



JOHNNY DIAMOND

by

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"The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie - deliberate, contrived and dishonest - but the myth, persistent, persuasive and realistic... "

-- John F. Kennedy

"If you ask me why he is a private detective, I can't answer you. Obviously there are times he wishes he were not... "

-- Raymond Chandler

"Walk like a man... "

-- Frankie Valli

FADE IN:

THE CRUMBLING VENETIAN ARCADES OF VENICE BEACH, CALIFORNIA

high above the decaying bridges, across the algae-choked canals.
Over the run-down shacks and apartments along the beach. Past
the shadow people, dead-eyed and desperate...

And, in gleeful counterpoint, we HEAR the VOICE-OVER of:

JOHNNY (O.S.)
Are you ready to experience the
ultimate pad, baby doll -- ?

But we remain in Venice... CAMERA CRANES DOWN TO WHERE

A MAN

walks through the darkness... Limps through the darkness...

EXT. VENICE BEACH - NIGHT

circa 1962. August, 1962. And the place has gone to seed.

The man comes to a stop across from

THE ST. MARK'S HOTEL

a condemned fire-trap... A demolition permit flaps on its
boarded-up front door...

The man puts a cigarette in his mouth... And, as he brings flame
to tip, we see the face of

EDDIE GRABOWSKI

or "Eddie Grab" as he's known on the street... Mid-60s, with a
face like a chunk of driftwood; shabby suit with patches of
worn fabric; five-O'clock shadow closer to half-past-seven...
Eddie pulls on a FLASK... Eyes the St. Mark's... Limps...

And, again, in V.O., we HEAR:

JOHNNY (O.S.)
What we have here, sweetie, is the
cat-daddiest swingin' manor for the
modern man. Yes, this is true
elegance. But never at the price of
comfort or aesthetics. Know what I
mean?

Eddie Grab crosses the street... Moving for the St. Mark's...

INT. ST. MARK'S HOTEL - NIGHT

Eddie Grab walks down the long, trash-strewned corridors...

RATS skitter... Plaster shake covers the floors... Leaking, unanchored toilets lean against the peeling walls... NOISE to the left... Eddie Grab whirls...

An OLD MAN moans in one corner... On the nod... Face of grime...

MAN

Never... In all my goofer-feathered dreams.. Did I imagine... I'd be here..

Eddie Grab passes him by... You and me both, friend...

He comes to a STAIRWELL, leading down to a stygian depth... He takes a snubnose .38 from a shoulder-holster...

And moves down... Slowly... And we HEAR:

JOHNNY (O.S.)

Now that's a Hermann Miller coconut lounge chair. And that's handcrafted Afghanistan carpeting, which means, they, uh, they made it in Afghanistan. And you know how far away that is. And over there is a George Tanier cone chair. Do you know Tanier's work? The man makes a helluva chair. Go ahead, sit in it...

INT. ST. MARK'S - BASEMENT

Eddie Grab steps into the wide, wasted basement... To find

A GROUP OF BEATNIKS

perhaps 12-strong... Clad in ragged denim and dirty Navy surplus... They sit on filthy pillows and uprooted bathtubs; playing bongos, smoking dope, shooting horse... A radio plays deep blue notes by Miles...

"Love IS" is painted on one wall in huge drippy letters...

The beatniks look up, as Eddie Grab steps from the shadows like an apparition...

A few of the Beatniks get to their feet... Move for Eddie Grab.

BEATNIK #1

Who are you, man, would intrude on our Kingdom Of Awareness... ?

EDDIE GRAB

Shut your bazoo --

Eddie Grab side-steps them... Walking to the rear of the silt-covered basement... To where

A YOUNG GIRL

is crouched. Late teens, filthy and barefoot and tying-off with a length of gimp... A BEATNIK cooks a spoonful for her...

Eddie Grab stands before her...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

Hillie Long -- ?

The girl, HILLIE LONG, ignores him... Intent on the beatnik, now drawing on a syrette from the spoon full of dirty-brown liquid.

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

We been looking for you for a month now

Hillie sticks out her arm... A rope of tumescent blue vein clearly limned... The beatnik makes to fix her...

The beatniks circle, like ravening hyenas... And, as Eddie Grab considers his options, WE HEAR:

JOHNNY (O.S.)

This is the newest thing: the Project G stereo system... That's Italian provincial styling in hand-rubbed walnut cabinetry... And see how the globular speakers rotate? They rotate 360 degrees. Gives you a sphere of sound unlike any others... Little Gene Chandler perhaps?

And, as the basso profundo intro ("Duke, Duke, Duke... ") of "Duke Of Earl" begins, we

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHNNY DIAMOND'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

One of architect Richard Neutra's more audacious post-war examples of California regional futurism. Exposed wood and glass, rich landscape, curvilinear form...

INT. JOHNNY DIAMOND'S APARTMENT

... and say hello to

JOHNNY DIAMOND

early 30s, matinee-idol good looks; baby blues that make all the young girls cry; a West Texas accent still drenched in derrick-sweat.

Johnny wears a one-button mohair-worsted suit with cloverleaf lapels, slanted pockets, no vent. And he wears it with an ease and elegance you could only dream of...

He is leading a YOUNG GIRL, mid-20s - in shrink-wrap-tight gingham Capri pants and hair piled-up high like a wedding cake - around the pad, which is the ultimate in hep, early-60s living:

Bubble lighting fixtures; legless rattan chairs that hang from the ceiling, upholstered in jaguar-spotted Dynel; beaded screens of baroque pearls, in all the doorways; airy grilles; tulip chairs; a hooded-and-raised fireplace...

An 8-foot Thayer-Coggin couch and twin Hermann Miller pull-up chairs surround a surfboard-design coffee-table, back dropped by a blaze of abstract-expressionist art on the fieldstone walls...

The girl is suitably impressed. As are we. She checks the view

GIRL

Wow... I bet - on a clear day - you can almost see Catalina from up here...

And Johnny takes an ascot from a side-table... And sets to blind-folding the girl...

GIRL (CONT.)

What are you doing, Johnny?

JOHNNY

It's a surprise --

Johnny lights himself a Tareyton cigarette with a gold lighter shaped like a Luger. He catches a look at himself in one circular wall mirror. Gives that cocksure grin that the janes die for, and the jims wish they could duplicate...

And he leads the girl out of the living room...

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARK'S HOTEL - BASEMENT - NIGHT

The same tableau... Hillie Long about to fix... Eddie Grab before her... Thick with Beatniks...

And Eddie Grab SLAPS THE SPIKE out of the Beatnik's hand... And he pops the Beatnik in the gut and the Beatnik drops...

Hillie Long gropes for the syringe... Eddie Grab CRUSHES IT underfoot...

And now the other Beatniks move for him... And, for an old cat, Eddie Grab can move... And fight...

Because, in moments, he's sent a half-dozen hippies to the dirt-floor, moaning in pain...

Eddie Grab hauls Hillie Long to her feet... And drags her, screaming and struggling, out of the basement...

A few beatniks get to their feet.

And give chase...

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNNY DIAMOND'S APARTMENT - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Johnny leads the blind-folded girl into the master bedroom.

Glass doors and skylights show city lights and stars... A fire roars in the Uni-bilt fireplace set against the stone wall...

Johnny leads the girl across the ocean of deep-piled brilliantly-hued tangerine rug, past a chess table of hand-inlaid teak...

He gentles her down ON THE BED... And she shrieks as the bed gives... For it is A WATERBED...

GIRL

What is it?

JOHNNY

It's called a "waterbed." It's the newest thing...

He takes off her blind-fold... Tentative at first, she reclines on the carousel-striped coverlet. The bed shimmies and shakes. And she squeals in delight...

GIRL

Oh - my - Lord...

JOHNNY

Indeedy... But don't you find this view a little... stagnant?

GIRL

What do you--

Johnny hits a BUTTON and the bed begins to ROTATE! A slow, languid 360 degrees... The girl is agog...

GIRL (CONT.)

Johnny...

JOHNNY

Yep.

He hits another BUTTON in the rotating headboard and a pair of PANELS SWING OUT and reverse to form upholstered back rests...

Johnny and the girl lean on the rests...

Johnny hits another button and two glasses of brandy nightcap appear... He hands her one... Takes one for himself...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

This is a bed to do everything in...

Another button and Brenda Lee's "Sweet Nothin's" warbles through the speakers...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

... except sleep.

And he moves for her... And we

CUT BACK TO:

INT. ST. MARK'S HOTEL - NIGHT

The Brenda Lee plays through... As Eddie Grab and the girl flee the moon-eyed Beatniks...

Down the long, decimated corridors... Through the crepuscular passageways... With the beatniks at their backs...

Hillie Long drops to the floor... Dead weight... She won't budge... The beatniks are approaching...

Eddie Grab yanks her upright... SLAPS HER across the face... She looks at him... Stunned... No one's hit her... Ever...

EDDIE GRAB

Move...

She does... They run on... Past the old man on the floor... Except that --

-- Up ahead, a BEATNIK blocks their passage, holding a KNIFE...

BEATNIK #1

Hey, Square John: where you takin' Mountain Girl -- ?

EDDIE GRAB

(to Hillie Long)
"Mountain Girl"... ?

HILLIE LONG

I'm Mountain Girl, now --

EDDIE GRAB

I don't think so, doll --

And Eddie Grab SHOOTS THE BEATNIK IN THE FOOT...

Eddie Grab and Hillie Long stare at the crumpled, howling beatnik... Hillie looks at Eddie, horrified...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

Let's go --

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Johnny and the girl. In the clinches. When the telephone RINGS. And rings. And rings. Johnny breaks the kiss.

GIRL

Ignore it.

JOHNNY

I can't.

And he pads back into the living room and picks up the phone.

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Diamond.

And we hear, O.S., a WOMAN'S VOICE - TOBY - Johnny's secretary:

TOBY (O.S.)

Johnny, it's Toby. Eddie's found the Long girl.

JOHNNY (O.S.)

Where?

TOBY (O.S.)

He's at the St. Mark's Hotel. In Venice. You better get over there.

JOHNNY

Did you call Sanford Long? And the cops and newshawks?

TOBY (O.S.)

Called you first.

JOHNNY

Call 'em. I'm there --

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Johnny goes to a CLOSET, where his CLOTHES are compartmentalized in teak cabinets around an L-shaped dressing area...

We should be struck by the sheer array of sartorial splendor here: dress shirts and suits, sweaters, slacks, blazers; stacks of shoes, tangles of ties, belts, links, tacks, swim wear...

Johnny knows this closet. He selects a GARMENT BAG and unzips it. Removing a Dacron-cotton JACKET and Orlon-viscose SLACKS. Only these duds are TORN and BESMIRCHED, STAINED and TATTERED.

Johnny puts them on anyway... He now looks like he was rolled.

He kicks off his buttery loafers and replaces them with a pair of SPATTERED AND SCUFFED CORDOVANS from the garment bag, slipping them on with a no-stoop shoehorn...

He comes out to where the girl lolls on the waterbed, riding it like a raft... She's drunk now, doesn't notice the condition of his clothes...

JOHNNY

I gotta split, baby.

GIRL

What am I supposed to do?

Johnny punches some buttons on the headboard...

JOHNNY

This'll give you several hours of dulcet balladry. I got everything from Roy Orbison to Nelson Riddle in there to keep you warm till I return...

GIRL

You got Connie Francis?

JOHNNY

I'm not sure --

Johnny kisses her on the forehead... And he's out of there... She pouts... And jounces on the waterbed...

GIRL

I like Connie Francis.

EXT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Johnny climbs into his '62 Corvette, with the sculptured sides and dual color scheme of red and blue... And peels off...

As he drives, he reaches into the glove-box... Takes out a JAR OF DIRT... And begins strategically applying the dirt to his face and neck and hands...

He takes out a PILL-BOX. Removes a single crimson CAPSULE. Johnny places the capsule in his mouth. Bites down on it. Fake BLOOD dribbles down his chin, onto his shirt and jacket collar.

EXT. ST. MARK'S HOTEL - LATER - NIGHT

Johnny pulls up along the deserted street... Parks...

He walks around the back... To the culvert by a drained canal...

Where Eddie Grab stands with the drug-addled Hillie Long, both of whom regard the "beaten" Johnny with bemused expressions... SIRENS wail in the distance...

JOHNNY

How'd it go... ?

EDDIE GRAB

Found 'em in the basement... Minor fight... They were all doped-up... Wasn't much bother...

JOHNNY

She gonna be trouble -- ?

EDDIE GRAB

Naw. All she'll remember is jazz and moonlight...

JOHNNY

Hello, Hillie. I'm Johnny Diamond...

Nothing from Hillie Long... Eddie Grab shakes her...

EDDIE GRAB

Say hello to the nice man, Miss Long. After all, he just rescued you --

Hillie looks confused...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

You packin'?

JOHNNY

You know I don't pack, Eddie. It messes with the drape of my coat...

Eddie Grab scowls... And gives Johnny his snubnose and shoulder-holster... A quick look to the still-dazed Hillie...

EDDIE GRAB

I'll see ya --

And Eddie Grab limps off into the shadows... Johnny takes Hillie Long firmly by one arm, as

A LINCOLN LIMOUSINE

pulls up... The DRIVER gets out and opens the rear door to:

A leonine MAN in his mid-60s. Elegantly-dressed, he exudes the quiet confidence of power... This is SANFORD LONG, studio honcho, Hollywood Big Noise... Hillie's father...

Sanford Long walks towards Johnny and Hillie...

SANFORD LONG
Mr. Diamond... Hillary...

Hillie Long spits in her father's face...

HILLIE LONG
Pig-fucker... !

Sanford Long wipes his face with a monogrammed silk hankie... To the driver:

SANFORD LONG
Get her in the car...

The driver drags Hillie, kicking and screaming, to the limo... Sanford Long gives Johnny a weary look...

SANFORD LONG (CONT.)
You'll make this sound right?

JOHNNY
Right as rain, sir...

SANFORD LONG
Thank-you, Mr. Diamond. A job well done...

They shake hands... Sanford Long returns to the limo... To where his daughter screams and rages... Just as the SOUNDS of dozens of CARS comes from the front of the old hotel...

The limo drives off. Johnny watches it go. And walks around to

EXT. ST. MARK'S HOTEL

Johnny Diamond faces a coterie of REPORTERS, lights and cameras and tape recorders... POLICEMEN drag a daisy-chain of BEATNIKS from the hotel and into waiting PADDY WAGONS...

JOHNNY
Thank you. Thank you. Earlier this morning, Diamond And Associates, after cultivating and investigating literally hundreds of tips, hints, allegations and rumors, inveigled the exact whereabouts, the locus, of Miss Hillary Long, the teenaged daughter of Mr. Sanford Long, Chairman of Mammoth Pictures and a pillar in this most unwieldy of communities...

ANGLE - An oversized MAN, with a scoop of chopped sirloin for a face, watches Johnny preen with a look of disgust... This is LIEUTENANT GATTAWAY...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Miss Long, who has been missing for over a month, was being held against her will, by a group of teaheads and beatniks, who were planning on ransoming her once they got sober... I entered the St. Mark's, and quickly determined the dirty haven of these characters... Assured Miss Long was safe, I got in a minor skirmish with the gang, and eventually they succumbed. I am happy to report, father and daughter are now luxuriating in the heady glow of reunion... A few questions -- ?

REPORTER #1

Did you enter the St. Mark's alone or with back-up?

JOHNNY

This is all the back-up I require --

And Johnny opens his coat, revealing the snubnose in its shoulder-holster... He winks, imbued with hard-boiled strut...

REPORTER #2

How did you find her -- ?

JOHNNY

Any mystery is merely just a question of drainage. You remove all of the extraneous elements and the answer reveals itself like a... Like a great, glowing stone...

REPORTER #2

Like a diamond -- ?

JOHNNY

Why, yes. Thanks, Sy. Like a diamond.

REPORTER #3

How were you able to locate her, when the police were not -- ?

Gattaway listens closely to this one...

JOHNNY

We have nothing but the utmost of respect for the Los Angeles Police Department. However, there are those nooks and crannies that even the L.A.P.D. cannot penetrate. And for that reason alone, Diamond And

(MORE)

JOHNNY (cont'd)
Associates was formed. You may have
heard our motto: "Diamond And
Associates: Where Questions Go To Get
Answered." Thank-you...

And the press break-up... And Johnny strides toward his car...
To find Lieutenant Gattaway waiting for him...

JOHNNY
Lieutenant Gattaway. What's the new?

GATTAWAY
I oughtta cite you for unloading manure
without a license...

JOHNNY
I paint what I see, Loot --

GATTAWAY
Where's "The Grab"?

JOHNNY
Who?

GATTAWAY
He gotta be around here. This reeks of
Grabowski. No way do you go into the
St. Mark's by your lonely. You ain't
got the sack for it, Johnny --

Johnny ignores him... Climbs into his car...

GATTAWAY (CONT.)
One day you'll be found out. For what
you really are: a waste of wild air...

JOHNNY
Well, until that day, Loot --

He winks and starts the car...

GATTAWAY
Oh, and Johnny? Time to get a new
scuffle coat. You've used that one
four times. I recognize the tears...

JOHNNY
Ahh, but Lieutenant Gattaway,
recognizing the tears is what this
business is all about...

And he drives off... Gattaway watches him go...

INT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

The girl in the Capri pants is sprawled on the waterbed, feeling abandoned... Dee Dee Sharp's "Mashed Potato Time" playing on the stereo... She looks up --

-- for there, melting through the beaded curtain leading to the bedroom, is Johnny Diamond, in full cat-daddy twinkle...

JOHNNY

Hello, baby --

And, as Johnny moves for her, we PRE-LAP The Everly Brothers' "Bird Dog" and

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREETS - DAY - BEGIN CREDITS

as Johnny Diamond, in hopsack double-breasted blazer and black Foster Grant wraparound shades, drives the Corvette through the streets of 1962 Los Angeles and our CREDIT SEQUENCE.

QUICK SHOTS --

-- of the sun-splashed streets... Passing drive-in restaurants; parasol stations; the endless run of motels and parks...

- Westwood Memorial Cemetery... Where a small SERVICE is just getting underway... With a substantial POLICE AND PRESS PRESENCE far on the outskirts, holding the CROWDS at bay...

- The famous spots: Musso and Frank; Chasen's; The Villa Capris; Quo Vadis; The Brown Derby...

- The "Hollywood" SIGN is perched up on the hillside, several of its letters crumbling... Johnny salutes it... He never gets tired of the sight of it...

- On The Sunset Strip - the STATUE of the shapely CHORUS GIRL and her high-kick smile, welcomes all the dreamers; SCHWAB'S DRUGSTORE at the eastern terminus of The Strip, with its actors and actresses exchanging casting news over Beef Dip sandwiches.

- BILLBOARDS for Dristan Nasal Mist; Noilly Prat Vermouth; Bonadettes car sickness pills...

- Hollywood Boulevard, paved with brass-bound STARS... Johnny stops at a light, watching as the four TEENS in the Impala ahead of him, execute a perfect Chinese fire drill...

- Graumann's Chinese Theater - the marquee reads "THE WINGS OF TIME" STARRING RIDGE PAULING...

There should be an innocence at work here... A joy... For, as our TITLE SEQUENCE COMES TO A CLOSE, we should get the sense that Los Angeles of 1962, like America itself at this time, is the happiest, sexiest, swellest virgin around...

But one about to get her hymen pierced all to hell by a big, hard, throbbing confluence of decadence, duplicity and death...

But before we can mull any of this over, Johnny has arrived at

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - DAY

A low-slung office building of crumbling stucco and glass, on the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and McCadden, a stone's throw away from "DON THE BEACHCOMBER'S" CANTONESE JOINT...

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - SECOND FLOOR

A scattering of offices with pebble-glassed doors. Home to a multitude of small businesses: travel agencies, music publishers, import/exporters, a few fringe entertainment types..

Johnny passes one office: "The Intrepid Agency - Investigations For Hire." He walks further down the hall - to the office with "Diamond And Associates" stenciled on the frosted glass...

INT. "DIAMOND AND ASSOCIATES"

The front office furnishings are simple: a desk; a trio of gleaming file cabinets; an Underwood Olivetti typewriter; Dictaphone; a few oil paintings of Verona rainscapes; a framed detective license and

TOBY

Early 20s, a gamin; her flip cut and guiche curl give her a slightly boyish look, 'though she's cute as a button...

Toby is answering phones and clipping ARTICLES about the Hillie Long case from the papers, adding them to an already fat FILE...

Across from her, reading the "HOLLYWOOD CITIZEN NEWS" is an enormous bald, black MAN who goes by the apt moniker,

BOX

as grumpy as he is large. Johnny enters. Sorts through a pile of mail... Notes the enormous POTTED PLANT on Toby's desk...

