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FADE IN:

EXT. SOUTHERN CITY TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Parking meters stand guard over rows of white-striped parking spaces surrounding the empty square.

The SOUND of falling water.

At one end of the square is a large building with a sign in front that reads -

CITY ART MUSEUM

To one side of the sign is a recessed garden-like area with a FOUNTAIN composed of three marble characters.

One - a naked, hovering CUPID constantly urinating into a pool below. His bow and arrow is aimed at the two other characters -

A naked YOUNG COUPLE standing hand in hand, gazing into the pool.

The SOUND of smashing glass shatters the peaceful vignette.

LUKE KOOK, late forties, stumbles into the square. He is drunk.

He stares at the broken bottle with a foolish grin.

LUKE

Plenty more where you came from.

Luke withdraws another bottle of beer from one of his jacket pockets and tries to pry off the cap with a bottle opener that dangles on a chain around his neck.

Several drunken attempts fail.

An epiphany.

LUKE

Oh yeah.

He twists the cap off, gives a triumphant smile, and takes a swig.

He staggers across the square, and reaches the museum.

The row of parking meters in front of the museum have all been decapitated. Meter heads lie all around on the ground.

Luke trips on one, falls to the ground and smashes his second bottle of beer.

He sits up and looks at all the meter heads around him.

LUKE

Dang! Someone doesn't know how to act.

Luke's attention is suddenly caught by the fountain. Getting to his feet he becomes transfixed by the peeing Cupid.

The SOUND of falling water becomes amplified. Luke crosses his legs to suppress a sudden urge.

He begins to squirm. A kind of distorted dance. He leaps up onto the fountain next to Cupid and relieves himself.

Luke's face, inches away from Cupid's, grins with relief.

LUKE

Now I know why you are smiling.

Luke lowers his eyes. 32

LUKE

And it ain't 'cause size matters.

A beam of headlights and the flashing of red lights FLARE Luke's face. He squints into the lights.

A police patrol car pulls up in front of the fountain. Two silhouetted OFFICERS emerge from the vehicle.

A startled Luke almost loses his balance. He grabs at Cupid to steady himself.

A loud SNAP. Luke holds Cupid's tiny member in his hand.

The single stream of the fountain is now a multi-tentacled spray of water.

Luke studies the member a moment. He places it stealthily into his pocket.

COP

What the?
(to the other cop)
This makes the second kook tonight.

LUKE

That's cook. It's pronounced cook like the guy in the kitchen.

Luke gives his most winning Paul Newman smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Two transport TRUCKS are parked alongside the dusty road.

A chain gang of a dozen men work in a ditch along the side of the road, swinging scythes, cutting down weeds.

Some shirtless, two or three shackled at the ankles. The sun beats down and the men sweat profusely.

BOSS SAUL, and a very short BOSS TALL, two mean-looking guards both toting rifles, stand one at each end of the gang.

BOSS GOMER - stony, impassive, large mirrored sunglasses.

Dressed in black from his hat to his boots, he carries a walking stick and paces slowly up and down the line.

DRAG-QUEEN, a huge burly giant of a man, flagrantly effete, wears a colorful bandana around his neck.

Dusty and sweaty, he starts to pull off his shirt.

DRAG-QUEEN
Strippin' it down here, Boss!

BOSS SAUL
(hesitantly)
You ain't wearin' them funny
personals now, are you Drag?

DRAG-QUEEN
No sir, Boss Saul. Strictly butch.
Strictly butch, Boss.

BOSS SAUL
Okay then, Drag-Queen, strip it
down there.

Drag-Queen pulls off his shirt. Boss Saul takes out his pocket watch and checks the sun.

KINKY, a beady-eyed prisoner with a nasty twitch is sweating profusely.

KINKY
Drink it down here Boss?

BOSS SAUL
Yeah, drink it down there, Kinky.
Rambler!

RAMBLER, a weasly-looking guy with ankle chains looks up.

RAMBLER
Yes, Boss?

BOSS SAUL
Water 'em down, Rambler.

RAMBLER
Yes, Boss.

He drops his scythe, jumps out of the ditch, and shuffles towards the transport trucks.

As he passes Boss Saul he trips over his chains and falls flat on his face.

RAMBLER
Dang these chains!

The butt of Boss Saul's rifle cracks the back of his head.

BOSS SAUL
You gotta show more appreciatin',
Rambler. We give you them chains
a'cause you got rabbit in your
blood, and like to run.

Another crack on the head.

BOSS SAUL
More than once. So them chains is
an expression of our love for you,
Rambler.

RAMBLER
Yeah. Thanks for the reminder,
Boss.

BOSS SAUL
That's better. You gotta get your
mind right.

Boss Saul stomps Rambler in the small of the back with his boot and walks away.

Rambler gets up slowly and staggers towards the trucks.

Boss Gomer passes Boss Tall and gives him an expressionless nod. Boss Tall nods back. He shouts at the gang.

BOSS TALL
Okay, men, smoke it up!

Everyone stops working.

GANG
(in unison)
Yes, Boss!

The men drop to the ground where they stand. All of them light up.

Moments later all of them begin coughing and wheezing. A dissonant concerto.

Rambler carries the bucket along the gang ladling water to thirsty men.

An automobile heads down the road churning up clouds of dust in its wake.

As it nears, SOCIETY FRED, a prisoner with shirt tucked neatly inside his pants and hair blow-dried and sprayed to perfection, barely perspiring, and looking like he just stepped out of makeup, stands up.

Pretending to check the blade of his scythe he covertly checks out the occupants of the passing car who curiously look back at Society Fred.

Kinky also stands and checks it out.

BOSS SAUL
You eyeballin' there, Society Fred?

SOCIETY FRED
Checkin' my yo-yo, Boss. Just
checkin' my yo-yo.

KINKY (O.S.)
Me too, Boss. Me too.

Boss Saul sneers at Kinky who is "walking the dog" with a toy yo-yo.

Boss Tall waves his rifle along the line of men.

BOSS TALL
Swing them yo-yos, boys!

GANG
 (in unison)
 Yes, Boss!

The gang gets back to work. Kinky sidles up to Drag-Queen and indicates down the road with his head.

KINKY
 Drag! Drag! Looky, looky.
 Newmeat Bus!

A covered truck slows for safety as it passes the gang.

KINKY
 Looked pretty full. Must be six or
 more.

BETTOR, a scrawny prisoner, sneaks an appraising glance.

BETTOR
 Nah, five or less. For a cold
 drink.

KINKY
 You're on. Hey, Halfwit, we got a
 bet here.

HALFWIT, the idiot of the gang, makes the bet official by trying to pat his head while rubbing circles on his belly.

The coordination isn't there.

The Newmeat Bus passes Boss Gomer. He turns and watches it pull away down the road.

A distorted image of the receding truck fills the lenses of his mirrored sunglasses.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - DAY

The entire compound is enclosed by a tall chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. Guard towers at the corners.

The buildings inside include the prisoner barracks, a mess hall, kitchen and laundry room.

A small structure which looks like an outhouse sits ominously by itself. The BOX, used for solitary confinement.

Alongside the fence is a kennel-run housing numerous bloodhounds. They are being tended to by a grungy, toothless trustee named DOGBREATH.

Outside the fence is a grassy area with picnic tables.

A short distance away is a small wooden cottage which serves as the living quarters and office of CAPTAIN.

Captain is a small man who strongly resembles, and sounds exactly like Truman Capote.

He sits on the porch of the cottage in a rocking chair fanning himself with a large decorative fan.

He snaps the fan shut and stands to watch the Newmeat Bus arrive.

BOSS JACK, a mean-looking guard wearing a side firearm and carrying a walking stick, opens the gate and admits the Newmeat Truck.

A rifle-toting GUARD jumps out of the cab, opens up the back, and hustles Luke and three other convicts out.

The DRIVER gets out and hands Boss Jack a file folder. Captain heads from the cottage towards the new arrivals.

The bloodhounds become noisy and agitated.

BOSS JACK
You men get lined up for the
Captain, you hear?

The men line up. Luke followed by DUMAS, an oafish-looking man. JOHNSON, a man with a cocky attitude, is followed by HITCHCOCK, a frail, terminally depressed-looking man.

The dogs become even more noisy and agitated.

BOSS JACK
Shut them dogs up, Dogbreath! You
hear me?

DOGBREATH
They just happy t'smell the
Newmeats, Boss.

He pats the head of a frothy-mouthed bloodhound.

DOGBREATH
Ain't that so, Sarah?

And Dogbreath kisses the dog full on the mouth. The dog responds with sloppy licks.

The four new prisoners react with disgust. Dumas gags.

Captain joins the group. He takes the file folder from Boss Jack and opens it. Boss Jack paces behind the men.

CAPTAIN

Let me see, what do we have today?

Luke scrutinizes the Captain. He whispers out of the side of his mouth to Dumas.

LUKE

I thought Truman Capote was dead!

Boss Jack is behind Luke. He gives him a painful whack with his cane. Luke remains stoic.

BOSS JACK

(menacingly)

Pay attention when Captain is speaking. And don't make no noise unless you want another reminder.

Boss Jack walks away and Luke mouths "Owwwww!".

Captain resumes reading the files.

CAPTAIN

Dumas. (He pronounces it dumb ass.) Assault on an officer. Two years. Dumb ass? What kinda name is that?

DUMAS

You're pronouncin' it wrong. It's Dumas (Doo-mus). It's French.

Boss Jack is directly behind Dumas. He leans in close to Dumas' ear and speaks threateningly.

BOSS JACK

You call the Captain, Captain. You hear, dumb ass?

Dumas nervously nods his assent.

CAPTAIN

Well, I can only imagine the road name Drag is gonna give you.

Luke is still studying the Captain. Intrigued.

CAPTAIN

Johnson. Breakin' and enterin'. Five years.

JOHNSON
(flippant)
I lost my key.

Boss Jack gives Johnson a whack.

BOSS JACK
You deaf, or just stupid? Call the
Captain, Captain.

JOHNSON
(contrite)
Yes, sir.

BOSS JACK
And you call the rest of us Boss.

JOHNSON
Yes, Boss.

CAPTAIN
(to Boss Jack)
Mr. Johnson looks to be a fast
learner, Mr. Cunnihut.

Boss Jack gives a smile of satisfaction. Captain goes back
to the files.

CAPTAIN
Hitchcock. Says here you killed a
man. In cold blood.

Captain looks up from the file and squints at Hitchcock.
Hitchcock remains expressionless.

Luke's eyes bulge. He mouths: "In Cold Blood".

CAPTAIN
Hitchcock, I'm gonna be watching
you real close, boy.

Captain glances down at the file and back up at Luke.

CAPTAIN
Luke Kook.

LUKE
That's pronounced cook, Capote. I
mean Captain.

Captain gives Luke a suspicious look. Then back to the file.

CAPTAIN

It ain't spelled that way.

LUKE

I know, Captain, but my daddy wrote my name down wrong at the county, and I got stuck with the wrong spelling. He was kind of dyslexic. He was kind of - - well, he was stupid.

CAPTAIN

Says here you were under the influence and maliciously destroyin' public property. What was that?

LUKE

I snapped off Cupid's pee-pee, Captain.

All the men wince.

CAPTAIN

Cupid's pee-pee?

LUKE

Yeah, his penis. You see Captain, I was peeing in the fountain when the officers showed up, and - -

CAPTAIN

That's quite enough, Mr. Kook - -

LUKE

Cook.

Boss Jack comes up behind Luke.

LUKE

Captain.
(to Boss Jack)
Sorry, Boss.

Boss Jack glares over Luke's shoulder with pure hatred. Luke avoids eye contact.

CAPTAIN

Well you got yourself two years. More if you don't get your mind right and obey the rules. Look at me!

Luke fixes his eyes on Captain.

CAPTAIN

How you men get treated here is up
to you. I can be a good guy. Or I
can be - -

The Captain indicates that he wants Luke to finish the sentence. Luke answers hesitantly.

LUKE

(effete)
A real bitch?

A whack from Boss Jack's walking stick.

BLACK SCREEN

LUKE (O.S.)

(under his breath)
Ooowwww!

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Bare, unpainted wood. Barred windows, bare light bulbs hang from the ceiling.

At one end is the single entrance where those entering pass a small area enclosed by a woven metal strap cage.

Inside this area is CAGE MAN, seen only as a shadowy individual.

Near the entrance is a long table with benches on either side. At one end of the table, up against the wall, is a long wash basin lined with faucets.

At the far end of the barracks are the washroom, showers, and toilets.

Double-tiered bunks line both sides the length of the barracks.

The Newmeats are changing into camp clothing. TRUCK, a huge cigar-chomping man, paces as he indoctrinates the men.

He speaks rapidly, barely pausing even to breathe, and the more he speaks the more confused-looking the men become.

TRUCK

Listen up 'cause all of this is
important.

(MORE)

TRUCK(cont'd)

Your clothes got a laundry number on them. Remember that number so you always wear the same clothes. Any man forgets his number spends a night in The Box.

(passing our spoons)

You get one spoon. Don't lose it. You don't get no knives or forks 'cause you're a bunch of morons. If you lose your spoon you spend a night in The Box. You get fed well here, and you're expected to eat what's given you. Any man don't finish what's on his plate spends a night in The Box. At five minutes of eight you hear a bell. That bell means get your butt in your bunk. Any man whose butt ain't in his bunk at eight when the second bell goes spends a night in The Box. There's no smoking lying on your bunk. To smoke you gotta be sitting up. Any man caught smoking while he's lying down spends a night in The Box. You morons with me so far? You get all that?

LUKE

I missed some.

Truck looks cheesed off.

TRUCK

Which part did you miss?

LUKE

(a la Maxwell Smart)

Everything after "Listen up 'cause all of this is important."

Truck takes a moment. He sizes up Luke. He continues.

TRUCK

No sitting on the bunks in dirty pants. Any man sitting on the bunks in dirty pants spends a night in The Box. Any man don't bring back his empty pop bottle spends a night in The Box. You get two sheets. Once a week you get one clean sheet. You put the clean sheet on top and the old top sheet on the bottom and the old bottom sheet you turn in to the laundry.

(MORE)

TRUCK(cont'd)

Any man turns in the wrong sheet
spends a night in The Box.

During the sheet explanation Luke mimes changing the sheets
as he mentally tries to keep up with the sheet order.

Truck eyes Luke with a sneer.

O.S. SOUND of trucks arriving.

TRUCK

There ain't no playing grab-ass or
fighting. If you got a beef with
any man you can fight him with the
gloves on Saturday afternoon
outside. Otherwise, any man
fighting or playing grab-ass spends
a night in The Box.

O.S. SOUND of men counting off.

TRUCK

I'm Truck. That's Truck with a T R
in front. I'm the floorwalker and
it's my job to make sure there's
always order in here. Any man that
don't keep order - - does what?

Truck stares at Luke for the answer.

LUKE

(hesitantly)

Has to change everyone else's
sheets?

Truck squints at Luke. The look says: "Is this guy a smart
ass or just dumb?"

The door bursts open and the road gang rushes in. It's chaos
as they use the urinals and sinks and charge back outside.

