

THE NAKED LUNCH

a screenplay  
by  
David Cronenberg

based on the novel  
by  
William S. Burroughs

FIRST DRAFT  
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The Recorded Picture Company  
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PRODUCTION NOTE:

The time of this script is 1953.

A dark screen. A quote from Naked Lunch fades up on the screen, white letters on black:

Nothing is true; everything is permitted. -- Hassan I Sabbah

The letters fade out. Another quote fades up:

Hustlers of the world, there is one Mark you cannot beat:  
The Mark inside. -- William S. Burroughs

The letters fade out.

1 INT. WORKING CLASS APT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

A door. There is a knock on the door and then a word called out from the other side of the door.

LEE (OS)  
Exterminator!

The door is open by a matronly Irish lady, MRS. MURPHY, to reveal LEE, who is working as an exterminator. Lee is tall, gaunt, 35, suit, tie, hat, exterminating canister and associated paraphernalia.

LEE  
You need the service?

MRS. MURPHY  
Well come in young man and have a cup of tea. That wind has a bite to it.

Lee comes in and sits down.

LEE  
It does that, mam. Cuts me like a knife and I'm not well, you know.  
(cough)

MRS. MURPHY  
You put me in mind of my brother, Michael Fenny.

LEE  
He passed away?

(CONTINUED)

1 CONT'D:

MRS. MURPHY

It was a long time ago, April day  
like this, sun cold on a thin boy  
with freckles through that door  
like yourself. I made him a cup  
of hot tea. When I brought it to  
him he was gone.

(gestures to empty blue  
sky)

Cold tea sitting right where you  
are sitting now.

Lee leans forward discreetly.

LEE

Is it roaches, Mrs. Murphy?

MRS. MURPHY

It is that from those Jews  
downstairs.

LEE

Or is it the hunkys next door,  
Mrs. Murphy?

MRS. MURPHY

(shrugs)

Sure and an Irish cockroach is  
as bad as another.

Lee begins to get his gear together.

LEE

You make a nice cup of tea, Mrs.  
Murphy. Sure I'll be taking care  
of your roaches.

She is about to give him a tour of the cupboards but he  
waves her away.

LEE

Oh, don't be showing me where they  
are. You see I know, Mrs. Murphy.  
Experienced along those lines.  
And I don't mind telling you I  
like my work and take pride in  
it.

MRS. MURPHY

Well, the city exterminating  
people were around and left some  
white powder draws roaches the  
way whiskey will draw a priest.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONT'D: (2)

LEE

They are a cheap outfit, Mrs. Murphy. What they left was fluoride. The roaches build up a tolerance and become addicted. They can be dangerous if the fluoride is suddenly withdrawn... Ah, just here it is...

Lee spots a brown crack by the kitchen sink. He sticks his bellows in and blows in a load of yellow powder. He's just working up a good cloud when the powder runs out with a wheeze.

MRS. MURPHY

What's the matter, young man?  
Running out of steam so soon?

LEE

Well, I don't know...  
Embarrassing, though, isn't it?

MRS. MURPHY

(suddenly excited)  
Oh, look!

As if they had heard the last trumpet, a few roaches stagger out and flop on the floor in convulsions.

MRS. MURPHY

Well I never!

Lee looks helplessly down the barrel of his empty bellows. Mrs. Murphy pats his hand in a maternal manner.

MRS. MURPHY

Never mind. I wouldn't want you to shoot them again anyway. Just let them die in agony.

2 EXT. A. J. COHEN'S EXTERMINATORS - DAY

Ground floor. Dead-end street by the river. A line-up of shabby exterminators checking in at day's end.

3 INT. COHEN'S - DAY

COHEN and Lee are having a beef. Cohen is an old Jew with cold grey fish eyes. A fat, smiling CHINESE is loading yellow pyrethrum powder from a barrel into a row of bellows.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONT'D:

The exterminators waiting for their bellows are amused.

COHEN

You vant I should spit right in  
your face!? You vant? You vant?  
You vant?

LEE

I ran out!

COHEN

You ran out? That's very nice,  
you ran out. It's impossible you  
ran out. Vat, you eat the stuff?

LEE

The chink short-changed me!

CHINESE

(shouting to Lee)

No glot! C'lom r'liday!

Lee shoots a glare at the Chinese. Unperturbed, and unseen by Cohen, the Chinese dips his hand into the barrel and scoops some of the bug powder into his mouth.

Lee is disgusted. The other exterminators laugh.

COHEN

(misunderstanding)

You see? It's funny! It's actually  
funny vat you said.

4 INT. GREASY SPOON - DAY

Lee comes in and sits with HANK and MARTIN. Hank is rugged and lumberjack-handsome. Martin is soft, bespectacled and intellectual-Jewish. They are both about ten years younger than Lee and are both eating greasy food. Lee's arrival does not immediately seem to register with them.

HANK

(quietly intense)

But you can't rewrite. To rewrite  
is to deceive and lie and betray  
your own thoughts... To rethink  
the flow and the rhythm and the  
tumbling out of the words is a  
betrayal and a sin, Martin. A sin.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONT'D:

MARTIN

I don't accept your Catholic interpretation of my compulsive necessity to rewrite every word at least a hundred times. Guilt is the key, not sin. Guilt re not writing the best that you can. Guilt re not considering everything from every possible angle, balancing everything...

HANK

How about guilt re censoring your best thoughts, your most primitive, honest, real thoughts? Because that's what your laborious rewriting amounts to.

This concept disturbs Martin. He turns to Lee as though he has been part of the conversation all along.

MARTIN

(disturbed)

Is rewriting really censorship, Bill? Because I am completely fucked if it is.

LEE

Exterminate all rational thought. That is the conclusion I have come to.

Now Martin is really upset. He turns to Hank.

MARTIN

(upset)

What is the man talking about? I'm being serious.

HANK

So is he.

(to Lee)

Bill, how is the extermination business going?

LEE

Somebody's stealing my roach powder. Somebody's got it in for me.

There is an awkward silence which suggests that both Hank and Martin know something. Lee misses it.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONT'D: (2)

HANK

Uh, Bill... maybe this is a sign. Maybe you ought to try your hand at writing pornography.

MARTIN

Yeah. A novel a week for a hunnert an twenny bucks. That's serious money. We can connect you with the guy. We're thinking of collaborating on one ourselves.

LEE

I gave up writing when I was ten. It's too dangerous.

HANK

Only if somebody reads what you write. So far, we haven't had that problem.

LEE

I've found my profession. I'm an exterminator.

MARTIN

Of course, Bill. That's just what the world needs: more literate exterminators.

HANK

You're gonna have trouble if you can't keep track of your roach powder.

Martin and Hank look at each other and burst into laughter.

LEE

Wait a minute. You boys know something about this?

MARTIN

We don't exactly know anything...

HANK

But we suspect that it's a domestic problem...

They burst out laughing again.

5 INT. LEE'S APT. - DAY

Lee opens the door to his one-bedroom apartment and closes the door. The apartment, shabby enough to begin with, has not been seriously cleaned for many weeks.

Once Lee has taken two steps inside the room, he can see his wife, JOAN, sitting on their Salvation Army couch. Joan is basically pretty, bright, 35, but she too has gotten shabby, worn out. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that she is injecting something into her arm with a hypodermic needle, having tied up with an old silk stocking.

Tipped over on the couch next to her is Lee's exterminator's canister, and next to that a spoon, book of matches, ashtray.

LEE

My god! What are you doing?

JOAN

(not particularly upset)  
You weren't supposed to see this.

LEE

Well, now that I'm seeing it, what is it?

JOAN

I'm shooting up your bug powder.  
You might like to try it yourself.  
Or you might not.

LEE

I ran out in the middle of a job.  
You've gotta stop using the stuff.  
They ration it out like snake-bite serum.

JOAN

Just do what everybody else does.  
Cut it with baby laxative. The roaches'll shit themselves to death.

LEE

(mumbling to himself)  
Best job I ever had. If I run out again I'm finished.

JOAN

(not hearing)  
It's a very literary high. Very literary.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONT'D:

LEE

Is that why Hank and Martin know  
all about it?

JOAN

We all tried it together. Spur  
of the moment thing. They didn't  
like it. I did.

LEE

What do you mean it's a literary  
high?

JOAN

It's a Kafka high. You feel like  
a bug. Try some.

LEE

Well, I dunno. I think our  
metabolisms are very different.

JOAN

Whose? Yours and Kafka's?

Lee is intrigued. He can't resist. He picks up her needle  
and starts to clean it.

LEE

I thought you were finished with  
doing weird stuff.

JOAN

I thought I was too. But I guess  
I'm not.

6 INT. N.Y. AUTOMAT - DAY

A group of five exterminators gather informally at the  
Automat for a cheap breakfast before going out to their  
sessions. Their bellows are spread out carelessly over  
several surrounding tables. They are all eating greedily.

Lee is one of them. We soon become aware of two large cops  
sitting at a table nearby, watching the proceedings  
carefully, drinking coffee.

EXTERMINATOR 1

Personally, I prefer a pyrethrum  
job to a fluoride. With the  
pyrethrum you kill the roaches  
(more)

(CONTINUED)

6 CONT'D:

EXTERMINATOR 1 (Cont'd)  
 right there in front of God and  
 the client whereas this starch  
 and fluoride you leave it around  
 and the roaches eat it and back  
 a few days later you find them  
 running around fat as hawgs.

EXTERMINATOR 2  
 (indicating Lee)  
 Well, there it is, Bill. You wanna  
 put on some weight, you gotta  
 switch from that yellow powder  
 diet of yours to summa this good  
 fluoride stuff right here!  
 (slaps his bellows  
 canister with barely  
 contained mirth)

There is general guffawing at the table. Lee shrugs it off,  
 not amused.

EXTERMINATOR 3  
 Sure works for the chink. He's  
 healthy enough. See him scoff that  
 poison down?

EXTERMINATOR 2  
 He doesn't really eat it. It's  
 sleight of hand.

EXTERMINATOR 3  
 Hell he doesn't! Been breathing  
 in the powder so long just makes  
 him laugh.

EXTERMINATOR 4  
 Just like them roaches.

More guffaws. Lee gets up to leave, slinging his gear over  
 his shoulder.

As he makes for the door, the two cops, HAUSER and O'BRIEN,  
 fall in step on either side of him. Lee stops at the door  
 and turns to face them.

LEE  
 What is this?

HAUSER  
 I'm Hauser. He's O'Brien. City  
 Narcotics. Taking you downtown,  
 Bill. Little matter of possession  
 of a dangerous substance.

## 7 INT. COP SHOP - DAY

The cops have emptied the contents of the canister onto the wooden table occupying the centre of the interrogation room.

Hauser is stirring through the yellow powder with a pencil. O'Brien shakes a cigarette out of a pack of Old Golds and offers it to Lee. Lee declines the smoke. O'Brien shrugs and lights it up himself.

O'BRIEN

You've got quite a record, Bill.  
Lotta drugs poured down the old  
vein.

LEE

I was a troubled person then. I'm  
married now, straight. Got a good  
job.

HAUSER

(still stirring)  
That's good, Bill. That's nice.  
But what's this, then?

LEE

It's my job. I use it to kill  
bugs.

Hauser looks up at O'Brien, theatrically skeptical.

HAUSER

Says it kills bugs.

O'BRIEN

He could be right. I'd like to  
see it.

HAUSER

Me too. I'd like to see it too.

LEE

Well, gee... I'd like to  
demonstrate, but I already got  
rid of that last case of crabs  
I had...

HAUSER

Very funny, Bill. But you know...  
(conspiratorial look  
to O'Brien)  
...I think we've got a bug around  
here somewhere...

(CONTINUED)

7 CONT'D:

Hauser pulls a shoebox out of a drawer and places it gently on the table.

O'BRIEN

Yeah. Right. Let's see if it'll kill it!

HAUSER

Yeah!

Hauser pulls the lid off the box. Inside, filling the entire box, is one enormous beetle. The beetle climbs out of the box and dives hungrily into the powder on the table next to it.

It goes into convulsions and begins to split open down the back.

Hauser and O'Brien throw on their coats and head for the door. It occurs to Lee that they are scared, but he can't figure out why.

O'BRIEN

We'll come back later to see how it, uh, worked out, kiddo.

HAUSER

Yeah. Break a leg.

They leave, closing and locking the door behind them.

Lee looks down at the huge insect, now all dusty-yellow with pyrethrum powder. The split which opened in its back has become an asshole. The insect begins to speak through the asshole, which flexes and pouts like a bizarre circular mouth.

INSECT

William Lee, I have arranged all this just to have a moment alone with you. I am your case officer.

Lee can't believe what he's seeing, but figures he'd better play it cool.

LEE

My... my what?

INSECT

Case officer. You are my agent. I in turn report to your operator. Come, come, Mr. Lee. You don't have to play dumb with me.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONT'D: (2)

LEE

No, no... that would be... uh,  
foolish, wouldn't it?

