BAD INFLUENCE

by

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endless thanks to
Martin Donovan

FADE IN:

EXT DESERT HIGHWAY DAY

The original Road to Nowhere. Sand, blacktop, dead animals.

A GAS STATION.

The sign hangs at an angle, sunburned and tired like everything else. The station itself, however, is surprisingly modern.

Inside the office, a GIRL of about fifteen sits with her feet on the desk, her cutoff jeans revealing a shapely -- but young -- pair of tanned legs. She watches a game show raptly. Women SCREAM.

From outside comes the WHINE of a motorcycle engine. The Girl looks up.

The motorcycle pulls into the parking lot and stops in front of one of the pumps. The Girl squints out the window at her customer.

ALEX, about twenty-six, gets off the bike and turns around.

He is drop-dead handsome.

But in an unconventional way. "Rough" is the best way to describe Alex's looks, rough like a diamond. He's deeply tanned, roundly muscled, so perfect he's flawed. Alex is a Rogue.

The Girl comes out of the office, openly admiring his physique.

GIRL
What can I can do for 'ya?

Alex looks up and grins disarmingly.

ALEX
I've had to crap since Reno.

GIRL
I like a man who knows what he wants. The john's back through the office. Fill 'er up?

ALEX
Yeah. Oil, too.

Alex goes into the office as the Girl fills his tank.

INT OFFICE

Alex pauses, noticing the cash register hanging open a few inches, greenbacks inside. He tears himself away and continues into the bathroom.

INT BATHROOM

Alex runs his hands through his hair, letting water run down over his face. He regards himself soberly in the mirror. He turns out the pocket of his jeans, revealing a crumpled dollar bill and some lint covered change.

INT OFFICE

Alex comes out of the bathroom and steps up to the cash register.

Looking quickly out the window, he sees the Girl bent over the motorcycle. He pulls the drawer open and runs his hand over the bills.

He settles on a single ten and slips it into his pocket.

He goes back outside.

EXT GAS STATION

The Girl wipes her hands, turns to Alex.

GIRL
No way I would have taken the rotisserie, I'll tell you that.

Alex looks up sharply.

ALEX
Huh?

GIRL
On the tube. Game show. Panicky housewives always settle for what they got instead'a pushin' for the big one.

ALEX
Not you though, huh?

GIRL
Not a chance. That's why I'm goin' on that show. Send in my card every week. I figure they gotta pick me pretty soon. Six fifty-two for the gas, seventy-five cents for the oil.

Alex pulls the ten out of his pocket and gives it to the Girl.

ALEX
(grandly)
Keep it.

She blinks and takes it, genuinely impressed.

GIRL
Where're you from? Not from around here, that's for damn sure.

ALEX
No. Not from around here.

GIRL
So, you -- uh -- you wanna stick around for a while? I could close up.

Alex looks her up and down. He grins and shakes his head. He gets on his bike and kicks it to life.

ALEX
Never settle for the rotisserie.

He winks and roars off. She watches him go.

CUT TO:

EXT LOS ANGELES DAY

Downtown. Buildings, freeways, smog.

INT A RECEPTION AREA

An incredibly busy place. WORKERS scamper officiously in and out past the RECEPTIONIST, who monitors the BEEPS and WHISTLES of a busy phone system.

RECEPTIONIST
InfoTech, please hold.
(another line)
InfoTech, please hold.
(another line)
InfoTech, good morning. Mr. Boll? One moment.

She punches a button.

INT MICHAEL BOLL'S OFFICE

LESLIE is about thirty-five, earthy, wearing a blousy cotton dress and large, bizarre earrings. There's an incredible openness in Leslie's face, it exudes warmth and security.

Right now she's sitting at a large computer terminal -- uptight.

She looks at her BUZZING phone in annoyance and answers it.

LESLIE
Michael Boll's office. Um, can he call you back? Thanks.

She hangs up and looks at the computer in frustration.

LESLIE
(calling into the back office)
Michael? I still can't find it!

INT A BATHROOM

MICHAEL BOLL looks ill. He's in his late twenties, conventionally handsome, bespectacled. Most striking is his careful grooming -- his natty suit and close-cropped hair give an impression of order and consistency.

But right now he is pale, sweaty, fragile looking. He splashes water over his face and studies himself in the mirror, trying to gain composure.

MICHAEL
(answering Leslie)
Just a second!
(a mumble)
I will not be sick. I will not be sick.

He takes a deep breath, steels himself, and opens the door.

INT MICHAEL'S OFFICE

His office is that of a busy middle level executive. Everywhere are the trappings of work -- stacks of computer forms, heavy bound reports -- but nowhere are signs of personality or an outside life.

Michael strides through into the outer office purposefully and approaches Leslie.

MICHAEL
Did you run a directory?

LESLIE
Twice. It's just gone.

MICHAEL
(voice raised)
It <u>can't</u> just be gone, it's due tomorrow morning. "Gone" is not part of the plan.

LESLIE
You don't have to shout at me.

MICHAEL
Sorry. What about trying a format roller?

LESLIE
Um -- a format what?

MICHAEL
(not unkindly)
Format roller. Leslie, do you read the manuals I put on your desk?

LESLIE
Something always comes up.

MICHAEL
Here. Let me.

He goes over to the computer officiously. He types in a few commands, attacking the keyboard like Beethoven.

MICHAEL
Oh no. Oh no.

LESLIE
See?

MICHAEL
This can't be.

LESLIE
I hate computers. My ex-husband said computers were --

MICHAEL
Think, Leslie. Think. Could you possibly have erased it? Is there any chance?

LESLIE
No! I swear! I don't even know how to erase!

Michael is struck by a thought.

MICHAEL
Fenwick.

He strides out of the office briskly.

INT ANOTHER OFFICE

Michael comes into an outer office and approaches a secretary. Unlike Leslie, BRITT is hard, efficient, businesslike as hell.

MICHAEL
I have to see Fenwick.

BRITT
He's in a meeting, Michael.

MICHAEL
My Commerce report -- it's gone. Off the computer. Fifty pages. Graphs. Tables. Three-color diagrams. Do you understand?

BRITT
Well, I don't have it.

MICHAEL
Somebody erased it.

BRITT
You should get some air or something.

MICHAEL
I don't <u>need</u> air, I need the lousy Commerce report!

BRITT
Maybe Leslie erased it.

MICHAEL
Impossible. Leslie can hardly work the power switch. The only other people who have access to those files are you, me, and --

The door to the office behind Britt opens and FENWICK steps out. Fenwick is about thirty-five, slightly overweight, with a pasty, petulant face. As a kid, he took the ball and went home a lot.

FENWICK
What's going on?

Michael looks up at Fenwick wildly.

MICHAEL
Put it back, Fenwick.

FENWICK
Put what back?

MICHAEL
My Commerce report. You erased it so it would be late and I'd look bad to Luce, didn't you?

FENWICK
Don't be absurd.

Michael speaks quietly, on the verge of mania.

MICHAEL
I know you did it, Fenwick. Admit it.

Fenwick looks around to see if anyone is listening besides Britt. He looks at Michael hard, sizing up his foe.

FENWICK
(quietly)
Prove it.

They lock eyes for a second, then Fenwick turns and goes back into his office.

Michael stands still, powerless. He skulks away, MUMBLING.

INT MICHAEL'S OUTER OFFICE

He returns to his office. Leslie is at the outer desk.

LESLIE
Did you find it?

MICHAEL
No calls, okay?

He heads into his office.

LESLIE
Michael -- Michael, your --

But he closes the door on her.

INT INNER OFFICE

Michael leans against the closed door, visibly drained.

Someone in the office SPEAKS and he jumps a foot.

RUTH
Darling!

Michael looks over at RUTH FIELDING, about twenty-five, blonde, pretty in a boring sort of way. She is dressed impeccably and conservatively.

MICHAEL
You scared me.

RUTH
I'm sorry, sweetheart. Are you ready for lunch?

MICHAEL
Lunch? Oh -- God.

RUTH
You're not going to cancel?

MICHAEL
No, no -- of course not.

She comes over to him and fusses -- brushing off his jacket, straightening his shoulders.

RUTH
If you had to I'd understand. It's only six weeks till Mr. Luce announces the new department head and we want you on your best behavior, don't we?

MICHAEL
Yes, I guess we do.

RUTH
Six weeks. I can hardly wait. You know what else that means.

MICHAEL
Um --

RUTH
You said after you knew whether or not you got the promotion we'd announce a date.

MICHAEL
A date? I never said that.

RUTH
Oh, Michael, I'm not going to have this argument with you again. If you don't intend to -- to go through with it, why don't you just have the --

MICHAEL
I do. I do want --

RUTH
-- just have the courage to end this thing right --

MICHAEL
-- to marry you. End it? Don't be crazy. We're perfectly --

RUTH
-- now, end it now, don't make me hang around and have my heart broken in a million --

MICHAEL
-- perfectly happy and as soon as I know whether or not I get the promotion I'll --

RUTH
-- there! See?

MICHAEL
See what?

RUTH
You just said it. As soon as you know if you got the promotion we'll set the date.

Michael is hit by a bolt of pain in his stomach. He doubles over.

MICHAEL
Ah! Oh, Jesus!

RUTH
What is it?

MICHAEL
My stomach!
(another stab hits him)
Oh, Christ! It's like I can't breathe!

She helps him to the sofa. He's still holding his stomach, trying to catch his breath but unable. He gets panicky. This is either a very good act or no act at all.

MICHAEL (cont.)
I can't -- I can't --

RUTH
Just take it easy, Michael. Take it easy.

He breathes deeply a few times, trying to settle down.

RUTH (cont.)
Do you want me to call Daddy at the hospital?

Michael suddenly stands and elbows past Ruth, moving with the conviction and swiftness of one who knows he is about to vomit.

He falls to his hands and knees in his bathroom.

Ruth moves quickly to close the door to his office.

Michael retches.

Twice.

Regaining himself, he wipes the sweat from his forehead.

After a moment, Ruth speaks timidly.

RUTH (cont.)
Should we talk about this later?

Michael doesn't answer, just gets to his feet and staggers over to his window.

RUTH (cont.)
You know, I really don't understand these attacks of yours. You're a man who has everything going for him, aren't you? You've even got an office with a view, and that's not so easy in L.A.

Michael looks out the window. Across the street is a large parklike area with black patches here and there.

MICHAEL
Some view. The La Brea Tar Pits.

RUTH
Look higher, Michael. You can see the ocean.

He looks up. He stares out from the twentieth floor, looking past the Tar Pits in the foreground and to the vibrant blue water of the Pacific in the distance.

RUTH (cont.)
See?

He continues to stare at the water -- shimmering, beckoning.

He turns back to her.

MICHAEL
Can we cancel lunch after all? I just remembered, I have a two o'clock.

RUTH
A two o'clock? Where?

CUT TO:

EXT THE BEACH DAY

A stunning day -- white sand, bronzed bodies, beautiful waves kissing the shoreline.

INT A SURF SHOP

MICHAEL stands in front of EDDIE, a surf rat. Michael checks out the vast array of colorful surfboards in the shop.

MICHAEL
Nothing special. Whatever's new in the summer line, I guess.

EDDIE
The summer line? Of surfboards?
(checking out Michael's clothes)
You surf a lot?

MICHAEL
Are you making fun of me?

EDDIE
You never know, dude. Surfin's a state of mind; got nothin' to do with clothes.

He climbs up on a ladder and starts to rummage through some colorful boards up in the rafters.

MICHAEL
You know, I just -- I did a really crazy thing. A very stupid thing, actually.

EDDIE
What, you paid to park?

MICHAEL
No, I just walked out of my office. In the middle of the day. I walked out on my secretary, on my fiancee, on the Seattle Chamber of Commerce report --

EDDIE
Never been to Seattle myself.

MICHAEL
-- on everything. Just said "to heck with it, I'm going to the beach." That's not me. I'm not like that.

EDDIE
Bingo!

He finds a board and comes down with it.

MICHAEL
But I had to. I just -- something told me that if I stayed there one more second, one more half-second, I'd have my hands around somebody's throat, you know?

EDDIE
Easy, ace. I got the answer to your problems.

He displays the board proudly.

EDDIE (cont.)
Triple fin, ultra-light blank and a bitchin' airbrush. You gotta let me ring this up, man.

MICHAEL
That is a beauty. How much?

EDDIE
I'll throw in some shorts, make it a fuckin' steal at three fifty.

Michael thinks.

EDDIE (cont.)
Come on, show 'em all. Live a little.

MICHAEL
You take Visa?

CUT TO:

EXT BEACH DAY

MICHAEL, wearing loud shorts and toting his surfboard self-consciously, makes his way out into the surf. He trips and falls, brought down by the two foot elastic cord that binds his surfboard to his ankle. He gets up, then flops onto the board, belly down, and paddles out.

A wave crashes and washes him back to the shore.

He tries again to get past the point where the waves break.

Same result. This time it's a little rougher with him and he's lucky to get out of the rough whitewater at all -- still, he ends up back at the beach.

Looking around him, he spots another SURFER making his way into the sea. Seeing a wave, the Surfer rolls off his board and ducks under it. The board, strapped to his foot like Michael's, stays with him.

Michael tries again, imitating this action.

It works. Soon he's out past the break point, bobbing on the waves with a couple dozen SURFERS. They talk among themselves, some regarding Michael with a leery eye.

The First Surfer floats by and nods to Michael.

SURFER
Awesome day, dude. South swell, I think. Sets are pourin' in, four to six, no close out.

MICHAEL
(thinking)
Cool.

A wave comes, bringing excited SHOUTS to those surfers in the right position to catch it. The lucky ones paddle furiously, stand up, and drop down over the crest expertly, disappearing from sight. Michael watches, studying them.

A bit intimidated, he lets himself drift off from the main group.

SHOUTS of excitement abruptly break out. Michael looks up. The Surfers are all looking directly at him, pointing. He turns.

A Perfect Wave approaches. A very large Perfect Wave.

Michael takes a deep breath, paddles like a madman, and at the appropriate moment clambers to his feet.

For a split second, he is on top of the wave as it breaks. He's at least six feet above the beach and the rest of the ocean. The view is spectacular -- and fleeting.

MICHAEL
YES!

No.

Everything turns white. The wave breaks over Michael, picking him up and sucking him under, raking him across the bottom, tumbling him senselessly, head over heels.

As the foam settles, he fights and kicks his way to the surface, bursting through, gasping for air, coughing and spitting water.

He hears a sound and turns, looking behind him.

A WALL OF WATER

slams into him, bouncing him around on the ocean floor like a sunken ship. He's battered again, held under even longer.

He finally surfaces, vomiting water.

ON THE BEACH,

no one pays any attention as Michael, a tiny figure, continues his fight with the sea in the distance.

IN THE WATER,

Michael is gasping, floundering in the break. He looks, sees another wave coming, and this time has the presence of mind to try to dive under it.

As he goes under, his surfboard floats innocently on the surface. When the wave hits, it grabs the board and sucks it under.

Michael, who is bound to the board by his foot, is dragged under with it.

He disappears.

A moment goes by.

The water settles.

His board pops up out of the water and floats lifelessly. Michael is nowhere to be seen.

ANOTHER WAVE approaches, a SURFER on a bright orange board at the front of it. The Surfer kicks out and swims to Michael's board swiftly.

He dives under and soon Michael bursts to the surface, boosted from below. He's gasping, choking, but still alive and conscious.

The other Surfer bobs up next to Michael.

