

ARCTIC BLUE
by Ross LaManna

FADE IN:

1 EXT. BOREAL FOREST - ALASKA - (AERIAL SHOT) - DAY

Flying. Not at the intangible height of a jet, but at spitting distance from the treetops. We're in central Alaska, the Big Lonely, just north of the Arctic Circle.

A thick forest follows the contours of mountain foothills like a deep-pile carpet. Up at treeline the forest thins to tundra, a grassy scruff turning red and yellow with the coming of autumn.

On the horizon, the hills rise to meet the Endicott Mountains, a great fortress wall of granite so sharp and jagged that snow cannot stick to its face. This is how all North America once looked -- raw, indomitable.

Then, abruptly coming into the SCENE is a colossal etching across the landscape too deliberate to be of natural origin. Bisecting this country like a metallic ribbon -- or a scar, depending on your point of view -- is the 800-mile-long Trans-Alaskan Pipeline.

Even the immensity of the pipeline is rendered insignificant by the vastness of the land. It goes on, and on, and on...

DISSOLVE TO:

A lone MAN walks along the Haul Road, a one-lane gravel trail running parallel to the pipeline. The weather turns sour -- rough wind and stinging snow cut across the man's path.

DISSOLVE TO:

The man is ERIC DESMOND, twenty-four, clean-shaven, determined. He's clearly out of place here, dressed in a business suit and a light, camel-hair topcoat.

Eric is trying to follow some footprints in the snow -- a predator's tracks, those of a wolf or coyote. But the footprints ahead have faded, covered by the snow and wind.

DISSOLVE TO:

The weather becomes more oppressive. Heavy snow, gale winds and sub-zero temperatures make his progress tortuous. Eric strives stubbornly forward.

1 CONTINUED:

(CONTINUED)

DISSOLVE TO:

Eric has gathered some branches. He tries to make a fire. Moisture from his breath has frozen in the upturned collar of his insufficient coat, and his skin is split raw from the cold.

His hands are too numb to hold the matches. After several attempts at striking one, he slumps down next to the pile of wood, exhausted and frustrated.

DISSOLVE TO:

The snow has covered the pile of branches. Eric still sits next to it, partially covered in snow himself.

ERIC

His face is a death mask: eyes half-open and dull, lips a purplish blue, bloodless skin crystallizing as it ices over. The wind HOWLS around him. The snow sticks to his eyelashes and hair without melting.

END

DREAM

2 INT. DARK BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eric bolts up in bed. Next to him, ANNE MARIE GAUVIN sits up and hugs him. All that can be seen of her in the dark is a lovely silhouette and a cascade of dark hair. After a moment, Eric kisses her. He shakes off the dream and lies back down.

3 EXT. HAUL ROAD AND PIPELINE - CLOSE - DAY

A metal sign, peppered with shotgun holes, is posted near a pipeline support piling:

**PIPELINE UTILITY CORRIDOR
PRIVATE PROPERTY
NO TRESPASSING
NO HUNTING
NO TRAPPING
NO SHOOTING**

WIDER

Eric walks quietly past the sign, intent on something ahead of him. Although still somewhat boyish in appearance, he's confident and resolute in attitude. His clothes have a distinctly western feel: Lucchese boots, Levis 501's, Mahan cotton shirt. His down parka is unzipped in the sunny, windless, forty-degree afternoon.

3 **CONTINUED:**

He pauses, then brings to his shoulder a rifle with a four-power scope mounted atop it. He peers through the scope.

HIS POV - THROUGH SCOPE

He puts the crosshairs on the shoulder flank of a big, ivory-white timber wolf, fifty yards away.

BACK TO SCENE

Anne Marie stands beside Eric, a Nikon with a telephoto lens in her hand, holding her breath in anticipation. She's twenty-three, pretty, with soft features and piercing blue eyes. She wears Eddie Bauer woman's gear like she was born in it.

Eric expertly fixes his aim and slowly squeezes the trigger. But instead of a loud retort, there is only the dull POP of a CO2-powered dart gun.

NEW ANGLE

The tranquilizer dart finds its mark in the wolf's fleshy shoulder. The wolf takes off running, but almost immediately slows, sits, then lies down.

Eric and Anne Marie hurry over to the wolf, who is breathing deeply. Eric kneels next to him and strokes his thick fur.

ERIC

What a beauty.
(to Anne Marie)
Hand me the transmitter.

Anne Marie passes to Eric a tiny, weatherproof homing device attached to a steel collar band. Eric puts the collar loosely around the wolf's neck and crimps it in place, all the while TALKING soothingly to the semi-conscious animal. Anne Marie smiles at Eric's tenderness and snaps some photos.

With the collar in place and transmitter activated, Eric backs away while the wolf tries to rouse itself from its narcosis.

ERIC

(continuing)
He's coming around fine.

ANNE MARIE

Be right back. I left my camcorder in the car.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (2)

FOLLOW ANNE MARIE

as she hurries back to their International Scout. On the door of the Scout is a stylized logo of an oil derrick, under which are the words:

NORTHLAND PETROLEUM CORP.

Anne Marie opens the hatchback and grabs a video camera.

ANGLE ON ERIC AND THE WOLF

Eric smiles as the wolf wobbles tentatively to his feet and trots unsteadily away. Near the treeline the wolf turns, glances back at Eric and then disappears into the forest.

NEW ANGLE

Anne Marie is taping the wolf's retreat. Looking through the viewfinder, she crosses a gully between a pipeline piling and a rock formation. Eric turns toward her and a glint of light in the debris at her feet catches his eye.

ERIC

Anne Marie! Stop!

She glances down. Something metal is half-buried in the dead leaves and gravel.

ERIC

(continuing)
Don't move.

Eric runs over. He pokes at the object with a stick. With a SNAP, a steel leg trap chomps the stick in half. Anne Marie jumps back. Eric brushes the dead leaves on the ground behind her and she carefully backtracks out of the gully.

ERIC

(continuing)
Goddamn trappers!

He angrily rips the trap out of the ground, unearthing several others attached to one another by a long chain.

ERIC

(continuing)
Takes nerve, laying traplines on restricted land.

Eric slips the scope off the dart rifle and climbs up the

pipeline on foot pegs to the top of an anchoring poINT.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (3)

Using the scope as a telescope, he scans up and down the Haul Road.

ANNE MARIE

What are you doing?

ERIC

He still might be around. I saw fresh tire tracks coming in.

HIS POV - THROUGH SCOPE

The road and the pipeline stretch toward either horizon, north and south. In the distance, a jeep is parked on the Haul Road. Near it, a Man climbs down into another shallow ravine.

BACK TO SCENE

Eric hurries down the footpegs.

ERIC

Man and a jeep, about a mile and a half down.

He jumps into the Scout. Anne Marie stuffs her cameras into the hatchback. As soon as she climbs in, Eric tears out.

4 INT. SCOUT - (MOVING SHOT)

It races along the dusty gravel road at 60 MPH.

5 EXT. HAUL ROAD

Startled at the APPROACH of the Scout, the Trapper uproots his traps and runs out of the ravine. He WHISTLES and another Trapper appears nearby.

6 INT. TRAPPERS' JEEP

They pile into their dilapidated, all-terrain jeep. It's oddly well-equipped, however. Bolted to the dashboard is an expensive tape player and a beat-up radio beacon receiver with a round locating screen. They zoom off.

7 INT. SCOUT - (MOVING SHOT)

Eric stomps on the gas. The dust from the jeep obscures his view but he's gaining on them anyway. Anne Marie hangs on and squints her eyes against the choking dust.

8 INT. TRAPPERS' JEEP - (MOVING SHOT)

The driver is LEMALLE (35), a tall, ugly, rawboned Canadian. His entire outfit is made of animal hide. He has long red hair, and a reptilian face usually twisted into a sadistic sneer. While driving, he scans along the pipeline.

LEMALLE

Where the fuck did you drop
Corbett off?

In the passenger seat, MITCHELL (38), chews tobacco and looks grim. He's a squat, flat-faced Okie, with curly matted hair and tired grey eyes. He's dressed in a brown long coat and has a Colt .45 Peacemaker in a quick-draw holster strapped to his leg. Despite his intimidating air, confrontation is not his style.

He spots a figure up ahead, where the road crosses a muddy creek.

MITCHELL

He's over there.

9 EXT. HAUL ROAD

Turning sharply, the trappers' jeep splashes through the creek bed without slowing. Bouncing, it comes down hard against the axle-deep bank at the creek's high water mark. LeMalle tries to back out, but can't find traction in the mud.

Eric stops the Scout thirty yards behind them.

10 INT. SCOUT

Eric opens his door. To Anne Marie:

ERIC

Stay here.

ANNE MARIE

Be careful -- there're two of
them.

Eric reaches in the back seat and hands something to Anne Marie.

ERIC

If I unzip my parka, stick this
out the window.

11 EXT. HAUL ROAD

Eric confidently approaches the jeep.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

Then, a third trapper climbs from the creek. He's got a line of traps slung around his neck and a world of experience on his face. He's BEN CORBETT, a life-long huntsman, somewhere past forty, weathered beyond his years.

He has a feral nose, thick beard and dark, smart, hunter's eyes. He wears a hooded cotton sweat shirt, cotton coveralls and vapor-barrier mountain boots. On his belt is a holster rig cradling a .44 magnum revolver.

Eric slows down. He didn't expect to face anyone as formidable as Corbett.

12 INT. / EXT. JEEP

Emboldened by Corbett's presence, LeMalle reaches into the back seat and grabs his 6.5 by 55 Swedish military carbine.

CORBETT

(to LeMalle)

No shooting. Let's see who's so interested in us.

Corbett has an incongruously affable voice. He throws his traps into the jeep, then strides closer toward Eric.

MITCHELL

(to Corbett)

Ain't worth it, Ben...

13 EXT. HAUL ROAD - CREEK CROSSING - LONG SHOT

As Corbett comes closer, Eric realizes this might not've been a great idea. Corbett squints his eyes and sniffs the air, as if by this he can gauge his opponent's mettle.

ERIC

You got two counts against you -- trapping out of season and poaching on restricted land.

CORBETT

Can't be much of a crime, if all they got minding the area is a cocky kid.

ERIC

I got your plate number, asshole. Maybe you feel like spending a few months in jail.

Corbett just smiles.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

But LeMalle, rankled, sticks the carbine out the jeep window.

Seeing the rifle pointed at him, Eric freezes, then slowly unzips his parka.

LEMALLE

Ben? Sure you don't want me to drop the fucker?

Corbett doesn't answer. Then, his eyes narrow and he looks past Eric at the Scout.

CORBETT'S POV

The passenger in the Scout sticks what looks like another rifle out the window.

BACK TO SCENE

Eric quickly glances over his shoulder to make sure Anne Marie's backing him up.

ERIC

You leave and don't come back, that's the end of it.

After a long moment, Corbett smiles again, then turns away from Eric. He motions LeMalle to the front of the jeep.

Frustrated, LeMalle slams back the safety on the carbine and throws it in the back seat.

ANGLE ON TRAPPERS

Mitchell climbs into the jeep and starts the engine. LeMalle and Corbett rock the jeep back and forth in the rut. While pushing, Corbett rips the sole of his boot on a sharp piece of granite. He cusses and pushes harder.

14 EXT. HAUL ROAD - CREEK CROSSING

Eric walks back to the Scout. He feels the trappers' eyes on his back, but forces himself not to hurry.

The trappers free their vehicle. Corbett gets in the driver's seat, and they take off.

15 INT. SCOUT

Anne Marie's hands are shaking as she pulls the plastic

tranquilizer rifle back in the window.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

ANNE MARIE

(unnerved)
Great idea -- pointing a lousy
dart gun at some nut with a
high-powered hunting rifle.

ERIC

Bastards took off, though, didn't
they?

16 EXT. BOREAL FOREST - LATER THAT DAY

The trappers have left the flatlands of the Haul Road area.
Now their jeep climbs a pathway over the rolling foothills.

17 INT. TRAPPERS' JEEP - (MOVING SHOT)

Corbett broods while driving. Mitchell looks out the
window. The silence makes LeMalle uncomfortable.

LEMALLE

All this fuckin' land, and we're
locked out. Makes me puke.

CORBETT

Jawing about it won't change it.

LEMALLE

Three hundred seventy-five
million acres in this state. I'm
real tired of runnin' into
people.

MITCHELL

Then don't look to your left.

18 EXT. SPORTSMEN'S CAMP

A brand-new Land Rover is parked on an alluvial fan in a
bend in a small river. Scattered about is an assortment of
expensive camping gear, beer cans, spent shells and other
garbage.

Three toy-macho, vacationing SPORTSMEN are guzzling beer and
BLASTING fish in the shallow river with 12-gauge shotguns.
They look up and glower suspiciously as the jeep slows and
stops.

19 INT. TRAPPERS' JEEP

LeMalle grabs his carbine.

CORBETT

Leave it here.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

MITCHELL

Let's keep going. We're only an hour from Devil's Cauldron.

CORBETT

(pats Mitchell's shoulder)
Relax. I just want to ask them how the hunting is.

20 EXT. SPORTSMEN'S CAMP

Corbett gets out of the jeep. He regards the Sportsmen, their shotguns and their mess with ill-concealed contempt.

The Sportsmen clutch their weapons and watch Corbett. He walks around the camp, spotting a rubber-lined rucksack stuffed with dead ermine. After a long, tense moment, Corbett smiles.

CORBETT

Looks like you've had some luck. Where's your guide?

SPORTSMAN #1

We're on our own, if it's any of your damn business.

CORBETT

(re ermine)
You did real good.

He crouches next to the dead animals and strokes the fur.

LEMALLE

(to Corbett)
No swinging shit. They're over their goddamned limit.

CORBETT

(to Sportsmen)
My friend is right. Supposed to have a licensed guide when you're on this land, too.

SPORTSMAN #1

Hey, we paid our fuckin' permit fees.

LeMalle amuses himself by pissing in their campfire. No one notices that in the b.g., quiet Sportsman #3 unzips his parka, exposing a .45 Peacemaker in a belt holster.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

SPORTSMAN #2

I were you, I'd drive right on outta here again. Now.

CORBETT

(calmly)
This was my roaming land, 'til the government took it over. Only Innuits can hunt here now, and tourists, like you.

Corbett swings the rucksack of carcasses onto the hood of the Land Rover. Pissed, Sportsmen #1 and #2 step closer to him.

CORBETT

(continuing)
According to tribal law, hunters passing through the land of another tribe can only take game to survive. They can eat the meat, but have to surrender the hides.

LeMalle pulls a hunting knife and holds up one of the ermine.

LEMALLE

Want the meat?

SPORTSMAN #1

Fuck you, dirtball.

Corbett chuckles and Mitchell spits.

WIDER

LeMalle digs through the camping goodies in the back of the Land Rover, many still in their packages. He helps himself to some sandwiches and a 12-pack of beer.

LEMALLE

I say shoot 'em, bury 'em with their shiny new car.

MITCHELL

(to LeMalle)

If you're gonna take something,
take it and let's go.

Corbett looks down to fasten the top of the rucksack.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (2)

NEW ANGLE

Suddenly, Sportsman #3 reaches inside his parka and pulls the pistol. He swings it toward LeMalle.

LeMalle looks up when he hears the HAMMER cock.

There is a deafeningly loud SHOT.

Sportsman #3 falls down dead at LeMalle's feet.

Off to one side, Corbett holds a huge, smoking .44 magnum six-shooter in his hand.

Shotgun in hand, Sportsman #1 gauges his chances of blasting Corbett. Nil. When Corbett turns to him, he lies the weapon down. Sportsman #2 rushes to his friend.

Looking bleak, Mitchell spits again. Corbett crosses to LeMalle and knocks from his hands the things he wanted to steal. Chastised, LeMalle smolders. After a moment:

CORBETT

(to Sportsmen)
Put him in your truck. Smell of
blood will attract the bears.
(to trappers)
Let's go.

As Corbett walks to the jeep, he's too angry to notice that he's stepped in a patch of mud under the Land Rover.

Near the jeep, LeMalle stops and pulls them into a huddle.

LEMALLE

I don't believe in leavin'
witnesses behind, Ben.

MITCHELL

It was self defense. Leave it at
that.

LEMALLE

You think those fucks will tell
it that way?

CORBETT

(ending the argument)
We'll get a head start before
they go crying to the law.

Corbett turns and FIRES two rounds from his .44 into the engine of the Land Rover. The Sportsmen stare and sputter.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (3)

CORBETT

(continuing; to Sportsmen)
You can pack out of here -- two,
three days' hike along this river
at most. Weather should hold
this early in the season.

Corbett and Mitchell get in their jeep.

LEMALLE

isn't yet satisfied. He walks back over to the Sportsmen, kneeling beside their fallen friend, and crouches right beside them. Intimidated, Sportsman #2 looks away, but LeMalle grabs his chin and turns his face back toward him.

LEMALLE

Think I'm pretty? You better
forget how we look, 'cause next
time they won't keep me from
killing you. This land ain't
quite civilized, you know...

He unsheathes his buck knife. BELOW FRAME, he slices across the forehead of the dead Sportsman, peels back his scalp and cuts it loose, Indian-style. The Sportsmen are stunned and sickened.

ANGLE ON TRAPPERS' JEEP

Corbett looks at Mitchell and wearily shakes his head.

MITCHELL

At least he scalped the dead one.

21 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - DUSK

Devil's Cauldron Hot Springs is a cluster of twenty tiny dwellings connected by an unpainted boardwalk. The town squats, ugly and temporary-looking, in a dirt clearing fifty miles north of the Arctic Circle. Thirty miles east of the Pipeline, it's almost dead center of interior Alaska.

At the edge of town is a gravel airstrip. Mixed with the prospector-era sod-roof cabins are a few prefabricated houses. The boon brought by men building the pipeline is

long gone. Now only a few itinerant loggers, natives and bush dwellers remain to fight boredom, each other and the depression of the oncoming winter.

Enough steam escapes from the hot springs to perpetually blanket the valley with fog. The spa is log-walled and horseshoe-shaped, with partitioned baths inside. Facing it

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

are a mud-walled fire bath, a wooden steam bath called a Maqi, six one-room cabins for let, and an unused dance hall.

LEO MEYERLING opens the tailgate of a Dodge truck with the Northland Petroleum logo and "District Supervisor" on the door. Meyerling is short and bald with a completely disreputable face. He staples a poster on a wall. It has a picture of him on it, and:

LEO MEYERLING
for
State Legislature
VOTE FOR THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND!

22 EXT. KENAI'S GENERAL STORE

Corbett and the other trappers drive past Meyerling and park their jeep as the sun disappears behind the foothills.

23 INT. KENAI'S GENERAL STORE

A handwritten public notice next to a schedule of church meetings reads: "Live each day so you can look every damn man in the eye and tell him to go to hell." There is a post office in the corner with some combination boxes and a wicketless window.

The trappers come in. Corbett sits in a chair and pulls his boots off. One of his wool socks is wet. He nods to the man sitting in the other chair, SAM WILDER. Wilder is short and tough, with a full head of crewcut grey hair and weather-ravaged face that makes him look older than his sixty years.

CORBETT
Hullo, Sam. Slow day?