INSECT

It would. Say, Bill... you don't  
mind if I call you Bill, do you?  
"Mr. Lee" seems so cold, somehow,  
after all we're going to go  
through together... Bill, do you  
think you could rub some of that  
powder on my lips?

The bug's circular lips twist grotesquely and smack in  
anticipation, slopping green saliva onto the table.

LEE

Uh, sure, yeah...

Lee dabs up some of the powder on his fingers and, after  
a moment of hesitation, rubs it onto the bug's obscenely  
quivering lips.

The bug goes into writhing paroxysms of delight, then  
manages to regain some control.

INSECT

Well, now. As you might have  
expected, I have instructions for  
you from control.

(theatrical pause)

It's about the little woman.

LEE

The what?

INSECT

The little woman. Your little  
woman. Your wife.

A cold fear sweeps through Lee's bones. Why does he seem  
to know what this apparition is about to say? And why is  
he in terror of those words? Slowly, cautiously, Lee slips  
his right shoe off under the table and grasps it firmly  
by the toe-end.

LEE

Tell me.

INSECT

Your wife is not really your wife.  
She is an agent of Islam, Inc.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

7 CONT'D: (3)

INSECT (Cont'd)  
 You must kill her, kill Joan Lee.  
 It must be done soon, this week.  
 And it must be done real tasty.

LEE  
 (faking it, trying to  
 get a handle on it)  
 Islam? I can't see it. Moslems  
 would never choose to use a woman  
 for a key job like that.

INSECT  
 (twittering gleefully)  
 But who says she's really a woman?  
 In fact, who says she's human at  
 all?  
 (coily)  
 I can say no more.

The bug burrows into the powder and tries to twitch small clouds of it over its back with its front pair of legs. As the powder settles, the circular lamprey mouth snaps greedily at every grain that comes within reach.

Lee whips his shoe out from under the table and raises it over his head. The bug somehow senses impending doom and begins to twitter hysterically.

INSECT  
 (hysterical)  
 Don't do it! Don't do it! There'll  
 be hell to pay!

Lee brings down the shoe with full force. The insect explodes in green blood and shards of wing-casing. Lee smashes at the table a few more times for good measure, then takes two strides to the door and breaks the door's frosted window with his heel.

He jams his now-slimey shoe back on, reaches through the window and turns the key which has been left in the lock. The featureless hall is empty.

Lee makes off down the hall, leaving the remains of the giant insect twitching pathetically amid the mash of green blood and yellow powder.

8 INT. LEE'S APT. - DAY

Lee finds Joan in their miniscule kitchen and begins to pace.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONT'D:

LEE

We've been made. We've gotta get out of town.

JOAN

Wait a minute, Bill. What's going on?

LEE

I got busted for bug powder. I started to hallucinate because of that stuff. God knows what I really said to those two flatfeet. I'm not even sure how I got out of there.

JOAN

Did you bring back tomorrow's bug powder? Did you, Bill? Did you?

This stops Lee in his tracks.

LEE

Migod, Joan. You're acting like a full-fledged junky. And it's bug powder, for Christ's sake!

JOAN

I do have a bit of a habit, yes, Hon. And you ought to at least give me a few marks for originality.

LEE

(suddenly perplexed,  
disturbed)

Yes, well... But what ever made you think of touching the stuff in the first place? How did you know it wouldn't just kill you?

Joan draws close to Lee. Her manner is strange. She draws a small stash of powder out of her bra, folded origami paper.

JOAN

I don't know, Bill. I felt drawn to it, like you feel drawn to an old lover...

She unfolds the paper and holds the yellow powder up to him.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONT'D: (2)

JOAN

Say, Bill. Could you rub some of  
this powder on my lips?

(she licks her lips in  
anticipation)

Could you, Bill? Please?

Freaky though the resonances are, Bill can't help but comply. He dips his fingers into the powder and rubs it lovingly on her lips. She works it into her lips with her tongue. Lee puts his lips over hers and they kiss passionately.

9 INT. SUBWAY TRAIN IN MOTION - NIGHT

An exterminator sits on the subway after a hard day's work, nodding off, his canister and bellows on the seat beside him. Someone in a trench coat sits down beside him. The someone tries to lift the canister, but Exterminator 1 (we recognize him from the Automat) wakes up and hangs onto it.

Exterminator 1 looks up into the eyes of the man wearing the coat, about to lay into him for messing around with his gear, but then he smiles at what he sees.

EXTERMINATOR 1

Hey, Bill. What happened to you  
this morning? We missed you at  
the Automat.

It is indeed Lee.

LEE

I, uh, got into a bit of a jam.  
Misplaced the gear, in a manner  
of speaking.

EXTERMINATOR 1

(mirthful)

We heard about it. Saw you go off  
with the heat, in fact. They won't  
give it back to Cohen. It's  
evidence, they say.

LEE

It's an embarrassment, yes.

EXTERMINATOR 1

Is that why you're trying to lift  
mine?

(CONTINUED)

9 CONT'D:

LEE  
That's unkind, Eddy. "Lift" is unkind. There's a job I started for a friend. The centipedes are getting downright arrogant, starting to attack his children... I thought maybe we could make an arrangement, a deal, in fact...

Exterminator 1 looks around surreptitiously, then turns back to Lee.

EXTERMINATOR 1  
Take it from me, Bill... you're not the first one to develop a bug-powder problem. Take this card and see this man. He can help you.

Lee looks at the card. It says, Dr. Benway.

10 INT. BENWAY'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. BENWAY seems to be the archetypal American doctor, mid-fifties, silvery gray hair, paternal and condescending, and underneath it all, a hustler. His office is a hole in the wall. He sits across from Lee.

BENWAY  
Bug powder? You mean pyrethrum?

LEE  
Yes.

BENWAY  
(nodding sagely)  
I get a lot of folks in the extermination trade. You'd better help this friend of yours get off the yellow stuff. It'll kill him.

LEE  
How can I do it?

Benway pulls out a tube of black stuff.

BENWAY  
Cut it with this. Gradually increase the percentage of black without telling your friend. He'll lose his taste for the bug powder soon enough.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONT'D:

LEE

What is it, and what will it do?

BENWAY

It's all natural. Made from aquatic Brazilian centipede or some such outlandish thing. It shuts down the brain's response to the bug powder, that's all. The powder becomes irrelevant to the addict, and the addict then ceases to be addicted.

LEE

Side effects?

BENWAY

(enigmatically)

Nothing that will surprise the addict.

LEE

(hesitant)

Before I can carry out your treatment I have to score some powder...

BENWAY

You wouldn't be trying to pull a fast one on the old doctor, would you?

LEE

I came here for help.

BENWAY

Of course you did.

Benway gets some powder from a cabinet and makes a great show of mixing in the black meat. When he opens the vial of black meat the stench is overpowering.

LEE

Migod! It smells potent enough.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONT'D: (2)

BENWAY

You see how elegantly it works:  
the black disappears completely  
- no smell, no discolouration -  
like an agent who's come to  
believe his cover story but is  
still in there somewhere, hiding,  
in a larval state, waiting for  
the proper moment to hatch out.

(plops the vial of mixed  
metaphors on the table  
in front of Lee)

A bit of a clumsy metaphor, I  
guess, but what the hell, I never  
was much of an insect man anyway.

11 EXT. STREET - DAY

As Lee walks home along the street, he suddenly begins to weep uncontrollably. People avoid him, so raw and awful is this weeping. Lee finally manages to gain some measure of control and continues on his way.

12 INT. LEE'S APT. - DAY

Lee walks in to find Hank fucking Joan on the couch. They have most of their clothes on but are definitely far into it. Martin is kneeling beside them reading poetry out loud to them while they fuck.

Martin smiles at Lee when he walks in.

MARTIN

Hi, Bill. Say, why don't you and  
I join them?

Without giving Martin anything, Lee walks into the bedroom.

13 INT. LEE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Lee has cooked up the mixture he got from Benway and is in the process of shooting it up. In media res, Joan walks into the room and sits beside Lee. She rolls up her sleeve and squeezes up a vein. Lee shoots her up.

JOAN

Hank and I were just bored, Bill.  
It wasn't serious.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONT'D:

LEE

I didn't take it seriously. Where is Hank?

JOAN

He got embarrassed and left.

LEE

Not before he came, I hope.

JOAN

Hank's on junk. He doesn't come.

LEE

Not before you came, I hope.

JOAN

I'm on bug powder. I don't need to come.

They hear the sound of poetry. They look up. Martin is at the door, incanting over them like a priest blessing a meal.

Lee jumps up from the bed. He pulls a cheap Spanish Star .380 semi-automatic pistol from the battered steel filing cabinet which serves as a night table and turns and points it at Joan.

LEE

Why don't we do our William Tell routine for Martin?

Joan hesitates for a beat and then smiles. She picks up the water glass from the top of the filing cabinet and places it on her head. Martin stops chanting and stares at the couple, mouth open in mid-Om.

Lee aims at the glass with a shaky hand. He fires. Joan falls to the bed, then slumps to the floor. There is only a small red hole in her left temple. The glass rolls around near her head in concentric circles, unbroken.

Lee stares dumfounded. Martin falls to his knees beside Joan and looks for a pulse. Lee knows there won't be one. He gets up from the bed, sticks the gun into his pocket, and runs out the door.

14 INT. BAR - NIGHT

Lee tries to escape into the dark anonymity of a bar. He drinks alone, but his troubled demeanour attracts the attention of a handsome, olive-skinned young man, KIKI, who speaks with an Interzone accent, a mixture of Spanish and Arabic.

KIKI  
(to Lee)  
You a faggot?

LEE  
Not by nature, no, I am not. I wouldn't say "faggot," no. However, circumstances force me to consider the possibility that...

KIKI  
(interrupting)  
I'd like you to meet a friend of mine. He specializes in sexual ambivalence.

LEE  
Sexual ambulance, did you say?

Kiki gestures to the figure on the stool next to Lee at the bar. Lee turns to look and finds himself face to face with a Near East MUGWUMP, a fantastic creature licking warm honey from a crystal goblet with a long black tongue. His lips are thin and purple-blue like the lips of a penis, his eyes blank with insect calm. Beneath the lips one catches glimpses of a razor-sharp beak of black bone.

LEE  
Migod!

The Mugwump speaks with a characterless, metallic voice.

MUGWUMP  
No point in feigning surprise. You knew we would be getting in touch with you. Why else would you come to a waterfront dive like this?

Lee looks around the bar. No one is paying the slightest attention to the Mugwump, even though his bizarre sexual organ seems to be erecting.

LEE  
(shrugs)  
Why else?

(CONTINUED)

14 CONT'D:

MUGWUMP

I suggest a Smith-Corona portable.  
It has resonance.

LEE

What? A typewriter? Suggest it  
for what?

MUGWUMP

For your report, of course.  
Handwriting is not considered  
professional.

LEE

My report..?

MUGWUMP

And don't leave out any of the  
tasty details. The small red hole  
in the temple... Mmmm...

The Mugwump's erection springs to full attention.

MUGWUMP

The look of astonishment on her  
face... Mmmm...

Lee backs away in horror. He turns and leaves the bar. Near the door, the dusky young man calls something vaguely seductive in Spanish to him. His comrades laugh softly as Lee exits.

15 EXT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

Lee stands outside a pawnshop, hands deep in pockets, looking at the typewriters in the window.

16 INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

Lee pulls the .380 semi-automatic out of his jacket pocket and drops it on the counter.

The COUNTERMAN picks it up and releases the magazine, which he sniffs.

COUNTERMAN

It's trash and it's been fired.  
very recently. Use it in a holdup?

(CONTINUED)

16 CONT'D:

LEE

I want that typewriter, the portable.

COUNTERMAN

This plus eight dollars. Got any ammo to go with it?

Lee fumbles in his pockets for a few linty bullets. The counterman scoops them up.

COUNTERMAN

These'll cover the state tax.

The counterman disappears through a door, taking the gun and bullets with him.

Martin appears beside Lee as if by magic. Lee hugs Martin desperately. Martin hugs him back, then pulls away.

MARTIN

Bill, I've got your ticket to Interzone and a few dollars, whatever I could scrape up. Write to me and I'll send you more later.

LEE

Yeah, I'll send you a report. I'll send you a copy of my report.

MARTIN

Send me a report, OK. Listen, Bill... I told the police it was a drunken accident, that I saw it, so at least that's on the record. They're after you, though. Say you escaped from custody and murdered your wife and they want you.

LEE

(spaced)  
I'd better lie low.

MARTIN

You gonna be all right?

LEE

I hear Interzone's really nice this time of year.

17 EXT. CITY OF INTERZONE - DAY

Magnificent establishing shot. It looks suspiciously like Tangier.

