

"COOL HAND LUKE"

Screenplay by

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Based on the novel by

Donn Pearce

SHOOTING DRAFT

FADE IN:

EXT. SOUTHERN CITY STREET EXTREME CLOSEUP PARKING METER
(NIGHT)

Its irritating head opens a glaring red eye: the red flag
pops across the entire screen:

VIOLATION

INSERT: PARKING METER SUPPORT (NIGHT)

CLOSEUP of a pipe cutter attached to the meter neck, metal
slivers curling out. From o.s. we HEAR -- LUCAS JACKSON
cheerfully humming and mumbling Auld Lang Syne and then:

LUKE

Okay, Mister General, you son of a
bitch. Sir. Think you can put things
right with a piece of tin with a
ribbon hangin' on it? Gonna put you
right.

CLOSEUP PARKING METER (NIGHT)

as the meter head falls out of FRAME.

NEW ANGLE ON METER (NIGHT)

as it falls to the ground amidst a forest of meter stands
and Luke's hand comes into the FRAME to pick it up and we
SEE him in CLOSEUP for the first time. He is cheerful, drunk,
wearing a faded GI Field jacket. A bottle opener hangs on a
silver chain around his neck. He addresses the next meter.

LUKE

All right. Helen, honey. I lost my
head over you. Now its your turn.

Suddenly the beam of headlights crashes in, FLARING the
SCREEN.

ANGLE ON PROWL CAR (NIGHT)

sliding up to us, headlights glaring, red toplight revolving menacingly. TWO OFFICERS, black shapes, get out and start warily toward Luke.

ON LUKE (NIGHT)

illuminated by the headlights. He grins as the Officers approach, lifts a bottle of beer, opens it and drinks, smiling. On his smile, FREEZE FRAME. ON THE FRAME SUPER-IMPOSE MAIN TITLE and as it FADES

DISSOLVE TO:

OMITTED

EXT. CLOSEUP A YOYO BLADE IN THE SUN

It swings with a pendulum motion, its shining blade topping a clump of grass and weeds; it swings on the backstroke, lopping more grass, then moves a little away from CAMERA. FROM CAMERA RIGHT, a pair of feet move INTO the FRAME, the feet of the man swinging the yoyo. They are booted and connected by chains, riveted around the ankles. The feet move further INTO the FRAME and the SHOT WIDENS. We are on:

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD (DAY)

and we see the work gang in uniforms (14 men) flailing away with yoyos, short-handled scythes in the hot sun, guarded by three men. Three of the workers wear chains (Gambler, Dynamite, Sailor). The scene is bleached and hot; the men sweating and dirty in prison shirts and pants. The light shifts during the following:

A MONTAGE OF A FULL DAY - SUPERIMPOSE TITLES AS APPROPRIATE OVER FOLLOWING

ANGLE ON RABBIT

He is a trustee. He walks up INTO CAMERA and sets up sign:
SLOW DOWN -- MEN AT WORK

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE (9:00 A.M.)

He is a giant, covered with sweat and dust. He starts to pull off his shirt.

DRAGLINE

Takin' it off here, Boss!

BOSS KEAN

Yeah, take it off, Dragline!

ANGLE BOSS KEAN (11:00 A.M.)

pulling out watch, looking at the sun.

ANGLE THE BULL GANG

flailing away, most of them naked to the waist.

ANGLE KOKO

He is sweating streams.

KOKO

Wipin' it off here, Boss!

BOSS SHORTY

Okay, wipe it off there, Koko.

Koko takes out a limp handkerchief and mops his face.

ANGLE ON GAMBLER (A CHAINMAN) (NOON)

his yoyo flashing like a sword. He pauses, panting.

GAMBLER

Drinkin' it up here, Boss!

ANGLE BOSS KEAN

BOSS KEAN

Awright, drink it up, Gambler. Water
'em, Rabbit.

NEW ANGLE GAMBLER AND GANG

as Gambler takes a drink from a tin cup, passed by Rabbit.

FULL SHOT THE GANG (2:00 P.M.)

working away like a machine.

ANGLE PAST BOSS GODFREY TO BOSS SHORTY

Godfrey is the Walking Boss, silent, implacable symbol of ultimate judgement. He wears a black hat, globular mirrored sunglasses -- the Man With No Eyes, impassive, emotionless. He nods to Boss Shorty.

BOSS SHORTY

Awright, smoke it up!

FULL SHOT THE GANG

In unison they chant:

THE GANG

Yeah, Boss.

ANGLE SOCIETY RED AND BLIND DICK 4:00 P.M.

Society is checking his yoyo edge with a file, covertly watching a passing car. Blind Dick sneaks a look, then ducks.

ANGLE BOSS KEAN

BOSS KEAN
You eyeballin' there, Society?

SOCIETY RED

SOCIETY RED
Checkin' my yoyo, Boss!

KOKO (5:00 P.M.)

He sees something o.s. He speaks, as they all do outside, like a ventriloquist, not moving the lips, and in a stage whisper, to Dragline.

KOKO
Drag... Drag... Newmeat Bus! We got us Newmeat tonight!

ANGLE ON GAMBLER AND DRAGLINE

They look up covertly.

P.O.V. ANGLE ON ROAD

The Newmeat Bus, a prison vehicle, a panel truck with meshed windows; and men in it, appears down the road approaching the gang. It slows as it passes them and the men covertly look at it.

KOKO AND GAMBLER

KOKO
(whispering)
A bunch. Must be halfa dozen Newmeat.

GAMBLER
No more than five. For a cold drink.

KOKO
(whispering)
Bet! Babalugats, bet here!

ANGLE BABALUGATS

He is the idiot of the gang. He grins foolishly, making the bet official.

NEWMEAT BUS

as it passes, picking up speed, PAN INTO:

CLOSE SHOT GODFREY

looking at the Newmeat Bus.

EXT. CLOSEUP THE EYES OF GODFREY

His sunglasses FILL THE SCREEN, distorting the image of the bus as it moves away from us and the last TITLE ROLLS.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWMEAT BUS

The SCREEN is mostly black, but we see out through the meshed rear windows a desolate panorama of gnarled trees and grubby landscape, bleak and hopeless.

Now we HEAR outside the barking and baying of bloodhounds, not like they're tracking, but just playing as the truck turns and stops. The BUS GUARD and DRIVER get out. The back of the truck is opened by the guard and through that rectangle of bright sunlight, the silhouettes of the Newmeat descend, Luke last.

EXT. PRISON CAMP LUKE'S P.O.V. (DAY)

The Scene: in a hollow is a long barracks, white-washed, faded gray, one story high. At right is a mess hall and laundry. A chain-link fence surrounds the whole compound. The corners of the fence are telephone poles with floodlights on the tops. These burn all night. Back of the mess hall, again outside the fence, are several kennel runs in which bloodhounds are now ROARING. A wooden tower with a simple board roof stands at two corners of the compound where the guards sit when the prisoners are not locked in the barracks. A picnic table sits in a grassy area just outside and at one side of the gate is a picket fence enclosing a scrubby lawn.

BOSS PAUL

Four. Right.

He hands the papers to the CAPTAIN, a small man with a kindly face but a firm, set mouth who always carries a golf club. In b.g. the bloodhounds are YOWLING:

BOSS PAUL

Dogboy, get them dogs shut up!

DOGBOY, a trustee whose leather gloves are always sticking out of one back pocket, puts his hand to be licked by the dogs who quiet, friendly, like any pets.

DOGBOY

They just smell newmeat is all, Boss.

The Captain has been ignoring this, watching the prisoners, looking at their records.

EXT. NEWMEAT BUS (DAY)

as the Bosses (BOSS PAUL and BOSS HIGGINS) motion for them, the other Newmeat (to be known as TRAMP, ALIBI, and TATTOO) stumble into each other and jostle Luke in their eagerness to obey orders.

BOSS PAUL

You men git lined up here.

The Newmeat jostle into line. They are wearing State Issue gray pants and their own Free World shirts. All except Luke carry a paper bag or cigar box containing their wordly goods. All except Luke look apprehensive, worried. Luke stands with languid grace, neither insolent nor hostile, nor fearful. The Bus Guard hands Boss Paul a folder that contains records as the Captain approaches from his porch.

CAPTAIN

What did they bring us today? Gibson.
A 507, Manslaughter. Good for a two spot.

ALIBI

It was an accident. I've never been in any trouble.

BOSS PAUL

You'all call the Captain, Captain.

CAPTAIN

(to next man)

Edgar Potter. A 302 and resisting arrest. One year.

TRAMP

I was tryin' to keep outa the rain.

BOSS PAUL

Git the wax out'n yore ears. You call the Captain, Captain.

TRAMP

Yes, sir.

BOSS PAUL

And you call the rest of us Boss, you hear?

TRAMP

Yes, Boss.

CAPTAIN

This man is gonna make us proud of him, Mr. Hunnicutt.

(moving on)

Raymond Pratt.

TATTOO

Yes, Captain.

CAPTAIN

Breakin', enterin' and assault. Five spot. Hmmm. Able-bodied seaman.

TATTOO

That oughta come in handy here, Captain.

CAPTAIN

Maybe.

(turning to Luke)

Lucas Jackson.

LUKE

Here, Captain.

CAPTAIN

Maliciously destroyin' municipal property while under the influence. What was that?

LUKE

Cuttin' the heads off parkin' meters, Captain.

CAPTAIN

Well, we ain't never had one of them. Where'd you think that was gonna get you?

LUKE

I guess you could say I wasn't thinkin', Captain.

CAPTAIN

(looking at record)

Says here you done real good in the war: Silver Star, Bronze Star, couple Purple Hearts. Sergeant! Little time in stockades. Come out the same way you went in: Buck Private.

LUKE

That's right, Captain. Just passin' the time.

CAPTAIN

(staring at him)

Well, you got yourself some time now. Two years. Hell, that ain't much, we got coupla men here doin' twenty spots. We got one who's got

all of it. We got all kinds and you gonna fit in real good. Course in case you git rabbit in your blood and decide to take off fer home, you git a bonus a some time and couple leg chains to keep you slowed down a little -- fer your own good. You'll learn the rules. It's all up to you. I can be a good guy or I can be one mean son-of-a-bitch, it's up to you.

He turns and walks away.

CLOSE SHOT LUKE

His eyes have been wandering during this speech. He sees a doleful, lovable bloodhound, nose at the mesh and winks at him.

CLOSE SHOT BLOODHOUND

He simply stares dolefully.

INT. BARRACKS (DAY)

Bare, unpainted wood. The windows are barred and covered with chain link. The door from the barracks up to the compound passes a small area enclosed by a woven metal strap cage. In this usually sits the WICKER MAN, whom we generally see as a heavy, short shape moving about his own business which is making an endless series of rings or jewelry by hammering coins with the back of a heavy spoon.

The door to the barracks locks by the tongue of a strap iron bar that is thrust through a hole in the wicker where the Wicker Man locks it by padlock. Thus he can always see them, but they can't reach him. The single big room is filled with two and even three-tiered bunks. Bare bulbs hang from the ceiling.

CARR, the floorwalker, a 240 pound behemoth, is indoctrinating the Newmeat while they change into camp clothing: gray twill trousers, shirt and jacket, all numbered, which has been piled on the table. Carr squeegees up and down, a restless man, and CAMERA in following him SHOWS us the room. At the same time, the Wicker Man is moving about the barracks, tapping the floors and bunk posts with a broom handle for signs of tampering. Carr pays no attention to him, addressing the Newmeat.

CARR

Them clothes has got laundry numbers on 'em. You remember your number and always wear the ones that has your number. Any man forgets his number spends a night in the box.

(passing out spoons)

This yere spoon you keep with you
and any man loses his spoon spends a
night in the box. There is no playing
grabass or fighting in the building.
You got a grudge against another man
you can fight him Saturday afternoon.
Any man playing grabass or fighting
in the building spends a night in
the box. First bell is at five minutes
of eight when you will get in your
bunk and last bell is at eight...

O.S. now are heard the SOUNDS of trucks arriving and the
Wicker Man goes back to the wicker.

CARR

(continuing)

Any man not in his bunk at eight
will spend a night in the box. There
is no smoking in prone position in
bed. To smoke you must have both
legs over the side of your bunk.
Anyone caught smoking in prone
position will spend a night in the
box. You get two sheets. Every
Saturday you put the clean sheet on
the top, the top sheet on the bottom
and the bottom sheet you turn in to
the Laundry Boy. Any man who turns
in the wrong sheet spends a night in
the box. No one will sit on the bunks
with dirty pants on. Any man sitting
on a bunk with dirty pants will spend
a night in the box. Any man who don't
bring back his empty pop bottles
spends a night in the box.

O.S. now are the SOUNDS of men counting off, filling the air
with the apprehension of impending arrival.

CARR

(continuing)

Any man loudtalking spends a night
in the box. You got questions you
come to me.

(attentive now)

I'm Carr, the floorwalker. I'm
responsible for order in here and
any man that don't keep order...

Luke mouths the next line with him. At the same time, we
HEAR the clanking of the Wicker Man's doors opening and the
thudding of many steps.

CARR

...spends a night in the box.
(to Luke, sincerely)

I hope you ain't gonna be a hardcase.

NEW ANGLE

As Luke shrugs the chute bursts open and the Bull Gang rushes in, men trying to get hands clean, urinate and get back out into the chowline. Sudden LOUD CHAOS. The Newmeat are seated on the bench, bewildered, except Luke who grins. Koko spies the Newmeat and is unhappy that there are only four.

GAMBLER

(to Koko)

Four. You owe me a drink.

DRAGLINE

(pushing both aside)

Get outa mah way you don't want a wet pocket!

SOCIETY RED

(passing the Newmeat)

Gentlemen, welcome to the Family.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Any of you guys from Connecticut?

CARR

Awright, let's move it along!

NEW ANGLE

as the flow of bodies reverses and the men stampede for the chute, going out, adjusting clothing, etc. Dragline shoves Loudmouth Steve along.

DRAGLINE

Fill your loudmouth with some beans!

And they are in the chute. The Newmeat still sit there. .in the empty barracks, the SOUND of men disappearing across the yard.

CARR

Well, what are you doin' here? You supposed to be eatin' them beans!

The Newmeat stampede out the chute.

INT. MESS HALL (DUSK)

Most of the other men already have their food and are sitting down with no jockeying for places: everybody knows. They are shoveling it down as fast as they can, getting back up for seconds. Luke and the other Newmeat get their plates and while the others stand there, confused, Luke sits at the first vacant spot and begins to eat industriously.

KOKO
(sotto voce to Dragline)
Newmeat's a hog-gut.

Dragline looks up, goes back to his food. There is an off-stage CRASH.

NEW ANGLE TRAMP

He is sitting on the floor, between his knees a mess of stew on the floor and his plate upside down. He has made the mistake of taking Dynamite's seat. DYNAMITE, the champion eater, has casually displaced him and is busy chowing. Dogboy is serving; he is the only one to break the rule of silence in chowlines.

DOGBOY
These pigs is rollin' in thar slops
now, Boss!

Tramp makes terrified and ineffectual efforts to scoop the stew back onto his plate with his hand, wiping his hand on his uniform, etc., then trying to obliterate the stain on the floor with a foot.

EXT. BARRACKS PORCH (NIGHT)

The men are being shaken down before entering the barracks for the night. They sit and take off their shoes. They empty their pockets into their caps. Carr inspects shoes, throws them inside door, frisks men who stand with backs turned, arms raised. Then Carr mutters a number.

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

Through the Wicker Cage toward door. As the men enter, stoop to pick up shoes, repeat their number to the Wicker Man, as they go through the chute.

INT. BARRACKS NEW ANGLE (NIGHT)

The men are preparing for their hour of free time. Gambler has layed out the blanket for the poker game and is shuffling cards. Koko and BLIND DICK have their seats, are arranging their piles of change. Luke sits at the other end of the table, past the blanket line. Dragline who has been talking to the Wicker Man now enters casually as we HEAR Dynamite, change in hand, moving to the game berating Tramp.

DYNAMITE
Next time you stay outa my place! I
earned it. You try that agin an'
I'll bounce you all over the floor.

TRAMP
I didn't know. I was hungry.

KOKO

You don't take another man's place,
boy.

ALIBI

It wasn't his fault. Nobody said
anything about seats. We --

DRAGLINE

(to Tramp)

You gotta mind your manners, you
actin' like a hillbilly tramp.

KOKO

(delighted)

Tramp! Beautiful!

Dragline nods.

GAMBLER

(to Tramp)

You got your bullgang name, boy.

TRAMP

(good-naturedly)

Ain't no worse than some I been
called.

TATTOO

In the Navy, we used to call guys --

DRAGLINE

Fasten your flap! All you Newmeats
gonna have to shape up fast and hard
on this gang. We got rules here an'
in order to learn them, you gotta
keep your ears open and your mouths
shut.

Luke snorts.

OMITTED

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

looking up as if he has just heard a strange sound.

DRAGLINE

Somebody say somethin'?

LUKE

I didn't say nothin', Boss.

DRAGLINE

Well, whatta we got here?

LUKE

A Lucas Jackson.

SOCIETY RED

(at mirror, back turned)
Dragline gives out the names here.
You'll get yours when he figures you
out.

DRAGLINE

(to Luke)
Maybe we oughta call you No-Ears.
You don't listen much, do you, boy?

LUKE

(smiling)
Ain't heard much worth listening to
yet. Just everybody handing out rules.

A feeling of discomfort. Koko assesses Luke, who has remained
at the poker table.

KOKO

Newmeat looks like a poker player,
Drag.

DRAGLINE

Wouldn't surprise me none.
(to Luke)
Wicker Man says you got a hundred-
twenny and some change in the
Captain's safe and you got your five
dollars pocket money... That'll buy
you a whole fistfull of cards. You
in or out?

Luke stares at him for a beat, then shrugs -- who needs it --
and walks over to his bunk.

SOCIETY RED

Looks like you've got yourself a
redhot, Dragline.

Dragline just stares after Luke.