WILDER
(wary)
Ben...boys. Yeah, real slow, and I'd like to keep it that way.

CORBETT
(conciliatory)
Just passing through.

A chubby Inupiat (interior Eskimo), wearing thick glasses, several heavy sweaters and battery-heated socks, fusses behind the counter. He's EARL KENAI, owner of the hot springs spa and the general store.

LeMalle chews on a handful of bear jerky. Kenai stares at LeMalle until he begrudgingly pays for the jerky. Corbett pulls on some sneakers and hands his boots to Kenai.

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23 CONTINUED:

CORBETT

(continuing; re boot)
Needs patching.

KENAI

Twenty-five dollar.

CORBETT

(smiles)
Sure have learned to worship the
white man's god.

Kenai nods agreeably and holds his hand out. Corbett pays him. Meyerling comes in and posts some fliers on the corkboard.

MEYERLING

I hope I can count on you
gentlemen to vote for The
People's Friend this November.

CORBETT

Share some of that oil company
money in your pocket and you can.

Meyerling smiles like a toad, then slaps another poster on the wall. LeMalle throws his knife and it STICKS in the poster between Meyerling's spread fingers. Meyerling jumps back and the trappers laugh. Meyerling looks to Wilder for support.

WILDER

(to Meyerling)
One flier comes loose and I shoot
you for littering.

MEYERLING

(exiting; grudgeless)
Have your fun... just remember
The People's Friend come election
day.

WILDER

(shakes his head)
Oil Company candidate running on
that slogan makes about as much
sense as a rat fucking a
grapefruit.

CORBETT

Hard to work up an interest in
politics, way we live. You're
the first people we've seen in
two weeks.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (2)

LEMALLE

(to Kenai)
How about a quart of Jack
Daniel's?

KENAI

How about it is right. Back in
the primary this town was voted
dry.

LEMALLE

(to Corbett)
Aw, shit. Let's go. Leave a
note for Viking Bob, tell him to
meet us in Cache.

CORBETT

Relax. One more day without
drink won't kill you. Right,
Sam?

WILDER

I'm living proof of that sad
fact.

CORBETT

Can we buy the Marshal some
dinner?

WILDER

No, I better stay at my post.

Even without the hootch riling
'em up, you know how
mean-spirited folks get when they
smell winter coming.

24 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON VALLEY - LONG SHOT - NIGHT

An early STORM has blown in from the north, bringing
whipping winds and freezing rain.

25 INT. RENTAL CABIN

Corbett peers out the tiny window, frowning. LeMalle cleans his carbine while eating beans and bacon. Mitchell hunches over a table. He's making a scrimshaw -- delicately engraving, using homemade tools, on a palm-sized piece of whale bone. He rubs his eyes and looks up at Corbett.

MITCHELL

So much for the walking weather
you predicted.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

CORBETT

Had no choice...
(pointedly, at LeMalle)
...Given the situation.

MITCHELL

I know. Least you didn't shoot
all of them.

LEMALLE

Fuck you, Mitchell. Woulda been
my ass if Ben didn't waste that
prick.

CORBETT

(after a beat)
Mitchell, look, it don't take
three of us to wait for Viking
Bob.

Mitchell glances at LeMalle, then at Corbett.

CORBETT

(continuing)
Go ahead. Take the jeep. I'll
come to Cache with Bob when he
gets here.

MITCHELL

Okay by me. You're the one likes
these hot springs so much.

CORBETT

Leave my traps. We'll tag up,
couple days.

26 EXT. HAUL ROAD - "THE TURTLE" - DAY

The winds have died down. The rain has turned to a light
snow.

A mobile arctic dwelling sits on a rise next to the Haul Road. It's a double-unit weathertight cocoon of fiberglass and aluminum, pulled by a diesel rig on oversized tires. The front module is 12 by 24, the rear 12 by 18.

An extended-cab pickup pulls up and Sam Wilder gets out. The gravel-and-dirt Haul Road, paralleling the pipeline for 400 miles, is closed to the public. An arriving vehicle, therefore, is news. The front door of the dwelling opens. Eric and Anne Marie come outside, delighted to see Wilder.

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26 CONTINUED:

WILDER

I was making my rounds, saw your hangar wide open, plane getting rained on, so I closed it up.

ERIC

Thanks.

ANNE MARIE

(to Wilder)

I bet you haven't had lunch.

WILDER

(smiles)

Bet you're right. But I didn't come by to wangle a meal --

ERIC

-- We appreciate the company. Anne Marie's getting cabin fever already.

Anne Marie shoots a look at Eric but doesn't disagree -- this is obviously an issue with them. Wilder looks with amusement at the mobile dwelling.

WILDER

What'd you say they call these spaceships?

ERIC

Mobile Arctic Dwelling -- MAD.

ANNE MARIE

I call it 'the Turtle,' as in carrying your home on your back.

ERIC

Best thing is, Meyerling has to chase around to find us.

ANNE MARIE

(laughs)
The little creep hates it that
Eric actually does what the
company hired him to do.

WILDER

Watch it with Meyerling. Man's
as mean and corrupt as they get.
Cut his mother's throat if it'd
get him a couple votes.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: (2)

Looking past Wilder, Eric points out some smoke on the
horizon.

ERIC

Hey, Sam, look over there. Black
and white smoke.

WILDER

Damn. Likely that's an SOS.
Have to pass on that lunch.

ERIC

We'll go with you.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. SPORTSMEN'S CAMP - LATER THAT DAY

Everything seems peaceful enough. The SOS fire (made from
burning green branches for white smoke and rubber for black
smoke) has burnt down to embers.

Eric, Anne Marie and Wilder pull up in Wilder's pickup.

The two Sportsmen sit in the front seat of the Land Rover,
but they don't react to the arrival of the rescuers. In the
back seat, a reflective camping blanket covers a large mass.

Something is amiss. Eric shoots a look of trepidation at
Anne Marie as they get out of the pickup. Wilder pulls the
door of the Land Rover open.

A Sportsman slumps out onto the ground. His eyes are open
and his tongue pokes out between his lips. His skin is
blue-white. (He looks, in fact, much like Eric's nightmare.)

Startled, Eric steps back. Anne Marie gasps with horror.
Wilder unzips the Sportsman's light windbreaker and listens
for a heartbeat. Nothing.

WILDER

Stupid goddamn greenhorns! Froze to death.

ANNE MARIE

It's not even winter!

WILDER

They got wet in the rain. Core body temperature dropped, got drowsy, probably didn't even know what was happening.

Eric stares at the dead Sportsmen.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

WILDER

(continuing)

Question is why they sat here when the storm moved in. Check their stuff while I sniff around.

Wilder tries the ignition. The starter TURNS OVER, but the engine makes a horrendous GRINDING. He walks to the front of the vehicle. Noticing the bullet holes in the grille, he bends down for a closer look.

NEW ANGLE

Eric opens the rear hatchback and digs through the plentiful supplies. Still in their packages are some matchbox-sized ELT locating beacons.

ERIC

They had Emergency Locator Transmitters, but didn't use them.

(opens one up; shakes his head)

Maybe because they didn't bring batteries.

CLOSE

Anne Marie opens the back door of the Land Rover. She pulls back the camping blanket... and uncovers the third Sportsman. The torn red flesh on his head and his bugged-out eyes are a hideous sight.

Anne Marie SCREAMS and stumbles away.

28 EXT. SPORTSMEN'S CAMP - LAND ROVER

Eric runs over to her as she tries to catch her breath.

Wilder looks at the third Sportsman and angrily kicks the side of the Land Rover.

WILDER

I'm too old for this shit.

ERIC

Any idea who could've done it?

Sourly, Wilder points to a patch of frozen mud under the vehicle.

WILDER

A certain sonofabitch bastard
-more-

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

WILDER (Cont'd)

wearing a damaged mountain boot.
Left a footprint clear as an
autograph.

Wilder examines the Sportsman, finding the bullet hole in his chest.

WILDER

(continuing)
Even for Ben Corbett, this is
nasty. Man's got balls. He was
sitting in Devil's Cauldron when
I left, calm as can be.

ANNE MARIE

Thank God. You can arrest him.

WILDER

Not necessarily. Corbett's awful
hardbitten these days.

Wilder leans against the Land Rover, feeling tired.

WILDER

(continuing)
His old roaming area's all
private reserve now. Normally,
long as he stays civil in my
jurisdiction, I let him be.
(beat)
Won't be able to take him by my
lonesome, though. Nobody in
town'll lift a finger on this.

Eric looks hard at the dead Sportsmen.

ERIC

(quietly)
I'll go into town with you.

ANNE MARIE

Eric, leave it alone. It's not
your business.

ERIC

(shakes his head)
No way can he get away with this.
I'll be back by tonight.

29 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - AFTERNOON

The town is quiet.

30 INT. HOT SPRINGS SPA

Corbett soaks in one of the huge wooden tubs with a pudgy
Inupiat hooker, DIXIE.

He looks up as Eric comes into the spa. Eric holds
Corbett's boots, which have been repaired. Eric pauses when
he sees Corbett. There is a flash of recognition between
them.

ERIC

Ben Corbett?

CORBETT

Yep. Afraid you have me at a
disadvantage.

ERIC

Kenai at the general store asked
me to bring these. Didn't expect
we'd already met.

CORBETT

No big deal. We just got off on
the wrong foot. What's your
name?

Eric glances down at Corbett's duffel bag, which sits on the
floor next to Corbett's tub. Corbett's magnum rests on top
of it, well within reach. Corbett notices Eric's interest
in it. He leans back and smiles.

ERIC

Desmond.

CORBETT

New to the country, kid?

ERIC

Six months. Ecological study for Northland Oil.

CORBETT

Ecology. Folks use that term for everything but what it means: who's eating who.

Putting his hand on Dixie's shoulder, Corbett stands and gets out of the tub. His sinewy body, resembling a scarecrow made of steel cable, is covered with scars. He wraps a towel around his waist and crosses to Eric.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

CORBETT

(continuing)

Now, why don't you get around to saying what you want.

Corbett grabs his boots from Eric and finds himself facing a revolver, which Eric has been hiding inside one of the boots.

CORBETT

(continuing; smiling)

You wouldn't shoot anyone...

WILDER (OS)

But I would.

NEW ANGLE

Wilder has come in the back way and stands behind Corbett with a 12-gauge shotgun. He kicks Corbett's magnum out of reach.

CORBETT

All this for laying traps on private land?

WILDER

You left a footprint at the Sportsmen's camp. Only pretty sight there, Ben, 'cause the two men you didn't shoot and mutilate died of exposure.

Corbett shakes his head but remains implacable.

CORBETT

Christ if I shouldn't know better than to step in soft earth. I've

seen footprints in the tundra a hundred years old.

WILDER

(to Eric)
I got it from here. Thanks.

CORBETT

(to Wilder)
Sam, give Dixie here fifty bucks out of my kit, will you?

31 EXT. HOT SPRINGS SPA

Eric comes outside. Earl Kenai, overdressed for the weather in gloves, mukluks and a full-length sealskin coat, stands

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

shivering by a woodshed near the hot springs, hacksawing a piece of meat from a frozen moose carcass.

KENAI

Before white men came, my people lived in sod houses underground and laid our dead on the tundra. Now we live above ground and bury our dead, and we haven't been warm since.

Wilder comes out of the spa with his shotgun and Corbett's duffel bag cradled in his arm. Handcuffed, Corbett walks in front of him.

Kenai looks down to avoid eye contact with Corbett as he goes by. Corbett stops next to Eric and smiles.

CORBETT

Nice bluff the other day with the tranquilizer gun out your jeep window. See you again, maybe.

ERIC

(unintimidated)
Yeah. Maybe so.

32 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - FOLLOW WILDER

as he leads Corbett along the boardwalk to the other end of town. They approach a prefab house perched on skids under a tall antenna tower. Mounted above the shack, a DC wind charger turbine spins lazily in the faint breeze. From within the cabin comes an anomalous SOUND -- MTV. Wilder KNOCKS on the door.

ARTHUR NEFF, a pasty-white, 45-year-old ex-Texan, pulls the door open. His customary grin fades when he sees Corbett.

33 INT. NEFF'S HOUSE

Wilder pushes Corbett inside past Neff.

WILDER

I need to call Fairbanks.

Neff just stares at Corbett.

WILDER

(continuing)

Neff! Dial it up. State police.

With a "what can I do but oblige?" look to Corbett, Neff sits in front of the RCA Alascom radio telephone and dials.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

NEFF

(on phone)

Fairbanks Alascom? Patch me through to the State Police.

After a moment, he hands the receiver to Wilder. Wilder takes it, keeping one eye and the shotgun on Corbett.

WILDER

(on phone)

This is Sam Wilder, Marshal in Devil's Cauldron. Had some killings here. I got a suspect; be real nice if someone came and took him off my hands.

STATE POLICEMAN (VO)

(thru phone)

On a good day I couldn't spare a crosswalk guard. But now, no way. Folks're batshit with the weather turning sour. Bring him in yourself.

WILDER

(on phone)

Next plane's not coming 'til next Monday.

STATE POLICEMAN (VO)

(thru phone)

Sit your suspect out in the cold. He'll keep.

WILDER

(on phone)
This man's friends ain't gonna
look favorably on his
incarceration.

STATE POLICEMAN (VO)

(thru phone; Mr. Glib)
So shoot him. Won't have to feed
him that way --

Angry, Wilder slams the receiver down.

34 INT. WILDER'S CABIN

In one room, there is a wood-burning cookstove and an Ashley heat stove, a table, a bunk and a small window. Behind a cloth partition is an eight by six holding cell. The frame of an iron-bar door is securely cemented to the log walls. Wilder comes in with Corbett and locks him in the cell.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

CORBETT

Mind if I get some stuff from my
kit?

Wilder does mind. He locks the duffel bag and Corbett's .44 in his desk drawer.

CORBETT

(continuing)
Sam, listen -- I shot to defend
my man. Other guy drew first.

WILDER

If that was all, fine. But
carving him up, stranding the
others, that's too fucking much.
Is everything that walks, crawls,
flies or swims fair game to you?

CORBETT

(softly)
I'll get loose before that plane
comes.

WILDER

Don't try me. I'll kill you if
it comes to it.

35 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - AFTERNOON

As Eric walks into Kenai's general store, Neff hurries over.

NEFF

Mr. Desmond!
(grins; sticks his hand
out)
Arthur Neff. Area rep for the
Federal Assistance Plan. Tell
the boys in DC to keep those
goodies coming.

ERIC

Sure.

NEFF

Snowplow, generator, TV dish...
hell, we get the goddamn Playboy
Channel! Here, this is for you.

He hands Eric a piece of styrofoam shaped like a commode
seat.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

NEFF

(continuing)

Warm to forty below. Remember,
anything you want, you ask Arthur
Neff.

36 EXT. HAUL ROAD - THE TURTLE - NIGHT

The storm has passed. A faint CHUGGING emanates from the
small orange generator trailer behind the Turtle. Eric
pulls up and parks the Scout.

37 INT. THE TURTLE

Nylon storage netting along the ceiling holds Eric's
research equipment and Anne Marie's photographic supplies.
In one corner of the Turtle are several of her black and
white prints. All are of man-made objects whose presence is
juxtaposed with the natural surroundings.

Relieved he's home in one piece, Anne Marie meets Eric at
the door and kisses him. Carrying a brown-paper-wrapped
package, Eric follows her into the kitchen, where she's
preparing dinner.

ANNE MARIE

Did you catch Corbett?

ERIC

Sure did. He was one of the
trappers we roused from the Haul

Road.

ANNE MARIE

Was there any trouble?

ERIC

He was sitting in a hot tub with a hooker.

ANNE MARIE

Going after killers isn't the same as chasing poachers, Eric.

ERIC

(grins)
Can't help myself. Corbett's type always pisses me off.
(hands her the package)
Oh, I found this at the post office. Had your name on it.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

Perplexed, she looks at the return address -- Bloomingdale's. Delighted, she tears it open. Inside is a pretty, elegant dress. Anne Marie kisses him.

ANNE MARIE

Oh, sweetheart. It's beautiful!

ERIC

You were looking at it in the catalog. Don't know where you can wear it...

ANNE MARIE

I'll wear it for you. And I can wear it when we go home. We won't be here forever.

ERIC

(frowning)
You make it sound like a prison sentence.

ANNE MARIE

That's not what I meant.

ERIC

It's exactly what you meant.

ANNE MARIE

Look, why get into this again. As long as it's working, let's leave it alone. It's been nice

so far. We're together --

ERIC

-- Permanently?

ANNE MARIE

(sighs)

Do I want to be with you permanently? Yes, I think I do. But be with what you do and the way you live? That I don't know. C'mon, Eric, until I met you, coming back to Alaska was totally

out of the question for me. But I'm here. I'm getting great pictures, and I'm having fun. (slips her arms around him) I love you. (kisses him) So shut up and let's eat.

38 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - NIGHT

An old primer-grey station wagon rattles into town and parks. With an unlit cheroot stuck in his mouth, "VIKING" BOB CORBETT gets out and stretches. He's 38, six-foot-six, with sandy hair, beard, ruddy skin, and his brother's dark eyes.

He looks around for some sign of life. He spots Neff tending one of the windmills and walks over to him.

VIKING BOB

I'm looking for some trappers. Ben Corbett, Mitchell, LeMalle. Seen 'em?

NEFF

Yesterday. Said they were going to Cache. They were thirsty, but we were voted dry.

VIKING BOB

Shit.

As Viking Bob walks back to his station wagon, he notices Kenai poking around in front of Wilder's cabin.

VIKING BOB'S POV

Illuminated by a bare bulb is Wilder's typical bush-country front yard. Piled are five cords of wood, boxes, tarps, stove parts, saw horses, 55-gallon drums, dismantled snow

machines, wash tubs, tires, etc.

Bunching his collar around his neck, Kenai shivers and sorts through Corbett's traps.

NEW ANGLE

Viking Bob ambles over to Kenai.

VIKING BOB

These yours?

KENAI

Gonna make an offer. Man who owns them won't need them where he's going.

39 INT. WILDER'S CABIN

Wilder peers out the window and sees Viking Bob, then turns to Corbett.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED:

WILDER

Back against the bars. Now.

Wilder handcuffs Corbett's hands to the cell door bars, then quickly wraps a piece of duct tape across Corbett's face, covering his mouth.

Stuffing a .357 magnum in his belt, Wilder, coatless, slips outside.

As soon as he's out the door, Corbett cranes his neck and painfully tries to pry the tape off his face with the corner of the door hinge.

40 EXT. WILDER'S CABIN

The look on Wilder's face tells Kenai to shut up. Viking Bob realizes something's up.

WILDER

Your brother and the boys left me some traps to sell for them. They're gone --

VIKING BOB

-- To Cache. So I heard. Ben never said nothing to me about selling his gear.

41 INT. WILDER'S CABIN

Corbett gets the tape partially off his mouth. He pries one of his boots off and kicks it through a window.

CORBETT

Bob! They got me on a murder charge!

42 EXT. WILDER'S CABIN

Wilder pulls his .357 out.

WILDER

Sorry, Bob. I'll have to keep you here 'til I ship him south.

Viking Bob responds by flinging a heavy trap at Wilder, then punching him in the gut. Wilder sprawls among the junk, dropping his revolver. Kenai freezes, not about to take sides.