18 INT. CAFE CENTRAL - DAY

Lee sits at a table in the Cafe Central typing a report. His first page:

REPORT ON THE ASSASSINATION OF JOAN LEE BY UNKNOWN FORCES

The present writer first met Joan Rohmer as a student of languages at Columbia University. She was a bright and mischievous girl with a heart-shaped face and a healthy sexual appetite.

We pull back to find that at almost every table there is someone with a portable typewriter typing a report of some kind. That's the 'Zone for you.

A German, HANS, comes over to Lee. He is smoking a greasy local cheroot.

HANS

Smith-Corona. Very nice for writing reports. I use a Krups Dominator myself. Company policy.

Lee stops typing and looks at the German but otherwise doesn't respond.

HANS

You are an American, korrekt?

Lee only blinks in response. The German is not dissuaded.

HANS

(sotto voce)

You know Doctor Benway?

Lee rises and starts to shuffle his papers into shape in preparation for a quick exit. He downs his Turkish coffee.

HANS

(a bit less sotto)

I'm interested in selling a large stash of the Black Meat. Verstehen sie? For some reason, I am certain that you are working for Herr Doktor Benway...

Lee zips up his portable's case and leaves the German standing there without having uttered a word.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONT'D:

Hans hesitates only another moment and then dashes outside to follow Lee through the Socco Chico.

19 EXT. SOCCO CHICO - DAY

HANS

Perhaps you are not interested in the Black Meat. That is only a sideline for me, anyway. I have a place in the Arab Quarter, very clean, which comes complete with a young man, a young woman... an old woman, if you insist...

Lee stops and turns to Hans.

HANS

Only fifty cents for the afternoon, two dollars for the night and morning because it means I have to find someplace else to sleep...

LEE

I don't work for anyone, correkt? I'm an independent, I'm... I'm a writer.

HANS

(conciliatory)

I see, I see... I'm sorry I mistook you for someone else. What is it exactly that you write?

LEE

I write fiction. Novels and short stories.

HANS

Oh... that can be very dangerous, is it not?

LEE

Only if what you write is ever read.

HANS

On the contrary. When one writes fiction, one has chosen to work for a foreign power whose nature is never quite revealed. That is the dangerous part.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONT'D:

Lee turns away and continues walking. Hans doggedly follows him. Lee is quietly disturbed by what the German has said.

HANS

Mr. Lee, I am a provider of rare services to the arts. And in my experience as a provider of rare services, I have found that writers are a particularly needy group. Is there nothing I can provide for you?

LEE

(playing dumb)

What is this Black Meat you mentioned?

Hans brightens considerably.

HANS

It is a thought-provoking confection. You are interested?

20 INT. MEDINA. HANS'S DRUG FACTORY - DAY

A bright, skylight-lit warehouse deep in the medina.

The carcasses of several giant centipedes, some more than six feet long, hang on iron hooks on the walls. A machete comes into frame and hacks off a segment, complete with legs. The segment is slammed down onto a broad wooden table where the legs are hacked off. The meat is then stuffed into an ornate arabesque meat grinder.

The greasy strings that emerge from the holes are hung up to dry on wooden racks and later pulverized into a powder after a bizarre process of refinement.

Hans and his assistant HASSAN, a huge Moroccan, have been giving Lee the guided tour.

Hassan shakes a stoppered ornamented glass vial of black powder under Lee's nose.

HASSAN

A very professional operation, as you can see, Mr. Lee. The processing of the Black Meat of the giant aquatic centipede is a dangerous and delicate matter.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONT'D:

HANS  
You would like a taste?

LEE  
(playing it cagey)  
I'd be happy to join you in a  
taste, if you're planning to have  
one.

Hans claps his hands and a BOY in traditional Moroccan dress appears. Hans makes an obscure grinding, spilling and smearing gesture. The boy nods and disappears.

HANS  
You can understand that if you  
were a purchasing agent for a  
foreign power, it would be to my  
advantage to impress you with the  
cleanliness and sincerity of our  
operation.

LEE  
You mentioned a Doctor Benley..?

HANS  
Benway..

LEE  
Yes. Does he qualify as a foreign  
power?

Hans and Hassan both laugh, Hans showing rather unfortunate teeth, Hassan having the better dentalwork.

HASSAN  
Oh my dear, yes. Very foreign!

The pair laugh again.

The boy appears again, this time bearing a large brass plate heaped high with mounds of black powder. He sets the plate down in front of Hans.

21 INT. LEE'S ROOMS - DAY

Lee has rented rooms in the Hotel Muniria. They are simple but pleasant.

Lee is writing his report. The words move around on the page of their own accord. They writhe and swell like leeches. Lee takes his hands off the typewriter and it continues to work without him.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONT'D:

As the Smith-Corona pounds away, not non-stop automatic, but with a human rhythm, complete with thoughtful pauses, Lee picks up the glass vial Hassan gave him and opens it. He licks the underside of his wrist, and pours the black powder onto the wet spot.

The powder dissolves instantly, seeming to soak into his wrist, creating a messy purple and yellow bruise as it passes into his bloodstream.

Lee leans back against the wall and nods off to the dreamy, comforting sound of the typewriter.

SMITH-CORONA

Lee, wake up! This is no time to doze off like a freckle-faced boy on a fishing raft.

Lee jolts awake. He can't believe what he sees: his typewriter has become a variant of the beetle case officer, complete with keys embedded in its carapace and the sheet of paper he has been working on rolling out from between its wing cases.

LEE

(still half asleep)  
What's up?

SMITH-CORONA

You didn't think we'd abandon you, did you?

LEE

(buying time)  
The thought never occurred to me.

SMITH-CORONA

Good. We like confidence in an agent. But don't let it make you careless.

LEE

I was just... I was in the process of configuring my report.

SMITH-CORONA

That's good, Lee. Admirable. But there have been some changes, changes at the top.

LEE

(wary)  
Oh?

(CONTINUED)

21 CONT'D: (2)

SMITH-CORONA

Good changes, Bill. Fresh blood, sparkling insights. Uh, Bill... could you do me a favour?

LEE

Sure.

The beetle-writer jitters around on its six stick-legs and presents its keyboard to Lee.

SMITH-CORONA

I want you to type a few words into me, words that I'll dictate to you.

Lee hesitantly tips his chair forward again and settles into his typing position, fingers poised over the keyboard, back slightly hunched.

SMITH-CORONA

OK, now... first sentence is: Homosexuality is the best all-around cover an agent ever had.

Lee hesitates. The beetle twitters in impatience and wriggles obscenely. Lee gently types in the first few letters. The keys feel squishy, unstable.

SMITH-CORONA

(very irritated)

Don't be such a pansy! Be forceful. Hurt me!

Lee draws a deep breath and then pounds in the sentence. The beetle squeals in delight, emitting a sour, vaguely rectal smell in the process. Lee shoves his chair back in revulsion.

SMITH-CORONA

Oh, oh! I love it. That was a great sentence. Those are words to live by, Bill. I'm glad those words went into your report. Our new management will be so pleased you see our point of view.

LEE

What are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

21 CONT'D: (3)

SMITH-CORONA

Well, just that we appreciate that you might find the thought of engaging in, uh, homosexual acts morally and, uh, possibly even physically repulsive...

Lee stands up and begins to move towards the door. The beetle dances around on the table top, still chattering away.

SMITH-CORONA

...and we are encouraged that you are able to overcome these personal, uh, barriers in order to better serve the cause to which we are all so devoted...

Lee slips out the door and closes it quietly behind him.

22 INT. CAFE CENTRAL - DAY

Lee is sitting alone in the Cafe Central reading a two-week-old newspaper.

Soon Hans is sitting beside him.

HANS

You have left the Smith-Corona at home?

LEE

It's doing all right without me.

Hans laughs, then realizes that he doesn't really get the joke. The laugh dies.

HANS

You have contacted Doktor Benway?

LEE

I told you before, I've never met him.

HANS

Bill, I can smell him on you. Benway marks out all those whom he has met like a lemur pissing on a liana vine to mark his territory. You are a marked man, Bill.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONT'D:

Lee is about to respond when through the cafe window he sees a nattily-dressed man, tweeds, prematurely silver hair, extremely concise and proper in the New England rather than English manner. With him is a woman who, except for her hair and style of dress, could be the reincarnation of his wife, Joan. It is conceivable that this woman, also named JOAN, could be played by the actress who plays Joan Lee.

The couple are rising from their sidewalk table in front of the cafe, and are getting their various newspapers and half-written letters packed away before they move on.

LEE

That couple, Hans. Who are they?

HANS

Tom and Joan Frost. Americans who have lived here for a very long time. They are both writers. Writers of fiction, like you. They have a nice flat in the new building at the foot of the mountain.

(maliciously)

They are visited constantly by many handsome young Arab men, sometimes two or three at a time.

LEE

Can you introduce me?

HANS

I do not think it would be to your advantage. For some reason...

(raspy chuckle)

...the woman has taken a serious dislike to me.

Hans turns to an adjacent table at which are seated two young Arab men and a Spanish boy. He gestures to the Spaniard.

HANS

Kiki, come and sit with us.

Lee turns in time to see Kiki smile agreeably, take a last sip of his mint tea, and excuse himself. Lee blinks. Can it be the same Kiki he met in the New York bar? He can't be sure (it is the same actor).

Kiki gets up and sits down beside Lee and across from Hans.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONT'D: (2)

HANS

Kiki, this is Mr. Lee.

Kiki shyly shakes hands with Lee, no sign of recognition in his eyes.

KIKI

Hello.

Lee just nods.

HANS

Mr. Lee is curious about the Frost couple. He would like to meet them.

KIKI

I think the woman would have sex with you, Mr. Lee. The man... he only likes Arab boys.

Lee is rattled by Kiki's sweet bluntness, but he tries hard not to let it show.

LEE

I don't want to fuck them. I just want to talk to them.

HANS

You know how Americans are, Kiki. They love to travel, and then they only want to meet other Americans and talk about how hard it is to get a decent hamburger.

KIKI

There is a party tonight at the Frost apartment.

(gestures to the two  
Arabs at his own table)

My friends and I would be happy to take you with us.

23 EXT. SOCCO CHICO - NIGHT

Lee makes his way back to his rooms. Like all foreigners, he is harrassed by every shape and size of local "guide" looking for a few dirhams. Lee's technique is to smile, shake his head, and say nothing.

24 INT. LEE'S ROOMS - NIGHT

Lee cautiously opens his door. His typewriter, now perfectly normal, sits on his table. Lee enters and closes the door. Just as he takes a step into the room, he hears the toilet flush.

Lee freezes. A man steps out of the WC and into the room with Lee. It is Kiki.

Lee exhales in partial relief.

LEE

What are you doing here?

KIKI

I came to take you to the party.  
I had to use the toilet.

LEE

I locked the door.

KIKI

I have many friends in Interzone.  
A friend is a key that will open  
a locked door.

LEE

Is that why they call you Keykey?

Kiki's face is blank. He doesn't get Lee's nervous joke.

KIKI

I could be your friend.

LEE

Did Smith-Corona send you?

Kiki gets close to Lee, starts to caress the back of his neck. Lee turns to face Kiki, possibly to protest. Kiki shakes some black powder onto his fingertips from a hollow, centipede-shaped pendant which Lee notices for the first time. He licks Lee on the throat, then works the powder into the wet spot.

KIKI

It was you, you who called me.  
I knew that you needed me.

LEE

That's not true...

The dissolving powder has left a bruise on Lee's throat. Kiki kisses Lee full on the mouth. Lee fights it for a second, then kisses Kiki back. They get into it hot and heavy.

## 25 EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHT

A clapped-out '48 Plymouth convertible careens up a twisty mountain road which winds high above Interzone. Lee is in the back seat with the two Arab friends of Kiki, who is driving.

## 26 INT. PLYMOUTH - NIGHT

The Arabs are treating Lee like a tart, fondling and kissing him at will. And Lee responds with the sensual passivity of a tart, albeit a slightly dazed one.

## 27 EXT. CAFE DE PARIS - NIGHT

The Plymouth pulls up to the front of the Cafe de Paris and Lee and the three young men spill out, much to the amusement of the expatriate haute monde of Interzone, including Tom and Joan Frost.

Lee is mortified, but too dazed to do anything about it. Kiki takes him by the arm and leads him to the tables set up on the sidewalk.

KIKI

C'mon. We're all walking from here.

## 28 EXT. NARROW INTERZONE STREET - NIGHT

One of those Mediterranean moon-lit night walks up a steep, narrow street, olive trees, plane trees, shadows, laughter.

Lee, the Frosts, and a small party make their way towards the Frost apartment. Lee and JOAN FROST are alone at the head of the group. Tom Frost is amongst the mid-pack strollers with Kiki and his friends.

JOAN

You are the new writer, aren't you? You've just arrived?

LEE

A few days ago. I just write reports. That's not exactly writing, is it?

JOAN

Who do you report to?

LEE

Uh, it's not always clear...

