

CUT NUMBERS

screenplay
by
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based on the novel
'Cut Numbers'
by
Nick Tosches

• Sanibel Films



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CUT NUMBERS

EXT LOWER MANHATTAN DAWN

CLOSE ON AN OLD SUITCASE as it gets plopped down on the sidewalk. Something inside makes a CLANKING SOUND (glass hitting glass). Fingers pinched white by the heavy load uncurl from around the handle, pump open and shut inviting blood to return.

LOUIE stands alone on Varick Street, black silk shirt under a light-colored sport coat that's been rumpled by the night just passed. Louie could be described as "still handsome". He must have been great looking when he was young. Now in his early forties, there are signs of erosion. We can see the weariness in his eyes when he looks up at....

THE SKY, where black is just becoming deepest blue. The last star twinkles for a moment -- then vanishes.

LOUIE sighs, picks up the heavy suitcase, and walks on.

CREDITS over LOUIE walking. We see early morning tunnel traffic. Deepest blue becomes day. Louie crosses Sixth Avenue. Soon a church campanile comes into view and Louie enters....

THE STREET OF SILENCE. Typical of Little Italy. Businesses on the street level. Residences in the four or five brownstone storeys above. WORKERS walk to and from their beds. DELIVERY MEN unload produce. A bow-legged OLD LADY in black, who left the Old Country some time before the year 1900, carries bread and paper-wrapped sausage in a net shopping bag. LOUIE glances at....

A STOREFRONT with BLACK-CURTAINED WINDOWS. A suspicious looking place at best. Peeling gold-leaf lettering alleges this to be THE ZIGINETTE SOCIETY OF SCIACCA. As the CAMERA TRACKS past, from Louie's P.O.V., an adjoining DOOR slowly CREAKS OPEN.

LOUIE looks away. He keeps on walking, trying to straighten himself to make the suitcase seem less of a burden.

In that dark doorway, an old man appears. Medium size, about seventy years old. Small gut. Thinning gray hair brushed straight back. He wears a light blue polyester suit and a brown shirt. This is IL CAPRAIO, a man of some importance. He watches....

LOUIE, who walks on pretending he doesn't know he's being watched.

IL CAPRAIO shakes his head. He inhales deeply, as if he has been burdened in this last moment no less than God has been burdened throughout all time.

INT GIACOMO'S PLACE MORNING

This is a hundred-year-old tavern which has never had a name. Beer neons have been replaced over the years as breweries have come and gone. Otherwise little here has changed in the last century. Shades are drawn on the windows and the door, though the place is open for business. Four barstools are occupied by human figures in similar states of dissolution. Al Martino's version of "Daddy's Little Girl" is playing distortedly on the juke when LOUIE walks in and the CREDITS END.

LOUIE

What am I, dirt, Giacomo? The old man,
Il Capraio, looks at me all the time like
I'm dirt.

GIACOMO stands behind the bar in a haze of cigarette smoke. He's an old man with lifeless white hair, running red eyes wholly occluded by thick bifocal lenses, a nose broken so often it can hardly be discerned.

GIACOMO

He's just lookin' out for business. Il
Capraio is always lookin' out for business.

Using both hands, Louie hoists his suitcase and plops it down on a table that stands in the darkness between the jukebox and the toilet. The four figures on the barstools never so much as look up.

LOUIE

What, like I'm gonna pocket something on him? Four years, have I ever put anything in my pocket? Maybe if I did I'd have something to show for my time. I got a lousy twelve grand workin' for me and most of that is out on the street.

Giacomo shuffles over to a three-pot Silex gas range, pours a coffee, loads it with sugar, brings it to the bar.

LOUIE (cont.)

Nobody borrows from a shark anymore. A guy's legit, he goes to see Phil Rizzutto. Who comes to me? Guys who get fired. Guys who go bet their livers at Belmont. Guys in jail. Guys with sick mothers. Guys who cry on me. Guys who die on me. I turn around. I got twelve G's. That's all I'm up in four years of this shit.

Collecting the coffee from the bar, Louie walks over, sipping, and flips open the suitcase. Giacomo follows.

LOUIE (cont.)

Look at this. You know Willie, used to work with me downtown? He owes me. He's tending bar over in Jersey. He hands me this suitcase.

Giacomo looks inside and sees four bottles of Dewar's, four bottles of Johnnie Walker Red, four bottles of Smirnoff, one each of Martell V.S.O.P., Bacardi Dark, and Southern Comfort.

LOUIE (cont.)

Does he take it and sell it and give me the cash? No. He hands me this suitcase and says, 'so we're square, right, Louie'. Now I gotta go sell it.

Giacomo holds the bottles up to the light, examining seals.

GIACOMO

A hundred and fifty.

LOUIE

Willie owes me a hundred and a quarter. Gimme a hundred and a quarter.

Giacomo brings a handful of folded money out of his pocket. Holding it close to his face, he counts out a hundred and a quarter and passes it to Louie. Louie moves the bottles, a few at a time, to shelves beneath the back of the bar while Giacomo shuffles over, draws back the window curtains and raises the shade on the door.

LOUIE (cont.)

Things have taken a downward turn, Giacomo. Hard times.

GIACOMO

You wouldn't know it from the neighborhood.

The old man looks out the window. The street is more populated now. Most are fashionably dressed. Young middle-management types, women in suits with attaches. The new breed of Yuppie Village dwellers.

GIACOMO (cont.)

All these cute young girls with big eyes and big checkbooks of their own. Boy-asses with fancy haircuts, like they're in some beer commercial on TV. Kids. They got all the

money today. And I swear you could sell 'em shit on a stick if you came up with a catchy brand name for it. They'd buy the Brooklyn Bridge if you told them it was gonna go co-op. Imagine carryin' thirty-year paper to live in some shit hole that's been fallin' apart since Christ left Chicago.

Al Martino finishes his song. Giacomo turns back from the window and claps his hands loudly.

GIACOMO (cont.)

Post time. Wake up. Come on, there's live people gonna be walkin' in here soon.

The four slumped figures begin to stir. One of them notices that the music has stopped.

MAN #1

More quarters, Jocko. And another shot.

Giacomo moves behind the bar again. He takes a bill from under the man's elbow, drops some silver in return, and goes to pour the man's shot. The man takes the change over to the juke where he punches up the same Al Martino song for three more plays. Giacomo joins Louie again and the two light cigarettes.

GIACOMO

The happiness boys.

They look at the four, who are sitting up now though still looking dazed, staring off in four different directions. The Al Martino fancier, sipping his fresh shot, moves his head and emits a sickly quavering sound in dire harmony with the jukebox. Another of the four picks up a stale drink. Before he can take a sip, he loses his energy and his head falls back onto his arms.

GIACOMO (cont.)

Shit-head there looks like he's ready for Perazzo.

LOUIE

He's got money to drink? He owes me, that bastard. He's been dodgin' me.

GIACOMO

He had few bucks at first. He's runnin' a tab for weeks now. They're all on the muldoon, the four of 'em. If it wasn't for the young crowd there'd be nothin' in here lately.

LOUIE

Guy owes me a hundred. Thirty cents on the dollar. He's supposed to pay off in five weeks at twenty six a shot. He makes two payments. After that it's, domani, domani.

GIACOMO

Loan him another couple yards so he can pay his tab.

The door opens and in walks a SMALL, SMILING MAN in a tan twill cap.

SMALL MAN

Good morning all you beautiful people. (Then to the juke.) Sing it, you guinea bastard.

Giacomo puts a spoon in a glass, fills the glass with coffee, then pours in some Cutty Sark. He pushes the glass toward the small, smiling man.

GIACOMO

What was it?

SMALL MAN

Nine-sixteen, Brooklyn. Three-eleven, New York.

GIACOMO

More cut numbers. What shit.

SMALL MAN

(To Louie) How's business, kid?

LOUIE

Business sucks. How's with you?

SMALL MAN

I ain't had a hit in weeks. This legal shit is killin' us. Everybody's playin' the fuckin' Lotto these days. I think I'd be better off makin' rounds with a shoeshine box.

Giacomo passes two singles to the smiling man.

GIACOMO

Four-oh-five, dollar straight, Brooklyn. Same thing, New York.

Louie hands him a five.

LOUIE

One-eighty-seven for five, straight, Brooklyn.

The smiling man scribbles with a short pencil onto a scrap of Yellow Freight System note paper.

The door swings open again and THREE FAT WOMEN come huffing in. Before they even reach the bar, Giacomo is pouring three coffees.

WOMAN #1

What was it?

SMALL MAN

Nine-sixteen, Brooklyn. Three-eleven, New York.

WOMAN #2

Three-eleven! My niece's birthday. I dreamed about her just the other night, too. Oh, well, what can you do.

WOMAN #3

I got sausage left over. I'll buy peppers.

WOMAN #1

Green or red?

WOMAN #3

You gotta be kidding me, red. Even the green are going through the ceiling.

As they prattle on, sipping their coffees, Louie notices that the welsher has gotten up from the bar and is making his way to the door. When Louie hurries over, catching him, we see that he's an older man. Fifty-five, sixty. A tragic figure with defeated eyes.

LOUIE

What is this shit?

MAN #2

Things ain't been good.

LOUIE

You're old enough to be my father and you're more stupid than I am. What is it with you?

MAN #2

Things, Louie. Things.

LOUIE

You make me look bad, you know that? I don't even really give a fuck about that. I don't. You know what I give a fuck about? I give a fuck about the fuckin' money. Seventy-eight dollars, I know, ain't nothin' to a bigshot like you. But to me seventy-eight dollars is seventy-eight dollars. And I want it. You hear me? I want it. That's it.

The man looks up at Louie, his eyes like those of a child. Louie's tone softens.

LOUIE (cont.)

You shouldn't fuck your friends. Go on. Try to straighten out. Do what you have to do, then come see me.

Louie dismisses him with a sideways toss of his head. The man exits, stepping around a slender figure suddenly seen to be standing in the open doorway. It's IL CAPRAIO -- and he's staring right at Louie.

Louie returns to the bar and mumbles to Giacomo under his breath.

LOUIE (cont.)

What is he always watchin' me? Jesus.

Everyone in the bar goes silent as the old Don walks slowly into the dark room. He pulls up right beside Louie.

IL CAPRAIO

Nice out today.

Louie, Giacomo, and the small, smiling man concur with nods.

IL CAPRAIO (cont.)

(This time only to Louie) You gonna be seein' your uncle?

LOUIE

Tomorrow. The day after.

IL CAPRAIO

Ask him whatever happened to Joe Brusher.

When Louie looks up, he finds steel eyes behind the old man's outwardly friendly smile.

IL CAPRAIO (cont.)

You ask him that for me, all right? You remember, or maybe you wanna write it down, or what?

LOUIE

I got it.

Il Capraio nods vaguely, then turns and walks away, leaving Louie perplexed, wheels spinning in his head, trying to figure what's up.

INT JOE BRUSHER'S APARTMENT DAY

JOE BRUSHER is getting dressed. A big man, somewhere around forty-five or fifty, he has an expressionless face permanently set with slightly arched eyebrows in a look of calm defiance. He squeezes his feet into a new pair of extra-wide wing-tip brogues, pulls up his brown woolen slacks, fastens two of the three buttons at the neck of his blue knit pullover. Then he pulls on a dark brown blazer, fixing his collar fastidiously. He walks to a little table near the door, where sits a ceramic swan on a crocheted doily. From the concave tray of the swan's back, he takes two sets of keys, a billfold, and a Rolex. He opens a drawer and removes a Charter Arms 79K .32. He screws a Dater steel-and-aluminum silencer onto the gun's bushing, thumbs the safety, and shoves the completed weapon into the deep pocket inside his blazer. Then he goes to the bathroom where he takes a loud, forceful piss.

INT JOE BRUSHER'S CAR at the HOLLAND TUNNEL DAY

JOE'S expression remains the same as he pulls his car out of the tunnel and into falling afternoon daylight on the Manhattan side.

EXT A GARAGE ON RENWICK STREET DAY

THE BUICK pulls up outside the gate of an old garage, now derelict. JOE BRUSHER gets out, unlocks the gate, and walks across a parking yard that is cracked and full of weeds. There's no one else around. Joe climbs up on the garage platform, unlocks the roll-up door, steps inside and looks around. Wooden pallets and milk crates, motor oil cans, beer bottles. He drags one of the crates to the threshold, where the light just barely reaches. He sets another crate back in the shadows between the first one and the wall. He sits on the outside crate, reaches into his blazer and clicks off the safety catch on his weapon.

ANOTHER BUICK, this one silver, pulls up behind Joe's car and a man named HARRY steps out. He sees Joe immediately and he calls out.

HARRY

This place brings back memories.

JOE

That's what I was sittin' here thinkin'.

Harry talks as he crosses the parking yard.

HARRY

Last time I seen this garage it was full of King Oscar sardines. Remember that? We must've hit every deli in New York tryin' to unload them damn sardines.

JOE

Yeah. The good old days.

HARRY

So, this shit you got is good?

JOE

I don't know, Harry. I don't like to bull shit anybody, you know? I could pull your prick and tell you it's white death, but I don't do that. This stuff, I wouldn't be surprised the assholes that use it end up shittin' themselves to death, it's probably got so much of that Sicilian mannitol shit in it. On the other hand they tell me it's as good as anything out there these days. What do you want for ten grand, anyway?

HARRY

I can lay down my lantern. I have found an honest man.

JOE

Yeah, whatever.

By now, Harry has climbed up beside the other man. He flops, unsuspecting, onto the vacant crate.

HARRY

I'm gettin' old. How you feelin' these days?

JOE

I tell you my troubles, I'll only have to listen to yours.

HARRY

I hear you. So, what do you say we take care of business and get out of this shit hole?

JOE

Yeah. Here.

Harry puts out his right palm to receive a package. Joe pulls out his gun and FIRES. The bullet enters below Harry's right eye, which fills with blood as his head snaps back.

Little drops of BLOOD spatter Joe's fingers which squeeze off a second round.

Harry drops off the milk crate, dead before he hits the floor. Joe thumbs the safety again, puts the gun away, and stands. In the dead man's pockets he finds two sheaves of fifty bills each, all hundreds, bound by rubber bands. Keeping the money, he rolls down the garage door and locks it. He walks across the parking yard and gets into his car.

INT JOE BRUSHER'S CAR at the GARAGE DAY

He places the gun and the money under the seat. From the glove compartment, he takes a Handi-Wipe. Washing the blood from his fingers, he starts the car and pulls away.

INT DONNA'S OFFICE AFTERNOON

A long set of partitioned cubby-holes, offices for the writers and artists of a weekly like "Seven Days". One of the layout artists, DONNA LOUISE CRAVEN, attractive, mid thirties, listens to the radio as she lays down pale blue bleed lines on a fresh illustration board. She looks at the telephone, trying to decide whether she should use it or not. Finally, laying down the last blue line, she lights a cigarette, picks up the receiver, and dials. The voice on the other end is Louie's

LOUIE (o.s.)

Yeah?

DONNA

It's me.

INT LOUIE'S APARTMENT AFTERNOON

It's a little bigger than a crash-pad, but not by much. One room on the second floor of a brownstone, a kitchen and a bathroom carved out of opposite walls. It's strewn with old newspapers. All the ash trays are brimming over with butts. There are clothes lying everywhere. LOUIE is in his underwear.

LOUIE

And how are you, Donna Lou?

(INTERCUT back and forth as the conversation continues.)

DONNA

Oh, I'm, you know. I miss you.

Donna starts to laugh, then very nearly starts to cry.

DONNA (cont.)

It's been a while.

LOUIE

Tell me about it. I been contemplating the gay life.

DONNA

That's one thing you never had trouble with, Louie, finding women.

LOUIE

I haven't been with anybody since I was with you last.

DONNA

You lie like a rug. (A long pause) So -- what do you think, Louie?

LOUIE

What do I think? You put me through nine kinds of hell, leave me standin' here with my dick in my hand, disappear for two months, then call up out of the blue and say 'What do you think?' You know what I think? I think you must have balls made out of solid brass.

When he says this, he reaches inside his boxer shorts and scratches his own balls. Then, feeling better for having said what he said, he struts in a circle, carrying the phone.

LOUIE (cont.)

Yeah. Yeah, that's what I think. So.
So why don't you come over later?

INT LOUIE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Louie flings himself into Donna, loudly, lustfully. She wraps herself around him, taking all he can give and wanting more. They climax together, shuddering. Then they cling for a time before Louie, gently, rolls onto his back beside her in the bed.

DONNA

Baby, I could die.

She closes her eyes. Louie sits up. Then he crosses the room, finds a cigarette, and lights it. He's staring out the window, just starting to think, when Donna says....

DONNA

Me too.

He turns. Realizes that she wants a cigarette. He moves back to the bed, hands her his cigarette, and moves away again. She puffs, watching his back.

DONNA

Everything okay?

He turns to look at her.

LOUIE

Hmmm? Oh, yeah. Yeah, everything's fine.
Everything is....great. I'm, er....I'm glad
you decided to call.

He smiles with as much warmth as he can generate. Donna makes a pleased sound, then closes her eyes, drifting. Louie watches her body in his bed, wondering -- actually not knowing -- whether or not he just told a lie. Is he really glad she decided to call?

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM NIGHT

JOE BRUSHER and the one called IL CAPRAIO sit at a table in the middle of the night.

IL CAPRAIO

That little Genoese prick. That cocksucker.

JOE

I'm lucky I ain't layin' up on First Avenue here. The little chiacchieron' wants to talk about old times. He pulls a forty-five, no less! A goddamn fucking cannon! One of them Argentine things. No mixer, no nothin'.

IL CAPRAIO

You take it?

JOE

No. I left it on him. This way, the bulls find him, they can pull that 'mob-style rubout' routine.

Il Capraio walks to the window, parts the curtain, and looks out into the darkness.

IL CAPRAIO

I just can't figure it. Harry was a pussycat.

JOE

Pussycats go crazy, too. And sometimes they bite.

IL CAPRAIO

You checked the car and everything, huh?

JOE

Everything. He had thirty-somethin' bucks on him. And a fuckin' cannon. That was it. I didn't look up his asshole, but I figure it's pretty hard to fit ten grand in somebody's heinie.

IL CAPRAIO

Still, it don't figure.

JOE

What figures is that he figured him and me were the only two people that knew him and me were gonna meet -- and he figured fuck me. With all due respect, Frank, I don't need shit like that.

IL CAPRAIO

I know, I know. Enough, eh?"

Joe Brusher walks to a SMALL BAR at the side of the room. He finds an eight ounce highball glass, holds it to the light, turning it slowly, then pours in a shot of J & B. He pops a little white PILL, washes it down with the booze, pours another shot. Then he and Il Capraio both walk back to the table where they sit, in unison.

IL CAPRAIO

You sleepin' these days, Joe?

JOE

Ah. I close my eyes, you know? I take the Valium's. Now the doctor gave me this new shit, Elavils, whatever the fuck they are.

Il Capraio nods slowly. He looks across the room at...

a big CLOCK, which is TICKING LOUDLY. The hands show that it's three thirty.

JOE (cont.)

I don't know, Frank. I watch the TV. They got one guy, some half-a-fruit, shootin' the other guy, and they got the music in the background, and next thing, the guy who shot the other guy is out on the veranda drinkin' Chateauneuf-du-piss with some broad who's lookin' at him like he's Jesus Christ with a hard-on. Last time I got laid it cost me a hundred bucks. And I never heard none of that music in the background, you know what I mean? Shit. I'm just workin' on gettin' my forty acres and a mule, and that's it. You got any idea how much cash I went through drinkin' and gamblin' when I was young? Forget it! I really believe, Frank, as God is my witness, I am the stupidest fuck I ever met. I mean that.

Joe shrugs and gesticulates abstrusely with his right hand.

JOE (cont.)

Then again, at least I'm still here.

Through all this, Il Capraio just gazes at the clock. He's not listening. He's got other things on his mind.

IL CAPRAIO

You see Giovanni Brunellesches lately?

JOE

He don't get around much any more. He's gotta be pushin' eighty now. I don't think he's been doin' anything.

IL CAPRAIO

He's doin' somethin'. I don't know what, but he's doin' somethin' with those tizzunes over there.

JOE

What are you sayin', Frank?

IL CAPRAIO

The numbers, Joe, the numbers. Newark used to be good for about two hundred grand a day. Now they got legal numbers. The State cut into the action out there even worse than here. But it still don't make sense. Newark is only bringin' in about twenty grand a day. From two hundred K to twenty K in the tizzune capital of the world? It don't make sense. Too much of a drop. Nobody could figure it. Then somebody says -- maybe Giovanni Brunellesches is doin' a little business for himself.

JOE

Nah. The old-timers, they never go in business for themselves. Giovanni Brunellesches. He's an old-timer. He's been around longer than you, Frank, from what I hear.