Bettor nudges Kinky as they pass the Newmeats.

BETTOR

Four. That'll cost you a cold one.

Kinky begins twitching wildly. Drag-Queen pushes Kinky out
of his way with a flare as he passes.

DRAG-QUEEN

Outta my way, Kinky. My belly is
cryin' for them beans.

(MORE)

DRAG-QUEEN(cont'd)

And I wanna get in line before
Mouthful scarfs them all up. He's
such a selfish bitch!

Truck gives a wan smile as the Newmeats watch bewildered.
The last of the gang exit.

TRUCK

That big guy is Drag-Queen. Sort
of a leader among men. And if you
Newmeats stand gawking like that,
you'll miss out on them beans.

The four men charge out of the barracks.

INT. MESS HALL - DAY

The room is full of men sitting either side of crude picnic-
type tables eating furiously.

Luke, Dumas, Johnson and Hitchcock enter and get in line.

Dogbreath stands behind the chow table with COOK, a paunchy
sad-faced guy.

MOUThFUL, a scrawny-looking guy, gets up from the table and
cuts to the front of the line.

Dogbreath heaps more beans onto Mouthful's plate.

DOGBREATH

There you go, Mouthful. That ought
to hold you. For about three
minutes.

Cook throws a piece of bread onto Mouthful's plate and
Mouthful heads back to the table.

Luke picks up a metal plate and stands in front of Dogbreath
who slops a ladle of beans onto it.

Dogbreath takes an instant dislike to Luke. He leans across
the chow table right in Luke's face. He sneers.

DOGBREATH

Did I give you enough food,
Newmeat?

Dogbreath's exhalation hits Luke.

LUKE

No. But that's okay 'cause I just
lost my appetite.

Luke takes his plate to the nearest empty spot, sits and begins shoveling down the beans.

Next to Luke, Drag-Queen gets up and heads back to the chow line.

Dumas, carrying his plate of bread and beans takes Drag's spot and begins eating. All eyes turn to Dumas.

Kinky, sitting opposite Dumas, gleefully smiles and twitches.

Drag-Queen returns. Without missing a beat he slides Dumas' plate from the table to his lap.

He pulls Dumas off the bench onto the floor. Beans everywhere.

DRAG-QUEEN

Oopsey-daisey! Didn't anyone teach you it's bad manners to take another man's spot?

Drag-Queen sits and continues eating.

DUMAS

I didn't know.

DRAG-QUEEN

Well I guess you're just a dumb ass.

KINKY

(to Dumas)

Guess Drag-Queen just gave you your new road name. Dumb Ass!

Dumas tries salvaging as many beans as he can. Kinky laughs and twitches.

KINKY

Right Drag?

Luke, more interested in his beans, speaks without looking up.

LUKE

Dumb Ass is his real name. That's what I heard Captain call him. So Fag-Queen didn't give him no new road name.

Instantly Drag-Queen stands. He glares down at Luke. Kinky begins twitching more excitedly.

DRAG-QUEEN
What did you call me?

KINKY
He insulted you Drag. He wants --

DRAG-QUEEN
Shut up Kinky!
(to Luke)
I said what did you call me?

Luke puts down his spoon and stands slowly to face Drag-Queen. Drag-Queen towers over him.

LUKE
I just called you what Twitchy here did.

Kinky jumps to his feet.

KINKY
My road name's Kinky, not Twitchy.
And Drag's name is not - -

DRAG-QUEEN
(to Kinky)
All right, All right!
(to Luke)
Seems like you got problems with your ears, New Meat. I may just have to box them ears this Saturday. What do you say to that?

LUKE
I just love your flare.

Drag-Queen's body language reads kill, but Boss Jack has just entered and stands by the door shaking his head. A warning.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Truck sits by the entrance reading a racing form and chomping on a stogie.

The hour of free time before lights out. Men are engaged in various activities.

A couple of men are on their bunks reading. Someone else is cleaning his fingernails. Others just talking.

Society Fred is by his bunk combing his hair. A small mirror sits on the bed.

He picks up a hair spray can and secures his do.

Drag-Queen stands by the cage talking to the Cage Man.

Bettor sits at the table shuffling a deck of cards. Kinky is at the table stacking pocket change.

Luke sits at the far end of the table away from the guys about to play cards. He looks through an old magazine.

Dumas/Dumb Ass sits opposite Luke. He examines the stains on his new prison-issue uniform.

Drag-Queen joins the card guys at the table. He casts an ugly look at Luke then turns his attention to Dumb Ass.

DRAG-QUEEN

Hey, Dumb Ass, does everything you eat look that good on you?

The men laugh. Luke ignores the joke.

DRAG-QUEEN

Next time I won't be so nice. You're gonna have to shape up. All you Newmeats are. This is the Ox Gang and we got rules so you all had better be watching and not flappin' your mouths.

Drag-Queen looks at Luke. Luke never looks up from his magazine. He smiles broadly a la Paul Newman.

DRAG-QUEEN

(to Luke)

Something' funny?

LUKE

Just amused by all the information I'm getting here, Boss. Rules, rules, and more rules.

DRAG-QUEEN

And what do we got here?

LUKE

A Luke Kook (Cook).

Society Fred walks up behind Luke.

SOCIETY FRED

Drag gives out the names here.
You'll get yours when he figures
you out.

LUKE

(a la Dirty Harry)

Well I guess your name must be
Pretty Boy. Or is it Hair Spray?

Society Fred sits down with the men at the card table.

DUMAS/DUMB ASS

And his real name ain't Cook,
'cause I heard the Captain call him
Kook!

Luke shoots Dumb Ass a look.

DUMB ASS

Can give, but can't take, huh?

DRAG-QUEEN

Kook, huh. Well, I guess we just
gotta figure out what kind of a
Kook you are.

Luke - another Paul Newman grin.

BETTOR

Let's play.

Society Fred takes his seat as Bettor deals the cards.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

Bettor, Drag-Queen, Kinky, and Society Fred still play cards.

Luke lies on his upper bunk reading a magazine. Above his
head hangs a bare, fly-speckled light bulb.

Halfwit is on his bunk reading in a large tattered Bible.

Mouthful, sits on his bunk. He pulls a hunk of bread from
his shirt pocket and begins eating it.

Johnson rolls a cigarette, and a glum Hitchcock sits at the
end of his bed writing a letter.

Inside the Cage, Cage Man takes a tire iron and beats a tire
rim causing a loud CLANGING.

TRUCK
First bell!

The card game breaks up. Men head for their bunks.

Luke studies the light bulb over his head. A dead fly drops and lands directly onto his lips.

Luke instantly spits it off as Drag-Queen passes his bunk.

The insect lands directly in the center of Drag-Queen's forehead.

Drag-Queen stops. He looks up to his forehead cross-eyed, then turns his gaze to rest on Luke.

Luke gives an innocent shrug.

Drag-Queen moves on.

LUKE
(under his breath)
No flies on you, Fag-Queen.

A second LOUD CLANG.

TRUCK
Last bell!

Everyone is in their bunk. The lights go dim.

Quiet.

Truck walks up and down the barracks, lips moving as he silently counts the men. He reaches the Cage.

TRUCK
Fifty, Boss.

CAGE MAN
Fifty. Okay, Truck.

Truck sits at the table and commences a game of solitaire.

Halfwit in a tortured kneeling position in his lower bunk is silently and frantically mumbling an incoherent prayer..

He freezes. His eyes open wide. He FARTS loudly.

A wet-sounding fart.

HALFWIT
Getting up here, Boss.

TRUCK

If that was you, Halfwit, I guess
you'd better.

Halfwit gets up and pads towards the toilets.

A moment later Luke's face breaks into an anguished look.
And he FARTS.

Kinky opens his eyes, starts twitching furiously and FARTS.
More random FARTS follow. A farty cacophony.

Truck looks up suspiciously and starts down the row between
the bunks. A few steps and he cowers and stumbles backwards.

TRUCK

Holy Crap! What'd they put in them
beans?

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

A peaceful night. Crickets chirping, frogs croaking -
interrupted only by a discordant symphony of FARTS.

TRUCK (O.S.)

This is gonna piss off Mel Brooks
for sure.

The symphony subsides into silence, leaving only the sounds
of nature.

The moon overhead rapidly arcs across the sky, and the faint
glow of dawn appears in the east.

A loud CLANGING.

TRUCK (O.S.)

First bell! First bell. Let's go!
Get them eats or you'll work
hungry.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Men hustle out of bed. Truck paces between the bunks kicking
bunks and punching the feet of slow-movers.

Luke sleeps on soundly. Truck kicks the bunk. No response.

Truck moves to the side of the bed and shakes it violently.
Luke remains silent and still.

Truck looks concerned.

He moves in close to Luke's face. Luke sleepily opens his eyes and kisses Truck on the cheek.

LUKE

Awh, come on, just another five minutes.

Truck recoils.

TRUCK

What the - -

Truck looks around.

Men pretend they saw nothing.

TRUCK

Get your butt out of bed!

Truck pulls Luke out of bed by the hair.

TRUCK

One word. Just one word, and you'll spend the next year in The Box!

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

Not yet full day light. Men pile out of the barracks, grab their spoons from the lockers and line up by the mess hall.

Leaning on his cane, an impassive Boss Gomer watches them from behind his dark glasses.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - DAY

The sun has risen higher, and light creeps over the compound.

Canvas-covered pick up trucks pull up outside the gate. Men file out of the mess hall and line up by the gate.

Boss Jack comes over and opens the gate and the men pile into the waiting trucks under the watchful eye of Boss Gomer.

Captain sits in the rocking chair on his porch watching the men. He snaps his fan open and begins to fan himself.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Johnson sits at the back end of the truck.

The last man in is Drag-Queen. He stands threateningly, hands on his hips, in front of Johnson.

DRAG-QUEEN

Okay, Newmeat, that's my eyeballin' seat!

Johnson slowly and reluctantly starts to get up.

JOHNSON

(under his breath)

I didn't see the "ladies only" sign.

Drag-Queen shoves Johnson out of his way and sits. The truck lurches forward and Johnson falls. He scrambles up and sits next to Dumb Ass.

DRAG-QUEEN

Oh, so now we got a smart ass on the crew.

Drag-Queen leans forward and grabs a piece of beef jerky that Hitchcok has just pulled from his pocket.

Drag-Queen daintily pulls the meat apart and begins eating.

SOCIETY FRED

(to Johnson)

Guess you just earned your new road name. Smart Ass.

JOHNSON/SMART ASS

Yeah! I been called worse.

Luke looks philosophically from Dumb Ass to Smart Ass.

LUKE

Yup! Smart or dumb, a couple of donkeys.

KINKY

Man, it's gonna be one hot momma today! Someone's gonna get bear caught today.

DUMB ASS

Bear caught?

SOCIETY FRED

Yeah. It's the heat. Total dehydration. The brain shrivels up like a dried pea.

DRAG-QUEEN

(to Dumb Ass)

'Course, in your case that ain't much shrivelling.

Kinky dutifully laughs. Dumb Ass and Smart Ass look worried. Hitchcock remains sullen, and Luke looks stoic.

BETTOR

Man gets seizures. Very unpleasant. Hey, Smart Ass, bet you don't last two hours.

Halfwit stands up and tries his head pat and tummy rub. Smart Ass looks concerned, but doesn't answer Bettor.

DRAG-QUEEN

Sit down, Halfwit. Don't look like Smart Ass is gonna take the bet.

KINKY

I'm sure glad I won't be in the ditch with the rest of you guys. I gotta cush job up top with the broom.

Kinky winks (or is it twitches?) at Drag-Queen.

DRAG-QUEEN

Maybe you should let one of these Newmeats have your cush job on their first day, Kinky. Break 'em in easy-like. Maybe Kook there. He looks kinda fragile.

Luke gives his best method-acting-macho-introspective-Paul Newman smile.

SMART ASS

I'll take it. I never did get used to hard work. I got fifty cents.

KINKY

Fifty cents? My cush job is worth at least a buck.

HITCHCOCK

I got a buck.

Hitchcock holds out a dollar. Kinky snatches it.

Drag-Queen eyes Hitchcock.

DRAG-QUEEN

I figured you for a tough guy. I thought you was in for killin' a man.

HITCHCOCK

I killed a man.

LUKE

In cold blood.

DRAG-QUEEN

How d'ya kill him? Gun? Knife? Satin pillow?

Drag-Queen puts the last of Hitchcock's jerky into his mouth.

HITCHCOCK

Poison.

Drag-Queen spits the jerky out. It hits Kinky in the eye.

LUKE

Oops. Looks like we just found out Hitchcock's new road name - -

Luke leans forward and looks at Drag-Queen.

LUKE

Poison!!!

Drag-Queen suppresses a gag.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The trucks pull up and the men pour out and line up by the tool truck. As the men take their scythes Hitchcock/Poison approaches Boss Saul.

HITCHCOCK/POISON

Boss I made arrangements with that man to take his broom.

BOSS SAUL

Git your yo-yo and get to work.

POISON

But you don't understand, boss We -

Boss Saul shoves him away.

BOSS SAUL
Don't back sass! Git movin', I
said.

Boss Saul points his rifle at Poison. Poison moves to the truck to get his scythe.

Kinky grins and twitches with delight. He gives a series of short rhythmic grunts. A twisted chuckle.

Luke looks askance at Kinky.

LUKE
You are one scary dude, man!

Boss Gomer looks to the east. The sun is low in the sky.

He turns and faces the gang as they get to work. Their distorted image fills his mirrored sunglasses.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

The sun is higher in the sky.

Luke flails away with his scythe, accomplishing little.

SOCIETY FRED
You're doing it all wrong, Kook.
Look at Drag.

Drag-Queen effortlessly swings his scythe with panache.

LUKE
Maybe if I was wearing ballerina
shoes and a tutu.

Luke continues flailing away.

Bettor, sweating profusely, stops working.

BETTOR
Drink it down here, Boss?

BOSS TALL
Yeah. Water 'em down, Rambler.

Rambler fetches the water pale. He trips as he passes Boss Tall and scores a sadistic, painful caning.

RAMBLER

Thanks, Boss.

Rambler gets to his feet and starts watering the men.

A pale, sweating Smart Ass goes limp and drops his scythe.

He starts to fall. Rambler drops his bucket and grabs him.

DRAG-QUEEN

Looks like Newmeat Smart Ass is
bear caught, Boss.

BOSS TALL

Halfwit. Bettor. Take care o'him.

Halfwit and Bettor drop their tools and help heave Smart-Ass
to the truck. Boss Saul locks him in.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

A chow table is set up by the trucks.

Boss Gomer looks up. The sun is directly overhead in a
cloudless sky. He gives Boss Saul a nod.

BOSS SAUL

All right, let's get them beans.

The gang breaks and heads for the chow line at the truck.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

The gang is spread alongside the road finishing their beans.

Luke lies flat on his back with his plate on his belly, and
eyes closed. He looks beat.

Drag-Queen pick up a rock and tosses it at Luke. He scores a
hit and Luke sits up and opens his eyes.

