

What lies in The Valley Below

Based on the Novel

The Happy Man

By

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Screenplay

By

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EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING - DAY

CHARLES RIPLEY, (40's) white male, exhausted, up for days, strides towards his property's edge.

He's unshaven, wears an open flowing robe, hands blood-red in what looks like dried, crimson primer.

CHARLES (V.O.)
The coyotes finally made it up from
the valley below.

EXT. PROPERTY'S BOUNDARY - DAY

Charles arrives at cliffside's edge.

Below him, a deep, gouging, dried-up riverbed cuts from right to left connecting Chula Vista to the Mexican border.

CHARLES (V.O.)
A dozen or more of 'em.

Charles bends down for the hose-bib, turns the nob open. Fresh water flows.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Ruskin. Jesus. A freight train
barreling straight to hell - and,
with me following all the way
without a blink.

Charles rubs his hands clean over trembling fingers.

CHARLES (V.O.)
But even he'd smile knowing a pack
of feral dogs had the last laugh.

Cracked, red flakes drop from dry hands. Charles hears the neighbor's gate open. He lifts up his eyes.

EXT. NEXTDOOR NEIGHBOR'S BACKYARD DECK - DAY

A sliding glass door, partially open.

Beige, tattered curtains sway lifelessly in a desolate, southern Santa Ana's.

A half-dozen spooked COYOTES dart wildly out from open doorway.

CHARLES (V.O.)
The Marshes rotted five full days
before the Sparklett's man even
took notice of the smell.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S SIDE-YARD - BACKYARD - DAY

A SPARKLETT'S WATER MAN (55), routinely bounds up the deck and stumbles upon the gorged pack of delirious dogs.

SPARKLETT'S MAN

Hey..!

Bristling, bloody snouts and bloodstained teeth curl, yap and snap.

The man drops his five gallon tank and turns. SPLASH.

SCREEN READS: MESA VERDE ESTATES - CHULA VISTA CALIFORNIA

INT. CHARLES' KITCHEN - CURRENT - DAY

Charles spits out a cleansing rinse of mouthwash into the sink, splashes water, clears his head.

CHARLES (V.O.)

Boredom versus a little excitement.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - LATER - DAY

CHULA VISTA DETECTIVES MAROON AND GABBERT (40's) step through the sliding glass door with drawn weapons.

CHARLES (V.O.)

Whoever said life in suburbia has
its drawbacks... was probably
right.

Two lifeless bodies - sprawled about. Red coyote paw prints scatter patches of blood everywhere.

Dozens of spent, high-powered casings sprinkle the floor like candy gutted from a bludgeoned piñata.

DETECTIVE GABBERT

Weapon sprays. Continuous arcs from
5 to 9. A real shit-show isn't it?

A grocery bag of hand guns and long rifles lie in the middle of the room.

A dead man, RUSKIN MARSH (45) lies pressed up against the corner of the family room.

His body, riddled with holes, legs and arms gouged from the wild, feral buffet.

DETECTIVE GABBERT (CONT'D)
Coyotes had a real party in here.
Probably took most of the traceable
evidence with 'em.

DETECTIVE MAROON
I count 32 shells. Consistent with
an Ingram, maybe.

DETECTIVE GABBERT
Full auto. But I don't see that
weapon though lying around.

A second form, female, crouches awkwardly lifeless down near
a guest room entrance.

DETECTIVE GABBERT (CONT'D)
Second Vic down the hall.

Detective Gabbert moves in for a closer look.

DETECTIVE GABBERT (CONT'D)
Jeeez-us...

The dead body is outfitted in a German Military jacket along
with a black, spandex body-suit.

The head is covered with a latex, rubber, zip-hood. Detective
Gabbert inspects the woman's hands.

DETECTIVE GABBERT (CONT'D)
Fingernails snapped in pieces.
Somebody took their DNA with 'em on
the way out.

Detective Gabbert pulls on a pair of rubber gloves - reaches
for Sybil's fetish headgear.

Hood comes off. SYBIL MARSH (40). Eyes and mouth frozen wide-
open in scream and strangulation.

DETECTIVE GABBERT (CONT'D)
Looks like some S and M went a
little, D-O-A.

INT. KITCHEN WINDOW - DAY

Doorbell rings. Charles snaps his kitchen blinds shut.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER - DAY

Furious activity invades the block. Neighbors step out from
their doors - terrified.

INT. FRONT DOORWAY - DAY

Charles, cleaned up, opens the door to find TWO SHERIFF
DEPUTIES (30's).

CHARLES (V.O.)
San Diego County Sheriff Officers.
Routine. "How well did I know the
Marshes? Had Ruskin spoken of any
threats?" Typical stuff.

EXT. BACK PATIO - LATER - 2 AM - NIGHT

Pitch black sky, Charles stands on the edge of his property
staring straight out into the dark abyss.

CHARLES (V.O.)
They say there's two kinds of
stories.

A torrent of inhuman screams begin to fill his head. Charles
closes his eyes - strains hard to make it all go away.

Baked chaparral sways and blows in the hot, dry, evening
currents.

CHARLES (V.O.)
A man takes a trip.

An EXPLOSION of imagined fire ignites.

Hundreds of snakes then pour out and slither away from the
flames, wrapping themselves up and around the body of
Charles' legs, waist, chest, suffocating, choking.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Or, a stranger comes to town.

Sounds of loud flittering crime tape snaps Charles out of his
imagined nightmare.

Charles turns to the back porch of his neighbor.

He sees a large black raven sitting ominously on the fence
line between the yards staring back at him.

The large black bird then reaches out with its wings, catches
a draft, lifts and drops into the dark valley below.

CHARLE (V.O.)
In this story, both are true.

EXT. BLUE SKY - AFTERNOON - DAY

An INS chopper thunders overhead dipping into the valley patrolling south toward Tijuana Mexico.

SCREEN READS: FIFTEEN MONTHS EARLIER

EXT. BACKYARD - SATURDAY - DAY

Charles, enjoying a reprieve from the work week, pushes mower alongside the rim of the valley ravine.

A woman's voice.

WOMAN (O.C.)
Charles? Charles?

EXT. BACKYARD DECK - DAY

Wife, SHELLY RIPLEY (38) wearing an outdated pair of Warby-Parkers and loose sweats strides through the back porch sliding glass-door.

CHARLES
Yeah?

SHELLY
It's Stu Andersen.

Work week reprieve officially over. Annoyed, Charles idles down the motor.

CHARLES
Stu Andersen? Why's he calling me on a Saturday?

SHELLY
He's your boss. How would I know? Said something about somebody retiring. Phil, somebody?

CHARLES
He's supposed to think we were out of town, Shells.

Shelly holds her ground. Charles relents, crosses the back lawn to the deck.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Coming, honey...

EXT. BACK DECK - DAY

Charles approaches. Shelly, defiant, extends the phone his way.

CHARLES
You gonna' stab me with that thing?

SHELLY
Thinking about it.

Charles takes the phone, turns and mumbles away.

EXT. YARD'S EDGE - DAY

Charles crosses the back lawn. On the other end of the phone, STU ANDERSEN (60'S) - a merry man with more energy a Saturday morning should allow.

STU ANDERSEN (V.O.)
Charles? Charles? You there? You didn't hang up me, did you?

CHARLES
No, no. I'm here, Stu. Something off with the specs? I triple checked 'em before they were submitted for approval.

STU ANDERSEN (V.O.)
No, no, no. I got something to ask you. It's Phil Hahn. My ass is out here hanging in the wind, Charlie.

Charles turns and slumps.

CHARLES
Tomorrow, Stu? I kind of need to...

STU ANDERSEN (V.O.)
42 years. Elizabeth called me. He's not taking any of this very well. It'd be a nice thing. You know?

CHARLES
I guess, yeah. That's fine, Stu.

STU ANDERSEN (V.O.)
"Team player." That's what I'm going to say on your performance review this year, Charlie my boy. Guaranteed.

CHARLES
I'll be there, Stu. Beef Bowl. 1
o'clock.

Click.

WOMAN (O.C.)
Hi, there?

EXT. ADJOINING YARD - DAY

New neighbor, Sybil Marsh wears Nike women's Air Max's, tight black cotton EttleLut stretch shorts, and an under armor form fitting Dick's Mock Neck.

Sybil crosses from her yard to the adjoining fence.

SYBIL
New neighbors.

Charles turns looking up to see Miss Marsh walking towards him from the neighbor's yard.

CHARLES
Oh. Hello.

EXT. ADJOINING FENCE - DAY

Charles pulls his sweaty shirt on over his bare chest.

CHARLES
Hi... I take it today's the moving-
in day?

SYBIL
It is. I'm Sybil Marsh.

EXT. FENCE LINE - DAY

Charles and Sybil arrive.

SYBIL
You must be the man next door?

CHARLES
Charles Ripley, neighbor at large.
Welcome to Mesa Verde Estates.

SYBIL
Thank you. I hope I didn't
interrupt your phone call?

CHARLES

Oh, no. That would've been welcome. My boss called. Somehow I've grown into the "accommodating" one at the office. My weekends have never been the same.

SYBIL

We all know how that is.

Charles looks over to see Shelly staring at him through the window working the dishes. She pulls shut the blinds.

CHARLES

Shelly, my...

SYBIL

Wife?

CHARLES

Yes, my wife... we were going to come by later to introduce ourselves.

SYBIL

Oh, the place is a madhouse. Boxes everywhere, furniture still in the garage. But my husband, Ruskin and I could swing by later for a drink? Our son Mark is with some friends until Wednesday. We could bring something with us? But then, it's your day off. We don't want to intrude.

CHARLES

Ah, no, no. New neighbors are no intrusion. We can make a quick run to Gelson's.

Sybil reaches out to Charles with her long and inviting hand. Their handshake last a bit longer than it ordinarily would.

SYBIL

Looking forward to all of it. I'd like that, Charles.

EXT. RIPLY DRIVEWAY - LATER - DAY

Shelly pulls her SUV into the driveway. She gets out of her car carrying a grocery bag from Gelson's Market.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Shelly enters from the garage door carrying her groceries.

Charles enters into the kitchen from the hallway. He's all cleaned up, hair combed, powder blue untucked button-down, refreshed - a bit of a bounce in his step.

Shelly turns and bursts out laughing.

SHELLY

Oh, my God, Charles. You didn't get all dressed up for me, did you?

CHARLES

Just cleaned up a little Shells, didn't mean to startle you.

SHELLY

Little Miss "under-sized top" at the fence light a fire in the belly?

CHARLES

Nothing wrong with making new friends. We used to have plenty of them, remember, Shelly?

SHELLY

You're pathetic.

CHARLES

I prefer to think of it as "Forward leaning".

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Hello, hello? Coming in through the sliding back door.

Charles bends forward - one last look at his reflection in the toaster - final adjustments.

CHARLES

You grab the tray, I'll grab the intro's.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Sybil and husband, RUSKIN MARSH (40's) comfortably sit across their counterparts.

Both are impeccably groomed, Ruskin physically formidable.

SHELLY

So, you two are new to San Diego?

RUSKIN

I'm a lawyer by trade actually but don't have much patience for it. I'm afraid I don't suffer fools lightly, you know? I hate waiting for anything. One of my short-sighted traits for sure. Legal work drives me nuts. Like screaming at glaciers. Much prefer the buying and selling.

SYBIL

As he's been traveling so much in this area lately; we decided to just go ahead and buy a place. And, lucky to find one too in this market. We had to overbid twice. I hated being alone.

SHELLY

Charles travels. Sometimes, I go with him but when I don't, it drives me nuts.

SYBIL

Wives should never be left alone. We can just get into so much trouble.

Charles passes around a tray of margaritas. The group holds up their drinks.

CHARLES

Cheers. To new neighbors and to new experiences.

RUSKIN

So, what kind of work do you do, Charles?

CHARLES

Oh, engineer. Strictly electrical. I design these things called FPGA chips.

RUSKIN

Defense contractor?

CHARLES

Yep. I'm a defense guy. Actually set out to be a writer in my imaginary youth. But my basic, resident, true-self was handed over a long time ago to suburbia and all the forces of attrition that come with it.

RUSKIN

Ha. Well, we'll have to get you out there a bit, Charles. Take a few good swings at that "attrition" you're talking about.

CHARLES

Old dog, new tricks? Is it possible?

EXT. RIPLEY HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - LATER - NIGHT

Charles and Shelly walk the Marshes out through the front door.

Ruskin and Sybil each separate and maneuver to pair up with their new counterparts.

Sybil puts her arm tightly around Shelly.

SYBIL

You like spas, Shelly?

SHELLY

I don't think I've been to one since we've been married.

SYBIL

Someone with a cute figure like yours doesn't spend half her life in the gym? I don't believe it for a second.

Ruskin pulls Charles to the side.

RUSKIN

Been thinking about what you said. Ever wonder if you would've made a better writer than engineer?

CHARLES

Only every day. But the routine of survival, huh?

RUSKIN

Wake up one day and all those ambitions somehow have leveraged you a galaxy far and away from where you started?

CHARLES

Precisely. I'm definately one of the caved.

RUSKIN

"Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt."

CHARLES

Ah, Cassius to Brutus - right before they break out the sharpened knives for poor Julius. To "discover, that of yourself which you yet, know, not, of".

RUSKIN

Exactly. All for the taking then, and all for the *taking now* Charles - if only we can get out of our own way.

EXT. BLACK SKY - NIGHT

Chopper rotor thunder blaers from above. A Border Patrol helicopter strafes above.

A white-hot beam whips about the cul-de-sac throwing washes of light across Mesa Verde rooftops.

SYBIL

What's that?

CHARLES

Immigration. They come over from San Diego and patrol the channel which runs a few thousand yards down into Mexico.

SHELLY

Border crossers mostly. Finding work and sending money back home.

RUSKIN

Flyover a lot?

CHARLES

A bout once every two weeks or so.

Ruskin checks his watch.

The aircraft thudding recedes. Ruskin follows the choppers' flight path overhead.

