

FIRST STONE

by
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This is a work of fiction. All characters and events portrayed in this work are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT - NIGHT

An array of similar houses and a grid of streets with bright streetlights is surrounded by flat dirt fields. The streets are empty and night is absolute, pressing in on the oasis of the development.

EXT. SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT, ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Ornamental gates frame the road. On the side of the gate is the name of the development: "Storybrook Meadows: A Quiet Community".

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

A glaringly-lit house is flanked by two other houses. All three are a variation on a theme. They're the sort of homes one might see in a relatively new, upper middle-class suburban development. The neighbor's GERMAN SHEPHERD barks once in the distance.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

On the mantelpiece is a bell jar clock, its mechanism spinning back and forth with a muted WHOOSHING. It shows 9:00 o'clock.

CHANCE (V.O.)

Our lives are stories without
meaning.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, STUDY - NIGHT

On a desk is a computer, its screen full of icons, a quiet HISS emanating from its speakers. In the corner it shows 9:00 PM.

CHANCE (V.O.)

Certainly they have a beginning
and an end. But the middle is
random, fragmented, chaotic.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, KITCHEN - NIGHT

A kitchen table is piled with dirty dishes and the remnants of a meal.

CHANCE (V.O.)

But it's in our natures to want
every story to have meaning.
We demand they have meaning.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CHARLES slumps on the couch, his arms hanging loosely between his thighs, hands empty, palms up. His head is back, his eyes closed. He wears a nondescript grey suit and white shirt with a loosened tie. His clothes are stained with blood that glitters wetly in the brightly lit room. There is a faint HUMMING noise in the background.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, KITCHEN - NIGHT

An under the counter dishwasher makes the steady HUM we heard before. The HUM is much louder now.

CHANCE (V.O.)

So we tell and retell a story
until it makes sense to us.

The dishwasher dial which CLICKS into the rinse mode.
Immediately CUT TO,

INT. DISHWASHER - NIGHT

We see dishes in a rack for a split second. Then the spray jets come on with a ROAR, blasts of water obliterating the view.
Immediately CUT TO,

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charles' eyes snap open. The volume of the spray jets is the same as if we were inside the washer, but the sound FADES. Charles blinks, and looks around in a panic. We see things he sees: a glass display case containing a collection of porcelain figurines; an end table with a framed picture of Charles and a woman, wearing cat's eye sunglasses, who holds a baby; a coffee table with a bowl of peanuts at one end, a vase with plastic flowers in the middle, and several magazines fanned out on the other end.

CHANCE (V.O.)

Until the teller no longer
remembers which version is
real. Or even if real ever
existed....

A dream-like SILENCE falls and stays through the following scenes.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

A WOMAN, naked from the waist up, lies curled into a fetal position at the foot of the bed.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, BABY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The headboard of a child's crib blocks our view of what's inside, but a child's motionless foot protrudes from between the crib's bars.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charles sits on the couch, his head cradled in his hands. He stands. A kitchen knife tumbles from the folds of his clothes. The knife bounces silently on the white carpet before coming to rest between his shoes, its blade gleaming and bloodied.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, UPSTAIRS WASHROOM - NIGHT

Water runs in a sink without SOUND. Charles' washes his hands slowly, wringing them so hard his knuckles are white.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Blood spots the stairway carpet. On the handrail are bloody handprints. Charles descends the stairs, holding the knife.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, FRONT HALLWAY - NIGHT

On the table is a ring of keys. Charles' hand picks up the keys without a sound. Charles reaches for the front door handle.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME, FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

SILENCE. The door opens and Charles moves onto the porch. He holds the knife. His expression is rigid, focussed inward. The neighbor's dog BARKS once, breaking the silence.

EXT. SUBURBAN YARD - NIGHT

A SNARLING GERMAN SHEPHERD strains at his chain, foam flecking his muzzle.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME, FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Other night sounds return: cricket CHIRPS, a DISTANT CAR. ANGRY MUTED VOICES argue. Charles turns his head to listen, but the words are indecipherable. The argument intensifies. In the neighbour's bay window, two shadowy figures gesticulate at one another as they argue.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME, DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

A black Lexus is parked in the driveway. Charles walks to the driver's side and opens the door, then pauses, cocking his head. A new sound, that of a woman GROANING, rises. Charles goes rigid.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

As before, the woman lies on the floor at the foot of the bed. But the GROANING is not hers; it comes from O.S. There is a loud GASP, almost a shout. Immediately CUT TO,

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME, DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Charles looks at the upstairs window of the other neighbour's house. The window is open and the lights out. The WOMAN's GROANS change into a rhythmic GRUNTING; a man's GRUNTS join hers. Both grow in volume.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Same as the original shot of the three houses. The SOUNDS of the fighting couple and the couple making love mingle as the Lexus backs out of the driveway. Something SMASHES, a lamp knocked over perhaps, but we can't tell which side the noise comes from. The German Shepherd begins BARKING as the Lexus drives out of SHOT.

EXT. SUBURBAN YARD - NIGHT

The German Shepherd BARKS angrily as the Lexus drifts past. Other dogs join in. The other SOUNDS continue at the same volume.

INT. VARIETY STORE & GAS BAR - NIGHT

A teenage CLERK leafs idly through a Playboy while a muzak version of "The Girl From Ipanema" plays in the background. He glances up to watch Charles' Lexus drift past, then returns to his magazine.

EXT. SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT - NIGHT

Charles' Lexus drives down one of the streets, creeping towards the darkness at the edge of the development. The variety store song, the dog BARKS, the cricket CHIRPS, the neighbours fighting and making love, all these SOUNDS mingle and grow in volume until they are impossible to untangle. The cacophony rises to ear-splitting volume.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Complete SILENCE. The Lexus speeds down a one-lane highway in glaring sunlight. Bit-by-bit the sound of the Lexus's engine THRUMMING and the tires HISSING along the asphalt rises to normal level. On either side of the highway we can see the bleak landscape lit in painful detail by a brilliant sun: an abandoned, tumbledown house; a decaying factory, its windows shattered; a rusting, lop-sided water tower.

INT. CHARLES' LEXUS - DAY

Charles, looking like shit, hunches over the wheel, squinting against the bright light. He sweats profusely. Inside the Lexus the SOUNDS are still there, but muted. Charles reaches over and flicks open the glove compartment. The kitchen knife tumbles out and onto the floor, half the blade covered in dried blood. Charles stares at it for a moment, his smeared reflection on the blade. Then he picks it up and drops it on the seat. He roots around in the glove compartment, pulls out a pair of women's cat's eye sunglasses and puts them on.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The empty highway stretches out into the distance. The Lexus drives into the shot and continues down the highway.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE, BACK ROOM - DAY

CHANCE, an extremely fat man in his early sixties, sits at a desk. Although it's early morning and the room is shuttered, he's already sweating through his trademark wrinkled white seersucker suit and Panama hat. Chance files the serial numbers from a large calibre revolver. A small lamp illuminates several bullets on the desk. Chance examines his handiwork. Satisfied, he opens the cylinder; one chamber is empty. He picks up a bullet and inserts it. Snapping the cylinder closed, he lays the gun on the desk. He takes a gold lighter from his pocket and relights a half-smoked cigar. He pulls a picture from his coat pocket. The picture, from the 60's, is of a shooting range. A smiling young man has his arm around a woman who aims the same revolver at the camera. A young Chance stands to the side, his hand on the head of a young girl. Chance burns the picture.

EXT. HIGHWAY PULLOUT - DAY

A police car pulls off the road so that it sits hidden behind a large billboard that has a faux 60's advertisement for cigarettes.

INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR - DAY

A COP hangs a radar gun outside his window and activates it. The gun tracks nothing on the empty highway. The Cop who picks up a paperback from the dashboard, Jim Thompson's "The Getaway". It's a hot day. Sweat clings to his temples. He starts reading.

In the distance a rusty Gremlin approaches. The radar begins BEEPING steadily. The Cop checks the radar gun, but the approaching car is well within the speed limit. The Cop raises his book again. Immediately the BEEPING stops. The Cop lowers his book. The Gremlin has pulled over to the side of the road a quarter of a mile away.

EXT. HIGHWAY RENDEVOUS - DAY

JENA, a woman in her early 30's, exits the Gremlin. She is dressed in a retro 60's way, with a white blouse, tight check pants, cat's eye sunglasses, and a kerchief over her head. She has a large black 60's purse slung over her shoulder. She walks down a dirt road where Chance waits for her, leaning against his Cadillac. He stares at Jena's cleavage, beads of sweat ringing his forehead. He licks his lips unconsciously.

CHANCE

It's been a while, Jena.

JENA

You'll be there, right?

CHANCE

Of course.

JENA

We need a witness.

CHANCE

You're looking good. All grown up.

JENA

The money....

Chance hands her a paper bag. Jena looks inside at a wad of money. Chance holds up a large calibre vintage revolver.

CHANCE

I got a gun. Let me show you
how it works.

JENA

I know how a fucking gun works.

Jena grabs the gun and shoves it in her purse. She walks to her car.

CHANCE

Wait! I should show you first.

Chance pursues her to the shoulder of the highway where the Cop sees them. Chance tries to grab the purse. Jena knees him and he goes down. Jena enters the Gremlin and drops her purse on the passenger seat; the butt of the gun slips out. She drops the paper bag on top of it, obscuring the gun.

CHANCE

Bitch!
(tries to rise,
can't)
You better not run away this
time!

Jena guns her car, spewing dirt on Chance and accelerates towards the Cop. Chance struggles to his feet and disappears into the brush.

INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR - DAY

Jena speeds past the radar trap, the Cop's radar beeping frantically. Chance's black Cadillac pulls out and drives off in the other direction. The Cop looks in both directions, considering. Then he puts the paperback in his shirt pocket and starts his car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The Cop pursues the Gremlin.

INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR - DAY

Closing on Jena, the Cop flicks on his cherry flashers and siren.

EXT. HIGHWAY, SHOULDER - DAY

Jena has pulled over, the Cop behind her. He exits his car and walks to the driver's side window of the Gremlin. On the passenger seat is the purse and the paper bag. The car stereo plays Julie London's version of "Daddy" loudly. Jena's thin white blouse clings to her in the heat, the top buttons undone, revealing considerable cleavage. She wears the same type of cat's eye sunglasses that Charles put on earlier, and has a kerchief over her head that is tied under her chin. The Cop stares at her breasts, a bead of sweat on his upper lip.

JENA
(smiling)
Am I too fast?

COP
(trying hard
not to stare)
Pardon me?

JENA
Was I going too fast?

COP
Could you turn down the radio,
Ma'am.

Jena turns the volume down. She undoes the kerchief and dabs at perspiration under her chin and on her throat.

JENA
It's one of my vices.

COP
Julie London?

JENA
Speed.

COP
Speed kills.

Jena dabs lower, onto the swell of her breasts.

JENA

You're not going to tell me there's lots of dangerous curves around here, are you?

COP

Not now.

JENA

I don't know how it happens. I get behind the wheel, put my foot on the gas, and the next thing you know....

COP

You should learn more self control.

JENA

That's what my ex used to tell me.

The Cop gives the interior of the Gremlin the once over.

JENA

You don't strike me as the sort who'd want a woman to practise too much self control.

COP

Just the right amount.

JENA

Right amount? How do you work that out?

COP

You have to decide how you want to feel about yourself the next morning.

JENA

That's a whole twenty-four hours away.

COP

I wake up early.

In the distance, another car approaches.

JENA

I'd rather learn from my mistakes. It's not as boring.

COP

You bored often?

JENA

On days like this I could be bored all morning.

COP

You suggesting something?

JENA

Nothing unseemly. If you like, we can get married first.

COP

You're the old fashioned sort. So's my wife.

JENA

She happily married?

COP

As far as she knows.

JENA

Till death do you part?

COP

She signed the papers.

JENA

Just like my ex.

COP

What happened to him?

JENA

Couldn't handle the curves. He parted.

COP

How about that fellow in the Cadillac? Can he handle the curves?

A beat passes while they regard one another.

JENA
(glances at paperback)
Any good?

The cop is puzzled, having forgotten about his book.

JENA
The book.

COP
Not really. I don't buy the characters or their motivations.

