

# A Jolly Good Fellow

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**EXT. SMOKEY FOREST - DAY**

Smoke chokes the pine forest. Trees stand silhouetted, like ghosts in the thick haze.

A rough hand glides along a thin piece of RED YARN. The yarn zigzags deep into the woods. The hand follows--

The voice of an old man:

VOICE OVER

Got lost in the woods once, when I  
was a kid.

The hand moves further in, and as it does we get glimpses of who's hand it is. A MAN. Frantic brown eyes looking desperately for something--

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Turnt 'round and dizzy. Started  
runnin', but was goin' the wrong way.

The man in the woods hand glides along the yarn until there is none. Just a thin thread wafting in the air.

His eyes dart. Squint. Attempting to look through the smoke.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

My father... He was the one who found  
me. Late into the day, almost night.  
He scooped me up.

The eyes go wide --

As if by some mystical breath, the smoke clears just enough to see something. Someone --

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Think that's the only real time I  
remember him hugging me.

The set of eyes races through the haze, and up to a WOMAN. Bloodied, and bound to the base of a tree by the red thread.

Her weak eyes flutter up at whoever is watching her. She's dead, just doesn't know it yet.

VOICE OVER  
Saved me from that dark place...

The dead woman's eyes struggle to stare up. Blue eyes, like some sky a lifetime away from here. She chokes out --

DYING WOMAN  
(weak)  
He didn't mean it...

VOICE OVER  
I couldn't save him...

The eyes push out tears. Then the hand pulls out a gun. The woman closes hers in acceptance.

The hand pulls the trigger and --

**BANG!**

**FADE TO:**

**TITTLE:**

## A Jolly Good Fellow

The **SMACK!** of flesh slamming into flesh --

**EXT. BOG TOWN - DAY**

The remains of a brick pioneer town jut from the unstable ground it was built upon. Like the bones of some ancient Goliath forgotten and corrupted.

Another **SMACK!** This time accompanied by a -- **CRUNCH!**

A quivering, strung out voice speaks up --

STRUNG OUT KID (O.S.)  
You're sick, man. You know that?

We find the fight. More like a beating. A STRUNG OUT KID, (20's), stands over another KID his age.

The strung out kid breathes hard. He's meth-skinny, and seems to just now be realizing what he's been doing.

STRUNG OUT KID  
You okay man? Man?

The strung out kid looks around. Doesn't want to be here.

STRUNG OUT KID  
Fuck this shit. Fuck you!

He turns and runs. Leaves the other kid lying on the ground, still as death.

His running FOOTSTEPS fade away as the other kid finds the strength to at least turn over and for a second we see his broken face, blue eyes staring out.

OLD COUNTRY MUSIC FADES IN --

**EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE FOREST - DAY**

A sea of pine trees sway in a hazy breeze. Cutting through the dense forest is a thin road. An OLD TRUCK drives.

The MUSIC grows as we go --

**INT./EXT. OLD TRUCK - DAY**

The TRUCK cruises through the thick pine forest. Inside the CAB we meet --

**GENE KILMAN**, late 60's, gruff and worn down. He's carried too much for too long, and just keeps piling more on. He don't know no other way.

The man sips coffee from of a worn-out thermos while he mutters along with the song. Something catches his eye --

Something outside the passenger window. He grimaces and pulls to the side of the road with a reluctant sigh --

GENE (SAME VOICE OVER VOICE)  
Dammit.

He begrudgingly opens his door.

**EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

Gene steps out of the cab. Makes his way over to a toolbox built into the bed of his truck. SQUEAKS it open.

Fishes out a pair of BOLT CUTTERS and --

He trudges down the road. Cars **WHIZZING** past.

Caught in a thin wire-fence is a struggling DEER. It's ears flick as Gene approaches. Aware of the oncoming predator.

GENE

Easy.

The deer struggles more as Gene gets closer -- pulling at the fence -- only getting itself more and more stuck.

GENE

(forceful)

Easy.

He SQUISHES into sloppy mud. Looks at his shoes in disgust, but keeps going.

The animal rails against the wire's hold. Gene SHUSHES it gently. It stops -- still spooked -- but still.

Gene places rough, but calm hand on its back. Looks into the thick smoky forest behind the shaking animal.

GENE

Gettin' way from the fire, huh?

He clips one piece of fence with the bolt cutters. **TWANG!**

The deer yanks against the wire -- practically cutting its hoof off --

GENE

Hold on!

Gene struggles to cut the last wire. With a grunt --

**TWANG!**

The deer bolts.

Kicks Gene in the leg -- sends him falling his old ass into the thick wet mud.

**PLOP!**

From the muddy ground Gene just watches the thankless animal bound away. With a bit of effort he gets up.

GENE  
(grumbles)  
Hope you get hit by a semi.

Gene limps back toward his truck -- bruised and dirty.

RADIO (PRE-LAP)  
...Expect haze for the next week...

**EXT. PINELAND SHERIFF STATION - DAY**

A small building. Built to hold Pineland's worst of the worst, drunks, and the occasional vandal.

The radio voice prattles on --

RADIO  
...as forest-service crews continue  
the controlled burns...

Gene pulls his truck into a space.

RADIO  
...those who suffer from allergies,  
and asthma are being encouraged to --

Gene kills the engine, and steps out. He clips his BADGE on his belt, and stares down at his muddy pants. He sighs.

Heads toward the station.

**BING BONG**

**INT. PINELAND SHERIFF STATION - CONTINUOUS**

Equally unimpressive inside. The beige building hasn't been re-decorated since the 70's.

The receptionist sits at her desk.

**ROXANNE WHITE**, 30's, bookish, friendly. She flips a page on her fantasy novel. Doesn't look up when Gene passes by.

ROXANNE  
Mornin' Gene.

He GRUNTS a *hello* as he walks by and heads straight to the --

**INT. BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A dingy little nook. Mismatch chairs sit around a small table coffee brown from so many years of spills.

Gene searches through cabinet after cabinet -- *where is it?*

ROXANNE (O.S.)  
Got some new books for Alice, think she'll like 'em.

GENE  
(thoughts elsewhere)  
Uh-huh...

He opens another shelf, and another.

ROXANNE (O.S.)  
These're little less bloody. Know she don't like that kinda stuff.

GENE  
Yeah.  
(sotto)  
Where's my mug?

ROXANNE (O.S.)  
She read the one about the druid and witches yet?

Gene shakes his head with exasperation. --*He doesn't know.*

He peaks out from the break-room.

GENE  
Don't really keep up with my wife's readin', Roxanne.

She smiles up at him.

ROXANNE  
Well it's a goodie.

GENE  
(agreement)  
Sure it is.

He nods and goes back his search for his mug.

He opens the dishwasher. Nothing.

ROXANNE (O.S.)  
Oh heeeey.

He looks up and shuts his eyes.

--All he wants is some god damn coffee.

GENE  
Yes?

ROXANNE (O.S.)  
No peeking, kay?

GENE  
Peakin'? Peakin' at wha--  
(sotto)  
Oh Christ.

Gene opens the fridge door wide. On the top shelf is a bright PINK CARDBOARD BOX. Gene grimaces, and takes it out.

He FLICKS open his POCKET-KNIFE, and cuts the box's tape. Lifts the thin lid and looks like he's going to be sick.

Painted with thick frosting is a caricature in his likeness smiling up at him on a boat fishing. Over the bright scene the cake reads...

#### *HAPPY RETIREMENT*

Gene glares at the jolly scene.

GENE  
...don't even fish.

MIKE (O.S.)  
Thought she said no peeking.

Gene looks up.

Officer **MIKE O'MALLEY**, 30's, grins at Gene. He's young, he's optimistic, he's everything Gene used to be, and he's holding Gene's God damn mug. Gene narrows in on it.

Mike takes a sip. Looks at it.



MIKE

Oh sorry. Mine was dirty, you don't mind, do ya?

Mike notices Gene's muddy pants.

MIKE

What happened to you?

GENE

Tried being nice.

MIKE

That'll happen.

GENE

What do you want, Mike?

Mike takes another frustrating sip from Gene's mug. Looks around as if he's checking for eavesdroppers.

MIKE

I gotta thing. Help me out, will ya?

GENE

What's a thing?

Mike looks around a little more.

MIKE

Just-- C'mon.

He nods behind him.

Gene barely nods. Mike smiles, and starts to walk out.

Gene sets the cake on the table, and before he leaves, he stabs his finger through his frosted face. Smirks.

**INT. SHERIFF STATION, HALLWAY - DAY**

Gene follows Mike down a small hallway sucking the frosting off his finger, not really paying any attention.

Mike prattles on --

MIKE

Came in beat tah shit. Found him in Bog Town, think he might --

GENE  
What were y'all doin' in Bog Town?

MIKE  
Picking him up.

GENE  
You get a call?

MIKE  
Yeah, Jesus, Gene, I want you to ask  
him the questions.

They get to a closed door. Mike turns to face Gene.

GENE  
How's that?

MIKE  
Figured... Y'know.

GENE  
Figured what?

Mike hands Gene a file.

MIKE  
Figured you could help me out. You're  
good at this kinda stuff, and you  
ain't teachin' nobody your tricks.

Gene peaks inside the room through the door's small window.

GENE  
Ain't no trick. Just talk to 'em  
s'all.

MIKE  
Well...

He slaps the folder against Gene's chest.

MIKE  
Talk to him then. Last chance at one  
of these things anyways.

Gene looks down, and hesitates. Meets Mike's stare.

MIKE  
Just want to know what happened to  
him is all.

Gene glances back inside.

Inside there is a young man his face hidden in shadows.

Gene takes the folder. Starts to head in.

MIKE  
Do it old school.

Gene shakes his head -- *Mike is an idiot.*

He heads in --

**INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Less of a vault, and more of an empty office that's been secured. Gene crosses the room thumbing through the file.

Gene glances up.

Slouched in a metal folding chair is **JASON ROUGE**, 22.

He's a wiry kid who's been through hell. Two black eyes, a split lip, and a swollen cheek. His bright blue eyes follow Gene as he walks toward him.

JASON  
You suppose to be the good cop or the bad cop?

Gene smirks, and takes the seat in front of Jason.

GENE  
Just a cop. Wanna tell me what happened to you?

Jason shakes his head. -- *No.*

GENE  
Told me you got picked up in Bog Town.

JASON  
So.

GENE  
The fire's pretty close to there. What were you doing out there.

JASON  
Lighting matches.

Gene asses this tough little shit.

GENE

Ya know. No point protecting whoever did that to your face. They'll just do it again.

JASON

You think so?

-- *Something about his blue eyes.*

GENE

We ain't holdin' you here, you know that right? You don't want our help get on out.

JASON

That what you usually do? Tell your problems to leave?

GENE

Do if they ain't lookin' for help.

JASON

You do even if they are, don't you?

And at that Gene senses something. This kid is talking about something far different than the situation.

GENE

Pardon me?

