

SAVING DOC

Written by

Michael Angelella

Story by Michael Angelella and James Knotts

3800 Canterbury Road
Unit B
Baltimore, MD
21218
443-668-0405

"Dogs have a way of finding the people who need them."

- Thom Jones

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

A RED RACING TRUCK--a Polaris Trophy Vehicle--EXPLODES into view. It roars hell-bent across a rugged desert terrain, emblazoned with race stripes and decals.

TITLE: "MOJAVE DESERT, SOUTH OF LAS VEGAS"

The Polaris HURTLES over a dune. Clouds of dust and dirt fly in every direction. Not a ride for the faint of heart.

At the wheel is 40-year old ROY DIX. Dust-covered, sweaty, he skillfully handles the truck through every turn and leap.

He soars over another dune. Closes fast on A GREEN BAJA DUNE BUGGY up ahead. Roy pulls close and blows past it. So close that his rear tires spew desert dirt--

--in the face of the BUGGY'S DRIVER, who spits, curses.

Roy pays no mind. He keeps going. Pushes the truck--and himself--to the limit.

A dune to the right beckons. Roy spots it and makes a wicked, sharp turn in that direction.

Roy's truck charges up the face of the dune at full-tilt, sails over it and--

--a BLUE RAZOR RACING TRUCK roars up the other side of the dune! Coming straight for him.

Roy doesn't flinch. Doesn't give an inch. He drives like he sees no danger at all. Or like he doesn't give a damn.

The DRIVER of the Blue Razor SCREAMS his fright. At the last instant, he VEERS out of the way. The Razor skids, swerves.

The trucks miss each other BY INCHES.

The Blue Razor comes to an abrupt stop. The Driver coughs and gags on the cloud of dirt that swallows his truck.

Roy glances back. Barely registers a reaction. Floors it.

His Polaris races on through the desert.

EXT. DESERT RACING GARAGE - MINUTES LATER

A sign over a hangar-size garage reads: "Mojave Racing Experience". The Polaris rumbles into a lot filled with other race trucks and buggies waiting to be rented. Parks.

Roy climbs out. He beats the dust from his clothes and smiles. That ride felt good. He starts for the garage just as a Lincoln Town Car speeds up and blocks him. The driver's window powers down and the Man from the Razor Truck leers out, his face a mask of fury.

MAN

(screams)

You could've killed me! It's a one-way track and you were going the wrong way!

ROY

(caught off-guard)

I'm sorry. I--

MAN

Asshole!

The Man floors the Lincoln out of the lot.

ROY

(sighs, to himself)

Sorry.

He continues to the garage.

INT. GARAGE OFFICE - SAME

IZABELLE AVEDA works the front counter. She's 30. Wears a USMC tank top. An American flag and a Marine Corps flag decorate the wall behind her.

She looks through the front window. Sees Roy coming.

IZABELLE

(shouts)

Hey, Mac! Mac! Here comes your trouble.

An office door whips open and ELIJAH MCCOY storms out. He's gruff, 40-ish, and already rigid with anger. He looks at Izabelle for an explanation--

MAC

What trouble!

--then sees Roy enter.

IZABELLE

Take it easy. Remember your blood pressure.

MAC

(ignores her and erupts)
What the hell, Roy!

ROY

How's it going?

Roy strolls to the counter. Bothered by what just transpired.

ROY (CONT'D)

Hi, Isabelle.

IZABELLE

Hey, Roy.

MAC

What the hell's wrong with you? My customer said you just tried to kill him out on the track.

ROY

I didn't try to kill him. I--

MAC

He said you were being reckless.

ROY

I got lost in my thoughts. Took a wrong turn. I apologized--

Mac fumes, not in the forgiving mood.

MAC

He's not coming back. You cost me his business.

Roy frowns. Takes out his wallet.

ROY

I'll make it up to you.

MAC

I don't want your money. I want his. Go on. Get out of here.

Roy shrugs, puts away his wallet. Slaps truck keys on the counter.

ROY

I'm sorry, sarge. Really. Thanks for the ride.

(to Isabelle)

Bye, Isabelle.

IZABELLE

Bye, Roy.

Roy leaves. Mac stares after him. Sighs, frustrated.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A handful of customers nurse drinks along the bar. A jukebox plays a moody blues number.

The door opens and Mac enters. He's tired, thirsty at the end of a long day. He spots an open barstool. Heads for it.

The BARTENDER approaches.

MAC

Corona.

BARTENDER

You got it.

On the stool right next to Mac is Roy. He downs a shot of bourbon and chases it with a sip of beer.

ROY

You missed happy hour.

MAC

Had some new trucks delivered.

ROY

Business must be good.

MAC

Good enough.

The Corona arrives.

MAC (CONT'D)

Thanks for inviting me for a drink.

ROY

Least I could do. I'm really sorry about earlier today.

They drink. A weeping guitar on the juke is the only sound.

MAC

(deeply concerned)

What's with you, man? I don't see or hear from you for months...

Roy doesn't answer. He drains his beer and signals to the bartender for more. Mac tries another tack.

MAC (CONT'D)
How's your business?

ROY
Old news, brother. I'm out of
business.

Mac can't believe his ears.

ROY (CONT'D)
I just couldn't do it anymore. So I
shut it down. Seeing too many
ghosts, I guess.

A new shot and beer arrive for Roy. Mac watches him toss back
the shot. His concern rises.

MAC
So what're you doing with yourself?

ROY
Pretty much what you see. Drink.
Drive. Trying to figure things out.

SILENCE. Then--

MAC
What about the VA? You talk to
someone over there?

Roy guzzles a mouthful of beer. Nods.

ROY
Got tired of their shrinks saying,
"How's that make you feel?" "Tell
me more about that." "You know, the
past doesn't have to equal the
future." Hell, not even their drugs
made a difference.
(to the bartender)
Another round of shots and beers
for us. Doubles.

He gestures to Mac's beer, which is still half-full.

ROY (CONT'D)
You gonna drink that, or you wanna
put a nipple on it?

Mac drinks. Watches Roy over the rim of his glass.

The next drinks start to arrive. A new song plays on the
juke. (Think Brian Jonestown Massacre's "Hide and Seek".)

Roy downs a shot. Mac watches him, worried.

EXT. BAR PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Roy wobbles outside, slightly drunk. A still sober Mac trails right behind him, ready in case Roy falls.

EXT. JEEP - SAME

Mac guides Roy toward a lovingly restored 1969 Jeep Commander. Helps him get in the front passenger seat.

EXT. JEEP - MINUTES LATER

The Jeep cruises along a desert highway, windows down.

INT. JEEP - SAME

Mac drives as Roy rests his head, letting the night air wash over him. Roy stares out at--

--the distant lights of the Las Vegas skyline.

INT. MAC'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The front door swings open. Mac leads Roy inside. Roy collapses on a sofa and Mac tosses blanket over him. Almost at once, he is asleep.

Mac plops into a chair across the room, exhausted. He watches Roy, deep in thought. Finally, he makes up his mind about something, takes out a cell phone and makes a call.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. MAC'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Roy wakes up on the sofa. He's fiercely hung over.

He sits up and finds a note on a table next to him. Reads it.

It's handwritten: "Make coffee. Call if you need anything."

INT. MAC'S HOUSE/BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Roy steadies himself at the sink as he looks in the mirror. The face that stares back at him is an ashen wreck.

For the first time, we see he wears DOG TAGS around his neck.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - LATER

Roy jogs in the hard morning sun. He pushes against the effects of the hangover with all he's got. It's a battle.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE ROAD - LATER

Roy has been running awhile. He's shirtless and all muscles. Sweat pours off him. No longer sluggish, his strides have a steady rhythm. His dog tags hang backwards, down his back.

Roy picks up the pace. Goes faster. Faster still. Pushes himself into an all-out, breathless sprint.

INT. MAC'S HOUSE/KITCHEN- LATER

Roy pours himself a steaming cup of coffee.

INT. MAC'S HOUSE/STUDY - MINUTES LATER

Roy drinks coffee as he strolls through Mac's place. Looks over some PHOTOS on a wall. Leans in for a closer look at--

One PHOTO shows Roy and Mac in cammie uniforms and bush hats. They hold M16 assault rifles in a military compound.

Another PHOTO shows Roy, Mac and some other Marines--all in cammies--in front of a painted sign that reads: "USMC Outpost Zorro." Roy and Mac drape their arms around each other. Sitting alongside Roy is BEAU, a German Shepherd.

Roy stares intently at the picture of the dog.

Beau wears a big "dog smile." Mouth open, tongue lapping over his teeth.

Roy sips his coffee. Keeps staring at the picture of Beau until he's interrupted by a KNOCK at the door.

INT. MAC'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Roy opens the front door and is taken aback to find SARA HYLAND there. 40-ish. Attractive. Wears jeans and a baseball cap with the word "Wild" embroidered on it.

An awkward moment of silence. For both of them. Then--

ROY
Good to see you.

SARA
Liar.

Another awkward PAUSE.

SARA (CONT'D)

Mac called me last night. Told me you were here.

ROY

Thank you Mac.

SARA

(hesitates, then--)

He said you closed your business.

ROY

Don't you have enough troubles of your own, you need to bug me about mine?

SARA

(beat)

Every time you open your mouth, you find another way to insult me.

Roy sighs. Has no desire to hear any more of this.

ROY

So what's this about?

Sara bristles.

INT. SARA'S TRUCK - LATER

Sara drives a Ford Maverick pickup truck. Roy is in the seat next to her. A beat of silence, then--

ROY

So what's with the "Wild"?

SARA

It's a hockey team. The Minnesota Wild.

ROY

Didn't know you were a hockey fan.

SARA

I'm not. I just like the hat.

ROY

I thought maybe you were advertising for a new husband.

SARA

In that case, I would've found one that said: "No vacancy."

Roy looks away and allows himself a little smile.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - LATER

Sara's truck rumbles down a desert road. It turns past a shady stand of mesquite and acacia trees and arrives at a well-kept one-story house. Nothing but desert all around.

EXT. ROY'S HOUSE - SAME

Sara parks in front. A Chevy Silverado is already there.

ROY
Hey. My truck.

SARA
I had Kiko pick it up from where
you left it at the bar last night.
Mac gave me the keys this morning.

Roy gets out. Anxious to be gone. He looks back, surprised to find Sara getting out as well.

She stares at the house.

SARA (CONT'D)
I see the porch still needs fixing.
You haven't painted yet either.

Roy sighs, perturbed.

ROY
You gave me a ride home so you
could point out my shortcomings?

SARA
Actually, I need a favor. Don't
worry, it's not for me. It's for a
German Shepherd at the rescue.

ROY
I'm out of the dog business.

SARA
But this one can really use your
help.

ROY
Not interested.

SARA
Why not?

ROY
No.

SARA

Why?

ROY

Because--

(beat)

Because I know what you're trying to do.

SARA

What's that?

ROY

(sputters)

I don't know. Fix me.

SARA

Is that what I'm trying to do? You have a high opinion of my abilities if you think that's why I'm here.

ROY

Just leave me alone.

Roy marches toward his house. Reaches the porch.

SARA

(calls out)

Okay, your call. But this dog's getting an OD of phenobarbital tonight. We're putting him down. You were his last hope.

Sara's words stop Roy cold. He turns back to her. Curious.

Sara comes to the porch. Sits on the steps. Tired.

SARA (CONT'D)

Couple days ago, the State Police raided a dogfighting ring out in the desert. The bad guys got word and scattered like flies before any of them could be arrested. But they left behind more than a dozen of their dogs. The only person the police caught was the caretaker of the place.

ROY

And you got involved how?

SARA

No other rescue shelter can handle taking that many dogs at once, so the police brought them to me. They asked me to sort which ones might be saved.

(MORE)

SARA (CONT'D)

A lot of the dogs were pretty sick, injured. I'm giving them the best medical care I can.

Roy sits with her. Feels her sorrow.

ROY

I'm sorry. This Shepherd. What's his story?

Sara reaches into a pocket and takes out A LEATHER DOG COLLAR. She hands it to Roy. He studies it.

The collar is embroidered with a name: "GLADIATOR."

ROY (CONT'D)

Gladiator.

SARA

That's the collar the Shepherd was wearing when he came in.

(beat)

And there's something else. We gave him a physical and found something inside one of his ears. A tattoo. It says "X257".

This gets Roy's attention.

ROY

That's a K9 military dog tattoo.

SARA

That's what the police told me. Of all the dogs they rescued, this one's the most violent. His kill switch is locked on.

Roy fingers the dog collar. A wave of disgust comes over him.

ROY

People that fight dogs, lowest form of life there is.

SARA

(nods)

You always told me vets deserve whatever help they need after serving their country. You're the best dog trainer I know. If anyone can help this vet, you can.

Roy thinks, thinks. Then hands her back the dog collar.

ROY

No.

Sara is rocked. Can't believe her ears. She stands, pissed.

SARA
Too late. He's already here. Out
back.

On Roy's shocked expression--

EXT. BARN - MINUTES LATER

Sara and Roy walk behind Roy's house to where a sunbaked barn sits in the back yard. A small, covered CARGO VAN is parked in front of the barn door.

KIKO VEGA gets out of the van. He's a big man, leathery and solid. He's all smiles at the sight of Roy.

KIKO
Mr. Dix! Good to see you again.

ROY
Kiko!

The two men shake hands. Kiko's left arm is heavily bandaged.

ROY (CONT'D)
What the hell happened to you?

Kiko loses his smile. Jerks a thumb at the van.

KIKO
That damn monster in there. Near
took off my arm! Twenty stitches
and a tetanus shot.

SARA
(to Roy)
We wanted to park inside the
kennel, get the dog out of the
heat, but the door's locked.

ROY
It's staying that way. I'm closed.
For good.

KIKO
What? No more Dog Man?

ROY
No more. Done.
(to Sara)
See, he listens.

Sara does a slow burn. Then, abruptly--

SARA

Kiko, open the van.

Kiko does as told. He opens the rear van door and stands aside. With trepidation.

Inside the van is a big cage. It appears empty.

Roy takes a step closer and sees--

--a shadow in the back of the cage. And in the shadow lurks...A DOG. Its eyes catch the light.

Roy leans in for a closer look when--

--the dog EXPLODES forward with terrific speed. It SLAMS into the locked cage door, barking with volcanic rage.

Roy LEAPS back, stunned.

ROY

Jesus!

This is GLADIATOR, a ferocious German Shepherd. He keeps up his attack on the cage with his dagger teeth.

Roy is horrified. The dog's body is covered with SCARS.

ROY (CONT'D)

Want my advice? Put him down.
You'll do him a favor. He's well on
his way to being dead anyway.

Sara is deeply at this verdict. The German Shepherd rages on.

EXT. ROY'S HOUSE - LATER

Sara's truck drives away, followed by the cargo van. Roy stands on the porch, watching them go. Good riddance.

EXT. ROY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An explosive lightning storm rages on the desert skyline.

Roy POUNDS a heavy punching bag that hangs from a tree in his yard. He's stripped, sweating hard. He's been at this awhile.

EXT. ROY'S HOUSE - LATER

Wind blows. Lightning cracks the sky. But there is no rain.

Still under the trees, Roy bench presses a heavy barbell. His muscles strain with each rep. Again and again and again.

Finally, he drops the barbell on its resting pegs and sits up, spent, breathing hard.

He watches the stormy night, deep in thought. THUNDER rolls.

INT. ROY HOUSE/STUDY - LATER

Roy sits at a computer, wet from a shower. On a Zoom call.

ROY

Hector! I appreciate you getting back to me. Know you're busy.

On the computer screen is HECTOR LOPEZ. He wears Marine fatigues with Master Sergeant E-8 Chevrons.

LOPEZ

Anything for my old Sarge.

ROY

You're the sergeant now. Congrats on the promotion.

LOPEZ

Thanks, sir. How's it going?

ROY

I'm good. Any luck on my request?

BEAT. Lopez TYPES at a computer keyboard. Reads from another screen as he talks.

LOPEZ

Yeah, that German Shepherd you got-- X257--he's a Marine all right. Turns out his name's not Gladiator. I looked up his service record. His real name is Doc. He was deployed with the Corps in Afghanistan. Received the K-9 Medal for Courage and Bravery. Seems that Doc and his handler were on patrol when they ran across an insurgent hideout. The patrol got pinned down. Here...

More typing.

LOPEZ (CONT'D)

There's some body cam footage of what happened. Pretty blurry, but you'll get the idea.

The computer screen fills with fierce battle images and sounds. Grainy jump cuts of Marines in a firefight. Gunfire flashes from an enemy bunker...

Roy watches with intense interest.

On the screen, Doc charges forward. Leaps into the bunker. Men scream. Holler.

LOPEZ (CONT'D)

Doc got loose and charged the bunker. Our guys followed him and blew the enemy all to hell, but not before Doc's handler was killed and Doc took a bullet.

On the computer, the fighting is over. The footage ends.

Lopez reappears on the computer screen.

