

# **Jody Thomas Doesn't Want To Die**

A Screenplay by  
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*(based the theatre play)*

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This screenplay is not a docu-drama.

It is a story... of the madness of using violence as a solution to the problem of violence, and... the awakening of a perpetrator/victim to his own sanity. The story is set in the U.S. It turns on the fact that the central character is a product of the cultural majority. In the U.S. that makes Jody Thomas a White man. The ethnicity of the other characters is irrelevant. Which means the same principle applies if the story is set in other countries. There is also no provision, by design, for ethnic references or issues.

**The rebel does not ask for life,  
but for reasons for living,  
if nothing lasts then nothing is justified  
everything that dies is deprived of meaning.  
To fight against death amounts to claiming  
that life has a meaning... .**

*Albert Camus*

*The Time is... anytime.  
The place is... anywhere*

**FADE IN**

**INT. THE GAS CHAMBER OF A STATE PRISON**

*It looks like a deep-sea tank with circular ribs, large bolts on the outside and a series of waist-high windows.*

*Inside are two square-backed chairs with straps on the arms and legs. The base of each chair is fitted with a round container with holes and a connecting pipe. Everything is painted a light, passionless, mint green.*

*The chamber looks almost two-dimensional as if it were lifted out of an illustration or off the cover of a 19th-century magazine.*

*Two OFFICERS are at the chamber. They are methodically performing a dry run of the system. The sound of their voices and movements is soft, intimate.*

FIRST OFFICER

Vent valve closed.

SECOND OFFICER

Check.

FIRST OFFICER

End clamps down.

SECOND OFFICER

Check.

FIRST OFFICER

Bath delivered.

SECOND OFFICER

Check.

FIRST OFFICER

Eggs laid.

SECOND OFFICER

Check.

FIRST OFFICER  
Cooking time.

SECOND OFFICER  
Six minutes, thirty seconds.

FIRST OFFICER  
Vent valve open.

SECOND OFFICER  
Check.

FIRST OFFICER  
Clear.

SECOND OFFICER  
Clear.

*There is a harsh, clanging sound as the SECOND OFFICER yanks the lever on his last command.*

#### **EXT. THE FRONT GATE OF THE PRISON - NIGHT**

*A police car with flashing lights makes its way through a loud melee of people, signs and bright tv lights.*

The CAMERA MOVES with it, then over to the crowd to:

#### **EXT. CLOSEUP OF A TV REPORTER**

REPORTER  
This is the first execution in the state since the death penalty was reinstated. With the uproar over lethal injection, the state was left with only two options. And in a bizarre twist last week, the state supreme court banned one them, death by hanging, as cruel and unusual punishment. That left the gas chamber and it will be used tonight.

#### **EXT. INTERVIEW**

*Signs and singing in the background*

REPORTER

So how do you feel this close to the end with all the conflict and...

PROTESTER

I don't know. I don't know. He's a (bleep) cop-killer and he's gotta pay for that. But I don't know why they couldn't wait to do it right. I don't know. I don't know.

OTHER PROTESTER

*(Jumping in front of the REPORTER.)*

They shoulda hung him, break up his (bleep) neck. Nothing cruel about that.

*The PROTESTER yanks the OTHER away from the camera.*

**EXT. CLOSEUP OF REPORTER**

REPORTER

And so the vigil continues. Even as the wind comes off the bay and brings a cold, wet fog with it, this huge crowd waits, bathed in candlelight, faces turned toward the North wing of the prison where Jody Thomas waits, and watches as the clock counts down the 30, now 29 minutes remaining before that midnight hour when this state will hold its first execution in 20 years.

**PULL BACK TO THE FACE OF THE REPORTER ON A TV SCREEN.**

REPORTER

This eerie, quiet scene is in stark contrast to the chaos and clamor that erupted throughout the day...

***FURTHER PULL BACK to:***

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*In one of two holding cells, next to the infamous chamber, JODY THOMAS, 31 years old, thin and muscular, is seated on a bench along with the CHAPLAIN, a Catholic priest in his 60's. Next to them is a tray with drinks, candy bars and an open pizza box. The cover of the box reads: "On Time, Every Time!" A GUARD stands nearby.*

JODY

Hey, could you turn that up. Father, how about it!

CHAPLAIN

Oh, yeah, sure!

*He turns up the sound.*

REPORTER

...a day full of last minute legal maneuvering, rancorous press conferences, and clashes between pro and con groups. Here was the scene a few hours ago.

*TV screen shows pictures from earlier in the day.*

JODY

Man, they're excited. I mean, I can't believe there's all those people out there.

CHAPLAIN

Yeah, a lot of people

JODY

You afraid to die, Father?

CHAPLAIN

I... sure, we all are. That's why it's important to make our peace with God.

JODY

Can you do that for me, Father?

CHAPLAIN

I can help you do that, Thomas. I can help you prepare for your salvation.

JODY

Nah... he's mad at me. I'll catch him later if I see him.

GUARD

Why don't you finish-up there, Jody.

JODY

Don't think so. Haven't really got a good reason to eat. You want some, you want a slice? It's real good, just the way I like it.

CHAPLAIN

I think we should get ready, Thomas.

JODY

Ready? Oh yeah I'm ready.

CHAPLAIN

You could prepare your mind, your spirit. We can pray together.

JODY

Nah, I'm ready. Pray? I never learned how.

CHAPLAIN

There's nothing to learn, all you have to do...

JODY

(sharply)

I said I won't be any trouble. I said I'm ready.

GUARD

We know you are, Jody, we know you are.

*A SECOND GUARD steps through the outside door in the cellblock. Stops, turns back, talks to someone outside.*

SECOND GUARD

Yes sir. Right away.

*Leans into the cell.*

You have a stay, Thomas, a stay! The Appellate Court gave you a stay!

*JODY turns away, presses his face into the wall.*

## **INT. THE WARDEN'S OFFICE**

*The FIRST OFFICER stands outside the door juggling two hot cups of coffee. He finally manages to open the door and enters. Inside, the WARDEN, a tall man in his early 50's.*

FIRST OFFICER

Here's your coffee, sir. You want black or white?

WARDEN

Doesn't matter.

FIRST OFFICER

Take the black, it's sweeter.

*WARDEN takes a cup, moves to the window, looks at the vigil outside the gate.*

WARDEN

Drag it out, screw it around. The lawyers play their games and every one goes crazy.

FIRST OFFICER

Ain't right to keep stalling like this. Don't make no sense.

WARDEN

Makes sense to me. Nobody wants to pull the switch. God I wish they'd get this over with.

*Phone rings. The WARDEN listens for a moment, nods, puts it down. His face tightens.*

**INT: THE CELLBLOCK**

JODY

I wish I had some chili powder. I like it hot, you know what I mean?

CHAPLAIN

It must be pretty cold by now.

JODY

No, I mean the taste. I like it spicy.

GUARD

So do I.

CHAPLAIN

I'm not really a pizza eater, myself.

JODY

No? Ahh, that's too bad. Nothing like a slice of pizza and a cold beer.

*The outside door opens. MICHELLE steps in, late 20's, casually dressed.*

JODY

Hey, it's my lady... my lady-lawyer. Got to go back to court, huh?

MICHELLE

*(quietly)*

No. They vacated the stay, overturned it.

JODY

Who?

MICHELLE

The Supreme Court.

JODY

The big guys?

*She nods.*

JODY (CONT'D)

I don't even know what they look like.

*The outside door opens. The WARDEN steps through followed by two guards. He stops at the cell.*

WARDEN

We have to go now.

JODY

Yeah, go.

## **INT: STAIRWELLS**

*Armed guards hurry down the stairs, followed by civilians being escorted in single file.*

**EXT. FRONT GATE.**

*The candlelight vigil has become groups of locked arms, swaying together, singing.*

*A large sign reads: "Cruel! Unusual! UnGodly!"*

**INT. THE GAS CHAMBER**

*A hand suddenly pulls a curtain open to reveal the window of the witness box, the witnesses in their seats.*

*JODY is seated inside the Chamber.*

*SECOND OFFICER inside clamping straps on his arms and legs.*

*FIRST OFFICER outside adjusting a series of valves.*

*WARDEN and CHAPLAIN standing to one side next to a set of wall-mounted telephones.*

FIRST OFFICER

Vent valve closed.

SECOND OFFICER

Check.

*He finishes with the straps, checks the container beneath the chair.*

FIRST OFFICER

End clamps down.

SECOND OFFICER

Check.

*JODY sits immobile, staring straight ahead, a molded smile on his face.*

*SECOND OFFICER lifts a hood, attempts to place it over JODY's head. He resists, waving his head from side to side. The officer finally gets it in place.*

FIRST OFFICER

Bath delivered.

SECOND OFFICER

Check.

*SECOND OFFICER checks the straps one last time, moves out of the Chamber, latches the hatch door, takes his position with the FIRST OFFICER behind a barrier near the Chamber.*

*Both men place their hands on a lever, look at each other, then at the WARDEN.*

*The WARDEN unfolds a paper from his coat pocket.*

WARDEN

Jody Ray Thomas, by virtue of the authority vested in me and pursuant to the order of the court, number C3775770...

*The shrill, piercing ring of a telephone stops him. He grabs it.*

WARDEN

*(loud whisper)*

Stand down!

*(then shouting)*

Stand down!

*The two officers let go of the lever abruptly as if hit by an electric shock. SECOND OFFICER wipes his hands repeatedly on his shirt.*

WARDEN

Yes, yes... that's right! I don't remember that. I've never heard of... spell it! All right... yes, of course, of course! You know this is completely out of... yes! I understand!

*He hangs up the phone. Pauses for a second, then whirls around.*

WARDEN

It's a stay, from another judge! Get him the hell out of there!

*FIRST OFFICER spins a valve to sounds of rushing air and a gurgling pump.*

FIRST OFFICER

Valve vent open.

SECOND OFFICER

Check.

*SECOND OFFICER* throws open the hatch, rushes inside, begins unclamping the straps.

CHAPLAIN

Another stay?

WARDEN

Another appeal!

*SECOND OFFICER* finishes with the straps, and hurries back outside. *JODY* sits with the hood still over his face.

FIRST OFFICER

Jody... yo, Jody!

*He moves inside the Chamber, pulls the hood off. JODY is motionless, his eyes wide open.*

*He breathes heavily through his clenched teeth.*

WARDEN (O.S.)

It's a circus, a goddam circus!

## **INT. A SMALL OFFICE IN THE PRISON**

*CAMERON*, crisply dressed, mid-30's, sits on the edge of a desk talking on the phone.

CAMERON

It's a circus, a goddam circus! Look... I prosecuted the bastard and I'm going to have him. Eight years of fucking the system...

*A MAN* opens the door and pokes his head in. *CAMERON* waves him off.

MAN

Warden wants you.

*CAMERON* waves him off again.

CAMERON

No... no... no chance! They're running it right to the top now. I knew this was going to happen, that's why we started rolling it this afternoon.

*The DEPUTY steps into the office and motions to Cameron: "Do you want something to drink?" CAMERON waves him off. He leaves.*

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Are you crazy? Do you know what's going on out front? The press is having a field day and I'll tell you, they're not going to burn me. This place is a crazy house. The warden is a balless liberal, should have been thrown out years ago. And his staff is running around like it's the second coming. It's a good thing the death house is so isolated. Otherwise... yeah... yeah... well I'll tell you, I'm sitting right on top of this phone. And when that call comes, it's going down if I have to pull the switch myself.

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY in his cell, pacing along the walls.*

*CHAPLAIN in a corner watching him.*

*The door to the cell is open as is the outside door.*

*GUARD leaning against the doorway.*

*MICHELLE pacing in the small corridor directly in front of the cells.*

*The scene is odd and disorderly given the open doors and the two moving people.*

MICHELLE

Are you sure you're all right?

JODY

Yeah I'm sure. Just got a belly full of pis.

GUARD

Come on, I'll take you.

JODY

Nah, this is mine, and I want to keep it.

CHAPLAIN

Why don't you sit down and relax.

JODY

Why don't you stand up and get nervous? I got a right to be nervous ain't I? Ain't that right, lady?

MICHELLE

That's absolutely right!

JODY

And I got more time coming, right?

MICHELLE

Probably another 24 hours, at least, It's a lot of time and a lot of things can happen.

GUARD

You'll even have some time to get a little sleep.

JODY

What for?

MICHELLE

*(sharply)*

That's right, what for?

GUARD

Well, I was just thinking...

JODY

I mean, fuck man, I'm going to sleep whenever I want to or I'm going to sleep forever. Right, lady lawyer?

MICHELLE

Right

JODY

You know something, I figured out how to beat that thing.

*(smiling)*

Don't inhale!

*The others look at him for a moment, then laugh.*

JODY

Sure, I was just going to sit in there and breathe out, not in. There's no air in there anyway, what's to breathe!

MICHELLE

Will you do something about that curtain!

GUARD

Oh yeah, yeah.

*He walks quickly past her, pulls the curtain between the Chamber and the cells shut. MICHELLE moves to JODY, places her hands over his at the bars.*

### **INT. THE SMALL OFFICE**

*CAMERON bursts out the door, grabs the DEPUTY, pushes him down the hall.*

### **INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

MICHELLE

How are you feeling?

JODY

I don't know. A lot different than before. I feel like I'm... I don't know... awake.

MICHELLE

Maybe we should give you some time, alone. Spend some time with the Chaplain.

CHAPLAIN

That would be good. We haven't really had a chance to...