JENA
Then why read it?

COP
I've got to know how it ends.

JENA
Aren't you supposed to ask me for my registration?

COP
Registration.

Jena searches the sun visors, the material of her blouse stretching tighter, the Cop eyeing her. She bends over, revealing the purse and the paper bag in the passenger seat.

COP
What's in the bag?

Jena looks over. From her P.O.V. she can see the butt of the gun just poking out from underneath the paper bag. The other car is much closer now and is weaving. The Cop pulls his head out Jena's car.

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - DAY

Jena notices the Cop is distracted. She reaches in the direction of the gun, though we don't actually see her pick it up.

EXT. HIGHWAY, SHOULDER - DAY

Charles' Lexus drifts past with exaggerated care. There isn't much room because of the way Jena's Gremlin takes up half a lane. Sunlight flashes off the bloody knife on the passenger seat in Charles' Lexus.

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - DAY

Jena sees Charles, who still wears the cat's eye sunglasses and his blood-stained clothes. Charles turns his head.

INT. CHARLES' LEXUS - DAY

Charles sees Jena. For a brief moment they regard one another through identical sunglasses.

EXT. HIGHWAY, SHOULDER - DAY

The Cop stares after Charles' Lexus slowly weaving away. The Cop turns back to Jena's Gremlin and freezes.

FADE TO WHITE.

FADE IN:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Charles' Lexus moves along the empty highway, still weaving.

INT. CHARLES' LEXUS - DAY

Sweat films Charles and dark semi-circles have formed under the arms of his suit jacket. As he drives Charles glances constantly in the rear view mirror. Each time the mirror shows only empty highway. Charles looks at the knife which glints with reflected sunlight. He stares at it and the sounds of the car fade.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

A INT. SUBURBAN HOME, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

In complete silence, Charles stands above the woman at the foot of the bed, holding the knife. He wears the cat's eye sunglasses. A car HORN BLARES, startling him.

RETURN TO SCENE:

INT. CHARLES' LEXUS - DAY

Charles snaps out of his fugue just in time to pull his car out of the way of an oncoming vehicle. The other car sounds a long HONK that dopplers into the distance. Charles wipes his forehead with the back of his sleeve, then glances over at the passenger seat. The knife is gone. In a panic, Charles reaches over, left hand on the wheel, and digs between the door and the passenger seat. Charles pulls out the knife, holding it by the blade in his right hand. He screws up his face in pain. He drops the knife to the seat and stares at his hand.

Charles has a nasty looking cut along the palm. He wipes his hand on his trouser leg, leaving a bloody smear. From a box of kleenex jammed between the driver and passenger seats, he grabs several tissues and wads them up in his hand, making a fist. Sweat streams off Charles' brow. He runs the back of his bloodied fist along his forehead, leaving a red streak. Noticing the red streak in the rear view mirror, he raises his arm to wipe his forehead with his sleeve and freezes. In the rear view mirror a police car follows. Charles lowers his arm, watching as the police car closes. Charles glances at the knife with its fresh blood, then back at the mirror. The police car's cherry lights flash on, although there is no siren. The police car closes rapidly. When it's a car length away the SIREN BLARES to life. The police car pulls around Charles' Lexus, then speeds past.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Heavy metal MUSIC BLARES from a boom box atop one of the pumps. MARVIN, the gas jockey, cleans the windshield of a convertible. Shirtless, he is heavily tattooed and pierced. A leggy WOMAN in high heels walks into the shot, opens the door and enters the car. Marvin draws his squeegee assiduously over the windshield, rinses it, then starts again. Despite his appearance, he is

fastidious. P.O.V. of woman: a soapy, well-muscled torso presses back and forth across the windshield. Marvin does a final wipe, works away at small specks with a fingernail, then stands back to evaluate his work.

MARVIN
Fucking beautiful.

Marvin walks around to the car door. Water drips from his chest and soaks his jeans. Marvin stares at the woman's cleavage. She holds out some bills.

MARVIN
On me, baby.

Her hand remains extended. Marvin winks.

MARVIN
Don't worry. I'll make it up
elsewhere.

The woman puts her money away and pulls out. Marvin stares after her.

MARVIN
Fucking beautiful.

Charles' pulls into the vacated spot and rolls down his window. He still wears his sunglasses.

CHARLES
Excuse me.

MARVIN
(staring after woman)
Can't you fucking read?

CHARLES
Read what?

Marvin points his thumb up without looking at Charles. A rusted sign above the pump that says "Self Serve".

CHARLES
Sorry.

Marvin finally looks at Charles. He takes in Charles' bloodstained clothes and the knife on the passenger's seat.

MARVIN

You're not from around here.

CHARLES

Do you have a washroom?

MARVIN

Maybe. Buying gas?

Charles pulls out a blood-stained billfold. He extracts a few bills that have dried blood on them and hands them to Marvin. Marvin holds them with the tips of his fingers. He reaches in his back pocket and pulls out a key attached to a large acrylic key holder. He hands it to Charles and points to the side of the building.

MARVIN

Knock yourself out.

EXT. GAS STATION, WASHROOM - DAY

Charles walks up to the washroom door, then stops, craning his head as if listening. In the background is the sound of TRAFFIC along with the MUSIC. Charles takes off his sunglasses and blinks.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Marvin nonchalantly washes the bills in a bucket of soapy windshield cleaner. In the background Charles enters the washroom.

INT. GAS STATION, WASHROOM - DAY

A CLICKING sound as the key is inserted into the lock and turned. The door opens and Charles enters. MUSIC follows him in, then is cut off as Charles closes the door. Charles stands in front of the mirror and regards himself for a moment. He turns on the water.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Marvin bops to the driver's side window in time to the music. He reaches in and he pulls the hood opener. He walks around and lifts the hood. Pulling a switchblade out of his pocket, he flicks open the blade and cuts the radiator hose. Then he notices dirt under one of his fingernails and uses the tip of the knife to clean it. The angle changes to reveal Charles standing by the side of the Lexus.

MARVIN

(without looking)

Looks like your radiator hose
is fucked.

Marvin finishes scraping his nail, then folds and pockets his knife as he turns to face Charles, who's managed to remove only a few of the bloodier streaks on his face. Charles' sunglasses are back on. Marvin wags the end of the hose at Charles.

MARVIN

Want me to fix it?

CHARLES

You cut it.

MARVIN

You're mistaken. I'll do her
for you for a hundred bucks.

CHARLES

I saw you.

MARVIN

Look, I don't have all fucking
day. You want me to fix it or
not?

CHARLES

Are you crazy?

MARVIN

Your choice. You can take the
work elsewhere. Next station
is 50 miles that way. Don't
think much of your chances of

getting there, what with the heat today and your fucking radiator hose broke. Or you can leave it here. I'll fix it.

(eyes Charles' clothes)
No questions asked.

Charles looks at his bloodied shirt.

MARVIN
Come back next week.

CHARLES
Next week?

MARVIN
Have to special order the part, don't I?

CHARLES
I've got to be somewhere today.

MARVIN
Where?

Charles has no answer.

MARVIN
I could express order the part. Be here by tomorrow morning. But it'll cost you an extra fifty.

Charles looks around, bewildered.

MARVIN
Keys?

Charles reluctantly hands over his keys.

CHARLES
I... I don't have anywhere to go.

MARVIN
Motel across the street. And if you're bored, there's a bar.

Marvin nods at a shuttered lounge next to the gas station.

MARVIN

After 11.

CHARLES

The bar opens at 11?

MARVIN

No, man. Tomorrow. For the car.

Charles moves towards the highway like a sleepwalker. On the other side a grey, cinder-block motel is done up cheaply in a medieval motif. In front of the motel is a suit of armour holding a staff from which a small, guttering flame emerges. A sign in front of the motel reads "Ted Knight's Inn". Cars zoom past on the highway.

MARVIN (O.C.)

Careful crossing the highway.

Charles steps out into traffic. Marvin walks back to the garage and pulls open a drawer in a cabinet. It's filled with hoses identical to the one he cut.

EXT. TED KNIGHT'S INN - DAY

Charles' stands outside the office under a 'Ye Olde Office' sign.

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, OFFICE - DAY

GERRY wears the WGM Blazer, like Ted Baxter's, and watches COPS on a portable TV with the sound off. On the TV the police are evicting a tenant from an apartment. The office walls are decorated with framed photos of Ted Knight along with medieval paraphernalia. Behind the counter is a mirror. Charles enters. Gerry ignores him. Charles walks over to the counter. Gerry turns to see Charles, covered with fresh and dried blood. In his

right fist Charles holds wadded up, blood-soaked kleenex. In the conversation that follows, Gerry studiously ignores Charles' state.

GERRY

How may I help you?

CHARLES

My car broke down. I need a room...

(looks at nametag)

...Gerry.

Gerry looks across the street at the Gas station. Marvin is fiddling under the hood of the Lexus. Gerry turns to look at a computer screen; he clicks a mouse and punches keys as they talk.

GERRY

Single or double?

CHARLES

Single.

GERRY

Smoking or non-smoking?

CHARLES

It doesn't matter.... Quiet. I need a quiet room.

GERRY

Non-smoking rooms are usually quieter.

CHARLES

Non-smoking.

GERRY

And how many nights will you be staying?

CHARLES

I don't know.

GERRY

I understand.

CHARLES

What do you understand?

GERRY

Uncertainty.

CHARLES

Uncertainty?

GERRY

(looking up from screen)

I sank my life savings into
this motel. It seemed like a
sure thing at the time.

(looks back at screen)

How will you be paying?

In the mirror behind the counter Charles sees himself.

CHARLES

(while staring at
his reflection)

Are you sure you want to rent a
room to me, Gerry?

GERRY

We don't take checks.

CHARLES

Look at me.

Gerry looks directly at Charles for the first time.

GERRY

Car problems, right? Cut
yourself changing a tire.
Messy business.

CHARLES

I have cash.

GERRY

That'll do fine.

Charles reaches in his pocket and pulls out a billfold. With his cut hand he pulls out the remaining bills and lays them on the counter. Gerry regards them. Then he pushes a registration card across the counter. Charles stares at it, then at his hand.

GERRY

Go to your room and clean yourself up. You can fill out the card later.

He runs a key card through a reader and hands it to Charles.

GERRY

Room 14. Murray Slaughter Suite. End of the row. Quieter that way.

Charles moves towards the door, then pauses. He nods at the TV.

CHARLES

How can you understand what's happening without the sound?

GERRY

The words are always the same.

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM - DAY

A nondescript motel room, except for medieval sconces on the wall. In the background the sounds of the HIGHWAY TRAFFIC. The door opens; the volume of PASSING CARS grows louder. Charles enters and closes the door, blunting the noise. Exhausted, he slumps on the edge of the bed and takes off his sunglasses. He glances at a clock. "9:00" glows in red numerals. Charles lays back, staring at the ceiling. He shuts his eyes; the TRAFFIC sounds fade to nothing.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM - NIGHT

Charles sleeps. It is later and the room is darker. O.C. is the muffled sound of a man and woman MAKING LOVE in the adjacent room. A rhythmic banging on the wall increases in tempo. Charles opens his eyes. The NOISE reaches an orgasmic crescendo and stops. The clock shows "9:00". An argument starts in the next room, although the words are impossible to make out. Charles sits up, turns to the wall.

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
No fucking way!

A WOMAN responds inaudibly.

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
Maybe I should kill you, you
fucking bitch!

Charles hesitates, then rises, standing on the bed and placing his ear against the wall. The MAN shouts profanities. Charles' face is pressed against the wall. A GUN SHOT. Light streams through a new hole in the wall inches from the tip of Charles' nose. Charles blinks, but keeps his ear pressed against the wall. For a moment there is SILENCE. Charles puts his eye to the bullet hole.

In the adjacent room Charles sees Marvin standing at the end of the bed, staring open-mouthed at someone out of view. Marvin wears only a pair of ragged underwear. WIPE to SPLIT SCREEN, with Charles staring through the bullet hole on one side, and the interior of Marvin's room on the other. Marvin'S room is spotlessly clean except for rumpled sheets on the bed. Drying bills, still blood-stained, are clipped to a string across the mirror. Jena, wearing the same outfit but with the blouse unbuttoned, holds the revolver, its barrel smoking.