Before Viking Bob can come at him again, Wilder grabs for his .357. Viking Bob jumps back and bolts for his car.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

He dives into his station wagon and starts it up. As he drives past, Wilder POPS off a few rounds, but Viking Bob keeps going.

NEW ANGLE

Kenai helps Wilder up. Pissed, Wilder shoves him against the cabin.

WILDER

(continuing)
You stupid, greedy, loudmouth sonofabitch! He'll have the others here in a few hours. You fucked me up, now you're gonna help me move him.

KENAI

(shakes head)
Forget it, Sam. I never work for free.

43 INT. THE TURTLE - NIGHT

Anne Marie sits on the floor, editing one of her VIDEOTAPES. On the monitor, it SHOWS footage of the traps under the pipeline piling. Eric comes out of the back module holding two ELT pendants. He glances over at the monitor and nods approvingly.

ANNE MARIE

I still can't believe I'm being
financed by an oil company.
Especially when they get a look
at these pictures. Technology in
the wilderness; not too pretty.
(re ELTs)
What's that?

ERIC

I thought I should check our
emergency transmitters.

Eric activates the ELT's. They emit an SOS pattern of radio
waves -- three short, three long and three short. This is
visible as rhythmic INTERFERENCE on Anne Marie's video
MONITOR.

ERIC

(continuing)
Avalanche season is coming.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

ANNE MARIE

Winter. Two straight months of
night -- we may never get out of
bed.
(kisses him)
Which would suit me fine.

ERIC

Prolonged darkness makes people
crazy.

ANNE MARIE

Not me. I'm equipped.

She turns on a small S-VHS video camera and snaps off the
room lights.

ANNE MARIE

(continuing)
Allow me to give you a practical
demonstration of low-light
infrared photography...

She does so by seductively undressing for the camera. She's
SEEN on the MONITOR, illuminated by the "light" from the hot
stove. Eric appreciates the show. He crawls toward her.

ANNE MARIE

(continuing)
High-tech in the wilderness.
Gets me excited, too.

ERIC

Come here...

Laughing, he wrestles her to the rug.

44 EXT. HILLS ABOVE DEVIL'S CAULDRON - NIGHT

There is a full moon and a clear night sky. Viking Bob's station wagon is parked out of sight. He sits inside, waiting.

He hears an ENGINE starting in the distance. Sitting up, he grabs some binoculars.

HIS POV

Wilder's extended cab truck pulls out, heading west.

45 EXT. FOOTHILLS - NIGHT

In the bright moonlight, two people are seen in Wilder's truck as it speeds along a dirt road.

Viking Bob follows at a discreet distance, headlights off.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

NEW ANGLE

Viking Bob turns and takes the literal high road -- a narrow trail above the roadway that Wilder's truck is on.

He zooms ahead and gets in front of his quarry, then drops back down onto the road and waits in ambush.

As Wilder's truck approaches, Viking Bob turns on his bright lights and crouches behind his car door with a shotgun.

Wilder's truck screeches to a stop.

CLOSER

Kenai gets out with his hands up.

Viking Bob slowly approaches Wilder's truck.

VIKING BOB

Ben?

No answer. Viking Bob looks in the cab. Kenai's passenger is Dixie, the Inupiat hooker. Viking Bob grabs Kenai and pushes the barrel of the shotgun hard against his cheek.

VIKING BOB

(continuing)
Where's Ben Corbett?

KENAI

I have no argument with you, Bob.
Wilder said I could keep his
truck if I drove it ten miles
away from town.

VIKING BOB

Where did they go?

KENAI

He didn't say, but I would guess
the opposite way from here.

Viking Bob shoves Kenai against the truck, then punches him
for good measure. Cussing, he runs back to his station
wagon and drives off.

CUT TO:

46 INT. THE TURTLE - REAR MODULE - NIGHT

Eric and Anne Marie are asleep. Eric starts awake at the OS
sound of a high-pitched vehicle HORN and an approaching
ENGINE.

47 EXT. HAUL ROAD - THE TURTLE

Eric pulls the door open. Wilder is untying Corbett from
the snowmobile.

WILDER

I got an emergency on my hands.

Corbett smiles at Eric as he walks inside.

48 INT. THE TURTLE

Eric, Wilder and Corbett sit in the front module. Anne
Marie, nervous, wearing a down robe, serves coffee. She
stares at Corbett, trying to reconcile his quiet demeanor
with what she saw that afternoon. Corbett smiles at Eric.

WILDER

(to Eric)
...You give us a ride in the
Cessna you got hangared at the
pumping station, we'll be in
Fairbanks in a few hours.

ERIC

That's what we should've done in the first place.

WILDER

I could've sat tight for the transport, 'til Bob came poking around.

CORBETT

(to Wilder; re Anne Marie)
A lot to ask, dragging him away from such a good-looking girl --

ERIC

(irritated)
-- To take you to jail? It'll be my pleasure.

WILDER

(to Eric)
You better get some sleep.

CORBETT

Good idea. Flying over mountains can give you some nasty surprises. Go too low, one of the clouds might have a big rock inside it.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED:

ERIC

(hard)
I'll get you there all right.

Eric takes Anne Marie to the rear module, leaving Wilder with his prisoner.

CUT TO:

49 INT. THE TURTLE - LATER THAT NIGHT

A bottle of Eric's Scotch sits almost empty on the table beside Wilder. Wilder dozes in a chair facing Corbett.

Corbett is awake. He contorts his body to bring his handcuff chain under his feet and get his hands in front of him. He eyes Wilder's .357. It's in a lefty Sam Browne holster. No way to take it without waking Wilder.

Corbett stands and inches toward the door. As he pulls it open, the insulation makes enough NOISE to stir Wilder.

Wilder gets up and pushes Corbett back into his chair.

WILDER

Goddammit, I don't need this aggravation. I'll shoot you, Ben. Bank on it.

CORBETT

I don't want to hurt you, Sam.

WILDER

I'm not too old to knock the snot out of you!

CORBETT

Nothing personal.

Wilder's mind clears enough to realize that Corbett's hands are in front of him. He reaches for his .357. Corbett butts into Wilder's midsection with his head. Amazingly, Wilder stays on his feet.

Corbett hurries back to the door. Wilder lunges, bull-determined to hold onto him. Corbett smashes Wilder across the face with his clenched hands. Wilder goes down hard, hitting his head on the table, and stays there. Corbett instinctively kneels to see if Wilder is still breathing. But then, hearing MOVEMENT in the rear module, Corbett flees.

50 INT. THE TURTLE - REAR MODULE

Eric is pulling on his pants.

51 INT. THE TURTLE - FRONT MODULE

Eric rushes in. The outside door is open and Wilder lies on the floor. His holster is empty. Anne Marie comes in and crosses to Wilder.

Eric pulls a floor trap door open and digs through the company-issue equipment, coming up with a huge Remington bolt-action bear rifle. Unfamiliar with weapons, Eric tears open a box of shells and fumbles to load the rifle.

52 EXT. THE TURTLE

Corbett is trying to start Eric's Scout.

Eric fires a loud warning SHOT from the Turtle doorway.

ERIC

You want to try that handgun against this rifle, go ahead.

Corbett sits in the Scout for a long moment, weighing his

odds. He takes his hands off the steering wheel...

Eric SHOOTs again, this time SMASHING the side-view mirror and window next to Corbett's head.

Still handcuffed, Corbett gets out of the Scout. Holding the .357 gingerly by the butt, he puts it on the hood of the Scout.

CORBETT

Some day you might have to face
me without a gun.

53 INT. THE TURTLE

Eric leads Corbett in. Anne Marie is cradling Wilder's head. She's crying. Eric looks at Wilder. There is blood coming from his ear and he's fading fast.

WILDER

(thickly)
Fetch him back?
(Eric nods)
Don't let him walk...

Eric nods again. Wilder holds his gaze on Eric, then simply stops breathing.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

Eric is stunned. Quietly, Corbett sits down. Clutching the rifle, Eric sits on the floor and glares at Corbett.

CORBETT

(softly)
Does he have people?

ERIC

(after a beat)
A daughter in Oregon.

CORBETT

Send him down to her. There's
money in my duffel bag, back at
his cabin.

Corbett's benign attitude is chilling.

ERIC

I better call in.

He turns the shortwave radio on. It SPARKS and burns out. The remainder of the liquor has been poured inside it.

ERIC

(continuing)
Thought of everything, huh?

CORBETT

Surviving is what I know --

ERIC

-- Killing is what you know.
(to Anne Marie)
Pack some food while I prep for
the flight.
(off her look)
I'm sure not gonna let him go.

Covering Corbett with the rifle, Eric handcuffs him to the sturdy metal bracket of a wall unit.

54 EXT. CACHE, ALASKA - (MOVING SHOT) - NIGHT

Viking Bob approaches in his station wagon on a narrow dirt road. The huge night sky all but smothers the weak light from the town up ahead.

Cache seems a mistake -- a jumble of unpainted buildings in the middle of a big nothing, twenty miles north of the Arctic Circle. Still, it's more animated than Devil's Cauldron. There are a hundred permanent residents, several taverns and a three-store, fly-in shopping center.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

Even though it's the middle of the night, people roam the streets, drinking and socializing. With only a couple feet of snow on the ground, this is still summertime. Under storefront awnings, drunken INDIANS sleep on the concrete.

Viking Bob cruises the main drag, looking for the other trappers. He spots their jeep in front of a dangerous-looking saloon called the "Bear Sign Inn."

ANGLE WITH VIKING BOB

as he parks and gets out of his station wagon. He hears a familiar VOICE around the side of the building.

LEMALLE (OS)

C'mon, girl, talk to me,
negotiate with me...

55 EXT. CACHE - ALLEY

Drunk, LeMalle stands in an alley with a bored, acne-scarred Oriental PROSTITUTE. He weaves and leers, his hand stuck inside her blouse.

VIKING BOB

LeMalle. We got a problem.
Where's Mitchell?

LEMALLE

Goddamn! Viking Bob! Mitchell's
inside, boring bastard...

Grumbling, Viking Bob separates LeMalle from the Prostitute
and drags him by the collar out of the alley.

CUT TO:

56 INT. BEAR SIGN INN - NIGHT

Meyerling's campaign posters cover the walls. Many have
been pulled down and muddied underfoot by the drunken crowd.

In a booth covered with grafitti, Mitchell squints and works
on his scrimshaw. LeMalle, somewhat sober, eats a plate of
muktuk -- whale blubber. Viking Bob pours him more coffee.

MITCHELL

(to Viking Bob)
...Ben never sent a signal.

VIKING BOB

Musta never got a chance to
-more-

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

VIKING BOB (Cont'd)
activate. Wilder's aiming to
take him to Fairbanks, we can
count on that much.

MITCHELL

Meaning he'll need a plane.

VIKING BOB

Closest planes for hire are here
in Cache.

MITCHELL

Hang on...
(to LeMalle)
Remember that Cessna we saw at
the pumping station on the Haul
Road? Belongs to the guy they
got patrolling the pipeline.

LEMALLE

There you go. Wilder's always

chummy with the fuckin'
Bambi-lovers.

VIKING BOB

It's a long shot.

MITCHELL

You got a better idea?

57 EXT. HAUL ROAD - THE TURTLE - DAWN

Wisps of light cut across the cold blue sky.

Eric comes out of the Turtle, leaving the front door ajar.
He throws a knapsack of supplies into the back of the Scout.

58 INT. THE TURTLE

Corbett's right hand is still handcuffed to the wall unit.
Terrified about being alone with Corbett, Anne Marie
cautiously puts a cup of coffee in front of him.

CORBETT

How long have you been up north?

ANNE MARIE

(after a beat)
Six months.

CORBETT

Can't be. Too keen a sense of
this place in your pictures.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

ANNE MARIE

Six months this time. I was born
in the Aleutians.

CORBETT

Your people Alaskan?

Anne Marie doesn't want to talk to a killer, but Corbett is
so soft-spoken and charming that she answers despite
herself.

ANNE MARIE

My dad was a Navy doctor.

CORBETT

Knew you had no native blood,
even with your dark hair. Blue
eyes give you away. My wife had
blue eyes.

ANNE MARIE

Had?

CORBETT

She's dead.

ANNE MARIE

Oh.

CORBETT

Had some good years. Met her in '66. She showed up one day in Coldfoot. No one knew her. One Sunday morning, she marched into a bar and announced she was available as a wife to the highest bidder. Didn't work out in three months, she'd return the money and leave, no hard feelings.

(off Anne Marie's amazed look)

My bid was eight thousand dollars. Beautiful girl.

ANNE MARIE

How did she..?

CORBETT

I was gone, in September, laying traplines. She went to our cache for some meat. Got mauled by a bear. Tore open her skull.

-more-

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED: (2)

CORBETT (Cont'd)

Might've lived if she got help, but the exposed part of her brain froze.

Anne Marie shudders. Smiling good-naturedly, Corbett looks around, spotting the package Anne Marie's new dress came in.

CORBETT

(continuing)

What about you -- why come back? Classy girl like you seems more suited to the finer things.

ANNE MARIE

That's why I left, moved to Washington. When I met Eric I was doing day shoots -- products

and fashion, mostly. Pretty dull. Eric was teaching college, and then he got the job with Northland Oil. We wanted to stay together, so we talked them into funding some wilderness photography... and here I am.

As she's talking, the Turtle ROCKS slightly. She looks out the tiny window.

HER POV - THROUGH WINDOW

Eric is putting Wilder's body inside an enclosed storage compartment built flush into the side of the Turtle.

BACK TO SCENE

Horrified, Anne Marie turns away.

CORBETT

You should know something.

ANNE MARIE

I don't want to talk any more.

CORBETT

Wasn't my intention to hurt Wilder. I'm telling you the truth. I liked the man. I only meant to get loose... to survive. Your cheechako boyfriend better understand that.

(beat)

Listen, I've got some money put away --

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED: (3)

ANNE MARIE

-- Don't ever think you can buy Eric off, Mr. Corbett --

ERIC (OS)

-- Cheechako?

Eric comes in, none too thrilled about Anne Marie chatting with Corbett.

ANNE MARIE

(translating)
Outsider.

He carefully stuffs Wilder's magnum in his belt and ignores Anne Marie's disparaging look as he does.

ERIC

(to Corbett)
Let's go.

ANNE MARIE

Wait a second.

59 INT. THE TURTLE - REAR MODULE

Anne Marie leads Eric out of earshot from Corbett. Eric keeps a cautious eye on him.

ANNE MARIE

Maybe you should drive him into Devil's Cauldron, let them decide what to do with him.

ERIC

(reassuringly)
Fairbanks is a three-hour flight.
I'll be back by dinnertime.

Realizing he's determined, she sighs and kisses him.

ERIC

(continuing)
Be careful, okay?

ANNE MARIE

That's my line.

CUT TO:

60 EXT. HAUL ROAD & FELDSPAR CREEK - DAWN

Eric and Corbett drive toward the deserted pumping station. They cross over a prefabricated steel portal bridge spanning a fast-running creek.

61 INT. SCOUT - (MOVING SHOT)

The wind whips through the shot-out wing window. Corbett's handcuffs are lashed to the seat frame with sturdy nylon rope.

62 EXT. PUMPING STATION

The pumping station consists of three corrugated steel buildings. The largest is an airplane hangar.

Just beyond the hangar is a narrow blacktop landing strip running parallel to the Haul Road.

63 INT. SCOUT - ANGLE THROUGH WINDOW - (MOVING SHOT)

Eric pulls up to the hangar. Suddenly, LeMalle steps out from behind the building.

64 EXT. PUMPING STATION

LeMalle recognizes the International Scout. He swings his rifle up to stop it.

Eric slams it in reverse and SCREECHES back around the hangar.

MITCHELL (OS)

Aim for the tires!

LeMalle FIRES as the Scout rounds the corner. He hits a fender, doing no damage. Angry, he runs after the vehicle.

65 INT. SCOUT - (MOVING SHOT)

Eric slams on the brakes and turns the Scout around.

CORBETT

Let me out and keep going. They catch us, they'll kill you.

Eric doesn't need any convincing of that. He tears out.

66 EXT. PUMPING STATION

Mitchell runs out in front of them and BLASTS the front of the Scout with his .45 Peacemaker. Steam HISSES out of the radiator. Eric floors it and races past Mitchell, almost hitting him.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

Mitchell and LeMalle SHOOT at the retreating vehicle. One of the Scout's back tires gets blown out.

67 INT. SCOUT - (MOVING SHOT)

Eric slows, shifts into four-wheel drive and continues, driving on the rim.

68 EXT. PUMPING STATION

Chewing an unlit cheroot, Viking Bob pulls up next to Mitchell and LeMalle in the trappers' jeep. They pile in.

69 EXT. HAUL ROAD

Eric backtracks as fast as possible in the crippled vehicle.

70 INT. TRAPPERS' JEEP - THROUGH WINDSHIELD - (MOVING SHOT)

As the Scout heads for the Feldspar Creek bridge, it disappears from sight over a hill.

71 EXT. HAUL ROAD & FELDSPAR CREEK

Viking Bob zooms over Feldspar Creek. They come over the rise, but the Scout still can't be seen ahead of them.

REVERSE ANGLE

The Scout sits idling in a depression near the creek bed, below the Haul Road. Above, the trappers speed past without noticing.

After giving the trappers time to get around the next bend, Eric drives the Scout up the embankment and crosses back over the bridge.

72 INT. SCOUT

Eric stops the vehicle. He grabs a five-gallon gas can and a piece of cloth from the back.

73 EXT. HAUL ROAD & FELDSPAR CREEK

The prefab bridge is the transportable type used by the Army Corps of Engineers, left over from the building of the pipeline. Eric stuffs the gas can between the abutment and the honeycombed underside of the bridge. He puts the rag inside the spout of the can, lights it with a match and runs like hell back to the Scout.

74 EXT. HAUL ROAD

The trappers realize their quarry is missing. Viking Bob slams on the brakes and looks around.

75 INT. SCOUT - (MOVING SHOT)

Eric speeds away.

CORBETT

They'll still catch us. All
you're doing is pissing them off.

76 EXT. HAUL ROAD & FELDSPAR CREEK

The gasoline can EXPLODES, tearing the bridge couplings away from the concrete abutment.

77 EXT. HAUL ROAD

The trappers see the explosion behind them. They turn around and head toward it.

78 EXT. PUMPING STATION - HANGAR

Eric parks the Scout sideways to block the way to the airstrip.

With the magnum at the ready, Eric cuts Corbett's handcuffs loose from the seat and hurries him toward the hangar.

The leeward side of the structure is a huge metal door on rollers. Eric unlocks it and rolls it back. Inside is a Cessna 182, dusted with snow and ice blown through the cracks by crosswinds. Eric brushes the windshield with his sleeve.

79 EXT. HAUL ROAD & FELDSPAR CREEK

The trappers pull up and find the far side of the bridge burning and disconnected from the creek bank.

80 INT. HANGAR - CESSNA

Eric helps Corbett into the cockpit, then secures his handcuffs to the frame of the seat with more nylon rope.