GAMBLER

(dealing)
Awright, let's play some poker. First
Jack is the Man... a trey, a duck, a
neighter...

He continues to call cards as we PAN AWAY and DOWN the bunks
showing Alibi writing a letter, Loudmouth Steve reading a
sex book, STUPID BLONDIE working a rattleskin wallet, SAILOR
removing his pants through his chains, CHIEF rolling
cigarettes, etc.

CLOSE THE WICKER

The shadow of the Wicker Man behind it rises and moves to the tire rim which he beats with a tire iron.

CLOSE CARR

CARR

First bell!

POKER TABLE

The men break it up, some head for the urinal.

ANGLE ON LUKE

He lies in his bunk staring directly into a flyspecked bulb hanging from the ceiling about eighteen inches from his face. It will be on all night. The tire iron SOUNDS again and men hurry for their bunks.

CARR (O.S.)

Last bell. Last bell.

INT. BARRACKS MED. SHOT

Carr moves down the aisle, counting lips moving. The barracks is silent. Finishing the count, Carr goes to the Wicker.

CARR

Fifty, Boss.

WICKER MAN (O.S.)

Fifty. Okay, Carr.

ANGLE ON LUKE

staring up at bulb.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE'S VOICE

Gittin' up here, Carr.

MOVING CLOSE SHOT CARR

Pacing along, his feet squeegeeing on the floor.

CARR

Yeeahp.

ANGLE SHOWING LOUDMOUTH STEVE

In the sleeping barracks he gets up and moves toward the toilets...

ANGLE ON BABALUGATS

He is crouched in a tortured position to pray, in the space between his bunk and the one above.

CLOSE LUKE

He rolls over and goes to sleep. SOUND OVER: Carr squeegeeing along, the CREAK of the bunks as men toss and turn, the WATER RUNNING in the toilets, the DOGS BARKING a little outside.

OMITTED

OMITTED

ANGLE ON CARR

He sits at the poker table. The sound has dropped now in the depth of the night, the chink, chink of the Wicker man stopped. Carr simply sits staring at his half-finished game of solitaire, a card in his hand, his eyes seeing something far distant. He's breathing but he could be carved of stone.

OMITTED

INT. BARRACKS LONG SHOT BEFORE DAWN (NIGHT)

All others sleeping. Carr at poker table. Suddenly the clamor of the iron bar is HEARD.

CARR

First bell! First bell! Let's go!

ANGLE ON ALIBI

as, still asleep, he is unceremoniously dumped onto the floor by Carr who goes right by. Pandemonium of rushing men all around.

EXT. CHUTE MED. SHOT BEFORE DAWN (NIGHT)

Carr is barring the gate with his body. The door outside is unlocked and opened. The gong SOUNDS. Carr opens the gate, steps outside to the porch and the men begin counting out.

EXT. BARRACKS PORCH BEFORE DAWN (NIGHT)

The voices continue to count off as the men run to lockers and quickly line up outside the mess hall. Watching them go is Boss Godfrey.

GODFREY'S FACE

impassive behind the sunglasses.

EXT. MESS HALL INSIDE YARD BEFORE DAWN (NIGHT)

The men pour out. There is a little dawnlight, but the floodlights are still on. The Yard Man opens the gate and the men begin counting off again. Gambler is the last out of the mess hall and gets a kick in the ass from Boss Paul to

get him up with the others.

ANGLE ON CAPTAIN'S PORCH BEFORE DAWN (NIGHT)

He sits in his rocket watching. We hear the SOUND of the men counting, clanging of chains.

TRUCK BEING LOADED (DAWN)

The men clamber inside. The Little Bull Gang truck leaves.

EXT. ROAD NEAR CAMP

Caravan of the Little Bull Gang and Patch Squad trucks moving off down the road into the dawn light.

INT. TRUCK (DAWN)

just as the gate is swung shut. We SEE Godfrey's face looking in, then all is dim and the truck begins to lurch away, gunning fast, throwing the men, searching for their customary seats. Chaos.

DRAGLINE'S VOICE

Git outa my eyeballin' seat, you
Newmeat dummy!

Luke stands, holding a strut in the roof and watching with amusement as Tattoo is shoved away by Dragline, then Koko, and then pushed from man to man as he tries to sit down but always finds a lap in the way. Bawdy laughter; it's a game but earnest. As they settle Tattoo winds up on the floor but grins, understands, finds a place beside Tramp. Across the way Alibi begins a serious conversation with Blind Dick.

ALIBI

(nervously)

Where are we going now?

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

It's the Captain's birthday. They're
takin' us on a picnic.

ALIBI

(uncertainly smiling)

I'm a salesman. I used to drive these
roads all the time. I never thought --
it was an accident, car skidded,
maybe I'd had a drink or two --

ANGLE ON KOKO, TRAMP, TATTOO

KOKO

Man! It's gonna be one hot muther
today.

GAMBLER

Bears gonna be walkin' the road today.

MECHANIC

(to Tattoo)

You ever seen a man bearcaught?

Tattoo and Tramp look uncertain, frightened.

NEW ANGLE

GAMBLER

All the salt goes outa his body and
the water follers the salt and the
brain shrivels up like a dried pea.

TATTOO

(trying to ingratiate)

When I was in the Navy --

SOCIETY RED

(to Alibi)

Convulsions, shivering. Very
unpleasant to watch.

BLIND DICK

(to Alibi)

Man's never the same. Makes him lose
his sex drive.

ON KOKO, OTHERS

KOKO

(to Tramp)

I'm lucky I got a broom. Work up
top. Real easy job. Man, it's gonna
be hot down in that ditch.

ALIBI

We work down in the ditch?

GAMBLER

Ain't you never seen a chain gang,
in all your driving around?

TRAMP

(to Koko)

I ain't used to hard labor neither.
Done my best to avoid it.

TATTOO

I ain't crazy about it myself.

KOKO

(shaking his head)

Gonna be a hot one to learn on.

SOCIETY RED

Koko, why don't you let one of these
Newmeats take your broom for today?

KOKO

Hell, no. I ain't goin' down in the
ditch.

TRAMP

I shore would appreciate it. I ain't
in much shape just now.

TATTOO

What about me?

SOCIETY RED

(to Tramp and Tattoo)

Perhaps if you offered Brother Koko
a small...

(makes money gesture)

TRAMP

I ain't got much. A quarter?

DRAGLINE

(to Koko)

You was to sell your job, maybe this
Lucas War Hero would give you a price.

TATTOO

I'll give you fifty cents.

KOKO

Fifty cents? Sweet job like that
worth at least a buck.

ALIBI

I'll make it a dollar.

KOKO

Buck is a deal.

ALIBI

(apologetically to
Tramp, Tattoo)

I've got this weak heart. Too much
drinking, I guess. As soon as they
find out about it, they'll probably
send me someplace else.

TRAMP

If you even need dough in here, I'm
in big trouble.

LUKE

(to Dragline)

Where'd you get that about war hero?

DRAGLINE

Oh we got our sources... Tearing the heads off... what was it... gumball machines? What kind of thing is that for a grown man?

LUKE

(amused by the put-on)

Well, you know. Small town, not much to do in the evenings. Mostly it was settling up old scores.

SOCIETY RED

You'll have to do better than that if you want to impress these men. Some pretty hard numbers here. Dragline's an ex-safe cracker, Koko's a jewel thief. Blind Dick is a rapist.

BLIND DICK

(to Luke)

Show you the clippings some time. News-Dispatch called me "The Shiek of Simmonsville." Five broads in three days...

GAMBLER

'Course two of them were sisters.

SOCIETY RED

Of course some of them, like Stupid Blondie, were just unlucky... he fell off the fire escape... and one or two don't really belong here at all...

(indicates Babalugats)

...or myself, who just made the small error of misspelling a friend's name... on a check.

DRAGLINE

Hey, Koko. You hear that? All this time I been thinkin' Society just come here for the sun and exercise.

Everyone laughs.

DRAGLINE

(to Luke who is smiling)

Whatta you so happy about?

LUKE

I just always did like truck rides.

EXT. CLAYPIT ROAD (JUST AFTER SUNRISE)

as the trucks pull up and stop and the men pour out, picking

up tools for the day's work.

EXT. TOOL TRUCK

The guards for the day are: Paul, Kean, Higgins and Godfrey. As the men move through the line for tools, Alibi approaches Boss Paul:

ALIBI

Boss, I made an arrangement with that man to take his broom.

BOSS PAUL

(shoving him along)
Git your shovel and git to work.

ALIBI

I don't think you understand. We made a deal ---

BOSS PAUL

(canes him on the leg)
Git movin', I said.

ALIBI

(in pain)
But I made this arrangement --

BOSS PAUL

(shoving him)
Cut that backsass!

Alibi sees the light, accepts a shovel and walks off resentfully to where the others are working, casting hurt, angry looks at Koko and Society who ignore him.

THE SUN COMES UP

in Godfrey's glasses, and we SEE the gang begin their work. In VARIOUS CUTS, in each of which the sun leaps forward, time passing inexorably...

FULL SHOT: THE GANG

rhythmically working away.

CLOSE: ALIBI

Trying to pretend to work, not doing it well and getting a passing cut from Boss Paul's cane. Resentfully, he goes at it, sweating heavily.

CLOSE: LUKE

He is working hard but badly, unused to the awkward tool, trying to master it. Society Red works up behind him.

LUKE AND SOCIETY

SOCIETY RED

You're working too hard. You won't
last two hours. Watch the way the
Human Dragline does it.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

He is whipping away with apparently effortless ease but
accomplishing more than the others.

THE ROAD

An open red Continental with kit zips past, the driver
grinning at the Gang.

CLOSE: TATTOO

He is suffering along, sweat pouring off him. The sun is
beginning to really beat down now. Dragline works a little
behind him.

DRAGLINE

Takin' it off here, Boss!

BOSS PAUL

Yeah, take it off there.

He takes off his jacket and tosses it to the edge of the
road where Dogboy collects it. Tattoo decides to imitate,
tentatively.

TATTOO

Takin' it off here, Boss?

BOSS PAUL

Yeah, take it off there.

He strips, revealing a tattoo of "Mother" lodged thornlike
in his flesh and a great garland of flowers and a girl on
his chest.

DRAGLINE

(sotto voce)

Hey, turn around! Let Koko see the
broad.

CLOSE TATTOO

turning so Koko can see, grinning, stopping work.

KOKO

Beautiful! A real work of art!

BLIND DICK

(low voice)

Nice broad. Good set.

TATTOO

(proudly, flexing it)

Had it done in Singapore. Bunch of
us drunk as coots --

DRAGLINE

(hissing)

Hey, Tattoo!

TATTOO

(not hearing)

-- went down to see this old hag and
she had needles the size of that
cane.

MECHANIC

(quietly)

Hey. Swing that yoyo or you gonna
get a taste of that cane.

Tattoo realizes where he is and goes back to work.

MOVING SHOT TRAMP (LATER)

as he seems to spin, his eyes closed, his arms limp, his
head lolling back, he stumbles, twists, careens.

CLOSE DRAGLINE

seeing this.

DRAGLINE

Man bearcaught, boss!

CLOSE BOSS KEAN

BOSS KEAN

Blondie... Sleepy! Git him afore he
falls.

STUPID BLONDIE AND SLEEPY

They drop their tools and rush over as Tramp falls. Without
ceremony, they drag him over the rough ground to the truck,
where Boss Paul locks him in.

DRAGLINE

He is watching Luke, who is very close to the same fate.
Although he has achieved some grace, it is apparent that
Luke is working too strenuously, too determined.

MED. SHOT BOSS KEAN

He reaches into his pocket and takes out a turnip watch,

looks to Godfrey, who nods.

BOSS KEAN

Awright, let's eat them beans!

The men break and head for the chow line.

OMITTED

ANGLE ON LUKE

He has dropped to the ground, examining a blister on his hand. At Boss Kean's call, he looks up, ruefully resentful, and gets to his feet and slowly walks to the chow line.

BOSS KEAN'S VOICE

Hey, you. Bean time!

DRAGLINE

(eyeing Luke, to
Gambler)

Cold drink he don't make it.

GAMBLER

Bet. Babalugats, bet!

Babalugats grins. Dragline has his chow, passes Luke.

DRAGLINE

(whispering)

You got to snag it, man. You got to
stop foolin' around and tear up them
weeds.

Luke stumbles past, not paying attention.

FULL SHOT GANG WORKING

It is later in the afternoon.

ON STUPID BLONDIE

He stops.

STUPID BLONDIE

Caught short here, boss!

ANGLE BOSS KEAN

BOSS KEAN

Awright, Blondie. Take it behind
that tree.

ON STUPID BLONDIE

He drops his tool and gratefully trots off in the direction
of the tree.

ANGLE ON LUKE

It is later. He is working hard, stops a minute as he HEARS a crow cawing overhead. He looks up at it.

CLOSE SHOT GODFREY

He snaps his fingers.

ANGLE ON LUKE, TATTOO, KOKO, OTHERS

looking up as Rabbitt goes to the truck and gets out a single action rifle which he brings to Godfrey, who puts in a bolt and bullets from his pocket.

TATTOO

Who's that?

KOKO

Boss Godfrey.

MECHANIC

The walking boss.

TATTOO

Don't he ever talk?

Godfrey has raised the gun and now FIRES.

INSERT CROW ON THE WING

It is hit, explodes in a burst of feathers.

ANGLE ON LUKE AND TATTOO

LUKE

I believe he just said something.

OMITTED

FULL SHOT THE MEN

working, Luke flailing away like an automaton.

INT. THE TRUCK (AFTERNOON)

as it is opened from the outside. Tramp sits up against the bench, still in rocky shape from his collapse. The others step over him as though he weren't there. Luke appears, like a sleepwalker. He grabs the side rails, gets one foot up and tries to pull himself over the edge of the truck body. But the muscles are just used up. Boss Paul sees this and gives Luke a kick, timed so that it coincides with his jump. It gives him just the added momentum needed to send him over the edge of the body and sprawling along the floor. He's the last one and as the guards lock them up, he grins up at

Dragline and Gambler from his prone position.

LUKE

(to Dragline)

You owe that fella a cold drink.

The men are not tired, they smoke and talk and laugh: it's been an easy day.

KOKO

Hot damn, Drag. Tomorrow's Saturday.
Another week almost made.

ALIBI

(hopelessly)

I got two years.

DRAGLINE

Only two? Man, I already done eight.
Nothin' to it. Just make the days
and let the weeks and the years make
themselves.

TATTOO

I did three hitches in the Navy. It
ain't bad. After a while, you get
used to it and the time --

Koko is looking out the back of the truck.

KOKO

Oh, man, oh man. Look at that. On
the bicycle. Lookit them shorts. I'm
dyin'.

The men rush to look out at the vision of freedom on the bike.

DRAGLINE

(knowledgeably)

She looks just like a lil girl I
useta know named Louise Merryweather.
Fine lil ol' girl, always partial to
home-made whiskey. Remember one time
down in the cellar, both of us knee-
walkin' drunk and ah had this lil
pint and Louise wanted a poke of it.
So ah said: you wanna poke and I
wanna poke, so...

He starts his story. On the floor, Luke sleeps.

EXT. PRISON YARD LATE (AFTERNOON)

as they are counting in through the gate, their hats with
their personal possessions in them held out to be inspected,
their pockets turned out. A guard frisks them quickly but

efficiently. The Captain stands nearby ignoring them, testing a golf swing. The men move to the mess hall, most of them on the run. Luke moves painfully with exhaustion. Alibi seems quiet and cowed, lost in the crowd. They fall into a line at the mess hall door. Dynamite, his spoon out, moves to the front of the line and Luke winds up somewhere near the rear.

BOSS HIGGINS

(yardman)

Awright, you, Gibson, step out. Boss Paul says you wasn't happy with your job. Done a lot of complainin'. Gone give you a chance to think it over.

Alibi looks around, fearfully steps out, peering up and down the line, wondering.

BOSS HIGGINS

Get them clothes off.

Alibi is led to the box. A light stands about it shining down into it and it always burns when the box is ready to be used or when there's someone inside. Now a nightshirt is laid out on top of it. Alibi strips and puts on the pajamas. Boss Kean opens the heavy lid of the box and we see it is grilled with heavy chain link fencing and with strap iron bars. A chamber pot is put inside. Alibi stands in the box, looking back at them, then lies down out of sight. The lid is slammed shut.

FULL SHOT

The men watching this. The mess hall door opens and they begin to file in.

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

as the Wicker Man whales away at his tire rim outside the barracks.

CARR

Awright, first bell! Let's hit them bunks!

The men are piling into bunks and the CAMERA FINDS Luke heaving himself with a kind of rueful amusement up to the third tier bunk he sleeps in; he's exhausted.

DRAGLINE

Plumb busted out. Looks like the hard road finally got to Mister Lucas War Hero.

LUKE

(agreeably)

Back at it in the mornin'. Just need a little nap...

He lies back. Across him and in various perspectives are the other participants in this conversation, speaking in the ventriloquist's whisper while the stragglers get into the sack.

KOKO

Man, I never thought they'd put him in the box on his first day.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

It was just supposed to be a joke. There ain't no brooms. Whoever heard of a chain gang using brooms?

TRAMP

I gotta tell you that I believed it.

TATTOO

He should have known; it was a gag.

KOKO

You can't switch 'round jobs, anyway. I figured he knew that.

SOCIETY RED

You can't expect him to learn everything the first day. Hopefully it's taught him a very valuable lesson.

LUKE

Well, you fixed it up so he's got all night to think about it.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

It's not our fault he's a square.

DRAGLINE

Course not. He ain't in the box 'cause a the joke played on him. He's there 'cause he back sassed a Free Man. They got their rules and we ain't got nothing to do with that. Woulda probably happened to him sooner or later, to a complainer like him. He's gotta learn the rules same as anybody else.

LUKE

Yeah, those poor old guards need all the help they can get.

DRAGLINE

You tryin' to say somethin'?

Luke rolls over and goes to sleep.