MARVIN
Are you fucking nuts?

JENA
Answer the question.

Marvin starts making the bed. He's agitated, but works carefully. Jena throws the gun atop the sheets Marvin is straightening. Marvin stares at it. Jena buttons her blouse, then picks up Thompson's "The Getaway" from the dresser top.

MARVIN
I don't do murder.

JENA
You told me you'd kill anyone
who got in your way.

MARVIN
It's not the same. A nice
clean hold up. That's one

thing. But murder is so
fucking messy.

JENA

You said you've killed people
before.

MARVIN

That was family.

JENA

You're scared.

MARVIN

Fuck you! You're not the one
pulling the trigger!

(picks up gun)

Where the hell did you get this
anyway?

JENA

Used book store.

Jena stuffs the book in her purse.

MARVIN

Not the book! The gun!

JENA

From the guy who hired us.

MARVIN

It's a fucking cannon!

JENA

You'll need it.

MARVIN

The .22's fine. Where the hell
is it, anyway?

Jena pulls a small hand gun out of her purse.

JENA

This pea shooter? You couldn't
kill a cop with that thing.

You need something bigger for
this job.

Jena shoves the gun back in her purse.

MARVIN

I don't like it. First Murray
hires me to rob his own bar,
now he wants me to kill his
partner?

Marvin aims at the bullet hole. Charles pulls back. Marvin
lowers his arm. Charles leans back towards the hole.

JENA

Wrong.

MARVIN

But you said--

JENA

Murray hired you. His partner
Chance hired me.

MARVIN

You told Chance we were going
to rob the bar? I don't
fucking believe it! Did you
invite the cops too?

JENA

Don't you see? It's perfect.
Chance doesn't know you. And
Murray, the one guy who can
roll on you, will be dead.
Nothing to connect you to
either guy. We get paid for
the hit, and keep whatever cash
there is in the safe.

MARVIN

What about Chance? He can ID
you.

WIPE BACK to FULL SHOT OF Marvin's room.

JENA

Never met him. I phoned.

MARVIN

You negotiated a hit by making
a cold call?

JENA

I heard a rumour. And he was a
motivated buyer. Easier than
selling penny stocks.

MARVIN

Jesus fucking Christ....

Marvin puts the gun down on the dresser and works on the bed
again.

JENA

Maybe I should set up a web
site. Murder.com. 'Where we
make the hits'.

MARVIN

I hate the fucking internet. I
don't understand it.

JENA

There, there.

MARVIN

When I agreed to this it was
cause a guy wanted me to rob
his own bar. A simple job with
an inside man--

JENA

Now we have two inside men.

MARVIN

But we're going to kill one.

JENA

Right.

MARVIN

And still rob the bar?

JENA

That's what he hired you to do.

MARVIN

The guy I'm going to kill.

JENA

Right.

MARVIN

And the other guy hired us to
kill the guy who hired us to
rob the bar.

JENA

You've got it.

MARVIN

This is getting too
complicated.

Jena pulls a large roll of bills out of her purse.

JENA

Does this simplify things?

Marvin stops making the bed and looks at the roll of bills

JENA

If we rob the bar, we make a
grand. If we're lucky.

(waves roll)

But this is real money.

MARVIN

If you called him, how did you
get that?

JENA

I arranged a discreet drop off.
He never saw me.

Jena pulls the bills out of their clips and adds them to her
roll.

JENA

Tomorrow, after it's done, a
lot more of this will be
waiting for us.

Jena puts the roll in her purse. WIPE to SPLIT SCREEN, the interior of Marvin's room on one side, the interior of Charles' on the other. Charles looks through the bullet hole.

MARVIN

I don't like it. Too many
fucking variables.

JENA

All you have to remember is to
kill the right guy. You can
manage that, can't you?

MARVIN

Do you think I'm stupid?

JENA

I need the car.

Jena grabs car keys from the dresser. She opens the door.

MARVIN

Where the hell are you going?

Jena exits. Marvin goes to the door. Charles hops off the bed, goes over to his front window and peeks through the blinds. Marvin stands at his door shouting at a rusty Gremlin that's pulling out of the lot.

MARVIN

At least leave me some of the
fucking money!

Marvin slams the door. Charles turns and climbs back on the bed to look through the hole.

MARVIN

Fuck!

WIPE BACK to FULL SHOT of the interior of Marvin's room. Marvin starts pacing, muttering to himself. He pulls out a pack of cigarettes, sticks one in his mouth and strikes a match. Then he spots a no-smoking sign on the dresser.

MARVIN

Fuck!

Marvin crushes the cigarette and the pack in his hand, and flings it against the wall. He paces, stops, picks up the discarded pack and cigarette and puts them in the trash can. Then he picks up the gun.

MARVIN
Stupid bitch! I'll show--

A loud KNOCK on the door cuts off Marvin's rant.

GERRY (O.C.)
Mr Smith?

Marvin looks at the gun, then glances at the bullet hole.

GERRY (O.C.)
I know you're in there, Mr. Smith.

MARVIN
Yeah?

GERRY (O.C.)
I need to speak to you, Mr. Smith.

MARVIN
Fuck off. I'm in the middle of something.

GERRY
This is a serious matter.

Marvin aims the gun at the door.

MARVIN
I said I'm fucking busy!

GERRY
Don't make me call the police.

MARVIN
Okay, okay. I'll be there in a sec.

Marvin, still clutching the gun, takes a step in one direction, hesitates, takes a step in another direction. There is no where to go. He moves to the door and puts the chain on. He places

the snout of the gun against door, sliding his finger under the trigger guard.

GERRY (O.C.)

Mr Smith?

Marvin opens the door until the chain pulls taut. Gerry stands outside, frowning. On the opposite side of the door, the gun is level with Gerry's head. Marvin's finger moves up and down the trigger.

MARVIN

You don't have to fucking shout.

GERRY

Check out was at 11.

MARVIN

What?

GERRY

Unless payment is rendered.

MARVIN

That's it? That's what this is about?

GERRY

I ran your credit card through today. It's over the limit.

MARVIN

Jesus. I thought....

GERRY

Yes?

MARVIN

Nothing.

GERRY

I can't put anything on the card now.

MARVIN

Come on, Gerry. You know I'm good for it.

GERRY

How will you be paying? We don't take checks.

MARVIN

I said I'm good for it!

GERRY

Please vacate the room.

MARVIN

I've got lots of money...

GERRY

Then pay me.

MARVIN

...just not on me.

GERRY

If you don't vacate the room immediately, I'll call the police.

Marvin stares at Gerry, turning the gun slowly back and forth, grinding it into the door. He tightens his finger on the trigger and the hammer starts to pull back.

MARVIN

All right! Jesus! Give me a second to pack my shit.

Marvin slams the door. WIPE to SPLIT SCREEN with the interior of Charles' room. Charles peers through the bullet hole. Marvin pulls on some clothes and starts packing his stuff in a duffel bag. Emptying a drawer, he pauses and leans toward the mirror, noticing the reflected bullet hole in the wall. Marvin turns and looks directly at the hole. In the bullet hole we can see Charles' eye.

MARVIN

What the fuck?

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM - NIGHT

Charles jerks his head away; he backs up until he stands on the edge of the bed. Light from the next room tunnels through the hole, making a small circle on his forehead. A shadow flickers, then the light is cut off. Marvin's eye fills the hole.

GERRY (O.C.)

Mr. Smith?

Light streams through the hole again. O.C. sound of the door being UNCHAINED. Charles steps off his bed and goes to the door. He opens it a crack. In the lot outside Marvin has the duffel slung on his back and holds a suit bag over his arm. Off to the side, Gerry watches him leave. Across the highway is the lounge, lights on and a flickering neon sign that says "Last Chance Cocktails". The gas station is closed. Marvin gives Gerry the finger and walks to the shoulder of the highway. He sticks out his thumb for a ride. Gerry turns and regards the dark, narrow opening of Charles' door.

GERRY

(to Charles)

Don't worry. You're paid up.

Gerry exits. Marvin watches Gerry walk away. Marvin lowers his thumb and sprints across the highway, stopping in the shadows of the lounge. He turns and looks back. Charles shuts his door quickly. He peeks through the blinds. Marvin stares directly at him. Some cars pass on the highway, momentarily obscuring the view. When they pass, Charles sees the duffel is open and Marvin takes out the gun. Marvin raises the gun, pointing it at Charles. RAPID ZOOM to barrel of gun which fills the screen. A car tears by, obscuring the barrel. After it passes, Marvin is gone. Charles can't see Marvin anywhere. A large truck rumbles past, its HORN BLARING, blocking his view. The moment it passes Marvin appears just outside Charles' window as if the truck had revealed him, even though he is now on the same side of the truck as Charles. Marvin raises his gun so its barrel looms. Another truck going in the opposite direction ROARS past, obscuring Marvin. When it passes, Marvin is back on the opposite side of the street again, duffel on his back and suit bag on his arm, walking towards the gas station. Charles blinks and lets the blind fall.

EXT. GAS STATION, REAR - NIGHT

Marvin walks towards the washroom, pulling the same key Charles used earlier from his pocket. It has a bloody thumbprint on it.

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM - NIGHT

Charles sits on the edge of the bed and stares at the phone.

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM, WASHROOM - NIGHT

Charles still wears his blood-stained clothes. He peels the wadded up kleenex from his hand, exposing the knife cut, which wells with blood. Charles takes the end of the roll of toilet paper and wraps it around his hand until he has another thick wad. He flicks the light off and stands in the darkness a moment, his head against the mirror. Behind him the curtains on a waist high window flick in the breeze. Lights slash across the bathroom as a car pulls up outside. Although Charles can see the car, it is too dark to see the person inside. The car's lights go out and the engine dies. A match flares inside the car, lighting Jena's face momentarily. Jena lights a cigarette, tosses the match out the window, gets out of the car, then exits.

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM - NIGHT

Charles watches Jena slip across the highway and walk in through the front door of the lounge. Charles moves to the night table and picks up the phone with his "bandaged" hand. He checks a list of emergency numbers pasted on the wall behind the phone and dials.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
Sheriff's office.

Charles says nothing.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
Who is this?

Charles hangs up. A red spot has worked its way through the tissue.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

The lounge is right out of the 60's. MURRAY, an older bartender with a bad hair piece, cleans glasses. Chance, in his seersucker suit and Panama hat, sits at a table with a bottle of expensive scotch, tallying figures. He's the only other person in the bar. Jena enters and Chance looks up. Without breaking stride Jena

winks at him. Chance, sweat beading his brow, looks away. Jena walks over to a jukebox and selects a song. As she walks to the bar Sinatra's version of "One for My Baby" begins to play. Behind the bar is a vintage clock with a cracked glass front showing 9:00. Jena glances at it, then takes a stool at the bar.

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM - NIGHT

Charles sits in a chair and watches TV with the sound off, flipping from channel to channel. COPS comes on. Charles watches numbly. On the screen is a scene of a woman lying immobile by the end of a bed.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

The woman, naked from the waist up, lies curled into a fetal position at the foot of the bed. Charles sits in his motel chair regarding her. In his "bandaged" hand he holds the bloody knife instead of the remote. Charles lets the knife drop.

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM - NIGHT

Charles stares at the knife lying at his feet. He stands and retrieves the knife, putting it in an inside pocket in his suit jacket. Passing through the shaft of light from the bullet hole, he opens the door. Across the highway is the "Last Chance Cocktails" lounge. Charles pulls his sunglasses from a pocket and puts them on.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jena sits at the bar, legs crossed, absorbed Thompson's "The Getaway". A cigarette smoulders in an ashtray next to her almost empty glass and her sunglasses. On the other side is her 60's purse. Murray glances from Chance to a door leading to a back room, then back to Chance. When he turns his back, Chance looks up and glares at him.

The screen doors BANGS shut, startling Murray. Charles stands inside the door, wearing his sunglasses. Chance looks at him, then looks away. Charles makes his way to the far end of the bar, near the door to the back room. He stares at Jena. Murray drifts over, so distracted he is oblivious to Charles' appearance, the bloodied shirt, the wad of toilet paper. As Murray talks, he glances at the door.

MURRAY

What'll it be?

CHARLES

Water.

