

**BARTON FINK**

**Original Screenplay by  
Joel Coen and Ethan Coen**

**February 19, 1990**

FADE IN:  
ON BARTON FINK

He is a bespectacled man in his thirties, hale but somewhat bookish looking. Wearing a tuxedo, he stands in the wings of a theater, looking out at the stage, listening intently to the end of a performance. Beyond him, in the shadows, an old stagehand leans against a flat, expressionlessly smoking a cigarette, one hand on a thick rope that hangs from the ceiling.

The voices of the performing actors echo in from the offscreen stage:

Actor  
I'm blowin' out of here, blowin' for good. I'm kissin' it all goodbye, these four stinkin' walls, the six flights up, the Ell that roars by at three a.m. like a cast-iron wind. Kiss 'em goodbye for me, Maury! I'll miss 'em--like hell I will!

Actress  
Dreaming again!

Actor  
Hot this time, Lily! I'm awake now, awake for the first time in years. Uncle Dave said it: Daylight is a dream if you've lived with your eyes closed. Well my eyes are open now! I see the choir, and I know they're dressed in rags! But we're part of that choir, both of us--yeah, and you, Maury, and Uncle Dave too!

Maury  
The sun's coming up, kid. They'll be hawking the fish down on Fulton Street.

Actor  
Let 'em hawk. Let 'em sing their hearts out.

Maury  
That's it, kid. Take that ruined choir. Make it sing!

Actor  
So long, Maury.

Maury

So long.

We hear a door open and close, then approaching footsteps. A tall dark actor in a used tweed suit and carrying a beat-up valise passes in front of Barton Fink.

From the offscreen stage:

Maury

We'll hear from that kid. And I don't mean a postcard.

The actor sets the valise down and then stands quietly in the shadows behind Barton, looking expectantly toward the stage.

An older man in work clothes--not wardrobe--passes in front of Barton from the other direction, pauses at the edge of the stage and cups his hands to his mouth.

Older Man

FISH! FRESH FISH!

As the man walks back off screen:

Lily

Let's spit on our hands and get to work. It's late, Maury.

Maury

Not any more, Lil. . .

Barton mouths the last line in synch with the offscreen actor.

. . . It's early.

With this the stagehand behind Barton starts furiously to pull the rope hand-over-hand, and we hear thunderous applause and shouts of "Bravo!"

As the stagehand finishes bringing down the curtain, muting the applause somewhat, the backstage actor trots out of frame towards the stage.

The stagehand pulls on an adjacent rope, bringing the curtain back up and unmuting the thunderous applause from the house.

Barton Fink seems dazed. He has been joined by two other

men, both dressed in tuxedos, both beaming broadly toward the stage.

BARTON'S POV

Looking from the wings across a tenement set at the backs of the cast as the curtain rises on the thunderous applause. The actors take their bows and the cry of "Author! Author!" goes up from the crowd.

The actors turn to smile at Barton in the wings.

BACK TO FINK

Barton hesitates, still unable to take it all in.

He is gently nudged toward the stage by the two tuxedoed gentlemen.

As he exits toward the stage the applause is deafening.

CUT TO:  
TRACKING SHOT

Pushing a maitre d' who looks back over his shoulder, past the camera, as he leads the way through the restaurant.

Maitre d'  
Your table is ready, Monsieur Fink. . . several  
members of your party have already arrived . . .

REVERSE

Pulling Barton Fink. He is wearing a suit.

Fink  
Is Garland Stanford here?

Maitre d'  
He called to say he'd be a few minutes late. . .  
Ah, here we are. . .

TRACKING IN

Towards a large semi-circular booth. Three guests in evening wear are rising and beaming at Barton: A square-jawed young rake with a pencil mustache; his date for the evening; and a portly middle-aged man who is rising to let Barton slide into a place at the banquette. This is Derek.

Derek  
Barton, Barton, so glad you could make it. You know Richard St. Claire...

Barton nods and looks at the woman.

... and Poppy Carnahan. We're drinking champagne dear boy in honor of the occasion. Have you seen the Herald?

Barton looks sullenly at his champagne glass as the fat man fills it.

Barton  
Not yet.

Derek  
Well, I don't want to embarrass you but Caven could hardly contain himself. But more important, Richard and Poppy here loved the play.

Poppy  
Loved it! What power!

Richard  
Yeah, it was a corker.

Barton  
Thanks, Richard, but I know for a fact the only fish you've ever seen were smothered in meuniere sauce or tacked to the wall of the Yacht Club.

Richard  
Ouch!

Derek  
Bravo! Nevertheless, we were all devastated.

Poppy  
Weeping! Copious tears! What did the Herald say?

Derek  
I happen to have it with me...

Barton  
Please, Derek--

Poppy  
Do read it.

Derek  
And this, mind you, from the master of the poison pen. . . "Bare Ruined Choirs: Triumph of the Common Man. The star of Bare Ruined Choirs was nowhere to be seen on the stage of the Belasco last night--though the thespians involved all acquitted themselves admirably. The find of the evening was the author of this drama about simple folk--fishmongers, in fact--whose brute struggle for existence cannot quite quell their longing for something higher. The playwright finds nobility in the most squalid corners and poetry in the most calloused speech. A tough new voice in the American theatre has arrived, and the owner of that voice is named Barton Fink--

Barton  
They'll be wrapping fish in it in the morning--so I guess it's not a total waste.

Poppy  
Cynic!

Derek  
Well we can enjoy your success Barton, even if you can't.

Barton  
Don't get me wrong--I'm glad it'll do well for you, Derek.

Derek  
Don't worry about me, dear boy. I want you to celebrate.

Barton lifts the glass of champagne to his lips.

Barton  
All right. But I can't start listening to the critics, and I can't kid myself about my own work. A writer writes from his gut, and his gut tells him what's good and what's. . . merely adequate.

Poppy  
Well I don't pretend to be a critic, but Lord, I

have a gut also, and mine tells me it was simply marvelous.

Richard  
And a charming gut it is.

Poppy  
You dog!

Richard  
(baying)  
Aaa-wooooooo!

The maitre d' has approached the booth. He hands Barton a slip of paper.

Maitre d'  
Excuse me.

Barton takes the card and opens it.

CLOSE ON THE CARD

A crest at the top of the card is imprinted "EL NIDO--HAUTE CUISINE, FINE SPIRITS". Underneath, the scrawled message: "I'm at the bar--Garland."

CUT TO:  
TRACKING IN ON THE BAR

A distinguished looking fifty-year-old gentleman in evening clothes is nursing a martini, watching Barton approach.

ON BARTON

As he draws near.

Barton  
I thought you were going to join us. Jesus Garland, you left me alone with those people.

Garland  
Don't panic, I'll join you in a minute. What'd you think of Richard and Poppy?

Barton laughs.

Barton  
The play was marvelous. She wept, copiously.  
Millions of dollars and no sense.

Garland laughs and draws Barton down to the end of the bar  
where they can be alone.

Garland  
We have to talk a little business. I've just  
been on the phone to Los Angeles. . . Barton,  
Capitol Pictures wants to put you under contract.  
They've offered you one thousand dollars a week.  
I think I can get them to go as high as two.

Barton  
To do what?

Garland  
What do you do for a living?

Barton  
I'm not sure anymore. I guess I try to make a  
difference.

Garland  
Fair enough. No pressure here, Barton, because I  
respect you, but let me point out a couple of  
things. One: here, you make a difference to  
five hundred fifty people a night--if the show  
sells out. Eighty-five million people go to the  
pictures every week.

Barton  
To see pap.

Garland  
Yes, generally, to see pap. However, point  
number two: A brief tenure in Hollywood could  
support you through the writing of any number of  
plays.

Barton  
I don't know, Garland--my place is here right  
now. I feel I'm on the brink of success. . .

Garland  
I'd say you're already enjoying some--

Barton leans forward earnestly.

Barton  
No Garland, don't you see? Not the kind of



success where the critics faun over you or the producers, like Derek, make a lot of money. No, a real success--the success we've been dreaming about--the creation of a new, living theatre of and about and for the common man! If I ran off to Hollywood now I'd be making money, going to parties, meeting the bigshots, sure, but I'd be cutting myself off from the wellspring of that success, from the common man.

He leans back and chuckles morosely.

. . . I guess I'm spouting off again. But I am certain of this, Garland: I'm capable of more good work. Maybe better work than I did in Choirs. . . It just doesn't seem to me that Los Angeles is the place to lead the life of the mind.

Garland

Okay Barton, you're the artist, I'm just the ten percenter. You decide what you want and I'll make it happen. I'm only asking that your decision be informed by a little realism--if I can use that word and Hollywood in the same breath.

Barton glumly lights a cigarette and gazes out across the floor. Garland studies him.

. . . Look, they love you, kid. Everybody does. You see Caven's review in the Herald?

Barton

. . . No, what did it say?

Garland

Take my copy. You're the toast of Broadway and you have the opportunity to redeem that for a little cash--strike that, a lot of cash.

Garland looks at Barton for a reaction but he is lost in thought.

. . . The common man'll still be here when you get back. What the hell, they might even have one or two of 'em out in Hollywood.

Distractedly:

Barton

That's a rationalization, Garland. . .

Garland smiles at him gently.

Garland  
Barton, it was a joke.

We hear a distant rumble. It builds slowly and we:

CUT TO:

The crash of a huge wave pounding the Pacific shore.

The title of the movie is supered over the seascape as the pounding continues.

The sound of the surf mixes into another rumble and a long scream as we:

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

A train wheel screeching to a halt. The credits continue over a long exhalation of steam as we:

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

A huge orange sun distorted by steam or haze, framed by a lone palm tree.

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

Tracking on feet, walking up a flight of concrete stairs, a battered valise swinging through the frame.

CUT TO:

A high wide shot, looking down across the lobby of an old hotel, from the front door, past the potted palms, brass cuspidors, ratty wing chairs--all the faded deco-gone-to-seed that is nether-Hollywood.

A beautiful amber light, late afternoon turning to evening, slopes in from behind us, washing the shadowy lobby with golden highlights.

Barton Fink enters frame from underneath the camera and stops in the middle foreground, perfectly still, looking across the lobby.

We are framed on his back, his coat and his hat. The lobby is empty. Nothing moves.

The last of the credits fades out.

He moves toward the desk.

THE REVERSE

As Barton stops at the empty desk. He hits a small silver bell next to the register. Its ring-out goes on and on, seemingly without losing any volume.

Another bell rings and Barton turns to look across the lobby.

A young man with a pock-marked face, wearing a faded maroon uniform, is emerging from the elevator. He takes a rope with a steel hook on it and hooks the elevator door open.

He crosses to the desk, not yet looking at Barton, swings a section of the counter up, crosses inside, then sticks his finger out and touches the small silver bell.

Now the lobby is silent again.

He looks at Barton.

Clerk

Welcome to the Hotel Earle. May I help you, sir?

Barton

I'm checking in. Barton Fink.

The clerk flips through cards on the desk.

Clerk

F-I-N-K. Fink, Barton. That must be you, huh?

Barton

Must be.

Clerk

Okay then, everything seems to be in order.  
Everything seems to be in order.

He is turning the register around for Barton to sign.

. . . Are you a tranz or a rez?

Excuse me?                   Barton

                                  Clerk  
Transient or resident?

                                  Barton  
I don't know. . . I mean, I'll be here indefinitely--

                                  Clerk  
Rez. That'll be twenty-five fifty a week payable in advance. Checkout time is twelve sharp only you can forget that on account of you're a rez. If you need anything, anything at all, you dial zero on your personal in-room telephone and talk to me. My name is Chet.

Barton is signing the register.

                                  Barton  
Well, I'm going to be working here, mostly at night; I'm a writer. Do you have room service?

                                  Clerk  
Kitchen closes at eight but I'm the night clerk. I can always ring out for sandwiches.

The clerk is scribbling something on the back of a small index card.

. . . Though we provide privacy for the residential guest we are also a full service hotel including complimentary shoe-shine. My name is Chet.

He pushes a room key across the counter on top of the index card.

Barton looks at the card.

On it is scrawled "CHET!"

Barton looks back up at the clerk. They look at each other for a beat.

                                  Clerk  
. . . Okay.

                                  Barton  
Huh?

The clerk nods.

Clerk  
Okey-dokey, go ahead.

Barton  
What--

Clerk  
Don't you wanna go up to your room?!

Barton stares at him.

Barton  
. . . What number is it?

The clerk stares back.

Clerk  
. . . 605. I forgot to tell you.

As Barton stoops to pick up his two small bags:

. . . Those are your only bags?

Barton  
The others are being sent.

The clerk leans over the desk to call after him:

Clerk  
I'll keep an eye out for them. I'll keep my eyes  
peeled, Mr. Fink.

Barton is walking across the lobby to the elevator.

INT ELEVATOR

As Barton enters and sets down his bags.

An aged man with a white stubble, wearing a greasy maroon uniform, sits on a stool facing the floor panel. He does not acknowledge Barton's presence.

After a beat:

Barton  
Six please.

The elevator man gets slowly to his feet, still looking forward. As he unhooks the door and swings it shut:

## Elevator Man

Next stop: Six.

## INT HALLWAY

Looking down the length of the hallway towards the elevator as Barton walks slowly towards us, examining the room numbers on the doors.

The hallway is carpeted with an aged and stained forest green carpet. The walls are papered with faded, yellowing palm trees.

Barton sticks his key in the lock of a door midway down the hall.

## INT ROOM

As Barton enters.

The room is small and cheaply furnished. There are a lumpy bed with a puke-yellow coverlet, an old secretary table, and a wooden luggage stand. The walls have the same faded wallpaper as the hallway.

As Barton crosses the room the camera arcs around him revealing a sink and wash basin, a house telephone on a rickety night stand, and a window with yellowing sheers looking out on an airshaft and brick wall.

Barton throws his valise onto the bed, where it sinks into the bottomless mattress. He shrugs off his jacket.

Pips of sweat stand out on Barton's brow. The room is insufferably hot.

He walks across the room, switches on an oscillating fan, and struggles to throw open the window. After straining at it for a moment, it slides open with a great wrenching sound.

Barton picks up his Underwood and places it on the secretary table. He gives the machine a casually affectionate pat.

Next to the typewriter are a few sheets of the house stationary embossed with the legend: THE HOTEL EARLE: A DAY OR A LIFETIME.

The camera pans up to a picture in a cheap wooden frame on

the wall above the desk. A bathing beauty sits on the beach under a cobalt blue sky, one hand shielding her eyes from the sun, looking out at a crashing surf.

The sound of the surf mixes up on the track.

BACK TO BARTON

Looking at the picture.

TRACKING IN ON THE PICTURE

The surf mixes up louder. We hear a gull cry. The sound abruptly snaps off with the ring of a telephone.

THE HOUSE PHONE

On the nightstand next to the bed. With a great groan of the bedsprings Barton sits into frame and picks up the telephone.

Voice

How d'ya like your room!

Barton

. . . Who is this?

Chet

Chet!

Barton

. . . Who?

Chet

Chet! From Downstairs!!

Barton wearily rubs the bridge of his nose.

. . . How d'ya like your room!

A PILLOW

As Barton's head drops down into frame against it.

He reaches over and turns off the bedside light.

He lies back and closes his eyes.

A long beat.

We hear a faint hum, getting louder.

Barton opens his eyes.

BARTON'S POV

The naked, peeling ceiling.

The hum--a mosquito, perhaps--stops.

BACK TO BARTON

His eyes move this way and that. After a silent beat, he shuts them again.

After another silent beat we hear--muffled, probably from an adjacent room--a brief dying laugh. It is weary-sounding, like the end of a laughing fit, like a sob.

Silence again. We start to hear the rising mosquito hum.

FADE OUT

FROM BLACK WE CUT TO A WHITE SCREEN  
WHITE IN TO:

A white door opening in a white wall. The camera pulls back across a white carpet as Barton Fink is ushered into the room by an obsequious middle-aged man in a double-breasted suit. Barton has a number of mosquito bites on his face.

REVERSE

From behind a huge white desk an enormous, burly man in an expensive suit is getting to his feet and striding across the room. He addresses Barton's companion as if Barton is not in the room:

Man

Izzat him?! Izzat Barton Fink?!. . . Lemme put  
my arms around this guy!

He wraps his burly arms around Barton in an affectionate hug.



. . . How the hell are ya? Good trip?

He separates without waiting for an answer.

My name is Jack Lipnik. I run this dump. You know that--you read the papers.