DRAGLINE

(to his back)

You jus' keep flapping your mouth
and one of these times, you and me
gonna raise a little dust.

The Wicker Man begins hitting the tire rim again.

CARR

Awright, last bell!

Silence.

CARR

(continuing)

Forty-nine and one in the box, Boss!

WICKER MAN'S VOICE

Forty-nine and one in the box. Right,
Carr.

EXT. ROAD CLOSEUP YOYO TRANSITIONAL DEVICE (DAY)

It slashes away like a pendulum, golden in the sun, TICKING
away time, over roads that stretch to infinity -- a SHOT
that will always tell us that the men are building time.
SHOT WIDENS. The gang is laboring, filling in washouts by
the roadside. The bosses are Paul, Kean, Higgins, and, always,
Godfrey, the Walking Boss.

CLOSE LUKE

He is tanned and hardened now, and has mastered the work
rhythm. SHOT WIDENS to show Dragline near him, checking his
shovel for nicks but really eyeballing a passing car. In the
ditch, Luke expertly scoops up a shovel full of sand and,
levering the handle on his knee, flips the sand through the
air so it hits spang in the pan of Dragline's shovel while
Dragline is still eyeballing. It knocks him off balance and
by the time he has caught up, Luke is already catching him
with another shovel full.

DRAGLINE

Slow down, man. They ain't passing
out medals for slinging dirt.

LUKE

I thought you knew, boy... they
sentenced me by the mile.

Dragline grins at this insouciance, sneaks a look down the
road. He digs into his pocket and hauls out a pair of salvaged
sunglasses, which he holds up.

DRAGLINE

Puttin' 'em on here, Boss!

BOSS KEAN'S VOICE
Yeah, put 'em on, Drag!

NEW ANGLE DRAGLINE, LUKE

as Dragline hooks on the glasses. Luke, Tattoo and Tramp are working around here.

LUKE
(to Tramp)
Lookit that. Some Hollywood movie star jus' joined up with us.

Tramp smiles.

DRAGLINE
(to Koko)
Man, this here Newmeat parking meter bandit thing what calls itself Luke don't know nuthin' 'bout nuthin'.

LUKE
(to Tramp)
But damn if he don't look like a fat old Dragline.

TRAMP
Coulda fooled me.

DRAGLINE
(to Tattoo)
These is my eyeballin' glasses. Now I'm gonna play peek-a-boo and ol' Godfrey ain't gonna know if I'm eyeballin' or tootin' the piccolo.

TATTOO
That ain't nuthing compared to what we used to do in San Pedro. There was this ensign...

DRAGLINE
(has been sniffing the air)
Ah believe I smell me a blonde-haired lady.

ANGLE ON BULL GANG

They all look up covertly and, sure enough, in the second car slowed down by Rabbit's sign, is a lush BLONDE in a sun dress that is hiked up high on the thighs and cut low over the bosom. She cringes under their gaze and starts the top going up on the car as though to hide from them.

KOKO

Man, see her legs. She's tanned all over.

BLIND DICK

Nice broad. Nice set.

DRAGLINE

She looks just like Mrs. Patricia Handy, a married woman... I use ta fool with. Man, I kin sniff blondes from a hunnert yards and redheads from a mile and a half.

KOKO

(to Tattoo)

Drag's been chain-ganging so long he's got a nose like a bloodhound.

LUKE

Maybe he's been chain-ganging too long.

DRAGLINE

Long enough to see redhots come and redhots go.

The car begins to move away. They sigh. The work begins again.

OMITTED

NEW ANGLE ON GANG

Time has passed; they are further down the road. A small blue coupe kicks up dust as it jitters down the road and stops across the highway before a small home. A blonde, mid-twenties, gets out, and heads covertly look up.

THE BULL GANG

The woman is too much for them, too close, too blonde, too lush. They stop as one and watch as she disappears into the house.

CLOSE GODFREY

Seeing their odd behavior, he turns to see what's happening but the woman is gone; when he turns back, the men's heads are back down.

DRAGLINE, KOKO, LUKE, OTHERS

KOKO

Oh, man, did you see her? Did you see her?

DRAGLINE

I got eyes, don't I? How my not gonna

see something like that?

BLIND DICK

Nice broad. Good set.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

How could you tell? You could hardly see her.

GAMBLER

She's back!

Heads pop up again as the blonde comes out of the house, now dressed in a short house dress, carrying a radio, a pail and a sponge. She is clearly buxom. She goes to the outside faucet, fills the bucket and drags the attached hose toward the car.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Look at that!

DRAGLINE

Shut up, you loudmouth jerk!

THE BLONDE

She begins to hose the dusty car, splashing herself, making the cotton dress cling to her body, tossing her hair, every movement and gesture erotic and provocative.

THE MEN

Their work is completely disorganized as they attempt to shovel while watching. Their voices overlap.

KOKO

Man Oh Man.

LUKE

That is one mean lady. Bet her husband spends one day a week shooting milkmen.

BLIND DICK

Lookit her bounce.

GAMBLER

Oh lean over here, lady. Lean this way.

TRAMP

I wouldn't mind being that hose.

GAMBLER

More... a little more.

TATTOO

I don't know if I believe it.

BLONDIE

She's so big!

GAMBLER

Now lean down... a little more.

DRAGLINE

Lookit that little honeypot. Lookit those legs.

MECHANIC

Oh man, I ain't never been so thirsty in my life.

THE BLONDE

She begins to rub the windshield erotically.

BLIND DICK

Oh rub.

SLEEPY

Rub.

DRAGLINE

Rub!

BABALUGATS

Rub-a-dub-dub. Rub-a-dub-dub.

KOKO

I'm dyin'. I'm dyin'!

DRAGLINE

Look, she's got paint on her toenails!
Oh Lord, whatever I done, don't strike me blind for 'nother couple minutes.
Oh you Lucille!

DRAGLINE AND LUKE

LUKE

Lucille? Where do you get that?

DRAGLINE

(whirling)

That'sa Lucille, you mullet head!
Any girl so innocent and built like that gotta be named Lucille.

LUKE

Innocent?

BLIND DICK

She don't even know what she's doin'!

LUKE

She knows exactly what she's doin.
She's drivin' you crazy and lovin'
it.

DRAGLINE

Shut your mouth 'bout my Lucille.

LUKE

Your Lucille? Man, you better put
them glasses back on and take a look
at yourself.

DRAGLINE

(glaring)

Boy. You jus' asking to be handled!

P.O.V. MEN TO GIRL

as Godfrey moves across the scene, blocking their view,
staring at them, FILLING THE SCREEN.

OMITTED

INT. SHOWERS (NIGHT)

Trashing bodies and heads in the steam. Feeling of tension,
irritation, except for Babalugats, who is SINGING.

SLEEPY

Babalugats, shut up.

MECHANIC

Leave him alone. He's happy.

SLEEPY

That's because he's a damn moron.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Now why don't you just shut up?

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

The men are in their bunks, sullen, quiet as the tire iron
SOUNDS.

CARR

Awright, last bell.

Carr paces, counting. Beds SQUEAK as men turn restlessly,
unable to get comfortable. At the far end of the barracks, a
slow-turning fan CREAKS gratingly. It will continue to do so
throughout the scene, adding irritation to Carr's SQUEEGEEING
steps and the regular SQUEAKING of bedsprings.

OMITTED

ANGLE ON MEN

restless, irritated.

CARR'S VOICE (O.S.)

Fifty, Boss.

NEW ANGLE ON MEN

WICKERMAN'S VOICE

Fifty, right, Carr.

ANGLE ON KOKO

KOKO

Man, it's so hot.

NEW ANGLE ON MEN

GAMBLER

Gettin' up, Carr.

FULL SHOT BARRACKS

as Carr paces, SQUEEGEEING. The fan CREAKS. Springs SQUEAK.

CARR

Yeahhpp.

Gambler gets up, chains JANGLING.

NEW ANGLE ON MEN

uncomfortable, tense, shifting.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Giddyap, Carr.

NEW ANGLE ON MEN

CARR'S VOICE (O.S.)

Yeahhpp.

NEW ANGLE ON MEN

Tramp turns, irritated, as Carr SQUEEGEES by.

TRAMP

How can you sleep with that damn
squeaking!

FULL SHOT BARRACKS

Carr pacing. SQUEEGEEING, the fan CREAKING, springs SQUEAKING.

DYNAMITE'S VOICE

Gettin' up, Carr.

CARR

Yeahhp.

Dynamite gets up, chains JANGLING.

ON FAN

It is turning slowly, CREAKING, CREAKING, CREAKING. And now on the SOUNDTRACK we HEAR low at first, but steadily building, the tinny SOUND of the Blonde Girl's radio.

ANGLE ON MEN

tense, annoyed, frustrated as the SOUND of the RADIO GROWS, joining the CREAKING, SQUEAKING and SQUEEGEEING.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

as Carr passes by. He speaks in a low whisper.

DRAGLINE

Man, that lil Lucille was a lot of
lil girl.

OMITTED

ANGLE ON MEN

some turning away, not wanting to be reminded, some staring ahead unhappily, thinking the same thing.

DRAGLINE'S VOICE (O.S.)

You see how she was jus' poppin'
outa the top of that dress.

ANGLE ON KOKO

irritated, anxious.

KOKO

Aw, come on, Drag.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

not paying attention.

DRAGLINE

And down below, that thing didn't
reach no higher than...

(chuckles)

She liable to catch cold... runnin'
around like that.

ANGLE ON MEN

irritated by Dragline's voice and the SQUEEGEEING and the SQUEAKING and CREAKING and the RADIO SOUND, tinny and grating, growing in volume.

DRAGLINE'S VOICE

...And that thing was so tight 'cross
her bottom... made me wanna just
reach out my hands and...

ANGLE ON LUKE

LUKE

Forget it, man.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

suddenly angry.

DRAGLINE

Whatta you mean, forget it?

ANGLE ON LUKE

LUKE

Stop beatin', man. You ain't doin'
nobody no good.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

his face corroding in fury as the RADIO SOUND and the CREAKING, SQUEAKING and SQUEEGEEING are at an unbearable peak.

DRAGLINE

(with slow menace)

Boy, you better get some sleep and
save your strength. 'Cause you're
gonna need it.

OMITTED

ANGLE ON FAN CLOSE

As the SOUNDS threaten to burst our ears with their high-pitched tension, the CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY into the hub of the fan and our nerves scream for relief.

OMITTED

EXT. BARRACKS CLOSE ON LUKE AS GLOVE SMASHES INTO HIS FACE
(DAY)

and Luke falls back into the dirt. He's hurt, startled, but grins. We HEAR a CHEER from the men O.S., as he gets up. He is stripped to the waist, wears huge 16 oz. boxing gloves.

FULLER ANGLE

showing Dragline similarly dressed. They are squared off in the yard, surrounded by YELLING men who want blood. It is a release from the sexual tension built up by the night before. The guards stand in the guard boxes, watching. The Captain sits up on his porch, so he can see without being too obvious.

Luke gets up and manages a lunging right across to Dragline's Adam's apple. Dragline is momentarily staggered but counters with a terrible clubbing blow that mashes Luke's gloves into his face, knocking him to the ground. Time is called for the round.

LUKE AND OTHERS BEHIND HIM

as he gets to his feet.

TRAMP

Why don't you just stay there? He's only gonna knock you down agin.

ALIBI

It's not your fault. He's just too big.

SOCIETY RED

Let him hit you in the nose, get some blood flowing. Maybe they'll stop it before he kills you.

LUKE

(shaking his head,
grinning)

I don't want to frighten him.

The second round is called and Luke advances toward Dragline.

TWO SHOT LUKE, DRAGLINE

circling. Luke has to get in his shot before Dragline gets too close and clubs him again. He feints a punch that moves Dragline off-balance and winds up for a big one, but Dragline smashes him backhand. Luke hits the dirt, the men SCREAM AND YELL. Wiping some blood from his mouth, Luke rises again. He is dizzy. Dragline smacks him down again.

THE MEN

SHOUTING, SHRIEKING, they have blood in their eyes, releasing their tensions.

INTERCUT THE VARIOUS REACTIONS

as the fight continues. The Captain on his porch rocks and spits dry little spouts of wind, Godfrey, impassive, waiting in his guard house. The YELLING gradually subsides as Dragline continues to smash Luke, who keeps getting up.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

Without relish, he pokes Luke down again. Now there is no cheering, no yelling, just silence.

ANGLE ON CAPTAIN

as he gets up and walks down to the wire where he can see what is happening. The silence disturbs him.

ON LUKE

He rises, grinning and winds up to throw another punch. But the act of lifting his giant glove is a Herculean task. Seconds go by in which he tries to raise the glove high enough to launch a punch.

ON DRAGLINE

waiting, gloves at waist level, poised.

DRAGLINE

(low)

Ommana pop you one easy. Stay down.

He pops Luke who reels, goes down on a knee and then slowly rises, rises. Dragline is honestly agonized.

DRAGLINE

I'm gonna kill you, you go on...

LUKE

That's what you're gonna have to do.

ANGLE ON CAPTAIN

concerned.

ANGLE ON BOSS GODFREY

impassive.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

He raises his fists. But Luke is up again. Dragline realizes he'll have to kill him to beat him. After a long moment, Dragline drops his hands to his sides, looks back toward Godfrey and the captain and then starts walking to the barracks, fast.

ANGLE ON LUKE

He looks after him and reaches up to wipe the blood away, still grinning.

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

The poker game. Five card stud. Playing are Gambler, Koko, Dynamite, Blind Dick and Luke, bandaged. The mood of the barracks is quieter than usual. The men are still assessing the fight, uncertain as to who now is their leader, looking toward Dragline for an indication. Not playing, Dragline lies on his bunk behind Koko, sullenly reading a sex book. Gambler deals the third cards.

GAMBLER

Ana paira ninas. Koko's the brains.

KOKO

Cuter.

Dynamite is already out. Blind Dick now folds.

GAMBLER

Ace calls.

LUKE

Kick a buck.

KOKO

(considers, then chips)

I'm in.

GAMBLER

Ace calls. Here we go.

(deals Luke)

King-five gets a tray for no help.

(deals Koko)

Paira ninas gets a Jack.

(deals himself)

Ana man with the ace gets... slop in the face... Ninas up.

KOKO

(regarding Luke)

Cuter again.

GAMBLER

Call.

LUKE

(expressionless)

Kick a buck.

Koko is worried. He looks at his hole card, considers, long silence. Dragline looks over from his bunk.

DRAGLINE

(to Koko)

Whatcha got?

KOKO

Pair'a nines.

DRAGLINE

I kin see that, brick head. I mean
your hole card.

Koko hands it over his shoulder to Dragline, who now sits up
to consider the whole situation.

DRAGLINE

(continuing)

Uh-huh. And he ain't got nothing
showing. Raise his head off.

KOKO

He's been betting his head from the
gun. Gotta have kings.

DRAGLINE

So then you just call him.

KOKO

(chipping)

I call.

GAMBLER

(studies Luke's cards)

I gotta believe. Out!

(folds)

Now they're rollin'.

(deals Luke)

King-five-four gets an eight.

(deals Koko)

Pair'a nines with a Jack gets a four.

Ninas still up.

KOKO

(tentatively)

Cuter.

LUKE

(automatically)

Kick a buck.

KOKO

Damn.

He looks up to Dragline for help.

DRAGLINE

Kick him back a buck!

Koko looks uncertain, but listens.

KOKO

Back a buck.

LUKE

(automatically)
Kick a buck.

Koko looks up to Dragline: What do we do now?

DRAGLINE
Don't look at me, mullet-head.

Koko looks to the others.

GAMBLER
Man, you play like a kokonut. You
got to call him at least.

KOKO
I know he's got a paira kings. He
don't have to stick 'em in my ear.

BLIND DICK
Gotta have kings.

GAMBLER
Sure he's got kings but you still
gotta call him.

Koko looks back to Dragline.

DRAGLINE
Man's got a paira kings, get your
tail out.

Koko folds. Luke reaches for the pot at the same time that
Dragline reaches for Luke's cards.

DRAGLINE
Nuthin'! A handfull of nuthin'!
(cuffs Koko)
You stupid mullet-head. He beat you
with nuthin'! Just like today when
he kept coming back at me.

LUKE
(smiling)
Nuthin' can be a pretty cool hand.

DRAGLINE
Cool Hand Luke.

So saying, Dragline saves face and the baton of leadership
is passed.

EXT. YOYO SHIMMERING IN THE SUN TRANSITIONAL DEVICE (DAY)

swinging away the time...

INSERT: ROAD MOVING SHOT DAY

SHOOTING THROUGH cage truck, as it moves swiftly along, the landscape a blur of shadows and racing phone poles, etc., the men shadows slouched on their benches inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

BEARCAUGHT AVENUE

This is a country road running over rolling moors, land open to the sky and sun, the roads reaching out to infinity. The cage truck rolls to the end of the road and stops. Stretching out on either side of the road, every five feet is a pyramid of freshly dumped sand.

ANGLE ON REAR OF TRUCK

as the bull gang gets down, looks at the sand, are given shovels.

KOKO

Oh no, man! Not on this hot muther.

GAMBLER

All the bears gonna be walking today.

ALIBI

(nervously)

What's the deal?

DRAGLINE

Tar truck.

At these bleak words, over the last rise comes a filthy blackened tank truck with a fire in its belly and an array of pipes and valves at its rear, like a hellish beetle.

KOKO

(to Tattoo, Tramp,
Alibi)

You think you've been working hard.
This muther'll break your back.

SOCIETY RED

This is a big day for the guards.
They get to remind us who's boss.

TRAMP

I ain't forgot.

ON THE MEN

as the truck driver makes adjustments in the heater, flame, etc.

BOSS PAUL

Awright, every second man, git to
the other side of the road.

Dragline, Dynamite, Gambler, Tattoo, Loudmouth Steve, Alibi, Sleepy, Stupid Blondie and Chief cross over, leaving Luke, Koko, Society Red, Tramp, Babalugats, Blind Dick, Mechanic and Sailor. The tar truck begins to move slowly down the road, spreading a black, hot, acrid wake behind it.