IL CAPRAIO

He had the balls and he had some style. I never liked him. He was older than me so he could always get his ideas through, you know what I mean? He became an important man. Maybe he thinks he's still an important man, I don't know. All I know is he's Albanese. I never trust a fuckin' Albanese.

Joe Brusher says nothing. Il Capraio crosses his legs loosely.

IL CAPRAIO (cont.)

I figured I'd throw a scare into him. He's got this nephew around here. Two bit shylock or whatever the fuck he is this week. I told this guy to ask his uncle when he sees him -- ask him whatever happened to Joe Brusher. I figured to remind old Giovanni that he's being thought of on this side of the river.

JOE

So. Is there somethin' you need me to do?

IL CAPRAIO

Not now. Maybe later. We'll see.

Another profound silence during which the two men sit there, still as a frieze. After some time, Joe Brusher breaks the silence.

JOE

Do you think, Frank, I could put the touch on you for some walkin'-around money till the weekend? Half a hundred, say?

Il Capraio pulls a money roll from his pocket. Snapping two twenties and a ten out of the wad, he places them on the table. Joe Brusher collects them.

EXT MILITARY PARK DAY

LOUIE walks through this once proud old park where broken benches now collect the homeless in alarming numbers. In the background lies the squalor of Newark.

EXT GIOVANNI'S BUILDING on HALSEY STREET DAY

LOUIE turns onto Halsey Street and approaches the narrow building where his uncle, Giovanni, lives. On the sidewalk, near the door, a black man sits on a folding chair. He's wearing a white wind-breaker and a black Homburg. A long hardwood shillelagh leans against the wall close by. This is ERNIE.

LOUIE

Hello, Ernie.

ERNIE

Louis.

Five young BLACK BOYS come dancing past, one with a suitcase-size radio blaring distortion.

ERNIE (cont.)

I's just sittin' here thinkin' -- thinkin' what Newark was like years ago. Used to be some kind o' town. Ever see a after-hours joint with a maitre d'?

LOUIE

Never.

ERNIE

Could have seen one in old Newark. (He bites and lights a Partagas cigar.) Made New York look like a Methodist tank town. Ah, well, like your uncle used to say, as goes Newark, so goes the world.

LOUIE

How's old Giovanni?

ERNIE

Rock of Gibraltar. Went with him to get his hair cut yesterday. Ever see that barber he goes to over on New Street? He's older than your uncle. Holds the scissors with two hands.

Ernie blows smoke. Louie knows he has more to say. He waits. Finally, it comes.

ERNIE (cont.)

There is somethin', Lou. You ever know your uncle John to use a telephone?

LOUIE

Are you kiddin'? Forget about it. When I was a kid, we were all livin' together. My grandmother finally gets a telephone. Old Giovanni never goes near the thing. Even if it's a call for him, he won't take it. He never even looked at the thing except to curse it.

ERNIE

All the years, I never seen him use a telephone once. Now he has one installed in his house. And there's somethin' else. He sends off to the Justice Department for a copy of his citizenship papers. Then he asks me to take him over to the photo shop to have his picture taken. It was for a passport. He upped and got himself a passport.

Louie looks dismayed. He pats Ernie on the shoulder.

LOUIE

Lemme go up and see him.

Louie unlocks the front door with a key from his pocket and walks inside.

INT THE VESTIBULE AT GIOVANNI'S DAY

The steeled oak door closes behind LOUIE, shutting out the world and time itself. Louie moves through a familiar sanctuary of varnished wood. He runs his hand along a polished bannister as he climbs a flight of creaking stairs to....

A DOORWAY at the top. He raps lightly. He hears an old man's shuffling footsteps, slow and regular as a sleeping heart. Then the door opens and there stands GIOVANNI BRUNELLESCHES.

GIOVANNI

Hello stranger.

Louie smiles, broadly. He can't hold back his joy and pleasure at seeing this old man. Shabby gabardine trousers. Suspenders over a plaid flannel shirt. Thick silver hair, newly trimmed above ears that wear big old fashioned hearing aids. Behind wire-rimmed spectacles, a face relaxed into the vague, inscrutable frown of age, though the eyes in that face still sparkle with life. Giovanni turns and walks away from the door. Louie follows him into...

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS DAY

A SITTING ROOM. Lace curtains transmute the streaming sunshine into soft, delicate rays which purl like churchlight on the pale blue walls. A heavy bronze crucifix hangs adorned by a woven palm leaf brought on Palm Sunday, almost a year ago.

Giovanni sits in one of two easy chairs by the window. Between those chairs, a cane is propped against a mahogany table. And on that table: a tweed cap, a magnifying glass atop a folded copy of today's Star-Ledger, White Owl cigars in cellophane wrappers, a box of De Nobilis, an ash tray, and the last thing that Louie would ever have expected to see in these rooms -- a shining black telephone.

GIOVANNI

(Pointing to his head) New haircut.

LOUIE

Yeah. Ernie told me.

GIOVANNI

(Pointing to his feet) New slippers.

Louie looks down. The old man is wearing fancy slippers of soft brown leather. They fit his feet but they, like the telephone, don't seem to fit his character.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Every time I see you, you ask me what's new.
I figured I'd beat you to the punch today.

No mention of the telephone. Louie tilts his head toward the black plastic improbability.

LOUIE

Somethin' else new, too.

The flicker of censure behind the old man's spectacles. Then something that resembles a grin.

GIOVANNI

Phone sex. They got that now. You call up
and you pay and the woman talks to you. They
had all about it on Donahue.

He takes his glasses off, wipes them with a handkerchief.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

So, how have you been, kid?

LOUIE

(Indecisively) Good.

GIOVANNI

Next time I see you, you'll bring the palm.
(He nods toward the crucifix) Then maybe you
can find me a lamb for Easter. Two weeks
after the lamb -- baseball. Maybe I'll go
with the Mets again this year. What do
you think?

LOUIE

They got a shot.

The old man nods his head very slowly. He sits silently for a time,
as if alone. Then he looks up through the purls of light and tosses
his head in Louie's direction. The gesture says, "and what's new
with you?"

LOUIE

You know a guy named Joe Brusher?

The answer comes slowly, with no smile, no trace of any expression.

GIOVANNI

Yeah. Do you?

LOUIE

No. But somebody asked me to ask you
whatever happened to Joe Brusher.

The old man closes his hand into a fist. He stares at it for a moment, as though wishing he could restore lost strength. Then he unclenches the hand, lowers it to the arm of his chair, braces himself, and stands. He digs in his pocket. Produces a dollar bill. Drops it on the table, and sits behind it.

GIOVANNI

What is it, Louie?

LOUIE

It's a dollar bill.

GIOVANNI

It's a piece of paper called a dollar. When I was a kid, a dollar bill represented a one dollar gold piece. Then Roosevelt outlawed gold and a dollar bill represented one silver dollar -- payable to the bearer on demand. Twenty years ago a dollar note stopped representing anything. Payable to the bearer on demand: un' gazz'. Turn it over.

Louie picks up the dollar and looks at the back.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

See where it says 'In God We Trust'? That's somethin' they added when they were gettin' ready to renege. And look to the left there, over top o' that Mason bullshit, the pyramid with the eye on it. What's it say?

LOUIE

(With improper pronunciation) Annuit coeptis.

GIOVANNI

Annuit coeptis. (He pronounces it perfectly) They're about two thousand years old, those words. Written by Virgil during the days of the first Roman emperor, Augustus, who ran the first lottery in history. It was still goin' strong in Italy when I was born. They called it the Giuoco del Lotto. When I came over here I worked for the Albanese they called Il Santo. We brought the Giuoco to New York. We took bets all over the Lower East Side....

(Here begins a series of FLASH BACKS.)

EXT LOWER MANHATTAN - 1923 DAY

YOUNG GIOVANNI BRUNELLESCHES, along with two henchmen, FRANKIE SCARPA and a man called DUTCHIE, take money from people on the street -- PRODUCE SALESMEN, a SHOEMAKER, an OLD LADY carrying laundry. Giovanni deals with the customers. Dutchie writes down the bets on a piece of butcher-wrap. Frankie Scarpa, a weasel of a man, small, wiry, keeps an eye out for trouble.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

....everything from a penny to a dollar.
Everybody, no matter how poor, had something to bet. They figured they couldn't go wrong for a penny or a nickel or a dime.

INT IL SANTO'S BACK ROOM - 1923 NIGHT

A BAG OF MONEY, all in coins, is dumped on a table. A FAT MAN counts the coins, separating pennies from dimes, nickels from quarters, stacking them, then rolling the stacks into paper sleeves.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

The thing was, they were goin' wrong. If they were lucky, they stood to be paid off at a million to one. A million to one. People thought that was great. But the real odds they were up against were almost forty-four million to one. It was a sucker's bet.

FRANKIE SCARPA and DUTCHIE are involved in a card game with TWO OTHER RUNNERS. At a third table, AN OLD MAN with wooden teeth counts paper money out into piles which he bands and marks.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

I took their money and I gave it to the Devil and the Devil gave me my pence.

Young GIOVANNI sits in a corner smoking a cigar. The fat man brings him a wrapped roll of coins which he curls into his fist.

A Puccini opera crackles through the amplifying horn of an old record player. Singing along, waltzing in circles around the room, eating penne from a bowl as he goes, is the one they call IL SANTO. Sixty years old, stout but not fat, he is handsome in his light colored suit. Alongside the towel which is tucked into his collar to catch any sauce that might drop, he wears a red carnation in his

lapel. His shirt has studs, not buttons. He's wearing a diamond ring and fancy, jewelled cufflinks. He looks happy, satisfied.

Giovanni, not so satisfied, watches the older man dance.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

They got bad names for women who sell flesh, but they don't have a name for men who sell dreams.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS DAY

Back to present day, as the eighty-year-old GIOVANNI shifts in his chair. LOUIE is completely caught in his thrall.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

By 1930, the Giuoco was becoming a thing of the past. Uptown, Harlem was runnin' its own racket. The clearing house numbers. Everybody just called it 'the numbers'.

EXT LOWER MANHATTAN - 1930 DAY

YOUNG GIOVANNI, FRANKIE SCARPA and DUTCHIE watch from the sidelines as RUNNERS from the Harlem operation take bets on the street. We go in CLOSE ON: MONEY changing hands; DIGITS written on yellow paper.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

You picked three digits. If they matched certain figures from the New York Clearing House, you got paid off at five hundred to one. It looked more legit. People thought it was a better bet. And these numbers became the biggest thing in New York. They became big everywhere. Soon there wasn't a city in the country that didn't have the numbers.

INT IL SANTO'S BACK ROOM DAY

GIOVANNI brings a newspaper to IL SANTO who snaps it open and reads. FRANKIE SCARPA and DUTCHIE look on, exchanging glances.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

The newspapers stopped printing the clearing house figures. The New York Clearing House itself stopped disclosing the figures. So the

Harlem bosses switched to the Cincinnati Clearing House. There was no stopping the numbers. Il Santo -- he just laughed.

Il Santo laughs. He tosses down the newspaper.

IL SANTO

La Borsa negra.

We hear the words distantly, as though spoken by a ghost.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

La Borsa negra. That's what he called those Harlem numbers. The nigger stock exchange. It was too late, and he was too old to care.

EXT AN ALLEY BEHIND THE BACK ROOM NIGHT

IL SANTO comes outside in a fur-collared coat. He is followed by young GIOVANNI and several others, who check the street for trouble before allowing Il Santo to cross to a waiting car.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

All he wanted was to go back to Italy and die. When a man died there, the women laid him out and washed his body with their tears and their hair.

Il Santo gets into the back seat of the car. A CHAUFFEUR closes the door behind him. Inside, A PROSTITUTE with ceramic-doll makeup greets the old man with a kiss. He burrows into her, fondling her breasts. She pulls down a fringed shade in the side window.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

That's what he wanted. To take his money and go like a lord. Sit in the sun. Die in the shade. And have those broads cry on his corpse. But it didn't happen that way.

EXT IL SANTO'S HOME NIGHT

THREE CARS pull up to a big old brownstone and three important looking men, Il Santo's PARTNERS, step out, each backed by one or two "SOLDIERS".

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

He had partners. Important men. They already didn't like him because he was in business for

himself with the bubbonia, the dope, which he was sellin' on the side. So now he's gonna go back to the Old Country, he tells his partners he's gonna turn over the Giuoco to them, but the bubbonia -- he's gonna leave his own people behind to keep workin' the bubbonia. He figures that's his retirement.

INT IL SANTO'S HOME NIGHT

Young GIOVANNI paces in a hallway with FRANKIE SCARPA, DUTCHIE and the FAT MAN. Pacing in opposite directions are several of the "SOLDIERS" who came in the cars. RAISED VOICES can be heard speaking in Italian. Giovanni glances toward the end of the hall where he can see...

...THE KITCHEN. IL SANTO is sitting at a table, eating from another bowl of penne. His PARTNERS are with him. They're the ones who are shouting, gesticulating.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

His partners knew the Giuoco was dying. And they knew that the heroin business was worth a fortune. So they decided the only way to take control was la vuoda.

One of the partners, a big man with a scar, nods his head. A "soldier" steps up to Il Santo's table and aims a pistol, point-blank, at the old man's head. Without hesitation he pulls the trigger five times. Il Santo pitches backward, clawing at the holes in his face. His chair balances on two legs for what seems an eternity. Then it falls backward, taking the old man's twitching body to the floor. We see all this from a distance -- from young Giovanni's P.O.V. at the far end of the dark hallway.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

And that was the end of Il Santo. Five in the head sitting at his kitchen table on the third day of September, 1930.

Young Giovanni spins around wondering if he should act. None of Il Santo's other men seem disturbed. Frankie Scarpa and Dutchie nod to one another as if they'd been expecting this day to come. The partners move down the hall. Joined by their "soldiers", they make for the front door. The man with the scar, the one who ordered the shooting, stops to look into Giovanni's eyes. Giovanni, accepting the new authority of this man, nods fatally.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS DAY

Present day. GIOVANNI blows his nose into a plaid handkerchief.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Get some water, Louie.

LOUIE goes to the adjoining kitchen where two big pots are simmering on a gas stove. Louie checks the flames; lifts one pot-lid then the other. Giovanni talks on, raising his voice only slightly.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

The new bosses, they threw the Giuoco to us like a bone. We were just punks, but we knew enough to bury that bone in Harlem.

Using a wooden spoon, Louie tastes the bubbling red sauce that's been cooking all day. Finally he moves to the refrigerator, takes out a bottle of San Pellegrino, and pours two glasses.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

There was an old capozzell' joint. They sold Coke bottles of wine for a dime, bowls of capozzell' for a buck. That's where I told the others how we could break the numbers without getting our shirts dirty.

Louie brings the water and sits. Giovanni takes a long drink.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Aaah. Best drink in the world. That was a little before Thanksgiving, 1930. The next week we took a train to Cincinnati. We went straight to the Clearing House.

INT CINCINNATI CLEARING HOUSE DAY

A cross between a newspaper city room and a bookie joint. There's a bustle of activity, CLERKS, ACCOUNTANTS, TYPIST DRONES of both sexes, rush to compile data. At one end of the room stands an enormous slate chalk board with the day's tallies scrawled on it.

In a glass-partitioned coffee room, young GIOVANNI, FRANKIE SCARPA, DUTCHIE and THE FAT MAN, talk with a nervous MIDDLE-AGED CLERK who wears a visor over his eyeglasses, garters on his sleeves, and a chalk-dusted apron.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

We found the guy whose job it was to write the figures on the slate for the press. We offered him two grand to round off three digits to zeros. He didn't hesitate, not for a minute. We set the date for December eleventh.

Giovanni nods. The fat man produces an envelope. Eyes darting, the middle-aged clerk takes it and stuffs it under his apron.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

It was as easy as that. We came back to New York.

INT A TAVERN IN THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT DAY

CLOSE ON a well-dressed, officious looking man, as he bites off half of a hard-boiled egg. As the CAMERA PULLS BACK, he dips the second half into Tabasco and shoves it in his mouth. Then he starts to peel the shell off another. This is CASTIGLIA.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

There was a man named Castiglia who went by the name of Costello. He had Tammany Hall in his back pocket. When you looked over this guy's shoulder you didn't see six guineas from Thompson Street, you saw City Hall. We went to see him.

PULL BACK further to reveal THREE MEN in a booth behind Castiglia. They look like Secret Service. In another booth, nearby, sit FRANKIE SCARPA and DUTCHIE. Castiglia is at the bar, and leaning in close to him, talking confidentially, is young GIOVANNI.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

I talked to him in Italian. He agreed to back us. He put up the money for the Clearing House clerk. He put our bets straight into Harlem through his people.

EXT BLUE WHITE DIAMONDS AFTERNOON

A pawn shop in Harlem. A big black sedan pulls up and CASTIGLIA gets out backed by two of his well-dressed GUNSELS.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

By three o'clock, December tenth, Harlem was holding more than five thousand dollars worth

of action on zero-zero-zero. There was a pawnshop up there called Blue White Diamonds, where you could lay up to a grand on a number and get paid off half a million in cash if you hit.

INT BLUE WHITE DIAMONDS AFTERNOON

Two or three DERELICTS with heirlooms to sell. CLERKS appraise the items and dole out cash. CASTIGLIA walks in and goes directly to a cashier's cage, where a manicured boss named MIRO meets him. Castiglia deals out a thousand dollars in hundreds.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

At the end of that afternoon, Castiglia himself walks in and lays down ten hundred dollar bills.

Castiglia smiles broadly at Miro who looks at him apprehensively.

CASTIGLIA

I had a dream.

Again we hear the voice as a mere echo. Giovanni, narrating, repeats the words in sync.

GIOVANNI (v.o.)

I had a dream, he says.

INT A NUMBERS BANK IN HARLEM DAY

CLOSE ON A TICKER as it stutters out tape.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

The next day, there it was, over the wires. Zero-zero-zero. Harlem went crazy.

PULL BACK to reveal a panic of activity. CLERKS and BOSSES are shouting at each other. CUSTOMERS who placed uninformed bets are tearing up their tickets. CASTIGLIA'S GUNSELS are collecting big. (The place is bedecked with Christmas decorations.)

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

Castiglia's people got what money there was from the numbers banks. Then they went to Blue White Diamonds for the rest.

EXT BLUE WHITE DIAMONDS DAY

A SALVATION ARMY SANTA rings his bell as the black sedan pulls up. CASTIGLIA and his MEN emerge and walk, through falling snow, toward the pawnshop.

INT BLUE WHITE DIAMONDS DAY

MIRO, sweating, trembling, sees them coming. Unnoticed, he fumbles through a small stock of ammunition behind the front counter, breaking the seal on a box of shotgun shells and pulling out two red cylinders. He rushes off to the back of the store just as CASTIGLIA and his MEN walk in. The CLERKS, in a panic, counting out cash, talking on telephones, do everything they can to stall.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

The bosses were busted. A few of them left town. One of them, a guy named Miro, blew his brains out.

THE CAMERA TRACKS Miro as he retreats. In the foreground: shelves piled with the traded treasures of depression-era Harlem. Miro grabs a shotgun from a stock of traded weapons. He breaks it and pushes in the two red cylinders. He keeps walking, spinning the gun around so that the doubled barrel is aimed at his head. He leaves frame and THE CAMERA STOPS, holding on a display of musical instruments. There's an OFF-SCREEN BOOM -- and the instruments are spattered with BLOOD.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS AFTERNOON

Back to the present. The sunlight has turned orange and is coming through the curtains at a lower angle. GIOVANNI, the old man, blows a little laugh out through his nose.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Castiglia and his friends took over. I figured I was one of those friends. Castiglia gave me twenty grand. He told me there would be more. In the meantime, he wanted me to come up with a new numbers system. One that couldn't be rigged. That's when I came up with the New York numbers. The system they're still usin'. Addin' up the payoff prices at the racetrack. Later they added the Brooklyn numbers. With both numbers drawing action, payin' off five hundred on a dollar against

real odds of nine hundred ninety-five to one,
the racket was bringin' in millions every week.
People went crazy for numbers. It was a disease.
And like every disease, it was a goldmine.

LOUIE

Grandpa always told me when I was a kid. There
wouldn't be no numbers, he said, if it wasn't for
Uncle John. I didn't know the numbers were illegal.
I used to look for your name in my history books.

GIOVANNI

You didn't find it there. Or anywhere else.
They don't give out copyrights in the rackets,
and they don't pay royalties. That twenty
grand I got. I bought myself a Packard coupe,
a convertible. I bought this ring.

He opens his hand. What has looked like a simple gold band all this
while, seen only on the back side of the old man's hand, is now re-
vealed, on the palm side, to contain a single diamond, quite large,
in a masculine square mounting.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

A dime here, a grand there. Like they say --
a fool and his money.