Lipnik is already walking back to his desk.

Lou treating you all right? Got everything you need? What the hell's the matter with your face?

Barton

It's not as bad as it looks; just a mosquito in my room--

Lipnik

Place okay?

To Lou:

. . . Where did we put him?

Barton

I'm at the Earle.

Lipnik

Never heard of it. Let's move him to the Grand, or the Wilshire, or hell, he can stay at my place.

Barton

Thanks, but I wanted a place that was less. . .

Lipnik

Less Hollywood? Sure, say it, it's not a dirty word. Say whatever the hell you want. The writer is king here at Capitol Pictures. You don't believe me, take a look at your paycheck at the end of every week--that's what we think of the writer.

To Lou:

. . . So what kind of pictures does he like?

Lou

Mr. Fink hasn't given a preference, Mr. Lipnik.

Lipnik

How's about it, Bart? Say whatever you want.

Barton

To be honest, I don't go to the pictures much,  
Mr. Lipnik--

Lipnik

That's okay, that's okay, that's okay--that's just fine. You probably walked in here thinking that was gonna be a handicap, thinkin' we wanted people who knew something about the medium. Maybe even thinking there was all kinds of technical mumbo-jumbo to learn. You were dead wrong. We're only interested in one thing: Can you tell a story, Bart? Can you make us laugh, can you make us cry? Can you make us wanna break out in joyous song? Is that more than one thing? Okay. The point is, I run this dump and I don't know the technical mumbo-jumbo. Why do I run it? I've got horse sense, goddamnit. Showmanship. And also, and I hope Lou told you this, I'm bigger and meaner and louder than any other kike in this town. Did you tell him that, Lou? And I don't mean my dick's bigger than yours, it's not a sexual thing--although you're the writer, you would know more about that. Coffee?

Barton

Yes. Thank you.

Lipnik

Lou.

Lou immediately rises and leaves.

. . . He used to have shares in the company. An ownership interest. Got bought out in the twenties--muscled out according to some. Hell, according to me. So we keep him around, he's got a family. Poor schmuck. He's sensitive, don't mention the old days. Oh hell, say whatever you want. Look, barring a preference, Bart, we're gonna put you to work on a wrestling picture. Wallace Beery. I say this because they tell me you know the poetry of the street. That would rule out westerns, pirate pictures, screwball, Bible, Roman. . .

He rises and starts pacing.

. . . But look, I'm not one of these guys thinks poetic has gotta be fruity. We're together on that, aren't we? I mean I'm from New York myself--well, Minsk if you wanna go way back,

which we won't if you don't mind, and I ain't askin'. Now, people're gonna tell you, wrestling, Wallace Beery, it's a B picture. You tell them, bullshit. We don't make B pictures at Capitol. Let's put a stop to that rumor right now. . .

Lou enters with coffee.

. . . Thanks Lou. Join us. Join us. Talking about the Wallace Beery picture.

Lou  
Excellent picture.

Lipnik  
We got a treatment on it yet?

Lou  
No, not yet Jack. We just bought the story. Saturday Evening Post.

Lipnik  
Okay, forget the story. Wallace Beery is a wrestler. I wanna know his hopes, his dreams. Naturally, he'll have to get mixed up with a bad element. And a romantic interest. You know the drill. Romantic interest, or else a young kid. An orphan. What do you think, Lou? Wally a little too old for a romantic interest? Look at me, a writer in the room and I'm askin' Lou what the goddamn story should be!

He throws his head back and laughs.

. . . Well, Bart, which is it? Orphan? Dame?

Barton  
. . . Both, maybe?

There is an uncomfortable silence. Lipnik, vaguely disappointed, looks at Lou.

Lou clears his throat.

Lou  
. . . Maybe we should do a treatment.

Lipnik  
Ah, hell, let Bart take a crack at it. He'll get into the swing of things, or I don't know writers. Let's make it a dame, Bart--keep it

simple. We don't gotta tackle the world our first time out! The important thing is, we all want it to have that Barton Fink feeling. I guess we all have that Barton Fink feeling, but since you're Barton Fink I'm assuming you have it in spades. Seriously Bart, I like you. We're off to a good start. Damn it, if all our writers were like you I wouldn't have to get so goddamn involved. I'd like to see something by the end of the week.

Lou is getting to his feet and signaling for Barton to do likewise.

. . . Heard about your show, by the way. My man in New York saw it. Tells me it was pretty damn powerful. Pretty damn moving. A little fruity, he said, but I guess you know what you're doing. Thank you for your heart. We need more heart in pictures. We're all expecting great things.

CUT TO:  
TRACKING SHOT

Down the sixth-floor hallway of the Earle, late at night. In front of each door sits a pair of shoes. Faintly, from one of the rooms, we can hear the clack. clack. clack. of a typewriter.

It grows louder as we track.

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT

On the section of typewriter roller where the keys strike. One by one, the following letters clack on: a--u--d--i--b--l--e. After a short beat, a period strikes.

ON BARTON

Elbows on his desk, looking at what he has just written. Sweat stands out on his face in the heat of the hotel room. He looks over at the window.

HIS POV

Not even the faintest breeze rustles the yellowing sheers.

BACK TO BARTON

He looks for a long beat, then rolls the paper up a few lines and looks some more.

HIS POV

The page. It says:

FADE IN

A tenement building on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Early morning traffic is audible.

ON BARTON

Looking. After a beat he rolls the sheet back into place.

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT

The letter-strike area. It is lined up to the period, which is struck over by a comma. Then the words "as is" and we cut back to--

BARTON

--as he continues typing. He stops after several more characters and looks.

Silence.

Breaking the silence, muffled laughter from an adjacent room. A man's laughter. No audible cue motivated the laughter, and it has a weary, continuous quality that makes it sound neither particularly amused nor even natural.

Barton looks up at the wall directly in front of him.

HIS POV

The picture of the girl on the beach.

BARTON

Still looking. The laughter--or whatever it is--continues.

Barton looks back down at his typewriter, as if to continue, but the sound is too insistent for him to ignore.

WIDE SHOT

The room, Barton sitting at his desk, staring at the wall.

The laughter continues.

Barton pushes his chair back, goes to the door, opens it and looks out.

HIS POV

The empty hallway, a pair of shoes sitting on the floor in front of each door. At the end of the hall a dim red bulb burns over the door to the staircase, punctuating the sick yellow glow from the line of wall sconces.

The laughter, though still faint, is more resonant in the empty hall.

Perhaps because its quality has changed, or perhaps simply because it is so insistent, the laughter now sounds more like sobbing.

Barton pauses, trying to interpret the sound. He slowly withdraws into his room.

INT ROOM

Barton looks down at his typewriter for a beat. The laughter/weeping continues.

He walks over to his bed, sits down, and picks up the house phone.

Barton

Hello, uh. . . Chet? This is Barton Fink in room 605. Yes, there's uh, there's someone in the room next door to mine, 604, and he's uh. . . He's uh. . . making a lot of. . . noise.

After a beat:

. . . Thank you.

He cradles the phone. The laughter continues for a moment

or two, then abruptly stops with the muffled sound of the telephone ringing next door.

Barton looks at the wall.

The muffled sound of a man talking.

The sound of the earpiece being pronged. A short beat, then:

Muffled footsteps next door.

The sound of the door opening and shutting.

Footsteps approaching in the hallway.

A hard, present, knock at his door.

Barton hesitates. He looks at the phone for a beat, then rises and goes to the door.

#### ON THE DOOR

As he opens it. Standing in the hall is a large man--a very large man--in shirt sleeves, suspenders and loosened tie. His face is slightly flushed, with the beginnings of a sweat.

Man

Did you. . . somebody just complained. . .

Hastily:

Barton

No, I didn't--I mean, I did call down, not to complain exactly, I was just concerned that you might--not that it's my business, but that you might be in some kind of. . . distress. You see, I was trying to work, and it's, well it was difficult--

Man

Yeah. I'm damn sorry, if I bothered you. The damn walls here, well, I just apologize like hell. . .

He sticks his hand out.

. . . My name's Charlie Meadows. I guess we're neighbors.

Without reaching for his hand:

Barton

Barton Fink.

Unfazed, Charlie Meadows unpockets a flask.

Charlie

Neighbor, I'd feel better about the damned inconvenience if you'd let me buy you a drink.

Barton

That's all right, really, thank you.

Charlie

All right hell, you trying to work and me carrying on in there. Look, the liquor's good, wuddya say?

As he enters:

. . . You got a glass? It's the least I can do.

Barton

Okay. . . a quick one, sure. . .

He is getting two glasses from the wash basin.

Charlie sits down on the edge of the bed and uncorks the flask.

Charlie

Yeah, just a nip. I feel like a heel, all the carryings-on next door.

Barton

That's okay, I assure you. It's just that I was trying to work--

Charlie

What kind of work you do, Barton, if you don't mind my asking?

Barton

Well, I'm a writer actually.

Charlie

You don't say. That's a tough racket. My hat's off to anyone can make a go of it. Damned interesting work, I'd imagine.



Barton  
Can be. Not easy, but--

Charlie  
Damned difficult, I'd imagine.

As he hands Charlie a glass.

Barton  
And what's your line, Mr. Meadows?

Charlie  
Hell no! Call me Charlie. Well Barton, you might say I sell peace of mind. Insurance is my game--door-to-door, human contact, still the only way to move the merchandise.

He fills a glass with whiskey and swaps it for the empty glass with Barton.

. . . In spite of what you might think from tonight, I'm pretty good at it.

Barton  
Doesn't surprise me at all.

Charlie  
Hell yes. Because I believe in it. Fire, theft and casualty are not things that only happen to other people--that's what I tell 'em.

He takes a sip of his drink.

. . . Writing doesn't work out, you might wanna look into it. Providing for a basic human need-- a fella could do worse.

Barton  
Thanks, I'll keep it in mind.

Charlie  
What kind of scribbler are ya--newspaperman did you say?

Barton  
No actually, I'm writing for the pictures now--

Charlie  
Pictures! Jesus!

He guffaws.

. . . I'm sorry, brother, I was just sitting here thinking I was talking to some ambitious youngster, eager to make good. Hell, you've got it made! Writing for pictures! Beating out that competition! And me being patronizing!

He gestures towards his face:

. . . Is the egg showing or what?!

Barton

That's okay, actually I am just starting out in the movies--though I was pretty well established in New York, some renown there--

Shaking his head:

Charlie

Oh, its an exciting time then. I'm not the best-read mug on the planet so I guess its no surprise I didn't recognize your name. Jesus, I feel like a heel.

For the first time Barton smiles.

Barton

That's okay, Charlie. I'm a playwright. My shows've only played New York. Last one got a hell of a write-up in the Herald. I guess that's why they wanted me here.

Charlie

Hell, why not? Everyone wants quality. What kind of venue, that is to say, thematically, uh.

. . .

Barton

What do I write about?

Charlie laughs.

Charlie

Caught me trying to be fancy! Yeah, that's it, Bart.

Barton looks at Charlie intently over his glass..

Barton

Well, that's a good question. . . Strange as it may seem, Charlie, I guess I write about people like you. The average working stiff. The common man. . .

Charlie

Well ain't that a kick in the head!

Barton reaches for Charlie's flask and pours himself another drink.

Barton

Yeah, I guess it is. But in a way that's exactly the point. There's a few people in New York-- hopefully our numbers are growing--who feel we have an opportunity now to forge something real out of everyday experience. Create a theatre for the masses that's based on a few simple truths-- not on some shopworn abstractions about drama that don't hold true today, if they ever did. . .

He gazes at Charlie.

. . . I don't guess this means much to you.

Charlie

Hell, I could tell you some stories--

Barton

And that's the point, that we all have stories. The hopes and dreams of the common man are as noble as those of any king. It's the stuff of life--why shouldn't it be the stuff of theater? Goddamnit, why should that be a hard pill to swallow? Don't call it new theater, Charlie; call it real theater. Call it our theatre.

Charlie

I can see you feel pretty strongly about it.

Barton

Well, I don't mean to get up on my high horse, but why shouldn't we look at ourselves up there? Who cares about the Fifth Earl of Bastrop and Lady Higginbottom and--and--and who killed Nigel Grinch-Gibbons?

Charlie

I can feel my butt getting sore already.

Barton

Exactly, Charlie! You understand what I'm saying--a lot more than some of these literary types. Because you're a real man!

Charlie

And I could tell you some stories--

Barton

Sure you could! And yet many writers do everything in their power to insulate themselves from the common man--from where they live, from where they trade, from where they fight and love and converse and--and. . . so naturally their work suffers, and regresses into empty formalism and--well, I'm spouting off again, but to put it in your language, the theater becomes as phony as a three-dollar bill.

Charlie

Yeah, I guess that's a tragedy right there.

Barton

Frequently played, seldom remarked.

Charlie laughs.

Charlie

Whatever that means.

Barton smiles with him.

Barton

You're all right, Charlie. I'm glad you stopped by. I'm sorry if I--well I know sometimes I run on.

Charlie

Hell no! Jesus, I'm the kind of guy, I'll let you know if I'm bored. I find it all pretty damned interesting. I'm the kind of schmoë who's generally interested in the other guy's point of view.

Barton

Well we've got something in common then.

Charlie is getting to his feet and walking to the door.

Charlie

Well Christ, if there's any way I can contribute, or help or whatever--

Barton laughs and extends his hand.

Barton

Sure, sure--Charlie, you can help by just being yourself.

Charlie  
Well I can tell you some stories.

He pumps Barton's hand, then turns and pauses in the doorway.

. . . And look, I'm sorry as hell about the interruption. Too much revelry late at night, you forget there are other people in the world.

Barton  
See you, Charlie.

Charlie closes the door and is gone.

Barton goes back to his desk and sits.

Muffled, we can hear the door of the adjacent room opening and closing.

Barton looks at the wall.

HIS POV

The bathing beauty.

From offscreen we hear a sticky, adhesive-giving-way sound.

BARTON

He looks around to the opposite--bed--wall.

HIS POV

The wallpaper is lightly sheened with moisture from the heat.

One swath of wallpaper is just finishing sagging away from the wall. About three feet of the wall, where it meets the ceiling, is exposed.

The patch of wallpaper, its glue apparently melted, sags and nods above the bed. It glistens yellow, like a fleshy tropical flower.

BACK TO BARTON

He rises and goes over to the bed. He steps up onto the

bed and smooths the wallpaper back up against the wall.

He looks at his hand.

HIS POV

On his hand is some of the tacky yellow wall sweat.

He wipes it on his shirt.

We hear a faint mosquito hum.

Barton looks around.

FADE OUT

WHITE IN:

On a typewriter, whirring at high speed. The rapid-fire clacking of the keys slowly mixes up. The keys strike so fast we cannot decipher the words.

SLOW TRACK IN

On Barton, sitting on a couch in the anteroom to an office, staring blankly across the room. As we move in the rapid-fire clack of the typewriter grows louder. Distant phones ring. Barton's eyes are tired and bloodshot.

HIS POV

An attractive secretary with bobbed hair sits at a desk typing a document.

The office door opens in the background and a short middle-aged man in a dark suit emerges. This is Ben Geisler.

To his secretary:

Geisler  
I'm eating on the lot today. . .

He notices Barton.

. . . Who's he?

The secretary looks over from her typing to consult a slip

of paper on her desk.

Secretary  
Barton Fink, Mr. Geisler.

Geisler  
More please.

Barton  
I'm a writer, Mr. Geisler. Ted Okum said I should drop by this morning to see you about the--

Geisler  
Ever act?

Barton  
. . . Huh? No, I'm--

Geisler  
We need Indians for a Norman Steele western.

Barton  
I'm a writer. Ted O--

Geisler  
Think about it, Fink. Writers come and go; we always need Indians.

Barton  
I'm a writer. Ted Okum said you're producing this Wallace Beery picture I'm working on.

Geisler  
What!? Ted Okum doesn't know shit. They've assigned me enough pictures for a goddamn year. What Ted Okum doesn't know you could almost squeeze into the Hollywood Bowl.

Barton  
Then who should I talk to?

Geisler gives him an unfriendly look. He blows out air and, without looking around at her, addresses the secretary.

Geisler  
. . . Get me Lou Breeze.

He perches on the edge of the desk, an open hand out towards the secretary, as he stares wordlessly at Barton.

After a moment:

Secretary  
Is he in for Mr. Geisler?

She puts the phone in Geisler's hand.