(CONTINUED)

28 CONT'D:

JOAN

(laughs)

That sounds like writing to me.  
Did you come to Interzone for the  
Arab boys?

LEE

No, I didn't.

JOAN

Tom and I did. That's quite a hot  
threeome you arrived with.  
They're very cheap and they're  
really a lot of fun.

LEE

(out of his depth)

Oh, are you supposed to pay them?

JOAN

You'll pay them, don't worry. A  
missing lighter here, a few  
borrowed dollars there. It's all  
very equitable.

TOM FROST now strides up to Joan and Lee. He takes Lee by  
the elbow.

FROST

You use a Smith-Corona, don't you?

(Lee is confused and  
doesn't respond)

To write with? Typewriter?

LEE

Oh, I do, yas.

Joan suddenly spots a friend behind them.

JOAN

Oh, there's Dorothea.

Joan slows her pace to allow her friend to catch up. Lee  
and Tom chug up the hill, leaving her behind.

FROST

I wouldn't use a Smith-Corona  
myself. Too demanding.

LEE

Demanding?

(CONTINUED)

28 CONT'D: (2)

FROST

Oh, come on. We're both writers,  
we know what we're talking about.

LEE

Well, I'm new at this game. You  
mean..?

FROST

All portables have a tendency to  
transform into things at certain  
crucial moments.

LEE

The big desk models don't?

FROST

They tend to be more stable, yes.  
But then, you don't get that  
wonderful feedback.

LEE

That would be a loss.

FROST

If I get blocked again, I'll let  
you try my Olivetti.  
(with obscure sexual  
innuendo)  
Her inventiveness will surprise  
you.

LEE

I can't wait.

FROST

(sotto voce)  
They say you murdered your wife.  
Is that true?

LEE

(stunned)  
Who told you that?

FROST

Word gets around.

LEE

It wasn't murder. It was an  
accident.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONT'D: (3)

FROST

There are no accidents. Everything is intended. For example, "without exactly intending it," I've been killing my own wife slowly, over a period of years.

LEE

Why?

FROST

She's a better writer than I am. I've done everything I can to suppress her, but she won't stop writing. It tends to be compulsive, as I'm sure you know.

LEE

But to kill her...?

FROST

It's not intentional, though. You see? On the level of conscious intention, it's insane, monstrous.

LEE

(nonplussed but game)

But you do consciously know it. We're discussing it.

FROST

Not consciously. This is all happening telepathically, non-consciously.

LEE

What do you mean?

FROST

If you look carefully at my lips, you'll realize that I'm actually saying something else. I'm not actually telling you about the several ways that I'm gradually murdering Joan, about the housekeeper, Fadela, whom I've hired to make Joan deathly ill by witchcraft, about the medicines and drugs I've given her, about the constant nibbling away at her self-esteem and sanity that I've managed without being at all obvious about it...

(CONTINUED)

28 CONT'D: (4)

Sure enough, now that Lee notices, Tom has been totally out of lip sync for at least this last bit of dialogue. And not just out of sync: they are actually having an entirely different conversation than the one Lee thought they were having. The new conversation now tunes in and Tom's lips return to sync with his words.

FROST

...although Joanie finds that she simply cannot be as obsessively precise as she wants to be unless she writes everything in longhand.

At that moment, Joan laughs wildly somewhere down the street behind them. Lee strains to make her out in the shadows. She seems to be with Kiki and his friends, but he's not sure.

Lee turns back to Tom, panicked.

LEE

I'm afraid I'm not going to be very good company tonight. Thanks for the invite anyway. I'll have to take a rain check.

Lee shoots off down an even darker, narrower side street and is gone, leaving Tom to shrug and slow down until his guests catch up to him.

29 EXT. INTERZONE BEACH - DAY

Lee wakes up on the sand of the desolate, flinty Interzone beach, dazed, aching. Overcast sky, smeared sun. Cold black wind through the bones. Lee pulls himself into a huddle against the wind.

A man in a white suit walks the stony sand, approaches Lee. His walk is casual, assured, his hat and cigarette are both at jaunty angles. It's CARLETON, a young, wealthy, decadent Brit looking and sounding like something out of Brideshead Revisited.

CARLETON

Enjoying the beach? I would never have expected to see you up and out so early. You certainly were in rough shape at the O'Leary party last night.

LEE

Was I?

(CONTINUED)

29 CONT'D:

CARLETON

You were very raw. Emotionally,  
I mean. You seemed to be in a lot  
of pain.

LEE

I don't remember it. The pain.  
In fact, I don't remember you or  
the O'Leary party either.

Lee tries to stand up but finds that he can't. He stretches  
out his hand to Carleton, who helps to pull him upright.

CARLETON

Well, it was a very intense  
performance in any case.

With Carleton's help, Lee manages to get ambulatory.

LEE

Thanks.

CARLETON

Name's Carleton. Can I buy you  
breakfast?

30 INT. EL MINZAH HOTEL BREAKFAST ROOM - DAY

Lee and Carleton have buns and tea for breakfast at the  
El Minzah Hotel, which is a lot posher and more expensive  
than any place Lee would ever go on his own.

CARLETON

I've seen you around, but I had  
no idea you were queer.

LEE

Queer?

CARLETON

I saw you arrive with that Spanish  
boy and his two Arab friends. What  
an entrance!

LEE

A curse. Been in our family for  
generations. The Lees have always  
been perverts. I shall never  
forget the unspeakable horror that  
(more)

(CONTINUED)

30 CONT'D:

LEE (Cont'd)

froze the lymph in my glands when the baneful word seared my reeling brain: I was a homosexual. I thought of the painted, simpering female impersonators I had seen in a Baltimore night club. Could it be possible I was one of those subhuman things? I walked the streets in a daze, like a man with a light concussion. I would have destroyed myself, but a wise old queen -- Bobo, we called her -- taught me that I had a duty to live and to bear my burden proudly for all to see. Poor Bobo came to a sticky end. He was riding in the Duc de Ventre's Hispano-Suiza when his falling hemorrhoids blew out of the car and wrapped around the rear wheel. He was completely gutted, leaving an empty shell sitting there on the giraffe-skin upholstery. Even the eyes and the brain went, with a horrible shlupping sound. The Duc says he will carry that ghastly shlup with him to his mausoleum...

Carleton has been staring at Lee in amused disbelief. He has no idea where this routine has come from. In truth, neither does Lee, who looks quite pale, the translucence of the possessed, perhaps.

CARLETON

You look as though you could use a drink. My place?

LEE

No, I... I'd better go home. I have a report to write.

31 INT. LEE'S ROOMS - DAY

In his flat, Lee types another report. We are close on the Smith-Corona hammers striking the page. We read:

I shall never forget the unspeakable horror that froze the lymph in my glands when the baneful word seared my brain.

Lee gets up, walks to the French doors leading to his balcony, opens them, steps out onto his balcony.

## 32 EXT. LEE'S BALCONY - DAY

Mountains on the right, steely sea on the left, the Arab Quarter steaming beneath him.

Lee slides over to the iron table in the middle of the balcony and picks up the ornate, glass-stoppered vial which sits next to a tea cup. There is just a bit of black powder left in the vial.

Lee licks his wrist and shakes the powder onto the wet spot, then rubs the powder in until it disappears, leaving a black, purple and yellow bruise behind.

Lee looks into the empty vial hungrily.

## 33 EXT. MEDINA - DAY

Lee walks through the narrow, teeming streets. In contrast to an earlier stroll, he now makes no impression as he walks, attracting no guides, no importunings by desperate souvenir sellers, as though he were dreaming the walk and not physically there. El hombre invisible.

## 34 EXT. MEDINA. HANS'S DRUG FACTORY - DAY

Lee arrives at the door of what was Hans's centipede drug factory. Rugs and copper plates are now suspended around the doorway. The place has a different tone entirely. With a feeling of trepidation, Lee enters.

## 35 INT. HANS'S DRUG FACTORY. GROUND FLOOR - DAY

The place has been cleaned out and replaced by a garden-variety rug and curio shop. Lee goes upstairs, unnoticed by the staff who are busy haggling over mint tea with tourists.

## 36 INT. HANS'S DRUG FACTORY. UPSTAIRS - DAY

Upstairs looks familiar to Lee. The warehouse shape and skylights are still there, even the wall hooks which held slabs of giant centipede - but the place has been given over to the manufacture of curios and rugs.

Lee examines one of the wall hooks, from which a scimitar in a braided leather scabbard now hangs. There is the tiniest trace of mucousy centipede meat still stuck to the point of the hook. Lee looks around surreptitiously, then sucks the macroscopic piece of black flesh off the iron hook.

INT. CAFE CENTRAL - DAY

The cafe is also teeming. A boatload or two of tourists must have hit town. There are fresh new faces in the cafe. There are also Tom and Joan Frost, he typing away on his Olivetti, she reading and correcting pages of manuscript, presumably her own, with a series of coloured pencils.

Lee spots them but isn't sure he wants to stay: he's looking for Hans. But Tom glances up at him, smiles, and stops writing. He waves Lee over, then begins the involved ritual of loading his English briar pipe.

Lee sits down across from Tom. Joan gives him a quick acknowledging smile and goes back to her work.

FROST

You made a big hit with our young friend Eugene.

LEE

Eugene?

FROST

Carleton.

LEE

He found me on the beach the morning after your soiree, which I'm very sorry I missed. I was in an odd state of mind.

Joan looks up from her work. She can't stay out of it.

JOAN

Eugene said you were wonderfully funny. Said you did a little routine that made him chuckle to himself all day.

FROST

You could probably get him into bed if you worked at it a bit. Deadly aphrodisiac, humour.

LEE

I'm not... I really don't...

(pause)

Have you seen Hans around?

Joan is not interested in Hans. She turns to a passing WAITER, chatters away in what strikes Lee as effortless Arabic, then goes back to her coloured pencils.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONT'D:

FROST

You mean you haven't heard?

LEE

No, I haven't heard.

FROST

Hans was arrested and deported two weeks ago. They let him take his clothes and his passport, and that was it. Everything else, nationalized, as they say.

LEE

Why?

FROST

He neglected to pay off the right officials, I think. You knew he ran a drug factory in the medina.

LEE

I had heard that, yas.

(delicate pause)

What happened to the factory?

FROST

Somebody else moved in and took it over. Moved it out of town, probably. Now that I think of it, that must be what really happened. Hans got outmanoeuvred by one of his many rivals.

LEE

(playing dumb)

What drug did he manufacture?

FROST

Nothing too exotic. Majoun, I think. Local hash-resin-and-almond paste. You can spread it on a muffin like jam.

Frost digs around in his jacket pocket and pulls out a small English jam jar. He hands it to Lee.

FROST

Try it. They eat it like candy here. And while you're at it, why don't you try my Olivetti? Take it now. Try it out.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONT'D: (2)

Lee hesitates. Joan looks up at him. He now notices that she looks bad, glassy-eyed, stringy-haired. She blows him a kiss and smiles. Her teeth are bad, stained, dark-spotted. He hadn't thought her teeth were bad before.

38 INT. LEE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Lee sits at his desk, the two typewriters in front of him, side by side. On his own, the larger Smith-Corona, he types:

Dear Martin,

Please help me, I've got to get out of Interzone. I'm dying of loneliness. I can't connect with anybody.

On the slimmer Olivetti, he types:

Dear Hank,

I seem to be addicted to something that doesn't really exist. I am very fearful of what the withdrawal symptoms will be.

Lee leans back and gazes at the two machines. He gets up and goes to the sink, pours himself a dirty tumblerful of an anonymous brand of whiskey, opens the majoun jam jar and spoons the majoun into his mouth with his index finger. He then washes the sticky stuff down his throat with the whiskey.

From behind him comes a piercing animal shriek, followed by a horrible primal crunching sound.

Lee whirls around. The Smith-Corona is eating the Olivetti, which writhes and shudders as each mouthful of its metallic carapace is torn away to reveal pulpy yellow insect flesh underneath.

The Smith-Corona takes another bite and then turns to Lee, still chewing with its metallic insect mandibles. On the table, the Olivetti lies on its side, twitching and shuddering, mortally wounded, oozing, mandibles agape.

Lee's insect-typewriter downs the last big chunk of insect meat and then begins to speak, strips of carapace and pulpy gobbets of flesh spraying towards Lee as it does so.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONT'D:

SMITH-CORONA

Migod, Lee! Surely you know better than to bring an enemy agent into your own home! You gave me no choice. You were giving him access to your innermost vulnerabilities, forcing them on him, for godsake.

LEE

(horrified)

That machine doesn't belong to me. It's Tom Frost's. What am I going to tell him?

SMITH-CORONA

(business-like)

What's your assessment of the situation? Did Frost know what he was doing or is he just a dupe?

LEE

Frost? Well, he... he seemed to be aware that his typewriter was more than just a typewriter.