It's ALEX.

Michael gets a good look at him and tries to mumble his thanks, but he loses consciousness and slips beneath the waves.

Alex goes after him.

CUT TO:

EXT BEACH DAY

MICHAEL lies on his back on the beach, unconscious. Slowly he opens his eyes and a great

"AAAAHH!!"

goes up from the small crowd of BEACHGOERS around him.

EDDIE helps him to sit up. Michael blinks, thoroughly confused.

EDDIE
I knew I had to keep an eye on you, slick.

MICHAEL
I was up for a second. Did you see me?

The crowd starts to disperse as they see he is okay.

EDDIE
Sorry, Surf King. You were down when I saw you.

MICHAEL
Where is he?

EDDIE
Where's who?

MICHAEL
The surfer.

EDDIE
Can you, like, be a little more specific?

MICHAEL
The guy who saved me.

EDDIE
Hey, give me a break. I saved you. Me. I saw you floating in on your board, knocked out, so I ran out and dragged you in.

MICHAEL
No, there was a guy on an orange board.

EDDIE
Sorry. Nobody cared but me. Hey, if you're okay, I should get back to the shop. There's probably other business dudes with Visas on the freak right now.

MICHAEL
Yeah, fine. Thanks.

Eddie nods and walks off. Michael looks out at the ocean.

CUT TO:

EXT MICHAEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING EVENING

MICHAEL drives up and parks. He gets out of the car, still in his wet shorts and carrying his briefcase and rumpled suit. He unloads the surfboard and carries it into the building.

INT FOYER

A COUPLE are standing in the entryway, near the buzzer system, arguing.

MAN
I work with her, for Christ's sake. I can't just ignore her.

WOMAN
You could! You could if you loved me!

They stop arguing as they see Michael come in, lugging the cumbersome surfboard awkwardly through the glass doors.

They GIGGLE as he passes.

INT MICHAEL'S APARTMENT

His apartment, like him, is well ordered and well furnished. Lots of leather and chrome, expensive stereo equipment, a big television, VCR, even a video camera is counted among the various gadgets that dot the place.

It's obviously the home of a single, successful apartment dweller -- anyone with a family or a larger place could never afford such toys.

Next to the door two pieces of artwork, the same size and shape, hang side by side. The one on the right is tilted, listing a little to the right and out of line with the other.

MICHAEL comes in and flicks on a light. Almost reflexively, he straightens the crooked picture.

It holds for a second, then slides back off center.

Michael dumps the surfboard in a corner with a few other things and punches a button on his answering machine. He takes his mail out of the slot and flips through it while the messages play.

MACHINE
(woman's voice)
Hi sweetheart, are you okay? Daddy put the emergency room on alert for you, so please stop in and let them help you. And don't forget we have dinner at my parents' tomorrow and my sister's on Friday and call me the minute you get in.

BEEP. The first piece of mail is a bill.

MACHINE
(man's voice)
Michael, it's Charles Luce. Fenwick seems to think there's some problem with your Seattle report. Tell me it isn't true. And where the hell were you this afternoon?

BEEP. Bill.

MACHINE (cont.)
(snide woman's voice)
It's Caroline. Remember me, your accountant? The one you had a three o'clock with? Hey, if you want to retire without an IRA that's your problem -- but don't come crying to me when you're seventy-five and eating dog food.

BEEP. Bill.

Now there is a long silence filled only by the sound of someone breathing. Then a very tentative man's VOICE comes on.

VOICE
Hello? God, I hate these. It's Pismo. Are you there? Okay, yes, I need money again, alright?

Michael looks up and groans.

VOICE (cont.)
Can I come over?

CUT TO:

INT MICHAEL'S APARTMENT LATER

A FACE.

Giant. On the television screen. Michael's video camera is set up on a tripod. PISMO BOLL mugs into the lens, making faces and turning slowly from side to side, watching himself on the screen.

Pismo is short, five-six if he's lucky, balding, and the closest thing to a salamander that still has the right to vote. He practically recoils from light.

He and MICHAEL are finishing beers. Michael is in running shoes and shorts.

PISMO
You're hung up, man, that's your problem. You sit there with your little desk divider in front of you -- paper clips here, staples here, rubber bands here -- your whole world is full of little gadgets to hold shit together. That's wrong! You need to bust shit open, break it apart. You've gotta get some scissors, Michael, buy a staple remover, maybe find some big ass letter opener...

MICHAEL
It's hard to think all my problems can be solved by office products.

PISMO
I'm trying to talk to you in your language, man.

MICHAEL
Why do I bother with you? You don't make any sense.

PISMO
You've got it! Stop making sense, like the Hindus say. Your whole life makes sense, it's plotted like a bad play. The perfect job, the perfect wife --

MICHAEL
I don't have a wife.

PISMO
Close enough. If you're not careful you'll have a home espresso machine by the end of the year.

Michael gets up and starts stretching. Pismo takes the camera off the tripod and points it at Michael, interrogating him.

PISMO (cont.)
Right now, for example. What are you doing?

MICHAEL
Stretching.

PISMO
You're going running, aren't you?

MICHAEL
Yes.

PISMO
Why?

MICHAEL
What do you mean why?

PISMO
Because you drank a beer. You drank a beer and now you have to go run it off, otherwise you might gain an ounce and ruin your whole equilibrium, and that idea just gives you hives, man.

MICHAEL
So I take care of my body.

PISMO
Take care of it? You never even let it out of the garage. You know it yourself, or you wouldn't have done what you did today.

MICHAEL
What I did today was a mistake. A momentary loss of concentration. Future department heads don't surf.

Pismo puts down the camera, intent on his point.

PISMO
Future department heads can't afford not to surf.

MICHAEL
Don't talk to me about adventure, Pismo. You only leave your apartment to borrow money from me.

PISMO
Exactly! Haven't you noticed it's the nineteen eighties? There's an evil symbiosis out there.

MICHAEL
Where?

PISMO
(simply)
The whole world. It's like a big swimming pool. Every movement of every individual stirs the water and affects the other individuals. If I go out into it, I become part of it. So I have to wait. See, Michael? I <u>think</u>. The world needs thinkers too, you know.

Michael gets up and goes out the door. Pismo follows him into the hall, bringing his beer.

PISMO (cont.)
You don't like what I do. I accept that, even though you're my little brother and you ought to keep quiet about these things. But cab drivers serve a valuable function too.

MICHAEL
Yes, cab drivers do. But you refuse to pick anyone up.

PISMO
I <u>can't</u>. Tax purposes.

MICHAEL
I just think an ex-hippie could be a little more productive.

Michael goes down the steps and out onto the sidewalk. Pismo follows.

EXT SIDEWALK NIGHT

Michael starts to jog. Pismo does too, his stomach rolling around and his beer splashing.

PISMO
I am <u>not</u> an ex-hippie! I sat out the sixties, man, and you know it! I sat 'em out because the whole thing was doomed.

Pismo is sweating already, his breathing labored and irregular.

PISMO (cont.)
I knew even then that was just the first love decade and it wasn't for real. But there's going to be a second, and this one's going to last a hundred years.

MICHAEL
A decade that lasts a hundred --

PISMO
The nineties, Michael! Wait for the nineties!

Pismo has fallen very far behind and is shouting. Suddenly he looks up, realizing he's outside.

Unprotected.

He turns and walks briskly back to the building, eyes darting left and right.

CUT TO:

EXT SIDEWALK NIGHT

Michael runs at a good clip, in fine shape. Up ahead there is a small GANG gathered outside a liquor store -- they wear third hand suitcoats, skinny black ties, sunglasses at night. At the curb are parked battered Vespa scooters.

They see Michael coming and shout taunts.

Michael pauses, jogs in place for a second, then takes a deep breath and continues on.

When he's about ten yards from them and their taunts have gotten louder and more menacing, he loses nerve and starts across the street.

The Gang Members spill out into the street, some jogging to catch up to him.

One PUNK even draws up behind and tugs at the back of Michael's shorts.

PUNK
Hey, Speed Racer! How come you never talk to us? You too good or somethin'?

The others laugh. Michael pours on the speed, trying to get away.

All the Gang Members fall off except for the Punk. He remains right behind Michael, keeping pace.

Michael speeds up. So does the Punk. They're both sprinting now, almost flat out.

PUNK (cont.)
(shouting)
Speed Racer, man. I catch you and I'm gonna cut you.

A metallic CLICK like a switchblade opening comes from behind Michael. He doesn't turn to check it out, just guns it, now <u>really</u> moving.

The Punk starts to lag behind.

After another half block, Michael turns back to look and sees the Punk stagger to a stop and wave him off.

Michael grins to himself.

CUT TO:

EXT BEACH NIGHT

MICHAEL jogs to a stop on a fishing pier, ending his run. He walks, hands on hips, catching his breath.

At the end of the pier is a small wood building, a Fishing Supplies store. Coming around it, Michael startles a COUPLE embracing at the end of the pier.

The GIRL looks up at Michael, suddenly embarrassed. The MAN doesn't turn around.

MICHAEL
Sorry.

Embarrassed himself, Michael turns and stares out at the water. Behind him comes the sound of a WHISPERED debate, then the Girl's FOOTSTEPS as she leaves the pier.

Michael turns around. The Man, still with his back turned, lights a cigarette.

MICHAEL (cont.)
Sorry. I didn't think anyone was out here.

The Man turns around.

It's ALEX.

ALEX
Don't worry about it.

MICHAEL
Hey! It's you!

Michael steps forward. Alex instinctively steps back, guarding himself.

ALEX
What? You know me?

MICHAEL
Today, in the water. You saved my life.
(putting out his hand)
I'm Michael.

ALEX
(not shaking)
That was you?

MICHAEL
Yeah. But when I woke up --

ALEX
I didn't want to stick around for the "thank you's". They make me kinda sick.

MICHAEL
Well, thank you anyway.

ALEX
What did I just say? Nobody ever listens.

MICHAEL
Sorry.

A pause.

Alex goes to the rail and stares out at the water. Michael racks his brain, searching for something to say.

MICHAEL (cont.)
So -- you surf a lot?

ALEX
Sometimes. If there's an ocean around.

MICHAEL
Yeah. That helps, I guess.

ALEX
Sure does.

Alex continues to stare at the sea. Michael watches him for a second, then turns to go. Alex calls after him without turning around.

ALEX (cont.)
Why'd you do it?

MICHAEL
Do what?

ALEX
Go out in those waves today. You've never surfed before, have you?

MICHAEL
Sure I have.

Alex looks at him.

MICHAEL (cont.)
(admitting it)
Okay. I don't know why. Something inside me. Like there was this little guy I'd beaten into submission every day at the office and today he just decided he wouldn't be ignored any more. Today he won. That sounds stupid, I suppose. I don't know what I'm --

ALEX
No. I get it. I'm like that. Except my little guy <u>always</u> wins.

Michael laughs.

ALEX (cont.)
My name's Alex. You want to get a drink or something --
(pause)
-- Michael?

MICHAEL
No. No, I can't. Thanks anyway.

CUT TO:

INT A BAR NIGHT

MICHAEL and ALEX sit at the bar in a beach tavern. Not much of a crowd. There are a few empty glasses in front of them and it's obvious they're already quite tipsy.

Michael is animated, very up.

MICHAEL
And he is an obnoxious son of a bitch, boy. But he gets ahead. That's the thing that really gets me, that a guy like that, with absolutely zero in the way of manners, can succeed. It doesn't make any sense.

ALEX
Of course it makes sense. It makes perfect sense.

MICHAEL
No. I refuse to believe it. Things don't have to be that way.

ALEX
But they are. That thing he did today with your report -- I don't know a thing about computers, but I know people and I know for a fact he did it on purpose. He did it to show you he could. That you'd let him get away with it. That's his point.

MICHAEL
Just because he's childish doesn't mean I should --

ALEX
Childish? Who's childish? He's laughing and telling the story to his buddies, you're sitting around here calling him names. I'd call you the little kid.

MICHAEL
I will not lose my dignity over a computer file.

ALEX
But it won't be that next time. It'll be your biggest account. Or your girlfriend. And you won't do anything about that either. Same principle, just a bigger scale. He understands that. I like this guy. What's his name?

MICHAEL
Fenwick.

Alex lifts his glass in toast.

ALEX
To Fenwick.

Michael looks at him, dumbfounded.

ALEX (cont.)
Come on. To Fenwick.

Shaking his head, Michael lifts his own glass and CLINKS it up against Alex's. As he raises it to his mouth, Alex's hand suddenly darts out and he

SLAPS

the glass from Michael's hand. It CRASHES to the floor, sending shards of glass flying all over.

BARTENDER
Hey!

PATRONS look up, surprised and annoyed.

Alex grabs Michael by the collar and pulls his face close.

ALEX (cont.)
Don't you ever. Don't you ever.
What kind of man are you, that you
drink to your enemies?

MICHAEL
Let go of me.

He looks around nervously. People are staring.

MICHAEL (cont.)
Come on, this isn't funny.

Michael shakes him off roughly.

Alex smiles at the slight violence in Michael's gesture.

ALEX (cont.)
You're learning.

Alex grins at Michael, then starts to laugh. Michael, after a moment, drops his petulant face and smiles too. He notices that he's spilled some beer on Alex's shirt. He points to it.

MICHAEL
You'd better rinse that out.

ALEX
Forget it.

MICHAEL
No, do it now or you'll never get
it out.

ALEX
I like it. Let's go get another drink.

MICHAEL
I really can't. I have to be up early.

CUT TO:

INT ANOTHER BAR NIGHT

This one is a crowded, raucous club. A BAND plays at the front, loud. The crowd is wired, frenetic, alive. MICHAEL and ALEX make their way through the people.

Michael SHOUTS in Alex's ear.

MICHAEL
I still don't have any money! Can I pay you back?

ALEX
(shouting back)
Don't worry about it.

Michael gestures to his jogging outfit.

MICHAEL
Don't I look ridiculous?

ALEX
Look around you!

Michael does. The outlandish get-ups make his attire look conservative.

Alex leads Michael to the bar and signals for drinks.

Michael looks around. At the other end of the bar is CLAIRE, about twenty-one, dark, her hair perpetually hanging in front of her face, wearing a carefully cultivated Dangerous Character look. She drinks a beer with a friend, a lady ROCKER in a leather jacket.

Michael taps Alex and tilts his head in the direction of the Women at the end of the bar. Alex grins. The drinks arrive. Alex shoves Michael forward, toward the Women. Michael resists. Alex shoves again and Michael finds himself next to Claire.

Michael, terribly uncomfortable, says something to Claire but it is lost under the band.

CLAIRE
HUH?

Michael speaks again. Claire gestures futilely that she can't hear him and turns abruptly back to her friend.

Michael returns to Alex, defeated.

Alex shakes his head and walks over to Claire, Michael lagging behind. Alex says something in her ear.

She laughs.

The Lady Rocker stands next to Michael, looking at him fiercely.

Alex grabs Claire's hand and leads her out onto the packed dance floor.

Michael looks at the Lady Rocker with apprehension. He smiles. He downs his drink and signals for two more.

The drinks -- shots of something -- are delivered and he hands one to her. He tosses his back in one gulp. She does the same.

BARTENDER
HEY PAL!

Michael looks at the Bartender, who gestures for money, holding up five fingers.

Michael's face goes pale as he remembers he has no money. He gestures apologetically to the Bartender, then looks around for Alex. He backs away from the bar, trying wordlessly to calm the impatient innkeeper, and goes out onto the dance floor.