INT THE TAVERN IN THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT DAY

Young GIOVANNI enters and peers through the smoke. DUTCHIE is
sitting at a booth with two of Castiglia's GUNSELS. CASTIGLIA is
standing at the bar, eating another hard-boiled egg, and, leaning in
close, talking to Castiglia confidentially, is FRANKIE SCARPA.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

I came to find out that while I was talkin'
Italian to Castiglia, Frankie Scarpa was
talkin' to him in English.

When Frankie sees Giovanni coming, he moves over to the booth with
the other men. Castiglia orders a draft of beer. He presents it to
Giovanni, pats him on the back, and walks out of the tavern. His
Gunsels follow. Giovanni looks at the booth, where Frankie Scarpa
and Dutchie sit smiling.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

Frankie Scarpa and his friend, Dutchie, got
the numbers, and I got un' gazz'.

EXT A STREET IN THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT DAY

In the smoke from a nearby chestnut wagon, young GIOVANNI leans against a lamp post sipping from a pint bottle of whiskey.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

I thought a while and I drank a while. Then
I went out and found Castiglia...

CASTIGLIA, with FRANKIE SCARPA, DUTCHIE, and two of his well-dressed GUNSELS get out of the black sedan and start down the street which is crowded with PEDESTRIANS.

GIOVANNI spots them and walks fast, hands in his jacket pockets, to catch up. Castiglia pretends that he's happy to see Giovanni. They talk as they walk.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

...on the street, in the daylight. I reminded
him of his promise that there would be more
money coming to me. I talked in Italian to
him and he answered me in Italian...

We see Castiglia speak the words, we hear them echoing.

GIOVANNI (cont. v.o.)

'E meglio il cuor felice che la borsa piena,'
he said. "Better a happy heart than a full
purse." That's when I got blood on my shirt.

Young Giovanni stops walking. Castiglia and his men move on. Giovanni's right hand comes out of his jacket pocket holding a pistol. He raises it, aims, and calls Castiglia's name.

Castiglia turns. So do his men. They see the gun. Start to react.

Giovanni deliberately drops the barrel, aiming it at Castiglia's legs, and he FIRES.

The bullet misses clean, punching into the tire of a parked car. One of the gunsels pushes Castiglia aside. The other steps in front of him, blocking the line of fire.

Giovanni squeezes off five more rounds in rapid succession.

One bullet tears into the gunsels left thigh. Another shatters his right kneecap. The man falls, screaming in agony. Castiglia and the others scramble to safety behind parked cars. Frankie Scarpa, terrified, finds his own cover in the doorway of a nearby building.

There's panic on the street. Pedestrians flee in all directions, many running directly between Castiglia and Giovanni, who stands, proud and un-flinching, in the middle of the sidewalk.

Castiglia's men are about to return fire but Castiglia himself stops them. He nods for them to put their weapons away.

The Police are coming. TWO OFFICERS are running down the sidewalk. A black-and-white is rounding the corner.

Giovanni raises his arms in a gesture of surrender. The pistol dangles harmlessly from between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand, its barrel pointed down at the ground. The officers snatch the gun. They grab Giovanni under both arms and literally haul him away. He spits, never once taking his eyes off....

....Castiglia, who sits in the gutter knowing full well why he was attacked.

Frankie Scarpa, trembling, looks on.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS DAY

The old man sits with fading sunlight at his back. The rooms are getting dark.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

So the government took five years from me.
That was alright. I tacked them onto this end.

He smiles and so does Louie.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Sing Sing was a very bad place. I sat in the dark. I thought the worst things a man can think.

Giovanni looks at the lace curtains which are swaying on a cool evening breeze. The breeze gusts, reaching into the room and gently tossing the newly cut hairs at the old man's temple.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Then one morning -- it was this time of year; you could smell spring on the breeze from the river -- I woke up and I was strong. I had caught that breeze. All those years -- from the time I went to work for Il Santo to when those big doors shut behind me -- I'd looked

down on the suckers who were my bread and butter. I'd looked down on them without seeing that I was no different than them. Just a fancier sort of sucker, that's all. While I was stickin' it to them, somebody was stickin' it to me. I had fallen for the oldest sucker's game in the world. Faith. I had trusted Castiglia. And worse, I had trusted Frankie Scarpa.

He looks at Louie with penetrating eyes.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

It's just like that dollar bill. They write 'In God We Trust' on it one day, the next day it's worthless. I wasn't alone. The time came when Dutchie trusted. He learned his lesson at the bottom of the Hudson. Castiglia trusted. I saw his picture in the paper, lyin' under a table in that capozzell' joint, bleedin' from thirty-two separate holes. Frankie Scarpa wound up with all the action.

Louie stares at the dollar bill that lies on the table.

The street lights come on outside. The old man, as if taking the lights as a signal, gets up from his chair and shuffles off toward the kitchen. He goes to the stove and checks the sauce.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

I got out of that place in 1936. I got involved with politics -- with Frank Hague there in Jersey City. I settled here. I did alright. I stayed my own man. I never started trouble -- and I never ran from it. Luck, eh, Louie? I got lucky. I caught a breeze and I learned from it. I don't catch that breeze, maybe I'm not so lucky. Maybe I do some stupid shit and those big doors shut behind me again.

Louie gets up and moves closer. He watches Giovanni stir the pots and turn off the gas.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

You wanna eat?

LOUIE

No. I gotta go. You eat, go ahead.

GIOVANNI

I'll wait.

The old man turns from the stove and walks back into the sitting room.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

More than a few times, I was asked by certain men to come back into the numbers. I turned them down. I knew the day was coming when the State would move in. So I just stayed over here. I watched what happened. Frankie Scarpa got greedier. He came up with this cut numbers shit. Certain numbers -- anything with a one in the middle; seven-sixty-nine, which most of the dreambooks gave as the number of death -- all of a sudden those numbers paid off less.

Giovanni sits in the dark, dappled street light hitting his back. Louie remains standing, leaning against the kitchen door jamb.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Say a guy's been playin' one-seventeen for ten years. Now the runner comes to him and says his number's cut. It won't pay five hundred on one anymore. I don't care how stupid that guy is, he's gonna think. And that's why the State was able to take over. All it had to do was pay off five hundred on one across the board. No cut numbers. The man who advised the State to do it that way was a smart man, whoever he was. Last year, in New York, the State took in close to half a billion in numbers action.

Giovanni grins slyly. Then a slow-forming frown pushes that grin away. He clears his throat so he can deepen the tone of his voice.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

There are people, Louie, who believe I've held a grudge against the numbers since that touch of la fede almost sixty years ago.

He shakes his head in stern denial.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

They don't know me. I'm just an old man who's done alright, an old man who's spent most of what he's made, an old man who caught a breeze and got to breathe it for longer than most men.

Now you come and you say to me that somebody says to ask me whatever happened to Joe Brusher. And I know that the somebody you're speaking of is the man you pay your union dues to. I know he's one of those who believe that I hold a grudge. He's the man who came up with that cut numbers shit. His name is Frankie Scarpa, and they call him Il Capraio.

Louie nods. Giovanni doesn't need the confirmation.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Joe Brusher is a man who was born with the eyes of a corpse, and who kills men. It's not a question that Frankie Scarpa is asking me. He knows as well as I do where to find Joe Brusher. It's not a question. It's a threat. And Frankie Scarpa is low enough to send my own flesh and blood as an errand boy against me. I hope you think about that, Louie.

Louie nods again. He is thinking about it. He's thinking about all of what he's learned here today -- and his smiles aren't coming as easily as they did earlier.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Gimme that pen.

Louie pulls a ball-point from his pocket, clicks it, and brings it to the old man. Giovanni pulls the dollar bill closer on the table and with a hand trembling from age he writes an address in the margin: 1286 FAIRMONT AVE., JERSEY CITY.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

There. There's his answer. That's where Joe Brusher lives. Give that address to Il Capraio. But don't give him the dollar. You keep it.

LOUIE

I'll keep it. Maybe there's something on the back you missed.

The old man smiles with a last glimmer of strength.

GIOVANNI

So what do you say, pal, we go with the Mets again?

LOUIE

Yeah. We'll go with the Mets.

The old man reaches up with one arm and Louie bends to hug him. It's a formality. There's not much warmth.

EXT GIOVANNI'S BUILDING on HALSEY STREET EVENING

Night has fallen by the time LOUIE comes out of the narrow building. ERNIE is still in his chair out front, a rock-solid sentinel.

ERNIE

What do you think?

LOUIE

What, about the phone? I don't know. He says he's gettin' into phone sex.

ERNIE

Maybe.

LOUIE

Yeah. Maybe.

Louie walks off through pools of light from the street lamps.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS EVENING

From a window, GIOVANNI watches Louie disappear into the night. Then he reaches for the black telephone, pulls it close, dials a number.

INT JOE BRUSHER'S APARTMENT EVENING

Another black phone -- sitting on a crocheted doily alongside a ceramic swan -- rings loudly. JOE BRUSHER lifts the receiver.

JOE

Yeah?

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS EVENING

GIOVANNI'S eyes show thoughtful in the dappled light as he says...

GIOVANNI

The kid bought it.

INT GENERAL TSENG'S RESTAURANT NIGHT

LOUIE and DONNA LOUISE sit sharing a Triple Pork Delight. They eat idly, he with a fork, she with chopsticks, neither with an appetite.

LOUIE

All these years I never knew those two hated each other. I thought they just knew each other, you know, from the old days. I never figured any of this shit.

Donna drops her chopsticks in a show of distaste that is lost, for the moment, on Louie.

LOUIE (cont.)

How come he never told me this before?

DONNA

He told you now.

LOUIE

Fuck, he told me now.

DONNA

He doesn't want you to get involved in something. I don't know. I don't want to know. About any of it. I don't care about it. I hate it.

LOUIE

Well, I care about it. He doesn't want me to get involved? In what? He tells me don't trust anybody. He's the only one I ever trusted. He's the only blood I got left. Now I find out there's all this shit he never told me.

DONNA

He told you now. I gotta go.

She plops down her napkin, gathers her purse and a shopping bag.

LOUIE

What? What are you doin'?

DONNA

I gotta go. I gotta do some work.

She's up and out of the booth. She fumbles in her purse, giving Louie a minute, hoping he'll say the right thing.

LOUIE

So -- what? When am I gonna see you?

DONNA

I don't know. Weekend maybe.

LOUIE

Hey, you're the one who called me, remember?

DONNA

(Nodding) I'll see you on the weekend.
See you friday night.

He looks up at her in silence.

DONNA (cont.)

Alright? Friday?

LOUIE

Yeah. Alright.

She turns and walks away.

EXT A DOWNTOWN STREET NIGHT

It's later. The street buzzes with night life. LOUIE walks into a bar called MONA'S.

INT MONA'S NIGHT

MUSIC blares. LOUIE sits at one end of a long wooden bar, circa 1889. A BARTENDER recognizes him and approaches, asking...

BARTENDER

Hard or soft?

LOUIE

What, my dick? Soft.

The bartender moves away. A SHORT BLACK MAN wearing a hat made out of a paper bag, steps up and pats Louie on the back.

PAPER HAT

Got a hundred for me, Lou?

LOUIE

How you wanna pay?

PAPER HAT

Pay? I don't wanna pay. I always light a candle and pray you'll get run over and die.

LOUIE

That's nice to know, Pete, but just in case you get a dud candle or some shit, how do you want to pay?

The bartender brings a club soda for Louie and moves away again.

PAPER HAT

How about three weeks?

LOUIE

Three weeks, twenty-five percent. Forty-two dollars a week.

PAPER HAT

How about a month?

LOUIE

A month, thirty percent. Thirty-two dollars and fifty cents a week. I'll give you a break, you can forget about the fifty cents.

PAPER HAT

Sounds good. I'll take the month.

Louie counts out five twenties and passes them over.

INT A SUBWAY CAR NIGHT

LOUIE rides the IND subway uptown. At the far end of the car, a gang of HISPANICS do the Dancon to a tape that roars out of a ghetto-blaster.

On Louie's end of the car, across the aisle, A WOMAN who looks like she hasn't washed in months, goes through the pockets of A SUBWAY BUM who is sleeping on the seat. Louie watches. The woman feels his eyes and looks up.

LOUIE

If I thought he had anything in there, I'd stop you.

WOMAN

You don't wanna fuck with me, asshole.

LOUIE

Nope. I don't wanna fuck with you. I
certainly do not want to fuck with you.

EXT FORTY-SECOND STREET NIGHT

LOUIE comes to an ugly red storefront where a flashing sign
announces: XXX - PEEPS - MAGS - VIDEOS. He walks inside, past
display copies of "She-Male Cum Eaters", "Assfucked Virgins" and
"Housewife Sluts."

INT THE XXX JOINT NIGHT

LOUIE moves through a long, narrow store. His eyes fall on A RUBBER
FACE with a wide-open mouth and six inches of gullet attached by an
electrical cord to a black battery pack.

He passes through A CHAMBER in the rear where mechanical whirrings
and forlorn coughs can be heard from behind the shut doors of
private booths.

At the very back, near a lone Joker Poker machine, Louie backhands a
seven-rap tattoo on an iron door that looks as though it's been
designed to keep out King Kong. A VOICE comes from within.

VOICE

It's open.

Louie pulls and the door opens into....

INT GOLDSTICK'S OFFICE NIGHT

....A SMALL OFFICE STOREROOM. Behind a beat-up steel and wood-
grained desk sits GOLDSTICK, a dumpy man of about forty, ink-stained
sleeves rolled to his elbows, eyeglasses mended with yellowing tape.
On the cluttered desktop a photograph of his wife and children
stands obscured by three stacked copies of a videocassette titled
"CUNT CRAZY".

LOUIE

Good morning, Lord Goldstick.

Goldstick checks the big clock on the back wall. It's 1 A.M.

GOLDSTICK

It would have been a good morning if the
Black Hawks had won.

He reaches into a drawer and gives Louie a thin bundle of money held together by a paper clip. Louie counts it.

LOUIE

Four twenty on the nose. Nothin' extra this week?

GOLDSTICK

Extra? Shit, if the Lakers didn't come through you'd have to settle for a pound of flesh.

LOUIE

No credit cards and no flesh. Not from people with dicks, anyway. Five more weeks at four-twenty. Then you pay the nut in full.

GOLDSTICK

Seven grand. I know. How can I forget?

LOUIE

You're one of my bigger customers, Goldstick. You better not fuckin' wipe out on me.

GOLDSTICK

Have I ever stiffed you, Louie. Don't worry, - I got somethin' goin' here. Get a load of these.

He reaches into another drawer and pulls out a folder stuffed with a dozen or so letters. He reads from one that's hand-written.

GOLDSTICK (cont.)

'I want a woman with black hair dressed in the clothes I sent separate. I want her to rub herself between the legs saying over and over like she is crazy, I want you, Harry. Oh, Harry, put it in me.'

Louie reaches for another of the letters. He scans it while Goldstick searches for more good parts to read.

GOLDSTICK (cont.)

Listen to this, 'her fingers lick at her belly and her breasts' -- bla, bla -- 'with her fingers, she rips open a hole in her pantyhose right at the crotch. She takes off one of her shoes and sucks on the heel.' Here, get this, 'the sound of this sucking should be quite audible.'

Goldstick laughs the wheezing laugh of an asthmatic.

GOLDSTICK (cont.)

'She removes her other shoe and inserts the heel into her vagina.'

LOUIE

You're a sick fuck.

GOLDSTICK

Not me. Them. (He points at the folder.) Every one of these came in with a check for five hundred dollars. And that's off one single ad in some suck-and-fuck rag two weeks ago. I call it Dreams, Incorporated. Your dreams come true on a professionally produced, thirty-minute videocassette which you can enjoy and cherish until you drown in your own spratz. Amen.

LOUIE

And in who's hip pocket might the international corporate headquarters of Dreams, Inc., be found?

Goldstick slaps his hip loudly several times in response.

GOLDSTICK

I been bustin' my God-given ass in this rat hole, makin' money for those greaseballs down the street for longer than I care to admit. This is my ticket out of here.

He walks over to a wide-open safe, pulls out a fifth of Canadian, pours two shots into paper cups from a water cooler, hands one to Louie, and they drink.

GOLDSTICK (cont.)

See, gettin' laid is a thing of the past. People worryin' about AIDS. These yuppies, the ones with the money, they don't fuck. Your class person no longer fucks. Dreams, Inc., caters to that elite and affluent clientele. For a mere five hundred, plus extras, Dreams, Inc., offers to fulfill any asshole's darkest and wildest fantasy.

LOUIE

And who's gonna make these tapes?

GOLDSTICK

I got it all lined up. Kid named Artie, works for a guy who does weddings and bar mitzvahs. He's lookin' to get started on his own. He'll work for dirt. I set him up in a storage room down on Allen Street. The rent is nothing.

He pours another drink for himself. He's getting excited.

GOLDSTICK (cont.)

The broads'll be next to nothing, too. Whores are starvin' on account of the yuppies and the AIDS. I'm tellin' you, Lou, this could be it for me. A few more ads, an okay from Visa and Master-Card, I could be clearin' two, maybe three grand a week before you know it.

LOUIE

You'll have cut rates for your friends, I hope.

GOLDSTICK

Sure. You got a fantasy?

LOUIE

Yeah. Ten guys. I don't care what they're wearin'. They all pay me what they owe me.

INT GIACOMO'S JOINT DAWN

LOUIE walks in just as old GIACOMO is raising the curtains. Perry Como is singing "It's Impossible". The four happiness boys, the REGULARS, are slumped on their favorite bar stools. Louie walks over to MAN #2, the one who owes him seventy-eight dollars, tossing his head by way of asking, 'what've you got for me?'

MAN #2

They garnisheed my pay. The union rep said it wouldn't happen, but it did.

LOUIE

You're a nice guy, but you're a fuckin' idiot. You're an old fuckin' idiot, and if you had any brains you'd blow 'em out. That would be the best thing. I mean that, sincerely, as a friend. They garnisheed your pay. What was it last time?

MAN #2

The vet.

LOUIE

Right. The vet. I sympathized with you, right? I understood. A guy like you -- old, alone, so ugly he probably never got to eat pussy without payin' -- a guy like that, he needs a dog, I told myself. His dog gets sick, it's a big deal. All my life that's been my ruin. People walk on me. People like you, who go around bent over pickin' up dog shit. So when are you gonna make good?

MAN #2

Next week. If the union don't help me, I'll figure out somethin' else.

LOUIE

You better figure out somethin' else, because at this point I don't give a fuck if you walk or crawl.

Louie moves away. The man turns back to his drink. The other barflies never look up.

Giacomo greets Louie with a cup of coffee.

GIACOMO

You're gettin' pretty good at that tough guy shit, kid.

LOUIE

Shut up and gimme a shot.

As Giacomo goes to get the drink, the front door opens and in walks IL CAPRAIO. He goes directly over to where Louie is sitting. He clears his throat and stands there without speaking. Louie digs in his pockets, pulls out the dollar bill with Joe Brusher's address on it, and hands it to the old Don. Il Capraio stares at it for a moment, slowly comprehending what it is. His face tightens and he turns to walk away.

LOUIE

Hey. That's my dollar.

Il Capraio smiles. He folds the bill, then slowly crumples it into a tiny ball. He taps that ball several times on the bar, then,

nodding strangely, he drops it into an ash tray. As the song on the jukebox ends, he turns, walks to the door, and exits.

Giacomo returns with Louie's drink. Louie looks up at him.

GIACOMO

I won't even ask.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM DAY

IL CAPRAIO, is on the telephone.

IL CAPRAIO

You're gonna have to go out there. You're gonna have to give him a good sittin' down and find out what the fuck is goin' on.

INT JOE BRUSHER'S APARTMENT DAY

JOE BRUSHER'S face slowly budes with the faintest of smiles as he speaks.

JOE

Saturday. I gotta go out there anyway.

INT DONNA LOUISE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Typical of a brownstone walk-up, somewhat larger than Louie's, and a lot neater, well-decorated. DONNA comes out of the bathroom wearing a robe. LOUIE sets down his glass of wine, comes over, and nuzzles into her back. She pulls away, not interested. She walks to the small kitchen and pours a fresh glass of wine for herself.

DONNA

What are we doing, Louie?

LOUIE

Oh, Christ, here we go.

DONNA

What are we doing? Where are we going?

Louie knows he's in for it. He doesn't need this right now. He wants to explode. But he forces a deep breath and manages to keep himself in check.

LOUIE

Where are we going? I thought we were going to bed.

DONNA

Is that all there is? Jesus. We fuck, we fight, we sleep. We eat at my place, we eat at your place, we eat at the Chinese place. Once in a while we laugh. That's it. That is the sum total of us, together.

LOUIE

Doesn't sound so bad.

DONNA

Maybe 'not so bad' is good enough for you, but it's not good enough for me. Is that why we're back together again, because it's not so bad?

LOUIE

We're back together again because you called.