JOHNNY

What's this?

TOBY

It came from Sanford Long.

JOHNNY

Hope it wasn't the only green he sent.

TOBY

It wasn't...

Johnny snaps his fingers... Toby hands him the CHECK... Pure joy washes over Johnny's face... Joy tempered with relief...

JOHNNY

Jesus wept.

TOBY

Yeah, well, just make sure Jesus leaves some of that for expenses. Those furniture rental guys called again...

JOHNNY

Yeah, yeah. Anything else -- ?

TOBY

Harry Gillette called. Wants to know if we're anywhere on the Ridge Pauling surv...

Johnny picks up one of the news-clippings. The HEADLINE reads: "Private Shamus Finds Missing Long Girl" bannered over PHOTOS of Hillie Long and Sanford Long... Another HEADLINE reads "Johnny Diamond: The Hero Of Movietown!" above a PHOTO of Johnny (which looks suspiciously like a head-shot).

JOHNNY

What's the new, Box?

BOX

Hangin' in like Gunga Din.

TOBY

You better get into your O...

She gestures to the closed door of Johnny's REAR OFFICE...

JOHNNY

Why?

TOBY

You got a client --

JOHNNY

They can wait...

BOX

They ain't waitin'. Eddie's already underway --

And Johnny looks toward his office, terrified...

JOHNNY

Eddie's in there?

BOX

As we speak.

JOHNNY
With a client?

BOX
Ditto.

JOHNNY
(to Toby)
Alone with a client?

TOBY
The phone was ringing. Things were
crazy. I lost control of the situation

JOHNNY
Shit.

BOX
And then some.

INT. JOHNNY'S OFFICE

In which a heavy-set woman, MRS. FLOYD, sits weeping, dabbing at her eyes with a frilly handkerchief...

Across from her, Eddie Grab sits. He seems to be wearing the same suit as last night, certainly the same beard, definitely the same irascible demeanor...

Note the attention to detail and faux-finery of the office: leather sofa, Alfred Dunhill 16th Century globe on Walnut stand, a 22-inch model of the H.M.S. Bounty, etc.

Johnny bursts in, assessing the situation on the fly...

JOHNNY
Eddie! What are you doing?

EDDIE GRAB
We got Mrs. Floyd here.

JOHNNY
Hello, Mrs. Floyd. Johnny Diamond.

The woman merely sobs with greater gusto.

EDDIE GRAB
Mrs. Floyd thinks her husband - Everett
Floyd, shoe store proprietor - is
stepping out on her with a gumdrop
ginch, works as a hostess over there at
Romanoff's...

Johnny takes off his coat, hanging it on a silent valet in the corner... We should note Eddie Grab... For he is GLUING a small metal PIN to the inside of a WRISTWATCH STRAP... He has

assembled a PILE OF WATCHES, all with little pins adhered to their inside bands...

JOHNNY

How long have you suspected this, Mrs. Floyd?

But she continues to weep... So Eddie answers for her...

EDDIE GRAB

A few months now.

JOHNNY

And this has you very upset -- ?

But she shakes her head no...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

No?

She shakes her head more emphatically...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Then what has you very upset -- ?

And she gestures to Eddie Grab...

JOHNNY

He has you very upset?

(she nods)

What'd you do, Eddie?

EDDIE GRAB

I did nuthin'...

JOHNNY

Eddie?

EDDIE GRAB

What?

JOHNNY

What'd you do?

Eddie Grab glues another pin to another watch...

EDDIE GRAB

What'd I do? I told her. I said to her. You don't want your husband stepping out, why don't you lose thirty fucking pounds, you fat bitch --

JOHNNY

Eddie!

EDDIE GRAB

Who wants to come home from a hard day
at the shoe store and have to hump
Buddha -- ?

EXT. DIAMOND AND ASSOCIATES - CORRIDOR

Johnny sees the lachrymose Mrs. Floyd out...

JOHNNY

Again, i'm sorry Mrs. Floyd. But I do
think you should at least reconsider
hiring us...

MRS. FLOYD

I never want to see that awful man
again... Never again!

She bustles off down the hall, just as the door to The Intrepid
Agency opens, to two MEN in crummy suits, string ties, ashen
pallors and perhaps the slimiest dispositions in town... This is

RAY ROUVALES AND SHELDON "CREEPY" KAHN

matrimony dicks and scumbum gumshoes non-pareil... Ray is the
more voluble... Creepy, the more, well, creepy...

They watch as Mrs. Floyd weeps away...

RAY ROUVALES

Johnny D! What's the new, daddy-O?
Don't tell me: Eddie The Grab's on the
premises --

JOHNNY

I'm afraid so... Hello, boys --

RAY ROUVALES

Nice work last night, fella. No shit.
Sanford Long must pay-off like a
jimmied slot, am I wrong?

JOHNNY

It was all right...
(to Creepy; who's dressed
up more so than usual)
Why you so flash?

RAY ROUVALES

Creepy went to Marilyn's funeral. How
'bout that? Paid his respects.
Creepy's been tumblin' for M.M. since
THE ASPHALT JUNGLE. Right, Creepy?

CREEPY KAHN

She's gone, you know. It's sad. I'm havin' problems with it. One minute she's here. Next, she's gone. It's The Death of Beauty, John. You know?

JOHNNY

Sure, Creepy...

Ray slaps Johnny on the back, as the two walk off...

RAY ROUVALES

Let's go over to The Beachcomber's some night, celebrate the Long case... I'm buyin' the Zombies -- !

And Johnny storms into his office, past Box and Toby and into the rear office, slamming the door behind him...

Eddie Grab has lifted the top half of the 16th Century globe to reveal the hidden six-bottle BAR COMPARTMENT within... And he's fixing himself a drink...

JOHNNY

Eddie, for God's sake --

EDDIE GRAB

I'm sorry, kid. I'm tired.

JOHNNY

That was a potential case. You see her fur-lined gloves? She had dough. Remember our deal? You're the steak. I'm the sizzle. You solve 'em. I do everything else. You should remember. It was your idea...

EDDIE GRAB

I know, I know. But these mat cases. If I gotta follow one more 64-year-old pigeon chest as he squires a 22-year-old jane around town... First stop, Perino's, for tenderloin of beef stuffed with foie gras and a couple of bottles of Brunello Di Montalcino, just to get her lubed... Then it's on to Gene Norman's Crescendo to see Mort Sahl, where she'll pretend to laugh at jokes she don't get, and he'll pretend he ain't peeping at her heaving titties; after which, a bungalow at the Bel Air, where he'll fail to get it up, which he don't understand, cos it's all he's been dreaming about, which is exactly why he can't get it

(MORE)

EDDIE GRAB (cont'd)
 up, and she'll coo all understanding-
 like, until he'll finally make her
 climax with a diamond-crusted bracelet,
 and all the while, I'm in the bushes,
 ankle-deep in mud, gotta piss, need a
 drink, rheumatism screaming, taking
 snaps... So yeah... She looks like
 Buddha... I paint what I see...

He takes a long draught of his drink... Johnny can only stare...

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Johnny and Eddie Grab walk out of the building...

EDDIE GRAB
 I was down to Figueroa today. Went by
 what used to be the Pinkerton Agency...

JOHNNY
 So?

EDDIE GRAB
 It's now a chicken take-out stand. A
 drum and a thigh for the pimps and
 hopheads...

JOHNNY
 That's real interesting, Eddie --

EDDIE GRAB
 We worked for the defense in the Fatty
 Arbuckle case --

JOHNNY
 I know, I know. And you all got the
 business end of the bottle after that
 one --

EDDIE GRAB
 You don't think we did? You say it
 like I repeat myself, kid --

JOHNNY
 I gotta go, Eddie. I'll see ya...

EXT. RODEO DRIVE - BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

Johnny walks along this plush shopping district, smoking a
 Tareyton... He ducks into

INT. ART THE HABERDASHER

A fancy men's store, run by the perpetually-smug ART...

ART

Johnny Diamond! I knew when I read my paper this morning, I'd be seeing you!

JOHNNY

Clear a case, buy apparel. First rule of the P.I. business, Art. What's the new at the smartest toggery in town?

ART

I got something here I'd love to put you into...

He pulls a suit off the rack... Comes in low, conspiratorially:

ART (CONT.)

They call this the Tri-Lite. Because it's a blend of three fabrics. You got 1/3 Dacron, for crease retention... 1/3 worsted, for fine wool quality... And 1/3 mohair, for cool crispness...

All of this is symphony to Johnny's ears... This is as serious as we've seen him yet...

JOHNNY

Does it come in a reverse twist?

INT. ART THE HABERDASHER - LATER - DAY

Johnny, suitbag over his shoulder, is paying Art... When, through the front window, he can see an ebony Studebaker GRAN TURISMO HAWK with tinted windows, pull up out front...

A short thumb of a DRIVER steps out and opens the back door to

A WOMAN

late 20s. And not quite like any other creature amongst these environs... The woman enters Art The Haberdasher's...

And perhaps everything SLOWS for Johnny as he sees her - in her apricot Chanel boucles suit; her Jackie Bouvier pillbox hat; her diamond earrings and emerald pendant; her positively translucent beauty: a grace, a sweep, an emotive, pale blue sky loveliness that makes you feel you're going to live forever...

The girl goes to a rack of ties... Runs impossibly long fingers over their silkiness...

Johnny moves to the girl, almost in a trance... Tremulous, not quite sure... A desert crash survivor coming upon an oasis that may or not be a mirage...

JOHNNY

Lolly?

And the girl looks up... Those lips, those eyes...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Lolly Carruthers?

Before the girl can respond, the driver is in Johnny's chest...

DRIVER

Easy, Apache. Step back...

GIRL

It's okay, Dick...

DRIVER (DICK)

You sure, Miss Vale?

GIRL

I'm sure, Dick --

Surprised, DICK retreats... And the Girl faces Johnny...

GIRL

Hello, Roy --

JOHNNY

My God. My God. Lolly...

GIRL

How have you been -- ?

He's clearly flabbergasted... She opens a silver cigarette case... Withdraws a Viceroy... Dick The Driver moves to light it for her... Art The Haberdasher, too... But Johnny's there first.

JOHNNY

Look at you. You're all fancy. Little Lolly Carruthers, the maid's daughter, from Everclear, Texas... Now, you got a teensy driver, a Jackie Kennedy hat, and not a trace of the old sagebrush accent...

GIRL

It's been a long time...

JOHNNY

How long exactly -- ?

GIRL

Twelve years. The summer of '50.

JOHNNY

'50. That's right. I remember it well. Cos I spent that year with a knife in my gut...

GIRL
I'm sure the hilt went beautifully with
your eyes. .

JOHNNY
Lolly --

GIRL
It's Gretchen now --

JOHNNY
What is?

GIRL
My name. Gretchen Vale.

JOHNNY
You got married?

GIRL (GRETCHEN)
No. Just changed it.

JOHNNY
Gretchen Vale. I like it. Have a
drink with me...

GRETCHEN
No...

JOHNNY
One drink. Please.

GRETCHEN
I'm sorry...

He ushers her away from the wide-eared radar of Dick The Driver
and Art The Haberdasher...

JOHNNY
I don't know if you remember, Lolly.
But a long time ago, you were my entire
world, the sun and stars included...

GRETCHEN
I remember. But this is a bad time,
Roy.

JOHNNY
It's Johnny.

GRETCHEN
What is?

JOHNNY
My name. Roy Clayton's gone. I'm
Johnny Diamond now --

GRETCHEN
"Johnny Diamond?"

JOHNNY
Yes, ma'am. At your service.

He gives her the grin. She frowns. Stubs out her cigarette.

GRETCHEN
Maybe I will have that drink after all.

EXT. CYRANO-CONTINENTAL COFFEE HOUSE - SUNSET STRIP - DAY

Dick waits outside by the car... Stubbing out another cigarette in a pile of them and looking uneasily at his watch...

INT. CYRANO'S

A large, pleasant, quietly chic, oval-shaped room with marble-topped tables, sweeps of leaded windows, a fireplace, and WAITERS who are bit players and stuntmen...

The CROWD, hip, young, aspiring, sit elbow-to-elbow in director's chairs throughout...

Johnny and Gretchen enter... And everyone seems to know Johnny... He nods, smiles, shakes hands... Works the crowd, all the while, leading Gretchen to a table at the back...

One balding SCHMOOZE-DOG slaps Johnny on the back...

SCHMOOZE-DOG
Johnny! You know Andrew Byner -- !

The schmooze-dog steps aside to reveal ANDREW BYNER, a ruggedly-handsome man in his early 40s who looks like a movie cowboy. Which is what he is...

JOHNNY
Nice to meet you... Big fan of your Westerns --

ANDREW BYNER
Thank-you...

Johnny and Gretchen move on... He smiles at her...

JOHNNY
Film stars are my friends. 'Cause I'm The Hero Of Movietown -- !

INT. CYRANO'S - LATER - DAY

Johnny and Gretchen are at the rear of the joint, by the gleaming espresso machine, coffees before them... Every now and again PEOPLE pass, sending hellos and hosannas to Johnny, who

nods, never taking his eyes off Gretchen...

Here, up close and in this light, we can discern a slightly damaged quality about Gretchen Vale; something wounded beneath the obvious veneer of transcendent pulchritude...

Johnny is giddy as he lights their cigarettes...

JOHNNY

Tell me everything. About the last twelve years. Leave out nothing.

GRETCHEN

I'm afraid it's all horribly dull.

JOHNNY

What have you been doing?

GRETCHEN

Smoking cigarettes. Playing gin rummy. Drinking in moderation. Expanding my capacities.

JOHNNY

For twelve years?

GRETCHEN

I always had small capacities...

JOHNNY

Sorry about your Momma...

GRETCHEN

Thank-you...

JOHNNY

I went back for the funeral. Thought maybe you'd be there...

Beat... They smoke...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

What I remember, is you, barefoot in your prom dress, pumping gas into my truck, laughing under a lipstick sky...

Beat... He studies her...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

You seem... Different...

GRETCHEN

I was a child, Roy. And so were you.

Long beat. A twister of a TALENT AGENT whirls by...

AGENT

Hey, Johnny! Nice, on the Sanford Long flap. Hey, Ray Charles is playing The Cloister tonight. Don Adams opening. I can get you a table...

JOHNNY

That's okay, Teddy. I got plans.

The Agent eyes Gretchen...

AGENT

I should have such plans. See ya on the go-round, J.D...

And he's off...

GRETCHEN

You're very popular --

JOHNNY

I'm a private detective. People think I have all the answers...

GRETCHEN

Do you?

JOHNNY

Sure. As long as I can copy off the paper of the kid sittin' next to me...

Beat... Long look... Then:

JOHNNY (CONT.)

I still carry you with me, Lolly...

GRETCHEN

I can't recommend against that more emphatically, Roy... It would be a true waste of your substance...

Long beat...

GRETCHEN (CONT.)

This is a peachamaroot, Roy. A big, fat peachamaroot. But I've got to go.

JOHNNY

I want to see you again...

GRETCHEN

You can't.

JOHNNY

Why not?

GRETCHEN
There are entanglements.

JOHNNY
You're seeing someone?

GRETCHEN
That's right.

JOHNNY
For how long?

GRETCHEN
Six months now.

JOHNNY
Well, he sounds like an asshole.

And she gets to her feet...

GRETCHEN
Goodbye, Roy --

JOHNNY
Lolly --

But she moves through the crowd - which pause for her passage - to where Dick the Driver holds the door open for her, fixing Johnny with one dark stare...

INT. DIAMOND AND ASSOCIATES - LATER - DAY

Toby is hard at work, coloring in a J.F.K. coloring book... Box watches footage from Marilyn's funeral on a Philco Black Beauty portable television set...

Johnny wanders in, distracted, suitbag over shoulder.

TOBY
You bought a suit.

Johnny hangs the garment bag in a closet...

TOBY (CONT.)
You look like you've seen a ghost.

He looks at her. Smiles.

JOHNNY
Very good. Intuitive, even.

TOBY
You got Harry Gillette in the O.

JOHNNY
Eddie around?

TOBY

He's at his place. Sleepin' one off.

BOX

Ain't that much sleep in creation...

Johnny heads for the office...

JOHNNY

What's the new, Box -- ?

BOX

They gone and killed Marilyn.

CUT TO:

A RONSON BIG DADDY ELECTRIC SHAVER

being run over the blebby, obdurate mug of

HARRY GILLETTE

Talent agent. Mid-50s, paunchy, mean-spirited. Good suit, but the shirt is stained and the tie's got airplanes on it...

INT. JOHNNY'S OFFICE

Johnny enters, to find Harry, sitting behind his desk, shaving, perusing a PHOTOPLAY MAGAZINE.

JOHNNY

What are you doing?

HARRY GILLETTE

What's it look like?

JOHNNY

That's my Big Daddy!

HARRY GILLETTE

You mind? It's incredible. Tender.
Yet tough. It crackles. Yet hums...

Johnny goes around the desk...

JOHNNY

Up...

Harry gets out of Johnny's chair... Continues to shave...

HARRY GILLETTE

I heard Hillie Long was shootin' skag
and didn't want to be rescued --

JOHNNY

You heard wrong --

Harry clicks off the razor. Rubs his face.

HARRY GILLETTE (CONT.)
Beautiful. You got any talc?

JOHNNY
No. What do you want, Harry?

HARRY GILLETTE
I know you got talc. But I won't
press. Ridge Pauling, John...

And he slaps down the magazine... Revealing its cover PHOTO:
the handsome movie star - RIDGE PAULING...

HARRY GILLETTE (CONT.)
Four months ago, I hire you cats to dig
dirt. Four months later, I'm sittin'
thumbside. What's the hink, J.D.?

JOHNNY
We've been surveillin' him. He ain't
done nothin' wrong...

HARRY GILLETTE
Ridge Pauling is set to star in Sanford
Long's magnum opus about Tiberius, the
second Roman emperor. It's called A
SON OF CAESAR. It's a powerful role,
and Ridge Pauling will make it his own.

Johnny isn't listening... He's looking out the window...

Thinking of her...

HARRY GILLETTE (CONT.)
You with me, J.D.? Or should I get up
on a stool and hire a monkey?

JOHNNY
Go ahead...

HARRY GILLETTE
In one week, before lensing commences,
Ridge Pauling is to marry Jean
Randolph, sexy new ingenue on the
scene. Now, I know and you know, and
everyone with spies and eyes knows,
Pauling is topping every hen in town,
under the age of 25. Get me proof,
J.D. Get me proof, so's I can violate
his moral turpitude clause, get him
shit-canned from the picture and pave
the way for hunky Steve Darren, Sanford
Long's second choice to play Tiberius.

JOHNNY

... who just happens to be your client.

HARRY GILLETTE

Yes, sir... Because, I don't know if you know it or not, J.D.: but there is beauty in this life...

JOHNNY

You've got us on a six-hour-a-day surv.
You wanna up it?

HARRY GILLETTE

Up it. The wedding's a week away. I need to crush it like a bug.

Harry Gillette looks out the window...

HARRY GILLETTE (CONT.)

You know: you can practically see Catalina from here, J.D...

Harry Gillette rubs his mug...

HARRY GILLETTE (CONT.)

You sure you don't got no talc?

EXT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT - LATER - NIGHT

Johnny pulls up to his apartment... Ahead, in the glow of his headlights, he sees the Studebaker Gran Turismo Hawk parked out front, Dick the Driver smoking miserably...

Johnny can't get out of the car fast enough... He scales the stairs to his flat, nine at a time...

INT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT

Check it: Linda Scott's "I've Told Every Little Star" on the stereo... The lights low... Gretchen Vale on the couch, in a short jacket and knee-tipping skirt, smoking a cigarette, working on a tumbler of brandy... She rises...

JOHNNY

Lolly?

GRETCHEN

Gretchen.

And she kisses him... And he takes her in his arms... And there are good kisses and there are bad kisses... Gretchen Vale's kisses are rockets on the 4th of July...

DISSOLVE TO:

JOHNNY'S BEDROOM

as they fall back on the waterbed... Gretchen doesn't react to its buoyancy... Johnny pauses to hit the revolving button... Gretchen pauses to turn it off...

GRETCHEN

Stop it, Roy...

We don't need that shit. And they are off. Slow, glorious. Beautiful fools refulgent in their desires...

And, as the music swells, and the lovers live on, we move outside, to where

DICK THE DRIVER

nervously chain-lights another smoke off the butt of his last, iguana eyes leaden with portent...

INT. JOHNNY'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Fuzzy in the afterglow. Gretchen in his arms. They smoke. Gretchen looks about the decor...

GRETCHEN

You sure have changed, Roy --

Big smile from Johnny...

JOHNNY

Nice, huh?

Her bad-tomato-bitten expression belies her nod and words of:

GRETCHEN

Yes. Very nice.