The floor is jammed with people -- sweaty, seething. The music isn't right, but the crowded conditions are producing a kind of slam dancing, and Michael is buffetted around as he searches for Alex.

Nowhere to be seen.

Michael takes a few hard knocks from out of control dancers. He absorbs them and continues on.

ACROSS THE CROWD,

he sees the Bartender coming out onto the dance floor, following him.

Michael takes a particularly hard shot, almost knocking him over. Briefly enraged, he SLAMS the nearest person next to him. Then he's slammed again, and soon he's CRASHING into people with everything he's got, spinning like a dervish -- getting into it.

The Bartender draws close.

Michael sees him and plows through the crowd to the exit.

EXT BAR

It's quiet on the street, then the door bursts open, letting out a flood of NOISE and Michael. The door slaps shut behind him and all is abruptly quiet again.

Michael stands on the sidewalk, breathing heavily, sweating, spinning.

CUT TO:

INT MICHAEL'S OFFICE MORNING

MICHAEL stands in his office, looking out the window at the ocean off in the distance.

His watch BEEPS. He checks the time and, HUMMING softly to himself, he walks out of the office.

INT OUTER OFFICE

He passes LESLIE, who is awkwardly applying liquid paper through the keys of a typewriter.

MICHAEL
I'll be back in five minutes.

INT CORRIDOR

Michael stops outside a door marked CONFERENCE ROOM. VOICES can be heard inside. He leans against a wall and checks his watch again.

There is a sudden silence in the room, followed by a chair SCRAPING.

FENWICK bursts out the door, looking around desperately. Michael clears his throat and Fenwick notices him.

FENWICK
(in a panic)
What did you do to the propulsion figures, you bastard?

MICHAEL
(innocently)
What do you mean?

FENWICK
You know damn well what I mean! The computer has batting averages where my propulsion figures should be!

MICHAEL
Not a sports fan, huh?

FENWICK
I am in a meeting, you swine, with Luce and three JPL vice-presidents! Now where are those figures?

MICHAEL
Where's my Commerce Report?

CHARLES LUCE, a graying corporate type of about sixty, pokes his head out of the meeting room.

LUCE
Fenwick? Everything alright?

FENWICK
Yes, Mr. Luce. Fine. One minute.

LUCE
Hello, Boll. I'm still looking for that Commerce Report.

MICHAEL
No problem, sir.

Luce nods.

LUCE
Hurry up, Fenwick. We're waiting.

Luce goes back into the meeting room.

Fenwick pauses, seeing he is beaten. He strikes a conciliatory tone.

FENWICK
I'm not admitting I did anything, of course --

MICHAEL
Of course.

FENWICK
-- but if you give me mine back, I'll see if I can get you yours back.

MICHAEL
Nah. Forget it.

He turns and walks away. Fenwick rushes up and spins him around.

FENWICK
Okay. What do you want?

MICHAEL
(points in the other direction)
I want you to walk down to your office --

FENWICK
I'm in a meeting!

MICHAEL
(firmly)
-- walk down to your office and get me my report back on line in sixty seconds. Then I'll see if I can find it in my heart to forgive you.

FENWICK
(long pause)
Bastard.

He turns to go to his office, then stops and turns back.

FENWICK (cont.)
Boll -- in a month, when Luce retires and makes me the new department head -- you're history.

MICHAEL
(taps his watch)
Sixty seconds.

Fenwick turns and stomps away.

CUT TO:

INT MICHAEL'S APARTMENT NIGHT

MICHAEL sits on the couch, speaking on the telephone with a hoarse voice that sounds suspiciously affected.

He kicks off his black leather loafers and unwraps a box of new shoes as he speaks.

MICHAEL
No, I just don't want to aggravate it, that's all.

He takes the shoes out of the box and puts them on -- they're a pair of colorful high top sneakers.

MICHAEL (cont.)
Ruth, I swear I'll be fine. I'll call you in the morning. Maybe tomorrow night. I love you too.

CUT TO:

EXT ROCK CLUB NIGHT

Michael's car pulls up and parks across the street from the club, the same one he was at the night before. MICHAEL gets out and heads across the street. His dress is an odd mixed bag -- blue jeans and high tops, but also a white button down shirt and a tie. Pausing at the door, he loosens the tie dramatically and puts on a pair of sunglasses.

Grinning in anticipation, he tugs open the door to the club.

INT CLUB

The place is empty -- at most maybe a dozen people sitting at the bar nursing beers, but no band, no dancers.

Michael takes off his shades and looks around in disappointment. He goes to the bar and is met by the same BARTENDER as the night before.

BARTENDER
Get you something?

Michael puts a five on the counter.

MICHAEL
Here. I owe you that from last night.

The Bartender sizes him up, not remembering.

BARTENDER
If you say so.
(pockets the five)
You want a drink?

MICHAEL
A light beer.

Michael looks around at the few scattered patrons.

The Bartender cracks open the beer.

MICHAEL (cont.)
Little slow.

BARTENDER
Nobody ever comes in on Friday. Thursday's the big night.

MICHAEL
Listen, I wonder if you've seen a guy -- name's Alex. Tall, really tan. Looks like a surfer. He said he hangs out here a lot.

BARTENDER
Doesn't ring a bell. Why?

A VOICE suddenly comes from directly above Michael.

VOICE
MICHAEL!

Michael looks up. ALEX is at the upstairs railing, grinning from ear to ear. In one move, he swings out over the railing, drops down onto the bar, and jumps onto the floor next to Michael.

BARTENDER
(to Alex)
You know him, Tony?

ALEX
Sure. He's cool.

BARTENDER
Looked like a cop to me.

He turns and goes to the other end of the bar.

Alex slaps Michael on the back.

ALEX
We kind of got split up last night. Sorry about that.

MICHAEL
No big deal. How did it go with that girl?

ALEX
Got very weird. We started talking about Kirkegaard and she suddenly turned into this total <u>theist</u>. I couldn't deal with it.

Michael just stares at him.

ALEX (cont.)
Then I fucked her brains out.

MICHAEL
(laughs)
Oh. Will you see her again?

ALEX
Maybe. I don't know. The whole thing got off to a bizarre start. She thinks I'm Italian.

MICHAEL
Why?

ALEX
Long story.

MICHAEL
Oh.

Michael pauses, looks up at the balcony above the bar.

MICAHEL (cont.)
You live here? Above the bar?

ALEX
Sometimes. Kurt and I go way back.

MICHAEL
He called you Tony.

ALEX
Old joke. Tony's a guy I hate. Hey, you got a car?

CUT TO:

INT/EXT MICHAEL'S CAR

ALEX drives, fast. Michael has a nice car, which he is presently riding in with something close to terror.

MICHAEL
This -- uh -- this is a company car.

ALEX
I'm burning the carbon off the plugs. You should thank me.

CUT TO:

EXT VENICE BACK STREET NIGHT

Michael's car pulls to a stop in a trendy but dangerous part of Venice. MICHAEL and ALEX get out and walk up to the front of a building. They stop in the doorway.

ALEX
You know anything about art?

MICHAEL
Not much. Why?

ALEX
Better let me do the talking.

MICHAEL
Talking?

ALEX
To women. Do you <u>live</u>, Michael?

Alex takes a capsule the size of a big cold pill out of his jacket pocket. He cracks it open and inhales deeply from it.

He offers it to Michael.

ALEX (cont.)
Amyl?

MICHAEL
(uneasy)
No, I -- I just ate.

Alex laughs and puts the capsule away.

ALEX
Whatever you say, pal.

He eyes Michael carefully.

ALEX (cont.)
Let's see -- who should you be?

MICHAEL
Huh?

ALEX
Never mind, I'll improvise.

He opens the door and goes inside. Michael follows.

INT THE TRENDY PARTY

Everywhere they look, there is black. Black-clad ARTY TYPES, black furniture, black wallpaper -- a different decade and perhaps there would even be black lights.

Scattered around the place are various strange objects which are apparently the artwork. Each one is made entirely from bottle caps. The place is on the first floor and opens up directly onto the beach. Some of the artwork is stuck into the sand.

ALEX
Look at the people. A party's like a battlefield, don't you think?

MICHAEL
Yeah. Sure.

Right next to Michael is a bottle cap crucifix, framed reverently and tastefully illuminated by track lighting.

He looks at it, disbelieving.

ALEX
There should be booze. There has to be booze.

He moves forward and disappears into the crowd.

Michael looks up, pointing to the artwork.

MICHAEL
Geez, will you look --

Alex is gone.

MICHAEL (cont.)
Oh, shit.

He tries to follow but has already lost sight of Alex. He wanders around, a little boy lost.

He stops at a rocking chair, constructed of thousands of bottlecaps nailed onto a wooden frame.

The bottlecaps and chair itself are shaped and painted with the visage of Christ, so that whoever sits in the chair is actually sitting in His lap.

Michael raises an eyebrow and continues on.

He catches a snippet of conversation.

WOMAN IN BLACK
Didn't you hear? He's dead.

MAN IN BLACK
Dead? Ridgely?

WOMAN IN BLACK
Maxwell killed him. Ridgely asked him to. He was going to do it himself anyway.

MAN IN BLACK
I'm shocked.

WOMAN IN BLACK
Oh, don't be naive.

MAN IN BLACK
Well, I didn't mean <u>shocked</u>, exactly.

Michael keeps walking and reaches a bar.

MICHAEL
(to the Bartender)
Two tequilas.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT PARTY LATER

MICHAEL stands at the bar. He gestures to the BARTENDER.

BARTENDER
Again?

Michael nods, drunk.

Suddenly a VOICE booms out from behind him.

VOICE
Dominick!

Michael does nothing.

VOICE (cont.)
DOMINICK!

Michael turns to see who's making the racket.

It's ALEX, headed straight for him with a young woman on his arm -- CLAIRE, the girl from the bar the night before, looking chic in black thrift store clothes.

Michael looks a bit panicky, then Alex reaches him.

He speaks with a bizarre accent.

ALEX
Ciao, Dominick! Come stai?

MICHAEL
Uh, fine.

Alex leans into the bar to get a drink, passing close to Michael's ear.

ALEX
(a whisper)
I'm Franco.

MICHAEL
Where the hell have you been, Franco? I've been standing here for --

ALEX
(with a heavy accent)
Dominick, look who is here! Claire is the art student I was before telling about to you. I think you met last night, no?

CLAIRE
Sure.

MICHAEL
You remember?

CLAIRE
Of course. I'm very sorry.

She is looking at Michael strangely, probingly -- as if she had a great deal of compassion for him. It makes him uncomfortable.

MICHAEL
Oh. Well, okay.

CLAIRE
So what do you think of the pieces?

MICHAEL
Well, I -- scuzzi.

He turns abruptly to the bar, speaking to Alex in a whisper.

MICHAEL (cont.)
Am I foreign too?

Alex laughs -- heartily, falsely.

ALEX
No, Dominick! No, of course not!
(to Claire)
He won't give his opinions so easily. He thinks the pieces are -- how do you say in English -- derivative. And cynical; without hope.

CLAIRE
Wow. That's really interesting, Dominick.

MICHAEL
(warming to this)
Well, if one hasn't hope -- then what?

CLAIRE
God. It's so cool that somebody in your -- I'm sorry, I don't mean to get personal -- but you are so totally positive. It's inspiring.

MICHAEL
(confused)
Thank you, I -- don't know what to say.
(with a look at Alex)
Really.

CLAIRE
Look, can we get the hell out of here? This shit's making me freak out.

ALEX
Bueno!

They head toward the open area outside. Alex leans in close to Michael.

ALEX
Try to look grief-stricken. She thinks your wife just died.

CUT TO:

INT MICHAEL'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Keys RUSTLE in the lock and the door swings open, revealing MICHAEL, ALEX and CLAIRE. They are all drunk, loud and animated.

Michael steps in and flicks on the lights.

Alex looks around the place and his eyes widen.

ALEX
Nice.

Michael goes into the kitchen.

MICHAEL
(gaily)
Who wants espresso?

CLAIRE
Don't you have anything to drink?

She follows him into the kitchen. Alex continues to size up Michael's apartment and furnishings. He speaks softly, to himself.

ALEX
Very, very nice.

He sees the two pictures hanging by the door, one of them listing off to one side as usual. He looks at them carefully. Instead of straightening the crooked one, he reaches out and makes crooked the straight one. Now they're both crooked, but crooked together.

Alex checks out the expensive stereo equipment, then examines carefully the video camera on the tripod. He looks through the viewfinder. The camera is pointed toward the sofa.

He pops open the door on the side of the camera -- it holds a tiny recording tape, about the size of an audio cassette. He clicks it shut.

He runs his fingers over the switches on the camera.

From the kitchen comes GIGGLING, then a SHRIEK of some kind as food is thrown. They're having a good time.

There is a KNOCK at the door. Alex turns. The knock isn't loud enough to be heard by Michael and Claire in the kitchen.

Alex opens the door and sticks his head out.

ALEX
Yeah?

It's PISMO, looking like he just ate a jar of instant coffee.

PISMO
(instantly suspicious)
Who are you?

ALEX
Friend of Michael's. Who are you?

PISMO
Is Michael here?

ALEX
He's busy.

PISMO
Tell him it's his brother.

ALEX
But I said he's busy.

PISMO
(urgently)
It's important.
(pause, then confidentially)
Tell him I've got the Fear. He'll understand.

ALEX
Sorry. Maybe in the morning.

He starts to shut the door. Pismo stops it.

PISMO
Who are you? What are you doing here?

Alex turns around as a particularly loud burst of GIGGLING comes from the kitchen. He turns back to Pismo.

ALEX
Helping Michael.

He closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT MICHAEL'S APARTMENT LATER

MUSIC is on. It's later, quieter. MICHAEL sits on the sofa, looking a little tired. CLAIRE is in a chair.

INT BATHROOM

ALEX comes down the hallway into the bathroom. Claire appears behind him and pushes him through the door, closing it behind her.

She kisses him, bending him over the sink. He responds and talks to her softly while they kiss.

ALEX
Do you like Dominick?

CLAIRE
(intent on kissing him)
Um-hmm. He's sweet.

ALEX
He's very sad, you know.

CLAIRE
I know. It's terrible.

They kiss some more, she growing passionate. Alex stops her.

ALEX
Can I ask you something?

CLAIRE
I don't have it.

ALEX
Have what?

CLAIRE
Your accent. You must be looking for it by now.

She titters. Alex grins engagingly. She starts to kiss him again.

CLAIRE (cont.)
I'm not stupid.

ALEX
He told you.

CLAIRE
Yeah, but I knew. He felt terrible for telling on you. He said it was probably because he's still so upset about Jasmine's death.

She continues to kiss him. Alex suppresses a small laugh.

ALEX
Look, I -- no, forget it.

CLAIRE
What?

ALEX
No, it's too much to ask.

CLAIRE
Come on, what?

ALEX
I -- this is very difficult.

CLAIRE
(thoroughly intrigued)
What is it?

Alex opens the bathroom door a crack and looks through into the living room, where Michael sits. He closes the door.

ALEX
It's Dominick.

CLAIRE
(blushing)
I know what you're going to ask.

ALEX
Forget it, I can't. I like you too much.

He starts to kiss her. Now she pushes him off.

CLAIRE
No. No, it's okay. I want to.

ALEX
(hopeful, sweet)
You do?

CLAIRE
Yes. I think it would be important to him.

She fixes her hair in the mirror.

