I'm not arguin' here. I'm
cooperating. . . There's no, uh--we're doin'
all we can. . .

He trails off into silence.

Marge

Sir, could I talk to Mr. Gustafson?

Jerry stares at her.

. . . Mr. Lundegaard?

Jerry explodes:

Jerry

Well heck, if you wanna, if you wanna play
games here! I'm workin' with ya on this
thing, but I. . .

He is getting angrily to his feet.

. . . Okay, I'll do a damned lot count!

Marge

Sir? Right now?

Jerry

Sure right now! You're darned tootin'!

He is yanking his parka from a hook behind the opened door and
grabbing a pair of galoshes.

. . . If it's so damned important to ya!

Marge

I'm sorry, sir, I--

As he leaves, the parka over one arm, the galoshes pinched in his
hand:

Jerry

Aw, what the Christ!

Marge

Could I use your phone, sir?

Jerry is already gone.

Marge turns back to the desk, reaches the phone over and punches numbers into it. She fiddles with a pencil as she waits for the connection.

Marge

. . . Detective Sibert, please. . .

With the eraser end of the pencil she plays with the clipboard on the desk. She twirls it around, drags it over to her side of the desk.

. . . Detective Sibert? Yah, it's Marge again. . . Yah, real good. Well I'm in Jerry Lundegaard's office, and there's somethin' goin' on here. Maybe you could run a CH on him. . .

The form on the clipboard is from the General Motors Finance Corporation.

. . . I'm pretty sure my car is from his lot here, and he seems--oh for Pete's sake. For Pete's sake.

Her voice has gone suddenly flat as she stares off.

HER POV

Jerry, wearing dark glasses, parka hood pulled up, is easing his car around the near corner of the showroom.

MARGE

She rises slowly to her feet with the phone still pressed to her ear.

Marge

. . . He's fleein' the interview. He's fleein' the interview. Oh for Pete's sake, he's. . . No, this fella Lundegaard. . .

Jerry pulls up to the mouth of the lot and makes a left turn into traffic.

. . . What the heck--I can't--I can't see his darn license. Well it's prob'ly his own car-

- he's drivin' a royal blue late-model Fifth Avenue and he's just turning, uh, west now on Wayzata Boulevard. . . That's two A's. . . No, in Lundegaard. . . Yah, it looks like this thing goes higher than we thought. . . Yah. . . Wanted for questioning in connection with a triple homicide. . . Yah, he was real darn agitated. . . Oh for Pete's sake. . .

GAEAR GRIMSRUD

He sits eating a Swanson's TV dinner from a little TV tray he has set up in front of an easy chair.

He watches TV--the Sony Trinitron, which sits on the cart where the old black-and-white used to sit. Rabbit ears have been placed on the new set but its image--it might be a game show--is still heavily ghosting and diffused by snow. The audio crackles with interference as well. Despite the impenetrability of the image, it holds Grimsrud's complete attention.

With the sound of the front door opening Grimsrud looks up. Carl is entering, his face still suppurating and raw.

He reacts to Grimsrud's wordless look with a grotesque laugh:

Carl

You should she zhe uzher guy!

He glances around.

. . . The fuck happen a her?

Jean sits slumped in a straightbacked chair facing the wall. Her hooded head, resting on her chest, is motionless. There is blood on the facing wall.

Grimsrud

She started shrieking, you know.

Carl

Jezhush.

He shakes his head.

. . . Well I gotta muddy.

He is plunking down eight bank-wrapped bundles on the table.

. . . All of it. All eighty gran. Forty for

you. . .

He makes one pile, pockets the rest.

. . . Forty for me. Sho thishuzh it.
Adiosh.

He slaps some keys down on the table.

. . . You c'n'ave my truck. I'm takin' a
Shierra.

Grimsrud

We split that.

Carl looks at him.

Carl

HOW THE FUCK DO WE SHPLITTA FUCKIN' CAR?! Ya
dummy! Widda fuckin chainshaw?!

Grimsrud looks dourly up at him. There is a beat. Finally:

Grimsrud

One of us pays the other for half.