MURRAY

Does this look like an oasis?

CHARLES

A coke.

MURRAY

Order up or you'll have to
leave.

CHARLES

Screwdriver.

Murray begins mixing the drink. Chance picks up a ledger and walks over to the bar next to Jena. He speaks to Jena in a whisper.

CHANCE

What the hell are you playing
at?

JENA

You seem agitated.
(pats him on
the stomach)
Not good for the digestion.

Murray glances over. Chance holds up the ledger.

CHANCE

(to Murray)
Put this back in the safe when
you get a sec, will you?

MURRAY

Sure.

Chance drops the ledger on the bar and returns to his table. Murray returns to his drink.

CHANCE

(to Jena)
Do it!

JENA
Where' the fire?

Chance shoots her a withering look, but returns to his table. Murray places a drink in front of Charles without looking at him.

MURRAY
(looks at back door)
Three-fifty.

Charles takes the knife out of his pocket and lays it on the bar. He extracts his bloodied wallet, but it's empty. He pulls out a credit card.

CHARLES
Plastic okay?

MURRAY
I'll run you a tab.

Murray drifts off, forgetting the card.

INT. GAS STATION, WASHROOM - NIGHT

Marvin is dressed in a white tuxedo with black piping. He puts on a blonde wig and white gloves and examines his reflection in the bathroom mirror. Behind him, his empty suit bag hangs from a nail on the wall. On the edge of the sink is the gun and a pair of cat's eye sunglasses. He pulls a lint roller from the bottom of the suit bag and begins meticulously cleaning the tuxedo.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Murray opens the safe and puts the ledger away. Jena stretches to see the safe in the mirror behind the bar. On the bottom shelf are several thick, banded stacks of bills. Murray closes the safe. Then he rises and leans on the bar in front of Jena. During their dialogue he alternately glances at the door to the back room and her breasts.

MURRAY

Any good?

JENA

I don't buy the characters or their motivations. But it builds nicely.

MURRAY

Another bourbon?

Jena considers.

MURRAY

On me.

JENA

What's the occasion?

MURRAY

You.

JENA

Me?

MURRAY

You're worth celebrating.

JENA

Like Christmas?

MURRAY

More like a three-day weekend.

JENA

Sounds like an eternity. A long eternity.

MURRAY

Then you can drink to our relationship.

JENA

We don't have a relationship.

MURRAY

I'm an optimist.

JENA

You keep giving away free drinks, you'll be a poor optimist. And we still won't have a relationship.

MURRAY

(quietly)

You're starting to sound like my penny-pinching partner, sweetheart.

Murray glares at Chance.

JENA

If I take the drink, you're not going to get any ideas, are you?

MURRAY

Just the right ones.

JENA

Aren't you a bit old for me?

MURRAY

I could teach you things....

JENA

Didn't you use that line on my mother?

MURRAY

If she was as good looking as you.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE, the 60's - DAY

We see the barrel of revolver. A muzzle flash, then JENA'S MOTHER falls to the floor, the gun dropping beside her. She wears the same clothes as Jena.

RETURN TO SCENE:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jena reaches in her purse and pulls out the roll of bills.

JENA

How much? Before tip and local taxes?

MURRAY

No need to get pissed off. Say, you always carry that much cash?

JENA

I made a killing today.

MURRAY

You want to be careful flashing a roll like that around. Some people would find it tempting.

(closes his hand
on her arm)

Sure you won't stay for another drink?

JENA

Let go. Or I'll call the cops. You don't want the cops in here, do you?

MURRAY

Okay, okay.

JENA

If you're going to hit on a woman, you should at least be pretend she's the only thing on your mind.

MURRAY

Mind?

JENA

My mistake. I forgot you were a man.

MURRAY

(quietly)

Look, baby, I'm sorry. It's just that.... that fat guy is my partner. He's got me so pissed off I can't think straight. And with this Goddamned music playing....

JENA

You don't like Sinatra?

MURRAY

He gives me the creeps. I hate all this 50's and 60's retro shit. Kids dressed like they're members of the rat pack. Jesus, can't they think up something original?

JENA

But you must like my blouse. You've been staring at it enough.

MURRAY

Sometimes I like to dwell on the past.

JENA

So did my mother. She used to come in here. These are her clothes.

MURRAY

She must be cold.

JENA

She's dead.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE, the 60's - DAY

Jena's mother lies on the floor, the revolver next to her, smoke drifting out of its barrel.

RETURN TO SCENE:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

MURRAY

Sorry.

JENA

Why are you sorry?

MURRAY

I didn't mean to bring up a painful memory. Not with things going so well between us.

Jena fingers her blouse, pulling it away to reveal more of her breasts. Murray stares.

JENA

This must bring back memories.

MURRAY

Oddly, my mind just went blank.

Jena lets go of her blouse.

JENA

I like this sort of stuff.
Like that clock behind the bar.
It's a wind up, right?

Murray nods.

JENA

My mother had the same one.
She used to let me wind it
every day.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE, the 60's - DAY

A YOUNG JENA, nine years old, kneels on the counter below the clock, winding it, her mother watching her. Young Jena drops down behind the bar. Noticing that her shoelace is undone, she bends to tie her shoe.

MURRAY (O.C.)

You can't live in the past.

RETURN TO SCENE:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

JENA

She liked this sort of place.

MURRAY

Faux 60's?

JENA

Back then it was real. I can imagine her sitting here, in these same clothes, on this same stool, ignoring you.

MURRAY

Yeah, well it's not real now. You won't see Frank or Sammy or Joey walking through those doors. All we get is kids and freaks.

(nods at Charles)

Like that guy over there.

Jena turns. Charles, who's been observing Jena, looks away quickly. Jena frowns, then puts on her sunglasses, sees Charles through the smoky haze of her lenses. For a brief moment he turns to stare at her, locking gazes as they did when their cars passed. Charles turns away. Jena takes off her sunglasses.

MURRAY

It's unnatural. Being in a bar and not wanting to drink. Freak.

JENA

Do you think he murdered someone?

MURRAY

Who?

JENA

The blood-soaked abstainer with the knife.

MURRAY

You see lots of things working
in a place like this. Most
don't mean anything.

JENA

He's bleeding on your bar.

MURRAY

As long as he pays for his
drinks -- and bleeds quietly.

JENA

That's mighty open-minded of
you, serving murderers.

MURRAY

Slow night. Besides, you can
never tell about people. Hell,
for all I know you could be a
murderer, gorgeous.

JENA

Anything's possible. You could
be a killer yourself.

MURRAY

It's impossible to reach a
certain age without getting a
little blood on your hands.

JENA

Everybody thinks about it.

MURRAY

Tell me about it.
(looks at Chance)
Fat bastard.

JENA

Why not change the music?

"One For My Baby" ends. "Ain't That A Kick In the Head" begins.

MURRAY

The kids eat it up.

JENA

You hate him for that?

MURRAY

Not for the business. My wife loves him for that. Hell, so does my girlfriend. Nah, I hate him cause he makes me play this shitty music. Cause he's changed this place into somewhere I don't want to be.

(beat)

Stupid, isn't it?

JENA

Not really.

MURRAY

Hate is a hobby for younger people.

JENA

I don't hate anyone.

MURRAY

No?

JENA

I'm the lazy sort. Hating someone is too much like work.

MURRAY

What about for pleasure?

JENA

Why don't you just try earplugs?

MURRAY

He's killing the place.

JENA

So why don't you kill him first?

Murray glances down at a pump action shotgun in a cradle under the bar. Underneath is a safe.

MURRAY

It's not in my nature.

JENA

You could hire someone to do your hating for you.

MURRAY

No one deserves to die for bad taste in music.

JENA

What about his clothes?

Murray stares at Jena who takes a drag on her cigarette.

JENA

How do you know he wouldn't hire someone to kill you?

INT. GAS STATION, WASHROOM - NIGHT

Marvin picks up the gun. He checks the cylinder and removes the spent shell from the chamber and throws it in the trash can. He reaches in the pocket of his suit, pulls out a new shell, and loads the chamber.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

JENA

Maybe he'd do it for you.

MURRAY

What?

JENA

(nods at Charles)

Him.

Murray glances at Charles, then stares at her.

JENA

Right. Too obvious. How about me?

MURRAY

I don't think that's funny.

JENA

I wasn't being funny.

MURRAY

Isn't it past your bedtime?

JENA

Okay.

MURRAY

Okay what?

JENA

I'll take that drink. Make it a Bloody Mary.

Murray narrows his eyes; Jena smiles disarmingly. Murray begins mixing the drink. Jena rises, puts on her sunglasses and drops the paperback in her purse.

JENA

I'll have it down there with the freak.

INT. GAS STATION, WASHROOM - NIGHT

Marvin places the gun carefully in the pocket of his suit jacket. He checks his watch. Picking up the sunglasses, he meticulously wipes the lenses and puts them on.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jena enters and sits next to Charles.

JENA

Haven't we met?

Charles turns. He sees his reflection in her sunglasses.

CHARLES

No.

JENA

You kill someone....
(flips open Charles'
wallet and looks at
driver's license)
Charles Smith?

Charles stares at her.

JENA

Your clothes. That knife.

Murray drifts over and sets Jena's drink down, then exits.

CHARLES

I... I don't know.

Jena lights a cigarette.

JENA

Wrong answer.

CHARLES

Wrong answer?

JENA

It's as good as saying, "I did
it."

CHARLES

Maybe... maybe I did.

JENA

Or maybe you didn't.

CHARLES

Either way, it doesn't matter.
Dead is dead.

JENA

It doesn't matter to you. But
it matters to other people.
That's where the trouble
begins.

Jena takes a drag on her cigarette.

JENA
You don't seem the type.

CHARLES
The type?

JENA
The homicidal type.

Charles stares at his drink again.

JENA
I'm not saying you didn't do it. The thing is that you don't seem the type. That's what really counts.

CHARLES
The type....

EXT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE, BACK DOOR - NIGHT

Marvin, dressed in his tuxedo and wig, jimmys the lock on the back door and enters.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jena and Charles sit at the bar.

JENA
What's important is what people think you did. Not what you really did.

CHARLES
And what do you think?

JENA
(evaluates him)
Family man. One point two kids. Upper-middle class neighbourhood.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

The same shot as in the first scene, a glaringly-lit house and two flanking houses.

RETURN TO SCENE:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

CHARLES

That's it?

JENA

Maybe a guy who works nights and weekends to provide them with a nice home in an exclusive, gated community.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME, KITCHEN DOOR - NIGHT

Marvin, dressed in his tuxedo and wig, breaks the lock on the kitchen door and enters the house as Jena speaks.

JENA (V.O.)

But he comes home late one night to discover that the gates are only so high.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marvin enters kitchen, then pauses when he hears FOOTSTEPS and a woman HUMMING. He looks around and pulls a knife from a knife block.

INT. CHARLES' LEXUS - NIGHT

Charles pulls into the driveway of the house as Jena speaks.

JENA (V.O.)

This tough luck guy, this loving husband and father, stumbles onto the scene of a robbery gone bad.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charles sits on the floor of the bedroom, cradling the woman on the floor. Blood stains his white shirt.

JENA (V.O.)

In his profound shock, in a fugue, he gets in his car...

INT. CHARLES' LEXUS - NIGHT

Charles drives down the street just as he did before.

JENA (V.O.)

...and drives away, because in his mind there's nothing left to keep him there. Everything he's loved is gone. He ends up here, in this lounge, staring at his own reflection.

RETURN TO SCENE:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Charles stares at his reflection in the mirror. He looks at Jena, then at the knife.

CHARLES

And that?

JENA

He finds it at the scene.

Jena takes a drag on her cigarette.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charles sits in the living room, staring at the knife.

JENA (V.O.)

He's overcome not only with grief, but with an irrational guilt at not being there to

protect his family. So he decides to slit his wrists with the same knife that ended the lives of his loved ones. It seems the only proper thing to do. But despite the depths of his anguish, he can't quite bring himself to do it.

RETURN TO SCENE:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Charles looks from Jena to the knife and back.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE, BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Light leaks out from around the frame of a door. Frank Sinatra's crooning can be faintly heard. Marvin pulls the gun out of his pocket. He checks his watch.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Charles stares at the knife. He speaks more to himself than to Jena.