CLAIRE (cont.)
Ask him to go into the bedroom.

ALEX
No. The couch.

She looks at him, a little confused.

ALEX (cont.)
I'll go in the bedroom. I might as well get some sleep.

She touches his cheek.

CLAIRE
You are very special.

INT LIVING ROOM

Claire comes back in and sits down next to Michael. She looks at him purposefully.

Michael looks around.

MICHAEL
Where's Alex?

CLAIRE
He was tired. He went to sleep.

MICHAEL
Oh.

CLAIRE
(softly, loaded with meaning)
Shall we have another drink?

MICHAEL
Sure.
(thinks)
You sure he's asleep?

She gets up and walks to the kitchen, smiling over her shoulder at him as she goes.

CLAIRE
Positive.

She calls out from the kitchen.

CLAIRE (cont.)
You know, I had you pegged all wrong at the club the other night.

MICHAEL
How's that?

CLAIRE
I thought you'd be uptight -- the kind of guy who winds the alarm clock before sex so he doesn't oversleep.

She pokes her head out, giggling mischievously. Michael is supremely embarrassed.

MICHAEL
Oh. You think I'm like that?

CLAIRE
We'll see.

She ducks back in the kitchen. Michael swallows.

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM LATER

It's mostly dark, but the sleeping form of MICHAEL on the couch is illuminated by the flickering light of the television. SOUNDS come from the TV.

Sex sounds. MOANING, clothes RUSTLING.

Michael stirs a little, disturbed by the noise. Slowly he wakes up and squints at the TV, trying to figure out what it is.

All at once he recognizes the images -- it's a grainy home video of he and Claire making love on the couch.

Michael sits bolt upright and flicks on a light. ALEX is sitting in a chair watching the television, vastly amused.

ALEX
Did you know you make a really funny face when you come?

Michael is horrified.

MICHAEL
What the -- ?

He dives across at Alex and snatches the remote control from his hands. He turns off the TV.

MICHAEL (cont.)
Where's Claire?

ALEX
She had to jam. Come on, man, turn it back on. You were just getting good that time.

Michael goes to the VCR and snatches the tape out. It's a bulky VHS size, which he shoves into the pocket of his robe.

MICHAEL
How did you get that?

ALEX
Simple. I turned your camera on.

MICHAEL
You what?!

ALEX
Relax, you've got the tape. I gave her to you, the least I deserve is to see the proceedings.

MICHAEL
You gave her to me? What are you talking about?

ALEX
I asked her to sleep with you.

MICHAEL
Bullshit.

Alex goes into the kitchen.

ALEX
Sure. I figured you could use it.

He comes back with two beers, gives one to Michael.

MICHAEL
You're lying.

ALEX
Nope. Wasn't hard. She felt awfully sorry for you. Incidentally, I don't mind you giving away my "Franco" thing. Good plan to keep the dead wife, though. That works great -- keeping up one lie while confessing another. Confuses the hell out of 'em.

MICHAEL
(still put off, but it's praise from Caesar)
Thanks.

ALEX
I think she would have gone for you anyway. She said we looked like brothers.

MICHAEL
She did?

ALEX
Sure.

Michael sits on the sofa, Alex in a chair.

MICHAEL
You're a very weird person.

ALEX
I suppose.

Pause.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

ALEX
Sure.

MICHAEL
I actually figured you'd done something. That never happens to me.

ALEX
It'll get easier. You'll see.

MICHAEL
So where are you from, anyway?

ALEX
I was wondering.

MICHAEL
What?

ALEX
When the questions would start. Nobody ever lets you just be who you are that day. They always want to know who you used to be.

MICHAEL
If it's --

ALEX
No, no it's all right. I kind of want to tell you.

Michael sips, waits.

ALEX (cont.)
East. North Carolina.

MICHAEL
Why'd you leave?

ALEX
(simply)
A friend of mine killed a guy and set me up for it.

MICHAEL
Oh, stop it.

ALEX
I'm serious.

His tone and manner indicate he is. Michael blanches.

ALEX (cont.)
Shouldn't ask questions if you don't like answers.

MICHAEL
No. I do. I want to hear.

ALEX
I went to college, you know.

MICHAEL
I figured.

ALEX
Duke. I was a history major. Made it to the last year, before Tony -- that was my friend -- freaked out on me. He was a philosophy major. Cold. In love with his intellect. He was dangerous, though. You know that age where you're old enough to figure out you know some things but too young to know you really don't? That's when you're most dangerous.

Michael listens raptly.

ALEX (cont.)
Tony had an idea about the perfect murder. Someone you didn't know, someone chosen completely at random -- someone there was no reason for you to kill.

MICHAEL
Leopold and Loeb.

ALEX
Exactly. It is the perfect murder. So he picked a name out of the phone book and did it. Trouble is, Tony didn't have the guts to stick by his theory. He wanted insurance.

MICHAEL
So?

ALEX
So he brought me to the guy's house after he was done. Told me it was a friend of his who'd asked us over for drinks. Nobody was there when we came in. We walked around a little, had a drink. Then we left.
(pause)
I didn't notice he hadn't touched anything. Only I had. When things heated up, Tony sent my fingerprints to the cops and they matched 'em up with the ones from the house. And that was that. I left the state.

Alex takes a deep drink of beer.

MICHAEL
You didn't tell them about him?

ALEX
Who'd believe me? Anyway, one thing I knew for sure about Tony was he'd take me down with him. I guarantee it. I understand him.

Michael sits back, frankly amazed by the story.

MICHAEL
My God.

Pause.

ALEX
I've never told anyone else that story.

MICHAEL
I feel like I've known you for a very long time.

Alex leans forward, suddenly animated.

ALEX
Tell me something you want, Mick.

MICHAEL
Mick?
(he says it to himself)
Mick.

He likes the sound of it. He likes Mick.

ALEX
Tell me something you want and tell me something you're afraid of. I'll get you the first and protect you from the second, I swear to God I will.

MICK
I think you could. I think you're capable of it. I really do.

ALEX
(convincingly)
Come on. Tell me. Tell me what you're afraid of, Mick.

Mick thinks.

MICK
Marriage. I'm fucking terrified of marriage.

ALEX
Done.

MICK
(laughing)
Just like that?

ALEX
Now tell me what you want. More than anything else, what do you want?

Mick thinks.

MICK
To be head of my department. To get the promotion. I want it, I want it, I swear to God I want that job.

Alex holds out his beer for a toast.

ALEX
Then drink. To Mick Dooley, unmarried department head.

Mick starts to raise his beer, then hesitates, remembering the last toast Alex made.

ALEX (cont.)
It's okay this time.

Mick CLINKS his beer. They drink.

ALEX (cont.)
Now tell me all about your job.

CUT TO:

INT MICK'S OFFICE EVENING

MICK sits at the computer, banging away at the keyboard, staring into the screen raptly. Outside the office, lights flick out. It's the end of the day.

LESLIE pokes her head in the door.

LESLIE
See you Monday, Michael.

He grunts.

She waits for some kind of answer.

LESLIE (cont.)
Well -- good night.

MICK
Okay.

She watches him. Not satisfied, she walks around to the front of the computer to get his attention.

LESLIE
Listen, Michael, some friends and I are driving down to Mexico this weekend to picket outside bullfights. Do you want to come?

MICHAEL
Picket bullfights?

LESLIE
It's something I feel strongly about.

MICHAEL
I see. Actually, I'm afraid I'll be in the office most of the weekend.

LESLIE
Oh.
(pause)
Is everything okay? You've been awfully distant the last two weeks.

MICHAEL
I've been working the last two weeks.

LESLIE
You ought to relax. My ex-husband, he was a lot like you. His blood pressure got so high they --

MICHAEL
Excuse me, Leslie, I just have a ton to do. Would you mind?

LESLIE
Oh, no. Sorry. Good night, Michael.

She turns to go. He calls after her.

MICHAEL
Leslie? I'd kind of prefer if you'd call me Mick from now on.

She breaks out into laughter, then stops when he doesn't laugh along.

LESLIE
(embarrassed)
Oh. Sure. Okay. Mick? Yeah, that's fine. Good night -- Mick.

He turns away. She furrows her brow, trying to understand this man. She leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT STREET EVENING

MICK and ALEX are jogging side by side. Both are in good shape and move at a brisk pace.

MICK
Can't. I have to go to Ruth's for dinner tonight.

ALEX
Ruth's? Fuck that. I'm talking about maybe the biggest party at Topanga all summer.

MICK
I can't get out of it. It's her parents' anniversary. Very formal.

ALEX
Blow it off.

MICK
Really, I can't.

They are approaching the liquor store. Mick notices the PUNKS that hassled him earlier are in front, drunk, leaning on their scooters. Wishing to avoid them, he stops and jogs in place at an intersection.

MICK (cont.)
I have to head back. We'll do something tomorrow.

ALEX
Yeah, sure.

Mick jogs off in another direction.

Alex watches him go.

CUT TO:

EXT RUTH'S PARENTS' HOUSE NIGHT

MICK rings at the front door. He is dressed in a tuxedo.

A SERVANT answers the door and shows him in.

INT HOUSE

Delicate STRINGED INSTRUMENTS play in the other room. ELEGANT GUESTS in tuxedos and gowns engage in sparkling conversation.

RUTH sees Mick and greets him grandly, snaking an arm around him.

RUTH
Michael!
(quietly, for him only)
A little late, but we won't worry about that.

MICK
Ruth, please.

RUTH
All part of the new you, right? Never mind. Francois is already here.

MICK
Francois?

RUTH
You didn't tell me you'd invited a friend, you bad boy.

Mick is thoroughly confused.

INT PARTY ROOM

Ruth leads Mick into the other room and approaches a small group of GUESTS who are gathered around a television set, chatting animatedly in French.

RUTH (cont.)
Francois?

One of the men turns.

It's ALEX.

He looks splendid, dressed in a gorgeous tuxedo. He breaks into a spectacular grin.

ALEX
(with a perfect accent)
Bon soir, Michel!

Mick is dumbfounded. Ruth nudges him.

MICK
(regaining)
Uh -- Francois! What a -- I'm surprised you made it.

ALEX
Yes, I was fortunate.

Alex turns to the small group, which includes Ruth's father HENRY FIELDING, an imposing, impressive man. Alex excuses himself in flawless French.

RUTH
(to Michael)
You didn't tell us you were working with someone from the Paris office. He's charming!

MICK
(searching)
Yes. Yes.
(still searching)
Yes.

ALEX
Mais oui, I've been here for several weeks.
(to Mick)
I was just about to show them the promotional campaign we've put together for the new French office.

MICK
Oh?

ALEX
Yes.

He turns and flicks on the VCR and tunes the television. He pushes "play."

ALEX (cont.)
(to the others)
Will you excuse us? Michel and I, we have of course seen these promotions a thousand times.

The small group nods its assent and fixes its attention on the screen.

RUTH
(in Mick's ear)
I'm so proud of you.

She turns to the television as well.

Alex takes Mick by the arm and leads him around the corner into the front hallway.

INT HALLWAY

Alex and Mick stop.

MICK
What the hell are you doing?

ALEX
Don't be mad.

MICK
I'm not mad, I'm astounded. Where'd you get the tux? Where'd you learn to speak --

ALEX
Shut up. You'll be mad in a second. But before anything happens, I want you to know I did it for you.

MICK
Did what for me? What --

From the other room, all conversation abruptly stops. The Stringed Instruments strike a sour note and stop playing altogether.

MICK (cont.)
That tape -- oh God, you didn't --

ALEX
It's for the best. Really.

From the other room comes a female SHRIEK, followed by the sound of a body hitting the floor.

Various VOICES rise up in anger and shock.

VOICE (o.s.)
Turn it off! Turn it off! For God's sake, someone turn it off!

Mick tears away from Alex and goes to the door to the party room just in time to see a fleeting image of himself making love to Claire on the couch in his apartment.

Ruth lies on the floor in a heap, tended to by several LADIES.

Henry Fielding snaps off the television and sees Mick in the door.

FIELDING
(the voice of a murderer)
I wanna talk to you.

CUT TO:

EXT HOUSE

Mick and Alex come running out the front door of the house and pile into Mick's car.

It patches out of the driveway as outraged GUESTS and SERVANTS appear in the doorway.

INT/EXT CAR NIGHT

Mick drives, eyes glued manically to the road. Alex looks at him.

ALEX
Are you mad at me?

MICK
Don't speak to me! Do <u>not</u> speak to me!

Silence for a moment.

ALEX
You can slow down now.

MICK
Fuck off.

CUT TO:

EXT BEACH NIGHT

MICK's car skids to a stop in the beach parking lot and he gets out and stalks down to the beach. ALEX follows. They are still wearing their tuxedos.

ALEX
(calling out)
You asked me to, man! Don't you remember?

Mick ignores him.

AT THE BEACH,

a large party is in progress. A bonfire burns in the middle, there are garbage cans filled with beer and ice.

Mick grabs a can of beer and rips the top off. He upends the can, drinking at least half of it in one swallow. Alex takes a beer as well and follows him, staying a safe distance away.

Mick cruises around, looking for someone he knows. He sees CLAIRE and goes over to her. He's wired.

She's tipsy and greets him enthusiastically.

CLAIRE
Dominick!

MICK
That's not my name.

CLAIRE
Huh?

MICK
(with a look over at Alex)
He made that name up. My real name is -- is --

CLAIRE
Yeah?

Mick throws another look at Alex, who watches them both through the fire.

MICK
Kirk. My name is Kirk. I was hoping I'd see you so I could tell you.

CLAIRE
Why did he lie?

MICK
It's a long story.

Mick leans in close to her, speaking earnestly. It's a different Mick we're seeing, an almost aggressively gregarious one. From time to time he steals a glance over at Alex to make sure he's watching.

Mick suggests something and Claire nods. Making sure Alex is watching, Mick leads her off to the side and they sit down.

They talk animatedly. She offers him a joint. He smokes some.

They laugh.

A short distance away, Alex watches them through the fire, not listening to some people that are talking to him.

Mick and Claire move closer. She's drunk, he's getting there.

Mick leans in and kisses her. She kisses back.

Alex watches, through the fire.

The kiss grows passionate, almost fierce. Mick runs his hand into her hair and pulls her head back, kissing her hard on the neck. She's turned on and runs both her hands over his chest. He leans her back and kisses between her breasts.

Mick turns his head, makes sure Alex is watching.

Alex is.

Claire slides one hand down to Mick's crotch -- surreptitiously, so no one sees.

Alex sees.

Mick looks up, making eye contact with Alex as he kisses Claire.

Alex drops his beer and walks over to them. He stands above them.

Claire looks up, startled.

MICK
(to Alex)
Yeah?

Alex reaches into his jacket and pulls out a capsule, the same kind as he had the other night. He breaks it open, inhales deeply, and offers it to Mick.

It's almost a challenge.

Mick takes it silently, defiantly. He takes a deep, hard snort, then shakes his head at the powerful effect.

ALEX
Forgive me?

Mick stands. He looks at Alex, eye to eye.

MICK
Forgive you? Hell with that.

He grabs Alex roughly.

MICK (cont.)
I owe you.

He hugs him -- not tenderly, but hard. Like men do.

Alex laughs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT BEACH PARTY LATER

MICK and CLAIRE are huddled off to one side of the now smaller party. Mick is obviously quite out of himself -- drunk, stoned, wired -- he's incredibly energetic, up.

CLAIRE
All I'm saying is I think you should be careful, that's all.