JODY

No! Don't go. I don't want to talk to him any more. I don't need to talk him.

CHAPLAIN

Hey, Thomas, I'm not trying to upset you, I just want to get you prepared for...

JODY  
(to Michelle)

I need to talk to you.

*They look at each other. She slowly moves her hands away from his.*

**INT. THE STAIRWELL**

*CAMERON is walking quickly, almost running. The DEPUTY is right behind him.*

CAMERON

It's showtime!

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

MICHELLE

I'm going to go check in with my office.

JODY

I thought we're gonna talk.

MICHELLE

Okay, let's talk for a while. Father, will you excuse us, please.

CHAPLAIN

Sure. Why not!

*MICHELLE moves to enter the cell.*

GUARD

Uh... only one at a time, you'll have to stay on the outside, ma'am.

CHAPLAIN

It's okay. I'll go take a... break for a few minutes.

*At that moment, CAMERON pushes through the outside door followed by the DEPUTY, who's wearing a flak jacket and a holstered pistol.*

CAMERON

Time to rise and shine, freak!

MICHELLE

What are you doing here?

CAMERON

It's over with.

MICHELLE

What?

CAMERON

The nine lords in Washington have spoken.  
They vacated the stay, overturned it...  
permanently!

MICHELLE

What are you doing here? Where's the  
Warden? Where did you get this?

CAMERON

Right from the horse's mouth. They haven't  
even called the Warden yet.

MICHELLE

This is bizarre. There hasn't been a filing.

CAMERON

There isn't going to be one.

*CHAPLAIN slowly rises. JODY's face tightens as he begins to move  
backwards in the cell.*

*He backs into the arms of CHAPLAIN.*

*They stand there like a dancing couple.*

CAMERON

And you know what? They've issued an order  
barring any further actions without their  
permission, which they're not going to give. It's  
all... over... with!

*He whirls and points to the GUARD.*

CAMERON (CONT'D)

You... better get to the Warden. And you...(to the Deputy) You get in there with him.

*The GUARD rushes out the door. The DEPUTY steps into the cell, slams the door behind him, takes a position facing JODY and the CHAPLAIN.*

CAMERON

Let's go, Wexler.

*She grabs him by the sleeve, stops him.*

MICHELLE

How could it come down so fast? Arnie is meeting with the Judge now, and the rest of my team is...

CAMERON

Did you ever hear of the fax machine and the telephone? We went right at it.

MICHELLE

It's unbelievable, you're like a pack of drooling hyenas.

CAMERON

Look, Miss left-wing, ACLU, bleeding heart, this farce is over! And that cop-killer, that animal is going to get the justice he should have gotten eight years ago.

JODY

*(angrily)*

I ain't no animal!

*JODY steps toward the cell door. The DEPUTY shoves him away.*

MICHELLE

This is justice? Why don't you take him out in front of the tv cameras and strip his skin off, the way they used to...

*JODY shoves the DEPUTY back.*

CAMERON

I'd love it!

*The DEPUTY lunges at JODY who sidesteps him, spins him around and smashes him up against the bars.*

CAMERON

What the hell are you doing?

*The DEPUTY tries to break free.*

*JODY slams his elbow into his back.*

*He reaches down, grabs the DEPUTY's pistol, shoves it hard into the side of man's head and cocks it.*

JODY

*(fiercely)*

I ain't no animal!

*CHAPLAIN grabs his arm.*

*CAMERON takes advantage of the distraction and slips out the door.*

CHAPLAIN

Thomas, don't be crazy.

*JODY smashes the CHAPLAIN across the head with the pistol. The force of the blow drives the CHAPLAIN across the cell up against the wall. He crumbles to the floor.*

MICHELLE

*(screaming)*

Jody!

*JODY jumps at her scream, whips the pistol over the DEPUTY's head, pointing it at her.*

*The two stand staring at each other, both bewildered and frightened.*

*The DEPUTY moans. JODY quickly shoves the pistol back into the side of his head. He glares at MICHELLE.*

JODY

Get out of here, lady!

Get the fuck out of here!

*She nearly falls over as she whirls around and runs out.*

*JODY pulls a pair of handcuffs off the DEPUTY's belt, clamps the DEPUTY's hands behind his back.*

*He sticks the barrel of the gun up the DEPUTY's nose.*

JODY

Move!

*The DEPUTY backs up with the gun in his face. JODY steers him out the cell door, down to the other, smaller cell next to his.*

*As they pass the outside door, he reaches out and slams the door shut.*

*They continue until the DEPUTY is backed into a corner of the cell. JODY pushes him to the floor, walks out backwards, leans against the bars.*

*JODY's chest is heaving, the sweat pours off his face. He wipes his mouth with his sleeve.*

#### **INT. A STAIRWELL**

*A line of armed guards is making it's way down the stairs followed by the WARDEN. The line stops.*

*WARDEN pushes his way forward to move them along.*

#### **INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY is still leaning against the bars. He slides along the front of the cells as if he's squeezing along a wall.*

*He hears a noise at the outside door. It's the sound of the latch moving. He backs off a few steps, raises the pistol, fires a shot into the door.*

*In the small, enclosed space, the sound of the gunshot reverberates like an explosion.*

*There is a commotion of voices mixed with the explosive echoes, then silence.*

WARDEN (O.S.)

Thomas?

JODY

Get away from the door!

WARDEN (O.S.)

Thomas, stop it... now! There's nothing to...

JODY  
Get away from that fucking door!

**INT. THE HALL OUTSIDE THE CELLBLOCK**

*WARDEN and guards are pressed flat against the wall near the door.*

WARDEN  
Listen to me. You can't...

*JODY fires another ear-splitting shot into the door.*

JODY (O.S.)  
No, you listen to me. Get away from that door!  
I got bullets here for everybody. The priest, the  
cop, everybody! You understand?

WARDEN  
I understand.

JODY (O.S.)  
And get the fuck out of that hall. You  
understand?

WARDEN  
I understand.

JODY (O.S.)  
I ain't going to be killed no more. You  
understand? I quit! I ain't buying it. He said it,  
I'm an animal, but I ain't going to be killed no  
more!

**INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE DEATH HOUSE CONTROL ROOM**

*MICHELLE and CAMERON are walking hurriedly toward the control  
room.*

MICHELLE  
How about it, Clint, did this make your day?

CAMERON  
Up yours!

*They reach the door and enter the control room.*

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

*It's a bunker with shadowless, gray cinder blocks, a console at the center with panels of switches, microphones, a bank of telephones, an array of small video monitors.*

*The FIRST OFFICER is seated at the console.*

CAMERON

Where's the Warden?

FIRST OFFICER

On his way.

MICHELLE

Phone?

FIRST OFFICER

Use the one on the wall.

*As she makes a call, the WARDEN enters. He pulls off his coat. His shirt is soaked in sweat.*

*He picks up a phone at the console.*

WARDEN

Pipe it through here.

*(to Cameron)*

Sit down!

*CAMERON stiffens, walks away.*

WARDEN

Hello, Frank? That's what I said, a complete lockdown! I want every man put away, I want every barrier down, every staff in position. No, you shut it down! Only incoming calls. I don't want any calls out without clearance. Cut the pays, and cut the info lines. Did you hear me? Not without clearance. No! No! Yes! Only the West gate. Keep everything away from the front. Nothing visible, nothing unusual. You got it? No tip to the Press. The West gate and only the West gate. I'll let you know. Keep me informed.

*(hangs up the phone)*

Insane! Absolutely insane!

**INT. CELLBLOCK**

*Cell doors sliding and locking.*

**INT. CONTROL AREA**

*Guards loading weapons, taking control positions.*

**EXT. THE FRONT GATE**

*Distant sirens wailing.*

**EXT. CLOSEUPS**

*Faces in the crowd.*

**INT. CELLBLOCK**

*CLOSEUPS of prisoner faces in lockdown.*

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

*WARDEN paces in quick, short turns. He's a man with experienced, seasoned control trying to steady himself in the face of this outrageous breach of security.*

CAMERON

It seems to me that...

WARDEN

Shut up!

If there's one basic, cardinal rule in this institution, in any prison it's that you never bring a weapon inside the walls. Never!

CAMERON

He was a deputy assigned to me as a bodyguard. There's been some threats.

WARDEN

How could you bypass all the security systems? What the hell are you doing here anyway?

CAMERON

Everything was chaotic, crazy. It's been a crazy day.

WARDEN

Bringing a firearm right down into that cellblock...

MICHELLE

What were you going to do, finish him off in case he held his breath!

CAMERON

And what the hell is she doing here?

MICHELLE

That's my client down there, jackass, remember?

CAMERON

Well this is a police matter now!

MICHELLE

My call was cut off.

WARDEN

We've got emergency control of the phone lines. All calls, in and out, have to have clearance.

MICHELLE

But...

WARDEN

Every call is being monitored.

MICHELLE

And why is that... Warden!

WARDEN

Because we've got a yard full of media and he's got a tv set down there!

*The phone rings. WARDEN takes it.*

WARDEN

What! Yeah. All right! How soon? Let me know.

MICHELLE

I need to make a call.

WARDEN

Go down to Central. They'll put it through for you. They're monitoring. No leaks, Miss Wexler, none!

*She turns to leave, stops.*

MICHELLE

Am I going to miss anything?

WARDEN

What?

MICHELLE

Is anything going to happen, anything I should know about?

WARDEN

No, Miss Wexler, we're just waiting to get a better handle on the situation down there.

*She leaves, the SECOND OFFICER enters.*

SECOND OFFICER

They're on the move.

WARDEN

You get back there. Make sure the side gate to level two is open. And make sure they're quiet, perfectly quiet. I don't want anything to set him off.

SECOND OFFICER

Check.

FIRST OFFICER

Okay, he's got no tv. We cut the feed.

CAMERON

You going to try and take him?

WARDEN

We're sliding a couple of men into position in the witness area. When Thomas moves out in the open, anywhere in sight, we'll nail him. What's he doing now?

FIRST OFFICER

He's just standing there by the door. The deputy looks all right.

CAMERON

I don't see the Chaplain.

WARDEN

Scan over.

FIRST OFFICER

I see him. He's moving. He might be all right.

CAMERON

Jesus, look at his head.

WARDEN

*(painfully)*

Oh, Phil.

**INT. CONTROL ROOM - CLOSEUP OF THE MONITOR**

*The face of the CHAPLAIN.*

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*The CHAPLAIN slowly moves on the floor where he fell. His forehead and the side of his face are covered with blood.*

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

CAMERON

He could bleed to death.

FIRST OFFICER

No, see, he's awake.

CAMERON

Can't you shut him down, tear gas or something?

WARDEN

That's a tight little box down there, closed-in, real tight. Nothing gets in or out without anybody knowing about it. He's gone crazy enough as it is! We do anything to set him off, cut the lights, cut the air, he gets a whiff of anything, and he'll waste those two people without blinking.

FIRST OFFICER

He'll do it!

WARDEN

Let's hope we have enough time to stop him.

**INT. A HALLWAY**

*Two armed guards make their way along the stairs.*

**INT. OUTSIDE THE WITNESS ROOM**

*The SECOND OFFICER opens the door to the witness room.*

*The cellblock can be seen in the distance through the window.*

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY stands with his back against the wall next to the outside door.*

*The DEPUTY stands in the corner of the smaller cell.*

*The CHAPLAIN sits propped up against the wall wiping his face.*

*After a moment, JODY steps down to the curtain and peers around it. Then he leans back against the bars, wipes the sweat off his face.*

JODY

*(to himself)*

Hoo... hooee! Thinking, thinking... it's gotta be easy. All you gotta do, man, is not wait around too long for something to happen. Hooee... who's move is it? Mine, mine... they're waiting and I'm thinking.

DEPUTY

Hey! Hey, the old man... can't you do something for the Chaplain? He's hurt bad.

JODY

He's all right.

DEPUTY

Give him a hand, will you? He's gonna...

JODY

Shut up! And sit down. And shut the fuck up!

CHAPLAIN

It's all right, it's okay.

JODY

See, it's okay, man.

CHAPLAIN

Take it easy, Thomas.

JODY

*(to himself)*

What are they waiting for? Because they can't do nothing, because I'm the honcho now. It's all turned around, because I stopped them. It's all stopped. Now what happens? I don't know. I don't know.

*(to Chaplain)*

Hey Father, what do you think? We got ourselves a party here, ain't we?

*Fighting the pain and shock, the CHAPLAIN tries to steady himself.*

CHAPLAIN

What are you going to get out of all of this, Thomas?

JODY

A prize.

CHAPLAIN

A prize?

JODY

Yeah, a big prize.  
The rest of my life.

CHAPLAIN

Good luck! This isn't the answer, you can't  
change anything this way.

JODY

Yeah?

CHAPLAIN

Yeah! You gotta face it, make peace with  
yourself. You've had enough time, your lawyers  
did everything they could. Make peace with  
yourself, make peace with God, don't hurt  
anybody else.

JODY

*(to himself)*

Who says so? I don't! Don't feel it anymore.  
Don't feel nothing. Gotta think!

### **INT. THE WITNESS ROOM**

*Voices from the cellblock, but the curtain is still drawn between the cells  
and the Chamber area.*

*Two shadowed armed guards slip into the witness room, take positions by  
the windows.*

### **INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

CHAPLAIN

Listen to me...

JODY

Hey, how come you're down here? I ain't no  
Catholic.

CHAPLAIN

I'm the Chaplain for the whole prison, for  
everybody. Besides, your sheet says your  
mother was Catholic.