BOSS PAUL
(continuing; with
undisguised malice)
Captain heard this gang been doin'
so good, gave us this special job.
We got three miles of tarrin' to
cover today. Let's roll it!

NEW ANGLE ON THE MEN

They begin to work, digging a shovel-full of sand, fanning it out over the hot tar, moving up to the next pile. Luke and Dragline in the lead of their respective groups. The guards move up along the ridges behind the men, urging them to move faster, caning the slow workers.

BOSS PAUL
Let's git with it!

BOSS SHORTY
Roll it, heah?

ANGLE GODFREY

He is at the rear of the columns, walking down the center of the road. With his stick he points to spots where the tar has not been covered and the nearest man flicks a spray of sand over it.

ON LUKE WITH KOKO AND SOCIETY RED LATER

They are working steadily but it is hot, hard, back-breaking labor. Koko stops for a moment to rub his arm.

KOKO
Oh man. I'm gonna twist my arm off
if this heat don't kill me first.

Boss Paul canes him across the legs.

BOSS PAUL
Roll it!

ON DRAGLINE

sweating and suffering across the road, just keeping up with Luke.

DRAGLINE
Hey, buddy. Take it easy. You're

making me look bad.

LUKE

The man wants speed, let's give it
to him. Ram it in and break it off.
Go hard. Shag it.

Dragline begins to work harder, digging and fanning, keeping
pace with Luke.

ON DRAGLINE AND DYNAMITE

DYNAMITE

(panting)

Whatta we racin' for?

DRAGLINE

Man wants speed, let's give it to
him. Use that shovel like you use
your spoon. Shag it, man!

Dynamite understands and throws himself into it.

FULL SHOT THE MEN

up to their waists in smoke and dust, splattered with tar,
working like devils as the word passes down the line.

BLIND DICK

(to Society Red)

Go hard!

GAMBLER

(to Tattoo)

Ram it in and break it off!

ALIBI

(to Sleepy)

Roll it!

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Shag it!

They are all working like hell.

ANGLE ON BOSS PAUL

He looks confused, concerned by this sudden manic activity.

ANGLE ON BOSS GODFREY

forced to walk faster to keep up, finding no unsanded spots
for his sorcerer's wand.

ON LUKE, DRAGLINE, OTHERS

enjoying the guard's confusion.

DRAGLINE

(to Luke)

They don't know iff'n to smile, spit
or swallow.

LUKE

They ain't never seen a bull gang
before.

SOCIETY RED

Work those shovels instead of your
mouths.

WORKING ON BEARCAUGHT AVENUE

Essentially a MONTAGE, a wild insane ballet of labor as led
by Luke and Dragline, the bull gang throws itself into the
madness, muttering Luke's words of inspiration to each other
and loving the guards' confusion. (SONG ON SOUND TRACK)

TRAMP

Go hard!

TATTOO

Ram it in...

MECHANIC

Break it off...

SOCIETY RED

Roll it!

DYNAMITE

Shag it!

STUPID BLONDIE

Move it!

Luke grins and works. The guards are tense and uneasy and
walk the road backward, not daring to turn their backs on
these madmen. Rabbit runs around with his water bucket but
the men don't drink, just upturn the water over their faces
and keep going.

ON BOSS PAUL

confused, angry, has not been able to cane anyone in an hour.
As Rabbit rushes by:

BOSS PAUL

Rabbit! What the hell's goin' on?

RABBIT

(knows but isn't saying)

I don't know, Boss. They must be
bearcaught. All of them.

He rushes off, as caught up in the esprit as the others.

WORKING AGAIN

More of the madness but now even faster, sweatier, wilder. The men are bearcaught by their sudden power to confound the guards. ALL SHOTS FAVORING Luke, splattered with tar, working right behind the truck.

ON GODFREY

Replacing his stick with a rifle, as tense and uncertain as the other bosses, staring at Luke with blank, hating eyes.

ON LUKE

as he looks up just as the tar truck turns off the road which has ended, crossed by a small highway. They have finished. Luke stands straight, looking out across the highway to the rolling green beyond. Dragline works up to him.

DRAGLINE

Where'd the road go?

LUKE

That's it. That's the end.

KOKO

But there's still daylight left.

DRAGLINE

(checking the sun)

'Bout two hours left.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

What do we do now?

Luke has been looking at the guards who have grouped in conference around Boss Paul who has his watch out. They look concerned, gesticulating toward Luke and the others.

LUKE

(smiling)

Nothin'.

The others understand. They have beaten the Free Men by working harder. They all collapse on the ground, rolling about, dazed, tired but happy as hell, laughing.

DRAGLINE

Oh, Luke, you wild beautiful thing!
You crazy handful of nuthin'!

DISSOLVE TO:

OMITTED

INT. BARRACKS (DAY)

Sunday afternoon scene. The chain men are dancing, jingling. Three RADIOS BLARE in different corners; a hell-fire preacher where Deacon and Society Red sit working a letter; romantic ballads (Near You, Heart Aches by Ted Weeks, etc.) for the men reading fuck books; rhythm and blues, country music for a couple of wrestlers, banging into bunks until one departs the other and runs off. CAMERA FOLLOWS THIS ACTION SHOWING the scene. Other men rolling cigarettes, Dynamite still on his rattlesnake wallet, Koko cutting hair, using a board over an ash can for a barber's chair. Everyone is barefoot.

WICKERMAN

Visitor for Luke!

Luke sits up from his bunk, staring at the Wicker, unmoving, amazed.

GAMBLER (O.S.)

Steve. Your mother's here!

ANGLE ON LUKE

as he gets up. Behind him Loudmouth Steve gets up, tossing down his sex book resentfully:

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Jeez! She never lets me alone.

TRAMP

You oughta be glad you got somebody.

Steve tosses him a finger as he leaves.

ALIBI

My wife hasn't been here for a month.
She must be sick again. She's had
this condition of the liver for...

TATTOO

Alibi, can't you never say nothin'
without explainin' it? Carr says you
even explain when you get up at night.

EXT. CAMP GATE (DAY)

By the picnic table set up for visitors. In far b.g., we SEE Luke come out of the door and start across the yard toward the gate, where he is shaken down and permitted to exit, moving down to the table. A few feet from the end of the table, Boss Godfrey sits in a kitchen chair, his hands discreetly crossed over the pistol in his lap. His mirror eyes play over the scene. Loudmouth Steve, his MOTHER -- a desperately fortyish blonde -- and a couple of other prisoners and visitors occupy the background. Parked next to the table

is a truck. In the bed lies Luke's mother, ARLETTA. She is propped up on pillows and wedged in for traveling.

The whole back is set up as for a chronic invalid, everything within reach, etc. She smokes incessantly. Nearby, Luke's BROTHER and his nephew, JOHN-BOY, a kid of twelve, enormously impressed with the sights and the guns and dogs, etc.

LUKE

Comin' out here, Boss?

BOSS PAUL

(by the gate)

Yeah. Come on out, Luke.

A few feet outside the gate, Jackson reaches for the boy, pats him on the head. Shakes hands in passing with his brother, who is unmistakably a farmer, and stands in the doorway looking at his mother. She lies on her side craning to see him.

LUKE

How'd you find me?

ARLETTA

Helen, she sent along your things with a note, and John here, he wrote to the police.

LUKE

Yeah. Well.

(to Godfrey)

Gettin' up here, Boss.

Godfrey just looks at him, says nothing.

LUKE

Well, Arletta, I got to stand down here.

ARLETTA

I allus hoped to see you well fixed and have me a crop of grandkids to kiss and fuss around with.

LUKE

Like to oblige you, Arletta, but right off I don't know where to put my hands on 'em.

ARLETTA

Sometimes I wisht people was like dogs, Luke. Comes a time, a day like, when the bitch just don't recognize her pups no more, so she don't have no hopes nor love to bring her pain. She just don't give a damn. They let

you smoke?

LUKE

Smokin' it up here, Boss.

Boss Godfrey nods. He lights cigarettes for her and for himself.

LUKE

Yeah, well, Arletta, you done your best. What I done with myself is my problem.

ARLETTA

No it hain't, Luke. You ain't alone. Ever whar you go, I'm with you, and so's John.

LUKE

You never thought that's a heavy load?

ARLETTA

We allus thought you was strong enough to carry it. Was we wrong?

Luke gives her the cigarette, and smiles at her.

LUKE

No. But things ain't always like they seem, Arletta. You know that. A man's gotta go his own way.

ARLETTA

Well, I don't know, I just wash my hands of it, I guess I just got to love you and let go.

She catches his hand as he puts the cigarette between her lips.

LUKE

Yeah.

ARLETTA

What are you doin' here?

LUKE

We call it abuildin' time, Arletta.

ARLETTA

I ain't askin' what you'll do after you get out, because I'm gonna be dead and it don't matter.

His mother's disappointment in him brings Jackson a real twinge of pain here. He tries to change the subject.

LUKE

You never wanted to live forever
anyways, did you? It wasn't such a
hell of a life.

ARLETTA

Oh, I had me some high old times.
Yore old man, Luke, wasn't much for
stickin' around, but damn it he made
me laugh.

LUKE

Yeah, would of been nice to of knowed
him, the way you talk about him.

She's looking at him and begins to laugh, losing control and
coughing to the point it alarms John and Jackson and they
have to help her. She pays no attention to the cough.

ARLETTA

He'd... He'd of... broke you up.

She quiets after the fit and lies back, tired.

ARLETTA

You think life is some kind of ocean
voyage and you start out with buntin'
and hollerin' and high hopes, but
the damn ship goes down before you
ever reach the other side. Luke?

LUKE

Here, Mom.

ARLETTA

What went wrong?

LUKE

Nothin'. Ever'thing's cool's can be.

ARLETTA

No.

LUKE

Tried to live always just as free
and aboveboard as you been, and well,
they ain't that much elbow room.

Arletta is looking hard into his eyes as he speaks. She
reaches out to him again...

ARLETTA

You allus had good jobs, and that
girl in Kentucky I taken a shine to
her.

LUKE

She took off with that convertible
feller...

ARLETTA

Well, why not? Idee of marryin' got
you all choked up, trying to pretend
you was respectable you was borin'
the hell out of all of us.

LUKE

(grinning at her)

Yeah.

ARLETTA

I'm leavin' the place to John.

LUKE

That's good: he earned it.

ARLETTA

Nothin' to do with it. I ain't never
give John the kind of feelin' I give
you, so I'm payin' him off now. Don't
feel you got to say anything. Way it
is, sometimes, you just have a feelin'
for a child or you don't, and with
John I just didn't.

OFFSTAGE WHISTLE

LUKE

Gotta go, Arletta.

ARLETTA

(recovering)

Laugh it up, kid. You'll make out.

She kneads his hand and subsides onto her bed. Luke turns
away from her to face John, who has stood by. Godfrey is on
his feet. The other men are getting up and saying goodbye to
visitors, picking up their packages, etc., and among them is
a chain man, his chains dragging, holding them up with a
string. The kid stands by John looking at the chains clinking
past...

JOHN-BOY

Why can't you have chains?

Luke looks up at John, Sr. with amusement.

JOHN-BOY

Uncle Luke?

TWO SHOT LUKE AND JOHN, SR.

JOHN

John-Boy looks to you. You're a hero.
He's braggin' on you all over the
county.

LUKE
(thoughtful)
Yeah.

JOHN
You must've really flung a binge
this time. You really hit that cop?

LUKE
(not liking the smug
pride in John)
Much as I'd like to oblige you, John,
I didn't hit the cop.
(beat)
She's in pretty bad pain, ain't she?

JOHN
(nods)
Fulla dope, Luke.

LUKE
Keep it with her all the time. Let
her have all she wants.

They understand each other. Luke chucks John-Boy under the
chin, then stops, looks at John, kneels beside him.

TWO SHOT LUKE AND JOHN-BOY

LUKE
You don't want to admire them chains,
John-Boy. They ain't medals. You get
them put on for makin' mistakes.
(beat)
And if you make a really bad mistake,
then you got to deal with the Man...
and he is one tough old boy.

THEIR P.O.V.

Godfrey stares at them, his glasses mirroring.

BACK TO THEM

LUKE
So long, Arletta. Take care.

ARLETTA'S VOICE
You know it, kid.

John holds Luke for a beat and reaches into the truck and
pulls out a battered banjo which he gives Luke.

JOHN

Now there's nothin' for you to come
back for.

ARLETTA'S TRUCK

LEAVING down the road, kicking up dust. Barracks in b.g.

EXT. HIGHWAY WITH YOYO SUPPORT (DAY)

cutting away at the time...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

Luke sits on his bunk plunking aimlessly at the BANJO. The barracks are quiet, an air of [...]. Suddenly there is an unidentifiable SOUND, low, but all the heads in the barracks look up, waiting, silently. It has begun to rain, the big drops DRUMMING on the roof. It begins to fall heavily. There are moving slams around the building as outside the guards SLAM the storm shutters. It is hot, oppressive.

ALIBI

I guess they have to close those
things, or we'd drown. But it's really
suffocating.

TATTOO

Talk about drownin', I did some
trainin' on a submarine once. Boy,
when you're under there you really
feel it.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Shut up, man. It's too hot to talk.

The air is stifling, desultory. Out of boredom, Dragline
turns to Dynamite.

DRAGLINE

You see mah skinny lid boy at chow
tonight. He was matching you plate
for plate.

DYNAMITE

I wasn't feelin' good. Think I got a
ulcer or somethin'.

DRAGLINE

He had a spoon like yours, he'd make
you look like a possum [...] on a
tree bark.

Society Red is lying on his bunk looking at the bottom of
the bunk above.

SOCIETY RED

Oh, come on, Clarence.

Dragline sits up and looks at him aggressively.

DRAGLINE

What do you mean, Clarence? You
callin' me a liar?

He waits.

SOCIETY RED

Not a liar. You just have a common --
and likable -- tendency toward
exaggeration.

DRAGLINE

(proudly)

He's the champeen hog-gut of this
camp. Hell, I seen him eat ten
choc'lat bars and seven cold drinks
in fifteen minutes. He kin eat busted
bottles and rusty nails, any damn
thing. If you'd so kindly oblige as
to let me cut off your yankee head,
he'd even eat that.

LUKE

I can eat fifty eggs.

They turn to look at him as though surprised to find him
there. Before Dragline can think he says...

DRAGLINE

Nobody kin eat fifty eggs.

SOCIETY RED

(to Dragline)

You just said he could eat anything.

DRAGLINE

(doubtfully, to Luke)

You ever eat fifty eggs?

LUKE

Nobody ever ate fifty eggs.

GAMBLER

Bet! Bet! Babalugats!

DRAGLINE

Mah boy say he kin eat fifty eggs,
he'll eat fifty eggs.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Yeah but in how long?

LUKE

One hour.

SOCIETY RED

Well I believe I'll have to take part of that wager.

DRAGLINE

Two bucks.

GAMBLER

Let's talk money.

DRAGLINE

Awright, twenty bucks. Anything! The Syndicate'll cover any money you got. Koko, get paper.

KOKO

Dragline... fifty eggs got to weigh a good six pounds.

DYNAMITE

(expertly)

Man's gut can't hold that. They'll swell up and bust him open.

BLIND DICK

You're gonna kill him.

DRAGLINE

Getcha money, up. Gambler! Dynamite! Everybody. Kokonut Head here is taking the money. Loudmouth -- get it up!

The initial boredom of the scene is dispelled -- a purpose has been created to lead them through the endless building of time.

GAMBLER

How's he gonna eat 'em?

LUKE

(cutting in)

Boiled for fifteen minutes. Then peeled. I eat all fifty in one hour.

Men are all around Dragline and Koko now with money and wagers. Koko is frantically scribbling.

DRAGLINE

Koko, write down their names, don't just make marks.

SOCIETY RED

One rule! No throwing up. He throws

up, you forfeit everything.

DRAGLINE

You ever see mah boy throw up? Shut your mouth and put up your money!

Koko is on the floor now with Babalugats beside him, assorting papers, handing out betting receipts. Dragline turns to Luke.

DRAGLINE

Why'd you have to say fifty? Why not thirty-five or thirty-nine?

LUKE

Fifty's a nice round number.

DRAGLINE

Damn, Luke. What's the matter with you? what's the matter with me?

LUKE

(winking)

Nothin' to worry about. We got a deadlock on that mullet.

EXT. PRISON YARD MOVING TWO SHOT (DAY)

Luke and Dragline jog around the yard like roadwork for a boxer and trainer.

DRAGLINE

What did I do? Stole and stole lies. I loved mah neighbor and his wife, but what did I do to deserve this lunatic to come in mah happy home and beat me outa hard earned bread.

LUKE

(grins)

We got it locked in the sock.

DRAGLINE

Yeah, I know. But what we gotta do first is stretch that l'il ol' belly of yours -- git it all strained out, in fightin' shape, like a barrage balloon.

LUKE

You ol' sack of guts. I had a belly like yours, we wouldn't have nothin' to worry about.

DRAGLINE

(considers paunch)

'Atsa sign I got me an affectionate nature.

LUKE
Like an elephant.

DRAGLINE
(grinning)
Us elephants may be a lil slow, like
in makin' love, but you give us a
coupla three days to really get with
it an' man -- stand back!

Luke grins.

LUKE IN THE CHOWLINE

taking enormous helpings.

DOGBOY
Lookit this hot gut, Boss. Here's a
man gone bust the State feedin' his
face.

BOSS HIGGINS
Wisht I could eat like that.

LUKE
Thing about bad food, you got to eat
a lot of it.

OMITTED

LUKE

He sits in a yoga position, rippling his stomach muscles
miraculously. Koko and Gambler pop INTO THE SHOT to watch
with amazement.

INT. MESS HALL (NIGHT)

Luke refuses food. He moves to his place, sits before his
empty plate.

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

as Dragline stops in front of the Wicker Man.

DRAGLINE
Boss! Man needs a brown bomber and a
dose of salts.

Instant UPROAR of protest.