SYBIL
Well, our first night in our new home. Lovely connecting. Good night everybody.

ALL
Goodnight.

CHARLES
Welcome to the Mesa Verde Estates.

INT. RIPLEY HOUSE - NIGHT

Charles closes the door and steps into the hallway with Shelly.

SHELLY
Very impressive, Shakespeare.

Charles pulls Shelly towards him, cocks a brow. He kisses her - smiles. Shelly purrs.

CHARLES
Old man still has some gas in the tank.

EXT. MARSH HOUSE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

A tall man who wears a long, dark coat and hat steps out of an Austin Martin DB 11.

Ruskin and Sybil meet the man in their driveway. Small talk. Ruskin points to both the border and ravine behind the house.

INT. CHARLES FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Charles' playful advances, leads Shelly up against the front door - nibbling, kissing.

SHELLY
Well, you just came alive. Maybe we invite Sybil over more often.

With Shelly's back up against the door.

CHARLES
Maybe...

Charles leans over her neck and takes a peek through the peep hole.

He sees Ruskin and Sybil conversing with a man wearing the long, dark coat and hat. Charles advances slow.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Hmmm. That's weird.

SHELLY
Hey, where'd you go? I was kind of liking this...

CHARLES
Look. The Marshes are talking to a guy out there. Turn around. Through the peep hole.

Shelly turns and presses her eye onto the door next to Charles.

SHELLY
His license plate says, "ANTICO". Who do you think that means? Real estate company maybe?

CHARLES
Could be but that's a DB Martin parked in front of the driveway.

Shelly playfully then snaps and turns. She springs upward off her feet throwing her legs around Charles waist.

SHELLY
Who cares? And, who says we can't be as sexy as the new neighbors?

CHARLES
Nature?

SHELLY
Shut up.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Falling onto the bed, Charles and Shelly renew their spark - undressing the other, kissing, both getting back to where it began.

CHARLES
You get this little chewable at Gelson's today?

SHELLY
Aisle 7. Desserts on 8. Want some?

EXT. CHULA VISTA BEEF BOWL - SUNDAY AFTERNOON - 1:15 PM - DAY

Charles pulls up in his trustworthy Acura into the parking lot of the grand, Chula Vista Beef Bowl.

INT. BEEF BOWL BACK ROOM AREA - DAY

STU ANDERSEN (60's) overweight and balding, sits at the head table next to a listless, fatigued and withdrawn, PHIL HAHN (65).

PHIL HAHN
You didn't have to go to all the trouble, Stu.

Tied to the side of the head table are a few listless, party balloons which float aimlessly - a real "joyous" send-off for the ending of a man's fully committed life of work.

STU ANDERSEN
You helped build this company,
Phil. The least we can do is give
you a good send off.

Twenty or so disinterested co-workers do their best to pay attention.

Stu stands before a podium microphone over the obnoxious din of clanking restaurant plates and shouting busboys.

STU ANDERSEN (CONT'D)
Yes, good old Phil was here when
Building 401-A opened its doors
forty-two years ago and was among
the very first to take possession
of what was then a brand-new
"cubicle."

Stu applauds, Phil's CO-WORKERS, politely, dutifully join in, peruse their menus.

Charles discreetly enters. He nods to Stu. Stu gives him a "thumbs-up."

Charles stops in his tracks when he notices, with a bit of horror, that he and Phil are wearing the same sport jacket and tie.

COWORKER (O.S.)
Yeah, Phil.

Phil's eyes drop staring at his plate of Beef Bowl offerings. Life as he knows it is over.

PHIL HAHN

Jesus.

Charles takes the furthest seat away from the main table next to a few co-workers.

Next to Charles, five more DEFENSE ENGINEERS (40's) and a very tightly packed, VICKI KIMBERLY (21).

Lost in her incessant texting, Vicki shows no interest in Phil or the Beef Bowl whatsoever.

Closest to Charles, a company ferret of a man, DAN BEEKER (50's).

Phil too notices that he and Charles are dressed alike. Phil smiles weakly to Charles at the back table.

PHIL HAHN (CONT'D)

Run, Charles... Run.

Charles salutes and signals with an "atta'-boy".

DAN BEEKER

Hey, Chuck...

CHARLES

Hey, Dan. Is this now where all of the toil and sacrifice end up? The "Beef-Bowl cemetery"?

DAN BEEKER

Yep. In the past we had these things at the Mission Bay. At least there, they gave you the ocean view before you got the trap door.

CHARLES

Phil looks like he's been dragged out in front of a firing squad. I guess we can all look forward to this kind of, celebrated send-off?

DAN BEEKER

They didn't even give him a gold watch.

New employ Vicki drifts off into sorority memories texting her youthful friends who're elsewhere doing youthful things.

DAN BEEKER (CONT'D)
 Oh, hey Charles. I'd like you to
 meet our latest, new young
 associate, Vicki Kimberly.

Vicki doesn't even look up.

VICKI
 Hi.

CHARLES
 Hello.

Dan whispers.

DAN BEEKER
 I'm working on her.

CHARLES
 She know you're breathing?

DAN BEEKER
 Ha.

Phil Hahn weakly stands up to the microphone to lackluster
 applause. A waitress whistles bringing down the noise.

DAN BEEKER (CONT'D)
 That's a nice touch.

PHIL HAHN
 I've been the Network Security
 Manager for the last three years
 and the first thirty-nine were...

DAN BEEKER
 You alright, Charlie? Looks like
 you've seen a ghost?

Charles, ashen-white, grows more claustrophobic by the
 second. He reaches for some water.

CHARLES
 I'm alright.

PHIL HAHN
 I'd prepared some remarks. But now,
 looking at all of you here, and all
 I can think to say is, "it all just
 went by so fast".

The audience applauds. Stu hands over to Phil a cheap-jack,
 leucite doo-dad, retirement trophy.

PHIL HAHN (CONT'D)
I... uh. Speechless.

Phil crumbles back into his seat - extinguished. Charles looks around to the uninterested crowd.

CHARLES
That's the send-off?

VICKI
Boy, it's a drag getting old isn't it?

Charles bristles. He stands and begins clapping his hands loudly in support of poor Phil Hahn - maybe too much so.

CHARLES
Yeah!!! Yeah!!! Phil!!

Charles then moves towards Phil toward the head table working his way through his seated colleagues.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Excuse me. Excuse me. Just, right by, thanks.

Vicki Kimberly looks up - Charles intrigues.

VICKI
What's he doing?

DAN BEEKER
Looks like he's giving the old guy some respect.

Charles approaches Phil and places his arm around him.

CHARLES
Excuse me, Stu.

STU ANDERSEN
Oh, sure.

CHARLES
(whispers)
I wish you the best, Phil. You ever need anything, anything at all, you call me. Anytime, anywhere.

PHIL HAHN
Thanks Charlie. You've always been nice to me.

The crowd quiets down. Charles leans into the sloping microphone.

CHARLES

That's Phil Hahn ladies and gentlemen. The hardest working guy I've ever known. A guy who put his life into this company. A guy who's shoulders everyone in this room are all standing tall on. A guy who's earned our respect. A guy whose made a difference in this industry. Phil Hahn.

EXT. BEEF BOWL - SECONDS LATER - DAY

Charles breaks at the knees hyperventilating. His own destiny like that of Phil Hahn's - awaits.

INT. RIPLEY'S GARAGE - LATER - DAY

Charles in work clothes, cleans out his garage. Chargers and Las Vegas Raiders game on TV.

Hidden behind the shelf is a stack of his old, dusty, college writing journals.

He brushes aside the cobwebs to reveal, self-written, out-of-date titles on his old college bindings: "Fall Semester". "Interesting People". "The Girl I Met."

SHELLY'S VOICE (O.C.)

Hi.

Charles turns. Shelly steps out from the kitchen doorway, dressed in a fresh new form-fitting gym outfit.

CHARLES

Wow. I see you lost the Warby-Parkers?

SHELLY

You like it?

Shelly turns on her toes.

CHARLES

Very much liking it.

SHELLY

Sybil came over when you were with Stu.

CHARLES
She's a good influence.

SHELLY
She found a gym in Hillcrest and
talked me into a new outfit.

CHARLES
Good taste. You look fantastic.

Sybil then enters the garage from the Ripley kitchen door -
breathtaking.

SYBIL
Oh, hi, Charles.

CHARLES
Oh, hi Sybil.

SYBIL
You don't mind if I kidnap Mrs.
Ripley for a few hours, do you?
Thought we might get a work out in.

Sybil and Shelly exit the garage. Walking out, Sybil then
turns back secretly to Charles.

SYBIL (CONT'D)
So long, you.

EXT. BRIDGE - LATER - DAY

Girls on a mission, Sybil and Shelly fly-high across the
Coronado Span. Top down, music blares.

SYBIL
My girlfriend called. You up for a
little fun after the gym?

INT. RIPLEY KITCHEN - LATER - DAY

Charles reads from the large accumulation of old writing
journals.

CHARLES
"The place he found what others
know. That place which shouldn't be
secret - but is". Hmmm?

The doorbell rings.

INT. DOORWAY - DAY

Charles opens the door. He looks up to see a broad-smiling, Ruskin Marsh.

RUSKIN
Hey, buddy boy.

CHARLES
Oh, hey, Ruskin.

RUSKIN
Sybil got a call from some old friends. Now their big plan is to eat afterwards - wanted me to come over and let you know.

CHARLES
Oh, okay.

RUSKIN
What do you think? Boys night out, too? I know a great steakhouse. You in?

EXT. RUSKIN'S DRIVEWAY - LATER - DUSK

Charles, dressed nicely crosses over to Ruskin's house.

Ruskin's front door opens up. He steps out onto his front porch.

He wears a leather Air Force flight jacket, emblazoned with squadron patches.

RUSKIN
Saw you coming over. C'mon in for a second. Want to show you something.

INT. STUDY - DUSK

Ruskin leads Charles into his study.

CHARLES
You got quite a collection behind you there, Ruskin.

A very large, high-end executive desk dominates one wall with a large oak bookcase overbearing another.

Ruskin sits. Behind him, three mounted hunting rifles.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 7 Millimeter Dakota, a 338 Lapua
 and a long range Remington 270?

RUSKIN
 You know your stuff.

CHARLES
 My father was regular infantry.
 Knew how to pull apart and put back
 together every weapon ever made
 with a blindfold on. As for me,
 they've always made me nervous.

Charles sits in the accompanying Barcalounger.

RUSKIN
 Well, if weapons make you nervous,
 this one will make you want to
 change your panties.

Ruskin winks to Charles, slides open a second drawer and
 pulls out a Gordon Ingram.

CHARLES
 You got a machine gun, Ruskin?

A long magazine extends from the bottom of the pistol grip.
 Ruskin hands it across the desk to Charles.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 Isn't this thing kind of against
 the law?

RUSKIN
 I have a dealer's license so it's
 legal. It's an A-Model-Ten, nine-
 millimeter Ingram. Take out a
 boatload of chatty assholes quicker
 than you can say, "where's the
 fuckin' avocado dip?"

Charles hands it back to Ruskin pivots his head to see
 Ruskin's other accolades hanging on his wall.

CHARLES
 Hasting's Law Degree, Air Force
 Commission, 612th Tactical Fighter
 Wing.

Charles stands and looks over to Ruskin's book collection.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 Ha.. And, quite some library too?

RUSKIN
Working my way through the Harvard
classics.

Charles reaches for one book in particular and opens it. He
sees three blank, creamy pages and then it's title:

"The Fortunes of Vice by Marquis de Sade".

CHARLES
You're reading the Marquis de Sade?
If memory serves, French
aristocrat, late 1700's or so.
Unrestrained by morality or any
social norms. How is it?

RUSKIN
A bit bloodthirsty to be honest but
a real page turner into human
nature. Take it with you. I'd like
to hear what you think of it.

Charles tucks the book under his arm.

CHARLES
Thanks.

RUSKIN
Now let's get our teeth deep into
those steaks.

EXT./INT. RUSKIN'S ESCALADE - LATER - NIGHT

Ruskin and Charles make their way on East Harbor Drive in
Ruskin's cockpit-like, Cadillac Escalade.

CHARLES
So you flew in the 612th Tactical
Fighter Squadron? See any action?

RUSKIN
All the time.

The instrument lights cast an eerie glow onto Ruskin's face.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)
Constant patrols. One time I found
myself over the Strait of Hormuz.

CHARLES
Pretty far south of Iraq. What were
you doing antagonizing the Iranian
Republic?

Ruskin takes out a flask of booze and sips. Offers it to Charles, who helps himself.

RUSKIN
Swung wide a bit just to say hello.

CHARLES
What happened?

RUSKIN
Was cruising about twenty-thousand feet in my Raptor. Wasn't looking for trouble - just letting ;em know I was out there.

EXT. HORMUZ SKIES - (FLASH SCENE) - DAY

An F-4 Raptor cruises over the Strait of Hormuz at 25,000 feet.

RUSKIN (V.O.)
All of a sudden an Iranian Mirage F-1 was coming straight up at me.

From below, the Iranian Mirage screams skyward toward the U.S. F-4 Raptor.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Official engagement.

Ruskin's F-4 Raptor tilts hard for higher altitudes.

RUSKIN (V.O.)
I went vertical for the canopy, then rolled. Let him chase me a bit.

The Mirage now flies behind the American fighter.

EXT. TRAIN CROSSING - (BACK TO SCENE) - NIGHT

A commuter light rail bores down at 70 mph.

RUSKIN
I evened out at 25,000 and he settled up behind me with a radar-lock.

Ruskin punches it. Guardrails drop, warning lights flash.

INT. RUSKIN'S ESCALADE - NIGHT

Charles's face - ashen white. Escalade just pushes through. The light rail rumbles behind.

RUSKIN
My hands were full but I had him
where I wanted him.

EXT. HORMUZ SKIES - (FLASH SCENE) - DAY

The Mirage flies closer to the American fighter.