Geisler  
Lou? . . . Yeah. How's Lipnik's ass smell this morning? . . . Yeah? . . . Yeah? . . . Yeah? . . .  
Okay, the reason I'm calling, I got a writer here, Fink, seriously confused. Says I'm producing that Wallace Beery wrestling picture. What'm I, the goddamn janitor around here? . . . Yeah, well who'd you get that from? . . . Yeah, well tell Lipnik he can kiss my dimpled ass. . . Shit! No, all right. . . No, no, all right.

Without looking he reaches the phone back. The secretary takes it from him and cradles it.

. . . Okay kid, let's chow.

COMMISSARY

Barton and Geisler sit eating at a semicircular booth.

Through a mouthful of food:

Geisler  
Don't worry about it. It's just a B picture. I bring it in on budget, they'll book it without even screening it. Life is too short.

Barton  
But Lipnik said he wanted to look at the script, see something by the end of the week.

Geisler  
Sure he did. And he forgot about it before your ass left his sofa.

Barton  
Okay. I'm just having trouble getting started. It's funny, I'm blocked up. I feel like I need some kind of indication of. . . what's expected--

Geisler  
Wallace Beery. Wrestling picture. What do you need, a road map?



Geisler chews on his cottage cheese and looks at Barton.

. . . Look, you're confused? You need guidance?  
Talk to another writer.

Barton

Who?

Geisler is rising and throwing his napkin down onto his plate.

Geisler

Jesus, throw a rock in here, you'll hit one. And  
do me a favor, Fink. Throw it hard.

#### COMMISSARY MEN'S ROOM

Barton stands at a urinal.

He stares at the wall in front of him as he pees. After a moment, he cocks his head, listening.

We hear throat clearing, as if by a tenor preparing for a difficult passage. It is followed by the gurgling rush of vomit.

Barton zips up and turns to face the stalls.

There is more businesslike throat clearing.

Barton stoops.

#### HIS POV

Booming down to show the blue serge pants and well-polished shoes of the stall's kneeling occupant.

A white handkerchief has been spread on the floor to protect the trouser knees.

The toilet flushes. The man is rising, picking his handkerchief off the floor and giving it an efficient flap.

#### BARTON

Quickly straightens and goes to the sink. He starts washing his hands. We hear the stall door being unlatched.

Barton glances over his shoulder.

HIS POV

The stall door opening.

BARTON

Quickly, self-consciously, he looks back down at his hands.

HIS POV

His hands in the white porcelain sink, writhing under the running water. We hear footsteps approaching on tile.

BARTON

Forcing himself to look at his hands. His face is shadowed as the man reaches the adjacent sink and turns on the tap.

Barton can't help glancing up.

THE MAN

A dapper little man in a neat blue serge suit. He has warm brown eyes, a patrician nose and a salt-and-pepper mustache. He smiles pleasantly at Barton.

BARTON

He gives a nervous smile that is more like a tic, and looks back down at his hands. We hear the the man gargling water and spitting into the sink.

After a moment, Barton looks back up again.

THE MAN

Reacting to Barton's look as he washes his hands. This time a curt nod accompanies his pleasant smile.

BARTON

looks back down, then up again.

THE MAN

extends a dripping hand.

MAN

Bill Mayhew. Sorry about the odor.

His voice is softly accented, from the South.

Barton

Barton Fink.

They shake, then return to their ablutions.

We hold on Barton as we hear Mayhew's faucet being turned off and his footsteps receding. For some reason, Barton's eyes are widening.

Barton

Jesus. W. P.!

The dapper little man stops and turns.

Mayhew

I beg your pardon?

Barton

W. P. Mayhew? The writer?

Mayhew

Just Bill, please.

Barton stands with his back to the sink, facing the little man, his hands dripping on the floor. There is a short pause. Barton is strangely agitated, his voice halting but urgent.

Barton

Bill! . . .

Mayhew cocks his head with a politely patient smile.

Finally Barton brings out:

. . . You're the finest novelist of our time.

Mayhew leans against a stall.

Mayhew

Why thank you, son, how kind. Bein' occupied here in the worship of Mammon, I haven't had a chance yet to see your play--

He smiles at Barton's surprise.

. . . Yes, Mistuh Fink, some of the news reaches us in Hollywood.

He is taking out a flask and unscrewing its lid.

Barton

Sir, I'm flattered that you even recognize my name. My God, I had no idea you were in Hollywood.

Mayhew

All of us undomesticated writers eventually make our way out here to the Great Salt Lick. Mebbe that's why I allus have such a powerful thust.

He clears his throat, takes a quick swig from the flask and proffers it to Barton.

. . . A little social lubricant, Mistuh Fink?

Barton

It's still a little early for me.

Mayhew

So be it. I m'self've always subscribed to the saw, never put off until tomorrow. . .

He knocks back a swig.

Barton

. . . Bill, if I'm imposing you should say so, I know you're very busy--I just, uh. . . I just wonder if I could ask you a favor. . . That is to say, uh . . . have you ever written a wrestling picture?

Mayhew eyes him appraisingly, then clears his throat.

Mayhew

. . . You are drippin', suh.

Barton looks down at his hands, then pulls a rough brown paper towel from a dispenser.  
Mayhew sighs.

. . . Mistuh Fink, they have not invented a genre of picture that Bill Mayhew has not, at one time or othuh, been invited to essay. I have taken my stabs at the wrestlin' form, as I have stabbed at so many others, and with as little success. I

gather that you are a freshman here, eager for an upperclassman's council. However, just at the moment. . .

He waves his flask.

. . . I have drinkin' to do. Why don't you stop by my bungalow, which is numbuh fifteen, later this afternoon. . .

He turns to leave.

. . . and we will discuss wrastlin' scenarios and other things lit'rary.

CUT TO:  
THE NUMBER "15"

We are close on the number tacked up in brass on a white door. The door is bathed in warm yellow light from the setting sun.

Muted, from inside, we hear Mayhew's voice--enraged, bellowing. We hear things breaking. Softer, we hear a woman's voice, its tone placating.

REVERSE TRACKING SLOWLY IN

on Barton, standing in front of the door.

The noise abates for a moment. We hear the woman's voice again.

Barton hesitates, listening; he thinks, decides, knocks.

With this the woman's voice stops, and Mayhew starts wailing again.

The door cracks open.

The woman's face is somewhat puffy, as if she has been crying, though she is not now.

Woman

. . . Can I help you?

Barton

I'm sorry, I. . . My name is Fink . . . Uh, Bill asked me to drop by this afternoon. Is he in?

Woman

Mr. Mayhew is indisposed at the moment--

From inside the bungalow we hear Mayhew's wail.

Mayhew

HONEY!! WHERE'S M'HONEY!!

The woman glances uncomfortably over her shoulder and steps outside, closing the door behind her.

Woman

Mr. Fink, I'm Audrey Taylor. Mr. Mayhew's personal secretary. I know this all must sound horrid. I really do apologize. . .

Through the door Mayhew is still wailing piteously.

Barton

Is, uh. . . Is he okay?

Audrey

He will be. . . When he can't write, he drinks.

Mayhew

WHERE ARE YOU, DAMNIT! WHERE'S M'HONEY!!

She brushes a wisp of hair out of her eyes, and darts a quick glance back at the door.

Audrey

I am sorry, it's so embarrassing.

Barton

How about you? Will you be all right?

Audrey

I'll be fine. . . Are you a writer, Mr. Fink?

Barton

Barton. Yes, I am. I'm working on a wres--

Audrey

You won't mention this to anyone?

Behind her in the bungalow we hear the sound of objects breaking and a body being hurled against a wall.

Barton

No, uh. . . of course not--

Audrey reaches out and touches Barton's hand.

Audrey  
I'll tell Bill you dropped by. I'm sure he'll  
want to reschedule your appointment.

Barton  
Perhaps you and I could get together at some  
point also. I'm sorry if that sounds abrupt. I  
just. . . I don't know anyone here in town.

Audrey smiles at him.

Audrey  
Perhaps the three of us, Mr. Fink.

Barton  
Please, Barton.

Audrey  
Barton. You see, Barton, I'm not just Bill's  
secretary--Bill and I are. . . in love. We--

Mayhew's Voice  
M'HONEY!! WHERE'S M'HONEY!!

Audrey glances back as we hear the sound of shattering  
dishes and heavy footsteps.

Barton  
I see.

Audrey  
. . . I know this must look. . . Funny.

Barton  
No, no--

Hurriedly:

Audrey  
We need each other. We give each other. . . the  
things we need--

Voice  
M'HONEY!! . . . bastard-ass sons of bitches. . .  
the water's lappin' up. . . M'HONEY!!

Audrey  
I'm sorry, Mr. Fink. Please don't judge us.  
Please. . .

Flustered and at a loss for what to add, she closes the  
door.

CUT TO:  
CLOSE ON A SMALL WRAPPED PACKAGE

Hand-printed on the package is the message: Hope these will turn the trick, Mr. Fink. --Chet!

The wrapping is torn away and the small box is opened.

Two thumbtacks are taken out.

BARTON'S HOTEL ROOM

Late at night. On the wall behind the bed, the swatch of wallpaper has sagged away from the wall again, and has been joined by the swatch next to it, which droops back almost to the bed.

Barton enters frame and steps up onto the bed.

He smooths up the first swatch and pushes in a thumbtack near the top.

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT

On the tack. As Barton applies pressure to push it in, tacky yellow goo oozes out of the puncture hole and beads around the tack.

ON BARTON

Smoothing up the second swatch.

As he pushes in the second tack he pauses, listening.

Muffled, through the wall, we can hear a woman crying--or moaning.

After a motionless beat, Barton slowly eases his ear against the wall.

CLOSE ON BARTON

As his ear meets the wall.

The woman's moaning sounds like sex. We hear the creaking of bed springs, then a dull thump, like a body or bodies hitting the floor. The moaning begins again, growing louder and more urgent. We hear her partner: "Shhh! . . ."



Shhh!"

Barton gets down off the bed and crosses to the secretary, where he sits. He stares at the paper in the carriage.

HIS POV

The blank part of the page around the key-strike area, under the metal prongs that hold the paper down.

We begin to hear moaning again.

BACK TO BARTON

Still looking; sweating.

HIS POV

Tracking in on the paper, losing the prongs from frame so that we are looking at the pure unblemished white of the page.

With the track in the moaning is growing louder, almost deafening.

It is cut short by two sharp knocks.

THE DOOR

As it swings open.

Charlie Meadows stands in the doorway, smiling.

Charlie

Howdy, neighbor.

Barton

Charlie. How are you.

Charlie rubs his left ear and looks over Barton's shoulder at the typewriter.

Charlie

Jesus, I hope I'm not interrupting you again. I heard you walking around in here. Figured I'd drop by.

Barton

Yeah, come in Charlie. Hadn't really gotten started yet--what happened to your ear?

--for Charlie's left ear is plugged up with cotton wadding.  
As he enters:

Charlie

Oh, yeah. An ear infection, chronic thing. Goes away for a while but it always comes back. Gotta put cotton in it to staunch the flow of pus. Don't worry, its not contagious.

Barton

Seen a doctor?

Charlie gives a dismissive wave.

Charlie

Ah, doctors. What's he gonna tell me? Can't trade my head in for a new one.

Barton

No, I guess you're stuck with the one you got. C'mon in.

Charlie crosses over to perch on the corner of the bed.

Charlie

Thanks. I'd invite you over to my place but it's a goddamn mess. You married, Bart?

Barton

Nope.

Charlie

I myself have yet to be lassoed.

Charlie is taking his flask out.

. . . Got a sweetheart?

Barton

No. . . I guess it's something about my work. I get so worked up over it, I don't know; I don't really have a lot of attention left over, so it would be a little unfair. . .

Charlie

Yeah, the ladies do ask for attention. In my experience, they pretend to give it, but it's generally a smoke-screen for demanding it back--

with interest. How about family, Bart? How're you fixed in that department?

Barton smiles.

Barton  
My folks live in Brooklyn, with my uncle.

Charlie  
Mine have passed on. It's just the three of us now. . .

He taps himself on the head, chuckling.

. . . What's the expression--me, myself, and I.

Barton  
Sure, that's tough, but in a sense, we're all alone in the world aren't we, Charlie? I'm often surrounded by family and friends, but. . . I gotta tell you, the life of the mind--it can get lonely.

Charlie  
Mm, I'd imagine. . .

He looks at Barton steadily as Barton hands him one of the glasses from the bathroom.

. . . You're no stranger to loneliness, then. I guess I got no beef; especially where the dames are concerned. In my line of work, I get opportunities galore--always on the wing, you know what I'm saying. I could tell you stories to curl your hair--but it looks like you've already heard 'em!

He digs in his pocket, laughing at his witticism concerning Barton's curly hair, and pulls a dog-eared photograph from his wallet. Handing it to Barton:

. . . That's me in Kansas City, plying my trade.

#### CLOSE ON THE PHOTO

Charlie stands, smiling and waving, next to a 1939 roadster, one foot up on the running board. A battered leather briefcase dangles from one hand.

Charlie  
. . . It was taken by one of my policy holders.

They're more than just customers to me, Barton. They really appreciate what I offer them. Ya see, her hubby was out of town at the time--

Barton

You know, in a way, I envy you Charlie. Your daily routine--you know what's expected. You know the drill. My job is to plumb the depths, so to speak, dredge something up from inside, something honest. There's no road map for that territory. . .

He takes a drink and looks from Charlie to the Underwood.

. . . And exploring it can be painful. The kind of pain most people don't know anything about.

He looks back at Charlie.

. . . This must be boring you.

Charlie

Not at all. It's damned interesting.

Barton

Yeah. . .

He gives a sad chuckle.

. . . Probably sounds a little grand from someone who's writing a wrestling picture for Wallace Beery.

Charlie

Beery! You got no beef there! He's good. Hell of an actor--though, for my money, you can't beat Jack Oakie. Any chance they'll give you one of his?

Barton

Don't know, really.

Charlie

A stitch, Oakie. Funny stuff, funny stuff. But don't get me wrong--Beery, a wrestling picture, that could be a pip. Wrestled some myself back in school. I guess you know the basic moves.

Barton

Nope, never even watched any. I'm not that interested in the act itself--

Charlie

Okay, but hell, you should know what it is. I can show you the wrestling basics in about thirty seconds--

He is getting down on his hands and knees.

. . . You're a little out of your weight class, but just for the purposes of demonstration. . .

Barton

That's all right, really--

Charlie

Not a bit of it, compadre! Easiest thing in the world! You just get down on your knees to my left, slap your right hand here. . .

He indicates his own right bicep.

. . . and your left hand here.

He indicates his own left bicep.

Barton hesitates.

. . . You can do it, champ!

Barton complies.

. . . All right now, when I say "Ready. . . wrestle!" you try and pin me, and I try and pin you. That's the whole game. Got it?

Barton

Yeah, okay.

Charlie looks back over his shoulder expectantly.

Charlie

Ready. . . wrestle!

Barton leans into the big man trying to pull his beefy arm off the floor, but can't budge him. Suddenly with one clean move Meadows flips Barton over his back, flat onto his own back on the floor, where his head and shoulders hit with a thump. He pins Barton's shoulders with his own upper body.

But before the move even seems completed Charlie is standing, offering his hand to Barton.

Charlie  
Damn, there I go again. We're gonna wake the  
downstairs neighbors. I didn't hurt ya, did I?

Barton seems a bit dazed, but not put out.

Barton  
It's okay, it's okay.

Charlie  
Well, that's all wrestling is. Except usually  
there's more grunting and squirming before the  
pin. Well, it's your first time. And you're out  
of your weight class.

Barton has propped himself up and is painfully massaging  
the back of his head.

This registers on Charlie.

. . . Jesus, I did hurt you!

He clomps hurriedly away.

. . . I'm just a big, clumsy lug. I sure do  
apologize.

We hear water running, and Charlie reenters with a wet  
towel.

Barton accepts the towel and presses it to his head.

. . . You sure you're okay?

Barton is getting to his feet.

Barton  
I'm fine, Charlie. Really I am. Actually its  
been helpful, but I guess I should get to work.

Charlie looks at him with some concern, then turns and  
walks towards the door.

Charlie  
Well, it wasn't fair of me to do that. I'm  
pretty well endowed physically.

He opens the door.

. . . Don't feel bad, though. I wouldn't be much  
of a match for you at mental gymnastics.

He chuckles good-naturedly.

. . . Gimme a holler if you need anything.

The door closes and he is gone.

Barton crosses to the secretary and sits down, rubbing the back of his head. He rolls up the carriage and looks at the page in the typewriter.