81 EXT. HAUL ROAD & FELDSPAR CREEK

Viking Bob assesses the damage to the bridge. Loose from the abutments, it wobbles like a diving board. Below, the water is too deep and fast-moving to be traversable.

82 INT. HANGAR - CESSNA

Eric tries to turn the ENGINE over. The starter is sluggish from cold and lack of use.

83 EXT. HAUL ROAD & FELDSPAR CREEK

Viking Bob looks at the others, bursting with frustration. He climbs into the driver's seat.

VIKING BOB

Get in. We can jump it.

They hop in. He SCREECHES backwards to get a running start, REVS the engine, pops the clutch, and tears toward the bridge.

As they reach the midpoint of the bridge it begins to buckle under them. With a sickening WRENCHING, the crossbar supports crumple.

The jeep flies through the still-burning gasoline, becomes airborne, and SCRAPES to a rude stop on the edge of the pavement on the other side, the back wheels dangling in space.

LeMalle and Mitchell gingerly get out and push the ass end of the jeep onto solid earth.

84 INT. HANGAR

Eric finally STARTS the plane and taxis out onto the landing strip.

85 EXT. PUMPING STATION

The trappers drive up to where the Scout blocks their path. They pile out of their jeep and run toward the landing strip.

86 INT. CESSNA - (AERIAL SHOT)

It picks up speed and takes off.

ANGLE THROUGH WINDOW - (AERIAL SHOT)

Below, the trappers watch the plane zoom over their heads. LeMalle points his carbine at it, but Viking Bob pushes the rifle down.

87 INT. CESSNA - (AERIAL SHOT)

Corbett scowls as he sees the trappers helpless below him.

88 EXT. PUMPING STATION

Viking Bob watches, wide-eyed with fury. Mitchell spits. LeMalle punches the wall. Then he turns and repeatedly BLASTS the Scout, parked nearby, with his carbine.

89 INT. CESSNA - (AERIAL SHOT)

Eric's knapsack, an emergency kit and several five-gallon cans of aviation fuel are tucked behind the seats.

ERIC

How the hell were they smart enough to find us?

CORBETT

Smart? Sure. That's why I'm sitting in this plane and they're down there blowing me kisses.

Eric retracts the landing gear and banks toward the

southwest. Corbett notices that Eric seems a little unsure of the controls.

CORBETT

(continuing)
Been driving long?

ERIC

I needed a pilot's license to take the job here, so I got one in six weeks.

CORBETT

That makes the flight more interesting.

Eric ignores the jibe. He stays at 2,000 feet, making the landscape all the more immediate.

Corbett stares out the window and broods. He spots an open, snow-covered area where some dark blotches mar the whiteness.

CORBETT

(continuing)
See the blood? Pack of wolves took down a moose. Greedy, gut-ripping sons of bitches. I'd kill the last wolf on earth, right in front of the President of the U.S. Stinking, cowardly predator, the wolf.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

ERIC

Sounds like professional jealousy.

CORBETT

Hunting and trapping was a damn fine life.

(beat)
Me and Mitchell, Bob and LeMalle, we were teams. I'd always go with Mitchell. Good man, Mitchell. I'd let Bob worry about goddamn LeMalle. We'd hire a plane in October. On the way to a dirt airstrip somewhere, we'd drop supplies. We'd land, tell the pilot to come back for us a few days before Christmas.

ANOTHER ANGLE - (AERIAL SHOT)

While talking in an even tone, Corbett intently studies the instrument panel and scans the landscape below.

CORBETT

The idea was to get to the supplies before the bears did. Along the route we'd set our traps. Made our year's living in three months.

Corbett spots a flat plateau farther in the mountains, above the tree line.

CORBETT

(continuing)

Lot of times we didn't even have a landing strip. We'd set down on a plateau, like that one there. Yeah, that one's easy; you could glide right in...

Suddenly, he turns in the seat and pins Eric against the door with his left foot.

The plane flies erratically. With his right foot, Corbett kicks the fuel jettison lever on the instrument panel, jamming it on.

90 EXT. CESSNA - (AERIAL SHOT)

The lever, used to empty the fuel tanks in case of emergency, does so with great expediency. All the gas is instantly discharged.

91 INT. CESSNA - (AERIAL SHOT)

Corbett releases Eric and calmly sits back up in his seat.

Eric rubs his neck, incredulous. Corbett's move was too fast and too outrageous. In a moment, the engine SPUTTERS to a stop. Eric struggles to hold the stick steady and glide the plane down to the plateau Corbett pointed out.

CORBETT

Hope you got your money's worth on those lessons.

92 EXT. CESSNA - (AERIAL SHOT)

There's an even chance of hitting a mountain instead of the plateau. Eric pushes the Cessna's nose down. The plateau comes up fast.

The plane drops lower and lower, pitching and yawing in the wind.

It CRASH LANDS, its metal underbelly SCREECHING as it hits the jagged granite under the snow. It stops suddenly, flipping tail over nose.

93 INT. CESSNA

It rests upside down in the snow. The men are dazed.

Behind Eric, one of the extra fuel cans, now hanging upside down, leaks gas. In front of him, the engine is ON FIRE.

Eric undoes his seat belt and rights himself, but his leg gets caught in the tangled belt. He pulls out a Swiss Army knife and cuts the rope binding Corbett's handcuffs to the seat. Corbett pushes the passenger door open. Panicking, Eric tries to pull loose of his seat belt, painfully wrenching his ankle.

94 EXT. CESSNA

Corbett rolls out into the snow. With no time to grab his supplies, Eric clammers from the wreckage. He and Corbett crawl/roll down the incline of the plateau, away from the plane.

A moment later the leaking gas reaches the burning engine and the Cessna EXPLODES.

WIDER

Eric tries to stand. He cries out and falls into the powdery snow, clutching at his ankle.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

Corbett realizes Eric is at a disadvantage. But before he can bolt, Eric grabs for the .357 magnum under his coat. He lies on the snow, gasping, pointing the gun at Corbett's midsection.

ERIC

Stay put!

CORBETT

You got the belly to look me in the eye and pull the trigger?

Eric cocks the gun's hammer with his thumb.

ERIC

Be no different than shooting a rabid dog.

The men face off for a tense moment.

Corbett smiles and zips up his jacket, dispelling the tension. Letting the hammer down, Eric looks back at the burning plane.

ERIC

(continuing)
Next time you want to kill
yourself, don't include me.

CORBETT

I took the odds on getting down
in one piece, and I made it. Now
we're in my territory.

ERIC

With light clothing and no
supplies, this is nobody's
territory.

CORBETT

You sound like the tourists.
Know-it-alls who read about
survival in a magazine. Fuck
you. You won't make it off this
mountain.

Corbett drops his facade of conviviality. Eric is too angry to be intimidated. He takes the scarf from around his neck and wraps his ankle with it.

ERIC

Let's go.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED: (2)

CORBETT

(re Eric's ankle)
I'm not gonna carry you out of
here.

ERIC

That's right. You're not.

CORBETT

Look, take these cuffs off. We
need to work together.

ERIC

Forget it.

Eric holds his wristwatch up, points the hour hand at the

sun, counts forward to noon, and, accordingly, makes an approximation of their direction.

ERIC

(continuing)
Last time I checked the flight plan, we were forty miles northeast of Devil's Cauldron. Southwest is that way. No sense waiting for a goddamn taxi.

Grimacing with pain, he gets up. Clutching the magnum, he shoves Corbett in front of him and starts walking. Corbett frowns -- it's tough to trudge through the snow with his arms cuffed tightly behind his back.

Eric looks around and tries not to let his emotions register on his face. They wouldn't be farther from the rest of humanity on another planet. Smelling fear on Eric, Corbett enjoys the view. And waits.

95 EXT. ENDICOTT MOUNTAINS - LATER THAT DAY

The Endicott range is full of jagged peaks, icy streams and gnarled tundra valleys. Squinting in the glare of the snow, Eric and Corbett trek through the grandiose Gates of the Arctic area. The smoldering plane wreckage is a hard-won, snow-covered mile behind them.

Intricate patterns of fragmented rock, strips of scruffy tundra and bedrock outcrops produce lonely, foreboding mosaics upon the landscape. The air is still. The silence

is itself a disconcerting presence. Ten miles ahead and two thousand feet lower, the forest begins. But here, on the rock face of the mountains, Eric and Corbett might as well be in a desert.

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED:

ERIC

It'll be interesting, trying to build a fire without any wood.

CORBETT

Welcome to the environment, Mr. Ecology. Out here, one mistake is all you get.

Determined and dour, Eric pushes on.

CORBETT

(continuing)
Why in hell you care enough about me to die taking me in?

ERIC

I don't plan on dying.

It's all academic. The sheer magnitude of the surroundings makes them feel they're the only people in the world.

DISSOLVE

TO:

96 EXT. ENDICOTT MOUNTAINS - DUSK

The sun drops behind the mountains. A wind whips up, chilling the men through their clothing. Eric tries not to shiver. He spies a small rock formation with a granite elbow protruding from it, making an enclosed triangle of solid rock.

ERIC

We'll stop here, dig out a snow shelter.

CORBETT

Snow shelter. Okay. You dig. I'll have a little sit-down.

Corbett sits on his haunches and smiles while Eric digs near the rocks. Although he knows Corbett is testing his every move, Eric refuses to let his patronizing air get to him.

CORBETT

(continuing)
Even in the drifts, this snow's too powdery to make a shelter. When you're done jerking around, reach down the back of my coat.

Eric approaches him suspiciously. He puts his hand down through Corbett's collar. Something is stowed inside a homemade flap in the lining of his coat. Eric pulls out a

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

folded nylon tarp with twine threaded through corner eyeholes. He shakes the eight by eight orange tarp open...

CUT TO:

97 EXT. NYLON SHELTER - EVENING

Eric and Corbett have stretched the tarp out tent-style next to the granite rock formation, making a minimal but functional refuge from the cold night.

98 INT. NYLON SHELTER

The men huddle inside the tarp. Eric keeps a wary eye on Corbett -- at all times he treats him like a rattlesnake. Eric unwraps his ankle and rubs it. It's swollen to the size of a softball.

CORBETT

Still quite a hike to Devil's
Cauldron.
(beat)
Days. A long stretch to go
without sleep, my friend. You
can hide behind that pistol for
now, but take your eyes off me
long enough to sneeze --

ERIC

-- Turn around.

While poking the .357 in Corbett's ribs, Eric one-handedly unlocks Corbett's right manacle, pulls his arm through the granite elbow, then locks it back up again. He's learning.

FADE TO:

99 EXT. HAUL ROAD - DREAM - (AS IN SCENE 3)

Eric is hurrying along the pipeline in his business suit, following the predator's paw prints in the snow. He peers ahead and his prey becomes visible. But it isn't a wolf, it's Corbett. His hands and face are covered in blood.

END

DREAM

100 EXT. ENDICOTT MOUNTAINS - DAWN

The sun peeks over the mountain tops, drenching them with light and color.

101 INT. NYLON SHELTER

The light hits Eric's eyes. He bolts awake from a fitful sleep. Corbett sits, already awake, looking like he'd uproot the rock to which he's chained if he could. He waits for an opportunity -- any opportunity -- with the patience of a vulture.

CUT TO:

102 EXT. ENDICOTT MOUNTAINS - SMALL VALLEY - DAY

Eric and Corbett trudge up to the bank of a frozen stream bisecting their path. It's simple -- to continue, they have

to cross it. Corbett takes in the scenery, in no particular hurry. Frustrated, but making dead sure he's always got the drop on Corbett, Eric puts a tentative foot on the ice.

CORBETT

Ice is too thin -- you can see the water moving underneath.

ERIC

We're not sitting here 'til November. There's a cargo plane coming to Devil's Cauldron in four days, and I'm putting you on it.

CORBETT

We get wet, we freeze to death in a couple hours.

ERIC

I've been on ice like this when I was a kid, skating. Spread your weight, keep moving. Go on.

Corbett is not about to be outdone in the guts department by someone with a Master's Degree.

CORBETT

(gestures 'you first')
Be my guest.

ERIC

(points .357)
I'm right behind you.

Frowning, Corbett tentatively steps onto the ice and inches across the fifteen feet to the other bank.

NEW ANGLE

He turns and, indeed, Eric is right behind him.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

CORBETT

Wait 'til I'm across!

Eric doesn't want to be too far from his prisoner. He keeps coming. The ice GROANS and HISSES under their weight.

Corbett is three feet from solid ground. He drops to his knees, then stomach, and rolls like a log the rest of the way.

Eric splays out on the ice and crabwalks across. The ice

makes an ominous CRACKING and water begins to seep through air holes.

Standing, Corbett weighs his chances of bolting from Eric.

Eric crawls doubletime. He makes it onto solid ground just as the ice under him breaks off in a big, thin, clear plate.

CLOSER

Eric sits on some rocks. Corbett glares at him.

CORBETT

Most dangerous thing in the world: A regular Joe, in over his head. You trying to prove how tough you are for me, or for yourself?

ERIC

It wasn't my idea to crash the plane.

CORBETT

Let's camp. There's grayling under this ice. I'll snare some for dinner.

ERIC

(standing)
We've got another two hours of daylight.

CORBETT

Pushing it is flat wrong. All you prove is your ignorance about breaking trail.

Eric is not convinced. Grumbling, Corbett gets up and takes the lead as they continue southward.

103 INT. THE TURTLE - DARKROOM - DAY

Trying to keep busy, Anne Marie develops some prints in the darkroom she's made from the front bathroom. She glances at her watch and sighs, her mind on Eric's overdue return.

104 INT. THE TURTLE - FRONT MODULE

Anne Marie comes out of the darkroom and hangs the prints up to dry. Outside, (OS), a car HORN blares a couple of times. Grinning, she runs to the door.

105 EXT. / INT. THE TURTLE

Meyerling's Dodge truck pulls up. Anne Marie comes outside. Her smile wilts when she sees it's not Eric. As Meyerling climbs the embankment to the Turtle, he glances at Wilder's snowmobile parked alongside the Turtle.

MEYERLING

I've been trying to raise you on the shortwave for two days.

He pushes past Anne Marie and goes into the Turtle.

ANNE MARIE

Have you talked to Eric?

MEYERLING

I have not, but I very much want to. What do you know about the trouble in Devil's Cauldron?

ANNE MARIE

I was hoping you had some news --

MEYERLING

-- Get this straight: I'm the District Supervisor. Whatever you do reflects on me. It wasn't my idea to bring you people up here, but I'm stuck with you. You are absolutely not to involve yourself in any local disputes. Whichever side you take, you alienate the other. Mr. Corbett is quite well-known in this region. People admire him --

ANNE MARIE

-- Corbett's a killer.

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

MEYERLING

I don't care if Ben Corbett makes meatloaf out of nuns and babies, he's not your concern. Understood?

Anne Marie just glares at him. Meyerling examines the damaged shortwave.

MEYERLING

(continuing)
What happened here?

ANNE MARIE

The radio's on the fritz.

MEYERLING

Where'd you say Eric is?

ANNE MARIE

Somewhere along the pipeline.

MEYERLING

What about that hotheaded
marshal, Sam Wilder? I heard he
was in the middle of this mess.

ANNE MARIE

Sam? We haven't seen him.

MEYERLING

Really. I thought maybe that was
his snowmobile outside.

(beat)

By the way -- your truck also 'on
the fritz?'

ANNE MARIE

(blanching)

Why?

MEYERLING

It's out by the pumping station,
shot full of holes.

Noting Anne Marie's distressed reaction to this news, he
crosses to the door.

MEYERLING

(continuing)

Still nothing to tell me?

(no reply)

Suit yourself.

106 EXT. ENDICOTT MOUNTAINS - DAY

Eric limps further down from the mountains. Corbett keeps
pace in front of him and his magnum. As their altitude
decreases, there is ever thicker vegetation.

Their tracks in the snow stretch up behind them into the
distance. The magnificence and grandeur of the surroundings
cannot be overstated. Picture the most rustic, overwhelming
wilderness imaginable, and then make it ten times larger.

NEW ANGLE - LATER

The men's way is once again interrupted, this time by a sheer granite drop. The steep decline would be tough to negotiate with mountaineering equipment and proper footwear. Corbett peers over the edge and shakes his head.

CORBETT

Have to backtrack, find another way down.

ERIC

Forget it. It would take days.

CORBETT

(assessing the drop)
Going to be a bit of a challenge with handcuffs on.

Eric realizes he's right. After some deliberation, Eric cautiously approaches him. With the .357 cocked and ready, he undoes one of the cuffs, leaving them hanging from Corbett's wrist. He then unthreads the nylon twine from Corbett's tarp.

ANGLE - GRANITE SHEER

Eric and Corbett are tied, belt to belt, with the nylon rope. Corbett inches down first, feet spread for maximum footing, gloveless hands grasping at anything.

Eric mimics Corbett's moves and follows the same path. Unable to grasp the rocks effectively, he stops and takes his gloves off. Continuing, he winces -- the rock is cold and sharp. His hands are soon numb and bloody. Even in the dry, below-freezing air, Eric is sweating.

He looks down and hangs on more tightly. Sliding to level ground two hundred feet below would pummel him to hamburger. Corbett pauses and rests his cheek against the rocks. Eric is right above him.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

Suddenly, Corbett's foot slips. His right hand instinctively goes for a hold. The dangling handcuffs snare on a protuberance, knocking him off balance.

The fulcrum of Corbett's body leans out into the empty air. Eric moves down a little, braces himself and extends his leg, giving Corbett something to grab. Corbett takes hold of Eric's shoe and tries to teeter back against the rock wall. Adrenaline screams through Eric's system.

Corbett looks up at Eric. A careless move will send them both tumbling. Eric clutches harder at the rocks and waits for the worst.

After a long moment, Corbett regains his balance and lets go of Eric's foot. He continues his descent. Eric lets out his breath and tries to swallow. His mouth is as dry as the granite.

CUT TO:

107 EXT. TREELINE - LATER THAT DAY

Handcuffed again, Corbett hikes in front of Eric along the top of some foothills. Now and again he glances behind, gauging Eric's weariness, waiting for a moment's carelessness. Around them there is heavy vegetation now -- snow-covered sedge tussocks, knee-deep muskeg and twisted thickets that are treacherous and slow to tramp through. Above them, ominous clouds and sharp, cold winds are coming down from the north.

But below, a mile ahead, the edge of the forest is like the hem of a great green garment stretching endlessly southward. The combination of altitude and latitude creates an amazingly sharp topographical dividing line. Within a few thousand yards, the landscape abruptly changes from scrub brush to thick coniferous forest.

CORBETT

Better get into those trees
before that squall blows down.

Then, Corbett pauses as a walloping sound ECHOES across the foothills.

Just ahead, two enormous bull moose are fighting. They ram each other with six-foot-wide antlers.

Corbett stares, transfixed, admiring.

CORBETT

You talk about ecology -- there
it is.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

Eric turns, surprised at Corbett's unabashed awe.

Catching the men's smell the moose bound away, and the spell is broken.

108 EXT. MINING SETTLEMENT - EVENING

Viking Bob, Mitchell and LeMalle head somberly back to Cache. They drive along a hydraulic gold mining sluice on a nearby river and come into town.

As the trappers park their jeep, some MINERS greet them, shouting over the ROAR of the water.