CHARLES (V.O.)
You had him?

RUSKIN (V.O.)
When he was about to let one go, I
pulled back with both hands on the
stick and flat-plated.

Ruskin's F-4 tilts upward and drastically slows. The Iranian
Mirage flies past Ruskin's Raptor.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Air breaks.

RUSKIN (V.O.)
Dropped down to 250 knots in a
blink. He blew right by me at
supersonic. Complete amateur
asshole.

INT. RUSKIN'S ESCALADE - (BACK TO SCENE) - NIGHT

Dash light intensifies over Ruskin's face.

CHARLES
He didn't expect that.

RUSKIN
He knew he fucked up. So, I just
let him fly a bit so he could think
about what was going to happen to
him. Pure poetry, Charles. Nothing
like it.

CHARLES
You let one go?

EXT. HORMUZ SKIES - (FLASH SCENE) - DAY

Ruskin's instruments read "lock". Raptor's wing right fires
an air-to-air ordinance.

RUSKIN
The first sidewinder went right up
his tailpipe.

The Mirage explodes to pieces. BOOM. Ruskin fires a second from his left wing.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)
The second detonated his debris.

Ruskin's F-4 widens his arc and circles back toward the falling scrap.

RUSKIN (V.O.)
I did a sweep but when I leveled out, there was his parachute.

The Iranian Pilot floats downward above the debris field.

CHARLES (V.O.)
He got out?

RUSKIN (V.O.)
Son of a bitch actually punched.

Ruskin then targets the floating pilot with his side-cannons.

CHARLES (V.O.)
What did you do?

RUSKIN (V.O.)
Lined up my 20 millimeters. Gave that fuck a real taste of the good old U.S. of A.

CHARLES (V.O.)
You did what?

Ruskin begins firing. The pilot is obliterated. Ruskin's Raptor screams past at Mach II.

INT. RUSKIN'S ESCALADE - (BACK TO SCENE) - NIGHT

Ruskin shrugs.

RUSKIN
Came apart like wet Kleenex in a hurricane.

CHARLES
You shot a pilot while his parachute was deployed?

RUSKIN
Geneva Convention isn't up there writing tickets at Mach II, Charles. Besides, it's the only thing they really understand.

CHARLES
And what's that, Ruskin?

RUSKIN
Cruelty, Charles. Cruelty.

INT. THE BEAR'S LAIR - NIGHT

A HANDSOME MAN (20's), physically ripped, leads Sybil and Shelly deep into the club. (Sodom and Gomorra).

More near NAKED MEN wear animated animal heads over their own i.e., a bear's head, a lion head.

SHELLY
Is this where your friend was
meeting you?

INT. STEAK HOUSE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

We see a good-looking Happy Hour crowd. Live piano. Charles & Ruskin sit at the bar. A BARTENDER (50's) approaches.

Ruskin tosses out his credit card.

RUSKIN
Let's get a tab going, shall we?

INT. MAIN SUITE - NIGHT

Mid-festivities, Sybil and Shelly step inside AMANDA ALBEE'S (30's) bachelorette party. MALE DANCERS bend, grind, squat and pour drinks into their navels as the bachelorette sips.

AMANDA
Three boys for each one of us.

Sybil and Shelly sit.

Amanda dances about wearing only a G-string and skimpy, fashioned, mock bridal gown.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
I have a feeling tonight I'm going
to be a very...

Sybil reaches out to Shelly's hand, touching, caressing.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Naughty little girl.

Dancing men then move to Sybil and Shelly - bending and gyrating.

SYBIL
Fun to think about being a little
dirty, isn't it?

INT. STEAK HOUSE - DINNER TABLE - LATER - NIGHT

A steak house WAITER (50's) removes the last bit of dessert
from the boy's table.

Ruskin's eye catches sight of TWO ATTRACTIVE WOMEN (48,49) on
the other side of the dining room.

RUSKIN
Waiter?

WAITER
Yes, sir?

RUSKIN
Whatever those two women sitting
over there in the corner are
having, send them two more. Put it
on my tab.

WAITER
Yes, sir.

CHARLES
What are you doing, Ruskin?

RUSKIN
Ampin' up the game a bit.

CHARLES
Amping up? Why? I'm out the door at
eight in the morning for work. We
are married men, right?

MORE - VARIOUS

The waiter crosses the floor and approaches the women - turns
and refers back to Ruskin and Charles.

RUSKIN
Target now engaged.

One of the Women gets up and crosses back over toward Ruskin
and Charles - grinning.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)
Well, that worked. Here we go.

CHARLES

Seriously. We've both had too much to drink. C'mon, Ruskin.

WOMAN #1 arrives at the table.

WOMAN #1

Excuse me, my friend and I were wondering, is there's something you're trying to tell us?

Ruskin stands up and greets.

RUSKIN

Why, yes. Yes, there is. Let's see, it's my birthday actually, and we were looking for a little company to celebrate with - so I just wanted to let you know that it would be quite all right for you to give me a kiss.

WOMAN # 1

Oh, it would, huh?

RUSKIN

I wouldn't mind at all.

WOMAN #1

Oh, really? A little forward, aren't you?

RUSKIN

Fortune favors the bold.

Ruskin leans in. He plants a delightfully, lingering kiss on the woman.

CHARLES

Ruskin, you can get arrested these days for that.

WOMAN #1

I guess it is your birthday.

Charles smiles, stands, but sways hard to the right, reaching for the table.

CHARLES

Shit.

RUSKIN

You okay, buddy boy?

CHARLES
I'll be back.

INT. RESTAURANT BATHROOM - NIGHT

Charles crosses towards the sink - turns on the faucet and splashes water on his face.

He checks his watch, 10:30 PM. Takes out his cell phone - calls Shelly - rings, rings, rings, no answer.

VOICE ON CELL PHONE (V.O.)
Hi, this is Shelly Ripley. Sorry I missed your call, but please leave a...

CHARLES
Hey. It's me. I'm out with Ruskin for steaks and drinks. It's looking like I'll be home later. Love you.

INT. THE MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT

Charles walks back to the table through the bar. Ruskin suddenly appears, steering him towards the front door.

CHARLES
What are you doing?

RUSKIN
Change in plans. We've been invited to a party.

CHARLES
I'm not going to any party.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Charles and Ruskin through a light rain past the valet area.

RUSKIN
C'mon, Charles. You've played safe by the rules your whole life.

CHARLES
I don't have to answer a bunch of questions from Shelly. I don't want to lie to her either.

Ruskin tosses his keys to Charles.

RUSKIN
Just because you're married doesn't mean you gave an oath to boredom.

INT. BEAR'S LAIR - MAIN SUITE - LATER - NIGHT

Full throttle - drinks, tight quarters, dancing.

Shelly, sits with a dancer. He whispers in her ear. Nibbles on it. A shiver goes up her spine. The man reaches for the inside of her leg.

INT. RUSKIN'S ESCALADE - LATER - NIGHT

Charles, behind the wheel - not happy but doing it. Ruskin takes his coat off and throws it in the back seat.

RUSKIN
We're going to have some fun,
Charlie Brown.

EXT. ISOLATED ROAD - A LITTLE LATER - NIGHT

The Women's car roars down the rain-slicked, two-lane road. Following behind is the Escalade.

INT. RUSKIN'S ESCALADE - NIGHT

Ruskin takes a deep slug off his bourbon flask.

RUSKIN
Where are we now?

CHARLES
Boondocks. Just following them like
you said.

RUSKIN
But they said it was only ten
minutes away. We're pushing thirty-
five.

CHARLES
Yeah, I get it.

Ruskin grows more agitated.

RUSKIN
Pull up alongside 'em. I'll talk to
them, see where the hell we are?

Charles concedes, accelerates the Escalade pulling into the oncoming lane behind the woman's car. He guns forward.

MORE - FULL SCENE - VARIOUS

Side by side, Ruskin gets the window down and sticks his head out - yelling.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)
Hey? Hey??

The driver rolls down her window.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)
Where are we?

WOMAN #1
We missed the exit. But we'll be
there in like, ten minutes.

The Women's wet car speeds up, Charles pulls back in position behind the women.

EXT. ISOLATED ROAD - NIGHT - LATER

Rain now begins to pour. Charles turns up the windshield blades.

RUSKIN
Ten minutes? Our mission is getting
fucked up.

INT. RUSKIN'S ESCALADE - NIGHT

Charles refers to the dashboard clock.

CHARLES
Maybe we just call it a night, huh?
This is getting really old and
weird.

Ruskin aggressively reaches over to the high beam switch flicking them off and on, off, on, off.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Hey, hey, Ruskin? Relax. Take it
easy. We're not in one of your F-
4's.

INT. WOMAN'S CAR - NIGHT

The women, visibly shaken.

WOMAN #1
Those assholes are crazy.

WOMAN # 2
Let's just go home.

INT. RUSKIN'S ESCALADE - NIGHT

Charles slows down.

Ruskin reaches over with his foot and stomps the accelerator.
Charles fights for control swerving roadside.

CHARLES
Ruskin, fuck man. I'm driving. You
insane?

Ruskin lifts up his leg and stomps his foot on the
accelerator again. Charles breaks - Ruskin throttles.

RUSKIN
Fuck them!

EXT. ISOLATED ROAD - NIGHT

The Escalade's front grill thumps against the women's rear
bumper. The women's car begins a dangerous slide.

CHARLES
We got their tail headed toward the
guardrail. Goddammit.

The back end of the women's car hydroplanes into a gradual,
threatening arc.

RUSKIN
Keep your tires straight and back
up from 'em.

EXT. ISOLATED ROAD - NIGHT

Catching a roadside pothole, the women's car blows a tire.
POW.

WOMAN # 1
Ahhh.

INT./EXT. WOMEN'S CAR - ESCALADE - ROAD - NIGHT

The women's vehicle then whips violently from right to left
towards the cliff-side drop.

CHARLE
They're going to hit the rail.

At high speeds, the small car hits the last part of the
safety rail and flips into the air.

CHARLES (V.O.)
No... God, no.

EXT. BLACK CANYON - NIGHT

The women's car launches straight off the cliff, careening helplessly downward. Wheels spin, canyon floor rushes at them.

INT. RUSKIN'S ESCALADE - NIGHT

Charles slams on the breaks halting at the guardrail's edge of the open canyon.

CHARLES

We pushed those women over, Ruskin.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE HILL - NIGHT

Full flight, the front of the women's car catches the face of the descending hillside.

The vehicle begins cascading violently downward seemingly without end.

EXT. OPEN GUARDRAIL - NIGHT

Charles and Ruskin fly out of the car arriving at the guardrail's edge - rain drives harder.

CHARLES

No. No. NO.

Charles peers over the cliff nearly plunging himself over. Ruskin grabs him by the back of his jacket.

RUSKIN

Charles, careful! Hold on. I got you. Grab the rail. Grab it.

Charles gets to his feet.

CHARLES

What've we done, Ruskin?

EXT. CLIFFSIDE HILL BY THE ROAD - NIGHT

The women's car continues tumbling, bouncing and banging downward, end-over-end.

CHARLES

They won't survive.

EXT. SMASHED GUARDRAIL - NIGHT

Ruskin and Charles see the car coming to its mutilated resting place - 100 yards in the field below.

No movement from the inside - canyon silence.

CHARLES
We have to do something. Call
somebody.

Ruskin instinctively recons the area for witnesses.

Not a house in sight, not a light in the sky, not a headlight
to be seen.

Ruskin checks his phone - full bars, full signal.

RUSKIN
I can't get a signal out here.

EXT. WOMEN'S CAR - CANYON FIELD - NIGHT

From the wreckage below, a pop of flame licks upward from
beneath the car's undercarriage.

EXT. SMASHED GUARDRAIL - NIGHT

Orange glow - fire.

CHARLES
They're going to burn.

Charles makes for the open rail. Ruskin grabs him by the back
of his shirt and yanks him backward off his feet.

RUSKIN
You're not going down there.

CHARLES
Those women are going to die
because of us.

EXT. WOMEN'S CAR - CANYON FIELD - NIGHT

Fire grows. The gas tank catches. Muffled pitiful screams
come inside the car.

EXT. SMASHED GUARDRAIL - NIGHT

Charles turns to the wreckage below.

RUSKIN
We can't afford to get involved in
this, Charles.

CHARLES

We are involved in this. We're both the reasons for it. You know that! You're an attorney.

RUSKIN

All the better to know that if we hang around, your nice, hard earned life in Mesa Verde Estates will be over as you know it, Charlie boy. First-degree vehicular homicide. That's a felony. That's a long time - away. Is that how you want to spend your retirement? In a 6 by 9 cell for the next ten to fifteen?

More fire laps upward from the car's undercarriage. Grass in the field fully ignites.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)

You want to go away like that?

EXT. WOMAN'S CAR - CANYON FIELD / GUARDRAIL - NIGHT

The women's car pops like a burning Hay stack. Va-wump.

RUSKIN

Drugs, booze and two married men out on the east side of San Diego with a couple of dead party girls? Are you kiddin' me? Christ, Charles, you were driving. Do the math.

EXT. WOMAN'S CAR - CANYON FIELD - NIGHT

The driver's door opens all the way. The first woman, on fire, staggers into the field.

EXT. SMASHED GUARDRAIL - NIGHT

Looking down the woman drops to her knees covered in flames face first. Ruskin, calm. Charles, frozen.

CHARLES

We can't just let'em, burn.

RUSKIN

We can, we will, and we have to.

EXT. WOMAN'S CAR - CANYON FIELD - NIGHT

The second woman staggers out on fire, screaming - hideously. She wobbles in a frenzied circle, then mercifully drops next to her friend.

RUSKIN

You would've never made it down there, Charles.

INT. ESCALADE - LATER - NIGHT

Ruskin drives. The neighbors sit in silence.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)

There was nothing we could do. Staying would have put us in prison and prison wasn't a choice.

INT. SYBIL'S MERCEDES - LATER - NIGHT

Shelly and Sybil quietly sit after a night of intense arousal.