JOHNNY

Gotta solve a lot of cases to get this kinda stuff...

GRETCHEN

I'd imagine. How'd you get into it?

He looks at her... Strokes her hair...

JOHNNY

I waited a year after you left. Wandered around town like a lost dog. Haunted your momma's place for word of you. None ever came. So I decided to split. Come to California. Billy Richards, the roughneck, remember him?

GRETCHEN

Yes.

JOHNNY.

He knew a guy here called Eddie Grabowski... A private eye... I called on Eddie, who'd fallen on hard times, and we put together the business...

He looks at her... Long and hard... She's not quite comfortable with the breadth of his gaze and the emotion behind it...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

But I gotta tell ya, Lolly. I thought I was happy. I thought things were good. But the way I'm feeling now... Man, I was starving and I didn't even know it...

He embraces her... She looks most distressed...

GRETCHEN

I've got to go, Roy...

JOHNNY

No you don't.

She gets up... Begins dressing...

GRETCHEN

Yes, I do. This was just this. This was nostalgia. That's it. You can't go sending me flowers and little notes and chocolates with cherubs on the wrapping. I'm involved with another man. And it's good. He's a good man. But I have thought about you often. And I will continue to do so. So let's leave it at that. Please...

JOHNNY

Okay.

GRETCHEN

Thank-you.

JOHNNY

When can I see you again -- ?

GRETCHEN

Roy --

JOHNNY

Let me tell you how it lays. It's a Sanford Long magnum opus. We open on the wealthy estate of a Texas oil baron... There's Royal Clayton, the chauffeur's boy, and Lolly Carruthers,
(MORE)

JOHNNY (cont'd)
the maid's kid... High school
sweethearts... Lovers in love...

Gretchen picks it up from here, her hometown accent creeping in:

GRETCHEN
In the shadows of the main house, they
share their dreams... Dreams which
stretch far beyond the dust and rust of
this tidewater town... Dreams of
walkin' on the summer side of the
street...

JOHNNY
Yes, yes... Only after graduation,
Lolly goes to visit an Aunt in New York
City. Never to return. Without a word
spoken. Close-up on the sappington
chauffeur's boy. Cut down in his
prime...

He looks at her for a beat... The look is sad though not
scolding... She continues it:

GRETCHEN
Twelve years go by. Fade in on Royal
Clayton, now a slick private dick...
The Hero Of Movietown...

JOHNNY
... as he spies Lolly Carruthers,
long-gammed and fancy, without a trace
of Texas on her, dancing in the streets
of Beverly Hills...

GRETCHEN
They connect. Camera dollies in.

JOHNNY
Because suddenly, the birds are
singing...

GRETCHEN
The sun is shining...

JOHNNY
Life is now about more than the search
for the proper martini and the errant
bird-doggin' of scarlet sisters. The
man awakes from a coma --

GRETCHEN
-- He smells the jasmine --

JOHNNY
-- The glow of hibiscus --

GRETCHEN
-- He is saved --

JOHNNY
-- She is saved --

JOHNNY
(big)
Cue the timpani. Roll credits. The
End.

GRETCHEN
Then someone yells "fire" in the
crowded theater. Hundreds are trampled
fleeing for the exits...

Beat... They smile... A little breathless...

JOHNNY
When can I see you again?

She sighs... Considers... Lights up... Then:

GRETCHEN
Meet me tomorrow night.

JOHNNY
Where?

GRETCHEN
I'm at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Room
213. Say 8:00.

JOHNNY
I'll be there...

She pauses in the doorway... The hanging beads all around her,
annoying...

GRETCHEN
I know you will...

A final look... She's sharply gelid... He's fat with gloat...

GRETCHEN (CONT.)
Nice beads, Roy.

JOHNNY
Thank-you.

And she's gone.

EXT. JOHNNY'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Bobby Lewis' "Tossin' And Turnin'" plays...

Johnny Diamond drives, Foster Grants wrapping around, Tareyton dangling, in a gabardine ensemble, hiply-crumpled chamois jacket and, as an added flourish - a rakish sport straw HAT, limned from brim to crown in a polychrome abstract-expressionist motif.

His look, his manner, his whole being, exudes abject joy...

Johnny picks up the Big Daddy razor... Turns it on... As it's inches from his face, he remembers --

-- Harry Gillette. Johnny promptly tosses it into the backseat.

He pulls up to where Eddie Grab waits in his CAR - a black and banged-up 1951 Mercury Club Coupe, whose blocky design, bulbous fender and divided windscreen probably looked outmoded in '51...

EDDIE GRAB

Get it. We'll take mine...

JOHNNY

Oh, no...

EDDIE GRAB

Hurry up --

Johnny parks and, reluctantly, opens the side door of the Coupe, which howls with rusted agony...

JOHNNY

If there's such a thing as "car cancer"
I think you got it...

Eddie puts the Coupe in gear... They drive...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

How can you drive this thing? Don't
you know your car is an extension of
your very self?

EDDIE GRAB

Let me tell you something, Roy...

JOHNNY

Don't start with the "Roy". You only
do the "Roy" when you want to put me in
my place...

EDDIE GRAB

Let me tell you something, Roy. The
grape-shot of this, your chosen
profession, is to go unnoticed. To
blend. Which makes for a good
detective, but an uninteresting human

(MORE)

EDDIE GRAB (cont'd)
being. You have to decide which you
wanna be. That thing you drive? It's
a 290-bhp fuel-injected sore thumb...

JOHNNY
You ain't gonna foul my mood today,
Eddie. Nothin', short of nuclear war
or an acetate-twill embargo, will foul
my mood today...

Eddie looks at him... Johnny watches the passing scenery...

EDDIE GRAB
What's with the hat? You look like
you're sellin' tickets to the goddamn
Ferris wheel...

JOHNNY
Not gonna work, Eddie. Just not gonna.

CUT TO:

A PAIR OF DEPLOYED HANDCUFFS

tight around the squirming wrists of Johnny Diamond...

INT. EDDIE'S CAR / EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - DAY

They are parked in front of a GATED HOME fashioned after a Mayan temple... It is surrounded on all sides by pine groves and great carpets of flowers...

Johnny's hands are cuffed behind his back... As he struggles to undo his WRISTWATCH... Eddie watches him, disappointed...

EDDIE GRAB
You're pathetic... Observe...

Eddie cuffs himself... Behind the back... He undoes his own watch... Plucks the PIN fixed to the band... And shims open the cuff-lock with the slim haft of the pin... In moments he's free.

Johnny just can't do it... He fumbles the watch and it slips below the seat...

EDDIE GRAB
Pa-thet-ic...

JOHNNY
I ain't plannin' on gettin' cuffed
anyway --

EDDIE GRAB

A good P.I. always gets cuffed... It means you're angering the local constabulary... Which means you're doing your job...

Eddie gets out... Comes around to the passenger side... Unlocks Johnny's cuffs... Johnny rubs his wrists...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

Slide over...

JOHNNY

Why?

EDDIE GRAB

You drive...

Johnny slides over... Eddie gets in... Johnny fiddles with the watch...

JOHNNY

Well, you certainly couldn't've picked uglier watches --

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

I went by a spot last night that Ray Chandler, Dash Hammett and I used to go to...

JOHNNY

Eddie, please. Not a Ray and Dash story...

EDDIE GRAB

(ignores him)

It had changed. We used to drink weak coffee and argue about Trotsky, or which we'd rather drive, the SJ Dusenbergs or the Rolls Silver Wraith. Until Dash would order on the bourbon and beer and we'd do boilermakers and bad mouth everything from Socialism to the downtown homicide dicks...

JOHNNY

It's amazing how that story's just as interesting the thirtieth time...

Before Eddie can respond, the GATES of the estate ROLL OPEN --

And a blue Zodiac CONVERTIBLE, by Ford-of-Britain, glides out... Behind the wheel, in ascot and aviator shades, is

RIDGE PAULING

the movie star. Mid-40s. Dashing, suave, elegant, debonair. None of these words accurately describe this man's elan.

Pauling drives down the winding road... After a beat, Johnny follows... Eddie snaps pictures with his camera...

QUICK SHOTS --

As they tail Ridge Pauling through the L.A. streets... Pauling rides on, oblivious... Johnny tries his best to keep a discreet tail... But it's not easy...

EDDIE GRAB

Ride her high... Let's try not to get burned... Ride her high...

Johnny looks at Eddie Grab, confused...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

In his blind spot... Right or left...

Eddie grabs the wheel, so they're just to the left of Pauling...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

Christ, you act like this is your first rolling surveillance --

From the look on Johnny's face, it probably is... At least his first one, driving... Pauling glides through a yellow-light...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

Bust that light... !

And Johnny does, running the red, nearly getting clipped...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

I think he's heated... Loose-tail it...

Again, Johnny looks to Eddie for a translation...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

Drop further back...

Johnny does... Pauling runs another light... A red one...

EDDIE GRAB

He's heated... Don't bust this one... R.U.R., kid...

JOHNNY

What -- ?

EDDIE GRAB

R.U.R.!

Johnny makes a right turn. Then bangs a U. Then goes straight.

EDDIE GRAB

What are you doing -- ?

JOHNNY

R.U.R.

EDDIE GRAB

That was an R.U.S. You went straight.
R.U.R. Right turn, U-turn, Right
turn... When the subject runs a red,
you R.U.R. You R.U.S.'d. Christ!
Pull over. We lost him...

Johnny does...

JOHNNY

"R.U.R." "R.U.S." "Bust a light."
"Loose-tail." You're speakin' Swahili,
man...

And, to their horror, Ridge Pauling pulls up beside them... He
sneers... Flips them one well-manicured bird... And drives off.

They watch him go... Eddie glowers at Johnny, disgusted... As we
PRE-LAP Dodie Steven's "Pink Shoe Laces" and CUT TO:

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - NIGHT

Pink and sprawling and clenched in a flutter of royal palms and
livid grass under electric light... Fifteen-foot oleanders with
their lushly drooping bannerets preside over all...

Johnny, in a soft heather blazer, silk-shantung gold tie and
silhouette trousers, gives his car to the ATTENDANT...

He carries a single red rose and a bottle of champagne...

And he's whistling...

EXT. ROOM 213

is a bungalow set off from the main building... Johnny goes to
the door, fixes his tie... Knocks... Exuberant...

No answer... He knocks again... Louder... Still no answer...

JOHNNY

Lolly -- ?

Nothing. Johnny tries the door. It opens. He enters.

INT. ROOM 213

The bed is unmade. The ashtrays are dirty. Lipstick on a
glass. All signs tell of a hasty exodus...

Johnny goes to the phone... Dials 0...

JOHNNY

(into phone)

Yes, I'm trying to locate a guest. A Miss Gretchen Vale... Thank you... Are you sure? Could you check under the name Carruthers? Dolores Carruthers...

He picks up an ashtray... Viceroy butts... Her brand...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Nothing... Okay... Thanks...

He hangs up the phone... He looks up...

For TWO MEN have entered the room. Dark suits, dark eyes. A pair of anvils on leave from the blacksmith's shop. Let's call them SLAP and TICKLE...

JOHNNY

Can I help you boys?

As they speak, they move in on Johnny...

SLAP

Whatta we got here?

TICKLE

Moony kid.

SLAP

Lovelorn...

JOHNNY

What do you--

TICKLE

Got any advice for the young at heart?

SLAP

Yes. I once felt sorry for myself that I had no shoes...

TICKLE

Yes... ?

SLAP

... until I met a man with no feet...

WHUMP! A fist to Johnny's guts... FRUMP! Another to his back... SPRACK! One more to his face...

Johnny goes down hard... The two goons stand over him... Johnny covers his head with his hands, anything but hard-boiled...

TICKLE

Feature him: anything but hard-boiled.

And POP! A shot rings out... Johnny flinches, cowering...

But it is only the champagne bottle. Slap has uncorked it.

And he POURS its entire contents onto Johnny... Soaking him...

SLAP

Stay away from her, tough guy...

Johnny still hides his head. After a few beats, he looks up...

But they are gone...

INT. JOHNNY'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Johnny at the wheel... The top down, the wind whips at his champagne-soaked togs, bringing him to a shiver...

He looks resolutely miserable... Clocks himself in the rear-view... A purplish bruise just starting to bloom on his face... Then something occurs to him... He bangs a U...

EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE - HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

A shambling multi-unit dwelling of stucco and crumbling concrete with a sign on its side that reads: "FURNISHED SINGLES, DOUBLES, BACHELORS. REASONABLE RATES. REFRIGERATION."

Johnny pulls up outside...

INT. APARTMENT HOUSE - CORRIDOR

Johnny knocks on the door to apartment #3... Rotting plaster and broken children's toys speckle the hallway...

The door opens. To Eddie Grab, in dirty robe and pajama bottoms

EDDIE GRAB

What are you doing here?

JOHNNY

Can I come in?

Eddie studies Johnny... The bruise... The rumpled duds...

EDDIE GRAB

You look like shit. I like it.

INT. EDDIE GRAB'S APARTMENT

Hell's glove compartment. A single room. Crowded with dirty dishes, empty bottles, a broken phonograph, piles of books, camera equipment, clothes hillocks, TV-dinner trays...

JOHNNY

Jesus, Eddie...

EDDIE GRAB

I know. I live like an animal.

JOHNNY

No. I don't know of any animals that live like this...

EDDIE GRAB

What happened to you?

JOHNNY

I fell.

EDDIE GRAB

(sniffs)

Into a glass of Almaden Brut?

Johnny takes out his cigarettes... They're champagne-soaked... He crumples them... Looks for a trash can... Eddie shrugs... And Johnny tosses the pack among the other detritus...

JOHNNY

We got a new case...

EDDIE GRAB

Yeah?

JOHNNY

It's a whereabouts trace. A chick. Gone missing. Name of Gretchen Vale. Mysterious. Maybe wise-guy connected. Last seen at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Rides in a black Gran Turismo Hawk. Driver called Dick. That's all I got.

EDDIE GRAB

Who's the client?

JOHNNY

Some kid. Tumbled hard for her. Then lost her. He's got dough. Wants to find her bad. He's clean.

Eddie studies him... Johnny averts his eyes from the look...

EDDIE GRAB

Gretchen Vale. She a flooze?

JOHNNY

I dunno. Probably.

EDDIE GRAB

Cos these nightclub-numbers, you know. They go missing all the time. Turn up drinking malted-milk in the desert with some vacationing Eastern industrialist and playing in Desi Arnaz' foursome at Rancho Mirage...

JOHNNY

Don't start, Eddie...

EDDIE GRAB

What about the Pauling surv?

JOHNNY

I'll work the Pauling surv...

EDDIE GRAB

You'll work it? C'mon...

JOHNNY

I can do it...

EDDIE GRAB

No you can't. You couldn't surveil Helen Keller in MacArthur Park and go unnoticed --

JOHNNY

I'll farm it out to Ray and Creepy. Just find this... flooze.

Eddie nods... Takes a drink...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

This place is really disgusting, Ed.

EDDIE GRAB

There's a very thin line between disgusting and cozy, kid...

He walks Johnny to the door... Johnny turns to him...

JOHNNY

What happened to you, Eddie?

Eddie considers... Beat...

EDDIE GRAB

Nothing. Everything. You know how it is. You get that one case. After all the bullshit, the aggravation, the petty peeking into other people's lives. How did my pal, Ray Chandler, put it: "down these mean streets a man

(MORE)

EDDIE GRAB (cont'd)
must go who is not himself mean... "
But that one case. You can get mean --

Beat... Johnny looks at him...

JOHNNY
You didn't really know Raymond
Chandler, Eddie... And you weren't the
basis for Philip Marlowe. Or Sam
Spade. Or any of 'em. The sooner you
accept that... The sooner you can get
on with your life --

Eddie smiles...

EDDIE GRAB
Go home, kid. You better get outta
them clothes before you ferment...

Eddie makes to close the door... Johnny stops him...

JOHNNY
You'll work this?

EDDIE GRAB
Gretchen Vale. Figure her found.

Johnny nods... And leaves... Eddie closes his door... Looks about
the squalor of his flop...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)
Cozy.

INT. JACK DENISON'S SUPPER CLUB - NIGHT

The next night. A dining and dancing spot... The Negro house
band swings some frantic West Coast jazz...

Johnny and his date, another vacuous STARLET, smoke and listen
to the band... Johnny looks at his watch, distracted...

STARLET
... it's enough to be asked. The fan
magazine leg art can be tasteful, you
know? Johnny? You know?

Johnny sees Ray Rouvales at the bar, working skirt...

JOHNNY
Be right back, baby doll --

And he goes over to Ray...

RAY ROUVALES
Johnny D.! What's the new, kemosabe?

JOHNNY

Listen, I need you guys to work up the Ridge Pauling surv for me...

RAY ROUVALES

Sure, Johnny. You got the kale --?

JOHNNY

Yeah. And a bonus if you get the snaps. Okay?

RAY ROUVALES

No worries, pal. If he's cleavin' quail consider him caught --

And Johnny goes back to his seat/starlet...

JOHNNY

Sorry, baby. What were you saying?

STARLET

I was talking about my magazine work --

JOHNNY

Right, sweetie. Right. You ready?

STARLET

We just got here --

JOHNNY

C'mon...

EXT. GARDEN APARTMENT - HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Johnny drops off the starlet...

JOHNNY

We'll do it again sometime, okay?

The starlet frowns... Johnny's indifference is alien to her subculture... She gets out of the car... He drives off.

INT. DON THE BEACHCOMBER - NIGHT

A little Pago-Pago in Hollywood. Amidst the low, candle-powered gloom, the decor is strictly tropical: bunches of bananas, clusters of coconuts, head dresses and shields from the Fiji Islands, all hang on the tapaclath walls before fat-bellied Gods

The sounds of RAIN drumming on the corrugated-iron roof overhead soothes, though it's dry as a bone outside...

It's late. The joint is mostly empty. Johnny sits in a side booth, smoking. DON, a congenial extrovert in a tattered white coat passes by...

DON

You hungry, Johnny? I can scare up
some Rumaki. Or chicken Manuu. Shrimp
something?

JOHNNY

I'm fine, Don... Thanks --

Don is off... Across the room from Johnny, alone in a center
booth, Box sits, shoveling pork and shrimp dumplings into his
mouth... Box nods at the yammering rain...

BOX

Never understood how he does that. The
rain thing. Must take some doing.

Johnny nods. Watches the door. Finger-drums the table. Box
goes back to his chow.

At last, the door opens. Eddie Grab. He nods to Box.

BOX (CONT.)

Eddie The Grab.

Eddie slides into Johnny's booth...

JOHNNY

You find her?

Don comes by, placing a bourbon neat in front of Eddie...

EDDIE GRAB

Thanks, Don --

JOHNNY

You find her, Eddie?

Eddie says nothing. Lights a cigarette. Sips his drink. Then:

EDDIE GRAB

Forget this one, kid.

JOHNNY

What are you talking about?

EDDIE GRAB

When I was workin' for Pinkerton--

JOHNNY

No. I don't wanna hear Pinkerton
stories, Eddie. I don't wanna hear Ray
and Dash stories, Eddie. Just tell me
about the girl...

EDDIE GRAB

I dunno who hired you. But we should stay away. It's big. And it's ugly. And it's peopled with those who prowl the catacombs. Lurk in the shadows. The flickering light...

JOHNNY

Arright, climb off the Sputnik now, man, and tell me what the hell you're--

EDDIE GRAB

We do matrimony. We find lost children. Recover stolen property. Investigate insurance claims. Repo. Trace a bail skip. Shit, a guy once hired me to correctly deduce whether risotto was a rice or a pasta. I took the case. But this. This Gretchen Vale thing. This ain't for us...

JOHNNY

Why not?

EDDIE GRAB

I'm the expert, remember? I'm the steak. You're the sizzle. The minute the sizzle starts calling the shots for the steak, the whole damn kitchen goes up in flames...

Johnny grabs him by the arm, knocking over his glass, soaking them... Johnny's eyes are imploring...

JOHNNY

We gotta do this, Eddie. We gotta...

Eddie stares at him... For there's panic on Johnny's face... Box looks up from his mandarin duck, chin smeared with plum sauce... Don comes by with another drink... After he's gone:

JOHNNY (CONT.)

And if it's as bad as you say it is. Then that's more of a reason why we got to find her. Get her out of it...

Beat... Eddie studies him...

EDDIE GRAB

But this ain't personal, huh, kid?

JOHNNY

Of course not.

EDDIE GRAB

Cos we don't do personal...

JOHNNY
It's the dough. We need the dough.
That's it.

Long look. Eddie Grab doesn't believe him. But there's something in Johnny's eyes... A desperation... Eddie sighs... Finishes his drink in three gulps...

EDDIE GRAB
I'll take one more nose around.

JOHNNY
Thank-you...

Eddie Grab gets to his feet...