MINER #1

Where's Ben at?

MITCHELL

You'll want to hear about it with a drink in your mitt.

CUT TO:

109 INT. BEAR SIGN INN - CACHE - EVENING

Outside, a STORM rages. LeMalle is drunk, but still able to stuff himself with a thick steak. Mitchell drums his fingers and listens to everyone talk. With them at the bar are the Miners, LOGGERS, CAT SKINNERS (bulldozer drivers) and some leathery WOMEN.

MINER #1

...Figures, Corbett getting hauled off by a Federal marshal. God almighty, how I hate the U.S. government.

LOGGER

We should pass a hat. Send Corbett a few bucks. We owe him.

Someone's hat comes off. It quickly gets filled with bills.

MINER #1

Government and business. They ruined this state.
(re Meyerling poster)
Like that little weasel, for instance.

WOMAN CAT DRIVER

'People's Friend,' my lily-white
-more-

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

WOMAN CAT DRIVER (Cont'd)

butt. I heard Northland got a conservation program, up along the pipeline.

LOGGER

Hold it. Meyerling told me that stuff's nothing but P.R. for the TV and papers down in Juneau.

LEMALLE

He's full of shit. We got run out of there by some fuckhead driving a Northland truck.

NEW ANGLE

Viking Bob hurries in and whispers something in Mitchell's ear. Mitchell shoots LeMalle a look and gets up. The threesome hastily exit, leaving behind the hat full of money.

110 INT. BEAR SIGN INN

Viking Bob, Mitchell and LeMalle stand in a quiet corner near the front door.

VIKING BOB

I called the cops in Fairbanks, see when Ben is standing trial. They don't know shit about Ben or Wilder!

LEMALLE

Get the fuck out of here.

VIKING BOB

It's a three-hour flight. They shoulda got there yesterday.

LEMALLE

Maybe they went back to Devil's Cauldron.

MITCHELL

Naah, Wilder knows we got friends in town.

VIKING BOB

That plane might've been to throw us off the track. Remember the bait-and-switch Wilder pulled with the Eskimo and his truck?

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

LEMALLE

Wilder still woulda made Fairbanks by now. Fuck a duck! Ben musta got loose.

VIKING BOB

Okay, let's backtrack, try to pick up his trail. You know the

kid out on the pipeline that
Wilder's buddies with?

MITCHELL

(smiles)
We were just talking about him.

111 EXT. FOREST - CAMPSITE PREPARATION MONTAGE - EVENING

The STORM brings gusting winds and below-zero temperatures. Eric and Corbett move through the storm in slow motion. Both recognize the need for a truce in the face of a common enemy. The snow and wind cut through their clothing like razors. They poke around for dead wood with which to make a fire. The trees are small and healthy; little is found.

CORBETT

(shouts over WIND)
Just gather birch. It'll smoke
like hell, but it'll burn green.

Awestruck by the intensity of the storm, Eric tears branches from birch trees and piles them in Corbett's handcuffed arms.

They hurry back to the nylon tarp, strung between two tree trunks, FLAPPING violently in the storm. Hunching against the wind, Eric pulls off his gloves and reaches in his pocket for some precious matches. His fingers are so cold he can't hold them, and he drops several in the wet snow.

Angry, he shoots a look at Corbett. Corbett is holding his hands inside his coat. He pulls them out and quickly takes the remaining matches from Eric.

Crouching down, back to the wind, Corbett grasps a match between his numb fingers and awkwardly strikes it. He holds the flame next to the kindling. It doesn't catch fire immediately. Corbett lets the match burn out against his fingers. He tries another match. This time, a flame takes hold but could succumb to the wind at any moment.

On his knees and elbows, Corbett nurses along the tiny fire. Eric can't control his shivering. He gets on his knees next to Corbett and holds his coat open to further baffle the wind. Corbett keeps his hands cupped around the flame, not

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

caring that it's burning his skin. Finally the fire begins to grow. Relieved, Eric and Corbett look at each other with a glimmer of a grudging mutual respect.

The fire, now unattended, is smoky as Corbett predicted, but burns along nicely.

END

MONTAGE

112 EXT. / INT. NYLON SHELTER - NIGHT

Corbett and Eric sit under the nylon shelter. The STORM rages outside. Eric empties his pockets of Eskimo potato, reindeer lichens, bistsort sorrel and other plants for his dinner.

Corbett has fashioned a snare from his boot laces and a tree branch, and placed some crushed roots as aromatic bait next to a small animal burrow outside the shelter. A squirrel sticks his nose out of the burrow to investigate.

Corbett sits catlike, ready to pounce. Eric grimaces as Corbett yanks on the snare and the squirrel's SQUEALS (OS) abruptly cease.

113 INT. NYLON SHELTER

Corbett pulls his dead dinner inside.

CORBETT

I need your pocket knife.
(Eric hesitates)
I have to eat, too.

After a beat, Eric pulls open the small blade on his Swiss Army knife and pushes it with his foot to Corbett. Smiling, Corbett admires the fancy knife. Then, BELOW FRAME, he skins and guts his catch.

CORBETT

(continuing)
Damn lucky this storm didn't blow down when we were on those baldheaded mountains. It continues, we better stay put.

ERIC

It could blow over tomorrow, too.

CORBETT

I'm still figuring: You're either real brave or real dumb.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

ERIC

I just want this over with.

CORBETT

(laughs)

Where in hell Meyerling dig you up?

ERIC

You know Meyerling?

CORBETT

Sure. The People's Friend. Kiss your ass with precision if there's a vote in it.

Corbett eats the squirrel Eskimo-style. Raw. He uses the knife like a native, too, holding the meat in his teeth, then expertly cutting off a mouthful with a quick slice. Eric stares, disgusted. Off his look:

CORBETT

(continuing)

Always eat your meat raw when the weather's cold. Does you more good, long as the entrails look clean.

Corbett uses snow and the squirrel's fur to wipe the blood from his face, then wipes the knife off and lays it, open, next to his leg.

ERIC

I'll hold onto that.

With a wry smile, Corbett pushes it back over to Eric. While Eric eats his dinner, Corbett listens to the STORM and watches him eat.

CORBETT

Sure love to know where you fit in up here.

ERIC

I'm here to do my job.

CORBETT

You want to fool yourself about that bullshit job, fine. Damn shame you have to drag your girlfriend along. You think a woman like that will be happy making moose stew for a man
-more-

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED: (2)

CORBETT (Cont'd)
making your salary? Look, I'll

give you five grand. Take the money and go home where you both belong.

ERIC

Don't fucking insult me.

Corbett smiles -- maybe he's beginning to understand Eric.

CORBETT

Folks come to Alaska for a real short list of reasons: Money. Adventure. Solitude. Those cover most everyone. But frontiers also draw another type of man. One with a demon in his gut. He comes to the edge of the world to face that demon, and lay it to rest.

ERIC

Yeah?

CORBETT

Yep. Sometimes they do, but usually they end up crazy or dead.

Eric ponders Corbett's words as he eats.

114 INT. THE TURTLE - NIGHT

Anne Marie is frantic with worry. She has the AM/FM RADIO on for company.

RADIO (VO)

...This is "Tundra Topics" on KFAR. Remember, as the nights get longer, be sure to stay on a regular sleep schedule. The depression from the coming of winter that doctors call 'Seasonal Affective Disorder' -- or 'Arctic Blue' to us lay folk -- is preventable.

Anne Marie tunes the radio to "Pipeline of the North" on **KIAK**.

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

RADIO (VO)

(continuing)
...John Byers was hospitalized in Fairbanks today for an infection

in an abscessed tooth. Mr. Byers had a toothache and attempted to remove the tooth himself with a pair of pliers...

Suddenly, a BUMP rocks the Turtle. Someone is outside. Startled, Anne Marie turns the lights off and looks out the window.

No sign of a vehicle or a person. As she pulls on her parka, she glances at the big rifle leaning against the wall, but doesn't touch it.

115 EXT. THE TURTLE

Her visitor, whoever it is, is behind the Turtle. Anne Marie cautiously rounds the corner and stops dead.

NEW ANGLE

A foraging GRIZZLY sniffs around, attracted by the smell of fresh carrion -- Wilder. Eight feet tall and eleven-hundred pounds, it's used to having its way. Right now, it's hungry.

With a casual swipe of its paw, its massive claws puncture the Turtle's aluminum skin, popping open the door of the

utility compartment. The bear pokes its head inside, and Wilder's body slumps out into the snow. The bear pushes at the corpse with its snout. Salivating, it prepares to dig in.

Anne Marie looks around, wondering what the hell to do nEXT. Wilder's snowmobile is a few yards behind her, parked against the side of the Turtle. She inches toward it. Testily, the bear looks up, SNIFFING loudly.

Keeping her eyes on the bear, Anne Marie feels for the snowmobile ignition keys. They're not there. She feels around inside the saddlebags and finds three emergency road flares.

Anne Marie IGNITES the flares. They illuminate the area with an eerie reddish glow. She YELLS at the bear, wields the flares like Excalibur and moves forward.

The bear, reluctant to leave so hearty a pre-hibernation meal, GROWLS and cocks its head back and forth to assess the threat. As Anne Marie inches ahead, the bear stands on hind legs to its full height to meet the challenge.

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

Anne Marie tosses a flare toward the bear. It grunts when

the flare hits it, and shuffles backwards. Anne Marie throws another flare. With a ROAR from hell, the bear charges. Anne Marie falls back. Still holding the last flare, she's forced into a crawl space under the Turtle.

ANGLE - UNDER THE TURTLE

Anne Marie tries to squeeze out the other side, but she's pinned in by the unevenness of the hard ground. The bear swipes at her, its huge paw inches away. Anne Marie jabs at the paw with the flare, but that only makes the bear more quarrelsome.

She twists around, looking for a defense. Above her is the cabling from the generator to the circuit box for the Turtle's electrical system. She tugs at it, but it won't budge. The bear SNIFFS at Anne Marie with its big wet snout. Anne Marie notices warning a sign on a control valve:

? **DANGER!!**

? **BLACK WATER**

? **UNTREATED SEWAGE**

Grimacing, she tries to turn the valve. After much effort, it SNAPS and opens, releasing a stream of fetid sewage.

WIDER

The bear gets a muzzle full of the stuff. HOWLING unhappily, it backs away, GRUNTING and SNEEZING. Greatly offended, its appetite gone, it lopes into the forest.

Anne Marie squirms out from under the Turtle and, gagging from the horrible smell, pulls off her wet parka.

CUT TO:

116 EXT. WOODS NEAR THE TURTLE - SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT

Wearing one of Eric's coats, Anne Marie stands in the center of three similarly-sized trees. A FLARE supplies the light. The big Remington rifle leans against the tree closest to her.

She tosses one end of a hundred feet of nylon rope over a sturdy tree branch twenty-five feet from the ground. Then she throws the other end over an opposing branch and stretches the rope like a clothesline.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

She attaches a second length of rope perpendicular to the

first and throws it over a third tree branch, midway between the other two. She kneels and ties something BELOW FRAME to the cross-length rope.

Pulling mightily on the perpendicular rope, she hoists something heavy to the level of the branches. The flare burns out, plunging the area into darkness.

Anne Marie wraps the rope around the tree trunk and nervously tries to LIGHT another flare. As she does, the forest seems closer, sinister, filled with lurking ogres. Seized with an instinctual fear, she grabs the rifle and runs back to the Turtle.

FADE TO:

117 EXT. ENDICOTT FOOTHILLS - DAY

The storm has passed, leaving a fresh covering of powdery snow in drifts like sand dunes. Eric and Corbett trek toward Devil's Cauldron through the ever-thickening forest. Corbett has made them snow goggles by cutting slits in strips of tree bark worn like sunglasses. Eric, using a tree branch as a walking stick, still limps on his sore ankle. For the first time, he keeps the magnum stuck in his waistband.

CORBETT

There's a cabin, maybe twenty miles south of here.

ERIC

(kneels to adjust his ankle wrap)
Too bad we're heading west.

CORBETT

There's a snowmobile. Inside a day we could be on the Yukon. I got money there. Remember that five thousand? Make it ten. Be smart. Take it and walk away.

ERIC

(bristling)
You don't get it, do you?

Corbett takes advantage of Eric's poor peripheral vision from the visor by kneeling Eric in the face. Eric falls backwards into the snow. Corbett takes off like a jackrabbit. Eric spits out some blood, shakes the stars out of his eyes and yanks the .357 from under his coat.

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

ERIC

(continuing)
Stop!

Corbett bounds through the snow, dodging trees and snow-covered rocks.

Eric squeezes off a SHOT, and is startled by the recoil and the blast. He scrambles to his feet and SHOOTS again.

Corbett zigzags and disappears from sight over a snowbank.

NEW ANGLE - FOLLOW CORBETT

Corbett runs over a frozen stream, invisible under a cover of snow. Suddenly, the ice SHATTERS under him. Corbett is immersed in frigid, waist-deep water. He gasps from the sudden temperature drop.

ERIC

hobbles after him, CUSSING bitterly to himself.

CORBETT

crawls to solid ground. Disoriented from the shock to his system, he rolls over to catch his breath.

WIDER

Eric appears over a snowbank.

Corbett tries to run, but his frozen, waterlogged legs feel like pig iron. Stumbling and panting, he looks for a safe place to cross the stream. Eric easily catches up to him. Corbett sits in the snow, shivering. He looks up as Eric trots over.

Eric glares at Corbett and rubs the bruise on his cheek.

CORBETT

Nothing personal. Just wanted to see what you'd do.

Noticing Corbett's sopping legs, Eric becomes furious.

CORBETT

(continuing)
Have to get these wet things off.

ERIC

You're not going to slow us down!
Keep moving!

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED: (2)

CORBETT

Inside of three hours you'd be
dragging my dead carcass.

Fuming, Eric helps Corbett up.

118 EXT. ENDICOTT FOOTHILLS - EVENING

The sun sinks below the horizon, creating across the
mountains a spectacular show of color and shadows. The wind
HOWLS.

119 INT. NYLON SHELTER

Eric stokes a fire at the mouth of the shelter. Corbett's
pants and boots hang to dry from branches next to it. He
huddles under the tarp, covered by his coat, drowsy and
listless.

ERIC

Stay awake! You want to go
hypothermic?

CORBETT

If that means freeze my balls
off, no thanks.
(yawns)
I'll be okay.

Eric examines him. Corbett's skin is white and rigid, his
lips are pale blue. He scowls at Eric.

CORBETT

(continuing)
Told you I'm fine!

ERIC

(holds up three fingers)
How many do you see?

CORBETT

(irritable)
What?! Fuck off. Save yourself.

ERIC

You don't feel cold?

CORBETT

It's a spring day...

He starts to doze off. The shivering he's been repressing
now racks his body. Eric sits him up, closer to the fire,
and puts his own parka over Corbett's shoulders. With his
foot, Eric rolls some hot rocks bordering the fire closer to

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

Corbett's legs. Eric rubs his arms and hands, but it isn't enough. Eric loathes the specter of death, even Corbett's. He shakes him, trying to keep him awake.

ERIC

Wake up, goddammit! You've got classic hypothermia -- crankiness, fatigue, can't feel your coldness. Worst thing you can do is fade out.

Corbett is headed someplace far away. Sighing, Eric turns him so his back faces the fire. He unbuttons Corbett's shirt, then unbuttons his own shirt and lies across Corbett. Eric gasps -- Corbett feels like a slab of ice. Corbett's teeth chatter. He's completely unconscious.

ERIC

(continuing)
One more thing -- this doesn't mean we're going steady.

DISSOLVE TO:

Later, Corbett rests fitfully. It could go either way. Eric chews on some roots and pokes at the fire to keep it lively.

DISSOLVE TO:

It's night. Some color has returned to Corbett's skin. Eric turns as Corbett mumbles and clutches at the front of his shirt. His eyes open. He tries to sit up, but he's too weak.

ERIC

Stay still.

CORBETT

Where's my ELT?

ERIC

Emergency transmitter? All your gear is back at Wilder's.

CORBETT

You got one?

ERIC

It was blown up with the plane.

CORBETT

Too bad. We'd be out of here in
a few hours.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED: (2)

ERIC

How? Nobody this far north
monitors that frequency until
avalanche season.

(beat)

Besides, I'm surprised a tough
guy like you uses fancy
electronics.

CORBETT

I'm surprised a flat-ender like
you knows cold-weather remedies.

ERIC

Read a lot of adventure stories
when I was a kid...

Corbett smiles.

CORBETT

I'm hungry. Go kill me some
dinner.

ERIC

An appetite. Maybe you won't die
after all.

CORBETT

Hate to disappoint you.

120 EXT. HAUL ROAD - THE TURTLE - NIGHT

The AURORA makes a dazzling display in the cold clear sky.
Below, the only light on the endless expanse of dark earth
comes from the Turtle.

CLOSER

Flashlight in hand, wearing one of Eric's coats, Anne Marie
refuels the generator. Something catches her eye --

ANNE MARIE'S POV

In the distance, headlight beams jostle along the Haul Road.

BACK TO SCENE

Anne Marie caps the diesel fuel can and stows it away.

ANNE MARIE

(grinning)
It's about time...

She hurries back into the Turtle.

121 INT. THE TURTLE

Anne Marie brushes her hair and makes herself presentable.

122 EXT. THE TURTLE

The vehicle gets closer. It's the trappers' jeep. It slows and parks on the Haul Road next to the Turtle.

123 INT. THE TURTLE

Anne Marie peers out the window. She gasps as she recognizes the jeep. Ducking from sight below the window, she grabs Eric's coat and hurries into the rear module.

124 EXT. THE TURTLE

Mitchell stays in the jeep. Viking Bob and LeMalle get out and walk cautiously toward the Turtle.

LeMalle stands midway between the jeep and the Turtle, cradling his carbine. Viking Bob goes up the steps.

125 INT. THE TURTLE - REAR MODULE

Anne Marie remembers something she should've taken with her: the rifle. Too late. She hears Viking Bob's FOOTSTEPS (OS) come up the wooden stairs outside.

126 EXT. THE TURTLE

Viking Bob knocks on the front door. He peers through the sheer curtain on the window, into the front module.

VIKING BOB

Hullo?

He shrugs to the others, then tries the door. It's unlocked.

Mitchell gets out of the jeep, spits and follows the others in, his hand close to the Colt Peacemaker strapped to his leg.

127 INT. THE TURTLE

Anne Marie climbs out a window in the back. She closes it behind her just as Viking Bob pokes his head in the rear

module.

The trappers snoop around, noticing that the coffee pot is still warm, etc. The emptiness is ominous. LeMalle picks up the big Remington bear rifle. He opens the breech to determine if it's loaded, and sniffs the barrel to see if

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

it's recently been fired. Viking Bob notices the damaged radio.

VIKING BOB

Somebody left in a big hurry.
(to LeMalle)
Check outside.

128 EXT. THE TURTLE

LeMalle goes outside and shines his flashlight around.

NEW ANGLE

In the back, Anne Marie drags an evergreen tree branch behind her to cover her tracks in the snow, then climbs into the utility compartment where Wilder's body was stored.

A moment later, LeMalle comes around the corner. He notices bear tracks and scat from the prior night's visit.