SMITH-CORONA

(impatient,  
disappointed)

C'mon, c'mon now. The relationship between writers and their writing machines is well-known, insignificant. Did Frost know that his machine was an Islamic agent, that is of course the real question.

LEE

(choosing his words  
carefully)

He and his wife seem to have a close relationship with the Arab population here...

SMITH-CORONA

His wife... yes, yes of course...

Smith-Corona picks flesh out of his mandibles with the sharp spurs which run down the back of his left foreleg. Behind it, the Olivetti still twitches horribly, occasionally releasing a hissing sigh like hot air whistling out of a boiling lobster.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONT'D: (2)

SMITH-CORONA

Bill, despite the ungodly pressures of international espionage, our people have still managed to retain a human face, if you catch my drift.

LEE

I'm not sure that I do.

SMITH-CORONA

We listen to the innermost voices of our agents in the field, Bill. They are not just disposable sanitary napkins to us.

LEE

No, no, of course not.

SMITH-CORONA

Your last two reports... I think we can kill several birds with one gallstone. The key is Joan Frost. You will connect with her. You will seduce her. You will discover the substance of her reports and deliver them directly to me...

LEE

But what about Kiki and the Arab boys? What about my cover?

SMITH-CORONA

The opposition will be thrown into total confusion. And as for your mysterious drug addiction, as reported to our unfortunate friend, here...

LEE

I apologize for that... I had no idea...

SMITH-CORONA

...you are herewith assigned to discover the whereabouts of the new Black Meat factory. Ultimate Objective: total co-option for the sole use of the Firm's Reconditioning Centre.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

38 CONT'D: (3)

SMITH-CORONA (Cont'd)  
(with slight sarcasm)  
Is the purpose of your life now  
clear? Of course, as an agent  
of the Firm, your access to our  
Black Meat powder will be  
unlimited.

With great effort, the Olivetti has been attempting to roll off the table. Now, just before Lee has a chance to respond to Smith-Corona's question, it succeeds, and crashes to the floor with the sound of a ten-pound mechanical grapefruit, scattering arms, keys, letters and pulp everywhere.

The Olivetti begins to painfully drag itself towards the door, but the Smith-Corona leaps on it with gleeful warlike twitters and begins to devour it even as it drags them both along the floor.

Lee flees the scene in horror.

39 EXT. FROST APT. BUILDING - NIGHT

Lee walks briskly down the street and into the building which houses the Frost flat.

40 INT. FROST BLDG. LIFT - NIGHT

Lee rides the claustrophobic lift which only holds three small people at best.

41 INT. FROST CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Lee exits the lift and walks to the door of the Frost flat. His gait is now much more tentative. He stops in front of the flat's door and listens for a moment. He hears nothing. He knocks. There is a sudden rustle inside, a pause, then light footsteps approach the door.

The latch rattles, the door opens. A very weary Joan Frost peers out at Lee. She does not seem to be decaying the way she was when Lee last saw her. A hint of a smile when she sees him.

JOAN  
Tom's gone out with the boys.

LEE  
I came to see you.

42 INT. FROST FLAT - NIGHT

Inside, a surprising atmosphere: hot, steamy, plants, incense, swaths of cloth hanging everywhere, carpets, cushions, all of which transform the place into a tent in the middle of an oasis.

Joan has created a small European corner centering on a desk covered with pens, paper and other writing materials,

LEE

You write in longhand.

JOAN

Yes. I'm not good with machines. They intimidate me.

LEE

I think I broke Tom's typewriter.

JOAN

The Olivetti? He'll be furious.

LEE

Does he have another one?

JOAN

He has this one, an Arabic one.

Lee checks it out. It is very bulky and has twice as many keys as a normal Western machine. It bears the brand name Mujahaddin written in Western characters.

LEE

Does he use it much?

JOAN

Not much. What happened to the Olivetti?

LEE

I probably just threw it on the floor and smashed it.

JOAN

Probably? You don't know?

LEE

I, uh, suffer from sporadic hallucinations.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONT'D:

JOAN  
 (a light laugh)  
 Join the club.  
 (indicates Arabic  
 typewriter)  
 Do you intend to kill Tom's  
 Mujahaddin?

LEE  
 Only in self-defense. I understood  
 that writing could be dangerous,  
 but I didn't realize that the  
 danger came from the machinery.

JOAN  
 What are you talking about?

LEE  
 (moving the Mujahaddin  
 into place on her  
 table)  
 I'll show you.

JOAN  
 (amused)  
 You're going to write something  
 in Arabic?

LEE  
 No. You are. Do you have any  
 objections to taking this?

Lee produces his jam jar and opens it. Joan gives it a  
 sniff, then laughs.

JOAN  
 Of course not. It's my own  
 mixture.

43 INT. FROST FLAT. A SHORT TIME LATER - NIGHT

Joan sits at her desk in front of the typewriter. Lee rolls  
 paper in for her.

JOAN  
 I don't like using Tom's things.  
 We don't trespass on each other.

LEE  
 Write something erotic.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONT'D:

JOAN

Erotic?

LEE

Sexy. Dirty.

Joan begins to type. We see the words hit the paper but we don't know what they mean.

As she works away, the typewriter begins break out into pulsating boils, which then spread into undefinable but sexy-fleshy lumps. Before long the Mujahaddin has become one typewriter-flesh-creature which is wholly sexual, pulsing, breathing, orgasming. Joan is still typing, faster and faster now, on keys which have become demonstratively clitoral.

Lee begins to nuzzle her. She takes his hand and places his fingers over the keys, forcing him to write terrible, forbidden sexual things. The machine goes crazy, leaps onto Lee's lap, shreds his pants, sucks at his flesh. Joan sticks her tongue down his throat. The machine slurps onto her ass, gluing it to Lee's crotch with wormlike mucous.

Suddenly the door bursts open with a bang. Enter FADELA, hair pulled back into a tight, aristocratic bun, smoking a long cigarette in an even longer holder, breeches, boots, riding crop. She takes a beat while she absorbs the scene, then shrieks at Joan.

FADELA

Mrs. Frost! This is an evil and insane thing that you are doing! You must stop it at once!

LEE

(breathless)

Who's she?

JOAN

(breathless)

Uh, my housekeeper.

Fadela throws down her cigarette and begins to slash at the sex-blob with her riding crop, howling in Arabic at it all the while. The slashes just make it moan in ecstasy, but the words make it release the couple. It blobs to the floor, oozing a sheet of slime which encases the lower bodies of the couple.

The thing is chased around the room by Fadela, who traps it in the deep, stuccoed window casement. She approaches

(CONTINUED)

43 CONT'D: (2)

it slowly, with sadistic pleasure, torturing it with Arabic words. The poor thing shudders, its keys clattering out a message on its last sheet of paper. Fadela rips the paper out of the machine and rips it to shreds with her teeth. With a tormented animal scream, the thing leaps out the window.

44 EXT. STREET OUTSIDE FROST FLAT - NIGHT

Tom and an Arab friend, Hafid, not a boy but a handsome middle-aged man, are just coming home when his typewriter, now purely normal and mechanical, comes crashing through the window to smash into a thousand pieces at their feet.

FROST

That's my Mujahaddin, for God's sake!

45 INT. FROST APARTMENT BUILDING STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Frost and Hafid run into the doorway and are halfway up the stairs when Fadela comes wailing down past them, cursing at the top of her lungs and slashing at the walls with her riding crop. The men shrink back from her in terror; she swoops past them without seeming to notice that they exist. They look at each other, stunned, then continue their dash up the stairs.

46 INT. FROST FLAT - NIGHT

Lee is trying to cover himself with his shredded pants. Joan is mopping down her sweat and straightening up.

LEE

Your housekeeper threw Tom's typewriter out the window.

JOAN

I saw it jump.

(nervous)

Didn't you? She made it commit suicide. It jumped of its own accord. You did see that, didn't you?

LEE

I did see that, yes. But that can't be what happened.

(CONTINUED)

46 CONT'D:

JOAN

It can be, it can, truly.  
 (whispering, afraid  
 someone will hear)  
 You have no idea how powerful  
 Fadela is. I found her selling  
 vegetables in the Socco Chico.  
 She runs our lives now, both of  
 us...

Tom and Hafid run into the room.

FROST

Joan! Are you all right? What  
 happened?

JOAN

Fadela stormed in and threw your  
 typewriter out the window.

FROST

That's it! The woman has to go!

LEE

(nodding his assent)  
 She certainly seemed dangerous  
 to me.

Lee's presence just seems to be accepted, as though he  
 might reasonably be expected to show up anywhere at any  
 time.

Hafid has been digging around the various potted plants  
 in the apartment, as though that had been his sole purpose  
 in coming to the apartment. Now he pulls a small plant up  
 by the roots and whoops in triumph.

HAFID

Look, Tom! Look!

They all look. A small, tightly wrapped cloth packet lies  
 entangled in the roots of the plant, the roots having  
 evidently grown around it over time. Tom disentangles it  
 and unceremoniously rips it open to expose a mess of dried  
 blood, hair and fingernails.

Tom looks meaningfully at Joan.

FROST

That's how Fadela's been  
 controlling you, Joan. Your blood,  
 your pubic hair, your  
 fingernails...

(CONTINUED)

46 CONT'D: (2)

JOAN

(serenely)

Fadela controls nobody, and you know it. We have forced control upon her. The poor woman is probably desperate to get out of our household...

HAFID

(very sincere, very concerned)

No, missus! She is making you say everything, even that. You must find all of these in your house, you must destroy them...

Frost turns to Lee and takes him gently by the elbow. The gesture is somehow completely wrong, but Lee has to let it happen.

FROST

I'm going to need my Olivetti, Bill. I feel desperately insecure without a typewriter in the house. I've never been able to write in longhand, you see. Never.

LEE

Oh, well, I haven't had a chance to try it out yet, Tom... I was kinda hoping...

FROST

(to Joan)

I'll leave Hafid here with you, Joanie, in case Fadela comes back. Bill and I will go to his place and pick up the Olivetti now...

JOAN

I'll go with Bill. You two stay here. I need to get out.

47 EXT. STREETS NEAR FROST FLAT - NIGHT

Lee and Joan walk the streets near the Frost flat.

LEE

When you were talking about how innocent Fadela was to Tom... you  
(more)

(CONTINUED)

47 CONT'D:

LEE (Cont'd)  
sounded like a spy in a Soviet  
hotel room: bad acting for the  
microphones in the walls.

JOAN  
Fadela's magic packets are hidden  
all over our flat. They act like  
like radio transmitters.

LEE  
(testing)  
Tom seems to think you can just  
get rid of her.

JOAN  
He always says that, then changes  
his mind. He's afraid of her too.

LEE  
She made no pretence of being a  
simple housekeeper.

JOAN  
Fadela was jealous. She is always  
the third in any sex that I have.

LEE  
Even with Tom?

JOAN  
Tom and I don't have sex. Not  
since he wrote the first novel.

LEE  
The novel stopped the sex?

JOAN  
The novel stopped the love, and  
the sex followed.

LEE  
How does that work?

JOAN  
(not exactly answering)  
Writing is prophecy.

48 INT. LEE'S ROOMS - NIGHT

Lee is boiling water in a pan in preparation for making  
tea. Somewhere in the room, Joan laughs.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONT'D:

JOAN  
This typewriter is fucked. Tom  
will go crazy.

Lee turns around to find Joan sitting on the floor in the  
corner amid pieces of Frost's Olivetti.

LEE  
My Smith-Corona attacked it.  
Smith-Corona can be pretty vicious  
when roused to anger.

(pause)  
What is Tom's prophecy for you?

JOAN  
Madness, disease, suicide...

LEE  
(shrugs)  
That's very classical.

JOAN  
...but worst of all, wilful  
betrayal of talent.

LEE  
Which in practice means..?

JOAN  
That I never finish writing  
anything I begin. That I am afraid  
to do what has to be done, to  
create something that can be a  
danger to me, something that has  
a life of its own and that can  
cause me harm. That I therefore  
never publish anything, that I  
die unknown. And it's been  
happening, it's been happening  
for twenty years and now I am  
going mad, and his prophecy will  
come true.

Lee brings mint tea in two glasses over to Joan on the  
floor. He sits down beside her.

LEE  
You've got to stop writing in  
longhand.

JOAN  
(despairing)  
Oh, god!

(CONTINUED)

48 CONT'D: (2)

LEE

I mean it. You've got to write on my machine. It will make all the difference.

JOAN

I can't believe it. You're serious.

LEE

Smith-Corona has made a lot of careers. Smith-Corona... unleashes things...

JOAN

You aren't going to have a machine for very long. Tom is going to want it to replace his Olivetti. What are you going to do then?

LEE

I won't give it to him.

JOAN

He's very good at manipulating the authorities here in Interzone. A stolen typewriter is a serious matter.

LEE

Then let's leave Interzone.

JOAN

I can't leave. Not unless...

LEE

Unless what?

JOAN

Unless I beg forgiveness from Fadela.