JASON

No. Not yet. I'll be seein' you, Gene.

Words can't make it out of his mouth --

**BANG BANG BANG**

Gene looks back. Mike is at the door's window. He nods for Gene to come out. He looks back at Jason.

Jason, beat to shit, smiles like he has the whole world figured out.

Gene just stares at him. Not knowing what to think.

**INT. SHERIFF STATION, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Gene is rattled.

MIKE  
Get anything outta him?

Gene stares inside at Jason.

MIKE  
Gene?

Shakes off his daze.

GENE  
Hmm? Oh, no... Nothing yet?

MIKE  
You okay, Gene? Seem a little --

GENE  
What do you want, Mike?

MIKE  
Captain wants to see ya.

GENE  
Yeah. Okay. Fine. Just...

He looks back into the room. Jason stares out at him.

MIKE  
Just what?

Gene gestures for Mike to hold on, but doesn't say anything. Just leaves. Thrown by the whole experience.

**INT. HALLWAY - DAY**

Gene stands outside a hallway door. A brass plaque on the door reads --

*CAPTAIN BELL*

Gene steadies himself. Breathes out, and goes in --

**INT. CAPTAIN BELL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Gene **KNOCKS** on the door as he enters.

GENE  
Capt--

Captain **VICTORIA BELL**, 40's, holds up a finger for him to wait while she's on the phone.

Bell sits behind a nice desk, in a nice suit. She and her office are the only things in this whole building give off even an air of class or pride.

BELL  
...Yes, I appreciate it, but I have  
been in contact with the forest  
service, and they are more than  
prepared to handle the controlled  
burn... Yes... Yes, thank you...

She glances up Gene. Gestures for him to shut the door.

Gene does, and shuffles deeper into the immaculate room.

BELL  
(getting annoyed)  
Mhmm... Yes, sir...

She rolls her her eyes at Gene. -- *Wants off the phone.*

BELL  
Okay... Okay, yes, we-- I appreciate  
it... Thank you... Okay, good bye.

She quickly hangs up. Looks up at Gene -- straight to business --

BELL  
You haven't filled out your  
retirement paperwork yet.

Gene looks down. -- *Knew this was coming.*

GENE  
Yeah, yeah I know.

She stares around, as if looking for the answer.

BELL  
Why not? Don't you wanna, I don't  
know, go fishing or something.

GENE  
Don't really like fishing.

BELL  
I said or something.  
(a thought)  
Don't tell Roxy that.

GENE

It's just... Maybe I could pick up something... Part-time at least. I cou--

BELL

Gene.

Bell stands, and crosses the desk toward him. Gene looks practically homeless in his crinkled suit compared to her.

She leans on her nice desk. Lets out a sigh --

BELL

I'm not being some hard-ass, and you didn't fuck up. This is a forced retirement.

She places a friendly hand on his shoulder.

BELL

You're too old. You've been here too long.

This hit Gene in the gut.

She pats his arm. Gene just nods.

BELL

You're a good guy, Gene. Too good for this town, but my hands are tied.

Gene sniffs. About all the agreement she's going to get.

BELL

Fill out the paperwork by the end of the week.

GENE

(agreement)

Sir.

He turns to leave.

BELL

And no more interrogations, or anything like that. Just enjoy it.

Gene grimaces, and nods.

**BANG! BANG! BANG!**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. GUN RANGE - DAY**

Gene aims down his BERETTA pistol. He blinks hard, seems un-focused. He timidly squeezes the trigger.

**BAM!** -- and -- **BAM!**

Gene shakes his head -- sets down the gun -- blames it.

He flicks the switch next to him to bring his target back.

The machine **HUMS** as the target flutters back.

**BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM!**

Gene looks over. Two **YOUNG OFFICERS** fire on their target.

Gene un-clips his target, and looks at it.

It's a mess. No grouping, and just a few solid shots. He grimaces and grumbles. Looks up.

The two young officers toss their target aside. Looks way better than Gene's.

Gene looks around, trying not to get noticed. He slips out a pair of GLASSES, and puts them on.

He sends out another target. This time way out there.

Takes aim. Seems much more confident.

**BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM**

Puts the gun down again and brings the target back.

This time it's professional. Great grouping, and all kill shots. He looks up, as if he's expecting praise --

But there isn't any. No one's there. No one cares. The room is empty now.

He crumples up the target, and throws it in the trash on his way out. The metal trash-can **BANGS**.

**INT. SHERIFF STATION, LOBBY - DAY**

Gene crosses past Roxanne. She thumbs through her novel.



ROXANNE  
(without looking up)  
Night, Gene.

Gene stops at the door with a memory and a snap.

GENE  
Forgot. Alice gave me a book to give  
to you. Justa sec.

Still she doesn't look up.

ROXANNE  
Kay.

**EXT. PINELAND SHERIFF STATION - EVENING**

Gene fishes in his pocket for his keys as he walks up to his truck. He slows. Notices something --

A torn piece of paper is under his windshield-wiper.

He plucks it out.

A torn piece of NEWSPAPER. Something written in sharpie --

*"Love's Mill 5"*

Gene looks around, but the lot is empty.

**INT. SHERIFF STATION, LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER**

Gene hands the paper to Roxanne along with the book.

GENE  
Whadda'ya make of this?

Roxanne takes them, and reads the paper.

ROXANNE  
Love's Mill five?

Looks up at Gene, and hands it back.

ROXANNE  
Don't make anything of it. Why?  
What is it?

He folds it up, puts it in his coat. Shakes his head.

GENE  
Don't know.

He looks out the door at the parking lot.

RADIO (PRE-LAP)  
...conditions are threatening...

**INT./EXT. GENE'S TRUCK - NIGHT**

Gene drives through a dark neighborhood. The radio chatters on about the fire.

RADIO  
...High winds might cause--

**CLICK**

Gene shuts it off. Just drives in silence. The **RUMBLE** of his truck's engine. He stops in front of a SMALL HOUSE.

**EXT. SMALL HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Gene steps out of his small old truck. Parked in the driveway is a nice NEW TRUCK. Gene stares at it knowing.

GENE  
(tired)  
Shit.

He turns and looks out to the horizon.

In the distance there is an orange glow of the controlled-burn. Gene takes it in -- a small moment of peace --

LAUGHTER floats in, and carries us too...

**INT. GENE'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER**

Happy voices of a man and a woman chatter in the house.

Gene sets his thermos down by a stack of mail. He flips through the envelopes. Almost all medical bills.

MAN (O.S.)  
...fell outta his pocket and he just  
pretends it ain't his.

A woman laughs.

Gene sets the past-due letters aside, and walks to --

**INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

**ALICE KILMAN**, 50's, bald from chemo-therapy, and wearing a head-scarf sits at a small table. Even though she's sick, she seems more full of life than Gene.

Sitting at the table with her, sipping on tea, is **HANK FALSELY**. In his late 60's, same as Gene, he's well dressed, and charming.

Alice dabs her eyes, wet with tears of laughter.

ALICE  
He did not.

HANK  
Swear on my life.

Gene walks in. Both Alice and Hank quiet.

Hank smiles a charming grin.

HANK  
Gene Gene the dancin' machine. How are you?

GENE  
Hank.

They shake hands. Gene makes his way around to Alice, he places a hand on her shoulder, she barely touches it.

Something's cold between them. Something's broken. Has been for a long time.

Gene takes a seat. Alice sits closer to Hank, than Gene. A fact not lost on anyone.

HANK  
How's retirement?

GENE  
Tell ya when it happens.

HANK  
Still in there, huh? Je-sus, I couldn't wait to cash out.

GENE  
I remember.

Hank, still trying to keep the atmosphere light.

HANK  
Been what, ten, eleven years? I  
remember--

GENE  
What're you doin' here, Hank?

The coldness of it -- the conversation stops.

ALICE  
Henry, brought me some tea.

HANK  
Suppose to help with the chemo, I  
dunno. Got too much free time spend  
it all on the internet.

GENE  
Nice of ya.

There is a pregnant pause.

HANK  
Well I should be gettin'.

Hank stands, puts on a cap.

HANK  
Still on for fishin', right?

Gene eyes Alice for a moment.

GENE  
I dunno. That's the same day as  
Alice's appointment.

ALICE  
It'll only take an hour.  
(to Hank)  
He's going.

Gene grumbles.

HANK  
Get use to it. Either fish or golf.  
And we got more lakes than drivin'-  
ranges.

Hank crosses to Alice.

HANK

Alice, my dear, you are looking more beautiful everyday.

He kisses her on the cheek. She smiles.

ALICE

Don't be a stranger, Henry.

HANK

Never am. Gene you're gonna like retirement, even if it kills ya.

GENE

Goodbye, Hank.

HANK

Ta-ta.

And with that Hank leaves. Gene and Alice sit in silence.

The sound of the front door **SHUTS**.

Still silent.

The nice truck **RUMBLES** to life, and **CRUNCHES** away.

Silence. Long, all too familiar, silence --

GENE

So, how long was Hank here?

ALICE

Give it a fuckin' rest, Gene.

She stands up and leaves Gene sitting there. He just nods to himself. Nothing new... Nothing new...

And electric HUM fades in as we --

**FADE TO:**

**INT. GENE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Gene lazily brushes his teeth with an electric toothbrush. He spits and stares at his old ass reflection in the mirror.

**INT. GENE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Gene walks into his bedroom. Alice is reading. Doesn't look up at him when he gets in bed.

He turns to go to bed without a word.

ALICE  
Roxanne, get the book?

GENE  
Yep.

ALICE  
She like 'em?

GENE  
Guess so.

Alice sighs in frustration. --*God, they annoy each other.*

ALICE  
Goin' on a hike?

GENE  
Nope.

This one gnaws at Gene. After a couple seconds he turns over to see her.

GENE  
Why?

ALICE  
I saw that piece of paper.

GENE  
What about it?

ALICE  
The trial marker. You going to hike it, or something?

Gene turns back over, thinking about it.

GENE  
No. Not goin' on a hike.

She shakes her head slightly.

ALICE  
Okay.

She turns a scratchy page.

**INT. GENE'S DESK - DAY**

Gene slumps in his chair at his desk. Florescent lights  
**HUM.** He lets out a long sigh...

Gene stares down at a small pile of paperwork. Underneath  
the pile a bright corner of a pamphlet sticks out.

Gene thumbs through it and just lets it fall back into  
place. A hand CLAPS his shoulder. He jumps.

BELL  
Finish it. Today.

She PATS his shoulder. He nods, and she leaves.

He slides the PAMPHLET out, it says "Retirement" on it, and  
shows a overly happy OLD MAN fishing.

Gene grimaces, and crumples it into a ball.

He opens his desk drawer to grab a pen, but sees that PIECE  
OF PAPER again. He takes it out and stares at it.

*"Love's Mill 5"*

Gene folds the paper, and peaks around. Nobody's watching  
him. Everything's quiet. Everything's always quiet.