SHELLY

I don't think Charles is home yet. He would have left the light on for me.

Sybil reaches for Shelly's hand.

SYBIL

I had fun, Shelly. Hope you did, too. It's nice to have a girlfriend who you can do things with.

Shelly turns to Sybil.

SHELLY

It's late. Ah, I...

Sybil leans in and kisses Shelly on the mouth. It lingers. Shelly eventually pulls back but not "unhappy".

SHELLY (CONT'D)

I should probably go.

INT. RUSKIN'S ESCALADE - LATER - NIGHT

Ruskin cuts his headlights and parks his Escalade in front of Charles' house.

He gives Charles' shoulder a reassuring squeeze.

RUSKIN

Home free, Charlie-boy. Put it out
of your mind. Home free.

INT. RIPLEY GARAGE - NIGHT

Side garage door opens. Charles enters. He passes his work-bench.

A touch of breeze lifts and gently places back down again the velvety yellow pages of Ruskin's - *Marquis de Sade*.

A faint light falls on a de Sade quote.

Page Reads: "*We monsters are also necessary to nature*".

INT. RIPLEY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Shelly, sexually shell-shocked, stands over the stove making a stack of midnight pancakes - eyes forward.

Charles enters. Both avoid the eyes of the other.

CHARLES

Hi. You're up?

SHELLY

Yeah. Hi.

Charles then sits in silence at the kitchen table. Shelly comes over with a couple of plates and a bottle of microwaved syrup.

CHARLES

You get my call?

SHELLY

I saw that you called. Figured
plans had changed.

Both sit in a respective daze - aimlessly stare at their plates.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

How was your night?

CHARLES

Oh, ah, uneventful. Ruskin, he's a
funny guy. Yours'?

SHELLY

Girls' get-together after the gym.
Friend of Sybil's getting
married... kind of boring really.

INT. NONDESCRIPT ROOM - NIGHT

Charles sleeps alone. We hear a pronounced sound and echo of water dripping from his ceiling above. Blop, blop, blop.

He gets up from bed and steps in knee deep rust water. Charles moves to the window and opens the drapes.

Outside, walking up and down the sidewalk - dead people. More sounds but that of the grinding rattling of two Husqvarna chainsaws - coming closer.

Someone or something is coming for him.

The door falls before Charles. A rush of iron-rust water floods the room.

Standing there are the two women from the car accident - burning.

WOMAN # 1
Why did you let us burn?

Both laugh and cackle at Charles - standing before him - on fire.

WOMAN # 2
You could have saved us.

INT. RIPLEY BEDROOM - MORNING - DAY

Charles awakens from the worst kind of dream. He looks over to see Shelly sound sleeping.

Charles throws his feet over the bed.

CHARLES
Jesus...

EXT. SILVER STRAND STATE BEACH PARKING LOT - DAY

Heavy waves pound on a San Diego Beach. Charles sits in his parked car dressed in his work clothes.

RADIO NEWS (RADIO)
Rescue workers are still at the
scene of a fiery crash...

INT. CAR - DAY

Charles blankly stares. He looks a thousand miles off into the distance.

RADIO NEWS (RADIO)
A double fatality in East County
this morning.

Charles replays the bits and pieces of the tumbling, crashing
car - the burning women.

RADIO NEWS (RADIO) (CONT'D)
Identification of two female
victims is being withheld...

His cell phone rings; The display reads, "Ruskin." Charles
powers the phone off.

RADIO NEWS (RADIO) (CONT'D)
Pending notification of family
members.

INT. TECHTRONICS CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER - DAY

Charles stands before a room full of ENGINEERS with an overly
detailed PowerPoint presentation.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
We decided to drop the hard-macros
approach and go with soft processor
cores.

On the walls: large photos of the MQ-1 Reaper Drone Military
Aircraft.

Charles, distracted, peers out the window to see two police
cars cruising down the avenue in front of TechTronics.

CHARLES (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Per Dan Beeker's recommendation, we
thought to goose the time-to-market
requirement.

The police car continues on. Charles - miles away.

STU ANDERSON
Charles?

CHARLES
Oh, ah, and we thought the specs on
the Reaper Drone could handle it.

EXT. TECHNITRONICS PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Lunch. Charles walks to his car.

CHARLES (V.O.)
 Two women dead just like nothing
 happened. No knock on the door.
 Nobody tying us back to the
 steakhouse.

INT. CAR - DAY

Charles drives with murder on his mind.

CHARLES (V.O.)
 Ruskin was right about the kind of
 trouble we would've faced. I
 wouldn't have done so well in jail.

EXT. FOOD COURT PARKING LOT - DAY

Charles parks his car.

CHARLES (V.O.)
 I'd never been out all night
 without Shelly since we've been
 married - seventeen years.

INT. GARAGE - (FLASH SCENE) - NIGHT

Charles enters his kitchen from the garage.

CHARLES (V.O.)
 I get back, she doesn't even ask me
 where I'd been. Makes pancakes with
 a distant, dull look in her eyes.

INT. KITCHEN (FLASH SCENE) - NIGHT

Charles sits at the table. He looks to Shelly - seeing
 something has unnerved his wife.

CHARLES (V.O.)
 Sybil showed her something.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASH SCENE) - NIGHT

Out of character, Shelly initiates assertive love making.

CHARLES (V.O.)
 But what?

EXT. TABLE - PARK FOOD COURT - LUNCHTIME - DAY

Food to his right. Charles writes in his journal.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
 Great American Novel?

He looks up to see, Vicki Kimberly, coffee cup in hand, sexy, perky, taking a big interest. Charles closes his journal.

CHARLES

Oh, no. That one has already been written. It's called "The Great Gatsby."

VICKI

Mind if I sit?

Charles scoots to his right.

CHARLES

Sure.

VICKI KIMBERLY

Actually, there's something I'd like to discuss if you have just a second?

CHARLES

Okay.

VICKI

I was wondering if you might think of me for one of the spots on the FPGA team? More than happy to commit to the grunt work as a way to work in.

CHARLES

Oh, uh, sure. Why not? You could play a support role to one of the senior engineers. That'd be productive for anybody.

Vicki leans forward with an expression that says: "please chat me up, oh interesting man."

Charles deflects Vicki's come-on.

VICKI KIMBERLY

Well, thanks. Back to work, I guess.

Vicki's tight figure doesn't go unnoticed on Charles. He watches her go.

CHARLES (V.O.)

But Ruskin was right. The less I thought about the accident - the better. And the less I thought of him, even better yet.

EXT. MESA VERDE ESTATES ARROYO - WEEKS LATER - DAY

Typewriter keys pop and snap.

A group of POLICE and PARAMEDICS climb out of the Valley.
They carry out a fully covered dead MAN on a stretcher.

CHARLES (V.O.)
A body was found in a nearby valley
bordering Mexico.

INT. KITCHEN TABLE - DAY

Charles looks out the kitchen window to see Shelly talking
with Sybil at their shared fence line.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Paper said his neck was slit and
his eyes were stabbed out.

EXT. MESA VERDE ESTATES ARROYO - DAY

The STRETCHER-BEARERS roll the body to the awaiting coroner's
van.

CHARLES (V.O.)
More than likely, Cartels sending a
grisly signal to a competitor.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Charles energetically pushes his mower up against the edge of
the ravine.

CHARLES (V.O.)
But I'd been good to my word in
avoiding Ruskin. Although I did
wonder what he'd been up to? What
he was thinking? Reading?

EXT. FRONT PORCH - FOLLOWING - DAY

Charles opens his mailbox. He sees an invitation. He opens
it.

CHARLES (V.O.)
And, when I got the Hartfellen
invitation, I knew he'd be there.
For some reason I was actually
looking forward to seeing him, even
though I knew I'd probably regret
it.

Doorbell.

INT. HARTFELLEN HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

BURT HARTFELLEN (55), a huge man, bounds from around the foyer and greets Charles and Shelly.

BURT HARTFELLEN
Charles. Shelly. Fantastic.

Standing inside the foyer are the ever-handsome couple Ruskin and Sybil Marsh.

BURT HARTFELLEN (CONT'D)
I believe you two already know the Marshes.

Ruskin smiles broadly. Charles' polite smile turns into a warm grin.

RUSKIN
You bet we do. Hello, Charles, Shelly.

CHARLES
Been a while, Ruskin.

Sybil puts her arm around her gal-pal Shelly.

SYBIL
There you are, "Little-Miss-Aloof."
I'm taking charge of you right now, Missy. Let's get you a drink and get caught up.

A lanky teenage boy named SETH (17) comes in through the open front door - unannounced.

SETH
Oh, hi. Here to pick up, Deb.

DORA HATFELLEN (50'S) greets the young boy.

DORA HARTFELLEN
Of course. Seth, right?

SETH
Yep.

DORA HARTFELLEN
Debra?! Your date, Seth, is here.

DEBBIE HARTFELLEN (O.C.)
You don't have to yell at me, mother. I'll be down.

DEBBIE HARTFELLEN (18) comes flouncing downstairs. Beneath the gobs of makeup and trashy clothes - young Debbie is actually quite breathtaking.

Ruskin locks into the youthful beauty.

DEBBIE HARTFELLEN (CONT'D)

Hi, Seth.

SETH

Hey. You ready?

Debbie spots Charles and Ruskin and immediately goes to them, smiling.

DEBBIE HARTFELLEN

Well, hello there, Charles.

DORA HARTFELLEN

That's "Mr. Ripley" young lady.

DEBBIE HARTFELLEN

"Mr. Ripley". Always nice to see you. And, you must be Mr. Marsh. The man who came to town.

RUSKIN

Four houses down.

SETH

Deb? Kind of, can we, like, go?

DEBBIE HARTFELLEN

Sure. See you around.

Debbie exits with Seth.

BURT HARTFELLEN

Joys of being a parent, huh?
Eighteen going on a strong 29. Come on out back, boys. The booze is first-class.

EXT. HARTFELLEN BACKYARD - LATER - NIGHT

Big deck, big pool, nice music - Hartfellen elegant.

Scattered guests grow in number. Tiki torches cast wavering glows. Burt, Ruskin and Charles share small talk.

BURT HARTFELLEN (CONT'D)

Hell of a thing about that Mexican kid they found in the canyon, wasn't it?

RUSKIN

Sybil actually saw them bringing up the body.

Charles takes a drink offered by Burt.

CHARLES

Maybe its time to start thinking about a fence up against that canyon chaparral?

BURT HARTFELLEN

They say whoever did it cut off his balls, and chunks of his goddamn left thigh were missing.

RUSKIN

Somebody owed somebody, something. Cartel, more than likely.

The front doorbell bongs again.

BURT HARTFELLEN

Excuse me, guys. Host duties call.

Burt departs. Ruskin and Charles peruse the incoming guests.

RUSKIN

So, little Debbie Hartfellen? What's the story on her, anyway?

CHARLES

You mean Burt's eighteen-year-old, daughter? Well, she's a kid and barely legal if that's what you mean? The well run dry since the steak house, Ruskin?

RUSKIN

Compartmentalize, Charles. Think about things when they need to. Forget the others as required.

CHARLES

Just like that, huh?

HARLO GOODWEATHER (35), a fastidious, upscale, gay man approaches Ruskin and Charles.

HARLO GOODWEATHER

Hi, Charles.

CHARLES

Oh, hey, Harlo. This is my neighbor, Ruskin Marsh. Harlo's another electrical engineer, like me. He works over at InfoPac.

HARLO GOODWEATHER

Ruskin and I are actually acquainted.

RUSKIN

Didn't Infopac lay off a couple hundred people or did I just read that in the funny papers somewhere?

Harlo's tiny little smile drains from his face.

HARLO GOODWEATHER

Right. They did, Ruskin. We should probably talk. I've been meaning to call you.

RUSKIN

Yeah, I bet.

Shelly, once again upbeat, suddenly appears by Charles' side, grabs his arm.

SHELLY

Hey, there you are. I've got to show you Dora's new converted garage/gym. Maybe we can do something like that? C'mon.

CHARLES

Be back.

EXT. HARTFELLEN POOL - LATER - NIGHT

The Hartfellen summer party is in full stride.

A nude Sybil Marsh jumps into the pool amidst delighted squeals and laughter.

SYBIL

Woooooh. Who's coming in? C'mon people.

Drunken Party-Goers oblige enthusiastically. Some undress and jump in.

Charles looks on, sips, glances back at the house to see...

MORE - VARIOUS

Ruskin and Harlo siting on the patio sofa. Ruskin leans in close, whispers in Harlo's ear.

RUSKIN
You didn't tell me you were let go
at Infopac? That why you're four
months behind?

HARLO
That's why, Ruskin.

RUSKIN
You came to me for help, Harlo. I'm
not a bank, you know?

Harlo stares at the floor.

HARLO
I should've called you.

RUSKIN
You put me in a real bind here
little man.

INT. HARTFELLEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Charles and Shelly head through the living room.

Charles notices Harlo Goodweather now sitting by himself, distraught, hunched over.

CHARLES
Let me talk to Harlo for a second.

SHELLY
See you poolside.

Shelly continues to the outside. Charles approaches the withdrawn Harlo.

CHARLES
Hey, Harlo? You don't look so good.
You alright?

Harlo keeps his head down - shakes his head "no."

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Can I get you a glass of water or
something?

Harlo begins sobbing.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 Whatever it is, it can be worked
 out. Everything always can be.

HARLO GOODWEATHER
 Not this. Not with what he's about
 to do.

Charles sits next to him on the couch.

CHARLES
 What'd Ruskin say to you out there?
 How do you know him, Harlo?

Harlo sobs.

HARLO GOODWEATHER
 He carried the note on our home. I
 got laid off.

CHARLES
 C'mon. Let's get you up.

Charles hustles Harlo to his feet.

HARLO GOODWEATHER
 He's coming for us, Charles. He's
 coming for you, too.

Charles moves Harlo up and out of the living room but is
 intercepted by Harlo's partner, TOMMY HERON (35).