DRAG-QUEEN

You gotta stop messin' around and
kill them weeds, boy.

LUKE
 Oh, is that a fact? And all this
 time I thought I was supposed to be
 cultivating them, sweetheart.

Luke lays back down and closes his eyes. Drag-Queen looks
 angered.

DRAG-QUEEN
 (to Bettor)
 A cold one he don't make it.

Bettor nods.

BETTOR
 Hey, Halfwit, we got a bet here!

Halfwit botches another try with the head pat and tummy rub.

DRAG-QUEEN
 (to Luke)
 You hear that? You ain't gonna
 make it. What d'ya say to that,
 huh?

Luke lies motionless. Eyes still closed.

The SOUND of a very loud fart.

LUKE
 (French accent)
 Pardonne-moi.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

The gang is back at work. Luke looks exhausted but keeps
 going. Drag-Queen keeps up his easy rhythmic swishing.

Society Fred still looks fresh. He does not perspire. He
 looks powdered down, and his blow-dried locks maintain a hair-
 sprayed-to-perfection look.

The SOUND of a loud wet fart straightens Society Fred up.

LUKE
 Oops!

SOCIETY FRED
 Caught short here, Boss.

BOSS SAUL
 Okay, Society, take it behind that bush. Just be sure to shake it once in a while so's I know you're still there.

Luke takes note as Society Fred gratefully trots off. He catches whiff of what Society leaves behind.

LUKE
 (to himself)
 If the wind is blowin' in this direction, we won't need him to shake that bush.

A cane comes down across Luke's back.

BOSS SAUL
 Zip y'mouth and git back to work.

Luke stands tough at attention. He addresses Boss Saul as if he was his Drill Sergeant.

LUKE
 Yes, Boss!

Boss Saul walks away. Luke mouths, "owwww!".

Drag-Queen stops his swishing and arm-wipes his brow.

DRAG-QUEEN
 Strippin' it off here Boss.

BOSS SAUL
 Yeah, go ahead, Drag.

Drag-Queen unbuttons his shirt. A peak of a pink, lacy undergarment.

BOSS SAUL
 Awh, leave that shirt on, Drag!

DRAG-QUEEN
 But I forgot, and I'm all hot and sweaty.

BOSS SAUL
 Leave it on!

Drag-Queen reluctantly goes back to work.

Luke watches Drag-Queen and begins a golf-style running commentary under his breath.

LUKE

And here we have the queen of drag demonstrating the ease of movement one can have in our new line of camisoles for fruity felons.

A cane comes down across Luke's back nearly sending him to the ground.

BOSS SAUL

What've you been told about that mouth? Keep that yo-yo moving.

Luke stands tough again.

LUKE

Yes, Boss!

Boss Saul moves on and Luke silently mouths, "owwww!"

The SOUND of a crow cawing gets everyone's attention. Boss Gomer looks up. He signals with his cane.

Rambler immediately drops his scythe and runs to the truck. He returns with a rifle and gives it to Boss Gomer.

Boss Gomer exchanges his cane for the rifle. He pulls a bolt from his belt and a bullet from his pocket, assembles and loads the gun.

Everyone stops working.

DUMB ASS

Who is that?

BETTOR

That's Boss Gomer, the walking boss.

LUKE

Ya think ol' Gomer's got piles? Look at that puss. The man never smiles.

BETTOR

The man with no eyes. That's what Drag calls him.

DUMB ASS

'Cause he never takes his shades off?

Boss Gomer raises the rifle as the crow flies overhead. It is less than ten feet from the end of the barrel. He fires.

The connector on a nearby power pole shatters. Power lines fall, sparking dangerously. Men dive out of the way.

The crow flies in a circle overhead and begins to swoop down again. Boss Gomer reloads.

He follows the crow, waving the barrel wildly around. Men dive for cover. Boss Tall and Boss Saul cower into a crouching position.

LUKE
(to Dumb Ass)
Does that answer your question?

Boss Gomer fires. The windshield on one of the trucks shatters.

The bird circles one more time. Boss Gomer reloads one more time.

LUKE
Yep. There's your answer.

Boss Gomer fires. The crow flies off, CAWING loudly. The cawing sounds suspiciously like mocking laughter.

Boss Gomer withdraws the bolt and throws the rifle into Rambler's hands. He takes back his cane.

Everyone looks relieved.

RAMBLER
Close, Boss. Better luck next time.

Boss Saul moves in and whacks Rambler with the cane.

RAMBLER
Thanks, Boss. I needed that.

Rambler scurries back to the truck with the rifle.

BOSS SAUL
All right, git back to work.

The men resume their work, and Boss Gomer resumes his walking.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

Luke looks ready to quit. Drag-Queen and Kinky watch him hopefully.

Boss Tall looks to the horizon where the sun is about to touch the earth. He looks to Boss Gomer who nods.

BOSS SAUL
All right, back in the trucks.

Luke looks relieved. Bettor smiles.

INT. TRUCK - DAY (DUSK)

Smart Ass sits up as the men pile in. Luke is last.

He grabs the side rails ready to haul himself up. He grins at Drag-Queen and indicates Bettor with a turn of his head.

LUKE
Guess you owe that fella a cold
drink.

As Luke pulls on the side rails, Boss Saul comes up behind and lends Luke some help up with a kick in the pants.

Luke is propelled up and in, and falls on top of Smart Ass. They are face to face.

LUKE
(Rhett Butler)
Frankly, my dear, I don't give a
damn.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - NIGHT

The trucks are parked outside.

As the men are counted in through the gate, their pockets are turned out, and they are frisked by Boss Tall.

Boss Jack watches the men line up in front of the mess hall.

Captain sits on his porch reading a Redbook magazine, sipping a mint julep, fanning himself and ignoring everything.

Luke is the last man through the gate. The frisking tickles him. He squirms and giggles.

A walking stick comes down heavy on Luke's back. Luke is knocked to the ground.

Boss Jack is in his face when he gets up.

BOSS JACK
What are ya? A pansy?

LUKE
(marine shout)
Yes sir! No sir! Boss!

BOSS JACK
Get in line.

As Luke moves to the line he mouths "owwww!"

BOSS JACK
Hitchcock, step out.

Looking leery, Poison steps forward.

BOSS JACK
Boss Saul says you weren't happy
with your job. Whined a lot like a
pansy. Guess you need a little
time to think it over.

Boss Jack nods.

Boss Saul shoves a worried-looking Poison out of line. He leads him off to The Box.

The rest of the gang watches in silence as Poison is made to strip off. There is a quick flash of bare buttocks.

SMART ASS
(under his breath)
Could have gone my whole hitch
without seein' that.

Boss Saul takes a night shirt from The Box and tosses it to Poison. He puts it on.

Boss Saul places a canteen and a bucket inside and Poison steps into the box.

Poison looks fearfully back out as Boss Saul slams the door shut and locks it with a wooden plank.

The gang looks on sympathetically.

The doors of the mess hall open. The men file in.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Loud CLANGING from the cage.

TRUCK

First bell! All right, let's hit them bunks.

The men pile into their bunks. Truck begins counting them down. Drag-Queen grins as Luke wearily heaves himself up into his bunk.

DRAG-QUEEN

Looks like our cocky Newmeat wasn't prepared for what he had to do today.

Luke gives his Paul Newman smile.

LUKE

Yeah, that's right. Guess I wasn't wearing my pink camisole.

Drag-Queen loses his smile.

KINKY

Man, I never thought they'd put Poison in the box on his first night. He should've figured out that that broom job was just a joke.

SOCIETY FRED

That's okay, you did him a favor, Kinky. He's gotta learn the rules just like everyone else.

DRAG-QUEEN

That's right. Kinky just expediated the process.

(to Luke)

Don't you agree, Newmeat?

LUKE

I don't know, Drag. But whoever taught you English ought to spend a night in The Box.

DRAG-QUEEN

Just keep it up Newmeat, you son - -

The CLANGING tire iron drowns Drag-Queen's words.

TRUCK

Last bell!

All the noise stops.

TRUCK

Forty-nine, and one in The Box,
Boss!

CAGE MAN

Forty-nine and one in The Box.
Okay, Truck.

Luke rolls over onto his side and smiles.

LUKE

(under his breath)

Guess I'd better be careful. Else
ol' Queen's gonna slap me with his
purse.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Dawn breaks. A slither of light appears on the horizon.
Prison trucks wind their way to a new location.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The bosses stand guard as the gang shovels and clears out
drainage ditches along each side of the road.

They reach an old farmhouse. An old automobile is parked on
a gravel area of a scrubby front yard.

A shapely COUNTRY GIRL comes out of the house with a bucket
of soapy water. A large sponge floats on top.

She is dressed in a flimsy sun dress. It rides high on her
thighs, and is cut low over her ample breasts.

Her long blonde tresses fall loosely passed her shoulders and
forward concealing her face.

She drops the bucket down by the car and picks up a hose.
She caresses it, turns on the water, and wets down the car.

The sun dress is soaked and clings to her body.

Every move is purposely provocative and erotic as she squirms
around the car with the soapy sponge.

The gang is going crazy as they try to work and watch. Their shoveling becomes completely disorganized.

KINKY
Would you look at that! Would you
look at that!

Kinky's twitching becomes frantic.

BETTOR
She's killin' me, she's killin' me!

SOCIETY FRED
Oh, baby, baby, baby, baby!

KINKY
Would you look at that!

BETTOR
She's killin' me!

SOCIETY FRED
Oh baby, baby, baby!

LUKE
Your turn, Drag, what do you say?

Drag-Queen is in a semi-trance as he watches.

DRAG-QUEEN
I say that material is to die for.
Look how cute that little dress is.
It looks great on her but - -

He snaps out of the trance. The gang stares blankly back at Drag-Queen.

DRAG-QUEEN
It's none of your dang business
what I think!

KINKY
Oh, looky, looky, looky!

The girl slides up and down with her back against the car. Her hair falls forward keeping her face concealed.

BETTOR
She's killin' me. She's killin'
me!

LUKE
Rub, rub, rub.

HALFWIT

Three men is a tub!

KINKY

Shut up, Halfwit. Looky, looky, looky! Lord whatever I done, don't strike me blind right now.

LUKE

No need. If what my preacher told me is true you'll be blind before the end of the week.

DRAG-QUEEN

(to himself)

Just love that print.

SMART ASS

(to Drag-Queen)

Man, look at that cleavage. Just one tiny safety pin holding that thing together.

DRAG-QUEEN

Yeah, a nice brooch would have been more tasteful.

SMART ASS

Come on safety pin, pop, pop, pop.

HALFWIT

Pop goes the weasel.

BETTOR

Oh man, she don't know what she's doing.

LUKE

She knows exactly what she's doing.

The girl shakes her hair free, and a face that resembles the late Jim Varny in a wig appears.

A big smile reveals several missing teeth.

LUKE

Scarin' the livin' kapok out of us!

The men's faces are frozen in horror.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Every man is on his bunk silent and sullen. The Cage Man CLANGS the tire iron.

Truck looks down the rows of bunks mystified and leery.

TRUCK
(half heartedly)
All right. First bell.

The prisoners look disturbed, disquieted, discomposed.

TRUCK (O.S.)
Fifty, Boss.

CAGE MAN (O.S.)
Fifty. Right, Truck.

SOCIETY FRED
Man, it's so hot!

LUKE
Yeah, too bad she was such a
woofer.

HALFWIT
Rub, rub, rub, rub.

LUKE
Am I glad I ain't sleeping
underneath Halfwit.

KINKY
If I could only get that face outta
my mind.

HALFWIT (O.S.)
Rub, rub, rub, rub.

Drag-Queen pulls out a flower print nightie from under his pillow and holds it up and inspects it.

DRAG-QUEEN
I'm thinking I could give her some
competition.

LUKE
Oh, boy!

Drag-Queen looks angrily up at Luke.

DRAG-QUEEN

All right, Newmeat, you and me is gonna raise some dirt.

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

The barracks in silhouette.

HALFWIT (O.S.)

Rub, rub, rub, rub.

The RHYTHMIC SQUEAKING of bed springs begins.

TRUCK (O.S.)

All right, wherever that's comin' from it better stop right now!

BLACK SCREEN

The RHYTHMIC SQUEAKING slowly fades to silence.

The SOUND of a boxing glove smashing into flesh.

LUKE (O.S.)

Oh, oh! Oh, oh!

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - DAY

A BOXING GLOVE smashes into Drag-Queen's face. He falls into the dust.

Drag-Queen and Luke are stripped to the waist and wearing large boxing gloves.

They are surrounded by a mob of prisoners forming a makeshift ring.

Captain sits on his porch fanning himself as he watches. Boss Gomer and the other Bosses also watch the action.

Drag-Queen looks up at Luke with an angry puzzled look.

DRAG-QUEEN

Your supposed to wait until the bell to begin the fight.

HALFWIT

(the bell)

Ding, ding, ding, ding!

Luke begins dancing around Drag-Queen throwing air-punches.

Drag-Queen slowly gets to his feet.

LUKE
Dance like a butterfly, sting like
a bee. Dance like a butterfly,
sting like a - -

An almighty punch pounds Luke in the face and into the dust.
Luke sits up. He is dazed. Onlookers scream for blood.

LUKE
(sing-song)
Okay, that's it. I'm done.

Two men rush in and hoist Luke to his feet. Drag-Queen comes
at him.

LUKE
Whoah, there big boy, give me a
second to - -

He is back in the dust. His nose is bleeding. He wipes it
with his glove and examines it.

LUKE
Medic!
(referee)
Stop the fight! Stop the fight!

Again Luke is hoisted up. Drag-Queen comes towards him.

Luke's legs are rubber. He is all over the place. He
bounces off the men around the perimeter.

Drag-Queen takes several swings. Each time Luke wobbles out
of the way.

DRAG-QUEEN
Keep still, why don't you?

LUKE
I'm trying. I'm trying.

Luke wobbles into Kinky who shoves him straight at Drag-
Queen. A punishing right hand sends Luke back into the dust.

Luke smiles serenely in his semi-conscious stupor.

LUKE
Oh baby, I like it when you're
gentle with me like this.

DRAG-QUEEN

Get him up!

Kinky and Bettor hoist Luke back up and propel him back towards a waiting Drag-Queen.

KINKY

I think you got him this time,
champ. Give it to him good!

Luke's knees buckle. He drops into a crouching position and Drag-Queen's punch sails way over Luke's head.

Kinky steps in and boots Luke in the rear. Luke springs back up and bangs his head under and into Drag-Queen's jaw.

A loud CRUNCH. Drag-Queen's eyes cross. He hits the dirt.

Silence! All eyes are riveted on Drag-Queen.

Drag-Queen doesn't move. Halfwit runs into the ring and raises Luke's arm.

Realizing he has won, Luke smiles broadly. All the men burst into cheering the new champ.

Boss Gomer looks on impassively.

Captain leans to one side of his rocking chair, FARTS and fans.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Men busy themselves with various activities. A sullen Drag-Queen lies on his bunk reading Cosmopolitan.

At the table a poker game is about to begin between Luke, Kinky, Poison, and Bettor. Bettor deals.