49 EXT. SOCCO GRANDE STREETS - DAY

The couple walk along the thronging streets of the grand market, a strange pair: she small and waif-like but with tremendous, magnetic energy; he tall, thin, invisible, the incarnation of entropy.

She stops them when they are in the middle of a small square jammed almost in vertical layers with Arab buyers and sellers.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONT'D:

JOAN

Fadela is here, within thirty feet of us. See if you can find her.

Lee looks around. He can see nobody that even remotely resembles the elegant Anglicized Arab witch that he vividly remembers. Lee shrugs. Joan laughs and claps her hands.

JOAN

There! She's right there!

Joan is gesturing towards a group of hefty Arab women in full local dress sitting around a discarded wooden packing-crate in which sits another woman who is holding court. The crate has been turned into a kind of compacted living room with all mod cons. The woman in the crate, Lee realizes, is Fadela.

The women all seem to be talking at once, including Fadela. But what Fadela is doing fascinates Lee: she is hacking off slices of a six-foot black centipede coiled in the crate with her and laying them out prettily, like salmon steaks, on a long wooden bench in front of her.

It occurs to Lee that it just might be Fadela who has taken over Hans's Black Meat concession.

LEE

What's that she's cutting up?

JOAN

A sea-creature, I think. I've never seen it before.

LEE

And the women? They work for her?

JOAN

(laughs)

In a sense. These women are all Fadela's lovers.

At that moment Fadela catches sight of Joan and curtly beckons to her. Joan casts her eyes down demurely, then turns to Lee.

JOAN

I'm going to have stay here with Fadela an' do penance. Meet me at the Cafe Central just after sundown.

Joan turns and runs off to join Fadela in her crate. Lee stares hungrily at the slabs of centipede meat, but nobody seems to be buying or selling them and Lee turns away.

50 INT. CAFE CENTRAL - NIGHT

Lee has been sitting in the Cafe Central for some time. The remains of three mint teas sit on the table before him. Joan is obviously not going to show.

51 EXT. LEE'S ROOMS - NIGHT

Lee throws open his door and then locks it after him. He flicks on the light and finds a glass with some whiskey at the bottom of it. The glass is cloudy and stained and there is something dead with translucent wings stuck to the side of the glass but Lee greedily downs the whiskey.

His typewriter sits with an expectant air on the table. Lee sits down in front of it, rolls in a sheet of paper, and begins to write:

Report by William Lee on the Black Meat Takeover in Interzone

Item: the Black Meat concession in Interzone has been co-opted by lesbian agents of Islam Inc. led by the bitch queen commonly known as Fadela.

52 INT. LEE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lee walks into his bedroom and feels under his mattress for the vial of black powder. He taps some onto his index finger and rubs it into his gums.

Lee holds the vial up to the light and shakes it. There is not much left.

Lee stuffs the vial back under the mattress and walks over to the fly-specked mirror behind the door. He draws back his lips and examines his gums, which are now purple-black, bruised.

A twittery, insect voice calls Lee from the main room.

Lee draws a deep breath and leaves the bedroom.

53 INT. LEE'S ROOMS - NIGHT

Waiting for Lee in the main room, pacing back and forth on the table in a very agitated, even petulant, manner is Lee's insect-typewriter controller, Smith-Corona. When Smith-Corona senses Lee, he stops and rotates to face him, paper-holder antenna twitching anxiously.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONT'D:

SMITH-CORONA

I have been instructed to reveal to you that you were programmed to shoot your wife, Joan Lee. It was not an act of free will on your part.

Lee picks up the glass and, in a fury, throws it against the wall.

LEE

Who the fuck asked you?

SMITH-CORONA

You worry me, Bill. You cause me many anxious moments.

Lee is in no mood to be fucked around by an insect-typewriter. He snorts sarcastically.

LEE

(sarcastic)

Gee. Golly. Sorry, S-C. Hope you're not losing any sleep.

SMITH-CORONA

No need to be nasty, Bill. This is just one of those unpleasant moments of truth we all have to face sooner or later.

LEE

We?!

SMITH-CORONA

(ignoring the comment)

There was some thought that you might actually want to hear this information. That it might assuage your guilt.

LEE

Save the psychoanalysis for your grasshopper friends.

SMITH-CORONA

(ignoring the comment,  
continuing gleefully)

You have to admit it was a pretty tasty set-up, Bill. Joan marries  
(more)

(CONTINUED)

53 CONT'D: (2)

SMITH-CORONA (Cont'd)  
you as part of her agent's cover,  
not realizing that you are the  
enemy agent assigned to kill her!  
As elegant as it is brilliant.

LEE  
(playing along,  
determined to probe  
for the reality)  
You're saying she was sent by  
Islam, Inc. to marry me?

SMITH-CORONA  
Yes. In fact, she was sent to you  
by Fadela, who was her controller.  
We did a lot of ground work to  
set you up in their files as the  
prime candidate for marriage.

LEE  
And it didn't matter that I didn't  
know anything about it?

SMITH-CORONA  
An unconscious agent is an  
effective agent, Bill. All agents  
defect and all resisters sell out.  
That's the sad truth. It does  
generate some ethical paradoxes  
at times. I'm the first to admit  
that.

LEE  
You suggested to me that Joan was  
possibly not human. What did you  
mean by that?

SMITH-CORONA  
Women aren't human, Bill. Or  
perhaps more precisely, they are  
a different species from men, with  
different wills and different  
purposes on earth. You know this  
instinctively, Bill, and it's your  
instincts that make you such a  
good operative.

LEE  
I'm talking about Joan. If Joan  
Lee wasn't human, what was she?

(CONTINUED)

53 CONT'D: (3)

SMITH-CORONA

Ah, well, Joan was a special case.  
Joan was elite-corps centipede.

LEE

(flat repetition)

Joan was a centipede.

Without warning, Lee's door explodes open and Tom Frost and Hafid burst into the room. Tom is theatrically brandishing a semi-automatic pistol which Lee can't help noticing is a .380 Star, the same model with which he shot Joan Lee. Smith-Corona flattens out on the table and freezes like a trapped cat.

FROST

Where's my Olivetti?

LEE

Jesus, Tom! Are you nuts?

FROST

Don't fuck with me, Lee! I want my typewriter. A lot of people have tried to silence me. All have failed!

Hafid - he's a natural housekeeper - has discovered the remains of Frost's Olivetti in the corner.

HAFID

Tom! She's here, in pieces. I fear it's hopeless.

Frost keeps his gun trained on Lee and moves to the corner to join Hafid. He allows himself a quick glance at the typewriter bits piled in the corner, stirs them with his foot, then advances on Lee.

FROST

All right. We're taking your Smith-Corona. Hafid? Bring me the bag.

At this, Smith-Corona leaps off the table and heads for the open door, squealing like a pig. Tom viciously kicks the door shut, almost decapitating Smith-Corona, who bashes into the door with the by-now-traditional sound of a mechanical grapefruit. Smith-Corona sits back on his haunches, stunned.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONT'D: (4)

Hafid runs over to Frost, pulling a canvas bag out from under his jacket. Frost and Hafid begin to stuff Smith-Corona into the bag. Smith-Corona moans and begins to come around.

SMITH-CORONA

(regaining  
consciousness)

Wha... what's going on? Wait,  
wait, this is a heinous mistake  
you're making. Lee! Do something!  
Stop them!

Lee can't help but enjoy Smith-Corona's anguish, but he plays it cool.

LEE

He's got a gun, S-C. You don't  
want to lose your best agent, do  
you?

SMITH-CORONA

(as he disappears into  
the bag)

You're going to have to write a  
full report, Lee. And I mean full!

LEE

How am I going to write it, S-C?  
Longhand?

There is a muffled and unintelligible reply from inside the bag. Hafid pulls the drawstrings and ties a knot in them. Smith-Corona wriggles and kicks like a rabbit but to no avail. Frost pulls open the door.

FROST

Your days in Interzone are  
numbered, Lee. I suggest you give  
up the writing game and make  
tracks for some other part of the  
world.

Frost and Hafid exit, Frost with an angry sneer, Hafid with a very concerned, anxious expression. They disappear down the hall, muted insect twitterings still emanating from the canvas bag.

Lee is left alone in his room. He disappears into his bedroom and returns shaking the pillowcase loose from his pillow.

Back in the corner of his livingroom, he begins to pick up the pieces of the Olivetti and stuff them into the pillowcase.

## 54 EXT. INTERZONE STREET OUTSIDE POST OFFICE - MORNING

Lee sits huddled on the grand steps of the Post Office. It is not much past dawn but the streets are already thronging. Lee looks much like any other street vagrant, collar up, hands deep in pockets, trying to survive the cold junky dawn, pillowcase holding all his life's possession's plunked down beside him.

On his right sit two other denizens of Interzone, both Arab women, who manage not to look like vagrants but rather like respectable citizens who are used to having to wait in order to accomplish the smallest tasks.

A short Arab man of self-important bearing, wearing Western clothes and a dense knot of keys on his hip, opens the Post Office doors with a flamboyant gesture and disappears back inside.

The two Arab women jump up and follow the man inside. Lee licks his dry lips and begins to stir.

## 55 INT. INTERZONE POST OFFICE - MORNING

Lee is on the telephone in one of eight wooden cabinets lining the wall at the end of the long, narrow Post Office. At right angles to him, several postal workers stretch and yawn and set up for the day behind their cages. The two women wait patiently, lined up behind one cage, for something to happen.

LEE

(into phone)

Martin? It's Bill. Bill Lee! I'm calling you from Interzone. Yeah, I know. I'll give you a few seconds to wake up. God, you've gotten so middle-class, Martin. There was a time you'd just be thinking about going to bed. What? I know how much this phone call is costing. It's an emergency. Joan's body. Yeah. I have to know what happened to it. Yeah. What did you do with Joan's body? Her parents? Yeah, right. Is there any way anybody could have stolen it, stolen her body? I heard you say cremated. I know what the fuck that means. But did you see her body burn? Were you there? Was the box open? Did you see it? Yes, well, well...

(more)

(CONTINUED)

55 CONT'D:

LEE (Cont'd)  
 no, of course you wouldn't. I  
 can't tell you over the phone.  
 I'll have to write you a report.  
 I don't dare say more. G'bye.

Lee hangs up the phone.

56 EXT. INTERZONE BEACH - DAY

Lee walks the Interzone Beach, pillowcase slung over his shoulder, hat tipped back, looking for someone. The beach is deserted. Lee sits down on the flinty, garbage-strewn sand and stares out at the water. He puts his head in his hands in despair, his hat tips off into the sand.

After a moment he lifts his face to the bright smear of sun, then notices two people coming towards him. It is Martin and Hank. Lee struggles to his feet. They hug him. They look like they just got off the boat.

LEE  
 I must be hallucinating. What are  
 you doing here? Martin, I just  
 talked to you on the phone this  
 morning...

MARTIN  
 Bill, that was three weeks ago.

HANK  
 Yeah, man. This is probably the  
 first time you haven't been  
 hallucinating in a long time.

LEE  
 What are you talking about? I mean  
 naturally I've had a few odd  
 moments... who wouldn't in  
 Interzone?

With the grace and ease of old friends, Martin and Hank dust the sand off Lee, straighten his jacket, get his hat back on his head, and pick up his pillowcase. They ease Lee into walking, strolling, between them.

MARTIN  
 That cute boy you've been living  
 with told us where to find you.

LEE  
 Boy?

(CONTINUED)

56 CONT'D:

HANK

He said his name is Kiki.

LEE

I don't live with Kiki! What do you take me for, a mainline faggot?

MARTIN

(gentle, conciliatory)  
It's OK, Bill. No harm done. We obviously misunderstood.

HANK

It's just some things you wrote in those dynamite letters... I guess we jumped to conclusions.

LEE

(pathetically confused)  
I sent you letters...?

MARTIN

(changing the subject)  
What's in this pillowcase, Bill?

LEE

Remains of my last writing machine. That's been a big problem for me...

MARTIN

Mind if I take a look?

LEE

(shugs)  
Go ahead.

Martin opens the pillowcase as they continue to walk, shakes it around a bit to get a better look at the contents. As Lee shambles on, oblivious, Martin nudges Hank and holds out the pillowcase for him to take a look. Hank does, and his eyebrows shoot up.

We get a look in the pillowcase too, and what we see is a bag full of hashish, majoun, syrettes, benzedrine inhalers, hypodermic needles, vials of druggy-looking substances, sample-sized bottles of codeine-laden cough medicine, etc.

Hank can't resist a paranoid scanning of the beach for the Interzone heat. There doesn't seem to be anybody around worth noticing.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONT'D: (2)

HANK

You say that this is the remains  
of your writing machine?

LEE

Yeah. Sad, isn't it? I don't think  
it can ever be assembled again.  
I don't know what I'm going to  
do, how I'm ever going to get to  
write again.