Tommy is horrified.

TOMMY HERON
 Harlo? Honey? My God, what is it?

Harlo dissolves into more tears. Charles stands aside. Tommy
 takes Harlo into his arms.

TOMMY HERON (CONT'D)
 Don't worry, baby. It'll be all
 right. I'm here. I'll take him,
 Charles. Thank you.

EXT. HARTFELLEN JACUZZI - LATER - NIGHT

Charles approaches the bubbling and popping waters.

Sitting together in the jacuzzi is Ruskin and SARAH
 WEINBERGER (42), (MRS. SARAH WEINBERGER).

RUSKIN
 Hey, Charles.

Sarah looks on the verge of passing out. Ruskin has an arm around her.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)
Like for you to meet my friend
here, uh... Sarah.

SARAH WEINBERGER
Sarah Weinberger. We've met before,
haven't we, Charles? At the Mesa
HOA meeting?

CHARLES
Yeah, I think so. Isn't your,
husband the one who used to play
ball for the Chargers? Ralph
Weinberger?

SARAH WEINBERGER
Ah, huh.

CHARLES
Isn't he here, Sarah?

SARA WEINBERGER
He jumped in the pool, I think.

RUSKIN
So, Charlie. You were looking for
me?

CHARLES
You're taking Harlo's house,
Ruskin? You can't give him some
time?

RUSKIN
Do you pay your neighbor's
mortgage, Charlie?

Harlo's distant wails of agony echo from the front of the house.

CHARLES
Excuse me.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

Tommy holds up a distraught Harlo. Burt Hartfellen stands nearby.

TOMMY HERON

His life was that house, Burt. He
had everything in it. This will
kill him.

Charles approaches.

CHARLES

Hey, Burt. I heard the scream.

BURT HARTFELLEN

It's Harlo.

Harlo cries like a baby, uncontrollably. Tommy and Burt help
him into the back seat of a Lexus.

CHARLES

Tommy, what do you need?

TOMMY HERON

I don't know. He's inconsolable. We
got to figure this out.

They get Harlo inside - shut the door.

TOMMY HERON (CONT'D)

Thank you, Charles, Burt. I'll get
him home, get him calmed down.

Tommy gets in the car and pulls out of the driveway. Charles
and Burt share a frightened look.

BURT HARTFELLEN

I think the guys just lost their
house.

There is a sudden SCREAM from the backyard.

BURT HARTFELLEN (CONT'D)

Jesus. Now what?

Burt turns and rushes back up to the house.

CHARLES

Ruskin.

EXT. HARTFELLEN BACKYARD - NIGHT

Party-Goers scream and circle about the Jacuzzi; a fist fight
is under way.

Burt arrives from the rear - Charles pushes himself through
the crowd toward the source of the brawl - he finds Shelly
who's got a ringside seat.

CHARLES
Shelly? What now?

SHELLY
Ruskin and Ralph.

Ruskin, fresh out from the Jacuzzi stands buck-naked with fists clinched like swinging hammers.

RUSKIN
Bring it, Old School. Let's see what you got!

Ruskin battles a currently insane RALPH WEINBERGER (45), husband of Sarah Weinberger.

RALPH WEINBERGER
You filthy piece of shit, MARSH.

Sarah cringes at the side of the Jacuzzi, weeping, slipping, reaching for a towel in the melee.

SARAH WEINBERGER
Ralph, don't. It's my fault.

Ralph lunges and Ruskin finds his opening - fires a short right hand that connects.

Ralph staggers backwards, reaches for a beer bottle, shatters the barrel of it - then quickly comes back swinging hard.

Ruskin moves in with lightning speed: ONE, TWO, THREE.

Ralph goes to his knees. Bottle drops - CRASH. Ruskin grabs Ralph's head and knees him in the face - repeats.

RUSKIN
You want to pull a bottle on me?
I'll kill you; I'll kill you, man.

EXT. RIPLEY HOME FRONT YARD - WEEKS LATER - DAY

The neighborhood is eerily calm. Charles stands in front of his home, watering his lawn.

Grass is brown, unkempt lawns and yards gone awry - Mesa Verde, decaying.

CHARLES (V.O.)
The party was the topic of conversation for quite some time.

Shelly pulls into the garage driveway.

She skips out of the car wearing a tight, thigh-high cut skirt - carries with her half a dozen designer packages.

CHARLES (V.O.)
The "bare-naked Ruskin Marsh with
fists clinched like fully loaded
fire hydrants".

Charles looks on. Shelly turns at the front door, and bends her finger for Charles to come inside.

CHARLES
Hi, honey.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Shelly now dressed in a sexy Victoria Secret eyelet bustier. She pushes Charles down on the bed and straddles him.

SHELLY
Lunch time, Charlie.

EXT. SIDEYARD - DAY

Charles empties his garbage.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Ruskin didn't care about anything.

EXT. HARLO GOODWEATHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Charles sits in his car and sees the movers loading up Harlo and Tommy's furniture into a moving van.

CHARLES (V.O.)
The burning women, Sarah
Weinberger, Ralph. Harlo. Poor
Harlo.

INT. TOMMY'S CAR - DAY

Tommy drives. Harlo wails in the backseat helplessly in the backseat.

CHARLES(V.O.)
He cried all the way to the
hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY - DAY

Tommy flies out of his door and circles the car. Harlo - inconsolable.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Cried all the way to the emergency
room.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Harlo rails against his restraints on a rolling gurney.
Orderlies fight to keep his arms and legs restrained.

CHARLES (V.O.)
And cried even more when they gave
him...

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

A needle slides into the bend of Harlo's arm.

CHARLES (V.O.)
25 milligrams full of Thorazine. If
he wasn't psychotic before Burt's
party, he sure was now.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Ralph lies in bed - beaten up, bandaged. A bouquet of flowers
sits on a side table signed by Ruskin.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Ralph was in the hospital for two
weeks. Broken jaw, nose. Never
pressed charges.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Ruskin strides away from Ralph's room.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Wonder what Ruskin told him?

EXT. MARSH HOUSE - LATER - DAY

Ruskin comes out from the front door. The FEDEX MAN (40's)
picks up a fresh load of heavy ice boxes from Ruskin's front
porch.

CHARLES (V.O.)
This guy wasn't afraid of anybody.

EXT. THE BEAR'S LAIR - DAY

Shelly, dressed in "sexually available" stands before the
entrance of the Bear's Lair club - by herself.

EXT. CHARLES' BACKYARD - DAY

An agitated murder of crows flies above. Charles uncoils the electric cord for the mower - looks up.

The sky above is blotted by black flapping wings and demoniacal squawking.

The crows descend onto Ruskin's back porch and roofline. Charles crosses his own yard and approaches Ruskin's.

He jumps the waist-high fence between the yard.

EXT. RUSKIN'S YARD - DAY

Charles approaches Ruskin's back porch. The crows grow more feverish, hold their ground - defiant.

Charles looks to see the sliding glass door open. Through the frantic caws, Charles can also hear, faint moaning noises.

He takes a first step towards the devil's messengers and makes his way carefully to the open door.

CHARLES
(leaning in)
Ruskin? You home, buddy?

INT. RUSKIN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charles hears a deepening, muffled moaning from down the hallway. It's both intense and aggressive.

CHARLES
Ruskin?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Charles timidly works his way down the hallway.

CHARLES
Ruskin?

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A back bedroom door is slightly ajar. Charles looks in freezing in his tracks.

Ruskin and young Miss Debbie Hartfellen tumble about fully unclothed.

Charles, frozen, steps back out quietly - unnoticed - aghast.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Charles picks up the Marquis de Sade - begins thumbing through and reading Marquis de Sade.

CHARLES
 "What would pleasure be if it were
 not accompanied by a crime?"

He looks over to Ruskin's house. Debbie Hartfellen exits the front door wiping away tears from her cheeks.

She rushes to her car, gets in and skids off.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 (whispers)
 No... Goddammit.

EXT. VALLEY - 3 AM - NIGHT

A flashlight crisscrosses in the dense chaparral - dry bush rustles.

Then to follow - a shrill, wild human, unrestrained cry.

INT. BEDROOM - 3 AM - NIGHT

Shelly wakes up. She turns on a side table light and pushes Charles awake.

SHELLY
 Charles. Charles. Wake up!

CHARLES
 What is it?

Distant, maddening screams from the outside escalate.

SHELLY
 Listen.

More deep, terrifying sobs.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
 Coyotes?

CHARLES
 That's not a coyote. Someone's in
 the valley. Guys crossing the
 border. Shit. Get up.

Charles throws off the covers and gets out of bed. He crosses to his closet. He reaches for a lockbox on the top shelf.

He brings the metal container back to the bed. His thumbs work the combo-tumblers.

It opens. Inside, his father's snub-nose Colt 38.

SHELLY
You've never fired that. You'll
shoot yourself.

CHARLES
We're not going to stand here
defenseless. Get your robe on. Do
it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - 3:10 AM - NIGHT

From the hallway, Charles and Shelly enter the dark living room. From outside, a human bellow of pure, raw agony.

CHARLES
Cartel murder.

SHELLY
You're not going out there,
Charles.

With flashlight in hand, Charles slides the glass door open and steps out to the back deck - loaded weapon held tightly in hand.

CHARLES
Better me going out then them
coming in.

EXT. BACKYARD DECK - NIGHT

Charles brings his flashlight up and scans the perimeter of his yard.

SHELLY
Should I wake Sybil and Ruskin?

CHARLES
No. Stay where I can see you.

More dreaded sounds pierce forward. Another ear splitting SCREAM.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
It's coming from across the arroyo.
Stay here.

Charles steps off his deck toward the rim of his yard.

EXT. PROPERTY'S EDGE - NIGHT

Charles moves to the edge of his property. He coats the sloping hillside with a long beam of light.

Gathering Santa Ana's push the gaping vegetation like a swelling sea.

It grows quiet. We then hear another drawn out, searing, hideous cry.

Charles turns and makes his way quickly back to the house.

CHARLES
Shelly, off the deck. Back inside.
Go.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charles and Shelly re-enter the house and lock the door behind them.

Charles locks and secures the door. He picks up the phone and dials 911.

CHARLES (PHONE)
Hello. Yes, I'm Charles Ripley. I
think someone's getting killed in
the valley below me.

EXT. FRONT YARD - MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

San Diego patrol cars arrive in Charles' driveway. THREE PATROL OFFICERS (30's) get out of their cars.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Charles enters the dark garage through his kitchen and exits the garage through a sideyard access door leaving it open.

EXT. FRONT YARD - MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

Charles approaches.

CHARLES
Back in the canyon. The open side
gate right here. Someone is killing
somebody!

EXT. CHARLES' BACKYARD - NIGHT

Charles and the three Officers rush through the back yard.

A Police Helicopter arrives and hovers overhead.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Chopper wash whips furiously inside the garage itself from above.

A bouncing and bathing light is just enough to reveal pages from the Marquis de Sade...

Pages flip, to read:

"The pleasures of the imagination"... "To know virtue, we must know vice..."

EXT. PROPERTY'S EDGE - NIGHT

Charles and the Police approach the lip of the yard. The patrol chopper above drops directly into the black chasm.

EXT. CANYON SLOPE - NIGHT

A rumbling, thrashing sound is heard from below coming towards them.

A DARK FIGURE batters its way upward and out of the canyon directly into Charles' backyard.

EXT. PROPERTY'S EDGE - NIGHT

A dark figure immerges from the brush. The police point their drawn weapons.

OFFICER # 1
Get your fucking hands in the air.
NOW.

It's Ruskin Marsh. He emerges from the edge of the chaparral. Ruskin's hands are held high.

RUSKIN
Hey, whoa. Hey. I'm the neighbor.
Ruskin Marsh. Neighbor.

CHARLES
Ruskin? Yeah, he lives next door.

Ruskin crests over the canyon lip, out of breath. Forehead covered in grime.

RUSKIN
Down there. There's two of them
working some guy over. It's bad. I
got close enough.

The Patrol Officers exchange a look.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)
They ran south when they saw me,
heading back towards San Ysidro.

OFFICER # 2
You say there's two?

RUSKIN
That I saw. Two and one victim on
the ground.

Officer # 2 jabbers in his shoulder talkie. Officers 1 and 3
rush down to the canyon below.

Charles and Ruskin stand alone for a moment. Choppers above -
swirling hot search lights on a lower floor.

CHARLES
You, went down there, Ruskin?

RUSKIN
Hear those screams. I recon' d it.
Did a sweep.

Charles takes notice of Ruskin's clothes, dark pants, dark
shirt, stuff that blends into the night.

CHARLES
You heard those screams. Why didn't
you call the police first?

The helicopter levels upwards. Prop wash from chopper rotors
blows hard against Ruskin and Charles.

RUSKIN
Can't always wait for the Generals,
Charles.

More OFFICERS and a PARAMEDIC TEAM rush by and down into the
canyon.

OFFICER # 3
Bravo command. Bravo command.

Patrol Officer # 1, reappears hyperventilating. He staggers,
face a ghastly white.

POLICE OFFICER # 1
We found him. He was cut up - parts
missing.

INT. KITCHEN - WEEKS LATER - DAY

Charles begins to put the pieces together - looks out the window to Ruskin's house.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Debra Hartfellen suddenly left.
Without even a word of farewell.
Just gone. Pfft.

EXT. CHARLES' HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAYS LATER - DAY

A distraught Dora Hartfellen presses a "MISSING PERSON" poster of her daughter, Debbie, into Charles' hands.

DORA
Charles. You've always been a good neighbor to us. Debra thought the world of you. Please contact us if you see her. Please.

CHARLES'S VOICE (V.O.)
And since Burt's daughter was over 18, the police couldn't do anything about it.

DORA
We've always been able to count on you.

CHARLES
Of course.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charles lies awake. Shelly nuzzles in - fast asleep. He thumbs through various pages of The Marquis DeSade.