LOPEZ (CONT'D)

Commanding officer said Doc saved a lot of guys that day. He recovered from his wound and was sent back to the states and put up for adoption. There's no record of what happened to him after that. Sounds like he's one hell of a Marine.

BEAT. Roy is deeply moved by this revelation.

ROY

Can't you tell how much I appreciate this.

LOPEZ

You bet. Watching that footage reminds me of the day we lost Beau. Bet you think about him all the time. I know I do. Best bomb sniffing dog I ever saw.

Roy is ambushed by that remark. It shakes him.

ROY

Got to go, Hector. Many thanks.

LOPEZ

Roger that, sarge. Take care and--

Roy shuts off the computer before Hector finishes.

Roy sits in silence and stares at the dark screen, rattled.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER PART OF THE STUDY

Roy drags a heavy FOOT LOCKER out from where it was stored in a closet. He drops the locker at his feet. He opens the padlock on the locker and lifts the lid.

Roy reaches into the locker and takes out a framed PHOTO. It shows a smiling Roy at Outpost Zorro, hugging his dog Beau.

Now Roy removes a PLAQUE from the locker. It honors "Marine Sergeant-Major Beau" with a "K9 Medal for Courage".

Roy puts down the plaque and pulls out an OLD TENNIS BALL from the locker. It has black ink letters on it: "Beau." The faint, ghostly BARK of a dog snakes through the air. Playful. Happy. As does a man's voice--

ROY (V.O.)
Good boy! How's my Beau!

Roy holds the ball like a cherished relic, remembering.

EXT. ROY'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

The screen door slams open as Roy bounds out of the house. He hurries to his Silverado. No time to lose.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Roy's Silverado speeds through the desert.

INT. SILVERADO - SAME TIME

Roy speaks to his truck's phone system.

ROY
Call Sara.

He hears the RINGING OF A PHONE, and a CLICK. It's answered.

ROY (CONT'D)
Sara. It's Roy. I need you--

SARA (O.S.)
(recorded voice)
Hi, this is Sara. I'm not in. Leave
a message after the beat.

There's a BEEP. Roy curses, frustrated.

ROY
Sara. It's Roy. Call me right away.

He hangs up and gasses it. The truck SURGES.

EXT. SARA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Roy POUNDS HIS FIST on the front door. No answer. He knocks again. Peers in one of the windows. No lights on inside. He goes back to knocking. Bangs LOUDLY, urgent.

Finally, the porch light switches on. The door opens a crack, on a chain. Sara peers out, groggy, alarmed.

SARA

Roy? You okay? What time is it?

ROY

The dog. The one you brought to me. Have you put him down yet? Is he still alive?

SARA

I don't know. Kiko's the vet. He's doing it. What's this all about?

ROY

Where?

SARA

What?

ROY

Where's Kiko?!

SARA

Out back. In the kennel. Wait--

Roy leaps off the porch and hurries to the back of the house.

EXT. BARN - SAME

An old barn sits behind Sara's house. Roy races there. Its huge double doors stand wide open. Lights are on inside.

INT. BARN - SAME

Roy rushes in, terrified he's too late.

ROY

Kiko! Kiko!

The barn was built for horses but is now converted to a dog kennel. Cages and kennel supplies line either wall, with the middle of the barn floor well lit and wide open.

Some of the cages are empty. Others hold dogs that leap to their feet and bark at Roy's commotion. He gives them a quick, panicked look as he rushes past, looking for Doc.

ROY (CONT'D)

Kiko!

He reaches an old horse paddock that now serves as a small veterinary clinic. A bright light is on in there. It shines down on an surgical table...and THERE'S DOC! The German Shepherd is sprawled on the table, utterly still.

Roy approaches, in shock. Sees the hind leg where a patch of fur has been shaved off. THE RED MARK OF A NEEDLE INJECTION shows on the skin.

Roy stops, dead still. Mission failed.

KIKO (O.S.)

Roy.

Roy gasps, startled. Kiko appears right behind him.

KIKO (CONT'D)

You okay?

Roy can't find words. Kiko comes all the way in.

KIKO (CONT'D)

I gave him a sedative to calm him.
He was too worked up. I was going
to put him down now.

Kiko takes a syringe from a stainless steel tray he carries. He stands over Doc and calmly lays a hand on his head.

KIKO (CONT'D)

Dear Lord, please give this poor
creature the love and compassion he
deserves after enduring so much
pain in this world. Guide him as he
comes all the way home to You.

Kiko moves to administer the shot. Roy puts a hand on Kiko's arm. Stops him.

ROY

God's not ready for this one yet.
(eyes on Doc)
He and I have some work to do.

Sara rushes in. She overheard. She comes alongside Roy, immensely grateful. Her eyes shine with emotion.

INT. DESERT - DAY

A blazing dawn turns the desert into the color of spun gold.

INT. BARN - DAY

Sara and Roy drink coffee, eyes on Doc. The dog is in a nearby cage, wide awake now. He stares back at them with a look that says: *Keep your distance.*

ROY

He and I have a big day today. This is where we say goodbye to Gladiator and find out more about who Doc really is.

SARA

Guess we can toss this then.

Sara holds up the Gladiator dog collar. Roy takes it, happy to oblige, then notices something. He traces a finger along the fabric inside the collar--

--and the pressure shows the impression of A SMALL SHAPE underneath. Roy pulls at the fabric. It rips and reveals A TINY ELECTRONIC DEVICE hidden underneath. Roy examines it.

SARA (CONT'D)

What is it?

ROY

A GPS tracker. Folks use them to find their dogs if they get lost.

SARA

Whoever lost this dog is involved in dog fighting.

Roy nods. Knows that's bad news for sure. He drops the GPS device to the ground and STOMPS his heel on it. Crushes it.

INT./EXT. SUV - SAME TIME

The location signal on A GPS TRACKING DEVICE flickers and dies. The screen goes black

The man holding the tracking device is STAPE, 20s, dangerous-looking, 20s. He sits at the wheel of A BLACK NISSAN ARMADA. He shakes the tracking device as if to wake it up.

Perplexed, he shows it to the man seated next to him. This is RENALDO, 20s, another tough bruiser. He shrugs.

RENALDO

(Balkan accent)

Fix it yourself.

Stape pulls out a phone. Makes a call. When it's answered--

STAPE

(Balkan accent)

Yeah. It's Stape. Renaldo's with me. Tell the boss something's going on. We lost the signal.

(listens)

Uh-huh. Got it.

He hangs up.

RENALDO

Sitting out here all night following a fucking dog. This better be over soon.

STAPE

It will. They're coming.

Renaldo reaches for binoculars. Peers through them.

Through the binoculars: It's Sara's house.

The Armada is parked across the road from the house, tucked behind a stand of trees. Renaldo and Stape are on stakeout.

INT. BARN - DAY

Roy turns on a stereo. Glenn Miller's "In the Mood" plays.

In his cage, Doc jumps to his feet at the sound of the lively music. Roy drags a chair close to him and takes a seat. They stare at each other.

Doc growls, no desire to make friends. Roy smiles, winks. Doc tilts his head, a questioning look.

BENNY strolls up. A teenager. Eager, anxious-to-please.

BENNY

I'm Benny.

Roy shakes his hand.

ROY

I'm Roy. What's your job here?

BENNY

Whatever they need me to do. I'm a volunteer. I love dogs.

ROY

Good man.

Doc shows them his long, sharp fangs.

BENNY

He scares me.

ROY

That's because he's scared himself.

BENNY

What're you going to do?

ROY

Treat him right.

(beat)

Government doesn't always do the right thing for these guys when their service time is up. Doesn't pay enough attention to who adopts them when they get mustered out.

Doc growls again. Sounds like he agrees.

ROY (CONT'D)

Time we get to work.

BENNY

Here's the bite suit. I thought you might want it.

Benny lifts up a heavy piece of clothing. It's a bulky padded suit to protect dog trainers from bites. Roy waves it away.

ROY

No. He's been antagonized enough. I don't want him to see us as the enemy. Let's show him calm and safe. Get a Baskerville muzzle. And some peanut butter. Skippy, if you've got it.

Benny nods. Heads off.

TIME CUT TO:

A JAR OF SKIPPY

Roy scoops a dollop of peanut butter onto his fingers from the jar. He smears it inside--

--A BASKERVILLE MUZZLE. The muzzle is a web of durable rubber that fits over a dog's mouth and nose to keep it from biting.

Roy licks the leftover peanut butter from his fingertips. Benny watches, apprehensive. Moves back several steps.

Roy approaches Doc's cage and opens it. Slow.

Doc jumps to his feet. Barks ferociously. Threatened.

Roy kneels at the open door, dangles the muzzle in the air.

ROY (CONT'D)
Hey, Doc. That's your name, isn't
it? Doc. It's a good name.

The dog STOPS BARKING. The sound of his name surprises him. His ears stand at attention.

ROY (CONT'D)
Yeah, you remember. Doc. That's who
you are.

Doc stares at the dangling muzzle. His nose TWITCHES at the tantalizing scent of peanut butter.

Roy gently moves the muzzle in a slow pendulum motion. His voice cajoles:

ROY (CONT'D)
You like peanut butter, don't you,
Doc? It's Skippy. So good.

Doc takes a tentative step forward. He wants that peanut butter, but he's not trusting. He stops, barks some more.

Roy brings the muzzle close to his own face. He inhales the smell of the peanut butter. Dabs some of it on a fingertip. Tastes it. Smacks his lips.

ROY (CONT'D)
Mmmm. That is so good. Come on,
Doc. Try it. I know you're hungry.

He extends the peanut butter/muzzle toward Doc.

The Stones song blares: "You make a grown man cry..."

The OTHER RESCUE DOGS watch from their cages, anxious to see what happens next.

Benny clutches the bite suit, on edge.

Doc barks sharply at Roy, fangs out. Despite his aggression, he takes a small step forward. He sniffs...sniffs...

The muzzle dangles...dangles...

Now Doc takes a full step. Then another. And another.

BENNY
Remember what he did to Kiko's arm.

ROY
Shhh.

Roy holds very still. As calm as can be.

Now Doc is inches from the muzzle. He hesitates once more, then pushes his nose all the way into it and starts to LICK the peanut butter. He LOVES it.

Gently, Roy eases the muzzle all the way over Doc's head and attaches it. Doc doesn't resist. He's too busy licking. Roy clips a leash around Doc's neck.

ROY (CONT'D)

Look at his tail. Did Sara teach you what that means?

Doc's tail hangs straight down.

BENNY

It means he's afraid or anxious.

ROY

That's right. He loves the peanut butter, but he's still not sure about us.

(beat)

Time to let out The Three Musketeers.

Benny has no idea what he's talking about.

ROY (CONT'D)

That's what I call Sara's dogs. I trained 'em to keep her safe when we split up. Bring them in.

BENNY

(alarmed)

In here?

ROY

Yes. Go on.

Benny hurries off.

As Doc keeps licking the peanut butter, Roy winces, upset at the sight of the SCARS on Doc's body. Dogfighting wounds.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A huge SUV--a black Nissan Armada with tinted windows--roars its way onto a desert highway. Coming fast. Like a missile.

INT. BARN - DAY

Benny returns with three dogs on leashes. He holds them at a safe distance away from Doc. There's NIKO (a Dutch Shepherd), BAILEY (a Doberman), and PESTO (a Belgian Malinois).

Roy calls them by name. Old friends.

ROY
Hey, Niko! Bailey! Pesto! Look at
you. The Three Musketeers. I've
missed you guys.

Their tails wag like crazy at the sight of Roy.

ROY (CONT'D)
Keep them back until I say so.

Benny nods. Keeps a tight hold on the dogs. Leads them
further away. Anxious to see what Roy is going to do.

Carefully, Roy walks the muzzled Doc out of his cage and into
the center of the kennel. Roy shows Benny the firm hand that
he keeps on Doc's leash.

ROY (CONT'D)
Watch me. Control the leash and you
control the dog's mind. Be patient,
but stand your ground. Do that and
the dog will learn to trust you.
Respect you.

Seeing the other dogs triggers Doc. He BARKS at them.

Roy TIGHTENS his grip on the leash. Doc whips his head, wants
to bite Roy, but the muzzle prevents it. He keeps trying as--

--Roy CONTROLS the leash and walks Doc to the far end of the
barn. Then turns around and walks him back to the center. Doc
stops trying to bite, but remains agitated, tense.

ROY (CONT'D)
Okay. Very easily, I want you to
take all three of the dogs off
their leashes.

BENNY
(nervous)
But what about--

ROY
It's okay. Just let them go. I've
got this.

Reluctantly, Benny does as told. He unhooks the Three
Musketeers from their leashes and--

--Roy WHISTLES--a command--and the three dogs instantly obey.
They begin to parade, one behind the other, near the walls of
the barn, around the perimeter of the kennel.

BENNY
 (awestruck)
 Wow!

Now Roy begins to walk Doc in a smaller circle in the center of the kennel, parallel to the other dogs. Doc snarls and jerks. He strains to get to the other dogs, but Roy grips the leash TIGHT, keeps Doc on his small circle walk.

ROY
 He doesn't want to fight. He's just excited and unsure what's going on. Look at his tail now.

Doc's tail is pointed straight up in the air.

ROY (CONT'D)
 He's a soldier all right! Look how he obeys. His Marine training's coming back to him. We just need to keep showing him that he's safe here with us and there's no need to fight. He has a ways to go before he begins trusting again.

Roy slows Doc's walk and brings him to a gradual stop. He WHISTLES and the other three dogs obey and stop too.

ROY (CONT'D)
 Okay, Doc. Sit!

Doc doesn't move. He's too busy watching the other dogs.

Roy steps directly in front of Doc. Gets his full attention and brings out AN APPLE SLICE from his pocket.

ROY (CONT'D)
 Always carry treats in your pocket. Apples are good.

Doc SNIFFS the apple slice and Roy feeds it to him through the muzzle. As Doc eats, Roy lightly touches his back end.

ROY (CONT'D)
 Sit.

On cue, Doc automatically sits, then lies down all the way and relaxes on the ground. He continues eating his treat.

BENNY
 Look at him!

ROY
 I told you he was well trained. He's not vicious by nature. He's just had all the good scared out of him by some bad people.

Roy feeds Doc another slice of apple, then makes A CLICKING SOUND at the other three dogs. Another command.

At once, The Three Musketeers come close. They sniff Doc, curious. Incredibly, he isn't bothered. He's too busy eating.

Roy scratches Doc behind one of his ears.

ROY (CONT'D)

You're going to be okay, Doc. I'm going to take good care of you.

Hearing his name this time, feeling a warm touch, Doc looks up at Roy. The eyes that were once full of menace are now almost sad, deeply grateful.

TIME CUT TO:

THE STEREO

This time, John Coltrane's "Stardust" comes on. Soothing.

Roy and Benny stand side-by-side. They stare at something that WE CANNOT SEE.

BENNY

I can't believe it.

ROY

Makes you feel good, doesn't it?

Sara and Kiko enter. They approach Benny and Roy.

SARA

We heard the music.

KIKO

Where's the hellhound?

Benny points and Kiko's jaw drops.

NOW WE SEE: There's Doc, STILL MUZZLED, but out of his cage. He lounges on the ground with The Three Musketeers. The dogs are almost on top of each other, a picture of bliss.

KIKO (CONT'D)

That dog tried to tear my arm off!

ROY

And now he's chilling to Coltrane.

Sara comes close to Roy.

SARA

I tried the muzzle on him. The peanut butter. Everything you taught me. But nothing worked.

ROY

Who knows. Might be I remind him of his days in the Marines. He and his handler were pretty close.

(beat)

I've got more to do with him, but it's a good first step.

Sara lightly touches Roy's arm. A touch of gratitude.

Suddenly, Doc is at their side. He nudges his muzzled nose against Roy's hand. Roy bends down so that he and Doc are eye to eye. He scratches the dog's ears. Unclamps the muzzle.

SARA

You sure? Might be too soon for that.

ROY

I think he's letting me know I can trust him.

Off comes the muzzle and Doc shakes his face, happy to be free of it.

Kiko and Benny take a few steps back, fearful of an eruption. Instead--

--Doc LICKS Roy's hand. He licks it again and again. Then returns to Niko, Bailey and Pesto and resumes lying down with them. Even lying down, Doc keeps his eyes on Roy.

EXT. SARA'S HOUSE - DAY

In the distance, an ominous spiral of dust. The black Nissan Armada approaches, fast. As it draws closer the other Armada pulls out from the trees and starts toward Sara's house.

Both Armadas park out front, side by side. The doors open and five men step out. Too far away to see all of their faces.

EXT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Sara and Benny work in the hot sun. They heft large bags of dog food into a wagon and pull it toward the barn when--

--LONG SHADOWS appear in the yard.

Sara stops. Sees she has visitors. Removes her hat. Wipes sweat from her eyes.

SARA

Can I help you?

Renaldo and Stape stand shoulder-to-shoulder. Like sentries.