JODY

My Ma? That's a good one. I can't hardly remember what she looks like. I ain't seen her since I was ten. Nah, she wasn't a Catholic, not a regular one. She was like, what do you call it, careso...

CHAPLAIN

Charismatic.

JODY

Yeah. She used to sing and jump up and down, you know? Man, that scared the shit out of me when I was kid. I don't even know if she's still alive. I wonder if she's watching all of this. Hey Ma, you watching what's going on?

CHAPLAIN

Do you miss her, Thomas? Would you like to see her? What would you say to her if she were here now?

*Obviously wound up tight, JODY responds in a distracted, edgy voice, like a rapper.*

JODY

My Ma? What would I say to her? Shit, I don't know. I don't know.

CHAPLAIN

I know what she'd say to you.

JODY

Yeah?

CHAPLAIN

Yeah! She'd tell you to stop hurting other people. She'd tell you for the first time in your life to face up to it, to face up to the truth.

JODY

Yeah?

CHAPLAIN

Yeah! She'd tell you that sooner or later we all have to face who we are and what we've done, the good things and the bad things.

JODY

That the truth?

CHAPLAIN

That's it.

JODY

Nah! She'd tell me what she said when she took off: don't cry, and don't piss in your pants. And you know what I'd tell her? I'd say, hey Ma, they're trying to kill me. They don't want me to make it.

*He stomps over to the Chamber curtain.*

JODY (CONT'D)

Take a look, Ma! . They're trying to put me out like a goddam dog at the pound.

*He pulls the curtain aside and is jolted by the sight of the guards.*

*Before they can react, he fires a series of shots that shatter the glass and knock one of the guards off his feet.*

*He quickly pulls the curtain shut and edges along the cell bars toward the door.*

JODY

*(to himself)*

See what I mean? See what I mean? They're supposed to be waiting, and they're not. They're gonna kill me, man. I gotta move.

*He makes it to the wall by the door which to him is now a safe place.*

*Looks at the gun, snaps the clip loose, examines it.*

*Runs into the smaller cell and grabs the DEPUTY*

JODY

Get up!

*He drags the DEPUTY off the floor, spins him around, takes the extra ammunition clips from the man's belt.*

*Pushes the DEPUTY into a corner, presses the gun to his head.*

*The DEPUTY shakes, his face squeezed with fear.*

FIRST OFFICER (O.S.)  
Thomas, Thomas, take it easy!

JODY  
Who said that? Where's that coming from?

FIRST OFFICER (O.S.)  
Just take it easy!

JODY  
*frantically)*  
Whose voice is that?

CHAPLAIN  
It's the intercom, just the intercom.  
JODY  
Huh?

CHAPLAIN  
*(pointing up)*  
The camera!

*JODY pushes the DEPUTY to the floor, looks up at a tv camera hanging down from the ceiling.*

*He edges his way around the bars until he's standing directly under it. Strips off his shirt. After a couple of attempts, drapes it over the camera.*

### **INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

*The FIRST OFFICER isn't sure what has happened. His monitor has gone dark. He anxiously flips switches trying to retrieve the picture.*

### **INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*Jody stares at the camera, then moves to the door of the larger cell.*

JODY  
See what I mean? They're trying to kill me.

CHAPLAIN  
You've got to cool down, man, cool down!

JODY

Oh I am, Father, real cool. Only I ain't doped up any more, you know what I mean?

CHAPLAIN

What are you talking about?

JODY

I'm awake. My head's clear. I ain't rolling along any more like a dumb cow, just shuffling along until they give it to you, pow! You know? You know what I mean?

*Wipes his hands over and over again on his pants.*

JODY (CONT'D)

I used to work in one of them places, one of them meat places. Did you ever see it, did you ever see a slaughter house, Father? They just go along wherever they push them, moaning and groaning, they just go along, until whack!

*Walks in small circles underneath the camera snapping his fingers.*

JODY (CONT'D)

They're a piece of meat. They don't put up no kind of fight, they just go along. They're just animals... that's what that fucking D.A. called me... animal.

*(yelling)*

Well I ain't no animal, and I ain't rolling along!

*He kicks off his paper slippers, begins to pace in front of the cells.*

*Barefoot and bare-chested, the sweat glistening on his body, his feet leave wet tracks on the floor.*

JODY (CONT'D)

Did you ever think about that, Father? Did you ever notice how easy it is to get people to just roll along? Just get 'em like they were all doped up and march them in. Did you ever wonder about that, Father?

CHAPLAIN

No, I... no.

JODY

Sure, you just drive them down, make them believe it. It's okay to be killed, it's okay for them to be killing you. Just be a nice little boy, a nice little cow and get into that gas chamber over there... or let them put a rope around your neck. It's okay. You got to cooperate. And if you don't, they'll send somebody to cut you up like a piece of meat like that guy at the window over there.

CHAPLAIN

He was just doing his job.

JODY

His job? His job?!

*(Cocks the gun.)*

His job was to kill me, and that put a big fat question in my head. What's my job? What am I supposed to do?

CHAPLAIN

Was he hurt bad?

JODY

I don't give a shit!

## **INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

WARDEN

What's he doing now? Why is the goddam monitor blank?

FIRST OFFICER

He must have thrown something over the camera. You can still hear what's going on but it's muffled.

WARDEN

That's just terrific!

*SECOND OFFICER runs into the room followed by MICHELLE.*

SECOND OFFICER

We pulled him out of there.

WARDEN

How bad?

SECOND OFFICER

He took one in the chest. They're working on him in the ready room.

*WARDEN angrily swipes pencils and cups off the console on to the floor. He picks up the microphone.*

WARDEN

Thomas! Thomas! Can you hear me? I want to talk to you. Thomas can you hear me? Can anybody hear me?

DEPUTY (O.S.)

I can hear you, Warden!

WARDEN

Are you all right?

JODY (O.S.)

I told you to back off!

WARDEN

Thomas, I want to talk to you.

JODY(O.S. CONT'D)

I told you to back the fuck off, man, and you didn't. One way or another. That's what you want, ain't it? Well it ain't gonna be that way. I shut you down, man, and it's my move, my move!

*WARDEN mutes the microphone.*

WARDEN

He's lost it... he's coming apart.

MICHELLE

What do you expect?

CAMERON

Will you get her out of here!

WARDEN

I can't tell what's going on down there!

FIRST OFFICER

They seemed to be okay just before he threw something over the camera. Father Phil was coming around.

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

JODY

*(to himself)*

Hooo... they're trying to set me up, they're trying to make me roll along again...not much time, not much time! It's up to me, Ma, it's up to me!

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

WARDEN

*(to himself)*

Not much time, not much time to turn it around.

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

JODY

It's up to me.

WARDEN (O.S.)

Phil, are you all right?

CHAPLAIN

I'm... all right, Joe.

WARDEN (O.S.)

You hang in there, you hear me?

CHAPLAIN

Great choice of words, Joe!

JODY

Who you talking to?

WARDEN (O.S.)

You! I want to talk to you, Thomas.

JODY

I ain't listening. I ain't talking. It's my game. I got all the cards. I got hostages down here... I got fucking bullets... I got all the cards. You ain't gonna stall me, you ain't gonna put me off!

WARDEN (O.S.)

What do you want to do?

JODY

You'll find out. So back off. I don't wanna talk to you, now!

WARDEN (O.S.)

Thomas, listen to me...

*JODY fires a shot into the ceiling.*

JODY

And I don't wanna hear you talk, no more... no more!

## **INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

*WARDEN mutes the microphone.*

WARDEN

We've got to let it cool down... just cool down. Goddammit!

MICHELLE

Maybe I should talk to him.

WARDEN

I want to get him quiet. He's not listening to anyone.

MICHELLE

No, not over the intercom. I meant, maybe if I went down there.

CAMERON

Are you nuts!

WARDEN

No, it's too dangerous. He's not thinking straight. He's wild. It's too dangerous.

CAMERON

If he didn't blow your head off, he'd probably grab you as a hostage. You'd probably love it too.

MICHELLE

You know, you should be down there, not your deputy. You should be sitting there staring at that boy and staring at that death box. Maybe you'd get in touch with a little reality.

CAMERON

He's no boy. He's a goddamn 31-year old killer!

MICHELLE

He's a boy, with the emotions of a fifteen year old, which makes you and him about the same age!

CAMERON

You're as much a freak as he is, you know that!

WARDEN

Okay, okay!  
Dammit, if we could only see what's going on.

FIRST OFFICER

Maybe we could sneak another camera in there.

WARDEN

That's terrific! You want to go down and hook it up?

FIRST OFFICER

Uh...No.

WARDEN

You pay attention to those monitors. And you, get over to 3B and see what you can do about that ventilation cover.

SECOND OFFICER

Check.

WARDEN

I'm going over to Central.  
And listen people, I want you to take it easy.  
You're here because... you're here, and because  
no one is leaving until this is over. But you  
could just as well be in the cafeteria with the  
rest of the visitors. So just... take it easy.

**INT. HALLWAY**

WARDEN

What's next, an earthquake?

SECOND OFFICER

Might solve everything.

WARDEN

It just might. Start praying!

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

CAMERON

This is nuts! He can't let it go on. He's going to  
have to put a force down there and rush him,  
end it!

FIRST OFFICER

That's right.

MICHELLE

What about the hostages?

CAMERON

Take their chances, that's all.

MICHELLE

Take their chances? That's your deputy... and  
the Chaplain!

CAMERON

Hey, look... it's not a pretty situation, but this  
sucker was on his way out, his sentence was  
death, remember? He got his justice, eight long  
years of it, and now he's making a mockery out  
of it.

MICHELLE

With your help.

CAMERON

Come on, Wexler...what are we talking about here? Your boy killed two people, two cops...

MICHELLE

After they shot him.

CAMERON

Oh I get it. You can go out and rob a 7-11, beat the hell out of the clerk, but when the cops stop you and you point a gun at them and they defend themselves, it's okay to shoot them. Two police officers!

FIRST OFFICER

The bastard!

CAMERON

And not only that, if one of them is still alive, lying on the ground bleeding, it's okay to pump another round into his head to make sure you did the job right! Come on, Michelle, what the hell are we talking about?

FIRST OFFICER

The bastard!

MICHELLE

Look, the crime is not the issue. The jury found him guilty, and he was guilty.

CAMERON

Then what the hell were all the appeals about? All eight years of jerking off the system at the taxpayers expense?

MICHELLE

I'm surprised to hear a comment like that from an experienced attorney like you.

CAMERON

Tell it to the wives of those cops.

FIRST OFFICER

You bet!

MICHELLE

*(to the officer)*

Will you shut the fuck up!

FIRST OFFICER

Hey!

*They eye each other for a moment, both ready to release the tension building up inside them. Cameron loosens his tie*

CAMERON

Okay, I know you were doing your job, I know it's part of the system, but this has gotten out of hand. It's shaken the hell out of people's faith in the law, it's promoted situations like this.

MICHELLE

*(cold and low)*

Don't lay this at the feet of civil rights, or prisoner's rights. It was your jockstrap zeal, your pumped up macho display... strutting into the cellblock with an armed guard... that's what led to this circus.

CAMERON

The circus came from your legal clown work. It took the Supreme Court to finally stop you.

MICHELLE

They haven't stopped it yet!

CAMERON

The Supreme Court, Michelle!

MICHELLE

They're not God's holy tribunal, Cameron! They're just five old white men, three aging white women, and an oreo cookie who's a sitting insult to the bench.

CAMERON

They're the law of the land, how the hell can you get over that?

MICHELLE

With the Bill of Rights, pal! It's called cruel and unusual punishment.

CAMERON

Yeah, for a cruel and unusual killer.

MICHELLE

It's all just a simple question of politics, for you, isn't it? The public perception versus the private perversion.

CAMERON

(quickly)

All right, let me ask you something. Do we keep spending a fortune to protect our very own wildlife, the scumbags in death rows all over this country, to hold them safe and comfortable? Do we keep sending out the message it's okay to kill, to murder because the worst that'll happen is you'll get a free ride for the rest of your life and you may even get out?

MICHELLE

(matching him)

You don't get it, do you? That's just what we're doing, sending out a message that it's all right to kill.

CAMERON

Let me ask you something...

MICHELLE

Your answer to the problem is, it's all right to kill..

CAMERON

*(with a tight smile)*

No, listen, let me ask you something. Suppose it was you. Suppose you got raped and beaten, or your mother, or your grandmother with her head split open and her face cut apart. I see it all the time. What would you feel like? Would you want to hug him, defend him, or take him out in the alley and smash his face in until he was dead... like your grandmother.

MICHELLE

You're talking about revenge, not justice!

CAMERON

You're goddamned right!

MICHELLE

You're goddamned primitive!

*The FIRST OFFICER has been caught up in the argument. He narrows his eyes, shakes his head, turns away.*

CAMERON

I'm talking about civilization, our country, our citizens. Remember them? They've had 25 years of not knowing who are the good guys and who are the bad guys. I'm talking about victims, cops watching animals murder people and laughing about it. It's gone insane, it's swerved over like a car on the wrong side of the freeway.

MICHELLE

*(sarcastically)*

You hypocrite! You cite the respect for life and you're the first one to shove that boy into the Gas Chamber! Is this where we're at after 5000 years of your civilization, after 200 years of this beautiful American democracy. Is this all we have? Kill the killer?

CAMERON

The value comes from knowing that you pay for it if you destroy it. It's a deterrent... pal!