BETTOR

Anyone wants in, now's the time.

Dumb Ass comes up behind Luke and leans over his shoulder.

DUMB ASS

Tell me something, Luke. How come you just got the crap beat out of you and the next time we see you, you don't show a mark on you?

LUKE

Talk to continuity.

BETTOR
Okay, men, ante up.

All except Luke throw in a dollar. Bettor takes a dollar from Luke's pile and tosses it into the ante.

LUKE
What, I lost already?

BETTOR
No, stupid, it's for the ante.

Luke throws in another dollar.

LUKE
Well, here. There's one for the uncle. Don't wanna leave anyone out.

Bettor sizes Luke up, then turns and calls out to Drag-Queen.

BETTOR
You're gonna want in on this game, Drag. We got a real fish here with ol' high-rollin' Kook.

DRAG-QUEEN
Nah!

BETTOR
Maybe this time he'll let you beat him.

DRAG-QUEEN
That ain't funny, Bettor.

Drag-Queen goes back to his Cosmo.

Bettor deals the first two cards, one face down and the other face up calling out each man's up-card.

BETTOR
(to Luke)
Jack with a club.
(to Kinky)
A jeweled Queen.
(to Poison)
An Ace to dig with.
(to himself)
And I get a ten. The only hand with no picture.

The men check their face-down cards.

LUKE
I got a question for you, Twitchy.

KINKY
Kinky!

LUKE
Yeah, that too. But are you gonna sit there and twitch like that through this whole game? 'Cause it's gonna sort of take the joy out of it.

KINKY
Shut up and play.

BETTOR
(to Luke)
Okay sunshine, it's to you.

LUKE
Me?

BETTOR
Yeah, you wanna check, fold, or bet.

LUKE
If I win I want cash. I don't take checks.

No one this funny. Luke gives the classic grin. He throws another dollar into the pot.

LUKE
Right. Then I'll bet.

Kinky throws in a dollar.

KINKY
I'm in. Ah see ya.

Luke points his finger at Kinky.

LUKE
Ah see ya too.

Bettor, Kinky and Poison exchange looks. Kinky smiles.

KINKY
Yeah, well this ain't peek-a-boo.

Poison tosses in a dollar.

POISON

I'm along.

Bettor checks his hole card.

BETTOR

Me too.

Bettor tosses in a dollar and picks up the deck. He places the top card on the bottom, deals each man one more card face down, and two more face up.

Bettor calls the show cards as he deals. The players check their face down card.

BETTOR

(to Luke)

Kook showing sail boats and a Jack.

(to Kinky)

Kinky showing a possible Queen flush. Very dangerous.

(to Poison)

A pair of bullets for the Poison man.

(to self)

Two more tens, and with three of a kind I'm riding' high.

Poison throws down his cards.

POISON

I'm out.

BETTOR

You don't want new cards?

POISON

I ain't feelin' lucky.

Bettor turns over Poison's cards.

BETTOR

Two pair. Okay.

(to Luke)

And you, fold or bet?

LUKE

Bet.

Luke throws in another dollar. Kinky matches it.

KINKY

I'm still in.

Bettor hesitantly throws in a dollar.

BETTOR

I'm thinking you may have a flush there, Kink old boy, but I'm also thinking you may be bluffing. And you, senor Kook with a pair of fours showing, you don't cause me too much concern so I think I'll see you, and raise a dollar.

Bettor throws a second dollar into the pot.

LUKE

Can I do that?

BETTOR

This is a game with no limit, my friend. You can raise the stakes as high as you want. But you gotta see me first.

LUKE

Duh! Well, of course I see you.

Kinky starts getting agitated.

KINKY

(to Bettor)

Is this guy for real?

(to Luke)

No, you moron, match the bet.
Match the bet!

LUKE

Oh.

Luke throws in two more dollars.

LUKE

There's my match.

Luke now slides another five dollars from his pile into the pot.

LUKE

And I'll raise another five.

This gets Drag-Queen up from his bunk. He moves over to the table behind Kinky. Others begin gathering around to watch.

Luke protects his two hole cards.

KINKY

You raising it five bucks with just a pair of fours showing?

LUKE

Yep. Fun, ain't it?

BETTOR

You gonna discard any cards for new ones?

LUKE

Nope. The cards you gave me are real pretty.

The tension around the table increases.

KINKY

I'm stayin' with my cards, too. I'll match you Newmeat.

Kinky throws in five dollars. Bettor folds.

BETTOR

You got a flush, for sure. I'm out.

Kinky, twitching like fury, stares Luke down. Luke stares him right back.

KINKY

Just you and me, Newmeat.

Luke shudders.

LUKE

I wish you wouldn't call me that. Makes me feel so cheap.

KINKY

Shut up. Put up or fold.

LUKE

Tsk, tsk, tsk, choices, choices.

Luke slides another five dollars into the pot. Then he pushes the rest of his money in.

LUKE

I'll see you, and raise you twelve dollars. All I got.

The whole gang is now around the table. Kinky starts twitching uncontrollably. He looks up at Drag-Queen.

DRAG-QUEEN

Well, you can't fold now! He's showing two fours and a Jack. If you've got a flush like I think you got a flush, he's gotta have a full house to beat you. I know he ain't got another four because Bettor just folded holding one four and you're showing the other. He's showing the Jack of hearts, and Poison here had the Jack of clubs. That means to beat you both those hole cards of his have gotta be Jacks. Now what's the odds of that happening?

A very cool Luke peeks at his hole cards again.

LUKE

Well I'd say, pretty good.

DRAG-QUEEN

See, he's bluffing you. You gonna let a fish bluff you out of that pot?

KINKY

But I ain't got twelve bucks left. All I got is six. You wanna spot me six, Drag?

DRAG-QUEEN

Heck, no. I ain't stupid.

POISON

I think he's bluffing too. Here's five bucks.

DRAG-QUEEN

Okay, here's the other buck. Call him.

The money is thrown into the pile, and all eyes go to Luke.

LUKE

Anyone wanna loan me twelve bucks?

Silence.

DRAG-QUEEN

Well boys, I think it's time we all
saw the cards. Turn 'em over.

Kinky give a wide grin as he fans out his cards.

KINKY

Queen flush!

The grin vanishes as Luke turns over the Jack of spades and
the Jack of diamonds.

A stunned silence.

LUKE

Well, how did I do?

Kinky gulps.

POISON

Son of Hemlock, he weren't
bluffin'.

LUKE

I wasn't. I wasn't? I thought I
was.

DUMB ASS

A full house. That is a cool hand,
man.

DRAG-QUEEN

(to Kinky)

He beat you and he didn't know what
he was doing. Just like he beat
me.

LUKE

So I had a cool hand?

DRAG-QUEEN

(smiling)

That's right. Cool Hand Kook.

SOCIETY FRED

Has a nice ring to it.

DRAG-QUEEN

Guess it does.

(to Luke)

Take your winnings. I'm gonna sit
next to my bud here, Cool Hand
Kook.

Drag-Queen sits down next to Luke. Luke rakes in the money with his classic grin.

The torch is passed. The friendship begins.

DISSOLVE TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE.

A) EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The faint light of dawn appears on the horizon. Trucks loaded with prisoners and equipment head out.

B) EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The gang slices away alongside the road. All are dirty and sweaty, Society Fred the one exception.

LUKE

Tell me something, Society Fred.
How come you always look so
perfect?

SOCIETY FRED

Great make up gal.

C) EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - NIGHT

The trucks enter the compound. Weary men, smothered in dust, clamber out of them.

D) EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The men work and sweat as they shovel out a drainage ditch alongside the highway.

END MONTAGE.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Sunday. Men sit around the barracks busy with various activities.

A card game is in progress at the table. Halfwit sits on his bunk reading a Bible. Luke lies on his bunk reading.

CAGE MAN
Visitor for Kook!

Luke sits up. He looks puzzled. Slowly he hauls himself from his bunk and heads for the exit.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - DAY

More activity. Two men are playing catch. One man is giving another a haircut.

Dogbreath leans against the barracks door. Guards, rifles slung over their arms, stand around the compound.

Luke comes into the sunlight. He passes Dogbreath who gets right in his face.

DOGBREATH
Is your momma here to see her
little boy?

LUKE
Dog Breath, why don't you brush
your teeth? Oh, that's right, you
don't have any.

Dogbreath smiles. Luke makes his way towards the gate. Boss Jack stands guard just outside of it.

Visitor's cars are parked haphazardly around the picnic area.

LUKE
Coming out here, Boss?

BOSS JACK
Yeah. Come on out Luke.

Luke passes through the gate. Under Boss Jack's watchful eye he makes his way over to an old beat-up pickup truck.

Standing by the truck is JOHN, Luke's younger brother, an obvious farmer. Luke shakes his hand.

Next to John is his son B.J., Luke's nephew, a boy of twelve. Luke pats his head and passes to the rear of the truck.

A netted-awning rigged over the truck's bed serves as a shade. Lying on an old mattress is Luke's mother, OUISER

Ouiser, a sickly-looking, aging woman with a plugged tracheostomy hole beneath her voice box is propped up on pillows and wedged in for traveling.

An Oxygen tank with an on and off valve lies by her side. Attached to it is a long plastic tube which lays on her lap.

A pack of Camels by her side and a lit cigarette hanging from her mouth, she sees Luke and begins a bout of loud coughing.

Her chest makes a sickening rattling SOUND. Luke patiently waits for the coughing to subside.

Ouiser takes the cigarette out of her mouth and stubs it out in the overflowing ash tray by her side.

With fingers that are stained black, she takes the plug out of the tracheostomy hole and holds a Kleenex over it.

Her chest heaves. She makes a loud phlegmy rattling NOISE and blows thick mucus into the tissue through the hole.

Ouiser picks up the oxygen tube from her lap and fastens it into the tracheostomy hole and opens the valve.

As she gasps down the oxygen she hands the soiled tissue to Luke. He reluctantly takes it and drops it into an open brown bag by her side which is already overfull.

Ouiser recovers. She removes the tube and replaces the plug into her throat. She turns off the oxygen.

She lights up another cigarette, inhales, and suppresses another coughing bout.

Luke indicates the oxygen bottle and the cigarette lighter.

LUKE

Ain't that kind of dangerous?

OUISER

Nah, I've been smoking all my life and I never felt better.

She goes into another coughing spell.

OUISER .

See, the smoke helps clear the chest. Here, help yourself.

She offers Luke the pack of Camels. He is reluctant.

OUISER

Go on, then. I never raised you to be no sissy.

Luke takes a cigarette, and looks over at Boss Jack.

LUKE
Smokin' it up here, Boss?

BOSS JACK
Yeah, smoke it up there, Luke.

Luke lights up, takes a drag. Ouiser takes a deep drag and goes into another coughing fit.

She puts the cigarette down and repeats the routine of removing the plug, hacking up phlegm, and taking the oxygen.

When done she picks the cigarette back up and smokes. Luke looks on incredulously. He stubs out his own cigarette.

LUKE
No, Ouiser, I meant ain't that kind of dangerous to be smoking around that oxygen?

OUISER
(matter-of-fact)
Yep.
(moving on)
So how are they treating you?

LUKE
Not bad, considering this is a chain gang and I'm watched over by a bunch of sadistic degenerates.

OUISER
Good. I kind of hoped you'd be settled by now and have me a mess of grand kids to fuss with.

LUKE
Nah, Ouiser, I wouldn't know how to be a good father. And -- well you'd be hackin' all over 'em and scaring the hell outta them.

OUISER
(laughing)
Damned right.

The laughing leads to another coughing spasm. When done, she lights another cigarette with the old one.

OUISER
This darned brand don't taste as good as it used to.

LUKE
What does?

OUISER
Well, I guess you ain't gonna
settle so --

LUKE
Yeah.

OUISER
So I'm leavin' the place to John.

LUKE
Yeah.

OUISER
Not your thing, farmin'. Never did
see you happy in the barn. 'Cept
maybe the time I caught you with
Sally Mae.

Luke grins.

LUKE
Wasn't that Fannie Mae?

OUISER
Nah. She's the one who loaned us
the money for the farm.

A WHISTLE BLOWS.

LUKE
I gotta go, Ouiser.

OUISER
Sure, kid. You were beginin'
t'bore me anyhow.

She laughs and goes off into another coughing spell. She waves Luke off.

John who takes a banjo from the truck cab and hands it to Luke as he passes.

JOHN
Figured you'd want this. Momma
probably ain't gonna be around when
you get out.

LUKE
There's a good chance she'll be
gone by the time I get back inside.

JOHN
So there won't no need for you to
come around no more.

Luke takes the banjo.

LUKE
Yeah.

B.J.
How come you don't have chains like
that other man, uncle Luke?

JOHN
Them chains is nothin' to be proud
of, B.J. Ain't that right, uncle
Luke?

Luke nods.

LUKE
Momma don't look so good. She in a
lot of pain?

JOHN
Full of dope. Doc gave her an
unlimited supply.

LUKE
Good.
(to B.J.)
Chains and fences are for people
what do wrong, B.J. This is a
great country, and you obey the
rules and you gonna enjoy freedom
and have a good life. You hear me?

B.J.
Yeah, uncle Luke.

LUKE
Good.

Luke nods to John and heads back in through the gate where
Boss Tall is waiting to frisk him.

LUKE
Be gentle with me.

B.J. watches from the truck window as Luke earns himself another whack from Boss Tall's cane.

Luke sees B.J. and gives him a thumbs up as the truck pulls away.

Luke walks back towards the barracks. He silently mouths "Owwwwhhh!"

DISSOLVE TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE.

A) EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The faint light of dawn is on the horizon. Trucks loaded with prisoners and equipment head out.

B) EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Sun blistering down. Men sweat as they slice down weeds.

Society Fred looks fresh and dry, his hair blow-dried and sprayed into perfection.

Luke stops work and stares enviously at Society Fred. He touches the sweat on his own forehead, then brings his hand to his face town crier style.

LUKE

Make up!

A rifle butt to the back sends Luke into the dirt. Boss Saul stands ominously over him for a moment before walking away.

Luke mouths "Owwwwhhh!"

C) EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - NIGHT

The trucks enter. Men, dirty and weary, climb out.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The convoy of prison trucks pulls up at a T-junction in the highway where a subsidiary road leads off across rolling moors into infinity.

On either side of the road, spaced five feet apart, is a pyramid of freshly dumped sand.

As the men alight from the trucks, each one is handed a shovel

KINKY

Oh, man, no! Not today. It's too dang hot.

BETTOR

Grown men are gonna die today.

DUMB ASS

(nervously)

What is it? What's goin' on?

With a nod of his head, Drag-Queen indicates down the road. A filthy blackened tar-spraying tank truck comes up over the rise.

KINKY

If you think any of the work you done so far is hard, wait 'till you work behind that fire-breathin' monster all day.

Boss Saul walk to and fro before the prisoners. An evil smirk is on his face.

BOSS SAUL

Captain heard that the Ox gang been doin' real good lately.

Halfwit jumps up and down clapping his hands like a kindergartner which earns him a caning from Boss Tall.