Unfolds the paper and sets it next to his monitor. He pulls  
up a search engine and chicken-pecks in the name.

Maps come up.

He flips one of the retirement forms over, and starts  
writing down directions.

He looks around again.

Bell talks with Mike. She looks back and seems confused.

Gene's desk is empty. She crosses toward it. Just a bunch  
of un-filled-out forms with one torn in half.

**INT./EXT. FOREST ROADS - DAY**

Gene drives through the hazy road. Smoke lingering in the air. He glances at the torn paper with directions.

He's lost. Pulls to the side of the road. Looks around. Everything seems the same. A gray smoky blur.

**EXT. FOREST SERVICE STATION - DAY**

Gene's truck **CRUNCHES** over the small dirt driveway leading to the station. Two other TRUCKS are there.

Gene gets out as one of the TRUCKS pulls away.

Dead-eyed **FOREST-FIRE-FIGHTERS** stare at him from the bed of the truck. Their faces covered in soot, eyes blood-shot, something sad and terrifying about them.

Gene crosses past the other smaller truck, and to --

**INT. FOREST SERVICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER**

Small and sparse: a powerful man sits at a tiny desk.

**BRUCE DiFUOCO**, 40's, tired, and on edge. He has dark bags under his eyes. He stares, lost in his thoughts, out a window. At the sound of the door **OPENING** he snaps.

BRUCE  
I told you to fi--

He stops at the sight of Gene. Gene smiles pleasantly.

GENE  
Afternoon.

Bruce nods.

Gene takes in the space. There's very little personal touches. Just a desk. Fire fighting equipment, and a hunting riffle leaned up against small hallway.

BRUCE  
(already pissed)  
Can I help you?

Gene reaches out a hand.



GENE

Gene Kilman.

Bruce sucks a tooth, then, with a quick sigh, shakes hands.

BRUCE

Bruce.

GENE

Lookin' for a trail head, but seem to  
be a little lost.

BRUCE

That'll happen. I'll fetch ya a map.

Bruce heads toward the back. Calls over his shoulder.

BRUCE

Wanna drink? Water or somethin'?

GENE

Coffee, if you have it.

**INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A tiny kitchenette, with some cabinets.

BRUCE

(calls back)

Got that instant stuff.

GENE (O.S.)

That'll work

BRUCE

(sotto)

Sure-sure.

Bruce **CLICKS** on an ELECTRIC KETTLE. He rummages through a cabinet. Tosses out a pack of instant coffee, and pulls out a thin MAP.

**MAIN ROOM**

Bruce comes back slapping the map in his hand.

Gene inspects some of fire-fighting equipment; a HOOD (ski mask), a PULASKI (ax), thick COATS and BOOTS

GENE  
How's the burn going?

Bruce opens up the map on his desk.

BRUCE  
Good as it could be. Long as the  
winds don't change.

GENE  
You been out there?

BRUCE  
Sure have. I'm the burn captain.

Gene turns.

GENE  
No shit?

Bruce would rather not chit chat.

BRUCE  
No shit.

Gene understands. He moves to the map.

BRUCE  
Where you lookin? Lotta trails  
closed up right now.

GENE  
Somethin' mill, hold on.

Gene digs into his coat, and pulls out the piece of paper.

GENE  
Um, Love's Mill five?

At that Bruce looks up. Like he's heard a ghost.

BRUCE  
(hoarse)  
What?

GENE  
Love's Mill five. That 'round here?

Bruce stares at Gene, while gene pours over the map. Gene  
taps on the map.

GENE  
This's us, right?

He looks up and meets Bruce's fiery gaze.

**CLOSE ON:** The kettle, it begins to *HOWL* --

**BACK TO SCENE**

BRUCE  
That'll be the coffee.

Bruce marches back. Gene watches him disappear into the small back-room.

Gene looks back to the map, and traces one of the roads with his finger, and there it is. *Love's Mill*.

Gene smirks. He looks up.

GENE  
Think I--

Gene goes quiet. The hallway is missing its RIFFLE.

**KITCHENETTE**

Bruce slowly, and quietly, pulls back the chamber on the old riffle. He's a wreck.

BRUCE  
You say somethin'? How you like your coffee?

**CLICK:** the chamber is loaded.

BRUCE  
Gene?

Bruce takes a breath, steadied the gun.

He sweeps into the...

**FRONT ROOM**

Bruce has his riffle aimed at his desk, but no one is there. He frantically glances around real quick.

The sound of tires peeling-out on gravel.

Bruce's eyes go wide.

**EXT. FOREST SERVICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER**

Bruce explodes out from the station. Gene's truck is already speeding away. Bruce takes aim.

**BAM**

**INT. GENE'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS**

**PLINK** the sound of the bullet hitting the truck. Gene ducks down in his seat, as he speeds away.

**EXT. FOREST SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS**

Bruce aims at the truck, but it disappears around a bend.

BRUCE  
Fffff-Shit! Shit, God Damn it!

**INT./EXT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS**

Gene races away, head ducked low. He spots a sign, and whips hard to the left --

He hits the dirt trail hard. FISH-TAILS, but steadies himself. He presses on, past a sign that reads...

*"LOVE'S MILL"*

**INT./EXT. TRUCK, LOVE'S MILL TRAIL - MOMENTS LATER**

Gene storms down the dirt trail, muttering to himself.

GENE  
(sotto)  
Whadd'ya doin? Whadd'ya doin, Gene?

He pulls to a stop at the trail head. Checks his rear-view-mirror. Just a plume of dust, nothing else.

Gene yanks out his cellphone. Flips it open, but there's no service. He **CLAPS** it shut. Checks his mirror a second time.

GENE  
(sotto)  
Get outta here. Just go ya old idiot.

But he doesn't go. He shuts off his truck and steps out.

**EXT. LOVE'S MILL TRAIL - DAY**

It's quiet. Birds **SING**, and wind **RUSTLES** through the pines. Gene un-buttons his holster, and hikes into the woods.

The forest is thick. --*It would be easy to become disoriented in here.*

Gene looks around, lost for what he's really searching for.

He breaths out a sigh of lost frustration.

-- And then he sees it --

A thin piece of RED YARN wrapped around a tree a couple of feet off the trail. Almost invisible.

Gene crosses to the yarn. It snakes around tree after tree forming an ominous path deeper, and deeper into the woods.

Gene lightly grips the thin cloth, and runs it through his rough fingers as he follows the crimson line.

**DEEPER IN**

Gene looks back. In moments his truck, and the trail are nowhere in sight. Gene takes out his gun, and continues on.

He steps out of the woods into a --

**EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS**

Trees have been cut away, and in the center of the small clearing is a TINY SHED. It's dilapidated, and evil.

Gene walks toward it, but stops at the sound of a **SHUTTING CAR DOOR**.

**EXT. LOVE'S MILL TRAIL - DAY**

Bruce cautiously jogs away from his truck, riffle in hand.

**EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS**

Gene takes a long look at the dark shed, then he too head's into the dense forest.

**EXT. PINE BARREN FOREST INTER-CUT - DAY**

Bruce pokes his head out from around a tree, then precisely moves to the next one. He is at home here.

Gene, on the other-hand, clumsily trips, in the forest. He gets snagged on branches, and falls into a tree for cover.

He's out of breath, out of his element. He peers out to --

**BAM! CRACK!**

Bark explodes right by Gene's face. He falls, and scrambles to hide behind his tree.

He keeps checking his head for blood.

Footsteps **RUNNING** through the woods draw his attention.

Bruce flickers behind tree after tree. Gene runs out too.

**BAM!**

Another bullet **WHIZZES** past Gene. He ducks, and jumps to the ground. Hits it hard.

Gene coughs. He pats himself down, and pulls out his SHATTERED GLASSES.

GENE

Shit.

He tosses the useless frames aside. He sniffs in defiance, and aims out --

Just woods.

Still, and calm. Gene aims at the tree line.

**ON BRUCE**

Bruce tries to steady his breath. He's pressed against a big pine. He chambers another shot, and glances out.

Gene aims away from him, a little ways off. Bruce ducks back. He breathes in and out, psyching himself up for it.

**ON GENE**

Gene looks out into the empty forest. At the edge of his sight Bruce steps out. Gene acts quick, but --

**FOREST****BAMBAM**

Two shot's echo away into the woods. --*Who shot? Who's alive?*

**ON GENE**

Gene slumps back behind the tree. His face painted in blood.

He touches a nasty slice where the bullet just grazed him.

He looks around, the world blurring.

Bruce limps away toward his truck. Hit in the leg.

Gene takes a lazy aim, with bloodied vision.

**BAM!**

He misses, but explodes Bruce's back window, before the truck drives out of sight.

Gene, exhausted, leans against the tree, and passes out.

**FADE OUT:**

**EXT. PINE BARRENS FOREST - NIGHT**

Red and blue lights spill into the dark forest.

**POLICE** mill around.

Gene sits in the back of an ambulance while a **PARAMEDIC** finishes patching up his wound.

**PARAMEDIC**  
All set, Gene.

Gene steps down with a small groan.

**GENE**  
'ppreciate it, Lynn.

Gene heads toward the woods. Turns back.

The orange haze of the forest-fire engulfs the sky here.  
He's surrounded by it.

**PARAMEDIC**  
Really trying to avoid retirement,  
aren't ya, Gene?

Gene looks at Lynn. Lynn points to his head where Gene's wound is.

**PARAMEDIC**  
Goin out swinggin'?

Gene coughs up a stale chuckle.

**GENE**  
Somethin' like that.

#### **EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT**

Police flashlights bob up in down in the dim orange glow.

Gene marches toward the SHED.

As he approaches, an **OFFICER** bolts out and vomits nearby.

#### **INT. SHED - MOMENTS LATER**

Gene **CREEKS** into the old shed. His small flashlight the only light. Its glow plays over the morbid scene.

Chard remains of what was once a human.

Flies **BUZZ**.



Gene pulls out a HANDKERCHIEF, and covers his nose.

He steps deeper into the crematorium.

**CRUNCH**

A shattered, blacken, bone is under his foot.

                                GENE  
                                (sotto)  
                Damn.

He looks around the grizzly room; stained glass beakers, crusted old pots and burners, everything you need for a meth-lab.

**TING... TING-TING-TING**

Gene sweeps his light to the sound.

A thin wire knocks against a large glass cylinder filled with some kind of liquid.

**EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT**

Gene walks out of the shed.

A group of officers pull on a HATCH buried in the ground.

With a sense of realization Gene runs toward them.

                                GENE  
                Stop! Get Awa--

**KA-BOOOOM!**

A fiery explosion shakes the woods. Two Officer nothing but a crimson mist.

Gene is thrown to the ground. Fire and derbies rain down.

His world just a high-pitched **WHINE**. The sound blends with a metallic **WHISTLE**, and carries us to --

**INT. GENE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Close on: tea kettle **SCREAMING** with steam. A hand grabs it.