STAPE
You run this place?

SARA
I do.

RENALDO
How much you sell dogs for?

SARA
(a patient chuckle)
I'm afraid it's more involved than that. You first have to apply to adopt a dog from us. If we think you're a good match--

RENALDO
How much?

Sara watches the men, unsettled. She turns aside to Benny.

SARA
Take the food into the barn.

STAPE
Better the boy stays here with us.

Sara puts her hat back on.

SARA
Care to tell me this is all about?

Renaldo and Stape stand aside, revealing IVAYLO DOVKA. He is 40, powerfully-built, in jeans and a Prada silk polo shirt. Like everyone in his circle, he has a thick Balkan accent.

DOVKA
I want to adopt a dog. His name is Gladiator. I understand you have him here.

SARA
(on alert)
We don't have a dog by that name.

DOVKA
You are a bad liar.

ROY
And you have bad manners.

Roy stands at the barn door...with Pesto, Niko and Bailey.

ROY (CONT'D)
You heard her. There's no dog here by that name. So why don't you go.

Dovka sizes up Roy, then--

DOVKA
Stanko. Dragu. Go.

STANKO and DRAGU--two more Balkan muscled gym rats--step into the yard from another direction. They move toward the barn.

Roy WHISTLES A SIGNAL and the Three Musketeers SNAP to attention. They bare their fangs and growl, ready to attack. Stanko and Dragu freeze.

DOVKA (CONT'D)
The dogs. Shoot them.

Stanko and Dragu pull 9mm Makarov pistols and take aim.

Roy WHISTLES again--a different signal--and the dogs STOP.

Dovka fixes Roy with a smile full of menace.

INT. BARN - MINUTES LATER

Dovka and his armed men watch as Kiko and Benny lead the Three Musketeers into a large cage and latch the door shut behind them. The dogs bark up a storm.

Dovka frowns.

DOVKA
Shut them up.

KIKO
They're trained to respond to threats. Like people with guns.

In a flash, Stape BASHES his gun into the back of Kiko's head. Kiko goes down, out cold. Sara cries out. Roy makes to move, but Stanko jabs a gun in his back. Stops him.

DOVKA
(to Sara)
I abhor violence, but it comes in handy when people don't give me what I want. Or when someone is foolish enough to try and stop me.
(to Roy)
Like you. I can see it in your eyes. You are trouble.
(back to Sara)
Now...where's my Gladiator?

Sara hesitates. She doesn't want to cooperate. Reluctant, she points toward the rear of the kennel.

CUT TO:

THE BACK OF THE BARN

Dovka and his men march Sara, Roy and Benny to the kennel cage that holds Doc.

Doc ERUPTS at the sight of Dovka. He barks, charges the cage door, fangs out. In a flash, the vicious Gladiator is back.

Dovka beams, delighted.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

Ah! Blagodarya to mnogo!
 (translation: "Thank you
 very much.")
 My Gladiator! My champion. Look at
 his fight. I love him, don't you?

SARA

You don't love him. You love that
 he fights and kills for money.

DOVKA

Such a pretty woman. Such an
 arrogant tongue.
 (to Roy)
 You let her speak to you this way?

Stanko and Dragu appear with padded protection suits. They start to put them on. They already know the drill.

ROY

Leave the dog. I'll pay you. Name
 your price.

DOVKA

Gladiator is mine. I will end his
 life before I let him go.

Dovka nods at Stape. A silent order. Stape obeys. He presses the muzzle of his gun to Roy's neck.

Renaldo YANKS Roy's hands behind his back and handcuffs them together with plastic tie zip restraints.

ROY

His real name's Doc. He's a Marine--

Stape KICKS Roy's legs. Roy falls to his knees.

Doc BARKS his fury.

Renaldo straps a Baskerville muzzle over Roy's face--TIGHT.

Dovka's men laugh with mockery.

ROY (CONT'D)

He's a decorated war hero. He saved
lives and--

Stape SHOVES Roy to the floor. Roy FALLS, muzzled, trussed.

Stanko and Dragu, now in padded gear, open Doc's cage.

ROY (CONT'D)

No! No! Doc!

A MOMENT. He and Doc hold each other's eyes. Then--

--Dovka delivers a savage KICK to Roy's head. Draws BLOOD.

Sara cries out. Rushes to him. Roy is out cold.

Doc fights, but his fangs are no match against the padded suits as Stanko and Dragu fix him with a muzzle and leash. They drag him from the crate.

Stape handcuffs Sara with wrist restraints and--

--Renaldo handcuffs Benny as well.

Dovka wipes Roy's BLOOD from the flashy PYTHON SNAKESKIN BOOTS that he wears. He comes to Sara and takes off her cap. He reads the "Wild" patch on the front of it.

DOVKA

If you were my woman, you would
know better than to wear such a
thing.

(smiles)

I would tame you.

He tosses the hat to Renaldo.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

Burn it. Now. Let her see her shame
go up in smoke.

Renaldo takes out a lighter and SETS FIRE to the hat. He drops it to the ground in front of Sara. As it burns--

DOVKA (CONT'D)

A piece of advice: I have money. I
am respected and have friends in
many places. Even among the police.
So if you should feel the urge to
make a complaint about any of this,
make no mistake that I will hear
about it very soon. And if that
happens, I promise that I will
repay your vengeance ten-fold. So,
for your sake, you should hope that
you and we never meet again.

With a smug smile and a defiant turn, Dovka walks off. Sara watches as the "Wild" emblem on her hat BURNS.

EXT. SARA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A fist knocks at the front door. The door yanks open and A GLOCK 22 points at Mac. He raises his hands, startled. Holding the gun is KATY VEGA. Middle-aged, fierce eyes, all business. Sara appears behind her inside the house.

SARA

It's okay. I asked him to come.
This is Elijah McCoy.

MAC

Eli. But call me Mac.

Katy lowers the gun and appraises Mac skeptically.

SARA

This is Katy Vega. A good friend.
She's Vegas P.D.

MAC

You said on the phone no cops.

KATY

I may be a police officer, but I
consider Sara family.

Katy stands aside. Lets Mac enter. Puts away her Glock. Mac glances at Sara, nervous at this greeting.

INT. SARA'S KITCHEN - SAME

Mac follows Katy and Sara into the kitchen. Kiko and Benny are hunched at a table. Both look beat up, shaken up.

Sara pours hot water from a kettle into mugs with tea bags. Kiko adds Maker's Mark to his.

SARA

Everyone, this is Mac. Mac, this is
Kiko and Benny.

Mac nods to them.

MAC

Any idea who did this?

SARA

Not yet.

KIKO
Heavy accents. Men from Eastern
Europe is my guess.

MAC
That narrows it down.

KATY
Don't be a clown. We're in no mood.

SARA
Come on. Roy's in the other room.

Sara pours a whiskey for herself as Kiko and Benny nurse their drinks.

INT. SARA'S HALLWAY - SAME

Sara and Mac come down a dark hallway. Sara stops. Wants to talk. Lowers her voice.

SARA
Thanks for coming. I know Roy
hasn't been a friend to you lately.

MAC
He's pretty much shut me out.

SARA
You're not the only one.

A MOMENT. Sara is grieved, worried.

SARA (CONT'D)
He needed our help before all this
happened, but now--
(beat)
He says he's going after the dog.
Like it's personal. We can't let
him go. The men who did this, they
had guns. He could get hurt.

Mac nods, concerned. He feels the depth of Sara's plea.

INT. SARA'S DEN - SAME TIME

Roy is stretched out on the sofa. His face bears a dark, bloody bruise where he was kicked. His eyelids twitch. His face contorts. AS fierce dream of warfare is upon him.

WE HEAR THE SOUNDS of his dream. They are faint at first, then louder. Explosive rifle fire. Bomb blasts. The shriek of wounded men. A barking dog...

Roy twists, under siege. Finally, the dream shatters and HE BOLTS UP, awake. He gasps, eyes wide with an awful memory. At that instant--

--Sara enters. She switches on a small light. Roy sits up, groggy. Is not at all pleased when Mac walks in.

ROY

What're you doing here? You two call each other whenever I end up on my ass?

MAC

(holds his tongue, then--)
How's your head?

Roy doesn't answer. He tries to stand, staggers. Sits again. Mac takes a seat across from him.

MAC (CONT'D)

Take it easy. You could have a concussion.

SARA

I made an appointment for you to see my doctor tomorrow.

ROY

No time. I need to find Doc.

MAC

(beat, careful)
Why's it up to you to find him?

ROY

They threatened Sara if she involves the police. So who else is gonna go after him?

(beat)

Besides, the dog's a Marine. No Man Left Behind, remember?

MAC

I remember. I also remember that the war's over for us.

(points to Roy's dog tags)

You can stop wearing those. We've been back home awhile now.

Roy clutches his dog tags. Takes a good look at them. Then--

ROY

That dog's going back into a world where it's kill or be killed. I can't live with pretending that all of this never happened.

A MOMENT.

SARA
If that's the way it is...then I'm
going with you.

ROY
Hell no.

SARA
Hell yes. The place the police
raided in the desert? Where they
found Doc and the other dogs? If I
were you, that's where I'd start
looking for answers about where he
might be. You can't get in there,
but I can. So I'm going.

Silence. Roy wants to argue. Can't. The logic of Sara's
argument is undeniable. Then--

MAC
(to Roy)
You're going to need backup. So I'm
going too.

Roy sighs, out of words, out of fight. Sara nods, satisfied.

SARA
You both get some rest. There are
beds upstairs. We'll leave first
thing in the morning.

She goes out. A heavy silence, then--

ROY
I divorced her and she's still
telling me what to do.

MAC
Be grateful. She loves you.

Mac stands. Gives Roy a steady look.

MAC (CONT'D)
No Man Left Behind. That goes for
you too, you know.

Mac leaves. Roy sits alone. He touches his throbbing head.

EXT. SARA'S HOUSE - MORNING

A hot sun rises over the desert.

Roy and Mac exit the house. Mac climbs behind the wheel of
the Jeep Commander. Roy takes the passenger seat.

Sara exits the house with Katy. They share a tight embrace. Sara comes to the Jeep. Gets in the back.

Kiko and Benny join Katy on the porch, along with Pesto, Niko and Bailey. They wave goodbye to Sara.

INT./EXT. JEEP - SAME TIME

Mac guns the Jeep to life.

ROY
You've got good people, Sara.

SARA
I'm lucky. They're my family.

The Jeep pulls away and passes close to the porch. Roy puts on sunglasses and waves to The Three Musketeers.

The Musketeers wag their tails and smile back at him--mouths open, tongues lapping over their teeth. Dog smiles, for sure.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - LATER

Mac's Jeep Commander barrels down the highway.

INT. JEEP - SAME

Roy pops more Tylenol. Watches the desert landscape.

Mac checks Sara in the rearview mirror.

MAC
I assume Kiko manages the rescue while you're not there?

SARA
Yes, and Benny can help. Katy too, when she's not at work.

ROY
Who's minding the Mojave Racing Experience?

MAC
Izabelle.

ROY
She's seems like a nice girl. She your girlfriend yet?

MAC
(hesitates)
Sort of.

Sara cracks a smile.

SARA

Sort of? Is she vague about the relationship, too, or just you?

ROY

He's slow in matters of the heart.

MAC

You're a good one to lecture me on relationships.

The comment stings Roy. Lightly. He's about to respond when--

SARA

There's an unmarked road ahead, on the right. That's the one we want.

Mac sees the road. Takes it.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME

The Jeep veers off the highway and bounces onto an unmarked dirt road. A cloud of dust fishtails behind it as the Jeep speeds on, deeper into the heart of the desert.

EXT. DOVKA'S MANSION - DAY

A splashy lunch party is underway around a shimmering swimming pool with a stunning view of the Las Vegas skyline.

A dozen well-dressed MEN AND WOMEN enjoy themselves around a table under a tent. One of them is a big man in a cowboy hat and a western suit jacket. This is CAPTAIN WALTER HARRIS.

Three WAITERS serve food and drinks.

Dovka glides around his guests, perfectly bronzed, smartly attired in a Brioni silk blazer and open shirt that shows off his muscled physique. He chats, having a grand time.

A 13-year old girl approaches. This is MARTA DOVKA. In her hand is a leash attached to a German Shepherd named STELLA.

Dovka embraces Marta. He beams. Turns her toward his guests.

DOVKA

My friends! May I present my daughter, Marta. She's visiting me from school this week. Her beauty lights up the world, am I right?

Everyone claps. Marta blushes, embarrassed. Then--

MARTA
 (to the guests)
 And this is my dad's Stella.

She pulls the German Shepherd forward. Everyone claps again.

ANGLE ON THE MANSION

A sliding door opens and Renaldo steps out. He surveys the party scene. Spots his boss.

Renaldo approaches Dovka, leans close and whispers to him. Dovka frowns, then resumes his party face.

DOVKA
 (to his guests)
 Please excuse me for a minute.
 (to Harris)
 Captain Harris, if you would kindly watch after my Marta and entertain our guests. I will be right back.

HARRIS
 My pleasure, Ivaylo.

Harris holds a chair for Marta. She takes a seat at the table and Stella lies by her side.

Dovka for the house.

INT. DOVKA'S MANSION/LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Doc is muzzled, strangely calm as he stares at--

--Dovka, who stares right back at him, greatly annoyed.

They are sitting close to each other in a plush living room.

Next to Doc, holding his leash, is TONY VARGAS, a bulked-up 30-something. He appears strained, nervous.

DOVKA
 I don't understand. Explain.

VARGAS
 Your Gladiator. He won't fight.

Dovka keeps staring at Doc. Waits for more.

VARGAS (CONT'D)
 He's not the same.

DOVKA
 I pay you to train my dogs to fight, Mr. Vargas. Train him again.

VARGAS

I've tried, sir, but it's no good. Before, he was a born fighter. But something happened to him when he went away. He is different now. It's like he is now someone else.

Dovka glares at Vargas.

DOVKA

You are the best trainer of dogs who fight. Am I right?

Vargas swells the muscles in his massive chest. He is not used to having his skills questioned.

VARGAS

Yes, sir. You are.

DOVKA

And do I pay you like you are the best?

VARGAS

Yes, sir.

DOVKA

If all this is true, then I should only expect excellence from you, not excuses.

The insult stings Vargas. The muscles in his ripped biceps ripple with tension.

Dovka faces Doc again. With eerie calm.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

Is this true? Are you no longer my prize killer? Are you now...what... just a dog?

Doc returns Dovka's stare, unblinking.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

Take off his muzzle.

VARGAS

(startled)

I don't think that's a good idea--

DOVKA

Take it off.

Vargas hesitates, but knows better than to disobey. He unhooks Doc's muzzle and steps back, as if expecting an explosion. He pulls A STUN BATON from his belt, just in case.

Dovka comes closer to Doc, inches from his face, and ERUPTS.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

YOU WILL FIGHT. YOU WILL FIGHT AND
YOU WILL KILL! OR IT WILL BE YOUR
TURN TO DIE! DO YOU HEAR ME!

BEAT. Doc does not flinch.

For a moment, there is SILENCE. Then a menacing GROWL rumbles deep in Doc's throat. His lips tremble. His fangs inch out.

Dovka holds steady. Waits.

Then, *nothing*. Doc's growl subsides. His fangs retreat.

Dovka is stunned. He stands and crosses the room to a window. He looks out at his lunch party.

Relieved, Vargas quickly fits the muzzle back on Doc.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

This is a day for me to celebrate, Mr. Vargas. My lunch guests are important people. Top casino men on the strip. Politicians. Police. They all know me. They know about my troubles in Bulgaria before I came to America. But today, none of that is on their minds. They are only thinking what a good American is Ivaylo Dovka. They drink my liquor and don't care so much about the things I may do on the side to make my living here because they are guilty of many things that they also wish to keep secret. The fact that they are here in my home means they are accepting me as one of their own. And nothing is going to ruin this moment. Not even the news you bring me about my Gladiator.

He faces Vargas.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

In a few days you and I will have this conversation again. Except I will want to see that you have brought my Gladiator back to life, my champion, just as he was. Because his next fight is already planned, and interest is high. Bets are being placed as we speak. Do I make myself clear?

VARGAS
I won't let you down.

DOVKA
I will hold you to your word.
(beat)
Now, you can go.

Vargas pulls on Doc's leash and Doc calmly follows him out. Dovka waits until they are gone.

Renaldo steps into the room. Dovka speaks to him.

DOVKA (CONT'D)
If he fails, kill him.
(beat)
Tell the chef to serve dessert now.

Dovka goes back to watching his party.

INT. JEEP - DAY

Mac, Roy and Sara drive on through the lunar landscape of the Mojave. Not a speck of civilization is in sight.

EXT. DESERT PROPERTY - DAY

The Jeep treks through endless desert to a deserted property with ramshackle buildings and a large cinderblock structure.

The Jeep stops next to a Land Rover that is already parked. A tall man steps out of the vehicle. This is ALEJANDRO ATTA.