DONNA

How many times do I have to get reminded of that. I never should have called. I never should have called. I tell you what, I'll go home, I'll wait for you to call me, how's that? That's what I did all the other times we broke up. And you always called. 'Let's try it again, Donna Lou.' How many times did I hear that? And did I ever throw it back in your face?

LOUIE

Alright. That's not what it's about. It's not about who called who, alright? One of us always calls. So we must want to be together. So why is it when we are together we can't just relax? Huh? Why do we have to go through this bull shit all the time?

DONNA

Because I have to know where the fuck it's all going?

She shouts this angrily, on the verge of an outburst. She stops herself, keeping a reign on her emotions. (These are both people with tempers that run hot.)

DONNA (cont.)

(Controlled, trying to go easy, measuring her words.) I make believe that everything's rosy and underneath I feel like my life is going down the drain. You make me crazy, Louie. Just when I think we're going okay, you throw back the curtains and there's a stone wall two feet thick. You know what it's like trying to love a stone wall, not knowing what's really on the other side?

She looks at him. There are tears in her eyes. He walks over and takes her in his arms. His hands go under her robe. He kisses her forehead, then the tears on her cheeks. She begins to laugh a little, through her tears, in a melancholy way.

DONNA (cont.)

What's that Italian word for shylock you told me?

LOUIE

Usuraio.

He lets the word roll, slowly, luxuriantly.

DONNA

Makes it sound so pretty.

There's a bite in this that makes Louie take his hands off her.

LOUIE

Donna -- this is not what I plan to do for the rest of my life.

DONNA

What is it you do plan on doing, Louie?

He peers out the window into the nighttime sky. His eyes seem to grow cold, as if in dark concordance with something wicked in that sky.

LOUIE

I don't know. They got a lot of pretty words in Italian.

DONNA

Yeah. That's what I'm afraid of.

He snaps his head around and looks at her with accusing eyes.

LOUIE

You think I'm shit 'cause I work the street. Well let me tell you somethin', everybody's workin' the street, Donna. From the President of the United States to the guy who cleans out the sewers. They're all workin' some goddamn, bullshit scam. Life is a fuckin' scam. And how you come through it is just luck, that's all. Like Uncle John says. The luck of the fuckin' draw. All you can do is try to improve the odds so maybe your number hits while you're still standin'. Make a couple o' dollars while you can still spend 'em, 'cause in the end we all get the same. We're just here for a fuckin' second. Twice around the fountain and into the dirt. There's no improvin' the odds on that one.

Donna stares him right in the eye, not backing off. In response, Louie starts to strut around the apartment, making a show of his oration.

LOUIE (cont.)

I know you got a lot of fancy ideas about what's right and what's wrong and what's good and what's bad in this world.

He has paraded to the kitchen. He pours himself another wine and carries it with him as he continues.

LOUIE (cont.)

You watch TV. You read books, go to movies. Instead of usin' your money to buy yourself a life, you throw it away to sit in the dark and watch a bunch of fruits with capped teeth playacting in a goddamn fairy tale that you think is real. You read a book by some fool who thinks he's got somethin' new to say three thousand years after Babel, and you go right along with him.

DONNA

That's it, throw it all back on me. You always attack when you feel threatened. All I did was ask you a simple question.

LOUIE

I'm trying to explain something, Donna.

DONNA

So, go ahead. Explain. Tell me why you keep saying things are going to change but they never do. Just tell me that. I don't want to hear about why the world sucks or why I suck. I just want an answer. Where the fuck are we going together?

The heat is rising. Their words are snapping now.

LOUIE

It's like this, okay? You believe in certain things. I believe in certain things. There are ways ingrained in you. There are ways ingrained in me. Old ways, Donna. Very old ways that I happen to respect.

DONNA

Those old ways are ugly ways, don't you see? Ways that breed ugliness. Ways that make you ugly, Louie, and make you....

LOUIE

Make me what?

He spits this out, daring her to continue. She decides to back off again. She looks away, hoping to save the moment. But it's too late. Louie is ready to explode, and he does.

LOUIE (cont.)

Your father should have shot his fuckin' load into the sink!

She turns on him, hissing.

DONNA

You, dirty fucking bastard.

LOUIE

You got nothin' to say worth hearin'. You never did. If I had half a fuckin' ball between my legs, I'd put a muzzle on you and take it off just to let you suck cock.

DONNA

I used to think of you as a person with an animal inside you. Now I know. You are just a fucking animal.

LOUIE

Yeah? What does that make the people that
swallow my scum?

EXT OUTSIDE DONNA'S BUILDING NIGHT

TWO POLICEMEN walking by on the street look up when they hear the commotion. Silhouettes of LOUIE and DONNA can be seen darting across a curtained window, gesticulating wildly, their voices growling, yelping, howling.

POLICEMAN

Jesus. Call the fuckin' morgue guys.

INT THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE DONNA'S APARTMENT NIGHT

LOUIE bursts out of Donna's apartment, jacket in hand, and slams the door behind him. He jogs angrily down the stairs two at a time. Just as he reaches the vestibule, he hears Donna's apartment door click open again. He turns to look up. The wine bottle smashes into the wall, missing him, but not by much.

Upstairs, DONNA slams the door again, and this time it stays shut.

EXT LOWER MANHATTAN DAY

JOE BRUSHER parks his maroon Buick on Grove Street near Bleecker. He walks around the corner and goes into a Gristede's supermarket.

INT GRISTEDE'S DAY

At the meat cooler in the back of the store, JOE BRUSHER picks up a small loin of pork. He loosens its Saran wrapping and carefully trickles the leaking blood onto the cuff of his shirt.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM DAY

IL CAPRAIO is talking with TWO SQUAT MEN wearing identical brown fedoras. When JOE BRUSHER walks in, Il Capraio ushers the other men out, telling them...

IL CAPRAIO

Niente da fare, e l'unico modo.

The fedoras shake hands with Il Capraio and leave. Il Capraio locks the door and gestures for Joe to help himself to a drink. Joe goes to the little bar and pours.

JOE

You ain't gonna believe it. I mean, you were right, but you're still not gonna believe it.

Il Capraio narrows his eyes, almost smiling. Joe walks to a chair, sipping, and sits down.

JOE (cont.)

He made a deal. He went to bed with New York State. That drop in the numbers action out in Jersey? That was no drop, Frank. Old Giovanni, he's got some of the shine bosses in cahoots with him. They found some partners, guys near the top up in Albany, and they're layin' off part of their street-number action to the legal action here in New York.

Il Capraio sits now, sideways on a chair, his hand remaining perched on the hard back.

JOE (cont.)

Here's how they work it. If somebody bets a buck on seven-eleven, through Giovanni and his friends that becomes a dollar on seven-eleven in the legal New York State drawing. If seven-eleven turns out to be the street number that night, they pay the guy off outa their own pocket. If it don't come out, which it likely won't, they collect a commission from Albany, a dime on a dollar. If seven-eleven turns out to be the legal number that night, Giovanni and his friends hit and keep the money. Pretty nice racket.

Il Capraio's jaw drops ever so slightly. His face seems to turn to stone.

JOE (cont.)

But that ain't the half of it, Frank. He's gonna fix the legal numbers. Him and his lopsided friends in Albany, they figured how to fuck the State. You watch how they get that number when they show it on TV at night?

Ping-Pong balls, and the broad calls out the numbers on the balls that get sucked up in the three gizmos? Ten balls in each gizmo. A few drops of hot wax into nine of them leaves just one little old ball that's got a chance of risin' high enough to get sucked up into that bimbo's hand.

IL CAPRAIO

He told you all this, just like that.

JOE

He didn't say shit until I was halfway done smackin' him. Then he broke down.

Joe throws down the rest of his drink. In doing this, he exhibits, the blood on the cuff of his shirt. Il Capraio notices.

JOE (cont.)

He told me he'd let me in on the fix if I dummed up to you. He wants me to tell you that there's nothin' goin' on out there in Newark. That the numbers are just dyin' out and that's all.

IL CAPRAIO

What did you tell him?

JOE

I told him I'd think about it.

IL CAPRAIO

When does the broad do the Ping Pong balls?

JOE

End of next month. We got time.

IL CAPRAIO

You gave the right answer, Joe. We'll think about it. We'll think about it.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS TWILIGHT

Dappled orange light comes through the lace curtains. The black telephone on the table near the window rings. GIOVANNI answers.

GIOVANNI

Yeah?

INT JOE BRUSHER'S APARTMENT TWILIGHT

JOE BRUSHER speaks on the matching phone which sits beside his ceramic swan.

JOE

He bought it.

(NOTE: A piece of sacred Old World MUSIC will play over the following scenes, knitting them together in a loose MONTAGE.)

EXT THE STREET OF SILENCE MORNING

Holy Week churchbells ring solemnly in the campanile as TWO MEN deliver bales of palm fronds to IL CAPRAIO. JOE BRUSHER, dressed respectfully, carries the bales into the black-curtained storeroom.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM MORNING

JOE BRUSHER gently sets the bales, stem down, in a two-wheeled wire shopping cart. IL CAPRAIO tips the DELIVERY MEN, dismissing them.

EXT THE STREET OF SILENCE MORNING

A SCHOOLBOY holds out his hand. IL CAPRAIO places a folded dollar in that hand and cups it closed. The boy takes the shopping cart full of palm fronds and wheels it off down the street. TWO WOMEN, walking past, make the sign of the cross.

EXT A HOUSE ON THE STREET MORNING

THE SCHOOLBOY hauls the shopping cart up the steps of a brownstone residence. An OLD WOMAN stands at the front door waiting to receive the holy load.

INT THE OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE MORNING

THREE OLD WOMEN, the one from the door and two others, sit in reverent silence, their knotted fingers weaving the fronds, transforming them into lovely, intricate flourishes and wreaths.

EXT THE STREET OF SILENCE MORNING

THE WOMEN, gauzed in black, bow-legged and hunched in fated obeisance, bring sprays of the woven palms to IL CAPRAIO, who sits on a kitchen chair in front of the black-curtained place. One after the other, the women lean forward to kiss Il Capraio's cheek. He rewards them with jars of brandied cherries.

IL CAPRAIO
(of the cherries) These are the good kind.

INT THE CHURCH SACRISTY MORNING

THE WOMEN, THE SCHOOLBOY, IL CAPRAIO and JOE BRUSHER look on while a very old PRIEST blesses the palms in loud voice.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM MORNING

IL CAPRAIO and JOE BRUSHER hand out cardboard boxes filled with palms. NUMBERS RUNNERS, including the SMALL SMILING MAN we saw at Giacomo's, take the boxes and leave on their rounds for the day.

INT GIACOMO'S JOINT MORNING

THE SMALL, SMILING MAN delivers a bunch of palms to GIACOMO who sets them on display near the cash register. The morning REGULARS sit slumped at the bar. LOUIE sips coffee.

SMALL MAN
Seven twenty-four, New York, two eighteen,
Brooklyn.

MAN #1
Cut number.

LOUIE
Gimme the usual. One eighty-seven, five
straight, Brooklyn.

Louie hands a five to the smiling man, who jots down the bet and goes off to work the other end of the bar.

GIACOMO
So, it'll only be four days. In thursday
night, out monday mornin'. Just tests, or
so they say. The way I figure, at my age,

they're just primpin' me for Perazzo. They wanna make sure they get a chance to shake me down good one last time, in case I croak nice and peaceful in my sleep without them havin' a chance to go through my pockets. Anyway, you know how it is with this kind of joint. People find a lock on the door, fuck it, they figure. Next time, they go drinkin' somewhere else.

LOUIE

I'll take care of the place. Don't worry about it.

GIACOMO

I'll give you two hundred for the four shifts, plus your cup. You know your way around the joint. Same old shit. Nothin's changed since you used to work the bar. A few pretty ones got ugly, a few ugly ones died, and Budweiser went up a quarter.

LOUIE

Don't worry. You just come back smilin', okay, pal? We need you around here.

GIACOMO

(Taking Louie's empty mug) Want another?

LOUIE

No. Gimme two palms. Nice ones.

Giacomo pulls two woven sprays out of the cardboard box and passes them across the bar to Louie.

INT LOUIE'S APARTMENT MORNING

LOUIE, shirtless and with shoes off, stands on top of his bed. He takes last year's palm, covered with dust, off the crucifix which hangs above the headboard. He picks the skimpier of the new sprays, hangs it in the old one's place, then hops down off the bed and starts to put on a fresh silk shirt.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS MORNING

GIOVANNI opens the door and LOUIE walks in carrying the second of the palm sprays and a heavy brown paper sack.

LOUIE

We made it another year.

Giovanni takes the palm. Louie goes into the kitchen. The old man shuffles over to the crucifix on his bare wall, replaces the new palm for the old, then walks to the kitchen in time to watch Louie lift a whole baby lamb, in a bloody plastic bag, out of the sack he was carrying.

Giovanni steps in closer, pats the lamb on its ass, looks into its dead eyes. He nods his head and smiles an unspoken "thank you". Louie smiles back with unspoken affection. Louie puts the lamb in the sink and starts to clean up the mess of leaked blood on the kitchen table.

GIOVANNI

I been thinkin', Louie, about the things we talked about.

LOUIE

Yeah?

GIOVANNI

I don't want any blood of mine suckin' up to a man like Frankie Scarpa. I want you to quit him, Louie.

Louie stops working and looks up. He can't believe what he's just heard.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

I want you to stop doin' business on his side of the river. I don't want him makin' any more money off your ass.

LOUIE

You're serious.

It's a statement of realization more than a question.

GIOVANNI

Find somethin' else to do. Somethin' that he's got no beef about. You wanna stay on the street, work over here in Jersey. You get in trouble, I'll help you out.

LOUIE

No. I can find somethin'. I don't need help. I'll....

GIOVANNI

Just so you know. If you get in trouble,
I'm askin' you to do this, I'll help you out.

Louie is speechless. Having nothing to say, he wipes at the table
to fill time.

GIOVANNI

You'll do it for me?

LOUIE

Yeah.

GIOVANNI

You got the balls?

Louie looks up, wounded.

LOUIE

What, balls? I'll do it.

They look into each other's eyes for a moment, slight tension
between them. Then Giovanni cracks a smile.

GIOVANNI

You look tired.

LOUIE

Ah. Me and the old lady broke up again.
I got my days and nights mixed up. You know.

GIOVANNI

I think you like her.

LOUIE

Yeah, I like her. She gives me shit.

GIOVANNI

She's got balls.

LOUIE

Oh, she's got balls but I don't? What the
fuck is goin' on over here?

GIOVANNI

Don't be stupid, Louie. You like a woman,
you make her happy. Then she stops givin'
you shit.

LOUIE

Oh. What are you, the great lover now, givin' advice? I don't see too many women hangin' around you.

GIOVANNI

I was married.

LOUIE

You were what?

GIOVANNI

Yeah. Nobody knows. I was seventeen. She was fifteen.

Again, Louie is dumbstruck. He sits slowly on one of the hard-backed kitchen chairs and looks up at his uncle with his mouth hanging slightly open.

GIOVANNI

She was only sixteen when she died. Tuberculosis. She weighed seventy two pounds when they took her.

He pulls out his plaid handkerchief, takes off his spectacles, and wipes his eyes.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Ferrarella. That was her name. Pretty. Ferrarella.

He lets the word lilt. Then he takes in a long breath through his nose and suddenly starts to unbutton his shirt.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Here. Look.

On the left side of his chest, above the heart, is a small, faded blue and red tattoo. FERRARELLA, it says, on a swagged ribbon surrounded by laurel leaves.

LOUIE

What are you, sick? Are you dyin' on me? What are you tellin' me all this shit all of a sudden? You been clammed up for eighty fuckin' years, now all of a sudden I'm gettin' the whole life story here.

Giovanni smiles wistfully and calmly re-buttons his shirt.

GIOVANNI

I still got some secrets. I don't tell anybody everything.

LOUIE

No. I bet you fuckin' don't.

And again, those wheels spinning in his head, Louie falls silent.

EXT THE BLARNEY ROCK TAVERN NIGHT

It's very late. JOE BRUSHER drives his maroon Buick slowly through pools of street light and pulls up to the curb outside a tavern called The Blarney Rock. He shuts off his headlights and looks over at the tavern's large window. He can see...

...a short, middle aged PUERTO RICAN MAN, apron over a dirty white T-shirt, washing down a steam table. The man looks up and sees Joe Brusher's car.

A RED-HEADED BARMAN comes to the glass front door and unlocks it, allowing the last THREE CUSTOMERS to leave. Then the barman locks the door again, turns off the overhead neon, and disappears somewhere inside the place.

Joe Brusher watches the Puerto Rican, who...

...after a moment, waves a hand, beckoning.

Joe Brusher opens his glove compartment, removes a Colt revolver, with silencer attached, and shoves it under his belt. Keeping the bulge away from the tavern window, he gets out of the car and slips on a jacket. The revolver invisible now, he walks to the front door of the tavern, which the Puerto Rican man has unlocked again.

INT THE BLARNEY ROCK TAVERN NIGHT

The PUERTO RICAN MAN, wordlessly, nervously, scurries off behind the bar and comes back with a long, heavy shotgun. He places the thing in Joe Brusher's hands and leads him to the rear of the barroom where, in an alcove that can't be seen from the street, he points at a door that's marked REST ROOM.

After a moment, they hear the sound of a TOILET FLUSHING. Then the rest room door swings open and out walks the RED-HEADED BARMAN. He stops in his tracks, freezing, when he sees Joe Brusher with the shotgun nestled in the crook of his arm.

JOE

Get your ass back in that shit house and
get the fuckin' take back outa there.

The barman returns to the toilet.

INT THE REST ROOM NIGHT

The BARMAN takes a key out of his pocket and, with a shaking hand,
unlocks the paper-towel dispenser above the sink. From inside, he
pulls out a pile of money bound by wide rubber bands.

INT THE BLARNEY ROCK TAVERN NIGHT

The BARMAN comes out of the rest room and hands the money over to.
JOE BRUSHER.

JOE

Now go downstairs and get the real money
out of the fuckin' safe. All of it. You
ain't gonna be cashin' no pay checks
tomorrow, pal.

The barman glances at the PUERTO RICAN and a wave of disgust passes
across the fear in his face.

JOE (cont.)

I said go!

Joe shouts this loudly, poking the shotgun barrel into the barman's
chest. The barman pulls another key from his pocket, unlocks a door
which opens to the basement, and hurries off down a dark set of
creaking wooden steps.

PUERTO RICAN

He knows I tol' you.

JOE

Don't sweat it.

PUERTO RICAN

He knows I tol' you where the safe is.

JOE

I said don't sweat it, Pancho.

With a lightning move, Joe Brusher pulls out his revolver and fires a silent round through the Puerto Rican man's forehead. The man's knees buckle and he drops to the floor where his dead body actually ends in a sitting position. Joe Brusher kicks the body over onto its back.

The barman reappears with a brick-sized bundle of bills. When he sees the dead man, he lets go of the bundle and it drops to the floor. He looks up at Joe Brusher and starts to tremble.

JOE

Now you know I ain't fuckin' around. How's your memory? When it comes to faces?

BARMAN

Bad. Real bad.

JOE

Alright. Pick it up.

He points the shotgun at the bundle on the floor. The barman retrieves the bundle and hands it to Joe Brusher.

JOE (cont.)

Get down in that cellar. And you stay down there a good hour. You remember that?

The barman nods and Joe Brusher dispatches him with a quick wave of the shotgun barrel. The barman turns and starts down the stairs. Joe Brusher shifts the shotgun to his left hand, takes out his revolver, fires once into the barman's spine and once into his shock of curly red hair. The barman's body tumbles down the wooden steps thudding hard at the bottom.

Joe Brusher walks behind the bar to a sink. With a bar rag he wipes the stock and barrel of the unfired shotgun. He puts it away beneath the bar, grabs an unopened liter of Johnnie Walker Black Label from a shelf, and walks out onto the street.

INT GOLDSTICK'S OFFICE NIGHT

GOLDSTICK sits, sweating, behind a stack of videocassettes that say CHICKS WITH DICKS.

GOLDSTICK

I don't know how to tell you this, Louie, but there's another shylock in my life.

LOUIE, looking as though he's lost religion, slams the heavy iron door shut and sits across the desk from the dumpy man.

GOLDSTICK (cont.)

The Stanley Cup playoffs killed me. I plunged and I got cleaned out. Bonds, IRA, il materasso, everything -- it all went to the fuckin' donkey. Meanwhile I was five months in the hole with payments and penalties on my mortgage loan. The bank was threatening to foreclose.

LOUIE

So you went to another shylock.

GOLDSTICK

No. I went to the guys down the street and arranged to have my house robbed. This would have brought me maybe ten grand from the insurance.

LOUIE

But?

GOLDSTICK

I didn't know the asshole eye doctor next door spent half his time lookin' across into my windows to cop a glimpse of my wife's titties. He called the cops. And the cops came. And those guys down the street ended up shakin' me down for four grand, which I did not have, but which they arranged for me to get through their very own lending institution. This lending institution, Louie, is not like you. This lending institution does not smile, Louie, as you sometimes do. This lending institution is a psychopath who once did time for killing a woman by ripping her womb out with his bare hands.