MICHELLE

*(shouting)*

It's not a fucking deterrent!

CAMERON

*(a little shocked)*

Hey!

MICHELLE

Oh, shut up!

*She turns away, trying to contain her anger. Then she faces him again.*

MICHELLE

Sure I'd want to strike back if that ever happened to me, and it did. I had a roommate in college who was brutalized, a horrible vicious rape. And I became violent, I wanted to smash the guy, even kill him! That was my emotion, it was revenge. But we're talking about the rule of law where there's not supposed to be any emotion, where we're supposed to hold the facts at arm's length.

CAMERON

Not when they chop your arm off. Then it's an eye for an eye...

MICHELLE

No, it's habeas corpus, it's the rule of law... pal! It's the breath and heartbeat of reason...

CAMERON

There's nothing rational about murder.

MICHELLE

That's right! There's nothing rational about killing... of any kind. And when the state kills, when society and its citizens kill, it takes us down to the same level of the person we're punishing. It says we don't have any answers...

CAMERON

We don't!

MICHELLE

That's right, no answers! And that includes the death penalty and that horror-show gas chamber over there. Five thousand years, hasn't been an answer, never been a deterrent, never stopped anyone from committing an offense that carried capital punishment. It didn't stop Jody Thomas!

CAMERON

It's going to.  
Call me the next time you get raped!

**INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CENTRAL CONTROL**

*WARDEN huddles with his assistant, FRANK.*

WARDEN

Nothing changes. Everything stays locked down. I don't care if it goes on for ten days.

FRANK

It won't.

WARDEN

I know.

FRANK

He's on his way.

WARDEN

I know. I need some ideas, Frank. I need to close this off before they take it out of our hands.

FRANK

I'm working on it.

WARDEN

You do that!

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

CAMERON

What a helpless feeling not being able to see down there.

MICHELLE

It's very unnerving for the Warden.

CAMERON

I don't know how much nerve he has to start with. He hasn't been too steady even carrying out the sentence of the court.

MICHELLE

How could he be! There hasn't been an execution in this state in twenty years. And I'm sure it's a first for him.

CAMERON

He's wasting time.

MICHELLE

He's being cautious.

CAMERON

I wonder what the animal's doing down there. There isn't a sound. Do you hear anything? He's so scared he's probably frozen in a corner.

MICHELLE

Sure he's scared, and he's wired, like a suicide vest.

CAMERON

He's probably feeling so trapped that his mind is blank. His mind is probably so blank that the right words, a little encouragement, a little authority, and he'd probably collapse. I'm going to talk to him.

MICHELLE

I don't think that's a good idea, pal. I wouldn't do that!

CAMERON

It's all right, he knows who I am. He's got some respect for me. He'll listen to what I have to say.

*He takes the microphone.*

CAMERON

Thomas, Thomas? This is Cameron, Cameron?  
I want to talk to you, and I think you'll listen to  
what I have to say.

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*CHAPLAIN is lying on a bench in one cell. The DEPUTY is on the floor in  
the other.*

*The intercom voice rouses JODY from his post at the door. He slowly walks  
to the center beneath the camera, looks up at it.*

CAMERON (O.S.)

I know that this is an impossible situation for  
you. And you know that too, right? You're at  
the bottom of a pit, no way in, no way out. It's a  
standoff, right? That's true, and you know it. It  
can stay this way for hours, for days, and  
nothing will change, nothing will be different,  
except a lot of trouble for a lot of people. That's  
all. Nothing else. You understand what I'm  
saying?

*(he pauses)*

Thomas, do you hear what I'm saying?

JODY

*(in a cold voice)*

I ain't talking to you.

CAMERON (O.S.)

Okay, then listen to this...

JODY

I ain't listening to you.

CAMERON (O.S.)

That's not the way we're going to...

JODY

*(suddenly exploding)*

Get the fuck outta my face!

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

*At that moment, the WARDEN bursts into the room followed by two officers.*

WARDEN

What the hell are you doing!

CAMERON

I thought I'd...

WARDEN

Get away from there!

*Pushes CAMERON away from the console.*

WARDEN

Who told you to do anything! We're getting ready to make a move, you idiot...you stupid idiot!

JODY (O.S.)

I can hear you...up there!

*WARDEN freezes, realizing that the microphone is open. He grabs it, mutes it.*

## **INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY stalks the camera in a circle, pointing his gun at it.*

JODY

I know what's happening, and it ain't gonna happen. I'm getting out of here, man. You got that D.A. up there. He thinks I'm an animal, he calls me an animal. Not me! Now you're going to roll me along, because I ain't giving you any chance to stop me. There's no more time because I'm getting out of here, now!

WARDEN (O.S.)

Jody, this is the Warden. The other voice you heard wasn't... he wasn't authorized to...

JODY

You stop talking and you listen to me! I'm leaving and... I want... I want... some money, lots of money and a car, no, not a car... I want a helicopter... that's it... I want a helicopter out front and lots of money in it... thousands, no millions of dollars and I want nobody around, no cops, nobody...

WARDEN (O.S.)

Take it easy, Jody, let's talk about it.

JODY

Fuck you and your talk! You're listening, you understand? You're listening and I'm talking!

### **INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

WARDEN

I understand, and I'll try to get you everything you want, but let's take care of something first. Let's get the Chaplain out of there, he's hurt and he needs...

JODY (O.S.)

What are you fucking crazy? You think I'm crazy? You think I'm all doped up? I got your people down here and they're dead meat just like me!

WARDEN

You don't want to hurt those men, Jody.

JODY (O.S.)

Are you going to get me what I want?

WARDEN

I don't have those things here, money, helicopters. It's going to take time, I have to...

JODY (O.S.)

There ain't no time!

WARDEN

Jody, listen to me...

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

JODY

I know what you're doing, you're stalling, you're trying to stall me. I ain't crazy, I ain't dumb. I know how it works...I've seen it... on tv. Talking, stalling, while you try to pull something, get some gas in here or push it down, dope me up, keep talking and stalling...

WARDEN (O.S.)

Jody...

JODY

Playing with me, pushing me down, making trades. The guy's hurt... give me some pizza...

*(screaming)*

I don't want no fucking pizza! Nobody's playing with me, I ain't playing. I ain't got nothing to lose. You hear me, you fucking D.A., I ain't got nothing to lose! You killed me already, and I ain't dying no more. You think I'm playing, man, you think this is a movie. I'll show you I ain't playing, I'll show you who's gonna lose.

*He jumps up, yanks the shirt off the camera*

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

FIRST OFFICER

We got a picture.

WARDEN

Where is he?

FIRST OFFICER

There!

**INT. CLOSEUP OF A MONITOR**

*JODY runs into the cell, pulls the DEPUTY to his feet*

JODY (O.S.)  
*(loud whisper)*  
This ain't no movie!

*JODY drags the man out of the cell, turns him around, jams the gun in his back and pushes him out.*

DEPUTY (O.S.)  
Hey, what are you doing? Don't, don't get crazy.

JODY (O.S.)  
*(whispering louder)*  
Nobody's crazy here.

*The CHAPLAIN pulls himself along the bars to the front of the cell.*

CHAPLAIN (O.S.)  
Thomas, get a hold of yourself. Nobody's going to do anything to you.

## **INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY pulls the Chamber curtain aside, shoves the DEPUTY across the space to the shattered witness window.*

*He takes a quick look over the man's shoulder to be sure the outside area is clear.*

WARDEN (O.S.)  
Jody, will you please hold on. We can talk about this, we can make the deal.

*JODY drags the man to the front of the Chamber, unlatches the door, shoves him inside.*

WARDEN (O.S.)  
Nobody's playing with you. Everybody believes you. I believe you. The deal. Let's do it.

JODY  
*(to himself)*  
The deal! You tried to kill me. That's the deal! Now I'm showing you, I ain't got nothing to lose.

*He shoves the DEPUTY into a chair, twists his cuffed arms over the edge, straps one arm down.*

DEPUTY

*(voice cracking)*

Hey, come on, man...I didn't do nothing to you... don't do nothing to me... don't hurt me!

WARDEN (O.S.)

Jody, we're all trying to work this out. I want to help you. Your lawyer's here, she wants to help you...

*JODY moves out of the Chamber, slams the hatch shut and latches it.*

JODY

You think I'm playing?. I ain't, I'm dealing. I'm the buyer and you're the seller, and here's the first payment.

*He spins the valve wheels.*

*The DEPUTY, seen through the Chamber windows, desperately turns and twists in a hysterical effort to free himself.*

*His muffled voice is heard pleading, crying.*

## **INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

*CLOSEUP OF THE MONITOR.*

*The faces of the WARDEN and the FIRST OFFICER are reflected in the glass.*

WARDEN

Jody... leave it alone... don't do this!

CHAPLAIN (O.S.)

Thomas... for God's sake...

JODY (O.S.)

*(spitting out the words)*

Vent closed! Check! Clamps down! Check! Bath delivered! Check!

*The sound of a gurgling pump.*

*The muffled voice inside the Chamber screams.*

FIRST OFFICER

*(breathlessly)*

It's down!

WARDEN

No, Jody... Don't! I'm begging you!

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY steps to the barrier, places his hands on the main switch.*

JODY

I ain't begging. I'm telling... I want out of here...  
now!

*He yanks the lever.*

*A hissing sound is heard as a faint white fog rises inside the Chamber. The voice screams again.*

*CLOSEUP OF MONITOR IN CONTROL ROOM.*

*MICHELLE's face is reflected along with the others.*

MICHELLE

*(quietly)*

Oh my dear God...

**EXT. THE FRONT GATE**

*Foggy dark with a hard-blowing wind.*

*The lines of people in the vigil try to keep warm, try to keep their candles lit.*

*Some of the police at the Gate have relaxed and are warming themselves at a barrel-fire, chatting with the protesters*

*A TV REPORTER walks along a line trying to squeeze out a shred of an interview here and there.*

TV REPORTER

It's past midnight and there hasn't been any word from prison officials. Lots of rumors, lots of doubts.

**A MAN**

Nobody knows what's going on. Everybody's pretty anxious. Gotta have a conclusion, gotta know one way or the other, you know?

**A WOMAN**

We're still pretty hopeful. It's long past the hour, so that's a good sign. It means that maybe his lawyers, maybe somebody found a way to stop this horrible thing. I think...

*She's interrupted by a helicopter overhead.*

*It hovers, briefly, causing a storm of dust and paper below.*

**EXT. PULL BACK TO A LOW AERIAL SHOT**

*The craft veers off and heads for the West side of the prison.*

**PULL BACK FURTHER**

*In the distance, streams of dust betray a line of black SUVs heading for the rear of the facility.*

**ANOTHER MAN**

What's happening? It looks like the Governor!  
(he races after the cars)  
It's the Governor!

*The gate guards run after him and tackle him. There is an uproar of voices and noise.*

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK.**

*JODY leans with his back against the Chamber. His face is blank, his arms down along his body, the gun in one hand.*

*The CHAPLAIN rigidly holds himself up at the bars of the cell.*

*JODY turns, pushes a switch and spins a valve wheel  
The sounds of rushing air and a gurgling pump.*

*The white mist inside the Chamber slowly dissipates. The DEPUTY, seen through the Chamber window, violently sculpted into a grotesque shape.*

*JODY moves to the hatch, opens it, steps to the side, not knowing if any lethal remnants remain.*

*He stands for a moment looking at the distorted figure of the man inside.*

*He closes the door, walks along the small corridor to the first cell door. He looks at the CHAPLAIN. The look is not returned.*

*He walks a few more steps to stand beneath the camera.*

JODY

*(coldly)*

That's the first payment. Now I'm waiting for you to deliver. And I ain't waiting too long. The next time I buy, there won't be nobody down here left to collect.

*He picks up his shirt, throws it over the camera.*

## **INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

WARDEN

There's nothing more to say to him. Now we wait.

CAMERON

Where's the toilet?

FIRST OFFICER

Down the hall to the right.

*As CAMERON hurries out, the phone rings.*

WARDEN

Yeah! When? All right.

*He hangs up, takes a pad, scribbles a note, staples the edges together.*

WARDEN

*(to the officer)*

Take this to Frank.

*The FIRST OFFICER rushes out.*

MICHELLE

I've never seen... an execution before.

WARDEN

Neither have I.

MICHELLE

It makes me want to scream.

WARDEN

Like the Deputy?

MICHELLE

Please!

WARDEN

It didn't have to happen, it shouldn't have happened. He murdered that man.

MICHELLE

No answer in the book for this problem?

WARDEN

What book? I've been in the penal system for twenty three years, this place for ten. You know what the worst problem is? Fear! Both the inmates and the staff. Fear! Not just for each other. What they're afraid of most is being forgotten. They dump these men and women into a holding pen, like this, and they dump the staff in here, most of them good professional people. And then they turn their backs and say you all figure it out. You work out how everybody's going to get from here to there. Just keep the lights low, don't ask for too much money, and let's not have any headlines.

MICHELLE

Then why not give him an alternative?

WARDEN

What alternative?

MICHELLE

Clemency! Commute his sentence to life, without parole.

WARDEN

Not a chance!

MICHELLE

Why? It's viable, it's an answer to this madness. It's the only way to save your Chaplain down there, it makes sense.