MICK
You don't know what you're talking about, okay? You don't.

CLAIRE
When he slept at my apartment, I heard him --

She abruptly stops talking, staring at something over Mick's shoulder. Mick turns.

Alex is there, grinning.

ALEX
(to Mick)
Let's jam.

MICK
Sure.

Mick turns and gives a look to Claire.

MICK (cont.)
You gotta relax. I know what I'm doing.

Alex shoots a look at both of them, then leads Mick away.

As soon as they're out of earshot --

ALEX
What was she saying?

MICK
Nothin'. Bullshit.

ALEX
I don't know about that chick, man. She woke up screaming the other night. Scared the hell out of me. I think she shoots up.

MICK
Figures.

ALEX
You tired?

MICK
Not a chance.

Alex has cracked another amyl and holds it out. Mick takes a hit.

ALEX
Is it two yet?

MICK
No.

ALEX
Let's hit a liquor store.

MICK
Sure.

CUT TO:

INT LIQUOR STORE NIGHT

ALEX and MICK walk in, still in their tuxedos. The place is empty except for the YOUNG CLERK at the front. Alex and Mick drift to the back.

Mick looks at the Hostess display, Alex walks up and down the aisles aimlessly.

Mick's eye is caught by a display of Halloween masks. He laughs and goes to them, putting on a plastic Ronald Reagan face.

MICK
(from behind the mask)
Hey, check this out!

Alex walks over. He sees the masks and starts laughing.

MICK (cont.)
Great, huh?

Alex continues to laugh, too hard.

ALEX
Oh, that's perfect. Too perfect.
Now we have to.

Mick starts to take the mask off.

MICK
What?

ALEX
No, keep it on.
(stern)
Keep it on.

He turns and walks to the front of the store. Mick, still wearing the mask, follows him.

Alex's pace quickens as he nears the counter. In one motion, he produces a handgun from his cummerbund and moves in, pressing it against the forehead of the Clerk.

ALEX (cont.)
Close your eyes.
(a shout)
CLOSE 'EM!

The Clerk does.

MICK
Oh, Jesus, oh God, what the
hell -- ?

ALEX
Shut up.
(to the Clerk)
Come out here. Come on.

He leads the Clerk out from behind the counter, gun still at his forehead.

ALEX (cont.)
Empty the register, Dominick.

Mick doesn't move.

ALEX (cont.)
Empty it!

MICK
How?!

ALEX
Press "no sale."

Mick leans over the counter, panicky, willing to do anything that will get them out of there as fast as possible. He searches the keyboard on the modern cash register.

ALEX (cont.)
Lower left.

Mick presses a button and the register springs open. He grabs a bag and fills it with cash.

Alex, meanwhile, has the Clerk out from behind the counter.

ALEX (cont.)
Lie down.

CLERK
Don't shoot, man.

ALEX
It's not your money, right? So don't die for it, right? RIGHT?!

The Clerk lies face down on the floor.

MICK
Let's <u>go</u>!

Alex turns and bolts out of the store. Mick follows.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT CAR NIGHT

ALEX drives, MICK rides. The radio blasts.

Alex lets out a war WHOOP. Mick echoes it with one of his own.

ALEX
You were great, man! You were great!

MICK
I was? I stayed cool, didn't I? Didn't I?

ALEX
Fuckin' A you did!

Mick cracks an amyl under his nose and takes a deep hit. He's completely gone now, over the edge.

MICK
Stop the car!

ALEX
Huh?

MICK
Just stop! Stop!

Alex brakes, hard. Mick piles out and falls to his knees in some bushes.

He vomits.

Alex comes and leans over him.

ALEX
You alright?

MICK
I'm fine. I'm fine. It's just the way I react to things.

He looks up, wild eyed, still on his knees.

MICK (cont.)
Let's do another one. A 7-11. I always wanted to do a 7-11.

Alex looks at him, surprised. Mick's jaw is set, he's grinding his teeth like mad.

ALEX
No -- a liquor store.

MICK
Why?

ALEX
No cameras.

MICK
I know a place.

CUT TO:

EXT LIQUOR STORE NIGHT

This is the liquor store that Mick runs past, the one the PUNKS hang out in front of. Their scooters are lined up in front.

Mick's car SQUEALS to a halt in front and ALEX and MICK pile out, both wearing Ronald Reagan masks. Mick grabs Alex by the arm.

MICK
Who am I this time?

ALEX
Tony. You're Tony.

MICK
Tony.

They go into the store.

We see the entire action from outside, through the glass windows.

The PUNKS are near the counter, playing a video game. Alex takes care of the CLERK at the register while Mick waves the gun around, forcing the Punks to lie on the floor.

The action is frenetic -- Mick is moving around manically, waving the weapon and SHOUTING at the Punks. They look up at him, in disbelief at something he just said.

He SHOUTS again and moves in closer. They obey, hurriedly taking off their shoes and pants and putting them in a pile.

Alex has finished at the counter and calls to Mick. Mick scoops up the pile of clothing, and, leaving the Punks naked from the waist down, he and Alex scurry out of the store.

In front, Mick takes one vicious kick at the first scooter and sends them all tumbling down, one after the other. He and Alex jump back into the car.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT CAR NIGHT

If possible, the MUSIC is louder, their moods higher. MICK is shaking his head, trying to get some feeling back in it as he laughs uncontrollably.

MICK
Never fuck with me -- they'll never fuck with me -- not now, no sir -- God, I feel weird, man. It's like I could either run a marathon or pass out, right now.

His head lolls back against the seat.

Alex slaps him lightly.

ALEX
Uh-uh. Don't go. Don't fade on me now.

MICK
Just let me sleep a second.

ALEX
Have an amyl.

Mick twists in his seat, trying to read the street signs as they whiz past.

MICK (cont.)
Hey! You know where we are? Fenwick lives around here! Fenwick!

CUT TO:

INT MICK'S APARTMENT MORNING

The place is a mess, empty bottles and junk food wrappers everywhere. MICK is asleep on the couch, half sitting, half lying down, still dressed in his tuxedo shirt and pants.

A window shade flies up with a SNAP and light floods the room.

Mick wakes up and squints. ALEX is at the window.

ALEX
(pleasantly)
You know what would be nice?

Mick takes stock of his surroundings -- he's more than a little fuzzy.

MICK
What's that?

ALEX
If you surprised me and didn't pretend like you don't remember.

Mick looks at him. He sits up a little straighter. He leans forward, holding his head in his hands. On the coffee table, he sees two piles of crumpled fives, tens and twenties.

MICK
Don't worry. I remember. Oh, God. I feel --

Alex, whistling, has gone into the kitchen.

ALEX
Coffee will be ready in a minute. And I went out and got some donuts. You like jelly filled, right?

MICK
You went out already?

ALEX
Sure. Had some things to take care of.

He resumes his whistling. Mick rolls his eyes in silent wonder at Alex's chipperness.

ALEX (cont.)
You were really something last night, Mick. A different man.

MICK
I said I remember, you don't have to go on about it.

He sits back, moaning.

MICK (cont.)
What have I done to my life? I knocked over a 7-11.

ALEX
Liquor store.

MICK
Liquor store.

Alex comes back in and puts a cup of coffee in front of Mick, who takes it eagerly.

ALEX
And?

MICK
What do you mean "and"? I think that's enough.

ALEX
And?

MICK
Again he says it. Okay, okay -- two liquor stores.

ALEX
And?

MICK
Leave me alone!

He gets up and goes into the kitchen with his coffee.

INT KITCHEN

Mick sits at the table. Alex follows him in and sits across from him. He stares at him.

MICK
What do you want?

ALEX
I knew you'd pretend you didn't remember. You're just the type.

MICK
I admitted it. I "pulled a job", okay? Two jobs.

ALEX
What about Fenwick?

MICK
What <u>about</u> Fenwick?

ALEX
Do I have to tell you, or will you admit it?

Mick gets up and goes to the refrigerator, apparently searching for something but really just trying to get away from Alex.

MICK
Admit what? There's nothing -- nothing to admit.

ALEX
Okay.
(with a sigh)
We went to Fenwick's apartment.

MICK
We did not.

ALEX
And you went in first -- you took the stairs two at a time.

MICK
That's not true! We came home!

ALEX
And we found him in bed and I pulled him up.

MICK
Shut up!

ALEX
And you beat him, Mick, you beat the shit out of him --

MICK
Stop!

ALEX
-- with a belt, then with your fists. You beat him and told him to drop out of the race for department head. You beat him until I stopped you and if I hadn't stopped you --

MICK
Just shut your fucking mouth!

ALEX
-- I think you would have killed him. You were crazed, Mick, you --

MICK
We came home! I remember, we came right home and we --

Alex grabs Mick's hand and holds it up in front of his face, forcing him to look at it. There's dried blood on the knuckles.

ALEX
Look at it! You know what you did!

Mick is crying now, sobbing in fear.

MICK
It's a lie! I didn't! What are you telling me?

ALEX
Look at it!

Mick slumps to the floor, his body wracked by sobs.

MICK
(crying)
I don't remember. I swear, I -- I don't remember. Why did you give me all that stuff?

Alex sits down next to him, suddenly tender and compassionate.

ALEX
Sure, Mick. It was the amyls. Not you. I shouldn't have let you do so much. You couldn't help it. You're not like that.

Mick leans on his shoulder.

MICK
I'm not -- it was the amyls, wasn't it?

Alex slaps him across the face.

ALEX
You disgusting little peuk. Admit what you did. Admit that you did it and it was wrong but it got you what you want. Admit you were man enough to see what you had to do and do it.

Mick gets up, furious and frightened.

MICK
Fuck you! It was the amyls. You said so. You said it!

He goes back into the living room. Alex follows.

INT LIVING ROOM

Mick paces.

MICK
Oh, Jesus. I'm dead. I'm dead. I'll lose my job. Hell with my job, I'll go to jail. This is it. This is really it.

ALEX
Don't be an idiot. He's not calling the cops. He won't call them because he knows you're a lunatic. He knows that even if he sent you to jail you'd get out and come for him and kill him this time -- and if you didn't I would.

MICK
Don't be stupid! How could he possibly know that?

ALEX
Because I told him this morning. When I got the donuts.

Mick just stares at him. This situation has just completely defined itself; has just settled over him with the weight and clarity of a Big Mistake.

ALEX (cont.)
It's what you wanted. We got you what you wanted.

Mick sits on the couch -- stunned, thinking.

ALEX (cont.)
Mick?

Mick waves him off. He gets up and goes across the room.

ALEX (cont.)
Mi -- ick?

MICK
Get out.

ALEX
What?

MICK
(softly first, then with growing resolve)
Get out. Get out of my apartment, get out of my life.

ALEX
You're upset.

MICK
Yes, I'm upset. I'm -- I'm fucking terrified. I'm furious. I'm furious with you, I'm -- I can't believe myself -- I --

ALEX
Maybe you should get some more sleep.

MICK
Just get out of here, isn't that clear enough for you? Get out! I don't want to see you anymore. I don't want to -- live like a -- a -- GET OUT!! You're a fucking criminal, I'm a fucking criminal and I just don't want you to come around here anymore! Do you understand?

Alex stares. Wordlessly, he grabs his jacket and stalks out of the apartment.

Mick is left with himself.

CUT TO:

INT AN OFFICE DAY

MICK, dressed in a business suit, is seated in a big leather chair in front of an impressive mahogany desk. CHARLES LUCE is behind the desk.

Mick stares.

LUCE
This is not the reaction I expected.

MICK
I guess it just hasn't sunk in.

LUCE
Of course. Well, when it does you'll be on top of the world, take my word for it.

He gets up to show Mick to the door.

LUCE (cont.)
I guess you'll be taking this office, hmm? You'll like it. Great view. One of the perks of being the department head.

He smiles. Mick smiles back, a sickly grin.

MICK
Did Mr. Fenwick say -- say why he was withdrawing himself?

LUCE
No, and I didn't ask. A decision like that is a man's private business.

MICK
I see.

LUCE
I hope you won't mind making a little speech at the stockholders' meeting on Friday.

MICK
No -- no, not at all.

LUCE
Listen, Dooley --
(arm around Mick's shoulder)
--I know you'll want to celebrate tonight, but go easy, will you? I need you in top form the next few weeks.

MICK
Of course.

Mick walks out of the office in a daze.

INT CORRIDOR

Mick walks down a corridor, ignoring the wishes of congratulations that a few people offer as they walk past him.

He turns a corner and finds himself outside Fenwick's office.

BRITT, Fenwick's secretary, looks up. If looks could kill...

BRITT
Hello.

MICK
Is he --

BRITT
He's home sick.
(like ice)
Congratulations.

MICK
Thanks. Is he -- okay?

BRITT
Yes. Actually, he's not sick, he got mugged this weekend. But he asked me not to spread it around.

MICK
I won't say a word.

He turns to go.

INT MICK'S OFFICE

Mick comes back to his office. LESLIE is standing on a chair, hanging a huge crepe paper and cardboard sign over Michael's door that says "Congratulations, Mr. Department Head."

She turns and sees him.

LESLIE
Oh, rats. You weren't supposed to get back yet.

MICK
Take that down.

LESLIE
What?

MICK
This is a data processing office, not a twelve year old's birthday party.

She looks at him, hurt. She says nothing. She climbs off the ladder. He goes to the door to his office.

LESLIE (cont.)
Mr. Riegert's waiting for you inside.

MICK
Who?

LESLIE
Mr. Riegert, the gentleman from our new polling service. Did I forget to write him down? I didn't even know we had a new polling service.

Mick goes to the door to his office trepidatiously and opens it.

INT OFFICE

There is a man in the chair across from the desk, his back to the door.

Mick comes in and closes the door. The Man turns.

It's ALEX, dressed in a conservative business suit. He grins broadly.

ALEX
Hey! Congratulations!

Mick pauses, then closes the door and goes to his desk. He sits down without a word.

ALEX (cont.)
Boy, you were sure in rough shape the other day.

MICK
(quietly)
Go away.

ALEX
(with a sigh)
Still got a bug up your ass, huh?

MICK
Please go away.

ALEX
Why don't we have lunch? We'll celebrate.

MICK
(disbelieving)
No, we will not celebrate. I told you how I felt on --

ALEX
Hey -- you're hurting my feelings. I don't get to share in your success even one tiny bit? You think you would have got this promotion if it wasn't for me? Huh? But now you used me for what you needed and I'm history, just like that. Is that it?

Mick stares, unsure how to reason with this person.

MICK
You made me into something I'm not. I don't want to be that person.

ALEX
Oh, grow up. You guys make me sick, you know that? You wanted to live on the edge, right? Well, you did. What did you think you could do, just take what you wanted? Be a little more popular, wear loud shirts, be a hit at parties?

Mick turns his chair so he is facing the other way, not listening.

Alex stands up.

ALEX (cont.)
I didn't make you into anything you weren't already. You want to walk on the wild side, you're gonna see things you don't like, pal. Just deal with it.

Mick still ignores him. Alex goes to the door.

ALEX (cont.)
I just want to know one thing. At the beach the other night, when you were kissing Claire. You did that to hurt me, didn't you?

MICK
Yes.

ALEX
What?

MICK
Yes. I did it to hurt you.

ALEX
Okay. Good. I just wanted to be clear on that. I wanted to real clear on that.

He leaves, slamming the door behind him.

Mick looks out the window.

CUT TO:

EXT OFFICE BUILDING EVENING

Dusk. One by one, lights flick off here and there in the windows of the office building as people close up for the day.