Carl

HOLD ON! NO FUCKIN' WAY! YOU FUCKIN' NOTISH
ISH? I GOT FUCKIN' SHOT! I GOT FUCKIN' SHOT
INNA FAISH! I WENT'N GOTTA FUCKIN' MONEY! I
GET SHOT FUCKIN' PICKIN' IT UP! I BEEN UP
FOR THIRTY-SHIKSH FUCKIN' HOURZH, I'M TAKIN'
THAT FUCKIN' CAR! THAT FUCKER IZH MINE!

Carl waits for an argument, but only gets the steady sour look.

Carl pulls out a gun.

YOU FUCKIN' ASH-HOLE! I LISHEN A YOUR
BULLSHIT FOR A WHOLE FUCKIN' WEEK!

A beat. Carl returns Grimsrud's stare.

. . . Are we shquare?

Grimsrud says nothing.

. . . ARE WE SHQUARE?

A beat.

Disgusted, Carl pockets the gun and heads for the door.

. . . Fuckin' ash-hole. And if you shee your friend Shep Proudput tell him I'm gonna NAIL hizh fuckin' ash.

OUTSIDE

We are pulling Carl as he walks toward the car. Behind him we see the cabin door opening. Carl turns, reacting to the sound.

Grimsrud is bounding out wearing mittens and a red hunter's cap, but no overcoat. He is holding an axe.

Carl fumbles in his pocket for his gun.

Grimsrud swings overhand, burying the axe where Carl's shoulder meets his neck.

MARGE

In her cruiser, on her two-way. Through it we hear Lou's voice, heavily filtered:

Voice

His wife. This guy says she was kidnapped last Wednesday.

Marge

The day of our homicides.

Voice

Yah.

Marge is peering to one side as she drives, looking through the bare trees that border the road on a declivity that runs down to a large frozen lake.

Marge

And this guy is. . . .

Voice

Lundegaard's father-in-law's accountant.

Marge

Gustafson's accountant.

Voice

Yah.

Marge

Where's Gustafson?

Voice
(Crackle)--looking.

Marge
Sorry--didn't copy.

Voice
Still missing. We're looking.

Marge
Copy. And Lundegaard too.

Voice
Yah. Where are ya, Margie?

We hear, distant but growing louder, harsh engine noise, as of a chainsaw or lawnmower.

Marge
Oh, I'm almost back--I figured I'd drive around Moose Lake on the way.

Voice
Oh. Gary's loudmouth.

Marge
Yah, the loudmouth, who knows. So they put it out, Lundegaard and Gustafson?

Voice
Yah, it's over the wire, it's everywhere, they'll find 'em.

Marge
Copy.

Voice
We've got a--

Marge
There's the car! There's the car!

HER POV

Slowing as we approach a short driveway leading down to a cabin. Parked in front is the dark blue Cutlass Cierra.

Voice
Fifth Avenue?

Marge
My car! My car! Blue Cierra!

Voice
Don't go in! Wait for back-up!

Marge is straining to look. The powertool noise is louder here but still muffled, its source not visible.

. . . Chief Gunderson?

Marge
Copy. Yah, send me back-up!

Voice
Yes ma'am. Are we the closest PD?

Marge
Yah, Menominie only has Chief Perpich and he takes February off to go to Boundary Waters.

EXT THE ROAD

Marge pulls her prowler over some distance past the cabin. She gets out, zips up her khaki parka and pulls up its fur-lined hood.

For a moment she stands listening to the muffled roar of the powertool. Then, with one curved arm half pressing against, half supporting her belly, she takes slow gingerly steps down the slope, through the deep snow, through the trees, angling towards the cabin and the source of the powertool roar.

ON MARGE

She slogs from tree to tree, letting each one support her downhill-leaning weight for a moment of rest before slogging on to the next.

The roar is growing louder. Marge stands panting by one tree, her breath vaporising out of her snorkel hood. She squints down toward the cabin.

HER POV

We can see past the side of the cabin into its back lot. A tall man with his back to us, wearing a red plaid quilted jacket and a hunting cap with earflaps, is laboring over a large power tool

which his body blocks from view.