We also see de Sade's various quotes:

"Contrivances diminish your pleasure".. "receive the painful, impression will be sweet and mild"...

CHARLES (V.O.)
More border-crossers were turning up not just dead - but butchered.

INT. CHARLES' GARAGE - DAY

Charles sits at his card table; his open journal lies before him next to the Marquis de Sade. His mind, haunted, adrift.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Dorothy Southwood, a second girl
somehow wandered away from another
backyard skinny-dipping fiesta.

INT. GRAN TORINO - NIGHT

Two GANG BANGERS (20's) patiently sit with a 9mm handgun in each of their hands.

CESAR
When he's done, then me, then you.
Then we take her out to the desert.

Before them we see...

INT. BACKSEAT OF A TOYOTA - NIGHT

Through the rear window, a drunk and rattled DOROTHY SOUTHWOOD (17) sits between two other rough and tatted gang members - she kisses one, the other is up her shirt.

MORE - CONTINUOUS

A COP'S flashlight swaths the scene. The Gran Torino boys stand car side in handcuffs - their weapons on the hood.

CHARLES (V.O.)
She was lucky enough to find two
gangbangers who decided to keep her
inside Chula Vista.

Cops approach, weapons drawn. Booze, smokes, clothes strewn about.

COP # 1
Get your hands off the girl.

INT. TECHTRONICS OFFICE - DAYS LATER - DAY

Charles works at his cubicle.

VICKI KIMBERLY (O.C.)
Here's the SB25 schematics you
wanted.

He looks up. Vicki Kimberly, sexy, available. She hands him a memory stick.

VICKI
I knew you wanted it.

Charles takes the stick.

CHARLES
How'd you get this, Vicki?

VICKI KIMBERLY
I went over to Mr. Barnes' office.
I asked him but he was a real jerk
about it. He got called away so I
just downloaded when no one was
looking. You going to fire me?

CHARLES
No. I appreciate your initiative.

VICKI KIMBERLY
So, now you owe me a favor. Lunch?

INT. VICKI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Vicki and Charles roll around half-naked on woven-grass Ikea rug.

INT. BEAR'S LAIR - ANOTHER - DAY

Before Shelly, a near-naked man dances wearing a Zebra head.
With drink in hand, Shelly is on the prowl in distant lands.

INT. GARAGE - WEEKS LATER - DAY

Charles sits at the card table. He looks harried and wide-eyed.

He reaches into his pocket - pulls out a crumpled note. It reads: **Lunch tomorrow? - "Vicki"**.

Charles moves to his workbench, finds a match, lights Vicki's note and places the burning paper into a jar filled with wood screws.

CHARLES
Shit.

INT. RUSKIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Ruskin opens up his door. Charles stands, beleaguered.

RUSKIN
Hey, Charles. You don't look so good.

CHARLES
Take you to lunch?

INT. DOWNTOWN BAR - LATER - DAY

Ruskin slugs back an afternoon cocktail, signals for another. Charles, uneasy, restless.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)
So, you got yourself involved with
someone at the office. So, what?

CHARLES
It's gotten complicated.

RUSKIN
How?

CHARLES
She gets off with the afternoon
thing. It's now becoming a real
problem around the office. She's
leaving me notes. I think I've seen
her drive by my house.

RUSKIN
None of that's good. What did you
say her name was?

INT. HARTFELLEN LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dora and Burt Hartfellen sit with a PRIVATE DETECTIVE (60's).

BURT HARTFELLEN
There's nothing? With all the
social media, friends, Facebook?
There's not a trace of her?

PRIVATE DETECTIVE
I'm sorry.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - WEEKS LATER - DAY

Charles works in a lab where an engineer's meeting is
breaking up.

CHARLES
Hey, Dan? Weren't we missing, a,
um, what's-her-name? Blonde girl,
she was at Phil Hahn's retirement a
few month's back?

BEEKER
Oh, yeah. Vicki Kimberly. Left a
couple days ago, I guess. Back to
school or something like that,
whatever it was.
(MORE)

BEEKER (CONT'D)

Awful sudden, though. She was doing pretty well around here, thought she'd be one to stick around.

EXT. SAN DIEGO PROMENADE RESTAURANT - DAY

Charles sits numbly across from Ruskin. A WAITER (30's) places a drink at Charles's side.

CHARLES

So, Vicki Kimberly?

RUSKIN

Yeah?

CHARLES

I just heard she left town. Basically, unannounced.

RUSKIN

Well, that solves your little work problem.

CHARLES

You have anything to do with it, Ruskin?

RUSKIN

Problem doesn't exist anymore does it, Charles? What's the saying, "Don't look a gift horse?"

CHARLES

You know I've never lied to my wife in my life until I met you.

RUSKIN

"Call of the Wild" Charles. The unleashing of your placid nature back to all those unrestrained places before you tamed them. You banged the girl because you wanted to. You weren't held back because of convention. That's what it feels like to be powerful. Feels satisfying doesn't it? You, yourself told me you hated conflict, your big secret, right? You know, "to stay in right in the middle?" Why belabor it with Shelly? You did it, you enjoyed it, it's over, Vicki's gone. It's clean. Impulse, satisfied. Find the next thing to take a second bite.

CHARLES

Are you a sadist, Ruskin?

RUSKIN

I suspect you've seen enough of the world to know that human nature can be a little dark, a little mean?

CHARLES

"When she's abandoned her moral center? When she's cast aside her façade of propriety? A writhing, mewling, bucking, wanton whore for my enjoyment and pleasure? Enticing from within the feral lioness, growling and scratching and biting and taking everything I could dish out?" I've been reading your, Marquis de Sade, Ruskin. Is it murder for the simple enjoyment of it?

RUSKIN

I take it you haven't finished the book, yet?

CHARLES

Is there some other cliffhanger I'm missing?

Approaching the table is ANGELA LINDSEY (30), young, vulnerable, concerned - packed in her dress like tight sticks of dynamite.

ANGELA

Ruskin?

Ruskin looks up toward the sun to see Angela standing over their table.

RUSKIN

Angela. What are you doing here?

ANGELA

I saw you from across the street. Why didn't you call? I waited all last night like you asked me to.

Ruskin stands, digs his fingers into her arm, and pulls her aside.

RUSKIN

Angela, I'd like you to meet my friend, Charles. Charles, this is Angela Lundy.

ANGELA

That's "Lindsay," actually. Hi. I didn't mean to interrupt your lunch.

RUSKIN

Why don't you join us?

Angela sits.

CHARLES

Look, Ruskin, I got to' run, unfortunately.

RUSKIN

Sorry we couldn't talk more. I mean, really talk. But maybe we'll get that chance at our Halloween party this weekend.

ANGELA (O.C.)

A Halloween party. That sounds fantastic.

RUSKIN

Sweetie, listen, this party is going to be at my home. That's where my wife lives. I couldn't very well have you there, now could I?

ANGELA

Oh, I guess not.

RUSKIN

Listen, Charles. Put Vicki out of your mind. Just another thing that's come and gone. And, look at yourself, what you've accomplished.

CHARLES

And, what have I accomplished?

RUSKIN

You've moved away just a bit more from living in the middle.

EXT. RUSKIN'S BACKYARD - DAYS LATER - NIGHT

Well into Ruskin's party, HOARDS OF PEOPLE crowd inside and out wearing sexy Halloween costumes, dancing and drinking.

A FEMALE DISC JOCKEY (20's), spins. A BIKINI'D BARTENDER (20's) pours liquor down a double booze chute made of ice.

Bordering inebriated, Charles and Shelly socialize. Charles wears syrupy Vampire make-up - his mouth filled with cheap plastic fangs.

Shelly, dressed up as a naughty little school girl.

Ruskin and Sybil, preside over the goings-on from their chariot-like perch dressed as ANTHONY and CLEOPATRA.

Their make-believe reign below sways and flows with alcohol, sexuality and loud music.

Sybil spots Shelly, locks on and makes her move. She descends to escort Shelly back through the sliding glass door.

SYBIL

I have something for you.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sybil and Shelly enter. Sybil tosses a baggy of drugs onto the counter.

SHELLY

I went back to the Bear's Lair.

SYBIL

Did you go to the back room?

SHELLY

Yes...

Shelly moves forward to Sybil, leans in. The women begin to undress.

EXT. RUSKIN'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Charles makes his way to Ruskin but then is intercepted by a MEDIEVAL MONK, who pulls him aside.

The Monk secretively draws back the hood. It's Angela Lindsay. (The girl from Ruskin's lunch).

Forlorn, she appears dreadfully terrorized.

ANGELA
Mr. Ripley?

CHARLES
Angela? How did you..? You
shouldn't be here. Ruskin was
clear. He meant it.

ANGELA
Please, please, I know. But I've
got to see him.

Charles throws a look over to Ruskin the "Caesar."

CHARLES
Didn't you get a chance to speak
with him after I left? His wife is
inside, Angela. You can't be here.

ANGELA
We wound up in a hotel. We didn't
end up doing much talking.

CHARLES
Listen to me.

ANGELA
I'm pregnant. I tried to tell him
but he didn't want to hear any of
it.

Charles moves Angela away from the crowd.

CHARLES
Angela. He doesn't care. He doesn't
care about anything. Do yourself a
favor and get the hell out of here
as fast as you can.

ANGELA
He betrayed me and you're just like
him.

Angela snaps the hood back over her head, turns and melds
back into the crowd.

CHARLES
Angela. Don't do it.

A hand slides inside Charles' arm. It's Sybil Marsh. She
presses up against him.

SYBIL
Have we met? My friends call me,
Cleo.

INT. SYBIL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sybil chops up long, white lines. Charles' face smears with makeup, sweat, drunkenness, anxiety.

SYBIL
Who was the girl in the monk
outfit?

CHARLES
Nobody.

SYBIL
Well, we can't have one of our
guests stressed-out, now, can we?
Here. How about a line?

CHARLES
Naw...

SYBIL
Come on, Charlie. You're not going
to let Cleo have all the fun by
herself, are you?

Sybil slides down to her knees in front of Charles.

SYBIL (CONT'D)
This won't hurt a bit. Cleo
promises.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FOLLOWING MORNING - DAY

Charles lies hung over and passed out on the living room sofa. Greasy, yellow make-up smears across his face and pillows.

Ceiling fan whirs above him. Chop. Chop. Chop.

SHELLY (O.C.)
Charles? Charles, get up, honey.

Shelly, cleaned up is fully dressed for departure. She shakes Charles awake.

He slowly arouses. She presses a cup of coffee in his hand.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
We need to talk.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Shelly piles clothes in a big suitcase sitting on the bed.
Charles enters.

CHARLES
What's this? We going somewhere?

SHELLY
I'm going away for a while.

CHARLES
Going where? What does that mean?

SHELLY
You heard what I said. "Away".

Shelly moves to the closet, loads up more clothes. Charles uncharacteristically grabs her arm with strength.

CHARLES
Hey, hey, hey..? Will you stop
packing and look me in the eye for
a second?

SHELLY
Through all that stupid clown make-
up, Charles? Get your hands off me.

Charles stands back. Yellow vampire makeup runs down his face and neck in beads of sweat.

CHARLES
Sybil talk to you last night?

SHELLY
She mentioned a few things.

CHARLES
About being in the bathroom?

SHELLY
Ah, huh.

CHARLES
Shelly.

SHELLY
Don't worry about it, Charles.
Things like that happen in the best
of marriages.

CHARLES
What does that mean?

SHELLY

What it means is, I was in the bathroom with her, too. Understand? You weren't the only one. Chalk one up for the both of us, huh?

CHARLES

You and Sybil? Are ya' kidding me?

SHELLY

No bullshit, Charles. I'm not the same person I was since we've met them. And, neither are you. And, it's dangerous, Mesa Verde is dangerous, and I'm getting out of here.

In a flash, Charles digs his fingers into Shelly's arm.

CHARLES

Seventeen years, you make some coffee, leave a post-it and jump in to a lesbian relationship with the neighbor? YOU FUCKING CRAZY?

Shelly breaks free and scrambles across the bed like a spooked animal.

SHELLY

GET AWAY FROM ME.

Charles corners her. Shelly knocks the suitcase running for the door but Charles leaps and grabs her from behind pulling her back to him.

CHARLES

You're not leaving.

SHELLY

What'd you say?

CHARLES

I said, "You're not leaving."

Shelly turns and slaps Charles viciously across the face. Charles doesn't flinch.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

You want to see what I'm capable of? You want to see what I can do?

Charles grabs Shelly by the throat, pushes her up against the wall and begins to squeeze.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
I can do this too. You want to see
what I'm capable of?

SHELLY
Charles... You're hurting me.

Viciousness flows through Charles' limbs like a sweetened
narcotic.

CHARLES
You gonna' leave a post-it now?

SHELLY
Charles. I can't breathe.

Fury and rage burn through the hollow, terrifying yellow
Dracula make-up.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
Charles, you're killing me.

Shelly manages to reach for a nearby newlywed picture frame
and smashes the glass across Charles' face. CRASH.

CHARLES
Arrrgghh...

Charles, squeezes more, terrifying, blood spilling down his
face.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
At last Shelly. A real emotion.

He gently, regretfully pushes back a strand of hair away from
Shelly's eyes with his fingers.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Our first honest moment. We've
arrived.

SHELLY
I can't breath.

Charles momentarily relents, a kiss possibly.

CHARLES
You know what the Marshess have
done to us.

Shelly then snaps a quick kick to Charles' groin.

He rolls over helplessly onto the floor - clearing the way
for Shelly to run.

SHELLY
Get away from me. Get away from
me!! STAY AWAY FROM ME.

EXT. MESA VERDE ESTATES - (HOURS LATER) - SUNSET

Neighborhood homes sit like burnt, suburban bunkers bathed in
a ghastly, hellish, red-orange glow.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SUNSET

A disheveled, tormented, zoned-out Charles sits before his
open journal - party make-up smeared, pen and journal poised.

He reaches for the phone.

EXT. RUSKIN'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Charles, still in costume, stands at the door dumbly.