LOUIE

You suck.

Goldstick pulls out his bottle of Canadian, which is almost empty, and, without a glass, slugs down the quarter-inch that's left.

GOLDSTICK

So what do we do?

LOUIE

What do we do? I don't do a fuckin' thing. I go downtown and see a guy, and I tell that guy that there's a Jew uptown who sucks. And he does somethin'. And if you think some guy who goes around rippin' open cunts is bad news, you're gonna love this guy.

GOLDSTICK

It's not like I meant to stiff you, Louie. I can pay you in six months. I'll cut out gambling and piggy-bank it.

LOUIE

You'd cut out breathing first.

Louie looks down, thinking, at the clutter on top of Goldstick's desk. He sees a folder laying open. And in it -- a stack of handwritten letters all addressed to Dreams, Incorporated.

LOUIE (cont.)

Is this Dreams shit set up legal?

GOLDSTICK

Yeah.

LOUIE

Well, I'll tell you what's gonna be. You meet me tonight at the Napoli bar downtown. You bring your accountant. You bring your stock certificate and your little pouch with your bullshit corporate seal. And you bring a pen. You're takin' in a partner.

GOLDSTICK

You'll go on the come like that?

LOUIE

Do I have a choice? I get fifty percent. Fifty percent, till I get my seven grand. Plus vig. And the rate just went up. And I wanna put my own guy in there so none of my fifty percent finds its way to fuckin' Belmont.

GOLDSTICK

Thank you, Louie. I knew you couldn't just feed me to the wolves.

Louie points a gun-barrel finger at Goldstick.

LOUIE

If I get stiffed on this -- any fuckin' kind of way, any fuckin' kind of how -- I'll find a cunt where you don't think you have one and I'll tear it out through your fuckin' throat.

INT MONA'S NIGHT

WILLIE, a wiry little man, walks into the smoke filled tavern, scans the crowded room, and smiles when he spots LOUIE at the bar. (That smile reveals the absence of two front teeth.) He walks through the CROWD nervously, scanning for other familiar faces, friendly or unfriendly. He approaches the bar. Louie looks up and sees him. .

LOUIE

I still can't get used to you with those teeth out.

WILLIE

Don't start. I feel funny-lookin' enough, as it is. I'm startin' to get a fuckin' complex or some shit.

He sits and, without asking, the BARTENDER brings his usual, three shots of whiskey, neat, in a tall glass, with a draft beer chaser.

WILLIE (cont.)

I'm tellin' you, if I ever run into that scumbag who hit me with that brick, I'm gonna feed his fuckin' balls to him, I swear to Christ.

LOUIE

You were tryin' to rob the guy, what do you want?

WILLIE

Still, it ain't right. So how'd you make out with that booze I gave you?

LOUIE

What do you care? You owed me a hundred. I took the booze instead. That's that.

WILLIE

We're even, then?

LOUIE

We've known each other since we were, what, thirteen? When we were thirteen and a half, I loaned you that dime to bet at the feast? Since then, we've never really been even, I don't think.

WILLIE

I paid you back that dime, you fuck.

LOUIE

Admit it, Willie, you're a fuckin' mooch. And now you're funny-lookin', too. Hey, you still foolin' around with that crazy Barbara?

WILLIE

Nobody's foolin' around with her. She shot wine and died. Three weeks in a coma.

Sucking air through clenched teeth, Louie offers a pained expression.

WILLIE (cont.)

Tell you the truth, Lou, unless I got a few in me, I really don't got much interest in women these days. I don't know, fucked-out or somethin'. This time last year, when I was drivin' the cab, forget about it. I don't think I ever got laid so much in my life.

LOUIE

You remember that guy, Goldstick, used to be an accountant for Vinnie Ferrante? (Willie nods.) He's into me, so I'm takin' a piece of the action in this new thing he's got goin'. I need somebody to look out for my end. You want the job?

WILLIE

What do you mean, job?

LOUIE

Job. A fuckin' job. You heard the word before. It's how human beings usually make a living in this fuckin' world.

WILLIE

Oh. A day job, you mean. Doin' what?

LOUIE

You're not gonna believe this.

THE CAMERA pulls away from the two men. Their VOICES FADE into the jumble of OTHER VOICES that fills the smoky room. We see fifty, maybe a hundred bar-flies, each tryin' to score somehow, each looking for a way to use the person he or she is hitting on, each trying to drown his or her desperation in the sweet (for the moment) nectars of the night.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM MORNING

IL CAPRAIO opens his front door and there stands LOUIE, dressed as he was the night before, and looking a little drunk. He's holding a small, accordion file-folder with both hands. Il Capraio steps aside and Louie walks in. The old man returns to where he had been sitting, and picks up the closest of two shot-glasses filled with espresso. Louie notices the second glass (who's is it?) but he doesn't comment. Nor does Il Capraio comment on Louie's file-folder.

IL CAPRAIO

You look beat up, kid.

LOUIE

I feel beat up, Frank. I am beat up.
I am beat up.

IL CAPRAIO

What's on your mind?

LOUIE

I tell you, Frank. I been lookin' at what I been doin' the last, what is it, four years, almost five. And I been lookin' at what I got to show for it.

The old man juts his lower lip and the corners of his mouth turn down in a low-energy scowl.

LOUIE (cont.)

I decided, Frank, that what I got to show for it is not what I would like to have to show for it. You know what I mean?

The old man squints his eyes, sensing what's coming.

LOUIE (cont.)

So I decided -- I decided I better get off the street for a while. Try somethin' different. I wanna turn in my book, Frank. I wanna try somethin' different.

The back door opens and in walks JOE BRUSHER. (We get the impression he's heard the conversation.)

LOUIE (cont.)

You got business. I'll come back later.

IL CAPRAIO

No. I was just bull shittin' with an old friend here. Joe Brusher. Tell your uncle John I hooked up with him. (To Joe) Louie's uncle John told me how to hook up with you, Joe.

JOE

Yeah? (To Louie) Tell your uncle John hello for me. How's he doin'?

LOUIE

He's alright. Haven't seen him in a while.

JOE

When you see him, tell him I said hello.

LOUIE

Yeah, okay. (To Il Capraio) So....so, anyway, Frank. I won't take up your time. Lemme leave this here...

He walks over to the little bar and sets down the file-folder.

LOUIE (cont.)

That's got it all. What's left out there owing. Who it is, how much, everything. And it's got your initial investment in there. I'm returning that in full. This week's take, it's all in there.

- Il Capraio looks up at Louie, choosing to be silent, choosing to watch Louie sweat a little.

LOUIE (cont.)

So I hope you don't think this is anything personal or anything like that. I just.... I like to live pretty good, you know? You

ask around, they'll tell you I like to live pretty good, and I just can't put the time in on this any more. Not the way things have been goin'.

Louie falls silent himself, now. After a moment, Il Capraio relaxes his scowl. He sips his coffee slowly. And finally he speaks.

IL CAPRAIO

It's alright, Louie. As long as I don't get burned, hey. You do what you have to do.

Joe Brusher moves closer to Il Capraio. He picks up the second glass of espresso and drinks, never taking his eyes off Louie.

IL CAPRAIO (cont.)

So what are you gonna do that's gonna let you live high?

LOUIE

I don't know. I'm lookin'. I'll come up with something.

Il Capraio slaps his knees with his hands. Then he stands up, walks to the front door, and opens it. With a nod to Joe Brusher, Louie moves over to the open door.

LOUIE

Thanks, Frank.

IL CAPRAIO

Sure, kid. You find some way to get rich that I haven't thought of, maybe you'll let me know.

With a half-hearted laugh, Louie exits. Il Capraio closes the door again, locks it, looks at Joe Brusher with evil eyes.

INT GIACOMO'S JOINT MORNING

Sinatra is singing "September of My Years". The morning REGULARS are slumped in their places. LOUIE walks in and moves to his stool at the far end of the bar. His Winstons are sitting there, with a half-finished scotch, where he left them ten minutes ago. He lights a cigarette, throws down the remainder of the drink, and looks up at GIACOMO.

LOUIE

Gimme another one.

GIACOMO

You're throwin' 'em down pretty good.

Giacomo goes to refill Louie's glass. MAN #2, the one who owes Louie money, leaves the other regulars, walks over, and holds out a twenty dollar bill. Louie looks at it, then up at the man.

MAN #2

The union went to bat for me. I got my pay. I'll have the rest for you over the next two weeks.

LOUIE

Too late, pal. I turned in my shoebox. You'll be dealin' with somebody else from now on.

MAN #2

You mean it?

LOUIE

I cashed in. I don't have to listen to your bullshit anymore.

MAN #2

Jesus Christ.

The man digs in his pockets and pulls out a small wad of bills. He peels off three more twenties and a ten, holding them out to Louie.

MAN #2 (cont.)

Pay this in for me, Louie. Tell 'em I gave it to you on time and you forgot. I don't want them poundin' on me for a lousy seventy-eight dollars.

LOUIE

I don't fuckin' believe this. You been holdin' out on me?

MAN #2

Please, Louie. You gotta help me out here.

LOUIE

All this time with the vet and your mother's gall bladder and your fuckin' root canal -- all this time you been holdin' out on me? Get outa here. Go tell the new guy your dog has a hernia. Go on. Get outa here.

MAN #2

Louie...

LOUIE

Get outa here, you dickless, fuckin' cocksucker!

Louie shouts this loudly. The man slinks away, despondent. He joins the other regulars at the far end of the bar, plops the money on the bartop, and slumps onto his stool. Louie, slowly softening, watches him. Giacomo brings Louie a fresh drink. Louie takes a sip, then, carrying the drink with him, he gets up and walks to where Man #2 is sitting. He reaches over and picks the money off the bar. The man looks up at him thankfully.

LOUIE (cont.)

Remember, a while back, I told you that you should kill yourself? How come you didn't do it?

Louie goes back to his seat. Giacomo looks at him without speaking. Louie knows what the old man is thinking, and he says...

LOUIE (cont.)

Shut up.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM MORNING

IL CAPRAIO and JOE BRUSHER are finishing their coffees.

IL CAPRAIO

The kid is in on his uncle's fix. That's got to be the thing.

Joe Brusher nods, then shrugs. There's silence for a time.

IL CAPRAIO (cont.)

He cuts his own nephew in it's gotta be a pretty good thing.

More silence. Then the old man sucks a long breath in through his nose. He's made a decision.

IL CAPRAIO (cont.)

You're gonna go pay another visit to uncle Giovanni, Joe. Tell him you thought about what he told you. Tell him you thought about it and you want in. You and me, we'll cash in with him. Then we'll cash him in.

EXT GIOVANNI'S BUILDING on HALSEY STREET DAY

ERNIE sits on his folding chair on the sidewalk. When JOE BRUSHER walks down the street, Ernie sees him, then looks away. Joe keeps his eye on the black man as he climbs the steps into Giovanni's building.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS DAY

JOE BRUSHER sips another espresso. This time, the old man across the table from him is GIOVANNI BRUNELLESCHES.

GIOVANNI

The fix is set for the third monday of next month. We got to have fifty grand from Frank by the weekend before.

JOE

Fifty. I don't know if we can squeeze him for fifty.

GIOVANNI

He spends more than that on a fuckin' automobile, are you kidding? He blows fifty on a bad deal every week. Anyway, these figures can't be played with. It's gotta be fifty G's. We take that fifty, and we each kick in another twenty-five of our own. Like I say, Joe, these figures can't be played with.

JOE

I'm almost there. Don't worry. I'm almost there.

GIOVANNI

We take the hundred, and we put it to bed for ourselves. The rest is gonna be history.

He brings his hands together in a sudden smacking clasp.

JOE

With all due respect, John. The rest is gonna be history? That's all you keep sayin'. I been hearin' a lot about history and a lot of big figures, but I ain't been hearin' a whole hell of a lot of anything else.

GIOVANNI

You want it spelled out for you, Joe? Is that what you want? Because if I spell it out for you, you better make sure you don't do any talkin' in your sleep.

JOE

I just want to know.

The old man drinks some coffee and then he speaks.

GIOVANNI

That third monday, while our friend is waiting for that TV patootie to let the Ping-Pong balls fly, somebody out at Aqueduct is gonna flick a few switches, and that computer tote is gonna spit out a track handle ending in three digits that will just happen to be the Brooklyn number that came to me in a dream the night before.

JOE

So we're not bettin' with the State.

GIOVANNI

No. That was bullshit. We can't tell Frankie that we're gonna use his own racket to burn him. So I made up that shit about fixin' the State number. The wax in the Ping-Pong balls. I saw where they did it once in Pittsburgh.

JOE

If you can fix it at the track, how come you don't just put a bundle on the number yourself? Clean up and disappear?

GIOVANNI

That's what I'm doin', Joe. That's what we're doin', you and me. Only we're gonna mix in some of Frankie Scarpa's money with our own. When we're sittin' in the sun on the other side, we'll drink a toast to him for helpin' to make it all possible. He owes me one, Joe. I wanna collect while I'm still walkin' around.

JOE

Fixin' the numbers again. You gonna use those three zeros like that time they all talk about?

GIOVANNI

Nah. Those three zeros hold more bad memories for me than good. I don't know the number yet. We'll use somethin' from the TV or the papers. A hot batting average, the price of gold, whatever shows up in the headlines. The kind of number that gets a heavy wave of action so our bets look less suspicious. We get some punks to run around and put it in for us, few dollars here, few dollars there. Scatter it through New York and Jersey, clear down to Philly. These punks won't see the big picture until it's gone down. My man at the track, he got his job at the N.Y.R.A. through Cuomo. He's got a lot on the line. He's not about to make any false moves. Besides, he's takin' seventy-five grand off the top.

JOE

Seventy-five grand?

GIOVANNI

The cost of doin' business. That's why I say these figures can't be played with. It's alright. It still leaves us with twenty-five grand ridin' on the rigged number. That hits for twelve and a half million, Joe. And they gotta pay us a guaranteed twenty percent in cash that same Monday night. Costs us five percent for the shoe leather. I figure we walk away with two and a quarter million, minimum, in our pockets, ready to spend.

Joe Brusher excitedly downs the rest of his espresso.

JOE

And -- I'm sorry, but I gotta ask you this, John -- what's the split?

GIOVANNI

A million and a quarter for me. A million for you.

Joe licks his lips, tasting wealth. He throws his coffee glass up to his lips again forgetting that it's already empty.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

We don't stick around for the balance. I don't anyway. If you want to, that's alright. I'll send flowers if the shit hits the fan.

JOE

No. I'm with you.

GIOVANNI

After that first payoff, it all turns into a long shot anyway. A coin toss. If anything comes in, my nephew, Louie, will collect it for us. That's the only thing that leaves a bad taste in my mouth. Leavin' Louie to hold the bag. If and when they figure out this whole thing wasn't just dreambooks and two-dollar bets; if and when they come lookin' for us and they come up empty, that kid's blood could end up in his shoes.

JOE

We could bring him in with us.

GIOVANNI

Ah. The kid's a busted valise. He's lucky . he's got a pot to piss in. If he does manage to collect for us, he'll be like a pig in shit if we throw him twenty grand.

JOE

Well, then, with all due respect, John, I guess it's like you say: a toss of the coin.

GIOVANNI

One thing I need to know, Joe -- for the airplane tickets. Does your passport have your real name on it?

JOE

Yeah. Brescia.

GIOVANNI

Alright. I'll pick up two seats, first class, one way to Milano. You bring me the money for your ticket. That's on top of your twenty-five grand. You're not gonna fink out on me? You're gonna show up with your twenty-five by that saturday, right, Joe?

JOE

Don't worry, John. I'm almost there. Really.
I'm almost there.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM DAY

More espresso. IL CAPRAIO looks out the window. JOE BRUSHER,
behind his back, pops a little white pill.

IL CAPRAIO

Fifty grand, eh?

JOE

He says the figures can't be played with.
He's kickin' in fifty of his own for a
total of a hundred. This guy who shoots
the wax into the Ping-Pong balls is takin'
seventy-five in juice for his trouble.
That leaves twenty-five alive at legit
State odds. Five percent comes off the
winnings for shoe-leather....

Il Capraio waves his hand cutting Joe off.

IL CAPRAIO

Seventy-five grand in juice off the top and
they want us to lay out another five percent
for shoe-leather?

JOE

This is not like sendin' some kid down the
corner for a paper. There's a lot of hustlin'
involved here.

IL CAPRAIO

Bullshit. The shoe-leather's supposed to come
with the juice. That's the fuckin' trouble
dealin' with the State, they buck you to
death from nine different angles. Everything's
like fuckin' taxes with those cocksuckers.
What are we gonna hafta do next with this
fuckin' thing, fill out W-2 forms?

JOE

Frank, our cut is more than seven million.
Seven fucking million, Frank.

IL CAPRAIO

Yeah, that's if he ever pays us off. I don't trust that Albanese.

JOE

He's got nobody to back him but that goddamn nigger of his. He'll pay us off. Then I pop him and his nigger and we get his seven million, too. What are you worryin'? I'm the one who's got his dick on the choppin' block, here. So maybe him or his nigger pop me before I pop them. I'm the one who's in the dirt. All you're out is fifty grand. With all due respect, Frank, you found yourself out more than fifty on some of your deals in the past, from what I hear. He pops me, you pop him -- and send him flowers in my name.

The old man paces, thinking, then he turns to Joe and fixes him with a stare.

IL CAPRAIO

I want you in on this with me. I'll take twenty-five, you take twenty-five. We split down the middle.

JOE

Hey, Frank -- it's hard for me to put my fingers on that kind of change.

IL CAPRAIO

What are you, kidding? At your rates? So you take a couple extra jobs. I can set you up with some new people who once in a while need some work done.

Joe takes his glass of coffee to the little bar, where he laces it with whiskey.

IL CAPRAIO (cont.)

You decide for the two of us, Joe. You wanna go in this scheme -- you like it, I like it. You don't like it, the whole thing's off.

JOE

I like it, Frank. I think it's a good set-up.

He takes a long swallow from the glass.

JOE (cont.)

Okay. I'm in for twenty-five. When that bimbo pulls them Ping-Pong balls outa the gizmo -- we'll both be rich.

INT A TICKET COUNTER AT VARIG AIRLINES DAY

JOE BRUSHER stands across the counter from an attractive young TICKET AGENT who punches up data on a computer.

TICKET AGENT

Let's see -- monday the twenty-first, seven-fifty, P.M. -- one seat, first class, to Rio de Janeiro. Can I go ahead and confirm that for you?

JOE

Yeah. Yeah, gimme that.

TICKET AGENT

And how will you be paying for that, sir?

Joe produces a fat wad of bills and starts to deal hundreds onto the counter. The ticket agent's mouth drops open.

TICKET AGENT (cont.)

Cash?

JOE

What'sa matter, you don't take cash?

TICKET AGENT

Oh. Oh, no. Cash will be fine.

CLOSE ON: THE STACK OF HUNDREDS as Joe Brusher continues to deal them on top of A TRAVEL BROCHURE showing carnival dancers beneath the Christ of Corcovado. On the TRACK, we hear, very faintly, the sound of SAMBA DRUMS.

EXT THE STREET OF SILENCE DAY

- The SAMBA DRUMS carry over on the TRACK and mingle with the sounds of STREET TRAFFIC, machine and human.

LOUIE walks south on the Street of Silence. The immense gray tombstone towers of the World Trade Center rise in the distance.

EXT CANAL STREET DAY

LOUIE walks down Canal Street. The storefront stalls of the Chinese grocers and fish-sellers are bustling.

EXT THE LOWER TIP OF MANHATTAN DAY

MONTAGE: as LOUIE walks past TRINITY CHURCH, past BOWLING GREEN, to BATTERY PARK. The SAMBA DRUMS FADE away into the sound of the RUSHING WIND as Louie approaches...

EXT BATTERY PARK DAY

....A PARK BENCH. LOUIE sits in the sun and lets the river breeze blow over him. His hair flies. He breathes deeply, looks around.

To the west, PIER A with its old red firehouse. Encroaching on it is an unsightly sprawl of vans and junk heaps, a ghastly man-made desert of debris.

To the north, the Manhattan skyline, once majestic, now fast becoming a collection of sterile geometric objects.

Louie seems lost. His world is changing around him. CHURCHBELLS ride in on a new swell of the breeze.

A well-dressed YOUNG MAN wearing a homburg hat strides hurriedly by with a briefcase and a bundle of papers under one arm. The wind descends on him suddenly. He stands still for a moment, his head down, his jacket and cuffs flapping. His free hand rises to his hat, but it's too late. The wind lifts the homburg into the air and carries it west. When the young man gives chase, some papers blow free from the stack he is carrying.