CHARLES

Or maybe a major deal at the office goes sour.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Charles sits behind a desk, slowly returning the phone to its cradle, looking angry and frustrated.

CHARLES

Or maybe his boss rides his ass night and day.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Charles stands in front of a desk. The man behind the desk is out of view. A file folder is thrown across the desk, sliding

off the edge, its contents spilling onto the floor. Charles hesitates, then kneels to gather it up.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Or maybe he's impotent, while
his neighbour has an overactive
libido.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME, DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Charles stands in his driveway, and turns to look at the upstairs window of his neighbour's house, as he did in the opening scenes. Again, he hears them making love.

CHARLES (V.O.)
Or maybe it's just his
neighbour's dog, making his
lawn a crap farm.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME, FRONT LAWN - DAY

The DOG we saw barking before now squats, taking a crap. Charles, in the front window of the house, watches the dog.

CHARLES (V.O.)
One day, no different than any
other, it begins with a small
argument at home. About the
dishes, say.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, KITCHEN - NIGHT

The same shot of a kitchen table piled with used dishes as in the opening scenes. The dishwasher makes a steady HUM.

CHARLES (V.O.)
He snaps.

The dishwasher dial CLICKS into rinse mode. Immediately CUT TO,

INT. DISHWASHER - NIGHT

Spray jets come ROAR on, blasts of water obliterating the view.

RETURN TO SCENE:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

JENA

I like my story better.

CHARLES

It makes no sense.

JENA

It doesn't have to. It's just
a question of what your
audience wants to believe.

CHARLES

Which story do you believe?

Jena takes a long drag on her cigarette, considering. Then she snaps out of her reverie as if she suddenly remembers something. She looks at the clock behind the bar; it still shows 9 o'clock.

JENA

Shit. What time is it?

CHARLES

I don't have a watch.

JENA

(to Murray)

What time is it?

MURRAY

It's always nine in here.
After the last owner of this
place killed herself, no one's
bothered to wind it.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE, BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Marvin checks his watch. Then he kicks at the door -- which doesn't budge. The recoil from the kick sends Marvin reeling backwards.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Everyone stares at the door to the back room. Dust stirred up by Marvin's kick drifts out from around the frame.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE, BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Wincing in pain, Marvin hops backwards on one foot, then catches his heel on a toolbox. He sways.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

An O.C. YELP is followed by a CRASH. Jena slides off her stool and backs away quickly until she is near the front entrance. Chance motions Murray to check out the noise. Unnoticed by the others, Jena turns the deadbolt, locking the front entrance. Charles slides off his seat and reaches the back door before Murray. He grasps the handle. Jena notices Charles about to open the door.

JENA

Wait!

Charles opens the door revealing Marvin, his wig askew and his suit streaked with dirt. His gun is levelled at Charles' stomach. He fires once. Charles staggers back, clutching his stomach.

MARVIN

Shit!

Chance stands up, knocking over the table. Marvin, still trying to get his wig on straight, panics and fires two rounds at Chance, who falls back into his chair.

MARVIN

Shit again!

Marvin points the gun at Murray and fires twice. Murray doesn't move.

Chance in his seat, Charles still standing, his hands on his stomach, Murray staring at Marvin's smoking gun. The only sound is the song, which is winding up. The three men look at one another, incredulous no one is hurt. Marvin is puzzled. For a moment they stand frozen. The song ends.

MARVIN

What the hell?

Murray grabs the shotgun from under the bar and aims at Marvin. Marvin lets his gun drop to the floor and backs towards Charles. For the first time Marvin spots Jena. He looks at his gun, then back at Jena.

MARVIN

You bitch!

Jena pulls out the .22 and shoots Murray in the arm. Murray pulls the trigger as he collapses, his shots going wild. Jena runs over to the bar and leans across the top, but she isn't tall enough to see what's behind. Stretching to hold the .22 behind, she fires several rounds blindly where Murray has fallen. Then she pulls herself cautiously onto the top of the bar until she is kneeling, and peeks over the edge. Murray has several new wounds; he appears dead.

As she does this Chance rises and pulls a revolver from his pocket. He shoots Marvin twice. Marvin collapses onto his hands and knees at Charles' feet, dropping his gun. Chance lumbers towards him to administer the coup de grace. Jena swings around and shoots Chance in the back just as he reaches Charles. For a moment Chance sways and the floorboards make a SPLINTERING sound like that of a tree about to topple. Then Chance falls atop Charles, knocking him over, trapping Charles beneath his bulk. Blood pools beneath them. Charles' sunglasses have been knocked off and lie near him.

Jena drops behind the bar and opens the safe with the snout of her gun. She pulls out the bundled bills and puts them atop the bar. Jena walks around to the other side of the bar and loads them into her purse. Then she picks up Charles' wallet and puts it in her purse too. Walking towards Charles, she changes clips in the gun and lets the spent clip fall to the floor. Chance stirs and groans, and Charles winces as the big man shifts his weight. Jena points the .22 and fires several rounds into Chance's bulk, his body shuddering with each shot. Drops of blood rain down on Charles, obscuring his vision. Charles blinks away the blood.

JENA

There. I feel better now.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Wounded, Marvin staggers up to the gas station office. Taking a key out of his pocket he opens the door.

INT. GAS STATION, OFFICE - NIGHT

Marvin crosses the room to a filing cabinet, unlocks the cabinet and grabs a set of keys from the bottom of the drawer. He's about to push the drawer shut when he pauses, then takes out a slip of paper. He crumples it up and sticks it in his pocket, then closes and locks the filing cabinet drawer.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jena notices the wig Marvin was wearing. A trail of blood leads to the door to the back room.

JENA

Shit!

(to Charles)

Wait right here.

Jena exits.

EXT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE

In the gas station parking lot are several parked cars, including Charles' Lexus; on the highway cars whiz by. Jena's shadowy figure crosses the lot behind the cars. The headlights of Charles' Lexus go on. The Lexus rolls forward, weaving slightly; Jena runs after it, stops as it pulls out into traffic. A car swerves around the Lexus, HONKING. The Lexus exits. A large truck ROARS past in its wake and we immediately CUT TO,

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Still trapped, Charles struggles to move Chance, but can't budge him. The sound of Jena's FOOTSTEPS returning. Through the lenses of his sunglasses, Charles can see Marvin's gun within reach. He knocks away the sunglasses, which skitter across the floor and fetch up against Jena's shoe, and grabs the gun. He points it at Jena. She shrugs.

JENA

Blanks.

Charles pulls the trigger and there is a loud REPORT. The recoil knocks the gun out of Charles' hand and sends it sliding along the floor. Jena's smile falters.

JENA

I wasn't going to kill you.

A red stain creeps up the right side of Jena's white blouse.

JENA

I actually kind of liked you.

Charles pulls the trigger several more times, but the gun dry fires. Jena sways, then collapses onto her hands and knees, the paperback slipping out of her purse. Her right arm hangs limply. Jena crawls towards the back door, dragging her purse and useless right arm along the floor, the .22 now clutched in her left hand. She exits through the door. Charles struggles to free himself, but can't budge Chance. Charles notices a gunshot wound in Chance's back that is still bleeding. He reaches up and stanches the flow of blood with the toilet paper wrapped around his hand. Trapped beneath Chance, Charles has his arm around the other man's shoulder as if he is hugging him.

EXT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jena, on her feet, stumbles drunkenly through traffic and disappears behind the motel. Cars HONK at her.

EXT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, REAR PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jena staggers over to her Gremlin and jerks the door open. She enters the car, dumping her purse on the seat next to her. Its contents spill out.

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - NIGHT

Gritting her teeth, Jena rummages through her stuff with her left hand and comes up with her car keys. Hand shaking, she manages to get them into the ignition. Then she turns on the engine, steps on the clutch and, from habit, reaches for the stick with her right hand -- and almost loses consciousness because of the pain. She can't drive a standard with her right arm out of commission. In frustration, she bangs the wheel with her left hand, and winces at the spur of pain.

JENA

Shit!

She rests her forehead against the wheel. Jena turns her head; she notices Charles' wallet lying open, his room card sticking out.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Charles gives up his struggle to move Chance's bulk. He momentarily closes his eyes. When he reopens them, he sees the Thompson paperback. He picks it up and considers it. Then he begins reading.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Police cars and two ambulances are parked outside the bar, their lights flashing and doors open. Chance is on a gurney stuck in the doorway to the lounge. Several PARAMEDICS struggle to push it through, rolling up the folds of his flesh. A TROOPER stands outside a car talking into a handset.

TROOPER

Looks pretty bad.

Indecipherable WORDS crackle over the set in the squad car.

TROOPER

Yeah, hard to come back when you're down two games in the series.

In the background the gurney pops free but its legs collapse, Chance rolling off onto the sidewalk, the paramedics shouting and scrambling out of the way like he was a live grenade.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Behind the bar is a clock with its hands frozen at 9. There is an overturned table, receipts scattered and speckled with blood. At one end of the bar is Charles' drink, knife and a small pool

of blood. At the other "The Getaway" lies next to an ashtray with cigarette butts. A hand picks up the book, considering it.

ACTON (O.C.)

Any good?

Charles sits on a bar stool beside the ashtray. He holds his ribs as if they are tender. His right hand still has the toilet paper wrapped around it, but the paper is thoroughly bloodied now. A uniformed OFFICER stands behind him. ACTON, a police detective, sits beside Charles, holding the book. Members of the CSU collect evidence. On the bar is the shotgun, Marvin and Chance's guns in a plastic evidence bags and a bowl of beer nuts. In the background there's a photographer's FLASH, and Charles blinks, momentarily blinded.

CHARLES

I just came in for a drink....

Acton puts the book down and pulls a pack of candy cigarettes out of his pocket. He offers one to Charles, who stares at them.

ACTON

He's not a great writer. And his characters are all despicable. No redeeming qualities whatsoever.

Acton pulls out a candy cigarette, unwraps it and pops it in his mouth. He puts the pack on the counter.

ACTON

Guess I picked a bad time to quit.

CHARLES

My car broke down.

ACTON

But you get caught up in their lives anyway. You find yourself pulling for them despite the unsympathetic rendering.

CHARLES

I had to leave it overnight.
(a beat)

Would they want you to pull for them?

ACTON

Never really thought about it from their perspective. Damn good question, though. You have any ID, Mr. Smith? License or something with your picture and address.

Charles can't find, his wallet. DAVIS, another detective wearing latex gloves, puts the bloodied knife in a large baggie.

CHARLES

They took my wallet.

ACTON

They always do.

(considers book)

You wouldn't think they'd care how we viewed them. Unless it got them something they wanted.

OFFICER

Everyone wants to be loved.

ACTON

You've got a point. But maybe they despise themselves so much they can't conceive of being loved.

OFFICER

Then they'd all be sociopaths. Isn't that a bit implausible?

ACTON

Ordinarily I'd agree. Here, though, I think that contributes to their appeal. Human nature without the restriction of morality.

OFFICER

Unbridled id....

ACTON
Could be relevant.

Davis enters, holding the evidence bag with the knife in his right hand. Acton picks up the candy cigarettes and offers one to Davis.

DAVIS
Hard on the old arteries.

Davis, still wearing latex gloves, grabs a handful of nuts. During the following dialogue he pops the nuts, one by one, into his mouth.

CHARLES
Aren't you going to ask me
anything about what happened?

DAVIS
It's elementary.

ACTON
Davis here thinks he's Sherlock
Holmes.

DAVIS
Fuck you with a rolling pin.

ACTON
Okay, so tell us what happened
Sherlock.

DAVIS
The evidence indicates two
perps--
(turns to Charles)
Two, right?

Davis nods at the two handguns and the two identical pairs of sunglasses. Charles nods. Davis is pleased with himself.

DAVIS
Two perps enter the scene by
the front door just before 9.

Davis points to the clock frozen at 9.

CHARLES

Should you be saying these things in front of me?

DAVIS

Are you trying to tell us how to do our job?

CHARLES

No.

ACTON

So, then. They come in at 9.

DAVIS

Right. They lock the door behind them, then pull out their guns. Murray goes for his shotgun.