JOHNNY (CONT.)
You'll call me... ?

Eddie nods... And heads out of the joint... Passing Box, who calls after him --

BOX
Hey, Eddie?

EDDIE GRAB
Yeah?

BOX
Whadjoo find out?

EDDIE GRAB
What?

BOX
Is it a rice or a pasta?

Eddie looks at him for a beat... As if debating whether or not to let him in on it...

EDDIE GRAB
It's a rice...

BOX
Thank-you.

EDDIE GRAB
You're welcome.

Eddie leaves... Box looks at Johnny, still shaken in his booth.

BOX
I had it figured for a pasta.

INT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Johnny paces... Smokes... To take his mind off of things, Johnny goes to his closet... Begins to count his shoes...

The phone RINGS. . He jumps... Runs to it...

JOHNNY

Hello --

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - PAY PHONE - NIGHT

Eddie Grab on the phone...

EDDIE GRAB

Meet me on Mulholland. Past the overlook. Come now...

JOHNNY

What have you--

But Eddie hangs up. Hears something O.S. Moves to investigate.

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - LATER - NIGHT

High up on a remote canyon... Eddie's Mercury is parked by the pay-phone, to the side of the road...

Johnny pulls to a stop on a crumpled cliff overlooking the bedspread of palpitating lights that is the San Fernando Valley.

Johnny gets out of the car... It's dark here... Shadows dance... Scrub oak branches sway pitilessly like dead men's bones...

JOHNNY

Eddie -- ?

No answer. Wisps of fog skim the red dirt road...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Eddie Grab -- ?

Nothing... Johnny looks into Eddie Grab's car... Empty...

CAR NOISE down the road... Johnny turns... BLINDING LIGHTS...

And a Chevy Bel-Air comes HURTLING PAST, missing him by inches, Johnny diving to the ground to get out of its way...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

HEY! YOU MANIAC!

He gets to his feet, turns back... Only to CRASH INTO EDDIE GRAB

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Jesus, Eddie -- !

Eddie Grab doesn't look good... He weaves... Lurches drunkenly..

JOHNNY (CONT.)

You boomered, Eddie -- ?

Nothing from Eddie Grab... Just more drunken swaying...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Goddamn it, man, I--

But Eddie Grab looks up... Eyes full of fear... And we/Johnny see the BLOOD soaking Eddie Grab's clothes...

... and the long, jagged SEAM of SLASHED FLESH and clothing, running from Eddie Grab's groin to his sternum...

And he's holding in his entrails with both bloodied hands...

Eddie Grab's been gutted.

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Eddie -- !

And Johnny puts his arms around Eddie Grab... And helps him to the ground... Where Eddie Grab leans up against the Mercury...

EDDIE GRAB

God. It hurts. Goddammit. They sliced me like a fucking mackerel. Like a mackerel, kid... God...

JOHNNY

We gotta get you to a hospital, man --

EDDIE GRAB

No. Wait. We got time...

JOHNNY

Eddie, they can save you --

EDDIE GRAB

I'm holdin' in my guts here, kid. Look down, you'll see my pancreas...

Johnny doesn't look down... Eddie looks at Johnny's suit, now covered in gore...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

Sorry about the suit, kid. Blood stains come out. But unfortunately, I had a bottle of wine with dinner. The wine stains you'll never get clean...

JOHNNY

Forget it, man... We gotta get you to a hospital...

EDDIE GRAB

No, no, no. This is Eddie The Grab's last night. Last moment. Got a smoke?

JOHNNY

Eddie --

EDDIE GRAB

There's a clarity here, kid. I am circumspect. It's all right...

(winces)

Argh. Fuck, it hurts. Gimme a smoke.

Johnny shakily taps one from his pack... Sticks it in Eddie Grab's mouth... Lights it... Eddie Grab inhales...

And a cloud of smoke leaks out from his sliced torso...

JOHNNY

Aw, man...

EDDIE GRAB

That's disgusting...

JOHNNY

Who did this -- ? Did it have something to do with the Vale girl?

EDDIE GRAB

Why? You gonna go get 'em, Sizzle? What are you gonna do? Huh?

JOHNNY

Eddie...

And Eddie looks out, out into the distance...

EDDIE GRAB

Hey...

JOHNNY

What?

EDDIE GRAB

You can almost see Catalina from up here...

And a goozlum of blood wells from Eddie Grab's mouth...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

That's what we call "a bad sign."

Eddie takes one last, blood-tipped haul of the Tareyton...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

God. God, I love cigarettes...

(turns to Johnny)

Stay away from it, kid. It's those who
prowl the catacombs.

(beat)

You shoulda told me it was personal --

JOHNNY

Eddie --

EDDIE GRAB

Dolores Carruthers. Lolly Carruthers.

Everclear, Texas. Young Royal

Clayton's light and love...

(beat)

She is something, kid. Reason To
Continue. But all the same. Stay away

JOHNNY

Please... Eddie... Please...

Eddie looks at him... Leans back his head... Exhales deeply...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

She's fucking him...

JOHNNY

What?

EDDIE GRAB

She's fucking him...

JOHNNY

Who, Eddie? Who?

Headlights rake the canyon... Approaching engine...

EDDIE GRAB

They could be back, kid...

Johnny peers over the Mercury... A CAR trundles slowly up the
road towards them...

EDDIE GRAB (CONT.)

You packing? No, of course not. Take
mine --

(off Johnny's look)

They ambushed me. Surprised me.
Sliced me like a mackerel. Take it.

And Johnny does, taking Eddie Grab's snub-nose from its
shoulder-holster... Johnny crouches, watching the road... He
turns back to Eddie...

JOHNNY

Tell me, Eddie... Please... Who...?

Eddie's weakening... Can't hide it... It's bad...

EDDIE GRAB

Jules... It's for Jules...

JOHNNY

Jules who -- ?

But THE CAR - a black late-model full-size sedan - crawls slowly along the overlook... Rear windows down, lantern-jawed MEN in dark suits, search the roadside, eyes predatory...

Johnny holds his breath as the car passes... Its attenuating rumble providing no relief.

JOHNNY

Now who the hell was that? Eddie -- ?

But Eddie Grab's wearing the beatific smile of the departed... Glossy-eyed, slack-jawed. He looks almost happy...

Johnny stares at him... Begins to cry... And he takes Eddie in his arms... Rocks him back and forth...

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - LATER - NIGHT

Johnny sits on the promontory, overlooking the Valley... Smoking... SIRENS approach in the distance...

Johnny glances back at Eddie Grab's body...

Johnny puts out his smoke... Goes to Eddie Grab... Begins to rifle through his pockets... Comes out with a small flask, a few crumpled dollars and

A TICKET STUB

from a car valet... For a nightclub... THE LARGO.

Johnny keeps the ticket. And the flask. Pocketing them...

As the POLICE PROWL CARS scream onto the canyon pass...

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - LATER - NIGHT

Johnny and Lieutenant Gattaway. Walk and talk. Gattaway jots things down in a notebook...

JOHNNY

... he called me. Said meet him here.
Talk cases. I showed up. He was cut.

GATTAWAY

He give you any indication who did it?

JOHNNY

No...

GATTAWAY

You know what case he was working?

JOHNNY

Nothing that'd get him killed. Small-time stuff. Missing people, you know..

Gattaway closes his notebook...

GATTAWAY

Okay. That'll do...

JOHNNY

How you gonna approach this?

GATTAWAY

Approach it? I'm not.

JOHNNY

You're not.

They stop... As Eddie Grab's body is placed on a gurney... The gurney loaded onto a waiting ambulance...

GATTAWAY

I got cases, Johnny. Serious cases. I got a tourist from Cleveland found in a dumpster in Echo Park, shot three times. A bible shoved up his ass. King James version. So I ain't gonna waste my time with old Eddie The Grab. He was a punk. He won't be mourned. You lie down in the gutter, you get rat turds on your bib...

JOHNNY

You sonuvabitch --

And Johnny charges for him... Only to be held back by a pair of UNIFORMS... Gattaway's grin is purple and mean...

GATTAWAY

I tell you what: why don't you solve this one? Wanna know why not? Cos you can't. Cos you're unable. Cos your meal ticket is over there with his goo on the ground. Cos the only case you could solve is The Mystery Of The Rumpled Linen Suit...

JOHNNY

You can't do this --

Gattaway looks at him, eyes small and cold...

GATTAWAY

I know. But I got the Governor of Ohio screaming at me to canvas every bible study class in town. So I don't give a pollen snot about Eddie Grab. Or you. Or your whole putrid world --

And with that, he walks off... Leaving Johnny Diamond to burn...

INT. JOHNNY'S CORVETTE - MOVING - NIGHT

Johnny at the wheel... Face clenched in deep despair... He loosens his tie... Clocks himself in the rear-view... Red-rimmed eyes... Guilt and sorrow doing a dance...

EXT. EDDIE GRAB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Johnny pulls up...

INT. EDDIE'S APARTMENT

Still in a shambles. Johnny looks about. He flips through Eddie's records. Puts one on the player. Shep & The Limelites. "Daddy's Home."

Johnny starts to sort through the flotsam. Looking for some kind of clue. Anything...

He finds several framed PHOTOS. One is of a young Eddie Grabowski. In police blues.

Another is of a WOMAN. Betty Bacall beautiful in an apricot evening dress...

The last photo is of Eddie Grab and Johnny Diamond and it appears to be some ten years old. When Johnny first arrived.

When he was still Royal Clayton from Everclear, Texas. It was taken inside Don The Beachcomber, Zombies raised in toast...

Johnny looks at the photo. Smiles. Though it's a wistful one.

Johnny opens a drawer... Finds a pile of CLIPPINGS... Of Diamond And Associates' past triumphs... All of them trumpeting Johnny. None of them mentioning Eddie Grab...

He comes upon a POSTCARD... It is an advertisement postcard for The Pacific Dining Car restaurant and there is a PHOTOGRAPH on its front of the most succulent U.S.D.A prime New York sirloin STEAK imaginable, grilled to perfection, and under it the words: "WHERE THE SIZZLE MEETS THE STEAK." Johnny smiles...

Another drawer: filled with WRISTWATCHES... Every one of them with the little pins fixed to the inside bands... Johnny takes one... Puts it on...

Looking around some more. He scans the bookshelves. Takes down one BOOK. "THE LONG GOODBYE" by Raymond Chandler. Johnny opens it. There is an INSCRIPTION:

JOHNNY

"To My Friend, The Grab. Thanks for the stories, bub. Best, Ray."

Johnny closes the book. A bit stunned.

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Wow.

And, we PRE-LAP Chubby Checker's "Pony Time" and

CUT TO:

THE TASSELED BREASTS

of a G-stringed STRIPPER, shaking her money-maker in

INT. CHUCK LANDIS' LARGO - NIGHT

Upscale burlesque. Buxom GALS shucking their satins and crinolins for a raucous CROWD of Sunset Strip salivators...

Johnny Diamond wheels in, clocking the room... He's changed his shirt and jacket, less flash now. Attempting The Blend...

He goes to the bar. Lights a Tareyton Eyeballs the room...

... settling on a large banquette, clearly the nexus for many of the dancers... A dozen HARD SHELLS, in cheap suits and plain white ties are assembled here, smoking and laying waste to several bottles of Pimms... Tickle, one of the thugs from the Beverly Hills Hotel is here as well...

At the center of this mob is a MAN, late 30s, with a high sweep of pompadoured hair, curling lips and cold gin good-looks that are somehow betrayed by his brutish sneer... This is

FRANCIS DIOGUARDI

whom the kids call "Frankie Dio." And, as the Chubby Checker fades, and Freddy Cannon's "Tallahassee Lassie" starts to rave,

SLAP

the other thug from the Beverly Hills Hotel, makes his entrance... He walks up to Frankie Dio's table...

Johnny hides behind a crepe-festooned pillar, to watch...

Frankie converses with Slap, though from here we cannot hear what is said...

Slap turns and leaves The Largo.

EXT. THE LARGO - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Slap walks across the lot... When he is GRABBED FROM BEHIND, spun around, and SLAMMED against a car... By Johnny Diamond, who appears to be emboldened by Eddie's murder...

SLAP

Who are you?

JOHNNY

Johnny Diamond. Gretchen Vale's friend.

SLAP

Sure. Moony kid. You go and get a set of nuts since we last met?

JOHNNY

Talk to me about Eddie Grabowski --

SLAP

Eddie Grab? Heard he got scragged. And feature you: the only ding in town who gives a gob...

Johnny shoves him harder against the car...

JOHNNY

What about a fella named "Jules?"

SLAP

"Jules?" Sounds like a swish to me. And I don't roll that stroll...

And an even harder shove... Then:

FRANKIE DIO (O.S.)

Problem, Slap -- ?

Both men turn... Frankie Dio and his crew stand there...

SLAP

No. Everything's jake, Frankie --

Frankie Dio walks up, into Johnny's face.

FRANKIE DIO

Who's this?

JOHNNY

Name's Diamond. Johnny Diamond.

FRANKIE DIO

Johnny Diamond. The P.I. You just found that movie guy's daughter. Was kidnapped by hopheads...

JOHNNY

That's right. Who are you?

SLAP

That's Frankie Dio --

If Johnny is momentarily shaken to be facing Frankie Dio, he hides it well. He fires up a Tareyton...

JOHNNY

Frankie Dio. And his boys. Ain't I lucky? All the leading lights in local bail-bond circles are here...

SLAP

You're gonna get beaten like a dusty rug, moon-boy.

JOHNNY

And it looks like everyone of 'em sent away to The George Raft Fan Club. Cos they all wearin' their official Tough Guy Eye-Squinters and Teeth-Clenchers.

Johnny smiles... Beat... Frankie Dio chuckles...

FRANKIE DIO

I gotta get inside. They got Brandy Long and The Knock-Knock Girl comin' on and they're goin' to do a DeMille bath scene which, I think, has the potential for terrific theatricality... Ever seen The Knock-Knock Girl, Johnny?

JOHNNY

No --

FRANKIE DIO

She does some extraordinary tassel work. She can get one tassel revolving in a clockwise position while the other goes counter-clockwise. I dunno how she does it. You know how, Slap?

SLAP

No idea, Frankie --

FRANKIE DIO

Walter Winchell himself calls this the "gayest girl spot in Movietown... "

JOHNNY
I'm looking for Gretchen Vale...

Frankie Dio nods. Understanding. Quietly:

FRANKIE DIO
Yeah? I'm looking for a Watusi
partner can perfectly recreate shaking
the water out of her ear...

He shrugs. Does a bit of The Watusi...

He nods to his boys... And, as The Vibrations' "Watusi" FADES
UP ON TRACK, they set to KICKING THE SHIT OUT OF JOHNNY DIAMOND.

Frankie Dio returns to the club. As his boys pummel Johnny.

It is brutal. Five men. Fists and feet a-flying...

THE VIBRATIONS (O.S.)
"Shimmy your shoulders/Slap your feet/
Wiggle your hips/In time with the beat"

It continues. Until CHUCK LANDIS, The Largo's owner, comes out
of the joint, admonishing the goons...

CHUCK LANDIS
You wanna give me a break, here, guys?
Huh? Please. Please...

And he manages to shoo the hard shells... And help Johnny to his
feet... Wipes him off... Stuffs a tenner in Johnny's pocket...

CHUCK LANDIS (CONT.)
Anybody asks where you got tossed. You
tell 'em it was at Le Crazy Horse.

Chuck Landis looks around for cops and ducks back into his club.

Johnny staggers across the parking lot. Lip and nose and
forehead bloodied. Suit torn and filthy. He holds his ribs.

As he approaches his car, he sees

TWO MEN

standing in the shadows. Huge, with short-cropped blonde hair
and matching WHITE SUITS that can barely contain their bulk...

They look at Johnny and his condition and are confused...

JOHNNY
I help you, boys?

The men look at each other. They swap shrugs.

As "The Watusi" FADES BACK ON...

And they set to BEATING UP JOHNNY DIAMOND!

Again.

This time it's quick. And Johnny is left writhing in the dirt.

INT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

Johnny stirs awake. The pain of one thousand daggers stabs him.

He moans. Groans. God, he looks bad. There's noises from the living room... Johnny looks out the window...

A large TRUCK with "Val's Val-U-Rent" painted on the side is parked in front... MOVERS are HAULING STUFF OUT...

Johnny runs (limps) into the living room... A good deal of the furnishings have been removed... Johnny is horrified...

JOHNNY

What are you doing -- ?

MOVER

We got a slogan: "You Don't Pay. It Don't Stay... "

JOHNNY

Aw, no. No... Not the Thayer-Coggin...

For MOVERS are hauling out the couch. Johnny gets on the phone.

TOBY (O.S.)

Diamond And Associates. Where Questions Go To Get--

JOHNNY

Yeah, yeah. It's me --

TOBY

Johnny! Where you been? You heard about Eddie -- ?

JOHNNY

Of course, I heard.

TOBY

Johnny, I'm sick about it --

JOHNNY

I know...

TOBY

Who did it?

JOHNNY

I dunno...

Johnny gets an ice-pack. Puts it on his head. Then his cheek. Then his ribs. He basically needs a dozen ice-packs.

JOHNNY (CONT.)

They're haulin' all my stuff away, Toby

TOBY

You don't pay. It don't stay.

He gets a bottle of milk from the icebox. Sits down. Takes a big swig...

JOHNNY

I heard that. Can't we send 'em a check... ?

TOBY

Know the one about the blood and the stone and the difficulty in the extraction of one from the other -- ?

A MOVER stands before Johnny...

JOHNNY

What?

The mover points to the chair Johnny's sitting on...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

God...

Johnny gets up. The chair is removed. He sits on the floor...

TOBY

Poor Eddie --

JOHNNY

Yeah...

He hangs up. One of the Movers is there.

MOVER

We're done. We're only taking half. Make payment, we bring it back. Don't. We come for the rest...

JOHNNY

Thanks. Thanks a pantload...

Johnny puts his bottle of milk down on an end-table.

Only the end-table ain't there no more.

And the milk shatters on the floor.

INT. SCANDIA RESTAURANT - SUNSET STRIP - DAY

The late-lunch crowd eat fine Scandinavian dishes under the huge chandelier and authentic Danish shields...

Frankie Dio and Gretchen Vale walk to the exit. The eyes of the world watch this handsome couple pass, Slap and Tickle trailing them like remora...

EXT. SCANDIA - DAY

The Gran Turismo Hawk has already been pulled around... Dick holds open the door... Gretchen kisses Frankie Dio on the cheek.

She climbs in. The Turismo roars off. Frankie watches it go...

ANGLE - CREEPY KAHN. Parked down the street. He starts his car... Follows the Hawk...

EXT. DOWNTOWN, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Clearly a district of silence and ruin. Shambling bowery TYPES. Dark buildings drawn in long shadows... Johnny walks along here. When a "pssstt!" alerts him to Creepy, on the skulk in an alley.

CREEPY KAHN

I tailed Frankie Dio, like you asked.
Tailed him to Scandia, where he met up
with the slash in question and they put
on the feed-bag. After lunch, they
separated. She come here.

He points down one deserted street... The Gran Turismo Hawk parked outside a rundown building...

JOHNNY

What's in that place -- ?

CREEPY KAHN

Nothin' good. This is one of them
areas, John, where bad things get worse

Johnny nods... Puts a Tareyton between cracked lips...

CREEPY KAHN (CONT.)

I'm still in shock about The Grab,
Johnny. First Marilyn. Now Eddie.

JOHNNY

I don't think they're related, Creep.

CREEPY KAHN

I know. But I'm talking about it being
a bad week for heroes, is what...

EXT. BUILDING

Dick The Driver smokes, leaning against the Hawk... He frowns when he sees Johnny Diamond walking toward him...

DICK

The hell you doin' here -- ?

JOHNNY

Where's Miss Vale -- ?

DICK

Why don't you leave her be -- ?

JOHNNY

You're sweet on her, aincha, Dick -- ?

The little guy's face, gnarled like a fighter's fist, goes a deep shade of red...

DICK

No...

JOHNNY

C'mon, Dickie Boy. I'm a card-carryin' member of The Fellowship Of The Smitten myself. 'Fess up. You're sweet on her

Dick scowls... He really doesn't like Johnny...

DICK

If by that, you mean I'd do anything for her... Then, yeah... Maybe I am...

And Johnny nods... Smiles...

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

Gretchen comes out with an enormous MAN in his late 50s who looks like the unholy offspring of Sydney Greenstreet and Topo Gigio. The man walks her to the Gran Turismo and opens the door for her. Gretchen gets in. The car drives away...

ANGLE - CREEPY KAHN. Down the street. Still on the skulk.

INT. THE GRAN TURISMO HAWK - MOVING - DAY

Gretchen lights a Viceroy. Looks out the window...