**EXT. PORCH - NIGHT**

Alice carries two mugs to a pair of chairs on the porch.

She sets them down on a small table.

Gene stares out at the orange haze. His world broken.

She toys his hair a little. He doesn't respond to it.

She sits.

ALICE

It's not your problem anymore.

He just stares. Miles away, lost in his thought --

ALICE

You hear me? Gene?

At his name he looks up lazily. Takes the tea.

GENE

Thanks...

ALICE

You're done there, okay? You don't own a thing to anyone. You've been good.

She quiets. Looks out with him.

Gene sips the tea. He grimaces.

GENE

Tastes like shit.

ALICE

Everything tastes like shit.

Gene scratches his leg, a chip of something comes off --

A WHITE FLECK stained black-red -- a bone fragment --

Gene brushes it away hoping his wife didn't see.

He looks up at her. They stare at each other caught in another strained silence. She looks at him, almost kind --

GENE

Gotta do what's right, Alice.

The kindness melts, as her eyes begin blaze in anger. She almost can't talk.

ALICE

*What's right. What's fucking right.*  
Is what's right leaving your dying  
wife a widow? Is that what's right  
Gene? You almost got shot, and blown  
the fuck up today. Is that what's  
right? Is it?

She bolts up.

GENE

Alice--

ALICE

No! I-- I can't. You wanna kill  
yourself then...

She starts to walk away. Turn.

ALICE

When am I what's right? Hmm? When  
are you?

She **SLAMS** the door as she goes inside.

Gene grimaces, and just drinks his shitty tea with malice.

#### INT. CORONER'S LAB - DAY

The metallic **TING** of a bright light turning on.

Laid out over a table are shattered remains of charred  
bones; femurs, fragments, and half a skull.

Someone, off screen, BLOWS their nose loudly.

An older man, **LOU BRIGGS**, 50's, overweight and sweaty. He  
HONKS out another nostril into a grubby handkerchief. Wipes  
his nose, and stuffs it in his pocket.

LOU

God. Smoke's killin' my sinuses.

Gene crosses toward the table of bones.

LOU

Heard the wind shifted. Blown the  
whole sha'bang outta control.

Gene isn't paying attention. He just stares at the bones.

LOU  
Whole damn place is gonna go up...  
(*SNAPS*)  
like that.

He pulls out his hanky again.

GENE  
Whad'a'ya got, Lou?

In between BLOWS.

LOU  
I gotta a whole lotta shit's what I  
got. What're you even doin' here,  
Gene? Shouldn't you be layed up at  
home drunk?

Gene gestures to the table.

GENE  
Lou.

Lou moves to the table.

LOU  
Fine, fine, fine.

LOU  
Half the bones I could identify  
aren't even human. Most of 'em are  
burnt to hell.

GENE  
F.B.I.'ll be out here by the end of  
the week.

LOU  
Don't I know it. Last thing I need  
is some piss thirty-year-old tellin'  
me the way I file shit's outta date.

Gene cracks a small grin.

LOU  
Did get one thing.

Lou picks up the charred skull with as much care as he would  
a bowling ball.

LOU  
Partial match on the dentals.

He sets it down, and grabs a file. Slides it to Gene.  
Gene picks it up and opens it.

LOU  
Name's Lara Rouge.

Gene's expression is cold. Something deep and old stirs.  
The sound of a woman's **HAPPY LAUGH** floats in for a moment.

LOU  
Gene?

Gene grips the file, white knuckled.  
Without a word he turns and walks out.

LOU  
Gene?

**INT. SHERIFF STATION HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Gene looks like he's seen a ghost. -- *He has* --  
He marches down the hallway, fire in his eyes.

**FLASHBACKS (they come quick and frantic)**

**OUTSIDE A CRIME SCENE:**

Gene, 20 years younger, drapes a BLANKET over a crying woman, **LAURA ROUGE**, 30, she's beat up.

GENE  
Mrs. Rouge?

**HALLWAY:**

Gene Marches on. His hand gripping the file like a vice.  
It shakes with rage --

**A MOTEL:**

Gene and Laura make love in a small motel room. There's electricity and real passion. First we've seen from him.

**HALLWAY:**

Voice of the past -- *ghosts* -- speak to him --

ALICE (V.O.)  
How long?

**GENE'S BEDROOM:**

Gene sits on the foot of his bed. Alice cries.

**HALLWAY:**

GENE (V.O.)  
I can't...

**BUS STATION:**

Laura cries. Gene tries to give her money.

LAURA  
No... No, Gene!

Gene kisses her deeply.

GENE  
It ain't right.

He forces the cash into her hands, and walks away. Broken.

**INT. BREAK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike chats up Roxanne when Gene burst through the door.

MIKE  
Gene, how ya fe--

Gene **SLAMS** Mike against the wall. Growls out --

GENE  
Where is he?

MIKE  
Jesus, what the hell?!

ROXANNE  
Gene, what're you doing?

GENE  
Where is he?

Roxanne bolts out.

MIKE  
Who?!

GENE  
That kid. The one I questioned.  
Where is he?

MIKE  
I--I-- We let 'im go. Nothing to  
keep him, man.

Gene throws his weight into Mike. Slams him again.

GENE  
Where?

Mike has no idea how to respond.

BELL (O.S.)  
Kilman!

Sanity washes over Gene. He glances over his shoulder.  
Bell stands in the doorway, fuming.

BELL  
With me.

Gene slowly gets off Mike. Once free Mike pushes Gene away.  
There might have been a fight if not for Bell.

BELL  
Now.

**INT. CAPTAIN BELL'S OFFICE - LATER**

Gene slumps in one of her chairs. Exhausted and confused.  
His world warping around him.

Bell locks the door.

BELL  
(hushed and pissed)  
What the hell are you thinking?

Gene doesn't know what to say.

BELL  
You're going to give me an ulcer with  
this shit.

GENE  
The skull...

Bell takes a breath composes herself. Closes her eyes.

BELL

I know.

Gene looks up at her, coming out of his clouded mind.

BELL (CONT'D)

Lou told me. You two weren't  
still...

Gene is almost taken aback by the candidacy of this. It's  
easy to tell that his affair was office gossip.

GENE

No... No I hadn't seen her in years.

There is a pregnant pause between them.

GENE

Christ.

He looks down, a little ashamed.

GENE

I shouldn't 'ave done that to Mike.

Bell smiles. An attempt to lift the mood.

BELL

Sure Mike had it coming for some  
reason or another.

Doesn't work. Gene just stares off.

BELL

C'mon, get your coat. I'm buying you  
lunch.

GENE

Sir?

BELL

Food, Gene. I buying some for you.

# **INT. SMALL TOWN DINNER - DAY**

Locals sparsely populate the greasy spoon.

Bell and Gene sit across from one another at a booth while a  
**CHIPPER WAITRESS** finishes jotting down their orders.



WAITRESS

Aallright. Order'll be out soon.

She smiles, and bustles away.

Gene sips a coffee, still lost his mind. Outside their window the town is lost in a haze.

BELL

Guess it jumped a fire line. Talkin' about maybe evacuating the town.

Gene just nods. A **PRETTY WOMAN**, puts her kids in her car. She could be the ghost of Laura for all Gene knows.

BELL

Gene.

He turns. Meets her eyes. Neither notice the dark figure staring at both of them across the street.

BELL (CONT'D)

When was the last time you saw her?

Gene looks up, as if Bell had been reading his mind.

GENE

Bus-station. Years ago. I forced her to take some money, and get outta town.

They retreat back to silence for a moment. The distant dark figure walks toward them.

GENE

That's a lie.

They meet each others gaze.

GENE

Saw here three years ago. At the grocery store...

# **INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY [FLASHBACK]**

Gene stands at the end of an isle. He peeks around the corner, like he's spying on some rare bird.

**LAURA**, older but no less amazing to Gene, grabs some POP-TARTS. She looks worn out, dressed in old clothes, and she has a bruise on her arm.

GENE (V.O.)  
She was gettin', I don't know, cereal  
or somethin'.

GENE (V.O.)  
Always had a feelin' she never left  
town.

Gene can't take his eyes off her.

ALICE (O.S.)  
Gene.

Alice pushes a cart toward Gene, she has a puzzled look.  
*--What's he looking at?*

**INT. SMALL TOWN DINNER - CONTINUOUS**

BELL  
She see you?

Gene looks down.

GENE  
No.

**INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY [FLASHBACK]**

Laura stares right at Gene. They lock eyes. She tears up  
for just a second. Waves slightly.

GENE (V.O.)  
Nah, she didn't see me.

Laura smiles with sadness.

Gene just barely nods.

**INT. SMALL TOWN DINNER - CONTINUOUS**

Gene sips his coffee again.

Bell fishes something out of her pocket.

It's a small BLACK FELT BOX. She sets it down on the table  
between them. Gene eyes it knowingly.

GENE  
Thought I still had a week.

Bell breathes out an exhausted laugh.

BELL  
The rate you're going I'll be  
surprised if you last another day.

He gently takes the box, and **POPS** it open.

A nice GOLD WATCH inside. The symbol of retirement.

Light plays off the shiny metal.

BELL (O.C.)  
You've done your duty.

Gene looks up at her. Outside the dark figure picks something up --

BELL  
You're leaving me with a headache,  
but it'll be my headache. Take the  
rest of the week off. Fill out our  
paperwork at home, and put all this  
behind you.

Gene takes the watch out of the box. Rubs his thumb over its face. Opens the clasp.

BELL  
Time to do the ri--

**CRASH!**

Patrons scream, and glass explodes onto the next booth over.

Someone threw a rock through the window.

BELL  
What the hell!

Gene stares out the window.

There in the streets is Jason. Still beat-up looking. He stares right at Gene. Then turns and runs off.

Bell sees this too.

BELL  
Gene--

But it's too late. Gene is already on his feet. His fire re-kindled.

He leaves the gold watch on the table.

**EXT. PINELAND STREETS - MOMENTS LATER**

Gene barrels onto the street. Looks around. Madness in his eyes. Bell chases after him.

BELL  
(distant)  
Gene!

Gene spots him. Jason runs across a street toward a park. Gene charges, like a locomotive, after the young man.

**EXT. PARK - MOMENTS LATER**

The park is busy with birthday parties. **CHILDREN** run around and scream in delight.

Gene is lost in a sea of people. He stares around frantically.

A GUN presses into the small of his back.

Gene freezes. Jason leans into Gene's ear.

All around them children mill around happily.

JASON  
(whisper)  
You listening?

GENE  
How did you kno--

Jason jams the barrel into Gene. Gene grimaces.

JASON  
Shut up. Just nod.

Gene nods. Jason stuffs something into Gene's pocket.

JASON  
Tonight. Come alone. Nod if you heard me.

He does. Then it's still. Just the sound of children.

He slowly turns around, but Jason's gone.

Gene pulls a piece of paper out of his pocket. Same handwriting as the one he found on his windshield.