INT MICK'S OFFICE EVENING

MICK is still at his desk, but his mind is elsewhere. He stares out his window blankly. The building is mostly empty. LESLIE sticks her head in the door.

LESLIE
See you. Don't forget to call your brother. He said he stopped by your apartment today and he needs to talk to you.

MICK
(absently)
Right. Gotcha.

She sighs heavily and walks away. After she is gone, Mick picks up his coat and briefcase and heads for the door.

EXT OFFICE BUILDING EVENING

MICK leaves the building. His gait is slow, burdened.

INT MOVIE THEATRE

Mick sits alone, watching a movie but not seeing it.

EXT MICK'S APARTMENT BUILDING NIGHT

Mick returns. An elderly WOMAN passes him and she stops at a door marked "MANAGER."

WOMAN
Hello, Mr. Boll.

Mick nods.

WOMAN (cont.)
Good luck with your redecorating. I'd love to see how everything looks when you're finished.

Mick stops and looks at her, confused, but she has gone into her apartment.

He turns and walks quickly to his apartment and opens the door.

INT MICK'S APARTMENT

Mick enters and flicks on a light.

It's empty.

The furniture is gone, the pictures are gone, even the carpeting has been pulled up and left in a roll in the corner.

Mick's face is awash with disbelief. He loses his grip on his briefcase, which drops to the floor with a THUD. He walks numbly into the kitchen -- same story.

He goes down the short hallway to his bedroom and tries the door, but finds it locked. He shakes it a little, puzzled. The knob turns, but the door doesn't open.

Looking around the edges of the door, he finds it has been nailed shut all around the edges by a half dozen spike nails.

MICK
Oh my God.

He staggers into the living room. In one corner of the room, he notices his VCR and television set are stacked neatly, the video camera beside them.

There is a square yellow Post-It stuck to the front of the VCR with one word neatly lettered on it:

"Surprise!"

Mick turns on the television and presses the "play" button on the VCR.

ALEX's FACE comes to life on the screen, in close-up. He grins his crook-toothed grin. His face is sweaty.

ALEX
I am bushed. Took me three hours to get all your shit out of here. But it was necessary. To show you I could. To put things back in perspective for you.

Mick sits, open mouthed, staring at the lunatic on the screen.

ALEX (cont.)
I cried all morning. You made me do that. Your ingratitude, your rudeness, your short temper -- all those things I could deal with. But when you told me you deliberately tried to hurt me -- well -- I'm only human, Mick.

From on the tape, there is a KNOCK at the door to the apartment.

Alex turns.

ALEX (cont.)
Stay tuned. I think you'll appreciate this.

ON TAPE,

Alex goes behind the camera and turns it so it faces the door. He goes to the door and opens it.

CLAIRE stands in the doorway.

ALEX (cont.)
Come on in. He's in the bedroom. He wants to talk to you.

CLAIRE
Is he alright? Where's all his stuff? Is he moving or something?

ALEX (cont.)
Sort of. Come on.

She comes in and goes back to the bedroom. As Alex passes the camera, he winks and turns it so it is facing the open bedroom door.

IN THE APARTMENT,

Mick snaps his head and looks at the bedroom door, now nailed shut.

He gets up and runs to the door and tries it. The nails hold. He kicks at it, which splinters it some but not enough to get in.

ON THE TAPE,

Alex follows Claire through the open door into the bedroom. Their VOICES can be heard, but the camera can't quite see all the way into the bedroom.

CLAIRE (o.s.)
Where is he? What's going --

She SCREAMS and there is the sound of flesh hitting flesh, hard.

AT THE DOOR,

Mick hears the battle on the tape and, as if he could still do something, he resumes kicking the door. It starts to come loose a bit.

ON THE TAPE,

there is a RIPPING sound and Claire's screams become desperate, hysterical -- then abruptly stop.

The RIPPING continues, accompanied by Alex's heavy and labored BREATHING as he engages in something very strenuous.

From the tape, there is the sound of a KNOCKING at the front door to the apartment. Alex stops what he is doing and leans out the door of the bedroom, listening.

He waits. The knock does not come again. Feet PAD away down the hall.

Alex goes back into the bedroom.

AT THE DOOR,

Mick is throwing everything he has into it. A few of the nails are starting to pull out of the wood.

ON THE TAPE,

Alex finishes his work and staggers back, out of the room. He is covered in blood. He leans against a wall, staining it red.

AT THE DOOR,

Mick sees this action and turns to look at the wall behind him. There is a large blood smear where Alex stood.

Mick hurtles himself into the door one final time and this time it gives -- two of the nails pull out of the wood and the door splinters in half.

Mick falls into the room.

INT BEDROOM

There is blood everywhere. Claire is on the bed, dead.

Mick turns and staggers back out of the room.

INT LIVING ROOM

ON THE TAPE,

Alex is looking into the camera, still breathing heavy.

ALEX
You brought that on yourself.

But his lips haven't moved. Mick snaps his head and sees --

ALEX

standing in the doorway to the apartment. In the flesh.

Mick SHOUTS incoherently.

Alex moves swiftly, coming into the apartment and closing and locking the door behind him. He goes to the VCR and extracts the tape and pockets it. Mick continues to babble -- in shock, unable to move.

ALEX (cont.)
Oh, grow up.

Alex waves the tape.

ALEX (cont.)
Don't worry, I kept the 8 mm one from the video camera too. That was your mistake with our little porno video -- see, Mick, you never cover all the bases. But we'll take care of that.

Mick, suddenly seized by fear and loathing, lunges at Alex, catching him around the midsection and tackling him in the middle of the room.

They grapple on the floor for a few minutes, but Alex is stronger and ends up on top.

ALEX (cont.)
Cool it! Just cool it!

He starts to release his hold on Mick and Mick lashes out, throwing a wild punch that Alex neatly avoids. Alex strikes, landing three consecutive jabs on Mick's face. Mick falls back to the floor, staggered by the blows, his eye bruised and his lip bleeding.

Alex gets up and paces above him.

ALEX (cont.)
You had this whole thing coming, why don't you just admit it? You got what you deserved and now we're even. Let's just leave it at that.

MICK
You're crazy. You're -- I'll call the cops -- I'll --

ALEX
Oh, for Christ's sake, Mick, for once will you just <u>think</u> before you talk? What are you going to tell the police? I'm a ghost! I don't exist! They'd think you made me up to protect yourself. They'd never find me.

MICK
They would -- they'd find --

ALEX
They'll find you, pal. You knew her, she's in your apartment, hell, I even bet I know someone who'd be glad to testify about your violent nature. How was Fenwick today, by the way?

Mick is in a corner and sees it.

MICK
I'll take my chances.

ALEX
You don't have the balls. Trust me, I think of these things.

MICK
I hate you.

ALEX
You hate yourself. That's your problem. Now please -- take care of this mess. It'll be good for you. Build character.

He turns and goes to the door.

ALEX (cont.)
Come see me when you cool down.

He leaves.

Mick lies on the floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT APARTMENT LATER

MICK, dressed now in jeans and tee-shirt, works feverishly, intently.

He scrubs the blood stained walls in the hallway and in the bedroom.

He pulls up a blood stained Persian rug in the bedroom and delicately puts Claire's body in the middle of it. He rolls the rug up, the body in the middle, and seals the ends with two lengths of rope.

INT BATHROOM

He washes his blood covered hands and arms in the sink in the bathroom. He runs water over his face and sees his image in the mirror.

He looks away.

INT APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY

Mick pokes his head out the door to see if anyone is around.

He hears voices and goes to the entrance of the building.

INT ENTRYWAY

A MAN and a WOMAN, the same ones as before, are having a violent argument in the entryway, near the buzzers and mailboxes.

Mick sees them and goes back to his apartment.

INT APARTMENT

Mick is holding down the "listen" button on his buzzer. He can hear the voices of the Man and Woman in the entryway.

WOMAN (o.s.)
You know what I want to know? Where do you get the time to screw all these people? That's what I want to know.

MAN (o.s.)
You're out of your mind.

Mick wipes the sweat off his forehead, impatient.

MICK
Come on! Go inside!

WOMAN (o.s.)
You screwed her!

MAN (o.s.)
I did not!

WOMAN (o.s.)
You put it in and you took it out. To me, that's screwing!

Mick snaps his finger off the buzzer, furious.

EXT APARTMENT BUILDING NIGHT

The rear of the building opens onto a dark alley. Mick's second floor window opens and he pulls the screen off. He looks up and down the alley, then carefully pushes the rolled up carpet out the window.

It lands with a dull THUD in the alley.

INT ENTRYWAY

Mick hurries past the still-arguing COUPLE and out the building.

EXT BUILDING NIGHT

As Mick comes out of the building, a police car pulls up and stops at the curb. A POLICEMAN gets out of the car and approaches him.

POLICEMAN
Hold on a second.

Mick stops, nervous.

MICK
Yeah?

POLICEMAN
You the one that called?

MICK
What?

POLICEMAN
About a domestic argument.

MICK
No -- no. Not me. They're in the front hall.

POLICEMAN
Right.

He walks past.

EXT ALLEY NIGHT

Mick's car pulls around. He loads the rug into the trunk of his car. No one sees. He drives away.

EXT LOS ANGELES NIGHT

Mick's car turns left from a main road and into a parklike area in downtown Los Angeles. As he enters, he passes a sign --

LA BREA TAR PITS.

He pulls up a service road and drives into the middle of the empty park.

He stops the car, looks around him, then unloads the rug and carries it to a pitch black area, something like a small pond. Mick goes to the edge of the pond and, steadying his grip on the burden, manages to fling it a few feet out into the middle.

For a moment, it just sits on the surface of the pond.

Mick looks at it, begging it to go down with his eyes.

After a few seconds, it starts to sink -- but slowly, as if sinking in something much more solid than water.

In a few seconds it is out of sight.

CUT TO:

INT MICK'S BATHROOM NIGHT

Again, he washes his hands and arms. He notices a blood stain on his tee-shirt and attacks that with fury, ripping the shirt off in the process. Now he notices a stain on his jeans and does the same.

INT MICK'S APARTMENT NIGHT

MICK sits on the floor in the empty living room. He's in his underwear, his knees drawn up to his chest.

The television is on and he stares at it. A game show blares innocuously.

Mick's eyes are wide, his concentration fierce. As he stares at the television, flashes of memory that flit through his mind come alive on the screen, replacing the game show. Fleetingly, he sees:

-- Alex smiling into the camera.

-- Alex greeting Claire at the door.

-- Shadows falling on the wall as Alex kills Claire in the bedroom.

-- A knock at the door; Alex stopping to listen.

Mick's head snaps up as he recalls the last. He continues to stare at the screen. He sees the image again -- a knock at the door and Alex stops what he is doing.

Now Mick hears another flash, this one LESLIE'S VOICE:

LESLIE (o.s.)
Don't forget to call your brother. He said he stopped by your apartment today.

Mick replays the image in his mind a third time, slower.

A knock at the door.

MICK
Pismo.

CUT TO:

EXT A STREET NIGHT

MICK parks his car in a more run-down part of town and runs up the steps of an apartment building.

INT A HALLWAY

Mick pounds furiously on an apartment door.

MICK
Pismo? Pismo, open up!

No answer. He pounds again.

MICK (cont.)
I know you're in there! Now open up or I'll break it in!

Pismo opens the door a crack, leaving the chain lock on.

PISMO
Don't freak out.

Mick gives the door one hard shoulder and the chain gives. He crashes into the room. He and Pismo tumble onto the floor.

Pismo scrambles up.

PISMO (cont.)
What are you doing? Are you out of your gourd?

MICK
You were there. You came over.

PISMO
Just take it easy.

He goes into his bedroom. Mick follows.

MICK
I heard you knock on the tape. Admit it! Admit it, you were at my apartment.

PISMO
All right, fine, I was there. So what? There's nothing I can do. I think it's for the best, actually.

MICK
For the best? Are you insane?

PISMO
Sure. You had too many things. This'll clean you out. Give you a fresh start.

MICK
Pismo -- he didn't just rob me. He killed a woman in my apartment.

Pismo turns.

PISMO
What?

CUT TO:

INT PISMO'S KITCHEN LATER

MICK and PISMO sit at the table. Pismo is pale, drained by the story Mick has just told him.

PISMO
Jesus, Michael. I could have told you that guy was a maniac, I could have told you that. But you haven't even talked to me the last two weeks.

MICK
I need help.

PISMO
It's too late. It happened. It's too late.

MICK
I need help.

PISMO
No! There's nothing we can do. Let it go.

MICK
Let it go?! He's a killer!

PISMO
He's Satan, Michael! Any way you connect yourself to him, the evil rubs off. You got in bed with the devil, are you that surprised that you had to fuck? Don't make me do it too. Don't involve me. Go to the police.

MICK
I can't.

PISMO
Why?

MICK
I just can't, okay?

PISMO
Let it go. Leave me clean. Please?

MICK
What the hell am I supposed to do with my life now?

Pismo looks away -- no answer.

CUT TO:

INT A MEETING ROOM DAY

There is a crowd of about a hundred well dressed and wealthy looking people. CHARLES LUCE is at a podium at the front, speaking into a microphone.

LUCE
Michael Boll!

The crowd bursts into applause. Luce steps away from the podium and gestures to MICK, who gets up from the table at the front.

He is wearing sunglasses to hide his now swollen black eye. He also has a split lip and hasn't shaved. Luce gives him a curious look as he takes the microphone.

The applause stops. Mick doesn't speak for a moment -- then begins tentatively.

MICK
Thank you.

A pause as he looks around the room. He sees FENWICK at a table in the middle. Fenwick's face is also battered, but is covered up with makeup and a small bandage over his eye.

The crowd shifts in its seats, uncomfortable at the amount of time Mick is taking to begin.

MICK (cont.)
I always thought I knew precisely who I was -- and where I was going -- and even when I was going to get there.

He trails off again. There are MUTTERS of confusion at this bizarre acceptance speech.

Mick looks up, hoping for understanding. He notices there is not one sympathetic face in the crowd. He is possessed by a powerful desire to get off the stage.

MICK (cont.)
(all at once)
Never mind. It's my problem. Thank you for your confidence. You gave me exactly what I deserve.

He walks off.

There is a confused silence, followed by a smattering of polite applause.

CUT TO:

INT MICK'S OFFICE DAY

MICK returns to his office. LESLIE is at the desk. As Mick walks up, TWO LARGE MEN stand up and approach him.

FIRST MAN
Michael Boll?

Mick is panicky, as he has no idea what to expect.

MICK
Yes.

The First Man slaps a paper in Mick's hand.

FIRST MAN
This is a court order prohibiting you from approaching or attempting to make contact with Miss Ruth Fielding.

Mick's face shows relief and he almost laughs through the remainder of the Man's speech.

FIRST MAN (cont.)
This order has been duly executed by Judge Howard Blanc of the County of Los Angeles and is in effect immediately. A copy is on file in the District Attorney's office. Do you understand?

MICK
Yes. Yes, I understand.

The Men leave. Leslie looks at Michael, concerned. He walks past her and into his office.

INT OFFICE

Mick comes into the office and starts across to his desk. He gets halfway there when something outside the window catches his attention. He goes to it and looks out, down across the street, at the Tar Pits.

A crowd is gathered, watching a crew performing some kind of extraction from a pit. A half dozen POLICE CARS and an AMBULANCE are also assembled and the whole area is roped off with yellow tape.