GRETCHEN

That went well, Dick --

JOHNNY (O.S.)

I'm happy for you --

Gretchen looks to the front... For Johnny is driving the car...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Hello, angel --

She remains cool, unflappable...

GRETCHEN

Where's Dick -- ?

JOHNNY

He's in the trunk, looking for nickels.

Gretchen glances back to the trunk...

GRETCHEN

Poor Dick...

JOHNNY

He'll be fine. He's miniature.

GRETCHEN

What happened to you? You look like a washed egg --

JOHNNY

Haven't you heard? They're having a big sale on fists and kicks. And I just went nuts...

GRETCHEN

Where are you taking me?

JOHNNY

To the movies...

EXT. THE CULVER DRIVE-IN THEATER - CULVER CITY - DAY

The huge screen. The silent rows of spaces and speaker poles. Deserted at this time of day. Johnny pulls the car to a stop.

He gets out. Opens the door for her. Lights two cigarettes.

GRETCHEN

Now what?

JOHNNY

You tell me what's going on --

GRETCHEN

No.

JOHNNY

Whatever it is, it got my friend killed

GRETCHEN

I'm sorry about that.

JOHNNY

Please. Don't cry. Your mascara will run...

GRETCHEN

What do you want to know?

JOHNNY

First off: what were you doing just now? Who's the fat fella? That Jules?

Gretchen doesn't answer him. Smokes.

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Speak. I gave my mind-reader the afternoon off...

GRETCHEN

Ooh. Very pulpy, Roy...

JOHNNY

Speak.

GRETCHEN

Whatever it is, it doesn't concern you.

JOHNNY

I'm covered in bruises that say different --

GRETCHEN

Stay out of it, they'll leave you alone

At this, Johnny sees red...

JOHNNY

"They'll leave me alone?" "THEY'LL LEAVE ME ALONE?" Why? Did you command them to? And what about my friend? And just who the hell have you become?

GRETCHEN

I could ask you the same question...

A cool beat... Lots of smoke exhaled... Then:

GRETCHEN (CONT.)

Do you know why they call this place "Lotus-Land?"

JOHNNY

No...

GRETCHEN

It's derived from The Lotus-Eaters of Greek mythology. They were a race of people whose only food was the fruit and blossoms of the lotus of the jujube trees... And if you ate of this magical tree, you forgot your homeland and the ties of friendship and family...

JOHNNY

Thanks for the story. Do I get a cookie now?

GRETCHEN

This, I think, is Los Angeles' ultimate gift. It makes you forget your past. And provides you with any future you choose...

JOHNNY

Yeah, well, I'd hate to have to pay your lotus bills...

Gretchen sighs... Fires up another smoke...

GRETCHEN

Watching my mother take two-hour baths to soak other people's dirt from her skin, I vowed never to be poor again. Then I became a woman... Grew to this. And found I could capitalize on the insecurities of rich and powerful men.

JOHNNY

Which makes you no more'n a hooker --

GRETCHEN

No. If anything, it makes me a pimp. Because these men work hard. To make money. For me.

Johnny stares at her...

GRETCHEN (CONT.)

Don't look so bitter-green, Roy. That's what love costs in my world.

JOHNNY

It didn't used to --

She looks at him... Softens a bit...

GRETCHEN

No, it didn't... But what I'm into, you can't make right. So save yourself. And stay away...

JOHNNY

I'd like to, Lolly. Only 12 years hasn't shook shit. I'm as dizzy for you now as I was when you were barefoot in your prom dress. I only realized it the other night but... When I lost you, I lost my ride...

They look at each other... Beat...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

But to be involved with that... That... Hoodlum...

GRETCHEN

I know. But I have to tell you, he's not like what you think. He's not like what the papers say. He's sweet.

JOHNNY

Yeah, sure... Sweet... That was my impression... Sweet...

GRETCHEN

I know he's short and awkward and funny-looking. But he's got a sweetness about him...

And now Johnny's confused. Because Frankie Dio is big and handsome and mean. But, before this can be explained away --

GRETCHEN (CONT.)

Oh-oh. Here come the adults...

-- and Johnny looks up. For a trio of BLACK SEDANS are knifing into the entrance to the drive-in...

GRETCHEN (CONT.)

I'd take a powder, Roy --

JOHNNY

Don't you worry 'bout me. I'm hard...

GRETCHEN

Not as hard as lead...

JOHNNY

Ooh. Very pulpy, Dolores --

Kicking up dust and stone, the sedans pull to a skidding stop around the Gran Turismo...

Doors are opened. The lantern-jawed MEN in the dark suits and short haircuts appear... A few have their guns drawn...

No one moves. Johnny holds his hands up. A few ticks of silence. Then, from the last car, a MAN emerges. This is

ROBERT WANGWOOD

mid-40s, beautiful suit, face all brow and angles, though not without a certain jaunty handsomeness. Wangewood stinks of the Ivy League... He walks up to Gretchen...

WANGWOOD
You okay?

GRETCHEN
I'm fine.

WANGWOOD
He's here.

GRETCHEN
Okay.

WANGWOOD
Who's this?

GRETCHEN
Johnny Diamond.

Wangewood consults the data-base in his head...

WANGWOOD
Right. Anything on your hip, Johnny?

JOHNNY
No.

WANGWOOD
Good.

JOHNNY
Who are you -- ?

Wangewood ignores him... To Gretchen:

WANGWOOD
Get going --

GRETCHEN
Don't hurt him.

WANGWOOD
Never-ever.

GRETCHEN
My driver is in the trunk.

WANGEWOOD

We'll see to him. Get going, sweetie -

And Gretchen does. With nary a look back at Johnny, she climbs into the lead car. The door closes. The car drives off...

JOHNNY

Where are you taking her?

Wangewood unwraps a piece of chewing gum. Pops it in his mouth. Chews thoughtfully...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Who are you guys? Where are you taking her?

Wangewood studies the beat-up and panicky Johnny...

WANGEWOOD

Declamatory statement. Word of wisdom. Not that you asked for it. But here goes: a man's stored impressions are housed in the dark, grayish matter of the cerebral hemisphere known as the cerebral cortex. These stored impressions, which we call "memories" can be recalled to a conscious level whenever one chooses. Or when plucked by a variety of stimuli: a song, a smell, the way the hair falls down around her face. Declamatory statement, Mr. Diamond. Send a team into your cerebral hemisphere. A team of microbe-sized scientists. And have them remove all traces, all hints, glints, crumbs, wisps, of your stored impressions of the lovely, but evanescently tragic, Miss Gretchen Vale. To not do so, is truly to your detriment. Have a good day, friend...

And with a wink of one wintergreen eye, Wangewood gets into the second car. And it drives off...

And Johnny is left there. With the four remaining lantern-jaws.

They surround him. And wouldn't you know it:

JOHNNY

Oh, no --

Oh, yes. And, for the third time in 24 hours, Johnny Diamond has the snot beaten out of him...

-INT. DIAMOND AND ASSOCIATES - LATER - DAY

Toby reads a movie mag... Box paints an Aurora monster model of Karloff's Mummy... Johnny enters... They clock his beaten being.

BOX

Was it them Frankie Dio boys again?

JOHNNY

They didn't look Italian...

BOX

What about the--

JOHNNY

Nope. Wasn't the white-suited fellas neither...

Beat... They regard him...

BOX

Well, if it'll make you feel any better, John - I have no plans to beat you up today...

Box goes back to his model. Johnny watches Box detail the sarcophagus...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

What do you do, anyway -- ?

BOX

I just sit here. Look big. Awaiting the day when The Man will no longer be able to keep us down --

JOHNNY

Any calls?

TOBY

Ray's called four times. And Harry Gillette...

JOHNNY

Yeah...

TOBY

And Henderson called. They got a "skip" they think crossed the border. Want to know if we can take it --

Both Box and Toby look at him... Johnny stares out the window...

TOBY (CONT.)

Johnny -- ?

JOHNNY

Yeah... ?

TOBY

What are we gonna do? Who's gonna
solve the cases? Am I gonna have to go
back to work at the racetrack?

Johnny's eyes tick to Toby. To Box. Then back out the window.

JOHNNY

I don't know, Toby. I don't know.

Something out the window catches his eye...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Aw, no. Aw, shit. AW, SHIT -- !

And he runs out of the office...

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

... to where a TOW-TRUCK has hooked Johnny's Corvette... And is
cranking it up...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

That's my car... !

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER

Was. You're bein' repo'd...

JOHNNY

They can't do that -- !

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER

Can. Will. Did.

JOHNNY

Please. You don't understand. I can
take care of this --

The driver gives Johnny a lazy once-over... After all, Johnny
looks like hell...

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER

Sure you can, bub. Take it up with the
bank. I just hook 'em...

And with that, he gets into his cab. And drives off, trailing
Johnny's beautiful ride... Box has come out of the building...

JOHNNY

Tell me none of this is happening, Box.

BOX

Well, you always got Eddie Grab's car.

And Johnny looks at the banged-up Mercury parked up the street.

Just as Ray Rouvales pulls up in his '57 DeSoto...

RAY ROUVALES

Johnny D. I been lookin' everywhere
for you --

JOHNNY

Tell me you got something on the
Pauling surv?

RAY ROUVALES

Shit, Johnny. This guy, he's a
freakin' altar boy. If he's chasin'
purse, he ain't no good at it --

JOHNNY

Well, we gotta step it up. Cos we need
the kale... Bad...

RAY ROUVALES

That's why I'm here. Sanford Long's
havin' a shindig. The cat-daddy
event of the summer social season. And
I got it on good graft that Mr. Ridge
Pauling himself is to make a movie-star
appearance and that the object of his
affections will be in attendance...

JOHNNY

How you gettin' in?

RAY ROUVALES

I happen to have purloined an invite...

He waves a glossy confection of an invitation...

RAY ROUVALES (CONT.)

Care to accompany -- ?

EXT. THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS - DAY

Ray Rouvales steers his '57 DeSoto through snaking canyon
drives, past gorgeous cantilevered houses. Johnny beside him.

At last, they come to the sweeping gated drive of

EXT. SANFORD LONG'S MANSE - DAY

The best that movie-money can buy: an Italian Renaissance
mansion of lush foliage, terraces and verandas, pools and
fountains. An 800-foot canoe lake, 9-hole golf course, handball
and tennis courts, six-stall stable. The view is breathtaking.

It is now overrun with white-jacketed WAITERS offering steaming
platters of hors d'oeuvres to the beautiful panoply of GUESTS:
movie studio POO-BAHS, young STARLETS on the come, high-ranking

city POLITICOS, ACTORS, DIRECTORS, SINGERS, HOOKERS, and all the attendant SYBARITES and FREEBOOTERS that go along with them...

A six-piece COMBO plays mood music on a riser off to one side...

Johnny and Ray Rouvales wheel in like half-eaten sandwiches...

Ray goes one way... Johnny the other... Johnny takes a glass of champagne off a passing WAITER'S tray...

HARRY GILLETTE (O.S.)

J.D.!

Johnny turns... To see Harry Gillette... With Harry is a handsome young man - STEVE DARREN...

HARRY GILLETTE (CONT.)

Didn't know you had the drag to circumnavigate this soiree, J.D...

JOHNNY

You know...

HARRY GILLETTE

Right. You found his brat. What happened to your grill -- ?

JOHNNY

I work a tough racket, Harry...

HARRY GILLETTE

Yeah, right. I heard about The Grab gettin' gooned. Bad beat, kiddo. Hey, you know Steve Darren? My newest find?

Johnny shakes Steve Darren's hand... Steve Darren's eyes are as dull as slate, his voice a cloddish murmur...

STEVE DARREN

How ya doin'?

Johnny looks at Harry... Harry shrugs...

HARRY GILLETTE

I got him doin' all the things, don't you worry. In a month's time, he'll be as polished as Marion Davies' diaphragm. Ain't he hunky, tho -- ?

JOHNNY

Highly hunky --

Harry takes Johnny aside... Sotto:

HARRY GILLETTE

How's my rubbish -- ?

JOHNNY

That's why we're here...

HARRY GILLETTE

Pauling's over there schmoozin' Sanford Long. Work it, J.D. The hour-glass is gettin' bottom-heavy...

And Harry zips off, dragging Steve Darren with him...

HARRY GILLETTE (CONT.)

Hey, Peter! You meet my new kid, Steve Darren -- ?

Johnny looks around the crowded party... He sees Lieutenant Gattaway, the cop...

JOHNNY

Lieutenant... What are you doing here?
Taking bribes from the caterer -- ?

GATTAWAY

Yep. They serve cubed chicken and call it scallops. I look the other way...

JOHNNY

What about Eddie Grabowski?

GATTAWAY

He's still dead.

Johnny stares at him...

JOHNNY

You know a guy named "Jules"?

Gattaway ignores him... Looks out at the expanse...

GATTAWAY (CONT.)

Beautiful view. You can practically see Catalina...

VOICE (O.S.)

Is that John Diamond -- ?

Johnny turns... To see Sanford Long...

JOHNNY

Hello, Mr. Long. Great party...

Sanford Long gives him a meaningful hug... Gattaway looks on with thinly-veiled disgust...

SANFORD LONG

You remember Hillie, John --

Johnny looks at Hillie Long - radically different from the last time we saw her - she wears a pretty organdy dress and a wide-brimmed straw hat with pieces of fruit and flowers attached

Hillie sneers at Johnny... With Ridge Pauling is his fiancée, the lovely ingenue, JEAN RANDOLPH...

SANFORD LONG

And do you know Ridge Pauling? Ridge,
this is Johnny Diamond...

If Hillie is filled with loathing for Johnny Diamond, Ridge Pauling is overflowing with it. But, ever-the-gentleman:

RIDGE PAULING

Nice to meet you --

JOHNNY

Likewise. Big fan of your pictures...

RIDGE PAULING

Yes. I'll bet you have a lot of them.

Johnny chuckles... He sees Ray Rouvales across the way... Ray is horrified to see Johnny actually conversing with the subject...

SANFORD LONG

And this is Ridge's fiancée... Jean
Randolph...

JOHNNY

How do you do -- ?

JEAN RANDOLPH

Whatever happened to your face -- ?

JOHNNY

Oh, just--

RIDGE PAULING

Snooping in a No-Snoop Zone?

JOHNNY

Something like that --

SANFORD LONG

Enjoy the party, John --

And Sanford and Hillie and Ridge and Jean walk off...

JEAN RANDOLPH

Nice to meet you --

Johnny watches as they walk off... Ridge Pauling appears to be anxiously searching the lawn for someone...

Ray Rouvales walks over to Johnny...

RAY ROUVALES

First rule of surveillance, Johnny D.:
avoid being introduced to the subject.
It plays hell on future survs...

JOHNNY

There's something sussy with Pauling.
He's looking for someone... Someone
special...

RAY ROUVALES

He's got Jean Randolph on his arm.
What could be more special than that?

Ray looks around the yard... Then:

RAY ROUVALES (CONT.)

Holy damn...

For a hush has fallen over the assembled crowd, as a
newly-arrived COTERIE OF GUESTS enters:

Thuggish MEN in dark suits. We know Frankie Dio. Slap and
Tickle, and some of the other muscle... But what's got Ray's
attention is the dapper-looking MAN with them...

RAY ROUVALES (CONT.)

That's Johnny Rosselli. Top tomato --

Rosselli and the others are all wrapped around a diminutive,
balding, beady-eyed 54-year-old MAN in a blue serge suit,
aviator sunglasses, and cloth hat...

RAY ROUVALES (CONT.)

Holy, holy damn -- !

Who just happens to be --

SAM GIANCANA

the head of the Chicago Mob and, for all intents and purposes,
the most powerful crime figure in 1962 America...

JOHNNY

And who's that -- ?

RAY ROUVALES

That, my friend, is Momo Salvatore
"Sam" Giancana. The head of The
Outfit. Christ. What's he doin' here?

Johnny watches as Sanford Long offers Giancana a hearty welcome.

JOHNNY

I do believe this wing-ding is in his honor...

RAY ROUVALES

You know he giggled at The McClellan Committee hearings? Laughed right in Bobby Kennedy's face and took the Fifth 34 times. He's got a sack like a saddlebag...

Frankie Dio sees Johnny... Offers him a tight little nod...

RAY ROUVALES (CONT.)

Can you believe that little troll is the most powerful mobster in America? That funny-looking little troll...

And suddenly Johnny's head is swimming... He looks at Ray...

JOHNNY

What'd you say?

RAY ROUVALES

I said can you believe that funny-looking troll is--

Echoing Gretchen's words... And a cold sweat cleats Johnny's forehead...

JOHNNY

He's got a sweetness about him, though, wouldn't you say?

And Johnny's gone milky white...

RAY ROUVALES

You okay -- ?

JOHNNY

Yeah. I gotta... Wash my face...

And Johnny heads for the main house... Passing Giancana, Rosselli, Frankie Dio and the others... Frankie leans into Giancana and Rosselli, pointing out Johnny as he passes...

INT. SANFORD LONG'S MANSION - BATHROOM

Johnny splashes water on his face... Looks at himself in the mirror... Jesus...

INT. SANFORD LONG'S MANSION

Johnny walks out of the bathroom... He hears giggling from under a stairwell... He checks it out:

Hillie Long and Steve Darren, guzzling gin and exchanging uvulas

HILLIE LONG

Beat it, creep -- !

Johnny does...

He walks through the house... He lights a Tareyton... He looks through the clerestory windows to the party beyond...

And there is Ridge Pauling, Jean Randolph by his side... Surrounded by a gaggle of glad-handing gadflies... Ridge nods politely, still searching the party...

At last, Pauling's expression softens, his eyes smile, aglow with warmth. With love.

Johnny follows Pauling's gaze... Across the fine-trimmed lawn... To where it settles on

ANDREW BYNER

The rugged cowboy actor. Byner is also submerged in a sycophantic cluster... But he has time enough to return the amorous glance...

Johnny is pretty much blown away... He walks toward the back door -- when he BUMPS INTO a large blonde MAN in a white suit...

JOHNNY

Excuse me --

The man says nothing... Johnny stares at him...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Don't I know you -- ?

But the man hurries quickly into the house... And is gone... And Johnny looks after him... For it is one of the white-suited blonde giants who beat him up in The Largo parking lot...

EXT. THE PARTY

Ray Rouvales is chatting up a deep-bosomed GAL, when Johnny ushers him away...

JOHNNY

Ridge Pauling ain't chasing purse.

RAY ROUVALES

I coulda told you that --

JOHNNY

But he is steppin' out...

RAY ROUVALES
What are you talking about?

JOHNNY
There's the object of Ridge Pauling's
affections --

And Johnny gestures to Andrew Byner...

RAY ROUVALES
Andrew Byner? The cowboy? No way --

JOHNNY
I'm tellin' you...

RAY ROUVALES
Andrew Byner shot 47 Injuns in CHEROKEE
ROSE. No way does he got sugar in his
shoes --

JOHNNY
He does. But we'll need snaps. You
seen Harry Gillette -- ?

RAY ROUVALES
He's dollar-pimping that beef-tip he
calls a client. I'll--

VOICE (O.S.)
Excuse me. Mr. Diamond -- ?

Johnny and Ray turn... And, wouldn't you know it, there stands
Sam Giancana, rodent-eyes twinkling, sipping a highball with
steady good cheer...

RAY ROUVALES
Holy damn...

JOHNNY
Yes... ?

Ray takes Giancana's hand... Pumps it furiously...

RAY ROUVALES
Ray Rouvales, Mr. Giancana. It's an
honor to meet you --

Giancana doesn't take his eyes from Johnny...

SAM GIANCANA
Yes...

And Frankie Dio shoos Ray away...

FRANKIE DIO
Go lap up some corn, junior --

RAY ROUVALES

Sure, sure. I'll go find Gillette,
Johnny. Nice to meet you, Mr. Giancana

And Ray takes a powder... Giancana continues to stare at
Johnny... Who doesn't much care for the scrutiny...

JOHNNY

I find sometimes, if you shake your
head, the eyeballs'll come loose --

FRANKIE DIO

I told you he was a punk, Momo --

But Giancana laughs...

SAM GIANCANA

Excuse us, Frank -- ?

And now Frankie Dio takes a powder...

SAM GIANCANA (CONT.)

You're very dear to someone who's very
dear to me, Mr. Diamond --

JOHNNY

Where is she -- ?

SAM GIANCANA

She's fine. She's safe. But clouds
are gathering. Dark clouds. Not
everyone has the best intentions for
our "scherzando." But I think I can
work it all out...

JOHNNY

I want to see her...

SAM GIANCANA

The line is long and there's a height
requirement...

Johnny looks confused... Giancana laughs...

SAM GIANCANA (CONT.)