SOCIETY RED
Rules Committee! Rules Committee!

ALIBI
Nobody said nothin' about that!

LOUDMOUTH STEVE
Same as dopin' a race horse!

SLEEPY
It don't sound right.

TATTOO
You can't do that!

DRAGLINE
You jes' watch us!

BLIND DICK
Fair's fair.

KOKO
Got a right to start with a clear
gut!

DYNAMITE
Man can't eat that much no matter --

LOUDMOUTH STEVE
You can't just change the rules any
way you want!

All of this is overlapping: Dragline walks through them carrying the pile and cup of salts passed out from the Wicker, ignoring it all.

INT. KITCHEN

JABO, the cook, is lowering the sacks of eggs into huge pots of boiling water. Carr stands by with a watch, timing. Outside the open door are Dragline, Dynamite and Gambler watching tensely.

DRAGLINE
Take it easy now, Jabo. Them is eggs,
not them cathead biscuits.

JABO
I know what eggs look like. I ain't
seen any around here for three years,
but I remember.

ANGLE ON BARRACKS DOOR (DAY)

as a file of men carry the still-steaming eggs in their hats from the yard into the building.

RABBIT
(adding on a scrap of
paper)
I've got it figured. If he eats an
egg a minute, he's got 10 minutes

left to swaller them.

CHIEF

I just got sent five bucks from the rodeo company.

RABBIT

What for?

CHIEF

A bull I fell off.

INT. BARRACKS

as the line of men reach the poker table and begin stacking up the eggs. The Rules Committee sits around the table leaving one side for Luke. It's all set up with towels, etc. They are counting eggs carefully, piling them in pyramids. Dragline picks up an egg and cracks it smartly on the table. Again uproar...

DRAGLINE

Awright! Stand back, you pedestrians, this ain't no automobile accident!

ALIBI

You're peeling his eggs!

DRAGLINE

That's right, Mister Alibi.

SOCIETY RED

He peels the eggs himself. That's understood.

DRAGLINE

You jus' may be great at hangin' paper around the big cities, but us country boys is not entirely brainless. When it comes to the law, nothin' is understood.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Who made what law about peeling his eggs?

DRAGLINE

I'm his trainer, I'm the syndicate what's coverin' all bets, and I'm his official egg peeler.

SOCIETY RED

Just wait till the hour starts, that's all.

The champion enters and the talk dies. He's naked from the waist. He does some side-straddle hops and deep-knee bends.

His stomach is markedly concave. He, drying himself from a shower, walks to the fragment of mirror on the wall and combs his hair, studies his image a second and, at last ready, moves to the table and sits down.

LUKE
(ingeniously)
What's goin' on?

Dragline jumps up and gives a second's rubdown to Luke's shoulders. There is a flurry of last minute betting, and then silence. Everybody gathered around. Luke shuffles his feet, twitches his toes. One egg from the pile is peeled and in front of him. Carr waits, his eyes on his wrist watch, his other hand up in the air, and all eyes rest on that hand. All eyes drop as the hand drops. Dragline grabs eggs and peels them, his fingers flickering, the shells flying. Luke picks up the peeled egg and eats it in a gulp.

CUTS OF LUKE, DRAGLINE, REACTIONS

LUKE

He's eating very fast.

SOCIETY RED
(keeping a written
tab)
One, two, three...
(continues counting,
throughout)

KOKO
He's gonna lose a finger eating eggs
like that.

Dragline reaches over and pops an egg into Luke's mouth, his pinkie extended, like tossing a tidbit into the mouth of some animal.

FULL SHOT LUKE IN THE CENTER

The others stand around, motionless. Dragline cracks and peels and Luke eats in a regular musical rhythm inexorable and horrible as it is sustained. Red is checking and counting off eggs...

SOCIETY RED
...twenty-four. Twenty-five, twenty-
six...

LUKE

His face bears an expression of ineffable absent pleasure as though eggs reminded him of something a long way away.

DRAGLINE

looking at him, neutral...

DRAGLINE

Slow down a little.

THE GROUP

Some chew fingernails, some stare, some mouth open, some stand with unlighted cigarettes in their mouths, staring. Some have eyes shut, their lips silently counting with Red.

SOCIETY RED

...thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two.

LUKE

He stops and stands up, stretching. His stomach bulges as though he were pregnant. Slowly he walks across the barracks toward the water faucet. Dragline stands looking after him, alarmed. Luke slowly bends over and washes his mouth out, not taking a drink. He stands, turns, walks up and down, does some exercises. Silence, no one else moves. He walks back, looks at the eggs, making an expression of distaste. He turns away and does some more exercises. Gambler moves over very close to him. Luke is going up and down, up and down doing knee bends. Gambler tries to look into his eyes, examine his stomach, listen to his wind. Luke sticks out his tongue obligingly for a check. Gambler stands up.

SOCIETY RED

Eighteen to go!

There is a flurry of last-minute betting led by Onionhead's examination. Koko, Babalugats beside him, are the tellers.

GAMBLER

He's had it. I'm throwin' in my last tenner.

Sleepy appears, as does Tramp, to make beta.

BLIND DICK

He don't look good.

DYNAMITE

(expertly)

Man's gut can't hold more'n that.

GAMBLER

Oh you gonna come crawlin' around beggin' for a cold drink, Drag. Your boy is done for!

Mechanic has been studying Luke as if he were an ailing carburetor.

MECHANIC

(quietly to Dragline)

If I give you a dollar and he don't
eat all fifty eggs, I get two dollars?

DRAGLINE

Mechanic!

Dragline puts his arm around Mechanic's shoulders
affectionately.

DRAGLINE

You're a sweet old boy and I don't
like to see you pick up no bad habits.
Better use that dollar to buy yourself
a new spark plug or something. But
as long as you done took a stand,
why don't you put some money where
your mouth is? Not no measly buck!

MECHANIC

All I got is three-seventy-five.

DRAGLINE

It's a bet! Koko! I gone this far,
I'm backin' mah boy all the way!
Come on, who's next? Where are the
big money men, I want to hear from
some high rollers.

Silence.

SOCIETY RED

I believe you've got it all, Dragline.
Every nickel in camp is riding.

Dragline turns to Luke and grins. Luke instantly appears to
recover and walks casually back to the table. It should be
clear this last was a little put-on between him and Dragline
to milk the last money into bets. Luke sits and begins eating.

LUKE

cool, confident, but as the egg is crushed in his mouth the
first real gagging feeling of total surfeit hits him. His
jaw closes and freezes. His eyes grow desperate and swivel
toward Dragline, though he doesn't dare move his head lest
he give way to nausea.

DRAGLINE

reacts.

LUKE

with a herculean effort, he swallows.

SOCIETY RED'S VOICE

Thirty-three.

Dragline swallows with relief. Gambler moves and looks about, a man feeling victory within his grasp.

ALIBI

Carr? What's the time?

CARR

Twenty-four minutes to go.

Luke swallows another egg; sweat bursts out on his forehead. Dragline signals to a second, Koko, to sit in for him and peel eggs. He moves to Luke.

SOCIETY RED

Thirty-four.

TWO SHOT LUKE AND DRAGLINE

as Dragline stands behind him, massaging his shoulders and neck, tenderly... Luke doggedly eats eggs, one by one. Red counts off under...

SOCIETY RED

Thirty-nine... forty... forty-one...
forty-two...

MEANWHILE:

DRAGLINE

Come on, boy, come on, darlin'. You kin do her. Just let that ol' belly sag and enjoy itself. Stay loose, buddy. Eight more, between you and everlasting glory. Little ol' eggs, pigeon eggs, that's all, fish eggs practically.

Luke almost throws up, and Dragline signals Koko to hold up... he gets Luke off his feet and begins walking him up and down the barracks...

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Carr? Time?

CARR

Six minutes to go, Dragline.

DRAGLINE

(into Luke's ear)
Just shakin' it down, that's all,
settlin' them eggs down...

He sits him down, takes an egg from Koko and puts it to Luke's lips, pursing his lips in a kiss...

DRAGLINE

Come on, Baby... don't be that way.
Open your little ol' gator mouth.

Luke opens his mouth, in goes the egg, he chews, chews,
swallows. Another egg...

SOCIETY RED

Forty-four...

CARR

Two minutes to time...

DRAGLINE

All right now: get mad at them eggs.
Eat it there boy! Bite it! Gnaw on
it!

SOCIETY RED

Forty-five.

CARR

One minute, thirty seconds.

Another egg goes. Luke closes his eyes and motions to
Dragline; just stuff 'em in any old how!

DRAGLINE

That's it, that's how to do it, chew,
chew, chew!

All eggs peeled, Koko is up and dancing wildly, and a couple
of men, even though they've got nothing but everything to
lose, are intoxicated beyond power to restrain themselves
and are yelling and jumping up and down.

CARR

One minute, fifty-five... fifty...
forty-five... etc.

SOCIETY RED

Forty-five, forty-six, forty-seven...

So that it all comes out in a near dead-heat, with Dragline
yelling and popping in eggs. At the last second before
deadline, two whole eggs are shoved into Luke's mouth, and
Dragline rams Luke's mouth shut for him...

DRAGLINE

All in: that's it: chew, chew, chew!

CARR

Fifteen, ten, nine, eight, seven...
six...

Luke looks around, then takes a mighty swallow, as:

CARR

One... zero!

Luke collapses with his head on the table, his arms flung out.

SOCIETY RED

He didn't swallow the last...

He grabs him by the hair and pulls his head back. Dragline pries his mouth open with his fingers. Luke is out...

DRAGLINE

You think so, huh?

NEW ANGLE PAST LUKE'S EAR

as they all peer down into his throat. Dragline grins, looks around at Society.

DRAGLINE

Where's the egg?

He slaps Luke on the cheek affectionately, closes his mouth and lets his head fall back on the table with a loud thump, his arms again sprawled out in the piles of egg shells. A dance of victory for Dragline... he collects all over the place. Dynamite, shaking his head, quietly knights the new champion hog-gut by laying his big spoon on the table next to Luke's head.

EXT. ROAD (DAY)

A car ROARS by, leaving a hint of laughter and music in the air and a cloud of dust. The men are working rhythmically. Godfrey watching.

ANGLE ON LOUDMOUTH STEVE GAMBLER

They have been observing Godfrey.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Man looks like a goddamn bus driver.

GAMBLER

(yoyoing)

He gets too close to me and I'll cut his belly open.

OMITTED

ANGLE ON KOKO

He sees snake.

KOKO'S VOICE

Snake in the grass! Boss!

He runs. Men flail at the snake in the grass with their yoyos and CAMERA MOVES WITH Snake though we can't see it and we follow its progress only by the men jumping, hitting at it, yelling.

GODFREY

He rams his cane into the soft sand and Rabbit reaches into the truck cab and hands him his rifle. Godfrey slams the bolt in.

BACK TO MEN

They jump and yell and chase the snake until they reach Luke, who stoops, grabs cooly and comes up with the snake, holding it by the tail.

LUKE

Pickin' it up here, Boss!

GODFREY

His EYES HUGE IN THE SCREEN: Luke seen there IN DUPLICATE, standing tall in the sun, grinning, the rattler wriggling and thrashing in his grasp. Godfrey's face holds for a long beat then the rifle is brought up so that we can now see Luke CLEAR IN ONE LENS and the other he is lined up in the rifle sight pointing directly INTO THE LENS -- or just CAMERA LEFT. There is a SHOT and the rifle is lowered enough so we can see Luke IN DUPLICATE again.

LUKE

looking at Godfrey, grinning, but a little tougher now. The snake has no head. He walks down a little and throws the body of the snake on the road at Godfrey's feet. It brings him close to where Godfrey's cane still stands in the sand. Godfrey kicks at the snake. He turns... Luke pulls the cane out of the sand and holds it out to Godfrey.

LUKE

Don't forget your walking stick,
Boss.

Godfrey turns to face him and stares at him. Luke just holds the stick out to him. Godfrey slowly takes the bolt out of the rifle, looks down the barrel, blows the smoke out, puts the bolt in his pocket and hands the gun back to Rabbit before finally reaching out and taking the stick from Luke. He turns and walks away.

LUKE

You shore can shoot, man.

Godfrey's shoulders almost jerk as though at every word he

were being hit with invisible bullets.

SKY CLOUD THUNDER LIGHTNING

EXT. ROAD DRAGLINE LUKE

working.

DRAGLINE

Luke, why you actin' so strange?
What you wanna do somethin' like
that for? You gone too far when you
mess with the Man With No Eyes. You
gonna be outa here in a little bit --
whyn't you jus' take it a little
easy?

Luke has been staring up at the darkening sky which is growing more ominous with clashing clouds and rolling thunder.

LUKE

Man, it looks like the Big Boss is
getting ready to let us have it!

It begins to rain, large spattering drops, quickly turning into a downpour.

BOSS PAUL (O.S.)

Awright, you kin git in that truck.

The gang rushes back into the shelter, all except Luke and Dragline.

LUKE

Look at Him go. Bam! Bam!

DRAGLINE

Knock it off, Luke! You cain't talk
about Him that way.

Dragline begins to move off toward the truck.

LUKE

You still believe in the Big Bearded
Boss, Drag? You think he's up there
watching us?

He grins at Dragline and then, after a beat, raises his bush axe straight up to the sky, grinning at Dragline.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

He is frightened as he backs off toward the truck.

DRAGLINE

Get in here! Ain't you scared --
ain't you scared of dyin'?

ANGLE ON LUKE

The rain is torrential. He has to shout to be heard.

LUKE

Dyin'? He can take back this nice
pretty life any time He wants.

(looks up)

You welcome to it, Old Timer. Come
on! Make me know you're up there!
Kill me or love me, one or the other.

He holds his bush axe again, laughing, soaking wet.

REVERSE BACK OF TRUCK

The men jammed into the frame of the body, a frieze of shocked
faces staring out at him through the rain. There is a blinding
flash of lightning and a THUNDEROUS ROAR. They wince but
don't turn away.

LUKE

He smiles and lowers the bush axe, walking toward the truck.

LUKE

Standin' out here in the rain! All
alone! Talkin' to myself.

He smiles a little shamefaced, rueful, sad smile and climbs
into the truck and the men draw back from him.

ANGLE THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD OF THE TRUCK PARKED BEHIND

Godfrey seen dimly through the rain-misted windshield.

EXT. YOYO SHIMMERING IN THE SUN TRANSITIONAL DEVICE (DAY)

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

It is the free hour. But instead of the poker game, Dragline,
Luke and Koko sit at the table dealing with their line of
debtors from the egg-eating. Koko acts as secretary, changing
the amounts as the men pay off or borrow more. As Blind Dick
receives his money and leaves:

DRAGLINE

(to Koko)

Blind Dick is payin' us off three
and borrowin' back five. Next!

It is Tattoo.

DRAGLINE

Borrowin' or payin' back?

TATTOO

Borrowin'.

DRAGLINE

Mister Cool Hand here is the soft
heart in our Loan Department. Next!

ON CARR AT THE WICKER (NIGHT)

He has just been handed a telegram by the Wicker Man. He reads it impassive as always, while in b.g., the business continues and we HEAR:

SOCIETY RED'S VOICE

I believe I still owe you thirty. I
don't suppose you'd take a check.

TATTOO'S VOICE

(to Luke)

My Navy disability didn't come yet.
You know how it is.

Carr finishes reading and we FOLLOW HIM as he walks to the table.

LUKE

Sure do... that's why we didn't bet
with the Navy.

DRAGLINE

Oh, that's mah darlin' Luke. Grins
like a baby and bites like a 'gator.

Carr sets the telegram on the table next to Luke.

CARR

Sorry, Luke.

Luke picks up the telegram and reads. Then he sets it down, stands and goes to his bunk. Dragline looks after him, takes up the telegram and hands it up to Society Red.

SOCIETY RED

(after reading)

His mother's dead.

ANGLE ON LOUDMOUTH STEVE

As he sees Luke go to his bunk, he picks up his sex book and moves down to the other end of the barracks. Alibi does the same with the cigarette papers and tobacco he has been rolling.

ANGLE ON LUKE

sitting on his bunk, bare feet tucked up beneath his drawn-up legs, softly picking out a slow hymn melody on his banjo.

Tears slowly stream down his cheeks.

ANGLE ON CARR

as Luke continues playing softly. He walks down to the other end of the barracks, too.

FULL SHOT BARRACKS

All of the other men are congregated at the other end, giving Luke what privacy they can. There is no conversation, only the slow, plaintive plucking of the banjo.

ANGLE ON LUKE CLOSE

playing, the tears coursing.

NEW ANGLE ON LUKE

in his bunk now, staring wet-eyed up at the ceiling.

CARR'S VOICE

Fifty, boss.

WICKERMAN'S VOICE

Fifty, awright, Carr.

EXT. MESS HALL (PRE-DAWN)

As the men pour out they see that the light on the box is burning, a nightshirt is hung on the fence. Their usual hurry-up pace is slowed to a nervous, apprehensive gait.

BOSS PAUL

Awright, git lined up here.

ANGLE ON CAPTAIN'S PORCH

He has been watching, rocking. As the men line up, he gets up and goes down the steps toward the yard.

CAPTAIN'S P.O.V.

pushing the gate open, moving in front of Boss Paul, facing the men.

CAPTAIN

Luke, fall out.

Luke steps forward, pulls off his shirt and jacket. He steps behind the latticework screen to take off his pants as the Captain speaks.

CAPTAIN'S VOICE

(emotionless)

When a man's mother dies and he gits to thinkin' about her funeral and

payin' respects, before he knows it
his mind ain't right and he's got
rabbit in his blood and runs. We're
keepin' you off the road fer awhile.

He has said all he has to say. He walks off.

FULL SHOT LUKE AND THE MEN

They are watching him slip on the nightshirt. Boss Kean opens
the box.

BOSS KEAN

(to Luke)

Ah'm jus' doin' mah job, Luke. You
gotta appreciate that.

ANGLE ON LUKE IN BOX

LUKE

Boss, when you do somethin' to me
you better do it because you got to
or want to... but not because it's
your damn job.