*"521 Liegh Road"*

BELL (O.S.)

Gene!

Gene grips the paper, hiding it in his fist. He turns.

Bell runs up to him.

BELL

Where'd he go?

GENE

I don't know. I lost him.

She looks around for Jason. Almost as frantic as Gene.

BELL

Shit.

#### **INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Gene sits on the side of his bed. He looks over at Alice, asleep in the pale light. He puts on his shoes.

#### **INT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT**

Gene quietly grabs his keys from under the messy stack of mail. He creeps toward his front door.

CLICK

The lights come on. Gene winces. Looks up the stairs.

Alice stands in the light wearing a bathrobe. She stares down at Gene. Confused.

ALICE

Where you goin' Gene?

She walks down the stairs. Gene doesn't say anything at first. She gets down to him. Looks sad.

GENE  
Go back to bed.

Tears brim in her eyes.

ALICE  
Not again...

He shakes his head.

GENE  
No... Not again.

They stay at an arms length for one another, still not able to connect. He starts to walk past her.

ALICE  
You stopped promising me you'd come home.

Gene stops at the door. Looks at her.

ALICE  
You always used promise me you'd come back home. Then you stopped.

Gene nods slightly.

GENE  
Figured my promises aren't worth a thing anymore.

The silence, so familiar. He opens the door.

GENE  
Go back to bed, Alice. I'll be home soon.

ALICE  
Promise?

He quietly shuts the door.

The sound of breaks SQUEAK, and carry us to...

**EXT. ABANDONED TOY STORE - NIGHT**

Gene stares out from the cab of his truck.

The building is an old brick structure forgotten, long ago.

Sodium-yellow lights crush everything into tarnished blacks and reds. Nothing welcoming about it.

Gene glances at the paper Jason gave him, then back up at the building with the faded "Toys" sign.

There is a loud BANG...

Gene nods, psyching himself up.

BANG... Flesh on wood.

He moves to the door.

#### CUT TO:

Gene slamming his body into the old door. He slams it open with one final BANG

#### INT. ABANDONED TOY STORE - NIGHT

It's dark inside. Old shelves covered in dust. Gene CLICKS on a flashlight. It plays over the atmosphere.

He moves deeper into the space, and--

SQUEEEEEEEK

He stops looks down. He's stepped on an old stuffed-animal.

He lets his foot up slowly.

SQUEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEK

Deeper into the store his light tacks onto some old camping equipment; a wrinkled sleeping bag, and some cans of food.

JASON (O.S.)

She used to take me here.

Gene whips around.

Jason, sits on a small counter. In the dim light he looks beaten to hell. He eats cold chef-boyardee out of a can.

JASON

Not often, but for special occasions.

Gene lowers his light.

GENE  
She's your mother? Laura?

Jason hops off the counter. Sets his can down.

JASON  
Got too old or... Whatever, it shut down.

He looks around. A kid reminiscing.

GENE  
Jason, what happened to her.

Jason finally looks up at Gene. Looks him up and down.  
His old hero.

Far away a car door SHUTS.

JASON  
My father...

# **EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

A pair of worn out boots limp across the parking lot.

# **INT. ABANDONED TOY STORE - CONTINUOUS**

Gene looks up. --*did he hear something?*

JASON  
There's more those sheds, you know?

GENE  
Jason, come with me. We can protect you. I can protect you.

# **OUTSIDE**

Close on Bruce. He grimaces, as he limps onward.

# **INSIDE**

Jason looks over his make-shift home. The camping supplies, the pile of clothes.



JASON  
You can't keep me safe.

**OUTSIDE**

Bruce gets to the old, open door.

JASON (V.O.)  
Not from him.

Bruce BANGS it open and...

**INT. DARK ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Wherever he is it's not the toy store. It's dark and large.  
Bruce peers through the pitch.

BELL (V.O.)  
How did this happen, Bruce?

He sees her. Captain Bell leans against her nice Mercedes.  
They are in...

**INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT**

She glowers at Bruce. He limps toward her.

BRUCE  
You tell me.

He leans against her car too. Off her look he gets off.

BRUCE  
You handle your end. I handle mine.  
That was the deal. Your end came in  
like some damn cowboy.

She snaps at him.

BELL  
Your son did this. Jesus, Bruce, what  
you did to that woman...

He looks down at his feet. Shakes his head, lost to a memory.

BRUCE  
Just pay him off or somethin'.

BELL  
They... they were involved.

Bruce looks up.

BELL  
Years ago. I was just an officer, but everyone knew.

She laughs to herself just slightly.

BELL  
I like Gene.

BRUCE  
I'll take care of him.

BELL  
You already tried.

Bell gets off her car, and crosses to the drivers side.

BELL  
Just make sure the labs are taken care of.

BRUCE  
Fire's gettin' outta control, whole damn forest is gonna go up.

She stands at her open door.

BELL  
No trace.

She get's in, and SLAMS the door. The car ROARS to life.

**INT. ABANDONED TOY STORE - NIGHT**

Gene stares out one of the broken windows.

GENE  
Bruce, he's your father?

Jason holds an old, dusty, ACTION FIGURE, he clicks it. The figure lights up. He doesn't look up.

JASON  
No... Not anymore.

**INT. GENE'S DESK - NIGHT**

A FLORESCENT light flickers to light with a HUM.

Gene sits at his desk in the dark, empty office. Rubs his blood-shot eyes. He TYPES.

He plugs in the name "Bruce DiFuoco."

Nothing.

He tries "Jason Rouge."

Nothing. Gene sighs in frustration.

"Jason DiFuoco"

A small file comes up. A picture of Jason. He's young, dressed like a punk, spiked hair, and chains. Youth revolt.

We catch a few blurbs.

"Theft" "Graffiti" "Violence"

Gene sighs. Behind him, someone walks in.

Gene types back into his computer. "Laura Rouge."

An image of her pops up. She has a black eye. Gene doesn't read a thing. He just stares at her glowing image.

He touches the static screen, it CRACKLES. Then...

BELL (O.S.)

Late night.

Gene startles. Clicks out of the program. Turns.

Bell stares at him. Her features lost in the dim office.

GENE

Captain.

BELL

Why aren't you asleep?

GENE

I don't sleep anymore. Thought I was alone.

BELL

You were.

She looks around.

BELL  
Dark in here, Gene, what are you  
hiding?

GENE  
Sir?

She CLICKS on a few desk lights.

BELL  
You shouldn't work in the dark like  
this.

Gene watches her. Something seems off.

BELL  
Give people the wrong impression.  
Might think you're up to something.

She turns with a tired smile.

BELL  
But we know couldn't be, now could  
it.

GENE  
Not sure what you're getting,  
Captain.

BELL  
Three.

She pulls up a seat, and sits down next to him.

GENE  
Three what?

She grimaces, takes off her gun and holster. She sets it on  
the desk between them. Gene eyes it.

BELL  
Hate sitting with those things. Three  
sick days. That's it. That's all  
you've taken the entire time you've  
worked here.

Gene doesn't say anything.

BELL  
Wha'da'ya think about that?

GENE

Don't think much about it.

Bell drums her fingers over the pistol.

THUMP-THUMP-THUMP-THUMP THUMP-THUMP-THUMP-THUMP

BELL

What do you want, Gene?

Gene stares at the gun. THUMP-THUMP-THUMP-THUMP

GENE

Is there something wrong, captain?

The drumming stops. She shakes her head at him.

BELL

Always so fucking righteous.

She stands, and grabs her gun. Something about the action, something aggressive. Gene reacts, and reaches for his gun.

She looks down at him, with his hand on his side-arm.

She smiles. Laughs.

BELL

Oh Gene. I'll miss you.

She turns to leave. Clicks off the lights, sending him back to the darkness.

BELL

No one else will, but I will.

CLICK, and it is all dark again. Just the shallow glow of his computer screen.

The HUM of the screen grows, and warps into a WHINE that carries us to...

#### **INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - DAY**

Gene sits next to Alice in a small office. Across from them, behind a simple desk, is DR. OBI, 45, he speaks in a pleasant Nigerian accent.

Gene is unfocused. Dr. Obi's words are garbled, and the whine GROWS until--

DR. OBI  
Mr. Kilman?

Gene re-focuses. Alice squeezes his hand.

DR. OBI  
What do you think?

Gene looks to Alice, trying to read her expression. It's clear his mind is elsewhere. He tries...

GENE  
Whatever Alice want's to do. We can--  
Alice suddenly stands, and goes to leave. Tears in her eyes.

GENE  
Alice, wha--  
She doesn't slam the door, but shuts him out all the same.  
Gene shuts his eyes, and pinches his nose in frustration.  
*--He can't make anything right.*

GENE  
Jesus...  
He starts to stand.

DR. OBI  
Mr. Kilman.  
Gene stops.

DR. OBI  
Your wife is very sick. Your time is one of the most important things you can give her right now.  
Gene nods gruffly.

# **INT. GENE'S TRUCK - DAY**

Gene and Alice drive in silence. Alice stares out her window as they pass through a neighbor hood.  
Past kids playing in a front yard.  
Gene starts to say something, but stops.  
She doesn't look at him, but she says...

ALICE  
Think things would have been easier  
if we had had kids?

He glances over at her.

GENE  
Lotta things would've made alotta  
things easier.

She breathes out a defeated laugh, and shakes her head.

GENE  
Listen, you know... That doctor, he's  
not the final word, okay? We can  
see--

ALICE  
It's fine, Gene.

They fall back into silence. The the rumble of the engine.

ALICE  
(quiet)  
It's not fine.

GENE  
What's that?

And Alice finds her voice. Years of frustration boils out.

ALICE  
(pissed the fuck off)  
It's not fine, Gene! It's not fucking  
fine. You weren't even in that room.  
I don't think it's too fucking much  
to ask that my husband be involved  
with this.

GENE  
Alice, I--

ALICE  
No! It's not about you. It's about me  
for once it's about me. I need  
somebody. I need someone I-- I--

Tears rob her of her words.

Gene pulls into their driveway. He parks quickly, and turns  
to her.

GENE

Alice.

He grabs her shoulder, but she swats him away.

ALICE

Don't touch me.

He's persistent, and she gives in. They hug.

GENE

I'm sorry.

ALICE

I can't do it anymore. I can't do this anymore. I need--

GENE

Alice.

ALICE

I need something.

GENE

(stern)

Alice.

She looks at him. He stares, stone faced, out the window.

ALICE

What?

GENE

Wait in the truck.

Without looking he opens his glove-box, and pulls out a small SNUB-NOSE revolver.

She turns to see what he's looking at.

Their front door is open.

**EXT. GENE'S HOME - DAY**

Gene pushes open the ajar door.



**INT. GENE'S HOME - CONTINUOUS**

Gene shuffles in. Listens. Then there is a CLATTER of someone in the kitchen.

Gene cocks his gun, and moves deeper into his house.

There is another sound shuffling.