(points to shotgun)

Gunfire ensues. Victim one attempts to flee the scene and is hit and collapses on top of you, shielding you, but not doing so well for himself.

(points to blood stain on floor)

Victim two, Murray, manages to get off a couple of rounds from behind the bar, wounding the perps, before he's hit. Down he goes. The wounded perps break down the locked door to the back room and flee the scene.

(points to blood trails through back door)

Right, Mr. Smith?

Charles stares at the knife. Acton notices him staring.

ACTON

Where did the knife come from?

DAVIS

The knife?

Davis regards the knife with a frown.

CHARLES

It's--

DAVIS

Don't tell me!

ACTON

Look behind the bar.

Davis leans over the bar. On the counter, near a sink, is a cutting board on which an orange is sliced. Behind it is a knife rack holding assorted knives. Davis frowns and looks at Acton.

ACTON

Looks like someone got in a few licks with the knife. Now why the hell would they do that with all these guns lying around?

Blood seeps into the last white corner of the bandage on Charles' hand. Davis slaps the evidence bag with the knife down on the bar.

DAVIS

(to Acton)

Why do you always do that?

ACTON

Do what?

DAVIS

Ask me a question when you already know the answer.

ACTON

I don't always do that.

DAVIS

Yes you do. Are you trying to embarrass me?

ACTON

If I wanted to embarrass you I would have told you the door to the back room was kicked in from the other side.

Davis looks at the door again. His face colors.

DAVIS

They could have used a pry bar
from this side.

ACTON

(to Charles)

Davis hates it when his
theories are wrong. Sometimes
I think he tampers with the
evidence just to prove himself
right.

DAVIS

That's a lie.

ACTON

The 'bloody glove' syndrome.
Makes it hard to believe
anything anymore.

DAVIS

Not more of that solipsistic
crap.

ACTON

If the glove doesn't fit....

DAVIS

You just can't acknowledge the
existence of other agents, can
you Acton?

ACTON

Prove them to me and I'll
acknowledge them. And I'm not
a solipsist, I'm a relativist.

DAVIS

Me, me, me.

ACTON

Two shooters, one comes in the
back and one the front.

(to Charles)
That part right?

Complete silence falls. Charles looks from detective to detective. A camera FLASHES. Charles opens his mouth to answer, but a phone RINGS loudly, startling him. Acton looks at Davis. Davis reaches behind the bar and pulls out an old rotary dial phone. It RINGS again. Davis picks up.

DAVIS
Yes?
(listens)
Hold on a sec.
(to Charles)
It's for you.

Davis hands the phone to Charles. Both detectives stare expectantly at Charles, who, after a moment's hesitation, lifts the handset to his ear using the wounded hand.

DAVIS
It's your wife.

Charles freezes, the receiver a few inches from his ear. We hear a woman's VOICE over the phone, but can't make out the words. Charles presses the receiver against his ear.

CHARLES
Mary?

A beat passes.

JENA (O.C.)
Did you tell them anything?

CHARLES
Mary?

JENA (O.C.)
You killed her. Remember?

Charles closes his eyes and swallows.

ACTON
Everything okay, Mr. Smith?

Charles opens his eyes.

JENA (O.C.)

Are you all right, Charles?

CHARLES

(whispers)

Yes.

JENA (O.C.)

You have a lovely home.

CHARLES

What?

DAVIS

Bad news?

JENA (O.C.)

The carpets need some cleaning,
though.

CHARLES

The police are here. I have to
go.

ACTON

No rush.

JENA (O.C.)

Don't hang up on me, Charles.
Or I'll call them back and tell
them what you've done.

CHARLES

I... I haven't done anything.

DAVIS

We just need to take a
statement. Then you're free to
go.

JENA (O.C.)

Do you really want them to come
out here?

CHARLES

It isn't me they're interested
in.

JENA (O.C.)

Not yet.

CHARLES

I'm a family man. A loving
father. Remember?

Acton and Davis stare at Charles, puzzled by his words.

JENA (O.C.)

Stories change.

CHARLES

But what if it was right?

JENA (O.C.)

It doesn't matter. It's what
people want to believe....

Charles looks at the knife, then at Davis and Acton.

CHARLES

I don't care.

JENA (O.C.)

She's alive.

ACTON

Something the matter?

JENA (O.C.)

For now.

CHARLES

I...I don't understand.

JENA (O.C.)

Don't tell them anything about
me, Charles.

CHARLES

I don't know what to say.

JENA (O.C.)

Something will come to you.
Just tell them what they want

to believe. Make it as simple as possible. And repeat it over and over. Pretty soon, you'll begin to believe it yourself.

CHARLES

Wait....

The CLICK of disconnection, then a DIAL TONE.

DAVIS

I think he's going to be sick.

Charles lowers the handset until it rests on the bar. He is visibly shaken. Acton pries the receiver from his hand and puts it up to his ear, listening to the dial tone. Then he puts it back on its cradle.

ACTON

Mr. Smith, do you need a doctor?

Charles is confused; he stares off into the distance.

CHARLES

The carpets need cleaning....
(focuses on Acton)
N...no. I...I need to lie down.

DAVIS

It's shock. Finally hitting him.

ACTON

We can get your statement later. I'll take you home. How far away do you live?

CHARLES

What? No. My car broke down. It's at the gas station next door. I... I was on the road.
(tentatively)

I'm a salesman?

DAVIS

Where were you staying while
your car was being fixed?

CHARLES

Motel across the highway.

ACTON

Gerry's a good guy. But not
much of a businessman. I'll
take you back to your room.

Davis shrugs.

CHARLES

The key card was in my wallet.

ACTON

Gerry will have another.
(looks at Charles'
clothes)

You can get yourself cleaned up
and catch a bit of sleep.

(checks watch)

We'll finish with the scene
then drop by your room in a few
hours.

Acton nods at the officer, who helps Charles to his feet. The
officer leads Charles towards the door, Acton following.

DAVIS

Wait!

Charles turns, and Davis throws the paperback at him. Charles
traps it with his good hand against his chest.

DAVIS

How did your wife know you'd be
here?

CHARLES

She called the motel. The
manager said I was probably
here.

Davis doesn't look convinced.

CHARLES

Where else is there to go?

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark except for a light left on in the bathroom. In the background are the sounds of the HIGHWAY TRAFFIC, then CLICKING as a key card is inserted into the reader. Gerry, Charles, Acton and the officer stand outside. Acton takes the key card from Gerry. Charles still clutches the book.

ACTON

Thanks.

Gerry shrugs, then exits.

ACTON

Home sweet home.

Charles looks at the bullet hole; it's a small dark circle hardly noticeable in the gloom.

ACTON

Sure you're okay, Mr. Smith?

Charles nods. He holds out his hand for the key card. Acton gives it to the officer.

ACTON

The officer will be right
outside if you need anything.

Charles enters the room. Acton pushes the door shut. Charles is a shadow in the room. The clock on the bedside table still says 9:00.

EXT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM - NIGHT

The officer and Acton stand outside the door. Acton pulls out a pack of candy cigarettes and offers one to the officer, who shakes his head. Acton unwraps the cigarette, pops it in his mouth and exits.

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM - NIGHT

Charles catches sight of himself in the mirror. He is a complete mess, new blood stains intermingled with the old. A drop of blood leaks from his "bandaged" hand onto the paperback. Charles heads for the bathroom. He pushes the door open and freezes.

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, OFFICE - NIGHT

Gerry stands behind the counter absorbed in an episode of Cops. On the wall is a string with drying bills clipped to it. Red and blue light from the police cars across the way slides across the walls. The bell over the door tinkles and Acton enters. Gerry turns.

ACTON

I'd like to ask you a few questions.

GERRY

I'd be surprised if you didn't.

On TV a suburban home is surrounded by members of the emergency task force. A V.O. explains that a man has barricaded himself in his home and threatened to kill his family. The ETF is about to move in. The action catches Acton's and both men watch the show as they talk.

ACTON

You see anything?

GERRY

You mean across the street?
Nah.

ACTON

No one leaving the scene?

GERRY

I was watching TV.

ACTON

We've got two wounded perps on the loose.

GERRY

This neighbourhood is going to hell.

Acton takes out his candy cigarettes and offers one to Gerry. They both unwrap their cigarettes and chew on them thoughtfully.

ACTON

Can I have a look at your register?

GERRY

Sure.

Gerry taps at the keyboard, then turns the monitor so Acton can see. On the monitor all the personal information fields are blank.

ACTON

No license?

GERRY

Didn't bother. His car was being fixed.

(gestures)

Black Lexus. Across the way.

ACTON

All those blank fields don't bother you?

GERRY

No.

ACTON

He could be a murderer.

GERRY

You said he was a material witness.

ACTON

Facts change.

GERRY

If he was a murderer he wouldn't put it down on the registration card, would he?

ACTON

I suppose not.

GERRY

With me, a man's story starts
when he walks through that door
the first time.

Acton stares at Gerry. On the TV the ETF prepares to storm the house, and Acton's attention is drawn to the scene.

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jena lies in the tub, left hand over a wound in her shoulder. In her right hand she holds the .22. A cell phone, Charles' wallet, and his key card lie on her stomach. The shower curtain has been ripped off several of its rings and is partially wrapped around her. A small trickle of blood runs down the drain. Jena looks disoriented, and it takes her a moment to register Charles' presence. She lifts up the gun and points it at Charles. Her hands shake.

JENA

M...my book.

With a supreme effort Jena levers herself up, the wallet, card and phone falling into the tub. She manages to half-stand leaning heavily against the wall. She points the gun at Charles.

JENA

Help me out of here.

Charles stuffs the paperback in his jacket pocket and puts an arm around her to help her out of the tub.

JENA

Now pick up those things.

Jena gestures at the clip, cell phone, and wallet. Charles picks up the items and pockets them.

JENA

Turn on the shower.

Charles looks at the gun, then at Jena. Jena raises the gun.

JENA

Do it.

Charles turns on the shower and the sound of RUNNING WATER is almost deafening. The water runs down the drain, carrying blood with it.

JENA

Wipe up the blood on the floor.

Charles uses a towel to clean the blood, wringing it out in the shower. New drops of blood hit the floor near Jena's feet. Charles takes another towel from the rack and wraps it around Jena's feet like the skirt around the base of a Christmas tree. The next drop falls onto the towel.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Acton stands alone in the empty space where the Lexus had been parked. He scans the darkened lot, then pulls the pack of candy cigarettes out of his pocket, but it's empty. He crushes it and drops it on the ground. Behind him several CSU technicians are scouring the ground.

ACTON

Helluva time to quit.

EXT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, REAR - NIGHT

Jena's Gremlin is parked just outside Charles' window. The screen has been pried off the window. In the backseat is the shower curtain, in which several bloodied towels are wrapped. Charles stands outside the bathroom window and gently lowers Jena, who attempts to hold the gun on him despite her pain. He helps her into the car. Jena gestures with the gun. Charles reaches into the back seat of the car and retrieves a bloodied towel. With an unstained portion he dabs at spots of blood on the sill, the wall and the asphalt. He throws the towel in the backseat and gets into the driver's seat. He starts to do up his seatbelt, but the paperback is in the way. He pulls it out and throws it on the dash, leaving bloody fingerprints on the cover.

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Davis stands by the peanut bowl, popping nuts into his mouth. Acton enters and leans on the bar.

DAVIS

You should have gotten his statement right away.

ACTON

You going to eat all those nuts?

Davis pushes the bowl towards Acton. Acton grabs a handful.

DAVIS

You've given him time to twist the facts to fit his purpose.

ACTON

We all do that.

DAVIS

That's not the point.

ACTON

He doesn't seem the sort.

DAVIS

Why do you insist on flouting procedure?

ACTON

I wasn't the one who told him my theories about how things went down.

DAVIS

You asked.

ACTON

His car is gone.

DAVIS

Whose car?

ACTON

Smith's.

DAVIS

Strange.

ACTON

Gerry says it was a black
Lexus. But there's no black
Lexus on the lot.

DAVIS
Didn't Gerry get the license?

ACTON
No.

DAVIS
Think Gerry was mistaken?

ACTON
Not likely.

Davis takes handful of nuts. A CSU OFFICER enters through the rear door carrying an evidence baggie. He walks over to Davis and Acton.