Son MARK (14) opens the door. He's a precocious kid, all the
earmarks of Ruskin - strong, unflinching.

MARK
Dad's in the back.

EXT. RUSKIN'S JACUZZI DECK - DUSK

Ruskin sits content in the Jacuzzi. Steam rises.

He inhales deeply from deep vape stick. Steam billows out
Ruskin's lungs like a refinery smoke stack.

Charles approaches.

CHARLES
Looks like Shelly and Sybil have
been getting pretty cozy over the
last few months.

RUSKIN
Grab some shorts. Wipe off the war
paint.

INT. JACUZZI - NIGHT

Charles splashes hot water against his face, washing away any
remaining makeup.

CHARLES
Nothing gets to you, does it? Not
even your wife with my wife?

RUSKIN
Not even my wife and you.

Charles looks up into the sky. Wispy clouds cross in long, thick bands.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Stoicism without even a pulse. Is it possible?

RUSKIN
It can be.

CHARLES
Tell me what to do, Ruskin.

Ruskin hands Charles the vape stick.

RUSKIN
Let the thoughts drift. Let the mind go. Don't let it make you a prisoner anymore.

Charles takes a hit of the vape, breathing in deeply.

CHARLES
Nothing bothers you, do you?

RUSKIN
I was just like everyone else. Unhappy. Confused. Angry. Like I was...

CHARLES
Wasting your time?

RUSKIN
Precisely.

CHARLES
Then it changed.

RUSKIN
It did.

CHARLES
That night when the Mexican was killed down in the valley. You killed him.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A Police Helicopter swoops overhead, drops directly into the black chasm.

Charles and the Police approach the lip of the yard. A rumbling, thrashing sound is heard from below coming towards them.

CHARLE (V.O.)
There weren't three men torturing
that guy.

A DARK FIGURE batters its way upward and out of the canyon and directly into Charles' backyard.

CHARLES (V.O.)
It was just you. Only you.

Officers draw their weapons.

OFFICER # 1
Get your fucking hands in the air.
NOW.

CHARLES (V.O.)
You tortured him. Cut the guy up.
Stabbed his eyes out.

Ruskin emerges from the chaparral wearing dark clothing.

RUSKIN
Hey. Whoa. Hey. I'm the neighbor.
Ruskin Marsh. Neighbor.

INT. JACUZZI - NIGHT (BACK TO SCENE)

Ruskin, motionless.

RUSKIN
And what would you say if it was?

CHARLES
I think I'd ask, "what it felt like
to kill a man?"

RUSKIN
It's just not the killing, Charles.

CHARLES
Then what is it?

Ruskin gets up, reaches a hand out to Charles.

RUSKIN
You've asked to know what the
secret means. I can do better. I'll
show you.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Candle light shadows dance, bounce and twist about.

White dressed linens dress the long dining room table.
Dressed in formal clothing, Sybil and Mark sit - waiting.

Ruskin and Charles enter wearing white terrycloth robes.

Charles, high from the vape, sees not the paintings on the wall but hallucinated-dripping-masses of oily pigments.

He works to clear his eyes and thoughts but can't. Ruskin leads him forward.

RUSKIN

I want you to sit at the head of
the table. Where you belong. You've
earned this.

With reverential care, Ruskin leads Charles forward and surrenders the head chair to him.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)

Our distinguished guest of honor.

Charles' eyes - dimly lit.

CHARLES

Thank you.

Ruskin places a knife and fork in Charles' hands - guides him to reach out.

He then reaches toward the decorative adornments which cover a bulky mid-table, main course.

RUSKIN

You'll join us and know what it is
to be emancipated.

Ruskin removes the last piece of decorative-covering which blankets the main course.

RUSKIN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

The secret Charles is the sharing.

Ruskin snaps back the adorned sheet from the main course. Staring before us is the upper-half stump of Ruskin's once-pregnant girlfriend, *Angela Lindsay*.

CHARLES

An... gela...

RUSKIN

The look on her face, the moment
she gave herself to me.

Ruskin places his arm around Charles' limp and helpless hands
- moves them a bit closer to the beautifully prepared,
adorned, deceased, dismembered - Angela Lindsay.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)

Her beauty gave us great pleasure
when she was alive but nothing
compared to the way I - we - shall
come to know her now.

CHARLES

Debbie Hartfellen? Vicki Kimberly?

Ruskin, eyes aglow with hungry expectation.

RUSKIN

The secret, Charles. The cutting
through to the mysteries and the
way to freedom which comes of it.

Ruskin begins carving a piece of Angela and places the human
steak on a plate before Charles.

SYBIL / MARK

Venite igitur ut animum testemur
gratissimum ei praedicate...

RUSKIN

This is her body, and this is her
blood.

EXT. TECHTRONICS PARKING GARAGE - DAYS LATER - DAY

Charles's car pulls into his assigned parking space.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Charles, harried, worn-down, types "Ruskin Marsh - San
Francisco" into his computer.

News articles read: Affluent Couple Finds Tortured Bodies,
Military Veteran Cleared in Investigation - another article -
another.

Charles spindles around to face the open window. A new FEMALE
ASSISTANT (30's) enters.

ASSISTANT

Mr. Ripley? Mr. Anderson would like
to see you.

Charles swivels back to face her. He wears a wide open smile - dressed in a dirty-rotten robe - aggressive.

CHARLES
What the fuck does he want?

INT. TECHTRONICS HALLWAY - DAY

Charles walks slowly down the hallway - open robe. Co-Workers stare wide-eyed.

CHARLES
What's the matter, Jim? Haven't you
ever heard of casual Friday?

INT. STU ANDERSEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Anderson sits at his desk, bids Charles to sit.

CHARLES
Hey, Stu. You wanted to see me?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Charles, distraught, slams into his driveway, chewing up half of his own lawn.

STU ANDERSON (V.O.)
You're wearing a goddamned robe
this morning, Charles.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Charles rushes into the kitchen, opens the cabinet, pulls out a bottle of bourbon.

STU ANDERSON (V.O.)
You're making people feel pretty
uneasy around here.

Charles snaps the blinds open across the kitchen sink and looks over to Ruskin's house.

STU ANDERSON (V.O.)
Everything alright at home?

Ruskin plays catch with the baseball with son Mark in the backyard.

STU ANDERSON (V.O.)
You need some time off, Charles?

Shaking hands rummage through a kitchen drawer. He finds his Journal.

Charles closely examines his journal pages.

There's no handwriting at all - only multiple drawings of weapons, devils, imps, endless pages of manic scribble.

STU ANDERSON (V.O.)
You hear me, Charles?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Fireplace - Charles tosses in his journal, then Ruskin's Marquis de Sade. Words burn:

"By sacrificing everything to pleasure, the unfortunate individual called Man.."

Both journal and the Marquis de Sade go up in flames.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Charles opens the night table drawer, pulls out his Colt snub nose.

He flicks open the cylinder; six chambers, five brass heads with tiny primers.

He puts the open barrel to his mouth and locks the hammer.

Trigger-finger, trembles.

Charles squeezes - click. Sixth empty chamber.

EXT. RUSKIN'S BACK SLIDING GLASS DOOR - MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

Mark lies before the TV, a bat and ball to his right. Ruskin in his chair, Sybil behind the kitchen counter.

Charles opens the slider and stands in silhouette with snub nose held out of view.

CHARLES
Hope you don't mind I took a
shortcut?

Mark looks up. Sybil works in the kitchen, cooking.

RUSKIN
Hello, Charles. You okay?

Charles levels the gun.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)
Charlie... Where'd you get the 38?

CHARLES

Heirloom.

RUSKIN

You never mentioned it. What are you doing with it?

Sybil and Mark hold still - wait for their cues from Ruskin. Hidden by the couch, Mark works into position.

CHARLES

Eradicating the disease a stranger brought to town. My hands aren't even shaking. In full compliance of my instincts. Imagine.

Mark wildly brings the bat to Charles shins. POW.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Arrgg...

A shot is discharged into the ceiling. Charles goes down hard! The pistol cartwheels across the room.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Get on him, Mark.

Ruskin picks up the gun. He rushes fiercely over to the prone Charles. He points the barrel of the gun between Charles' eyes.

Mark's hands circle and choke Charles' throat.

MARK

Now, daddy? Can I do it? Can I do this time?

RUSKIN

No. Get up.

Mark gets off of Charles chest.

RUSKIN (CONT'D)

Looks like the sharing is over, Charles. Sorry to see it happen.

CHARLES

You're going to burn in hell.

RUSKIN

Heaven or hell, Charlie. Friends in both places.

Ruskin unloads a hard right cross to Charles' face. He's out. Sybil circles.

SYBIL

What now?

RUSKIN

Let's get him in the prep room.
I'll get Mark over to Laguna and
pick up the sauces on the way back.
We're going to take our time with
our good friend.

INT. RUSKIN'S BASEMENT - LATER - DAY

The room is covered in plastic from wall to wall.

Blindfolded, stripped of his shirt, Charles lies on the bed with a red-ball stuffed in his mouth.

Wrists and ankles - secured to the bedposts. Charles awakens - begins fighting against his constraints but to no avail.

INT. BASEMENT DOOR - DAY

The door opens.

Sybil, dressed in a black leather G-string, a German Luftwaffe jacket and spiked heels steps down the stairs and into her mini-hall of horrors.

She carries with her a riding crop and a burning candle.

SYBIL

Charlie, Charlie, Charlie. We let
you in and you turn against us.
Safe to say, "Not everyone has the
stomach for success" do they?

Sybil approaches the bed. She lifts up his nose with a snap of a riding crop.

SYBIL (CONT'D)

We're going to carve you up
tonight, Charles.

Sybil climbs and straddles herself across his waist.

SYBIL (CONT'D)

We were convinced you were ready
but not everybody is.

Sybil drips scalding hot wax over Charles' chest and waist. It burns. Charles chews in agony on the red ball.

Sybil removes his blindfold.

Charles' face - wet and contorted with pain. Sybil leans in closer - wide grin.

SYBIL (CONT'D)
Wie viel Schmerz kann man nehmen?
(How much pain can you take?)

Sybil penetrates her long red nails in to his chest, scratching the white skin of his stomach towards his loins.

CHARLES
Ahhhh.

Sybil removes the red ball from his mouth.

SYBIL
Nobody can hear you down here, but
you can cry if you want to.

She reaches her hand to his crotch - squeezes.

SYBIL (CONT'D)
Always fun getting the dinner
ready.

Sybil suddenly snaps off of his body, turns to her bureau. Charles continues to fight against his restraints.

The ball of the wooden post snaps free in his hand - he holds it in place.

With her back to Charles, Sybil puts on a rubber hood. (Small eye-slits and a zipper mouth).

SYBIL (CONT'D)
Now we get to the serious matters.

Rendered nearly blind, Sybil opens a second drawer.

MORE - VARIOUS - CONTINUOUS

She feels around and picks up a shiny, sharp torture instrument - works her way back toward the bed and the tied-up, Charles.

Sybil straddles his body once more. She brings the sharp tip to Charles' eyes.

Her breaths pulsate in and out beneath the spandex hood.

Sybil brings the hooked-tipped knife to Charles' throat. She begins to slice.

SYBIL (CONT'D)
Just a little taste.

Charles suddenly drives the snapped bed-post, wooden ball straight into the side of Sybil's head.

SYBIL (CONT'D)
Arrggh.

Sybil crumbles bedside but manages to slice deep into the thigh of Charles.

With his right hand Charles frees the other - unties his feet. He gets off the bed.

He quickly leaps on top of writhing Sybil and plunges the bedpost ball once more to the other side of her head - he begins to pound.

CHARLES
You want to cut me up?

Sybil blindly struggles - reaches and finds the knife.

Charles brings down the wooden ball on her wrist and snaps her bones.

He reaches for her head - secures her blinding rubber hood while pulling the zipper tightly across her mouth.

SYBIL
Ahh, argghh. Uhh.

No air to be had. He covers her mouth.

CHARLES
Looks like dinner is fighting back.

Sybil's long fingernails dig, scratch, puncture and snap off into the small of Charles' back - to no avail.

He holds her down, clasping the rubber mask's zipper unmercifully shut over her mouth.

Sybil's body contorts in strangulation. Her body falls slack. Charles gets to his feet and stands above her.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
You're right, Sybil. Getting ready
for dinner is fun.

INT. RUSKIN'S STUDY - DAY

Charles dumps all of Ruskin's handguns on the office desk. He reaches for the long guns in the rifle case.

He finds Ruskin's Ingram pistol grip machine gun.

Charles dry fires the weapon. Click, click, click. He then loads the 36 capacity, 9mm ammo clip.

He notices his own snub-nose .38 lying on one of Ruskin's open novels. He tucks it in his waistline.

He sits - looks up to the office clock, waiting... beaten but not bowed, Ingram safety, "off".

EXT. RUSKIN'S DRIVEWAY - LATER - DAY

Ruskin pulls in the driveway. He gets out of the car, opens the trunk and picks up his groceries.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charles sits calmly, waiting by a brown grocery bag filled with Ruskin's hand guns.

We hear the front door opening. Door shuts. Ruskin makes his way inside the house.

Charles gets up from his chair - weary, ready.

RUSKIN (O.C.)
Sybil? Sybil? Honey?

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Ruskin enters.

He looks down to see his wife dead on the floor, spandex hood over her head, knives strewn about - the room in tatters.

RUSKIN
Ahhhh. God, no!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charles stands at the ready with Ruskin's Ingram pistol grip machine gun at hip level - waiting.

RUSKIN (O.C.)
RIPLEY!!!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ruskin enters the living room with his wife in his arms.

CHARLES
You didn't forget the sauces, did
you, Ruskin?

Hidden by Sybil's carried body, Ruskin reveals his Wahler .45
and points it at Charlie.

RUSKIN
Looks like you forgot this one?

Charles tosses the bag of guns between the two men.

Charles levels the Ingram straight for Ruskin's eyes. Ruskin
sets Sybil down - showdown.