Gene hugs the corner, he spins into...

**INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Gene rounds in to find Hank... Snooping through Gene's fridge. He pops his head out from inside.

HANK

Gene.

Eyes his gun.

HANK

Seem a bit jumpy.

Gene looks at his gun, and rests it by his side. Crosses into the kitchen to meet Hank.

GENE

Why are you in my house, Hank?

Hank steps away from the fridge with a plate of something.

HANK

Forgot what time we agreed on today.  
You gonna eat this?

GENE

Hank I don't think today is gonna  
work--

ALICE (O.S.)

Henry?

Both men turn. Alice walks in from the kitchen.

HANK

Alice, darling, how are you?

They hug.

ALICE  
Can I get you some tea?

HANK  
Read my mind.

GENE  
Anyway, Hank, today's not gonna work  
for fishing.

ALICE  
Oh hush, Gene.  
(to Hank)  
He's going.

GENE  
Alice.

HANK  
Hear that, Gene? Boss don't want  
ch'ya here.

Gene eyes them.

HANK  
How'd the appointment go, Ally?

She walks to the cupboard grabs two mugs.

ALICE  
Same old bullshit.

Gene turns to leave. They continue on, barely notice him  
leaving.

HANK  
Nothing stands a chance against you.

**INT. GENE'S HOME, FRONT ROOM - DAY**

Gene place his gun on the entryway side table, next to Hanks  
TACKLE-BOX. Alice's laugh floats down the hallway.

It kills Gene. He glares at the tackle-box, and notices  
something. A piece of paper peeks out of the lid.

Gene looks back down the hallway. No one's there.

He unclasps the box with a CLICK. He opens it.

Inside is a small stack of his mail. Alice's medical bills, the current and past-due ones. He furrows his brow.

He grabs one after the other, and then his eyes go wide.

At the bottom of the box is a gun.

HANK (RIGHT BEHIND GENE)  
Ready to go?

Gene looks up. Hank is behind him sipping his tea.

Gene turns. Perfect poker face. The tackle-box shut again.

GENE  
Whenever you are.

The sound of a truck BUMPING over a dirt road carries us to...

**INT./EXT. HANK'S NICE TRUCK - DAY**

The two men bump in their seats as Hank works his truck through an overgrown dirt road.

GENE  
Thought we were goin' to Snyder lake.

Hank waves him off.

HANK  
Ehh. Snyder's shit now days. Too many people, and you can't catch a decent trout there anyway.

The large truck CRUNCHES down the primitive road.

Gene eyes the tackle-box. It's right next to Hank. Hank catches his stare, and smiles broadly.

HANK  
Don't think this spot even has a name. It's...

GENE  
(offering)  
Remote.

HANK  
Remote.

**EXT. REMOTE LAKE - DAY**

Gene grunts as he shoves a LARGE CANOE into the water.

HANK

Get in, get in, 'fore you gotta swim  
out.

Gene squishes into shore-side the mud, and clumsily  
maneuvers into the canoe.

Gene stares at his muddy shoes. Hank is at the head of the  
boat. He looks back. Digs into an ICE-CHEST.

HANK

Here...  
(tosses the beer)  
That'll help.

Gene barely catches the can.

GENE

Thought we were fishin'.

Hank grins ear to ear, and crack open his own.

HANK

Fishing is drinking, Gene.

**FADE TO:**

**EXT. REMOTE LAKE - DAY**

The two men float in the middle of the remote lake. Fishing  
lines cut the water. Very picturesque.

The brick skeleton of a dilapidated building juts from the  
water. Gene eyes it.

Hank follows Gene's stare.

HANK

Used'tah be a small mine here.  
Poisoned the pond, and people forgot  
about it.

GENE

What about the big fish?

Hank just reels in his line, and casts it back out.

There's a tension between them. A tension not lost on Hank.

HANK  
How's things, Gene?

GENE  
Things're fine.

Gene glances down at the tackle-box in the middle of the canoe. Back up at Hank, who isn't looking back.

HANK  
Not what I hear.

Gene quietly takes the box.

GENE  
What do you hear, Hank?

Gene quietly un-latches the first latch.

CLICK

HANK  
I hear you decided to play detective last week.

GENE  
Uh-huh.

Goes for the other latch.

HANK  
Just, maybe better if you don't poke around so much. Spend time Alice.

CLICK

Gene lifts the lid.

HANK  
Know her treatments are expensive.

Gene pulls up the tray. Glances up at Hank.

Hank has his hand in his coat.

Back down at the box. The gun is missing.

Gene sits up. Eyes Hank.

GENE  
What do you want, Hank?

HANK  
You need to stay outta this, Gene.

There is a quiet between them. A pregnant pause. The only sound is the LAPPING of water against the canoe.

GENE  
No.

On Hank: He blinks hard in disappointment.

HANK  
You're a stubborn asshole, you know that?

Gene watches Hank reach into his coat quickly.

**EXT. REMOTE LAKE, SHORE SIDE - DAY**

BAM!

A gunshot echos. Some birds go flying.

**EXT. REMOTE LAKE - DAY**

We are at the shore-side. Far away from the bobbing canoe. The two men are silhouettes.

They float for a few seconds. Then...

The shadow of the man at the front slumps forward.

**EXT. CANOE - DAY**

Gene breathes heavily. He grips his gun, white knuckled. It smokes. Gene gathers his senses, and stands.

The canoe wobbles, and he turns Hank over.

Hank groans. His eyes dart wildly. A red flower blooms from his chest.

GENE  
Who is it, Hank? Who is it?

Hank mumbles something, but it's unclear.

Gene reaches into where Hanks hand is, and pulls out a bloody envelope.

What is this?

Hank stammers out...

F-f-f you.  
(for you)

Gene opens it. Stained hundred dollar bills. Gene looks confused, and suddenly scared.

GENE  
Who is this from, Hank?

Hank just bleeds to death. Gene looks out and around the lake, there is no one else. Back to Hank. He's dead.

**EXT. REMOTE LAKE, SHORE SIDE - DAY**

Gene has the canoe ashore. Hank's body is in it.

Gene pulls Hank's gun from the other side of his coat. Pockets it. Then Hank's cell RINGS.

Gene fishes it out of the dead man's pants.

"VICTORIA BELL"

He answers the phone, but doesn't say anything.

BELL (ON PHONE)  
Hank? You there? Did he take it?

Gene remains silent.

BELL (ON PHONE)  
Did you have to...?

Gene stares at the dead man.

BELL (ON PHONE)  
Hank? . . . Gene?

**INT. CAPTAIN BELL'S OFFICE - DAY**

Bell listens to the silent receiver on bated-breath.

GENE (ON PHONE)

Captain.

Bell shuts her eyes in a silent prayer. She crosses her office to shut her door.

BELL

Where's Hank, Gene?

CROSS CUT: BELL'S OFFICE / LAKE SHORE

GENE

Hank's dead.

Bell's on the edge of losing.

BELL

Gene, don't do anything stupid.

Gene stands over the canoe, and looks down.

GENE

Too late.

He hangs up, and tosses the phone into the canoe.

END CROSS CUT

**INT. CAPTAIN BELL'S OFFICE - DAY**

Bell yells into her cell.

BELL

Gene. Gene!

(checks it)

Shit!

She swings open her door.

BELL

Mike, get in here.



**EXT. REMOTE LAKE - DAY**

Hank lies on the floor of the canoe. Water bubbles up from a few freshly shot holes. He, and the canoe, slowly sink.

MIKE (PRE-LAP)  
Why am I arresting Gene?

**INT. CAPTAIN BELL'S OFFICE - DAY**

She looks like she's going to crack any second.

BELL  
Because I said so.

Mike nods.

**INT./EXT. HANK'S NICE TRUCK - DAY**

Gene races the truck through winding streets. The forest-fire's smoke clouds the roads.

Gene is lost in his mind. Doesn't notice the RED and BLUE LIGHTS flashing in his rear-view mirror.

The SIREN sounds. Wakes Gene from his stupor.

A moment of hesitation. --*Stop or run.*

Gene hits the turning-signal. Slows to the side of the road.

**INT./EXT. TRUCK / SIDE OF ROAD - DAY**

The squad-car pulls up behind. The two vehicles seem lost in the sea of haze.

Mike gets out of the squad-car.

Gene eyes Mike's reflection in the side-mirror. Looks over at the passenger seat. Hank's gun is on the seat.

TAP TAP TAP

Mike is at the window. He TAPS with his BATON.

MIKE  
Roll down the window, Gene.

Gene does.

The window DRONES down. Mike looks in. Gene's shirt is stained with blood, he eyes the gun.

MIKE  
Step out of the car.

Gene stares ahead.

GENE  
Can't do that, Mike.

Mike grips the handle of his side-arm.

MIKE  
Get out of the car now, Gene.

Gene sighs, and quickly...

Opens his door into Mike.

Tackles the unsteady Mike to the ground.

Mike gets one SHOT off.

Gene gets around to the back of Mike.

Gets him in a choke-hold.

Mike flails. Something in Gene's eyes. Something alive. He almost smiles.

Mike's eyes roll back, and he falls limp.

Gene collapses to the ground too. Coughs from the exertion.

**FADE TO:**

**EXT. FOREST - DAY**

Mike's eyes flutter open. He gets his bearings.

Mike is handcuffed around a pine sapling. His animal instincts override him. He frantically pulls and strains.

GENE (O.S.)  
Can't break metal, Mike.

Mike whips around. Gene leans against a tree starrng off into the woods. It's getting later, and the fire's glow is starting to come out.

MIKE

What the hell, Gene? Let me go.

Gene glances back. Then back out toward the orange glow.

GENE

Winds shifted. Ain't no stoppin' it now.

Gene turns to Mike, tosses him down a pocket knife.

GENE

Just gotta let it burn through.

Mike looks at the knife.

MIKE

What the hell am I supposed to do with this?

GENE

There's a saw on it.

Gene nods to the tree.

MIKE

Fuck you, Gene, that'll take me forever.

Gene looks up at the sky.

GENE

Nah. You'll be done by nightfall.

Gene starts to walk away.

MIKE

Gene! Gene!

He looks around, sacred.

MIKE

What about... Bears or something.

Gene gets back into the truck. Calls out from it.

GENE

Ain't no bears in the pines, Mike.

And with that he drives off, leaving poor Mike.

MIKE  
GEEEENNNNEE!!

It's all quiet. Somewhere in the woods some twigs SNAP. Mike lets out a little yelp. Looks around, then grabs the knife.

He starts to saw. His sawing blends with the pre-lap of SCRAPPING.

**INT. GENE'S GARAGE - NIGHT**

A worn duffel bag SCRATCHES out of a dust cabinet.

The bag SMACKS down with a cloud of dust. Gene unzips it. CAMPING GEAR; old and worn. Gene digs through its contents.

Pulls out a pair of HIKING BOOTS. He tosses them to the side. Winces. Gene palms his belly. There's blood. His.