MICK
Oh my God.

He runs out of the office.

CUT TO:

EXT LA BREA TAR PITS DAY

A panicky MICK runs across the street and elbows his way to the front of the crowd. He can see a FIGURE wrapped in a sheet being loaded into an ambulance. Mick sees a white-coated museum EMPLOYEE just inside the yellow tape.

MICK
What's going on?

EMPLOYEE
Found a body. Fresh one.

MICK
In the tar pit?

EMPLOYEE
Yeah. Happens about once a year. Somebody tosses a corpse in here, thinking it'll sink in the tar. Trouble is, a pit like this is mostly water by the time it gets this big. Soon as the stomach bloats the body comes to the surface. Tough luck for somebody, huh?

The Employee chuckles and walks away. Mick is left staring as the ambulance doors are slammed shut.

A VOICE comes from behind him.

VOICE
Don't feel bad. How were you supposed to know that?

Mick whirls. ALEX is standing right behind him.

ALEX
We need to talk.

Mick, seized by fear, turns and runs blindly through the crowd, knocking a few people over as he goes.

Alex smiles but doesn't give chase.

EXT STREET DAY

Mick bursts out of the park and into the street. Cars HONK. Mick runs.

After several blocks he stops at a phone booth, breathing heavily, hysterical.

CUT TO:

INT PISMO'S APARTMENT

PISMO answers his phone.

PISMO
Yeah, hello?

MICK's voice comes over the phone.

MICK (o.s.)
Pismo, it's me. They found it! They found the body!

PISMO
Oh shit.

MICK (o.s.)
You've got to help me, Pismo.

PISMO
I told you, I can't. I --

MICK
You're my brother! You've got to. He's following me. I don't think I can go home. He's following me!

PISMO
What do you want me to do, man?

MICK (o.s.)
You're supposed to be a thinker -- think!

CUT TO:

INT MICK'S APARTMENT BUILDING DAY

ALEX, escorted by the eldery woman MANAGER, walks down the hallway of Mick's building.

MANAGER
Decorating is so exciting. He offered to let me see it when he's done. He's such a nice man, don't you think?

ALEX
Oh, he's got a dark side, just like anybody.

MANAGER
I wouldn't know.

She has unlocked Michael's door and opened it.

MANAGER (cont.)
Just let me know if you need anything else, Mr. Dumont.

ALEX
Sure thing.

She walks away down the hall. Alex goes into Mick's apartment.

INT MICK'S APARTMENT DAY

The place is still completely empty, except now there is a card table set up in the middle of the floor with two empty glasses on it. PISMO is next to the card table, setting up two folding chairs.

PISMO
(looking up)
Oh!

ALEX
Who are you?

PISMO
Name's Pismo. Michael's brother. Who are you?

ALEX
A friend. Mick asked me to meet him here.

PISMO
Ah.

Pismo finishes setting up the chairs.

PISMO (cont.)
There. Michael told me he'd been robbed so I just stopped by to give him my old card table. Figured he'd at least have something to eat at.

ALEX
(suspicious)
I see.

PISMO
Now, let's see. I always like to steal a little bourbon when I come over.

He goes into the kitchen. Alex follows him.

INT KITCHEN

Pismo is rummaging through cupboards.

ALEX
I don't know if Mick would like that.

PISMO
Come on -- I'm his brother. He expects it. Aha!

He's found a bottle. He goes back into the other room. Alex follows.

INT LIVING ROOM

Pismo sits at the table and pours a glass. He drinks.

PISMO
Fabulous. He's got good taste, Michael.

Alex is staring at Pismo. Pismo notices.

PISMO (cont.)
Oh God, my manners. Have a drink.

He pours two more glasses of bourbon.

ALEX
No, I gotta go. I'll meet him later.

PISMO
Come on. What's the harm? He's probably just a little late.

Alex studies Pismo, trying to figure him out. He sits at the table.

ALEX
Alright.

Using the butt end of the bourbon bottle, Pismo slides the glass across to Alex, then lifts his own glass.

PISMO
Cheers.

They both drink.

PISMO (cont.)
So you're doing some decorating for Michael?

Alex eyes him suspicously.

PISMO (cont.)
I heard you talking in the hall.

ALEX
Yeah. A little bit.

PISMO
What'd you say your name was?

ALEX
I didn't.

PISMO
Fair enough.

Pause.

PISMO (cont.)
Terrible about the robbery, huh?

ALEX
Robbery?

Pismo gestures at the empty room.

ALEX (cont.)
Oh -- yeah. Listen, if he comes tell him I'll be back later.

He gets up and goes to the door.

PISMO
Aren't you forgetting something?

ALEX
What?

PISMO
Who am I supposed to tell him was here?

Alex studies Pismo. There's something he doesn't trust here.

ALEX
Dumont. Tony Dumont.

He leaves.

Pismo turns his attention to the empty bourbon glasses. He takes a brown bag out of his jacket pocket and snaps it open. Taking Alex's glass carefully by one edge, he drops it into the bag.

CUT TO:

INT PHONE BOOTH DAY

CLOSE ON the Yellow Pages flipping by, slowing down at "I".

A FINGER runs down a page and stops under "Investigators".

CUT TO:

INT G. BAGLEY'S OFFICE DAY

G. BAGLEY, a woman of about sixty in a bright floral print dress, pokes the bourbon glass around on her desk with a pencil.

PISMO sits across from her.

BAGLEY
Sure, I can do it. Take me an hour, tops. Cost you a hundred bucks.

PISMO
A hundred?

BAGLEY
You don't got it. I can see by your face.

A thought strikes Pismo. He starts rummaging through his wallet.

PISMO
You take Visa?

BAGLEY
Sure.

Pismo has unearthed a crumpled slip of paper.

PISMO
I only have the card numbers.

BAGLEY
No problem. Name on the card?

PISMO
Michael Boll. B - O -

CUT TO:

INT MICK'S OFFICE DAY

LESLIE is looking up at PISMO, who stands in front of her, dressed in a tattered overcoat, unshaven and a little dirty, as usual. He looks incredibly out of place in the office environment. He is clutching a brown envelope to his chest.

PISMO
Gone? Gone where?

LESLIE
I don't know, he just left a few hours ago. I think he was ill.

Pismo looks around furtively.

PISMO
Who are you?

LESLIE
I'm Leslie. Who are you?

PISMO
Can you be trusted, Leslie?

LESLIE
What's going on here? Who are you?

Pismo leans in close to her.

PISMO
Are you easily shocked?

CUT TO:

INT MICHAEL'S OFFICE LATER

PISMO and LESLIE are inside Mick's office, seated around the desk. Leslie is pale.

LESLIE
My God.

PISMO
But I know who he is. At least I can find out.

He opens the brown envelope and spills the contents -- large blow up photographs of fingerprints.

PISMO (cont.)
InfoTech does work for insurance investigators and things like that, doesn't it?

LESLIE
(catching on)
Sure. We run fingerprint traces all the time.

PISMO
And do you know how to do it?

CUT TO:

INT COMPUTER ROOM

LESLIE and PISMO stand in front of a truly impressive bank of computer terminals that WHIRR, HUM and BEEP intimidatingly.

Leslie has one hand out, paused indecisively over a command panel.

LESLIE
Um --

PISMO
"Um" isn't a good start.

LESLIE
Well I'm not real firm on some of the finer points.

PISMO
Listen to me, Leslie. Michael is in a lot of trouble. If you don't know how to use these things then find me somebody who does!

CUT TO:

INT FENWICK'S OFFICE

FENWICK looks up at LESLIE and PISMO, who face him across the desk.

FENWICK
Don't be ridiculous. Michael knows we aren't allowed to tap into F.B.I. mainframes without an agent present.

LESLIE
But it's important. He called specifically to ask me to do it.

FENWICK
It's impossible. There are very strict regulations.

LESLIE
(thinks)
You mean he might get in a lot of trouble if we did it with his access code? Well, maybe we shouldn't.

FENWICK
(also thinking)
Actually -- no. No, I think it might be okay. If we're sure to use <u>his</u> access code.

CUT TO:

INT COMPUTER ROOM

FENWICK is finishing an elaborate series of commands. The screen finally BUZZES and a slot drops open.

FENWICK
Okay -- feed.

LESLIE
Huh?

FENWICK
The prints -- feed them into memory.

LESLIE
Oh.

She feeds the photos into the open slot. A red light scans them and they are spit out again.

PISMO
Now what?

FENWICK
Now -- wait. It's searching. Look.

He points at a screen, where the spirals and webs of a million fingerprints a zipping by in a blur.

FENWICK (cont.)
Takes hours sometimes. Good luck.

He gets up and goes to the door. As an afterthought, he turns back to Pismo.

FENWICK (cont.)
Do you work here?

PISMO
Trainee.

FENWICK
Oh.

He does a double take, then shakes his head and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT MICK'S APARTMENT NIGHT

MICK pulls up and approaches the main entrance. He stops when he sees a motorcycle parked out front. He regards it suspiciously.

He goes tentatively to the buzzer and runs his finger down until he reaches the one that says "BOLL". He pushes it. Silence for a second, then the speaker crackles to life with ALEX'S VOICE.

ALEX (o.s.)
Yeah?

Mick stares at it, disbelieving. He doesn't move for a second.

ALEX (o.s.)
Mick -- that you?

Mick turns and runs out of the building and to his car. He pulls away as Alex looks out the window of Mick's apartment on the second floor.

CUT TO:

INT COMPUTER ROOM NIGHT

LESLIE and PISMO are still at the computer, watching prints race by on the screen.

The rest of the building is quiet. Leslie has her things gathered together and her overcoat on.

LESLIE
You're sure you'll be alright?

PISMO
No problem.

LESLIE
(writes something down)
Here's my address. Come over as soon as you find something.

PISMO
Sure.

She goes to the door.

LESLIE
Michael's very lucky to have a brother like you.

PISMO
Only recently.

She smiles and leaves. Pismo turns his attention back to the screen.

CUT TO:

INT GUN SHOP NIGHT

MICK watches silently as a CLERK takes a .38 handgun out of the display case and shows it to him. Mick nods.

CLERK
Good choice. Okay, I need you to fill out a few forms for the registration and you should be able to have it in two weeks.

MICK
Two weeks?

CLERK
Sorry -- it's the law.

Mick silently pulls five crisp one hundred dollar bills out of his wallet and puts them on the counter.

CLERK (cont.)
But what the hell -- you look like a sensible guy.

CUT TO:

INT COMPUTER ROOM NIGHT

PISMO is dozing lightly at the computer screen. A long, loud BEEP rouses him and he looks at the screen.

The prints have been matched. A computer-generated photograph appears on the screen. It's Alex -- younger, different hairstyle, but definitely Alex.

A name prints out next to it -- "ANTHONY ROBERT NEWCOMBE."

Pismo grabs a pen and starts writing.

The screen again -- "ALIASES" -- and it starts listing them:

"ROBERT ANTHONY"
"TONY DUMONT"
"BOBBY CAROLINA"

-- and so on, a list of at least fifty scrolling by at an incredible pace. Pismo is just scrambling to write them all down when another heading comes up on the screen.

"ARREST RECORD."

Pismo lets out a low whistle as the long list begins.

CUT TO:

INT MICK'S APARTMENT NIGHT

CLOSE ON Mick's answering machine as it picks up the ringing phone.

MACHINE
This is Mick. I'm out. Leave a message and I'll call you back.

BEEP.

PISMO'S VOICE comes over the machine, sounding desperate.

PISMO (o.s.)
It's me. I found out who he is. We can go to the cops. If you're there, stay put. I'm coming right over.

He hangs up.

A finger pushes the "stop" button on the machine.

ALEX.

CUT TO:

INT AN APARTMENT BUILDING NIGHT

MICK waits outside a door. After a moment the door is opened by LESLIE. She reacts to Mick with surprise.

LESLIE
Michael!

MICK
(pathetically)
I don't have anyplace else to go.

She swings the door open, letting him inside.

CUT TO:

INT LESLIE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Leslie's apartment is an incredibly homey place -- afghans, tapestries on the wall, one would even expect children's drawings on the refrigerator. Most startling is the abundance of <u>life</u> -- there are two small dogs, a couple birds, an aquarium and a half dozen cats.

MICK sits on an old, comfortable couch. A dog is curled in his lap. He strokes its head gently.

LESLIE comes into the room and gives him a cup of tea.

LESLIE
Careful. If you're not used to Korean teas they can be a little surprising.

Mick smiles and takes the cup. She sits down at the other end of the couch.

Mick sips the tea.

MICK
It's wonderful.

LESLIE
(quietly)
Pismo told me what's going on.

Mick sets the cup down and looks up at her helplessly -- he is a mess.

MICK
How did I get like this?

He looks as though he may cry. She gently moves the dog away and slides over closer to Mick. She puts her arm around him. He lets his head fall on her shoulder.

LESLIE
Don't worry. It'll end. Bad times always end.

A cat leaps up into Mick's lap.

MICK
Until this second I never realized how much I hate my apartment. Nothing lives there. Nothing ever has.

LESLIE
Shhh.

MICK
I think I could sleep here. Really sleep.

LESLIE
Then do.

He closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT MICK'S APARTMENT BUILDING NIGHT

PISMO pulls up in his cab and stops in front. He darts into the building. From the second floor window above, ALEX watches him.

INT MICK'S APARTMENT

ALEX positions himself behind the door.

INT HALLWAY

PISMO comes in and hurries down the hallway. As he passes the MANAGER's apartment, she comes out with a bag of garbage.

She nods to Pismo.

MANAGER
Little late for decorating, isn't it?

She continues past. Pismo continues on, ignoring her.

He reaches the door to Mick's apartment and reaches for the knob.

His hand stops halfway there. He looks back at the Manager, who is disappearing around a corner. He looks down at the knob.

He figures it out.

He turns and bolts, running down the hallway as fast as he can.

After a second, the door to the apartment jerks open and ALEX appears, maniacal as hell, looking both ways. He sees Pismo racing down the hall and gives chase.

EXT APARTMENT BUILDING

Pismo comes tearing out of the building and makes for his cab.

Alex is not far behind.

Pismo leaps into the cab, locks all the doors, and fumbles for the ignition key. He finds it.

Alex comes racing across the front lawn and

DIVES

onto the hood of the cab. Pismo SHRIEKS and drops the keys. He scrabbles for them on the floor of the cab, finds them, and gets the right one in the ignition.

Alex, in one mighty blow, reaches around and

SMASHES

the driver's window with his fist.

Pismo starts the car.

Alex reaches in blindly, trying to grab Pismo.

Pismo avoids him and punches the accelerator. He hauls the cab hard around a corner, sending Alex flying off the hood.

Alex manages to hold on to the door frame with his hand. Pismo pounds on his fingers, rounds another corner, and sends Alex rolling into the street.

Alex watches Pismo's taillights disappear.

CUT TO:

INT LESLIE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

LESLIE answers the door. PISMO, looking incredibly strung out, steps into the apartment.

PISMO
I know who he is. He tried to kill me. We have to call the cops now.

LESLIE
Keep your voice down. Michael's sleeping in the other room.

MICK
No he's not.

They turn. MICK -- pale, gaunt, over the edge -- is standing in the doorway to the bedroom.

Pismo goes to him.

PISMO
(in a rush)
Michael, his real name is Anthony Newcombe. He goes by Tony. Aside from a two page arrest record, he's wanted for murder in North Carolina. He killed some guy at random and then tried to frame a tax attorney for it.