She's no longer there for you, Mr.
Diamond. Keep her for your quiet
moments. Every now and again, take her
out. Feel her glow. But she's no
longer there. She can't be. She's
moved on. You should too. Rejoice in
having held her once. Imagine the
sorrow of all those who never will...

Johnny stares at him... Indeed, most of the party is watching
them: Ray, Harry Gillette, Sanford and Hillie Long, Gattaway,

Frankie Dio, Johnny Rosselli, Ridge Pauling and Andrew Byner...

SAM GIANCANA (CONT.)

I think you're like me, Mr. Diamond. Most men, when given the choice of a horse or an elephant, would choose the horse. Practicality insists on it. A horse is fast, easily-trained, economically fed. But you and me, I think, would choose the elephant. Because who needs practicality, when you can make a huge impression and leave behind an enormous trail of shit?

And with that, Giancana smiles congenially and walks back to Johnny Rosselli, Frankie Dio and the others...

And the party returns to life with an electric-coil buzz...

INT. DON THE BEACHCOMBER'S - LATER - NIGHT

A devastated Johnny Diamond is drunk in a rear booth with Don... They drink Zombies and commiserate... Don is just as plastered. The rain continues to hammer on the tin roof...

DON

... it ain't like it used to be, Johnny. It's just not the same. It's the death of glamour, that's what. Used to be - Tallulah Bankhead, Sonia Henie, Monty Clift, you know? Run around. Walk into a joint. Schmooze Hedda and Louella. Hey, there's W.C. Fields and Clifford Odets! And Dorothy Parker and Dietrich! Valentino! Irene Dunne and Spencer Tracy!

Johnny's head lolls on an unsteady neck...

JOHNNY

She's no longer there for me, Don. She can't be. She's moved on...

He looks up to the ceiling of the joint... To the rain sounds...

DON (CONT.)

Now. Now, you got these... These... Rat-Packers... Drinkin' and whorin' and confabin' with gangsters. And murderin' the glamour. Killin' it. And leavin' less than 10 percent gratuity to boot...

Johnny points to the ceiling...

JOHNNY

How you do that?

DON

I can pinpoint the exact moment when The Death Of Glamour occurred and the day of the big spender went with it. It was a historic night in 1949, when Aly Khan arrived at The Mocambo with Rita Hayworth and refused to pay the cover! That was the beginning of the end. The shock and horror reverberates to this day. We still feel it...

JOHNNY

How you do that, Don -- ? The rain?

DON

Johnny, it's very complicated... It's science and physics and a machine that's... Very complicated...

(calls out)

Sunny! Two more Zombies -- !

JOHNNY

Yes... Yes... Very complicated...

SUNNY, blonde and bubbly, comes over...

SUNNY

Telephone, Johnny. It's Ray --

Johnny staggers over to the phone... CROSS-CUT AS NECESSARY...

RAY ROUVALES

Johnny? What happened to you? You bolted outta there like a gopher...

JOHNNY

What is it, Ray? I'm building a better drunk here...

RAY ROUVALES

Oh, no you don't, fella... Ridge Pauling and Jean Randolph left the bash in separate autos. I followed Ridge. He is at The Phantom's Tomb. On La Brea? It's a notorious swish swamp. Perfectly suited for a clandestine crotch claw... I suggest you drink some coffee and bring your camera...

Johnny hangs up... And the bibulous Don calls out:

DON
 George Peppard and Yvette Mimieux?
 That's glamour? That ain't glamour.
 That's toothpaste ads... !

EXT. LA BREA BOULEVARD - LATER - NIGHT

Johnny parks along this non-descript stretch of commercial storefronts and wholesale distribution houses...

INT. THE PHANTOM'S TOMB - BATHHOUSE - DAY

Johnny pays at the desk... The ATTENDANT gives him a locker key, a towel and a smile...

INT. BATHHOUSE

Johnny, in a towel, featherweight camera tucked into the waist, walks along the rows of small rooms for rent; the saunas, the showers, the pool room...

The light is green and murky... MEN cavort in the shadows. Cruising, swimming, sitting around naked... Random acts of loveless sex abound... Johnny Diamond is hit-on several times...

At last, alone in a STEAM ROOM, Ridge Pauling sits...

Johnny hovers outside the door... Unsure at his next move...

RIDGE PAULING
 Hello, you little rat-fucker...

Johnny says nothing... Tries to hide...

RIDGE PAULING (CONT.)
 You're not a very good detective are you? Hurricanes are more surreptitious

INT. STEAM ROOM

Thick tendrils of mentholated steam swirl about... Ridge Pauling and Johnny sit, in towels, on opposite wooden benches...

RIDGE PAULING (CONT.)
 You disgust me.

JOHNNY
 I can understand that --

Through the steam, we can clearly see the look of strain upon Pauling's movie star features...

RIDGE PAULING
 I sit here. One of the most successful movie stars in the world. I am rich.
 (MORE)

RIDGE PAULING (cont'd)
I am famous. I am hallowed. And yet,
because of men like you, I cannot be
with whom I want to be...

JOHNNY
I ain't stoppin' you, Doc. I'm just
makin' a livin'...

RIDGE PAULING
Then let me make it easy on you, okay?
Cos you need easy. In five minutes,
Andrew Byner, the cowboy star, is going
to meet me here. And I am going to
make long passionate love to him. For
hours. And it is going to be splendid.
Okay? Happy? Get your camera out.

Johnny does... Taking the camera from his towel...

JOHNNY
Got it.

RIDGE PAULING
Good...

They sit there... Beats of silence tick by... Pauling stares at
Johnny, clearly disgusted:

RIDGE PAULING (CONT.)
Look at you. Fresh off the rhubarb
farm. Still believing the dream. You
have no idea what it's like to love
someone and not be able to be with them

Johnny flinches at this... Pauling goes on, almost in a trance.

RIDGE PAULING (CONT.)
Because that's what this is about.
Above it all. The Fear Of The
Cocksucker. The Cocksucker will wreck
the war picture. The Cocksucker will
destroy the Western. The Cocksucker
cannot exchange witty repartee with
Miss Audrey Hepburn...

Beat...

RIDGE PAULING (CONT.)
So The Cocksucker marries the ingenue
(a lovely girl, who doesn't know, and
will only blame herself for her
husband's bedroom indifference). And
The Cocksucker lives a life of quiet
desperation. It's a hundred agonies.
Every day, I die a little bit more...

Beat... Long look... Johnny steels himself for:

JOHNNY

You know what? I don't care. Sorry, but this is worth five hundred dollars to me. And a lot of free publicity. And five hundred dollars and free pub might as well be five million for how badly I need it. So save your sermonizing for The Abe Lincoln Story... Cos if I do get these shots, they're going wide...

Beat... The two men stare at each other... Then:

RIDGE PAULING

Fine. Although, it's The Oscar Wilde Story you are groping for...

JOHNNY

Okay. Sure. Whatever you say.

And the door to the bath opens... And a surprised Andrew Byner stands there, in a towel...

ANDREW BYNER

Ridge -- ?

RIDGE PAULING

Yes. Come here, Andrew. Say hello to Johnny Diamond. Gumshoe to the stars.

Byner gives Johnny a nervous once-over...

ANDREW BYNER

What's going on, Ridge -- ?

RIDGE PAULING

Come, come... The Hero of Movietown is going to save us, too --

He pats the wooden seat beside him... Byner reluctantly sits down... Ridge puts an arm around Byner... Plants a kiss on the cowboy's cheek... To Johnny:

RIDGE PAULING (CONT.)

Cheese...

Johnny is as stunned as Byner... But he recovers and begins snapping pictures...

ANDREW BYNER

Ridge -- ?

RIDGE PAULING

It's okay, Andrew. It's all okay --

Snap, snap, snap...

EXT. THE PHANTOM'S TOMB - LATER - NIGHT

Johnny emerges... A spring to his step... Giddy... He kisses his camera... He even howls... Walks toward his car...

But then he loses his enthusiasm. Pauling's words seem to echo in his ears: "You have no idea what it's like to love someone and not be able to be with them..."

Johnny stops... For, at his car, two PROWL CARS are parked... Four UNIFORMS wait...

POLICEMAN

Johnny Diamond -- ?

CUT TO:

BETTE DAVIS SERVING JOAN CRAWFORD "RAT AL DENTE"

EXT. CULVER DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

In "WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE"... Projected onto the huge drive-in screen... But few of the many cars here are watching the flick... Most are gazing at the far corner of the lot --

-- at the considerable CRIME SCENE BUSTLE. Cop cars. Ambulance. Forensic men. Another prowler car arrives... Johnny steps out of the back... Lieutenant Gattaway is here, of course.

JOHNNY

What's going on -- ?

GATTAWAY

Where I work, we call it "homicide."

Gattaway leads Johnny over to where

THE GRAN TURISMO HAWK

is parked... Johnny freezes... An open trunk... A BODY in it... He moves forward... Perilously... Expecting the worst --

But it is Dick The Driver... A clotted-over hole in his forehead

GATTAWAY (CONT.)

You look relieved --

JOHNNY

I thought maybe it was someone else --

GATTAWAY

I got it from on high that you and him got into a thing...

JOHNNY
Poor little guy --

GATTAWAY
You hear me -- ?

JOHNNY
Yeah. We did. Get into a thing. But
I didn't kill him, if that's what
you're thinkin'...

GATTAWAY
Hey, you're becoming a fine detective
after all. Cos that's exactly what I'm
thinking...

JOHNNY
Come on. I liked him. He had good
taste...

ANGLE - POOR DICK. The victim of yet one more injustice...

JOHNNY (CONT.)
Where's the girl -- ?

GATTAWAY
What girl?

JOHNNY
The girl he drives... Gretchen Vale...

GATTAWAY
I don't know nothing about no girl.

JOHNNY
You have to find her. He was helping
her... If they killed him... She's in
danger...

Gattaway nods to a UNIFORM and the cop SLAPS CUFFS on Johnny,
behind his back --

JOHNNY (CONT.)
What are you doing -- ?

GATTAWAY
(to a uniform)
Put him in my car --

JOHNNY
We have to find the girl --

And the uniforms hustle Johnny over to Gattaway's car... Usher
him into the backseat...

INT. GATTAWAY'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Gattaway drives... Johnny in the backseat...

GATTAWAY

Heard they picked you up outside The Phantom's Tomb. I didn't have you figured for a rocket-lover...

JOHNNY

Yeah, well, life's just fulla surprises...

ANGLE - JOHNNY HANDS. Because he's wearing one of Eddie Grab's WRISTWATCHES... And he tries to undo the watch... But he can't quite get it...

GATTAWAY

You got this reputation as some big ladies man... But it's always that way, I guess... You dress so flash... You like nice things...

At last, Johnny undoes the watch... And extracts the wristwatch shiv. And sets to working on the cuff-lock...

GATTAWAY (CONT.)

But that's the way it goes, I guess... You show me a man whose socks match his tie .. I'll show you a man who gargles the sack...

Johnny fumbles the shiv... Drops it... Struggles to grasp it again... Continues to work on the hasp-lock...

JOHNNY

You planning on taking me to jail or executing me with bad conversation... ? You know I didn't kill that guy --

GATTAWAY

Of course I do. But any mystery is merely just a question of drainage. You remove all of the extraneous elements and the answer reveals itself like a... Like a... How does it feel to be an extraneous element?

Except Johnny's picked the lock... And he WRAPS THE CUFFS AROUND GATTAWAY'S THROAT... And squeezes... And Gattaway spins the wheel and the car SWERVES and CRASHES INTO A UTILITY POLE...

And Johnny gets out of the back... Opens the front... Tosses the unconscious Gattaway to the pavement...

Johnny gets behind the wheel... And drives off into the night...

EXT. DOWNTOWN, LOS ANGELES - LATER - NIGHT

Johnny pulls up... As the car radio's squawk box blurts:

RADIO (O.S.)

... all points... All points be on the
look-out for John Diamond... Male,
Caucasian, early 30s... Wanted in
connection with--

Johnny kills the motor... He is outside the seedy building where
he first saw Gretchen and the fat man... SIRENS caterwaul from
somewhere in the night...

INT. BUILDING - HALLWAY

Johnny moves down the dark corridor... All of the offices are
locked... He continues on...

At last, colliding with a skinny THUG eating a wet tamale...

THUG

Hey -- !

Johnny pins him to the wall...

JOHNNY

I'm lookin' for Jules --

THUG

You come to the right place... But it's
a little late, ain't it... ?

JOHNNY

Take me to him --

INT. OFFICE

Johnny follows the thug into the a large brightly-lit room...

MAN

Can I help you -- ?

JOHNNY

You're Jules -- ?

MAN

No... I'm Scalzo... Irwin Scalzo...

JOHNNY

I'm lookin' for Jules --

SCALZO

I have jewels... Lots of jewels...

And Johnny notices the room's detail: the jeweler's bench and
acetylene torch system and buffing machine... The saws and
files, emery sticks and mallets, calipers and gravers and pickle

pots...

And the JEWELS... A glittering array of necklaces and earrings, bracelets, brooches, tiaras and bangles, of sapphire, emerald, ruby, diamond, gold and silver...

JOHNNY

Jewels...

SCALZO (CONT.)

That's what we do here... Make jewels... Fake jewels, of course... But jewels, never-the-less...

And Johnny realizes he was looking for the wrong kind of "Jules"

JOHNNY

Talk to me about Gretchen Vale --

SCALZO

I'm afraid confidentiality is a critical facet of my trade --

Johnny grabs Scalzo by a roll of neck-fat... And slams him into the wall... When the thug tries to interfere, Johnny sends him sprawling into a chest of jewels...

JOHNNY

Let's try again --

Scalzo sizes up Johnny... Doesn't like the strength he sees there... So he spews:

SCALZO

That's what I do here. Turn rhinestones to diamonds. Turn blue, green and red crystal and German-made glass into sapphires, emeralds, rubies... I can make you a pearl, could fool an oyster... That's what I do here

JOHNNY

Gretchen Vale...

SCALZO

The lion's share of my clientele are these L.A. party girls... Their sugar daddy's give 'em sparkling gifts which they promptly bring to me. I reproduce them with the utmost fidelity and then the little lovelies sell the real McCoys for cash and prizes without anyone the wiser. Thus subsidizing their liberation from the withering embraces of the pale and the flaccid...

Johnny stares at the man...

JOHNNY

Where is she -- ?

SCALZO

I've no idea --

JOHNNY

How do you make delivery -- ?

SCALZO

She comes here... Or her good fellow,
kind Dick, acts as courier...

JOHNNY

I just left "kind Dick." He's
measuring a trunk and his courier days
are all behind him...

SCALZO

I'm sorry to hear that --

JOHNNY

An address --

SCALZO

I told you--

JOHNNY

They killed Dick because he was helpin'
her... Helpin' her to get away, I'm
sure... You know who the gift-giver in
question is... And if he's angry with
Dick for just mulin' the bogus jewels,
imagine what he'd do to the guy was
makin' 'em...

SCALZO

I'm sorry, I just--

JOHNNY

Gimme an address... Or I'm on Sam
Giancana's doorstep in an hour singing
a song about fat Scalzo and his jewelry
scam --

Scalzo looks at him for a long, distasteful beat...

SCALZO

You're a repugnant young man, you know
that don't you -- ?

And he nods at the skinny thug... And the skinny thug writes an
address on a piece of paper... Hands it to Johnny... Johnny
reads it... Nods...

JOHNNY

Very good...

And he makes to leave... Scalzo stops him with...

SCALZO

Here --

And he tosses Johnny a GEMSTONE the size of a baby's fist...

SCALZO (CONT.)

A gift. But before you thank me,
remember: a fake gem may glitter
brighter than a real one. But it has
no value whatsoever in the lives of men

CUT TO:

THE ARCHED PORTE COCHERE OF

EXT. FREMONT ESTATES - NIGHT

A gated Hancock Park Community... A fancy sprawl of glorious
properties... Johnny waits in Gattaway's car... Parked across
the street... Smoking...

But then the gates to Fremont Place open... And Gretchen Vale is
there, in dark sunglasses and slouch hat...

Johnny watches her... He makes to get out of the car... Only he
stops... For he/we see that she is CRYING... Powerful sobs of
profound misery...

And he watches as, amazingly enough, she somehow manages to
quickly compose herself... The tears gone... The sorrow replaced
by a cool detachment... The transformation is alarming...

Johnny gets out of the car...

JOHNNY

LOLLY -- ?

She looks over... Horrified to see him...

-- as THREE Chrysler 300 Coupes pull up... Johnny ducks behind
Gattaway's car...

Frankie Dio steps out of one car, holding the back door open for
Gretchen, who glances furtively over to where Johnny stood...

EXT. WILSHIRE BOULEVARD - GATTAWAY'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Johnny follows the Chrysler convoy east on Wilshire, through the
traffic... Passing such noted landmarks as The Masonic Temple,
Perino's Restaurant, The St. James Church...

Johnny appears to be a bit more poised this tail... Especially as the convoy makes it through a red signal...

JOHNNY

R.U.R. Okay... Right turn... U-turn...
Right turn...

And Johnny has effectively driven around the red... And notched in once again behind the Chryslers...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Yes! Nicely executed, boss --

He follows them another three city blocks, snaking through the traffic with surprising aplomb... Until they --

-- pull into an abandoned LOT by The Versailles Apartments on 6th and St. Andrews... Johnny brakes at the corner, a half-block back...

The Chryslers come to a stop... Frankie Dio and some of his THUGS step from their cars.

And then a TRIO OF LINCOLN LIMOUSINES pull into the lot...

Out of the lead limo, steps Robert Wangewood, the slick from the drive-in... Behind him, are his lantern-jawed lackeys.

And Gretchen steps from Frankie Dio's Chrysler... She is ushered over to one of the Lincoln Limos...

Wangewood and Dio shake hands tentatively... Everyone climbs back into their cars... The Chryslers head back west... The Lincolns head east...

Johnny tails the Lincolns... East on Wilshire... Once again wending through the obstacle course that is L.A. traffic...

The traffic is thicker now... WOODEN POLICE HORSES create a CORDON along Wilshire and Hobart... PROWL CARS and UNIFORMS hold back swarms of REPORTERS, TOURISTS, LOOKIE-LOOS... Before the rear entrance of

THE AMBASSADOR HOTEL

Looming large and regal. COPS move the wooden cordons. The limos are allowed passage... And the wooden cordons are closed behind them...

Johnny pulls up to the cordon... A beefy OFFICER is there...

OFFICER

No entry past this point...

JOHNNY

I'm with them --

OFFICER
Sure you are. Scram, pal --

JOHNNY
What's going on -- ?

The Cop looks at him sideways...

OFFICER
What do you, live in a cave -- ?

JOHNNY
Yes. And one with very little
furniture. What's going on?

Johnny sees OTHER COPS further down... As they notice his car...
Check it with their A.P.B. mimeo...

Johnny can see the limos as they circle the hotel...

OFFICER
The President's in town --

JOHNNY
The President of what?

And the other cops are heading his way...

OFFICER
Of what? Of The United States,
butterboy. Now, scram -- !

CLOSE ON - Johnny. As a prickly feeling of dread sweeps his
face like a klieg light...

He pulls the car over to the side of the road... Gets out... As
the cops start moving toward him...

But Johnny wanders over to the cordon... Climbs under...

OFFICER
Hey -- !

But Johnny is gone... Running for The Ambassador... COPS at his
heels...

EXT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - SERVICE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

To where the limos are parked... Johnny barrels over a
dark-suited Wangewood type... And enters the hotel...

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - ENTRY TUNNEL

Johnny runs full gallop down this dark corridor...

JOHNNY

Lolly -- '

And he runs on... At last, coming to the

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - KITCHEN

Industrial kitchen... Thick with ILLEGALS in their whites...
Johnny collides with a rack of desserts... Still chasing...

Only suddenly, the place is crawling with MEN. Johnny whirls
around... And gets brass knucks to the face... He drops... And

FRANKIE DIO

is in the kitchen. Slap and Tickle at his flanks. A half-dozen
other THUGS behind them...

FRANKIE DIO

You are one hearty hombre, Diamond.
Now, how the hell did you end up here?

JOHNNY

Detective work.

FRANKIE DIO

Yeah, well. That's what we'll carve on
your tombstone: "Detective work."

JOHNNY

What's happening? Where's the girl?

FRANKIE DIO

The girl. Forget the girl. She's a
matter of National Security --

SLAP

She's the National Security blanket --

And they react to Johnny's face --

TICKLE

Feature him: shaken and stirred.

FRANKIE DIO

What? You didn't know?

JOHNNY

Know what?

FRANKIE DIO

You didn't know your old flame was
skankin' The Presidential "shvanze?"

And Johnny has to lean on a counter to steady himself...

SLAP

I'd say he didn't know --

FRANKIE DIO

Yep. Bad Back Jack and Momo.

SLAP

I'd say power makes her moist...