LEMALLE

(calls out to others)
Grizzly sign. Looks fresh.

Viking Bob and Mitchell converge with LeMalle. They point their flashlights around, spotting footprints and marks going off into the woods.

129 EXT. WOODS NEAR THE TURTLE

Tense and silent, the trappers follow the marks. A breeze RUSTLES the needles of the evergreens around them. They stop at the point the footprints end. A rhythmic CREAKING above them makes LeMalle shine his light upward.

NEW ANGLE

The light REVEALS Wilder's feet swinging back and forth above their heads. His body is suspended in the manner of a trail cache. Viking Bob lets out a startled grunt. He and Mitchell shine their lights on Wilder's face.

MITCHELL

It's Sam Wilder!

VIKING BOB

Musta wanted to keep him from the bears. If Ben killed him, he sure as hell wouldn't hang him up like this.

MITCHELL

Where's the kid?

(CONTINUED)

129 CONTINUED:

LEMALLE

Who gives a husky fuck? Where's Ben?

The trappers look glumly at one another.

130 INT. UTILITY COMPARTMENT - THE TURTLE

Anne Marie jams herself behind a pile of her photo equipment. She stops as she hears the trappers' boots (OS) CRUNCH in the snow past her and go inside the Turtle.

131 INT. THE TURTLE

The trappers peel off their overcoats. They look around at the comfortable surroundings.

MITCHELL

I should get me a job with an oil company.

He sits on the couch and lays his scrimshaw and engraving tools out on the coffee table. LeMalle helps himself in the well-stocked larder.

LEMALLE

I say we eat, torch this fuckin' thing, and move on.

LeMalle digs through the cupboards and comes up with a fresh bottle of Scotch.

VIKING BOB

Go easy.

LEMALLE

Cool out. I ain't about to get blasted.

CUT TO:

132 EXT. THE TURTLE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Flashlight in hand, gloriously drunk, LeMalle stumbles

outside. He crosses to the jeep to grab a box of Twinkies and, as long as he's at it, take a leak in a snowbank. Bleary-eyed, he notices the damage to the utility compartment inflicted by the bear.

He walks to it, stepping over the bear scat. He marvels at the size and depth of the clawmarks.

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED:

LEMALLE

Big mother musta wanted something
real bad in here...

LeMalle tries the door, but it's jammed shut. He tucks his flashlight under his arm and gives another tug. This time the door cracks open.

CLOSER - HIS POV

He peers through the opening and shines his flashlight in. A pair of eyes stare back at him.

WIDER

LeMalle jumps back, startled, and pulls out his knife. He tries the door again. It WRENCHES open...

...He's looking at his own face in one of Anne Marie's mirrored photo reflector boards.

Letting his breath out, LeMalle pokes around the equipment in the compartment. Ever larcenous, he pulls a few items out, examines them, and, disinterested, leaves them in the snow. Doing so, he comes close to uncovering Anne Marie, who sits motionless and terrified in the back of the compartment.

Nothing in the compartment catches LeMalle's fancy. Leaving the door hanging open, he wanders away.

133 INT. UTILITY COMPARTMENT - THE TURTLE

After he's gone, Anne Marie reaches over and closes the door. She can hear the trappers' (OS) CONVERSATION inside:

VIKING BOB (OS)

I know in my gut he was here.
First light, we try to get scent
of his trail.

Sighing, Anne Marie stuffs her hands inside her parka and tries to get comfortable. It's going to be a long night.

FADE TO:

134 EXT. ENDICOTT FOOTHILLS - DAWN

Eric and Corbett wearily trudge through the woods. Corbett has the tarp wrapped around him for extra warmth. As he walks, he sniffs at one of Eric's Eskimo potato roots and takes a tentative nibble.

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

CORBETT

Used to see the natives eating roots when I was a kid in Nome.

ERIC

Nome? I figure you'd be a whaler, coming from there.

CORBETT

Told that's what our old man was. Planned on going to sea, me and Bob, 'til I read Jack London. Started trapping when I was ten. Mailed the furs to Sears. Eight bucks for a skunk, three for a muskrat.

(off Eric's look)
That was fine money.

ERIC

Killing wildlife not good enough anymore, so you go on to bigger and better things.

CORBETT

You got a knack for seeing things the way you want to see them.

They walk in silence. Corbett tightens the tarp against the cold air and looks at Eric.

CORBETT

(continuing)
Don't judge me. You're a joke, coming here from a fucked-up culture, telling us what to do!

ERIC

Yeah, it is fucked up -- but it's not too late to keep that from happening here.

CORBETT

(temper flaring)
All you do is keep folks from

working the land, living like they're meant to. You don't understand shit! Trappers, hunters -- we're part of the environment. Who's protecting us?

(sourly)

I've seen plenty like you. So
-more-

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED: (2)

CORBETT (Cont'd)

full of yourselves there's no room for other people's way of life.

ERIC

What do you know about people? You live like an animal! A savage goddamn throwback like you belongs out here, as far away from the rest of us as possible.

CORBETT

I'm real sad you don't approve of me.

He shoves Eric with his handcuffed hands.

CORBETT

(continuing)

Tell me what I should do, Professor. You got all the answers. I shouldn't hunt? Fine, I'll just phone up and have a salad delivered.

Livid, Eric backs away and knocks Corbett's hands away from him.

ERIC

Don't push me..!

CORBETT

Cowardly bastard. I'm in handcuffs and I still scare the piss out of you.

Eric smashes his fist into Corbett's face. Corbett reels back, more surprised than hurt. Eric moves in, furiously throwing punches. Corbett plows his clenched fists into Eric's midsection, doubling him over. Gasping, Eric rams his head into Corbett and they fall into the snow.

Despite the handcuffs, Corbett gets a few blows in. They wrestle fiercely, and Eric ends up on top of Corbett. He's about to throw another punch when Corbett looks up at him.

CORBETT

(continuing)
First you save my ass, now you want to kill me. Make up your goddamn mind.

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED: (3)

Eric lowers his fist and climbs off of Corbett. Corbett gets up and they continue on their way in sullen silence.

135 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - DAY

Sunday morning. Chimney smoke rises straight up in the still morning air and mingles with the wisps of fog hanging above the Devil's Cauldron valley.

A scratchy RECORDING of a HYMN ("We Will Gather at the River") plays through a PA system, ECHOING forlornly off the hills. The PEOPLE of Devil's Cauldron walk through the new snow to the center of the settlement. Some, older Women mostly, head for the dance hall, where the HYMN originates.

136 INT. DANCE HALL

The Women SING along with the HYMN. They face a shelf holding the PA, a rusty TV and record player. And, in front of the shelf, an unmanned pulpit.

137 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON

The Men, including Neff, split off from their mates and go into the Maqi.

138 INT. MAQI

Neff joins some other Men sweating on benches in the primitive steam bath. Kenai sits closest to the fire. His thick glasses are steamed up, but he finally looks warm.

NEFF

Wilder's missing church services;
you believe it?

KENAI

I just as soon he stay gone.
Fool could've got us all killed,
arresting Ben Corbett here in
town.

139 EXT. FOOTHILLS ABOVE DEVIL'S CAULDRON - DAY

Exhausted, Corbett and Eric climb across the last set of foothills before the Devil's Cauldron valley. The town comes into view below them; faintly the MUSIC carries from below. Corbett looks at Eric and breaks the silence:

CORBETT

What makes you so sure my boys
won't be waiting for us?

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED:

ERIC

They think you're in Fairbanks.
If not, they still won't find you
before the plane comes tomorrow.

CORBETT

Don't bet on it.

ERIC

I already have.

CORBETT

You don't know how true that is.

Eric sweeps the snow from between two rocks and sits down.

ERIC

We'll wait here until nightfall.
No fire, no tarp.

Corbett sits next to him. After a long moment:

CORBETT

Didn't mean it, you being a
coward. You're a lot of things,

but chickenshit isn't one of
them.

ERIC

Maybe...maybe not. I'll tell you
what scares me -- stumbling
through life, like an ordinary
jerk. That's why I want to work
on the front lines, where what I
do means something.
(beat)
Soon as I got here, I realized my
job was bullshit. Oil company
propaganda. I was ready to
leave, then I thought screw it,
I'll outsmart them, do the work
anyway.

(beat)
I don't know anymore. Maybe I am
fooling myself. That's what I'm
afraid of most of all.

CORBETT

Hell, I still get a knot in my
gut every season, wondering how
much longer I can go on. No
'Home for Retired Trappers' that
-more-

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED: (2)

CORBETT (Cont'd)

I ever saw. We're like Eskimos
-- get too old to be useful,
we're left on the ice to die.

The men listen to the faint MUSIC echoing through the silent
foothills.

CORBETT

(continuing; softly)
My wife used to go to chapel on
Sundays. See her friends, 'cause
I was away so much.
(beat)
Should've been home that day.
She'd be getting dressed right
about now...

Eric glances over as a look of utter desolation crosses
Corbett's face.

140 EXT. HAUL ROAD - THE TURTLE - DAY

The trappers file out the front door.

VIKING BOB

My guess is he's loose and
heading for Chukfoktulik. He'll
need supplies; that's the closest
settlement without a lawman.

LeMalle carries his booty with him. Viking Bob looks at him
disapprovingly as he puts the big Remington rifle in the
jeep.

LEMALLE

I ain't gonna leave a seven-
hundred-dollar Remington behind.

VIKING BOB

(exasperated)

What you gonna do with it? Large bore's for shit on small game.

LEMALLE

Not in the right hands it ain't.

To demonstrate, he rapid-fires several SHOTS from the hip, taking the radio antenna off the roof of the Turtle, shattering panes of glass in an accurate succession, and blasting the door latch off the utility compartment.

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED:

Pleased, LeMalle slams back the bolt, ejecting a spent shell. He glances curiously at the door of the utility compartment and starts toward it.

LEMALLE

(continuing)

Thought that door was open last night...

VIKING BOB

Quit fucking around. Get in.

LeMalle climbs into the back of the jeep. With Viking Bob driving, they pull away.

141 EXT. TRAPPERS' JEEP - (MOVING SHOT)

Grinning maliciously, LeMalle hangs the Remington out the window as they retreat. Taking careful aim, he SHOOTs.

142 EXT. THE TURTLE

LeMalle's bullet hits the metal fuel tank of the generator. The kerosene fumes EXPLODE, splattering BURNING KEROSENE on the rear module of the Turtle.

The trappers don't slow down to enjoy the show. Viking Bob hurries on to more important business.

143 INT. UTILITY COMPARTMENT - THE TURTLE

As soon as the SOUND of the jeep fades away, Anne Marie clambers out of the utility compartment. Haggard and numb with cold, she helplessly watches as the fire ravenously devours the rear module. Shielding her face from the flames, Anne Marie reaches under the accordion cover between the modules. With great effort, she unbolts the coupling bracket.

144 INT. DIESEL RIG - THE TURTLE

Anne Marie STARTS the engine, SLAMS it into gear, and

lurches the front module away from the burning rear module. She shuts the motor off and, trying to hold back the tears, watches the rear module BURNING.

DISSOLVE

TO:

145 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - NIGHT

Bone weary, Eric and Corbett walk toward town, staying on the outskirts to avoid being seen. They look at one another -- this moment seemed impossible not very long ago. No one seems to notice as they limp into Wilder's cabin.

146 INT. WILDER'S CABIN

It's dark. Eric locks Corbett up in the holding cell, not noticing that Corbett seems almost pleased to be there. He blocks the windows, pumps up the pressure on the white gas lantern and heads back outside again.

147 INT. NEFF'S HOUSE

Neff pries himself from his MTV to answer a KNOCK at the door. Eric hobbles in. Neff notes Eric's weatherbeaten condition.

NEFF

You don't mind me saying, Mr. Desmond, you look like hell.

ERIC

Have you heard anything from the girl staying with me, Anne Marie?

NEFF

Not a damn thing. What's going on? Mr. Meyerling was here, all steamed up, looking for you.

ERIC

Look, Neff, I've got Ben Corbett with me --

NEFF

-- Here?! Where's Wilder?

ERIC

Back at my place... he, uh, broke his leg.

NEFF

If Corbett's men find out --

ERIC

-- I'm putting him on the plane to Fairbanks, eleven tomorrow.

NEFF

Jiminy Christmas.
(beat)
What do you want from me?

ERIC

Corbett ruined my two-way. Go to my place on the Haul Road, tell Anne Marie I'm okay and to sit tight.

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED:

NEFF

I'll go at dawn.

ERIC

Thanks. Don't tell anyone you saw me.

After Eric goes, Neff closes his door and bolts it.

148 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - VARIOUS ANGLES - NIGHT

The temperature dips as the winds shifts and blows down from the north. Another storm approaches. The temperate days of last week seem ages ago.

Kenai, Neff, and other TOWNSMEN batten Devil's Cauldron down for the STORM. Kenai is bundled up in the cold. The men tighten guy wires on the radio tower, windmills and caches; bring firewood indoors; close off unused rooms in the general store and spa. Then Neff and Kenai split off from the others.

149 INT. HOT SPRINGS SPA

Via a catwalk, Neff and Kenai climb up into the ceiling struts above the partitioned cubicles in the spa to caulk a roof leak with pitch. Neff is sullen from his conversation with Eric. Kenai, however, is smiling at Neff.

NEFF

Why the smirk?

KENAI

Bet I could make some money turning Ben Corbett in. Maybe more for lettin' him loose.
(off Neff's flustered look)

I was up in my cache. Saw the Northland man come talk to you.

NEFF

You're out of your greedy goddamn mind.

KENAI

Corbett coming here stinks of trouble. We should make the best of it before it turns around and bites us in the ass.

NEFF

Stay out of it.

150 INT. WILDER'S CABIN - NIGHT

Eric stirs a pot of beans on the cookstove. Corbett watches from the cot in the cell.

CORBETT

Talk to that good-looking girl of yours?

ERIC

You broke the radio, remember?

CORBETT

(smiles)
I'm sure she's fine. Seemed like a clever kid.

Corbett sits up as Eric hands him a plate of beans.

CORBETT

(continuing)
You were real resourceful out there. Got me thinking of this perimeter man, froze all his fingers one winter. So he hacked the tips off and sharpened the exposed bones. Gets along better than ever. Yeah, maybe I underestimated you.

ERIC

I liked you better frozen. You didn't talk so much.

CORBETT

You're damn lucky, glimpsing this country before it's ruined, gone for good. You saw wonders you'd

only dreamed of. That alone makes you different than the sorry bastards back where you came from, because you have dreamt them.

Corbett sees he's hit a nerve with Eric.

CORBETT

(continuing)
Remember that demon in the gut? Sometimes it's nothing more than wondering if the so-called civilized life has bred the balls and brains out of you. That's what you want out of this, isn't it?

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED:

ERIC

All I want want is you in jail --

A KNOCK at the door interrupts. Eric lowers the flame on the gas lantern and peers out through a corner of the cardboard in the front window. Frowning, he cracks the door open and slips outside.

151 EXT. WILDER'S CABIN

It's Neff and Kenai. Neff looks guiltily at Eric.

NEFF

(explaining)
He saw you and Corbett come in...

KENAI

Dixie's waiting at the infirmary. She'll put a splint on that injured leg.

Eric is skeptical of Kenai's concern.

NEFF

Don't let him fool you. Real reason he's here is to buy Corbett's traps.

Eric looks at Kenai, then at Neff. Neff nods that it's okay. As extra precaution, Eric handcuffs Corbett's right wrist to the frame of the cot inside the cell.

ERIC

(to Kenai)
Okay. You can talk to him. But

I'll keep the keys with me.

152 INT. HOT SPRINGS SPA - NIGHT

Outside the wind HOWLS. Eric enters and walks into the hallway connecting the bath partitions. A hand grabs his arm. Startled, he turns around.

It's Dixie, wearing a threadbare flannel robe.

DIXIE

Earl says you get discount.
Twenty-five dollar.

Eric shakes his head -- typical Kenai. He gives her three tens. She smiles and leads Eric toward the "infirmary." It's actually a bath partition outfitted with an examining table and a first-aid kit.

153 INT. WILDER'S CABIN - NIGHT

Neff paces nervously. Corbett smiles at him and Kenai.

NEFF

(apologetically)
Look, Ben, we don't want any trouble. The kid's got the key, and besides, he looks edgy enough to use that magnum he's carrying.

CORBETT

Relax. I'll get loose in time.

KENAI

Any traps you don't want, I'll pay cash money.

CORBETT

Guess someone should use them.
Open the bottom drawer in Wilder's desk. My kit's in there. Might as well unload everything.

Kenai tugs on the drawer. It's locked. Undaunted, he jimmy's it open with a knife. Neff groans. Kenai goes to throw Corbett the duffel bag, but Neff grabs it. He checks for weapons, pulling out a hunting knife. Satisfied, he hands Corbett the bag through the bars.

With his free hand, Corbett digs through his belongings: clothing, freeze-dried provisions, jerky, paperback books. He looks up and shrugs.

154 INT. HOT SPRINGS SPA - NIGHT

Eric's ankle is in a resin cast. His foot rests on a stool. While waiting for the cast to set he soaks in the bathtub, a hot towel draped over his face. Above him, on a wall bracket, a closed circuit TV plays a war-surplus PORNO FILM.

The door CREAKS open and Dixie comes in. She impassively checks his cast -- which is interesting, as she's now wearing panties, clog shoes and nothing else. Eric takes the towel off his face and sits up, astonished.

DIXIE

I wash your back for you. You will like it.

Before Eric can protest, the door OPENS again. It's Meyerling. He snaps his fingers at Dixie to shoo her and she scurries away.

(CONTINUED)

154 CONTINUED:

MEYERLING

I hate to interrupt playtime, but why the hell are you caught up in a local matter when I gave you express instructions to the contrary?!

ERIC

Cut the shit, Leo. I might need your help...

155 EXT. CHUKFOKTULIK, ALASKA - NIGHT

Consisting of a handful of sod-roof cabins, mostly bars, Chukfoktulik is a way station in the coniferous forest, sixty miles southeast of Devil's Cauldron.

156 INT. TRAPPERS' JEEP

With the seats pushed back, LeMalle peels the town's lone WHORE out of her parka. He's got the motor running for warmth. Her gold tooth glints in the light from the building next to them. The locating screen on the beat-up radio beacon receiver bolted to the dash GLOWS phosphorescent green.

WHORE

They got nice beds upstairs, honey.

LEMALLE

I'm standin' guard duty.

Besides, rather spend the room money on sloppy seconds.

Over the sound of LeMalle's exertions there begins an insistent succession of BEEPS. The Whore looks over LeMalle's shoulder at the locating device.

WHORE

Hey, Tiger --

LeMalle turns and immediately loses interest in the Whore. Pushing her off of him, he blows the jeep's HORN three times.

157 INT. HOT SPRINGS SPA - NIGHT

Eric and Meyerling are in the middle of an argument.

ERIC

...I won't let a killer walk!

(CONTINUED)

157 CONTINUED:

MEYERLING

Alleged killer.

ERIC

What does this matter to you?

MEYERLING

(sneering)

You can't see past your lousy little assignment, sniffing around the pipeline. The few voters there are in this district look up to Corbett, and I'm not about to alienate them.