MICK
Incredible. He's doing it again.

PISMO
What?

MICK
Forget it.

PISMO
I'm calling the police.

He goes over to the telephone. Mick intercepts him.

MICK
No.

PISMO
What do you mean, "no"?

MICK
I told you. No police. Especially now. I took care of the body. Do you know what that means?

PISMO
You can't leave him on the loose.

LESLIE
Michael, you're not being rational.

MICK
He's a liar! The best I've ever seen. Even if they do catch him -- which is doubtful, since they never have -- even if they do catch him, he'll take me down with him, just for spite. I know that. I understand him now.

PISMO
I'm done being a coward. And so are you. I'm in the world now. Men like him aren't allowed in my world.

MICK
You talk real brave with my life.

PISMO
What about my life? He tried to kill me tonight!

MICK
Well that's fucking typical. As usual, I'm here to serve your life.

PISMO
Are you insane? You've always had first crack at everything. Why do you think I didn't get college paid for? 'Cause you "showed more promise," those were Dad's exact words. He could only afford one college tuition and you "showed more promise." Jesus Christ!

LESLIE
Aren't we getting a bit off the subject?

Mick whirls on her, his movements almost vicious.

MICK
Yes! The subject is that we are not going to the police.

PISMO
Wrong! For once, I know what's best.

He moves for the phone again. Mick blocks his way.

MICK
Don't fuck with me, Pismo. You don't know me anymore.

PISMO
I think I do.

Pismo picks up the receiver. Mick grabs the phone and rips it out of the wall.

MICK
Wanna bet?

CUT TO:

INT AN ELEVATOR

ALEX is dressed in a well-tailored business suit. He rides in an elevator with several other EXECUTIVES. He carries an expensive leather briefcase.

The elevator door opens and he steps off and walks briskly through the reception area of InfoTech. The RECEPTIONIST calls after him.

RECEPTIONIST
Sir? Can I help you?

ALEX
(over his shoulder)
No thank you!

He continues back.

INT MICK'S OFFICE

Alex approaches. LESLIE looks up and smiles.

LESLIE
Mr. --
(trying to place the face)
-- Riegert?

ALEX
Right. He's expecting me.

LESLIE
Well, that's odd. He's not in yet.

ALEX
(looks at his watch)
It's eleven-thirty!

LESLIE
I know. We were beginning to get concerned. Do you want to wait?

Alex furrows his brow.

ALEX
No. No, I'll try back later.

He turns and goes.

CUT TO:

INT MICK'S APARTMENT DAY

A sound can be heard SCRAPING in the lock, then the door opens and ALEX looks in.

ALEX
Mick?

He makes a quick check -- Mick is nowhere to be found.

CUT TO:

INT BAR NIGHT

This is the bar Alex lives at. ALEX is at the pay phone, waiting.

INT MICK'S APARTMENT NIGHT

The phone RINGS in the dark. No one is there to answer.

INT BAR

Alex hangs up the pay phone angrily and goes back to the bar.

BARTENDER
She stood you up, huh Tony?

ALEX
Huh? Oh -- yeah.

He nurses a beer thoughtfully.

CUT TO:

EXT MICK'S APARTMENT MORNING

ALEX roars up on his motorcycle and stops out front. He sees Mick's car -- there are two parking tickets on it.

Alex roars off.

As he drives away, the motorcycle flashes past an empty taxicab -- there are parking tickets on it as well.

CUT TO:

INT MICK'S OFFICE DAY

LESLIE is on the phone.

LESLIE
Mr. Riegert, I've taken down your messages, but he just hasn't been in since Monday. That's really all I can tell you.

CUT TO:

EXT BEACH DAY

ALEX hangs up a pay phone and looks out at the ocean reflectively.

CUT TO:

INT BAR NIGHT

It's closing time. The place is empty except for ALEX, who sits at the bar with a drink, lost in thought. The BARTENDER shuts off a few lights and stands by the door.

BARTENDER
Shut off the other lights before you go up, will you Tony?

ALEX
Sure.

BARTENDER
'Night.

ALEX
'Night.

Alex downs the rest of his drink, then stretches, gets up and goes up the stairs. He walks down a narrow corridor and opens the door to his room.

INT ALEX'S ROOM

Dark. Alex comes in and shuts the door behind him. A FIGURE moves quickly out from behind the door and pounces on Alex's back.

Alex cries out and struggles as the Figure wrestles him down and pins him to the floor.

The Figure GIGGLES and switches on a light.

MICK is on top of Alex. He's dressed in the same clothes he's worn the past few days, which now look considerably worse for the wear. He still hasn't shaved and his face is covered with dirt and grime. His eyes are dark, hollow.

MICK
Hey Tony. It's Dominick.

He GIGGLES. Alex, still shaken, throws him off and sits up.

ALEX
You scared the shit out of me, man.

MICK
Don't be mad at me. I brought you a present.

He points to the other side of the room. Alex turns and looks. A brand new television and VCR have been set up at the foot of the bed. The just-opened boxes are next to them.

MICK (cont.)
I boosted 'em from the back of the Federated. Cool, huh?

Alex looks at him sideways.

ALEX
You -- you stole these?

MICK
Yeah.

ALEX
Thanks.

MICK
You're welcome.

ALEX
Stupid to go to Federated, though. Private security everywhere.

MICK
I don't give a shit.

Alex just looks at him.

MICK (cont.)
I DON'T GIVE A SHIT!!

ALEX
Okay, man, okay. I heard you.

Alex looks at Mick, not sure what to think of this unbalanced person.

Mick breaks into a wide, uncontrolled grin.

MICK
I'm here!

ALEX
Yeah, I see that.

Mick gets up and paces, like a thing caged.

MICK
I mean I'm here to live. With you. I got to thinking -- you made it real tough for me, you know that? The way I was living -- that world I was in -- I couldn't have that life and you. You know what I mean? They just didn't fit together. One or the other had to go. And since you didn't seem like you intended to go anywhere --

ALEX
Ah, Mick, how could I? We're pals.

MICK
Right. We're pals. But you kicked me out of my world. You did. Admit it. So here I am. In yours. Completely.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a 1/2" video cassette. He tosses it on the bed.

MICK (cont.)
Play it.

Alex picks it up suspiciously and looks at it.

MICK (cont.)
(singsong)
Pla -- aay it.

Alex, who hasn't the faintest idea what to think, puts the tape in the VCR and flips a few switches.

Mick giggles again, unable to contain his mirth and delight.

MICK (cont.)
You got a big surprise coming to you, pal.

He sits down eagerly next to Alex. The television flickers, then an image comes on.

ON THE SCREEN,

the camera glitches a few times before an unshaky image comes to life. The camera is apparently being placed on a chair in a darkened apartment.

As the light meter adjusts, we see it is a bedroom. The camera is pointed at a bed, in which lies a sleeping figure.

MICK'S FACE now comes around from behind the camera and peers into the lens. He winks.

The figure in the bed stirs. Mick turns, alarmed, and hurries over to the side of the bed. He hunkers down, half under the bed.

The figure sits up. It's PISMO. He's scared.

PISMO
Hello? Who is that? I heard you, whoever you are!

He sees the camera at the foot of his bed. He leans forward, puzzled, and looks into the lens, checking it out.

PISMO (cont.)
What the -- ?

Mick moves quickly up behind Pismo, lunging forward --

-- and Pismo GASPS, his face going purple. His tongue lolls, his eyes bulge out, and he sags forward.

A KNIFE

is revealed, sticking out of his back. Mick pulls away, looking quite thorougly insane, and watches Pismo struggle for life.

Pismo's arms flail -- he gets a grip on the knife and begins to pull it out, screaming.

Mick is panicked by this development. He leaps forward and grabs Pismo roughly by the hair. In the ensuing struggle the chair with the video camera is tipped over and the picture goes wild.

From offscreen comes the

WET THUD

of something banging hard against a dresser, then Pismo drops onto the floor right in front of the camera.

Dead.

Blood oozes from a gaping wound on the side of his head.

IN ALEX'S ROOM,

Mick snaps the VCR off proudly. Alex stares in shock.

Mick leans in close and whispers.

MICK
One apiece, hey? Guess what happens now?

Alex is numbed -- unable to move.

ALEX
You're -- you're crazy.

MICK
Nope, that's not it. Guess again.

No answer from Alex, who is shaken.

MICK (cont.)
Now I turn us <u>both</u> in!

Alex looks up.

ALEX
What are you talking about?

Mick dances over and out the doorway. Alex, floored by this maniac, follows him.

INT BAR

Mick climbs out over the railing and calls out to the darkened bar.

MICK
(like a child)
Alex killed Claire what's-her-name!

Alex lunges over and reaches for Mick, who neatly avoids him by jumping to the bar below.

He turns and calls up to Alex.

MICK (cont.)
Isn't it perfect? You ruined my whole God damn life and now I'm gonna do the same to you! We can be cellmates!

ALEX
Mick, don't be stupid! Come up here!

MICK
Catch me!

He turns and runs out the door of the bar. Alex follows.

EXT STREET NIGHT

Mick runs at full speed down the nearly deserted street.

Alex follows.

Mick, who is much better conditioned, develops a healthy lead and runs backwards for a few yards, calling taunts back to Alex.

MICK
Whatsa matter? Big hatchet murderer outta shape?

He laughs wildly and turns on the speed.

Alex continues after him.

EXT BEACH NIGHT

Mick runs effortlessly, kicking up a spray of sand behind him.

Alex follows, gasping for breath.

EXT FISHING PIER NIGHT

This is the same pier on which Alex and Mick met that first night.

Alex grins when Mick turns onto the pier.

ALEX
Dead end! I got you now! I got you, Mick!

Near the end of the pier is a small wooden shack with a "FISHING SUPPLIES" sign on the top. Mick races past it and to the end of the pier. A streetlight casts a single pool of light over the end of the pier.

Mick is at the railing -- nothing but sea beyond.

Alex comes past the store and stops, breathing heavy, grinning.

ALEX (cont.)
I guess you're dead now, you crazy fucker.

In one smooth motion, Mick reaches up under the railing and, with the distinctive sound of Velcro RIPPING, pulls the .38 handgun he bought out from a hiding place.

MICK
Guess again.

Alex blinks. This is a new wrinkle.

He pauses, thinking hard, his brain spinning a million miles an hour. Then he straightens up, looks Mick in the eye -- and laughs good naturedly.

ALEX
(smiling resignedly)
Beautiful! You nailed me, man! You win!

He starts to walk forward.

MICK
GET BACK! Into the light. Where I can see you.

He waves the gun at the single circle of light. Alex puts his hands up and steps back into it. Mick circles around him so he is next to the fishing supply store and Alex is the one with only sea behind him.

ALEX
You got me. I admit it. You win.

MICK
I win. That's it?

ALEX
Yeah. Sure. Come on, let's go have a drink.

He steps forward.

MICK
IN THE LIGHT!! Stay in the light.

Alex steps back.

Silence for a second.

ALEX
Well?

MICK
I should kill you.

ALEX
I said I was sorry.

MICK
Sorry? SORRY?!

ALEX
Yeah. Sorry.

MICK
Do you have any idea what you did to me? What you did to my soul?

ALEX
I didn't make you do anything that wasn't in you already.

MICK
I beat up a guy while you held him down! You think that was in me?

Alex chuckles to himself and runs his hand through his hair.

ALEX
You didn't beat up anybody.

MICK
What?

ALEX
I beat up Fenwick. You were passed out in the car the whole time. I just rubbed some blood on your knuckles to fuck with you.

Mick stares at him, beyond comprehension of this monster.

MICK
Just to fuck with me?

ALEX
Look, I can only say I'm sorry so many times, you know?

MICK
You should die. By every law of nature, you should die.

ALEX
Me? You're the fuckin' lunatic! What the hell did you kill your own brother for? Pleasure, or some sick thing like that? You're the God damn menace, not me. When I killed Claire there was a reason -- I was proving a point. But you -- shit, it's personal with you.

Mick looks incredibly drained, as if an enormous burden has just been lifted from his shoulders. He is crying.

MICK
Did he stay in the light?

ALEX
What?

MICK
Did you get it?

The door to the fishing supply store swings open and a man steps out.

PISMO BOLL.

Alive and well.

He has Mick's video camera on his shoulder.

PISMO
I got it.

MICK
Sound?

LESLIE'S HEAD bobs up from on top of the roof of the fishing store. She holds a shotgun microphone.

LESLIE
Every word.

HIDDEN SPOTLIGHTS snap on in a rude glare. The air around the place is suddenly filled with the color, VOICES and RADIO SQUAWKING of a major police action. UNIFORMED POLICE pour out of the store. Two of them go to Alex and drop him to his knees, cuffing his hands over his head.

Alex looks at Mick in shock.

ALEX
You bastard! You lousy bastard!

Mick is pale. He looks about to faint. He lowers the gun and turns away.

Alex cries out to Mick.

ALEX (cont.)
You fucking ingrate! I got you what you wanted! I only got you what you wanted, Mick!

Mick whirls, suddenly taut with rage. He raises the gun and points it at Alex.

Everyone freezes, studying him. A few POLICEMEN draw guns.

Mick screams at Alex, a deep, anguished cry.

MICK
MY NAME IS MICHAEL!!

And with that Michael turns and throws the gun out into the sea.

He cries.

Pismo takes a step forward but Mick holds him off with a gesture.

He walks away down the pier, alone.

CUT TO:

INT CHARLES LUCE'S OFFICE DAY

LUCE is behind his imposing desk. MICHAEL, dressed in jeans and a white shirt, is in front of the desk. He is composed, calm. He is Michael.

MICHAEL
I just couldn't take the pressure any longer. I knew you'd made a mistake and it was just a matter of time before you saw it.

LUCE
I see. And you think --

MICHAEL
Believe me, I know. The guilt of being promoted ahead of someone so obviously superior was too much. Can you imagine if I'd had to work in the shadow of his -- greatness all these years? Impossible.

LUCE
Well, I certainly respect --

MICHAEL
Nothing to it. Really. It's only what's right.

He shakes Luce's hand firmly and walks briskly out of the office.

Luce watches, astounded. He pushes a buzzer on his desk.

LUCE
(into intercom)
Get me Mr. Fenwick, will you?

INT HALLWAY

Michael is shaking his head, wincing at what he just did.

He rounds a corner and bumps smack into FENWICK, who is hurrying the other way, preening self-consciously.

They both step back from each other, uncomfortable. Fenwick starts to go. Michael reaches out and grabs his arm.

MICHAEL
Fenwick, I --
(what the hell do you say?)
-- I tried. It's not enough, but I tried.

Michael turns and goes.

EXT BUILDING DAY

Michael walks out of the building. He doesn't look back.

A TAXICAB waits at the curb. Michael goes to it.

INT CAB

PISMO is in the driver's seat. Michael joins LESLIE in the back.

MICHAEL
(to Leslie)
How do the locals feel about pickets at bullfights?

LESLIE
A bit hostile. They tend to arrest you.

MICHAEL
I've never been arrested. Are the jails nice?

LESLIE
Atrocious.

PISMO
Everything's relative. I'm sure there are worse.

MICHAEL
Then drive on.

Pismo pulls away from the curb.

Michael turns to Leslie.

MICHAEL (cont.)
Tell me. Do you have dinner plans after the arrest?

She smiles.

LESLIE
I don't really like to date unemployed men.

MICHAEL
Who's unemployed? I just bought a taxi cab.

FADE OUT.