One of those papers, by some quirk of the swirling breezes, dances directly toward Louie.

He watches it come.

It somersaults, then glides, then pirouettes, until finally it clings to Louie's leg in a wild, fluttering embrace. Louie picks it up and looks at it.

It's a prospectus, printed on fancy paper, from the brokerage firm of G.W. JOYNSTON & CO. Louie turns its pages, runs his fingers over full-color photographs of GOLD INGOTS, COTTON IN HUSKS, NUGGETS OF LEAD, FLAKES OF COPPER.

Louie looks up, inspired.

LOUIE

(To himself) How do you like that?
I caught a breeze, uncle John.

INT LOUIE'S APARTMENT DAY

LOUIE disconnects the ventilation sleeve at the bottom of his refrigerator. He reaches inside and pulls out a business-size envelope -- then another -- then two more. They are all stuffed with cash.

He brings the envelopes to the kitchen table where he drops them on top of the prospectus that he inherited from the wind. He roots in his pants pocket, pulls out a coin, and flips it into the air.

LOUIE

Heads it's copper. Tails it's gold.

The coin lands on the table, spins, and drops heads up.

LOUIE (cont.)

Copper. That's good. Now how much do we buy, Louie. We gotta do this scientific.

He walks into the bedroom. From a drawer in a bureau he pulls out a pair of dice. He sets one of them aside, shakes the other in his hand, blows on it, and rolls it out on top of the bureau. It comes up showing a five.

LOUIE (cont.)

Five grand. Alright. That oughta just about wipe me out but what the fuck.
Easy come, easy go.

He looks at himself in the mirror.

LOUIE (cont.)

When do we get to the 'easy come' part?
(He smiles.) Maybe this'll be it.

INT G.W. JOYNSTON & CO. DAY

THE BROKER from Battery Park, the one who lost his homburg in the wind, sits down behind his computer and smiles at LOUIE.

BROKER

And how did you decide on Joynston & Co.?

LOUIE

I got a hold of one of your brochures.

BROKER

Mmmm hmmm. Nicely done, aren't they?
They're designed to attract the unsophisticated investor.

LOUIE

Yeah, well, that's me, I guess. I got good instincts, though.

The broker punches up data on his computer.

BROKER

Let's see. You want copper.

LOUIE

Five thousand dollars worth.

BROKER

I'm not sure that I'd advise you to buy copper at this time. You see....

LOUIE

I'm puttin' five grand on copper. That's it. Nothin' else. Nothin' fancy.

BROKER

Well, if your mind is made up. Would you like to open an account?

LOUIE

How does that work? What is that?

BROKER

Will this be a single transaction or do you intend to continue investing in....?

LOUIE

Oh, I get it. I'll prob'ly be playin' for a while. Yeah. Let's open an account.

BROKER

And how will you be paying in to....

Louie, anticipating, has produced the business envelopes from home. He starts to count out cash in hundreds.

BROKER (cont.)

Cash? .

LOUIE

What'sa matter, you don't take cash?

BROKER

Oh. Oh, no. Cash will be fine.

INT DREAMS, INC. (OFFICE) DAY

A seedy basement storage room has been turned into an office with some cheap white paint, a second-hand desk and chairs, and a telephone hook-up. GOLDSTICK sits at the desk, papers spread around him, greedily working a calculator. Across the desk sits LOUIE. He's thumbing through an illustrated book titled "I MARRIED A LESBIAN SLUT". The author's name is HENRY JAMES. Louie is not enjoying the book. Quite the opposite. He looks sad.

GOLDSTICK

What'sa matter? You look like somebody just died over here.

Louie tosses the book onto the desk.

LOUIE

Ah. I was just....I picked up a book once, at your place uptown. Book by this same guy, this Henry James. I brought it to my old lady as a joke. She was always readin' Henry James.

Goldstick looks up from his calculations. He doesn't get it.

LOUIE (cont.)

See, this Henry James that she was always readin' was a different guy.

Goldstick just stares at him.

LOUIE (cont.)

It was a joke. Take my word for it. It was funny.

Goldstick turns back to his calculator, punches the "TOTAL" button, and rips off the tape.

GOLDSTICK

Look at this, Lou. It's workin' like a fuckin' charm. We made nine grand just this one week. That's after expenses and it only includes checks that cleared the bank. I told you this was gonna be a fuckin' gold mine here.

Goldstick pulls a fat bundle of cash from a drawer. He deals out a pile for Louie as he talks.

GOLDSTICK (cont.)

That's forty-five less five hundred for your boy, Willie. Your share comes to four grand. You got a fuckin' sweetheart deal here, Louie. I kick myself. This coulda all been mine if it wasn't for the Stanley fuckin' Cup. Life, eh?

Louie isn't listening to him. He's listening to another sound that's carrying through the walls from somewhere outside. The ecstatic MOANING of a woman apparently in the throes of orgasm.

Goldstick slides Louie's pile of cash across the desktop. Louie collects it and stands.

LOUIE

Thank you, Lord Goldstick. You're an honest man. It'll be your downfall.

GOLDSTICK

Never, Louie. I'll never fall again. I swear it. I'm gonna stay on top this time. Shit, with the money I'm gonna pull in here, I could lose ten Super Bowls, I'll still be fuckin' rich.

Louie drifts out the door.

INT DREAMS, INC. (STUDIO) DAY

LOUIE follows the sound of the MOANING. At the end of a short corridor, there's a large room that has been converted into a shooting studio. Seamless paper, painted backdrops, props scattered

on tables -- dildos, rubber snakes, a collection of paraphernalia from the Pleasure Chest.

At the center of the room, a cameraman, ARTIE, trains the lens of his camcorder on A YOUNG GIRL, seventeen at most. She's marginally attractive. She's a little too thin, and she looks wasted, stoned. Wearing nothing but a garter belt and long black stockings, she's crouched on a bare mattress, in a circle of photo-light, tossing her head in feigned rapture.

GIRL

Oh...oh, yes! Oh, God! I can't stand it! Oh! Ooooooh!

Toothless WILLIE appears beside Louie.

WILLIE

We're just shootin' close-ups of her face. We can splice it all together later. I'm learnin' a lot here, Louie.

Louie looks up at the girl who continues to moan, though less convincingly now. She's running out of steam.

WILLIE (cont.)

These broads are like dishrags. No resistance at all. They'll do anything these sick fucks want 'em to do.

Artie stops shooting and goes about changing his lens. The girl remains kneeling on the mattress.

GIRL

Is it okay if I smoke another joint.

ARTIE

Not now, babe. I wanna finish the close-ups. You can take a break before we do the thing with the dog. Hey, Willie, where's the dog? You were supposed to pick up the fuckin' dog.

WILLIE

Relax. I got it all set. They're chargin' us by the hour. I figure we pick up the dog after lunch. (To Louie) I'm always lookin' to save money for the bosses.

Willie produces a Milk Bone dog biscuit and shows it to Louie.

WILLIE (cont.)

We're gonna cement this down with Krazy Glue near where she spreads her legs. Then we shoot at an angle where you can't see it. Looks like the dog is goin' down on her. We were gonna stick it in her snatch but the guy with the dog says he might take a bite out of her by mistake.

LOUIE

You'd do anything for a buck, Willie. You're a walkin' fuckin' moral catastrophe.

WILLIE

Look who's talkin'. You and Goldstick there passin' envelopes back and forth like it's fuckin' election time in the Ninth Ward.

LOUIE

Well, I tell you what, Willie, why don't you buy me out?

WILLIE

Are you serious? Why the hell would you ever wanna sell out? You got it like Riley here. You don't do shit but stick out your hand and get it greased.

LOUIE

It makes me feel dirty, that's why.

WILLIE

Gimme a fuckin' break.

LOUIE

I ain't kiddin'. It makes me feel dirty.

Louie looks at the young girl. She sniffles and wipes her nose with a naked arm. She looks pathetic. Louie turns and walks away down the corridor. Willie follows him.

WILLIE

How much you want?

LOUIE

I figure my half oughta be worth around thirty grand before you guys get busted. From you, I'll take five down and a grand a week for six months.

WILLIE

Where am I gonna get five grand? I'm
gettin' my teeth replaced. That's costin'
me a bundle. Where am I gonna get five
grand?

LOUIE

I don't know. I can lay this in your lap,
but I can't do your thinkin' for you.
Lemme know what you wanna do.

Louie walks out the front door leaving Willie with his mind
churning.

INT GIACOMO'S JOINT NIGHT

LOUIE is behind the bar pouring drinks. The place is crowded. It's
three A.M. and the "hip" Villagers are still out drinking. MEN wear
jeans, patterned shirts, earrings. WOMEN wear suits and juggle
attache cases.

Mixed in with the "hipsters" are some of the REGULARS, neighborhood
drudges, bartenders, bouncers and waitresses from places that closed
an hour ago. Louie pulls a draft for a dapper, middle-aged man
named GOO GOO MANGIACAVALLLO.

GOO GOO

What d'ya think about all these punks in
the neighborhood, heh, Louie? Not like
the old days. They stay up too late, that's
what it is. That's why you got all these
finocch's today, all these fairies. They
were conceived after dark.

Louie scans the bar. Nobody's calling for service. He picks up a
Wall Street Journal and reads idly.

GOO GOO (cont.)

In the old days you didn't have that. A
man and a wife went to bed early. Now
they got the TV, the go-go, this, that,
the other thing. Next thing you know you
got fruits all over the place. I mean,
two and two is four. You don't gotta be
no Einstein to figure this shit out.

LOUIE

And you never went to college or anything?

GOO GOO

Fuck, no.

The numbers runner, THE SMALL, SMILING MAN who we've seen before, suddenly appears beside Goo Goo.

SMALL MAN

Louie. I been lookin' all over for you.

LOUIE

Yeah, I been -- out and around, you know.

The small man passes an envelope surreptitiously over the bar. Louie takes it and, without looking inside, tucks it into his back pocket. None of the "hipsters" at the bar notice.

SMALL MAN

One-eighty-seven. For twenty bucks from the other day.

LOUIE

You're shittin' me.

SMALL MAN

Would I give you an envelope if I was shittin' you?

Louie leans in close and whispers.

LOUIE

You're tellin' me there's ten thousand dollars in this envelope?

SMALL MAN

I coulda had you shot for six and pocketed the rest. How 'bout a drink on the house?

LOUIE

Fuck a drink on the house. Here. Buy yourself a fuckin' house, are you kidding?

Louie pulls several hundred dollar bill from the cash drawer. Folding and cupping them, he passes the wad to the small man. Goo Goo is the only one around who knows what's going on.

GOO GOO

I haven't hit since 1982.

Louie pulls out another hundred and slips it to Goo Goo.

LOUIE

Buy yourself a new tie, Goo Goo.

A HAIRDRESSER type in a black studded shirt leans in closer.

HAIRDRESSER

Hey, if you're passing out money, I'll take some.

LOUIE

Fuck you, these are my friends, here.

EXT GIACOMO'S JOINT DAWN

Light is dawning when LOUIE unlocks the front door and lets the last of the "hipsters" out of the bar. As they stagger drunkenly away, Louie looks up and down the street.

Five conspicuous looking CARS, big gleaming Lincolns, Cadillacs, Buicks, are parked with space between them. In some of them, DRIVERS sit, waiting.

THREE NEIGHBORHOOD WOMEN, the same ones we've seen before, come walking down the street. Louie steps aside so they can enter the bar.

WOMAN #1

Good morning, Louie. You hear how Giacomo's doin'?

LOUIE

No. I didn't hear anything.

Louie follows the women inside.

INT GIACOMO'S JOINT DAWN

THE WOMEN go to the bar. LOUIE props the door open with a wooden jamb, then goes to the window and raises the shade.

Through the window, Louie sees another black CAR pull up and park. AN IMPORTANT LOOKING MAN gets out of the car and walks into the tavern.

At the bar, we see five other IMPORTANT LOOKING MEN, sitting apart from each other, drinking coffees. Their expressions are stern, impenetrable.

The other morning REGULARS are present as well, slumped and despondent, sipping stale drinks. The entire complexion of the bar has changed. The "hipsters", cocky, giddy, declamatory, have all gone and the stony silence of reality has reclaimed its place.

Louie moves behind the bar. He pours a coffee for the newly arrived Important Looking Man, then he pours three more for the women.

WOMAN #2

They're gonna cut right here (she points at the fat beneath her ribcage) and they're gonna find a lump the size of an eggplant. I just pray to God it's not malignant.

WOMAN #3

No. It's his heart again. This time he'll have to have the bypass. At his age it won't be easy.

WOMAN #1

You're both wrong. Giacomo's got worms in his blood. You can see them under his skin. They burrow through the veins and they lay teeny eggs. The eggs hatch. Little by little they take over your entire system. I forgot the name for it. I'll look it up tonight.

Everyone served, Louie goes to the cash drawer where he counts his tip money. He comes across a fake twenty with a dirty picture where Andrew Jackson should be. He crumples it in his hand and is about to say something when he is attracted by movement around the bar.

The Important Looking Men have all risen and are moving toward the front door -- where the figure of IL CAPRAIO now stands. Il Capraio looks at Louie and smiles, uncharacteristically.

Louie smiles back.

Then the old man walks off in the direction of the black-curtained place. The Important Looking Men follow him.

INT LOUIE'S APARTMENT MORNING

Louie's apartment is a mess. Worse than before. Clothes strewn everywhere, dishes piled, papers scattered. LOUIE, in his underwear, talks on the phone.

LOUIE

I wanna put another ten thousand in my account. I'll get it down to you today.

(pause)

No, no. I want to keep it ridin' on the copper. All of it. Fifteen grand. How'd we do so far?

(pause)

Hey. See that? (Louie smiles) I told you I had good instincts. Go 'head, put in the order before the price goes up any more.

He hangs up. He paces nervously, unable to contain his excitement. Then he stops suddenly and stares at the phone. He debates with himself. Should I, or shouldn't I? After a moment, he crosses back to the phone, lifts the receiver, and dials a familiar number. Someone answers quickly.

LOUIE (cont.)

Yeah. Donna Craven, please.

He paces nervously again. Suddenly he lunges for the phone as though he's going to hang up. He stops himself. Puts the receiver back to his ear. Finally Donna comes on the line.

LOUIE (cont.)

Yeah. Donna Lou? It's me.

There's an angry-sounding CLICK, followed by dial tone. Louie hangs up slowly, sadly. Then he laughs. The laugh soon dissipates into a smile, the smile vanishes, and sadness returns.

LOUIE (cont.)

Fuck me.

INT CASA BELLA EVENING

In a restaurant called Casa Bella, JOE BRUSHER sits at a secluded table eating steak. Across from him, ANOTHER MAN eats tripe. The man's thinning hair is slicked back from a well-defined widow's peak, giving his face a certain devilish look.

JOE

How can you eat that shit?

DEVILISH MAN

This? Tripe? You kiddin? I love it.

JOE

It's got no fuckin' taste.

DEVILISH MAN

The sauce, Joe. It's the sauce.

JOE

Speakin' of sauce, those ubriacon' I told you about, the ones that got the load of plastic guns, I think their price is ready to come down.

DEVILISH MAN

Who the fuck wants plastic guns?

JOE

Nobody. That's what these assholes found out. At first everybody thought these things were gonna be a big deal. They said you could bring 'em in through metal detectors, nothin' would happen. Turns out the fuckin' thing's got somethin' like nineteen ounces of fuckin' steel in it. It's got as much metal as a fuckin' Bulldog. They said it was the biggest-deal gun in a hundred years. Terrorists could take 'em on planes and all this shit. They had it on TV and everything. It was all bullshit.

Joe pours red wine into his glass, emptying the bottle.

JOE (cont.)

Anyway, they got all these plastic guns, these assholes. They go for about four hundred overseas. These guys'll take two-fifty, bulk.

DEVILISH MAN

All my life, I ain't touched nothin' but Smith & Wesson. Why fuck with success?

JOE

I just figured I'd let you know. I'm in for a cut if I sell 'em.

DEVILISH MAN

What are you into all this shit? I thought you were like me. A day's work for a day's dollar.

JOE

I'm buyin' into some action downtown. I gotta come up with a quick fifty grand.

DEVILISH MAN

I never bought into anybody's action but my own. A day's work for a day's dollar. That's it. No sidelines. Nothin' to clutter the head, you know? You clutter your head, you make mistakes. I don't want any fuckin' plastic guns. Go sell 'em to some guaglione who's lookin' to get rich.

The man butters a crust of bread and wipes at his bowl with it.

JOE

Scopata, eh?

DEVILISH MAN

The best part. The sauce.

Joe swallows some more wine. He's looking a little nervous.

DEVILISH MAN (cont.)

Come on, let's go make the rounds and have a few laughs.

JOE

I'm gettin' too old for that shit. Maybe next time.

DEVILISH MAN

You don't get around enough anymore, Joe. Here we are with scratch in our pockets and there's booze out there waitin' to be drunk and broads waitin' to get their yaps plugged and aces waitin' to be pulled, and you look like you're ready for the sandman. I don't know, Joe. You don't watch out, you're gonna lay down before your time.

JOE

Like I said. Maybe next time.

INT JOE BRUSHER'S CAR on DWIGHT STREET NIGHT

It's very late. JOE BRUSHER sits in silence squeezing the contents of a large can of Ronsonol lighter fluid into an empty Martell pint bottle. When the bottle is full, he caps it and tucks it into a jacket pocket.

EXT DWIGHT STREET NIGHT

JOE BRUSHER gets out of his Buick and walks toward a series of old warehouses that face the piers where Dwight Street ends. He stops at a narrow three-storey building which is dilapidated but for a new-looking steel door. He pounds hard on that door. The sound causes pigeons to scatter from out of the shadows.

A little wire-reinforced window opens in the center of the door and BILLY peers out. He's in his forties but he looks older. His face has the pallor of a man who is a stranger to natural light. His red eyes squint through smoke from a cigar that's clenched between his teeth. Recognizing Joe, Billy opens the door halfway.

BILLY

I'm on my way out here, Joe.

JOE

I ain't a customer. I'm a messenger.

The door opens wider and Joe Brusher steps inside.

INT GAMBLING JOINT NIGHT

JOE BRUSHER steps into a pink-lit foyer. Then beyond that into a large room with a horseshoe-shaped bar and three regulation black-jack tables. The entire place is carpeted in red. Tiffany chandeliers hang overhead. Joe follows BILLY through the open door of a poky room in the back.

JOE

So, how's business?

BILLY

The guy who cleans up for me just left. He found three bucks and a ten dollar chip on the floor. He's doin' better than me.

Billy leads Joe through the poky room and into a small cubicle that passes for an office. A piece of half-inch ply anchored to the wall and supported by two-by-fours serves as a desk. There's a telephone, an ashtray, and a mess of papers. There's a coat-rack and a file storage box made of corrugated cardboard. A billy club hangs from a nail on the wall. Billy sits wearily in a swivel chair, the only seat in the room.

BILLY (cont.)

So whose stupid son-in-law wants to become a blackjack dealer now?

JOE

I think you better call downtown. They want me to bring out some papers. Some books or some shit. I don't know. Call down there, they'll tell you what.

BILLY

What the hell do they want?

JOE

You know me. I don't ask, I just do. I don't like to get involved.

He reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out the Martell bottle.

JOE (cont.)

You want a drink?

BILLY

I'd shit blood for a week.

Billy picks up the phone and starts to dial. Joe Brusher sets the bottle, uncapped, on top of the file box. Then he pulls a cigarette from another pocket and places it in his mouth. He pulls out a book of matches and reaches across the desk for the ashtray.

Billy dials the last digit and looks up.

He sees Joe Brusher light the whole book of matches and drop it, flaring, into the ashtray. With his free hand, he picks up the Martell bottle and lunges.

Billy is doused over his face and front. He bolts out of his chair.

BILLY

What the fuck....

Joe Brusher hurls the bottle at Billy, then pitches the ashtray.

Billy bursts into blue incandescence. He tries to lunge at Joe, his hands groping, but Joe kicks him away. He stumbles into the plywood desk and falls to the floor. The desk collapses. Papers fly.

The floor catches fire where the bottle fell. Papers burn. Billy, all ablaze, tries to struggle to his feet, but he is hit suddenly with the pain. He starts to scream. Smoke fills the room as flames ignite everywhere.

Joe Brusher takes the billy club from where it hangs. He turns and looks at....

Billy, who, making hideous, agonized sounds, pulls himself up to a kneeling position.

Joe Brusher whacks Billy's skull with the club. Fiery cinders of burned hair and charred skin swirl through the air. But Billy doesn't fall. He screams again. Louder this time, and even more terribly. Joe Brusher brings the club down again, this time with all his might. The screaming stops with a horrid bleat beneath the crunch of the blow. Billy's body drops to the floor, a flaming heap.

Joe Brusher backs away. Embers are drifting through the room kindling tiny blazes everywhere. Joe notices fire in the cuff of his jacket. He smacks it out with a hand that sweats and shakes in equal measure. He tries to calm himself, tries to think.