ERIC

I should release Corbett because you want some votes?

MEYERLING

This miserable wilderness is a state of the union. Policy's made here the same way as in the civilized world: at the ballot box. That's the beauty of it -- these icebox cowboys are living a century too late. Get them on your side, it's like buying Manhattan for beads. With a handful of votes you control the greatest frontier since white men stumbled onto the New World.

ERIC

Some day these people'll wake up,
and you'll be the first one
they'll run out of here.

Eric's attention turns to a rhythmic INTERFERENCE on the TV screen. There are three short bursts, followed by three long bursts. Something about it is very familiar. Scowling, he sits up.

ERIC

(continuing)
Shit...
(to Meyerling; distracted)
Do what you have to. So will I.

Eric climbs out of the water and pulls his pants on.

158 INT. WILDER'S CABIN - NIGHT

Kenai sorts through the tangle of Corbett's traps. The door bursts open and Eric hobbles in. Gun drawn, Eric unlocks the cell door. He rips Corbett's shirt open. Looking around, he sees Corbett's duffel bag sitting by the cot. Digging through it, he finds at the bottom of the bag an ELT with a small red LED flashing on it.

Furious, he flings it against the wall, smashing it.

159 INT. TRAPPERS' JEEP - CHUKFOKTULIK - NIGHT

The green dot on the screen and rhythmic BLEEP go suddenly dead, just as Viking Bob and Mitchell run up to the jeep.

LEMALLE

Northwest. Devil's Cauldron.

LeMalle dumps the half-naked Whore out onto the snow. Viking Bob starts the jeep and they roar off.

160 INT. WILDER'S CABIN - NIGHT

Eric shoves Kenai and Neff out the door.

NEFF

What's wrong?

ERIC

Just stay out of my face until
I'm gone!

He slams the door. Corbett smiles his Cheshire smile.

ERIC

(continuing; picks up ELT)
Emergency transmitter? What
happened to signal mirrors or
two-tone smoke fires?

CORBETT

Lets us watch each other's backs
over a wide area. Only thing
messed me up this time was
getting arrested in the baths.
ELT was in my duffel bag, not
around my neck where it should've
been.

ERIC

No way they'll find you on a
five-minute signal. And no way
-more-

(CONTINUED)

160 CONTINUED:

ERIC (Cont'd)

they'll get here in eight hours
in this weather, unless they're
right around the corner.

CORBETT

They haven't disappointed me yet.

161 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - DAWN

Fat, dry snowflakes pour through the still air. Gloomy
clouds hang immediately overhead. Visibility is ten feet;
the temperature is below zero.

162 INT. WILDER'S CABIN

It's 5:30 AM. Sitting at Wilder's desk, Eric pries the tops
from some bullets and dumps the gunpowder into a styrofoam
cup. He rings the top of the cup with bluetip matches, then
seals it with masking tape. Watching him from the cell,
Corbett smiles.

CORBETT

Flashbomb, eh?

Eric doesn't answer. He pulls on a heavy overcoat of
Wilder's. Putting the unused bullets back in Wilder's desk,
Eric finds Corbett's .44 magnum. He puts it and some
speedloaders full of .357 hollowpoints in his pockets.

163 EXT. / INT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - MONTAGE

Eric hobbles across town to the hot springs under cover of the early hour and heavy snowfall. He paces out several circuitous routes from the rental cabins to the airstrip at the edge of town, pausing now and again along the way.

He hears a door SQUEAK open and someone COUGH nearby, so he stands motionless in the snow.

Bundled in wool blankets, Kenai trundles down to his outhouse.

After Kenai passes by, Eric sneaks inside the spa. He climbs up into the catwalk.

As Kenai goes back to his cabin, he notices that the antique bear traps on display in front of the general store are missing. Suddenly, Eric grabs him and pulls him into the spa doorway.

END

MONTAGE

164 INT. HOT SPRINGS SPA

Eric's unexpected appearance startles Kenai.

ERIC

I need to rent a cabin.

KENAI

What's the problem with Sam Wilder's place?

ERIC

Will you rent me a cabin, or not?

KENAI

Pretty clever: If the trappers got that signal beacon and get here in time, Sam's is the first place they'll look. They may figure you're waiting for an airplane, so you can't stay in the shack by the airstrip. Last place they'd expect you is on the far side of town.

(shakes his head)

I can't afford any trouble --

ERIC

(takes out all his cash)

-- Here's a hundred dollars. And if you or anyone else will back me up on this --

KENAI

(grabs money)
-- Forget it. And try not to
bleed on my throw rugs.
(walks away, then turns
back)
Why do this?

ERIC

If you have to ask, you wouldn't
understand.

NEW ANGLE

Outside, there is the high-pitched WHINE of a snowmobile
(OS) driving into town. Eric cautiously follows the SOUND.

165 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - CLOSE ON ERIC

He listens as the vehicle cuts across town toward Neff's
house. The snowfall is too thick to see who it is. Eric

(CONTINUED)

165 CONTINUED:

moves in as close as he dares. The ENGINE stops (OS) and
FOOTSTEPS crunch up Neff's driveway.

WIDER ANGLE - NEFF'S HOUSE

A person in a hooded parka stands on Neff's stoop, about to
knock. Magnum drawn, Eric suddenly appears from the curtain
of falling snow. He shoves the person against the side of
the house.

NEW ANGLE

It's Anne Marie. She gasps. Seeing Eric, she's more angry
than relieved. Eric puts the gun back in his waistband.

ANNE MARIE

Eric! Why aren't you in
Fairbanks?

He pulls her away from Neff's doorstep. Her anger
dissolving, she wraps her arms around him.

ANNE MARIE

(continuing)
Oh, Christ, sweetheart. Four
days! I thought you were dead,
or worse.

ERIC

You can't stay here. Go back to

the Turtle. I'll meet you back there in a few hours.

ANNE MARIE

(stung by his coolness)
What's going on?

ERIC

I'll tell you everything later.

ANNE MARIE

Where's Corbett?

ERIC

Here. A transport plane is due at eleven. Once I put him on it, it's all over.

ANNE MARIE

So what's the problem?

(CONTINUED)

165 CONTINUED: (2)

ERIC

There isn't one, unless Corbett's men get here before the plane does.

Anne Marie grasps the situation with a sickening clarity.

ANNE MARIE

Let the people here handle it. It's their marshal Corbett killed!

CUTAWAY - NEFF

has been eavesdropping on the conversation through his window. The news about Wilder stuns him.

BACK TO SCENE

ERIC

Please, Anne Marie, you being here only complicates things.

ANNE MARIE

I'm staying.

Eric knows she won't relent.

ERIC

Take the snowmobile, park it behind Wilder's cabin.

Sighing, she STARTS the snow machine. Most of her photo gear is lashed to the saddlebags. As she pulls away, Eric limps back to Neff's house and knocks on the door.

INT. NEFF'S HOUSE

Shaken, Neff opens the door and lets Eric in.

NEFF

I was just on my way to your ladyfriend's, but I guess she found you.

ERIC

Yeah. Sorry I barked at you last night.

NEFF

I'm the one should be sorry... Goddamn Kenai, always out for a score. I never should've let him go over there.

(CONTINUED)

165 CONTINUED: (3)

ERIC

I'd sure like that favor you offered a while back.

Neff gets a seasick look on his face.

NEFF

Look, Mr. Desmond, I didn't count on it turning this ugly.

ERIC

What are you talking about?

NEFF

Bastards killed Sam, you think they won't kill the rest of us?

ERIC

There'll be three, four men at the most. I have some backup, nothing will happen.

NEFF

I'm real sorry. In a while, you're gone from this country. But we live here. No one wants to mix it up with those hombres.

Neff opens the door for Eric.

ERIC

(angry)
You don't care enough about Sam
to --

NEFF

-- Sam Wilder was my cousin.
He's why I came to Alaska. All
his letters, saying what a
paradise it is. But me ending up
dead won't do Sam a lick of good.

166 EXT. WILDER'S CABIN

Anne Marie waits in front as Eric hobbles up. She looks at
his bad ankle.

ANNE MARIE

You're hurt.

ERIC

Nothing broken. C'mon, we have
to hurry.

He leads her inside.

167 INT. WILDER'S CABIN

Corbett is calmly reclining on the cot in the holding cell.

CORBETT

Could've told you no one would
help...

Seeing Anne Marie, he smiles.

CORBETT

(continuing; to Anne Marie)
Maybe you can talk sense into
your boyfriend.

ERIC

Shut up!

CORBETT

(to Anne Marie)

Either way, you better clear out.
I don't want anyone innocent
getting harmed.

This comment has the intended effect on Anne Marie. Angry,
Eric throws Corbett a coat. Corbett puts it on. Reaching
through the bars, Eric cuffs Corbett's hands together.

ERIC

We're moving. Let's go.

As they exit, Corbett's sardonic look makes Anne Marie shiver.

168 INT. RENTAL CABIN

The ten-by-ten cabin is furnished with two sagging cots, a beat-up color TV set, a cookstove and a half-drum heat stove. Built into the rear wall is a rustic dumb waiter that once lowered perishables into the icy waters of a now-dry stream.

Eric checks his watch. 6:15 AM. He bolts the door and blocks the windows, opening one enough to let sound in from outside. He extinguishes the Benman lantern and douses the fire in the heat stove so no smoke will emit from the chimney. Anne Marie slumps into the corner next to the dumb waiter.

ERIC

You'll catch a chill by that dumb waiter shaft. Sit on the cot.
(hands her the .44)
Keep this pointed at him if I get preoccupied.

(CONTINUED)

168 CONTINUED:

Anne Marie reluctantly takes the huge gun. Trying to allay her fears, Eric sits and brushes the hair from her face. Corbett intently watches them. Before he can say anything, Eric shoots him a cold look. Corbett stays quiet.

169 EXT. / INT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - VARIOUS ANGLES - DAY

A pall hangs over the town. People know to stay inside. Time crawls by.

In his house, Neff, for once, has his TV turned off. He tries to read and listens for sounds outside.

In the spa, water DRIPS somewhere. All the stalls are empty.

In his sod house, Kenai looks out his one tiny window at the curtain of snow. Dixie comes up behind him and puts her hands on his shoulders. He looks up at her, glum.

In Wilder's empty cabin, his belongings are scattered about as if expecting his imminent return.

In the rental cabin, Eric checks his watch. 10:45 AM.

170 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - NEAR WILDER'S CABIN - DAY

The sound of a MOTOR grows in volume, then abruptly ceases. The trappers' jeep APPEARS in the snowfall on the road into town. It coasts quietly in and stops behind the cover of a woodpile across from Wilder's cabin.

The trappers get out of the jeep. LeMalle has Eric's Remington, Mitchell has his Peacemaker, and Viking Bob carries LeMalle's old carbine. Mitchell spits. It's so cold outside that the spittle freezes and CRACKS before it hits the ground.

They fan out and approach Wilder's cabin.

ANGLE WITH TRAPPERS

The cabin comes more clearly into view as the trappers move closer. There is no sign of life. Viking Bob gestures for the others, now positioned on either side of the cabin, to crouch down for cover.

VIKING BOB

(calls out)
Ben? Ben Corbett?

No response. Carbine held at his hip, Viking Bob walks up to the door and, with a mighty kick, BREAKS it in.

(CONTINUED)

170 CONTINUED:

REVERSE ANGLE - THROUGH WILDER'S CABIN DOOR

Viking Bob points the carbine at an empty room. He notices, however, Corbett's duffel bag on the floor of the cell.

171 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON

The trappers march through town like an advancing army, looking for some sign of Corbett. LeMalle stops to dig through his pockets for some food. All he comes up with is the stump of a candy bar. Viking Bob looks at him impatiently.

VIKING BOB

Look, we pull Ben's ass out of the fire, I'll get you a whole damn crate of Snickers bars.

LEMALLE

(insulted)
I'm right fuckin' here with you.

To prove his point, LeMalle trots from dwelling to dwelling, looking through windows and letting himself in through any

unlocked door. This proves fruitless, so he lets out a frustrated YELL. Pointing the Remington skyward, he lets off a couple thunderous SHOTS that ECHO back off the foothills.

172 INT. RENTAL CABIN

Hearing the shots, Eric pushes Anne Marie against the floor. Cautioning her to stay put, he crawls to the window and tries to see through the snowfall. After a moment of silence, from outside, not too far away:

LEMALLE (OS)

Ben! Speak out before I torch every dump in town!

Eric points the magnum at Corbett.

ERIC

Answer and I'll shoot!

CORBETT

You kill me, you sign your death warrant.
(re Anne Marie)
And hers.

173 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - NEAR MAQI

Viking Bob and Mitchell come running over to LeMalle. LeMalle fires another couple SHOTS for emphasis.

LEMALLE

(calls out)
You hear me? Ben?

VIKING BOB

(to LeMalle)
Ease off. We do this my way.

He and the others strain their ears for a clue.

VIKING BOB

(continuing; calls out)
Whoever's holding Ben Corbett, listen to me: we just want to know he's okay. He is, nobody gets hurt.

174 INT. RENTAL CABIN

His mind racing, Eric stares at Corbett. Despite the freezing temperature of the room, he's sweating.

CORBETT

They know I'm here. I don't say something, they'll plow this town under. You willing to accept that responsibility?

Setting his resolve, Eric drags Corbett to the window. He pushes the barrel of the magnum against Corbett's cheek.

ERIC

Say you're okay. Tell them I'll kill you if they rush us.

Anne Marie bites her lip and tries to maintain a brave front. Despite the gun in his face, Corbett remains calm.

CORBETT

(shouts through window)
Bob?

175 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - NEAR MAQI

Hearing Corbett's voice, the trappers spin around, trying to ascertain its direction.

CORBETT (OS)

Relax. I got a nervous man here with a magnum up my nose.

(CONTINUED)

175 CONTINUED:

The trappers follow his VOICE toward the rental cabins.

VIKING BOB

You in one piece?

CORBETT (OS)

I'm fine. Look forward to seeing you...

VIKING BOB

Count on it.

176 INT. RENTAL CABIN

Eric pulls Corbett away from the window. He shoots a look at Anne Marie. They're in a bind and she knows it.

177 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - NEAR MAQI

LeMalle grabs Viking Bob's arm.

LEMALLE

(to Viking Bob)
Sweet-talk won't get shit.

(calls out)
Choose it, asshole -- cut Corbett
loose, or soon as you come
outside, I put a fuckin' bullet
through your eye!

178 INT. RENTAL CABIN

Eric glances at Corbett, whose grim look certifies LeMalle's
boast.

CORBETT

Snow's to their advantage, kid.
You can't see them, but soon as
that plane comes, they'll sure as
hell know where we're going.
Wise up. Take me to the Yukon.
I'll give you that money and
guarantee you'll walk away.

ERIC

Why offer a buyoff with your
gunmen waiting outside?

CORBETT

The time has passed for men like
them and me. I know it. But
they're still fighting for
survival, like cornered animals.
That's why they'll kill you.

-more-

(CONTINUED)

178 CONTINUED:

CORBETT (Cont'd)

(smiles)
Be rude to let that happen after
you kept me from freezing back
there.

Anne Marie tries to hide how tempted she is by Corbett's
offer.

ANNE MARIE

(to Eric)
He's right about the snow. We're
blind.

Eric sighs -- is she against him, too? From outside:

VIKING BOB (OS)

Ben?

The trappers are obviously much closer. Eric signals to
Corbett not to answer.

NEW ANGLE

Eric and Corbett face the window. They don't notice as Anne Marie quietly shimmies outside through the narrow dumb waiter shaft to the back of the rental cabin. Eric turns, gasping as he realizes she's gone. Corbett smiles sardonically.

CORBETT

At least your girl had the sense to jump ship. Too bad she's the only one small enough to fit through that dumb waiter.

179 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - FOLLOW ANNE MARIE

Using the cover of the snowfall, Anne Marie circles around the outside edge of town toward Wilder's cabin. She takes some of her photo gear from the snowmobile.

180 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - NEAR MAQI

Unaware of Anne Marie's maneuver, the trappers wait for a response from Corbett. None comes. Viking Bob places a calming hand on LeMalle's shoulder.

VIKING BOB

Just wait, we don't know what this guy's up to. Ben'll let us know what to do.

181 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - ANTENNA TOWER

With a camera bag slung over her shoulder, Anne Marie climbs up the metal antenna tower behind Neff's house on the edge of town. She grits her teeth and fights back a wave of vertigo. The ground disappears from sight, hidden by the snow and fog.

Fifty feet up, she attaches her infrared video camera to the tower crossbars and, using a length of coaxial cable, hooks its RF output to the feedline of the community TV antenna.

182 INT. RENTAL CABIN

Eric looks at his watch. 10:55 AM.

183 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - NEAR MAQI

A CRACKING twig behind the cabins gets the trappers' attention. Clutching his rifle, LeMalle goes to investigate.

WITH LEMALLE

as he probes through the snow, listening. He reaches the edge of the woods and, finding nothing, returns to the others.

NEW ANGLE

Anne Marie crouches behind a tree, twenty feet behind LeMalle. After a moment, she tiptoes back toward the rental cabin.

184 INT. RENTAL CABIN

Eric and Corbett turn as Anne Marie's camera bag suddenly drops from the dumb waiter shaft. Anne Marie wriggles back inside. Before Eric can say anything, she puts her fingers over his mouth. She turns on the TV set and tunes it to channel 3.

ANGLE ON TV

A fuzzy IMAGE comes into view. It's Devil's Cauldron from the vantage of Anne Marie's infrared video camera. The falling snow shows up as a translucent yellow wash over the scene. Buildings are distinguishable as bluish silhouettes. Heat-producing objects -- warm walls, chimney smoke, etc. -- are pink and red. And there are three clearly-definable human figures standing near the Maqi. The trappers.

BACK TO SCENE

Corbett is amazed. Eric smiles at Anne Marie.

(CONTINUED)

184 CONTINUED:

ERIC

Your infrared camera?

ANNE MARIE

(nods)

Technology in the wilderness.
Only problem is talking to you on
your way to the landing strip.

ERIC

I've got an idea. We'll have to
work fast.

He digs through Anne Marie's bag of equipment and supplies, then stops and looks up. Outside, there is an OS SOUND that is felt before it is HEARD. The cargo PLANE approaches in the distance.

185 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - NEAR MAQI

The trappers look at each other as the SOUND of the plane grows louder.

VIKING BOB

There's what they're waiting on!

MITCHELL

(smiles tightly)
They'll have to come right past us.

186 EXT. RENTAL CABIN

Eric quietly pulls the door open. Holding the pistol to Corbett's head, he pushes Corbett out in front of him.

Anne Marie and Eric exchange a long look. Fighting back tears, she reaches up and touches his face.

ERIC

When you ran off, I thought you'd keep going 'til you were back home in Washington.

ANNE MARIE

My home is here. With you.

He smiles. Then he and Corbett are gone, lost from sight in the snowfall. After a beat, Anne Marie takes a deep breath and slinks away in the other direction, toward the dance hall.

(CONTINUED)

186 CONTINUED:

ANGLE NEAR THE MAQI

The trappers wait, twenty-five feet from Eric and Corbett. The DRONE of the plane grows louder.

ERIC AND CORBETT

start toward the airstrip. Corbett sees a patch of bare dirt and SCUFFS his feet in it.

