

THE MAKING OF A SNITCH

Edited excerpts from an Ohio State Highway Patrol interview in Staughton Lynd, *Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising* (PM Press, 2001), pages 101-103.

Cast: TROOPER 1
TROOPER 2
PRISONER

[TROOPER 1]: I'm seeing who is going to be truthful with me and who I'm going to try and remain in prison for a long time. Okay.

[PRISONER]: But you know I was going to the Parole Board today?

[TROOPER 1]: I knew you were having some parole difficulties . . . I know you got a chance to go home. I'm going to try to keep that chance, okay? Like I said, the prosecutors are coming here today. I will sit down with the prosecutors today and discuss what [you have] to discuss.

[TROOPER 2]: What do you want us to tell them? . . .

[PRISONER]: I, I don't know. I could say that I could clear a lot of shit up if they guarantee me a parole.

[TROOPER 1]: Okay, how much can you clear up for us?

[PRISONER]: I can clear up everything.

[TROOPER 1]: What's everything? W[h]et my appetite. Give me something to take to them. . . .

[PRISONER]: If I get a written, if I get a written statement saying that I'm guaranteed a no conditional parole, I clear up everything.

[TROOPER 1]: Okay. Understand that we don't have anything to do with the Parole Board except to say with a letter [that you have] cooperated with us in a very serious matter. I can guarantee that. I can guarantee that right now. Okay?

[PRISONER]: I'm saying I go to the Parole Board today.

[TROOPER 1]: You'll still go. I'm not going to stop that. Okay? Now we may stop your release, okay?

[PRISONER]: I believe that I'm going to get some time behind this.

[TROOPER 1]: Okay, would that be acceptable?

[TROOPER 2]: What's the least you want out of this? . . . What's the least that would be acceptable to you?

[PRISONER]: Pheew!! Parole.

[TROOPER 2]: Now that's the most. . . . If you didn't get a parole.

[TROOPER 1]: I'm here to help you. . . . You have some great information. You cleared up a lot of stuff for us. Okay? And I don't believe that deeds should go unpaid. But there is the one little problem with [naming one of the murdered prisoners]. That has to be straightened out. Okay? See what I'm saying? And that's something that I will discuss with the prosecutors today. You know I need to know what I can take to the prosecutors. . . .

[TROOPER 2]: See we got this sliding scale. If you'd said, "I ain't saying nothing". . . . We go to . . . something like Aggravated Murder. But now, look, you've talked to us. . . . Are we going to go to the prosecutor and say, "Hey, think we ought to fry this guy". I can tell you that right now -- no. Okay? But we want to know what's in line with you. Do we walk in and say, "Look he was forced to do it". What do we say, murder? Okay. Without any spec[ification]s. Concurrent with whatever he's got right now and if the Parole Board paroles him out, we're done. Is that what I go to them and say? I mean that sounds like a pretty decent deal to me. Okay. But I'm not here to make deals but I will . . . go to bat, says "Look, he's told us all this information. Good information. . . ."

[PRISONER]: Pheew! I'd like to go home, I done been here 12 years, I'm tired. I want to go home.

[TROOPER 1]: . . . What can you clear up for me that I can go tell the prosecutors about that we don't already know? I've got to have something. . . .

[TROOPER 2]: You know what they're going to say though? They're going to say, "What can you tell us about Vallandingham?" They say that every single time. "What can this guy tell us about Vallandingham?" . . ."

[PRISONER]: I ain't going to have to testify or nothing like that in court or nothing.

[TROOPER 1]: That might be part of the deal. That may be part of the prosecutor's things...

[PRISONER]. I'm saying how am I going to testify and be in the same camp with these guys.

[TROOPER 2]: Well, you won't.

[TROOPER 1]: You won't

[PRISONER]: Why won't I?

[TROOPER 1]: Where do you want to go? This is stuff that I have to tell them. "Hey, he'll testify if we can guarantee his protection. He'll testify if we can work something out about [the murdered prisoner] with him." . . . And then of course they'll come back with their counter offer. You know how it goes. Okay. . . You know when attorneys sit down and talk, you know how it goes back and forth. But I have to know what you need for your testimony.

[PRISONER]: You, uh, talk to the prosecutor and try to work out something. I'll probably have some more for you.

[TROOPER 1]: Well, I need to tell them what more might be.

[PRISONER]: I, I have some more for you. I had, I have some further.

[TROOPER 1]: I need to w[h]et them a little bit. The more I w[h]et them, the more they're willing to deal.

[PRISONER]: I have something for you. I'm ready to go home. I think you know what I'm saying.

[TROOPER 1]: Are you going to give me Vallandingham?

[PRISONER]: Yep.

[TROOPER 1]: Honest to God, straight up.

[PRISONER]: I'm going to give you Vallandingham. Yep.

[TROOPER 1]: No specifics. I just want to know how you know.

[TROOPER 2]: Cause they're going to say, "How is he going to give us Vallandingham?"

[PRISONER]: I was there. I seen it.

[TROOPER 1]: The murder?

[PRISONER]: Yeah.

[TROOPER 1]: Okay, let's end it right there. Okay. And I will take that to them. Okay?