HIS POV

The page.

FADE IN

A tenement building on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Early morning traffic is audible, as is the cry of the fish mongers.

BACK TO BARTON

He rubs the back of his head, wincing slightly, as he stares at the page.

His gaze drifts up.

HIS POV

The bathing beauty on the beach.

BARTON

Looking at the picture. He presses the heels of his hands against his ears.

HIS POV

The bathing beauty. Faint, but building, is the sound of the surf.

BARTON

Head cocked. The surf is mixing into another liquid sound. He looks sharply around.

**THE BATHROOM**

As Barton enters.

The sink, which Charlie apparently left running when he wet the towel, is overflowing.

Water spills onto the tile floor.

Barton hurriedly shuts off the tap, rolls up one sleeve and reaches into the sink.

As his hand emerges, holding something, we hear the unclogged sink gulping water.

**BARTON'S HAND**

Holding a dripping wad of cotton.

**BARTON**

After a brief, puzzled look he realizes where the cotton came from--and convulsively flips it away.

He looks down at the water, still dripping from the sink onto the tiled floor.

FADE OUT

**WHITE IN:**

On the white title page of a book:

**NEBUCHADNEZER**

By

W.P. Mayhew

A hand enters with pen to inscribe it, shifting the page slightly as a golden light washes across it.

To Barton--

May this little entertainment divert you in your sojourn among the Philistines.

--Bill



The book is closed and picked up.

WIDER

As--thoomp!--the very heavy volume is deposited across the table, in front of Barton, by Mayhew.

Barton, Mayhew, and Audrey are seated around a white-painted metal faux-picnic table. It is one of a few tables littering the lot of a small stucco open-air hamburger stand.

It is peaceful early evening. The last of the sunlight slopes down through palm trees. Barton, Mayhew, and Audrey are the only customers at the stand. Mayhew's black Ford stands alone at the edge of the lot.

Mayhew leans back in his chair, closing his eyes.

Mayhew

If I close m'eyes I can almost smell the live oak.

Audrey

That's hamburger grease, Bill.

Mayhew

Well, m'olfactory's turnin' womanish on me--lyin' and deceitful. . .

His eyes still closed, he waves a limp hand gently in the breeze.

. . . Still, I must say. I haven't felt a peace like this since the grand productive days. Don't you find it so, Barton? Ain't writin' peace?

Barton

Well. . . actually, no Bill. . .

Barton looks nervously at Audrey before continuing.

. . . No, I've always found that writing comes from a great inner pain. Maybe it's a pain that comes from a realization that one must do something for one's fellow man--to help somehow to ease his suffering. Maybe it's a personal pain. . . At any rate, I don't believe good work is possible without it.

Mayhew

Mm. Wal, me. . . I just enjoy makin' things up. Yessir. Escape. . . It's when I can't write, can't escape m'self, that I want to tear m'head off and run screamin' down the street with m'balls in a fruitpicker's pail. Mm. . .

He sighs, and reaches for his bottle of Wild Turkey.

. . . Mebbe this'll help.

Audrey

That doesn't help anything, Bill.

Mayhew

On the contrary, m'honey, it's an absolutely invaluable writer's aid. Ask our friend Barton if he don't agree.

Barton puts down his hamburger and thoughtfully wipes his mouth with a napkin.

Barton

I don't know, Bill. I've never found it to help my writing.

Mayhew is starting to become testy.

Mayhew

I said the writer, son, I didn't say nothin' about the writing.

Barton

Then to hell with the writer. Think about the writing for a change--

Audrey, feeling the tension, jumps hastily in. She taps the book on the table.

Audrey

You should read this, Barton. I think it's Bill's finest, or among his finest anyway.

Mayhew looks at her narrowly.

Mayhew

So now I'm s'posed to roll over like an ol' bitch dog gettin' her belly scratched.

Audrey

Bill--

Barton  
 Look, maybe it's none of my business, but a man with your talent--don't you think your first obligation is to your gift? Shouldn't you be doing whatever you have to do to work again?

Mayhew  
 And what would that be, son?

Barton  
 I don't know exactly. . .

Mayhew snorts and takes another long draught of bourbon. Barton looks at Audrey.

. . . But I do know what you're doing with that drink. You're cutting yourself off from your gift, and from Audrey, and from your fellow man, and from everything your art is about.

Mayhew  
 No son, thisahere moonshine's got nothin' to do with shuttin' folks out. No, I'm usin' it to build somethin'.

Barton  
 What's that?

Mayhew  
 I'm buildin' a levee. Gulp by gulp, brick by brick. Raisin' up a levee to keep that ragin' river of manure from lappin' at m'door.

He drinks again, heftily, from the bottle, and extends it towards Barton.

. . . Start workin' now 'fore the monsoon hits.

Audrey  
 Maybe you better too, Barton. Before you get buried under his manure.

Mayhew chuckles gently.

Mayhew  
 M'honey feints with her tongue, but leads with her heart. She pretends to be impatient with me, Barton, but she'll put up with anything.

Audrey  
 Not anything, Bill. Don't test me.

Barton  
 You're lucky she puts up with as much as she  
 does.

Mayhew is getting to his feet.

Mayhew  
 Am I? Maybe to a schoolboy's eye. People who  
 know about the human heart, though, mebbe they'd  
 say, Bill over here, he gives his honey love, and  
 she pays him back with pity--the basest coin  
 there is.

Audrey's voice is tense with held-back tears:

Audrey  
 Stop it, Bill!

He wanders over to a corner of the lot between two palm  
 trees, still clutching his bottle, his back to Barton and  
 Audrey, and urinates into the grass. Behind him the sun  
 sets--a heavy orange ball.

He starts singing--loudly--"Old Black Joe."

Audrey walks over to him.

BARTON

Watching her go.

HIS POV

Audrey touches Mayhew's elbow. He looks at her, stops  
 singing, she murmurs something, and he bellows:

Mayhew  
 The truth, m'honey, is a tart that does not bear  
 scrut'ny.

She touches him again, murmuring something, and he suddenly  
 and wildly lashes out at her, knocking her to the ground.

Mayhew  
 (bellowing)  
 BREECH MY LEVEE AT YOUR PERIL!

BARTON

He rises.

AUDREY

Coming back to Barton.

MAYHEW

Stumbling off down the dusty road leading away from the hamburger stand, muttering to himself and waving his bottle of Wild Turkey.

Audrey

Let him go.

Barton

That son of a bitch. . . Don't get me wrong, he's a fine writer. . .

He looks down the road. Mayhew is a tiny, lone figure, weaving in the dust.

Mayhew

(distantly)

I'll jus' walk on down to the Pacific, and from there I'll. . . improvise.

Audrey is shivering slightly. Barton touches her.

Barton

Are you all right?

Very distantly we hear Mayhew bellowing:

Mayhew

. . . Silent upon a hill in Darien!

Suddenly she bursts into tears. Barton puts his arms around her and she leans in to him, burying herself in his shoulder.

Barton

Audrey, you can't put up with this.

Gradually she collects herself, wiping her tears. Barton still holds her.

Audrey

. . . Oh Barton, I feel so. . . sorry for him!

Barton  
 What? He's a son of a bitch!

Audrey  
 No, sometimes he just. . . well, he thinks about Estelle. His wife still lives in Fayetteville. She's. . . disturbed.

Barton  
 Really? . . .

He thinks about it for a moment, but then his anger returns.

. . . Well that doesn't excuse his behavior.

Audrey sighs, still brushing away her tears.

Audrey  
 He'll wander back when he's sober and apologize. He always does. . .

Barton  
 Okay, but that doesn't excuse his--

Audrey  
 Barton. . . Empathy--requires. . . understanding.

Barton  
 What. What don't I understand?

Audrey gazes at him.

MAYHEW

He is very distant now, weaving but somehow dignified in his light summer suit. "Old Black Joe" floats back to us in the twilight.

FADE OUT

CUT TO:  
 INT HOTEL ROOM NIGHT

From a high angle, tracking in on Barton.

The room is dark. Barton lies fully clothed, stretched out on the bed, asleep. The hum of the mosquito fades up from the stillness.

Suddenly Barton slaps his cheek. His eyes open, but he remains still. The hum fades up again.

Barton reaches over and turns on the bedside lamp, sitting up slightly in the bed. His eyes shift this way and that, waiting, listening.

The hum fades down to silence.

Barton's eyes sweep across to the far end of the room.

#### HIS POV

The typewriter sits on the secretary, a piece of paper rolled halfway through the carriage.

#### THE OSCILLATING FAN

As it is switched on and starts to hum. Barton's face enters frame, dripping sweat. He shuts his eyes in the warm draft.

He opens his eyes and looks across the room again.

#### HIS POV

The typewriter on the secretary. He enters frame and sits down in front of the Underwood.

#### HIS POV

Next to the typewriter are several crumpled pieces of paper.

The page in the carriage reads:

#### FADE IN

A tenement hotel on the Lower East Side. We can faintly hear the cry of the fishmongers. It is too early for us to hear traffic; later, perhaps, we will.

#### BACK TO BARTON

Looking down at the page.

**CLOSE ON BARTON'S FEET**

Swinging in the legwell.

One foot idly swings over to nudge a pair of nicely shined brogans from where they rest, under the secretary, into the legwell.

We hear typing start.

**THE PAGE**

A new paragraph being started: "A large man. . ."

**BARTON'S FEET**

As he slides them into the shoes.

**THE PAGE**

"A large man in tights. . ."

The typing stops.

**BARTON**

Looking quizzically at the page. What's wrong?

**HIS FEET**

Sliding back and forth--swimming--in his shoes. The shoes are several sizes too large.  
We hear a knock at the door.

**BARTON**

As he rises and answers the door.

Charlie stands smiling in the doorway, holding a pair of nicely shined brogans.

Charlie  
I hope these are your shoes.

Barton  
Hi Charlie.



Charlie

Because that would mean they gave you mine.

Barton

Yeah, as a matter of fact they did. Come on in.

The two stocking-footed men go into the room, where Barton reaches under the secretary for the shoes.

Charlie

Jesus what a day I had. Ever have one of those days?

Barton

Seems like nothing but, lately.

Charlie is perching on the edge of the bed.

Charlie

Jesus what a day. Felt like I couldn't've sold icewater in the Sahara. Jesus. Okay, so you don't want insurance, so okay, that's your loss. But God, people can be rude. Feel like I have to talk to a normal person like you just to restore a little of my. . .

Barton

Well, my pleasure. I could use a little lift myself.

Charlie

A little lift, yeah. . .

Smiling, he takes out his flask.

. . . Good thing they bottle it, huh pal?  
He takes a glass from the bedstand and, as he pours Barton a shot:

. . . Did I say rude? People can be goddamn cruel. Especially some of these housewives. Okay, so I've got a weight problem. That's my cross to bear. I dunno. . .

Barton

Well it's. . . it's a defense mechanism.

Charlie

Defense against what? Insurance? Something they need? Something they should be thanking me for offering? A little peace of mind? . . .

He shakes his head.

. . . Finally decided to knock off early, take your advice. Went to see a doctor about this.

He indicates his ear, still stuffed with cotton.

. . . He told me it was an ear infection. Ten dollars please. I said, hell, I told you my ear was infected. Why don't you give me ten dollars? Well, that led to an argument. . .

He gives a rueful chuckle.

. . . Listen to me belly-achin'. As if my problems amounted to a hill of beans. How goes the life of the mind?

Barton

Well, it's been better. I can't seem to get going on this thing. That one idea, the one that let's you get started--I still haven't gotten it. Maybe I only had one idea in me--my play. Maybe once that was done, I was done being a writer. Christ I feel like a fraud, sitting here staring at this paper.

Charlie looks across the room to the opposite wall.

Charlie

Those two love-birds next door drivin' you nuts?

Barton looks at him curiously.

Barton

How do you know about that?

Charlie

Know about it? I can practically see how they're doin' it. Brother, I wish I had a piece of that.

Barton

Yeah, but--

Charlie

Seems like I hear everything that goes on in this dump. Pipes or somethin'. I'm just glad I don't have to ply my trade in the wee-wee hours.

He laughs.

. . . Ah, you'll lick this picture business--

believe me. You've got a head on your shoulders. What is it they say? Where there's a head, there's hope.

Barton  
Where there's life there's hope.

Charlie laughs.

Charlie  
That proves you really are a writer!

Barton smiles.

Barton  
And there's hope for you too, Charlie. Tomorrow I bet you sell a half-dozen policies.

Charlie  
Thanks, brother. But the fact is, I gotta pull up stakes, temporarily.

Barton  
You're leaving?

Charlie  
In a few days. Out to your stompin' grounds as a matter of fact--New York City. Things have gotten all balled up at the Head Office.

Barton  
I'm truly sorry to hear that, Charlie. I'll miss you.

Charlie  
Well hell, buddy, don't pull a long face! This is still home for me--I keep my room, and I'll be back sooner or later. . .

Barton rises and walks over to his writing table.

. . . And--mark my words--by the time I get back you're picture'll be finished. I know it. . .

Barton scribbles something on a notepad and turns to hand it to Charlie.

Barton  
New York can be pretty cruel to strangers, Charlie. If you need a home-cooked meal you just look up Morris and Lillian Fink. They live on Fulton Street with my uncle Dave.

We hear a tacky, tearing sound.

Barton looks towards the door.

Charlie rises and walks over to stand next to where Barton sits.

The two staring men form an odd, motionless tableau--the slight, bespectacled man seated; the big man standing in a hunch with his hands on his thighs; their two heads close together.

#### THEIR POV

A swatch of wallpaper in the entryway has pulled away from the wall, where it sags and nods.

Christ!  
Charlie (off)

#### THE TWO MEN

Charlie  
. . . Your room does tha': too?

Barton  
I guess the heat's sweating off the wallpaper.

Charlie  
What a dump. . .

He heads for the door, and Barton follows him.

. . . I guess it seems pathetic to a guy like you.

Barton  
Well. . .

Charlie  
But it's pathetic, isn't it? I mean to a guy from New York.

Barton  
What do you mean?

Charlie  
This kind of heat. It's pathetic.

Barton  
Well I guess you pick your poison.

Charlie  
So they say.

Barton  
Don't pick up and leave without saying goodbye.

Charlie  
Course not, compadre. You'll see me again.

Barton closes the door.

He goes back to the desk and sits down, staring at the typewriter. After a beat he tips back in the chair and looks up at the ceiling.

We hear a loud thump.

HIS POV  
THE CEILING

A seamless, white space.

As we track in the thumping continues-- slowly, rhythmically, louder.

LOOKING DOWN ON BARTON

From a high angle, tipped back in the chair, sweating in the close heat, staring at the ceiling.

Slowly we track down toward him. The thumping continues, growing louder, sharper.

HIS POV

Moving in on the ceiling. The thumping is almost deafening. We close in on a pure white space of the ceiling and cease to have any sense of movement.

With a blur of motion something huge and dark sweeps across the frame to land with a deafening crash, and an instant later it is gone, having left a huge black "T" stamped into the whiteness of the ceiling.

We are pulling back from the whiteness, past the metal prongs of the key-strike area on a typewriter. More letters appear rapid-fire, growing smaller as the pull back continues. The thumping has become the clacking of the

typewriter.

SWISH PAN

Off the typewriter and track in on Barton.

He is sitting on the sofa in Geisler's office. He hasn't shaved. His eyes are bloodshot and haggard. He has a mosquito bite on one cheek, daubed with calomine lotion.

The sound of the typing mixes down. We hear a door opening.

BEN GEISLER

is emerging from his office into the anteroom.

As he enters, the secretary abruptly stops typing, glances down at a slip of paper and, tonelessly, without looking up:

Secretary

Barton Fink.

Geisler

Yeah. Fink. Come in.

The clack of the typewriter resumes as Barton rises.

GEISLER'S OFFICE

As the two men enter.

This office is considerably smaller than Lipnik's, done in grays and black. There are pictures on the wall of Geisler with various celebrities.

Geisler sits behind his desk, looking at Barton for the first time.

Geisler

What the hell happened to your face?

Barton

Nothing. It's just a mosquito bite.

Geisler

Like hell it is; there are no mosquitos in Los Angeles. Mosquitos breed in swamps--this is a

desert town. Whaddya got for me?

Barton

Well I. . .

Geisler

On the Beery picture! Where are we? Wuddya got?

Barton

Well, tell you the truth, I'm having some trouble getting started--

Geisler

Getting started?! Christ Jesus! Started?! You mean you don't have anything?!