CSU OFFICER
Both of the blood trails lead
to the parking lot at the Gas
Station.

The CSU officer holds up the baggie with a crushed package of candy cigarettes.

CSU OFFICER
We found this where one trail
ended.

DAVIS
You picked a hell of a time to
quit.

ACTON
You're right.

DAVIS
About the candy cigarettes?

ACTON
About interviewing Smith.

Acton and Davis drop their remaining nuts in the bowl and head for the door. Acton stops, returns to the bar and snatches the baggie from the CSU officer's hand and stuffs it in his pocket.

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - NIGHT

Charles drives down a dark road. Jena is slumped in the passenger seat, clutching her shoulder. She notices Charles looking at her.

JENA

What are you staring at?

CHARLES

You didn't go to my home.

JENA

No shit, Sherlock.

CHARLES

Where are we going?

JENA

Here.

Holds up Charles' driver's license, her thumb on his address.

CHARLES

What about the cops?

JENA

I'm betting you didn't tell them where you live. Not with the state of your house....

INT. TED KNIGHT'S INN, MURRAY SLAUGHTER ROOM, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Acton, Davis and Gerry look at the torn screen. The floor, walls and the tub show no signs of blood. Davis walks over to window and looks out. Gerry gapes at the empty towel rack.

GERRY

That bastard stole my towels!

ACTON

He couldn't have gotten far on foot.

DAVIS

What now?

ACTON

Better call this one in.

Gerry notices the empty shower curtain rings.

GERRY

Don't forget to mention my
shower curtain!

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - NIGHT

The car travels down a narrow, empty highway. Jena has trouble staying alert; her eyes flutter closed, then open. Charles watches her, slowing the car as Jena drifts off. Jena, suddenly aware of Charles' scrutiny, snaps awake and points the gun at Charles.

JENA

Don't slow down.

CHARLES

You need to go to a hospital.

JENA

Worry about yourself.

CHARLES

If you wanted to kill me you
would have done it back in the
bar.

JENA

How do you know I won't kill
you now?

CHARLES

You don't seem the type.

JENA

What type do I seem?

CHARLES

I thought you were cool and
detached. Now I think you're
angry. Vengeful, maybe.

JENA

But not a cold-blooded killer.
Even though I just killed two
men.

CHARLES

One.

JENA

One?

CHARLES

The fat man was still alive.

JENA

Shit!

CHARLES

If you were a cold-blooded
killer you wouldn't care.

JENA

(points gun)

Never too late to change.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Acton peers into the window of the locked office. Davis watches the empty highway. Next door, a few COPS mill around behind yellow tape in the parking lot and around the lounge. THE CSU officer enters.

DAVIS

Well?

CSU OFFICER

The owner's away. But I got
his wife.

ACTON

And?

CSU OFFICER

Says he has the keys and
doesn't think he's got a spare
set at home. But she said a
guy named Marvin opens up the
place at six.

DAVIS

And?

CSU OFFICER

She said that Marvin is staying
at Ted Knight's Inn.

ACTON

That's convenient.

CSU OFFICER

Not so convenient. I just
called Gerry and he told me he
evicted Marvin yesterday.

DAVIS

Ask her to call her husband and
find out if there's a spare
set.

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - MORNING

Dawn streaks the sky. Charles and Jena drive down a highway,
through the outskirts of a city. An occasional car passes.
Jena's head is slumped, her eyes closed. One hand on the wheel,
Charles reaches slowly across with his other towards the gun.
When his fingers almost touch the barrel, Jena snaps awake and
Charles pulls his hand back.

JENA

Al... almost had me.

CHARLES

Let me take you to a Doctor.

JENA

No.

CHARLES

You could be dying.

JENA

All...all I need is a coffee to
keep me awake. I'm tired.
That's all.

(points gun at building
shaped like a giant

coffee cup and saucer)
 There. Stop for a coffee.

Charles pulls off the highway, entering a drive-through lane.

JENA
 No! Use the parking lot!

Charles puts the car in reverse, but another car pulls in behind him. Charles is stuck beside a man-sized paper coffee cup with a two way speaker and menu. Another car is at the pick up window ahead.

COFFEE CUP
 Your order?

CHARLES
 (to Jena)
 What should I do?

JENA
 Improvise.

Charles leans out the window towards the paper cup.

CHARLES
 Two regular coffees.

EXT. GAS STATION - MORNING

Acton sits on a concrete curb outside the office to the gas station. Davis enters carrying two cups of coffee and hands one to Acton.

ACTON
 Well?

DAVIS
 She didn't know which hotel her husband was staying at. They're still calling around.

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - MORNING

The car ahead pulls out and Charles drives up to the pick up window. A KID picks up the two coffees and leans out the window -- then freezes. He gapes at Charles and Jena's blood-stained clothes, the shower curtain in the back seat, and the bloodied paperback on the dash, the gun resting in Jena's lap. Charles takes the coffees.

JENA

What are you looking at?

The kid tries to be nonchalant but fails miserably.

KID

Uh... the book. Any good?

CHARLES

Our coffee?

The kid passes a tray with two coffees to Charles.

CHARLES

How much?

KID

Two-fifty.

Charles reaches in his pocket, then stops.

CHARLES

(to Jena)

Got any money?

Jena reaches in her purse and pulls out some blood-stained bills. She gives them to Charles who hands them to the kid. The kid, holding them by the edge, puts them in the register. Charles drives away. The kid pulls out 50 cents. He leans out of the window.

KID

Your change!

Behind the kid a MANAGER enters, and looks on disapprovingly. The kid notices the manager.

KID

(shouts after the
Gremlin)

Have a nice day!

EXT. GAS STATION - MORNING

Acton and Davis sit on the concrete curb. Acton's coffee cup is on its side and Davis has his arms crossed over his shins, his forehead on his knees. A police car pulls up and a middle-aged WOMAN in a bathrobe and slippers emerges. Acton nudges Davis, and both stand. The woman moves to the door of the office and, taking out a large ring of keys, starts trying them one by one.

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - MORNING

Two empty coffee cups lie on the dash. Jena stares out the window as they drive along a nearly empty road in the country.

JENA

I've never killed anyone
before.

EXT. OVERGROWN COUNTRY ROAD - MORNING

A shot framing a police car in a weed-choked lane. No one is inside. For a moment everything is still. We can see the metal near the trunk lock is bent and creased. There is a loud BANG and a new crease appears.

INT. GAS STATION, OFFICE - MORNING

Acton and Davis enter. Both look for work orders but come up empty. Acton tries a drawer on a filing cabinet. It's locked. He looks at the woman who lifts the ring of keys as if to say, "You try."

INT. GAS STATION, OFFICE - MORNING

Davis closes a file he's been leafing through.

ACTON

I've been through it twice.
It's not here.

DAVIS

Maybe there was no car.

ACTON

Lack of a work order doesn't
prove anything.

DAVIS

Granted.
(beat)
What now?

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - MORNING

It's dawn. Jena's coffee cup lies on its side on the dash.
Charles drives through the outskirts of a city, heading into the
suburbs.

JENA

Did you?

Charles looks at Jena.

JENA

Kill your wife?

Immediately,

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The same shot from the opening of the film, Charles slumped on
the couch, his clothes bloodstained.

RETURN TO SCENE:

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - MORNING

Charles stares straight ahead. Jena glances at him then looks
away.

INT. CAFETERIA - MORNING

Davis and Acton sit on opposite sides of a narrow table, the
debris of coffees and snacks scattered on plastic trays in front
of them. A few other people mill around, but the cafeteria is
nearly empty.

ACTON

What do you think his story is?

DAVIS
He's involved.

ACTON
That's it. "He's involved"?

DAVIS
I can't make sense of it.

ACTON
You just need to find the right story to fit his character.

DAVIS
I was sure he was an innocent victim.

ACTON
Maybe there are no innocent victims this time.

A DOCTOR enters.

DOCTOR
Okay, you can see him now.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

Acton and Davis stand beside a bed in ICU. Chance is hooked up to several monitors. He is conscious, but drugged up, his eyes glassy and half-open. He watches as Acton repetitively tosses and catches a shell casing. When he speaks, Chance talks slowly and deliberately.

ACTON
Let's run through it again.

CHANCE
How many times do I have to tell you the same story?

DAVIS
We just want to know what happened.

CHANCE

No one can ever know that with certainty.

ACTON

He's got a point.

DAVIS

Tell us again.

CHANCE

What would you like to hear?

DAVIS

The facts.

CHANCE

They change.

ACTON

Are you refusing to co-operate?

DAVIS

He's still trying to figure out what we know before he answers.

CHANCE

Two people robbed my bar. A man and a woman. They shot me. That's all I remember.

DAVIS

And you didn't recognize either?

CHANCE

I already told you I've never seen them before.

DAVIS

Of course.

ACTON

But we're a bit confused.

CHANCE

Confused?

DAVIS

About the other gun. The one
the perps dropped.

ACTON

Odd thing about it. Five of
the shell casings were crimped
at the mouth.

CHANCE

Crimped?

Acton shows Chance the shell.

ACTON

That's done with blanks to hold
the card wad in place of the
bullet.

DAVIS

Why would they be shooting
blanks?

CHANCE

Maybe they only wanted to scare
everyone.

ACTON

Then why would they have loaded
one live round?

CHANCE

How the hell should I know?
Ask them.

DAVIS

We'd like to.

CHANCE

Can't you trace the gun?

ACTON

It's an old gun. And someone
filed off the serial numbers.

DAVIS

Typical.

CHANCE

Bad break.

DAVIS

Not really. The gun was a Webley 455. A vintage piece. Made in England before the second world war. Pretty unusual.

CHANCE

I'm tired.

ACTON

Strange thing about guns used in crimes. They usually don't travel far.

CHANCE

Could we do this later?

DAVIS

We checked the records for this model. We found only one report with a mention of a Webley 455. It was part of the investigation into the murder of a woman in the 60's.

CHANCE

So?

DAVIS

We sent the gun off to forensics. My guess is that the rifling will match.

ACTON

It was your sister's death that was being investigated.

DAVIS

And the gun was signed over to you after the investigation.

A beat.

CHANCE

It was ruled a suicide.

ACTON

Why were there blanks in the
gun?

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - MORNING

CHARLES

Why were there blanks in the
gun?

JENA

Whose gun?

CHARLES

Your boyfriend's.

JENA

How the hell should I know?

CHARLES

He wouldn't put them in his own
gun. And he looked pretty
damned surprised to be shooting
blanks.

JENA

He's not the brightest candle
on the birthday cake.

CHARLES

Someone screwed him. Maybe
hoped he'd get shot.

JENA

What are you saying?

CHARLES

Eliminate Marvin and you've
gotten rid of a witness and
doubled your profits.

JENA
(aims at Charles)
This doesn't have blanks.

CHARLES
You wanted him dead.

JENA
No.

CHARLES
Then why put blanks in his gun?

JENA
Would you believe me if I said
I didn't?

CHARLES
Then who did?

JENA
The fat man.

CHARLES
The fat man?

JENA
Chance. The guy who fell on
you.

CHARLES
Why would he do that?

JENA
We have a history.

CHARLES
What sort of history?

JENA
I made up a story for you. You
make up one for me.

CHARLES
(frowns)
Chance hired you to kill his
partner, Murray.

JENA

How did you know that? How did you know their names?

CHARLES

I heard everything last night.

JENA

You listened. At the wall.

CHARLES

You lied to Marvin when you told him you never met Chance before.

JENA

I told him what he wanted to hear.

CHARLES

Chance is the one who gave you the gun, isn't he?

Jena looks away and says nothing.

CHARLES

But the bullet that went through my wall was real.

JENA

He wanted to show me how to use it. One demonstration shot. I didn't let him.

CHARLES

But there were two live bullets.

Charles glances at Jena's wound.

JENA

Marvin must have replaced the one.

CHARLES

Your boyfriend?

JENA

The idiot.

CHARLES

Why would Chance put one live round in the gun?

JENA

So I'd think all the rounds were real.

CHARLES

I still don't--

JENA

He didn't know about Marvin. He thought I was going to do the job myself.

CHARLES

He wanted you dead.

JENA

Right.