MARGE

Looking.

HER POV

The man is forcing something downwards, which engages the roaring powertool and makes harsh spluttering noises.

CLOSE REVERSE

On the man. The roar is very loud here. The man is Grimsrud, his nose red and eyes watering from the cold, hatflaps pulled down over his ears. His breath vaporizes as he sourly goes about his work, both hands pressing down on a shod foot, as you would press down on the shaft of a butter churn.

Behind Grimsrud we see the woods, and movement.

MARGE

Slogging down to the next tree, panting, looking.

HER POV

Grimsrud forcing something into the machine, which we can now see sprays small wet chunks out the bottom.

MARGE

Her eyes shift.

HER POV

A large dark form lying in the snow next to Grimsrud.

CLOSE ON GRIMSRUD

Loud roar. Eyes watering.

Emerging from the woods behind him we see the large khaki-colored shape of Marge Gunderson, advancing, her right arm extended.

With a grunt Grimsrud bends down out of frame momentarily, and reenters holding a thick log. He uses it to force the leg deeper into the machine.

Marge is advancing. We can now see the gun in her extended right arm.

Grimsrud rubs his nose with the back of his hand.

CLOSE ON MARGE

Breath steaming out of her nose, corners of her mouth drawn down in a grimace as she advances. One arm is still curled under her belly.

HER POV

Hand-held track in on Grimsrud's back as he puts his weight into the log that pushes down into the machine.

The dark shape in the snow to his side is the rest of Carl Rolvaag's body.

CLOSE ON GRIMSRUD

Sourly at work as, behind him, Marge draws to within twenty yards.

When she bellows it sounds strangely hollow and distant, her voice all but eaten up by the roar of the powertool:

Marge

Stop! Police! Turn around and hands up!

Startled, Grimsrud scowls. He turns to face her.

He stares.

Marge bellows again:

. . . Hands up!

Conscious of the noise, she shows with a twist of her shoulder the armpatch insignia:

. . . Police!

Grimsrud stares.

With a quick twist of his body he reaches back for the log and hurls it at Marge and then starts running away.

Marge twists her body sideways, shielding her stomach.

No need--the heavy log travels perhaps ten yards and lands in the snow several feet short of her.

PULLING GRIMSRUD

As he pants up the hill--slow going through the deep snow.

Behind him:

Marge

Halt!

She fires in the air.

ON MARGE

She lowers the gun and carefully sights.

Marge

Halt!

She fires.

GRIMSRUD

Still slogging up the hill--a miss.

MARGE

Still sighting.

Marge

Halt!

She fires again.

GRIMSRUD

He pitches forward. He mutters in Swedish as he reaches down to clutch at his wounded leg.

Marge walks toward him, gun trained on him, other hand now

reaching under her parka and feeling around her waist.

It comes out with a pair of handcuffs which she opens with a snap of the wrist. She holds them up near her ear, her other hand pointing the gun down at Grimsrud.

Marge

All right buddy. On your belly and your hands clasped behind you.

THE CRUISER

Marge drives; Grimsrud sits in the back seat, hands cuffed behind him.

For a long moment there is quiet--just engine hum and the periodic clomp of wheels on pavement seams--as Marge grimly shakes her head.

She stops shaking her head, but still looks grimly out at the road.

Marge

. . . So that was Mrs. Lundegaard in there?

She glances up in the rear view mirror.

Grimsrud, cheeks sunk, eyes hollow, looks sourly out at the road.

Marge grimly shakes her head.

At length:

Marge

. . . I guess that was your accomplice in the woodchipper.

Grimsrud's head bobs with bumps in the road; otherwise he is motionless, reactionless, scowling and gazing out.

Marge also stares out at the road.

. . . And those three people in Brainerd.

No response.

Marge seems to be talking more to herself now.

. . . And for what. For a little bit of money.

We hear distant sirens.

. . . There's more to life than a little money, you know.

She glances up again in the rear view mirror.

. . . Don't you know that? . . . And here ya are, and it's a beautiful day . . .