BOSS SAUL

So he's gonna reward y'all with a special job. We got three miles of tarring to cover and it's gotta be finished today. So I suggest that you men put your backs into it or I'll be puttin' this into your backs.

Boss Saul holds up his cane

BOSS TALL

All right, gang, split it up. Half of you get to the other side of the road.

Drag-Queen, Kinky, Society Fred, Dumb Ass, Halfwit and others move to the other side.

Luke, Mouthful, Bettor, Poison, Smart Ass and a handful of other men stay put on one side of the road.

The tar truck begins moving down the road spewing hot acrid tar behind it.

BOSS SAUL
Put your backs into it. Let's roll
it.

The men follow the tar truck down the road picking up shovels full of sand and fanning it across the road covering the tar.

As one pile of sand is used up they move on to the next. The bosses follow the men with a watchful eye.

Every now and then Boss Gomer silently point his cane to a wet patch./ The nearest man flicks a spray of sand over it.

The sun arcs in rapid motion half-way across the sky. The men are drenched in sweat and look beat.

As usual, the one exception is Society Fred, and again Luke looks at him with amazement.

LUKE
(to himself)
Dang, I want that guy's make up
gal.

A cane from Boss Tall swipes across the back of Luke's legs.

BOSS TALL
Quit day dreamin'. You gonna have
us here 'till midnight.

LUKE
Yes Boss!

Luke gets back to work. As Boss Tall moves on Luke mouths, "oowwww!". Luke gives a knowing nod and picks up the pace.

BETTOR
This heat is killin' me. And my
arms are aching like heck. They
need a break.

Boss Saul swipes his cane across Bettor's arm on one side and then across the other. Luke watches and winces.

LUKE
That oughtta do it.

Luke picks up more speed and pulls ahead of Drag-Queen.

DRAG-QUEEN
Hey, buddy, slow it. What's the hurry?

LUKE
Speed is what they want, speed is what we oughtta give'em. Roll it!

Drag-Queen picks up speed, keeping pace with Luke.

KINKY
Why we racin', Drag?

DRAG-QUEEN
'Cause speed is what the man wants. Ram it!

Kinky gets into the spirit.

KINKY
Rip it!

Gradually all the men catch on and both teams become a fury of work.

Starting individually, they progressively become a chorus of inspiration as they toss the sand across the road.

ALL PRISONERS
(in unison)
Roll it! Ram it! Rip it!

The speed at which the men move down the road increases. The Bosses looking confused and nervous, are forced to almost break into a run to keep up.

Rambler runs up and down the lines offering the men water. None of them drink. They pore the water over their faces and keep working.

As Rambler runs past Boss Tall - -

BOSS TALL
Rambler, what the heck's goin' on?

RAMBLER
I don't know, Boss. Roll it! Ram it! Rip it!

The men are now inventing creative ways of delivering the sand.

Smart Ass plunges his shovel into the pile of sand and without looking tosses it over his shoulder. It lands perfectly in place covering a wet spot just inches from the toe of Boss Gomer's boot.

Dum Ass straddles a pile of sand and shovels it like a dog between his legs onto the road with perfect precision.

Mouthful, Poison and Bettor stand in a line. Mouthful picks up a shovel full of sand and gives it a short toss.

It lands perfectly onto Poison's shovel, and Poison in turn tosses it onto Bettor's shovel. Bettor fans the sand across the road.

Bosses Saul and Tall seethe with anger and cast evil eyes at Luke who is working directly behind the tar-spraying truck.

Abruptly the truck stops its spraying and turns right at another T-junction. The road has come to an end.

The work is finished. Luke stands up straight and Drag-Queen works up to him.

Both men are covered in black gooey tar from head to foot. They look exhausted but joyful.

The whole gang break into a victorious cheer. The bosses watch nervously.

Boss Gomer swaps his cane for his rifle. Bosses Saul and Tall take note. The prisoners are oblivious.

MOUTHFUL

Where'd the road go?

LUKE

We did it. All three miles. We rolled it!

ALL PRISONERS

We rammed it! We ripped it!

The men break out into joyful laughter. They plop down on the field by the side of the road. Bettor looks up at the sun.

BETTOR

There's gotta be two hours of sunlight left.

DRAG-QUEEN

What do we do now, Cool Hand?

LUKE

We do exactly nothing!

Boss Gomer checks his watch. His mirrored sunglasses reflect the men lying around in their glory.

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Lightening strikes behind the momentarily silhouetted building. Rain is pounding down.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

The HAMMERING of rain is loud on the tin roof. Most of the men are stripped to their boxers and glistening with sweat.

They lounge around on their bunks languishing in the stifling humidity.

Truck is at the Cage talking to Cage Man. Luke lies on his bunk reading a magazine.

Smart Ass pads back to his bunk from the showers.

SMART ASS

Dang, its close in here. I just took a cold shower and I'm already sweating like a pig.

DUMB ASS

Quit your complaining!

Smart Ass stops as he passes Society Fred's bunk.

SMART ASS

How come he always looks so cool and pretty? This is a chain gang for cryin' out loud! And don't anyone go giving me that crud about his make up guy.

DRAG-QUEEN

Hey, if you don't like it talk to the director.

A sulking Smart Ass saunters away. Drag-Queen turns on Mouthful.

DRAG-QUEEN

You see my bud, Cool Hand at chow tonight? He was eating two spoons to every one of yours.

MOUTHFUL

I ain't been feelin' good. Got a touch of stomach flu or something.

DRAG-QUEEN

Old skinny Luke here is the chow king around here. He can eat anything. Ain't nobody can match him in eatin'. He can eat broken glass and rusty thumb tacks.

LUKE

I can eat fifty-one eggs.

Everyone looks at Luke. There is a long silence.

DRAG-QUEEN

Nobody can eat fifty-one eggs.

SOCIETY FRED

You just said he could eat anything.

BETTOR

I smell a bet here. Halfwit, we got a bet here.

Halfwit goes into his attempted head pat and tummy rub routine. Drag-Queen looks doubtfully at Luke.

DRAG-QUEEN

You ever eat fifty-one eggs?

LUKE

Nobody ever ate fifty-one eggs.

DRAG-QUEEN

If my bud says he can eat fifty-one eggs, he can eat fifty-one eggs.

BETTOR

Yeah, but in how long?

LUKE

I'll do it if I can -- have an hour.

BETTOR
I'll get in on that action.

Halfwit tries even harder to accomplish his pat-rub routine.

SMART ASS
Me too.

Halfwit cranks up the intensity. He starts to spin.

DRAG-QUEEN
Okay, then, two bucks for any man
that wants in.

BETTOR
You call that a bet?

DRAG-QUEEN
Okay, then, ten bucks. Anything
you want. The Syndicate'll cover
any money you got. Kinky, get
paper.

Kinky is twitching overtime.

KINKY
Drag, fifty-one eggs gotta weigh at
least a good six pounds.

MOUTHFUL
Man's guts can't hold that much.
He'll bust them wide open.

DRAG-QUEEN
Then you can make yourself some
fast money, can't you?
(to everyone)
Kinky here is taking the bets. See
him if you want in.

A flurry of activity as men place money against Luke.

Halfwit is now rolling around on the floor.

BETTOR
How's he gonna eat these eggs?

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

BETTOR

Wait up! Wait up! You can't change it. You said half and hour before.

LUKE

I said if I could have an hour.

BETTOR

No. I distinctly heard you say half an hour.

MOUTHFUL

That's what I heard.

SMART ASS

Me too.

DRAG-QUEEN

Hey, my bud don't lie.

LUKE

It's okay, Drag. If the man says I said half and hour, I'll do it in half an hour. But I need to make one small change.

BETTOR

(suspicious)

And what's that?

LUKE

Better make the eggs raw.

Men suddenly look like they are about to throw up.

LUKE

Gives me a better chance to down them in half an hour.

SOCIETY FRED

I got a rule. No throwing up. He throws up, he loses.

DRAG-QUEEN

No way is my bud gonna throw up.

Kinky is taking bets and handing out receipts.

Halfwit, trying to keep up, is almost in seizure lying on his back in the fetal position with his head pat and tummy rub.

DRAG-QUEEN

Dang, Luke, why fifty-one. Why not thirty, or twenty? I just don't understand fifty-one.

LUKE

Seemed like a nice round number.

Drag-Queen looks incredulously at Luke. The sound of the tire iron starts CLANGING.

TRUCK

First bell. Cut out the chit chat.

DISSOLVE TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE.

"Rocky"-type MUSIC plays over the scenes.

A) EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - DAY

Luke, Drag-Queen, and Halfwit run around the yard. A boxer with his trainers.

After one lap Drag-Queen stops and waits for Luke and Halfwit to come around to him.

B) INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Drag-Queen stands over Luke who is on the floor doing sit-ups. Men stand around watching.

C) EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - DAY

COOK dressed in his kitchen whites comes down to the chain-link fence. He takes a small wad of dollar bills being poked through the fence by Kinky.

D) INT. MESS HALL - DAY

Luke goes through the chow line. He refuses the food. He takes his empty plate to his place next to Drag-Queen.

Drag-Queen looks at his empty plate and gives a nod of approval. Luke does squats while the others eat.

E) EXT. KITCHEN - DAY

Through an open window Cook is seen counting eggs into two large bowls.

F) INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Luke lies on his back on his bunk. Halfwit stretches and massages his belly.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. KITCHEN - DAY

Cook exits kitchen into the yard carrying two large bowls filled with eggs. He is followed by an ASSISTANT carrying one large empty bowl.

They march down to the gate. Truck opens it. Kinky and Bettor to take the bowls filled with eggs. Halfwit takes the empty bowl.

Kinky, Bettor and Halfwit, followed by a crowd, march towards the barracks holding the bowls high overhead.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Drag-Queen waits by the table as Kinky, Bettor, and Halfwit enter with the bowls and place them on the table.

A super-sized spoon sits on the table. Men crowd around.

DRAG-QUEEN

Okay you guys, back up! Make some room.

Luke, wearing a robe draped over his shoulders, and a pair of shorts, solemnly comes to the table like a boxer entering the ring.

The room goes silent. Everyone backs up and makes room as Luke begins doing deep knee bends and stretches.

DRAG-QUEEN

That's right. Give the man some room.

(to Kinky and Halfwit)
Get cracking.

Kinky and Halfwit start cracking the eggs into the large empty bowl. Bettor and Society Fred COUNT out loud.

Truck enters. He carries a large stop watch. He pulls out a ten dollar bill and throws it on the table.

TRUCK

My bet is he don't make it.

Drag-Queen picks up the bill.

DRAG-QUEEN

Duly noted.

(to Bettor and Society
Fred)

Come on, come on. Cook has already counted them.

Drag-Queen helps crack the remaining eggs. The bowl is awash with sloshing eggs.

Luke shrugs off the robe. Drag-Queen catches it and hands it to Kinky. Kinky throws it aside.

Luke sits in front of the bowl. He picks up the large spoon. The barracks go deathly silent. Luke looks up at Drag-Queen.

DRAG-QUEEN

Cook calculated out for us that if you eat a full spoon each time, it'll take about sixty spoons to down all fifty one eggs.

(slight pause)

You ready?

Luke gives a solemn nod. Drag-Queen looks over to Truck who nods and starts the stop watch.

DRAG-QUEEN

Go!

Luke, in rapid succession, spoons one spoon after another of the raw eggs into his mouth. Drag-Queen COUNTS each spoon.

The runny mess slides down Luke's chin and back into the bowl. He continues to shovel the eggs into his mouth.

Men look on in awe. Some look a little sick. Dumb Ass is visibly gagging and choking it back.

Luke suddenly stops. There is silence. Luke looks a little odd.

More money gets thrown onto the table. Kinky takes it and records it in the book.

Luke continues, but at a slower pace.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

Luke is struggling. Each spoon takes effort to get down.

DRAG-QUEEN
Thirty-three, thirty-four...
(to Truck)
How much time left?

Truck checks his stop watch.

TRUCK
Nine minutes and four seconds.

DRAG-QUEEN
Come on, Luke, you're falling
behind.

Luke abruptly stops. He slowly stands.

BETTOR
He ain't gonna make it.

DRAG-QUEEN
Shut up, and give the man some
space.

The men back up. Luke takes measured steps around the table to the long wash basin by the wall.

Facing the wash basin he leans forward as if he is about to retch.

BETTOR
Look, he's gonna throw up.

MOUTHFUL
I told you he couldn't do it.

SMART ASS
Talk about having egg on your face.

A flurry of activity. More last-minute bet money gets thrown onto the table in front of Kinky.

DRAG-QUEEN

You bunch of willy-nillies!
Waiting 'till you think he ain't
gonna do it before you ante up.
I'm cutting you off now. No more
bets after this.

SOCIETY FRED

There isn't any more money left on
any one of these guys. Every penny
owned by every man is in the pot.

Drag-Queen gives a satisfied look. He looks over at Luke who
leans low into the basin.

Men watch in silent anticipation.

Luke turns on the faucet and takes a drink. He straightens
up, goes back to the table, and resumes spooning up the eggs.

DRAG-QUEEN

Thirty-five, thirty-six...

SOCIETY FRED

(to Truck)

How much time?

TRUCK

Four minutes, thirty-one seconds.

DUMB ASS

He ain't gonna make it.

Luke abruptly stands up. A strange look is on his face.
Kinky puts his ear to Luke's distended abdomen.

Loud gurgling NOISES emanate from Luke's belly. Everyone
reacts. They look expectantly at Luke.

Luke suddenly BELCHES. Those closest to him jump back and
away.

TRUCK

Three minutes!

Luke picks up the bowl, holds it to his mouth and downs the
rest of the eggs in one continuous chug. He drops the bowl.

Eggs hang all around his mouth and on his chin.

With a flourish Luke licks around his mouth and, using his
fingers, pushes the residue of eggs into his mouth.

Men are stunned. Smart Ass turns and vomits. Luke grins broadly.

MOUTHFUL

He did it. He really did it. He is the chow king. The title's his.

Mouthful walks sullenly away.

Suddenly Luke's face becomes deathly serious. He is trying desperately to hold down what his stomach is trying to expel.

It comes up, he forces it back down. It comes up, he forces it back down.

All eyes are on Luke. After a few paroxysms which turn out to be false alarms, the smile returns to Luke's face.

LUKE

What's for desert?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The sky is dark with clouds and foreboding. The gang work their way down the road swinging their scythes.

A panicked Kinky begins swinging his scythe wildly.

KINKY

Snake here, boss. Snake in the grass.

Boss Gomer signals to Rambler to fetch the rifle from the truck. Others join Kinky trying to cut down the snake.

As soon as Kinky hands Boss Gomer the rifle everyone spreads out gives him wide berth.

Boss Saul and Boss Tall get well behind Boss Gomer. Crows circling overhead take off for safer air space.

Luke stoops down and grabs the snake by the tail.

LUKE

Picking it up here, Boss!

Luke turns to Boss Gomer holding the snake. A big grin disappears when he sees Boss Gomer aiming in his direction.

LUKE

Holy Crap!!!

Boss Gomer fires. Everyone looks away. The shot fades to silence, and men gingerly turn back.

An incredulous Luke still holds the now headless, dead snake.

DRAG-QUEEN

Son of a gun, he hit the snake.

SOCIETY FRED

He must have been aiming for Luke.

Luke tosses the snake.

LUKE

Good shooting, Boss.

Boss Gomer stares blankly at Luke. He holds up his rifle and stares at it. He turns and walks away.

Luke looks heavenward.

LUKE

See, Old Timer? I must be invincible.

A bolt of lightning strikes the earth inches from Luke, followed instantly by an ear-splitting CRACK of thunder.

Raindrops begin falling on Luke's face. In an instant the sky opens up and it pours down rain.

BOSS SAUL

All right, git back in the trucks.

Bosses and men scramble back into the trucks. Luke doesn't move. He remains staring up into the rain.

LUKE

No need to be so sensitive!

As Drag-Queen is about to climb up into the truck he looks back at Luke.

More lightning strikes a short distance away, followed by another CRACK of thunder.

DRAG-QUEEN

Hey, Luke, get in the truck. Ain't you scared? You can't tempt him like that.

LUKE

I ain't a scared, Drag. I come
this far, and Old Timer ain't seen
fit to take me yet.

Drag-Queen shakes his head and climbs up into the back of the
truck leaving Luke alone in the rain.

LUKE

I ain't scared of what you can do,
Old Timer.
(shouting)
Who wants this life I got anyway?

Boss Gomer stares impassively at Luke through the steamed-up
truck windshield.

LUKE

Nobody wants this life. And you
know why? Cause this life you give
me ain't worth crap! It ain't
worth crap!

A bolt of lightening burns a scorched path between Luke's
legs. He looks down at it as deafening thunder CRACKS above.

Luke looks from the scorched earth to heaven.

LUKE

Maybe I'm being a little too
critical.

Luke scoots towards the truck.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - DAY

The light is rapidly fading as the prisoners line up outside
the barracks.

Boss Jack and Boss Tall finish frisking each prisoner.
Captain comes through the gate.

BOSS JACK

Stand to!

The prisoners stand at attention.

CAPTAIN

Luke Kook, step forward.

Luke steps forward. He casts a glance towards The Box. It
is open and Boss Saul stands by it holding a nightshirt.

LUKE

Awh, don't put me in The Box,
Captain. I was just letting the
Man Upstairs know how I felt about
how he was handling my life.

Boss Jack is about to cane Luke, but Captain waves him away.

CAPTAIN

Sorry, Luke, you gotta go.

LUKE

Oh, man! Do I have to wear the
nightgown? Ask Drag. It ain't my
color.

Captain motions to Boss Jack, and he canes Luke on the back
of the legs.

CAPTAIN

This ain't no time to be sassin'
me, Luke. We're takin' you off the
road for a while.

(all in one breath)

Sometimes things happen in a man's
life that changes him and makes him
edgy, and before he knows it he
feels like runnin', and then we
gotta go after him and when we find
him we gotta make his mind right,
and then once his mind is right we
gotta leave him in leg irons to be
sure he don't run again and it can
get pretty darn nasty. You get
that, Luke?

LUKE

I missed some, Captain

CAPTAIN

What d'you miss, Luke?

LUKE

(Maxwell Smart)

Everything after "this ain't no
time to be sassin' me, Luke"

Captain nods at Boss Jack and he canes Luke again.

CAPTAIN

Off you go now, Luke. Nice and
quiet like.

Boss Jack leads Luke towards The Box. Once his back is towards the other men Luke mouths his familiar "Oowww!"

Luke reaches The Box. He strips, but coyly steps behind the small fence in front of The Box before removing his pants.

BOSS JACK
Sorry about your momma, Luke.

KOOK
My momma?

BOSS JACK
Yeah, she died. That's why you're goin' in The Box. Captain don't want you gettin' any ideas about you paying' respects at the funeral.

Luke knowingly nods. Boss Jack strides off. Luke takes the nightshirt from Boss Saul, dons it and enters The Box.

Boss Saul puts the canteen and bucket in and locks the door.

INT. THE BOX - DAY

In the grey light of the naked bulb burning above, Luke squats to his haunches in a corner.

A perplexed look crosses over his face.

LUKE
Momma died?

EXT. THE BOX - DAY

LUKE (O.S.)
Noooooooooooooooooooo!!!

The men in line react.

DISSOLVE TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE.

A) EXT. COUNTRY ROAD- DAY

Men working, swinging scythes and sweating. Luke is conspicuously absent.

B) EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - NIGHT

Men exit trucks and head in through the compound gate. Each one casts a glance in the direction of The Box.

C) INT. THE BOX - DAY

Luke leans against one side of the box.

D) EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - NIGHT

Men returning from work day. Each one casts a glance in the direction of The Box.

E) INT. THE BOX - NIGHT

Luke sits crossed-legged on the floor with his arms folded chimp-style over the top of his head.

Men HEARD counting in through gate.

F) INT. THE BOX - NIGHT

Luke standing on his head with his arms folded in front of him. Men HEARD counting in through gate.

G) EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Men, filthy and sweaty, clean out a roadside ditch. Society Fred, fresh and clean.

SOCIETY FRED

I wonder how Cool Hand is doing.
They say any more than two or three
days in The Box will drive a man
crazy.

DRAG-QUEEN

Don't you worry none about my bud,
Luke. He can handle anything.

H) INT. THE BOX - NIGHT

Luke with hands and feet pressed solidly out against opposite walls is lodged half way up The Box.

A crazed expression is on his face, and he is foaming at the mouth. Men are HEARD counting in through gate.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. THE BOX - DAY

A large HAND removes the wooden plank locking the door, and pulls it open.

Luke's unshaven face is fixed in a maniacal smile.

BOSS TALL

Your momma's done buried now, Luke.
Best forget about it. And Happy
fourth of July. You got the rest
of the day to yourself.

Luke looks blankly across the compound. Prisoners relax and engage in various leisure activities.

Luke walks zombie-like towards the barracks. As he passes the men, each one freezes and follows Luke with his eyes.

Luke looks straight ahead.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

A loud July 4th celebration is in progress. A radio BLARES swing music.

Two guys dance the jitterbug. Others sing with the radio. At the table a card game is in progress.

Society Fred is reading a romance novel to Kinky and Halfwit. Kinky twitches with delight. Halfwit looks confused.

Bettor passes them and stops to listen.

SOCIETY FRED

(reading)

He ran his hand along her milky
white thighs. Cool and smooth as
marble --

HALFWIT

Ain't marble cold? Was she dead?

SOCIETY FRED

Will you shut up. Yeah, she was dead, Halfwit. He was getting ready to make love to a corpse.

BETTOR

Sounds like my old lady. She was --

SOCIETY FRED

Will you shut up!

Luke is on the floor by his bunk sawing a hole in the floor. Drag-Queen and others give him cover. He is almost there.

SUBTITLE: DON'T ASK WHERE THE SAW BLADE CAME FROM.

The Cage Man SOUNDS the tire iron. Truck moves between the rows of bunks.

TRUCK

First bell. All right, let's wrap it up. The party's over.

Men head for their bunks. Drag-Queen casts a nervous eye towards Luke and quickly moves down to join the romance novel group. He grabs the book from Society Fred.

DRAG-QUEEN

Hey, Truck, you gotta check this paragraph in this here book. It's steamy.

Truck looks interested.

TRUCK

Readin' dirty books, eh?
(suspicious)
Wait a minute, it ain't --

DRAG-QUEEN

Nah, Truck, this is your kindda stuff. Look, just read this paragraph.

Truck takes the book and is quickly absorbed. Drag-Queen slyly looks over at Luke's bunk.

Luke comes up and gives Drag-Queen a thumbs up and disappears. Drag-Queen goes to his own bunk.

Dumb Ass nervously eyes the hole Luke has disappeared through. He makes a decision and jumps into it.

The SOUND of the tire iron jolts Truck. He drops the book.

TRUCK
Last bell! Last bell!

Truck begins counting down the men.

CAGE MAN
What's that noise outside, Truck?

Truck runs to the window.

TRUCK
Man on the fence, Boss! Man on the
fence.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND (FENCE) - NIGHT

The SOUND of the Cage Man wailing on the tire iron is joined by BARKING dogs.

Guards, canes and rifles in hand, run to the fence.

Dumb Ass is snagged on the barbed wire at the top of the fence. The guards begin beating him.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND (DOG RUN) - NIGHT

Dogbreath is putting harnesses on three of the bloodhounds. Boss Jack rubs a prison shirt on the dogs' noses.

The barking dogs are agitated. Suddenly one of them breaks free and takes off before Dogbreath can harness it.

DOGBREATH
Red! Get back here!

BOSS JACK
How come you're so dumb, you let
that dog go?

DOGBREATH
Yeah? Well how come you're so
smart you managed to get here with
Kook's shirt already and no one's
said he's the one who escaped yet?

BOSS JACK

Well, how come you got down here to the dogs right now when just a minute ago you were in your nightshirt in your bunk?

DOGBREATH

Well, how come I was told to get the dogs and all we know so far is that one man is stuck on the fence.

This stumps Boss Jack. He looks confused for a moment.

BOSS JACK

Shut up!

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Barracks silhouetted in the moonlight.

BOSS JACK (O.S.)

Con-tin-u-it-y!!!!

TRUCK (O.S.)

Forty eight. One in The Box. One in the bush, boss.

CAGE MAN (O.S.)

Forty-eight. One in The Box. One in the bush. Okay, Truck.

BOSS JACK (O.S.)

One in the bush. Now we know.

DOGBREATH (O.S.)

How did the man on the fence get into The Box so fast?

Silence.

BOSS JACK (O.S.)

Shut up!

(pause)

Con-tin-u-it-y!!!

EXT. STREAM - NIGHT

Luke runs down the center of the stream. He turns and looks behind towards the sound of distant BARKING.

Some distance upstream, Red emerges and runs around trying to pick up Luke's scent.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND (GATE) - NIGHT

Boss Jack and Dogbreath restrain the dogs. Boss Saul approaches from the Captain's cottage.

BOSS SAUL
 Captain says to wait 'till the
 Patrol gets here.

The sound of Red BARKING from a distance.

DOGBREATH
 My baby's got him. He's tellin' me
 that now. Ol' Red's got him.

BOSS JACK
 That old mutt doesn't know a golf
 hole from a gopher hole.

DOGBREATH
 (under his breath)
 Yeah, but he knows a butt hole when
 he smells one.

Boss Jack is about to raise his cane on Dogbreath when a police patrol car turns into the compound parking area.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - NIGHT

Luke, face dirty and hair mussed up, runs down the tracks. Looking back, nothing is behind him. A big grin.

He turns back to face where he is going. The grin vanishes. His face turns to horror!

A locomotive barrels down the tracks towards him. He barely dives out of its way as it passes with a deafening SOUND.

EXT. OPEN COUNTRY - NIGHT

Dogbreath is pulled along the road by two sniffing, excited hounds. An OFFICER follows behind him.

EXT. FIELD DIVISION - NIGHT

Luke runs alongside a low, barbed wire topped fence which divides one field from another.

In the distance Red begins BARKING.

Luke begins scissor-jumping from one side of the fence to the other as he runs parallel with the fence.

Each pass over the fence is a razor-sharp snag to his butt.

LUKE
Oooh! Ouch!!! Owwww!

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - NIGHT

Red runs along the center of the tracks. He stops, cocks his ear, and moves off of the tracks.

Red sits patiently as a train goes WHISTLING by. After it passes he resumes his pursuit along the tracks.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Luke comes to a wide, deep river. He looks up and sees an overhead cable strung between two trees across the river.

He climbs a tree, makes a dangerous leap for the cable, manages to grab it, and hauls himself across the river.

EXT. FIELD DIVISION - NIGHT

The bloodhounds scramble under the fence. Dogbreath, covered with cuts and scratches, tries to restrain them.

A bemused PATROL OFFICER stands watching.

PATROL OFFICER
I hate to imply that you are anything but real intelligent-like, but you've been over that fence and back a number of times now and you're cut up pretty bad. So if I might, I suggest we go down on one side of the fence a piece until the scent don't go back and forth anymore. Then we can get on with this pursuit.

Dogbreath stares blankly up at the Patrol Officer.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Red comes to the wide, deep river. Looks up and notes the overhead cable. Looks to his left.

An old stone bridge lies about twenty yards down stream. Red trots down to it crosses the river.

EXT. ELEVATED BRIDGE - NIGHT

Luke comes to a high truss bridge. Running across it at full speed he jumps over its railing to a river below.

He lands in the deceptively shallow water with a jarring halt. The water only reaches up to his knees.

LUKE
Oh... my...God!!!

Luke limps to the shore. Each step is agony.

LUKE
Oooh! Ouch! Owww!

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

One bloodhound is already across the wide, deep river.

Dogbreath with the other bloodhound on his stomach, hangs from the cable with hands and feet working his way across.

The Patrol Officer watches with amusement as Dogbreath finally reaches the other side.

The Patrol Officer walks down to the bridge and crosses the river.

EXT. ELEVATED BRIDGE - NIGHT

Luke sits below the bridge on the river bank rubbing his legs. Red floats under the bridge on a small wooden raft.

An incredulous Luke watches as Red jumps off the raft and swims towards him.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - DAY

The men are coming out of the mess hall, washing their spoons at an outside faucet and lining up for inspection.

Boss Saul and Boss Tall watch over them. Boss Gomer watches from just outside the open gate by the trucks.

Captain stands watching and fanning himself from his porch.

A patrol car pulls into the compound. Everyone watches as the Patrol Officer gets out and opens the back door.

Dogbreath exits the car. He is dirty, bruised and grazed. He opens the back door and ushers out the two bloodhounds.

The dogs flop down and fall asleep.

DOGBREATH

Look, Captain. Look what that Kook did. My dogs is dog tired.

Dogbreath drops to the ground and holds his hounds.

DOGBREATH

My poor babies.

He wipes the foam from one of the dog's mouths and kisses it. Prisoners cringe. Smart Ass almost gags.

Captain is still standing on his porch. He shakes his head.

CAPTAIN

That man has been a trustee for far too long.

Captain snaps his fan shut and sits down.

DRAG-QUEEN

(to Kinky)

He made it!

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The men work and sweat away at the bottom of a high embankment. The guards watch them from the road above.

Boss Gomer turns and looks down the road. Reflected in his sunglasses is the image of an approaching car.

The car pulls up past the trucks and stops. Captain emerges from the front passenger side.

He approaches and says something to Boss Saul. Boss Saul turns and shouts down to the gang below.

BOSS SAUL
All right, hold it!

The men stop working and look up at the Captain.

The Captain nods in the direction of the car. The back doors open. A GUARD escorts Luke from the car to Captain.

Luke is bearded, unkempt, filthy, and cuffed. He stands on the edge of the embankment grinning sheepishly.

Captain gives a signal to Boss Tall who goes back to one of the parked trucks. The prisoners look disappointed.

DRAG-QUEEN
(to himself)
At least my boy gave 'em a run for
the money!

Boss Tall comes back from the truck carrying a set of leg irons and a hammer.

Boss Tall hammers the leg irons on Luke as the guard from the car removes Luke's handcuffs.

Captain stands stoically next to Luke fanning himself with one hand. His other hand is visible and clearly empty.

CAPTAIN
You'll eventually get used to
wearing them leg irons, Luke.
You'd better, because you gonna be
wearing them for a long time.

LUKE
Thank you, Captain, I always did
think about accessorizing. The
uniforms are so plain.

The blood drains out of Captain's face. In a sudden move he starts slapping Luke with his open fan.

Luke does not move his legs, but leans back and weaves to avoid the slaps.

Totally frustrated, Captain throws down the fan, and from nowhere produces a cudgel.

He whacks Luke on the side of the head. Luke is knocked off balance and tumbles down the embankment.

CAPTAIN

How dare you! How dare you! How dare you! Don't you never talk back to me again. Never!

As quickly as he became enraged, Captain calms down. He recovers his fan. His voice becomes reasonable.

He points to Luke who lies unmoving in the dust. He speaks to the gang.

CAPTAIN

What we got here is a jail bird who won't cooperate.

Bettor whispers to Society Fred from the side of his mouth.

BETTOR

Bet you that quote don't make it onto the list of immortal classics.

SOCIETY FRED

I'll give you a better one. I bet no one ever figures out where Captain got that club from.

Halfwit overhears the conversation. He is about to start his head pat and tummy rub. Bettor back-kicks him.

BETTOR

Knock it off.

Captain hands the cudgel to Boss Tall and continues addressing the men.

CAPTAIN

Now I'm a reasonable man. Shucks, I don't like violence. But you gotta have your mind right in my charge. That's all.

Captain gives a curt nod, goes back to the car and gets in it. The car pulls away.

Drag-Queen helps Luke to his feet.

DRAG-QUEEN

All right, bud, you gonna make it. Swing that yo-yo. Show 'em you okay.

Luke nods. One of the men hands him a scythe.

BOSS SAUL
Okay, Ox gang, swing them yo-yos.

Under watchful eyes and raised rifles, Luke and the men get back to work.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

The gang works and sweats. Boss Tall looks up at the sun. It is directly overhead.

He pulls a watch from his pocket and checks it. He looks towards Boss Gomer and gets a nod.

BOSS TALL
All right. Let's get them beans.

The men drop their tools and head up the embankment.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

The men are by the trucks forming a chow line in front of a makeshift serving table. Dogbreath is dishes out the grub.

Luke reaches Dogbreath. Dogbreath gloats.

DOGBREATH
Got yourself some chains now, ain't you? And a couple more years.

He leans across the table. He is in Luke's face.

DOGBREATH
I'd like to see you try and run now.

LUKE
Yeah, well, you keep breathing on me like that, Dogbreath, and I'm gettin' the itch.

Luke gets his beans and carries his plate past Dumb Ass. Dumb Ass is bruised and also in leg irons.

Luke sits next to Drag-Queen and Kinky. He begins shovelling down the beans.

DRAG-QUEEN
Slow down there, fella. Wolfing them beans like that has a way of coming back at you.

LUKE
I got my reasons.

KINKY
So, tell us, what happened.

DRAG-QUEEN
Leave the man alone. Let him eat. Plenty of time for that later. Right, Luke?

Luke nods and finishes his plate. He starts to get up.

DRAG-QUEEN
Easy there, good bud, Drag'll take care of that.

Drag-Queen takes Luke's plate and hands it to Kinky.

DRAG-QUEEN
Take this back for Luke.

Reluctantly Kinky gets up and takes Luke's plate away.

Meanwhile Luke picks up a piece of kite string from the dirt, winds it into a tiny ball, and puts it in his pocket.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

The gang is back at the bottom of the embankment working. Boss Saul and Boss Gomer stand above them on the road.

Boss Tall stands close by Luke with rifle in hand.

BOSS TALL
You don't mind the company, do you Luke? 'Cause we gotta keep a short leash on you for a while.

LUKE
A short leash, huh?

BOSS TALL
That's right.

LUKE
Well, I'd say the right man got the
job, Boss Tall.

Boss Tall looks suspiciously at Luke, but lets it go.

BOSS TALL
Didn't get too far now, did ya?

LUKE
Nope. I ran, I got caught, I'm
back. That's about the long and
the short of it.

BOSS TALL
And you ain't gonna get no chance
to run again. Now I ain't never
killed no white man before --

LUKE
(English accent)
Jolly decent of you.

BOSS TALL
But I'll do it if I have to. You
see, a man like you --

Luke lets off a very loud and very long FART.

LUKE
Caught short here, Boss.

Boss Tall eyes Luke suspiciously. Then slowly, dangerously -

BOSS TALL
Sure, Luke. Yeah, I understand.
Man needs a little privacy
sometimes. Take it over there
behind that bush. But you keep
shaking that bush, you hear? Just
so I knows you still there. You
just keep shaking that bush.

LUKE
Yes, Boss.

Luke trots off behind a large bush. Boss Gomer and Boss Saul
move closer to the edge of the embankment.

Boss Gomer signals Rambler who scrambles up the embankment to the truck. Boss Tall points his rifle towards the bush.

BOSS TALL
Let me hear you now, Luke.

The bush begins to shake.

LUKE (O.S.)
Shakin' the bush here, Boss.
Shakin' the bush.

Rambler hands Boss Gomer his rifle. Boss Gomer readies his rifle, aims towards the bush.

He fires.

A crow flying overhead falls SQUAWKING to the earth. The squawking sounds suspiciously like "Ahhh craaaap!"

The bush begins to shake again.

LUKE (O.S.)
Shakin' the bush here, Boss.
Shakin' the bush.

As Boss Gomer concentrates his gaze on the bush, its shaking is mirrored in his sunglasses.

LUKE (O.S.)
Still shakin' the bush, Boss.
Still shakin' the bush.

The men stop working. All eyes are now fixed on the bush. It shakes a time or two more and then becomes still.

A moment of watchful anticipation, then -

All three Bosses raise their rifles and fire a volley into the bush.

The bush remains still.

Boss Tall runs down to the bush and looks behind it.

BOSS TALL
Dang!

Boss Tall follows the kite string which is tied to the bush and leads off back into the brush.

BOSS TALL
Get the dogs! He's gone!

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

A rutted country road with farms scattered along it. Luke appears, a filthy, bearded, wide-eyed animal in chains.

EXT. SHARECROPPER'S VILLAGE - DAY

Ramshackle huts and rusting junk litter everywhere. An old BLACK WOMAN hangs washing on a line.

Luke runs by. Her eyes widen. She shakes her head.

Luke passes a General Store. An old BLACK MAN quickly retreats inside leaving a couple of young black boys, PETE and CLETE, staring at Luke as he approaches.

Exhausted, Luke comes to a stop and sits on a nearby stump.

LUKE

You boys have an axe around here.

The boys eyes widen.

CLETE

You gonna chop us up and eat us?

LUKE

No.

The boys relax.

PETE

Yeah, we got an axe.

LUKE

Good. Now one of you go get it.
And I also want you to get me some
chili powder, pepper, curry, dried
mustard and things like that, okay.

The boys eyes widen.

CLETE

I thought you said you wasn't gonna
eat us.

The BAYING of hounds are heard in the distance.

LUKE

I ain't. But you boys hear those
dogs?

The boys nod.

LUKE

Well, I'm gonna show you something
funny with them and the spices.
But first I gotta get these leg
irons off. So scat.

The boys run off. Luke tears off the stripes from the side
of his pants.

Pete returns. He drags a big heavy axe behind him. Luke
takes it and sits in front of the stump.

He spreads his feet on either side and drapes the chain over
the stump. With several heavy swings the chain snaps.

Using one of the pants stripes, Luke straps up the chain on
his leg so that it doesn't drag along the ground.

When Luke stands up, both sides of the chain are miraculously
strapped up.

Clete runs out holding boxes of spices. Luke lies down in
the dirt and rolls around. The boys look on in wonder.

PETE

Momma always said that white trash
didn't have no sense.

CLETE

And momma was right!

Luke gets up. The BAYING of the hounds gets closer. He
takes the spices from Clete, and sprinkles them liberally
over the area he rolled around in.

LUKE

Okay, boys, I gotta go. But you
sit back and watch the show. One
of these days I'll come back and
you can tell me what happened.

The boys nod and smile, and Luke takes off.

PETE

Tell you somethin' else.

CLETE

What's that?

PETE

I'd like to know how that man only
tied the loose chain up on one leg,
but when he got up the chains on
both legs were tied up.

Clete gives his brother a long, irritated look.

CLETE

Fool. That is something you gotta
talk to continuity and editing
about.

The dogs appear, pulling Dogbreath along. Pete and Clete
disappear into the store and reappear in the store window.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Pete and Clete watch outside through the window. The dogs go
crazy sniffing around Luke's scent.

The dogs begin sneezing, then choking, and then yelping in
distress. Dogbreath looks distressed.

CLETE

I ain't never seen a white man cry
before.

PETE

Holy succotash!

BLACK SCREEN

The SOUND of sneezing and anguished yelping continues.

DOGBREATH (O.S.)

Oh, my babies, my babies, my
babies.

SUBTITLE: THE VISUAL FOR THIS SCENE HAS BEEN DELETED DUE TO
ITS GRAPHIC NATURE, AND TO KEEP THE ANIMAL RIGHTS KOOKS
(SORRY LUKE) OFF OUR BACKS.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

The men sit around in various activities. Truck distributes
mail. He examines an envelope and hands it to Mouthful.

TRUCK

From your momma, Mouthful.

MOUTHFUL

Thanks.

Mouthful takes the envelope and as he opens it he FARTS loudly. Truck gives him a dirty look.

TRUCK

That ain't no way to show appreciation.

SMART ASS

He was showing appreciation for the fine lunch we was served.

Truck moves on, handing out mail.

BETTOR

Bet you Luke ain't eating no beans for lunch.

Halfwit jumps up and begins his ritual.

BETTOR

Knock it off, Halfwit. Ain't no one gonna take that bet.

SMART ASS

That's right. Luke is probably eating steak, corn dripping with butter --

DUMB ASS

Chocolate ice cream with cherries on top.

SMART ASS

How long's it been since Luke's been gone?

DRAG-QUEEN

More than three weeks now. My boy Cool Hand is probably living in the lap of luxury. While we are out there sweating every day, old Luke is probably lying in a bubble bath being fed grapes one by one.

TRUCK

Magazine for you, Drag.

DRAG-QUEEN

Magazine! Who'd be sending me a magazine?

Drag-Queen takes the magazine and hands it to Society Fred.

DRAG-QUEEN
Where'd it come from?

SOCIETY FRED
No return address. Postmark is
Atlanta.

Drag-Queen grabs the magazine back and begins ripping it open.

DRAG-QUEEN
Atlanta? Must be from my uncle.
What's my uncle doing sending me --
(looks at magazine)
A magazine with animals on the
cover.

Society Fred looks over Drag-Queen's shoulder as he begins flipping through the magazine.

SOCIETY FRED
Field and Stream.

DRAG-QUEEN
Field and Stream? Fashion! That's
what interests me. Fashion! Who
wants to --

Drag-Queen freezes. He gazes down at the magazine.

INSERT: PHOTOGRAPH TAPED TO THE PAGE

An 8 X 10 glossy of Luke in a Las Vegas-type setting, between two scantily clad women. They are all over him.

A smartly dressed young waiter in a vest and bow tie is pouring Luke a glass of champagne.

BACK TO SCENE

Drag-Queen closes the magazine and looks around. Truck is back at the cage idly talking to Cage Man.

Drag-Queen reopens up the magazine and eyes the photograph.

DRAG-QUEEN
Would you look at that. My bud
Luke is doin' all right.

One by one, more men gather around to look at the photograph.

SOCIETY FRED

Wow, he is really something.

DRAG-QUEEN

Yeah. You ever see a waiter dressed so fine?

SOCIETY FRED

I meant Luke. He is really something. Look at them broads. Oh, baby, baby, baby.

KINKY

Would you look at that! Would you look at that?

BETTOR

Look at that blonde. She's killin' me, she's killin' me. Nice set.

SMART ASS

No, the brunette. Look at them legs. All the way up to her --

Drag-Queen snaps the magazine shut.

DRAG-QUEEN

That's enough! You gonna get Truck's attention you keep on like that.

(an idea)

Anyway, from now on there ain't gonna be no more free eyeballing. Gonna cost from now on.

KINKY

Cost? What d'ya mean, cost? How much is it gonna cost?

DUMB ASS

I'll give you a cold drink for a look right now.

DRAG-QUEEN

You know something? You really live up to your name, Dumb Ass. A cold drink ain't gonna get you an eyeball of Luke --

SOCIETY FRED

With two fine lookin' broads.

BETTOR

A blonde with a perfect beautiful set.

SMART ASS

The legs on that brunette.

DRAG-QUEEN

Okay, okay, we'll be taking orders. A cold drink gets you a peek and a buck gets you a full minute. Kinky here'll be taking orders.

Kinky begins twitching excitedly.

KINKY

That means I get to look for free, right, Drag?

DRAG-QUEEN

Yeah, you get to look for free. Now the rest of you that wants in on this extravaganza line up --

BOSS JACK (O.S.)

Captured prisoner comin' in!

Everyone's attention is diverted towards the door.

Luke is shoved through the door. He falls to the floor face down. Boss Jack and Boss Saul follow behind him.

Luke wears a double set of chains. The men look stunned.

BOSS JACK

(to Truck)

Make sure he's gonna stay conscious if and when he comes to.

TRUCK

Yes, Boss.

BOSS JACK

And he's in The Box every night until Captain says different.

TRUCK

Got you, Boss.

The men begin to gather around Luke. Captain enters fanning himself. He addresses an unconscious Luke.

CAPTAIN

Now you're wearin' two set of chains. You won't ever need another set, Luke, because you're gonna get your mind right.

(to the Bosses)

Ain't that right?

BOSS SAUL

That's right, Captain.

CAPTAIN

Turn him over.

Boss Saul prods Luke over with his foot. Luke has been badly beaten. His face a mess of bruises and cuts.

CAPTAIN

(to the men)

Take a good look at your Cool Hand Kook. He ain't so pretty now, is he? So I want you all to learn from this. Now I'm a man who don't like violence. I like everything to run smooth. And I can be as nice as pie. But if one of my charges don't have his mind right, I can be real mean.

He snaps his fan open and walks out fanning himself. The Bosses follow.

The men gather around Luke. They carefully lift him up onto the Poker table.

DRAG-QUEEN

Easy now. Easy with my bud.

SOCIETY FRED

Somebody get him something to drink.

Dumb Ass runs to get some water.

DRAG-QUEEN

You did good this time, Luke. You was gone almost a month.

KINKY

And looks like you did yourself all right during that month.

BETTOR

You gonna tell us all about it,
right, Luke?

Dumb Ass returns with a mug of water. The men raise Luke up
and put it to his mouth.

Luke opens his puffy eyes and takes a sip.

KINKY

Look, he's comin' to.

SOCIETY FRED

How you doing, Luke?

DRAG-QUEEN

You'll be fine. We're all gonna
watch out for you on the road.

Luke moves his mouth as if to try and say something. The men
move in close.

DRAG-QUEEN

Look, he's tryin' to say something.
What is it Cool buddy?

Luke smiles weakly up at the men.

LUKE

I'm gonna need Society Fred's make
up man.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Men work and sweat. Luke works under the close scrutiny of
Bosses Saul and Tall.

Luke stumbles on his two sets of chains. Immediately Boss
Tall steps in and canes him.

BOSS TALL

Keep your mind on your work, Kook.
I want them weeds to take up a
hundred percent o'your thinking.

LUKE

I slipped. Could you give me a
break.

BOSS TALL

Sure, Kook, you want me to break
your arm or your leg.

LUKE
 Better make it my leg. I don't
 think you can reach my arm.

Both Boss Saul and Boss Tall cane Luke until he falls down.
 He defiantly takes the beating without a word.

BOSS SAUL
 Don't you back sass, you hear!

Luke looks up at them expressionless. Drag-Queen, Kinky,
 Bettor, and Halfwit look on.

KINKY
 They gonna break him or kill him.

DRAG-QUEEN
 That's Cool Hand you're talking
 about. He's a tough one.

BETTOR
 I'll bet you a cold drink he don't
 make it the week.

Halfwit goes into his routine.

DRAG-QUEEN
 I think I'll take that bet.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - DAY

Men get off the truck and count in through the gate.

DRAG-QUEEN
 (to Luke)
 You made the week, bud. Got the
 afternoon and tomorrow to rest up.

Luke nods appreciatively. He joins the line heading towards
 the barracks. Boss Jack waves him out of the line.

BOSS JACK
 Luke! Over here!

Luke falls out of line. He heads to the fence where Boss
 Jack waits.

Drag-Queen and Society Fred sadly look after Luke.

SOCIETY FRED
 They're gonna kill him before they
 break him.

Boss Jack draws parallel lines in the dirt three feet apart and pokes the ground between them with his cane.

BOSS JACK

Boss Saul says that's his ditch. I told him that there dirt is your dirt. What's your dirt doin' in Boss Saul's ditch?

Luke looks at Boss Jack a little puzzled. He shrugs.

LUKE

I dunno. But if it's my dirt then I give it permission to do whatever it feels like doing.

Boss Jack canes him. He takes a shovel that is leaning up against the fence and throws it at Luke's feet.

BOSS JACK

You get your dirt out of his ditch, boy. Now!

Luke picks up the shovel and wearily begins to dig.

LUKE

Bad dirt! Bad dirt!

Boss Jack canes Luke again.

BOSS JACK

Don't you back sass, boy. And move it! I wanna see some action.

Boss Jack strides off.

LUKE

(to himself)

My guess is you'd need to pay for it.

Luke resumes digging.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

Luke is waist deep in a grave-size trench. Prisoners relaxing around the yard cast curious and sympathetic looks at Luke.

Boss Tall strides across the yard to Luke.

BOSS TALL
Wait a second. That ain't my
ditch!

LUKE
(under his breath)
I know. You wouldn't be able to
see out of it if it was.

BOSS TALL
What did you mumble?

LUKE
Nothing, Boss Tall.

BOSS TALL
Well, let me tell you. This is my
yard, and I don't want no dirt from
a ditch that ain't mine litterin'
my yard. So get it where it
belongs, you hear?

LUKE
Yes, Boss.

Luke gets out of the trench and begins weakly shoveling it
back into the trench as Boss Tall strides away.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - NIGHT

Luke is alone in the yard. The trench is almost filled. A
cane swipes across Luke's buttocks.

BOSS JACK
I thought I told you to get your
dirt outta Boss Saul's ditch.
Why's it still there.

LUKE
Emmm, a bureaucratic mix up?

Boss Jack mercilessly canes Luke.

BOSS JACK
Get that dirt outta that ditch!

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

The men are hanging around their bunks. Drag-Queen and Dumb
Ass are looking out of the window.

Luke is heard YELLING in pain.

DRAG-QUEEN

That's the first time I ever heard
Luke yell when he got caned. They
gonna kill him.

EXT. PRISON COMPOUND - NIGHT

Luke is waist deep in the trench as Captain, Boss Jack and
Boss Tall approach.

Luke is a mess. Badly bruised and cut, he can barely move.

BOSS JACK

Get up here, Luke.

Luke can barely crawl out of the trench and stand up.

BOSS TALL

What's your dirt doin' in my yard?

Luke breaks down. He drops to his knees and grabs Boss Tall
around the legs and pleads. A broken man.

LUKE

Don't hit me Boss, please don't hit
me. I'll do anything. Anything.
My mind is right now, please don't
hit me again.

Boss Tall kicks Luke away. Luke falls back into the trench.
A man in a grave.

Boss Jack's voice changes to sympathetic.

BOSS JACK

You gonna run again, Luke?

LUKE

No sir, Boss Jack. My mind is
right.

CAPTAIN

Come up here, Luke.

With much effort, Luke climbs out of the trench and stands
before Captain.

CAPTAIN

No more chances, Luke. Next time
you run we gonna kill you.

LUKE

I won't run again, Captain. My
mind is right. I won't run again.

Captain looks towards the fence where Boss Gomer stands
stoically in the dark, sunglasses still in place.

CAPTAIN

What d'you think, Mr. Piles?

Boss Gomer nods.

CAPTAIN

Go on, Luke. Go get some rest.

Luke stumbles off towards the barracks, mumbling as he goes.

LUKE

I got my mind right. I got my mind
right. I got --

Captain nods to the Bosses, snaps his fan open and walks off.
Bosses Jack and Tall follow.

Boss Gomer stands motionless for a moment, then walks forward
and falls blindly into the trench.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The men work and sweat. Luke works methodically like a
zombie.

BOSS SAUL

Okay men, smoke it up!

ALL PRISONERS

Yes, Boss!

The men drop their scythes and sit around smoking and
coughing.

BOSS SAUL

(almost friendly)

Luke, water 'em down.

LUKE

(almost childlike)

Yes sir, Boss Saul.

Luke, unencumbered by chains and eager to please, runs to the
trucks with a silly smile on his face.

He gets the water and starts watering the men. As he passes Rambler he gets a look of jealousy.

Other men look at Luke with sympathy, embarrassment, disappointment, and so on.

A dirty sweaty Drag-Queen sits next to a clean cool Society Fred. He sadly shakes his head.

DRAG-QUEEN

They got to him. Been a week now.
He's acting worse than Halfwit.
Got him so's he don't even have to
wear no chains. Never thought I'd
ever see that.

Boss Gomer signals with his cane to Luke. Luke drops the water bucket.

LUKE

I'm coming Boss Gomer.

Luke runs to the first truck and gets the rifle. He trots it back to Boss Gomer who takes it with almost a smile.

Boss Gomer puts the bolt in and loads the rifle. Boss Saul and Boss Tall casually move to a position behind Boss Gomer.

Boss Gomer aims the rifle at a turtle at the edge of a nearby pond. Prisoners furtively move out of the line of fire.

Boss Gomer fires. A duck falls from the sky and lands next to the turtle. Luke runs to it and holds it high in the air.

LUKE

You got it! You got it, Boss!

Luke excitedly runs the duck back to Boss Gomer.

BOSS SAUL

How about you put the duck in the truck for Boss Gomer and then take yourself a smoke break.

LUKE

Yes, Boss Saul. Thank you, Boss.

Boss Gomer removes the bolt. He hands Luke the rifle and Luke runs back to the truck. Boss Saul gives Boss Gomer a look of satisfaction.

The look quickly fades at the SOUND of an engine firing up.

Luke is in the truck cab. He puts it in gear and takes off down the road right past the Bosses.

Drag-Queen takes off running. He catches up with the truck, and manages to jump in through the passenger-side door.

Luke hits the gas, then hits the lever and the dump bed begins to raise.

Boss Gomer tries to take Boss Saul's rifle but Boss Saul wrenches it back.

BOSS SAUL
Are you kiddin' me?

Both Boss Saul and Boss Tall empty their rifles at the truck. The bullets bounce off the raised bed.

Tools and equipment dumped from the truck bed litter the road. Boss Gomer looks on impassively.

INT. TRUCK CAB - DAY

DRAG-QUEEN
We're freeeeeeee! I'm so excited I
might wet my panties!

LUKE
Go ahead. Ain't my truck.

Luke has two sets of keys in his hands. He tosses them out of the window.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Boss Tall stands by one of the trucks, Boss Saul at the other.

BOSS TALL
He's taken the keys!

BOSS SAUL
Here too!

Boss Gomer merely watches impassively down the road. The disappearing escape truck reflects in his sun glasses.

EXT. PALMETTO SWAMP - DAY

Drag-Queen is cutting palm fronds and covering the truck.
Luke sits tearing the stripes from the side of his pants.

DRAG-QUEEN
Shakin' the bush here, Boss,
shakin' the bush.

Luke smiles. Drag-Queen laughs, then goes into a mock
cowering.

DRAG-QUEEN
Don't hit me, boss. My mind is
right.

Drag-Queen laughs some more, but Luke looks puzzled.

LUKE
How come you know I said that? You
weren't there.

Drag-Queen looks blankly at Luke.

LUKE
Damned continuity!

Luke gets up and takes off running. Drag-Queen follows him.

EXT. ORCHARD - NIGHT

Luke is rests under a tree. Drag-Queen appears.

DRAG-QUEEN
Just a small village. Nobody
anywhere. Don't think we'll find
any food there.

LUKE
Drag.

DRAG-QUEEN
Yeah, Luke?

LUKE
We gotta split up.

Drag-Queen looks crushed.

DRAG-QUEEN
Split up? Why?

LUKE

I just gotta go it alone, Drag.
You'll make out okay.

Luke stands. Drag looks up at him, then down at the ground.

DRAG-QUEEN

I don't know what I'm gonna do by
myself. Man, I only had a couple
of years left. I should of stayed
put. But when I saw you jump in
that truck and take off I -- But
you're right, Luke, we'd better
split up --

Drag-Queen looks up just in time to see Luke reach the road
and disappear.

DRAG-QUEEN

Was it something I said?

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Luke walks down the empty street towards an old church. A
distant RUMBLE of thunder makes Luke look up at the sky.

He heads towards the church's door.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

It is dark and somber. A sliver of moonlight enters through
the only window located on one wall.

The front door CREEKS loudly as Luke enters. He looks
around. His attention is drawn to a single large painting on
the wall opposite the window.

The picture is a depiction of Moses parting the Red Sea.
Luke stares at the painting.

LUKE

He listened to you, didn't he?
(Charlton Heston)
Behold his mighty hand!

Luke moves away from the painting. Another door in the side
of the church gets Luke's attention. He opens it, looks out,
and closes it.

He looks up at the rafters.

LUKE
You home, Old Timer?

Luke slides into one of the pews and sits down.

LUKE
I know I've done some pretty stupid things, Old Timer. Drank. Chased women. Dismembered poor old Cupid.
(sighs)
But you ain't exactly done right by me, Old Timer. Seems like you ain't got no real interest in me. I've been prayin' to you over the years and seems like nothin' ever gets any better. Sometimes I get to believing you don't even hear me. You ain't never answered me yet. Ain't that right?

Luke looks back up at the rafters for a moment, nods his acceptance, and lowers his head.

DRAG-QUEEN (O.S.)
Luke!

Luke jumps.

LUKE
Holy crap!

He looks nervously around the church. From a dark corner Drag-Queen stands up.

DRAG-QUEEN
Luke, it's me. Drag. I'm sorry, bud, but I didn't want to disturb your prayin'.

LUKE
Drag! Don't do that!

DRAG-QUEEN
Sorry, Luke.

Luke looks at Drag-Queen with a quizzical look.

LUKE
Tell me something. How did you get into this church before I did?

Drag-Queen looks blankly back at Luke. He shrugs.

LUKE

Dang con --

He interrupted by the SOUND of automobiles. Red police lights begin FLASHING through the window.

Car doors SLAM.

LUKE

And how in the heck did those guys know where we were?

Drag-Queen shrugs again.

Luke moves to the window and opens it.

EXT. CHURCHYARD - NIGHT

Captain, Boss Gomer, Boss Saul and Boss Jack along with two SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES watch Luke appear at the window..

All but Captain have guns and rifles trained on Luke.

Luke smiles back at the raised weapons.

LUKE

What we got here is a jail bird who won't cooperate!

A SHOT. Luke falls and disappears below the window.

Boss Gomer lowers the still-smoking rifle. On either side of him Boss Jack and Boss Saul look on with disbelief.

BOSS SAUL

You actually hit him?

Drag-Queen comes charging from the church, bellowing an incoherent roar.

He rushes past the startled guards and stands defiantly in front of Boss Gomer.

And slaps him.

DRAG-QUEEN

You bitch!

The two Sheriffs grab and cuff Drag-Queen. Captain walks towards the church, and goes inside.

Boss Saul and Boss Tall still look surprised.

A big warm smile washes over Boss Gomer's face. He speaks with a high-pitched Southern accent.

BOSS GOMER
G-o-l-l-y! Surprise, surprise,
surprise! I hit my mark.

Captain appears at the window.

CAPTAIN
Sorry to disappoint you, Mr. Piles,
but Kook is gone. You did however
put a bullet in the private parts
of Moses.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

Drag-Queen and Kinky sit on the stoop of the Barracks surrounded by some NEWMEATS.

Drag-Queen is finishing up a story which has obviously captivated his audience.

DRAG-QUEEN
I doubt you Newmeats'll ever come
across a guy like my bud, Cool Hand
Kook.

NEWMEAT
Didn't they ever catch him that
last time?

DRAG-QUEEN
They never even tried.

NEWMEAT
Wow!

DRAG-QUEEN
Yep, he was one of a kind. They
tried to break him, but he broke
them. No matter what they did to
him, he never lost that Cool Hand
Smile. Yeah --

A SERIES OF STILLS OF LUKE SMILING AS DRAG-QUEEN CONTINUES HIS STORY.

DRAG-QUEEN (V.O.)
They'd beat him, but he'd just grin
right back at them.
(MORE)

DRAG-QUEEN(cont'd)

They'd put him in The Box, but he'd
come out with that manic smile
o'his. Smile, smile, smile. That
was my bud, Luke. No one ever came
close to being as cool as Cool Hand
Kook.

BACK TO SCENE

DRAG-QUEEN

Well, maybe there was one before
him. But he ended up selling salad
dressing in supermarkets.

Drag-Queen slowly shakes his head.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A scythe swings in the sun. It belongs to Drag-Queen who now
wears chains. He also wears a wife beater-style tank top.

A pink bra strap slips out and slides down his arm, and he
furtively tucks it back up.

Moving away from Drag-Queen, the whole gang becomes visible.
Men working and sweating. Society Fred immaculate. Bosses
guarding.

Moving higher and further away, the men grow smaller and
smaller, blending and disappearing into the background of the
yellow fields.

FADE OUT.