He ignores it, and takes out a hiking backpack.

ALICE (O.S.)  
Where're you going, Gene?

Gene stops what he's doing. Shuts his eyes. --*He didn't want her to see him.*

He stands, and turns. She gasps. Takes a step toward him.

GENE  
It's not my blood.

She stops. Frozen. He walks to her. Places his hands gently on her frail shoulders.

She eyes the backpack, shoes, and two guns. Despite herself, she tears up.

He holds her, still at arm's length, but this is the first real touch we've seen from them.

GENE  
You've always deserved better.

ALICE  
Gene...

GENE  
I gotta do something.

He lets go of her. Hoists on the pack.

ALICE

Why?

Gene stops at that. --*Maybe he hasn't even ask that question.* He pauses. Then...

GENE

'cause it's what's right, and  
nobody'll do if I don't.

He starts to walk away from her.

ALICE

Promise me.

He stops. Turns back to her. Looks at her. Frail but strong.  
Defiant of every shitty thing thrown at her, even him.

Beautiful.

ALICE

Promise me you'll be home, or I'll  
shoot you right now.

He smirks. --*She just might.*

GENE

Promise.

Just barely smiles.

ALICE

You'll want to change your clothes.

Gene smirks, and nods.

A BANG, and CRACK take us to...

#### **INT. ABANDONED TOY STORE - NIGHT**

Gene kicks the door in. His gun drawn.

GENE

Jason... Jason

Gene sneaks past the empty racks. He rounds one to Jason's  
campsite. It's empty. No sign of the kid.

Gene taps some empty cans with his foot. Looks around in defeat. He winces as he sits down.

There is fresh blood on his new shirt. He ignores it, and leans back. --*The exhaustion catching up to him.*

He closes his eyes.

                                GENE  
                                (sotto)  
                Damn it.

**FADE TO:**

**INT. ABANDONED TOY STORE - NIGHT**

Gene sleeps. It's shallow, and disturbed, be he doesn't hear a car door SHUT.

**EXT. ABANDONED TOY STORE - NIGHT**

Bruce stands beside his truck. He looks Gene's truck up and down, then grabs some gear out of his bed.

A fire-jacket and fire-hood (like a ski mask). He suits up and lastly grabs a portable torch for controlled burns.

He lights it, and marches toward the toy store.

**INSIDE**

The store begins to glow orange. Wood CRACKLES and smoke begins to waft in. Gene coughs.

**OUTSIDE**

Bruce blasts fire at the side of the building. Flames lick up into the night sky.

**INSIDE**

Gene stubbornly wakes up. It takes him a moment to take in his burning surroundings. Then, all of a sudden, he bolts up.

He runs to the entrance, but it is being consumed by flames.

He turns--

BOOM

Gene ducks.

Bruce, dressed head to toe in fire fighting gear, bursts in through the back. He sprays fire inside.

Gene peeks out from behind a shelf.

The flames begin to consume the store. He stops at the sight of Jason's camp site. Bruce crosses toward it.

He lifts his face shield.

BRUCE

JASON!

He looks scared. Conflicted. He hesitates for a moment, then CLICK his mask back down.

WOOOSH

He lights up the old campsite. Something moves in the corner of his vision. He looks up sees Gene duck back.

BRUCE

You!

Gene retreats further back, as a blast of fire flies at him.

Gene takes aim, but the smoke is so thick. He gets down on the ground gulps down air.

Bruce lumbers through the smoke, a ghost of silhouette suns past. Bruce chases it with flames.

Fire spits past Gene. He's running out of options. Walls begin to crumble. He has to get out.

He blinks hard trying to see through the smoke. There is a figure. Gene aims.

BAM FWOOOOMMM

Gene misses Bruce, but clips his oil can. There is a huge burst of flames. Bruce screams for a moment.

Then he just walks out of the fire-ball. His uniform protecting him.

He unslings an AX, and charges toward Gene, bits of him still ablaze. A hellish force.

BAM

Bruce falls. GUT SHOT.

Gene races up to him. Bruce reaches for the ax, but gene kicks it into the flames.

The place is coming down around him. He doesn't have much time. He grabs Bruce, and begins to drag him.

Gene groans.

Bruce groans. He mutters out.

BRUCE

He's yours.

Gene stops. The exit is close. He turns on Bruce.

BRUCE

He's your little bastard, and I raise 'im.

Bruce looks around, he's getting weak.

BRUCE

He did all this. He...

Bruce meets Gene's stony gaze.

BRUCE

Do it. Do it wha'dda'ya waitin' for.

Gene doesn't make a move, he just eyes the exit.

BRUCE

Do it!

Gene turns, and goes to walk out.

BRUCE

NO! No you come back!

A beam crashes down. Bruce looks around scared. Gene is gone.

BRUCE

Kill me! KILL ME!



**EXT. ABANDONED TOY STORE - NIGHT**

Gene watches as the fire devours what's left of the old building. He glances off to the distance.

RED and BLUE lights flash toward him.

**EXT. BRUCE'S TRUCK - NIGHT**

SIRENS grow. Gene frantically digs through the truck. He pulls papers out of the glove-box.

The sirens are almost there.

He finds something. Pockets it. He can see the firetrucks and cop cars moments away.

**EXT. BURNING TOY STORE - NIGHT**

Firetrucks wail up, and get to work quickly. FIRE-FIGHTERS scramble out, and start dousing the flames.

A SQUAD-CAR zooms in, followed shortly by a NICE MERCEDES.

Captain Bell bolts out of her Mercedes. Watches, in horror, as the fire engulfs the toy store.

She spies the COP heading toward Bruce's abandoned truck. She yells

BELL  
Get away from that!

The cop turns, taken aback. She sprints toward the him.

BELL  
Get the fuck away.

She gets to the truck and tears through the cab.

--Where is it? Where is it?

Bell stands up in horror. Hands empty. She turns.

Far across the street is a truck. Headlights on. A man stands hidden in shadows.

Bell watches, knowing exactly who's staring back.

**OLD TRUCK**

Gene looks at Bell from far away, the fire-light plays over the scene. He slaps an OLD FOLDED MAP in his hand, then gets in his truck.

**ON BELL**

Bell watches the truck drive away. Her world crumbling.

FOREST RANGER (PRE-LAP)  
Can't do it, sir.

**EXT. FOREST ROAD - MORNING**

Gene leans out of his truck in front of a roadblock. A YOUNG FOREST RANGER speaks with him. The whole forest is smokey.

FOREST RANGER  
Road's closed sir. Even for  
residents. Fire's outta control.

Gene looks past the young man. The forest lost in the haze.

GENE  
Look.

He reaches grabs the old map he pulled from Bruce's truck.

He shows the forest ranger a red circle, and follows a trail down from it.

GENE  
The trail here. This goes all the way  
up here, right?

The forest ranger isn't too sure what to say. He hesitates.

FOREST RANGER  
Sir, I... This whole area is at risk.

Gene nods. --*That was a "yes."*

GENE  
Keep up the good work.

FOREST RANGER  
Sir?

Gene puts his truck in gear and drives away, leaving the forest ranger looking concerned.

**EXT. TRAIL HEAD - DAY**

Gene secures his old backpack on, and SHUTS his truck's door. He jingles his key in his hand, debating.

He puts them on one of his tires, and heads into the forest.

**EXT. FOREST TRAIL - DAY**

Gene doesn't look well, but he does look determined. He struggles up the trail. The stain on his belly growing.

He is engulfed in a thin haze. He stops.

Checks his map.

Checks his GPS.

He looks around, everything looks the same.

Gene walks staring at his GPS instead of his surroundings. He looks up, and spots it.

A tree with a thin line of RED YARN.

**EXT. OFF THE TRAIL - DAY**

Gene follows the yarn through the woods into a clearing.

Same as last time. There is a worn, hidden, SHED.

Gene timidly approaches the shed. He pats himself down, grabs his glasses, puts them on.

He edges down the shed. Peeks in one of the openings.

**INSIDE**

Anything that had been inside has been gone for a while.

**EXT. SHED**

Gene examines the door. No sign of booby-traps. He slowly opens it. Nothing. He goes in.

**INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS**

Glass CRUNCHES under his feet. He clicks on a flashlight. The light sweeps around the small area.

There are some syringes, but nothing of substance.

**EXT. SHED - DAY**

Gene sits on a log, drinks from an old CANTEEN. He blinks hard, and takes off his glasses. Rubs his eyes.

Above him a FIRE PLANE rumbles past him.

Gene follows the plane until it's lost in the tree-line.

With a groan he gets up, and continues on.

He leaves his glasses behind.

**EXT. FOREST - DAY**

Gene stumbles out from behind a tree. Whistles a bit.

This SHED is much bigger. Gene crosses toward it.

                    GENE  
                    (sotto)  
            Upgrade.

Gene makes his way toward the BIG SHED. Something CRASHES inside. He freezes.

Gene grabs his gun, then goes for his glasses...

Pats himself down.

                    GENE  
                    (sotto)  
            God damn it, Gene.

He glances back for a moment. He presses forward.

Up to an actual window. It's filthy. Gene looks in.

Through the dirty glass he can see someone. Their back to him. The person frantically tosses stuff off shelves.

Gene moves to the door. Grips his gun... Steadies himself.

He KICKS the door in.

GENE  
Don't even breathe.

**INT. BIG SHED - CONTINUOUS**

It's dark in the shed. The person has their back to Gene still. Their hands up.

GENE  
Turn around... Slow.

Slowly they turn around.

GENE  
Jason?

Jason stares at Gene, at his father.

JASON  
Officer Kilman?

Gene glances around then holsters his sidearm.

GENE  
What are you doing here?

Jason's eyes dart to a filing cabinet.

JASON  
I'm...

Gene approaches the filing cabinet.

GENE  
You got a weapon on you?

Jason nods.

GENE  
What?

JASON  
's a gun. In my back.

GENE  
I'm gonna take it from you now, okay?

JASON  
(nods)  
Mhmm.

Gene fishes out small Walther from Jason's back. Gene stuffs it in his jacket pocket. Gene tries the filing cabinet...

JASON  
It's locked.

GENE  
What's in here?

JASON  
Evidence.

Gene eyes him.

JASON  
My Da-- Bruce he keeps this book.  
Some ratty notebook. Has all the  
names and contacts of all his buyers.  
I ne--

BAM

JASON  
Shit.

Jason jumps back. Gene shot out the lock.

JASON  
Warn me next time.

Gene grabs the drawer. It's jammed now. He yanks it open.

Nothing inside. Jason can't hide his disappointment.

He knocks kicks metal cabinet.

GENE  
How many more of these shed you know  
about?

JASON  
None. Know there's plenty more  
though.

GENE  
How'd you find this one.

Jason doesn't like being grilled.

JASON  
Followed him once. He beat the shit  
outta me when he found me.

Gene looks out the grimy window. Plume of smoke in the distance.