WARDEN

Why? Because it's already a disaster. When it gets out, when the media gets a hold of this, it'll spread like wildfire right through every prison in the country. You know the old story, you've seen it in a hundred movies... a hundred people held at bay by a cop or a soldier or a guard with a rifle, a machine gun. And you say, why don't they rush him? There's a hundred of them and only one of him? Sure it means someone will get hurt, even killed. But there's more to it than just the fear of pain. Did you ever wonder about that?

MICHELLE

Yes. It's the herd instinct in all of us.

WARDEN

That's right! It's a pattern, a routine, a positioning, like a mask that smothers an individual's sense of personal survival, of rebelling to survive. But then, someone throws a stone, a brick and all of a sudden the fear is shattered, the fog clears, and the symbol, the figure of authority becomes smaller and very vulnerable. That's what Thomas did. He threw a brick right through the glass wall around him. Give in, commute his sentence, and you glorify him. You send out a signal go ahead, pick up a brick, you can do it too!

MICHELLE

Don't bargain with a terrorist!

WARDEN

That's right! Sell out and it'll send a shockwave that'll turn every prison in this country into an armed concentration camp. Reason number two-- This s an election year. Have you ever met the Governor?

MICHELLE

Once.

WARDEN

I haven't, but I've watched him. He's a very slick politician. He'd never buy clemency because he'd never be able to sell it to the law-and-order crowd. He knows he'd get crucified the way they blasted what's-his-name in the last election. He'd go down and wrestle with Thomas himself before he'd ever give it away like that.

MICHELLE

I'm afraid for the Chaplain.

WARDEN

Me too! Phil is a good man. You don't make many friends in this business. He's a good friend. Christened my first granddaughter last week. Been here a long time... going to retire next year.

MICHELLE

Then you might have to give Jody what he wants.

WARDEN

We might... but not until we try to move on him again.

MICHELLE

May I know how?

WARDEN

No.

**EXT. OUTSIDE THE BACK OF THE PRISON.**

*Dark-uniformed, heavily-armed men jump out of a row of vans, hustle toward an open door in the gate.*

*The COMMANDER waves them on, stops an OFFICER who is carrying a rifle with a scope.*

COMMANDER

How's the eye?

OFFICER

*(winking)*

Okay... but I shoot with the other one.

COMMAND

Don't miss.

OFFICER

Have I ever?

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

SECOND OFFICER

He's here... the Governor.

*The GOVERNOR steps in, late forties, well-groomed, wearing a casual running suit.*

WARDEN

Governor!

GOVERNOR

Warden! If you'll all excuse us, please.

*MICHELLE and the officers move to the door. The GOVERNOR stops her.*

GOVERNOR (CONT'D)

Who's this?

WARDEN

Thomas' attorney.

GOVERNOR

What's she doing here?

MICHELLE

*(sharply)*

Defending my client.

*GOVERNOR nods. She leaves with the officers.*

GOVERNOR

Your ship's a little loose isn't it, Warden? All right... your people briefed me on the situation. Terrible! What's the status now?

WARDEN

He's still holed up in the cellblock. Shot one of my guards... he's in critical condition. Executed a sheriff's deputy...

GOVERNOR

No shit!

WARDEN

And, he's holding my Chaplain hostage.

GOVERNOR

Your Chaplain? What kind of Chaplain?

WARDEN

Priest, a Catholic priest.

GOVERNOR

What about him? Can he handle himself?

WARDEN

He's an older man, and he's hurt.

GOVERNOR

I understand Thomas blocked out the security camera. What a bitch when you can't see what's going on!

All right. I want to tell you, Warden, that I'm prepared to give you whatever assistance you need, all in a very low profile, of course, because that's absolutely necessary. Right? I've got SWAT teams standing by and riot control people ready to back them up. I'm sure you have contingency plans for rebellions like this, and...

WARDEN

This is a kind of wild card, Governor, no way to plan for it.

GOVERNOR

Understood! But there's always a way to manage any situation.

WARDEN

We're faced with the pressure of time, a countdown, Jody Thomas's countdown. That cellblock is a tight little drum, no way to flush him out. And this isn't a typical rebellion. His position is black and white... he was this close... when that last stay of execution came through.

GOVERNOR

What a fuckup!

WARDEN

He knows, he believes, he has nothing to lose, nothing to compromise.

GOVERNOR

That's a little melodramatic isn't it?

WARDEN

No! No, it isn't, not with another man's life at stake.

GOVERNOR

You still have control of the power and ventilation?

WARDEN

Yes, but we don't want to set him off again...

GOVERNOR

Understood! Now, some other possibilities.

*He leans out the door.*

WARDEN

Hey bud, come on in here.

*The COLONEL enters. He's in his forties, dressed in military gear.*

WARDEN

This is Tim Harris, he's with the Army, special operations. He's an expert. Got a few things we might be able to use. Go ahead!

COLONEL

Yes, well, there are some agents we've developed...

WARDEN

Agents?

COLONEL

Gaseous agents, gasses! They'd work right through the ventilation system. They're odorless, tasteless, colorless, and they're absolutely... final! They'll take out the enemy, the subject, before he knows what's hit him. As a matter of fact, he'll never know what hit him! Of course in this case, we have a couple of bystanders, so we may have to fall back on an older weapon. I'm sure you've heard of nerve gas, just as reliable, same characteristics, odorless, colorless. Works a little slower, give us time to push in there and hit the hostages with a counteragent, antidote, like atropine.

GOVERNOR

How long does it take, bud?

COLONEL

Ten to twelve seconds.

WARDEN

Does it always work?

COLONEL

You mean the antidote? We had some opportunities to do a little testing in Iraq, ninety-nine out of a hundred times.

WARDEN

And what's Thomas doing during this... ten to twelve seconds while you're saving the Chaplain?

COLONEL

The convict? The chances are he'll be too busy to notice.

WARDEN

Chances? You mean there's a chance that he could still shoot the man?

COLONEL

Highly unlikely. The gas is a contact weapon,  
it'll grab him and...

WARDEN

But is there a chance he could still fire the gun?

COLONEL

No! Well, maybe... but it depends on how  
much agent we pump down the air ducts, how  
it spreads, how dry the air is down there. You  
know how it works? Just one drop on the skin,  
one short breath...

WARDEN

No! I'm not going to risk another man's life!

GOVERNOR

It's a risk you might have to take. Thanks,  
Colonel, appreciate your help.

COLONEL

No problem.

*As he exits, CAMERON walks in. The GOVERNOR acknowledges him.*

GOVERNOR

Now, I want you to understand... what's your  
first name?

WARDEN

Joseph.

## GOVERNOR

All right, I want you to understand, Joe, that I'll support you in whatever final action you decide to take. And I want you to know that I appreciate the way you've contained this whole affair, keeping a gag on it inside these four walls and away from that sideshow out front. But you know as well as I do that we're not going to be able to keep the lid on this garbage can too much longer. It's going to leak and the media is going to have another feeding frenzy added to the chewing and spitting that's been going on for the past few days. I can't afford... and you can't afford to let them slice you up. Am I right? We've got to package this dirty business, bring it to a clean, tight conclusion and give it to them with the right spin. I'm talking about damage control, Joe. How the hell did that armed deputy get in there anyway?

## CAMERON

He was with me. I... had some threats.

## GOVERNOR

Asshole! You looking for another job Cameron?

*CAMERON shrugs his shoulders.*

## WARDEN

It was a stupid mistake.

## CAMERON

Hey, look...

## GOVERNOR

It was a stupid mistake! We'll talk about it later. My people will handle it. Get it?

## CAMERON

Got it!

## GOVERNOR

Now Joe, I'm not talking about any deals. No deals! That's a cop-killer down there, Joe, I don't have to tell you, it took a long, hard fight to get that death penalty through the assembly, to get the courts turned around. We've got a big law-and-order block in this state. It's what the people want, it's what they voted for. And we're not going to deal that away. So how you going to handle this, Joe, what do you think?

## WARDEN

We have a move in the works. It'll be ready to go in a few minutes. Thomas has a close friend here, someone he looks up to, another inmate, a mentor if you will. He took Thomas under his wing when he first got here, protected him. Thomas respects him, trusts him. We're going to let him approach Thomas, talk to him. He might be able to turn him around.

## GOVERNOR

You're going to give him a weapon and... what are you going to do, Joe?

## WARDEN

No, too dangerous! Thomas would smell it. We're simply going to let him deal with him. You see, sometimes, when an inmate is all wound up, a simple eye-to-eye contact with a peer, with someone he thinks understands him is enough to crack the tension, drop the energy, confuse the reflexes, unwind him.

## GOVERNOR

*(anger rising)*

Wait a minute, wait a minute!.

## GOVERNOR (CONT'D)

You're supposed to be a hard-nosed pro, the commander-in-chief of this institution. What are you screwing around for? Look Joe, look... I'll take over here. I got my troops with me, combat experienced guys, real tigers. They'll get in there and they'll take him out!

WARDEN

No you won't! You're not taking over here.  
Dammit, there's a hostage, you understand, a  
hostage!

GOVERNOR

A priest!

WARDEN

That's right, a priest, the chaplain.

GOVERNOR

Can't be helped. You got to slam this  
shut...now!

WARDEN

Your boys crash in there and your hands will be  
covered with blood. How are you going to  
explain that to the media?

*GOVERNOR turns away. WARDEN, fists clenched, stares after him.*

GOVERNOR

*(cooly)*

Why is this pal of his willing to take the  
chance?

WARDEN

He's in the death house, coming down to the  
wire with his appeals.

*(hesitates)*

I offered him the possibility of clemency, a  
turnover to life without.

CAMERON

Jesus H. Christ!

GOVERNOR

You offered him what? What do you mean you  
offered him... I told you no deals. I'm not  
sticking my neck out...

WARDEN

*(matching him)*

I don't believe in deals either, but it's all we got left, short of letting Thomas dance out the front door with a hostage. That's my Chaplain down there, Governor. He's a good man and a good friend and he's got a right to keep living just like you and me. Thomas is not going back to that Chamber while he's got a gun in his hand!

**EXT. THE COURTYARD WALLS OUTSIDE THE DEATH HOUSE.**

*The COMMANDER is moving his men into position. He stops to talk to the prison CAPTAIN.*

COMMANDER

We're just going to stay out of sight. Half my men on one side, half on the other. Strictly a backup for your guys. Gotta get this cop-killer if he tries to break out. Gotta get him, right?

PRISON CAPTAIN

You bet.

COMMANDER

And Captain... we're just backup and we're here on the QT. Governor's orders.

PRISON CAPTAIN

Got it!

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM.**

*The GOVERNOR is walking in a large circle around the Warden*

GOVERNOR

I don't like it, Joe! What's this guy in for, this pal?

WARDEN

Hard-core, life. There was a fight; he killed another inmate, and a guard.

GOVERNOR

I don't like it, Joe! An inmate and a guard... all internal?

WARDEN

All internal!

*The GOVERNOR stops in front of him.*

GOVERNOR

All right... I'll buy it. But I'm going to move some of my people into position. Okay?

WARDEN

*(protesting)*

My men can handle it, Governor. Don't need any back up.

GOVERNOR

*(adamantly)*

Okay?

WARDEN

*(after a moment)*

Okay.

GOVERNOR

I need a secure line.

WARDEN

We'll have to go over to Central Control.

CAMERON

I'll show you where it is.

GOVERNOR

Make it work, Joe. Make it work!

## **INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

JODY

Hey, Father! You still with us? Don't fade out, my man, we still got some living to do. You okay?

CHAPLAIN

My head hurts.

JODY

Yeah, well, I ain't sorry about that. You should've stayed out of it.

CHAPLAIN

You're doing a terrible thing, Thomas. You're going to...

JODY

See what I mean? Just stay out of it! And don't quote no bible crap to me. Save it for when we get out of here. You'll need it.

*A soft tapping on the outside door. JODY freezes. Tapping again, along with a VOICE.*

VOICE (O.S.)

Jody!

*JODY edges along the bars and scurries to a position by the door.*

VOICE (O.S.)

Jody! You hear me? Jody, it's me, it's the Hootchman. It's me, twinkieboy!

JODY

Mike?

VOICE (O.S.)

Yeah!

JODY

What'are you doing?

VOICE (O.S.)

They let me out. I came down to see you.

JODY

They let you... what are you talking about?

VOICE (O.S.)

I told you, they let me come and see you.

JODY

What do you mean they let you? You stooling for them? They give you something? They right behind you?

VOICE (O.S.)

It's just me, man, nobody else. They let me come see you and talk to you, because you're my boy. They can't hear you, you savvy, they want to know what you're saying, they want to hear it from the Hootch! Let me in!

JODY

I'm busting outta here, man, I'm gone! What are you doing? Get outta here!

VOICE (O.S.)

I got to talk to you. The Hootchman has got to talk to you!

*Confused for a moment, Jody puts his ear at the door. Then he jumps to the other side, sets his feet and holds the gun in both hands.*

VOICE (O.S.)

You fucking dildo, are you going to let me in?

JODY

All right... do it! .

*The sound of the outside latch. The door slowly swings open as MIKE steps in. He's a large man in his late thirties, with slicked hair and a long handle-bar mustache.*

*When he clears the doorway, Jody kicks him in the legs, tripping him to the floor.*

*In one motion, he slams the door shut, pounces on MIKE, knees in his back, gun at his neck.*

MIKE

*(groaning)*

For crissakes!

*JODY frisks him roughly.*

*He places his knee between MIKE's legs, brings it up hard. MIKE moans again, rolls over holding his groin.*

*JODY tears at his clothes, rolls him on to his back, puts the gun to his head.*

JODY

Move!

MIKE

You shit! You trying to screw my sex life?