He sees the phone receiver lying on the floor. He manages to pick it up by the cord and set it back onto its cradle.

Then he picks up a sheaf of papers. Touching them to the flames on the floor, he uses them as a torch. He ignites the cardboard file box, a coat on the coat rack. Then he runs out of the room.

In the large casino, he drops the burning papers onto the red carpet. He waits for a moment until he is sure the carpet has caught, then he runs toward the front door.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM MORNING

JOE BRUSHER throws down a pill with the remnants of a drink. Then he moves to Il Capraio's little bar and pours a refill. IL CAPRAIO sits silently on his hard-backed chair. ANOTHER MAN, balding, wearing an important looking suit, walks across the room toward the bar. The man pulls an envelope from his jacket and tosses it down in front of Joe.

BALDING MAN

Here. Plant a tree in Israel. You see the news this morning?

Joe Brusher shakes his head. He has clear distaste for this man.

BALDING MAN (cont.)

'Gambling war in Brooklyn'. That's what they said. They bought it lock, stock, and barrel.

The man grins, flashing a gold tooth.

BALDING MAN (cont.)

So tell me, Joe. How'd that little rat cunt-eater go when he went? How'd he check out?

JOE

You had to be there.

BALDING MAN

But he suffered. (It's a question expressed as a statement.)

JOE

Yeah. He suffered. It wasn't too pretty there last night in that joint.

The man senses the note of umbrage in Joe's voice.

BALDING MAN

What's the matter? You gettin' dainty on us here? What are you a fuckin' floral arranger all of a sudden?

JOE

Look, this was different.

BALDING MAN

Different?

JOE

Yeah, different. I coulda dropped that bastard in ten seconds. This was a major fuckin' production.

BALDING MAN

It's what I wanted.

JOE

It's what you wanted. So you got it.

Reading the tension, wanting it to end, Il Capraio, who has been sitting quietly, now stands and walks toward the front door.

IL CAPRAIO

Alright. It's done. You did a good job, Joe. (then to the balding man) I told you Joe would do a good job.

Il Capraio opens the door, inviting the visitor to leave. Reluctantly, the balding man pulls away from the bar.

BALDING MAN

You know, Joe -- it's like the philosopher says: Count your blessings.

The man leaves. Il Capraio shuts the door and locks it. Then he shuffles over to the bar where Joe is pouring his third.

IL CAPRAIO

Don't worry about it. He's a cocksucker.. Forget him. Think about the money, Joe. It's the money that counts.

Il Capraio picks up the envelope that the balding man left for Joe.

IL CAPRAIO (cont.)

How 'bout I keep this here, eh? It goes toward your half of the Ping-Pong action.

The old man pockets the envelope. Joe lets it happen without protest. The old man looks at him. Sees his nervousness. Writes it off to the difficulty of last night's job.

IL CAPRAIO (cont.)

Forget about it, Joe. Think what your half of seven million is gonna buy for you. And maybe we get the other seven, too, from Giovanni. You don't think glommin' his take is gonna be a problem?

Joe shrugs off some of his nervousness.

JOE

One through the head, two up the ass. That usually solves the problem.

Il Capraio sits back down on his hard-backed chair.

JOE (cont.)

One through the head, two up the ass.
Ten seconds and I'm outa there. Not like
this fuckin' big production here last
night. One through the head, two up the
ass, and we're rich men.

EXT LOWER BROADWAY DAY

LOUIE paces back and forth on Broadway near 21st Street. It's as if he's waiting for someone. Lunch-hour crowds go rushing past. Louie keeps an eye on an office building across the street.

An elevator-load of people comes pouring out of the office building. Near the back of the pack, THREE WOMEN appear. One of them is DONNA LOUISE. They stop on the sidewalk. It looks as though they're trying to decide on where to go for lunch.

LOUIE fades back into the crowd. Should he approach Donna, or shouldn't he? He decides to go ahead. He takes a few steps forward. When he reaches the curb, he sees....

....A GOOD LOOKING MAN come out of the office building and step up to Donna Lou, smiling. Donna says something to the other two women who walk away, south, on Broadway. Donna and the man walk north, talking animatedly.

Louie watches for a moment, then turns and walks away.

After Louie is gone, Donna and the man split up. The man turns east on 21st Street, Donna trots south on Broadway. She catches up to her friends and they walk off together.

INT GIACOMO'S JOINT NIGHT

Giacomo's is crowded again, "HIPSTERS" three-deep at the bar, jostling, weaving, hollering, fighting, laughing. LOUIE races back and forth, pouring, serving, pouring more. He's quick and efficient, but not at all friendly.

A COCAINE GHOUL, holding a drink up close to his mouth, talks seductively, over the lip of his glass, to A GIRL with green streaks in her hair.

COCAINE GHOUL

I don't enjoy fucking. I like to make
love to a woman.

A drop of dark crimson drips from one of his nostrils and falls into his drink. Then suddenly blood streams from both nostrils, drenching his moustache and spattering his shirt.

COCAINE GHOUL (cont.)

God. (To Louie) Can I have some paper
towels, please, and some ice.

LOUIE

Get outa here. Go to the fuckin' wash
room and clean yourself up.

The man leaves, pressing his shirtsleeve to his nose. Louie finishes pouring an order of four drinks, ending with a bottle of Dewar's in his hand. He moves to put the bottle back in its place, but he stops himself. He stares at the bottle for a moment, then he grabs a fifth glass, pours a long shot, and drinks it himself.

When he looks up, A YOUNG GIRL is staring at him. She might be attractive. It's hard to tell. Her makeup is so severe that her face looks like a mask. Dangling on each side of that face are two large rainbow-colored lollipops that have been glazed and fashioned into earrings. The girl smiles at Louie invitingly. Louie smiles back, pours another shot for himself, throws it down, and carries the other drinks to a group at the far end of the bar.

One of the group is a whorish-looking FAT WOMAN who wears a large button showing a crown of thorns encircling the letters PMS. Standing beside her is a slender man with his hair in a ponytail.

FAT WOMAN

Louis, dear, this is my new friend, Hans.
Hans is from Denmark.

HANS

Denmark, yes. I came to New York to make
the art. You like the art?

LOUIE

I like the art.

HANS

I love the art. (He glances furtively at
Louie's crotch.) I think here the people,
they understand the art. What do you think?

LOUIE

I think you were conceived in the dark.

Louie returns to the Dewar's bottle and pours himself another shot. The Lollipop Girl smiles at him again. He toasts her with his glass and drinks. Before he can say anything, he's distracted by a man who comes pushing through the crowd. It's toothless WILLIE.

WILLIE

Here it is, Louie. I came up with it.

Willie passes Louie an envelope. Louie pockets it.

LOUIE

Jesus Christ. I'm collecting more envelopes behind this bar than the ushers collect in church. This is it? The whole thing?

WILLIE

The five, like you said. The rest over six months. You're bein' bought out by a fuckin' consortium. Me and Artie, that's the camera-man, and Artie's Uncle Sammy who hit it big out in Queens. It's goin' like fuckin' gang-busters. You know there's millions of sick fucks out there, Louie. At five hundred a pop. Forget it, we're really goin' places with this thing. You're gonna be sorry you threw it over.

LOUIE

Yeah, well I'm already not sorry. That's the way it is. I hope you get some new teeth out of the deal anyway. Here, on me.

He pours Willie a shot of Dewar's and pours himself a fourth.

LOLLIPOP GIRL

Get the fuck away from me!

The Lollipop Girl is yelling at a hulking HISPANIC creature who is looming over her.

LOUIE

Hey, hey. What's goin' on here?

LOLLIPOP GIRL

This creep is rubbin' his dick against me.

HISPANIC

I ain't rub no dick 'gainst no one, man.
This chick's crazy. I just been standin',
mind m'own business, drink my drink.

LOLLIPOP GIRL

He's fulla shit. I had my hand on my leg.
He pressed his dick right up against it.

HISPANIC

Oh, man....

LOLLIPOP GIRL

And it was little!

She yells this with venomous glee. The Hispanic's eyes open wide.
He's about to retaliate when Louie interrupts.

LOUIE

That's enough of this shit. You. (He points
a finger at the Hispanic) You wanna stay,
move away from her.

The Hispanic snatches his money from the bar and affects a proud air
as he walks away. Louie looks at the Lollipop Girl.

LOUIE (cont.)

And you. You're not even old enough to drink,
so don't make waves.

The girl drops the corners of her mouth in a naughty pout. She
fingers one of her lollipop earrings, waving it at Louie in slow,
sensual circles.

LOLLIPOP GIRL

If I'm a good girl, will you give me a
lollipop.

LOUIE

You don't mind getting sticky?

LOLLIPOP GIRL

Oh, no. I just love getting sticky.

Louie swallows another shot. Then he leans over toward Willie.

LOUIE

Hey, Willie. You wanna do me a favor?
Sit the bar for me?

Willie looks at the Lollipop Girl and a toothless grin breaks on his face.

INT LOUIE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

The LOLLIPOP GIRL unbuttons her blouse, pulls it off urgently, and tosses it aside. She's wearing no bra.

LOLLIPOP GIRL

My name is Lili. After Lilith, you know. The Jews say that Lilith was the name of Satan's wife? They say that she had a serpent's tail and that she had sex with Adam before Eve was created.

LOUIE

Sounds like my kind of girl.

LOUIE tosses off his own shirt and starts to unbuckle his belt. The Lollipop Girl sits on the edge of the bed, pulls off her lollipop earrings, and kicks off her shoes. Louie, still in his pants, comes over and grabs the top of her skirt. They're both drunk, fumbling. The girl lifts her legs and Louie pulls her skirt off rather ungracefully. There's a picture of a lollipop on her panties, and above it the words "LICK ME".

They fall, entwined, onto the bed, with Louie on top. He slips off to the floor, ending on his knees. The girl wraps her legs around him and pulls him down on top of her. His face winds up in her belly. He starts to move his hands over her chest but she twists her body and reaches down off the side of the bed into her purse, which Louie can't see. She comes up with something in her hand. Shnap! A clicking sound -- and gleaming metal springs from pearly black. It's a switchblade.

LOUIE

What the....!

LOLLIPOP GIRL

Hold it to my throat.

LOUIE

What is this, some kind of....

LOLLIPOP GIRL

Quick. Hold it to my throat. Oh, quick. Quick. Hurry.

She's still got him captive in her legs. She's moving her pelvis up and down against him. Louie takes hold of the knife and the act sends the girl into wild, writhing excitement.

LOLLIPOP GIRL

Oh. Oh, God. Ooooooh, God. Quick.

LOUIE

What...what if my hand slips?

LOLLIPOP GIRL

Don't let it.

LOUIE

Do you always do this on a first date?

LOLLIPOP GIRL

I trust you.

LOUIE

You trust me.

LOLLIPOP GIRL

Yes, my love, I trust you. Please. Hurry.
Oh, hurry, hurry....

Her urgency has intensified. She's pumping her hips wildly now.

LOLLIPOP GIRL (cont.)

The flat side. Press the flat side to my throat. Under my chin. Please. Oh, please, do it. Do it now.

He reaches up and gently touches the shining metal to her throat. It's as though he's touched her G spot. She goes wild instantly.

LOLLIPOP GIRL (cont.)

There, yes. Oh my God, my darling, yes.
Oh. Ooooooh. Qoooooooooooooooooooo....!!!

She arches her back. Her whole body shakes. And she goes limp. Louie just stares at her, his mouth hanging open. After a moment of heavy breathing, the girl swallows and looks at Louie through eyelids that droop.

LOLLIPOP GIRL (cont.)

I came.

And with that, she falls asleep.

Louie stands and looks down at the girl. She's gone. Off in dream-land. And Louie never even got his pants off. He walks around to the other side of the bed and lies down. He realizes he still has the switchblade in his hand. He leans over and tucks it under the mattress on his side. Then he flops back and starts to laugh.

WIDE SHOT: of the two of them lying in the dark, with Louie laughing uncontrollably.

INT LOUIE'S APARTMENT MORNING

When LOUIE awakens, he's alone. Instinctively, he checks his pockets. He pulls out some cash and the envelope that Willy gave him. Inside he finds five thousand in hundreds.

He stands up and staggers to the center of the room. He catches sight of himself in the mirror. Bloodshot eyes. Beneath them, dark shadows that look like shiners. His hair is knotted. He's in bad need of a shave. He trembles. Coughs. He looks around the room. It's more of a wreck than he is.

INT UPSTAIRS IN LOUIE'S BUILDING MORNING

LOUIE knocks on the door of an upstairs apartment. AN OLD WOMAN opens the door and smiles. She looks into Louie's red, puffy eyes and understands immediately what he wants.

OLD WOMAN

Si. Un momento.

She disappears, then returns with a bucketful of scrub brushes, rags and detergents.

INT LOUIE'S APARTMENT MORNING

The OLD WOMAN looks at the wrecked apartment, at the piled clothes and dishes, at the clutter of cigarette butts and beer cans and empty scotch bottles.

OLD WOMAN

Madonna mia, che pasticcio.

She sniffs the air in an exaggerated way, then raises her hand to LOUIE in a mock threat, shaking her head.

OLD WOMAN (cont.)

Rabbiosa e cagne. Baccala, Luigi, baccala.

She starts to clean up. Louie finds an acceptable shirt on the floor, slips into it, and walks out of the apartment.

INT GIACOMO'S JOINT MORNING

The REGULARS are slumped in their places. The jukebox plays "Daddy's Little Girl" again. LOUIE is sitting in the phonebooth near the back end of the bar.

LOUIE

So we did alright, huh? Three thousand?

So what, that's eighteen total we got?

(pause)

Oh. Oh, yeah. Commissions. So how much is that? Alright. Let's move over to platinum.

(pause)

I know, I know. It's a bad move. Just do it, alright? The whole banana on platinum.

Yeah. Yeah, I'll call you in a couple days, let you know what I wanna do.

He hangs up. Just as he is stepping out of the booth, old GIACOMO walks in through the front door.

LOUIE (cont.)

It's alive!

GIACOMO

(Seeing Louie's condition) It's been drinkin'. What'dya suck up all my good stuff?

LOUIE

I paid in for it.

Giacomo moves behind the bar. Louie stumbles onto a stool.

LOUIE (cont.)

So, you gonna be with us for a while?

GIACOMO

Yeah. Waste of fuckin' money. Stomach, you know. Nothin'. So how'd we do?

LOUIE

Twenty-six hundred and forty something.
That's what you made. I made eighteen
thousand dollars.

GIACOMO

What'd ya do, hit?

LOUIE

I hit. Couple things hit. Eighteen
grand in four fuckin' days. Four years
I busted my ass sharkin'. After all the
liars and stiffes and criers and bustarelle
I woulda done better sittin' on a C.D. and
scratchin' my ass. Now look at this.
Eighteen grand without even tryin'.
Luck, eh?

The old man shrugs and lights a cigarette.

LOUIE (cont.)

I used to think you could make your own
luck. Figure the angles, push a little
here, push a little there, give it some
english, you could make things happen for
yourself. That's bullshit. You either
get lucky or you don't. And all you
get for all the pushin' and shovin' is
an evil eye. You look too long with an
evil eye and everything turns to shit.
People turn to shit, money turns to shit,
everything. You gotta know when to close
that eye. You gotta know when to close
that evil eye, Jocko, or you'll never
see the good in anything.

EXT GIOVANNI'S BUILDING on HALSEY STREET DAY

ERNIE sits posted on his folding chair, his shillelagh in hand.
LOUIE comes walking down the street expecting Ernie's usual smile.
But no smile comes.

LOUIE

Hey, Ernie. What's up?

ERNIE

Louis. How you doin'?

Ernie barely looks up. He seems nervous, distracted. His fingers fidget at the knotted crook of the shillelagh.

LOUIE

You look like you're a thousand miles away.

ERNIE

Nah. Contemplatin' the late double at Saratoga, that's all.

Somewhat concerned, Louie moves on into his uncle's building.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS DAY

GIOVANNI opens his door, sees LOUIE, and smiles.

GIOVANNI

You must have extrasensory deception, kid.
I was just sittin' here thinkin' about you.

He turns and walks into the room. Louie shuts the door and follows the old man to the comfortable chairs by the window.

LOUIE

What's with Ernie? He doesn't seem to be himself.

GIOVANNI

Who knows what goes through people's minds?
That's one thing you can never do, get inside another man's mind.

The old man sits heavily.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Anyhow, like I said, I was just thinkin' about you.

LOUIE

I been thinkin' about you, too.

GIOVANNI

Yeah? We sound like two fags in a piano bar.

LOUIE

I been busy, that's all.

GIOVANNI

That's what I figured, but I started wondering. Another few days, I was maybe gonna get on the old horn here.

He gestures with his eyebrows toward the telephone on the table.

LOUIE

That would be somethin', gettin' a phone call from you.

GIOVANNI

Like the guy on the TV says, you gotta move with the times. Next I get the little come-si-chiama with the beeper for my belt, the Dick Tracy wristwatch, the hi-fi earmuffs, the works.

LOUIE

You know, Unc, you got a good shot at becomin' the world's oldest living ballbuster. Most guys your age, they just sort of roll over and start suckin' up to Jesus. You don't quit. You just keep on bustin' 'em.

Louie sits and lights a cigarette.

LOUIE (cont.)

So, read any good dollar bills lately?

Giovanni doesn't respond. Thick silence falls. Louie's impatience swells. He can't hold it in any longer. He raps his knuckles hard on the black enigma that sits between them.

LOUIE (cont.)

For once and for all, what the fuck is goin' on here? What is this?

GIOVANNI

It's a goddamn telephone, like you have, like damn near everybody else in the world has. A man gets old, he starts to feel alone.

LOUIE

What about the passport?

Louie's knowledge of the passport seems to surprise the old man but he conceals it well.

GIOVANNI

You don't have one?

LOUIE

I have one.

GIOVANNI

I know you do. You showed it to me once.
Where'd you go with it?

LOUIE

Nowhere.

GIOVANNI

Where you goin'?

LOUIE

Nowhere.

GIOVANNI

Well?

They look away from each other and the silence rises again. After a time, the old man sighs.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Ah. What do I wanna lie to ya, I'm thinkin' about goin' home, Louie. Casalvecchio. I wanna see it again before I go in the dirt. I dunno. Maybe I go in the dirt over there. Maybe I don't see you no more. So. That's why I'm sittin' here thinkin' about you.

The old man looks down at his hands.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

I want you to have this.

With difficulty, the old man twists the big diamond ring free from his gnarled finger. He reaches it across the table. Louie holds out his hand and the ring falls into his palm. When he looks up, there's a tear in the old man's eye.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

You keep it, eh? You don't give it to nobody, for money or for love.

LOUIE

No. I'll keep it. I'll keep it always.

Bewildered, his confusion not diminished but increased, Louie pushes the ring onto his finger. The old man nods and wipes his eyes with his plaid handkerchief. The two sit silently, a breeze blowing the curtains behind them.

INT A DARK, DISMAL TAVERN DAY

ERNIE sits in a booth across from a slender young BLACK MAN with glistening marceled hair and a pencil-thin moustache.

BLACK MAN

Black or white?

ERNIE

White.

BLACK MAN

How old?

ERNIE

Like the hills.

The black man nods pensively.

ERNIE (cont.)

What about the noise? It's the blast from that damn shotgun that worries me.

BLACK MAN

That's the least of our problems.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM DAY

IL CAPRAIO lets JOE BRUSHER in and locks the door behind him.

IL CAPRAIO

It's on the bar.

Joe walks over to the bar where a Florsheim shoebox sits waiting. He opens the box and looks inside at two bundles of cash.

IL CAPRAIO (cont.)

That's my twenty five and ten of yours I been holdin'. You got the other fifteen?

Joe pulls out a thick wad of hundreds, drops it in the box, and closes the lid. Il Capraio steps in close. He places his right hand on Joe Brusher's shoulder, and with his left, he pats the shoebox.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS DAY

JOE BRUSHER sets the shoebox on the table beside the telephone. GIOVANNI nods slowly and pats the box.

JOE

That's what he did. Patted it like it was a baby's ass.

GIOVANNI

Well, maybe we have that much in common. We both love children.

Giovanni opens his box of De Nobilis and pulls out a bundle of rumpled hundreds.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Fifty from Frank, he could kiss it goodbye. Twenty-five from me.

He opens the shoebox and drops in his bundle.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Your twenty-five makes it a hundred, Joe.

Joe Brusher pulls another wad from his jacket pocket. He places it reverently into the pot.

GIOVANNI

Good, Joe. Good. Partners, eh?

The telephone rings. Giovanni answers.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Yeah. Si. U sacca e piena. Si. Stasera alle sei. Non ti preoccupare di questo. Ernie lo portera. Si, il negro.

