

THE GRAIN STOP

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EXT.FRONTAGE ROAD-DAY

Shafts of dawn light are swallowed by an approach of dense clouds. An empty backwood road stretches around a forested bend, dotted with discarded luggage and fallen branches.

THE COURIER, late-20s, reedy; limps favoring their right leg down the desolate roadside.

They brace two wounds, an abrasion on their exposed left forearm and a wide contusion on their lower ribs.

A light rain begins to fall.

They labor for every breath. They sit on a fallen tree and begin to hoist their injured leg over.

The Courier's heavy boot impacts one of the myriad rotten branches and their knee contorts viciously.

The wind is knocked out of them as they sprawl onto the pavement.

FLASHBACK-CAMPFIRE-NIGHT

The Courier hurls themselves from where they sit to grab a nickel-plated revolver from their bag nearby.

BARTON, mid-40s, massive, clad in a weatherbeaten denim jacket; grabs and repeatedly rakes The Courier's left forearm over a capsized log stool.

The Courier wails and releases the handgun. Barton drives his knee into the The Courier's lower rib. He stands.

BARTON

It's so easy, just gimme the
fuckin' bag! It's just a bag!

Barton puts his boot on the smaller being's left knee and steps forward toward the canvas messenger bag. Under his formidable weight The Courier's joint gives out an audible CRACK.

He scoops up the canvas bag, the handgun, and the strewn contents including a small brown package.

He strides confidently into the tree-line with his prize.

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

(Whistles) Not a bad haul, thank
ya'!

EXT. FRONTAGE ROAD-BACK TO PRESENT DAY

The Courier trudges the access road. The light rain turns into a torrential downpour as a weather-beaten building comes into view.

INSERT-GRAIN STOP SIGN, WHICH READS:

"The Grain Stop! Your Fast Friends of Feed!"

EXT. GRAIN STOP-DAY (LATER)

The rain beats down heavily on an awning riddled with holes, causing rivulets of water to spill over The Courier as they peer through the cracked windows of the old grain stop.

They spy their canvas bag that hangs on a nail inside underneath a familiar weatherbeaten denim jacket.

They quickly push through the door into the much less soaked interior.

INT. GRAIN STOP OFFICE MUDROOM-DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

The Courier tosses the jacket onto a rough cut waiting bench tucked under the entryway desk.

They rifle through the contents of the bag, a travel map of Washington, a semi-clean shirt, and three spare rounds tucked underneath the bag's lining.

Barton's shadow looms beyond the office window, far on the rear side of the Grain Stop's packing room.

He raises his arm with a sense of bravado.

A shot SHATTERS the window.

The Courier wrenches themselves away from the hanging bag.

They have the rounds and shirt in a white-knuckled grip. They push the rounds into their pocket as they wring the cotton garment.

BARTON

I cannot, and will not, abide by
any and all forms of rudeness
through theft!

The Courier scrabbles across the dusty floor behind a hip high wall that leads into the packing room.

INT. GRAIN STOP PACKING ROOM-CONTINUOUS

The Courier picks a few splinters of glass out of their cheek.

They take a deep, quiet breath.

THE COURIER

Keep the bag, keep the gun, just
give me the thing I had in there!

They swallow and wipe their cheek with the shirt in their hand.

THE COURIER (CONT'D)

The wrapped pack--the package, I
got some trade if you'll talk.

Barton pulls the hammer of his ill-gotten handgun back.

The CLICK echoes off the dirt coated concrete floor.

BARTON

Campfire kid? Thought the rain got
ya, or at least the coyotes.

He steps over a pile of broken palettes towards the low wall.

The Courier drags themselves to the end of the wall and their feet finally find purchase on the concrete.

Barton rolls his shoulders forward to lean on the low wall in a nonchalant manner. He smiles, almost avuncular in nature.

BARTON (CONT'D)

Well I'm sure as sunrise glad
you're here.

The Courier's eyes go wide as they hurl themselves around the wall's fragile end-post.

It fractures, The Courier sprawling over the pile of broken wood Barton stepped on moments earlier.

Barton wheels around, still slouched against the low barrier.

He lets out two more lazy shots, but only hits a bag of old farm feed.

The Courier is showered with the half rotten grains.

They snag one of the broken palette boards and hurl it towards Barton.

The Courier weaves between the high stacked palettes of feed and mulch, two more shots blow open a bag and a nearby post.

They cower in the far right corner, a rectangular protrusion from the packing floor.

A sleeping bag tossed casually over several bags of grain, a makeshift mattress around which is strewn trappings of a meager bandit's life.

The package sits at the head of the sleeping bag.

Other traveller's clothes, many female or simply not sized for Barton's frame, make up a good deal of this human nest.

Photo albums of various families act as low slung nightstands with unlit yet heavily melted candles.

A SQUEAL of Barton's boot within arm's reach snaps The Courier from their observation.

Barton levels the handgun at the Courier's stomach.

The Courier shouts and shoves barton's arm. Barton squeezes the trigger, though the shot only clips The Courier's hip.

BARTON (CONT'D)

What a waste.

He cracks The Courier across the cheekbone with the butt end of his handgun.

They sprawl over the sleeping bag.

BARTON (CONT'D)

Gimme a sec, kid.

Barton strides back to the pile of palettes and sets the handgun atop a grain stack.

He puts a boot to one of the planks and yanks violently. The board GROANS and POPS as it is wrenched free.

The Courier attempts to stem their bleeding with the shirt.

They brace themselves on the stacks of grain.

They hurl themselves across the gaps between them as they fish for the spare rounds in their pocket.

The Courier grabs the handgun and pops the action open. Rounds spill across the floor.

Barton turns toward them, half broken palette still in hand.

THE COURIER

I'm sorry.

They cycle a fresh round and aim at Barton's chest.

The Courier fires three times. Barton's eyes are wide, incredulous.

INT. GRAIN STOP PACKING ROOM-DAY (LATER)

The Courier bandages and braces their wounds with the stolen clothing Barton acquired over his career.

They methodically gather their bag. The empty handgun is set underneath the map, no longer useful.

The Courier rolls the package around in their hands and sighs with a tremendous weight.

The rain stops.

They scrub the stains out of Barton's denim jacket and settle into the large garment.

Now braced against the cold damp outside, The Courier rolls the sleeping bag and tucks it underneath their carrying strap.

They look down at Barton's crumpled body.

They step over it, the weight pressed onto their left knee.

The Courier grimaces, but continues out and around the low wooden wall.

They bear their shoulder into the flimsy plank door, met by the exterior mist.

The Courier walks towards the forest, back towards the road.

EXT. FRONTAGE ROAD-NIGHT

The lanky figure of The Courier walks along the roadside, until a desolate on-ramp comes into view.

They take a deep breath as two figures are lit by a low campfire light, their shadows cast across the on ramp like a screen projector.

END