JODY

Why'd you come, Mike, why they let you come?

MIKE

Because I pushed them around, I said: That's my boy... he'll tell me what's happening.

JODY

Cut the shit, Mike! What'd they get you to do?

MIKE

Hey, twinkieboy, this is Hootchman. Nobody gets me to do nothing I don't want to do.

JODY

*(shouting)*

I'm asking you!

MIKE

*(shouting)*

I'm telling you.

*(smiles)*

I'm telling you... no setup, you savvy? I told them they needed me. They're scared up there, don't know what to do. They want to get it first-hand from the Hootchman's mouth.

JODY

Yeah? They know what to do. I'm busting out, I'm on fire, man!

MIKE

Hey, easy baby. This is me remember?

JODY

I showed them I don't give a shit no more, I mean what I say.

MIKE

Did you really ice that dude in the green box?

JODY

Yeah. Wanna see?

MIKE

Nah! I don't need to see, bad karma! You wanna smoke? Oh yeah, you're a healthy boy now, you quit. Hey, how you doing, Father? He okay?

JODY

*(coldly)*

What do you want, Mike?

*MIKE walks along the bars without looking at him. JODY walks parallel to him, but at a distance.*

MIKE

So how you gonna... bust it?

JODY

What do you want, Mike?

MIKE

Hey, will you stop hanging on me like a fucking dog! I'm trying to do you some good here! Look, man, there's no way, no way in hell they're gonna let you dance out of here. They got you tattooed and stewed and they're gonna have you for lunch. There ain't no way they're gonna let you turn them around not with all the other guys waiting in the skids to climb out after you.

JODY

You're blowing their smoke, man!

MIKE

You're all fucked up, dude! Hey, twinkieboy, Jodyboy, haven't I always given it to you straight? Haven't I always had my arm around you from the day you walked into his joint? Haven't I, me, your Hootchman?

JODY

Yeah!

MIKE

So why you treating me like a pussy?

JODY

I don't know... why you telling me all shit?

MIKE

*(yelling)*

I'm trying to help you, sucker!

JODY

Do what? Go back in there?

*JODY begins to walk rapidly up and down the small corridor, accenting his speech with short jerky movements as he speaks half to himself, half out-loud.*

*MIKE watches him intently, following every movement.*

JODY

They killed me already, Hootch, I'm dead... I sat in the seat and I took a deep breath. But I'm living now, I'm on fire, I'm busting out.

MIKE

Jodyboy... Jodyboy... you're scamming yourself, man. Didn't I always tell you, you were the biggest sucker in the world? What's the difference? If they didn't get you in there, they're gonna get you... out there! That's what it's all about. They own it!

JODY

No, no, man... I'm at the wheel, now. They know I'm over the line. They tried to send their heat in, I blew them away. They tried to stall me, I wasted that cop. They know! I got my stash, my card, my chips... him!  
*(points to the CHAPLAIN)*

MIKE

Hooee! You're smoking some bad shit, man! They don't give a fuck about him. They only care about you! You got them bending over, on their knees. They can't take that. They can't have that, no way. They got this whole thing rigged. All those people out there reading newspapers, looking at tv... that's the public, man, the voters. They want yooouuu! And these honchos are gonna give yooouuu to them, one way or the other. And him too, if that's what they got to do. They don't give a shit. It's political, man. They rigged it this way and they ain't gonna let you cheat them out of the payoff.

JODY

Nah! You're missing it, Hootch, you're missing it. I'm buying, they're selling. Don't you get it? That's a priest. He's the Warden's man. If they were gonna whack me, they would have done it a long time ago. Nah, they're dealing! I stopped them, I turned it around, and they're giving me a ticket. Hey, I'm getting a helicopter and lots of bread. I'm flying out of here, man, I'm beating this rap right out of the country. I'm going all the way.

*He stops to take a breath, then turns to MIKE smiling.*

JODY (CONT'D)

You want to come with me? How about it, Hootch? The two of us. You're like me, what've you got to lose? You're down to your last appeal, it ain't going nowhere and you ain't gonna get a chance like this, not after me! What do ya say, Hootch? It's boogie time, right?

*Caught off guard, MIKE shrugs his shoulders.*

MIKE

Nah, it's a sucker's bet!

JODY

What are you saying? It's a one in a million winner, it's the lottery, man!

MIKE

Where you gonna go, what're you gonna do?  
You think they're gonna let you get ten feet  
away from here?

JODY

Fuckin-A they are!

MIKE

And what happens if you do bust out?

JODY

I got wheels, a whirly-bird, and big bucks, man!

MIKE

You got nothing! Where you gonna go, what're  
you gonna do? You don't know nobody, you  
ain't been nowhere, you don't know how to do  
nothing. You're a loser, man. You were a loser  
when you were born. You never had nothing  
and you're never gonna get nothing.

*JODY's face tightens in pain, his eyes begin to glisten.*

MIKE (CONT'D)

You been scrambling and shuffling your whole  
life just to get one look in the mirror. And when  
you get a good look, what do you see? Nothing!  
You're nothing, Jodyboy. You might as well  
never been born, you might as well be that stiff  
in the green box over there.

*JODY begins to sob, silently. Tears run down his face.*

*Sensing the opportunity, MIKE smiles. raises his hands, moves slowly  
toward him, then hesitates.*

MIKE

Hey. twinkieboy. Ain't I always been there for  
you, telling you how it is? Ain't I always kept  
you warm at night and safe. Ain't I been the  
only one in your whole life that ever took care  
of you?

JODY

*(his voice wavers)*

But I saw it when I was sitting in there and they covered me up. For the first time, I saw it.

MIKE

Saw what?

JODY

I saw me, Hootch. I saw all that I got, and I just wanted to be free.

MIKE

*(crooning)*

Then be free, Jodyboy. Let it go, scratch it off, you don't need to deal it any more.

JODY

I just want to be free.

MIKE

*(still crooning)*

No, man, it's a fucking pipe dream. It's a needle in your arm and they're shoving it up into your brain. Don't you get it? You gotta get the monkey off your back. You gotta quit. Come on, Jodyboy...

*JODY shudders, then suddenly opens his eyes wide. MIKE smiles. JODY lunges at him, drives him up against the bars, the gun at his neck.*

JODY

You're selling me out. You made a deal!

MIKE

You're crazy.

JODY

You're dealing, you're trading... me for you!

*They struggle for a moment, then MIKE throws him off, but JODY keeps his balance, steps back with the gun pointed at him. MIKE slowly backs up through the open cell door.*

MIKE

*(with angry bravado)*

That's right! So what! You said it... you're dead already. When you iced that stiff in there, you crawled right into your own box, man. You're history! You're meat! Yeah, they gave me a deal! You for me! So what? I got a chance to beat this rap. I got a chance to live. You got no chance! I got something to live for. I'm somebody. You got nothing. You're nobody. I got you this far, and you owe me, you owe me! If it weren't for me, you'd have been history a long time ago. Long time! You owe me!

JODY

You motherfucker!

*He fires the gun. The shots tear through MIKE's thigh.*

*The force lifts him off his feet. He careens off the side bars into the back wall, and crumbles to the floor near the CHAPLAIN.*

*JODY stomps to the cell door.*

JODY

You were just doping me up. You just wanted me to roll along.

*He raises the gun again. The CHAPLAIN kneels over MIKE placing himself between him and JODY.*

CHAPLAIN

Don't do it. Don't do it, Thomas, you need him. you need him, he's another hostage, right?.

*Jody slowly backs away from the cell, lowers the gun.*

*The CHAPLAIN takes off his belt, ties it around MIKE's leg.*

*JODY stops underneath the camera, begins to turn in a circle.*

JODY

Are you listening?

*He jumps up and undrapes the camera.*

JODY (CONT'D)

Are you watching?

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM.**

*CLOSEUP of the monitor, Jody turning in circles.*

FIRST OFFICER (O.S.)

We got a picture.

WARDEN (O.S.)

Scan it! Stop!

**PULLBACK THE WHOLE ROOM**

FIRST OFFICER

He's got them both in the cell.

GOVERNOR

Who's that?

WARDEN

Mike.

FIRST OFFICER

He's in trouble.

JODY (O.S.)

I'm watching! I'm watching that clock over there, the Gas Man's clock.

*(laughs to himself)*

Ten minutes. That's all time I got left. That's all the time I'm gonna spend in this, this fucking graveyard.

*The WARDEN reaches for the microphone.*

WARDEN

Jody, listen to me.

JODY (O.S.)

Ain't no more time for listening. Just watching for my little whirly-bird with all those bucks in it. Ten minutes to fly away!

*In the monitor, Jody sits down cross-legged beneath the camera, facing the Chamber.*

*MIKE groans. The CHAPLAIN does what he can to help him.*

*The Warden flips the switch off.*

GOVERNOR

You've got to go in and get him out of there. It's all over with!

WARDEN

That's not the answer. I've just got to buy some time.

GOVERNOR

I'll talk to him.

WARDEN

No! He's not going to hear your voice any better than he hears mine. He's just going to go off.

GOVERNOR

Well he's going to do that anyhow in ten minutes, isn't he? You believe that?

WARDEN

Yes!

GOVERNOR

We need some time to think this out. What about that lawyer of his, what can she do?

*The WARDEN grabs a phone.*

WARDEN

Frank? Get Thomas's lawyer over here, now!

GOVERNOR

You know, Joe, this is like a roaring flood and all we're doing here is putting wet sandbags on a wet levee. At some point we're going to have blow the dam and let it go.

**INT. THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE CENTRAL CONTROL.**

*MICHELLE and CAMERON are leaning against the doorway drinking coffee.*

MICHELLE

You can't even make a good cup of instant coffee.

CAMERON

Keep busting my chops, babe. I got a good memory.

MICHELLE

So do I, pretty boy.

*FRANK leans out the door.*

FRANK

The Warden wants you, now.

*CAMERON starts to move. FRANK stops him.*

FRANK

Just her.

*MICHELLE gives CAMERON her cup.*

MICHELLE

Here, have two, courtesy of the state.

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM.**

WARDEN

You heard?

MICHELLE

I heard.

WARDEN

We need you to talk to him. He's wired up and he's counting the minutes. We need you to calm him, we need time.

MICHELLE

What makes you think he'll talk to me?

WARDEN

He likes you, he respects you. You're the only person he thinks tried to help him.

MICHELLE

And then what?

GOVERNOR

Then we'll do what we have to do.

MICHELLE

Which is what?

WARDEN

I don't know yet. That's why we need time, to clear our options.

MICHELLE

What options? You can destroy him and his hostages along with him or you can give him what he wants and let him go.

*(watches both men)*

I think there's another choice.

GOVERNOR

What's that?

MICHELLE

Clemency.

GOVERNOR

Huh?

MICHELLE

Commute him... life without.

GOVERNOR

Absolutely not! That's not even a possibility.

MICHELLE

That way, you pull the fuse out of the bomb. No one else gets killed.

WARDEN

It's not an option.

MICHELLE

Why not? It's better than the public spectacle of flying him into the sunset like a Hollywood movie. I know what you think, Warden, no negotiating. But what are the choices?

GOVERNOR

There's only one. End it! Wipe him out.

MICHELLE

Uh-Uh,. that's no longer a choice, either. I can see the sound bites flashing in your eyes.

JODY (O.S.)

Five minutes... on the Gas Man's clock!

MICHELLE

Those aren't just hostages down there. One of them is a priest, a Catholic priest. How's that going to play in the headlines, in all the vast thinking, feeling, God-fearing constituencies in this state?

*The GOVERNOR unzips his coat, shoves his hands in his pockets and walks away. She turns to the WARDEN.*

WARDEN

I can't make that decision.

GOVERNOR

And I won't! Shit! Clemency! That's no trade off!

MICHELLE

Quid pro quo.

GOVERNOR

We're playing with moral fire here, you know... and a hell of a lot of guilt in the face of responsibility that's been entrusted to us. It seems to me...

MICHELLE

Yeah, yeah, yeah!

WARDEN

It seems to me... that when the time comes to draw a line...

MICHELLE

Hello? Excuse me, there's no time for philosophy. This is a pure political situation, right? That boy has already execu... killed some one out of desperation, and right now he's sitting there watching that clock. And when the time runs out, he's going to explode and you're going to have a mess on your hands. An ugly, bloody, questionable mess.

GOVERNOR

That's because we've lost control of the situation, and he's calling the shots. If he was on my turf...

MICHELLE

I don't think he's bluffing. I think he'll do it!

GOVERNOR

You like to play hardball don't you, counselor?

MICHELLE

Quid pro quo!

GOVERNOR

*(to the Warden)*

You think he'll do it?

*The WARDEN nods. The GOVERNOR walks away from them again. His jaw tightens, He checks his watch.*

GOVERNOR

All right! But he stands trial for the murder of that deputy.

MICHELLE

Deal!

*The WARDEN hands the microphone to her.*

MICHELLE

Jody, this is your... lady lawyer. I want you to listen to me, I want you to listen to me very carefully. I have a deal for you, a new deal, a way out of all of this that makes sense for everyone. Jody? Do you know what I'm saying? Jody?

JODY (O.S.)

There ain't no time for any new deals.

MICHELLE

Yes there is, of course there is. Listen to me, Jody, I have the Governor here, and he's prepared to...

JODY (O.S.)

I don't know what you're saying. I don't believe what you're saying.

MICHELLE

Jody, have I ever lied to you? Haven't I always given it you straight? Haven't I always tried to help you? Haven't I? Dammit Jody Thomas will you answer me!