ANGLE ON KEAN

His eyes narrow. The box door slams. Greyness.

BOSS PAUL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Awright, let's move it out!

And o.s. the SOUNDS of the men counting through the gate and
the truck engines coughing.

EXT. ROAD DAWN (NIGHT)

The bull gang truck pulling out. In b.g. the barracks and
the light over the box.

EXT. CAMP

The bull gang truck stopping. The back is opened and the men
jump out, line up and begin counting off through the gate.
In b.g. as they count is Luke's voice singing.

CLOSE ON DRAGLINE

He smiles... oh that Luke!

CLOSE ON BOSS GODFREY

listening to the mocking voice.

EXT. BARRACKS

It is the next morning. The tire iron SOUNDS.

CARR'S VOICE

First bell! First bell! Let's go!

The figures of Boss Paul and Boss Seven go to the box. Seven carries Luke's food.

INT. BOX PAUL'S P.O.V.

as it is opened. The dimness of the overhead bulb illuminates Luke.

LUKE

Shut the door, Boss. You're lettin'
in a draft.

ANGLE ON PAUL

His face corrodes in fury.

BOSS PAUL

Git on your feet! Ah'm gonna teach
you some respect right now!

Furiously he tries to cane Luke with his walking stick. But the cramped quarters restrict him. The cane clangs wildly against the sides of the box as Luke crouches in a corner, covering his head.

ANGLE ON LUKE

protecting, as Boss Paul retreats. The box door slams!
Greyness.

EXT. BARRACKS (AFTERNOON)

as the bull gang counts in after the day's work. The light on the box still burns. No sound from Luke.

CLOSE ON DRAGLINE

He looks worried.

EXT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

The tire rim SOUNDS and the men scurry for their bunks.

CARR'S VOICE

Last bell! Last bell!
(the pacing of his
steps)
Forty-nine, Boss. And one in the
box.

WICKERMAN'S VOICE

Forty-nine and one in the box. Right,
Carr.

EXT. BARRACKS (PRE-DAWN)

Boss Paul, carrying a shotgun, and Boss Seven are opening the box. In b.g. the tire rim SOUNDS.

CARR'S VOICE

First bell! First bell! Let's go!

And the uproar of the men getting out of their bunks, hurrying to dress and line up by the chute.

INT. BOX CLOSE SHOT LUKE'S P.O.V.

as the door opens and the double muzzle of Boss Paul's shotgun stares.

BOSS PAUL'S P.O.V.

Luke is standing at the rear of the box, his arms crossed over his chest, his eyes slightly wild, his face dirty and stubbled. In b.g. the SOUND of Rudolph, the pet bloodhound puppy, yipping.

LUKE'S P.O.V.

Paul's gun draws back. Boss Seven hands Paul a heavy biscuit, grinning. Rudolph is sniffing, nipping at Paul's trousers, smelling the biscuit.

BOSS PAUL

You look hongry, Luke.

(tosses biscuit in
his hand)

Reckon this would taste mighty good,
but Rudolph looks pretty hongry,
too. Why don't we split it with the
pooch, okay?

He breaks the biscuit and dangles half over Rudolph who nips and barks for it.

BOSS PAUL

(feeding Rudolph)

Tha's a good boy.

(to Luke)

Well, here's your piece, Luke.

ON LUKE

He speaks in a low, uneven voice.

LUKE

Might as well give it all to him,
Boss. I just ain't much hungry.

ON BOSS PAUL

Livid with rage, he slams the door! Greyness.

EXT. LAUNDRY FENCE CLOSE ON LAUNDRY FLYING OVER FENCE
(AFTERNOON)

as LAUNDRY BOY tries to catch the flying sheets, pants and shirts being tossed by the men. Behind him we SEE the steaming, pumping cleaning machines.

EXT. YARD (AFTERNOON)

Laundry boy and machines in b.g. as Boss Kean and Boss Seven go to the box. Boss Seven carries Luke's shoes and a freshly cleaned set of state issues. The men turn.

INT. BOX (AFTERNOON)

as the door opens. Luke looks up. Kean's face stares down, not unkind. Luke moves forward.

OMITTED

EXT. BOX (AFTERNOON)

as Luke emerges, Kean behind him.

BOSS KEAN

(gently)

She's in the ground now, Luke. Best forget about it. You got a day and a half lay-in... and tomorrow's a holiday.

OMITTED

INT. BARRACKS (EVENING)

The Fourth of July. All hell is breaking loose. Four radios going, chain men jitterbugging, one of the men has a mouth harmonica, another plucks Luke's banjo. A lemonade barrel is in a corner and men dip into it with coke bottles; others are banging together bottles as instruments, playing combs, etc.

ANGLE ON ALIBI AND DYNAMITE

just filling their bottles with lemonade.

ALIBI

(toasting)

Happy Fourth of July.

SLEEPY

Same to you.

ALIBI

Boy, if anyone had told me where I
was going to be spending Independence
Day...

(shakes his head)

ON MUSIC MAKERS, OTHERS

Most of them are concentrated in front of Luke's bunk, singing
and screaming, trying to make as much noise as possible.
Tattoo is reading a new sex book aloud while Dynamite,
Loudmouth Steve, others listen intently, some avid, some
confused.

TATTOO

(reading)

Wanda trembled, faced by this awesome
decision. It was the moment of choice.
Could she take the plunge and wantonly
hurl herself into pagan abandon? Or
would she remain ever fettered by
the bonds of her puritanical
upbringing? Could she take this chance
to experience the sensual thrill of
total release and gratification? Or
would she turn her back and retreat
into frigid denial? Desire and fear,
temptation and terror, yearning and
horror, warred within her beautiful
young body...

Luke is not to be seen among the music-makers and revellers.
Moving through the crowd, the CAMERA FINDS Luke on his hands
and knees, sawing at the floorboard with a piece of hacksaw.

ANGLE ON CARR

as the tire iron SOUNDS and SOUNDS again to be heard over
the din.

CARR

First bell! Let's git to bed. You
done had your fun.

The singers and music-makers around Luke finish their song,
reaching a high, piercing, noisy crescendo. At the same time,
Dragline has been reading another sex book to Stupid Blondie,
Blind Dick and Chief who are trying to act out the
description, tying themselves into an intricate anatomical
knot.

DRAGLINE

(reading)

She moved her head another inch while
he reached up and put his left hand
on Carol's cheek as Carol pressed
her lips to... Oh Lord, I can't read
it!

He wriggles, panting with eye-popping pleasure, attracting Carr's attention. Stupid Blondie, Rabbit and Chief are still trying to untie themselves.

DRAGLINE

Carr. Lookit this. Oh I don't believe it.

CARR

What you got there, Drag? You bought yourself another of them dirty books?

Intrigued, Carr sits down on Dragline's bunk and follows Dragline's finger pointing out the lascivious parts. He is quickly absorbed.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

He looks over toward Luke who can be seen between the legs of the surrounding men, poised, waiting to drop down into the hole. Dragline winks.

ANGLE ON LUKE

He winks back, grins and disappears through the hole in the floor.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE AND CARR

The tutor and the student.

DRAGLINE

Here's a real hot one!

Carr reads intently.

ON THE HOLE BENEATH LUKE'S BUNK

gaping, empty, inviting.

VARIOUS REACTIONS OF MEN

- A. KOKO - suppressing a giggle.
- B. SOCIETY RED - considering it, cowardly.
- C. ALIBI - tense, nervous.

ANGLE ON TATTOO

He has been considering it, weighing his chances, his eyes darting from the hole to Carr, back again. Now he scurries to the hole, drops inside.

ANGLE ON CARR, DRAGLINE

as the tire iron SOUNDS. Carr gets up.

CARR
Awright, last bell!

The men are in their bunks, Carr begins to make his count.
As he comes to Tatto's bunk:

WICKER MAN'S VOICE
HEY, CARR! WHAT'S THAT OUTSIDE?

Carr rushes to the window.

CARR
Somebody's on the fence, boss!

EXT. YARD ON THE FENCE

It is Tattoo, half-way up the fence, startled by the clamor
as the Wicker Man whales the GONG. He falls back down, starts
up again, dogs BARKING.

EXT. YARD NEW ANGLE

as guards come running from the Captain's house, the dogs
HOWLING.

ON TATTOO

frantically trying to get up the fence, falling down, starting
to run, seeing the guards approaching with guns and canes,
turning to the other direction: more guards. Caught like a
rat, eyes wild with fear, he makes terrified motions to go
in one direction, then the other but is rooted by fear and
indecision as the guards move in. He SCREAMS.

INT. BARRACKS ANGLE ON WICKER AND DOOR

which is unlocked. Dogboy is dressed, combing his hair, self-
importantly putting on his gloves while the men lie in their
bunks, staring contemptuously. Boss Paul, Godfrey and others
stare with shotguns leveled from the wicker.

BOSS PAUL
Who else?

Carr has been tearing a sheet off Luke's bed.

CARR
Jackson. He cut a hole in the floor,
Boss.

He hands the sheet to Dogboy.

BOSS PAUL
He ain't even got the sense to run
from the road like everybody else.

DOGBOY

Blue'll git him, Boss. We'll git
that bastid, Cool Hand Luke.

OMITTED

EXT. DOG PEN MED. CLOSE SHOT (NIGHT)

Boss Paul is unlocking the pen. Dogboy stands by the screen
letting the yapping, frothing hounds sniff at the sheet.

BOSS PAUL

Stan' back, Dogboy. Git the leash
here.

As he opens the pen, the hounds rush out. Dogboy grabs one,
Boss Paul grabs another but Big Blue, the lead hound, has
the scent and he bolts, howling and tearing off.

DOGBOY

Blue! Come back here! Come back, I
said.

EXT. SWAMP (NIGHT)

Luke, smiling, running like hell through the murky water. In
b.g. Blue's baying.

EXT. SWAMP (NIGHT)

Blue in pursuit, sniffing, dashing, on the trail.

EXT. SWAMP (NIGHT)

Dogboy with the other dogs being pulled through the muddy,
murky, thickly-foliaged swamp. Behind him, wading unhappily
through knee-deep water are Bosses Paul, Higgins and Shorty.

EXT. ABANDONED RAILROAD STATION NIGHT (LATER)

Boss Paul is on the phone to the Captain, Bosses Higgins and
Shorty sit disconsolate, dirty, wet, exhausted. Only Dogboy
is still eager, two hounds by his feet, listening in the
distance to the howl of Blue baying.

DOGBOY

Listen to Blue sing. She's on to
him. She says: got him.

BOSS SHORTY

Hail, that dog is jus' runnin' in
circles.

BOSS PAUL

(returning from phone)
Captain says to wait 'til the Patrol

gits here.

DOGBOY

(listening to Blue)

She's on to him. You shoulda waited
fer me to git her out -- loose like
she is, he kin run her crazy.

BOSS PAUL

It ain't my fault you don't know how
to handle your dogs.

DOGBOY

How my suppose to handle a dog someone
jus' let loose?

BOSS HIGGINS

I'm beat. This ain't mah job, nohow.

BOSS SHORTY

Me neither.

A Highway Patrol car pulls up.

BOSS PAUL

Here's the Patrol.

DOGBOY

(pulling up dogs)

She's got him! You hear that?

Higgins and Shorty shake their heads wearily.

OFFICER

(to Dogboy)

Okay, let's get started.

EXT. FARM COUNTRY (PIPELINES) (NIGHT)

Luke steps under and through the pipeline supports and
vanishes. In b.g. Blue's plaintive HOWLING.

EXT. FARM COUNTRY (PIPELINES) DAY (DAWN)

Dogboy moves ACROSS the SCENE with his pack of dogs, having
trouble following through the supports. The Officer behind
him.

CLOSE SHOT DOGBOY

plodding along, exhausted, yanking at the dogs as they pull
in different directions.

DOGBOY

Come on, Rudolph, Austin, you no
good buncha chicken-eaters, we're
lookin' for a man. We got us a job

to do.

EXT. BUSH BY FENCE (NEAR RAILROAD TRACKS) (DAY)

Luke carefully slips through the barbs, runs a few yards, slips back through again, runs a few yards, returns to the other side.

EXT. BUSH BY FENCE (NEAR RAILROAD TRACKS) DAY (LATER)

Dogboy with his pack and the Officer. In b.g. Blue is HOWLING, the dogs are BAYING frantically. It is with trouble that Dogboy and the Officer get through the fence, pulled by the eager dogs. Then they must cross it again.

OFFICER

Your dogs are crazy.

DOGBOY

He keeps criss-crossin'. He's smarter'n a dog. But he ain't got us boxed yet... Blue'll get him.

OMITTED

EXT. RAILROAD BRIDGE DAY

A trestle built of creosoted timber. The dogs reach it, break up into a milling, confused mass. Dogboy wrestles them out of the trestle. In b.g. as always, Blue's plaintive BAYING.

ANGLE ON BRIDGE

as Dogboy fights the dogs to get them across.

ANGLE ON FAR SIDE OF BRIDGE

as Dogboy hauls at the dogs who are pulling in different directions.

CLOSE SHOT DOGBOY

exhausted, disappointed, looking around, puzzled.

NEW ANGLE

The dogs are confused, seem to mill around aimlessly.

DOGBOY

(almost in tears)

Dammit.

(calling)

Blue! Blue!

No answer.

EXT. FARMLAND ORCHARD TRACKING SHOT OF LUKE

running through the thick overhead cover. It is like a jungle. PULLING UP SLOWLY to HELICOPTER SHOT, we SEE that the cover is only a small patch of foliage and on the other side is a huge panorama of rolling, empty moor-like country in which, after a moment, Luke enters, a tiny figure, running free.

EXT. CAMP (LATE AFTERNOON)

The men are coming out of the mess hall, washing their spoons, about to line up for inspection. A Highway Patrol car pulls up outside the gate; from the back seat comes the yipping of dogs. Every head turns. The Captain moves from his rocker and starts down the porch. Boss Paul and Godfrey move toward the car.

CLOSE ON PATROL CAR (LATE AFTERNOON)

as the Officer (seen at the railroad station) gets out and opens the front door. He nudges a sleeping, grizzled figure who emerges. It is Dogboy. The back door is opened and Rudolph and the other small dogs leap out, cavorting, glad to be home. Then the Officer and Dogboy go to the trunk. The Officer opens it. Dogboy reaches in and carries out -- the body of Big Blue. Staggering with fatigue, tears in his eyes, Dogboy stumbles up to the Captain.

DOGBOY

Look, Cap'n. Look what he done to Blue. He's dead, Cap'n. Dead! Run hisself plumb to death. That crazy sadis Cool Hand Luke run her 'til her heart bust.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE KOKO

DRAGLINE

He made it.

EXT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

CARR'S VOICE

Forty-eight, Boss. One in the box and one in the bush.

EXT. ROAD

The Bull Gang is working at the bottom of a high embankment and the guards stand on the road high above their heads, looking down, shotguns out now, alert. The men work away at a racketsy pace.

EXT. GODFREY'S EYES (DAY)

as he turns at the SOUND of a distant motor approaching and the image of a car coming closer enlarges in his glasses.

EXT. ROAD

The car pulls up beside the guards and the door opens. The Captain steps up to the road edge and looks down. He says something to Boss Paul.

BOSS PAUL

Awright, hold it!

The men stop working, puzzled, looking up. Then from the car a guard escorts Luke to the edge of the pavement. Luke grins down at the men sheepishly. His prison uniform is filthy and torn, his hands are cuffed behind his back, his face is dirty and stubbled.

EXT. ROAD PAN REACTIONS OF MEN

They are stunned, saddened.

ANGLE ON LUKE, CAPTAIN, GUARDS

Behind Luke are Godfrey, Paul, Bosses Six and Seven and the Captain. Kean and Shorty flank the gang. The guns are held levelled at the men. One guard uncuffs Luke's hands; others produce a sledge hammer, ballpeen hammer and a set of leg irons from the Captain's car. Two guards kneel before Luke and begin hammering on the irons. Silence except for the HAMMERING AND CLINKING. Luke is silhouetted, a tall, straight figure on the low horizon. The Captain looks directly ahead.

CAPTAIN

(to Luke)

You gonna get used to wearing them chains after a while, Luke. But don't you never stop listenin' to them clinkin'. That's gonna remind you of what I been sayin'.

LUKE

Yeah, they sure do make a lot of cold, hard, noise, Captain.

The Captain feeds his fury staring, then reaches out his hand and Boss Paul lays the blackjack in it. As the chain guards finish and stand up, trembling with rage, the Captain takes a convulsive step forward and brings the sap down behind Luke's ear. As Luke tumbles down the littered embankment toward the men:

CAPTAIN

Don't you never talk that way to me!
You hear? You hear? Never!

His rage subsides and his voice becomes calm, reasonable.

CAPTAIN

(to the men)

What we got here is a failure to communicate. Some men you can't reach, that is they just don't listen when you talk reasonable so you get what we had here last week, which is the way he wants it, well he gets it, and I don't like it any better than you men.

Nodding curtly, the Captain gets back in his car. Someone throws a shovel down the embankment. It CLATTERS until it lands beside Luke. Dragline and the others are by his side, helping him to his feet. Above Godfrey stares down at them.

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE, LUKE AND OTHERS

DRAGLINE

Awright, buddy. You be awright. You give 'em a run for their money. Jus' take it slow and easy, baby. You gonna make it fine.

As Luke tries to get his bearings, someone thrusts the shovel into his hands and they get him going like a rusty piece of machinery.

DRAGLINE

Come on, buddy. Show 'em you're awright.

Luke seems to nod and begins to work slowly. The others back away, glancing fearfully at the guards, go back to work, quiet and sullen.

ANGLE ON LUKE

He is working with great difficulty, stiff, tired, aching.

BOSS KEAN'S VOICE

Awright, let's eat them beans.

Luke stumbles gratefully toward the chowline.

ON THE CHOWLINE

Dogboy dishing it out to Luke. Dogboy is gleeful, gloating.