Sara gets out and greets him. Roy and Mac do the same.

SARA
Mac, Roy, this is Alejandro Atta.
(to Atta)
This is Mac McCoy and Roy Dix.

The men shake hands. Atta takes note of Roy's head injury.

ROY
It's nothing serious.

ATTA
Looks serious.

SARA
I called Alejandro this morning and asked him to meet us. He does work for a wildlife rescue organization. He's the one who got the tip that a dog fighting ring was operating out here and alerted the state police.
(MORE)

SARA (CONT'D)

This is the property where they
found Doc and the other dogs.

Roy and Mac eye the landscape. Wind blows. Dust swirls.

ATTA

(to Sara)

How're the dogs doing?

SARA

We're doing our best. Some are in
bad shape.

ATTA

(to Roy and Mac)

Sara's a guardian angel in the
rescue world.

Sara is embarrassed. Wants to change the topic.

SARA

(to Atta)

Thanks. The reason I wanted you to
meet us out here is because I want
Roy and Mac to better understand
what the dogs went through before
they came to us.

ATTA

(nods, grave)

Well, this is as real as it gets in
my work. Let me show you around.

Atta starts to lead the way.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER PART OF THE PROPERTY

Roy, Sara and Mac walk with Atta.

ROY

What happened when you got here?

ATTA

Not as much as we wanted. Someone
tipped off that the police were on
the way and the fights broke up
before we arrived. We caught a lot
of the dogs because the owners
didn't have time to get them out.
But the police got their hands on
one the caretaker of the property.
Unfortunately, he's not saying a
word. I think he's too scared to
tell us what he knows.

The wind howls. Roy looks around.

ROY

It's crazy--these buildings out here. Middle of nowhere.

ATTA

From what I've been able to find out, this property's been vacant for years. It was built by a religious group of some kind. Called themselves Children of the Sun. But I guess things went belly up at some point and the place has been deserted ever since. Or was supposed to be.

Roy stops. He raises his nose to the air.

ROY

Smell that?

ATTA

(with disgust)

I've helped bust more than my share of dog fighting rings. They all smell like death to me.

Roy catches Mac's eye. They exchange a silent look that suggests they suspect something else. Roy gives him a slight nod. Mac returns it, understanding.

ATTA (CONT'D)

Let's go in where the fights were held.

MAC

You guys go. I want to look around.

Roy, Sara and Slim head toward the cinderblock structure. Mac strolls off by himself.

INT. CINDERBLOCK BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Slim, Roy and Sara enter the building. All around, the walls are filled with murals of Old Testament scenes--the dove over Noah's Ark, Daniel in the lion's den, the death of Samson...

CROWS CAW in the rafters above a large dirt floor. In the center of the floor, a 20-square yard enclosure is surrounded by a chain link fence. There are some crude bleachers.

ATTA

This is where the fights were held.

(points)

(MORE)

ATTA (CONT'D)

We found a scale against the beam over there. That's where the dogs were weighed before each fight. It was used to set the betting odds.

Roy takes off his sunglasses. Walks to the beam. Bends for a closer look. There BITE MARKS in the wood.

Roy stares across the arena. HEARS THE GHOSTLY ECHO OF HORRORS THAT WENT ON HERE: dogs bark, snarl, men shout...

Sara watches him, worried.

SARA

You okay?

Roy nods, but he is shaken.

Sara steps into the arena. This is hard for her, too.

ATTA

Before the dogs are brought to a place like this, they're abused and starved until they become vicious. Which is what their owners want. When it's time to fight, two dogs are put into an arena like this. Their handlers let go of them and the dogs attack each other.

Roy steps into the arena too. He rubs his forehead. The pain of his head injury again.

ATTA (CONT'D)

A fight can last several minutes or hours. Usually until one of the dogs collapses from its wounds.

A BEAT. The WIND SIGHS through the broken windows.

Sara comes to Roy. She puts a supportive arm around him.

ATTA (CONT'D)

Dogfighting's illegal, which means it's big money for the kind of people who are a part of that world. Some of them have ties to organized crime.

(to Sara)

If you happen to come across anyone who was involved, they're bound to be dangerous. So be careful.

A crow SCREECHES from above--a harsh, taunting sound.

EXT. CINDERBLOCK BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Roy, Sara and Slim exit the warehouse and--

MAC (O.S.)
HEY! UP HERE!

They look to a hill that looms above the property and--

--Mac is up there. He waves for them to join him.

Roy and Sara and Atta start the climb to the top.

EXT. DESERT HILLTOP - MINUTES LATER

Roy, Sara and Atta reach the top of their climb. The WIND SWIRLS as they look around.

The hilltop overlooks the entire property. From this high angle they see something for the first time.

The entire roof of the cinderblock building is covered with an epic, decayed painting that shows RAYS OF LIGHT RAINING DOWN FROM PEARLY GATES. Emblazoned around the gates is flowing script that reads: "The Kingdom of Heaven Awaits."

Roy stares at the mural, gripped by bitter thoughts.

ROY
The people who built this place came here hoping for the promise of something good. What an awful world it is that turned their hope into a hell for the most loving creatures on earth.

A MOMENT.

MAC
Roy. Over here.

Mac leads Roy, Sara and Atta toward a large boulder. They circle behind it, and come to--

--a pit of ash and charred debris.

MAC (CONT'D)
(to Roy)
You smelled it right away.
(to Sara and Atta)
After being stationed in the Middle East, you don't forget what a real burn pit smells like. Whatever the officers didn't want laying around the post, they told us to dig a pit and burn it.

ROY
Garbage. Paint. Medical supplies.
Human waste. You name it.

MAC
Sometimes...even body parts. Same
thing here, sad to say.

Mac pokes his foot into the pit and uncovers--
--a partial animal LEG BONE hidden in the deep bed of ash.
Mac holds up a CHARRED PIECE OF PAPER.

MAC (CONT'D)
I also found this. Something that
didn't go all the way up in smoke.
It's got some names printed on it.
Charger, Diesel, Rocky...
(pauses for effect)
Gladiator.

A MOMENT. Mac hands the paper to Roy. Roy examines it. Under
the name "Gladiator" it reads: "Gr" and "All In".

Roy gives the paper to Atta.

ROY
Make anything of this?

ATTA
I've seen things like this before.
It's a tip sheet for gamblers, like
what you get at a race track. "Gr"
stands for Grand Champion. Means
this Gladiator won five or more
fights. I don't know what the "All
In" means.

SARA
What about the caretaker the police
arrested? He's got to know
something.

ATTA
Like I said, he's not talking.
(indicates the paper)
I should give this to the state
police. Might help their
investigation.

Slim starts to pocket the paper. Roy casually takes it back.

ROY
Sara can give it to you later. We
want to show it to a friend. See
what they think of it.

Atta hesitates. Lets Roy take it. Sara gives Roy a questioning look, then--

SARA
Thanks, Alejandro. Appreciate it.

Atta nods and starts back down the hill. Sara and Mac follow.

Roy slips the charred piece of paper in his pocket. He starts down the hill after them. Takes one last look at--

--the rooftop mural. It shines in the blinding sun.

EXT. DESERT PROPERTY - MINUTES LATER

Slim drives his Land Rover into the desert.

Roy, Sara and Mac stand alongside their Jeep.

SARA
Why didn't you let him take that piece of paper?

ROY
Same reason you didn't mention to him what happened to Doc. Safer to keep things between us right now.

MAC
So who's this "friend" we're going to show the tip sheet to?

ROY
The caretaker.

Mac and Sara react with surprise.

SARA
We don't know who he is. Or how to get in touch with him. Besides, you heard, he's not talking.

ROY
I have an idea.
(to Sara)
You're going to use another of your contacts.

Sara is stymied. No idea what Roy is talking about.

ROY (CONT'D)
Let's get something to eat and drink. I'm hungry.

Roy climbs into the Jeep, ready to get going. Sara and Mac exchange a look of curiosity and confusion.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - LATER

An old style place. A few customers. A country song plays on the juke. (Think Billy Swan's "I Can Help".)

At a table by themselves are Roy and Mac. They eat hamburgers. Roy devours his, famished.

MAC

Good to see you've got an appetite.

ROY

Headache's gone too. Feeling better.

Mac looks out a window to where Sara talks on a cell phone.

MAC

I hope Katy can help us.

ROY

She'll try. Katy will do anything for Sara.

MAC

But not you, right? That's why you didn't call her yourself, ask her to find out the caretaker's name and address.

ROY

(nods, mouth full)
Katy's never forgiven me for divorcing Sara. Can't say I blame her. I wrecked things pretty bad.

MAC

Have to agree.

Mac's bluntness catches Roy off guard.

ROY

I've made my apologies.

MAC

Words don't always fix things.

ROY

You're my therapist now?

MAC

You could use someone to talk to.

ROY

(beat)
You got something to say, say it.

Mac takes a breath. Goes for it.

MAC

Ever since we got out of the service, you've put as much distance as possible between yourself and everything else. Sara. Your business. Me.

ROY

If it bothers you so much, quit. This is my mission.

Mac shakes his head in disbelief.

MAC

Man, you make everything hard. All right, here's some truth. I'm here in case you need help. Sara's worried sick. She's afraid you're going to do something stupid and get yourself hurt. Or worse. Because this isn't just about getting back Doc. You're here because you can't forgive yourself for what happened with Beau. It's called survivor guilt. Look it up.

Roy stops eating. Grows tense.

ROY

Beau died because I left him alone.

MAC

He was a Marine and he died doing his job. He saved four men from stepping on a nest of bombs that he sniffed out, while you went off and rescued the rest of our platoon from a wicked crossfire, me included. That's another reason I'm here. You saved me. But leaving Beau alone to save us wasn't anyone's *fault*. It was a hard decision that had to be made and you made it.

Roy puts down his burger. Shoves it away.

MAC (CONT'D)

If you keep telling yourself you're to blame, then that'll be your truth. You'll never escape it and it'll bury you alive. Saving Doc isn't going to save you from your guilt. Only you can do that. Let it go, brother. Let it go.

A MOMENT.

The diner door opens. Sara strolls in, excited.

SARA

We're in business! Katy opened the case file. Got the caretaker's name and address.

MAC

Eat your burger. It's getting cold.

SARA

I'll take it with me. Let's go.

Sara scoops her burger in a napkin and is out the door before Roy and Mac can say another word.

INT. JEEP - MINUTES LATER

Mac drives through flat desert. Roy is up front, deep in thought. Sara rides in the back. Abruptly Roy turns to her.

ROY

We're gonna to drop you off. I don't want you coming with us.

SARA

(stunned)

Too late. I'm going.

Roy looks to Mac for support.

MAC

He's right. It could be dangerous.

SARA

First, that means it could be dangerous for you, too. So that's not an argument. You don't want to get into a gender spat with me.

ROY

You're being stubborn.

SARA

I prefer strong. Second, you're still calling the shots when we get there. And Mac's still your backup. Only difference is now I can back him up, if it comes to that. So it's only good news that I'm coming along. Besides, I belong here. Doc was stolen from me, remember?

Mac looks sideways at Roy.

MAC
Strong and smart.

Roy can't find any more words to say on the topic. Sara sits back, content. She smiles at a memory.

SARA
(to Roy)
Strong and smart. You once said you liked about me. The night you proposed. Remember?

MAC
Such a charmer.

ROY
(grumbles)
I don't remember. There was alcohol involved.

SARA
Several margaritas, to be exact. Van Morrison on the stereo. We danced.

Beat. Mac eyes Roy. He's about to make a comment when--

ROY
Shut up and drive.

Sara smiles.

Mac gives the Jeep more gas.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - SAME

The Commander accelerates. The only vehicle on a long road.

INT. JEEP - LATER

Sara leans forward, between Mac and Roy.

SARA
When we find this caretaker, how do we get him to tell us what he knows? Alejandro said he was afraid to talk.

ROY
Let's see how this plays out. There's always a way.

Sara sits back.

Roy and Mac exchange a knowing look.

INT. GYM - DAY

Muscled, tattooed FIGHTERS punch heavy bags and lift barbells. A hard, dark Bulgarian hip-hop beat blares from a stereo--"Predator" by Fifty Vinc.

In a boxing ring, TWO MEN spar. They wear padded head gear and exchange wicked MMA punches and kicks. Their bodies are in battle-hardened fighting shape.

Finally, the men break. One of them takes off his head gear. It's Dovka. Drenched in sweat, he walks to the ropes. Renaldo tosses him a towel. Dovka wipes his face. Lowers his voice.

DOVKA

I got a call. Someone's snooping in the caretaker's file.

Renaldo gives him a questioning look.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

My guess is they want to know what he knows. Maybe pay him a visit.

RENALDO

He won't talk. You're paying him enough. Who's doing the snooping?

DOVKA

A police officer. She's married to one of the men we roughed up at the woman's dog rescue. I warned her not to make trouble.

(beat, to himself)

I should've got rid of that caretaker. He knows too much about this business.

RENALDO

Say the word.

DOVKA

(beat)

All right. Send Stanko and Dragu. Tell them to take care of this.

Renaldo heads off. Dovka puts on his head gear. Faces his ring opponent and they spar again. Dovka attacks, vicious.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

A rock song blares. (Think "Dirty, Dirty" by Crazy Horse.) A battered Ford pickup rumbles along--

--then sharply veers veers down a side road. A haze of dirt kicks up in its wake.

INT. TRUCK - SAME TIME

The rock song blares on the radio. The man at the wheel hums along, with gusto. This is ARTIE YOE, about 75.

Artie is a grizzled scarecrow of a man. He has a crusty look that reeks of poor choices and hard luck. He wears a faded Grateful Dead bandana around what's left of his stringy grey hair. Smoke curls from a joint that hangs from his lips.

EXT. TRAILER PROPERTY - DAY

The truck arrives at a seen-better-days trailer home that's hidden beyond a hill with rock outcroppings. The truck parks. The engine wheezes off. The song dies.

Artie peers through the windshield. Carefully surveys--

--the trailer and the property around it. The place is in serious decline, a junkyard of the busted and broken.

A 500-gallon propane tank sits a distance from the trailer. It bears psychedelic-style graffiti: "MOBY GRAPE!".

Artie steps out and stands alongside the truck. He remains alert, carefully looking things over.

Satisfied that nothing is amiss, he retrieves a bag of groceries from the truck and heads for the trailer.

He stops at the door and examines it. He reaches for a--

--a SMALL PIECE OF PAPER that is wedged between the upper jamb and the door--his DIY security system.

Artie smiles, satisfied. He tosses the scrap of paper aside and goes inside.

INT. TRAILER - SAME

Artie enters and comes face to face with--

--Roy! He sits at a table, casually drinking bottled water.

ROY

Hello, Arthur. Hope you don't mind
I took one of your waters.

Artie gapes and the joint falls from his mouth. He turns to flee, but Mac is behind him! He shoves Artie inside and closes the door.

MAC

You went all out on your security system. A piece of paper wedged in the door frame. High-end stuff.

Artie gapes. Can't think what to do.

Mac takes groceries from Artie and sets them aside. He pats him down. Finds a SIG Sauer P365 handgun in his jacket. Mac ejects its 15-round magazine and tosses the ammo and gun on the table. A rifle is already there--a .50 Beowulf AR-15.

ROY

Looks like you're expecting bad company. Lot of firepower in that rifle.

ARTIE

I use it to shoot birds. Scare off coyotes, bobcats.

MAC

Yeah, right.

ROY

Take a seat.

Artie doesn't move. Mac forces him into a chair.

ARTIE

(stammers, afraid)
I don't want any trouble.

ROY

Too late.

Mac gathers a stack of mail. Reads aloud from one.

MAC

Arthur Yoe. Looks like you're behind on your propane bill. Your third warning.

ARTIE

(a jittery mess)
My name's Artie. My last name's pronounced Yo. The "e" is silent.

MAC

Glad we got that straight, Artie Yo with the silent "e".

ARTIE

I'll pay the bill soon as the tank starts to get empty. It's got plenty now.

MAC

(to Roy)

He thinks we're the gas company.

(to Artie)

You think I'm a bill collector?

Roy leans closer to Artie. Dark and ominous now. Artie winces at the up-close view of Roy's bruised forehead.

ARTIE

I promised you people I won't say anything. You can trust me.

MAC

All these guns, you don't look like the trusting kind.

ARTIE

I was just being careful.

Roy pulls out THE CHARRED BETTING SHEET. Shows it to Artie.

ROY

I want you to tell me about this. Gladiator. German Shepherd. A grand champion. I know all that.

(beat, points)

But the words "All In". What's it stand for?

ARTIE

(beat, realizes--)

Wait. Wait a minute. Who are you?

ROY

All In. I want a name.

Artie shudders, suddenly cold. Shakes his head no.

Mac pulls out a clear plastic bag with WHITE PILLS. Holds it close to Artie's eyes.

MAC

Might want to rethink that, Artie. Found this in your stash. You need to lay off the Oxy. Not good for your paranoia.