FRANKIE DIO

Which puts the junior g-man here behind the 8-ball. Get him out of here...

And through this next exchange, we remain on Johnny. On a Johnny who's entire world has just been turned upside down...

TICKLE

What do you want we should do with him, Frankie -- ?

FRANKIE DIO

Take him out. Biff him...

SLAP

The gown'll be pissed.

FRANKIE DIO

So -- ?

SLAP

If the gown is pissed, Momo'll be pissed...

FRANKIE DIO

Just do it. Let me worry about who is and isn't pissed. Biff this shitbird.

And now the gist of their words sink in...

JOHNNY

What? You're not gonna kill me...

FRANKIE DIO

You don't step-off, man. Just like your friend, Grabowski. You think I liked scraggin' The Grab? He was a legend. To his credit, tho. Twenty years I been homicidin'... He's the first guy didn't shit his shorts...

JOHNNY

You killed him --

FRANKIE DIO

Yeah. You guys... You keep comin' and comin'. I gotta tell ya: it's annoying... And lemme tell ya something else. Rap on the real. No piece of patch is worth it...

Slap and Tickle have Johnny in a rough embrace... He tries to wrest out of it and gets slammed into the wall for his trouble.

JOHNNY

Lemme talk to Sam --

Frankie Dio slaps him across the face...

FRANKIE DIO

Who are you to call him "Sam?" He kind-words-ya once at a party and you think you're pals?

JOHNNY

He won't let you kill me...

FRANKIE DIO

Get him out...

And Johnny is dragged out... Fussing and fighting..

EXT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - SERVICE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Johnny is dragged to a waiting Buick Skylark... Hands bound behind his back... Blind-folded... A TRUNK is popped...

JOHNNY

You boys don't want to be doin' this... This is the wrong way... It's--

A SAP to the squash. Johnny's out. He's tossed into the trunk. The trunk is closed. The car peels off into the night...

And The Fendermen's "Mule Skinner Blues" begins to play...

EXT. BUICK SKYLARK - MOVING - NIGHT - RAPID SHOTS

as the car motors out of Los Angeles proper... Slap and Tickle in the backseat... Two silent and sinister SHOOTERS up front...

INT. CAR TRUNK

Johnny is tossed about the confines of the trunk, bound and blind-folded. And quite clearly terrified...

EXT. TOWER OF WOODEN PALLETS - VAN NUYS - NIGHT

MUSIC CONTINUES. The Skylark pulls into a large SALVAGE YARD, center-punched by the bizarre TOWER OF WOODEN PALLETS - an odd piece of architecture erected in 1951 for no apparent reason...

The tower is comprised of two-thousand 3-foot-by-3-foot WOODEN PALLETS stacked in a spiral configuration...

The trunk is opened... Johnny is hauled out... Brought to his knees... All four men have drawn their guns...

All four aim at the still blind-folded Johnny's head...

JOHNNY

Now, please... Fellas... This is the wrong thing... It's--

Awakened CHICKENS cackle and peck about the eerie quietude...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Jesus... Chickens...

They make to fire. Johnny can sense it. And the MUSIC SWELLS. WE ARE TIGHT ON JOHNNY'S FACE... We can't see his assailants... Only their SIDEARMS ARE IN FRAME...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

No... Please... Fellas... Not in front of the chickens... Please...

. . Fingers squeeze triggers. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

. Johnny cowers in the dirt... But he is not hit...

Because, with a stunning alacrity, Slap, Tickle and the other two gunsels are RIDDLED WITH BULLETS...

They dance and drop in Peckinpah pirouettes... Dead before their faces touch mud...

Silence. But for the clucking chickens. And The Fendermen's keening... The blind-folded Johnny looks this way and that...

JOHNNY

Hello -- ?

. . He crawls across the ground... Bumping into Tickle's corpse...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Jesus! Hello -- ?

. And Johnny is picked up... Thrown over a white-suited shoulder.

JOHNNY (CONT.)

What's happening? What's going on?
Hello -- ?

And tossed into yet another trunk...

And again knocked unconscious... The music fades... So we'll

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

ON JOHNNY COMING TO --

On the floor of a ROOM that is PITCH BLACK... And FREEZING... It appears to be a HOTEL ROOM... Long shadows... Air conditioner HUMS... Walls slick with condensation...

Sheets of PLYWOOD and CARDBOARD COVER THE WINDOWS, though thin slivers of sunlight leak through seams in the masking-taped curtains and black-out shades, letting us know it is day...

Johnny raises his hands... They are covered in PLASTIC BAGS, elastic-bound at the wrists... His shoes are similarly covered.

Johnny can see an ORTHOPEDIC BED, an electric wheelchair, a tangle of medical equipment... A bedside table cluttered with bowls and bottles of codeine, Valium, Librium, syringes, needles

One of the giant white-suited blonde MEN appears... And helps Johnny to a low CHAIR before the orthopedic bed...

Johnny shivers... Rubs his bruised jaw... To the MAN:

JOHNNY

Where am I -- ?

The silent man remains so... And then the mechanical CREAK of the orthopedic bed... As its BACK IS RAISED TO A SITTING POSITION... For there has been SOMEONE laying on the bed the entire time... We can barely make him out in the shadows --

But what we see is spooky: long greasy hair, a Rasputin beard that flows to his sternum; filthy fingernails, several curling inches long... Deep-set cadaverous eyes...

A crawling king spider, his voice a rasp. This is, of course,

HOWARD HUGHES

You've been busy, Johnny Diamond.

JOHNNY

Who are you?

And two more white-suited MEN appear... With aerosol cans... And they SPRAY JOHNNY... Who jerks away from their cold spume... But they spray on... Disinfecting...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

What the hell -- ?

HOWARD HUGHES

Bacteria clings to you like a drunken showgirl. That's a simile. Do you like similes? Simply use the words "like" or "as" and you can make your own simile...

And, as the aides stop their spraying and slip back into the shadows, a slow realization is dawning on Johnny --

JOHNNY

Are you -- ?

HOWARD HUGHES

Obsession is depression, Mr. Diamond. You can never have enough. But you can always pleasure yourself with gooey nostalgia. The shadowy axis a woman possesses may give occasional life, but think of all the lives it destroys along the way...

Another huge white-suited MAN materializes to help Hughes from the bed... Hughes is NAKED but for a SOILED SHEET he wraps himself in... His body is starvation-thin and covered with bed sores and track marks and a belly swollen with malnutrition... He pats his distended gut...

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)

Nietzsche said: "the abdomen is the reason why man does not easily take himself for a God... "

He laughs... A thin, liquid-lung laugh...

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)

Where was I -- ?

JOHNNY

The woman --

HOWARD HUGHES

Yes. Women are beautiful creatures of opportunity. Hula Hoops in high heels. Around and around you go. Dizzier than a mongoloid on a merry-go-round. Yet always, you end up in the same place...

His energy seems to drain... As if by silent command, another white-suited MAN appears...

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)

My Mormons. They apologize for roughing you up. At the time, we weren't sure of your role. They are
(MORE)

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.) (cont'd)
 silent and incorruptible. If only our
 women were like them. Silent and
 incorruptible. There'd be singing in
 the streets...

The man quickly FIXES Hughes - tap-tap-tapping a vein and
 INJECTING the wraith-like creature with a syringe of milky-white
 Codeine solution... Hughes winks at Johnny...

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)
 Even my bedbugs are addicts. They
 don't bite - as in "don't let the
 bedbugs bite" - if you feed them enough
 opium and sour flatulence...

JOHNNY

Jesus...

And Hughes comes roaring back to drug-induced vitality...

HOWARD HUGHES
 Recently, they referred to me as a
 paranoid, drug-addled, insane
 millionaire... Do you know how this
 enrages me -- ?

JOHNNY

I--

HOWARD HUGHES
 Because I'm a billionaire -- !

He laughs that laugh... And gobbles several pills, washing them
 down with a glass of milk... His next words are RAPID-FIRE:

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)
 This milk is as cold as Mamie
 Eisenhower's slash. See? Another
 simile. I'm thick with them...
 Although the part about the mongoloid
 on a merry-go-round, I believe, was a
 metaphor, although I'm not sure the
 difference, but hope it's not as
 simplistic as the use of "like" or "as"
 but then again, I don't even know what
 entitles shrimp - yet no other
 shellfish - to have its very own
 fork -- so who, just who, am I, except
 some deranged aviator who could make
 Ava Gardner climax with a bowl of
 orange ice cream (not sherbert,
 couldn't be sherbert, had to be ice
 cream) but couldn't get her to stop

(MORE)

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.) (cont'd)
 sleeping with that little runt, Mickey
 Rooney, so why the hell, Mr. Diamond,
 do you look so surprised when I tell
 you: you show me cleft.. I'll show
 you crossfire...

He's on a speed-fueled rant...

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)
 They shoved a "Yellow Jacket" which is
 a combination of chlorhydrate and
 Nembutal up Marilyn's rectum... This
 leaves no traces... And looks like a
 drug overdose... Check the autopsy
 report... They found nothing in her
 stomach... But her lovely asshole was
 dripping with the stuff...

JOHNNY
 Who's "they?"

HOWARD HUGHES
 "They." They. They, they, they... The
 meeting of The "Mistress Of The Month
 Club" is now in session... Woo-hoooo!!!

And he does a little jig... And the AIDE returns to INJECT
 Hughes again... This time, to slow him down with a syringe of
 liquid Valium... At once, Hughes seems to calm down...

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)
 Whew. I got snakes in my head.

JOHNNY
 Listen, I don't know what any of this--
 Rheumy goat-eyes fix on Johnny, soberly...

HOWARD HUGHES
 She is pregnant, Mr. Diamond.

JOHNNY
 What -- ?

HOWARD HUGHES
 She carries the succubus. The tender
 joy morsel. Miss Vale, your paradigm
 of paradise has, growing inside of her,
 the scion of either one of two very
 interesting demons.

Johnny is crushed at this...

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)

Who knows which demon? Who cares? But the forces are mounting. The curette is close at hand. They're making moves. And they're making them now. Time is of the essence. We cannot let that happen, Mr. Diamond. You must save the scion from the curette. And take her away. My Mormons will tell you all you need to know to achieve this. You will see that the child is born. You will see that the mother is cared for. You will be duly remunerated with 50,000 dollars and the "happily-ever-after" you have hoped for since you were throwing cross-block-tackles in Texas... And that is how it will be...

Beat... As all of this sinks in... Then:

JOHNNY

Why do you care?

HOWARD HUGHES

Because the real politicians are the people fighting in the streets every day. Because they beat my friend Dick Nixon in '60. Because the old man was a business annoyance back in the 20s. Because I hate the whole shiny, whiny family. Because to know that, when the day is right, we can smell the ka-ka of the bastard son of that bastard's son, and use it against them, gives me an unabashed glee I will not apologize for. But mostly, call me a romantic, it's because I hate to see someone slide under a meat truck chasing after an egg...

Hughes, with the help of another aide, returns to his bed...

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)

You stop living, Mr. Diamond, when you've got no one left to blame...

Another MORMON appears... Hands Johnny an envelope... Johnny opens it... Thick with currency... 50,000 dollars worth...

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)

Go. Be a hero...

And the aides are at Johnny's side, to take him out of the room... But first:

HOWARD HUGHES (CONT.)

One more thing --

Johnny looks at the face in the darkness...

JOHNNY

Yes?

HOWARD HUGHES

Do you still dream, Mr. Diamond?

JOHNNY

Sometimes --

HOWARD HUGHES

Nice dreams?

JOHNNY

I've had some good ones...

Hughes nods... Grins over a mouthful of sour, black teeth...

HOWARD HUGHES

But how long can you fucking sleep,
right?

And with a creak, the orthopedic bed RECEDES, back into the shadows... And Howard Hughes disappears...

And Johnny turns into a BIG MORMON FIST... And he's out cold...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FREMONT PLACE ESTATES - DAY

Gretchen Vale is being DRAGGED OUT of one of the homes, by several THUGS... She struggles... Not going quietly...

GRETCHEN

Let me go! You sons-a-bitches!

She kicks a thug in the shin... He howls... Growls... But, before he can slug her --

FRANKIE DIO (O.S.)

You crazy, Mike?

Frankie comes out of the house... With Johnny Rosselli...

FRANKIE DIO

You wanna pop Momo's gown? You got a
grudge against your life?

The thug backs off. They drag Gretchen to a waiting CAR...

GRETCHEN
Frankie! Don't do this...

FRANKIE DIO
Gotta do it, Gretchen...

GRETCHEN
Johnny, please... Lemme talk to Sam...

JOHNNY ROSSELLI
Sam's with the program, doll... Has to
happen... Has to... For God's sake...
You're not safe if it don't...

And she is ushered into the car... Goons on either side...
Another SEDAN following them in escort...

INT. FRANKIE'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Gretchen in a hoodlum sandwich...

GRETCHEN
I want to talk to Sam --

FRANKIE DIO
Yeah, yeah --

EXT. FRANKIE DIO'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Gretchen looks out the car window... For the scenery has
changed. They are driving through the southern FLATLANDS of Los
Angeles... The wide open neighborhoods and freestanding
wood-frame houses... The magnolia trees and bodegas and
botanicas selling Santeria... They have arrived in

EXT. WATTS - DAY

Passing the huge HOUSING PROJECTS of Nickerson Gardens and
Jordan Downs... Passing sick-looking dogs and second-hand stores
and tiny tumbling stucco buildings with "COUNTY PATIENTS
ACCEPTED" signs in the windows...

They pull up to a collection of five-story pale-blue cinder-
block BUILDINGS with a lattice work of rickety FIRE ESCAPES and
heavily-used clotheslines connecting them to each other...

Lots of BLACK FACES stare at them through windows and doorways
and concrete courtyards, dotted with patches of grass...

They drive around to the back... Down an alleyway that DEAD-ENDS
at a series of METAL DOORS...

Lieutenant Gattaway steps out to meet them... He is with a
skinny BLACK KID, bouncing on his heels...

GATTAWAY
This is Peanut. He'll take us in...

FRANKIE DIO
Good... A couple a you stay down
here... Watch the street...

-Three of the hoods remain... Peanut looks this way and that...

PEANUT
Let's go...

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - REAR ENTRANCE

Peanut leads them in... Gretchen, Gattaway, Frankie Dio, and four THUGS...

They go through a metal door... Take a winding cement staircase up three flights... To a HALLWAY...

PEANUT
You in good hands now. What we like to
say is: No Fetus Can Beat Us -- !

He cackles... Frankie Dio and Gattaway share a sour one... They go down the hallway of chipping and peeled paint.

They take another cement staircase up another two flights... At last coming to an APARTMENT... Peanut knocks three times... And the door opens to a wiry OLD MAN, who lets them into

INT. APARTMENT

An efficiency apartment... Jesus pictures on the satin walls... A huge crucifix over the mantel... Six or seven YOUNG BLACK WOMEN wait in the living room...

A two-year-old BOY trundles about the living room, till his MOTHER calls him back...

On the other side of a THIN CURTAIN, RINGING PHONES and MALE CHATTER can be heard...

An enormous overweight BLACK WOMAN, in a kimono - WANDA - sits behind a desk... Peanut leads Frankie Dio over...

WANDA
Good. You here. Sure is a lot of you.

FRANKIE DIO
Can we do this -- ?

WANDA
Cool your engines, handsome. I need to
talk to the girl...

Frankie gestures to two of the fellas to bring Gretchen over...

Gattaway glances behind the thin curtain... To where four BLACK MEN play cards and answer a half-dozen ringing telephones. Taking numbers for the policy racket...

Gretchen sits before Wanda...

WANDA

It'll be a D & C or a catheter.
Depending on what the doc thinks when
he examines ya...

GRETCHEN

I don't want to do this...

WANDA

No one does. You haven't eaten or
drank anything in four hours -- ?

Gretchen doesn't answer...

FRANKIE DIO

She hasn't...

WANDA

Don't look so sad, sister. Where I'm
from? Down south? Girl in trouble,
they have her take bluing. You know
bluing? Put it in the wash to make it
white? You take bluing, you come
around... So this is a improvement...

GRETCHEN

Thank-you for that...

WANDA

Sure. Let's go --

And Wanda heaves her considerable girth out of the seat... She walks to a door in the back... Gretchen hasn't moved... Frankie takes her arm... Pulls her along...

INT. BACK ROOM

A white tile room... Wanda leads Gretchen and Frankie in...

Gretchen clocks the accoutrements: A COT with jerry-rigged obstetrical stirrups; INSTRUMENTS wrapped in newspaper; an enema syringe and a bowl of soapy water; catheters of different thickness; a speculum...

Wanda spreads newspapers on the cot and then places hospital pads on top of the newspapers...

GRETCHEN

Jesus...

Even Frankie Dio looks queasy...

WANDA

Okay, now... Take off your clothes and put this on... The doc'll be with you in a moment...

Wanda goes to the door... To Frankie Dio:

WANDA (CONT.)

Let's go, handsome --

Frankie looks reluctant to leave...

WANDA (CONT.)

Ccme on... Ya ain't stayin' here...

Frankie gives Gretchen one last fearsome look... And follows Wanda out...

Gretchen paces the small room... She tries the door... Locked.

INT. LIVING ROOM / WAITING ROOM

Frankie waits, with Gattaway and the hoods... The 2-year-old bounces across the room, somehow giddy with life, in this place where his brethren are falling...

The 2-year-old waddles over to where Frankie sits... Giggles... Unnerving the hell out of Frankie Dio...

INT. BACK ROOM

Gretchen, still dressed, still paces... A knock on the door... And it opens... WE STAY WITH GRETCHEN...

GRETCHEN

Listen - I am here against my will. I do not want to go through with this --

NEW ANGLE REVEALS - THE DOCTOR. In lab coat and stethoscope.

It is Box. He smiles...

BOX

I know that...

INT. LIVING ROOM / WAITING ROOM

Frankie Dio paces... Looks at his watch...

FRANKIE DIO
 What's taking so long -- ?
 (to Gattaway)
 Check it out, huh -- ?

Gattaway walks to the back... Passing Wanda...

WANDA
 Hey, you can't go in--

But he has...

And, in moments, he's back... His face dark... As Webb
 Pierce's "I Ain't Never" SOUNDS UP ON TRACK --

GATTAWAY
 We got a problem, Frankie --

SLAM CUT TO:

JOHNNY DIAMOND AND GRETCHEN VALE

as they boogie on down a BACK HALLWAY... Hitting a fire door on
 the run... Scaling the staircase...

INT. APARTMENT

Frankie Dio and the others tear open a back door to the
 apartment which leads to another corridor...

Frankie and two men go right. Gattaway and the others go left..

INT. HOUSING PROJECT - CORRIDOR

Johnny and Gretchen flee. MUSIC CONTINUES. AS A CHASE ENSUES.

Through the dimly-lit housing project, as Johnny and Gretchen
 negotiate their way down to the ground floor...

(If something about the staging of this sequence ever-so-gently
 reminds us of Eddie Grab and Hillie Long's Venice flight at the
 opening of our story, well, that's a good thing...)

Johnny and Gretchen rapidly descend, past the surprised denizens
 of the project... But at the ground floor landing:

TWO DIO THUGS stand guard...

JOHNNY
 Shit. C'mon --

And they run back up the stairs... To the third floor... Johnny
 sees Gattaway and his crew prowling...

So they take another flight up... To the FOURTH FLOOR...

They book it down the hall... An APARTMENT DOOR opens... A shocked OLD LADY squeals...

As Johnny pulls Gretchen into the old lady's apartment...

INT. OLD LADY'S APARTMENT

Johnny opens a window... The rickety FIRE ESCAPE looms...

JOHNNY

C'mon --

GRETCHEN

Jesus, Johnny --

JOHNNY

I know. C'mon --

And they step out onto the shaky wooden planking...

FRANKIE DIO

in the stairwell, hears the old lady shrieking...

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - JOHNNY AND GRETCHEN

ascend quickly... But, at the third story landing --

A PAIR OF DIO THUGS

loom large... And they start to muscle Johnny... And we clearly expect him to get his ass handed to him...

But not this time... This time, Johnny FIGHTS... And with a quick combination, the thugs go down hard...

But before any of us can marvel over his new-found grace under pressure, Frankie Dio, with a cry, SWINGS DOWN, feet first, from one-story up, connecting full in the face with Johnny Diamond --

Johnny and Frankie Dio roll over the fire escape in a grunting grapple... Punches are thrown...

FRANKIE DIO

You are an annoying little hot rod --

Frankie's big... He hauls Johnny to his feet... Knees him in the gut... Forearm blows... Jabs to the face... It's quite a fight.

A CROWD gathers below... Box among them... They watch...

As Frankie Dio continues to punish Johnny Diamond... Trying to dislodge him off the escape... Johnny hangs on for dear life...