Barton

Well not much.

Geisler leaps to his feet and starts an agitated pace.

Geisler

What do you think this is? Hamlet? Gone With the Wind? Ruggles of Red Gap? It's a goddamn B picture! Big men in tights! You know the drill!

Barton

I'm afraid I don't really understand that genre. Maybe that's the prob--

Geisler

Understand shit! I thought you were gonna consult another writer on this!

Barton

Well, I've talked to Bill Mayhew--

Geisler

Bill Mayhew! Some help! The guy's a souse!

Barton

He's a great writer--

Geisler

A souse!

Barton

You don't understand. He's in pain, because he can't write--

Geisler

Souse! Souse! He manages to write his name on

the back of his paycheck every week!

Barton

But. . . I thought no one cared about this picture.

Geisler

You thought! Where'd you get that from? You thought! I don't know what the hell you said to Lipnik, but the sonofabitch likes you! You understand that, Fink? He likes you! He's taken an interest. Never make Lipnik like you! Never!

Some puzzlement shows through Barton's weariness:

Barton

I don't understand--

Geisler

Are you deaf, he likes you! He's taken an interest! What the hell did you say to him?

Barton

I didn't say anything--

Geisler

Well he's taken an interest! That means he'll make your life hell, which I could care less about, but since I drew the short straw to supervise this turkey, he's gonna be all over me too! Fat-assed sonofabitch called me yesterday to ask how it's going--don't worry, I covered for you. Told him you were making progress and we were all very excited. I told him it was great, so now my ass is on the line. He wants you to tell him all about it tomorrow--

Barton

I can't write anything by tomorrow.

Geisler

Who said write? Jesus, Jack can't read. You gotta tell it to him--tell him something for Chrissake.

Barton

Well what do I tell him?

Geisler rubs a temple, stares at Barton for a beat, then picks up the telephone.



Geisler

Projection. . .

As he waits, Geisler gives Barton a withering stare. It continues throughout the phone conversation.

. . . Jerry? Ben Geisler here. Any of the screening rooms free this afternoon? . . . Good, book it for me. A writer named Fink is gonna come in and you're gonna show him wrestling pictures. . . I don't give a shit which ones! Wrestling pictures! Wait a minute. . . Isn't Victor Sjoderberg shooting one now? . . . Show him some of the dailies on that.

He hangs up the phone.

. . . This ought to give you some ideas.

He jots something down on a piece of paper and hands it to Barton.

. . . Eight fifteen tomorrow morning at Lipnik's house. Ideas. Broad strokes. Don't cross me, Fink.

SCREEN

Black-and-white footage. A middle aged man enters with a clapstick and shouts:

Clapper

Devil on the Canvas, twelve baker take one.

Clap! The clapper withdraws. The angle is on a corner of the ring, where an old cornerman stands behind his charge, a huge man in tights who is a little too flabby to be a real athlete. His hair is plastered against his bullet skull and he has a small mustache.

Voice

Action.

The wrestler rises from his stool and, in a German accent as he heads towards center ring and the camera:

Wrestler

I will destroy him!

He passes the camera.

Voice

Cut.

Flash frames.

Clapper enters again.

Clapper

Twelve baker take two.

Clap! He exits.

The wrestler is moving towards the camera.

Wrestler

I will destroy him!

Voice

Cut.

Clapper enters.

Clapper

Twelve baker take three.

Clap!

Wrestler

I will destroy him!

SLOW TRACK IN ON BARTON

Seated alone in the dark screening room, the shaft of the projection beam flickering over his left shoulder.

As we creep in closer:

Wrestler (off)

I will destroy him! . . . I will destroy him! . .  
 . I will destroy him! . . . I will destroy him!

Another, off-microphone, distant voice from the screen:

Voice

Okay, take five. . .

THE SCREEN

A jerky camera pan, interrupted by flash frames. The wrestler is standing in a corner joking with a make-up girl

who pats down his face as he smokes a cigarette.

A cut in the film and another clapstick enters.

Clapper  
Twelve charlie take one--

On the clap:

BACK TO BARTON

Staring at the screen, the color drained from his face.

Action.  
Voice (off)

THE SCREEN

The angle is low--canvas level. We hold for a brief moment on the empty canvas before two wrestlers crash down into frame.

The German is underneath, on his back, pinned by the large man on top of him.

The referee enters, cropped at the knees, and throws counting fingers down into frame.

Referee  
One. . . two. . .

Wrestler  
AAAAAHHHH!!

With a tremendous scream the German bucks and throws his opponent off and out of frame.

Voice  
Cut.

Clapper  
Twelve charlie take two.

Crash.

Referee  
One. . . two. . .

Wrestler  
AAAAAHHHH!!

BARTON

Glazed.

Wrestler (off)

AAAAAAHHHHH!. . . AAAAAHHHHH!!. . .  
 AAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!!!

CLOSE SHOT  
 PAGE IN TYPEWRITER

At the cut the screaming abruptly drops out. We hear only the sound of heavy footfalls on carpet.

Two new words have been added to the typescript, below the opening paragraph:

Orphan?

Dame?

The footfalls continue.

THE HOTEL ROOM

Night. Barton paces frantically back and forth.

He looks at his watch.

HIS POV

It is 12:30.

BACK TO BARTON

Walking over to the typewriter. He sits down and stares at the page.

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT  
 BARTON'S LIPS

Sweat is beaded over his upper lip. He bites his lower lip, thinking--then silently mouths one word. "Dame".

CLOSE ON THE PHONE

Being lifted out of the cradle.

Barton  
Hello Chet, its Barton Fink in 605. Can you try  
a number for me in Hollywood . . . Slausen 6-  
4304.

TRACK IN ON THE RECEIVER

As we hear the phone ringing at the other end. Barton  
sweats. The phone rings.

Barton  
Pick it up. . . Pick it up. Pick it--

Audrey  
Hello.

Barton  
Audrey, listen I really need some help. I know  
it's late and I shouldn't be calling you like  
this--believe me I wouldn't have if I could see  
any alternative, but I--I'm sorry--Listen, how  
are you--I'm sorry. You doing okay?

Audrey  
. . . Who is this?

Barton  
Barton. I'm sorry, it's Barton Fink.

Through the phone, in the background, we hear Mayhew's  
drunken bellowing.

Mayhew  
Sons of bitches! Drown 'em all!

We hear various objects dropping or being thrown to the  
floor.

Audrey  
Barton, I'm afraid it's not a good time. . .

Mayhew  
Drown all those rascals. . .

Barton  
I'm sorry, I just feel like--I know I shouldn't  
ask, I just need some kind of help, I just, I  
have a deadline tomorrow--

Suddenly excited again:

                                  Mayhew  
I said drown 'em all! Who is that?

There is more clatter.

Audrey's voice is hushed, close to the phone:

                                  Audrey  
All right Barton, I'll see if I can slip away--

                                  Mayhew  
Who is that?! Goddamn voices come into the  
house. . . sons of bitches. . .

                                  Barton  
If you could, I'd--

                                  Audrey  
If I can. He gets jealous; he--

                                  Mayhew  
Goddamn voices. . . DROWN 'EM!!

                                  Barton  
I need help, Audrey.

                                  Audrey  
I'll try to slip out. If he quiets down, passes  
out. . . I'm afraid he thinks--well, he said you  
were a buffoon, Barton. He becomes irrational--

                                  Mayhew  
Hesh up! Be still now! DROWN 'EM! DROWN EM!  
DROWN--

CUT TO:

The bathing beauty on the wall.

We hear the crashing of the surf.

WIDE SHOT THE ROOM

CRANING DOWN towards the bed. Barton lies stretched out on  
his stomach, his head buried underneath a pillow as if to  
blot out the room.

The sound of the surf echoes out over the cut leaving only

his labored breathing.

The camera's TRACK IN reveals the wristwatch on his dangling arm: 1:30

WIDE THE HALLWAY

At the end of the dimly lit corridor a red light blinks on over the elevator.

We hear a faint DING.

BACK TO BARTON

With two violent and simultaneous motions he whips the pillow off his head with one hand and throws out his other wrist to look at his watch.

There is a knock at the door.

Barton swings his feet off the bed.

THE DOORWAY

Barton opens the door to Audrey.

Audrey

Hello, Barton.

Barton

Audrey, thank you for coming. Thank you. I'm sorry to be such a . . . such a . . . Thank you.

They enter the main room, where Audrey perches on the edge of the bed.

Audrey

Now that's all right, Barton. Everything'll be all right.

Barton

Yes. Thank you. How's Bill?

Audrey

Oh, he's . . . he drifted off. He'll sleep for a while now. What is it you have to do, exactly?

Barton paces.

Barton

Well I have to come up with--an outline, I guess you'd call it. The story. The whole goddamn story. Soup to nuts. Three acts. The whole goddamn--

Audrey

It's all right, Barton. You don't have to write actual scenes?

Barton

No, but the whole goddamn--Audrey? Have you ever read any of Bill's wrestling scenarios?

Audrey laughs.

Audrey

Yes, I'm afraid I have.

Barton

What are they like? What are they about?

Audrey

Well, usually, they're. . . simple morality tales. There's a good wrestler, and a bad wrestler whom he confronts at the end. In between the good wrestler has a love interest, or a small child he has to protect. Bill would usually make the good wrestler a backwoods type, or a convict. And sometimes, instead of a waif, he'd have the wrestler protecting an idiot manchild. The studio always hated that. Oh, some of the scripts were so. . . spirited!

She laughs--then stops, realizing she has laughed. She looks at Barton.

. . . Barton.

She shakes her head.

. . . Look, its really just a formula. You don't have to type your soul into it. We'll invent some names and a new setting. I'll help you and it won't take any time at all. I did it for Bill so many times--

Barton's pacing comes up short.

Barton

Did what for Bill?



Reluctantly:

Audrey

Well. . . this.

Barton

You wrote his scripts for him?

Audrey

Well. . . the basic ideas were frequently his--

Barton

You wrote Bill's scripts! Jesus Christ you wrote his--What about before that?

Audrey

Before what?

Barton

Before Bill came to Hollywood.

Audrey is clearly averse to traveling up this path.

Audrey

Well, Bill was always the author, so to speak--

Barton

What do you mean so to speak?! Audrey, how long have you been his. . . secretary?

Audrey

Barton, I think we should concentrate on our little project--

Barton

I want to know how many of Bill's books you wrote!

Audrey

Barton!

Barton

I want to know!

Audrey

Barton, honestly, only the last couple--

Barton

Hah!

Audrey

And my input was mostly. . . editorial, really,

when he'd been drinking--

Barton  
I'll bet. Jesus. . . "The grand productive  
days." What a goddamn phony.

He resumes pacing.

. . . W.P. Mayhew. William Goddamn Phony Mayhew.  
All his guff about escape. Hah! I'll say he  
escaped!

Barton sighs and looks at his watch.

. . . Well, we don't have much time.

He sits down next to Audrey. Audrey's tone is gentle:

Audrey  
It'll be fine. . . Don't judge him, Barton.  
Don't condescend to him. . .

She strokes Barton's hair.

. . . It's not as simple as you think. I helped  
Bill most by appreciating him, by understanding  
him. We all need understanding, Barton. Even  
you, tonight, it's all you really need. . .

Barton takes her hand and draws close to her on the bed.

His hands move up to cradle her head and he looks into her eyes for a long beat.

He kisses her, they separate, and she puts her head on his shoulder. Her shoulders start heaving, silently.

Barton holds her tightly. She responds.  
She starts kissing Barton's neck, drawing him down onto the bed.

Slowly, they start to make love, their breathing becoming louder and more labored.

Audrey starts to cry out.

#### FLOOR LEVEL

Pulling back under the bed. The sounds of the lovemaking are louder and even more intense. The bed creaks above us, as the sounds become more frenzied.

As we pull back out from under the bed we hear the two lovers rolling over, and they hit the floor in front of us, still intertwined, still making love. The shot is composed much like the shot on the canvas where the wrestlers fell into frame.

WHITE

Seamless white. The sound of the lovemaking is louder here, more intense. Audrey's cries are starting to take on the characteristics of a scream.

A single, huge drop of water splashes across the whiteness.

The edge of a huge, black circle is coming into frame and we realize we have been moving across the porcelain of a sink.

We move down into the blackness of the drain. The scream echoes in a metallic way and mixes in to the groaning of pipes.

BLACK

OVER BLACK THE HUM OF THE MOSQUITO FADES UP

FADE IN  
CLOSE ON BARTON NIGHT

Lying in bed, facing the ceiling. His eyes snap open.

We hear the hum.

HIS POV

The white ceiling. A tiny black speck flits across the white. The hum continues.

BACK TO BARTON

Slowly, propping himself up, looking to his side.

HIS POV

Audrey lies on her side on the other half of the bed, half covered with a blanket, facing away from us.

The black speck flits and disappears. The hum stops.

BARTON

Gingerly, he reaches over and draws the blanket down on Audrey's back.

HIS POV

Close on her back. An alabaster white.

The tiny mosquito has lit down on the center of her back

EXTREME CLOSE ON BARTON

Looking.

EXTREME CLOSE ON THE MOSQUITO

Swollen with blood.

SLIGHTLY WIDER

As Barton's hand comes through frame and slaps Audrey's back.

She doesn't respond.

Barton draws his hand away. Audrey's back is smeared with blood.

ON BARTON

He looks at his hand

HIS POV

His hand. It is dripping with blood. Much, too much, blood.

BACK TO BARTON

Eyes wide. He looks down at the bed.

HIS POV

The sheets are heavily spotted with blood.

BARTON

He pulls Audrey's upper shoulder.

AUDREY

Rolls onto her back. Her eyes are wide and lifeless.

Her stomach is nothing but blood--we cannot even tell if there is skin underneath. The sheet, drawn to her waist, is drenched red and clings to her body.

BARTON

He screams.

He screams again.

WIDE SHOT  
THE ROOM

He hear rapid and heavy footfalls next door, a door opening and closing, and then loud banging on Barton's door.

Barton's head spins towards the door. He is momentarily frozen.

Another knock.

Barton leaps to his feet and hurries to the door.

THE DOORWAY

Over Barton's shoulder as he cracks it.

Charlie stands in the hall in his boxer shorts and sleeveless tee. He looks very concerned.

Charlie  
Are you all right?

Barton stares dumbly for a moment.

. . . Can I come in?

Barton  
No! . . . I'm fine. Thank you.

Charlie  
Are you sure--

Barton  
No. . . no. . .

Barton is nodding as he shuts the door in Charlie's face.  
He walks back into the room.

HIS POV

Panning to the bed as we emerge from the entryway.

Audrey, in long shot, face up on the bed, is just as dead as when we left her.

BARTON

He walks over to the bed in horror, wheels just before he reaches it and walks across the room toward the door.

He stops short and turns back toward the room. He averts his eyes--as it happens, towards the secretary.

He walks stiffly over to the secretary and sits, his back to Audrey.

CLOSE ON BARTON

As he sits in. He stares emptily down at the desk, in shock, totally shut down. Behind him, we can see Audrey on the bed.

He stares for a long beat.

Strange, involuntary respiratory noises come from his throat. He is not in control.

Becoming aware of the noise he is making, he stops.

He lurches to his feet.

Charlie himself looks disturbed and unhappy. He wraps both arms around Barton.

Unashamed, Barton sobs into his shoulder. Charlie looks somber.

Charlie  
It's okay. . . It's okay. . .

Barton pulls himself away and sits down in the chair in front of the secretary. He buries his head in his hands.

Barton  
Charlie, I feel like I'm going crazy--like I'm losing my mind. I don't know what to do.

He looks up in pain.

Charlie is staring at him intently, curiously.

. . . I didn't do it, believe me. I'm sure of that, Charlie. I just. . .

His breath starts coming in short gasping heaves.

. . . I just don't know what . . . to do--

Charlie  
You gotta get a grip on, brother. You gotta just carry on--just for a few days, till I get back. Try and stay here, keep your door locked. Don't talk to anyone. We just gotta keep our heads and we'll figure it out.

Barton  
Yeah, but Charlie--

Charlie  
Damn it, don't argue with me. You asked me to believe you--well I do. Now don't argue with me.

He looks at Barton for a long beat.

. . . Look, pal--can you do something for me?

Charlie hands him his parcel.

. . . Keep this for me, til I get back.

Barton, snuffling, accepts the package.

. . . It's just personal stuff. I don't wanna

drag it with me, but I don't trust 'em downstairs, and I'd like to think it's in good hands.