ARTIE

I got pain. They're for my back!

ROY

Tell me what I want to know or we toss your drugs down the toilet.

Artie erupts in full-blown panic.

ARTIE

No. You don't get it. These people--
they're--oh man...you do not want
to do this. You don't--

ROY

Gladiator was my dog. They stole
him from me. I want a name.

ARTIE

I can't.

MAC

I got some flushing to do.

Mac starts toward the bathroom.

ARTIE

NO! I NEED THEM!

Mac stops.

ROY

You don't give me a name, you not
only lose your stash, I talk all
over town how you told us
everything. Understand?

Artie covers his face with his hands. Pained. Pathetic.

Roy and Mac exchange a look, unsure which way this is going
to go. Artie looks up, desperate.

ARTIE

All right. I'll tell you. But
promise you'll leave me out of
this. No one can know. Ever. Or I'm
dead.

ROY

Cross my heart.

Artie wrestles with his inner demons. Nods. Mac hands him the
bag of drugs. Artie GRABS it, grateful.

Artie hesitates, terrified. Then--

ARTIE

All In. That's the owner of the dog
Gladiator.

ROY

I want a name

ARTIE

(a beat, scared)
Dovka. Ivaylo Dovka.
(MORE)

ARTIE (CONT'D)

He bankrolls all the big dog fights around here. He came out here years ago. Bought his way into a bunch of legit businesses. But his big money comes from anything illegal. If it's dirty, he's got his hands in it.

ROY

Where do I find Gladiator?

ARTIE

(a crazy, bitter laugh)
You don't want to do that, man. Dovka runs the freaking mob. You steal that dog from him, you end up face-down in a ditch with a highway running over you.

MAC

Mob? You mean like the Mafia?

ARTIE

Mafia's the movies. Balkan mobsters run Vegas now. Hard core bangers. They took over years ago. And Dovka's the boss.

ROY

Again: Where do I find Gladiator?

ARTIE

I don't know. I really don't.

ROY

(to Mac)
Flush it.

Artie yelps, desperate.

ARTIE

No! Okay, I don't know, just not for sure. There are people who run his dogfights. They hang out at a place downtown called Naked City. They might know. But you do not want to mess with them.

Roy stands. Mac pulls Artie to his feet.

MAC

Time for a field trip.

ARTIE

Wait! What? I'm not going.

Mac takes the bag of pills back from Artie. Pockets it.

MAC

On second thought, let me hold onto these until we're sure you're telling us the truth.

Artie starts to protest, but it's useless. Roy opens the door to leave. Jus then, his CELL PHONE RINGS. He answers it.

ROY

What's up?

EXT. DESERT HILLTOP - SAME TIME

Sara is prone on a hill that overlooks the trailer below. She holds her cell phone in one hand, binoculars in the other.

SARA

We've got company. A car. It's coming fast.

She peers through the binoculars at--

--a black Nissan Armada. It roars through the desert.

INT. TRAILER - SAME TIME

Roy speaks on the phone:

ROY

We're coming now.

He hangs up. Faces Artie.

ROY (CONT'D)

We've got company. You expecting someone?

ARTIE

No one comes here. Except you guys. And I wish you hadn't.

Roy and Mac exchange a look that acknowledges they have arrived at a tipping point in their quest. Mac sees Roy eye Artie's rifle and handgun. Knows what Roy is thinking.

MAC

You sure we're doing this?

ROY

We may need them.

Mac hesitates. Decides Roy is right. He takes hold of Artie.

Roy grabs the rifle, handgun and ammo. They rush out.

EXT. DESERT HILLTOP - MINUTES LATER

Mac and Roy hustle Artie up the hill to where Sara awaits. The Jeep is parked nearby. The sight of the guns alarms Sara.

SARA
Wait! No guns!

ROY
You wanted to come along.

SARA
No, Roy. No guns.

ROY
Too late.

MAC
(to Sara)
This is Artie, the caretaker. He's taking us to meet some people who know where Doc's being held.

ARTIE
I said they "might" know.

Sara starts to protest. Mac sees something below.

MAC
Get down.

The four of them hit the ground.

EXT. TRAILER - SAME TIME

The Armada SUV arrives. The doors of the SUV open. Out step Stanko and Dragu.

INTERCUT:

Roy, Mac, Sara and Artie hit the ground.

ARTIE
(to Sara)
I told them that the people who might know about the dog are bad people and that your friends need to be careful.

SARA
They're "bad people" how?

ARTIE
They're bikers. A really bad kind.

Sara is terrified now. Roy takes the binoculars from Sara. He peers at the two men below.

ROY
I recognize them. They were there
when Doc was stolen.

He hands the binoculars to Artie.

ROY (CONT'D)
Do you know them?

ARTIE
Yeah. They work for Dovka.

Stanko and Dragu look over Artie's pickup, the property. They walk to the trailer and knock on the door.

No answer. Stanko steps back and KICKS IN THE DOOR. He and Dragu go inside.

Now it's Mac's turn to look through the binoculars. He sees--

--Stanko and Dragu emerge from the trailer. They look around. Both men pull their guns. BLAM. BLAM. They shoot out all four tires of the pickup.

Artie freaks.

MAC
They shot the tires on your truck.

ARTIE
Why'd they do that?

ROY
'Cause they don't want you leaving.
They want you dead.

Roy and Mac hustle Artie to his feet. They rush him to the Jeep. Sara follows.

At the Jeep, Roy shoves Artie in the front. Mac gets behind the wheel.

ARTIE
I know a back road out of here--

MAC
We know about it. Marines don't go
some place without first finding
another way out if things go wrong.

Roy grabs the Beowulf. Checks the load. Sara grasps his arm.

SARA
No.

ROY
I'm just going to slow them down.
In case they try and follow us.

A beat. She looks to Mac for his support.

MAC
He's right.

Reluctant, she releases Roy and he trots back to the hilltop. He sprawls on his belly. Takes aims with the Beowulf AR.

Stanko and Dragu appear in the crosshairs.

Roy's finger is poised on the trigger.

Suddenly, Roy moves the rifle until--

--the "Moby Grape" propane tank appears in the crosshairs.

Roy fires and the Beowulf RECOILS.

At the tank, the shot KICKS UP A BALL OF DIRT to the left. A MISS. The SOUND of the Beowulf's shot echoes.

Stanko and Dragu flinch, whirl. They look for where the shot came from, guns ready.

Roy readies to fire again, angry at himself.

ROY
Shit.

He fires and--

--DIRT KICKS UP to the right of the tank. ANOTHER MISS.

Roy reacts, furious with himself.

ROY (CONT'D)
Goddamn!

Stanko and Dragu spot the hilltop. Catch the sun REFLECT off the scope of the Beowulf. They open fire.

Roy ducks as shots PING around him. He raises the rifle and--

ROY (CONT'D)
Come on, you lazy bastard.

--he fires.

The shot HITS and the tank EXPLODES! A ball of fire erupts. The blast throws the two men to the ground.

Roy aims the rifle at the SUV and fires four times. The Beowulf RECOILS with each shot.

All four of the Armada's tires BLOW OUT.

Roy heaves a sigh of relief.

ROY (CONT'D)
About damn time.

He scrambles up and runs back to the Jeep.

INT. JEEP - SAME

Roy climbs in the back with the AR.

ARTIE
What was that explosion!

ROY
You need a new propane tank.
(beat)
And your trailer might be a little
toasty.

Artie is aghast. Before he can say a word--

--Mac GUNS the engine and roars away from there.

Sara stares at the rifle. Then glares at Roy, upset.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - LATER

The Jeep barrels down the highway.

INT. JEEP - SAME

Mac drives. Artie stares into space, shattered by his suddenly upended life.

Roy and Sara ride in the back. They look away from each other. The tension between them is palpable.

Mac watches in the rearview. Their SILENCE is uneasy.

ARTIE
They were going to kill me. I kept
my word. Until you guys showed up,
anyway.

MAC
You're a loose end. Afraid of what
you know, what you might say.
(beat)
I got a question for you. How is it
you were the only one the police
caught in that raid?

ARTIE

I'd just popped some pills. When the cops showed up, I didn't know which end was up until the cuffs were on me.

Roy angrily PUNCHES the back of Artie's seat. Jolts him.

ROY

I don't like people who hurt animals.

ARTIE

(startled, then--)
I never hurt a dog in my life.

ROY

You worked for people who did. Same thing.

ARTIE

(sullen, knows it's true)
I didn't always. I used to be a handler at all the big dog shows. I was good at it.

MAC

Why'd you stop?

ARTIE

Got blacklisted. Busted for drugs.

MAC

There's a shocker.

ARTIE

I was broke. Homeless. Dovka's people offered me a job. I couldn't see any other way out.

(beat)

I'm ashamed of how the dogs were treated. I guess I got used to closing my eyes to what went on.

(beat, to Roy)

I'm sorry they took your dog.

SARA

It's not his dog. It's mine.

A MOMENT. Roy faces Sara. She faces him right back, defiant.

SARA (CONT'D)

I'm going to call the police.

ROY

(a long beat, then--)
Pull over.

MAC

What?

ROY

I said pull over.

(to Sara)

I want to talk to you.

The tension between he and Sara brims over.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - SAME TIME

The Jeep swerves onto the shoulder of the road. Stops.

Roy and Sara get out on opposite sides. Slam doors. Roy walks off and stands alone in the desert. Sara joins him.

ROY

You need to go home.

SARA

You're not a sergeant any more and I'm not one of your soldiers. So stop giving me orders.

ROY

I don't want you getting hurt.

SARA

I said no guns. They're only good for one thing--killing, or getting yourself killed. I was lucky to get you back in one piece after Afghanistan. So I sure as hell don't want you getting shot all to hell back here at home.

ROY

I didn't kill anyone at the trailer, Sara. I stopped them from maybe killing us. What was I supposed to do? Ask 'em nice to please go away?

SARA

Don't make fun of me. You know how I feel.

ROY

How can I forget? You keep reminding me like a damn alarm clock.

SARA

(fumes, a beat)

Using that rifle was reckless.

(MORE)

SARA (CONT'D)

Now you're going into a lion's den of more trouble, and God knows what's waiting for you there. You keep sticking your neck out like you want to get it chopped off.

ROY

I want to save Doc.

SARA

This isn't about Doc anymore, and you damn well know it!

A MOMENT. After a long silence--

ROY

When you get trained to work with dogs, the Marines tell you to never get close to them,. "Never love your dog, soldier, because your first duty is always to the other soldiers you're serving with." They don't want you getting your priorities mixed up if a decision has to be made in the heat of battle. No divided loyalties. Protect human life first, your dog second. But what they don't teach you is what happens if you find yourself loving your dog anyway, like me and Beau. I kept how I felt about him a secret so they wouldn't question what decision I might make under fire. I was afraid they'd take him away from me.

(beat)

In the end, I did what I was trained to do. I saved most of my men, but I left Beau alone and he took a half-dozen bullets and I wasn't there to catch him when he fell and hold him when he died.

(beat)

If you think I'm being reckless, fine. That's the way you see it. But right now the only thing I understand is that I'm not going to let what happened to Beau happen all over again with Doc. If I walk away now, or stop trying to find him, I might as well be saying that Beau's death means nothing to me. And I can't do that. I won't.

HOLD ON Roy and Sara. Solitary figures in the desert.

EXT. SARA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A Python Snakeskin Boot KICKS OVER an open gasoline can. GAS spills on the ground and streams through the dirt.

Dovka stands over the spilled gas and strikes a match.

DOVKA

I told you not to make trouble. Now
I give you trouble right back.

He pitches the match into the gas. WHOOSH! The spilled gas erupts into a flame that shoots along the ground and reaches--

--the closed doors of the barn that houses Sara's rescue. The doors catch fire.

Renaldo and Stape stand with him. They shoot nervous glances back at Sara's house. The windows are dark.

RENALDO

Come on, Boss. We got to go.

Dovka admires the fire as it engulfs the doors and shoots up the face of the barn. DOGS BARK from inside. Trapped.

A light comes on inside the house. Then another.

Dovka smiles at the blaze.

TIME CUT TO:

Pesto, Niko and Bailey race out of Sara's house and come to the burning barn. Kiko, Katy and Benny are right behind them. There's no sign of Dovka and his men.

KIKO

(shouts)
Call 911! Benny, come with me.
Let's get the dogs out the back.

Kiko and Benny race off. Katy calls on her call. Waits. The glow from the blaze lights the terror in her face.

EXT. NAKED CITY - NIGHT

Lights from the Stratosphere Hotel and Casino pierce the sky.

The streets below it are filled with derelict, depressed buildings. Traffic cruises past abandoned lots, fences with razor-tipped wire, streetwalkers...

INT. JEEP - SAME TIME

Roy, Mac, Sara and Artie take in the grim sights as they drive through Naked City.

ARTIE

They call this neighborhood Naked City. It's been bad a long time. After they built the Strat Hotel and Casino, people thought this area would bounce back, but it didn't. Crime took over. You don't want to be here at night.

MAC

I don't want to be here how.

ARTIE

Take this next left.

Mac makes the turn.

INT. JEEP - MOMENTS LATER

The Jeep slows and pulls over. Artie points to a dive bar.

ARTIE

That's the place. It's a front for Dovka's bunch.

The parking lot has a few cars, but it's mostly occupied by motorcycles--Harleys, Triumph Rockets, Indian Chieftains. A biker haven, for sure.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

It's a dark, smokey place. Skinheads and dangerous-looking men in biker garb hunch at the bar. A boisterous Bulgarian rap song blares--BCKC CΦPΦ by Fyre and GOCATA

One of the men at the bar looks up. It's Mac. He drinks a beer, casually checking out the other patrons.

ARTIE (O.S.)

The man you want runs his business from in there. His name's Shack. You can't miss him. He's a big mother. Has a cobra face tattoo.

At a rear table is SHACK. He plays cards with three other BIKERS. He is as advertised. A hulking badass with a cobra tattoo over half his face. You do not mess with him.

ARTIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

He buys and sells dogs for fighting, mostly for Dovka. If anyone knows where they're keeping your dog, he will. But you can bet it's not going to be an easy place to get into. He always has lots of guns around him.

Mac gets a good look at Shack. Finishes his beer.

INT. JEEP - NIGHT

Mac exits the bar. He gets back in the Jeep.

MAC

He's there all right. He's built like a damn tractor.

No one says anything. Mac looks at the others, realizes something is happening.

MAC (CONT'D)

What did I miss?

ROY

Katy called. Someone set fire to Sara's rescue about an hour ago.

Sara is in near shock.

MAC

What about the dogs?

ROY

They all got out okay. But the barn's a total loss.

A BEAT.

MAC

Jesus...

SARA

It's payback.

(beat)

He warned me not to go to the cops. He must have gotten word about Katy finding out Artie's name. That's why those two men showed up at the trailer when they did.

MAC

This shit's getting too deep. I say let's go the police now, for real.

Silence. Then--

ROY

(to Sara)

Go home. Check on your people. Then call the cops and tell them what you know.

(to Mac)

Everything's out in the open now. There's nothing to lose by bringing them into this.

MAC

What're you going to do?

SARA

He's going to keep going after Doc. Isn't that right? No matter how dangerous.

A BEAT. Everyone knows what Roy intends to do.

HEADLIGHTS wash over the Jeep as a CAB pulls alongside.

SARA (CONT'D)

Here's my cab.

Abruptly, she gets out.

EXT, JEEP - SAME TIME

Roy jumps out.

ROY

Sara?

SARA

There's nothing to say.

ROY

Yes, there is.

SARA

No. You've made it clear to me that the only one who matters in all of this is you. You're going to keep doing what you do until you realize that the past has zero to do with this moment. You think who you are is stamped forever on those dog tags you wear, and that you can't change. But you can. Just take the tags off. Set yourself free and start living for right now.

(MORE)

SARA (CONT'D)

If you don't, then I don't want to be around to see what happens to you. I can't handle that.

Sara gets in the cab. Roy watches it drive away.

INT. JEEP - SAME

Roy gets back in the Jeep. There's a heavy silence as everyone thinks about what just happened.

Roy and Mac hold each other's stare. A decision needs to be made. Finally--

MAC

This Shack, we can take him, but we might need a forklift

Roy nods, grateful that Mac's sticking with him. He extends a handshake. Mac shakes it.

MAC (CONT'D)

No man left behind.

ARTIE

Does that include me?

Artie leans in from the back and extends a handshake as well. Neither Roy nor Mac take it. They look at him skeptically.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

I've been looking for a way to get out from under these guys. Being with you might be my chance.

ROY

We'll see.

Artie drops his smile and pulls back his offered hand.

ARTIE

Fair enough.

Roy and Mac go back to watching the dive bar.

MAC

Say we get our hands on this big guy, we still got a problem. He's not gonna be friendly. Not a guy with a cobra tattoo on his face.

Roy thinks, eyes on the parking lot.