MARTIN

That's very hopeful, Bill. Very  
hopeful.

LEE

What is?

HANK

That you have the hunger to write,  
Bill. That's a good hunger to  
have. It's good for the soul.

MARTIN

Yeah. We can get you a typewriter.  
That won't be a problem.

Lee shakes his head and snorts.

LEE

I don't think you boys understand.  
It's very complicated here.  
Getting a typewriter is not just  
acquiring a mechanical writing  
device. It's a political  
statement, a metaphysical act that  
could kill you if you don't get  
it right...

Martin ties a knot in the pillowcase.

MARTIN

I can believe that.

HANK

Yeah. Me too.

Lee suddenly stalls, shaking off their hands.

LEE

Wait a minute. Where are we going?

(CONTINUED)

56 CONT'D: (3)

MARTIN

Back to your place.

Lee sits abruptly back down in the sand.

LEE

Nope.

Hank and Martin sit down beside him.

HANK

Why not?

LEE

It's not safe there. I'm a dead duck there.

MARTIN

We'll protect you.

LEE

You're kidding yourselves. You're babes in the woods here.

HANK

Well, what do you suggest? We thought it was important for us to help you get your book together. We've sent chunks of it to Martin's publisher and they're interested.

MARTIN

All you gotta do is finish it, man. You've done the hard part already.

The strangest look comes over Lee's face. As though the veil of reality has just been torn.

LEE

Book? My book?

HANK

Yeah. The one you've been calling Naked Lunch.

57 INT. LEE'S ROOMS - DAY

Lee is sitting at his table drinking wine and Martin and Hank are sitting in the middle of the floor with ratty type-written pages strewn around them everywhere, single sheets and packs of sheets placed on every possible flat surface.

MARTIN

Where did you put that Bradley the Buyer routine? Did you find it all?

HANK

It's on the arm of the sofa. Next to the Hassan's Rumpus Room rap. Yeah, right over there.

LEE

I'm telling you boys I've never seen these pages before. I truly do suspect some sort of colossal con.

HANK

Somebody planted these pages in your room, right?

MARTIN

Somebody sent all those letters to me and signed them with your name, right? Postmarked Interzone?

LEE

A well-orchestrated cabal could easily manage all these simple things, children. When will you learn?

HANK

Well, then they've done you a favour, Bill. This stuff is gonna get published under your name and you're gonna have a career.

MARTIN

(chuckling)

Yeah. You'll probably get into print before we will. For God's sake, Bill. Play ball with this conspiracy.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONT'D:

LEE

(dangerous)

You're patronizing me, boys.

(pause, then sweetly)

But I don't mind cause you're so sweet to me.

HANK

Listen to this, Martin.

(reads)

So we start for New Orleans past  
iridescent lakes and orange gas  
flares, and swamps and garbage  
heaps, alligators crawling around  
in broken bottles and tin cans,  
neon arabesques of motels,  
marooned pimps scream obscenities  
at passing cars from islands of  
rubbish... New Orleans is a dead  
museum.

MARTIN

(nodding appreciatively)

So nice. Sound familiar, Bill?

LEE

(dozy and cosy)

First time I ever heard it. Why don't you read me some more?

MARTIN

I think it's time to discuss the philosophy of drug use as it relates to artistic endeavour.

Lee suddenly snaps awake, pulls up a floor board and takes out a small plastic vial.

LEE

Well, to bring this meeting to order, I think you boys'll wanta share my last taste of the true Black Meat of the giant centipede.

Lee shakes out the black powder onto a well-used, shiny section of tile on the floor.

Hank and Martin exchange glances, shrug, and get down on their hands and knees with Lee.

58 INT. CAFE CENTRAL - DAY

The trio sit in the Cafe Central in the Socco Chico, drinking mint tea.

LEE

I don't want to go back home. But I want it to be my choice.

MARTIN

You can come back home, but you'll have to go through an inquest about Joan's death. There's no guarantee that you won't have to stand trial.

HANK

You'll never finish your book in America. Don't even think of coming back until it's finished.

Hank has some of Lee's typescript in his pocket. He pulls it out and reads.

HANK

(reads)

America is not a young land: it is old and dirty and evil before the settlers, before the Indians. The evil is there waiting.

LEE

You boys are writing that damned book. I don't have anything to do with it.

MARTIN

Well, Bill, that brings up an interesting topic for discussion.

LEE

It does?

HANK

I think it does.

LEE

Wow! You boys are better choreographed than Hauser and O'Brien!

HANK

Who are they?

(CONTINUED)

58 CONT'D:

LEE

I'll send you a report as soon as I get a writing machine.

MARTIN

Can you borrow one from somebody in the 'Zone? There's a large expatriate writing colony here, I understand. The writing couple Joan and Tom Frost? Have you met them?

LEE

They haven't been too helpful.

HANK

You're going to need a supporting mechanism if you plan to stay here. We're finding that to be an important element of the revolutionary writer's craft, even stateside.

MARTIN

Especially stateside.

HANK

It can't be done alone.

LEE

Well, I've been developing something that's perhaps, uh, a bit unorthodox. I admit it's been a painful process. The normal writerly channels as I understand them don't seem to flow well here.

MARTIN

But you've accepted yourself as a writer? That that's your vocation?

LEE

I write journalistic reports on what I see. There's no creativity involved in my writing.

A silence as Hank and Martin absorb this.

59 EXT. STREETS - DAY

The trio walk through the twisty streets which lead to the harbour. Hank and Martin carry seamans' dufflebags. Martin also carries a small cardboard suitcase.

HANK

I think Bill's on top of things here, don't you?

MARTIN

He has a grip on a certain unique reality principle, yes.

LEE

I think you should both consider staying here for a few months. Everything you could want is cheap and plentiful here and that reality-principle thing could work for you too. You can actually buy a small house in the Arab Quarter for \$1500.00.

HANK

My mother's all alone and kinda sick, Bill, and besides, my book is all-American as football. I couldn't finish it here.

LEE

(disappointed)

What about you, Martin? It's time you stopped pretending to be straight heterosex bourgeois advertising man and came to terms with those sweet Arab boys.

MARTIN

I could never do it the way you do, Bill. Boys like Kiki sure are pretty but God, what do you talk to him about? It's too cold-blooded for me.

LEE

(stung)

Bullshit! You're just afraid to tear away that veil of illusion and see the real Moby's Dick!

(CONTINUED)

59 CONT'D:

MARTIN

(cranky)

As a matter of fact, Bill, I, uh, I've sort of fallen in love with a young man who was a poetry student of mine. We have a very satisfyingly complex relationship.

LEE

(to Hank)

He's made this up to placate me, hasn't he? He's jivin' me.

HANK

No, it's all true. I've met the guy. They're like newlyweds. He's very handsome.

LEE

(to Martin)

So I guess you've stopped seeing that shrink who keeps telling you faggotry is nothing but neurosis?

MARTIN

You don't just drop out of therapy after all that time and effort...

HANK

(laughing)

With our beloved friend Martin, getting rid of the bourgeois part will take a lot longer than establishing the faggot part.

60 EXT. HARBOUR - DAY

We now realize that Lee is seeing Martin and Hank off, back to America. They hug each other. Martin hands Lee an envelope with some money in it.

LEE

Thanks, Martin. I'll pay you back.

HANK

We're taking copies of everything we could find back with us. It's almost a book, Bill. Keep writing. It's vital.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONT'D:

LEE

Well, I'll keep doing whatever  
it is I've been doing.

MARTIN

Keep the drug use within the  
parameters of your work, OK, Bill?  
We see now how crucial it is that  
you stay here in Interzone. It  
would be a disaster for your art  
if you got busted and thrown out.

The boat moans a warning to board. They hug again.

HANK

The problem of the writing  
machine. What do you want to do?  
We could get David to send you  
a good used one from Madrid.

LEE

Don't worry about it. The 'Zone  
is full of surprises. The 'Zone  
takes care of its own.

As they turn away to leave, Lee turns towards us and we  
see that tears are streaming down his face.

61 EXT. CASBAH STREETS - NIGHT

Lee staggers drunkenly through the labyrinthine casbah  
streets, which are fortunately narrow enough that he never  
quite falls all the way down. He has a brown bottle in one  
hand and his pillowcase in the other.

Kiki appears as if by magic.

KIKI

William? What are you doing here?  
You look terrible.

Kiki is evidently with a young male friend, but he hisses  
at him in Arabic and the friend nods and disappears.

Lee fights to regain his composure but a few tears get  
loose. Kiki puts his arm around him and kisses him tenderly  
on the neck.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONT'D:

LEE

It's just... I dunno, I can't seem to break through, I'm so isolated... My only friends in the world have just left for America and I'm terrified that I'll never see them again...

KIKI

Come with me. Take me home.

LEE

(misunderstanding)

I can't go home. It's too dangerous for me in America... I...

(holds out bottle to Kiki)

Would you like some of this?

KIKI

Alcohol is forbidden here, William. You know that.

Lee holds out the pillowcase for Kiki to look inside, jounces it around so that the pieces rattle like a bag of nails.

LEE

There, you see? That's me, that's the state my life is in.

KIKI

Is that your typing machine, William?

LEE

Foutu. Broken beyond repair.

KIKI

(very serious)

If we fix the typing machine, will we also fix the life?

LEE

It would probably help. Why, my sweet little beast? Do you know of someone who fixes foreign typewriters?

62 EXT. INTERZONE STREET - DAY

Kiki leads Lee up a steep, winding street to a row of one-storey, concrete-block workshops in which the flames of forges and welding torches burn brightly.

These are siamesed, closet-sized garages, much of the work going on out in the street itself. The walls of the shops are hung with mufflers, sections of exhaust pipes, springs, shock absorbers, like huge muted bracelets and anklets, auto parts forming metal mosaics.

Kiki stops in front of a shop that is almost dead centre. The interior is lit only by forgelight and the daylight that seeps through the open doors and two tiny, oily windows in the back wall. A middle-aged Arab WELDER is standing outside welding a metal trellis which stands on a trestle. Inside a FORGEMAN stokes a forge built into the end wall.

KIKI

Here, you see? There is no cause for despair. This man can fix anything that is broken.

LEE

They don't seem capable of delicate work here. You sure you've got the right address?

KIKI

You must have faith, William.

Kiki takes the pillowcase from Lee's hand and goes inside. Lee shuffles along behind him. Kiki puts his hand on the shoulder of the man at the forge. The forgerman turns.

To Lee's horror, the man is not a man at all, but a MUGWUMP in coveralls which are open at the front. Lee looks to Kiki for his reaction, but this revelation is obviously no surprise to him. Kiki dumps the Olivetti bits into the forge like a shaman throwing oracle bones. The Mugwump stirs the Olivetti bits into the glowing embers as though he and Kiki have done this routine a thousand times before.

Kiki gets down on his knees before the Mugwump. He pulls a stunned Lee down with him. Two strange organs descend from the Mugwump's belly. Kiki begins to suck on one, and with his free hand he pulls Lee's sleeve and urges him to suck on the other. Lee takes the weird organ in his mouth.

Pale, opalescent fluid spurts into his mouth and gushes down his chin. Lee is revolted at first but, encouraged by Kiki's obvious enthusiasm, soon begins to suck greedily.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONT'D: (2)

Kiki's face clouds over with disappointment that Lee is not more impressed.

KIKI

I don't know, William. I am not a writer.

63 INT. LEE'S ROOMS - DAWN

Lee sits at his desk, working away at his new Mugwriter. His hands are in the Mugwriter's open mouth, out of sight, and he has that up-writing-all-night look. A muted typewriter-clacking comes from within the strange machine.

At the top of the Mugwriter's head a long teat periodically erects, dripping slightly as though it had the clap. Lee sucks thoughtfully on this appendage from time to time, as though drawing on a comfy old Meerschaum pipe.

Eventually Lee withdraws his hands from the Mugwriter's mouth and removes a typewritten sheet of paper from a slit at the back of the thing's cranium. Lee reads over what he's written. He smiles.

LEE

Not bad. I feel very comfortable working with you.

MUGWRITER

I like that sense of camaraderie in an agent. You must be progressing. My predecessor felt you had an ambivalent relationship with him.

LEE

You mean Smith-Corona?

MUGWRITER

Yes.

LEE

Is he all right?

MUGWRITER

He is still in the hands of our enemies. Such are the hazards of our trade.

LEE

A hazardous trade, yas.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONT'D:

The Mugwump's features glisten in the fornelight, lips thin and purple-blue only partially covering a razor-sharp beak of black bone, eyes blank as obsidian mirrors, pools of black blood.

After a few moments Kiki lets go of his Mugwump teat and hauls Lee away from his. Lee is reluctant to let go.

KIKI

No, William, no! That is enough for the first time. It can hurt you, too much of it.

Lee sits back on the greasy floor, back against the wall, wipes the fluid off his chin with the back of his hand and then licks his hand with revolting, desperate greed.