JODY (O.S.)

Yeah!

MICHELLE

I'm trying to help you, now, and I'm giving it to you straight... now!

*A long, tense pause.*

JODY (O.S.)

You got something going?

MICHELLE

That's right, that's right, a way to stop this horrible, senseless... a way that you and everybody else down there can stay alive. Now listen to me.

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK.**

JODY

You got a deal for me?

MICHELLE (O.S.)

That's what I'm telling you.

JODY

Then show me... don't tell me!

MICHELLE (O.S.)

What?

JODY

*(points to camera)*

I don't want to hear it from that box. Show me.  
Come down here and show me.

MICHELLE (O.S.)

*(stunned)*

Come down there?

JODY

Show it to me, I want to see it in your eyes.

MICHELLE (O.S.)

I don't know if that's possible?

JODY

*(loudly)*

Here, eye to eye!

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

*MICHELLE covers the microphone with her hand, looks at the WARDEN.*

GOVERNOR

Absolutely not!

WARDEN

No, I can't allow it.

GOVERNOR

He's just looking for another hostage.

MICHELLE

I'm not sure about that.

WARDEN

It's too risky, too dangerous.

GOVERNOR

He's crazy! Look what he's done already. You'd be walking right into his hands.

MICHELLE

I don't think so. He's not looking for any more hostages, he knows the priest is enough. And I don't think he'd hurt me. There's something else ticking inside of him besides escaping. I can't put my finger on it. No, he's just stretched thin, he won't trust anything he can't see and touch.

*Before either of the men can speak, she takes her hand off the microphone.*

MICHELLE

All right! I'm coming down.

JODY (O.S.)

Alone... nobody else.

MICHELLE

Nobody else!

JODY (O.S.)

Hey! You for sure coming down?

MICHELLE

Yes.

JODY (O.S.)

With your hands tied... cuffed.

MICHELLE

What?

JODY (O.S.)

Your hands... in bracelets.

*She closes her eyes, sets her jaw.*

MICHELLE

Okay!

*She is about to turn off the microphone, then stops.*

MICHELLE

Hey... Jody?

JODY (O.S.)

Yeah?

MICHELLE

Don't go away!

*She mutes the microphone.*

GOVERNOR

Now wait a minute, I'm not going to be... are you going to let her do this?

MICHELLE

*(angrily)*

You want to consult your PR people, Governor?

GOVERNOR

You're way out of line, counselor!

MICHELLE

Fine! Then you handle it! Why don't you declare a state of emergency, take over the prison? Then you can bring in your shock troops and clean the whole situation up. Jody will put a bullet in the Chaplain's head and you can put a bullet in Jody. Fini! But you better do it soon, there's only a few minutes left... on the Gas Man's clock!

GOVERNOR

You're really riding the death penalty horse, aren't you?

MICHELLE

Bad analogy, Governor. You're the one who's standing on its back waving a flag. That's why you made the deal, wasn't it?

*She turns to the WARDEN. He stares at her for a moment.*

WARDEN

Take her down.

*MICHELLE and the SECOND OFFICER hurry out the door.*

GOVERNOR

*(coldly)*

Your call, Joe!

**INT. HALLWAY BY CENTRAL CONTROL**

*MICHELLE and the SECOND OFFICER are running down the hall. They pass CAMERON.*

CAMERON

What's happening? Wait a minute!

*MICHELLE waves him off.*

CAMERON

Where's the Governor?

SECOND OFFICER

*(over his shoulder)*

Control room.

*CAMERON hurries off the other way.*

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY moves to the cell door and looks in.*

CHAPLAIN

He's not doing too well. He's lost a lot of blood.  
He needs a medic.

JODY

He's had worse. He'll make out. Did you hear?  
My lawyer's coming with a new deal.

CHAPLAIN

Yeah, I heard.

JODY

You're going to be off the hook, Father, we're all going to be okay.

CHAPLAIN

I'm praying for it.

JODY

Yeah, that's it, you just keep praying.

*A muffled knock at the door. Jody runs to his position at the door, gun cocked.*

JODY

Yeah!

MICHELLE (O.S.)

It's me, Jody.

JODY

Alone?

MICHELLE (O.S.)

Alone!

JODY

All right, do it.

*The sound of the latch. The door opens. MICHELLE steps through, her hands out front, bound in handcuffs.*

*JODY quickly pushes her aside, slams the door shut.*

*He grabs her by the arm, spins her around, frisks her, spins her back to face him.*

*He takes the flat of his hand and pushes on each of her breasts. She glares at him.*

*He reaches down and shoves his hand between her legs almost lifting her off her feet. Her face hardens.*

*He is about to walk away, but stops. He reaches back, softly touches one of her breasts again.*

JODY (CONT'D)

*(smiling)*

That's not too bad for a lawyer.

*She slaps him across the face, then cringes when she realizes what she has done.*

*He smiles again.*

JODY (CONT'D)

I understand. I understand that.

MICHELLE

Father? How are you? How's that man doing?

CHAPLAIN

I'll be okay, but this guy's not good...

JODY

Forget about him. You said there was a deal.

MICHELLE

Do you mind taking these chains off?

JODY

Don't have a key.

MICHELLE

I have.

*She opens one of her fists to reveal a small key.*

JODY

That's pretty smart!

*He unlocks her cuffs, hangs them on the cell door.*

JODY (CONT'D)

I want to hear about the deal.

MICHELLE

*(with a deep breath)*

It's this... the Governor is willing to commute your sentence, life without parole.

JODY

Life?

MICHELLE

That's right! No parole... but life. As long as you give it up, the gun, free these men... end it.

JODY

How do I know this is straight?

MICHELLE

Because you have me and my colleagues, the rest of your legal team, and you've got the media out front. That's your guarantee that it'll be straight. You can trust that.

CHAPLAIN

And I'm a witness too.

MICHELLE

That's right!

JODY

Hooee... that's the deal!

MICHELLE

That's the deal! The sentence is commuted. No more clock!

JODY

What about the other stuff?

CHAPLAIN

I won't press any charges, son, you can count on that.

JODY

*(pointing toward the DEPUTY)*

What about him?

MICHELLE

You'll have to stand trial for what you did to that deputy, Jody.

JODY

*(vaguely)*

Trial?

MICHELLE

That's part of the deal. Listen to me.

*She steps closer to him. He doesn't back away.*

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

It's okay, it's a good deal. The sentence is gone, that's the important thing, you're alive again. And another trial? A lot of possibilities... given the circumstances and what's happened today.

JODY

A trial? And after a few weeks or a few months or something... it's back here again.

MICHELLE

No, Jody, listen to me. That's not a sure thing. There's going to be a big todo when the media finds out what's been going on. Right now, they're blocked off out front, and they're waiting. Nobody has been able to get to them. Nobody knows what's going on. But once they do, it makes our case... how wrong this all is, how insane the whole system is. Listen to me, Jody, at least you have a chance to survive. What are your chances if you break out of here? How far do think you'll get?

*JODY's manner is strangely calm, his face relaxed, a sense of confidence knowing he's safe in her presence.*

JODY

Pretty far! I can fly away from here, far away, and I'll have lots of money.

MICHELLE

Then what?

JODY

*(vaguely)*

I don't know. Then what? I don't know.

MICHELLE

Eventually they'll get you and stop you, and probably kill you.

JODY

That's what they've always tried to do. At least I'll be free.

MICHELLE

But you won't be safe!

JODY

*(snickering)*

I don't want to be safe no more... it ain't worth shit! See him?

*(points to MIKE.)*

He was like my brother, like my blood brother. And here he is trying to sell me out, him for me! Because that's the way it is, because in the end, when you're ready to cash it in, all you got, all I got is me! There ain't nobody else. That's why everybody is afraid to die, because it means you're going to be alone, and everybody is scared to be alone. I ain't scared to be alone no more, you get me? I ain't scared.

MICHELLE

But you're not alone, there are people fighting for you, there are people out front demonstrating for you, and now you have a chance to survive, to live, you have a chance to...

JODY

Nah! It's just the same old thing. See, that's all I spent my whole life doing, trying to stay alive, you know what I mean? Since I was a little kid, all I been doing is running around in a hole like a rat, like a bug. And nobody ever told me how to get out.

MICHELLE

We haven't got much time, Jody.

JODY

Sure we do. That's all we got. I mean, look at me... I was a lousy twenty three years old when I got into this joint and it was all over with. nothing. I didn't do nothing, I didn't have nothing. All I had was my life, being alive. And here I was, ready to let them take it away, all that I had. That's the fog that's been sitting in my head. And then it hit me, way inside. It hit me when I was sitting on that throne, with the dark on my eyes and the acid crawling up my nose. I said, wait a minute, it's all I got, my life! If I let them take that, if I let them kill me, then it don't mean nothing, I'm nothing. See what I mean, lady? If you die, you lose. If you die, it's all gone, it don't mean nothing.

CHAPLAIN

There's only one way to live forever, Jody.

JODY

Aw that's the bible crap. All that two-faced horseshit. Hey, Father, ain't one of your rules, your commandments, right at the heart of things, ain't it you shouldn't kill?

CHAPLAIN

That's right.

JODY

So what are you doing here?

CHAPLAIN

Helping you!

*JODY laughs.*

MICHELLE

Let's do it, Jody, let's walk out of here.

JODY

I know what's happening, Yeah, now I know what's right and what's wrong.

MICHELLE

I know you do.

JODY

But there's only one thing that's right when you're standing on the edge of the wall, no matter how you got there, and they're trying to push you over. Only one thing... live!

*There is a tense silence. MICHELLE starts to speak but stops, unsure what effect her words will have.*

JODY (CONT'D)

No... it's a bad deal!

MICHELLE

What?

JODY

It's just another rope around my neck, pulling me in, telling me what's good for me and what ain't.

MICHELLE

I can't believe you'd throw this away, I can't believe you'd do this to yourself.

JODY

I believe it. This time it's my deal, this time, I make it happen. I'm going to be free, lady, for the first time I'm going to be free!

MICHELLE

*(points to the cell)*

And what about them?

JODY

Didn't I tell you, they're part of it. I ain't stupid! They ain't going to kill me any more!

CHAPLAIN

Think hard, Jody, search your heart.

JODY

Hey, you notice lately how the Father starts calling me by my first name, calling me "son". It means he ain't doping me anymore, it means now I'm somebody!

MICHELLE

Give it a chance, Jody, do it for me!

JODY

I'd like to do something for you. I know it ain't because you like me. I know you got your own thing and that's why you're there for me. But you give it to me straight, and you don't treat me like I ain't a human being.

*(he laughs)*

Hey, why don't you do something else for me and for the Father there? Why don't you be like a... a escort, and take us out of here? Want to do that?

*Fear appears in her face. She wraps her arms around herself. He takes a step toward her. She backs away.*

JODY

No? Then you better get out before the party begins.

MICHELLE

You've gotten this far. You beat them. They're ready to deal with you. Why throw it away?

JODY

Nah, you don't get it, do you? I ain't beat them. I ain't got nothing until I'm outside that front gate, breathing that cool air and running like hell. For the first time it don't make no difference what they stick into my back as long as I'm running away from them, as long as I called the shot.

*She tries to speak, thinks better of it, turns and strides to the door.*

JODY

Hey. lady lawyer. Wish me luck?

*She stops.*

MICHELLE

I don't know what to wish you, Jody.

JODY  
Well I wish you... a happy life.  
*(yelling)*  
Hey, hey up there... open up!

*The sound of the latch. MICHELLE pushes the door open stands in the doorway.*

MICHELLE  
Luck!

*She leaves, slamming the door behind her.*

*JODY starts pacing again.*

*He stops at the door, puts his ear against it, listens.*

*He moves back underneath the camera, picks up his shirt, throws it over the lens.*

#### **INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

*CAMERON walks in. The GOVERNOR motions with his thumb: "Sit!" He does.*

FIRST OFFICER  
We lost the picture again.

WARDEN  
You sure she's out of there.

FIRST OFFICER  
Yeah, I'm sure.

#### **INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY takes the handcuffs off the cell door.*

CHAPLAIN  
*(his voice shaking)*  
It won't work, Jody, you'll never get out of here.

*JODY drags MIKE to a sitting position, slaps one of the cuffs on his wrist.*

CHAPLAIN

Why don't you give it up? For the love of God,  
Why don't you leave us alone?

JODY

Shut up, Father, just stop talking man!

*He pulls the CHAPLAIN to the rear and struggles to lock the two men together. Then he drags MIKE to his feet and drags both men, handcuffed out of the cell.*

*MIKE collapses, pulling the CHAPLAIN down on top of him. He still has the belt-tourniquet on, but he's splotched with blood. sweating heavily and groaning.*

MIKE

*(mumbling)*

Hey man, where are you?

JODY

*(to the camera)*

Hey! Hey! Do I go... or do we all stay?

## **INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

*MICHELLE stumbles through the door, breathless.*

MICHELLE

You saw it, you heard?

WARDEN

What do you think?

MICHELLE

He's getting out. He's going to do it. And I'm telling you, if you stop him, he'll pull the trigger, he'll kill them. He doesn't want to live any more... in here.

WARDEN

We're out of time.

MICHELLE

We're out of time!

*They both turn to the GOVERNOR.*

*He checks his watch.*

GOVERNOR

Then we'll give him what he wants.