Still snuffling:

Barton  
Sure, Charlie.

Charlie  
Funny, huh, when everything that's important to a guy, everything he wants to keep from a lifetime--when he can fit it into a little box like that. I guess. . . I guess it's kind of pathetic.

Wallowing in self-pity:

Barton  
It's more than I've got.

Charlie  
Well, keep it for me. Maybe it'll bring you good luck. Yeah, it'll help you finish your script. You'll think about me. . .

He thumps his chest.

. . . Make me your wrestler. Then you'll lick that story of yours.

Barton is tearfully sincere:

Barton  
Thanks, Charlie.

Charlie solemnly thrusts out his hand.

Charlie  
. . . Yeah, well, see you soon, friend. You're gonna be fine.

Barton rises and shakes. As they walk to the door:

Barton  
You'll be back?

Charlie  
Don't worry about that, compadre. I'll be back.

Barton shuts the door behind Charlie, locks it and turns around.



HIS POV

The room. The blood stained mattress.

Barton walks across the room and sits carefully on the edge of the bed, avoiding the rust-colored stain. For a long beat he sits still, but something is building inside.

Finally it erupts.

Barton sobs, with the unself-conscious grief of an abandoned child. He hurls himself onto the bed and buries his head in the pillow.

HIGH WIDE SHOT

Barton weeping, alone on the bed, next to the rust-colored stain.

FADE OUT

FADE IN  
BATHING BEAUTY

With the fade in the sound of the surf mixes up.

We pan down the picture to discover that a snapshot has been tucked in to the corner of the picture frame: it is the snap of Charlie, smiling and waving, with his foot up on the running board of the 1939 Ford roadster.

BARTON

Sitting at the desk, staring at the picture, utterly still. From his glazed stare and the way his mouth hangs open, we may assume he has been staring at the picture for some time.

He notices something on the desk and picks it up.

HIS POV

The Holy Bible--Placed by the Gideons.

Barton opens it, randomly, to the Book of Daniel. The text is set in ornately Gothic type:

**THE DOORWAY**

As Barton enters, opens the door and sticks his head out.

**HALLWAY  
ON BARTON**

Looking to see if the coast is clear.

**HIS POV**

The long hallway.

In the deep background, Chet, the nightclerk, is stooping in front of a door to pick up a pair of shoes. Next to him is a castored shoe caddy.

All of the doorways between us and Chet are empty of shoes.

**CHET**

Close on him as, mid-stoop, he looks up.

**CHET'S POV**

Up the long hall. In the deep background a door is closing.

**CHET**

Straightens up and puts the shoes on the shoe caddy. It squeaks as he starts pushing it on down the hall.

**BARTON**

Standing at the door, listening to a very faint squeak. Eventually it disappears.

Sweat pours from Barton's brow.

Finally he cracks the door again, looks out, and exits.

**HALLWAY**

In front of Charlie's door. Barton knocks.

Footfalls, and the door is cracked open by Charlie.

Charlie  
Barton. Are you all right?

Barton  
No. . .

His breath starts coming again in quick, uncontrollable gasps.

. . . Can I come in?

Charlie is staring at him.

Charlie  
Why don't we go to your room--

Barton  
Charlie, I'm in trouble. You've gotta help me.

He is breathing hard again.

Charlie steps out into the hall and shuts the door behind him.

Charlie  
Get a grip on yourself, brother. Whatever the problem is, we'll sort it out.

Gasping:

Barton  
Charlie, I'm in trouble--something horrible's happened--I've gotta call the police. . .

Charlie leads him towards his room.

. . . Will you stay with me till they get here?

Charlie  
Don't worry about it, Barton. We can sort it--

He is pushing Barton's door open, but Barton grabs his elbow to stop him.

Barton  
Before you go in--I didn't do this. I don't know how it happened, but I didn't. . . I want you to know that. . .

Charlie looks into his eyes. For a moment the two men

stare at each other--Charlie's look inquisitive and appraising, Barton's supplicating.

Finally Charlie nods.

Charlie

. . . Okay.

He turns and pushes open the door.

#### BARTON'S ROOM

Looking towards the entryway as the two men enter.

Barton lingers by the door. Charlie walks into the foreground to look off towards the bed.

His eyes widen and he screams.

He turns and disappears into the bathroom. We hear him vomiting, then the flush of the toilet.

From the bathroom:

Charlie

Jesus. . . Jesus. . . Jesus have mercy. . .

His reaction has not encouraged Barton, who looks more and more distraught.

Charlie emerges from the bathroom, sweating.

Jesus, Barton. . . What the hell is this?  
What're we gonna do?

Barton

I've gotta call the police--or you could call for  
me--

Charlie

Hold on--

Barton

You gotta believe me--

Charlie

Hold on--

Barton

I didn't do this, I did not do this--

Charlie  
Hold on. Stop. Take a deep breath. Tell me  
what happened.

Barton  
I don't know! I got drunk, I passed out, I woke  
up, she was. . . God, you gotta believe me!

Charlie is, in spite of himself, sneaking horrified glances  
into the room.

Charlie  
I believe you brother, but this don't look good.

Barton  
We gotta call the police--

Charlie  
Hold on. I said hold on, so hold on.

Barton  
Yeah.

Charlie  
What do you think happened?

Barton  
I don't know! Maybe it was her. . . boyfriend.  
I passed out. I don't know. Won't the police be  
able to. . .

Charlie  
Stop with the police! Wake up, friend! This  
does not look good! They hang people for this!

Barton  
But I didn't do it--don't you believe me?

Charlie looks into Barton's eyes.

Charlie  
I believe you--I know you. But why should the  
police?

Barton gives him a dumb stare.

. . . Did you. . . Barton, between you and me,  
did you uh. . . have sexual intercourse?

Barton stares at Charlie. He swallows.

Charlie shakes his head.

Charlie  
Jesus. . . They can tell that. . .

Barton  
They gotta believe me, Charlie! They gotta have  
mercy!

Still stares at Barton. Under his breath:

Charlie  
. . . You're in pictures, Barton. Even if you  
got cleared eventually, this would ruin you.

He turns and starts walking toward the bed.

. . . Wait in the bathroom.

#### INT BATHROOM

As Barton enters. He stands in the middle of the floor,  
his arms hanging limply at his sides.

From the other room we hear the creak of bedsprings and the  
sound of the bed clothes being torn off.

Finally, a last creak of the bed springs and the sound of  
Charlie, grunting under great weight.

We hear his heavy footsteps approaching.

Barton looks up at the open door to the bathroom.

#### HIS POV

Charlie is groping for the front door knob, cradling the  
sheet-swaddled body in his arms.

#### BACK TO BARTON

He quickly averts his eyes.

Charlie (off)  
I'll be back in a minute.

We hear him pass through the door, and the sound of his  
footsteps receding down the hallway.

Barton looks down at his hands.

HIS POV

They are still covered with blood.

BARTON

As he walks over to the sink and turns on the water.

HIS POV

Moving in on the drain as the blood swirls down.

Moving in closer the blackness of the drain grows larger. Just as we are engulfed in blackness we hear the dull thump of a body hitting the floor.

FADE IN

Charlie stands in the doorway to the bathroom, now wearing pants but still in his sleeveless tee which has a little blood smeared across the belly.

Charlie

You passed out.

Barton is groggily lifting himself from the floor of the bathroom.

Barton

. . . Uh-huh.

Barton stares at Charlie for a moment.

. . . Where's Audrey?

Charlie

She's dead, Barton! She's dead! If that was her name.

TRACK IN ON BARTON

The memory flooding back.

Charlie

Barton, listen to me. You gotta act as if nothing's happened. Put this totally out of your head. I know that's hard, but your play from here on out is just to go on about your business

as usual. Give us some time to sort this out. .

Barton looks at his watch.

THE WATCH

7:45

Charlie (off)  
 . . . Just put it out of your head. . .

CUT TO:  
 TRACKING

Forward along the edge of an outdoor pool set in a grand yard with shaped hedges and statuary set amid palm trees.

Sunlight glitters angrily off the water; we are approaching Jack Lipnik who sits poolside in a white deck chair.

Lipnik  
 Bart! So happy to see ya!

REVERSE

Pulling Barton, who is being escorted by Lou Breeze.

Barton is very haggard, sunken eyes squinting against too much sun.

Lipnik  
 Sit! Talk! Relax for a minute, then talk!  
 Drink?

As Barton sits:

Barton  
 Yeah. . . rye whiskey?

Lipnik  
 Boy! You writers! Work hard, play hard! That's what I hear, anyway. . .

He laughs, then nods at Lou Breeze.

. . . Lou.

Lou exits.



Lipnik

Anyway. Ben Geisler tells me things're going along great. Thinks we've got a real winner in this one. And let me tell you something, I'm counting on it. I've taken an interest. Not to interfere, mind you--hardly seems necessary in your case. A writer--a storyteller--of your stature. Givitta me in bold strokes, Bart. Gimme the broad outlines. I'm sitting in the audience, the lights go down, Capitol logo comes up--you're on!

He beams at Barton expectantly.

Barton licks his parched lips.

Barton

Yeah, okay. . . well. . . we fade in. . .

Lipnik is nodding, already involved in the story.

. . . It's a tenement building. On the Lower East Side. . .

Lipnik

Great! He's poor, this wrestler! He's had to struggle!

Barton

And then. . . well. . .

Barton looks out at the pool, his eyes slits against the sun. He looks back at Lipnik.

. . . Can I be honest, Mr. Lipnik?

Lipnik

Can you? You damn well better be. Jesus, if I hadn't been honest in my business dealings--well of course, you can't always be honest, not with the sharks swimming around this town--but you're a writer, you don't think about those things--if I'd been totally honest, I wouldn't be within a mile of this pool--unless I was cleaning it. But that's no reason for you not to be. Honest, I mean. Not cleaning the pool.

He laughs, and gives Barton an encouraging smile.

Lou has entered with a drink, which he sets next to Barton. Lou sits.

Barton looks around, takes the drink, sips at it greedily, but must finally take the plunge.

Barton

Well. . . to be honest, I'm never really comfortable discussing a work in progress. I've got it all worked out in my head, but sometimes if you force it into words--prematurely--the wrong words--well, your meaning changes, and it changes in your own mind, and you never get it back--so I'd just as soon not talk about it.

Lipnik stares at him. For a long beat. His smile has disappeared.

Lou clears his throat. He apparently feels obliged to fill the void.

Lou

. . . Mr. Fink. Never mind me. Never mind how long I've been in pictures. Mr. Lipnik has been in pictures just about since they were invented. He practically invented them. And he owns this studio and pays your salary.

Lipnik has turned to look curiously at Lou.

. . . I think if he's interested in what one of his contract employees is doing while he draws pay, I think that employee ought to tell him, if he wants to stay an employee. Right now the contents of your head are the property of Capitol Pictures, so if I were you I would speak up. And pretty goddamn fast.

Lou looks at Barton, expectantly. Lipnik continues to stare at Lou.

There is a long heavy silence, as if before an approaching storm.

Finally, still looking at Lou, Lipnik explodes:

Lipnik

. . . You lousy kike sonofabitch! You're telling this man--this artist--what to do?!

Lou is stunned.

Lou

Mr. Lipnik, I--

Lipnik  
 This man creates for a living! He puts the food  
 on your table and on mine! Thank him for it!  
 Thank him, you ungrateful snotnosed sonofabitch!  
 Thank him or you're fired!

Barton is staring, aghast.

Barton  
 Mr. Lipnik, that's really not necessar--

Lipnik, still staring at Lou, gives no sign of having heard  
 Barton. He is rising to his feet and pointing.

Lipnik  
 Get down on your knees, you sonobitch! Get down  
 on your knees and kiss this man's feet!

Lou  
 Mr. Lipnik, please--

Barton  
 I--Mr. Lipnik--

Lipnik  
 KISS THIS MAN'S FEET!

Lou, aghast, looks at Barton.

Barton, aghast, can only return the same stunned look.

Lipnik is still looking at Lou:

. . . Okay, get out of here. You're fired, you  
 understand me? Get out of my sight.

Lou gets stiffly to his feet and stumbles away.

Barton  
 Mr. Lipnik, I--

Lipnik  
 I apologize, Barton.

Barton  
 No no, Mr. Breeze has actually been a great help--

Lipnik  
 You don't have to cover for him. It's noble of  
 you, but these things happen in business.

Barton

Mr. Lipnik, I really would feel much better if you could reconsider--

Lipnik

Ah, forget it kid. I want you to put this out of your head. If that sonofabitch wouldn't apologize to you, goddamnit, I will. I respect your artistry and your methods, and if you can't fill us in yet, well hell, we should be kissing your feet for your fine efforts.

He gets down on his knees in front of Barton.

. . . You know in the old country we were taught, as very young children, that there's no shame in supplicatin' yourself when you respect someone.

Barton stares aghast at Lipnik, on the ground at his feet.

. . . On behalf of Capitol Pictures, the administration, and alla stock holders, please accept this as a symbol of our apology and respect.

BARTON'S POV

As Lipnik kisses his shoe and looks up at him.

Behind Lipnik the pool glitters.

CUT TO:

BARTON'S ROOM

The cut has a hard musical sting. Out of the sting comes a loud but distorted thumping noise.

It is night. We are looking down, high angle, from one corner of the room. We are presented with a motionless tableau: Barton sits, hunched, in the far corner, elbows on knees, staring at the bed in front of him. He wears only trousers and a T-shirt and his body and face glisten with sweat. The room is insufferably hot. The bed's sheets have been stripped and the ratty gray mattress has an enormous rust-red stain in the middle.

After a beat, in the foreground, the only motion in the scene: A bead of tacky yellow wall-sweat dribbles down the near wall.

Silence, then the thumping repeats, resolving itself into a knock at the door.

Barton rises slowly and crosses the to the door.

#### THE DOOR

As it is cracked open.

Charlie stands in the hallway, dressed in a baggy suit, his hair slicked back, a tan fedora pushed back on his head. It is the first time we have seen him well turned out.

A battered briefcase is on the floor next to him. He holds a parcel in his left hand, about one foot square, wrapped in brown paper and tied up with twine.

Charlie  
Barton. Can I come in?

Barton stands back from the door and Charlie picks up his briefcase and enters.

#### THE ROOM

As the two men enter.

Barton  
Jesus. . . You're leaving.

Charlie  
Have to, old timer. Just for a while.

Barton sounds desperate:

Barton  
Jesus, Charlie, I. . .

Charlie  
Everything's okay, believe me. I know it's rough mentally, but everything's taken care of--

Barton  
Charlie! I've got no one else here! You're the only person I know in Los Angeles. . .

He starts weeping.

. . . that I can talk to.

Charlie himself looks disturbed and unhappy. He wraps both arms around Barton.

Unashamed, Barton sobs into his shoulder. Charlie looks somber.

Charlie  
It's okay. . . It's okay. . .

Barton pulls himself away and sits down in the chair in front of the secretary. He buries his head in his hands.

Barton  
Charlie, I feel like I'm going crazy--like I'm losing my mind. I don't know what to do.

He looks up in pain.

Charlie is staring at him intently, curiously.

. . . I didn't do it, believe me. I'm sure of that, Charlie. I just. . .

His breath starts coming in short gasping heaves.

. . . I just don't know what . . . to do--

Charlie  
You gotta get a grip on, brother. You gotta just carry on--just for a few days, till I get back. Try and stay here, keep your door locked. Don't talk to anyone. We just gotta keep our heads and we'll figure it out.

Barton  
Yeah, but Charlie--

Charlie  
Damn it, don't argue with me. You asked me to believe you--well I do. Now don't argue with me.

He looks at Barton for a long beat.

. . . Look, pal--can you do something for me?

Charlie hands him his parcel.

. . . Keep this for me, til I get back.

Barton, snuffling, accepts the package.

. . . It's just personal stuff. I don't wanna

drag it with me, but I don't trust 'em downstairs, and I'd like to think it's in good hands.

Still snuffling:

Barton

Sure, Charlie.

Charlie

Funny, huh, when everything that's important to a guy, everything he wants to keep from a lifetime--when he can fit it into a little box like that. I guess. . . I guess it's kind of pathetic.

Wallowing in self-pity:

Barton

It's more than I've got.

Charlie

Well, keep it for me. Maybe it'll bring you good luck. Yeah, it'll help you finish your script. You'll think about me. . .

He thumps his chest.

. . . Make me your wrestler. Then you'll lick that story of yours.