Gretchen tries to help... Frankie SLAPS her away like a gnat... She falls to the planking... Hurt...

And Johnny Diamond rises up... Enraged... And he grabs Frankie Dio... And HURLS HIM across the fire escape landing...

... and Frankie Dio CRASHES against the rails, which SNAP like balsam, sending Frankie Dio REELING out and off...

And TUMBLING FOUR STORIES to his death...

EXT. HOUSING PROJECT

Johnny and Gretchen come out of the building... To find the crowd there... Gretchen looks at the broken body of Frankie Dio.

GRETCHEN

Is he dead?

BOX

He's sneered his last sneer --

JOHNNY

Where's the car -- ?

Box points... To where a gleaming THUNDERBIRD is parked...

JOHNNY

Thanks, man...

Box nods.

JOHNNY (CONT.)

(to Gretchen)

C'mon --

Box calls after them...

BOX

Hey, Johnny -- ?

JOHNNY

Yeah?

BOX

That's a good piece of work. Real smart...

Johnny nods. Smiles. And they move for the Thunderbird...

Johnny gets behind the wheel. They roar off. Box waves goodbye.

EXT. REAR ALLEY

Gattaway and his thugs explode from the metal door to their cars... To find --

A LARGE TRUCK - the "Val's Val-U-Rent" truck, actually - is STUCK at the MOUTH OF THE ALLEY, blocking in the cars. There are two MOVING MEN under the HOOD.

GATTAWAY

Move this thing -- !

And the movers look up from the engine block... And IT'S RAY ROUVALES AND CREEPY KAHN, in "Val's Val-U-Rent" uniforms. They shrug impotently...

RAY ROUVALES

She's deader'n Kelsey's nuts, daddy-O -

INT. THUNDERBIRD - FREEWAY - MOVING - DAY

Johnny at the wheel... Gretchen beside him...

GRETCHEN

Now what -- ?

JOHNNY

There's a boat in Long Beach... Which has orders to take us to safe-haven in Mexico...

GRETCHEN

Safe-haven in Mexico. Very pulpy, Roy.

They drive... Beat... At last:

JOHNNY

Who's is it?

She looks out the window at the passing emptiness...

GRETCHEN

I'm not sure...

JOHNNY

Jesus...

GRETCHEN

I know...

After a beat:

GRETCHEN

I met Jack in Vegas two years ago. When he was still a Senator. At a party. And then...

JOHNNY

I can figure out the "and then... "

GRETCHEN

I met Sam through Jack... Later... Jack asked me to...

JOHNNY

Can you quit calling him "Jack"?

GRETCHEN

What -- ?

JOHNNY

This is the President of the goddamn United States and I can't get my brain around the concept that you were actually... Actually... So just quit calling him "Jack."

GRETCHEN

What do you want me to call him... ?

JOHNNY

Just go on...

GRETCHEN

He asked me to set up a meeting with Sam... He asked me to take Sam something... A package... To "move the mail." They called it "moving the mail." And I wasn't the first. Just the latest...

JOHNNY

What was in the packages... ?

GRETCHEN

I only looked once. Money. Intelligence. Instructions. All to do with The Castro Problem --

She looks behind them... Worried...

GRETCHEN (CONT.)

We're being followed... That car has been behind us for miles...

Johnny checks his rear-view... Sees the CAR... Sees the two white-suited gentlemen riding in it... Smiles...

JOHNNY

It's okay... Go on...

GRETCHEN

But then I got pregnant. I tried to keep it a secret. But that's impossible when you're constantly being followed by every government agency, not to mention the Mob, Interpol, and the CIA. And, I'm almost 30-years-old. And the 19-year-old girls are lined up
(MORE)

GRETCHEN (cont'd)
and waiting... But when Marilyn died...
That was it... I woke up one morning,
and I just felt... So... Expendable...

JOHNNY
So you went to Scalzo...

GRETCHEN
Both men are expensive gift-givers...
And like to see their girls wearing
their displays of generosity... But
I've been selling them off, so I could
leave the country. Leave all of this..

JOHNNY
But they found out --

GRETCHEN
They suspected... And Dick paid dearly
for my plan --

JOHNNY
He died for the one he loved. We
should all go out with such nobility...

Gretchen sighs... Looks at him...

JOHNNY (CONT.)
Giancana seems fond of you...

GRETCHEN
I think Sam's in love with me... But
you have to understand his position...

Beat...

GRETCHEN (CONT.)
Fairly monstrous, isn't it -- ?

JOHNNY
Sort of not on the list of Top Five
Things You Hope For Your High School
Sweetheart...

GRETCHEN
No. But I want this baby. Regardless.

JOHNNY
And you really don't know who's it is?

GRETCHEN
No... There were times... Especially
right before the Invasion... When my
courier services were.. Active...

Johnny nods... Drives... Comes to a decision...

JOHNNY

Well, from here on in: it's my baby...

GRETCHEN

Stop it, Roy...

JOHNNY

I'm serious... It's mine... We're gonna go to Mexico... And we're gonna deliver on a promise we made a long time ago... We're gonna walk on the summer side of the street... And that's how it's gonna be... Cos I don't know if you know it or not, Lolly darlin': but there is beauty in this life...

Gretchen looks at him... Because Johnny Diamond has never seemed so sure... So courageous... So right...

And for the first time, maybe in our entire tale, Gretchen Vale actually smiles...

And on they drive...

EXT. PORT OF LONG BEACH - PIER A - HARBORMASTER'S SHED - DAY

An imposing line of huge steel and concrete transit SHEDS front the expansive WATER AREA... A working CONVEYOR loads petroleum coke into the forward hold of a SHIP, its horizontal boom and trimmer pouring the bulk cargo in a metronomic THUK! THUK! THUK!

Johnny pulls up to the Harbormaster's SHED...

JOHNNY

I just gotta find what berth it's at...

He kisses her cheek... Opens the door...

GRETCHEN

Roy -- ?

JOHNNY

What -- ?

GRETCHEN

Thank-you...

He smiles. Winks. Gets out of the car. She watches him go...

INT. HARBORMASTER'S SHED

No one about. Johnny goes to the counter. Rings the bell.

JOHNNY

Hello -- ? Anybody in -- ?

He lights a Tareyton... Drums his fingers on the counter...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

HELLO -- ? Hello, hello --- !

A MAN appears out of the back room... He doesn't look like a harbormaster, what with his dark suit and soulless eyes...

But before Johnny can react, the man BRINGS A KNIFE DOWN ON JOHNNY'S HAND... PINNING IT TO THE COUNTER...

JOHNNY HOWLS... TIRES SQUEAL FROM OUTSIDE... GUNSHOTS... BANG! BANG! BANG, BANG!

Johnny uses his good hand to PUNCH the man's face repeatedly. The man DROPS... Johnny yanks the knife from his piked hand...

Johnny explodes out of the Harbormaster's shed...

To see a BLACK BUICK tearing off...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

LOLLY -- !

And a bloody MORMON dead on the roadway...

And the second MORMON, white suit soaked red, staggering to a stop and fall...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

LOLLY -- !

And Johnny jumps behind the wheel of the Thunderbird...

And races after the speeding Buick... Hand gouging blood... Muttering to himself:

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Just hold on, baby... I'm coming for ya... Goddamn bastards... I'll...

And he takes the snubnose from his shoulder-holster... Checks its load... Pins the gas... He's catching up to them...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

Sons-a-bitches... When I get my hands on you, there'll be no way to--

But he hears a WHIMPER from behind him... He glances into the rear-view...

And his eyes fill up... And he dry-swallows... Silently mouths words... Slows the car...

Because Gretchen has not been snatched by the fleeing Buick...
For it is a glimpse of pale arm he sees... In the backseat...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

No... No, no, no... Lolly -- ?

And he pulls the car over to the shoulder in a wild skid...

And he climbs into the backseat...

To where Gretchen Vale lays... Shot in the chest...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

No, no, no, no, no... Lolly...

He takes her in his arms... Tears roll down her perfect face...

GRETCHEN

Roy...

JOHNNY

Sshhh...

His eyes fill... He wipes the sweat-soaked hair from her perfect brow... She's dying, her voice is a weak whisper...

GRETCHEN

It was nice to see you, Roy... After all this time... You were always there when I needed you... No matter how wicked I behaved...

JOHNNY

Lolly...

GRETCHEN

I never really stopped loving you, Roy. I just... Lost my way home...

And she smiles one sad, final smile...

GRETCHEN (CONT.)

The Hero Of Movietown...

And she dies...

JOHNNY

Lolly... ? Lolly... Shhhh... Shhhh...
It's not like that... Summer side of the street, baby... Summer side...
Shhhh... Don't be sad... Quiet there...
Don't cry... No, no, no, no, no...

And he rocks her... And weeps...

EXT. LONG BEACH FREEWAY - LATER - DAY

Several POLICEMEN warily approach the parked T-Bird...

To find Johnny Diamond, bleeding in the backseat... Still talking softly to Gretchen Vale...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

There is, baby, there is... Shhhhh,
baby... There is... There is...

And the police open the door... And Johnny looks up at them, his face etched with the ravages of a pain so pointed, so utter, he's almost unrecognizable...

EXT. JOHNNY'S OFFICE BUILDING - HOLLYWOOD - LATER - DAY

The Long Beach Police Car drops Johnny off at the offices... He wearily climbs out, his hand bandaged...

Lieutenant Gattaway waits in the doorway to the building...

JOHNNY

Not now, Lieutenant --

Gattaway absently rubs at his bruised throat...

GATTAWAY

You and me'll settle later, Diamond.
Now, he wants a word --

This stops Johnny...

GATTAWAY (CONT.)

He's in The Beachcomber...

Johnny looks over at Don The Beachcomber, eyes alight with fury.

GATTAWAY (CONT.)

You rodded -- ?

Johnny shakes his head... Gattaway pats him down just the same.

INT. DON THE BEACHCOMBER

Completely empty... Late afternoon shadows slant through... Only the ever-present RAIN-ON-THE-ROOF SOUNDS...

At the rear of the joint... Alone... Sits Sam Giancana...
Sipping a whiskey... Couched in gloom...

Johnny is surprised to find the man unprotected... He marches right toward Giancana... Picks up the whiskey bottle... Hurls it at the wall... Overturns the table... Smashes a chair against a tiki torch... Turns his attention to the unmoving Giancana...

Johnny yanks Giancana out of his seat... SLAMS him against the rear of the booth... The little man doesn't react... He remains lifeless... Out of fight...

Johnny releases him. Giancana slumps back into the booth.

JOHNNY

Why? Why'd you do it -- ?

SAM GIANCANA

I didn't do anything.

JOHNNY

Don't lie to me... You knew about the jewelry... Knew she wanted out...

SAM GIANCANA

Yes, but I still thought I could keep her. That's what love costs in my world

JOHNNY

She said the same thing...

SAM GIANCANA

And I did love her. I wanted to marry her. I loved her like you loved her, Johnny. More, because I'm old and I'm ugly and she made me young and she made me handsome...

JOHNNY

I don't believe you --

SAM GIANCANA

We had to get rid of the baby. That much we had to do. As part of our deals. But not the girl. Never the girl...

JOHNNY

Then who -- ?

SAM GIANCANA

I always say, Johnny: if you want to find the murderer, look for the one who survives --

JOHNNY

You survived --

Giancana looks at him... Ashen and drawn, small eyes dewy with emotion...

SAM GIANCANA

No... This is not surviving...

JOHNNY

Who -- ?

SAM GIANCANA

Haven't you learned anything? Anything at all? Or are you still just an empty party hat -- ?

JOHNNY

Tell me who --

SAM GIANCANA

The good guys, Johnny. The good guys killed her...

JOHNNY

No --

SAM GIANCANA

Yes --

JOHNNY

I don't believe you... They had no reason...

Sam Giancana searches Johnny's face for irony... When he sees none, he sighs... Then:

SAM GIANCANA

You should have this... It belonged to her...

And he takes out a large BOOK with red covers... And hands it to Johnny... And Johnny flips through it... It is a SCRAPBOOK.

And it is filled with NEWSPAPERS CLIPPINGS... Clippings of Diamond & Associates' greatest triumphs... Johnny is floored...

Giancana ignores him... His following words come out with no emotion... Flat, dull, irresolute:

SAM GIANCANA

The proper and the powerful are puppets. Men you can't buy, you kill. I've lived my life by this.

As Sam speaks, Johnny flips through the scrapbook. And we see the clippings. The articles.

SAM GIANCANA (CONT.)

I think they'll pay. I think, someday, I will wake-up, I will look into a mirror. I will look at my face in the mirror... My little rodent face...

ANGLE: the scrapbook. "The Hero Of Movietown!" "Johnny Diamond Solves Another" and, most telling - "Private Eye Buys his Duds At Art's After Every Case Solved"...

SAM GIANCANA (CONT.)

On that day, I will think that I will never feel her lips on my cheeks, wiping away the rodent face. Turning it, with a kiss, into Tyrone Power. And, on that day, my anger will be such. That I will make him pay. Make them all pay. And for that, she will be remembered. She will have changed history. Like she changed me, Johnny. Like she changed you...

Johnny shakes his head... No... He reels back, walking away with the scrapbook, leaving the pathetic little man to his sorrows.

And, on the way out, Johnny passes a SIDE ROOM at the entrance. The door is open a crack...

Johnny looks inside the side room: to where a MEXICAN BUSBOY is holding a GARDEN HOSE up high, to the roof, one finger on the nozzle. Creating the ersatz rain we've heard all this time.

The Mexican boy smiles at Johnny over a mouthful of gold teeth.

EXT. DON THE BEACHCOMBER

Johnny limps out of the joint... A long black government LIMOUSINE pulls up beside him... The back door opens...

After a moment's hesitation, Johnny climbs in...

Out of the shadows, Gattaway watches it go...

INT. WANGWOOD'S LIMO - MOVING

Johnny and Wangewood and four government SLICKS... Johnny stares at Wangewood...

JOHNNY

Why -- ?

WANGWOOD

Why what -- ?

And Johnny shoves Wangewood up against the back of the car, plucking his REVOLVER from its shoulder-holster, JAMMING the gun's bore into the man's mouth...

JOHNNY

You killed her --

The other slicks go for their guns... Wangewood warns the other men off with a garbled:

WANGEWOOD

No... !

They heed his word and don't draw... Johnny removes the gun from Wangewood's mouth, though he keeps it head-high...

WANGEWOOD (CONT.)

Shoot me, Diamond. Shoot all of us.
Ever notice how we all look alike?
There'll be a dozen to take our place.
We're rather like gray hairs. And just
as inexorable...

Johnny calms down in the face of this apparent futility... He lowers the gun...

WANGEWOOD (CONT.)

I'm sure you're heart-broken. But it
had to happen. Sometimes, sacrifices
have to be made. For The Greater Good.

JOHNNY

"The Greater Good" -- ?

WANGEWOOD (CONT.)

Mom-Dad-Buddy-And-Sis, Diamond. This
isn't about gangsters and Presidents
and gorgeous slash. Not about private
dicks. Movie stars. Political
dissidents. Or your back pages. This
is about Mom-Dad-Buddy-And-Sis. It's
their world. We're here merely to
safeguard it. It's about the dream.

JOHNNY

What dream is that -- ?

WANGEWOOD

It's all very precious and delightful
and colorful. It's rather like, oh, I
don't know: Camelot.

JOHNNY

"Camelot?"

WANGEWOOD

Camelot. And think of me as Merlin.
Just making magic to protect my King.
Protect him sometimes from himself...

JOHNNY

You're crazy --

WANGEWOOD

No, John. I'm responsible...

Long stare... Long beat...

JOHNNY

How come I get to live?

WANGEWOOD

We're not gangsters. We don't kill indiscriminately...

JOHNNY

No -- ?

WANGEWOOD

If you really mattered you wouldn't live. But what are you, after all? Just one dog, barking at a shadow...

The car comes to a stop... Back at the Hollywood offices... Wangewood steps out... Johnny follows...

WANGEWOOD (CONT.)

Get used to us, Johnny. We're going to be here for a long, long time. Three brothers' worth. That's some 25 years at least... The monarchy starts now... Don't fight the magic, pal. Live it...

Johnny looks like he's going to make a move for him... But the Driver is there...

WANGEWOOD (CONT.)

Oh, please. What are you going to do? Sock me in the face and say: "that's for my girl, Gretchen"? Is there no cliché you can avoid?

JOHNNY

You're right... You should just be careful though, Merlin...

WANGEWOOD

Of what?

JOHNNY

When that one dog barks at a shadow? A hundred dogs bark at his bark...

And Johnny turns his back on Wangewood's sour grin... Starts to walk... Stops... Turns back...

JOHNNY

Oh, and one more thing --

WANGWOOD

Yes -- ?

JOHNNY SOCKS HIM FULL IN THE FACE... WANGWOOD GOES DOWN HARD...

JOHNNY

That's for my girl, Gretchen --

And Johnny Diamond walks off...

EXT. HOLLYWOOD OFFICE BUILDING

Box is waiting for him on the stoop...

BOX

You okay -- ?

Johnny hands him the scrapbook... Box flips through it... Johnny watches as the limo drives off...

JOHNNY

She knew all along... She read the papers all these years and she believed 'em... She believed I was a good detective... She believed I could help her... That was no chance meeting on Rodeo Drive... She sought us out, cos she knew she was in danger... What she didn't know was that Johnny Diamond was a sham... What she didn't know was that Johnny Diamond could only fail her...

Johnny looks hard at Box...

JOHNNY (CONT.)

These are rainy days, Box --

BOX

You need a lift somewhere, Johnny?

JOHNNY

I'm arrright... Give this to Toby... Tell her to pay some bills...

And he drops the envelope of Hughes money on Box's lap...

And he sticks a Tareyton in his mouth... Lights it...

And he starts to limp over to Eddie Grab's Mercury parked across the street...

Face as beat-up as a chunk of driftwood; shabby suit with patches of torn fabric; five-o'clock shadow closer to half-past seven... Johnny pulls on the flask... Limps...

Box watches him go...

INT. DIAMOND AND ASSOCIATES - OFFICES - SAME TIME - DAY

Toby and Ray Rouvales play checkers... Harry Gillette enters...

HARRY GILLETTE

Where are they? Where -- ?

Toby hands him a MANILA ENVELOPE... Harry tears it open... Flips through the STACK OF PHOTOGRAPHS...

HARRY GILLETTE

What the hell kind of pictures are these? What the hell am I lookin' at?

ANGLE - THE PHOTOS. Crisp, clear compromising photographs -- OF BOX'S AURORA MODEL OF KARLOFF'S MUMMY... !

BOX

That's Karloff's The Mummy. Nicely painted, too. Apparently they're the only monster photos that came out --

Smug little grins from the folks at Diamond & Associates, enjoying their newfound vantage point from the moral high ground Creepy glances out the window... Does a double-take...

CREEPY KAHN

Holy crow -- !

Toby and Ray go to the window... Look down...

ANGLE - JOHNNY. Limping toward Eddie Grab's car... Looking like nothing, if not our old friend, Eddie Grab...

CREEPY KAHN (CONT.)

For a second there, I thought that was-

The others nod... They see it too... But before they get too reverential:

RAY ROUVALES

Hey, look! I never noticed it before - but you can almost see Catalina from up here -- !

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - DAY

Johnny limps toward the Mercury... And perhaps he can see his reflection in a storefront window... Perhaps he too can see the resemblance.. Perhaps he likes what he sees...

Johnny climbs in behind the wheel of the Mercury... Starts the car... Starts a Tareyton...

But lest we think the old Johnny Diamond is lost to us forever -
 -- Johnny looks up in wonder as, speeding down the street past him is a

'63 CORVETTE STING RAY

in its first year... It is a boattail split-window fastback coupe with slotted "Rally" wheels and chrome beauty rings, and to Johnny Diamond it is proof of a single, all-powerful Deity...

Johnny puts Eddie's car in gear... Racing after the Sting Ray...

Box watches him drive off... And we hear, in long-dead V.O.:

EDDIE GRAB (O.S.)

It's like my good friend Dashiell Hammett once said: "if you are tired you ought to rest, and not try and fool yourself and your customers with colored bubbles... "

And Johnny aims the car into the flow of traffic, following the 'Vette... He turns on the RADIO NEWS which REPORTS:

RADIO (O.S.)

... and Ridge Pauling married Jean Randolph in a star-studded celebrity ceremony, with cowboy star, Andrew Byner, serving as best man... And, in political news, Gallup Polls show that President John F. Kennedy has scored the highest approval ratings since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, which, one has to say, is a most auspicious start to this, The New Frontier...

And once again, The Everly Brothers' "Bird Dog" PLAYS --

And Eddie Grab's Mercury, Johnny Diamond at the wheel, is soon lost to us, disappearing...

Back into the Los Angeles from which it came...

The End