ANGLE NEAR MAQI

The trappers turn to the SOUND, heard under the RUMBLE of the still-distant plane. Converging, they head in that direction. Suddenly, Anne Marie's VOICE booms through the town:

ANNE MARIE (OS)

(over PA)
They're moving toward you!

WIDER

Eric SHOOTs a couple times, then backtracks and pulls Corbett behind one of the rental cabins.

Ducking the bullets, the trappers sprawl onto the ground.

187 INT. DANCE HALL

Anne Marie has turned on the rusty TV near the pulpit. While watching the infrared IMAGE of the action outside, she holds the microphone wired to the old PA.

ANGLE - THE TRAPPERS

Viking Bob gestures to Mitchell and LeMalle to separate.

ANNE MARIE (OS)

(over PA)
They're fanning out.

Angry, LeMalle BLASTS his rifle in direction of her VOICE.

LEMALLE

(to Viking Bob)
Kenai's PA -- but how the fuck
she seein' us?

VIKING BOB

Doesn't matter. We know where
they're going. C'mon.

Stalking, anxious, LeMalle follows Viking Bob.

(CONTINUED)

187 CONTINUED:

MITCHELL

splits off from them and looks for footprints in the snow.

188 EXT. ALLEY

Eric pushes Corbett through a narrow pass between two buildings in the center of town. He walks in Corbett's footprints. Almost through to the other side, he suddenly stops. Pulling Corbett with him, Eric walks backwards, still carefully placing each foot in an existing footprINT. Corbett can't help but smile.

189 INT. DANCE HALL

Watching the TV screen, Anne Marie sees one of the red blips change direction and head toward her.

ANNE MARIE

(into mic)
One is moving back toward the
cabins.

190 EXT. DANCE HALL

It's LeMalle. He crosses to Kenai's generator. With a well-placed rifle SHOT to its innards, he GRINDS it to a halt.

191 INT. DANCE HALL

The TV PICTURE disappears as the power dies. Anne Marie keys the PA microphone; it's dead, too.

192 EXT. ALLEY

Eric and Corbett emerge from between the buildings. Eric backtracks toward the hot springs spa, now leaving an obvious trail.

193 EXT. HOT SPRINGS SPA

Eric and Corbett go inside. Eric pulls the door closed behind them, but leaves it ajar.

194 INT. KENAI'S HOUSE

The DRONE of the approaching plane is ever louder. Kenai stands and pulls on a succession of sweaters. Dixie looks at him.

DIXIE

Earl, it's crazy to go out there.

(CONTINUED)

194 CONTINUED:

KENAI

I hear someone in the spa.

He straps on a holster under his sealskin coat.

195 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - AIRSTRIP - LONG SHOT

The big 4-prop plane is about to touch down on the far side of the snow-covered airstrip.

196 INT. DANCE HALL

Anne Marie zips up her parka and cautiously goes outside.

197 EXT. HOT SPRINGS SPA

LeMalle follows the footprints to the door Eric left ajar. He peers inside.

198 INT. HOT SPRINGS SPA

It's tomb-quiet except for water DRIPPING and pipes CREAKING. LeMalle looks around. The sound of a small DING against metal above him gets his attention.

He sees a fleeting shadow cut across the catwalk above him. He finds a metal ladder, slings his rifle over his shoulder and climbs up. Hearing another SOUND on the far side of the catwalk, he hurries across, holding onto the pipes for balance.

LeMalle is directly above the huge central pool. He ducks to go under a long piece of twine running from the ceiling to a dark corner below. Suddenly, the twine snaps tight, pulling open a heavy trap door on the ceiling. The door swings down and knocks LeMalle off the catwalk. With a yelp, he splashes into the water below.

NEW ANGLE

Hidden in the shadows, Eric drops the end of the twine and rushes toward the front door with Corbett in tow.

ERIC

(to Corbett)

That'll keep him out of the cold.

LEMALLE

climbs out of the central pool, soaked. He pulls his wet jacket off and furiously throws it down.

199 EXT. HOT SPRINGS SPA

Eric leads Corbett around the back of the spa. A GUNSHOT rings out nearby and a BULLET hits the wall above Eric's head.

MITCHELL

has seen their faint silhouettes through the snow. He purposely SHOOTS over their heads so he doesn't hit Corbett.

ANGLE BEHIND HOT SPRINGS SPA

Eric and Corbett crouch down and double back. They are once again swallowed up by the snowfall.

200 EXT. ALLEY

Viking Bob follows their footprints in between the buildings. He continues to a point where they converge to one set, then stop. He smiles at the naivete of Eric's ploy. Looking at the boardwalk railing above, he assumes Eric and Corbett have swung over it onto the iced-over boardwalk. Pleased with his deduction, Viking Bob continues along the alley.

SNAP! Viking Bob lets out a horrible HOWL and falls on his back in the snow. Biting into his right calf is a huge conibear leg trap. In extreme pain, he struggles to lever it open with the barrel of his rifle.

201 EXT. KENAI'S GENERAL STORE

Corbett shoots Eric a dangerous look as Viking Bob's CRIES carry through the town.

ERIC

He'll live.

202 EXT. ALLEY

Hearing Viking Bob's cries, Mitchell backtracks and rushes to Viking Bob's aid. Between them, they manage to yawn open the jaws of the trap and free Viking Bob's leg. Viking Bob tries to walk but the leg won't support him -- the bone is broken. Bitterly frustrated, he waves Mitchell on. In agony, Viking Bob eases down in the snow. He tears a strip of lining from his coat and wraps his leg to stop the bleeding.

203 EXT. HOT SPRINGS SPA

Anne Marie scurries by on her way to the airstrip. Suddenly, the hot springs door bursts open and LeMalle lunges at her. Stripped of his wet clothes, he's wrapped

(CONTINUED)

203 CONTINUED:

in blankets and furs, his feet protected by sacks lashed to them. His wet body and hair steams in the frigid air.

Anne Marie lets out a startled cry and springs away from him. She falls hard on her back, knocking her wind out. Scrambling for footing in the snow, LeMalle drops his rifle. He comes at her again. Anne Marie moves away and pulls the .44 magnum out. LeMalle stops and glares at her.

ANNE MARIE

(gasping)
Don't make me shoot.

She gets up, keeping the magnum pointed shakily toward him. LeMalle glowers menacingly.

ANNE MARIE

(continuing)
We're going to Sam's cabin. You can stay in the jail until this is over.

LeMalle slowly crouches down for his rifle. Anne Marie wields the handgun at him, but he doesn't stop.

LEMALLE

Want to chance it with that hog-leg? You can't even hold it up. Better drop me first shot, bitch, or I'll rip your fuckin' lungs out.

Taunting, sneering, LeMalle stares her down. Anne Marie is paralyzed. Feeling that he's won, LeMalle wraps his bony fingers around the stock of the Remington.

Anne Marie closes her eyes and FIRES. Pulling the rifle close, LeMalle tucks and rolls and jumps to his feet. Anne Marie FIRES again, and AGAIN. Shot, LeMalle hobbles away, leaving a trail of blood in the snow. Numb, Anne Marie lets her arm fall.

204 EXT. BOARDWALK NEAR WILDER'S CABIN

Eric looks around at the sound of the shooting, fearing the worst. He pulls Corbett off the boardwalk and they cut across open ground toward the airstrip depot.

205 INT. HOT SPRINGS SPA

Kenai looks around at the messy RESULTS of LeMalle's ransacking for things to wear. Kenai turns, startled, when he hears footsteps. It's Neff and Meyerling.

(CONTINUED)

205 CONTINUED:

KENAI

(disgusted)
Lookit this damn mess. Where in hell's Wilder?

NEFF

(after a beat)
Dead. Trappers killed him.

KENAI

Aw, Jesus. Told you this was trouble.
(to Meyerling)
What about you, big shot? Do

something. Who's side are you on, anyway?

MEYERLING

Hey, I thought you people loved Corbett and his wild men!

KENAI

This shoot-'em-up shit is bad for business. I'm sick of it.

MEYERLING

What about you, Neff?

NEFF

Well... two of the trappers are down already --

MEYERLING

(suddenly on the bandwagon)
-- One left; three of us. Let's finish it.

NEFF

What about Eric Desmond?

MEYERLING

I'll handle him.

206 EXT. YARDS BEHIND AIRSTRIP DEPOT

Through the snow, Eric can see the faint outline of the plane on the runway. He and Corbett hurry toward the back of the airstrip depot.

As they wend their way through the junk-filled yards, Eric catches a glimpse of movement around a corner, REFLECTED in a pane of glass leaning against a roll of tar paper.

(CONTINUED)

206 CONTINUED:

ERIC'S POV - REFLECTION

Peacemaker in hand, Mitchell is behind the depot, coming right for them.

WIDER

Eric takes out the homemade flashbomb. He lights it, tosses it toward Mitchell and covers his eyes. It EXPLODES with a muffled pop and a bright flash of white light.

Mitchell stumbles backwards and blinks his eyes. The flash has temporarily clouded his vision.

Eric moves Corbett to another approach to the depot and waits for Mitchell to move on.

207 EXT. REAR WALL OF AIRSTRIP DEPOT

Mitchell is about to do just that when a hand on his shoulder stops him. It's LeMalle, oblivious to the profuse bleeding from his right shoulder. Mitchell blinks, still having trouble seeing. LeMalle gestures for him to be quiet and points in Eric and Corbett's direction.

LEMALLE

(whispers)
Over there...

He hoists his Remington.

MITCHELL

(whispers)
Hold it. You might hit Ben.

LEMALLE

Bullshit. I hit what I'm aiming at.

MITCHELL

Let 'em come closer first...

But LeMalle is too anxious. He swings the rifle up, left-handed, and SHOOTs.

NEW ANGLE

The bullet just misses Eric. He panics and wildly returns FIRE with the .357.

208 EXT. REAR WALL OF AIRSTRIP DEPOT

Mitchell and LeMalle scatter under the hail of bullets.

(CONTINUED)

208 CONTINUED:

ANGLE ON ERIC AND CORBETT

as they HEAR LeMalle's labored footsteps run past them, nearby. Eric peers cautiously around the corner toward the depot. There is no further movement.

Eric waits a moment, then leads Corbett cautiously toward the depot.

209 EXT. REAR WALL OF AIRSTRIP DEPOT

Reaching the rear wall, they practically stumble over something. It's Mitchell, lying on the ground near the

wall, badly wounded by Eric's barrage. Eric gasps. Anguished, Corbett kneels next to Mitchell. Mitchell pulls him closer.

MITCHELL

Glad to see you're okay. I told
LeMalle not to shoot.
(tries to smile)
Had some fine seasons, didn't
we...

Mitchell's grasp on Corbett's coat relaxes as he dies. Horrified, Eric stares at the man he killed. Noticing the scrimshaw lying on the snow where it slipped from Mitchell's pocket, Corbett picks it up.

CORBETT

(to Eric)
Fifteen years on the trail with
this man, I never saw him rise to
anger.

Glaring at Eric, Corbett dips his hand in Mitchell's blood, and suddenly smears it across Eric's mouth. Repelled, Eric pulls back.

CORBETT

(continuing; bitterly)
Your first kill. How does it
taste?

Wiping his face, sickened and desolate, Eric has no reply.

WIDER

Then, from somewhere close by, LeMalle FIRES at them. Eric stuffs the .357 in his belt and uses a brick to knock the padlock off the back door of the depot. He pushes Corbett inside.

210 INT. CARGO PLANE - COCKPIT

The pony-tailed, ex-hippie PILOT shuts his engines off and removes his Walkman headphones. Hearing LeMalle's continuing GUNSHOTS, the Pilot pulls his door closed and turns on his two-way radio.

PILOT

(into radio mic)
Circle, this is BMY-955. I just
touched down in Devil's Cauldron.
Nobody's here to greet me like
usual, and there's gunfire. I'm
getting scarce.

With that, he STARTS his engines up again.

CUT TO ERIC IN DEPOT

who turns, startled, when he hears the ENGINES coughing to life OS.

211 INT. CARGO PLANE - COCKPIT

The Pilot fiddles with his controls and prepares to take off. He looks up, surprised, as the passenger door suddenly opens.

WIDER

Anne Marie slides onto the seat.

ANNE MARIE

You can't leave yet.

PILOT

It's my responsibility to get this aircraft out of here safely.

Anne Marie points the .44 at him.

PILOT

(continuing)
You got to be kidding.

ANNE MARIE

Leave the engines idling. Go back and open the side door.

Shaking his head and muttering, the Pilot unfastens his seat belt, climbs between the two seats to the cargo compartment, and obliges the little lady with the big gun.

212 INT. AIRSTRIP DEPOT

The depot, as temporary-looking as the rest of Devil's Cauldron, is a boxcar-shaped loading dock and warehouse with a corrugated steel roof. Boxes, wood palettes and hand dollies are piled haphazardly about.

Eric and Corbett navigate through the piles of boxes, inching toward the front door -- the door leading to the plane.

Suddenly, a string of overhead lights come on. Eric goes for the .357, then stops when he sees Meyerling, Kenai and Neff have come in the front door. Kenai stomps his feet and

shivers. Grandstanding for the others, Meyerling steps forward.

MEYERLING

Nobody wants any more killings; we all agree to that, correct? (no one argues)
That's good. Now, Eric, you're gonna hand your prisoner over to us.

ERIC

Fuck you.

MEYERLING

This isn't your concern. It's over, here and now.

CORBETT

(to Meyerling)
Sure, when you put a bullet in my back on the way out. Easier for all involved.

MEYERLING

Not a bad idea. Face it, Ben. There's no room in Alaska for you any more.

Meyerling pokes with his foot at a tipped-over rack of Eskimo paraphernalia -- masks, furs, big skin drums, fish-and bear-spears.

MEYERLING

(continuing)
You're as antiquated as this shit.

Meyerling moves toward Corbett, but Eric stands in his way.

(CONTINUED)

212 CONTINUED:

ERIC

Keep back.

CORBETT

You're quite a piece of work, Meyerling. The tide changes, you ride right along with it.

Eric looks at Neff.

ERIC

Neff, you know better than this...

NEFF

You're an outsider, Mr. Desmond.
Step aside; stay out of it.

Kenai and Neff move in with Meyerling. Eric stands his ground and reaches for the .357 in his belt.

NEW ANGLE

Suddenly, LeMalle stumbles into the depot, the blankets and furs dragging at his feet. His right side is bathed in blood. Half-frozen, bled dry, he looks ready to drop down dead. In his left hand, impossibly, he still clutches the massive Remington.

He hoists it to his hip and grits his teeth as he BOLTS a round into the chamber with his injured right arm. Bracing himself, he levels the rifle at Eric.

Hearing the ACTION of the rifle, Eric turns.

Corbett reaches down, grabs a rusty Eskimo spear in both his handcuffed hands, and hurls it.

There is a deafening ROAR as LeMalle's rifle discharges.

LeMalle flies back from the recoil -- and from the spear stuck clear through his chest.

Some packing material above Eric's head smolders, ignited by the muzzle blast.

NEW ANGLE

There is a moment of silence. Corbett looks at the other weapons near him, and then at Meyerling. Threatened, Meyerling pulls out a .380 automatic. Before Eric can do anything, Meyerling FIRES.

The IMPACT of the bullet throws Corbett against some boxes.

(CONTINUED)

212 CONTINUED: (2)

With a YELL, Eric jumps Meyerling and rips the gun from his grasp. Enraged, he pummels Meyerling with it until Kenai and Neff pull them apart. Eric wrenches away from them and scrambles to his feet with Meyerling's gun in his hand.

ERIC

(continuing)
Anybody moves and I'll shoot!

Holding the .380 on them, Eric crosses to Corbett. Bleeding from the abdomen, he's trying to stand up.

ERIC

(continuing)
Can you walk?

CORBETT

Wound's a through-and-through.
Missed my liver, I think.

ERIC

Let's get out of here.

Cautiously backing away from the others, Eric helps Corbett get up and shuffle toward the OS SOUND of the cargo plane.

213 EXT. DEVIL'S CAULDRON - AIRSTRIP

Anne Marie jumps down from the cockpit. She and Eric lift Corbett into the plane.

214 EXT. CARGO PLANE

as it taxis and lifts off.

215 INT. CARGO PLANE - (AERIAL SHOT)

While Eric takes Corbett's handcuffs off, Anne Marie looks at his wound. He waves her away.

ERIC

How come you didn't let him shoot me?

CORBETT

(softly)
Like I said, I'd still be up on that mountain, frozen solid, it wasn't for you.

ERIC

We'll get you to a hospital, soon as we get to Fairbanks.

(CONTINUED)

215 CONTINUED:

CORBETT

So they can patch me up and put me in a cage? Forget it. Meyerling's right -- I'm a dinosaur. Greedy bastards like him, it's their turn with this land. Put me in the woods, let me live or die on my own.

He painfully pulls himself into a sitting position.

CORBETT

(continuing; peers out
window)

Look down there, tell me what any
of this matters. Struggles of
men get swallowed by the bigness.
Soon there won't be a trace of
our troubles... or us.

ERIC

You're wrong. Everything we do
leaves its mark. You said it
yourself -- there are hundred-
year-old footprints in the
tundra.

Too tired to argue, Corbett leans back against the window.
He takes Mitchell's scrimshaw out of his pocket and looks at
it.

EXTREME CLOSE UP - THE SCRIMSHAW

The exquisitely beautiful and detailed engraving depicts a
grizzly beside a wilderness creek, with trees and mountains
in the background.

CORBETT

clutches the scrimshaw in his hand and closes his eyes.

NEW ANGLE - (AERIAL SHOT)

Eric sighs as he looks at the blood -- Mitchell's blood --
on the back of his hand. He stares at Corbett for a long
moment. Then, resolved, he climbs up front and says
something to the Pilot. Grumbling, the Pilot adjusts his
controls.

CUT TO:

216 EXT. HAUL ROAD - PUMPING STATION - DAY

The snow clouds are dissipating. The cargo plane comes down
through them and lands on the airstrip behind the pumping
station.

217 INT. CARGO PLANE

As it rolls to a stop, Eric throws open the cargo door.
Corbett sits up, surprised. He and Eric exchange a long
look, then Corbett crosses to the open door and gingerly
steps down onto the snow-covered runway.

218 EXT. CARGO PLANE

Eric and Anne Marie watch from the door of the plane as Corbett limps across the runway toward the treeline. As he goes, his footprints are dusted over by the snow and wind.

Corbett stops, turns and looks back at Eric, then continues onward, disappearing into the forest.

ANGLE ON CARGO PLANE

Eric closes the cargo door as the Pilot turns the plane around and taxis back down the runway.

219 INT. CARGO PLANE - (AERIAL SHOT)

Eric wearily sits next to Anne Marie. She kisses him.

The Pilot glances over his shoulder and frowns.

PILOT

(to himself)

Too damn crazy in this state
anymore. I'm moving back to L.A.

220 INT. CARGO PLANE - ANGLE THROUGH WINDOW - (AERIAL SHOT)

The plane climbs above the fog and snow clouds into a sunny, ice blue sky. It banks and turns south. Behind it, the mountains roll on toward the Arctic wasteland, forever.

FADE OUT