Barton is tearfully sincere:

Barton

Thanks, Charlie.

Charlie solemnly thrusts out his hand.

Charlie

. . . Yeah, well, see you soon, friend. You're gonna be fine.

Barton rises and shakes. As they walk to the door:

Barton

You'll be back?

Charlie

Don't worry about that, compadre. I'll be back.

Barton shuts the door behind Charlie, locks it and turns around.

**HIS POV**

The room. The blood stained mattress.

Barton walks across the room and sits carefully on the edge of the bed, avoiding the rust-colored stain. For a long beat he sits still, but something is building inside.

Finally it erupts.

Barton sobs, with the unself-conscious grief of an abandoned child. He huris himself onto the bed and buries his head in the pillow.

**HIGH WIDE SHOT**

Barton weeping, alone on the bed, next to the rust-colored stain.

**FADE OUT****FADE IN  
BATHING BEAUTY**

With the fade in the sound of the surf mixes up.

We pan down the picture to discover that a snapshot has been tucked in to the corner of the picture frame: it is the snap of Charlie, smiling and waving, with his foot up on the running board of the 1939 Ford roadster.

**BARTON**

Sitting at the desk, staring at the picture, utterly still. From his glazed stare and the way his mouth hangs open, we may assume he has been staring at the picture for some time.

He notices something on the desk and picks it up.

**HIS POV**

The Holy Bible--Placed by the Gideons.

Barton opens it, randomly, to the Book of Daniel. The text is set in ornately Gothic type:



5. And the king, Nebuchadnezzar, answered and said to the Chaldeans, I recall not my dream; if ye will not make known unto me my dream, and its interpretation, ye shall be cut in pieces, and of your tents shall be made a dunghill.

BARTON

Looking at the passage. He stares. His mouth hangs open.

THE BIBLE

Barton rifles through to the first page.

In bold type at the top:

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Underneath, in the same ornate Gothic type:

Chapter One

1. Fade in on a tenement building on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Faint traffic noise is audible;
2. As is the cry of the fishmongers.

BARTON

Squinting at the page, his eyes bloodshot and haggard.

A lone tear runs down his cheek from his left eye and hangs on his chin.

WHITE

Seamless white. A huge tear splashes across the whiteness of the paper.

FADE OUT

WHITE IN:  
BARTON'S ROOM DAY

At the cut to white a painfully loud clackety-clack bangs in. With the fade down from white, the typewriting sound mixes down to a more natural perspective.

Sunlight burns against the the sheers of Barton's window, making it a painfully bright patch in the room which itself remains only dimly lit.

Barton sits at the secretary, typing furiously.

He finishes a page, yanks it out of the carriage, and places it face-down on a short stack of face-down pages sitting to the right of the typewriter.

He feeds in a blank sheet and resumes his furious typing. He is sweating, unshaven, and even more haggard than when we left him the previous night.

The telephone rings.

Barton stops typing and looks at it for a beat.

He rises, goes to the window, and pulls down the shade beneath the sheers. The shade casts a yellow pall on the room.

The phone is still ringing. Barton crosses back to the desk and picks it up. Hoarsely:

Barton

Hello. . . Chet. . . Who? . . .

He puts the receiver down on the desk, leans over the typewriter and examines something he has just written.

He picks the phone back up and listens for a beat.

. . . No, don't send them up here. I'll be down in a second.

INT ELEVATOR

A small oscillating fan whirs in a corner near the ceiling of the elevator.

We pan down to Barton, who is riding down with Pete, the ancient elevator operator. Barton's voice is hoarse with fatigue:

Barton

. . . You read the Bible, Pete?

Pete

The Holy Bible?

Barton

Yeah.

Pete

I think so. . . Anyway, I've heard about it.

Barton nods.

They ride for a beat.

### LOBBY

Late afternoon sun slants in from one side. The lobby has the same golden ambience as the first time we saw it.

Barton is walking towards two wings chairs in the shadows, from which two men in suits are rising. Swann is big and beefy with a ruddy complexion. The other man, Deutsch, is shorter, and swarthy.

Policeman

Fink?

Barton

Yeah.

Policeman 2

Detective Swann.

Policeman 1

Detective Deutsch.

Swann

L.A.P.D.

Barton

Uh-huh.

All three sit in the ancient maroon wing chairs. Swann perches on the edge of his chair; Deutsch slumps back in the shadows, studying Barton.

Deutsch

Got a couple questions to ask ya.

Swann

What do you do, Fink?

Still hoarse:

Barton  
I write.

Deutsch  
Oh yeah? What kind of write?

Barton  
Well, as a matter of fact, I write for the pictures.

Swann  
Big fuckin' deal.

Deutsch  
You want my partner to kiss your ass?

Swann  
Would that be good enough for ya?

Barton  
No, I--I didn't mean to sound--

Deutsch  
What did you mean?

Barton  
I--I've got respect for--for working guys, like you--

Swann  
Jesus! Ain't that a load off! You live in 605?

Barton  
Yeah.

Deutsch  
How long you been up there, Fink?

Barton  
A week, eight, nine days--

Swann  
Is this multiple choice?

Barton  
Nine days--Tuesday--

Deutsch  
You know this slob?

He is holding a small black and white photograph out towards Barton.

There is a long pause as Barton studies the picture.

Barton  
. . . Yeah, he. . . he lives next door to me.

Swann  
That's right, Fink, he lives next door to you.

Deutsch  
Ever talk to him?

Barton  
. . . Once or twice. His name is Charlie Meadows.

Swann  
Yeah, and I'm Buck Rodgers.

Deutsch  
His name is Mundt. Karl Mundt.

Swann  
Also known as Madman Mundt.

Deutsch  
He's a little funny in the head.

Barton  
What did. . . What did he--

Swann  
Funny as in, he likes to blow people away with a shotgun and then cut their heads off.

Deutsch  
Yeah, he's funny that way.

Barton  
I. . .

Swann  
Started in Kansas City. A couple housewives.

Deutsch  
Couple days ago we see the same M.O. out in Los Feliz.

Swann  
Doctor. Ear, nose and throat man.

Deutsch  
All of which he's now missin'.

Swann  
Well, some of his throat was there.

Deutsch  
Physician, heal thyself.

Swann  
Good luck with no fuckin' head.

Deutsch  
Anyway.

Swann  
Hollywood precinct finds another stiff yesterday.  
Not too far from here. This one's better looking  
than the doc.

Deutsch  
Female caucasian, thirty years old. Nice tits.  
Bad stomach ache. No head.

Deutsch  
You ever see Murdt with anyone meets that  
description?

Swann  
But, you know, with the head still on.

Barton  
. . . No. I never saw him with anyone else.

Deutsch  
So. You talked to Mundt, what about?

Barton  
Nothing, really. Said he was in the insurance  
business.

Deutsch indicates Swann.

Deutsch  
Yeah, and he's Buck Rodgers.

Swann  
No reputable company would hire a guy like that.

Barton  
Well that's what he said.

Deutsch  
What else?

Barton

He. . . I'm trying to think. . . Nothing really.  
 . . . He. . . He said he liked Jack Oakie  
 pictures.

Swann looks at Deutsch. There is a long pause. Swann  
 looks back at Barton.

Swann

Ya know, Fink, ordinarily we say anything you  
 might remember could be helpfull. But I'll be  
 frank with you: That is not helpfull.

Deutsch

Ya see how he's not writing it down?

Swann looks at Deutsch.

Swann

Soon as I saw this guy I knew he'd be a goldmine.

He turns back to Barton.

. . . Fink. That's a Jewish name, isn't it?

Barton

Yeah.

Swann is getting to his feet, looking around the lobby.

Swann

Yeah, I didn't think this dump was restricted.

Swann is digging in his pocket.

. . . Mundt has dissappeared. I don't think  
 he'll be back. But. . .

He hands Barton a card.

. . . Give me a call if you see him. Or if you  
 remember something that isn't totally idiotic.

CUT TO:  
 BARTON'S ROOM

We are tracking in, across the room, toward the paper-  
 wrapped parcel that sits on the floor next to Barton's bed.

Barton enters and picks it up. He holds it for a beat,

looking at it, then brings it over to the secretary and sits.

He shakes it.

No sound; whatever is inside is well packed.

He holds it up to his ear and listens for a long beat, as if it is a seashell and he is listening for the surf.

Finally he puts it on the desk under the picture of the bathing beauty and starts typing, quickly and steadily.

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:  
REVERSE

Some time later; Barton is still furiously typing. He is face to us; beyond him we can see the bed with its rust-colored stain.

The phone rings. Barton ignores it. It continues to ring.

Barton rises and exits frame; we hold on the bed in the background. We can hear the phone continuing to ring and Barton's footsteps on tile--in the bathroom.

Barton sits back into frame with cotton wadding stuffed into each ear. He resumes typing. Finally the phone stops ringing.

REVERSE

Barton typing. The desk trembles under the working of the typewriter. On that account, Charlie's parcel chatters.

Barton takes a finished page out of the carriage and places it face down on the growing stack to his right. He feeds in a new page. We hear the muted ding of the elevator down the hall. Barton resumes typing.

We hear a knock at Barton's door. Barton does not react, apparently not hearing. He continues to type.

THE DOORWAY

We are close on the bottom of the door. The person outside is sliding a piece of paper beneath the door; we see his shadow disappear and hear his footsteps recede.



The printed message form says: "While You Were Out. . . ." Underneath are printed the words: "You were called by" and, handwritten in the space following: "Mr. Ben Geisler."

Handwritten below, in the message space:

Thank you.  
Lipnik loved it.  
Keep up the good work.

Barton's offscreen typing steadily continues.

FADE OUT

CUT TO:  
HALLWAY

A perfectly symmetrical, wide low angle shot of the empty hall. Shoes are set out in front of each door except for one in the middle background.

At the cut in we hear faint, regular typing.

We hold for a long beat. There is no motion. The long, empty hall. The distant typing.

We hold.

The typing stops. There is a beat of absolute quiet.

It is broken by the sound of a door opening. It is the shoeless door in the middle background. A hand reaches out to place a pair of shoes in the hallway.

The hand withdraws.

The door closes.

A short beat of silence.

The distant typing resumes.

The long empty hall. The distant typing.

FADE OUT

Over black we hear the distant sound of a woman's voice,

tinny and indistinct:

Woman  
Just a minute and I'll connect you. . .

FADE IN  
CLOSE ON BARTON

His eyes are red-rimmed and wild looking. He sits on the edge of his bed holding the receiver of the house phone to his ear.

Unnaturally loud:

Barton  
Hello? Operator! I can't. . . Oh!

He stops, reaches up, takes a cotton wad out of his ear.

We hear various clicks and clacks as the telephone lines switch--then a distant ring. The phone rings three or four times before it is answered. Finally a groggy voice:

Garland  
. . . Hello.

Barton  
Garland, it's me.

Garland  
Barton? What time is it? Are you all right?

Barton  
Yeah, I'm fine, Garland--I have to talk to you.

Garland  
Okay.

Muffled, we hear Garland speaking to someone else.

. . . It's Barton. Calling long distance.

Back in the receiver:

. . . What is it Barton? Are you okay?

Barton  
I'm fine, Garland, but I have to talk to you.

Garland  
Go ahead, son.

Barton  
It's about what I'm writing, Garland. It's really. . . I think it's really big.

Garland  
What do you mean, Barton. . . ?

Barton  
Not big in the sense of large--although its that too. I mean important. This may be the most important work I've done. . .

Garland  
Well, I'm. . . glad to hear that--

Barton  
Very important, Garland. I just thought you should know that. Whatever happens.

Garland  
. . . That's fine.

Barton  
Have you read the Bible, Garland?

Garland  
Barton, is everything O.K.?

Barton  
Yes. . . Isn't it?

Garland  
Well I'm just asking. You sound a little--

Guardedly:

Barton  
Do you know something I don't?

Garland  
Know something? No, I. . . you just sound a little--

Bitterly:

Barton  
Thanks Garland. Thanks for all the encouragement.

He slams down the phone.

OVER HIS SHOULDER

A one-quarter shot on Barton from behind as he picks up the cotton wad and sticks it back in his right ear.

He resumes furiously typing.

After a beat he mutters, still typing:

Barton

. . . Nitwit.

CUT TO:  
THE BATHING BEAUTY

It is some time later. We hear the roar of the surf.

The sound of the typewriter mixes up.

CLOSE ON TYPEWRITER

We are extremely close on the key-strike area. As we cut in, Barton is typing:

p-o-s-t-c-a-r-d-.

The carriage returns a couple times, and then the following is typed in:

T-H-E---E-N-D

The paper is ripped out of the carriage.

CLOSE ON A STACK OF PAGES

Lying face down on the desk; the last page is added, face down, to the pile.

The pile is picked up and its edges straightened with a couple of thumps against the desktop, and then replaced, face up, on the desk.

The title page reads:

THE BURLYMAN

A Motion Picture Scenario

By

Barton Fink

Barton's right hand enters frame to deposit a small cotton wad on top of the script.

Barton's left hand enters to deposit another small cotton wad on top of the script.

Both of Barton's balled up fists enter and give a short, vigorous, way-to-go pump.

We hear Barton walk away. His door opens and shuts.

#### THE BATHING BEAUTY

Still looking out to sea. We hear the roar of the surf mix up.

After a beat, we hear the faint ding of the elevator down the hall.

#### CUT TO: THE BELL OF A TROMBONE

We are pulling back from the blackness of the bell as the trombone blares along with the rest of a raucous forties swing band in the middle of an up-tempo number.

#### BARTON

Dancing animatedly, almost manically, his fingers jabbing the air.

#### USO GIRL

Rather plain, but smiling, dancing opposite Barton.

They are in a large hall filled with girls and young men, most of whom are servicemen. A spinning glitter ball flecks the dancers with light.

Girl

You're cute!

BARTON

Still dancing, so caught up in it that he is almost oblivious to the girl.

A white-uniformed arm reaches in to tap Barton on the shoulder.

Sailor

'Scuse me, buddy, mind if I cut in?

Barton glares at him.

Barton

This is my dance!

Sailor

C'mon, buddy, I'm shipping out tomorrow.

For some reason Barton is angry.

Barton

I'm a writer! Celebrating the completion of something good! Do you understand that, sailor? I'm a writer!

His bellowing has drawn the attention of onlookers.

Voices

Step aside, four-eyes! Let someone else spin the dame! Give the navy a dance!

Barton turns furiously upon the crowd.

Barton

I'm a writer, you monsters! I create!

He points at his head.

. . . This is my uniform!

He taps at his skull:

. . . This is how I serve the common man! This is where I--

WHAPP! An infantryman hits Barton's chin on the button. Bodies surge. The crowd gasps. The band blares nightmarishly on.

CUT TO:  
HOTEL HALLWAY

Very quiet at the cut.

After a beat there is a faint ding at the end of the hall and, as the elevator door opens, we very faintly hear:

Pete  
This stop: Six.

Barton emerges and stumbles wearily down the hall. As he approaches we see that he is quite disheveled.

Barton stops in front of his door, takes his key out and enters the room.

BARTON'S POV

Swann is sitting on the edge of his bed reading Barton's manuscript.

Deutsch stands in front of the desk staring at the bathing beauty.

Swann  
(looking at the page)  
Father: We'll be hearing from that crazy wrestler. And I don't mean a postcard. Fade out. The end.

He looks up at Barton.

. . . I thought you said you were a writer.

Deutsch  
I dunno Fred, I kinda liked it.

Barton  
Keep your filthy eyes off that.

Swann  
When'd'ya get back, Pink?

Barton  
What?

Deutsch  
Got a wire from that puss-hole you call home.

Swann  
Jew York City.

Deutsch  
The P.D. there just found out about your little visit.

Barton  
I don't understand. I've been here--

Swann  
Anyone seen you?

Barton  
I've been in my room--

Deutsch  
Sure, Fink. Never been out.

Barton  
That's right, I--

Swann  
How could you do it? Your own parents.

Barton  
My own. . .

Deutsch  
Just tell me one thing, Fink: where'd you put their heads?

Barton  
Oh my god! It can't be. . . My. . . Oh my god!.  
. . . . And Uncle Dave?

Swann glances at a notebook.

Swann  
David Liebowitz. Check.

Deutsch  
Tell us where the heads are, maybe they'll go easy on you.

Swann  
Only fry you once.

Barton rubs distractedly at his temples.

Barton  
. . . Something's wrong--



Deutsch  
All right, forget the heads. Where's Mundt,  
Fink?