DOGBOY

I knew they'd git you. With them chains an a bonus of a coupla years, you runnin' days is over forever. Ah'd like to see you try to run agin. You gettin' so you smell so bad, I could track you myself.

LUKE

For a natural born son of a bitch

like you, that oughta be easy.

NEW ANGLE THE MEN

as Luke settles down with his beans, the others find spots around him so he is the focus of the group. We SEE Tattoo in chains, forlorn. Luke wolfs his food hungrily.

DRAGLINE

Jus' take it slow, buddy.

KOKO

(unable to restrain
himself)

What happened? How far did you get?

DRAGLINE

Shut up. Let him eat. Don't pay them
no mind, boy.

TATTOO

(urgently)

I gotta know -- How... how'd they
get you?

LUKE

(between mouthfuls)

Topflight police work.

GAMBLER

Tell us about it.

BLIND DICK

You steal a car?

LUKE

Yeah, found one in this supermarket,
keys in the ignition.

KOKO

Well, how far didya get?

LUKE

(eating)

Fat mile'n a half. Hit this red light,
highway patrol pulls up alongside.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Didya fight it out with him?

LUKE

Nope. I jus' kept lookin' straight
ahead waiting for that light to
change. And he kept lookin' over,
wondering what somethin' that looked
like me was doin' drivin' a shiny
new car.

ALIBI

And then...?

LUKE

Then he leans over and sees this state issue... All there was to it. Feller's probably a lieutenant by now.

Luke continues to shovel in his beans. The men are clearly disappointed. Only Dragline understands.

DRAGLINE

Well now we jus' gonna lay low and build time and afore you know it the heat'll be off you and things be back where they was. Right, sweet buddy?

Luke winks and slaps Dragline affectionately on the cheek. During this last, Luke has been idly winding a piece of kite string found on the ground beside him. As, idly, he shoves it into his pocket.

ANGLE ON BOSS KEAN LATER

The gang has resumed working, Kean stands looking out at the horizon, not talking directly to Luke, just leaning on his gun, following Luke whenever he moves, his voice as calm and secure as a priest in his study.

BOSS KEAN

Ah hears tell you don't believe in no God, Luke. Ah was wonderin' how come a nice lookin' feller like you come to get put on the Hard Road. But now ah reckons ah knows. Ah been on the Road Gang for twenny-two year, Luke, and in all that time I ain't never killed no white man but I ain't afeerd to cause a body has to do his work. And I ain't never seen no man that wasn't afeerd to die neither.

LUKE

'Scuse me, Boss. Don't mean to interrupt... but... caught short here.

Boss Kean is stunned.

BOSS KEAN

(slow, dangerous)

Awright, Luke. Thas okay... You go on up there in them trees. Man's gotta have some privacy sometime.

But you grab a bush and keep shakin'
it, hear? Jes' so we know you're
there. Jes' keep shakin' that bush.

LUKE

Yes, boss.

He begins to trot off, awkward in his chains. Kean looks at Godfrey who snaps his fingers to Dogboy, a gesture that means rifle. Dogboy runs to the truck and brings back the rifle which Godfrey loads and arms with the bolt from his pocket.

ANGLE ON LUKE

Slowly walking off into the rough grass, his chains catching on brush and stumps. He disappears behind a large bush.

CLOSE SHOT GODFREY

Luke's bush is in distance. He raises the gun to his shoulder and FIRES.

REVERSE HIS P.O.V.

The bush shakes, we can't see Luke.

LUKE

I'm shakin' it, Boss. I'm shakin'
it!

We see the dust kick up behind the stump and another SHOT.

LUKE

Still shakin' it, Boss.

CLOSE SHOT GODFREY

impassively: SHOOTS again, aiming.

REVERSE HIS P.O.V.

The bush goes on shaking. Then it stops.

GODFREY

Caught loading. He brings up the rifle fast, FIRES.

CLOSE THE BUSH

It is still.

FULL SHOT

The gang stops working, looks up stunned.

ANGLE ON BOSS KEAN AND GODFREY

A long beat of shock -- they (and us) think Godfrey's hit him. Boss Kean trots hurriedly up to the bush.

ANGLE BY THE BUSH

Boss Kean appears, looking down and off. CAMERA ADJUSTS so we see what he sees: a piece of kite string tied to the bush and leading off into the brush.

BOSS KEAN

Damn!

He turns and rushing back down toward Godfrey, others.

BOSS KEAN

He's gone! Git the dogs!

EXT. DIRTY ROAD (DAY)

It is a rutted country road with farms on both sides. Luke appears, a filthy wide-eyed, stumbling, bearded beast in filthy uniform and chains. PAN with him past sharecropper's village of ramshackle huts, rusted junk. An OLD NEGRO WOMAN sees Luke and goes inside, closing the door. PAN with him to a General Store where an OLD NEGRO MAN watching, quickly retreats inside leaving only two small Negro boys (BEN and LAWRENCE) staring at Luke as he shambles toward them.

LAWRENCE

(looking at chains)

Whattaya got them on for?

BEN

How do you take your pants off?

LUKE

(smiling)

Well -- the best way is to take the leg irons off first.

(to Lawrence)

But you ain't strong enough.

LAWRENCE

Strong enough for whut?

LUKE

You couldn't heft an axe.

LAWRENCE

Can, too.

He's off, running toward a house. In the distance now, we hear the dogs baying, coming closer. Luke smiles at Ben.

LUKE

What's your name?

BEN

Ben.

(a beat)

Had'n you better take them stripes
off your pants?

Smiling, Luke sits in the dirt and begins ripping off the stripes as Lawrence appears, dragging a huge double-bitted axe behind him.

LUKE

(to Ben)

You wanna see somethin' funny? Go
get some chili powder, pepper, curry,
dried mustard and like that. A lot
of it.

Ben rockets off and Luke turns to see Lawrence, struggling mightily, attempting to bring the axe over his head and down on the chains.

LUKE

Hold it!

He takes the axe, sets the chains up on a stump and begins to back heavily, BAYING OF DOGS growing louder.

LAWRENCE

No, me, me. Let me do it!

Lawrence cries and stomps unhappily, clouding up dust as Luke severs the chain from one shackle. Ben APPEARS with an armload of spices.

BEN

Here's them spices.
(looks at Lawrence,
crying, stomping)
What's wrong with him?

Luke begins backing away, scuffing his feet in the dust, pouring out the spices as he goes.

ANGLE ON LUKE

stopping at Lawrence. The baying of the dogs is much closer now.

LUKE

You remember how them dogs do when
they get here so you can tell me
about it someday.

He is gone.

ON DOGS IN DISTANCE

They are approaching quickly.

ON VILLAGE

Some of the people have reappeared, now go back inside.

ANGLE ON DOGS

They fill the FRAME, milling around the empty street, sneezing, howling, stirring up dust, pawing at their noses.

CLOSE LAWRENCE

He is peeping from a corner. His tears stop and he smiles.

EXT. ROAD CLOSEUP YOYO TRANSITIONAL DEVICE (DAY)

...cutting away at the time.

INT. CAGE TRUCK (PROCESS) (DAY)

as it passes the Negro Church.

DRAGLINE'S VOICE

Thas the church. After he chopped off those old chains and whilst he was layin'd down the pepper --

GAMBLER'S VOICE

I heard it was curry powder.

DRAGLINE'S VOICE

It was pepper and curry powder and dry mustard. Now shut your face. Whilst he was layin' down them spices, Luke heard them choir practicin' in there. So he just sauntered inside, cool's kin be, and sung along with them... my baby Luke... and he was still singin' when the dogs come by, singing and grinning and eatin' the food the people had brung him.

EXT. ROAD TRANSITIONAL DEVICE

EXT. ROAD (DAY)

The bull gang at the end of bean time.

BOSS PAUL'S VOICE

Awright, let's git to work.

Dragline and the others deposit their chow plates, pick up their yoyos and start to work.

DRAGLINE

He ain't eating beans fer lunch.

KOKO

He's eatin' steak and corn with butter
and green beans and...

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

...fried clams, pizza, chocolate,
malted milkshakes.

SOCIETY RED

(yoyoing)
...and a Brown Bomber.

DRAGLINE

(yoyoing)
Shut your mouth. He's out there doin'
it for all of us.

OMITTED

INT. BARRACKS (DAY)

It is Saturday afternoon. Carr is distributing mail and
packages, the men clustered around; others lying on bunks,
making wallets, etc.

CARR

Magazines for you, Dragline!

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE

Dragline sits up from his bunk, astonished.

DRAGLINE

Magazines? Who's sendin' me magazines?

He looks at the package. Carr has tossed on his bunk.

DRAGLINE

From mah uncle? Ah never heard from
him in eight years and now he's
sendin' me magazines. He musta gone
crazy.

He has torn open the package, looks through the magazines,
which are movie fan books, lies back to flip the pages. In
b.g. Carr is continuing the mail call. Suddenly Dragline's
eyes widen, his mouth opens, but he catches himself and closes
it before he has revealed himself.

INSERT THE PICTURE

It is taped to page in the magazine. It shows Luke in a suit
and tie, holding up four aces and a joker in one hand, arms
around two buxom over-made strippers. On the table in front
of them is a giant bottle of champagne and glasses. Scrawled
across it is something in Luke's writing.

ANGLE DRAGLINE KOKO SOCIETY RED OTHERS

Seeing Dragline's reaction, they have gathered around.

DRAGLINE

Looka that! Two of them. Oh my...

KOKO

I'm dyin'. I'm dyin'.

Dragline suddenly realizes the danger and closes the book so Carr and the Wicker Man don't catch on. The others reluctantly move away. Dragline casually hands the magazine to Society Red.

DRAGLINE

(whispering)

What's the writing say?

SOCIETY RED

(opening to the
picture, reading)

Dear Boys. Playing it cool. Wish you
were here. Love, Cool Hand Luke.

DRAGLINE

Oh my. Oh my... Give it back here!

Red surrenders the magazine. Dragline opens it again and a look of pure bliss settles over his face.

KOKO

Lemme see it!

DRAGLINE

(violently)

Get away!

He looks over at Carr but Carr has moved away, is talking to the Wicker Man, his back to the men. Koko, Loudmouth Steve, Gambler and the others hurriedly cluster around Dragline. Their voices are eager intense whispers.

KOKO

Lookit the brunette...

BLIND DICK

The blonde's gotta better set.

GAMBLER

Some legs.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

They must be six feet tall.

TATTOO

...And the champagne.

SOCIETY RED
(from his bunk)
Domestic.

TRAMP
Wonder how he got the dough.

ALIBI
He's probably a salesman. You can
make pretty good money if you know
what your doing in selling.

GAMBLER
A salesman! Cool Hand Luke a salesman?

BLIND DICK
He's probably a gigolo.

MECHANIC
Or a con artist.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE
The head of the rackets.

KOKO
(reverently)
Oh lookit that brunette.

DRAGLINE
Mah baby! We're diggin' and dyin'
but our boy Luke is lovin' and flyin'.

They all gaze at the picture with loving, dreamy, painful
rapture.

OMITTED

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

Blackass time, dull, sad, boring. Koko sits idly flicking
cards from the poker deck, men staring into space. The cards
sail by Society Red who is clipping his nails.

SOCIETY RED
Stop that.

KOKO
How about you tryin' to make me?

SOCIETY RED
Oh for...

They slowly subside.

KOKO

Dragline, lemme look at the picture.

DRAGLINE

(feigned innocence)

What for?

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Yeah, Drag. Get it out for a look.

DRAGLINE

You're just a kid. Whatta you know about it? You don't wanna see that dirty picture. Luke and those broads an' all that booze.

KOKO

Come on, Drag. Lemme take a look.

DRAGLINE

It'd go to your coconut head. You'd start getting ideas. Maybe even pass right out.

BLIND DICK

Dragline! Be a buddy!

DRAGLINE

How much you figure it's worth, a peek at this here picture? A quick look, I'm not talkin' about no memorizin' job.

KOKO

A cold drink.

DRAGLINE

A cold drink? You mean one cold drink? To feast yore starvin' fishy l'il eyes on The Picture? A true vision of Paradise itself? With two of the angels right there in plain sight a-friskin' round with mah boy?

KOKO

A cold drink? Okay?

DRAGLINE

Well --- okay. It's a deal. One cold drink, if'n you please. In advance. One chilly bottle right here in mah hot l'il hand... That goes for the rest of you mullet-heads, too.

Activity as the men dig out coins to purchase drinks. Dragline pulls out the magazine and the men all gather round, gazing into it as though it were a crystal ball. Suddenly the wicker door slams open and as the men look up...

THEIR P.O.V.

Luke is dumped to the floor, face down, unconscious, by Boss Paul, Boss Kean, others. The Captain is standing there over him. Luke wears a new prison uniform and two sets of chains.

CAPTAIN

(to Luke)

You run one time, you got yourself a set of chains. You run twice, you got two sets. You ain't gonna need no third set because you're gonna get your mind right... And I mean right.

He looks at the men who are stunned by the juxtaposition of their hero in The Picture and the reality of the unconscious figure before them.

CAPTAIN

Take a good look at your Cool Hand Luke.

With his foot he prods Luke over onto his back.

CLOSE ON LUKE

As he rolls over we can see he has been badly beaten.

OMITTED

NEW ANGLE THE MEN

As the Captain turns and walks out past the guards who follow, and the wicket chute CLANGS shut, Dragline, Koko and others move forward and gently lift Luke onto the poker table.

DRAGLINE

Oh mah poor baby. They done you real good... I don't know if you gonna have them gals chasin' after you for a while...

CLOSE ON LUKE

lying, eyes closed.

SOCIETY RED'S VOICE

I've got some aspirin.

KOKO'S VOICE

They half killed him.

ALIBI'S VOICE

He should have a doctor.

DRAGLINE'S VOICE

Don't you never learn nuthin'? They
ain't gonna let no doctor see what
they dont to him...

ANGLE ON DRAGLINE, OTHERS

Dragline looks up at Carr who stands hovering above them.

DRAGLINE

Carr, kin we use your razor to clean
up where they cut his head?

Carr moves off to his canteen area.

CLOSE ON LUKE

as Blind Dick, Gambler, others move in...

GAMBLER

How you feelin', buddy?

TRAMP

He don't hear.

TATTOO

Somebody get him something to drink.

SOCIETY RED

Here.

Gently he tucks two aspirin tablets into Luke's mouth, holds
a cup of water to Luke's mouth. Luke's eyes slowly open, he
drinks the water.

DRAGLINE

That's my baby.

KOKO

He's gonna be awright.

NEW ANGLE ON MEN

as Carr moves in with a razor, bandage, etc. The men clear
to give him room.

KOKO

Luke?... We got the picture! See?

He holds it up.

CLOSE ON LUKE

His eyes squint open, close.

BLIND DICK'S VOICE

A pair of beauties. Best I ever seen.

TATTOO'S VOICE

You really know how to pick 'em.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE'S VOICE

Tell us about 'em. What were they like?

CLOSE ON LUKE

as his lips open. He speaks slowly, painfully.

LUKE

Picture's a phoney... Cost me a week's pay.

NEW ANGLE THE MEN

KOKO

A phoney? Whatta you mean, a phoney?

GAMBLER

We saw the broads.

BLIND DICK

Yeah. Did you have them both at once or --

LUKE

It's a phoney. Made it up just for you guys.

LOUDMOUTH STEVE

Aw, come on. We saw it all.

TATTOO

The champagne.

TRAMP

Some life.

FIXER

You really had it made.

LUKE

Nothin. I had nothin, made nothin. Couple towns, couple bosses. Laughed out loud one day and got turned in.

KOKO

(about to cry)

But -- but --

LUKE

That's all there was. Listen. Open your eyes. Stop beatin' it. And stop feedin' off me. Now get out of the

way. Give me some air.

Stunned, the men shrink back.

DRAGLINE

He ain't himself. He's all beat up.
Cain't you see that? He don't know
what he sayin'.

EXT. ROAD DAY

Luke is working with great difficulty, pained, weary under the double set of chains. Bosses Paul and Kean stand right over him, watching every move.

ANGLE ON GODFREY

standing far behind, his mirrored eyes on Luke.

ON LUKE

moving, he stumbles on the chains, gets hit by Paul's cane.

BOSS PAUL

You was eyeballin', Luke. You can't
gitcha mind on them weeds if yer
eyeballin'...

LUKE

(wearily)

Boss, you don't need reasons to hit
me.

He gets the cane again.

BOSS PAUL

Gonna learn you not to back sass!

EXT. THE BOX (NIGHT)

as Luke is slammed into it and the door is closed.

INT. THE BARRACKS (NIGHT)

The poker game is in progress: Dragline, Koko, Blind Dick, Gambler, Tattoo with Tramp behind him. Society Red stands at the window, looking out as he brushes his hair.

SOCIETY RED

He'll never make it.

KOKO

What are you talking about?

SOCIETY RED

He doesn't know when to give in.
They'll kill him.

KOKO

Give in? That's our Luke out there.

DRAGLINE

That ole box collapse and fall apart
before Luke calls quits.

SOCIETY RED

Your Luke's got more guts than brains.

KOKO

I don't see no sign of guts in you.

SOCIETY RED

No. No chains either.

KOKO

(heating up)

You ain't man enough to wear them!

SOCIETY RED

But you're dog enough. Maybe they'll
let you sleep outside the box near
your master.

KOKO

Big deal paper hanger! Hell, anyone
who can write can pass fifty-sixty
dollar checks. Like breakin' open a
piggy bank.

SOCIETY RED

You've been having bad luck with
masters, haven't you? Your last one
left you when the cops came... and
now Luke. You should complain to the
S.P.C.A.

KOKO

(rushing him)

You phony creep!

Dragline steps in to separate them.

DRAGLINE

Awright, that's enough. You wanna
end up in the box, too?

The tire rim sounds.

CARR'S VOICE

First bell! First bell!

INT. MESS HALL (NIGHT)

The men file in from work, sullen and quiet, Dogboy serving

but without his usual chatter. Higgins leans back, unusually alert.