CHARLES

You'd come charging into the bar with gun blazing, and Murray would blow you away with his scatter gun.

JENA

Sounds like a good story to me.

CHARLES

Then why didn't he stop you if he knew you still had a live round in the gun?

JENA

I shoot Murray, Murray shoots me. Six of one, half dozen of the other to Chance.

CHARLES

You still haven't told me about your connection to Chance.

JENA
He's my goddamn uncle.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

Acton listens while Davis takes notes.

CHANCE
I love my neice.

DAVIS
All good stories have a love
angle.

ACTON
Go on.

CHANCE
She's unstable.

DAVIS
Unstable?

CHANCE
She had a bad breakdown a few
years ago. While she was under
psychiatric care, a repressed
memory was uncovered. At least
that's what she believes.

ACTON
You don't?

CHANCE
Her mother committed suicide
when she was nine. Jena found
her. But now she thinks she
witnessed her mother's murder.

ACTON
And?

CHANCE
She thinks my partner Murray
murdered her mother. She's a
sick girl.

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - MORNING

JENA

He's a sick bastard. He got
what he deserved. They both
got what they deserved.

CHARLES

What did they do?

JENA

(tugs on her shirt)
She died wearing these clothes.

CHARLES

Who died?

JENA

My mother.

CUT TO FLASHBACK:

INT. LAST CHANCE COCKTAIL LOUNGE, the 60's - DAY

Young Jena ties her shoe. A SHOT rings out, and the glass on the
clock cracks. FOOTSTEPS recede, then a screen door BANGS shut.
Young Jena creeps around the bar to find her mother on the floor,
smoke still curling from the barrel of the revolver.

JENA (V.O.)

They said it was suicide. But
I know it wasn't.

RETURN TO SCENE:

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - MORNING

CHARLES

Why would they kill your
mother?

JENA

It was her bar. Until her brother Chance showed up with his friend Murray. She felt sorry for them, gave them jobs. Two charming punks. She thought they were trustworthy. Especially Murray, who had the kind of looks she'd always been a sap for. It was almost too easy for him. To seduce her. To convince her to make up a will leaving the bar to her brother. I don't think she saw it, that they'd planned it from the start.

CHARLES

I heard you talking to Murray. He didn't recognize you.

JENA

I was nine when he last saw me.

CHARLES

Why kill them both?

JENA

Murray was too stupid to plan it. And Chance would never have been able to pull it off if Murray hadn't turned my mother's head. It doesn't matter who pulled the trigger. They were both guilty.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

ACTON

So you gave her a gun to shoot Murray.

CHANCE

I gave her a gun with blanks, so that she could act out her fantasy. I thought it would help her.

DAVIS

And Murray was in on it?

CHANCE

Of course. He loved her as much as I did.

DAVIS

But he's dead.

CHANCE

She had a friend. She had another gun. I didn't know.

ACTON

I see.

CHANCE

Look, if I didn't give her the gun, she'd have gone out and gotten her own. One with live rounds.

DAVIS

What about the live round in your gun?

CHANCE

I don't know. Maybe she fired off a round and replaced one of the blanks.

ACTON

Maybe.

CHANCE

I never meant for anyone to get hurt. I was only trying to help her.

DAVIS

Is that the best story you can come up with?

CHANCE

It's not a story.

ACTON

How does Charles Smith fit into
your story?

CHANCE

Who?

EXT. SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT - MORNING

Charles drives through the gate of his suburban development, past the sign that reads "Storybrook Meadows: A Quiet Community."

INT. VARIETY STORE & GAS BAR - NIGHT

The same teenage clerk leafs idly through a Playboy while a muzak version of "The Girl From Ipanema" plays in the background. The clerk glances up to watch the Gremlin drift past. Unlike the first time, he follows it intently, as if the Gremlin is a foreign invader.

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - MORNING

JENA

Who said you can never go home?

Charles tenses, but doesn't answer. They pass a MAN in a bathrobe picking up his morning paper. The man frowns at their car.

JENA

Why is he staring at us?

CHARLES

Your car.

Jena glances at the driveways. Each contains a car glinting in the morning sun, all similar to Charles' Lexus. Charles jams on the brakes, throwing Jena forward. Jena gasps in pain.

JENA

What the hell!

Charles stares out of the front window. Jena raises her gun.

JENA

You don't have a choice.
You're going home.

CHARLES
I'm already home.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME, DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Parked in Charles' driveway is his black Lexus.

INT. JENA'S GREMLIN - MORNING

Jena frowns at Charles, not understanding.

JENA
What are you talking about?

CHARLES
That's my house.

JENA
Then pull in the driveway.

CHARLES
That's my car.

JENA
So?

CHARLES
I left it at the gas station.
With Marvin.

JENA
Let's go.

CHARLES
He thinks you put the blanks in
his gun.

JENA
He knows I wouldn't have done
that.

CHARLES
He thinks you want him dead.
That's why he took off. Now,
he'll want to kill you.

JENA

Maybe he came here because he
figured I'd come here.

CHARLES

He had my registration with the
address. That's all.

JENA

He said he loved me.

CHARLES

You don't believe that?

JENA

He sounded sincere.

CHARLES

You took all the money.

JENA

If he loves me, he'll be
waiting for me with open arms.

CHARLES

Can you be sure?

JENA

I have no other stories left.

Jena lifts the gun wearily.

JENA

Now pull over.

Charles parks the Gremlin on the street.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME, BACK DOOR - MORNING

Jena, her arm around Charles' shoulder, reaches the door. Benny
Goodman's 'Stomping at the Savoy' comes from within.

JENA

He loves Benny Goodman.

Jena rests against the wall; Charles retrieves a key from under a mat.

JENA

You've got to be kidding.
That's such a cliché.

CHARLES

He knows we're here. He's got
to.

JENA

Unlock it.

Charles inserts the key. The lock SNAPS open loudly. Jena puts her arm around Charles' shoulder.

JENA

Now we get to see whose story
was right. Open the door.

Charles pushes the door open.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, KITCHEN - MORNING

Charles helps Jena through the door. Jena holds the gun at the ready. All the breakfast things have been put away and the dishes washed and stacked neatly. On the table is a roll of packing tape, scissors and two bloodied face cloths. The following dialogue is whispered.

CHARLES

He washed the dishes.

JENA

He hates a mess.
(points gun to
living room)

That way.

Charles helps her to the door. They both look cautiously around the corner. Marvin is on his hands and knees, shirtless, packing tape wound around his chest, holding in place a bloodied face cloth serving as bandage. He scrubs at blood spots on the rug. A gun sits on the carpet a few feet away. 'Stomping at the Savoy' ends. Jena draws a ragged breath which is audible in the silence. Marvin turns slowly.

MARVIN

I knew you'd come, baby. I
love you.

JENA

Bullshit.

Marvin dives for his gun as Jena pulls the trigger of hers. The shot shatters the glass coffee table, spilling its magazines and vase of flowers. Marvin raises his gun. They regard one another across barrels.

JENA

I wasn't trying to hit you.

MARVIN

Bullshit.

Marvin fires; Charles is hit in the arm and goes down on his knees, clutching his wound.

JENA

You shot him.

MARVIN

It was an accident. I was
aiming at you.

Jena and Marvin keep their guns on each other. Blood seeps between Charles' fingers and drips onto the carpet. Marvin glares at the new spots.

MARVIN

Fuck! I was almost finished
cleaning!

CHARLES

Cleaning?

MARVIN

You left a pretty big mess.
What the fuck happened here
anyway?

CHARLES

Ask her.

JENA

Shut up.

MARVIN

At least it's not red wine.
That's a bitch to get out.

CHARLES

Have you... have you cleaned
upstairs?

MARVIN

What?

JENA

Why don't you put your gun
down?

MARVIN

You first.

JENA

You just shot Charles.

MARVIN

I wasn't shooting at him.

JENA

That's my point. If you
weren't such a bad shot I
wouldn't be so nervous.

MARVIN

I don't trust you.

JENA

And I don't trust you.

CHARLES

At the same time.

Charles tentatively touches Jena's gun, leaving a bloody finger print on the end of the barrel. Jena allows him to lower it. At the same time Marvin lowers his. Marvin walks over to Jena and kisses her. After a moment she kisses back, then becomes passionate.

MARVIN

Jesus! Anyone ever tell you
you're sexy when your wounded?

JENA

What now?

MARVIN

We need to talk. But not in
front of him.

JENA

So what do we do with him?

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, FRONT HALL - MORNING

Charles stands in the front hall closet, his jacket and shirt sleeve cut off just above his gunshot wound. A face cloth has been taped over his wounded arm. Tape is wound around his ankles, binds his wrists behind his back, and covers his mouth. Marvin has the two bloody face cloths from the kitchen wadded up and stuck to a long piece of packing tape. He places the face cloths over Charles' eyes and wraps the tape around his head. Jena sits on the stairs watching. Charles winces when Marvin jostles his wounded arm.

MARVIN

Sorry man.

JENA

Finished?

MARVIN

(admires his work)

Fucking beautiful.

JENA

He can still hear us.

MARVIN

Oh, yeah.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, HALL CLOSET - MORNING

MARVIN

Take five.

Marvin closes the door on Charles. The following dialogue is muffled.

MARVIN (O.C.)
Okay, let's talk.

JENA (O.C.)
Not here.

MARVIN (O.C.)
Upstairs?

JENA (O.C.)
In the kitchen.

SOUNDS of Marvin helping Jena move to the kitchen.

Charles manages to wiggle around and find the door knob with his hands. He turns it slowly until the latch opens with an unnaturally loud CLICK. Charles pauses, but everything is silent. He opens the door and eases out of the closet feeling his way along the wall to the front door. A GRUNT comes from the kitchen, followed by another. More rhythmic GRUNTS follow, rising in intensity. Charles unlocks the deadbolt to the front door. A SMASHING sounds comes from the kitchen.

MARVIN (O.C.)
Fuck!

JENA (O.C.)
You asshole!

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET OUTSIDE CHARLES' HOUSE - MORNING

Charles' next door NEIGHBOR, wearing a jogging outfit, runs down the street. Seeing the Gremlin in Charles' driveway, he slows. He walks up to the driver's door and spots "The Getaway" on the dash. Reaching inside, he picks up the book and examines it.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - MORNING

Acton and Davis lean against their car. Acton opens a pack of candy cigarettes and offers one to Davis who shakes his head.

ACTON
Do you think he was in on it?

DAVIS

Who?

ACTON

Charles Smith.

DAVIS

Beats the hell out of me.

ACTON

Maybe he was just an innocent bystander, like he said.

DAVIS

Then why run?

ACTON

Why, indeed?

DAVIS

We've got nothing on him. No plates, no ID. With a name like Smith, it's not like we can look him up in the phone book. Hell, we don't even know if he gave us his real name.

ACTON

He's smart.

DAVIS

Where are you Charles Smith?

ACTON

Guess we've seen the last of him.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, FRONT HALL - MORNING

Charles opens the front door and hops out onto the porch as another SMASHING sound comes from the kitchen. Charles loses his balance as he tries to hop down the steps and falls onto the grass. Aghast, the neighbor stares at Charles who is bloodied, blindfolded and gagged. In his hand the neighbor holds "The Getaway".

From within the house the argument rises. Then everything goes silent.

The sound of GUNSHOTS shatters the suburban morning. A DOG barks in the distance. The neighbor drops the book and runs. A timer on the side of the house CLICKS on. In the front yard, water jets from the nozzles of a sprinkler and falls on Charles, soaking him. Thin attenuated streams of blood drip from his eye patches and run down blades of grass, disappearing into the earth.

EXT. OVERGROWN COUNTRY ROAD - MORNING

The cop car sits in a weed-choked lane. A BANG and the trunk bends out around the lock. With the next BANG, the trunk pops open. The Cop drops a stubby metal jack onto the ground; it's what he's been using to hammer at the lock. He clambers out, a sweaty mess. Going to the driver's side, he opens the door and picks up the radio handset. The cord has been cut. He pauses. Then he checks the dash, the seats, the glove compartment, under the seats, finally returning to the trunk, looking for something. He pauses.

COP

She stole my book.

(sits on edge of
trunk looking
pissed)

Now I'm never going to know how
it ends.

FADE TO BLACK.

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