ROY

Artie, does this Shack drive a car or a bike?

Artie points toward the back of the lot where--
--a 1969 Camaro is parked. A pure muscle car.

ARTIE
That's his. The Camaro. A '69 RS.

Mac whistles, impressed.

MAC
Nice ride.

ARTIE
It's vintage. He brags about it all
the time.

Roy stares at the Camaro. An idea forming.

EXT. DIVE BAR - LATER

The front door opens and out strides Shack. The big man
lights a cigarette. Looks around as if ready to do war with
the world. Heads for his Camaro.

He unlocks the driver's door. As he reaches to open it--

--Mac races the Jeep into the lot and slams to a stop right
in front of the Camaro. Blocks it.

Shack looks up, startled. The Jeep lights BLIND HIM.

Roy steps out from the shadows and hooks an arm around the
big man's neck. Tips him backwards.

Shack struggles, helpless in an iron grip.

ROY
It's only a sleep hold, or you'd
already be dead.

Shack thrashes. His hands flail, scratch and reach for Roy.
But it's no use. He can't get free. After a moment, Shack
slumps, unconscious in Roy's vise-grip.

EXT. MIKE'S DESERT ROAD RACING - DAWN

A large sign announces in bold letters: "Mike's Desert Road
Racing. The Thrill Of A Lifetime".

This speedway once fulfilled racing dreams. Now it's
abandoned, decrepit. Five miles of winding track curves and
straightaways surrounded by empty desert. A main grandstand
is a decaying relic of the track's better days.

The Camaro is the only car in sight. It's parked in the middle of the track. And strapped to its front hood--

--is Shack. He's belly up, spread-eagle! His arms are stretched out, his hands bound by rope to the car's rearview mirrors. He looks like a frog pinned for dissection.

An anxious Artie keeps out of sight. He watches as--

--Roy and Mac approach Shack. Roy smiles at the morning light that streaks across the track.

ROY

I loved coming out here with my buddies when I was in college. People cheering in the stands. Too bad old Mike had no clue how to run a business. Now it's all... gone.

SHACK

Fuck you! I swear you're dead. You're in a world of shit.

ROY

(to Shack)

I keep asking, but I'm getting tired. Where's my dog?

SHACK

Go to hell!

Roy sighs. He holds the key to the Camaro for Shack to see.

ROY

I'd say it's time to see what this baby of yours will do.

(to Mac)

What do you think?

MAC

130, 135 is my guess. But it'll be slower with this hood ornament.

Roy opens the driver's door. Shack twists, can't break free.

ROY

I knew some Intel guys in Afghanistan who did this with an uncooperative sheik. They called it the Taliban Tango.

SHACK

Did what?!

ROY

Try and keep your head down. Might
spoil your day if you block my
vision at the wrong time.

SHACK

Let me go!

Roy gets in and fires up the Camaro.

SHACK (CONT'D)

LET ME GO--

Shack's SCREAM is drowned out by the MONSTER ROAR of the
Camaro as it takes off. The car THUNDERS down the first
straightaway, gains speed.

Shack cries out, terrified.

INT./EXT. CAMARO - DAWN

Roy drives. Pushes the car. Faster. Faster.

The speedometer reads: 80...90...100...

Shack's eyes are wide with alarm. The wind hammers his face.

The Camaro roars around a curve. Fishtails close to a wall.

Shack sees the wall and bellows.

The Camaro straightens again. Kicks up a cloud of dirt.

Roy grips the wheel. Floors the accelerator. The car leaps.

The speedometer reads: 110...120...125...

Shack SCREAMS. Like he's staring into the abyss of death.

The Camaro CAREENS around curves and near misses with the
track wall. Finally, the roar of its engine winds down as the
car slows and drifts to a stop near Mac and Artie.

Shack is breathless, eyes crazed with terror.

Roy exits the car, the engine still running.

ROY

Topped out at 135! It's a beauty.

MAC

My turn!

ROY

Take it away.

SHACK

Wait. What--?

Mac gets in the car. REVS the engine. Shack HOLLERS.

SHACK (CONT'D)

NO! Stop. I'll tell you. I'll tell you where he is. Just stop.

BEAT.

Roy gestures for Mac to cut the engine. Mac frowns.

EXT. MIKE'S DESERT ROAD RACING - MORNING

The Camaro and the Jeep are parked side by side on the track. Mac and Artie relax together in the morning light.

Suddenly, there's A SHRIEK. Mac and Artie look sharply at--

--A RACETRACK TUNNEL that leads under the grandstand.

Another SHRIEK.

ARTIE

What's he doing in there?

Mac doesn't answer, ill at ease, concerned.

INT. RACETRACK TUNNEL - SAME TIME

Morning light seeps into a dark place that was once a runway tunnel leading to the track. One of its walls is broken open, revealing wood studs. Shack is bound there, stripped naked. He cries, out of his mind with fear.

SHACK

I told you all I know. Let me go.

Roy stands close to Shack. He wears the strain of this ordeal on his face like a dark mask.

ROY

For all the dogs you starved and fed with your hate...for all those you taught to kill...

SHACK

I didn't. I took care of them. I swear.

ROY

You don't deserve mercy. You deserve your own corner in Hell.

Roy walks away.

SHACK

Don't leave me here! Please. No...

Roy disappears into the dark of the tunnel.

Shack's pitiful, agonizing screams echo behind him.

EXT. MIKE'S DESERT ROAD RACING - SAME

Roy emerges from the tunnel. He approaches Mac and Artie.

MAC

You just going to leave him there?

ROY

Security guards check this place every few days for squatters. They'll find him. Eventually. If he gets loose, he's still miles from anywhere. We've got time before he can alert anyone that we're coming.

Mac starts to say more, but Roy heads for the Jeep. That ends the conversation.

Mac gets behind the wheel of the Camaro.

INT. JEEP - SAME

Artie climbs into the seat next to Roy. He is shaken, scared by what he has just witnessed.

ROY

You think I'm gonna hurt you?

ARTIE

I don't know. I'm scared. I just want my life back. Before all this.

He waits to hear what Roy might have in mind for him.

ROY

One thing you can do for me, then you're free to go.

ARTIE

(relieved)
Anything.

Roy guns the truck to life. Gasses it.

EXT. MIKE'S DESERT ROAD RACING - SAME TIME

The Jeep heads into the desert. The Camaro follows.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - LATER

Tourists fill the sidewalks. Casino signs blaze.

The Jeep pulls out of the flow of traffic. Parks at a curb.

INT. JEEP - SAME

Artie looks over at Roy. Waits for what's next. Afraid.

ROY

Get out.

Artie is confused. He doesn't move.

ROY (CONT'D)

I said, get out.

Artie does as he's told.

EXT. STRIP SIDEWALK - SAME

Artie stands on the sidewalk. He peers in at Roy through the open Jeep window.

ARTIE

You said you wanted me to do something for you.

ROY

I want you to leave town.

Artie is baffled.

ROY (CONT'D)

Leave Las Vegas. Go far away from all this business. Save yourself.

He tosses Artie the small plastic bag with his pills.

ROY (CONT'D)

And find some help to get off these pills of yours. They'll kill you.

Suddenly, Mac steps out of the stream of pedestrians on the sidewalk. He joins Artie at the Jeep.

MAC

I ditched the Camaro around the corner.

(MORE)

MAC (CONT'D)

Here's the keys if you want to take it. But I'd get rid of it before it's reported missing.

He hands Artie the car keys. Artie is stunned.

ARTIE

But I know the place where Shack said they're holding your dog. I can help you get there.

ROY

Go on, Artie Yoe. People around this town want to hurt you.

ARTIE

I got no place to go, no one to help me. I'm broke.

Roy pulls some cash from his wallet. Hands it to him.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

I didn't mean that. I'd rather stay with you two. You saved me from getting killed.

Roy and Mac exchange a strained look. Mac's not sure he agrees with this move. Finally he relents. Takes some money from his own wallet. Hands it to Artie as well.

MAC

Find a safe place.

(beat)

We're not leaving you behind. We're giving you a new start.

Artie swallows. Struggles to speak.

ARTIE

I'm sorry for the trouble I caused.
I hope you get your dog back.

Mac extends a hand. He and Artie shake. Roy does the same.

Artie steps aside as Mac gets in the Jeep's passenger seat. Shuts the door.

Roy pulls back into traffic. Just like that the Jeep is GONE.

Artie doesn't move. He stands on the sidewalk, woeful, alone. He regards the bag of pills, unsure what to do with it. This is hard. He starts to pocket the bag, then stops and--

--spills the pills into the gutter. Every last one of them.

Artie takes a breath, feeling proud, and walks off.

INT. JEEP - MINUTES LATER

Roy and Mac drive through the city, deep in thought. Then--

ROY
Let's get Doc.

MAC
Why not.

They share a look of determination. Two friends on a mission.

EXT. DESERT RANCH - DAY

An isolated, rundown ranch, miles from nowhere. A barn and a half-dozen ramshackle outbuildings are spread around, flanked by Creosote bushes, Joshua trees, and scattered shrubs. Several cars are parked here. Harleys too.

At the edge of the ranch, the Jeep appears.

INT./EXT. JEEP - SAME

The Jeep stops. Through the windshield, Roy and Mac see a battered sign hammered to a tree. It reads: "No Trespassing. No Fucking Around. You've Been Warned."

A long moment, then--

The screen door of an outbuilding opens. Out steps a hardcase Biker. This is ELDER. Shaved head. Full beard.

Elder strolls into the yard, eyes on the Jeep. He wears a leather vest adorned with colorful patches and the name of a biker club on the back: "The Brood." He carries a Mossberg pump action shotgun slung over one shoulder, muzzle up.

Roy and Mac watch him.

MAC
"No Fucking Around." That sign
wasn't kidding.

ROY
You ready for this?

MAC
Time to find out.

Roy eases the Jeep forward.

Elder levels his shotgun. As the Jeep draws close--

ELDER
That's far enough!

Roy brakes a dozen yards away. Elder glares with menace and moves closer to Roy's open window. Gun ready.

ROY

Shack sent us. Name's Roy.

ELDER

I'm Elder. State your business.

ROY

I told Shack I wanted to look at his merchandise. Maybe buy something.

Elder squints, unconvinced.

ROY (CONT'D)

We had drinks with him last night at the bar. He told us to come on out.

A BEAT. The ploy feels like a fail. Then Mac leans toward the open window. Smiles at Elder like they're old buds.

MAC

Don't know how he stands listening to that Bulgarian rap crap. It's all they played in that fucking joint.

That remark cuts through Elder's doubts. He must hate that music too. He grins a meth mouth full of ruined teeth.

BIKER #1

I know, right. Like being hit in the head with a shovel.

(beat)

I'll get Sylvus for you boys. Leave your car here.

Elder lets out a loud whistle. A signal. Then strolls off.

Roy turns off the Jeep. He and Mac take an uneasy breath.

The barn door opens and another hulking Biker steps out. This is SYLVUS. He wears a Brood vest, too. He carries a Browning Hi-Power handgun in a chest holster.

A BEAT of deepening worry.

MAC

(to Roy)

What did I say about Marines always having an exit plan? I don't think you've mentioned one.

ROY

There's no plan. We lay eyes on Doc, we take him. That's it.

MAC

(a beat)

In case you haven't noticed, we're seriously outgunned. I switched Artie's guns to the Camaro. They were his after all.

Roy thinks about that. Then--

ROY

We'll improvise.

The two share a look. They are in this deep shit together. They get out of the Jeep and walk toward the barn.

EXT. BARN - SAME

Up close, Sylvus looks even more fierce. Like a buzzard starved for roadkill.

ROY

We're here to buy a dog.

SYLVUS

(nods, calls out)

Henry!

A third biker steps out of the barn. This is HENRY. He is heavily tattooed, with a massive mustache that sprouts furiously over his mouth. He wears a Brood biker vest and carries a Ruger Blackhawk .357 holstered on his hip.

SYLVUS (CONT'D)

(to Henry)

Check 'em.

Henry saunters over to Roy and Mac. Pats them down.

HENRY

They're clean.

SYLVUS

(to Roy and Mac)

All right then. Follow me.

Sylvus leads them into the barn. Henry follows.

INT. BARN - SAME

Dreamy stoner music blares from a stereo. (Think "Rabbit One" by Masters of Reality.)

Sylvus and Henry escort Roy and Mac past a quartet of MEN AND WOMEN who work at long tables, bagging crack cocaine.

A Biker named BILLY patrols the quartet. He eyeballs their work. Cradles a Ruger AR 556.

SYLVUS
All good, Billy?

BILLY
Sweet as cherry pie.

SYLVUS
You boys in the market for some sleet?

Roy gives him a quizzical look. No clue what he means.

SYLVUS (CONT'D)
Crack. I'll cut you a deal.

Sylvus and Henry exchange a cynical laugh.

HENRY
I don't know, Sylvus. They don't look like cocaine party dudes.
(to Roy and Mac)
You dudes like to party? You like to dance with the witches? We got some girls make your eyes roll like hot dice.

More mocking laughter.

At the back of the barn, A VAN is parked in the shadows. The rear end is visible. It's riddled with bullet holes.

Sylvus reaches the back of the barn. He turns and faces Roy and Mac with steely eyes.

SYLVUS
Keep your hands to yourself out in the yard, 'less you're tired of counting all your fingers.

He kicks open a door. Sunlight floods in.

EXT. REAR OF THE BARN - SAME

Roy and Mac follow Sylvus outside. Henry stays inside the barn. He slams the barn door shut behind them.

Roy and Mac face a sun-drenched patch of desert. There are scrub trees and a dozen large oil drums. The tops of the drums are open and they lie on their sides. Heavy chains are staked into the ground in front of each one.

A fourth biker in a Brood vest strolls among the drums. This is TC.

SYLVUS

Get 'em up, TC. Got us some real live customers here.

TC THUMPS a metal bite stick on the drums that he passes.

TC

Rise and shine, deadheads! Come out, come out! Company calling!

WE DO NOT SEE ALL THAT ROY AND MAC SEE IN THIS SCENE. Their revulsed expressions tell us all we need to know as **WE HEAR** dogs stir awake inside the oil drums. They BARK AND SNARL. Their chains CLANG as they emerge into the hot sun from their makeshift hovels. This place is a dog kennel from hell.

Sylvus leads Roy and Mac through the kennel.

SYLVUS

So Shack sent you.

Roy can't answer. He's rendered speechless by the brutality of this place.

SYLVUS (CONT'D)

Don't know how much experience you got with dogfightin', but our hounds are trained to draw blood. They're worth every cent you pay.

Roy and Mac are outraged, revulsed. They look away.

SYLVUS (CONT'D)

Know what you're looking for?

Roy can't find his voice. Sylvus looks at him strangely.

SYLVUS (CONT'D)

What's with you, rabbit? Look like you want to turn tail.

MAC

(to the rescue)

We heard about a German Shepherd. We want to see one.

SYLVUS

Only dogs are what you see here.

MAC

Shack said he'd show us a dog named Gladiator.

SYLVUS

He did, huh?

Dogs whimper, moan. Roy barely keeps his horror in check.

ROY

I've heard about places like this.
You make them eat, sleep, shit
chained up outside, all day and
night. Until someone takes them off
somewhere to fight and die.

SYLVUS

We can't all have the champagne
life, can we?

Roy stops. Faces Sylvus. On the verge of erupting.

ROY

I'm ready to buy. But first I want
you to get Shack on the phone and
tell him that you refuse to make
good on his promise to show me this
Gladiator so I can see for myself
what a champion looks like.

Sylvus is caught off-guard by Roy's challenge.

ROY (CONT'D)

Go on. Call him. Tell him. Or we're
leaving.

The tension escalates. Finally--

SYLVUS

I haven't been able to get him on
the phone today.

MAC

The way he was boozing with us last
night, I wouldn't be surprised if
he was flat on his ass somewhere.

Sylvus keeps staring at them. The dark mood gets more tense.

SYLVUS

You were drinking with him, yet
here you are. Sober. Not flat on
your ass.

MAC

Guess we can hold our liquor.

Sylvus is unsure. Then--

SYLVUS

All right. I'll show you what you want. Then you come back out here and buy. Understand me?

ROY

Deal.

Sylvus leads Roy and Mac away from the barn.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE RANCH - MINUTES LATER

Away from the kennel, behind one of the ramshackle buildings, is A LONG CONSTRUCTION TRAILER attached to a diesel truck.

Sylvus takes Roy and Mac that way.

SYLVUS

Gladiator has his own private home. Air conditioned. Better than my place. Benefits of being owned by a very rich man.

Sylvus uses a key to unlock a heavily padlocked door on the trailer. He swings it open.

INT. CONSTRUCTION TRAILER - SAME

Sylvus, Roy and Mac enter the trailer. It BOOMS with the roar of an AC unit. Overhead lights illuminate carts filled with kennel gear. Leashes and muzzles hang on the walls.

A man rises up from a chair. It's Tony Vargas, the trainer.