He wields quickly and begins pulling the trigger of his
handgun. Click, click, click. Nothing.

CHARLES
The clip is in the pile.

RUSKIN
Unflinching. Never thought I'd see
it.

Ruskin steps toward the pile of weapons and the Wahler clip
laying on top.

CHARLES
Ah, eh, eh. Wouldn't do that now,
Ruskin. I really wouldn't.

RUSKIN
No fighting chance?

CHARLES
Like Debbie Hartfellen? Vicki,
Angela? The poor bastards coming in
from Mexico? So, this is how it
feels - all the clarity and cruelty
you've been talking about?

RUSKIN
And for a guy who hates
confrontation. There's still time
for the both of us, Charles.

CHARLES
Well. Time is a funny thing,
Ruskin.

(MORE)

CHARLES (CONT'D)

It's a great teacher, but
unfortunately it kills all of its
students.

RUSKIN

They'd never find us. You'd be in
hiding anyway for the rest of your
life.

CHARLES

I think I'm going to let the
sunshine be the best disinfectant.

RUSKIN

They'll come for you.

CHARLES

And, I'll be waiting.

Charles' finger rest a bit more firmly on the Ingram trigger.

RUSKIN

Don't do it, Charles.

A pause, a shared look, a smile of goodbye between friends.

CHARLES

The stalking, the struggle, the
sharing? Adios, buddy and good
riddance.

Charles calmly squeezes the trigger.

The Ingram rattles like a chainsaw that won't stop. Ruskin is
punched, blown and thrown about the room.

Ruskin drops to his knees. Charles relents, lets the dust
settle and steps closer.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Watching you die, and actually
sharing that with you? Now you're
on to something.

Blood spills from Ruskin's throat and mouth.

RUSKIN

(gasps - chokes)
Well then congratulations, Charles.
Your hesitation is finally gone.

Charles right index finger squeezes at point blank range.

CHARLES
Well then, I guess I've arrived
haven't I?

EXT. FRONT DOOR - LATER - NIGHT

Days after the neighborhood has quieted down, a knock on the door.

Charles looks through the peep-hole and sees an old man, EDWIN HAYES (80's).

Hayes carries a sunken look - wears a long black overcoat and dark fedora.

Charles opens the door to the length of the chain.

EDWIN HAYES
Mr. Charles Ripley?

INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

Charles and Mr. Edwin Hayes sit at the dining table both eyeing the other.

Hayes, elegantly reaches for a pack of Nate Sherman cigarettes from his coat pocket.

EDWIN HAYES
Do you mind if I smoke?

Charles slides a table plate forward.

CHARLES
You can drop your ashes on this.

Hayes' fingers carefully, elegantly slide a slender cigarette out of its pack. An alligator briefcase sits across his lap.

EDWIN HAYES
These things will be the death of
me.

CHARLES
Light?

EDWIN HAYES
Thank you.

The flame is brought to the tobacco tip. Red, hot ash. Smoke curls up inside Edwin's nostrils like a cold, gray chimney.

EDWIN HAYES (CONT'D)
 I don't suppose Mr. Marsh ever
 mentioned anything about the "Il
 Modo in Cui Antico?"

Charles moves not a muscle.

CHARLES
 So, it's all true, then?

EDWIN HAYES
 As sophisticated as one could
 imagine. In every major city, Mr.
 Ripley. Ruskin was enthusiastic
 about you.

CHARLES
 I'm afraid he underestimated me. I
 have no interest in hiding.

EDWIN HAYES
 I'm afraid we may have presumed too
 much, Mr. Ripley. I apologize for
 the inconvenience.

Without warning, Charles grabs Hayes tightly by the tie and
 yanks hard, pulling Hayes down to his knees.

CHARLES
 You're not going anywhere, Mr.
 Hayes.

A long blade flashes from Hayes' coat.

Whipping with speed, the old man tears the shirt and the
 surface of Charles underbelly.

Blood smatters the floor.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 Arrrrghh.

Hayes struggles to his feet and makes for the front door.
 Charles lunges and tackles him back down again.

Hayes, remarkably powerful, turns back with a vengeance.

Charles reaches for the man's arm, bends his wrist nearly
 snapping it.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 Drop it. Drop it, you son-of-a-
 bitch.

The knife drops to the floor - sticks.

Charles reaches for the neck of the old man and begins to strangle him.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
You came here to kill me.

The choking is messy, jerky, harder work than imagined.

The men fall onto the kitchen counter. Cups and saucers are pushed about, fall and shatter.

EDWIN HAYES
Arrrrghh.

Hayes reaches into his jacket and produces a concealed Browning pistol.

EDWIN HAYES (CONT'D)
I see Ruskin taught you some things, didn't he?

Hayes struggles but gets a shot off from inside the chokehold blasting out the kitchen fixture above.

EDWIN HAYES (CONT'D)
It doesn't have to be this way.

Charles gets Hayes in a clumsy headlock. Hayes reaches for a butcher's knife - makes stabbing motions.

Charles overpowers - Hayes drops the weapon.

CHARLES
You were gonna' to shoot me through the window on your way back to your car.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Charles drags Hayes out of the kitchen, tumbling down the narrow hallway kicking and fighting.

EDWIN HAYES
This isn't necessary. Everything can be washed away.

Both men slam-up against the utility closet, hand to hand combat.

Charles opens the closet.

He finds a sweatshirt and covers the man's head. He stuffs the hoodie in the old man's mouth - choking, suffocating.

CHARLES
It ends right now.

EDWIN HAYES
Arrrgghh...

Charles tightens his grip. The old man slumps, coming to an end.

INT. GARAGE - LATER - NIGHT

Charles places Edwin's body into the trunk. We then hear a cell phone ring from Hayes' overcoat.

Charles reaches inside, finds the phone and also a business card.

The card has an address in San Francisco - Nob Hill. Charles answers the phone and listens.

A WOMAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
Hello? Hello? Edwin? Edwin are you
there? Edwin?

EXT. STREET - LATER - NIGHT

All quiet. Dressed and ready for a trip, Charles stands in the middle of his forlorn cul-de-sac.

CHARLES (V.O.)
And now, the story turns to the
other man. The one who would take
the trip.

EXT. SAN DIEGO FREEWAY OFFRAMP - NIGHT

Charles watches the body of Edwin Hayes tumble down the freeway ravine.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Charles turns on the radio. Black highway - numb.

Flashes of Ruskin fill his mind; the warm smile, bits and pieces,

"Our doubts are traitors". "It's there for the taking, Charles". "Knowing who you really are."

CHARLES (V.O.)
I knew there could never be an
oblivion I could climb into.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO FISHERMAN'S WARF - EARLY MORNING - DAY

Charles drives slowly along the Embarcadero - exhausted, deep
circles around his eyes.

The Ingram Pistol Grip lies exposed on the passenger's seat.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Not with what I've done.

EXT. THE TENDERLOIN - DAY

Charles walks along a jumble of topless, bottomless dives and
peepshows - anonymity.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Not even room in obscurity for me.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL: TENDERLOIN DISTRICT - LATE - NIGHT

Charles sits, stone cold sober. His eyes - blank.

EXT. CITY STREETS - SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Low clouds scud over the city by the Bay, laying down a thin,
wispy, breathless layer of fog.

CHARLES (V.O.)
I was damned as the most inner
inhabitants of hell itself.

Charles drives and keeps his hands on the wheel, eyes fixed,
Edwin Hayes' address in hand.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Lucifer and his confederates, now
all waiting for me.

EXT. THE ANTICO USANZA MANSION - NIGHT

An 1890's Robber Baron-style mansion. A DARK SUITED MAN (55),
security, stands door side.

CHARLES (V.O.)
But if I embraced all of what I was
about to do...

EXT. S.F. STREET - MANSION - NIGHT

Charles drives by and sees the windows of a mansion ablaze with dancing shadows and moving figures.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Possible atonement.

EXT. CORNER - NIGHT

Charles parks. Cuts the engine. He looks on - waits. He checks his full ammo clips, then adjusts his necktie.

The front doors of the Antico Uzunza swing open.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Peace? Was it possible? Even for a moment?

EXT. ANTICO USANZA MANSION - NIGHT

A Mercedes pulls up.

The DRIVER (40's) opens the passenger door and a handsome COUPLE (50's) emerges and approach the mansion's steps.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Heaven have mercy on me.

Charles keeps his eyes straight ahead.

The Antico HOST (70's) bounds down the steps and greets the guests with a warm embrace.

HOST
Welcome, welcome...

A Bentley pulls up. DRIVER # 2 opens the door and a MAN IN A TURBAN (45) makes for the vestibule.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Charles triple checks his firepower - formidable. The Ingram is held at his side.

Charles steps out of his car. He's dressed in upscale white piqué front with a detachable wing collar, cuff links and shirt studs - pretty nice outfit to die in.

He lights a small Molotov cocktail tossing it the front of his seat.

The car begins to burn. Charles begins to walk.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Charles strides up the street. The music from within the Mansion grows louder; a Viennese waltz.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

The host greets the last guest, enters and closes the vestibule doors behind him.

Charles approaches.

We hear the first trilling of laughter from within. Charles opens the vestibule door and walks right in.

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

Some smile at him, others take no notice. Charles climbs up the ballroom steps.

CHARLES (V.O.)
If they only knew.

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

The uneven noises merge with a frenzied, escalating pounding of kettle drums.

Charles is met by the security guard at the top. With Ruskin's Berreta .380, he quickly fires one to the head.

The man drops. Charles continues on.

CHARLES (V.O.)
And, now the second man who came to town. Me.

INT. THE ANTICO USANZA MANSION (BALLROOM) - NIGHT

Charles stands on the staircase above looking down.

Walls are filled with the Netherlandish masterpieces of Hieronymous Bosch.

Gangly Imps and Dancing Devils pick and prod ill-fated peasant farmers.

We pull back to reveal hundreds of cult revelers holding cocktail glasses, wearing long gowns, jewelry and formal tuxedos.

We've arrived to - The Antico Usanza's Harvest Feast.

Charles peers into the vast ballroom. He takes up his killing position. The sounds of a keyboard begin to furiously click.

CHARLES (V.O.)
An interesting tale.

Wild and divine images of Christian art hang upside down; inverted symbols of morality transformed into ghastly paeans to evil.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Containing both dispatch and
arrival.

We see a ghastly buffet: a large table covered with lifeless stumps of the prepared as spectacular cuisine.

CHARLES (V.O.)
My last resolve.

He slowly opens up his overcoat. The ball-goers turn and casually and look at Charles.

CHARLES (V.O.)
To let them feel what was about to
happen. To let them drink it in.

Charles lifts the machine gun from the folds of his coat. A WOMAN turns.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Time for some to look upon their
sin, as I have looked upon my own.

Charles places his finger alongside the Ingram trigger.

CHARLES (V.O.)
My first unselfish act.

EXT. MARSH'S HOUSE - LATER - DAY

We see both the old Marsh and Ripley home.

SCREEN READS: YEAR LATER - MESA VERDE ESTATES

EXT. EX-RIPLEY HOME BACKYARD - DAY

It's a hot day. A San Diego patrol helicopter roars overhead plunging down in the ravine.

A young man, BRANDEN NIELSON (30'S) current owner of the old Riply home, mows the lawn with his shirt off.

His wife, FINOLA NIELSON (30's) comes out through the back sliding-glass door with some drinks.

Branden looks over the small fence of the neighbor's backyard.

A beautiful WOMAN (30'S - ANTICO) wearing tight shorts and a light summer top crosses her yard and approaches Branden at the adjoining edge of the waist-high fence.

INT. CAR - VANTAGE POINT - DAY

Hands tightly grip the Bosch and Lomb high-powered glasses.

Wearing a baseball hat covering his head and eyes is a very focused and resolute Charles Ripley.

Ripley sees in the distance, the ANTICO woman at the fence and an ANTICO MAN (40'S) stepping off his deck from Ruskin's old house.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Charles gets out of his car. He moves around to the trunk and opens it. Inside, we see a dark black rifle hunting case.

Charles opens it.

In the case, various parts. Charles begins to expertly assemble the Remington 270 Long Gun.

He moves back to the open driver's side door and rests the long barrel of the weapon through the open window and takes a stance.

Charles brings his right eye close to the scope's objective lens, closes his left to focus on his targets - squints.

Through it, Charles scans the two yards and brings the crosshairs of his scope to the head and shoulders of the Antico woman at his old fence line.

Crosshairs float over the woman's head and back.

He swings his rifle to the right and spots the Antico man standing on the deck.

Charles then levels the crosshairs too on to the man's head and shoulders.

He lifts his right forefinger off the trigger guard and places it on the awaiting lever stem.

Looking through the scope, he focuses on the Antico man. Charles takes a breath and begins to gently squeeze.

The vegetation behind the Antico man then bends and snaps forward catching Charles' eye.

Charles lifts up from his stance and takes his eye off the scope resting his trigger finger on the outside guard.

He reaches for his binoculars. He looks down to see...

EXT. RUSKIN'S OLD BACKYARD - DAY

Mark Marsh, son of Ruskin, now refreshed, strong in nature - hunting.

He breaks from the hillside chaparral toward his backyard lawn with three additional young BORDER CROSSERS - TEENS.

All gather on the lip of the yard.

Mark shares bottled waters, breaks out some trail mix from his backpack and gives it to the young, weary travelers.

The Antico surrogate parents cross over to meet Mark and the border crossers - they express their approval to the young hunter.

The crosses thank Mark for the bottled waters, turn and make their way back down into the thick chaparral.

Food looks to be in plenty supply.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Charles lowers his binoculars.

INT. CAR - DAY

Charles sits. He opens his gloves box and we see a stash of tightly wrapped money - he shuts the glove box.

He then tosses a small baggy onto his dash - Sybil's cracked, long red fingernails - turns on the radio - waits - stalks.

RADIO (V.O.) (CONT)
...and the Padres host the Giants
today.

We begin to fade to black.

The End