*Even though they've pressed for it, MICHELLE and the WARDEN are stunned by the decision.*

GOVERNOR

That's right, give it to him. It's all arranged. The copter is out back, there's an unarmed pilot in it, he has the money, and everyone else has been pulled away.

WARDEN

You're sure?

GOVERNOR

I'm sure!

*(a tight smile)*

Look, we'll be on his tail, we'll get him.

*CAMERON jumps up.*

GOVERNOR

*(to Cameron)*

Not a word!

WARDEN

*(to First Officer)*

Get Frank on the phone.

*MICHELLE is unable to take her eyes off the GOVERNOR.*

*The WARDEN picks up the microphone.*

WARDEN

Jody, Jody, this is the Warden. Listen, it's a go! You've got a helicopter out back, the pilot is unarmed. The money you want is in it, and nobody's going to get in your way. I promise you. You hear me?

JODY (O.S.)

Yeah. I hear you!

WARDEN

All right. It's up to you. You tell me!

JODY (O.S.)

That's right! I tell you! You watch me. man,  
watch me close!

**INT. CENTRAL CONTROL**

FRANK

*(on the phone)*

Yeah, yeah. Got it!

*He picks up a two-way radio.*

FRANK (CONT'D)

Eddie? He's coming out, and he's got the  
hostages. This is strictly a Code 4. You  
understand? Right from the top. Code 4! No  
action!

**EXT. WALLS OUTSIDE THE DEATH HOUSE.**

PRISON CAPTAIN

*(on his radio)*

Right. We wait for you. Got it.

*He turns to the Commander.*

PRISON CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

He's coming out.

*They stare at each other.*

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY runs to the Chamber, pulls the hatch open, turns the DEPUTY's body  
around, takes off the handcuffs.*

JODY

You did good, bubba, you did good! Too bad  
you ain't going with us.

*He runs back to the two men, locks their other hands together, pulls them  
to their feet so they stand back to back.*

*MIKE leans heavily on the CHAPLAIN.*

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

WARDEN

Okay Frank? Give me the yard cameras on all monitors. I don't want any one in sight. Keep the towers clear.

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY steps in between the two men, faces the CHAPLAIN with the gun at his neck.*

*He crouches over, supporting MIKE.*

JODY

Hey! We're ready. Kill the lights!

WARDEN (O.S.)

What?

JODY

*(yelling)*

I said... kill the fucking lights!

*He fires a shot into the ceiling.*

*The shock of it makes the CHAPLAIN fall to his knees with JODY and MIKE on top of him.*

*JODY quickly catches himself, pulls the CHAPLAIN upright by his collar.*

WARDEN (O.S.)

Do it!

*The lights in the cellblock go out, except for a dim bulb in the rear of one cell.*

JODY

*(shouting)*

Open it!

*The latch turns at the door.*

*JODY nudges the CHAPLAIN.*

*They begin a slow, painful shuffle: the CHAPLAIN, his face twisted in fear, whispering to himself; MIKE dragging his leg, mumbling incoherently; JODY hidden between the two of them.*

*It is a procession, moving like a grotesque herd of lost cattle.*

*As they approach the door, JODY leans out, pushes it open. They stop for a moment. MIKE groans.*

JODY

Hey, Hootch, don't worry. You're lucky. You ain't going to see this place again.

*He nudges the CHAPLAIN.*

*They move out the door.*

**INT. THE HALL OUTSIDE THE CELLBLOCK.**

*The procession begin to shuffle down the hallway.*

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM.**

WARDEN

*(on the phone)*

Is Rivera in position? Good. You got him on the headset? You tell him to stay back and down. He's just a pair of eyes, that's all, he's just telling us what the cameras can't see. Is the tape rolling? Good. I want everything on tape.

*CLOSEUP of GOVERNOR.*

WARDEN (O.S.)

Everything! That's right, just a couple of lights at the gate. Keep it low.

**EXT. THE COURTYARD**

*It's quiet, except for the sound of the wind blowing across the yard. A few dim shafts from spot-lights cut across the area.*

*The CHAPLAIN appears in an open doorway.*

**INT. CENTRAL CONTROL**

*FRANK stands at a monitor, talking, quickly, quietly into a head-set microphone.*

### **INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

FIRST OFFICER

There they are!

WARDEN

I see them, Frank. Take it easy. Yes I know. It's okay. No, nobody goes down, he'll push the gate himself.

*Each person stands over a separate console monitor.*

*CAMERA MOVES from one to the next, each time reflecting the face of the person standing there in the glass.*

*The scenes on the monitors show the procession shuffling out of the doorway into the yard.*

WARDEN (O.S.)

Steady, keep that far camera steady. Nice slow scan.

### **EXT. THE COURTYARD**

*The procession painfully makes it's way into the yard.*

*There is a sudden rustling from up above followed by a harsh metallic sound.*

*The procession stops, almost collapses on itself.*

*JODY props both men up.*

WARDEN( O.S.)

What's going on? What's happening?

FIRST OFFICER( O.S.)

It looks like they're trying to turn around.

WARDEN (O.S.)

Dammit Frank, get in closer!

MICHELLE( O.S.)

Something's wrong!

WARDEN (O.S.)

Wait a minute, hold it, hold the picture. Who is that? Who the hell are those people on the wall? What the hell is going on?

**INT. CENTRAL CONTROL**

FRANK

It's the police... the state police... they've been moving...

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

WARDEN

No! Nobody in the way. Nobody can...

*He twists around to face the GOVERNOR who just stares at him, hands in his pockets. The WARDEN lunges back to the monitor.*

CAMERON

*(rocking his fists)*

Yes!

WARDEN

Oh no, for God's sake.

**EXT. THE COURTYARD**

*JODY desperately tries to turn the men around.*

*There is a sudden explosion of shots, then another.*

*The three men are buffeted and shattered into a bloody heap on the ground.*

**EXT. THE FRONT GATE**

*The sudden sound of explosive gunfire causes one of the protesters to drop her placard. It falls into the barrel-fire next to her and burns.*

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

*The WARDEN drops the phone. It skitters across the top of the console.*

*His face is a mask, molded by long years of discipline and authority, betrayed only by the shudder of rage behind his eyes and the trembling in his hands.*

FIRST OFFICER

It's hard to see. Some of the lights got shot out. Mygod, look at them. They're all cut to pieces.

### **EXT. THE COURTYARD**

*Only a single shaft of light cuts across the yard in front of the battered men.*

*In the shadows, JODY is still alive.*

*Bleeding and in pain, he drags himself out from under the other two, crawls along the ground into the open doorway.*

### **INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

WARDEN

*(in a low, dull voice)*

You said it was all arranged.

GOVERNOR

It was, Joe, it was. Exactly 25 minutes ago we took emergency control of this facility. I'm sure you're familiar with the statute.

WARDEN

How could this have happened?

GOVERNOR

He tried to escape. He shot a hostage. We stopped him. It's what I said: a clean tight package. I'll discuss it with you later.

WARDEN

*(tight-jawed)*

You do that!

GOVERNOR

And don't worry about the media. I'll take care of them.

WARDEN

You do that!

GOVERNOR

I need the phone again.  
(to CAMERON)  
Come on.

*He and CAMERON exit.*

MICHELLE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

WARDEN

We killed him, you know. Phil, that good, old man. We all killed him.

**INT. THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE CONTROL ROOM.**

*MICHELLE catches up to the GOVERNOR and CAMERON.*

MICHELLE

Governor?

GOVERNOR

(to CAMERON)  
Go ahead.

*CAMERON continues backwards down the hall.*

GOVERNOR (CONT'D)

Make it quick, counselor, there's a lot to do.

MICHELLE

I'm sure there is.

*She steps in front of him, blocking his way.*

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Tell me... you never intended to let him out of here, did you? That was your deal!

GOVERNOR

I don't know what you're talking about.

MICHELLE

You finished the job, you executed him after all.

GOVERNOR

It was the sentence of the court.

MICHELLE

And the others?

GOVERNOR

Casualties in the war on crime. Sad, but true.  
More victims, Jody Thomas' victims

*She steps closer to him.*

MICHELLE

You know, when I was down there with Jody,  
he asked me to do something for him. If I  
believed in the deal, if I trusted it, and I did, he  
asked me to be his escort, his safe conduct out  
the gate. It scared the hell out of me.

GOVERNOR

Who wouldn't be scared!

MICHELLE

Tell me... if I had trusted it, your word... if I had  
gone out into that courtyard with Jody, what  
would have happened then? What would the  
package look like now, Governor? Would I be  
alive, talking to you? Or would I be a bloody  
mush like the Chaplain out there?

GOVERNOR

*(finger in her face)*

Don't push it!

*He steps around her and starts down the hall.*

MICHELLE

Don't walk away from me!

*(yelling)*

I'm a witness!

*He stops. She strides up to him.*

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I heard it, I saw it, and I know the truth. Do you  
know what the truth is, Governor?

*He stands with his back to her.*

GOVERNOR

No, counselor, tell me.

MICHELLE

Jody was right. In his own uneducated, twisted way, that boy, that killer saw right through you. He stood up to you face to face and challenged you to solve the riddle, the problem, to find a truth that he could never find. Instead, he proved that you were both alike, that you both had the same thing in common. And do you know what that is... Governor?

GOVERNOR

No, counselor, tell me.

MICHELLE

Impotence Governor, both of you... impotent!

*He pulls up the zipper of his jacket.*

**INT. THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE CONTROL ROOM**

*A long view down the hallway.*

*The SECOND OFFICER comes racing down the hall toward the control room.*

SECOND OFFICER

It's Thomas, he's alive!

GOVERNOR

What?

SECOND OFFICER

Somehow he didn't buy it. Somehow he crawled back into the passageway. He's headed back to the cellblock.

*He rushes into the control room.*

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

FIRST OFFICER

Can't see much down there.

WARDEN

Turn on the lights!

GOVERNOR

No. No light.

FIRST OFFICER

Huh??

GOVERNOR

I said. No light! Let it stay just the way it is!

*MICHELLE looks at the WARDEN. His face is a blank.*

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY appears at the door, pulls himself through, falls to his knees, begins to crawl along the floor.*

*As he reaches the area beneath the camera, his strength gives out. He folds over on to the floor, one hand around his ribs, his head on his knees, the gun in his other hand.*

*Silhouetted against the dim background, he remains motionless as if he were praying.*

*Shadowed figures appear at the door, others climb through the shattered witness window next to the Chamber.*

*They seem huge in the dim light, the weapons they carry glisten.*

VOICE (O.S.)

Thomas. Throw away the gun.

*JODY doesn't move.*

VOICE (O.S.)

You hear me? Thomas?

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

MICHELLE

Somebody has got to do something. Say something, talk to him.

VOICE (O.S.)

Thomas. Throw it away!

*She grabs the microphone. The FIRST OFFICER grabs her arm. The GOVERNOR waves him off.*

MICHELLE

Jody!

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

MICHELLE (O.S.)

*(her voice booming)*

Jody, don't move, don't do anything. I'm coming down. We're coming down to get you. You hear me? Don't move.

*(frantically)*

Dammit, why can't you turn on the lights? Jody, do you hear me?

*JODY slowly turns his head, lifts himself to look up at the camera.*

JODY

Hey, lady.

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

MICHELLE

Jody, don't do anything. There's still a chance...

JODY (O.S.)

I know. I'm still running... fast.

MICHELLE

That's not what I mean. Please, don't move. Don't make them...

JODY (O.S.)

It's all behind me, just a few more steps.

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

MICHELLE (O.S.)

Jody, do you hear me?

JODY

I hear you, lady. I told you it was a bad deal, I told you they just wanted to dope me up again, just like they're doping you.

*He begins to unfold himself.*

JODY (CONT'D)

I hear you, lady. Do you hear me? I'm gonna be free. I'm gonna be free!

**INT. THE CONTROL ROOM**

MICHELLE

*(screaming)*

No, Jody, no.

*She throws down the microphone, runs out the door.*

**INT. A STAIRWELL**

*MICHELLE races down the stairs, kicking off her shoes.*

**INT. THE CELLBLOCK**

*JODY slowly raises his body and begins to lift the gun.*

*The rustle and clicks of other guns are heard.*

*He thrusts his arm into the air and fires a shot.*

*A thunderous response of fire from both sides of the area levels him to the floor in a heap.*

*A layer of smoke drifts across the scene in time with the echoing explosion.*

*A cold silence settles over everything.*

*The shadowed figures move cautiously. One of them kicks the gun away. The others stand looking at JODY's body.*

*MICHELLE bursts through the open door and catches herself at the doorway. She stands, breathing heavily.*

**EXT. THE DEATH HOUSE COURTYARD - DAWN**

*The WARDEN is kneeling next to the body of the CHAPLAIN.*

*Noise and voices can be heard in the background.*

*He removes the cross from the dead man's neck.*

**EXT. THE FRONT GATE - DAWN**

*The sky is gray and dawn-lit. The GOVERNOR is holding a press conference off to one side. His voice is heard at a distance. CAMERON is with him. To the other side, a mob of protesters, yelling, throwing balloons full of powder in the air, held back by police,*

*The gate opens to allow a car to come out.*

*It's MICHELLE.*

*She slows as she passes the conference, then stops. Lowers her window.*

*CAMERON looks at her. The GOVERNOR does not. CAMERON gestures with a finger across his neck, and a thumbs-up.*

*MICHELLE shows him her middle finger, puts it to her lips and blows him a kiss.*

*She raises the window, drives off.*

*In the distance, the sun is beginning to rise.*

**FADE OUT.**

*THE END*