VARGAS

No one's allowed in here.

SYLVUS

Won't take long. They want to see Gladiator.

VARGAS

I said no one.

SYLVUS

Shack's orders. You want to say no to him and go down that rough road, be my guest.

Vargas tenses. The threat carries weight.

Sylvus reaches for a metal bite stick and--SNICK!--flicks it open to a menacing two-foot length. He leads Roy and Mac to the far end of the trailer where a large cage sits by itself, half hidden in shadow.

Roy approaches the cage. His nerves ratchet as he gets closer, closer. Nothing stirs inside. The cage appears empty.

Sylvus RAKES the bite stick back across the bars.

SYLVUS (CONT'D)

You have visitors. Show your face!

Still nothing. Sylvus VIOLENTLY HITS the bars with the stick.

There's a GROWL, then out steps Doc. He comes to the cage door and stares at Sylvus. Flashes his fangs.

SYLVUS (CONT'D)

This is what a champion looks like,
fellas. Blood hunger in those eyes.

Roy is sickened by Sylvus' cruel bravado.

Now Doc turns his attention to Roy. He takes a deep sniff of him, then relaxes his mouth. Lets his tongue hang free.

A MOMENT.

VARGAS

That's funny. Never seen him be
that way before.

SYLVUS

What way?

VARGAS

(to Roy)
He likes you.

ROY

How much?

Vargas stares at Roy quizzically.

VARGAS

Why does he like you?

ROY

I'll buy him. Right now. How much?

SYLVUS

You deaf? I already said this one's
not for sale. You can choose from
the dogs outside.

ROY

Name your price. I want him.

Now Sylvus feels that something's wrong. He raises the bite stick in one hand, reaches for his gun with the other. But before he can pull it--

--Mac grabs a heavy metal food bowl and tosses it--

--to Roy, who catches it and CRASHES it into Sylvus's head.

Stunned, Sylvus drops the bite stick. Roy drops the bowl, scoops up the bite stick and-- CRACK!--swings it full force into Sylvus's right knee. Sylvus CRIES OUT. Falls, hard.

Vargas lunges for Roy.

Mac grabs the metal bowl off the floor and repeatedly SMASHES Vargas in the head with it. Vargas drops. Out cold.

Sylvus holds his knee, face knotted in pain. CRASH! This time Roy smashes him in the head with the bite stick. Lights out.

Doc barks--a happy, excited bark at this turn of events!

Roy goes through Sylvus's pockets. Finds his keys.

He unlocks the cage and Doc bounds out, right into Roy's arms. He licks Roy's face over and over. A blessed reunion. Roy hugs Doc for all he's worth.

ROY (CONT'D)

I got you, boy. I got you.

Doc growls suspiciously at Mac.

ROY (CONT'D)

It's okay. He's one of us.

Mac smiles at Doc. Holds up his hands in mock surrender.

TIME CUT TO:

Vargas and Sylvus are still unconscious. Roy drags both of them inside the dog cage. He starts to close the cage door, then sees the Browning in Sylvus' chest holster.

He reaches for it, then catches himself. Sara's warning about no guns is too much for him. He pulls back his hand, SLAMS the cage door shut and locks both men inside.

The trailer door opens and Mac enters from outside.

MAC

I've got the trailer unhooked.
Let's improvise some more.

He dangles the keys from the end of one finger.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION TRAILER - MINUTES LATER

Roy, Mac and Doc exit the trailer. Doc is on a leash.

Henry is just coming that way. He sees them head for the diesel truck. Realizes something's amiss.

HENRY

Hey! HEY!

The trio scramble into the cab of the diesel truck. Roy gets behind the wheel. Mac and Doc get in the other side.

Henry pulls his Blackhawk.

Roy gasses the truck. It lurches into gear. Takes off.

Henry blasts THREE SHOTS.

INT. DIESEL TRUCK - SAME TIME

Roy floors it. The truck roars around the side of the barn and into the front yard. He spots the Jeep.

ROY

We'll come back for your Jeep later.

MAC

Go, go, go!

The truck thunders past the Jeep.

Roy spots the entrance to the ranch. Speeds that way.

EXT. RANCH - SAME TIME

The bullet-shot van charges out of the barn. Billy drives.

He makes it to the entrance and BRAKES, blocks the way out. Turns, aims his Ruger AR at the truck, and BLASTS AWAY.

INT./EXT. DIESEL TRUCK - SAME TIME

Bullets pepper the hood of the diesel truck.

Roy jerks the steering wheel. The truck spins away from the entrance. Veers sideways.

Suddenly, Elder comes running. Raises his shotgun and--

--BLAM! His shot RIPS INTO the side of the truck.

Roy flinches. Looks at Doc and Mac. They are okay. Drives on.

MAC

Find another way out.

Roy aims for a tall stand of vegetation next to an outbuilding. PLOWS INTO IT and--

--the truck BURSTS out the other side.

Suddenly, Roy STANDS on the brake. The truck SKIDS several feet and comes to a VIOLENT STOP inches from--

--a LEDGE. It's poised at a precipitous drop into a TREACHEROUS ARROYO.

Roy and Mac stare wild-eyed at the drop. That was damn close! Roy throws the truck in reverse. Spins wheels back out into--

--the yard. Suddenly, Billy's VAN is right there, coming straight for a head-on collision with the truck.

Roy swerves. The van SIDESWIPES the truck. A near miss.

But there's Henry again. He's in a shooting stance. His .357 ROARS twice.

The shots BLOW OUT the front tires of the truck.

In the truck, Roy fights for control of the steering wheel as the truck--KAVOOM!--CRASHES into--

--an outbuilding. The truck churns through the middle of the building, then--

--BLASTS out the other side of it. The house COLLAPSES.

The collision violently tosses Roy, Mac and Doc. With no front wheels, Roy is losing control, but he STOMPS on the accelerator anyway. Makes for the entrance again.

Henry and Elder mount their Harleys and come fast. They pull their guns. Blast away.

BOOM! One of the truck's rear tires blows out.

The truck rocks, swerves.

Roy looks at the RIGHT-SIDE REARVIEW MIRROR. Sees Henry coming up fast. He swerves the truck that way and--

--CRASH! Henry and his Harley tumble in a wreck, destroyed.

Roy looks in his LEFT-SIDE REARVIEW MIRROR. Sees Elder on his speeding Harley. Roy swerves to take him out.

Elder fires his gun and--BOOM!--the shot blows out the truck's remaining rear tire.

The truck SMASHES into the Harley and Elder is thrown.

The impact of the collision knocks the diesel truck off-balance. It rocks side to side, in danger of tipping over.

Roy fights the wheel. Cries out:

ROY
Hold Doc!

Mac pulls Doc tight as the truck tips, tips more and --

--CRASHES to the ground, on the driver's side. The colossal machine CHURNS DIRT as it thunders to a stop.

In the truck, there's an awful moment of SILENCE. Roy is at the bottom of the sideways truck, pinned against the earth. Mac and Doc loom above him in the passenger seat.

Roy blinks, stunned. Through the cracked windshield he sees the entrance to the ranch right there. So close.

ROY (CONT'D)
You all right?

MAC
Think so.

ROY
Doc?

MAC
I think okay.

Roy struggles, but its no use. He can't get free.

Through the windshield, he sees the bikers. Those still standing reload, coming this way.

ROY
You and Doc get out. Hurry.

Mac PUSHES UP on his passenger door. It CREAKS open. He winces in pain as he pulls himself up and--

--stumbles out of the truck. He falls to the ground. His forehead is cut. Blood streams into one eye.

Doc scampers up after him, but does not jump down. He remains atop the fallen truck. Looks back down into the cab at Roy.

ROY (CONT'D)
Go with Mac. Go. Go!

Doc does not move.

BLAM, BLAM, BLAM. The Brood blow the hell out of Mac's Jeep. Cut off that avenue of escape.

Mac looks around. There's nowhere to go. He comes to the shattered windshield, Doc at his side. They look in at Roy.

ROY (CONT'D)

Run!

MAC

I'm not leaving you!

ROY

For God sakes! GO!

Mac is frozen. Caught in a no-win jam.

Suddenly, behind him, A ROAR. Mac whips around and--

--Shack's Camaro SPEEDS through the ranch entrance. It skids to a stop close to the truck.

ARTIE IS AT THE WHEEL.

MAC

Well, I'll be...

ARTIE

I came back in case you needed me.
Seems you do.

Mac smiles with stunned relief.

The bikers open fire again.

Mac faces Roy again. A PAINFUL MOMENT. They know the score.

ROY

Just save Doc.
(beat)
Do it.

Mac relents. He pulls Doc by the leash. Doc resists, barks. He does not want to leave Roy. Finally he gives in and hurries off with Mac.

INT. CAMARO - SAME

Mac and Doc get in the car. Mac up front. Doc in the back.

ARTIE

What about--

MAC

Go now!

A bullet EXPLODES the Camaro's rear window.

Artie floors the muscle car. Does a wicked 180 and speeds away from the ranch.

Mac stares straight ahead, devastated at this turn of events.

Doc watches back out the rear window--

--at the fallen diesel truck--

--at Roy imprisoned inside--

--at The Brood coming for him.

The speeding Camaro leaves the ranch far behind.

EXT. DESERT RANCH - ANOTHER DAY

POLICE OFFICERS spread out across the property. They search the grounds, stream in and out of the barn and outbuildings. It's a beehive crime scene.

Police cars are parked at the entrance to the ranch. Sara and Mac wait nearby. Sara is emotionally drained, shattered.

A uniformed Katy approaches from across the yard.

KATY

We're coming up empty. No dog kennel. No drugs. No wrecked or shot up cars.

Mac angrily points to the collapsed house.

MAC

We smashed right through that house! How 'bout that?

KATY

I know what you told us, but we've got nothing yet.

Mac fumes. He looks across the yard to where--

--several COPS question someone. One cop moves aside...and there's Shack. He smokes, glares at Mac with calm menace.

MAC

That bastard. He knows the truth.

KATY

He's the owner of the property. He says he's never seen you before.

SARA

It's been two days since Roy went missing. I want him back.

KATY
(with great empathy)
We're trying.

MAC
You keep saying that.

Katy glares. Before a fight can erupt between them--

SARA
Dovka's got him. I know it. I
warned Roy he was pushing too hard.

MAC
Yeah, what about this Dovka?

KATY
One of our detectives questioned
him. He has an alibi for when you
said he stole Doc. Says he was
saying confession at a church. Even
has a priest who swears to it.

Mac sputters. Can't believe his ears.

SARA
I suppose the fire at my place
never happened either.

KATY
Our investigator says it looks like
arson. Nothing official yet.

MAC
Looks like?!

Katy wants to throttle Mac. Calms herself.

KATY
(to Sara)
If we can link Dovka to any of
this, we'll nail him. And we're
gonna find Roy.

Sara isn't so sure, but she nods anyway.

TIME CUT TO:

ANOTHER PART OF THE RANCH

A black Suburban SUV is parked away from all the action. Katy walks Sara that way. Mac follows.

KATY (CONT'D)
Best thing to do is go home and
rest. I'll call you as soon as we
hear anything.

As they reach the Suburban, a door opens and out steps Artie, jittery as hell.

ARTIE

We got a problem. Him.

He points across the yard to--

--where the cops still confer with Shack. One of them is a man we have seen before. He wears a cowboy hat and a western suit jacket. He was at Dovka's lunch party--Captain Harris.

KATY

That's my boss, Captain Harris.
What about him?

ARTIE

I've seen him at a lot of the dogfights. He's friends with Dovka.

Katy squints suspiciously at Artie.

KATY

Who are you again? And why am I listening to you?

MAC

He saved our asses out here. That's who he is.

ARTIE

I'm sure of it. That guy in the cowboy hat is dirty.

KATY

(thinks, to Sara)
Harris is the one who gave me access to the case file on the police raid.
(points to Artie)
That's where I got his name and address.

SARA

And the next thing we know, two of Dovka's henchmen show up.

A MOMENT. Everyone thinks about that. Then--

SARA (CONT'D)

(to Katy)
I have an idea. Can we hold up at your house?

KATY

Sure. I sent Kiko and Benny to stay there with Doc and the other dogs. What're you thinking?

SARA

Your boss. I'll tell you more when you get home.

Everyone is at a loss what Sara is thinking. Katy watches them pile in the Suburban and take off.

INT. DOVKA'S GYM - NIGHT

The place is awash in shadows. A finger of light illuminates where a heavy bag used to be. Instead, Roy hangs there, battered, bloodied, hands knotted to the overhead hook.

Dovka appears. He is shirtless, drenched in sweat, out of breath from kicking and beating the hell out of Roy.

Stanko and Dragu watch from the shadows.

DOVKA

You could have avoided all this pain, but you had to be a tough guy. All I wanted was to know where your friends took my Gladiator. It doesn't matter now. I found out where he is anyway.

Roy labors to breathe. Struggles to speak.

ROY

Doc...His name's...Doc.

Dovka scoffs. Takes hold of Roy's dog tags. Reads them.

DOVKA

And you are...Dix. R. A. 18235098. USMC. Roman Catholic. I am Catholic, too. So much guilt.

Dovka lets go of the dog tags and delivers a vicious spin kick to Roy's face. Blood flies.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

(to his men)

Put him with the other dogs. Then get Renaldo and Stape. Tell them to go and bring back my champion.

He grabs hold of Roy and SPINS him on the hook. Roy turns round and round, helpless, in a dizzying circle.

DISSOLVE TO:

A DARK PLACE

Roy is out cold. He twitches, tortured by a horrible dream filled with the BRUTAL SOUNDS OF WARFARE. Bombs explode. Weapons fire. Men cry out.

Out of the darkness, A DOG appears. It licks Roy's hand. Comforts and calms him.

Roy's eyes flicker open. He can't believe what he sees.

The dog is BEAU.

ROY

Beau. How's my good boy. My Beau...

Roy reaches a hand to stroke him and--

--Beau VANISHES. Gone.

Then ANOTHER HAND gently shakes Roy.

MARTA (O.S.)

Wake up. Wake up.

Roy WAKES, in a sweat. Realizes that Beau was a dream and that the hand belongs to--

--a little girl. It's Marta, Dovka's daughter. She holds a flashlight lantern, the bulb turned down low.

Roy struggles up, out of sorts. Sees that he's in IN A CAGE.

Marta is outside the cage on the floor next to him.

ROY

Where am I?

MARTA

Shhh. Keep your voice down.

The girl BRIGHTENS her lantern and the glow illuminates--

--a room filled with several other cages. DOGS are housed in each one. Some sleep. Others stare with sad, tormented eyes.

MARTA (CONT'D)

(whispers)

They've all been sold. They're waiting to be picked up by their new owners.

ROY

Sold? For fighting?

Marta nods yes.

Roy rattles his cage door. LOCKED.

ROY (CONT'D)

Let me out.

MARTA

I can't. I don't have a key. My father said not to trust you.

Roy KICKS the cage door harder. BANG!

One of the dogs in the room BARKS, alarmed.

MARTA (CONT'D)

Be quiet. I'm trying to keep this one calm.

She moves the lantern to show the cage adjacent to Roy. Inside is a GERMAN SHEPHERD named STELLA. It lies on its side, panting, straining. The girl gently strokes its head.

MARTA (CONT'D)

This is Stella. She's having her babies.

(to the dog)

Good girl. You're doing fine.

Roy tries to open his cage door again. No luck. He turns back and watches as--

--Stella begins to give birth.

Time stops. It's a tender, moment.

MARTA (CONT'D)

Good girl. Look. Here comes the first one. Good girl...

The NEWBORN PUP slides all the way out and Stella licks it, welcomes it to the world.

Marta keeps stroking Stella. She smiles at the dog for all she's worth. Then, to Roy, in a hushed voice--

MARTA (CONT'D)

I take care of Stella and make sure everything goes okay. I love her.

(beat)

Here comes another one.

PUP #2 starts to come out.

MARTA (CONT'D)

Aren't they beautiful.

Stella licks both of her newborn pups as they wiggle against her, trying to suck her nipples.

MARTA (CONT'D)

Wish I could keep the pups, but
they've been bred for fighting and
will be sold too.

(beat)

Their father is a famous champion.
Gladiator.

A STUNNING REVELATION. Roy stares at the new pups, aghast.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

A Nissan Armada crawls down a suburban street and parks.

INT. SUV - SAME

Renaldo and Stape are in the front seats. They watch a house
across the street. No lights are on.

STAPE

That's the place.

They take out Makarov pistols and check they are loaded.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - SAME

Renaldo and Stape exit the SUV. They cross to the house.

EXT. BACK OF HOUSE - A MINUTE LATER

Renaldo and Stape arrive at the back. All is dark here.

Renaldo tries the back door--locked.

RENALDO

Give me your lock pick.

STAPE (O.S.)

I don't think so.

Renaldo sighs. He turns around, annoyed--

RENALDO

I swear, what is your problem--

Katy is there. She has a Glock in each hand. One is pressed
to Stape's neck. The other is aimed point blank at Renaldo.