Swann  
He teach you how to do it?

Deutsch  
You two have some sick sex thing?

Barton  
Sex?! He's a man! We wrestled!

Swann  
You're a sick fuck, Fink.

Wearily:

Deutsch  
All right, moron, you're under arrest.

Barton is massaging his temples.

Barton  
Could you two come back later? It's just. . .  
too hot. . . My head is killing me. . .

Deutsch  
Well that's a cryin' shame. Let us know what  
fits in with your schedule.

Swann  
Waitamminute, Ernie. . .

Swann loosens his tie.

. . . It is warm in here.

Deutsch  
So it's warm, so what.

He loosens his tie.

Swann cocks his head with a quizzical look. He walks  
slowly out into the hall.

Deutsch watches him.

HIS POV

Swann in the hallway in full shot, framed by the door,

still looking quizzical.

Swann

. . . Fred. . .

Deutsch is sweating heavily.

He stands and pushes his suit coat back past the gun on his hip, revealing a pair of handcuffs on his belt. He takes the cuffs and slips one around Barton's right wrist, and the other around a loop in the wrought iron footboard of the bed.

Deutsch

Sit tight, Fink.

#### THE HALLWAY

As Deutsch joins Swann.

Deutsch

Why's it so goddamn hot out here?

Swann

. . . Fred. . .

Deutsch looks where Swann is looking.

#### THE WALL

Tacky yellow fluid streams down. The walls are pouring sweat.

The hallway is very quiet.

#### SWANN AND DEUTSCH

Look at each other. They look down the hall.

#### THEIR POV

In the distance, at the end of the hall, we see the little red light go on over the elevator and hear its distant ding.

After a beat, light fans into the hallway as we faintly hear the elevator door trundle open.

SWANN AND DEUTSCH

Looking.

THEIR POV

For a long beat, nothing.

Finally, Pete the elevator man emerges.

He is a small staggering figure at the end of the hallway, stumbling this way and that, his hands pressed against the sides of his head.

He turns to face Swann and Deutsch and takes a few hesitant steps forward, still clutching his head.

SWANN AND DEUTSCH

Watching.

PETE

Still in the distance he takes one last step, then collapses.

As he pitches forward his hands fall away from his head. His head separates from his neck, hits the floor and rolls away from his body with a faint irregular trundle sound.

SWANN AND DEUTSCH

Wide-eyed, Swann and Deutsch look at each other, then back down the hall.

All is quiet.

THE HALLWAY

Smoke is beginning to sift into the far end of the hall.

We hear a muted rumble.

SWANN AND DEUTSCH

Deutsch tugs at his tie.

He slowly unholsters his gun. Swann slowly, hypnotically, follows suit.

Deutsch  
 . . . Show yourself, Mundt!

More quiet.

THE HALLWAY

More smoke.

LOW STEEP ANGLE ON ELEVATOR DOOR

The crack where the floor of the elevator meets that of the hall.

It flickers with red light from below. Bottom-lit smoke sifts up.

CLOSE ON DEUTSCH

Standing in the foreground, gun at the ready. Sweat pours down his face.

Beyond him the hall stretches down to Swann, who stands nervously in the light-spill from Barton's doorway.

The rumble and crackle of fire grows louder.

THE HALLWAY

More smoke.

STAIRWAY DOOR

Opposite the elevator. Flame flickers in the crack between the door and floor.

PATCH OF WALL

Sweating.

A swath of wallpaper sags away from the top of the wall, exposing glistening lath underneath.

With a light airy pop, the lathwork catches fire.

SWANN AND DEUTSCH

Sweating.

Deutsch

. . . Mundt!

THEIR POV

The hallway. Its end--facing--wall slowly spreads flame from where the swath of wallpaper droops.

LOW STEEP ANGLE ON ELEVATOR DOOR

More red bottom-lit smoke seeps up from the crack between elevator and hallway floors.

With a groan of tension-relieved cables, and a swaying of the elevator floor, a pair of feet cross the threshold into the hallway.

JUMPING BACK

Wide on the hallway. Charlie Meadows has emerged from the elevator, hellishly backlit by the flame.

His suitcoat hangs open. His hat is pushed back on his head. From his right hand dangles his briefcase.

He stands motionless, facing us. There is something monumental in his posture, shoulders thrown back.

DEUTSCH

Tensed. Behind him, Swann gulps.

Deutsch

There's a boy, Mundt. Place the briefcase at your feet and put your hands in the air.

Slowly, Mundt leans down to put the briefcase on the floor.

CLOSE ON SWANN

Nervously licking his lips.

BACK TO MUNDT

Straightening up from the briefcase, a sawed-off shotgun in his hands.

BOOM!! The shotgun spits fire.

Deutsch's face is peppered by buckshot and he is blown back down the hallway toward Swann.

A bellowing sound fills the hallway over the roar of the fire:

Mundt  
I'LL SHOW YOU THE LIFE OF THE MIND!!

THE HALLWAY

With Mundt at its end. The fire starts racing down the walls on either side.

CLOSE STEEP ANGLE ON PATCH OF WALL

Fire races along the wall-sweat goopus.

TRACK IN ON SWANN

His eyes widen at the spectacle of Mundt and the approaching fire; his gun dangles forgotten from his right hand.

HIS POV

Charlie is charging down the hallway, holding his shotgun in double-time position, loosely in front of his chest. The fire races along with him.

He is bellowing:

Charlie  
LOOK UPON ME!! LOOK UPON ME!! I'LL SHOW YOU THE  
LIFE OF THE MIND!!!! NEIL HITLER!!!

SWANN

Terrified, he turns and runs.

REVERSE PULLING SWANN

As he runs down the flaming hallway, pursued by flames, smoke and Mundt.

Behind him Karl is still bellowing as he levels the shotgun on the run.

BOOM!!!

PUSHING SWANN

His legs and feet sprout blood, paddle futilely at the air, then come down in a twisting wobble, like a car on blown tires, before they buckle and pitch him helplessly to the floor.

PULLING MUNDT

Slowing to a trot, cracking open the shotgun.

PUSHING SWANN

Weeping; dragging himself forward on his elbows.

PULLING MUNDT

Slowing to a walk.

BARTON'S ROOM

Barton strains at his handcuffs.

HIS POV

Through the open doorway we see Mundt pass by, pushing two shells into his shotgun.

PULLING SWANN

Still weeping, dragging himself forward.

Mundt looms behind him and--THWACK--slams the shotgun shut.  
Swann rolls over to face Mundt, resting on his elbows.

ON SWANN

Weeping, sweating, gasping.

Swann  
What. . . Oh Jesus, what do you want?

MUNDT

Primes the shotgun--CLACK.

He presses both barrels against the bridge of Swann's nose.

Mundt  
Relinquish your pain.

SWANN

Stares.

MUNDT

Tightens a finger over both triggers. He squeezes.

BLAM.

TRACK IN ON BARTON

He flinches.

The gunshot echoes away. We hear Swann's body hit the floor with a thud.

Barton strains at the handcuffs.

We hear Mundt's footsteps approach--slowly, heavily.

THE DOORWAY

Mundt, walking down the hall, glances in and seems mildly surprised to see Barton. The set of his jaw relaxes. His expression softens. He pushes his hat farther back on his



head.

Charlie

Barton!

He shakes his head and whistles.

. . . Brother, is it hot.

He walks into the room.

INSIDE BARTON'S ROOM

As Charlie enters, wearily:

Charlie

How you been, buddy?

He props the shotgun in a corner and sits facing Barton.

Barton stares at him from his perch on the bed.

. . . Don't look at me like that, neighbor. It's just me--Charlie.

Barton

. . . I hear it's Mundt. Madman Mundt.

Charlie

Yeah, well, what's the diff. . .

He reaches into his pocket and takes out a flask of whiskey.

. . . Just another name. And not a very nice one. Jesus, people can be cruel. . .

He takes a long draught from the flask, then gives it a haunted stare.

. . . If it's not my build, it's my personality.

Charlie is perspiring heavily. The fire rumbles in the hallway.

Barton

Charlie. . . Why? . . .

Charlie

. . . Well, they say I'm a madman, Barton, but I'm not mad at anyone. Really I'm not. Most

guys I just feel sorry for. Yeah. It tears me up inside, to think about what they're going through. How trapped they are. I understand it. I feel for 'em. . . So I try to help them out. . .

He is perspiring heavily. He reaches up to loosen his tie and pop his collar button.

. . . Jesus. Yeah. I know what it feels like, when things get all balled up at the head office. It puts you through hell, Barton. So I help people out. I just wish someone would do as much for me. . .

He stares miserably down at his own feet.

. . . Jesus, it's hot. Sometimes it gets so hot, I wanna crawl right out of my skin.

Self-pity:

Barton  
But Charlie--why me? My whole family--Uncle--

Charlie  
Because you DON'T LISTEN!

A tacky yellow fluid is dripping from Charlie's left ear and running down his cheek.

. . . Jesus, I'm dripping again.

He settles, mops his brow. After a beat he looks up at Barton, his eyes a deep well of pain.

. . . C'mon Barton, you think you know about pain? You think I made your life hell? Take a look around. This is not a happy place. . . You're just a tourist with a typewriter, Barton. I live here. . . Don't you understand that. . .

Still staring at his feet, his voice is becoming choked with emotion.

And you come into my home. . . And you complain that I'm making too. . . much. . . noise.

He looks up at Barton.

There is a long silence.

Finally:

Barton  
. . . I'm sorry.

Wearily:

Charlie  
Don't be.

He rises to his feet and kneels in front of Barton at the foot of the bed.

The two men regard each other.

Charlie grabs two bars of the footboard frame, still staring. His muscles tighten, though nothing moves. His neck fans with effort. All of his muscles tense. His face is a reddening grimace.

Suddenly, with a shriek of protest, the metal gives. The bar to which Barton is handcuffed has come loose at the top and Barton slides the cuff off it, free.

Charlie gets to his feet.

Charlie  
I'm getting off this merry-go-round.

He takes his shotgun and walks to the door.

. . . I'll be next door if you need me.

He pauses at the door and turns to face Barton; beyond him the hallway blazes.

. . . By the way, that package I gave you? I lied. It isn't mine.  
He leaves.

Barton wearily picks up the parcel, and his script.

#### THE HALLWAY

As Barton emerges. Flames lick the walls, causing the wallpaper to run with the tacky sap of glue. Smoke fills the hallway. Barton turns and looks down the hall.

#### HIS POV

Charlie stands in front of the door to his room, his briefcase dangling from one hand, his other hand fumbling

in his pocket for his key.

With his hat pushed back on his head and his shoulders slumped with fatigue, he could be any drummer returning to any hotel after a long hard day on the road--except for the fact that the hallway is engulfed in flames.

He opens his door and walks silently into his room.

#### BACK TO BARTON

He turns to walk up the hallway, his script in one hand, the parcel in the other.

A horrible moaning sound can be heard under the roar of the fire, almost like the sound of the surf.

#### BLACKNESS

#### WHITE IN:

Lou Breeze is escorting Barton, unshaven and extremely unkempt, into Jack Lipnik's office.

Barton cradles the parcel in his right hand.

Lipnik rises from behind his desk, wearing the smartly-pressed uniform of an army colonel.

Lipnik  
Pink.

Barton  
Mr. Lipnik.

Lipnik  
Colonel Lipnik, if you don't mind. Sid down.

Barton takes a seat opposite Lipnik's desk.

. . . I was commissioned yesterday in the Army Reserve. Henry Morgenthau arranged it. He's a dear friend.

Barton  
Congratulations.

Lipnik

Actually it hasn't officially gone through yet. Had wardrobe whip this up. You gotta pull teeth to get anything done in this town. I can understand a little red tape in peacetime, but now it's all-out warfare against the Japs. Little yellow bastards. They'd love to see me sit this one out.

Barton

Yes sir, they--

Lipnik

Anyway. I had Lou read your script for me.

He taps with distaste at the script on his desk, its title page slightly charred.

. . . I gotta tell you, Fink. It won't wash.

Barton

With all due respect, sir, I think it's the best work I've done.

Lipnik

Don't gas me, Fink. If your opinion mattered, then I guess I'd resign and let you run the studio. It doesn't, and you won't, and the lunatics are not going to run this particular asylum. So let's put a stop to that rumor right now.

Listlessly:

Barton

Yes sir. . .

Lipnik

I had to call Beery this morning, let him know we were pushing the picture back. After all I'd told him about quality, about that Barton Fink feeling. How disappointed we were. Wally was heartbroken. The man was devastated. He was-- well I didn't actually call him, Lou did. But that's a fair description, isn't it Lou?

Lou

Yes, Colonel.

Lipnik

Hell, I could take you through it step by step, explain why your story stinks, but I won't insult

your intelligence. Well all right, first of all: This is a wrestling picture; the audience wants to see action, drama, wrestling and plenty of it. They don't wanna see a guy wrestling with his soul--well all right, a little bit, for the critics--but he's gotta win that fight too. This psychological mental stuff is a trap, Fink. You make it the carrot that wags the dog. Too much of it and they head for the exits and I don't blame 'em. There's plenty of poetry right inside that ring, Fink. Look at "Hell Ten Feet Square."

Lou

"Blood Sweat and Canvas."

Lipnik

Look at "Blood Sweat and Canvas." These are big movies, Fink. About big men, in tights--both physically and mentally. But especially physically. We don't put Wallace Beery in some fruity movie about suffering. I thought we were together on that.

Barton

I'm sorry if I let you down.

Lipnik

You didn't let me down. Or even Lou. We don't live or die by what you scribble, Fink. You let Ben Geisler down. He liked you. Trusted you. And that's why he's gone. Fired. That guy had a heart as big as the outdoors, and you fucked him. He tried to convince me to fire you too, but that would be too easy. No, you're under contract and you're gonna stay that way. Anything you write will be the property of Capitol Pictures. And Capitol Pictures will not produce anything you write. Not until you grow up a little. You're no writer, Fink, you're a goddamn write-off.

Bitterly:

Barton

I tried to show you something beautiful. Something about all of us--

This sets Lipnik off:

Lipnik

You arrogant sonofabitch! You think you're the only writer who can give me that Barton Fink feeling?! I got twenty writers under contract

that I can ask for a Fink-type thing from. You swell-headed hypocrite! You just don't get it, do ya? You still think the whole world revolves around whatever rattles inside that little kike head of yours. Get him out of my sight, Lou. Make sure he stays in town though; he's still under contract. I want you in town, Fink, and out of my sight. Now get lost. There's a war on.

CUT TO:  
THE SURF

Crashing on the Pacific shore.

THE BEACH

Almost deserted at mid-day. A few bathers frolic at the edge of the water. In the distance, Barton's lone overcoated figure can be seen making his way across the sand. The paper wrapped parcel swings from the twine in his left hand.

BARTON

He walks a few more paces and sits down on the sand, looking out to sea. His gaze shifts to the side.

HIS POV

Down the beach, closer to the water. A bathing beauty, sitting on the sand, gazing out at the water. She looks much like the picture on the wall in his hotel room.

The surf crashes in the background, the sound washing over the track obliterating everything except the occasional cry of a gull.

BARTON

Staring at her. Transfixed.

THE GIRL

She is exceptionally beautiful, backlit by the sun, her

hair piled up on top her head, her hand cupped over her eyes. The sea glitters beyond her, stretching to a distant horizon.

BARTON

Still staring.

CLOSE ON THE GIRL

Rising to her feet. The wind blows her hair down as she walks along the shore.

BARTON

Following her with his eyes.

EXTREME CLOSE ON THE GIRL

Bending to pick a shell off the sand. She looks up and sees Barton.

Their eyes meet.

She says something but her voice is lost in the crash of the surf.

Barton cups his hand to his ear.

Beauty  
(above the crash of the surf)  
I said it's a beautiful day. . .

Barton  
Yes. . . It is. . .

Beauty  
What's in the box?

Barton shrugs and shakes his head.

Berton  
I don't know.

Beauty  
Isn't it yours?



Barton  
I . . . I don't know. . .

She nods, sitting down on the sand several paces away from him facing the water but looking back over her shoulder at Barton.

Barton  
. . . You're very beautiful. Are you in pictures?

She laughs.

Beauty  
Don't be silly.

She turns away to look out at the sea.

WIDER

Facing the ocean. Barton sits in the middle foreground, back to us, the box in the sand next to him.

The bathing beauty sits, back to us, in the middle background.

The surf pounds.

The sun sparkles off the water.

FADE OUT