Joe Brusher frowns when he hears Ernie's name.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Si. Lunedì alle sei e mezzo. Saro pronto.

The old man hangs up the phone.

JOE

You're gonna have that nigger deliver our money?

GIOVANNI

Me and that man been drinkin' from the same bottle for forty years. Can you say the same for yourself, about anybody?

Joe shifts on his feet uncomfortably.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Relax, Joe. Your work is done, payday's coming.

The old man shuffles off to the kitchen. He brings back a bottle with two glasses.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

It's all set. Six thirty monday morning, I make a call and give my man the number. Six thirty monday night he gets back to me and tells me where to meet him. You and me, we go together. We get our money and we get our asses out of here. This time tuesday we'll be on the other side.

Squinting and bracing his hand, the old man pours two drinks.

GIOVANNI(cont.)

You got the money for your ticket?

JOE

I'm gonna hafta owe you, John. It was all I could do gettin' my twenty-five.

GIOVANNI

It's over two thousand dollars, first class. You gonna leave me holdin' the bag on two thousand dollars?

JOE

It's all I can do. You could take it outa my share.

GIOVANNI

Two thousand one hundred and twenty two dollars, you believe that? Fuckin' bunch of thieves.

JOE

You ever fly before?

GIOVANNI

No. I came, it was a boat. You?

JOE

Many a time.

GIOVANNI

They say it's safer than ridin' in a car.

JOE

Yeah. That's what they say.

Giovanni hands one of the drinks to Joe. He lifts his own drink high and the two men clink glasses.

GIOVANNI

Alla fortuna, eh?.

JOE

Alla fortuna.

To that, the both of them drink down their shots in earnest.

INT DONNA LOUISE'S APARTMENT EVENING

DONNA LOUISE opens the door to find LOUIE standing there, white coral roses in one hand, a bottle of champagne in the other. She slams the door in his face.

LOUIE

Shit. DONNA?

He bangs loudly with his fist.

LOUIE (cont.)

DONNA LOUISE?

Silence. Then her voice comes through the door.

DONNA

What do you want?

LOUIE

(Muttering) Good fuckin' question. (Then a little louder) What do I want? (Then very loud) I want....YOU!

Another moment of silence, then a bolt clicks and the door swings open slowly. Donna appears, her face streaked with tears.

DONNA

(Quietly) You bastard. You're a fuckin' bastard, you know that? Why can't you leave me alone? Every time I think you finally disappeared for good, I'm just startin' to get used to it, you show up again, like a bad penny.

LOUIE

I hate to say it, but you called me last time remember?

DONNA

I'll hear about that for the rest of my life.

LOUIE

I hope so.

She looks at him questioningly. Was that some sort of a commitment he just made? Louie puts out his fingers and gently touches her cheeks, wiping the tears away. She smiles tentatively. Louie, more confident now, smiles back at her and, turning up the bravado for effect, he struts into the apartment.

LOUIE (cont.)

I've been makin' some moves.

DONNA

What kind of moves?

LOUIE

Moves.

DONNA

Come on, Louie. It's me, Donna.

He sets the flowers and the champagne down on the sofa, sits beside them, and lights a cigarette.

LOUIE

Stock-index options. I bought a few contracts.
I'm doin' alright. I'm doin' real good, in fact.

Donna shuts the door. She's surrendered. They're back together,
at least for the moment.

DONNA

Isn't that a pretty complicated thing to
just dive right into?

LOUIE

They just make it out to be. It's nothin'
but the numbers racket with fractions.

He picks up the champagne bottle and starts to unwrap the cork.

LOUIE (cont.)

They go for yield curves and nonsense like
that, just like the old ladies with the
dreambooks.

Donna walks to the kitchen, gets two glasses, grabs a dish-towel,
and brings them out to the sofa.

She sits, puts the glasses on the coffee table, kicks off her shoes,
tucks her legs up under herself, and leans back into the cushions,
her head on one hand.

LOUIE (cont.)

I figured if I went into it lookin' at it
for what it was -- a glorified crapshoot --
I'd have an edge over the herd, the ones who
believe there's a system to be discovered.

Louie pops the champagne cork. Foam erupts. Donna tosses him the
dish-towel and he catches most of it. He pours.

LOUIE (cont.)

It's like any other racket, any other crap-
shoot. The smart money goes on instincts and
ends up takin' the scared money home to bed.

DONNA

Forgive me for asking, but if you know so much
about this, why did you waste all that time
sharking?

Louie hands her a full glass and pours one for himself.

LOUIE

In a way, sharkin' and this have a lot in common. The big difference, aside from this bein' legal, if you wanna count that, is that with this you're more likely to get paid when you're supposed to.

His glass full, he turns and faces Donna. He finds her beaming.

DONNA

Louie, finally, after all these years, you've discovered America.

They clink glasses.

LOUIE

Alla fortuna, eh?

DONNA

Alla fortuna.

Louie sits there, keeping his distance but smiling broadly. For the first time since we've known him, he looks cute. Donna sets down her glass of champagne.

DONNA (cont.)

What the fuck.

She dives into him and they fall onto the sofa kissing passionately.

INT JOE BRUSHER'S APARTMENT MORNING

The telephone beside the ceramic swan rings. JOE BRUSHER answers.

JOE

Yeah.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS MORNING

GIOVANNI sits in the purling light, the black phone at his ear.

GIOVANNI

Two thirty-eight. Last night there was two hundred and thirty-eight people killed in that plane crash, you hear about it?

INT JOE BRUSHER'S APARTMENT MORNING

JOE

Yeah. I figured you'd go for that one.

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS MORNING

GIOVANNI

Frankie Scarpa'll get a laugh out of it. It'll make him think everything's okay. Then while he's watchin' the tomato with the Ping-Pong balls, we'll be out collecting our winnings. We stay at the airport hotel tonight so nobody can find us. Tomorrow night, we buy us some high priced pussy in Milano.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED PLACE MORNING

A third black telephone. It rings and IL CAPRAIO answers.

IL CAPRAIO

Yeah?

INT JOE BRUSHER'S APARTMENT MORNING

JOE

Two thirty-eight.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM MORNING

IL CAPRAIO'S face slowly cracks open with a grin.

IL CAPRAIO

The airplane crash. That's alright. Makes our bet look less suspicious. Old Giovanni's probably gettin' a big laugh outa this. That's alright, too. He won't be laughin' much longer.

IL CAPRAIO hangs up the phone. He goes to his hard-backed chair and sits, chuckling to himself. He checks the big clock on the wall. It shows the time as 6:40. Il Capraio looks through a narrow opening between the black curtains on the window.

Vague shapes rush past. Blurs. There's a world out there, but the opening is so narrow that nothing is clear.

EXT NEWARK EVENING.

The sun is sinking in the sky. At this hour, the buildings, rimmed with golden light, seem to regain some of their majesty.

INT JOE BRUSHER'S APARTMENT EVENING

A packed suitcase stands near the door. JOE BRUSHER, fully dressed, sits in silence, waiting.

On the little table, near Joe Brusher's arm, a plane ticket lies beside the travel brochure that shows Samba dancers in Rio. Beside that, the ceramic swan, the telephone, a bottle of whiskey and a half-filled glass.

Joe Brusher stands abruptly. He grabs the ceramic swan, unzips the soft front of the suitcase, and stuffs the swan inside. Then he returns to his seat. He fumbles for his pills, pops one, and washes it down with whiskey. Finally, the telephone rings. He answers.

JOE

Yeah?

INT GIOVANNI'S ROOMS EVENING

GIOVANNI is dressed for travel, a suit over his sweater, an old fashioned tie with a wide, loose knot, a soft brown fedora on his head. He, too, has a suitcase packed and waiting.

GIOVANNI

Come and get me. Our number's out. Our money's wrapped and ready to go. We pick it up at Spring Lake.

INT JOE BRUSHER'S APARTMENT EVENING

JOE BRUSHER hangs up the phone. He opens a drawer, pulls out a small pistol and a silencer, marries them, checks the safety, and slips the complete weapon into his jacket.

JOE

Here I come, old man. Here I come.

He picks up his suitcase. With keys in hand, he opens his front door and clicks off the lights.

INT THE HALLWAY in JOE BRUSHER'S BUILDING EVENING

JOE BRUSHER steps into the hall, pulling the door shut behind him.

From the stairwell to his right comes an immense blast of light and thunder.

Part of Joe Brusher's face disappears. Smoke and blood exit through the left side of his skull. He hits the wall and slides to the floor, dead, his suitcase and keys still in hand.

Out of the shadows, wearing a long raincoat, carrying a smoking shotgun, steps ERNIE. He checks Joe Brusher's body, making certain that it's lifeless. There's the sound of a door opening upstairs.

VOICE (o.s.)

What's goin' on down there?

Ernie tucks the shotgun under his raincoat and goes hurrying off down the stairs.

INT GIACOMO'S JOINT EVENING

The REGULARS sip their drinks. GIACOMO slouches behind the bar. The numbers runner, the SMALL, SMILING MAN, walks in.

GIACOMO

What did you hear?

SMALL MAN

One-fourteen, Brooklyn. Nine-twelve, New York.

The regulars stir, grumbling.

REGULAR

Jesus Christ. More cut numbers.

SMALL MAN

Everybody bet on that two thirty-eight from the plane crash. I don't think anybody hit today.

GIACOMO

Maybe tomorrow. (He passes two singles to the smiling man) Four-oh-five, dollar straight, Brooklyn. Same thing, New York.

The smiling man notes the bet with a chewed pencil on a small yellow sheet of paper. Al Martino croons in the background.

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM EVENING

IL CAPRAIO sits on his chair. A small portable television has been placed on the little bar. On screen -- there she is -- the PATOOTIE with the Ping-Pong balls.

PATOOTIE

-- ten balls numbered zero through nine. The numbers will be selected automatically from left to right, just as they appear on your ticket. The drawing is conducted and supervised by the New York State Lottery, under the observation of an independent auditor from Deloitte, Haskins and Sells.

IL CAPRAIO

Come on, already, speed it up, you bitch.

PATOOTIE

And now for tonight's winning numbers

One of the white bobbing balls pops up into the neck of the plastic gizmo. The patootie rotates the ball so its number faces camera.

PATOOTIE (cont.)

First ball up. It's a two.

Il Capraio lets out an evil laugh and leans in closer.

PATOOTIE (cont.)

The next number....

The ball pops up, gets rotated.

PATOOTIE (cont.)

...is a six.

Il Capraio's smile fades.

PATOOTIE (cont.)

And the last number is three, making the daily number two-six-three.

- Il Capraio sits motionless for a moment while the Lottery broadcast winds up with fanfare music and colorful cartoon animation. Finally the old man stands, walks to the bar, clicks off the television, and moves to the phone. He dials quickly.

INT A DARK DOWNTOWN APARTMENT EVENING

Another black telephone rings. The man with the widow's peak, the DEVILISH-LOOKING MAN who refused to buy Joe Brusher's plastic guns, answers.

DEVILISH MAN

Yeah?

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM EVENING

IL CAPRAIO

Get down here. Right away. I need you.

EXT JOE BRUSHER'S BUILDING on FAIRMOUNT AVENUE EVENING

The DEVILISH MAN gets out of his car and walks toward a crowd that has gathered outside Joe Brusher's building.

A body, Joe's, is being wheeled, covered, to an ambulance. POLICEMEN are questioning people in the crowd. The Devilish Man steps up beside TWO FAT WOMEN who stare, wide-eyed, their hands over their mouths.

DEVILISH MAN

What happened?

FAT WOMAN #1

A man named Joe Brusher. Somebody shot him.

FAT WOMAN #2

I was makin' supper when I heard it. I thought the boiler blew up, I almost died.

FAT WOMAN #1

He always kept to himself.

FAT WOMAN #2

Still waters run deep. Well, lemme go wash dishes.

EXT GIOVANNI'S BUILDING on HALSEY STREET EVENING

The DEVILISH MAN pulls up in his car. He checks inside his jacket, sees that the small pistol there is positioned properly, then he opens the door and gets out of the car.

He walks across the street toward the narrow building where Giovanni has long lived. A folding chair sits on the sidewalk out front, but Ernie is conspicuously absent.

The Devilish man looks up at the windows. Sees that lights are burning. Then he checks up and down the street and moves to the front door. It's unlocked. He enters.

INT LOUIE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

SHOCK CUT: to yet another telephone, ringing loudly.

LOUIE and DONNA LOU are lying naked in bed. They roll over, each of them grumbling. Louie dives under his pillow and packs it tightly against his ears. Neither makes a move to answer. Finally, the ringing stops.

DONNA

Who would call you at this hour?

LOUIE

Nobody. I don't give this number to people who drink.

Donna snuggles up against him, laughing groggily, a private sort of giggle.

LOUIE (cont.)

What's funny?

DONNA

You don't give this number to people who drink. That's like the Pope closing St. Peter's to people who pray.

LOUIE

Booze and telephones don't mix. I don't call people when I drink.

DONNA

Louie, you don't even send a postcard.

- The phone rings again.

LOUIE

You get it, I got a hard-on.

Donna hops out of bed, crosses, naked, to the telephone, and picks up the receiver.

DONNA

Hello. Yes. Yes....who is this?

She looks up, alarmed by what she has heard.

Louie lifts himself up onto an elbow.

DONNA (cont.)

Where? Newark? Wait....wait one minute,
I'll get him. Yeah. Just a minute.

She holds the receiver down at her side and turns to face Louie.

DONNA (cont.)

Louie. They....they found your uncle.

INT THE SUBWAY NIGHT

A TRAIN SCREECHES through a tunnel.

INT SUBWAY CAR NIGHT

LOUIE sits on the train, its motion rocking him back and forth. He stares at his hand....

....at the diamond ring on his finger.

INT THE MORGUE IN NEWARK NIGHT

A morgue drawer is pulled open. A covered CORPSE glides out into the light.

MAN'S VOICE (o.s.)

When a shotgun is discharged at close range,
the gases and fire from the muzzle cause
massive disfiguration.

LOUIE looks down, bracing himself for a shock.

MAN'S VOICE (o.s.)

It's going to be difficult to identify this
body by looking at the face. Does he have any
identifying marks that you know of?

LOUIE

No. Nothin' that I....

A pair of black hands lift the sheet off the corpse. It's torso is revealed as the torso of an old man.

LOUIE (cont.)

Wait a minute. Yeah. There was a tattoo.

Louie looks down at the body.

Its chest is clean of any marks. No tattoo.

Louie looks up at....

....the BLACK MORGUE ATTENDANT. It's the same slender man that we saw meeting with Ernie, the one with the marceled hair and the pencil-thin moustache. He looks into Louie's eyes.

BLACK MAN

You make the call. If you see a tattoo,
I see a tattoo.

A sly smile breaks, ever so slowly, on Louie's face.

BLACK MAN (cont.)

Can you identify this as the body of your
uncle, Giovanni Brunellesches?

LOUIE

Where do I sign?

INT THE BLACK-CURTAINED ROOM MORNING .

IL CAPRAIO sits, jaw clenched, on his hard-backed chair. The
DEVILISH MAN stands near the front door.

DEVILISH MAN

They were dead before I ever got there, the
both of 'em. The old man popped Brusher,
then shot himself, or maybe Brusher popped
the old man, I dunno. Maybe somebody heard
there was a shoebox full o' cash somewhere
and popped 'em both off. Anyway. They're
both done, and there's no money in sight.

Il Capraio stands slowly and moves to the door. He unlocks it, and
swings it open. The Devilish Man steps outside.

DEVILISH MAN (cont.)

Sorry I couldn't help you out but -- you got what you wanted anyway. Except maybe for the money. But what's a few bucks, right.

Il Capraio swings the door closed in the Devilish Man's face. He locks it, stands still for a moment, then slowly shuffles over to the little bar where the portable TV stands beside the bottles so often used by Joe Brusher.

Il Capraio stares at the things. He starts to tremble slightly. The skin on his face pulls so tight it seems as though it might crack open. He raises an angry hand into the air and brings it crashing down on the bartop. The bottles fly, shattering. The TV topples over to the floor.

Il Capraio returns to his chair. He sits and stares, with an evil eye, through the opening in the black window curtains.

EXT A CEMETERY in NORTH ARLINGTON DAY

LOUIE, DONNA, ERNIE and his WIFE stand and watch as a bronze coffin is lowered into the ground. A FEW OLD MEN, none of them particularly important looking, are in attendance. A PRIEST mumbles an inaudible blessing.

The mourners file past the grave, each tossing a single rose onto the coffin. Then they walk away.

Louie and Ernie walk several yards ahead of the women.

ERNIE

At least it's over and done with now. The way I see it, that poor bastard in that hole made out pretty good -- a two grand box in a high-rent worm farm. Sure beats potter's field.

LOUIE

Yeah. I guess so. Whoever the hell he was.

They arrive at their limo. Louie holds the door for Ernie, who climbs in first, followed by his wife.

ERNIE'S WIFE

Things like this make you think.

Donna steps in close to Louie. She hugs him, kisses him lightly on the cheek, brushes his hair with her fingers.

DONNA

I'm sorry, Louie. I know you loved him.

Louie nods. Donna climbs into the car. Louie looks up at the sun and a shit-eating grin breaks on his face.

EXT FIUMICINO AIRPORT MORNING

An Alitalia jet lands at Fiumicino Airport in Rome.

EXT A HILLSIDE ROAD ABOVE FOGGIA DAY

An old bus creaks and rattles and groans and trembles up a hill that rises into the clouds.

EXT CASALVECCHIO DAY

Built within the walls of a medieval fortress, Casalvecchio stands in the sun. The old bus stops on a dusty cobblestone road beneath the village's mother church. LOUIE steps out into the shadow of a crucifix. The bus pulls away. Louie walks, following signs that say CENTRO.

Louie walks on through hens and old women in black. Beyond the shadow of the cross, he comes to a ring of trees that surround a lovely little garden. In that garden, in the dappled sunlight that filters through the leaves, there are several old benches made of stone. On one of those benches, Louie finds his uncle GIOVANNI, sitting with his eyes serenely shut.

Louie walks up and sits down beside the old man.

LOUIE

So, who do you like in the series?

The old man jolts slightly, his eyes still closed. Then he smiles widely; he smiles like a fool.

GIOVANNI

My buddy. (He opens his eyes.) I knew you'd come. All along, I knew it.

Louie, grinning himself now, puts his hand on the old man's shoulder and shakes him gently and with love

GIOVANNI (cont.)

I know, I know.

The old man waves one hand. Louie' still grinning, nods slowly.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

How was my funeral?

LOUIE

(shrugging) Not bad, you know. A few of the old guys. Frankie Scarpa sent an Economy Sympathy Garland. It was nice.

GIOVANNI

Did you tell your girlfriend? Did you tell her it wasn't me in the box?

LOUIE

No. Don't take this the wrong way, but I think she's better off thinkin' you're dead.

GIOVANNI

That's right.

A MAN some years older than Giovanni ambles by eating a pear.

MAN

Buon giorno, Giovanni.

GIOVANNI

Buon giorno, cavaliere. That guy was born right next door to where I was born. He still lives there. 'Where you been all these years?' he asked me. 'L'America', I told him. 'What did I miss?' he asked me. 'Nothing,' I told him. 'Niente. You didn't miss a thing.'

Louie laughs, looks around, hears the birds, breathes the air.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

So. Ernie explained?

LOUIE

Pretty much. He didn't explain why. Maybe you can tell me that.

GIOVANNI

I wanted to balance the books, Lou. I wanted to make that bastard trust for once in his life and then choke on that trust. He'll take credit for killing me and Brusher. Meanwhile, till his dying day, his ass'll hurt from the fucking he took. And when that dying day comes, I may still be around to dip into the interest on his money and send him one of those -- what is it? Economy Sympathy Garlands. If not, you can do it for me. You and Ernie. You're my beneficiaries. You deserve it. And it'll keep your mouths shut.

LOUIE

How did you suck in that Brusher?

GIOVANNI

I just told him I had an idea, that's all. I told him about those three zeros, and what happened to me after. I told him the lesson I'd learned from it, that men believe more in a lie, in a dream, than in what's real. Then I lied to him. I told him this phony idea and he believed it. He forgot the lesson and he believed the lie. He was lickin' his chops for the millions we were gonna make on this fixed bet. I never bet shit. I took seventy-five grand off o' them and I came home here.

Louie laughs, shaking his head.

GIOVANNI (cont.)

Anyway, nobody got hurt but Brusher. And takin' a life like his is sparing ten. That stiff they snatched outa the morgue didn't feel a thing, and he had no use for his face where he was going. That's it. I wanted to balance the books and I did. I wanted to sleep in peace. Now I can. And this is a good place for sleeping, Lou. There's something about endin' up where you drew your first breath, somethin' in the air that makes it sweet for you.

It's dusk now and the light has grown softer. THE CAMERA pulls slowly back, leaving the two men together in the garden, savoring the breeze, the both of them, each in his own way.