INT. HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Pesto, Bailey, Niko and Doc sit quietly, side by side. They
stare intently at--

--Renaldo and Stape who sit in chairs, their wrists bound by zip tie handcuffs. Only a few feet separate them from the dogs. Both men look terrified, as they should be.

Katy, Sara and Artie enter. Dovka's men glare at him.

RENALDO

Traitor.

ARTIE

Not from where I stand.

STAPE

(to Katy)

How did you know we were coming?

SARA

Speaking of traitors.

KATY

I called Captain Harris and told him we had the dog that Roy rescued. I figured he might not be able to keep that a secret. Not from his good friend, your boss.

(a coy smile, to Sara)

Good call.

SARA

(to Renaldo and Stape)

It was the right move, because now you're here and you're going to tell us what we want to know.

Renaldo snorts a derisive laugh.

Sara gives the dogs a hand gesture and the Three Musketeers SNAP TO ATTENTION. On their feet. Poised to attack.

Renaldo and Stape react with "Oh shit" expressions.

SARA (CONT'D)

As I said: You're going to tell us where Roy is. And you're going to tell us now.

Doc GROWLS at the men. He shows them his fangs.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

A full moon hangs over the desert city.

EXT. DOVKA'S HOUSE/POOL - SAME TIME

Dovka strolls outside, dressed for a night on the town. He looks at the city lights in the distance.

Stanko approaches.

STANKO

I've been calling them. Still no answer.

Dovka's face tightens. Darkens with fury.

INT. DOVKA'S MANSION/LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Stella's twin puppies are in a quilted bed on the floor. Stella tenderly strokes them.

Dovka appears. Bends close to her.

DOVKA

Taking good care of our babies?

MARTA

(shakes her head yes)
Can I keep them, papa? Please.
They're so cute.

DOVKA

They belong to someone else now.

MARTA

Are they going to fight?

DOVKA

Not for awhile. First they must grow up.

Marta is quiet, then--

MARTA

Why must they fight?

DOVKA

Because when they get bigger, they will be good at it.

MARTA

I don't want them to get hurt.

DOVKA

Getting hurt isn't all bad. It can make them stronger, tougher.

MARTA

Even when they're little?

DOVKA

Yes.

The pups lick her fingertips.

MARTA

Is that how you got to be strong?
Did you get hurt a lot when you
were little?

A MOMENT. Out of the mouths of babes.

Dovka stares at Marta, the puppies.

INT. DOVKA'S GYM - NIGHT

The front door rattles, locked. Then it BURSTS OPEN. Mac and Sara step inside. The place is dark, empty.

Mac turns on the lights. Comes to where a heavy bag once stood. Sara bends to the concrete floor under it. Touches--

--DARK RUBY FLECKS. Fresh.

SARA

Blood.

The worried look on their faces says it all: Time is short.

EXT./INT. SUV - MINUTES LATER

Sara and Mac walks briskly from the gym. They get in the front of an SUV, Mac at the wheel.

Katy is in the back with Stape, who is still handcuffed.

SARA

(urgent, to Stape)
No one's there.

STAPE

Then they've already taken him.

SARA

Where?

Silence.

SARA (CONT'D)

(to Katy)
Give me his gun.

Katy hesitates, then hands her the 9mm Makarov pistol.

Sara leans into the back seat and JAMS the barrel of the Makarov into Stanko's crutch. He flinches, terrified.

SARA (CONT'D)

Tell us where they took him or I'm going shoot your nuts all over these pretty leather seats.

STAPE

(can't answer fast enough)
To the underground. I can show you.

Sara takes note of Katy's shocked expressions.

SARA

I don't like guns, but Roy showed me how to use them in case I ever needed to. And I needed to.

She gingerly hands the gun back to Katy.

SARA (CONT'D)

Don't ever let me do that again.

STAPE

Head uptown.

Mac starts the SUV and waves an arm out the window to--

--ANOTHER SUV parked behind them. Kiko is at the wheel. Artie is next to him. In the back seat, Benny sits next to a handcuffed Renaldo.

In the way back sits Doc and The Three Musketeers. Intent. Obedient. Ready to rock.

EXT. SUVS - SAME

Both SUVs speed down the street. As they do, A SOUND OF SAVAGE, RHYTHMIC CHEERS FILLS THE AIR AND CROSSES THE--

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - NIGHT

The CHORUS OF CHEERS echoes down a long tunnel lit by construction lights that reveal graffiti-covered walls.

INT. UNDERGROUND ARENA - SAME

At the end of the tunnel is a wide open space that has been fashioned into an arena of sorts with lights and a high, circular fence. A boisterous CROWD OF MEN are all around the fence, hollering for action.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - SAME

Dovka steps into a utility room just off the arena. The ROAR of the crowd muffles as he shuts the door behind him.

Roy is slumped in a chair, stripped naked.

DOVKA

You hear that? The crowd. They're hungry. They want a dogfight. I had one scheduled for them, but--

(he shrugs, philosophical)

--tonight I give them something special. Two men. A fight to the death, perhaps.

Dovka lifts Roy's bloodied face. Gives him a good look.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

You're my new Gladiator.

Dovka STRAPS a dog collar around Roy's neck and hooks a chain leash to it. He pulls on it and Roy tumbles to the ground. He gags. The collar strangles him.

DOVKA (CONT'D)

On your feet, dog. Time to show what fight you have left in you.

He pulls the leash again and forces Roy to crawl on all fours. Dovka opens the door and leads him into the arena. The crowd THUNDERS.

INT. ARENA - SAME

Dovka struts, proud of his new pet. Roy gags, struggles to keep up. Stanko and Dragu bring up the rear.

The crowd goes wild. Mocking laughter and cheers rain down.

Shack and Vargas are in the crowd. So too are the bikers: Elder, Sylvus, Henry and Billy. They leer and shout, taking pleasure in Roy's misery.

Police Captain Harris is there as well. He stands near the fence, taking in the vile spectacle.

Dovka opens a gate in the fence, unhooks the leash and KICKS Roy inside.

Roy lands face-first. Slowly he opens his eyes.

Another fighter is already there. This is MEECH, and he is a tower of menace. His torso is scarred from a hundred fights.

Dovka shouts to the crowd--

DOVKA
Gladiator versus Meech!

He slams shut the gate and the crowd ROARS.

Roy gets up on his knees, his feet, incredibly weak. Looks at the leering faces around him, made all the more grotesque by their lust for blood. Something out of Dante.

Meech sneers and LUNGES for Roy.

They grapple. Gouge.

Punch. Kick.

Punch. Blood flies.

It's a vicious brawl. Meech crushes Roy.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - SAME TIME

The two SUVs race through the city streets.

INT. UNDERGROUND ARENA - SAME TIME

Meech locks Roy in a brutal chokehold. Grabs the chain that holds Roy's dog tags and twists it until it becomes a noose.

Roy chokes. Can't breathe. He thrashes, helpless.

Dovka watches. Eyes shine with savage delight.

Roy struggles. Miraculously he's able to STOMP on one of Meech's feet. Meech loses his iron grip just enough for Roy to SINK HIS TEETH into one of the big man's forearms.

Meech SHRIEKS and lets go.

Roy stumbles free and attacks. He punches Meech in the face. Once. Twice. Three times.

Meech staggers, stunned. Blood spurts from his nose. He lets loose a monstrous roar and charges Roy. Like a mad bull.

Roy drops low and KICKS Meech's right knee. A wicked blow.

The big man topples. Clasps his knee.

Dovka's delight vanishes. He turns to Stanko.

DOVKA
Knife!

Stanko pulls a leather pouch from inside his jacket. Flips it open. Inside are two FIGHTING KNIVES--K98 MAUSERS.

Dovka takes one of the knives and tosses it in the cage. It CLATTERS at Roy's feet.

Roy eyes Dovka.

DOVKA (CONT'D)
Do it, dog. Kill or be killed.

The crowd thrashes and shouts for blood.

A MOMENT.

Roy defiantly KICKS the Fighting Knife away.

Dovka smolders.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - SAME TIME

The two SUVs arrive at a dark corner of the city. It's a construction site filled with scaffolding and pallets of sewer pipes. A SHED bears a sign: "No Trespassing."

Sara and Mac leap out. Katy drags Stape with her.

The doors of the second SUV open. Benny and Artie jump out. Kiko drags Renaldo with him.

Pesto, Niko, Bailey, and Doc bound out, ready for action.

From across the site, A BIG MAN steps out of the shadows.

BIG MAN
(Bulgarian accent)
This is private property. You're trespassing.

MAC
We're here for the party.

BIG MAN
Invitation only.

MAC
Will this work?

Mac grabs the Big Man and SMASHES his head into a pallet of sewer pipes. CLANG. The Big Man drops, out cold.

SARA
(to Stape)
Where is it?

STAPE
The shed. Inside.

Sara throws open the shed door. Peers inside.

The shed is fake. It covers the way into a lighted tunnel.

Sara turns to the others.

SARA
There's a tunnel here.

Katy pulls her service revolver. Checks the load.

KATY
I called this in. If it turns out
to be what we think it is, we're
gonna need backup.
(to Kiko)
Hang those two out to dry, and
let's go.

Kiko pushes Renaldo and Stape against a chain fence. He uses zip tie handcuffs to attach their hands high up on the fence.

SARA
(whistles, to Pesto)
Pesto! If they move, rip 'em a new
one.

Pesto BARKS that he understand the command.

Sara charges into the tunnel. The rest of the team follows. Doc, Bailey and Niko right with them.

Left alone, Renaldo and Stape are helpless, tethered to the fence. They pull and yank at their hands, trying get free.

Pesto SNARLS at them, a deep snarl that promises a special brand of wicked pain if it's not obeyed. Both men FREEZE.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - SAME TIME

The rescue party runs through the semi-dark, past the graffiti. The ARENA CROWD VOICES ECHO from up ahead.

INT. UNDERGROUND ARENA - SAME TIME

Roy struggles to unhook the dog collar from around his neck. It's choking him to death.

Meech is back on his feet. He limps. His knee pain is agony.

Dovka picks up the Fighting Knife that Roy kicked aside.

DOVKA
(to Stanko)
The other knife!

Stanko pulls the second knife from the sheath. Dovka takes it. Extends both knives through the fence to Meech.

Meech takes them. He whirls, a blade in each hand. He limps toward Roy, BELLOWS like a Grizzly going for the kill.

Roy backpedals. Nowhere to hide.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - SAME TIME

Sara and company race through the long tunnel.

INT. UNDERGROUND ARENA - SAME TIME

Meech comes at Roy, knives slashing.

One blade CUTS Roy's chest. Blood spurts.

The crowd ROARS.

Meech lunges again, slashes.

Roy sidesteps, just in time, and Meech's momentum carries him past Roy.

Roy spins and SLAMS Meech face-first into the fence. Holds him there. Bends one of the big man's hands BACK, BACK...

Meech SCREAMS. The knife in that hand falls.

Roy presses harder, then lets go and unleashes a flurry of hammer-like punches into Meech's kidneys.

Meech HOLLERS.

Roy steps back and KICKS Meech's injured knee again. The knee bends unnaturally and...CRACK!

Meech HOWLS. The second knife falls. Then Meech falls too.

The crowd goes ballistic.

Roy--wounded, beaten, out of breath--kicks away both knives.

Dovka is livid. He snaps, tears off his shirt, and steps inside the fence.

Roy can barely stand to face his new opponent.

Dovka flexes his powerful torso, raises his massive arms, and attacks. He's a cage-fighting swarm machine.

Kick.

Punch.

Smash.

Kick.

Roy withers against the onslaught. Barely able to stand. Bleeds from the gash in his chest, from the ruin of his face.

Dovka launches a spin kick at Roy's head, and--

--Roy's head snaps sideways.

TIME TURNS TO SYRUP.

Roy's view BLURS. The noises in the arena converge into a single, sustained slaughterhouse WAIL.

Dovka thrusts his arms into the air, triumphant. He drinks in the adulation of the crowd.

Roy falls to his knees. He can't go on.

Dovka picks up one the Fighting Knives, expertly spins it and raises it above Roy's head, ready to deliver the deathblow.

Suddenly, DOC CHARGES OUT OF THE TUNNEL. He leaps through the open gate and CLAMPS his powerful jaws on Dovka's wrist. Just in time to stop the knife coming down.

Dovka SCREAMS and drops the knife. He tries to pull free, but Doc is fierce. His vise-like bite forces Dovka to the ground.

Doc bites HARDER.

Dovka flattens face-down on the concrete.

Niko and Bailey bound out of the tunnel. They bark their way into the crowd, scattering bodies.

Sara, Mac and the others are right behind them. Katy FIRES her gun into the air.

KATY

Police! No one gets out!

Pandemonium. The crowd splinters into escape mode.

Kiko WHISTLES and Niko and Bailey instantly obey the order. They block the escape tunnel. They bark and snap their teeth at anyone who tries to get past them.

Now MORE COPS pour out of the tunnel--Katy's backup. They swarm into the arena. Start to round up people. Stanko, Dragu, Shack, Vargas, others...

A COP grabs Captain Harris and is shocked to recognize him. Lets him go. As Harris turns to leave--

--Katy is right there.

KATY (CONT'D)

Captain.

HARRIS

(feigns innocence)

Officer Vega. Good job here. I'll
take charge of our backup.

He starts to move past her. Katy blocks him.

KATY

I don't think so.

By the look on Katy's face, Harris realizes his charade's up.

Sara pushes through the crowd. Can't move fast enough.

Dovka cries out. Doc still has hold of his wrist, biting
hard. With his other hand, Dovka desperately reaches for one
of the dropped knives. Almost has it when--

--a FOOT stomps on Dovka's hand. Stops him. He looks up.

The foot belongs to Sara.

SARA

I abhor violence, too, but I hope
you get a big dose of it in prison.

Doc releases his hold on Dovka's hand. Mac moves in and puts
zip tie restraints on Dovka.

Roy is still on his knees in the center of the arena. Just
then, his strength gives out. He pitches forward and--

--Sara catches him and gently lays him on the ground.

Roy blinks up at her through blood and swollen eyes.
Struggles to speak...

ROY

I thought...thought I divorced you.

SARA

(smiles)

Didn't think we'd get rid of each
other that easy, did you?

Roy manages the faintest of smiles back at her.

Now Doc joins them. His big eyes watch Roy for a moment...
then he LICKS his face. Once. Twice. Juicy slobbers of love.

A MOMENT OF PURE JOY.

ROY
Doc...Good boy...You saved me...

SARA
You saved each other.

Roy raises a hand for Sara to see. In it are--HIS DOG TAGS.

ROY
You saved me too.

He tries to pull them from around his neck, but the chain holds. He's too weak.

ROY (CONT'D)
Help me.

Sara gently places a hand around his.

A MOMENT.

Together they pull and--

--the chain tightens and BREAKS.

The dog tags slip free and FALL to the ground.

Roy sighs. The sigh of a weight lifting from him.

Sara leans down and kisses him, soft and tender.

Mac and Katy hoist Dovka to his feet. He thrashes.

DOVKA
Let go! My hand! The dog bit me!

MAC
Shut up or I'll bite you.

Benny steps into the cage.

BENNY
Here. Use this.

Benny tosses Mac A DOG MUZZLE. Mac fits it over Dovka's face--
REAL TIGHT--and shuts up the snarling bad man.

EXT. PARK - ANOTHER DAY

MUSIC PLAYS: "Baby Sees the Big Ship" by Dominic Angelella.

The sun shines bright on a beautiful green park at the edge of the desert. The whole gang is here: Katy and Kiko, Benny and Artie, Mac and Izabelle. They lounge on the grass, eating, drinking, playing Frisbee, dancing, having a picnic.

And all the dogs are here, too. Pesto, Niki and Bailey take turns RIPPING AND CHEWING a pair of Python Snakeskin Boots that once belonged to you-know-who. And Stella and her two puppies scamper, blissful, free.

Roy stands apart from the group. In his hand is--

--A TENNIS BALL. The name "Beau" is written on it.

Doc is at his side. He watches, waits as Roy playfully flips the ball in the air. He knows what's coming.

Now Roy throws the ball and Doc races after it.

Sara comes alongside Roy. She holds a small GIFT. Roy gestures for her to open it. She tears the wrapping paper and takes out a brand new "Wild" baseball hat.

She smiles, delighted. Puts it on and kisses Roy.

They hold each other as Doc lopez back with the ball. He offers it Roy. Ready to go again.

Roy takes back the ball and rubs Doc's ears.

Now Stella and her two puppies romp over. They converge on Doc, and all the dogs begin to tumble in the grass and play, bursting with energy and excitement.

Roy and Sara kneel on the ground with them and join the fun.

Suddenly, The Three Musketeers are there too. Sara and Roy find themselves swimming in a rolling tide of playful dogs.

One big family. All of them, together. Happy. Loving. Safe.

THE END