ANGLE ON DOORWAY

Suddenly Luke appears, unshaven but cleaned up and in his uniform. The men make room as he moves to his accustomed place at the head of the line, before Dynamite.

DOGBOY

Here's our champeen hog gut. Ain't et for four days, gonna need a little extra... Well we got plenty for you...

He's heaping food onto Luke's plate.

DOGBOY

(continuing)

Now you know the rules... gotta eat everything on the plate or go back in the box, right, Boss?

Higgins nods, Dogboy continues to pile it on. When Luke tries to move on, Dogboy reaches out and grabs the plate with his free hand and continues to ladle it out. Behind Dogboy, Jabo, the cook, looks sympathetic to Luke.

JABO

(to Dogboy)

We ain't got but one pot of stew, you know. He ain't the only one eatin'.

DOGBOY

(piling it on)

Man use to Free World food gotta big appetite... so here's some more potatoes and here's some ice cream and some cake with choclat fudge sauce... there you go, stretch that hog-belly right out.

Luke looks at the impossibly piled plate and moves off.

LUKE AT A TABLE

He is eating with great difficulty, finally puts his spoon down and his eyes close with weariness. Koko reaches over and takes a bite off the plate. Luke sits there and one by one the men get up and file out, each one passing behind Luke and taking a bite until, as Deacon takes the last mouthful, the plate is empty and Luke stands up and leaves.

EXT. CAMP YARD (DAY)

It is Saturday afternoon. The men have just returned from the road. Luke moves slowly toward the barracks, Dragline

helping him.

DRAGLINE

You made the week, boy. Plenty of
time to rest up for old Monday.

They move a few feet until confronted by...

THEIR P.O.V. BOSS PAUL AND BOSS KEAN

BOSS PAUL

Luke!

Kean steps forward, draws a long line in the dirt of the
yard, barring the path, moves three feet back and draws a
parallel line.

BOSS PAUL

Boss Kean say that's his ditch. I
tol' him that their dirt is yore
dirt. What's yore dirt doin' in his
ditch?

Luke looks up at them blindly.

LUKE

(weakly)

I don't know, Boss.

Boss Paul canes him and the other prisoners scatter. Boss
Kean throws a shovel at Luke's feet.

BOSS PAUL

You git yore dirt outa his ditch,
boy!

Luke takes up the shovel and starts to dig.

BOSS PAUL

Roll! I wanna see you roll it!

He canes Luke across the back, Luke digs.

ANGLE ON BARRACKS

It is later. The men sit on the stoop, the usual Saturday
activities.

ANGLE ON LUKE

He is hidden up to his waist in the trench he has dug, about
three feet deep and wide and as long as the lines Kean drew.

ANGLE ON MEN

watching.

ANGLE ON BOSS SHORTY

walking along briskly, feigns surprise at seeing what Luke is doing. He stops.

TWO SHOT BOSS SHORTY AND LUKE

BOSS SHORTY

Luke, what you think you doin'?

LUKE

(not stopping)

Diggin' my dirt outa Boss Kean's ditch, Boss.

Shorty is carrying a hoe handle with which he hits Luke on the head. Luke slumps to the ground.

BOSS SHORTY

Be damned iff'n you gonna put your dirt in mah yard. You hear me?

LUKE

(getting to his feet)

Yes, Boss.

BOSS SHORTY

Then git it out there. Roll it, heah?

Luke begins slowly shoveling the dirt back into the ditch. Boss Shorty nods with satisfaction and walks away.

ANGLE ON LUKE (LATE AFTERNOON)

The dirt is almost all back in the ditch. A shadow falls on the dirt beside him. A walking stick falls across his buttocks and he staggers to his knees.

BOSS PAUL'S VOICE

Ah done told you to get yore dirt outa Boss Kean's ditch, didn't ah?

LUKE

(getting to his feet)

Yes, Boss.

BOSS PAUL

Then how come it ain't done yet?

LUKE

I don't know, Boss.

BOSS PAUL

You don't know!

He canes Luke on the back of the legs. Luke falls and rolls over and Paul canes him across the head. Luke gets up on all

fours and makes a rush right at Boss Paul. He is so weak and uncoordinated that the attack does nothing but smear blood and dirt over Paul's uniform. The guards beat Luke away and he falls on his back in the soft dirt.

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

The men are restless, their efforts to ignore what's happening are futile. Dragline gets up and looks out the window into the yard. Koko leans over beside him. He holds the picture.

DRAGLINE'S P.O.V.

Luke under the lights, working again, slowly, dumps a shovel full of dirt and hasn't the strength to move the shovel. Momentarily, he stops moving and is hit. We HEAR the thud and the groan he gives.

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

Dragline goes back to his bunk. We HEAR another thud and a cry from outside. Dragline begins to WHISTLE. Koko begins to chink his chains. Onionhead and Dynamite join in with their chains. Other prisoners rhythmically beat on bunk posts. Only Society Red does not join in.

EXT. YARD (NIGHT)

Luke works. From inside we HEAR the music from the prisoners. Boss Paul and Boss Kean appear.

BOSS PAUL

What's all this dirt in the yard?

LUKE

I... I... I...

He can't talk. Paul hits him and he falls again on the dirt. Paul hits him again.

LUKE

Please! Please!

BOSS PAUL

Git to work!

LUKE

Don't hit me! Please, for God's sake, don't hit me.

BOSS KEAN

What was that? What was that name you said, Luke?

LUKE

God. I pray to God you won't hit me.
(he grovels in the

dirt before them,
tears streaming down
his cheeks)
I'll do whatever you say, but I can't
take no more. Please.

TWO SHOT PAUL AND KEAN

A trace of smiles.

BOSS PAUL
(kindly)
You got your mind right, Luke?

CLOSE LUKE

LUKE
Yes, Boss. I got it right.

ON KEAN AND PAUL

BOSS PAUL
Supposin' you was to backslide on
us, Luke? Supposin' you was to
backsass or try to run again...

LUKE
No, Boss! I won't. I won't. I got my
mind right. I got it right, Boss.
Please don't hit me no more.

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

The music has stopped, the men listening.

ON KOKO

His face tightens into an expression of contempt, hatred. He
grabs the picture on the bunk beside him and violently tears
it in half.

EXT. YARD LUKE, BOSSES PAUL AND KEAN (NIGHT)

BOSS PAUL
(kind and reasonable)
Luke, you run again and we'll kill
you.

LUKE
I know, I know. Just don't hit me.

The Captain steps in -- out of the dark. He has been watching
from his porch.

CAPTAIN
Okay, son. Go get shaved and cleaned
up and get you some sleep. I reckon

you need it.

Luke slowly struggles to his feet and begins painfully stumbling toward the barracks.

INT. BARRACKS (NIGHT)

as the chute opens and Luke staggers inside and the door is slammed behind him.

LUKE

I got my mind right. I got it right.

He stumbles toward his bunk, passing Tattoo and Alibi who turn away embarrassed.

LUKE

I got my mind right.

Others like Dragline and Koko stare straight ahead, not seeing him; Society Red has his back turned; Dynamite, Blind Dick, Loudmouth Steve meet his gaze contemptuously.

LUKE

(collapsing on his
bunk)

Where are you now? I got my mind
right. You hear me? I got it right!

Silence.

EXT. ROAD (DAY)

The gang is working. Over a week has passed. Luke's wounds are healed. He works in a slow, spiritless way, broken.

CLOSE GODFREY

looking somehow less menacing.

BOSS PAUL

He is sitting, not even looking at the men, relaxed, pulls out watch looks over to Godfrey in b.g. Godfrey nods.

BOSS PAUL

Awright, smoke it up.

The men break and sit down for smoking.

BOSS PAUL

Luke! Water 'em.

Without a moments hesitation, Luke jogs over and gets the water pail and dipper from Rabbit and moves to the group of men.

CLOSE THE GROUP

as Luke moves around filling their cups. The men are silent, some embarrassed, some sympathetic, some confused, some disappointed.

CLOSE GODFREY

He signals with his cane for his rifle.

ON RABBIT

He hurries to the cab of the truck, gets Godfrey's rifle. The other men, but not Luke, watch as Godfrey slips in the bolt, loads, fires at something out in the swamp.

ON BOSS PAUL

As Godfrey takes bolt out of rifle, returns the gun to Rabbit.

BOSS PAUL

Go git it, Luke.

LUKE

Yes sir, Boss Paul!

Grinning, cheerful, he begins to hobble away through the swamp and grass.

CLOSE ANGLE ON TURTLE IN THE MUCK

Luke's hands COME INTO FRAME AND OFFER the head a stick. The jaws clamp down on the stick and Luke lifts the turtle up.

FULL SHOT LUKE

grinning, holding up the turtle by the stick.

LUKE

Here he is, Boss. Deader'n hell but he won't let go.

THE GROUP

as Luke walks back through them carrying the turtle.

BOSS PAUL

You cut that up fer lunch, Luke.

LUKE

Yes, Boss.

He moves off toward the trucks with the turtle, and we HOLD on the disappointed reactions of the men, featuring Dragline.

Then there is the SOUND of a motor starting.

ON THE GROUP NEW ANGLE

as they turn to look, as one man.

THE TRUCK

as Luke tries to get it in gear, there is the SOUND of gears grinding and as the truck begins to move the bed of the dump body begins to raise. The truck begins to move past the prisoners, away from the guards.

ON THE GUARDS

As they begin to run toward the truck, raising their guns.

ON DRAGLINE

on his feet.

DRAGLINE

Oh Lord!

SOCIETY RED

That fool. That damn fool.

DRAGLINE

Oh mah baby Luke.

He starts to run like hell toward the truck coming past.

ANGLE ON GUARDS

stopping to fire but bullets ricochet off the rising bed of the dump body.

MOVING SHOT PARALLELING TRUCK

Dragline running alongside trying to grab the door handle. Inside Luke, grinning fiercely, as he drives. SHOTS sounding. Dragline gets hold of the door, swings inside. HOLD AND PAN the truck off down the road until all we can see is the steel dump body.

REVERSE THE ROAD

It is littered with tools and equipment dumped from the truck body. The guards stand there, their guns empty.

BOSS KEAN

(from another truck)

He's taken the keys. He's got the keys!

Boss Shorty pokes his head out of another truck.

BOSS SHORTY

Here, too.

INT. TRUCK LUKE AND DRAGLINE

DRAGLINE

We're free, Luke. You terrible man.
Think of that. We're free. Free!

Over them, appears the SUPERIMPOSED image of Godfrey's glasses, the Man With No Eyes, watching them, denying Dragline's words.

LONG DISSOLVE:

EXT. PALMETTO SWAMP

Dragline is exuberantly hacking away at palm fronds to cover the truck while Luke is filing away at his chains.

DRAGLINE

(rattling frond)
Shakin it here, Boss. Shakin it...
Oh my baby Luke.

He laughs, shakes his head in appreciation. Luke ignores him, continues to file. Dragline does another worshipful imitation.

DRAGLINE

Don't hit me no more, Boss! Don't hit me! I'll do anythin' you say but just don't hit me! Oh Luke. You are an original, you truly are. You really fooled them.

LUKE

Foolin', Hell! I would have eaten that dirt for them. They coulda used my head for a shovel and a my face for a broom... They just never did get a piece of my mind.

DRAGLINE

And all the time you was plannin' on runnin' again.

Luke has filed through the chains, stands up.

LUKE

Yeah, well... I never planned nothin' in my life...

He tosses the severed chain link into the swamp and starts to walk off, Dragline hurrying behind him.

EXT. NEAR NEGRO VILLAGE (DUSK)

Luke and Dragline appear, tired and cold. Dragline is having

trouble keeping up. Seeing this, Luke stops and rests, looking off at church visible in distance.

DRAGLINE

Whoee, it's cold. Wisht I had somethin' to eat. Bread, grits, beans even. Soon's we get to my house, we're gonna have us one big meal and then I'm gonna show you some farm girls that...

LUKE

We ain't goin' nowhere.

DRAGLINE

(confused)

What you talkin' about, Luke? We're together, you and me, just like always. Now the thing we gotta work out is how to get Koko outa there and then the Terrible Trio be all complete again. Man, this old Free World ain't gonna know which ear to stand on.

LUKE

Yeah, well, you and Koko kin handle it without me.

DRAGLINE

What you mean, Luke?

LUKE

I've done enough world-shakin' for a while. You do the rest for me. Send me a postcard about it.

He gets up, starts off.

DRAGLINE

But, Luke...

LUKE

Take it easy, Drag.

DRAGLINE

Luke. Where you goin'?

LUKE

On my own.

DRAGLINE

But what am I gonna do all by myself?

(hangs head)

Oh if'n I hadn't lost mah head. I only had two more years to go. But when I saw you tearin' down with

that truck... But you right Luke. We oughta split up. Be safer for us both.

He looks up. Luke is in the distance.

DRAGLINE

Luke?

(calls out)

Just the same, you're a good old boy, Luke. You take care, hear?

There is no answer.

OMITTED

EXT. NEGRO VILLAGE (NIGHT)

as Luke trots down the main street, passes the church.

LUKE

Hey, Old Man! You home tonight?

He starts across the bridge.

LUKE

If you kin spare a minute, it's about time we had ourselves a little talk.

INT. CHURCH

Luke mounts the steps of the lectern, looks up.

LUKE

Old Man, I know I'm a pretty evil feller who killed people in the war and got drunk and chopped up municipal merchandise and like that. I admit ain't got no call to ask for much. But even so, you ain't dealt me no cards in a long time. I mean it's beginning to look like you got it fixed so I can't never win out. Inside or out, it's just different bosses and different rules. Where am I supposed to fit in? Old Man, I got to tell you: I started out pretty strong and fast but it's starting to get to me... When does it end?... What you got in mind for me next? Old Man. What do I do now? Awright. On my hands and knees a skin'. Yeah. That's what I thought. I guess I'm just a hardcase and I gotta find my way out myself.

We HEAR the SOUND of vehicles outside, telling Luke that the

police have arrived. He starts for the back just as Dragline enters from the side entrance. Seeing him, Luke looks up at the ceiling.

LUKE

Is that your answer, Old Man? You're a hardcase too, ain't you?

DRAGLINE

Luke, are you alright?... They got us, boy. They're out there thicker'n flies. Bosses and dogs and sheriffs and more guns than I ever seen in my life. We don't have a chance, Luke... They caught up with me right after we split up and they was aimin' to kill you, Luke. But I got 'em to promise if you give up peaceful, they wouldn't even whip you this time.

LUKE

(amused)

Do we even get our same bunks back?

DRAGLINE

Why sure, Luke. I mean I didn't talk to them about that. But why not? They're reasonable, Luke. Hell, we only been gone a coupla hours.

LUKE

You don't understand a thing, do you, Drag?

DRAGLINE

Luke, you got to listen to me. All you got to do is just give up nice and quiet, just play it cool.

LUKE

Like I always do?

DRAGLINE

Thass right. Just play it...

He sees Luke moving toward the window.

DRAGLINE

Luke, what are do doin'?

OMITTED

ANGLE BY WINDOW

as Luke steps out of pitch black into the harsh light in full view, calm, slight smile, having chosen his moment. His

voice is loud, clear, mocking:

LUKE
WHAT WE GOT HERE IS A FAILURE TO
COMMUNICATE...

A SHOT! It catches Luke in the throat and throws him back,
but he stays in the light, still smiling.

DRAGLINE
Luke!

EXT. CHURCHYARD (NIGHT)

ON guards and police, FEATURING Godfrey, who holds his smoking
rifle. There are confused SHOUTS and movements by the
sheriffs, but the Captain and the prison guards only look
toward Godfrey, then turn away, stoic.

INT. CHURCH

as Luke falls to one knee, trying to hold himself up. Dragline
is by his side, helps him up and to the door.

EXT. CHURCHYARD (NIGHT)

where Bosses Kean and Paul move in to handcuff Luke. Dragline,
seeing Godfrey, bellows out an INCOHERENT ROAR and charges
past the surprised guards to knock Godfrey to the ground,
tear his glasses from him. Confused, bewildered, Godfrey
gropes for the glasses as the prison guards beat Dragline
into submission.

ANGLE ON CHURCH (PRE-DAWN) (NIGHT)

as Luke, handcuffed behind his back, is being led toward the
Captain's car by Bosses Paul and Kean. He is half-paralyzed,
blood pouring from him. The Captain has turned his back on
Godfrey, talking to the Sheriff.

SHERIFF
You follow me and I'll radio the
emergency clinic to open up...

CAPTAIN
I'm takin' him to the prison hospital.

SHERIFF
But that's an hour away. He ain't
gonna last twenty minutes.

CAPTAIN
Git outa the way. He's ours.

MOVING SHOT LUKE

as he is brought past Dragline, who is being held by several

guards. Tears stream down Dragline's cheeks. Luke looks at him, still smiling as he is pushed into the Captain's car.

LUKE INT. THE CAR

as it begins to move out. In the b.g. across the road we SEE the Negro villagers watching, silently. The window of the car is up and the reflections on the glass make Luke already dim, a little distant.

MOVING SHOT THE CAR (DAWN)

as it moves down the road, over the trestle. It is the mystic hour of dawn, the sun's rays just diffusing as we watch the car until it disappears over the rise in the road.

EXT. ROAD CLOSE ON YOYO (DAY)

The yoyo is swinging in the sun. As the shot WIDENS we SEE it is Dragline, wearing chains, wielding the yoyo and now we SEE the others working around him. Godfrey is gone; Boss Paul is now the Walking Boss. The MUSIC gains strength and speeds as

Dragline works with strong, certain grace and determination and the others also seem more vital and free as imperceptibly the CAMERA PULLS BACK and RISES SLOWLY TO:

HELICOPTER SHOT

as the men grow smaller in the limitless field of gold stretching in all directions as far as the eye can see, intersected by four roads that reach out to infinity. Now the men are specks, now invisible in the fields and there are only the roads, lines in the gold, going on forever. OVER THIS, SUPERIMPOSE the PICTURE OF LUKE, now scotch-taped together, HOLD and

FADE OUT:

THE END