Grimsrud's hollow eyes stare out.

The sirens are getting louder. Marge pulls the car over.

. . . Well. . .

She leans forward to the dash to give two short signalling WHOOPS on her siren.

She turns on her flashers.

She leans back with a creak and jangle of utilities.

She stares forward, grimly shakes her head. We hear the dull click of her flashers.

. . . I just don't unnerstand it.

THE ROAD

It is snowing. The sky, the earth, the road--all white.

A squad car, gumballs spinning, punches through the white, approaching in slow motion.

An ambulance punches through after it.

Another squad car.

FADE OUT

FADE IN
HIGH ANGLE

A small motel, straddling the interstate on a snowy windswept plain. One or two cars dot the parking lot along with an idling police cruiser.

MOTEL ROOM DOORWAY

We are looking over the shoulders of two uniformed policemen who stand on either side of the doorway, their hands resting lightly on their holstered side-arms. One of them raps at the door.

Cop One
Mr. Anderson. . .

A title fades in on the screen:

OUTSIDE OF BISMARK, NORTH DAKOTA

After a pause, muffled through the door:

Voice
. . . Who? . . .

Cop One
Mr. Anderson, is this your Fifth Avenue?

Voice
. . . Just a sec.

Cop One
Could you open the door please?

Voice
. . . Yah. Yah, just a sec.

We hear a clatter from inside.

. . . Just a sec. . .

One of the policemen unholsters his gun and nods to someone whose back then enters--a superintendent holding a ring of keys. This man turns a key in the door and then stands away.

The two policemen, guns at the ready, bang into the motel room.

The rough hand-held camera rushes in behind them as the two men give the room a two-handed sweep with their guns. The room is empty. Cop One indicates the open bathroom door.

Cop One
Dale!

The two men charge the bathroom, belts jingling, guns at the ready, jittery camera behind them rushing to keep pace.

A man in boxer shorts is halfway out the bathroom window.

The policemen holster their guns as they charge the window, and drag Jerry Lundegaard back into the room.

His flesh quivers as he hyperventilates and keens in short peircing screams.

The cops wrestle him to the floor but Jerry thrashes in a palsied fit. Both policemen struggle to restrain him.

Cop One
Call an ambulance!

Cop Two
You got him okay?

Cop One pinions Jerry's arms to the floor and Jerry bursts into uncontrollable sobbing.

Cop One
Yah, yah, call an ambulance.

Jerry sobs and screams.

A BEDROOM

We are square on Norm who sits up in bed, under the covers, eyes on a television set that sits at the foot of the bed. He absently munches from a bag of potato chips.

We hear the low audio of a talk show.

After a long beat Marge enters frame in a nightie and climbs into bed, with some effort.

Marge
Oooph!

Norm reaches for her hand as both watch the television.

At length Norm speaks, but keeps his eyes on the TV:

Norm
They announced it.

Marge looks at him.

Marge
They announced it?!

Norm
Yah.

Marge looks at him, waiting for more, but Norm's eyes stay fixed

on the TV.

Marge

. . . So?

Norm

Three cent stamp.

Marge

Your mallard?!

Norm

Yah.

Marge

Norm, that's terrific!

Norm tries to stifle a smile of pleasure.

Norm

It's just the three cent.

Marge

It's terrific!

Norm

Hauptmann's blue-winged teal got the twenty-nine cent. People don't much use the three cent.

Marge

Oh for Pete's--a course they do! Every time they raise the darned postage, people need the little stamps!

Norm

Yah.

Marge

When they're stuck with a bunch a the old ones!

Norm

Yah, I guess.

Marge

That's terrific.

Her eyes go back to the TV.

. . . I'm so proud a you, Norm.

They watch TV.

. . . Heck, we're doin' pretty good, Norm.

Norm murmurs:

Norm
I love you, Margie.

Marge
I love you, Norm.

Both of them are watching the TV as Norm reaches out to rest a hand on top of her stomach.

Norm
. . . Two more months.

Marge absently rests her own hand on top of his.

Marge
Two more months.

Hold; fade out.