JASON  
This is what they do.

Gene looks back at him.

JASON  
They make all these labs, and then  
use the controlled burns to hide the  
evidence. We're running outta time.

Gene takes a moment, sucks his tooth and thinks.

GENE  
Guess there's no point in sending you  
back, plus I need some better eyes.

Gene eyes Jason.

GENE  
I'm gonna give you back your gun.  
Then we gotta move.

Gene looks back out the window. In the distance an orange hue glows forbiddingly.

GENE  
Fire's makin' better time than we  
are.

# **EXT. FOREST - LATER**

Gene and Jason hike through the sandy forest. Jason in the lead. Jason coughs from the smoke.

Gene looks at him concerned.

GENE  
(out of breath)  
Hey, how 'bout a breather in a sec.

Jason looks up, then up the trail. Nods.

JASON

Sure... Sure

The two stand under a particularly large pine. Jason rubs the bark, and looks up it.

JASON

Nothing anyone can do about it.

Gene sips from his canteen. Looks up at Jason. Gene takes out a handkerchief.

GENE

'bout what?

Jason looks around as if that is answer enough.

JASON

All this. It's all going up.

Gene wets the handkerchief. Hands it to Jason.

GENE

Here.

Jason eyes it. Doesn't know what to make of it.

GENE

For the smoke.

JASON

Oh. Uh, thanks.

GENE

You have her eyes, you know.

Jason looks at Gene then quickly to the ground.

GENE

People tell you that a lot?

JASON

Used to...

GENE

Here.

Gene offer Jason his canteen.

GENE

You should drink.



Jason accepts. Drinks. Another FIRE PLANE roars past.

GENE

You come out in the woods much as a kid?

JASON

Some. Bruce... He'd take me out. Think she made him, bonding and all that.

He gives Gene back the canteen.

JASON

We went camping a couple times. He'd always try to scare me. Tell me the Jersey Devil was gonna get me.

GENE

It work?

JASON

No.

There is a finality to it.

JASON

You knew her, right? My--

GENE

I did. She say anything about me?

JASON

Just that...

They stare at each other. Both knowing, neither saying.

JASON

That I could trust you if anything ever came up.

Gene nods.

A white snowflake flutters down. Gene looks up. It's starting to snow.

In summer?

Gene catches one of the snowflakes. Rubs it between his fingers.

It's black.

It's...

GENE

Ash.

They look around a storm of ash rains down around them.

GENE

We gotta go.  
(to handkerchief)  
Put that on.

Jason does, as they start up again.

**EXT. FOREST - DAY**

Gene and Jason hike through the blizzard of ash.

GENE

Almost there. Keep an eye out for--

JASON

Found it!

Jason sprints away.

GENE

Jason!

But he's already gone. Gene runs after him.

**EXT. MAIN SHED - DAY**

Gene crosses a tree-line out to a clearing. Stops.

It looks like a page from a twisted fairy-tale. The dark twisted shed dusted with an ashen snow.

Justin sprints headlong toward the shed.

JASON

This's gotta be it.

A thought from Gene.

GENE

Jason! Stop! Jason!

Too late...

Jason swings open the front door. Gene grimaces expecting, but there is no boom, Jason just goes inside.

Gene jogs up to the shed. Glances over his shoulder. The smoke is a lot closer. They need to be quick.

**INT. MAIN SHED - DAY**

Jason is already tearing the place apart. The main shed is much more lived in. No sign of chemistry equipment, or anything meth related. This is a base of operations.

JASON

(sotto)

It has to be here. It has to be here.

GENE

Hey!

Jason looks up.

GENE

Don't do that.

Off Jason's confused look.

GENE

Don't just run off by yourself.  
These, uh... It's dangerous. I don't  
wanna worry about you.

Jason nods.

So does Gene. Surprised at his on paternal instincts.

Gene slowly takes in his surroundings. Some dusty axes and saws, magazines, empty beer cans.

There are photos tacked to the wooden walls. He examines one.

He blows ash off of it.

Bruce, Laura, and Jason. A happy family on a fishing trip. Bruce and Laura smile widely. Jason grimaces. Teen anger.

Another photo of Bruce and Laura, they look...

Happy.

Gene glances up at Jason. He is pulling drawers out of a small desk. He stops. Then keeps on going.

Gene rubs ash away from one more photo. Bruce and Jason. Bruce beams at the camera. Jason, not even a smirk.

JASON (O.S.)

Found it!

Gene turns from the photo. Jason holds a RATTY COMPOSITION NOTEBOOK.

JASON

This is it, let's go.

GENE

Hold on. I need something that ties  
Bell to all this.

JASON

What do you mean. I have the book.  
That's what we're here for.

There is something in Jason's tone. Something Gene doesn't like. Gene crosses past him toward the desk.

GENE

I need something else.

Jason looks out a window.

JASON

Fire's getting close.

He glances back at Gene. Gene has his back to Jason. There is a crumpled piece of paper on the ground.

Gene grabs the piece of paper. There is a dried red stain on it. Behind him Jason slowly, and quietly, takes out his gun.

Jason levels the gun at Gene.

BAM

JASON

Agh!

Gene whips around. Forgets all about the paper.

Jason is on the ground holding his bleeding arm.

Gene ducks low, crosses to Jason. Jason moans.

JASON

That fucking bitch. That fucking  
bitch.

Gene peeks out the window. There is a forest patrol jeep parked far off.

Gene just gets a glimpse of Bell slip behind a pine.

He looks back down at Jason.

JASON  
Ahh I'm gonna kill her. I'm gonna  
fucking kill her.

GENE  
Shut up. You ain't dyin'.

BELL (O.S.)  
(yelling)  
Gene, we can work this out.

Jason shakes his head. His eyes pools of hatred.

Gene stands. Jason grabs his leg.

JASON  
What're you doing?

Gene straightens his jacket. Holds his gun at his side.

GENE  
Stay here.

JASON  
Great idea.

#### **EXT. MAIN SHED - DAY**

The sun is getting low. The forest glows orange.

Gene steps out of the shed. He stands tall.

GENE  
Bell. Come out. This don't have to go  
down this way.

#### **ON BELL**

She keeps her back to the tree. She PUMPS a shotgun.

Calls out.

BELL

I-- I can pay. All of Alice's medical bills. Anything you need.

**ON GENE**

GENE

Can't be that way, and you know it.

A low RUMBLE GROWS. A fire-plane.

GENE

Step out.

**ON BELL**

She just shakes her head to no one. The fire plane ROARS overhead and drops its payload.

**EXT. MAIN SHED - CONTINUOUS**

Gene looks up. A monsoon pours down from above. The world instantly a grimy muck of muddy ash.

SMACK THUMP SMACK

Fish fall from the sky, and hit the ground.

Gene soaked stares in wonder.

A drenched Bell emerges from behind her tree. They stare at each other, neither making a move.

A quickly dying fish gapes, drowning in a sea of air.

BELL

Gene.

GENE

Captain.

Water DRIPS all around them. A pregnant pause builds.

Then...

BOOM

BAM BAM

The forest explodes into a fire-fight.

The shotgun's ball-bearings scatter, but some find gene.

One shot clips Bell's leg. She stops for a second then.

CHK-CHK BOOM

Gene falls too. He gets her in the gut though.

Both writhe in pain on the mucky ground.

Gene crawls toward Bell.

GENE

Throw you gun away, captain.

She looks at her shot gun. Right next to her.

GENE

Gene do it.

He's almost there. She falls back in defeat.

#### **INT. MAIN SHED - DAY**

Bell hits the ground next to Jason with a THUD. Jason looks up pissed off.

JASON

Are you crazy.

Jason reaches for his pistol, but Gene kicks it away.

JASON

Shoot her.

Bell grimaces, and adjusts herself.

BELL

Stupid... He's playing you, Gene.

JASON

Shoot her!

GENE

(to Jason)

Shut up!

Bell wipes blood from her mouth.

BELL

Fuck...  
(looks to Gene)  
Wasn't Bruce.

Gene remembers something. He crosses to the back, and picks up the piece of crumpled paper.

JASON

Don't listen to her.

He unfolds the paper, and a FINGER falls out.

Scrawled on the paper, in a familiar messy hand is...

*The names of mommy dearest loses more than her finger.*

Gene's world is warping.

JASON (O.S.)

Did I disappoint you?

BELL (O.S.)

Gene.

Gene turns just in time to dodge a wildly swung HATCHET.

Gene stumbles back.

JASON

Feeling's mutual.

Jason swings again, but his arm is useless. He misses by a mile. Gene's hurting, but he tackles Jason to the ground.

Gene smashes the hatchet out of Jason's hand.

Gene stands up, and takes control of the room. Points his gun at Jason's head.

BELL

Gene, you can make this right.

GENE

Shut up.

He points the gun at Bell.

JASON

What did you expect? Left me to be raised by that gorilla? Left her to her old shitty life.



BELL  
Gene. Do what's right.

JASON  
Oh she always talked about you. Put  
you up on some fucking pedestal. Look  
at you.

Gene, bleeding from tons of shotgun wounds, covered in mud.  
He looks pathetic. Has no way to deal with his situation.

JASON  
Don't shoot me, Daddy.

The gun bobs between Jason and Bell.

# **EXT. MAIN SHED - DAY**

The glow of the fire is almost on top of them.

A single SHOT echos out into the woods.

**FADE TO:**

# **BLACK**

Just the CRACKLE of fire. Slowly an engine rumbles in. The  
engine replaces the fire. Then it turns off.

# **EXT. GENE'S HOME - EVENING**

Gene slowly steps out of the forest ranger jeep. He looks  
horrible. Painted in crusty blood and mud.

He slowly walks up to his front door. Realizes he doesn't  
have his keys. He sighs. Tries the handle.

It's unlocked. Somewhere deep in his mind this my register,  
but he just lumbers in like some zombie.

# **INT. GENE'S HOME - CONTINUOUS**

Gene moves deeper into his dark house. He rounds the corner.

CLICK

All the lights come one at once. People emerge from behind various pieces of furniture.

ALL  
Surprise!

There are streamers, and balloons. Everyone CHEERS, starts singing.

ALL  
*For he's a jolly good fellow...*  
*For he's a Jolly good fellow...*  
*For he's...*

One by one people quiet. They all stare at him. It's a sea of quiet all around him. Gene just turns and walks away.

**INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Gene washes the mud and blood off of his face. He stares at himself. He looks broken, vulnerable, pathetic.

There is a light KNOCKING at the door.

Alice slowly walks in. Looks him up and down.

ALICE  
What'd you do, Gene?

More for himself than anyone else.

GENE  
I did what's right.

He quivers.

GENE  
I did what's right.

Then they hug. Gene cries quietly into her shoulder.

GENE  
I did what was right.

She rubs his back. Shushes him.

ALICE  
I know... I know... You always do.

They just hold each other. A raw act of love.

**FADE OUT:**

**THE END**

**A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW**