

FANGED

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FADE IN:

TWANGY COUNTRY GUITAR CHORDS blast from the speakers.

Bold red, white and blue letters fill the screen -

**B R A N S O N**

The letters are filled with generic images of the Midwest's entertainment mecca - water skiing, bearded craftsman, duck boats, roller coasters.

AN EAGER ANNOUNCER with a country drawl pushes the greatest show on earth.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

It's the biggest thing in Branson!

The word Branson EXPLODES as photos of celebrities flash across the screen.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Featuring the biggest names in  
country music!

Stock footage of glitzy Vegas showman DINO, covered in rhinestones, head to toe.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

With special guest from Las Vegas,  
the Fabulous Dino!

Flags and fireworks.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(reverberating)

It's the Amerithon!

THE COUNTRY STAR fills the screen - a gaudy, neon-lit cowboy palace.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Live at Dwayne Robbins' fabulous  
Country Star; the newest, the  
biggest, the best theater in  
Branson!

DWAYNE ROBBINS - portly, flashy, commanding - scratches a slobbery beagle's ears.

DWAYNE  
 Proceeds benefit the American  
 Humane Association!

More flags and fireworks. Dwayne appears on the Country Star stage with his guitar, surrounded by musicians.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)  
 Don't miss the Amerithon! Ya'll  
 come on down!

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - LOBBY - NIGHT

Dwayne slams down a whiskey as he watches himself on the plasma screen TV. He turns with pride to the BARTENDER.

DWAYNE  
 Ain't that something?  
 (sets down the glass)  
 Gimme another!

The bartender nods with approval and pours another shot.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)  
 Nationwide broadcast. Cost a  
 bundle, but we wanna pull in the  
 high rollers.

BARTENDER  
 This place'll be packed tomorrow,  
 Mr. Robbins.

DWAYNE  
 You betcha! I look bigger on TV,  
 don't I?

An old man's voice interrupts...

IRV  
 You look fatter, if that's what you  
 mean.

Wheelchair-bound IRV WILSON, gaunt, wiry, rolls in the door, checking out the garish lobby. He's an old timer - gray beard, worn cowboy hat, scuffed boots.

The sides of Irv's chair are shaped like guitars complete with strings. They pluck out a WARBLING TUNE as he rolls up to the bar. A real guitar hangs from the back.

Dwayne takes the insult in stride, slamming his whiskey.

DWAYNE

Are you looking for tickets to the Amerithon, old timer?

IRV

Nope. Rather buy into that other little shindig you got planned for tomorrow.

DWAYNE

What are you talking about?

IRV

You know, the one in the basement.

The bartender's ears perk up and Dwayne is suddenly nervous. He pushes Irv's wheelchair away. Once out of earshot, Dwayne swings the chair around and leans into the old man.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

How the hell do you know about that?

IRV

I always know what's going on in this town, and if you think I'm just going to stand by and let it happen-

DWAYNE

What are you going to do? Turn in your own son?

IRV

You keep Jud out of this.

DWAYNE

Too late for that, old timer.

Angered, Irv throttles his wheelchair, smashing into Dwayne's shin. Dwayne CRIES OUT in pain.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

You old coot!

IRV

It's wannabe cowboys like you that ruined this town! You don't know squat about country music! Ever since they let them Japs and Ruskies on stage, Branson's gone to the dogs.

Irv whips his guitar out and swings at Dwayne, clipping his temple.

DWAYNE

Jesus!

IRV

Don't be taking the Lord's name in vain! He's gonna' send his wrath down on your worthless ass!

DWAYNE

Listen old man, I'm going to turn that decrepit theater of yours into a parking lot.

IRV

That's what you think!

Irv punches Dwayne in the belly. Dwayne keels over.

The worried bartender picks up the phone.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

DEPUTY BAMBI WILSON grips the wheel with white-knuckled determination, SWEARING WILDLY under her breath.

BAMBI

Dag nabbit!

SIRENS WAILING, the police car leans as she takes a curve without slowing.

A well worn, one-eyed, stuffed TOY DOG rolls across the seat.

She looks younger than her 30 years - short, dark, fiery. SWEARING LOUDER, she grabs the dog and slams it against the far door.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

Tarnation!

She tears down the brightly-lit, crowded Branson strip, swerving in and out of traffic, barely missing tour buses and slow-moving tourists.

EXT. THE COUNTRY STAR - NIGHT

The police car skids sideways, SCREECHING to a halt in front of the theater.

The doorman leaps out of the way as the car door flies open and Bambi piles out.

With CLINCHED FISTS and SHOULDERS SQUARED, she marches into the Country Star's crowded lobby.

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - LOBBY - NIGHT

Bambi pushes and shoves her way through a crowd of employees to find Dwayne lying on the floor, cringing in terror as...

Irv WHEELIES his chair and smashes down on Dwayne.

BAMBI

PAPPY!

Irv backs off like a kid scolded by his mother.

DWAYNE

It's about time...

Dwayne pulls himself to his feet, turning to Bambi.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

...Jesus, not you!

Bambi is up in his face, eyes blazing.

BAMBI

Assaulting a seventy year old invalid, Mr. Robbins?

DWAYNE

What?

She's suffocatingly close. Dwayne steps back, but she follows.

Irv aims his guitar and twists the tuning knob. The string SNAPS, whipping Dwayne in the ass.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Yeowch! Mother H. Christ!

Dwayne leaps on Irv, knocking the wheelchair over. Both tumble to the ground.

Bambi whips out her nightstick, catching Dwayne's arm and bending it back. Dwayne rolls over in pain.

She cuffs him.

BAMBI  
Is that alcohol I smell on your  
breath? Drunk and disorderly?

DWAYNE  
You can't arrest me. I've got a big  
show tomorrow!

Irv pulls himself back into the chair.

IRV  
Throw that phony in the slammer!

BAMBI  
You go on home.

IRV  
He started it!

BAMBI  
Go home, Pappy!

DWAYNE  
Goddamn unbelievable!

Bambi yanks Dwayne to his feet, twisting his arms uncomfortably.

BAMBI  
Don't take the Lord's name in vain.

She shoves him toward the exit. Dwayne struggles all the way.

DWAYNE  
You can't get away with this...

INT. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

The cell door SLAMS on Dwayne. He grips the bars, face beet red, spitting.

DWAYNE  
...I'll make you eat that badge!

INT. LABORATORY - NIGHT

Electronic equipment pulsates with a strange, green light.

JUD WILSON, a handsome, rough-hewn, ball-capped country boy, pets the head of

KONG,

an unnaturally muscular, coal-black PIT BULL.

A CHINESE SCIENTIST jabbars away in Jud's ear in his native language as a young, bespectacled

CHINESE TRANSLATOR

in a crisp, black suit takes his other ear and translates.

TRANSLATOR

The fusion process is nearly complete. See Kong's body. Sense Kong's potent strength.

Jud moves a hand over Kong's front leg - its huge, abnormally large muscles bristle under the skin.

KONG IS A MONSTER!

Jud rubs Kong behind the ears as a SECOND SCIENTIST approaches with a

BIG SYRINGE.

He grabs a handful of Kong's neck skin.

CHINESE TRANSLATOR

This will enhance his fighting instincts. Kong will be a giant among his peers!

The needle is thrust in.

Kong SNARLS IN SURPRISE.

He lashes out, SNAPPING, trying to break free.

The bite rips Jud's jeans,

CANINE TEETH

sinking into human flesh.

JUD

Fuck!

Jud pulls away, examining the bloody bite.

JUD (CONT'D)

Fanged by my own dog! You boys should be more careful. Kong's sensitive!

Kong WHIMPERS and licks Jud's wound.

JUD (CONT'D)

See?

He looks Kong in the eye, a devilish grin on his face, as the dog laps up his blood.

JUD (CONT'D)

You ready to fight, boy? Let's see you strut your stuff.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

A muddy pickup tears up the gravel road - headlights off.

It stops at a gate guarded by SHADOWY FIGURES. Beyond lies a large, tin-roofed barn backed up against the thick woods.

Rifle barrels protrude. Flashlight beams pierce the dark cab, moving up and down, resting on the driver's face.

Rough and tumble mountain man

MARK TOLLER

squints and covers his eyes.

He calmly pushes the flashlight away, his hand reflecting light back on the face of a man with a German Shepherd.

Mark nods.

MARK

Sheriff.

The German Shepherd SNARLS at Mark. THE SHERIFF tugs on the leash and eyes Mark with suspicion. He holds out his hand.

Mark shoves a fifty dollar bill into his palm.

The flashlights disappear.

The gates open.

Mark drives through.

EXT. FARLEY BARN - NIGHT

Mark drives slowly past an assortment of parked vehicles pickups, minivans, BMWs, Mercedes and even a Jag.

He pulls into a vacant spot, then stuffs a .357 in his shoulder holster. Staring into the mirror, he steels himself before stepping out of the truck.

Armed guards open the barn door. Yellow light spills onto the muddy ground.

THE NOISE OF A CROWD greets Mark as he steps inside.

INT. FARLEY BARN - NIGHT

It's like a carnival. Mark moves through the crowd passing vendors grilling hot dogs and burgers. Adults drink from bottles and flasks. Carefree children laugh and scamper under bleachers. A smoky haze lingers over their heads.

Mark notes armed guards milling about the room. He watches as money changes hands, people BOASTING LOUDLY, placing bets.

Drunken, surly rednecks size him up as he penetrates the thick crowd.

The SNARLING and GROWLING swells, momentarily rising above the human din. The crowd joins in with

LUSTY CHEERING.

Mark pushes his way to a plywood pit at the center where

TWO PIT BULLS BATTLE,

RIPPING away at each other,

OPENING WOUNDS

locked in a DEATH GRIP.

Mark reacts in disgust, ever so slightly. He glances around at the smiling, bloodthirsty faces.

One dog finally drops, defeated, GASPING FOR BREATH.

The crowd CLAMORS FOR MORE as the dogs are dragged away.

The winning dog's owner leaps into the pit and thrusts his clenched fists triumphantly into the air.

The worked-up audience throws beer cans and popcorn at him.

EXT. FARLEY BARN - NIGHT

A jet-black ARMORED TRUCK with tinted windows pulls up to the barn. The driver's window opens with an ELECTRIC HUM.

Jud holds a CELL PHONE to his ear, its faceplate emblazoned with the

CONFEDERATE FLAG.

He frowns as the phone RINGS AND RINGS.

JUD  
(to himself)  
Where are you, Dwayne?

He turns to the three Chinese men crowded in next to him.

JUD (CONT'D)  
Where the heck is he, boys?

They stare back with blank faces. The translator shrugs, speaks to the others in Chinese, and turns back to Jud.

TRANSLATOR  
Mr. Dwayne does not confide such things as personal whereabouts and schedule.

JUD  
Yeah, right. He's gonna miss this.  
Crap!

Jud tosses the phone to the seat and it bounces onto the floor.

JUD (CONT'D)  
Well boys, looks like it's up to us. The new and improved Kong is-

THUD!

The truck rocks from side to side. The scientists look concerned and CHATTER IN UNISON.

JUD (CONT'D)  
 What was that?

Jud gives them a questioning glance and checks the mirrors nothing behind them.

He slowly pulls the armored truck around behind the barn where a row of trucks and SUVs are parked. The trucks have dog cages mounted in the back.

A small group of DOG OWNERS stand in a circle, beers in hand, bullshitting, when Jud's armored truck pulls up. They stop talking and gape.

A pit bull on a choker chain GROWLS.

SCRAWNY DOG OWNER  
 Jud Wilson?

The truck stops and Jud hops out, limping slightly from his bite wound. He approaches the dog fighters with a shit eating grin.

FAT DOG OWNER  
 What the hell is that, Jud?

Jud motions dramatically behind him.

JUD  
 That, boys, is the future of dog fighting.

The scientists scurry out after Jud, still talking among themselves.

GREASY DOG OWNER  
 Who's them foreigners?

JUD  
 Some of Dawyne's investors. Show some respect. This is a multi-national operation now.

The growling pit bull starts BARKING. Its owner yanks on the choker. Jud nods to the translator.

JUD (CONT'D)  
 Why don't you introduce the boys to Kong?

The translator speaks to the scientists and they head to the back of the truck. One fumbles with keys in the lock and opens the doors.

They climb in with the translator close behind.

FAT DOG OWNER  
Hell, Jud, you're full of shit.

JUD  
You all can just kiss your little  
pet doggies goodbye.

The pit bull yanks on the chain, nearly knocking its scrawny owner over. He loops the chain around his arm, holding the dog tight.

Dogs in trucks start BARKING and HOWLING IN UNISON.

One dog leaps against the window of an SUV. Another tears at the metal fabric of its cage.

The owners look around, confused at the SUDDEN CACOPHONY.

CRASH!

The armored truck rocks violently.

WHAM!

It happens again!

The dogs fall silent.

Jud slowly approaches the back of the truck - freezing as a

GODZILLA-LIKE BELLOW

fills the air.

Everyone hangs motionless - terrified.

CRASH!

A body flies out of the armored truck - SMASHING into the SUV. It falls on the ground -

THE TRANSLATOR,

his face and chest slashed wide open.

Before the shock registers with Jud, the two scientist leap out of the truck and run SCREAMING into the darkness.

The back doors EXPLODE and Kong's black shape arcs through the night air, landing on a pickup,

CRUSHING IT.

JUD (CONT'D)  
Holy Crap!

Kong BELLOWS again. His dimly lit form is vague against the black woods, but it's fearsomely massive.

Jud jumps in the cab of the armored truck, searching for his pistol under the seat, knocking his

CELL PHONE

into the grass in the process.

He climbs out as a white pit bull rushes past, his leash dragging the ground, and a

SEVERED ARM

still gripping handle. Jud turns to see the

BLOODY BODIES

of the three dog owners - lifeless shapes sprawled on the ground.

He scans the darkness. The quiet is suffocating.

Jud dives into the cab, SLAMS THE DOOR and cranks the ignition. The engine REVS and he tears away.

INT. FARLEY BARN - DOG PIT - NIGHT

Sawdust is thrown over a puddle of blood. A white cord is laid across the pit.

SNAP!

A cloud of white dust rises. The cord is drawn away, leaving a sharp chalk line.

THE REFEREE signals two new contestants into the pit.

REFEREE  
Face your dogs!

The men in the pit move their anxious dogs to the line.

They GROWL and pull at their restraints as they near each other. The crowd CHEERS them on.

The referee waves his hand and the dogs are released. A timekeeper starts his stopwatch.

The dogs collide, ripping and tearing at one another.

The crowd loves it!

Suddenly the dogs stop fighting and face the barn doors with a FEARFUL WHIMPER.

The crowd falls silent as the dogs back away from each other.

A SHOUT is heard outside, followed by GUNSHOTS. A moment of NOISY CONFUSION and it all goes QUIET.

A SCRAPE

at the door. It moves, ever so slightly.

TWENTY SHOTGUNS

take aim as the door CREAKS OPEN.

A broken, bloodied body collapses into the opening - eyes wide, frozen in terror.

Outside, a LOW GROWL begins, growing louder, rattling the windows, reaching a furious pitch.

The barn door is kicked inward.

The HELLISH GROWLING is met with GUNFIRE and PANIC-STRICKEN SCREAMS. People scramble, surging like a tidal wave away from the door.

SHOVING

SCREAMING

PUSHING

SHOUTING

Mark scans the barn. High in the back wall, he spots a

LOFT OPENING.

Pushing through the mob, he forces his way to the bleachers. He bounds up to the top, just a few feet below the loft.

Leaping, he grabs the edge of the opening, hanging precariously for a moment. He pulls himself up.

A hand grasps his boot and jerks, nearly pulling him back down.

UNSEEN MAN (O.S.)

Help me!

Mark sits up and reaches for the man's hand, flailing in the dim light. Their fingers touch, but the man is torn away.

Mark watches the chaos a moment in horror then SLAMS the door shut - scrambling across the loft floor.

INT. ARMORED TRUCK - NIGHT

Jud barrels blindly down the road - his eyes darting to the rearview mirror - terrified.

JUD

Jesus! Sweet Jesus, you've got to  
save me now!

He whips the truck around a corner, SPEWING GRAVEL.

He sweeps the front seat with his right hand, searching.

JUD (CONT'D)

My phone...

Panicky, he leans over and feels around the floorboard.

JUD (CONT'D)

...where the hell is my phone?

He looks down a moment, leaning further, reaching up under the seat.

The truck JERKS VIOLENTLY and he sits up.

A SHARP CURVE AHEAD.

He works the wheel, but it's too late. The truck hits the slope of the shoulder, then leaves the ground, flying through the air like a two-ton brick. It lands savagely, bouncing again and again.

Jud works the wheel from side to side, trying to maneuver through the maze of trees.

BAM!

A mirror is ripped off.

SCREECH!

A tree scrapes down the passenger side.

Jud covers his face as a huge walnut tree looms straight ahead. The truck SLAMS into it head-on, it's front end crumbling like a METAL ACCORDION.

HUGE WALNUTS rain down, pounding the armored car.

STEAM SPEWS from the ruptured radiator.

INT. BARN LOFT - NIGHT

Mark crouches in a dark corner, curled up in a ball, revolver in hand, staring at the loft door.

Nothing but silence below.

He gets to his knees, hands still shaking. He crawls slowly along the loft floor towards the door.

THE FLOOR BOARDS CREAK

under his knees and he freezes - listening - still nothing from below. He continues.

Five feet...

four...

three...

the door is within reach. His hand touches the handle.

CRASH!

The door splinters as a powerful blow is struck from the below. Mark covers his face as he's knocked back by the concussion.

For a moment, only his own GASPING BREATH is heard. But soon another joins it...

DEEPER...

SLOWER.

Mark's hand searches for the .375, just inches from his grasp.

The room darkens as a huge, black form looms over him. The form moves closer - engulfing, smothering.

Fierce, red eyes glower down at him.

MARK SCREAMS!

EXT. FARLEY CROSSING BARN - DAY

Bambi pulls up to the barn. Every police car in the county is there.

Half a dozen bloodhounds BAY on a truck flatbed.

COMMISSIONER BERNIE MURALLO, a middle-aged, balding, nervous wreck of a man in a country business suit rushes up to her.

BAMBI  
Commissioner.

BERNIE  
Good Lord, what took you so long?

Bambi bristles as he grabs her arm and pulls her along, hurrying her back to the barn.

BERNIE (CONT'D)  
This is unbelievable! A complete disaster!

BAMBI  
What?

Bernie pulls her inside and points.

BERNIE  
Why don't you tell me?

INT. FARLEY CROSSING BARN - DAY

Bambi adjusts her eyes to the dim light. Other cops move about compiling evidence, taking photos.

The barn walls are splattered with blood, the bleachers destroyed, the plywood pit ripped to pieces.

She lets out a LOUD WHISTLE.

BERNIE  
Blood all over the damn place...

DEPUTY NOVI wields a camera like he's a member of the CSI team. His muscular frame and crisp mustache mean business.

He photographs shredded, bloody clothes tossed in a corner.

BERNIE (CONT'D)  
...clothes, money, jewelry...  
everything's still here. Everything  
but the bodies!

NOVI  
 (interjecting)  
 Looks like illegal dog fighting to me, Sir, but there's gallons of spilt blood. Must have been quite a crowd.

BAMBI  
 Where's Sheriff Russell?

The commissioner SNORTS IN DISGUST. He picks up an evidence bag with the sheriff's blood-splattered billfold and badge.

BERNIE  
 Where indeed?

BAMBI  
 No.

BERNIE  
 The sheriff involved in dog fighting?

NOVI  
 (under his breath)  
 That's a revelation!

The commissioner thrusts a second evidence bag in her face

A CELL PHONE

with a Confederate flag case and the initials J.W.

BERNIE  
 J.W. - Jud Wilson? Is this your brother's?

BAMBI  
 Jud?

NOVI  
 (again, just loud enough)  
 Hallelujah!

Her eyes dart to Novi, narrowing. Novi turns away to hide his smirk.

BERNIE  
 The whole town knows Jud is a dog fighter. You telling me you don't know what's going on?

Bambi shakes her head - stunned, confused.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Well, as Senior Deputy Sheriff, you're in charge now - at least until we find out what happened to Sheriff Russell. Clean this mess up, but don't let word get out. Tonight's the biggest show to ever hit Branson and I'm not going to let some stupid illegal dog fighting ruin everything!

He shoves the cell phone evidence bag into her hand and rushes off, climbing into a black Lincoln.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I'll be at the Country Star. Keep me informed. And if that idiot mayor calls, clam up. No need for him to know anything yet. Good Lord, we don't know anything yet!

NOVI (O.S.)

Commissioner! Sir!

Novi runs up to the car and hands the Commissioner a banjo.

NOVI (CONT'D)

Almost forgot this.

BERNIE

Jesus Christ, that's all I need.

He grabs the banjo, smiles at Novi, and scowls at Bambi, before speeding off.

Novi smirks at Bambi. She rolls her eyes, and turns to find six male officers lined up behind her - all wearing Novi's smirk - just daring her.

Her eyes spark with anger, then she calms herself, mustering courage and authority.

BAMBI

We'd better call in some of the big boys from Springfield.

Novi looks down his nose at Bambi.

NOVI

I don't think we need to do that just yet.

Me and the boys here will take the bloodhounds out, see what we can find.

BAMBI

Novi, I've been put in charge  
here...

NOVI

Don't worry your pretty little head  
about it, Bambi. We've got it  
covered.

Bambi fumes as Novi and the others file outside, LAUGHING  
amongst themselves.

NOVI (CONT'D)

Finding ole' brother Jud might be a  
good place for you to start on your  
first big investigation!

EXT. FARLEY BARN - LATER

BAYING BLOODHOUNDS drag the Deputies into the surrounding  
woods.

Bambi strides out of the barn - her fiery glare burning  
holes in Novi's back as he loads his shotgun. He senses her,  
but doesn't turn.

NOVI

It ain't right.

BAMBI

What?

NOVI

Puttin' you over me like that.

Bambi bristles again.

BAMBI

Right or wrong, they put me in  
charge.

Novi confronts her.

NOVI

We all know you just made deputy  
because of your brother. Fighters  
stick together.

Bambi shakes with anger. Novi notices.

BAMBI  
Radio me if you find anything  
anything at all.

Novi looks at her clinched, white-knuckled fists - the building fury. Bambi holds her own, ready to fight.

Novi breaks his gaze and backs down.

NOVI  
Right.

He follows the hounds' FADING HOWLS into the dark forest, and the barn becomes peaceful and serene. Bambi's tension slowly releases.

She bursts into tears walking back to car.

INT. BAMBI'S CAR - DAY

Bambi flops down behind the wheel, SNIFFLING, wiping away the wetness from her cheeks with a sleeve.

She opens her glove box and starts to toss Jud's cell phone in, but stops.

She stares at the red, white and blue casing, running her thumb over the initials through the bag.

Suddenly her resolve strengthens, her lips tighten. She looks at the scraggy stuffed dog in the passenger seat.

She PUNCHES it hard. WHAP!

WHAP! She hits it again, then again.

Venting her anger, she pounds on the battered dog over and over. Finally she stops and clutches the steering wheel with both hands.

BAMBI  
Aaaarrrrgh!

A SUDDEN MOVEMENT to her left.

A FIGURE rushes across the clearing - dishevelled, wild.

Bambi lets out a YELP of surprise, then leaps from her car.

BAMBI (CONT'D)  
Hey! Hold it!

The figure is oblivious and dives blindly into a thicket. Bambi hustles after him.

INT. FOREST - DAY

Bambi plows through the dense, wild hedge, pushing aside brambles and thorny vines.

Breaking into a clearing, she freezes. The forest spreads out in front of her - tall trees tower above, dark shadows pool.

HER HEAVY BREATHING SLOWS.

She pulls her revolver and scans the shadows.

SNAP!

A branch cracks to her left. The figure emerges from behind a tree, leaping over fallen branches, racing away.

Bambi levels her weapon.

BAMBI

Halt!

The figure dives over a far hill and disappears.

EXT. RAVINE - DAY

Bambi crouches, moving with caution up to the edge. She peers into the ravine's deep recesses.

The figure is gone.

TRICKLING WATER the only sound.

The figure creeps up behind her - it's Mark.

MARK

Hey!

BAMBI WHOOPS WITH SURPRISE, falling on her rear in an attempt to turn. She scrambles to her feet, shoving the revolver in his face.

BAMBI

Freeze right there!

Mark is wild-eyed. Blood covers his clothes.

MARK

You gotta do something!

Bambi shoves him with her free hand.

BAMBI

On the ground!

Mark doesn't seem to hear her.

MARK

It was horrible!

BAMBI

On the ground!

Bambi shoves again - hard this time.

Mark falls backwards.

Bambi pounces, twisting him onto his stomach.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

Hands behind your back!

Mark lies there, BABBLING.

MARK

You gotta do something. You  
gotta...

Bambi grabs his arm, bends it behind his back, and shoves  
him into the mud.

MARK (CONT'D)

Ouch! Jesus.

BAMBI

Don't take the Lord's name in vain.

The pain brings Mark to his senses as the cuffs tighten  
around his wrists.

MARK

You've gotta call the Feds before  
it kills again.

BAMBI

The only thing I've got to do is  
take you in for questioning.

She pulls Mark to his feet and roughly shoves him forward.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

Now move!

INT. BAMBI'S CAR - DAY

Driving down the forest road, Mark cuffed in the back.

BAMBI

So, this "thing" killed everyone at  
the Farley Crossing barn and  
mysteriously left you alive.

Mark gives a hopeless nod.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

I've heard some tall tales buddy,  
but that takes the cake. We'll get  
you a good lawyer and a psych  
evaluation.

Mark straightens, sits up with resolve.

MARK

It's what happened.

Bambi studies his face in the rearview, not convinced.

BAMBI

So, what's your name?

MARK

Mark Toller.

BAMBI

Toller, from Ozark County?

MARK

No. I'm...

Mark, exasperated, leans forward with dead seriousness.

MARK (CONT'D)

...I'm working undercover for the  
Humane Society, collecting evidence  
to bust a dog fighting ring.

Bambi gives him a look of total disbelief.

MARK (CONT'D)

Call the St. Louis office and check  
it out.

He seems honest.

BAMBI

Nobody told me about a sting.

MARK

Well they figured the local cops  
might be covering it up. The  
sheriff was there...

Bambi gets uncomfortable.

MARK (CONT'D)

...and this guy named Jud Wilson.  
Looks like he's the dog fighting  
king around here...

Bambi looks at Jud's phone on the seat beside her. She  
slides it under the stuffed dog.

MARK (CONT'D)

...but it's that thing we've got to  
worry about now.

EXT. ARTIE BOLSON'S HOUSE - DAY

ARTIE BOLSON, a large dirty man in coveralls and ball cap,  
holds a squirming CAT at arm's length as

FRANK RYAN, even bigger and dirtier, leans against the hood  
of a rusty pickup guzzling a beer.

He crushes the can and tosses it into the pickup bed.

FRANK

More beer, Artie!

ARTIE

Damn it, why didn't you say so  
before? Here, catch!

Artie tosses the cat at Frank. Frank jumps to his feet,  
grabbing the cat as it

HISSES AND CLAWS his arms.

FRANK

Jerk off!

Artie laughs as he walks back to his shoebox house, crossing  
a yard filled with skeletal car hulks, bathtubs, derelict  
appliances.

Frank holds the cat up and grins maniacally.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Let's go have some fun, huh kitty?

He carries the cat to the truck bed and stuffs it into a BURLAP SACK.

The cat fights him all the way and Frank wrestles with it until he gets its front paws pushed through

TWO SMALL HOLES

in the sack. He ties off the opening with a short rope.

MUMBLING TO HIMSELF and breathing heavily from the exertion, he carries the sack to a fenced in pen where

AN ANGRY PIT BULL

moves neurotically along the back fence, GROWLING at Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Nipper, you're one ugly dog, and you got one stupid name.

He holds up the squirming sack. The dog looks at it curiously as Frank does a sing-song.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Time for your first blood. Nipper, nipper, nipper nipper...

He tosses the sack into the pen.

The terrified cat, unable to see, claws frantically at the air as the curious dog slowly approaches.

Frank grins, yellow teeth glistening, bloodlust in his eyes.

INT. ARTIE BOLSON'S HOUSE - DAY

Artie saunters through a filthy living room to a crusty kitchen and opens a refrigerator full of beer.

ARTIE

Lazy son of a bitch...

He grabs a six-pack of Red Dog, then freezes at the SOUND OF FIGHTING outside. He drops the beer and runs to the window, throwing it open.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
 Goddamn it, Frank! Wait for me!  
 I'll blood my own dog.

Whirling, he heads for the front door, then stops dead in his tracks.

THE REFRIGERATOR IS GONE.

Only a greasy outline against the wall remains. He steps into the spot where it used to be, moving his hand through the air as if it had suddenly become invisible.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
 What the hell?

He GASPS at a A LOW SNARL from the other room. He slowly turns around and his eyes widen.

THE REFRIGERATOR

flies into the kitchen with a WHOOSH, hitting Artie in the chest, flattening him with a CRUNCHING THUD.

The refrigerator door pops open and dozens of beer cans spill out in a avalanche of cold metal.

EXT. KENNEL - DAY

Frank hooks the bloody burlap bag with a wood pole and pulls it to him. He holds the sack out, taunting the dog.

The pit bull leaps at the fence, SNAPPING FEROCIOUSLY, as Frank laughs, still singing.

FRANK  
 Nippy, nippy, nippo... You like  
 that, don't you boy?

The pit bull suddenly stops barking and sits.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 Huh?

Frank looks back over his shoulder.

Four pit bulls stand behind him, GROWLING.

Terrified, Frank offers the bloody cat sack.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Nice doggies! Here you go.

He throws the sack. It lands at their feet. They don't flinch, keeping their attention on Frank.

Frank bites his lip, sweaty and desperate, as his attention shifts from the dogs to

SOMETHING BIGGER.

Terror fills his eyes.

His SCREAMS are muffled as a large

BURLAP SACK

is thrust over his head. He struggles to escape, but only finds two holes for his arms.

Frank swings wildly as he's thrown into the pen. He rolls a few times, then sits up, HOWLING and flaying his arms.

Nipper licks his lips, then pounces.

The other dogs leap the fence to join him.

INT. COUNTY JAILHOUSE - DAY

RATTLE OF KEYS and the hall door opens. Dwayne leaps to his feet as Bernie follows a deputy up to the cell. He grabs the bars as the door is unlocked.

DWAYNE

Where the hell you been?

BERNIE

Having some problems.

DWAYNE

You're having problems? Look at where I spent the night? Christ Almighty!

Bernie looks away nervously, mustering his courage to face the stronger man.

BERNIE

We've got to get you to the luncheon. We're late.

Dwayne pushes past him and down the hall.

DWAYNE

I know that! Give me your phone.

Bernie hands his cell phone to Dwayne.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

Jud's phone begins to ring with the

DUKES OF HAZARD THEME,

the SOUND MUFFLED under the stuffed dog. Bambi pulls the evidence bag out from underneath it.

Once, twice, three times - it continues to RING.

MARK

Your evidence is ringing.

Bambi throws him a menacing look, then snatches the bag. She awkwardly presses the "talk" button through the plastic.

DWAYNE (O.S.)

(muffled)

Wilson? I'm in the damn slammer...

Bambi cocks her head.

BAMBI

Come again?

DWAYNE

I'M IN JAIL, YOU MORON...

BAMBI

Dwayne Robbins?

DWAYNE

Who is this?

BAMBI

I said are you Dwayne Robbins?

A long pause, then CLICK. Bambi is puzzled.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The armored car's door CREAKS OPEN, pushed by a bloody arm.

Jud leans against the door, holding his blood-splattered head, GROANING in pain.

He rolls out of the car and lands on the ground, then tries to stand.

A THRUST OF PAIN - his leg gives out.

He looks down - the pant leg is torn.

Kong's bite is infected, unnaturally swollen with red, spidery veins spreading out.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

Jud limps onto a barren stretch of asphalt. A sign reads:

HERCULES GLADES WILDERNESS AREA.

He looks around, checks his bearings and heads down the road.

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - AUDITORIUM - DAY

FIFI, a toy poodle, trots down the center aisle - hair dyed flame red, sky-blue ribbons adorning each ear.

She moves from one out-stretched hand to the next in a room full of

SILVER-HAIRED PATRONS,

wagging her tail, frantically licking.

Dwayne stands at a podium on the stage. Artist's renderings of the proposed animal shelter serve as backdrop.

DWAYNE

Ladies of Branson. You are and have always been the power! It is you all of you - who have made this possible!

He motions to the pictures behind him. The women APPLAUD politely.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

And after tonight's Amerithon - the biggest show on the biggest stage in Branson ever - we'll have the funds to complete our, no, your new animal rehabilitation shelter!

THE APPLAUSE GROWS. Dwayne holds up a quieting hand.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)  
 This luncheon is the County Star's  
 way of humbly saying 'Thank you.'

Momentary displeasure crosses his face as he notices Fifi emerging from a group and crossing the aisle.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)  
 But wait! There's more. Look around  
 and you'll see we've got a special  
 visitor - all the way from Las  
 Vegas, Nevada.

An ELDERLY WOMAN in cowboy garb snatches up the poodle and holds her up for all to see.

ELDERLY WOMAN  
 Look everyone, it's Fifi!

The old ladies liven up as she hugs and kisses the poodle.

DWAYNE  
 That's right! And we all know Fifi  
 goes nowhere without... yes... THE  
 FABULOUS DINO!

Fifi leaps out of the woman's arms and races onto the stage, disappearing behind the curtains. Dwayne follows her. He pulls back the curtains and

DINO

waves to the crowd - his handsome, deeply lined face heavy with make up, like an aging, macho-drag queen. His gold and silver sequined outfit sparkles brightly as he scoops up Fifi.

Two huge thugs, HANS and GRUBER, in matching pink outfits, stand behind Dino like gay mafioso.

Dwayne gives Dino an exaggerated, false smile, hissing under his breath.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)  
 Well, well... the poster boy for  
 glitter obliteration.

Dino continues to wave, speaking through clenched, sparkling white teeth. His voice is shockingly deep and unaffected.

DINO  
 Love your boots, cowboy.

Fifi GROWLS at Dwayne.

DWAYNE

Keep that thing on a leash or it'll  
be an appetizer for Kong.

Dino feigns a laugh and runs a hand along the lush stage  
curtains.

DINO

These thrift store rejects'll have  
to go once the Country Star is  
mine. That'll be, oh, about eight  
tonight...

DWAYNE

Right time, wrong outcome. I'll be  
owning some Vegas property.

Dino flashes a devilish smile, then glides onto the stage.

EXT. ARTIE BOLSON'S HOUSE - DAY

Using a makeshift crutch, Jud hobbles through the cluttered  
yard. He pauses, scanning the place - it's strangely silent.

Using the tip of his stick, he cautiously opens the screen  
door and enters the darkened house.

JUD

Artie?

INT. ARTIE BOLSON'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jud steps into the room, shrouded in semi-darkness. His hand  
moves along the wall, searching for the light switch.

JUD

You here?

He finds the switch and flips it on. Blinking, he takes a  
step forward, only to stumble into the refrigerator.

Jud looks down at the flattened, bloody mess under the  
fridge.

He lets out a YELP,

scrambles backwards,

slips on a beer can and falls flat on his butt,

BURSTING OPEN several beer cans as he does.

He scooches across the floor, slamming his back into the kitchen counter.

Staring back at the fridge, unable to look away. GASPING FOR BREATH, Jud thinks - fear in his eyes.

He pulls open a drawer with shaky hands and whips out a large

CARVING KNIFE.

On his feet and with the knife out in front, Jud moves around the fridge, and into the living room.

He darts nervously about the room, searching, swinging the knife defensively. Nothing to be found. Then...

HE FREEZES.

Turning slowly back to stare at

A GUN CABINET

loaded with rifles and shotguns. Jud's eyes widen.

The carving knife CLANGS against the floor.

INT. ARTIE BOLSON'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

A well-oiled, double-barrel shotgun rests against the sink. Jud sits on the toilet and cuts open his pant leg open, examining the wound.

It's bad.

He fingers it, wincing as blood and yellow-green puss spurts out.

He fumbles for bandages and tape in the medicine cabinet. As he closes the cabinet door, he stares at his frightened, weary face in the mirror.

EXT. ARTIE BOLSON'S HOUSE - DAY

Jud limps up to a pickup in the gravel drive, shotgun in one hand, six-pack in the other. He pops his head inside the driver's window - no keys, the ignition is empty.

He opens a beer, takes a swig, and tosses the others onto the seat.

A DOG HOWLS behind the house. Jud chokes and spits out his beer at the sound.

Cocking the shotgun, he moves slowly towards the back of the house.

EXT. KENNEL - DAY

The kennels have been destroyed. A large, lumpy shape lies in the training area.

Jud moves carefully towards it. He steps over the smashed fence.

ANOTHER HOWL in the woods. He whirls - nothing there.

FRANK'S BODY

lies face-down, wrapped in shredded, bloody canvas, the stumps of his

GNAWED OFF ARMS outstretched.

Jud's breath quickens as he kneels down next to the body.

JUD  
Lordy, Frank.

He winces uncomfortably and reaches for the large key ring on Frank's belt. It comes loose with a SNAP.

INHALE.

A rush of air fills Frank's lungs. He rolls over, face slashed, caked with dirt and blood, eyes mad.

FRANK  
AR-G-G-G-G-G!

Jud leaps back. Frank flops around violently, obscenely, then falls still.

INT. ARTIE BOLSON'S HOUSE - DAY

Jud grabs every gun in the rack. He's loaded down as he races out the door toward the truck.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

Bambi slows and turns off the paved highway onto a dirt road. Mark looks around.

MARK

You're not taking me to the station?

BAMBI

You just sit tight back there, Mister.

"NO TRESPASSING" signs cover a heavy steel gate flanked by tall, barbed wire fences. Bambi punches some numbers into a keypad and the gate opens.

EXT. JUD'S RANCH - DAY

Bambi pulls up to the secluded ranch house. She glances at a pickup truck parked near a garage. She grabs her rifle.

MARK

What's going on? What is this?

BAMBI

Stay put.

Mark glimpses her name tag - WILSON - as she slams the door.

MARK

Holy shit.

As she walks away, he tries the door handle - LOCKED.

THE DOORBELL

Bambi waits at the front door. Nothing.

She walks around the house, looking over a wooden fence. Several outbuildings surround the backyard.

BAMBI

Jud?

Moving through the gate, she passes a row of empty CAGES, the doors ripped off their hinges.

A tire swing hangs from a tall oak.

INT. STEEL BARN - DAY

Bambi pushes open the door with a GRATING METAL sound.

BAMBI  
Jud? Hello?

BREAKING GLASS is heard inside.

Bambi moves in, past wooden packing crates, refrigerators and strange machines to a door. She tries it - locked.

She looks back toward the exit - which way to go? She readies her rifle, tightens her lip, and

SMASHES OPEN THE DOOR.

She raises the rifle, then freezes - surprised, perplexed.

EXT. BAMBI'S CAR - DAY

Bambi trains her rifle on Mark.

BAMBI  
Come on.

Mark hesitates, fearful.

BAMBI (CONT'D)  
Let's go.

Mark slides out of the car. He jumps as Bambi roughly turns him around.

BAMBI (CONT'D)  
Relax.

She takes off the handcuffs.

BAMBI (CONT'D)  
Do you speak Chinese?

MARK  
What? No!

BAMBI  
Follow me.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Mark follows Bambi through the busted door. The two Chinese scientists sit meekly on stools.

BAMBI

Found them packing this stuff up.

Mark checks out instruments, microscopes, water baths, centrifuges, bottles of chemicals.

MARK

Some kind of laboratory - must've cost a fortune.

BAMBI

Do you know anything about this?

MARK

Animal research, steroid enhancement? I don't know. This isn't dog fighting stuff.

He stops at a laptop computer - the screen and keyboard are covered in Chinese characters. A pile of notebooks next to it are all marked in Chinese.

BAMBI

They don't understand English.

Mark pulls a glass vial from a wooden box.

The scientists start chattering in Mandarin, waving for him to put it down.

MARK

What is this? Steroids? Were you injecting steroids into dogs?

Mark takes a step towards them and they shrink back against the wall. One of the scientists shakes his head.

TALL SCIENTIST

No stee-roid, umm...

He consults with the second, who continues awkwardly...

SHORT SCIENTIST

J-enetics.

MARK

Genetic engineering?

They put their heads together and whisper frantically. After a moment, they nod in agreement.

The short one slips off the stool, straightens his suit coat, adjusts his tie, nods to his partner.

The tall one nods a strong "yes".

Dropping down on all fours, the short scientist begins moving around the floor, wagging his tail, panting like a dog.

Bambi and Mark exchange a look.

The other scientist begins to babble an explanation and points to the vial in Mark's hand.

He uses a make-believe syringe to inject short scientist in the neck.

The short scientist flattens on the floor and starts

GROANING.

He flops around like a fish out of water. He suddenly stiffens as

A FEROCIOUS GROWL

grows in his throat.

He gets up on all fours, then rises up on two legs, clawing the air menacingly over Bambi. She pushes him away.

BAMBI

Dog? Pit bull?

The short scientist jumps on his colleague and mimics tearing at his throat, clawing at his torso.

The tall scientist SCREAMS and flails about, feigning a gruesome death.

The other SNARLS triumphantly over the corpse.

Bambi's jaw drops as she pieces everything together.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

Oh my goodness.

MARK

They did something to a dog. Some kind of-

Bambi grabs the tall scientist, shoving him against the wall.

BAMBI

Jud Wilson! What happened to Jud Wilson?

TALL SCIENTIST

Jod Weel-son?

BAMBI

Jud!

He looks to his partner for help, only getting a helpless shoulder shrug.

Bambi draws a finger across her throat and gurgles.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

Jud?

They suddenly understand.

TALL SCIENTIST

Jod...

He pretends to start a car and drive, making revving engine sounds. The second nods and joins him.

BAMBI

He got away?

MARK

I think so.

Bambi heaves a sigh of relief.

BAMBI

He got away.

EXT. BAMBI'S CAR - DAY

Bambi grabs her radio handset as she leads them to her car.

BAMBI

(into radio)

Darcy, I'm bringing in two illegals. See if you can find anyone that speaks Chinese for the interrogation.

DARCY (O.S.)  
Chinese?

BAMBI  
That's right. Maybe those acrobats  
working the Jamboree in Branson?

DARCY (O.S.)  
Okay. Novi called for you earlier.

BAMBI  
Great, hook me up.

She opens the door and the scientists crawl inside.

MARK  
So I guess you're related to Jud  
Wilson?

BAMBI  
He's my little brother.

MARK  
And I just leapt right out of the  
frying pan.

BAMBI  
Yeah, well, after that little floor  
show in there, I'm starting to  
believe your crazy stories.

As they settle into the front seat, the radio interrupts  
with a burst of STATIC.

NOVI (O.S.)  
Bambi!

BAMBI  
(into radio)  
Yes, Novi.

NOVI (O.S.)  
We found the bodies.

Bambi and Mark look at each other, a common sense of purpose  
as she slams the car into drive and tears down the road.

INT. JUD'S TRUCK - DAY

Jud pulls over to the side of the road. He lays his head back - a cold sweat on his pale face.

He swoons, nearly passing out. TAKING A DEEP BREATH, he fights for consciousness.

His leg throbs. BLOOD soaks through the bandage, staining the seat.

Winching in pain, he turns to stare at the river glistening in the setting sun. Up ahead is a road sign for

ROCKAWAY BEACH.

He starts the truck and follows the sign, turning off the highway and heading toward the river.

EXT. KREB'S MARINA - DAY

CHAD, a skin and bones teen, rides a rusty roundabout turned by a

CHAINED PIT BULL.

Every time the dog slows, Chad WHACKS him with a stick and the dog runs faster.

The cycle continues...

slow, WHACK

run, GROWL

slow, WHACK

run, SNARL

slow, WHACK.

Lean and wiry, MILTON KREB scowls at the boy from the porch of his home/boat marina, shoving a lump of tobacco in his cheek. He casually scoops up a dirt clod and lets it fly.

SMACK!

It wallops the kid on the head.

CHAD

Damn Uncle Kreb, that hurt!

Chad jumps off the wheel as Kreb comes out to scold him.

KREB  
What the hell are you doing?

CHAD  
I was just training her.

KREB  
Well you're doing it all wrong, you  
idjit. Watch.

Kreb tosses sandbags onto the wheel, weighing it down. Chad helps him. Then Kreb climbs on the wheel and pulls a

DEAD RAT

from his coverall pocket. He picks up a fishing pole and hooks the rat on. He dangles the rat in front of the dog.

The dog SNAPS at the rat, pulling on the chain.

The wheel doesn't move.

Kreb swings the rat closer, tempting the mutt.

The dog pulls harder. Paws dig into the ground, straining at the wheel, muscles tightening. With a LABORIOUS CREAK, the roundabout begins to turn.

Chad CACKLES and eggs the dog on.

CHAD  
That's it, girl! Get that rat! Get  
it!

A ROARING ENGINE interrupts.

Jud's pickup busts through the locked gate and shudders to a stop.

Kreb stares at the truck, turning his head round and round as the wheel keeps spinning.

Jud stumbles out and stands - swaying, oblivious.

He's startled back to reality by the SNARLING DOGS in a row of cages. He takes a couple of steps and collapses in the dirt. Chad rushes over.

Kreb drops the fishing pole. The dog devours the rat.

INT. KREB'S MARINA - DAY

Jud lies sprawled on Kreb's couch, shouting into the phone.

JUD  
I don't care what he's doing. You  
get Dwayne on the phone right now.  
It's an emergency.

Kreb and Chad stare at the bite wound.

Chad pokes the wound with a pencil. Jud screams.

JUD (CONT'D)  
Yeow! Freakin' Judas shit, boy!

He backhands the kid and knocks him into the coffee table.  
Beer cans and cheese puffs go flying.

Jud returns to the phone.

JUD (CONT'D)  
You tell him I'm at Kreb's Marina,  
and he'd better get over here  
pronto.

Jud slams the phone down.

KREB  
Wound looks bad, Jud. Kinda'  
weird..

Jud looks down at his leg - green and yellow puss seeps  
through the bandage.

JUD  
No kidding.

KREB  
You need a doctor.

JUD  
I need a lot more than that.

Jud's head falls back on the pillow, eyes rolled back.

UNCONSCIOUS.

Kreb gives Jud a shake.

KREB  
Jud? Nothing.

Kreb spits into his coffee mug.

KREB (CONT'D)  
Aw hell, I'm calling an ambulance.

He grabs the phone and dials 911.

DARCY (O.S.)  
Emergency dispatch.

KREB  
Yeah, this here's-

JUD'S BLOODY HAND

clutches Kreb's wrist - stopping him.

Jud covers the receiver - glaring at Kreb.

JUD  
They'll send the cops.

KREB  
Sorry, Jud.

JUD  
Maybe I can fix it...

Jud puts the phone to his ear, working to sound cool and collected.

JUD (CONT'D)  
Hey Darcy, this is Jud. I need to speak to Bambi.

DARCY (O.S.)  
This line is for emergency use only.

JUD  
Well this is a bit of an emergency. Just put me through, please.

DARCY (O.S.)  
Okay, but you owe me a beer, you bastard.

HOLD MUSIC.

Jud nods to Kreb - it's cool.

EXT. FOREST GLADE - DAY

Novi watches two policemen dig into the fresh earth with shovels. They scoop out a

BLOODY ARM.

Novi uncovers the face.

NOVI  
I found Sheriff Russell.

Another cop unearths a boot.

COP  
Here's another one.

Novi looks over the clearing - a huge circle of freshly dug earth.

NOVI  
Lord knows how many there are.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Bambi pulls up as the bloodhounds are being loaded onto a police truck.

She gets out and heads down into the clearing.

INT. BAMBI'S CAR - DAY

The Chinese scientists argue with each other as

Mark watches the cops pull another victim from the ground and place it in a body bag.

MARK  
(to himself)  
It buried the bones.

EXT. FOREST GLADE - DAY

Bambi checks the bodies, stunned and on the verge of crying. Novi crosses the field to meet her.

NOVI  
I called in the Forestry Service  
for some help.

BAMBI

But the commissioner said-

NOVI

Screw him! All he cares about is playing his banjo. We've got a massacre here. We need equipment.

BAMBI

All right.

NOVI

The kills are fresh. We'll need roadblocks on every road out of Hercules Glade.

BAMBI

That won't do any good.

NOVI

Why?

BAMBI

I think this is a dog attack.

NOVI

No dog could do all this in one night. Someone was settling a score, feuding over something. Roadblocks, Bambi!

Bambi glares, tired of Novi's pushing, but a glance at the pile of bodies calms her. She sucks it in.

BAMBI

Fine, I'll head back to Forsyth and take care of it. Get the Coroner's office out here, pronto. You ID as many bodies as you can.

Bambi's radio CRACKLES to life.

DARCY (O.S.)

Bambi, I've got your brother on the phone.

Bambi grabs at her radio. Novi's suspicions are tweaked - he stares her down, a silent challenge passing between them.

DARCY (CONT'D)

Bambi?

Bambi forces a nervous smile at Novi, then calmly steps away, walking out of earshot to take the call.

Novi watches her go, a questioning scowl on his face. He looks up at Bambi's car on the ridge and sees the silhouettes of Mark and the scientists.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Bambi trots to her car, urgency in her voice as she talks on her headset.

BAMBI

I'll be right there, Jud. Just stay put, you hear?

She looks at Mark.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

(to Jud)

I believe you.

She gets in the car, making eye contact with Mark. He looks at her inquisitively, but she turns the ignition stone-faced.

She pulls out as a Forestry Service bulldozer comes rumbling down the road toward the glade.

EXT. FORSYTH - COUNTY JAILHOUSE - DAY

Bambi opens the door and lets the two Chinese scientists out. Mark starts to slide out after them but Bambi stops him.

BAMBI

No, you stay.

MARK

Hey, I know my rights. Whatever you're planning, you can forget it.  
(pointing to the scientists)  
Those two are witnesses.

Bambi glances at the scientists, more to hide a smile than anything else.

BAMBI

Look Mark, you're the only one that's seen this thing. I need your help.

MARK

Oh?

BAMBI

So you can either come with me or  
you're free to go.

Mark gives it two seconds of thought, and then hops out of  
the car and heads off.

Bambi curses under her breath, surprised and disappointed.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

Darn.

She leads the scientists toward the station.

After a few strides, Mark stops and turns to Bambi.

MARK

Do you have any pets, Officer  
Wilson?

Bambi is confused by the question.

MARK (CONT'D)

Dogs? Cats? Fish? Anything that  
depends on you for survival?

BAMBI

No, I don't.

MARK

Dog fighting's a federal offense.

BAMBI

I'm fully aware of that.

MARK

Have you ever seen a dogfight?

A soft spot with Bambi - she looks away, apprehensive.

MARK (CONT'D)

Two dogs tearing each other up  
until only one survives. A crowd of  
people cheering them on. Dogs  
raised mean. Raised for one purpose  
- to kill.

Mark knows he's getting to her.

MARK (CONT'D)  
Someone's going to pay for these  
murders.

Bambi nods, accepting the implications.

MARK (CONT'D)  
I'd better stick with you to make  
sure you do the right thing.

He walks back to Bambi's car and gets in the front passenger  
seat, tossing the stuffed dog into the back.

Bambi smiles hopefully and leads the scientists inside.

EXT. KREB'S MARINA - DAY

Bambi's car pulls up next to the battered pickup.

BAMBI  
Stay here. I'll wave if I need you.

She climbs out of the car and heads toward the marina,  
passing the roundabout,

JUMPING IN FRIGHT

as the caged hounds start to BAY. Mark watches her step into  
the marina door. Moments later her hand reaches out and  
waves.

INT. KREB'S MARINA - DAY

Mark checks the wound on Jud's leg - it's worse than ever.  
Bambi sits at Jud's side as he lies semi-conscious.

MARK  
You need to get this stitched up  
and you really need antibiotics.

Jud suddenly focuses, but in a strange, distant way. He  
tilts his head,

SNIFFING THE AIR

as if he's searching.

JUD  
What are you, a doctor?

Mark notes his odd behavior.

MARK  
Veterinarian.

Jud eyes him suspiciously.

Kreb spits into his coffee mug.

KREB  
There's some medicinals in the dog  
shed.

Mark follows Kreb out the back door.

Bambi holds out a glass of water, helping Jud take a drink.  
He lies back down, exhausted.

BAMBI  
So it's true? The whole monster  
story?

JUD  
Yeah.

She still has trouble accepting it.

BAMBI  
I feel like I ought to call  
Ripley's Believe It or Not.

JUD  
What's he doing here?

BAMBI  
He's helping me.

JUD  
I've seen him around. He's a nosey  
bastard. I don't trust him.

BAMBI  
You shouldn't. He's with the Humane  
Society.

JUD  
What?

BAMBI  
He's going to have me arrest you.

JUD  
And you brought him here? My own  
sister?

BAMBI

He was at Farley's Barn last night.  
We found the bodies buried up in  
Hercules Glade. You've got to tell  
me what's going on.

Jud turns away with a GROWL, closing her off.

JUD

I don't care if you are kin. I  
ain't talking without a lawyer.

BAMBI

Jud, I'm the only hope you've got  
right now.

JUD

How could you betray me?

BAMBI

You betrayed Pops. You broke his  
heart with all this dog fighting. I  
shouldn't have let it go on.

Jud clams up with that - defiant.

EXT. KREB'S MARINA - DAY

Kreb leads Mark past half a dozen dogs locked in kennels,  
past Chad on the training wheel.

The dogs HOWL AND BARK ferociously as they approach a  
dilapidated wooden shed. Kreb fumbles with the lock.

Mark winces in disgust at the caged dogs

MANGLED

DEFORMED.

INT. DOG SHED - DAY

Kreb throws open the door. A steel table is in the center of  
the room, a wash basin at the far end.

He unlocks a cabinet full of medical supplies.

MARK (DISGUSTED)

It's a goddamned operating room.

Mark checks some vials and grabs a syringe, then tosses them  
into a plastic bin, along with cotton gauze.

INT. KREB'S MARINA - DAY

He prepares a syringe.

MARK

Pretty nice setup your friend's got out back. Take care of many injured dogs?

JUD

Fuck off.

MARK

Oh, did big sister tell you the bad news? Well, this should ease your worries.

Jud winces as Mark jabs the needle in his leg.

MARK (CONT'D)

How'd you get this bite?

Jud doesn't answer. Mark threads a curved stitching needle and goes to work.

MARK (CONT'D)

I thought fighters loved their dogs. Why'd you let them do that to Kong?

Jud relents, taking his mind off the work on his leg.

JUD

I don't know. It's all scientific bullshit to me. These Chinamen just stuck needles in him and stuff and said Kong would beat any other dog in the country.

MARK

You bet your ass it will!

BAMBI

So what do we do now?

MARK

We have to find it and kill it.

JUD

Good luck. Most of the county is open forest.

MARK

If only we knew where it was going.

BAMBI

When we went by Jud's place all the dogs were gone. The cages were broken into.

JUD

My dogs?

BAMBI

I didn't connect it at the time.

MARK

That was just west of the mass grave.

JUD

It killed Frank and Artie, too.

BAMBI

So it's heading this way.

Realization hits Jud.

JUD

It's killing dog fighters.

BAMBI

That's ridiculous. How could it know?

JUD

Dogs can sense fear. Kong's different now. His senses are heightened even more. He knows...

MARK

That's why it didn't kill me?

Mark looks out the window at the row of dog cages.

MARK (CONT'D)

Then we don't have to go looking for it. It will find us.

BAMBI

Kreb...

Bambi looks at Jud.

BAMBI (CONT'D)  
 ...and you? Jud sobers at the  
 implication.

JUD  
 There's a shitload of firearms in  
 the truck.

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - AUDITORIUM - DAY

The commissioner YODELS a tune as he twangs his BANJO.

Nearby, Dino and Dwayne watch the sound check.

Hans and Gruber sit behind them, grimacing at the  
 Commissioner's unbridled enthusiasm.

DINO  
 This cowboy sucks.

DWAYNE  
 Yeah, well if I don't give the  
 county commissioner a slot in the  
 show, we don't have a fight  
 tonight.

Dino reconsiders.

DINO  
 He's starting to sound better.

Irv rolls up in his wheelchair.

Dwayne leaps up and climbs over his seat.

DWAYNE  
 Stay back you old coot!

Irv screeches to halt and gives Dwayne the evil eye.

IRV  
 So you want to play games?  
 (shaking a thumb at Dino)  
 I don't know who this fruit of the  
 loom is, but I'm going to put my  
 money behind him just to spite you.

DWAYNE  
 Are you betting on the fight?

IRV  
The Branson Rose - kit and  
caboodle.

DWAYNE  
Your theater? And if I lose?

IRV  
You head to Vegas with that  
fruitcake, and you never talk to my  
boy Jud again.

DWAYNE  
You're crazy!

DINO  
Is Dwayne Robbins stepping away  
from a challenge?

DWAYNE  
No, I ain't. It's just... ah hell,  
it ain't like I'm going to lose.  
You've got a bet, old man.

DINO  
Looks like we're partners, Mr.  
Wilson.

IRV  
You've heard of me?

DINO  
Are you kidding? The legendary Irv  
Wilson!

IRV  
Well, much obliged. And you better  
rip that mutt of his a new asshole  
if you know what's good for you. I

rv turns and wheels away.

Dino watches him go, a glint of admiration in his eyes.

DINO  
You could use an entertainer like  
Irv Wilson in your show tonight.

DWAYNE  
I'm not letting that old fogey's  
music on my stage!

Irv bumps into the bartender at the exit. The bartender  
gives him plenty of room to pass.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)  
Besides, he hasn't performed since  
he was put in that wheelchair. His  
country days are over.

The bartender rushes up to Dwayne waving a sticky note.

BARTENDER  
Mr. Robbins, I've got a message  
from Jud Wilson!

EXT. KREB'S MARINA - DUSK

Dwayne's Hummer pulls up. He spots the police car and scans  
the yard, suddenly worried. He shifts to reverse, about to  
leave when

BAMBI

steps out of the marina, leveling a shotgun.

BAMBI  
Hold it right there!

Dwayne's tension fades at the sight of Bambi. He climbs out  
of the Hummer and saunters up to the marina - cocksure.

DWAYNE  
Well if it isn't Miss Police  
Brutality.

BAMBI  
You'd best be careful how you  
address me. Looks like you're in a  
heap of trouble.

DWAYNE  
I don't recall breaking any laws  
since the last time you threw me in  
jail. Where's Jud?

BAMBI  
Inside.

He strides into the marina, brusquely shoving her aside.

She takes a deep breath, keeping her cool, and follows him  
in.

INT. KREB'S MARINA - DUSK

Mark aims a rifle at Dwayne as he walks through the front door. Dwayne raises his hands.

DWAYNE

Relax, boys. It's just me.

Bambi steps in after Dwayne.

BAMBI

I'm curious to know what Mr. Robbins is doing here?

JUD

Who do you think paid for those scientists and all their lab shit?

DWAYNE

You don't need to go confessin' everything.

JUD

They know all about it.

DWAYNE

You'd better tell me Kong's alright.

JUD

Kong's gone.

DWAYNE

Gone! Gone where?

BAMBI

Your dog has killed dozens of people, Mr. Robbins.

Dwayne looks around, stunned and trapped.

DWAYNE

Just where the hell is my dog, Jud?

EXT. KREB'S MARINA - DUSK

Chad circles round and round, HUMMING to himself.

The mutilated dogs pace back and forth in their cages

WHIMPERING.

INT. KREB'S MARINA - DUSK

DWAYNE

That's the biggest load of horse  
puckey I've ever heard. What have  
you people been smoking?

Jud is pale - a cold sweat - nervous.

JUD

It's all over, Dwayne. We're  
busted.

Dwayne laughs.

DWAYNE

What, by your sister? She can't do  
nothing to me. Here's a reality  
check for you folks...

He struts up to Bambi - too close for comfort.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

The county commissioner popped me  
out of jail first thing this  
morning and said he'd be checking  
out Deputy Wilson here for wrongful  
arrest and police brutality. You  
don't just lock up decent,  
humanitarian celebrities like me.

Bambi clenches her fist - white knuckles - ready to punch.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Now Kreb and I are going to carry  
Jud to my Hummer so I can find Kong  
and get back to Branson for the  
show tonight. Kreb?

Kreb looks at Bambi - fearful and hesitant. He spits and  
moves to help Jud.

EXT. KREB'S MARINA - DUSK

Kreb's dogs stand silent - watching - rigid.

Chad drags a finger in the dirt as the roundabout spins.

A LOW GROWL rumbles behind him.

He whirls - startled - terrified.

INT. KREB'S MARINA - DUSK

Dwayne is nose to nose with Bambi, grinning defiantly.

DWAYNE

Why don't you give us a hand so  
your little brother doesn't get  
hurt?

It's all she can stand. The fist flies!

POW!

ON THE JAW!

Dwayne drops like a rock.

EXT. KREB'S MARINA - DUSK

The roundabout slows to a stop.

EMPTY.

SILENT.

INT. KREB'S MARINA - DUSK

Dwayne wipes the blood from his split lip as he gets back on his feet. He CHUCKLES.

DWAYNE

Thank you, ma'am. That's just the  
evidence I needed to make my case  
against you. I hope it swells up  
real plump-like. Now if you don't  
mind...

Dwayne and Kreb lift Jud to his feet and carry him to the door. Jud cringes, despite the painkillers and makeshift splint.

MARK

Bambi, do something.

BAMBI

What?

MARK

I'd call the cops but you're  
already here.

Frustrated, Bambi pumps her shotgun and aims at Dwayne.

BAMBI

Don't go out that door, Dwayne.

Dwayne continues, oblivious and cool-headed.

DWAYNE

Don't shoot, Bambi. You might hit your brother.

Dwayne flings open the door as

BRIGHT LIGHTS

pierce the marina's windows. Everyone instinctively ducks as a voice calls out over a loudspeaker.

NOVI (O.S.)

Jud Wilson? This is the police.

Bambi crawls to the window and peeks out.

Several police cars block the marina entrance. She can vaguely make out the silhouette of

DEPUTY NOVI

behind the spotlight. She calls out to them.

BAMBI

Hey boys, Chief Deputy Wilson here. I've got things under control.

NOVI

Bambi, we know Jud's in there. Come out and give him up.

BAMBI

Go on home, Novi. I can take care of this.

NOVI

Why don't you just bring him out so we can take him down to Forsyth proper.

BAMBI

I said things are under control. I don't need any backup.

NOVI

Don't do this, Bambi. You're an officer of the law.

BAMBI  
I know what I'm doing.

NOVI  
You're making a mistake.

Mark whispers to Bambi.

MARK  
Something's wrong.

They listen a moment - DEAD SILENCE.

JUD  
He's here.

DWAYNE  
Who's here?

Kreb glances around the room - suddenly worried.

KREB  
My nephew!

They rush to the back window and peer out.

THE KENNEL

is ripped to pieces. The dogs missing. The shredded fence swaying.

THE TRAINING WHEEL

is spinning fast

A BLUR

But as it slows, a shape appears. It takes form as the wheel decelerates.

KREB (CONT'D)  
My God!

CHAD is lashed to the wheel with chains.

His belly is sliced open - circling slower and slower.

EXT. MARINA - DUSK

The cops sense the quiet. They look around, fearful.

Novi turns to the others, hiding behind the cars, weapons ready.

NOVI  
I don't like this one bit.

A BLACK SHAPE

flies out of the darkness. It bounds off a police car.

NOVI SCREAMS

as ENORMOUS JAWS clamp down on his neck. Novi's rifle hits the ground, followed by

HIS HEAD

The cops are startled as it rolls under a car.

KONG

tosses Novi's limp body aside, attacking the others as they

OPEN FIRE.

INT. MARINA - DUSK

Everyone falls to the floor as

GUNFIRE ERUPTS.

The barrage continues as Mark strains to look out the window.

MARK  
They're not shooting at us.

The gunfire continues for what seems an eternity, then abruptly falls silent.

A haze of smoke rises above the police cars.

Bodies lay sprawled on the ground.

Jud looks up, sensing something in the air.

JUD  
We'd better get out of here.

Mark peers out the front window.

MARK

We'll never make it to the cars  
with Jud.

Bambi mulls the situation over.

BAMBI

Kreb, what's your fastest boat?

KREB

That'd be Ol' Molasses.

Bambi rolls her eyes.

BAMBI

Great!

She turns to face Dwayne - he's sweating, sober, scared. He  
stares at the dead policemen - helpless.

Bambi brushes past him, knocking him aside.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

Let's go.

EXT. KREB'S MARINA - DUSK

The door opens. Bambi's shotgun barrel appears.

She slowly moves out, checking all directions, straining to  
see in the fading light. She waves to the others, covering  
them.

Mark and Kreb come out carrying Jud. They cross the  
gangplank to a dock that runs parallel to the shore.

Dwayne follows, nervously watching his back.

They reach an intersection and head left toward the boats.

BAMBI

Get him to the boat.

Dwayne starts to follow the others, but Bambi stops him.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

You stay. Keep your eyes open.

Mark and Kreb carry Jud to

OL' MOLASSES

a brand new, brightly-painted, souped-up cigarette boat.  
They carefully lower Jud into a seat.

MARK  
This is Ol' Molasses?

KREB  
She's a humdinger, ain't she?

MARK  
Bit of a misnomer isn't it?

KREB  
Miss what?

THE GANGPLANK

Something catches Bambi's eye on the far dock.

BAMBI  
I see it.

They watch as

TWO RED, GLOWING EYES

appear in the shadows, moving towards them.

Bambi aims her shotgun, inching back cautiously toward the  
boat as

KONG

steps into the light, standing erect

a massive half-dog, half-man monster covered in black fur.

Terrifying, snarling face

Baring huge

sharp

FANGS!

Bambi GASPS at the sight, unconsciously lowering her weapon.

BAMBI (CONT'D)  
Lord Jesus, it can't be real.

Dwayne looks at Kong and his fear vanishes, replaced by

AWE AND PRIDE.

DWAYNE  
That's Kong alright. Ain't he  
something!

Kong drops down on all fours, digs in, then charges down the dock straight for them.

                  BAMBI  
Here it comes!

Bambi takes aim.

Dwayne grabs her shotgun and pulls it away.

                  DWAYNE  
What the hell? Don't shoot him!

They wrestle with the gun as Kong barrels toward them, his claws RIPPING into the wooden dock, his weight bouncing the dock in the water. It splashes up over the edges.

Bambi lets go of the weapon and Dwayne, off-balance, tumbles off the dock into the water.

It's Bambi alone.

She draws her pistol and kneels, taking aim, but

KONG

flies past her, slashing her across the back, knocking her off the dock.

She plunges into the river.

Kong continues on toward

OL' MOLASSES

as Kreb STARTS THE ENGINES. Mark sees Kong coming and screams.

                  MARK  
MOVE! MOVE! MOVE!

Kreb guns the throttle and the speedboat pulls away from the dock.

Kong leaps across the void and lands on the stern, claws digging into the fiberglass, jaws SNAPPING MADLY.

Mark falls back on Jud, scrambling to get away. The boat drags for a moment, ENGINE REVVING, water churning, as Kong hangs on, snapping at Mark.

Kong's grip slips.

Ol' Molasses jerks forward and Kong disappears in the dark water. Mark scrambles to his feet.

MARK (CONT'D)  
Bambi! Turn around! Go back!

Kreb makes a broad, fast turn - circling back toward the dock.

They pull up to Bambi and Mark lifts her into the boat.

JUD  
Where's Dwayne?

BAMBI  
I don't know. I didn't see him.

The boat zips alongside the dock - searching.

JUD  
Dwayne?

MARK  
He might be dead.

Kreb scans the darkness, trembling with fear. He spits.

KREB  
I'm getting the hell out of here!

He opens the throttle and the boat speeds away from the marina, heading upstream.

UNDER THE DOCK

Dwayne peers out from behind a piling. He reaches up and grabs the shotgun still lying on the dock.

He wades to shore and charges up the hill. J

ust short of his Hummer, he stops dead in his tracks.

A DOZEN PIT BULLS

surround the vehicle - waiting for him.

THEY GROWL.

DWAYNE  
You stupid mongrels ready for a fight? I'll give you a fight.

They charge - BARKING, YELPING, HOWLING  
as Dwayne fires off round after round.

EXT. RIVER - SUNSET

Ol' Molasses swiftly navigates the twisting river heading toward the setting sun.

Bambi shakes the water out of her radio before tossing it aside.

BAMBI  
How long before we get to Branson?

KREB  
Thirty, forty minutes.

Jud takes Bambi's hand.

JUD  
I'm sorry, Sis. I didn't mean for  
any of this to happen.

Bambi nods her head and puts a life jacket over him.

BAMBI  
It's alright. We'll get you to a  
hospital. Try to rest.

Bambi joins Mark at the back of the boat. He's shining a spotlight on the claw marks Kong ripped in the stern.

MARK  
Look how massive these are.

BAMBI  
You'd better fix me up, Doc.

Mark turns the spotlight on Bambi's torn uniform - noticing the wound for the first time.

MARK  
Take off your shirt.

Bambi glances back at Kreb - busy driving the boat.

She shyly removes her police shirt, turning her back to Mark, revealing a

BLOODY GASH.

Mark carefully lowers the bra strap from her shoulder to get at the cuts. She's bashful and uncomfortable at first until she winces in pain as Mark examines her.

BAMBI

Ouch!

MARK

Sorry. You might need stitches but I'm not going to try that on a moving boat. I'll do what I can.

He pulls gauze and tape from the duffle bag and begins.

Bambi glances at Jud in the front of the boat as he stares off into the darkness. Tears well up in her eyes as Mark works.

BAMBI

Jud's first dog attacked our Pappy. He's been in a wheelchair ever since. Pappy shot that dog. They don't speak to each other anymore.

MARK

You don't have to...

Bambi continues, struggling with her words.

BAMBI

I'm not saying that justifies anything he's done wrong, it's just that I understand why he did it. I don't know when I'm supposed to be the big sister or the strong arm of the law. Stupid sheriff didn't care either way. You must think we're such bad people.

MARK

I think I would have done the same thing if I were you, and it still wouldn't be right, but I understand.

Mark takes off his flannel shirt, revealing a tight Bob Seger T-shirt underneath.

MARK (CONT'D)

Here, wear this.

He wraps the oversize flannel around Bambi and she slides her arms in the sleeves, suddenly appearing small and fragile.

BAMBI

Do you even like Bob Seger?

MARK

I don't even know who he is.

She laughs. They look into each others eyes a moment of real understanding...

...and attraction.

She hugs him, crying into his chest.

Jud, apparently listening, contemplates the passing shoreline.

A MOVEMENT catches his attention.

JUD

There he is!

Jud points toward the shore. Everyone peers into the darkness.

Mark swings the spotlight around to the tree-lined bank.

The occasional break in the forest reveals Kong's black form moving swiftly through the underbrush.

MARK

It's following us.

EXT. THE COUNTRY STAR - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Irv wheels across the street past a line of cars waiting to get into the lot.

Attendants wave light wands, directing traffic. Plates from every state take a spot. Irv rolls up the handicap ramp as

GREYHOUND BUSES

park near the entrance.

A MOB OF ELDERLY TOURISTS pour out.

Irv stops, gazing up at the gaudy neon, when he hears...

TOURIST

Is that Irv Wilson?

He spins around to find a giddy fan nearly his age.

TOURIST (CONT'D)  
It is! It's Irv Wilson!

She rushes up and shoves a piece of paper in his face.

TOURIST (CONT'D)  
Could I have your autograph?

Irv is stunned for a moment, then grabs the paper.

IRV  
My pleasure, ma'am.

He takes out a pen and turns the paper over.

It's a portrait of Dwayne Robbins.

He grins as he writes his name across Dwayne's face, poking a hole in one eye as he dots his 'i'.

He hands the picture back as more tourists surround him, calling out his name. He's the center of attention, and he signs his name gratefully for everyone.

A commotion in the back catches his attention. Tourists are suddenly shoved aside.

Hans and Gruber break through the throng, grabbing Irv's chair.

HANS  
(deep German accent)  
Dino would like to see you now.

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Irv is pushed backstage past stagehands and performers busily preparing for the show.

They wheel him up to a door with a sparkling gold star that reads "DINO".

INT. DINO'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Dino slides a CD across the table. The cover shows Irv riding a horse with a guitar, decades younger.

DINO  
This one is my favorite.  
((begins singing) )

DINO  
 'When my heart and my mind don't  
 get along, my heart always wins by  
 singing a song...'

Irv smiles awkwardly, finishing the chorus.

IRV  
 '...Cause the heart that sings out  
 is strongest of all.'

An awkward laugh. Dino holds up a pen.

DINO  
 I would be honored.

Irv takes the pen. He opens the CD to sign it, pausing on

A PHOTO of Irv with two kids - Bambi and Jud - mere tykes,  
 smiling in the warm embrace of their father.

Irv signs and hands the CD back.

Fifi jumps up in Dino's lap and he pets her.

DINO (CONT'D)  
 I'm glad we could be partners, Mr.  
 Wilson. I'm going to need a real  
 musician like you around when the  
 Country Star is mine.

IRV  
 You ain't planning to fight that  
 poodle, are you?

Dino laughs.

DINO  
 Of course not, Mr. Wilson. Wait  
 till you see what I've got waiting  
 downstairs.

IRV  
 You're so certain you're going to  
 win?

DINO  
 Let's just say Dwayne owes me a  
 lot, and people who owe me always  
 pay. The boys here will show you to  
 the arena. They'll make sure you  
 get a good seat.

Hans pushes Irv's wheelchair towards the door just as it bursts open.

THE STAGE MANAGER rushes in, panicked.

STAGE MANAGER

It's fifteen past curtain and no sign of Dwayne. I need you to open the show.

DINO

Where'd he go?

STAGE MANAGER

The hell if I know.

Dino nods to Hans and Gruber. They head out of the room on a mission.

DINO

I think it's time for us to sing a song together, partner.

IRV

You mean go on stage? In this?

Irv motions to the chair. Dino smiles and pushes Irv out the door.

DINO

Ever heard of a fiddler named Itzhak Perlman?

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - STAGE - NIGHT

The seats are packed - it's a full house.

Huge banners sway from the balcony fronts - photos of Dwayne and Dino, shoulder-to-shoulder, holding their guitars in the air with the word "AMERITHON!" in bright red letters across the bottom.

Lights fade to black. DRAMATIC MUSIC blasts from the speakers. Spotlights swirl around the auditorium.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, the fabulous Dino!

Lights flicker on as Dino enters. The crowd ROARS.

Dino steps up to the microphone.

DINO

Good evening, everyone! I'd like to introduce a friend of mine who you might remember from the good ol' days. Mister Irv Wilson!

Irv rolls onto the stage. The audience grows quiet, MURMURING at the wheelchair. Irv checks with Dino, not certain if he should continue. Dino lowers the microphone for him.

Irv clears his throat, a tear in his eye.

IRV

I'd like to sing a song I wrote for my boy. It was a hit once. Some of you might remember it.

Irv starts plucking his guitar. The elderly audience members respond with HOOTS and SHOUTS. Dino urges the band to join in.

Irv sings, and the audience starts CLAPPING along. Dino joins in at the chorus.

A smile crosses Irv's face as the old magic returns.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

In spite of the wound, Jud sits up , leaning out over the coaming, searching the dark shoreline. Bambi kneels down beside him and gently rests a hand on his shoulder.

The action causes him to jerk away.

BAMBI

Hey, easy! You really need to listen to your big sister here and relax.

Jud turns to her, his face tense, covered in sweat.

JUD

Something's wrong, sis. Not just Kong, but me too. Ever since he fanged me... I see things different.

BAMBI

It'll be all right, I promise.

He looks away.

JUD

No, it won't. He's got a list of wrongs to right, and I'm at the top of it. There's nothing anyone can do to stop him. And you know, sis? I can't blame him. I just hope I can make it right - for Pop before I go.

She wraps an arm around him, pulling him close.

Kreb's boat rounds a bend in the river, the lights of the

BRANSON LANDING MARINA

light the night. Kreb slows the boat.

They all peer at the well-lit waterfront - a new development with shops, hotels and bars is fronted by a half-mile-long boardwalk.

The curved walkway is crowded with tourists and fisherman. Two circular fountains anchor the ends, each displaying a water dance occasionally highlighted by colorful fireballs.

A DUCK BOAT

drifts slowly past them full of passengers.

A sign on the side reads: WELCOME TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION OF CANINE OBEDIENCE SPECIALISTS. SIT! STAY!

Mark scans the shore.

MARK

I don't see anything.

BAMBI

Let's dock and call an ambulance.

Kreb speeds forward, pulling alongside the dock.

KREB

Take the wheel.

Mark grabs hold of the steering wheel as Kreb climbs to the bow. He checks the distance to the dock.

KREB (CONT'D)

Slow down!

Mark slows. Kreb reaches out to grab the dock just as

KONG

explodes from the water in front of the boat.

His enormous, powerful jaws clamp tight around Kreb's arm, pulling him into the water.

Kreb's MUFFLED YELP is instantly submerged.

Bambi leaps toward the bow.

BAMBI

Kreb!

Mark jumps up in surprise, accidentally gunning the throttle.

The boat SURGES FORWARD into the dock, SMASHING into it. It tips to starboard as it powers up onto the dock, then rolls over, upside-down in the water.

THE DUCK BOAT CAPTAIN

quickly turns his boat around. Passengers YELL, pointing to BAMBI,

swimming to Jud floating in his life vest.

Mark grabs onto the capsized boat.

MARK

Bambi!

BAMBI

I've got Jud.

Bambi pulls Jud toward the boat. Mark looks around for Kong.

A BRIGHT LIGHT momentarily blinds him. The duck boat arrives - the captain shining a spotlight on Mark.

CAPTAIN

Is everyone alright?

KONG rockets out of the water onto the boardwalk. He ROARS at the approaching duck boat, standing defiantly on hind legs, muscles rippling under wet fur.

On the boardwalk, PEOPLE SCREAM. They scatter, running for their lives.

In unison, the duck boat passengers GASP!

As Kong's form becomes clear, the GASP turns to an admiring

A-A-H-H-H-H!

A dozen cameras are raised. Multiple flashes bathe the scene in a psychedelic light.

The captain drops the spotlight in shock.

Mark swims toward the duck boat, grabbing Bambi and Jud as he goes.

The Captain fumbles at the controls, reversing the duck boat and pulling away from the dock.

Mark grabs hold of the rail just as it passes. Bambi and Jud are pulled along. The passengers continue to snap pictures of Kong.

MARK

Help us!

One of the passengers notices Mark at the side of the boat. He stops taking photos and reaches down to help. More passengers join in.

One by one they are pulled into the boat. Bambi helps with Jud.

BAMBI

Careful! His leg...

Jud is gently lifted onboard as Mark rushes to the Captain, who watches in amazement as Kong runs back and forth, HOWLING at the duck boat.

CAPTAIN

What is that thing?

MARK

Big, fucking pit bull.

CAPTAIN

Like Hell?!

Bambi joins him at the wheel.

BAMBI

I'm Deputy Sheriff Bambi Wilson.  
Get us out of here-now!

The captain double-checks the waterlogged Bambi.

CAPTAIN

Yes, ma'am.

The water around them boils as he guns the motor and the duck boat takes off.

BAMBI

Where's your radio?

The Captain fumbles in a glove box and pulls out a hand-held, thrusting it at her. Kong tears down the boardwalk.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

(into the radio)

This is Deputy Wilson to dispatch.  
Come in, over!

CAPTAIN

Hang on! This might be rough.

The duck boat heads straight for the shore, crashing into the bank at full speed.

Mark hangs on as the duck boat tears up a boat ramp, bouncing roughly on it's six, huge tires -

A BOAT THAT CAN DRIVE ON LAND!

Bambi is jerked violently, losing her grip on the radio. It flies out of her hands, bouncing on the floor.

She dives for it, reaching out with grasping hands, but the radio slides away, disappearing over the side.

Mark looks back - Kong is charging towards them, galloping down the boardwalk, scattering tourists and fisherman, all diving for shelter.

MARK

How fast does this thing go?

The Captain gauges Kong's speed. He looks worried.

CAPTAIN

not fast enough.

EXT. THE COUNTRY STAR - NIGHT

Dwayne's white Hummer, splattered with blood, tears down the alley and around back of the Country Star.

Armed guards hurry to the car and open the door. Dwayne steps out - his clothes also soaked red.

GUARD

What happened to you, Boss?

DWAYNE

We've got us a mad dog.

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The guards follow Dwayne into the crowded hallways. MUFFLED MUSIC is heard from the stage.

DWAYNE

Round up all the boys. Tell them to meet me downstairs loaded for bear.

GUARD

We going big-game huntin'?

DWAYNE

The biggest.

The guards dash off as Dwayne rounds a corner and plows into Hans and Gruber.

GRUBER

Mister Robbins, we thought you were running out on us.

DWAYNE

No way, boys. I was just out taking care of Kong. Getting ready for the big show.

HANS

That is good, because standing up Dino would be a very bad idea.

Dwayne spots the STAGE MANAGER coming down the hall.

DWAYNE

Don't worry so much, boys.

STAGE MANAGER

What the hell's with you, Dwayne?  
The show's already started.

The stage manager SNAPS his fingers and several attendants rush over to strip off Dwayne's bloody clothes.

Hans and Gruber back away, disappearing down the hall.

Dwayne is simultaneously worried and relieved.

STAGE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Is that your blood?

DWAYNE

No, I got attacked by dogs.

STAGE MANAGER

Dogs? Are you good to go on?

DWAYNE

Christ, I've got other issues at  
the moment.

The attendants throw on his sparkling, sequined cowboy costume. Others clean his blood-splattered face.

STAGE MANAGER

How am I supposed to stall the star  
attraction, Dwayne? At least go out  
and say something.

Dwayne freezes, listening to the music on stage.

DWAYNE

Wait a minute, what is that?

STAGE MANAGER

What?

DWAYNE

That old timey crap music I hear?

STAGE MANAGER

That's Irv Wilson. He opened the  
show for you.

DWAYNE

Irv Wilson? On my stage? Holy shit!  
Where's my guitar?

Dwayne thrusts on his boots and rushes for the stage just as Irv finishes his song.

The audience ROARS with applause.

Dino spots Dwayne in the wings and winks.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Goddamn it.

The stage manager hands Dwayne his guitar and Dwayne rushes on stage.

EXT. BRANSON LANDING - NIGHT

Mark leans out the side of the duck boat, SCREAMING at people in their path.

MARK

Get out of the way! Move it!

The duck boat swerves wildly from side to side as the Captain works the wheel.

People dive.

They tumble into the water.

Mark looks back.

MARK (CONT'D)

He's gaining on us!

Bambi keels beside Jud, trying to steady herself, drawing a bead on the monster. She slowly pressures the trigger, ready to fire, then pulls back as several tourists cross her line of sight.

BAMBI

Dag-nabbit!

Behind them, Kong plows his way down the dock right behind them. With one, huge leap, he reaches the back of the boat.

Bambi and Jud recoil as he takes a swipe,

RIPPING METAL,

shredding the transom inches from them.

The Captain guns the accelerator and the boat and pulls away.

Ahead, the boardwalk circles around one of the large, round fountains. The Captain veers to the left, tearing around it.

Kong leaps at them again, but a hotdog vender, pushing a cart to safety, rushes right into his path.

Its sign reads: MONSTER DOGS. THE WORLD'S BIGGEST HOT DOGS!

They collide, sending cart, vendor and hot dogs flying while Kong tumbles

END OVER END into the fountain.

The water suddenly erupts with a series of

EXPLOSIVE, COLORED FIREBALLS

shooting into the air. Enraged, Kong looks up at the colorful balls shooting all around him. He cocks his head, then leaps into the air,

SNAPPING WILDLY.

He falls, only to leap again.

SNAP! SNAP!

Falling a second time back into the pool, he digs away at the water, sending waves into the air. He grabs the submerged mechanism and pulls hard, ripping it loose.

The fountains disappear. The water now boils around him. Kong holds the piping over his head, ROARS, then heaves it into the lake.

He stops in mid-roar, GRUNTS, then turns his attention to the duck boat, now barely visible far down the boardwalk.

It turns and speeds up a ramp, off the boardwalk and out of sight.

EXT. BRANSON - NIGHT

The captain pushes the duck boat to the limit, charging through traffic, over the curb, through a parking lot, up an embankment, and

ONTO THE BRANSON STRIP.

The strip is crammed with bumper to bumper traffic. Cars, RVs and tour buses creep along in both directions.

IT'S TOTAL GRIDLOCK.

Mark stands behind Bambi. They scan the area. Nothing.

MARK

I think we've lost him...

CRASH!

Like a rocket, Kong comes out of nowhere, broad-siding the duck boat. The force rocks it violently.

THE CAPTAIN

and several passengers tumble over the side. The duck boat rolls to a halt.

Bambi grabs Mark's shoulder and points to the empty driver's seat.

MARK (CONT'D)

Jesus!

He scrambles over the passengers to the front with Bambi close behind.

Peering over the side, he sees the Captain, out cold on the pavement.

Jud, mad-eyed and sweaty, watches as Kong staggers away from them, momentarily dazed. But the moment is quickly gone as

A TOUR BUS rushes up behind,

BRAKES SCREECHING,

ramming Kong in the back.

Kong whirls, smashes a paw through the windshield and pulls the driver out onto the street. He tosses the driver aside like a rag doll, then grabs the front of the bus and

STRAINS

PULLS

LIFTS

it off of the ground.

Inside, passengers SCREAM IN TERROR as the bus is flipped over backwards, smashing the cars behind it.

On the boat, Mark jumps into the driver's seat, messing with the controls.

MARK (CONT'D)  
How do you run this thing?

Kong whirls, advances.

JUD  
Bambi?! You better do something...

BAMBI  
You've had 30 seconds more  
experience at it than I have...

She puts a hand on his shoulder for support and looks back at Kong, moving ever closer, his features now fully revealed in the garish, neon light a face that now has definite human features.

JUD'S FEATURES!

He's a giant, snarling, drool-spewing, man/dog monster heading straight for them.

Bambi looks from Jud to Kong, then back again. Jud's eyes widen at the implication.

BAMBI (CONT'D)  
(to Mark)  
...I think you'd better get good at  
it real fast.

Mark nods, fumbles, then hits the accelerator and tears out.

Kong races along on all fours, then up on his back two like a man to SLAM into a taxi that's in his way. It spins out of control onto the crowded sidewalk.

Tourists scatter as the taxi crashes into a store front.

GLASS AND SPARKS FLY

CAR HORNS BLARE

SCREAMS

SCREECHING TIRES

as Kong plows between the cars, hopping over and around them, stopping at nothing.

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - STAGE - NIGHT

Dino takes the microphone and works the crowd like a pro.

DINO  
Dwayne Robbins everybody!

THE AUDIENCE SCREAMS.

Dwayne thrusts a fist in the air, still adjusting his costume before joining Dino.

DWAYNE  
God bless the USA!

YEEHAW! The crowd is easy.

Dwayne covers the mike and leans over Irv during the uproar, whispering.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)  
Get off my fucking stage you geezer!

Irv backs away.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)  
(into the microphone)  
Irv Wilson, everybody!

The crowd APPLAUDS again as Irv rolls off stage. Dwayne glares after him.

DINO  
Now Dwayne, I know a little song  
you folks like down in these parts.

DWAYNE  
What's that, Dino?

DINO  
Let's just see if you can keep up  
with me.

Dino plucks out a simple theme on his guitar. Dwayne repeats. Dino plays again, with variation. Dwayne replies.

Back and forth - it's DUELING GUITARS.

THE CROWD CLAPS ALONG.

Both guitars suddenly play at once.

LIGHTS! EXPLOSIONS! CONFETTI!

Dueling guitars turns into a hard country-rock anthem.

EXT. BRANSON STRIP - NIGHT

Mark breaks a sweat as he frantically works the duck boat in and out of traffic. Still, Kong moves closer.

THE DUCK BOAT

Spins into a parking lot to avoid a sign, swerving around parked cars.

Bambi watches as Kong closes in fast, leaping from car top to car top.

MARK

This ain't getting any easier!

Bambi spies a toolbox in the corner. She drops to her knees and opens it, pulling out whistles, flags, first aid kit, eventually digging out

A FLARE GUN.

BAMBI

I'll slow him down.

She leans close to him, whispering gently in his ear.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

You're doin' good.

She rushes to the back of the duck boat, aiming the gun at Kong as he runs draws nearer, almost alongside.

Jud grabs her arm, pulling her away.

JUD

No! Stop!

Bambi looks at her brother - his eyes wild and crazed, sweat pouring from his forehead, his body shaking uncontrollably.

She jerks away and takes aim again, just as Kong leaps into the air, straight for her, jaws wide open.

BAMBI FIRES

The flare rockets into Kong's mouth, the flame igniting in his throat.

Beside her, Jud SCREAMS, clutches his throat and flails about violently.

Kong falters and trips, rolling, bouncing into a parked car.

THUD! GROAN!

The car crumples under Kong's weight. He lies there, motionless.

The duck boat speeds away.

THE PASSENGERS CHEER.

She ignores them, rushing to Jud's side. He lies on the floor, still clutching his throat, his eyes wide open.

Bambi shakes him - he's out cold.

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Dwayne and Dino come off the stage - immediately confronted by Hans and Gruber.

Irv wheels up next to them.

DINO

Well, that was a good show, cowboy.  
Now let's go fight.

Dwayne looks around - there's no escape.

DWAYNE

Listen, Dino, about that fight...

Hans and Gruber grab Dwayne by the arms. Dino slides right up into Dwayne's face - threatening.

DINO

Either you bring a dog to that  
fight, or you'll get into the pit  
yourself. Got that?

COMMISSIONER BERNIE MURALLO

appears from behind a curtain, carrying his banjo.

BERNIE

Well, Dwayne! Looks like it's time  
for the spotlight to shine on me.

Dino quickly backs away. Hans and Gruber release their hold.

Dwayne answers him, nervously.

DWAYNE

Sure thing, Commissioner. Break a leg.

Bernie winks at Dino.

BERNIE

We'll show you Vegas boys how to put on a real show.

Bernie heads for the stage. Dino glares at Dwayne.

DINO

Downstairs. Now.

Hans and Gruber shove Dwayne toward the exit.

Dino grab's Irv's wheelchair and pushes him along.

DINO (CONT'D)

Come along, Mr. Wilson. Let's go settle our bets.

INT. DUCK BOAT - NIGHT

Mark whips around a corner and onto a side street, down a hill, and into a residential district.

Bambi makes her way back to Mark.

BAMBI

Thank God. I think that monster's finally down. Let's get these people off here. Then we gotta' get Jud to the hospital. He's real bad!

Mark nods, pulling into a driveway.

Bambi turns to the passengers, straightening her hair, mustering her professional voice.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

As it is by now, quite obvious to you all, we've got a severe, police emergency situation here. Please exit quickly.

She begins helping them down the stairs.

BAMBI (CONT'D)

Watch your step, Ma'am. Careful, sir...

The passengers gather in the yard.

EXT. MAN'S YARD - NIGHT

At the house, a porch light comes on. The door opens and a middle-aged, BEER-BELLIED MAN steps out, holding back a

FEROCIOUS, BARKING DOBERMAN.

BEER-BELLIED MAN  
 Jesus Christ! What the hell's going  
 on!

The dog lunges, pulling on his leash, trying to break free.

BAMBI  
 Police emergency, sir. I need you  
 to help these people out. I need  
 you to call the police station.  
 And, I need you to stop taking the  
 Lord's name in vain...

A FEMALE PASSENGER steps up to the man.

FEMALE PASSENGER  
 And I need to use the bathroom.

The man glares at her, lets the dog lunge towards her.

BARK!

GROWL!

SNAP!

FEMALE PASSENGER (CONT'D)  
 Oh, P-L-E-A-S-E!

The passenger pats the dog on the head, then moves past and into the house.

EXT. BRANSON STRIP - NIGHT

Curious bystanders begin to move towards the twisted car and the motionless monster lying on top of it.

Kong stirs. A half-human, half-canine MOAN growing in his throat. People step back. Some run.

His eyes slowly open. Across the street, on a roof-top billboard in his line-of-sight, the words

THE BIGGEST SHOW IN BRANSON!

THE AMERITHON!

AT THE COUNTRY STAR!

And, a twelve-foot high image of

DWAYNE'S FACE

smiling down at him.

INT. DUCK BOAT - NIGHT

JUD GASPS, pulling in a deep breath. Awareness fills his eyes.

EXT. BRANSON STRIP - NIGHT

Kong's HOWL drowns out the sirens as he leaps to his feet and bounds up to the four-story building, scaling the walls with ease.

His fury unleashed, Kong rips at Dwayne's image with razor sharp claws, shredding it within seconds.

Making fists, he smashes the billboard.

POW!

CRACK!

WHAP!

The billboard begins to CREAK and MOAN.

One final blow, and it is ripped from its anchors, flying off the roof and onto the street with a THUNDEROUS CRASH into the path of an approaching fire truck.

Kong freezes, inhaling with a SNORT. There, in the distance, across the rooftops, a huge neon sign stands out, towering above the rest...

THE COUNTRY STAR.

Kong drops onto all fours, SNORTS AGAIN, then claws at the gravel and asphalt roof.

RIP

SNORT

RIP

Gravel and hunks of asphalt rain down onto the street.

He bounds off the roof and onto the next, heading towards The Country Star.

INT. DUCK BOAT - NIGHT

Bambi helps the last of the passengers off.

Jud leaps to his feet and

CHARGES HER.

Mark turns, sees the madness in Jud's eyes and steps into his path, but Jud slams into him, knocking him aside.

He pounces on his sister, pushing her to the floor, pulling the pistol from her belt, then leaping to the controls.

Mark makes a move towards him.

JUD

Stay back!

BAMBI

Jud. What are you doing? You're not well. Let me get you some help...

JUD

No!

Jud INHALES DEEPLY, as if startled by some inner voice.

His eyes dart wildly and he scans the horizon as if some unknown enemy is about to attack.

He motions to Mark with the gun.

JUD (CONT'D)

You, get off!

Bambi's eye's narrow, she bristles and steps between them.

BAMBI

NO!

He seems oblivious to her plea, still obsessed with the phantom in his head. With uncommon strength, he shoves them both.

JUD  
All right, then. Back there! All  
the way!

Bambi and Mark slowly back to the rear of the duck boat.

JUD (CONT'D)  
Sit! Stay!

Jud scrambles to the driver's seat, starts the engine and reverses it. Tearing into the street, he slams into a parked car.

WHAM!

He puts it into drive and ROARS off.

EXT. BRANSON ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Kong leaps easily from rooftop to rooftop, taking a final lunge to cross the forty feet to a radio tower standing in a wooded lot.

His body stretches, reaches, as he soars.

CLANG

SCREECH

as claws scrape against the metal tower.

Kong quickly scrambles to the top, holding on with one hand. He leans out into the jeweled Branson night.

Throwing back his head, he lets out a LONG, CHILLING HOWL.

INT. BRANSON ANIMAL SHELTER - NIGHT

Dogs sit up, jump up, ears cocked, listening.

They begin to HOWL along with Kong's distant call.

Some run in circles, others claw at cage doors.

THE NIGHT ATTENDANT opens the door and looks in. He cocks his head in dismay.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

AN OLD GEEZER sits in the over-decorated living room, laid back in a tired Lazy-boy, cruising the cable channels with his remote.

In his lap, well-groomed PENNY THE PUG sleeps peacefully.

Penny's ears perk. She sits upright, little claws digging into the man's crotch.

OLD GEEZER  
E-H-O-W-W-W-W!

Penny leaps to the floor, racing to the window. She claws at the glass.

MUMBLING, SWEARING, Pappy gets up and goes after her.

OLD GEEZER (CONT'D)  
Mama! Somethin's got into Penny!

MAMA, HUMMING, sits on a stool in the entrance hall, carefully dusting off one of thirty-or-so

Precious Moments

figurines on a side table.

Penny begins YAPPING MADLY as she runs from window to window with the man close behind.

MAMA  
Penny? What's wrong, baby? come to  
Mama...

Penny tears around the corner and into the hall, heading straight towards Mama. Pappy is close behind.

Penny slams headlong into the table. Mama GASPS as

THE TABLE ROCKS

TILTS

THEN CRASHES TO THE FLOOR.

Penny skitters through the broken ceramics, leaps for the door, crashes through the screen, and is gone.

Mama's jaw drops in disbelief as Pappy steps up behind her.

PAPPY  
I knowed we should of got her  
fixed!

EXT. BRANSON STREET - NIGHT

Dozens of dogs, pour into the street

BARKING YELPING CRYING.

Shepherds, poodles, cockers, dobermans and mutts of all kinds form a canine caravan, all racing towards the distant HOWL.

Bringing up the rear, a giant Saint Bernard hurries to catch up. A doghouse CLATTERS behind him on a long chain.

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - BASEMENT - NIGHT

A STAINLESS STEEL CRATE

Lowers into the pit.

The arena is a high-tech version of Farley's barn - neon-lit concession, steel dog pit, cozy stadium seating.

GOOD 'OLE BOYS mill about the room - armed to the teeth with shotguns, rifles, assault weapons, bows, and knives.

ELEVATOR DOORS open.

Dwayne steps out, followed by Dino.

HOOTS and HOLLERS from the boys in the stands.

Dwayne looks around, nervous, anxiously noting the exits.

Hans and Gruber push Irv behind them. They step into the center as the crate lowers into the pit.

The GOOD 'OLE BOYS CHANT.

GOOD 'OLE BOYS  
Killer... killer... killer...

Dino steps up to the pit, making a grand show. He waves a hand and

THE CRATE RISES, revealing Dino's warrior/dog pit bull

KILLER.

The power of his incredibly stocky, overly muscular, steroid pumped body is offset his white sequined cape and diamond studded collar.

The GOOD 'OLE BOYS CHEER HIM ON as Killer GROWLS.

DINO

A bet is a bet, Dwayne. Where's your dog?

Before Dwayne can answer,

A THUNDEROUS HOWL shakes the room.

Everyone looks around for the source. Killer cocks his head.

DWAYNE

I think that's him right now.

The crowd stands silent, waiting. Then,

ANOTHER HOWL

MUCH CLOSER.

All turn as a SNARL fills the hallway leading to the dog pit.

Everyone watches as Kong emerges from the darkness, walking on two legs, huge, muscular arms with claws ready to strike, a nearly human face.

Dino's jaw drops.

Killer backs away.

KONG HOWLS

an ear-piercing shriek.

Dwayne, visibly shaking, musters courage with a voice full of uncertainty.

DWAYNE

Let's take him, boys!

Dozens of guns are cocked in a METALLIC CHORUS. Everyone aims at Kong in the center of the room.

In unison, Hans and Gruber whip out long-barreled pistols.

Irv quietly rolls towards an exit.

Suddenly, FIFI HOWLS, high-pitched and grating.

Everyone looks.

Killer follows suit.

ANOTHER HOWL

from across the room as a German Shepard appears at the exit.

MORE HOWLING

as several dogs enter from behind the bleachers.

Dozens of dogs pour into the room - every kind of breed creating a BAYING CACOPHONY.

Everyone looks around - confused, terrified.

Killer turns, looking Dino square in the eyes. He licks his lips.

Dino backs away as Killer

CROUCHES

TENSES

THEN LEAPS FROM THE PIT.

Blood sprays everywhere as his jaws clamp down Dino's throat.

Dino falls, GURGLING in the throes of death.

The other dogs attack.

GUNSHOTS ring out from everywhere.

BEAST tears at MAN.

MAN tears at BEAST.

Kong watches as Dwayne falls back behind Irv, grabbing the wheelchair and using it as a shield.

He begins backing towards a doorway, working to avoid the chaos around him. He slips through, pulling Irv behind him and slamming it shut.

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

Hans and Gruber stand back-to-back, emptying their weapons into the fray.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

CLICK

CLICK

CLICK - EMPTY.

They look at their guns, then at Killer as he moves towards them. Behind them, the elevator doors open with a

DING.

They drop their guns, turn and run, diving inside.

Killer rushes after them. The doors start to shut.

HE PUTS ON THE BRAKES,

SLIDING,

SKIDDING

into the closed doors as they slam shut.

Hans and Gruber give each other a sigh of relief - cut short by a DOG'S SNARL. They look down.

Fifi stares up at them, baring her little fangs.

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - HALLWAY/STAGE - NIGHT

Dwayne pushes Irv's wheelchair up the shadowy, sloped walkway as fast as he can. He keeps looking over his shoulder - nothing.

IRV

Let me go!

DWAYNE

Shut up, old man! I'm saving your life!

IRV

I can save my own life!

Irv looks ahead, eyes wide, then covers his face.

IRV (CONT'D)

Whoa!

Dwayne crashes the wheelchair through a pair of swinging doors and onto the stage.

The band stops in mid-song. The audience stops CLAPPING.

Dwayne looks at the audience, then at the swinging doors.

He waves his pistol over his head.

DWAYNE

Evacuate the theater!

Everyone seems puzzled. Bernie forces a laugh.

BERNIE

What seems to be the trouble,  
Dwayne?

Dwayne, exasperated, SCREAMS.

DWAYNE

Get-out-of-here-now!

Some chuckles from the audience. People think it's a joke. The audience starts LAUGHING.

Dwayne FIRES A SHOT into the air.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

I mean it! GET OUT!

The audience falls silent.

His words ECHO across the room.

Behind him,

A STAGE ELEVATOR

rises up from the floor,

KONG

slowly coming into view.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Dammit, get out-

GASPS from the audience cause Dwayne to stop in mid-sentence.

He slowly turns around to see Kong towering over him.

Dwayne stares up into Kong's ungodly face. He lets the pistol drop to the floor.

The monster leans down and ROARS LONG AND HARD.

The AUDIENCE SCREAMS. People scramble, climbing over each other, heading for the door.

The band members drop their instruments and follow suit.

Bernie stands on the edge of the stage, dumbfounded.

Kong snatches the banjo from his hands.

Kong holds it up and swings.

BERNIE SCREAMS.

Clutching his hands, he falls off the end of the stage, into the front row.

Kong turns on Dwayne. Dwayne whips the wheelchair around, putting Irv between them.

EXT. THE COUNTRY STAR - NIGHT

The duck boat turns into the parking lot of the Country Star.

Jud, in a frenzy, can barely control the wheel.

The duck boat bounces up a short run of steps and smashes into the base of the neon sign out front.

Bambi and Mark are thrown onto the floor of the boat.

The sign GROANS and CREAKS Then crashes to the pavement.

Mark helps Bambi to her feet. She looks forward-

JUD IS GONE.

SCREAMING PEOPLE race out of the Country Star.

Bambi leaps to the ground and pushes her way inside.

Still groggy, Mark follows.

INT. THE COUNTRY STAR - NIGHT

Kong leans closer to Irv, his breathing DEEP AND HEAVY.

Irv slowly lifts his eyes. He COUGHS from the stench of the monster's breath. His fear is suddenly replaced with curiosity.

IRV

Son?

Kong sucks in his breath. Silence, then...

JUD (O.S.)

I'm here, Pappy...

Jud leaps unto the stage, boldly stepping between Kong and his father. He locks eyes with Kong, unflinching.

JUD (CONT'D)

Go on now, Pappy. This is my fight...

Irv hesitates, then slowly wheels himself out of harm's way.

Jud steels himself - it's like looking into a sideshow mirror.

JUD (CONT'D)

I know you been done wrong - real bad wrong. But lots of people have been hurt, and this ain't been none of their doing. It's all mine. Take me...

Suddenly, Bambi steps up behind Kong.

BAMBI

Hey! Rover!

She swings a bass fiddle, slamming it onto the back of his head.

WHAM!

The bass splinters.

Kong whirls, back-handing Bambi and sending her flying across the stage.

She slides into the drums with a CRASH. They bury her.

Without hesitation, she pushes the drums off of her and jumps to her feet.

Her face REDDENS EYES NARROW SHE CLINCHES HER FISTS.

Anger fills her eyes. She squares her shoulders and marches towards Kong.

BAMBI (CONT'D)  
Keep your slimy paws off my  
brother!

Three strides and she's there. Like lightning, her fist flies. Flesh connects with flesh.

KEE-RACK!

Bones break. HER BONES!

She clutches her hand in pain.

Kong staggers back, then regains his footing. He doubles a claw-hand and responds in kind.

SMACK!

Bambi's lifted off the floor by the impact. She hits the stage with a

SICKENING THUD.

Mark bounds onto the stage. Kong ignores him, whirls and bounds towards Jud.

Dwayne puts a hand on Jud's shoulder, whispering in his ear.

DWAYNE  
Go get him, boy...

He shoves Jud towards Kong, turns and runs for the door.

Irv pulls the guitar from the back of his wheelchair and tosses it into Dwayne's path. Dwayne hits it, trips and tumbles.

Kong leaps towards Jud.

Jud winces, covers his face, waiting for the end.

Kong leaps over him, flying through the air, bearing down on Dwayne.

KONG OPENS HIS MOUTH

AND CLAMPS DOWN ON DWAYNE'S MID-SECTION WITH RAZOR-SHARP  
TEETH

Kong leaps off the stage and into the aisle circling the stage just in front of the seats.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Help me!

Like a demonic puppy gone mad, Kong races around the stage, shaking Dwayne wildly, squeezing harder and harder.

Dwayne's eyes bulge, his arm's flaying.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

A-R-G-R-R-R-R!

Mark helps Bambi to her feet. She wipes the blood from her mouth and turns her attention back to Kong who circles

FASTER AND FASTER,

his head shaking so quickly and savagely that it and Dwayne are a blur.

Dwayne's SCREAM slides into a SHRIEK

A LONG, PAINFUL, WAIL OF PAIN.

With light-speed movement, Kong races

ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND.

Blood begins to fly - splattering seats, stage, everything.

Dwayne's SHRIEK fades. Bambi staggers towards Dwayne's pistol.

She scoops it up,

then takes aim, turning in circles, trying to keep up with the monster's movement.

Mark, Jud and even Irv duck as she swings the pistol around.

Bambi steadies,

CIRCLING

THEN FIRING.

Kong stops on a dime.

The bullet misses its mark, but instead hits Dwayne's broken, blood-soaked body.

Kong drops the body and it hits the floor like a gutted, stuffed animal toy.

Blood drips from Kong's bared fangs. His eyes lock on Bambi.

SHE FIRES AGAIN. No effect.

Kong bounds towards her.

BLAM!

Another shot.

BLAM!

Kong leaps for her, but Bambi stands her ground,

FIRING AWAY.

Mark dives across the stage, tackling Bambi and knocking her down - to safety. Kong flies past them, slamming into Jud, knocking him flat.

Now on all fours, he towers over his former handler. Both BREATHING HARD, IN RHYTHM.

Bambi gets to her knees, steadies the pistol and takes aim.

CLICK IT'S EMPTY.

Kong raises a paw for the final blow.

JUD  
I'm sorry, Kong...

Kong SNORTS, brings his arm down

RIPPING

CLAWING THE STAGE

AN INCH FROM JUD'S HEAD.

Kong heaves from the exertion. Jud looks up at Kong, realization in his eyes.

The auditorium doors burst open and dozens of cops pour in, FIRING WILDLY.

Bambi and Mark hit the deck.

Bullets are flying everywhere. Several hit the strings on Irv's wheelchair, making a PINGING SOUND.

Irv rolls out of the chair, hitting the floor.

Kong HOWLS, then bounds off the stage, up the aisle, behind one of the banners.

The Deputies follow with their fire.

It sounds like New Year's Eve in Baghdad.

Hundreds of bullets tear into the material. Dwayne and Dino's images dissolve in a hail of bullets.

Bambi sits up, SCREAMING OVER THE DIN.

BAMBI  
ENOUGH! CEASE FIRE!

The Deputies stop.

The banner swings on a single, frayed rope, then drops to the floor. Behind it, a shattered exit door CREAKS on its hinges.

KONG IS GONE.

Mark helps Bambi to her feet. She gives him a loving smile, then cradles her swollen, red hand.

BAMBI  
Jesus Christ, broke my damned hand!  
Hard jawed S.O.B...

MARK  
Don't take the Lord's name-

BAMBI  
(cutting him off)  
Yeah, yeah...

The Commissioner climbs over a seat, thrusting his bloodied hands between them.

BERNIE  
I broke mine too. I'll never be  
able to play banjo again.

Jud rolls over and slowly stands. He limps over to Irv, pulls him up and into the wheelchair.

JUD  
You alright, Pop?

IRV  
I am now, son.

Bambi holds up a pair of handcuffs.

BAMBI  
I think it's time I did the right  
thing.

Jud offers his wrists and she puts the cuffs on him.

JUD  
Me too.

Mark gives Bambi an understanding nod.

They pause as the MOURNFUL WAIL GROWS, THEN SLOWLY FADES.

BAMBI  
Think they got him?

MARK  
What do you think?

JUD  
We don't have to worry about Kong  
anymore. His score is settled.

They scan the chaos around them, then head off stage.

INT. MEXICO BARN - DAY

A WELL-DRESSED MEXICAN moves through a crowd, passing vendors selling burritos and rice. Adults drink from bottles and flasks. Carefree children laugh and scamper. A smoky haze lingers over their heads.

The Mexican notes armed guards milling about the room. He watches as money changes hands, people boasting loudly, placing bets.

Drunk, surly thugs size him up as he penetrates the thick crowd which swells with

LUSTY CHEERING.

He pushes his way to the center where

TWO ROOSTERS BATTLE,

tearing away at each other

OPENING WOUNDS

FEATHERS FLYING

A COCK FIGHT!

The Mexican turns around to confront

TWO CHINESE SCIENTISTS.

A grim smile grows on his face. He nods. They give him the thumbs up.

FADE OUT.