The Mugwump embeds himself in an alcove in the wall which Lee has not noticed before, and the welder who has now come inside begins to seal him into it with wet clay which he draws from a large wooden barrel.

Lee whimpers like a dog.

LEE

(whimpering)

But what if I want more?

Kiki dips a coarse shop rag into a clay bowl of water and begins to stroke Lee on the temples with it.

KIKI

Of course you will want more, William. It is in the nature of things. And when you want it, you will find a way to get it.

A clanging from the forge makes Kiki look up and away. His face suffuses with a pure, childlike delight.

KIKI

Oh, look! We have your new writing machine!

Lee looks up just in time to see the welder drawing something out of the forge. It glows with the heat of the forgefire and it looks very much like a half-mechanical, half-organic Mugwump's head.

LEE

How does it work?

(CONTINUED)

MUGWRITER

Your report on the subversive activities of Joan Frost was a model of its type. If you continue to develop your skills as an operative, I think a top position with the CIA is not out of reach.

LEE

(genuinely pleased)  
You really think so?

MUGWRITER

You have the demeanour. That's something you can't buy.

LEE

CIA, now that's a career you can get your teeth into. It has resonance. Giving yourself over to being a writer...

Lee shakes his head in despair.

MUGWRITER

The two are very closely related.

LEE

So you boys have been telling me. Well, what's my next assignment? I'm hungry for adventure.

MUGWRITER

Excellent. You know the Englishman Carleton?

LEE

Yes. I think he's a rat faggot and won't admit it.

MUGWRITER

That ought to make it all the easier. You will seduce Carleton and force him to reveal his ties to Islam Inc. He is susceptible to humour, but be brutal if necessary. We have it on good authority that he is our conduit to Benway.

LEE

Dr. Benway?

(CONTINUED)

63 CONT'D: (2)

MUGWRITER

Self-styled. He never actually made it through medical school.

LEE

And Joan Frost?

Here for the first time Lee senses hesitation, even fear, on the part of the Mugwriter.

MUGWRITER

We do not at the moment have the capacity to neutralize Joan Frost. Stay away from her.

Kiki walks in, stretching, yawning. We suspect he and Lee have spent time in bed together.

KIKI

You are working away, William?

LEE

Yes, Kiki. The machine turns out to be a very good one, my simpatico.

Kiki leans sleepily against Lee, who hugs him affectionately.

LEE

And I have you to thank for it, so I will. Thank you.

KIKI

(nuzzling Lee)

It was fun to introduce you to my friends. I am very proud to be your friend, you know.

LEE

(genuinely touched)

Next time I intend to introduce you to my friends, the fucking snobs.

Kiki wanders over to the sink and begins to eat cereal from a box.

KIKI

That would be lovely, William.

Lee gets up and puts some water on for tea.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONT'D: (3)

LEE  
Would you like some tea?

Kiki nods, still dozy.

LEE  
Kiki, do you know Carleton, the  
Englishman with the big house on  
the Old Mountain Road?

KIKI  
Carleton? Oh, Cairletone, yes,  
yes, with the wonderful car.

LEE  
He has a wonderful car?

KIKI  
The most wonderful car. I know  
where it lives.

64 EXT. GARAGE IN TOWN - EARLY MORNING

A small garage under an apartment block with a metal roll-up shutter. Kiki and Lee are browsing at a nearby magazine kiosk when Carleton strolls by on his way to pick up his car. He isn't particularly surprised to see Lee.

CARLETON  
Hello, Bill. This is pretty early  
for you, isn't it?

LEE  
I was up all night with a sick  
typewriter.

CARLETON  
Strange part of town to find you  
in.

Carleton unlocks the padlock at the base of the garage's shutter and rolls the shutter up. There is a car inside, but it has a cover over it.

LEE  
Young Kiki here is wild about your  
car. Says it's very special. Would-  
love to be taken for a ride. .

CARLETON  
Would he, now?

(CONTINUED)

64 CONT'D:

Carleton turns to Kiki and puts his fists on his hips, sizing up the boy and his connection with Lee. Kiki smiles a dazzling, child-innocent smile and nods. For one frozen moment, Carleton finds himself desperately bathing in that smile like a lizard on a wall at sunset, and Lee has seen it all.

Now Carleton turns away, almost blushing, and with an understated grand gesture sweeps the soft cotton cover from his car. Even Lee can appreciate that this car, a very rare Spanish Pegaso Z-102 convertible sports car, is something special.

CARLETON

You came here just on the off-chance you'd get to see my car?

LEE

I indulge the boy his every whim.

CARLETON

Such devotion demands to be rewarded.

65 EXT. CARLETON'S CAR - DAY

Carleton's two-seat car is fast and dashing and white and handsome, and Lee is being lulled by the heat flowing back from the strange V-8 motor and the cool wind flowing back over the windscreen. He is also enjoying the closeness of Kiki, half in his lap, one arm around Lee's neck, smothering him deliciously in the faster right-hand turns.

Carleton is not unaware of his passengers' easy physical familiarity as he drives forcefully up the twisty mountain roads towards his house in the English Mountain enclave.

CARLETON

You know, I've often thought of that funny story you told me that first time we met on the beach, the one about the Duc du Ventre. At first I didn't know how to take it. I thought it was a homosexual come-on.

LEE

Well, I'm not really queer, although they say humour is a potent aphrodisiac.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONT'D:

CARLETON

You ought to write those things down. They do tend to resonate, even though they're rather grotesque and vulgar.

LEE

If I don't have an audience, I can't think of anything to say.

CARLETON

Well, I'm always available to hear a good story.

LEE

Did I ever tell you about the man who taught his asshole to talk? His whole abdomen would move up and down, you dig, farting out the words. It was unlike anything I ever heard, a bubbly, thick stagnant sound, a sound you could smell. This man worked for a carnival, you dig, and to start with it was like a novelty ventriloquist act. After a while the ass started talking on its own. He would go in without anything prepared and his ass would ad-lib and toss the gags back at him every time. Then it developed sort of teeth-like little raspy in-curving hooks and started eating. He thought this was cute at first and built an act around it, but the asshole would eat its way through his pants and start talking on the street, shouting out it wanted equal rights. It would get drunk, too, and have crying jags nobody loved it and it wanted to be kissed same as any other mouth.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

65 CONT'D: (2)

LEE (Cont'd)

Finally it talked all the time day and night, you could hear him for blocks screaming at it to shut up, and beating at it with his fist, and sticking candles up it, but nothing did any good and the asshole said to him: "It's you who will shut up in the end, not me, because we don't need you around here any more. I can talk and eat and shit." After that he began waking up in the morning with transparent jelly like a tadpole's tail all over his mouth. He would tear it off his mouth and the pieces would stick to his hands like burning gasoline jelly and grow there. So finally his mouth sealed over, and the whole head would have amputated spontaneously except for the eyes, you dig. That's the one thing the asshole couldn't do was see. But nerve connections were blocked and infiltrated and atrophied so the brain could't give orders any more. It was trapped in the skull, sealed off. For a while you could see the silent, helpless suffering of the brain behind the eyes, then finally the brain must have died, because the eyes went out, and there was no more feeling in them than a crab's eye on the end of a stalk.

66 EXT. CARLETON'S HOUSE - DAY

Carleton deftly wheels the Pegaso through the narrow gate in the wall surrounding his house, and parks it in a carport whose structure is barely visible through the lush tangle of vines and creepers growing over it.

The house itself is large, peach-coloured, and Mediterranean in style with a definite Moorish influence, particularly in the doorways and alcoves.

The whole of Interzone is spread out below them, the Mediterranean bleeding into the Atlantic, but Carleton has

(CONTINUED)

66 CONT'D:

seen it all before, and Lee is too proud to gawk at the incredible view. Kiki, however, is not too proud. He is very excited.

KIKI

Look, William! You can see where the Mediterranean and the Atlantic are married together!

Carleton smiles an avuncular smile which is perhaps a shade too sweet.

CARLETON

It's thrilling, isn't it? Would you like to see my parrot collection? Some of them are quite tame.

67 EXT. CARLETON'S HOUSE. PATIO - DAY

The trio are sitting on the patio at the edge of Carleton's garden, which is so dense, tangled and wild that daylight has to pick its angles in order to penetrate it.

Five parrots, multi-coloured and spectacular, are perched on various parts of Kiki, who is in ecstasy feeding them cashews. Lee and Carleton sip sherry. A mint tea sits in front of Kiki, as though he were perhaps too young to drink alcohol.

LEE

When I first met you I was under the impression that you were a typical Interzone expatriate with a boring story to tell. You know, can't go home because of dark crimes committed in the native land.

CARLETON

Oh, heavens, no. Interzone is my home. There have been Carletons in Interzone for decades and decades. My grandfather the second Earl of Montcrieff built this place. Little summer place. Used to be a Muslim prayer house.

(leaning forward  
confidentially)

But I rather like your image of me as an international outlaw.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

67 CONT'D:

CARLETON (Cont'd)  
It's a role I'd relish playing,  
except for the wardrobe, of  
course.

Carleton gets up and moves around behind Kiki. He puts his arms around him and strokes one of the parrots on Kiki's lap, copping a squeeze in the time-honoured "let me show you that golf swing" tradition. Kiki is not bothered by it, although Lee definitely is.

CARLETON  
(to Kiki)  
You like my little friends. I'm  
so glad.

Carleton dares to give Kiki a kiss on the temple. Kiki jerks away from the kiss with sudden, overwhelming revulsion. Carleton is hurt but tries to cover up.

CARLETON  
(to Kiki, with  
suppressed anger)  
Oh, my, my. We are fragile today,  
aren't we?

LEE  
(as though talking about  
a dog)  
He has to get to know you first.

CARLETON  
(archly)  
Oh, does he? Let's see what we  
can do, then.  
(regaining his  
composure)  
Would you like to see the other  
birds? There are cages at the  
bottom of the garden.

LEE  
Considering the long history of  
your family in Interzone, you're  
probably the right one to tell  
me all about Islam, Incorporated.

Lee has struck a nerve. Carleton moves away from Kiki.

CARLETON  
Islam, Inc? What is your interest  
in Islam, Inc?

(CONTINUED)

67 CONT'D: (2)

LEE

Strictly journalistic. I'm writing a travel piece on Arab communities in North Africa.

CARLETON

Islam Inc. has nothing to do with the Arabs, and everything to do with...

Here Carleton stops and smiles, a coy, collusive smile.

CARLETON

Well, I'm sure you don't care what it has to do with, not if you're writing a simple travel piece.

(to Kiki)

Will you come with me to the parrot cages, Kiki?

There is something so palpably sinister in Carleton's tone of voice that Kiki involuntarily shudders.

KIKI

(suddenly fearful)

I, uh, don't think I can, Mr. Carleton... That is, I don't really...

Kiki looks pleadingly to Lee for help. Lee's features harden.

LEE

Islam, Inc. has nothing to do with the Arabs, and everything to do with...?

Carleton smiles. They have understood each other.

CARLETON

Everything to do with Dr. Benway. Benway is Islam, Inc. And the only way to Benway is through Joan Frost.

Lee ponders this a moment. This information presents him with a conundrum: he is supposed to find Benway but stay away from Joan Frost. Finally, he turns to Kiki.

LEE

Go see the fucking parrots, will you, Kiki? I've gotta have a piss  
(more)

(CONTINUED)

67 CONT'D: (3)

LEE (Cont'd)  
and then I'll come and get you  
and we'll go home.

Kiki is not happy, but Carleton is.

CARLETON  
The pissoir is at the end of the  
great hall.

68 INT. CARLETON'S HOUSE. BATHROOM - DAY

Lee finishes pissing, flushes the toilet, then takes out a small vial of Mugwump jissom. He removes the stopper, tilts the vial into his mouth, and lets the jissom glop slowly down his throat. It is pearly silver with green highlights, and the consistency of certain hair-thickening shampoos.

69 EXT. CARLETON'S HOUSE. PATIO - DAY

Lee leaves the house and enters the garden. The patio is deserted. Lee walks down the flagstone steps into the garden to search for the parrot cages.

70 EXT. BOTTOM OF CARLETON'S GARDEN - DAY

Lee rounds a corner. The parrot cages are in sight. There are several of them, but there seems to be a lot of action in the main cage, which is basically an eight-foot wire cube. As Lee moves through the lush overgrowth towards the cage, he can see flashes of incredible colour as the parrots flutter around in panic, and he can hear screeching and squawking which is not beautiful but fear-filled and vulgar.

And now Lee is near enough to see what is deranging the parrots: in the middle of the cage, Carleton and Kiki are locked in an obscene naked embrace, Carleton behind Kiki, the two of them enveloped by a sickly yellow-green mucous sac which seems to be secreted by Carleton from large, nipple-like glands which protrude all along his body's lateral line at five-inch intervals. As Carleton and Kiki writhe to an alien sexual rhythm together, Carleton in ecstasy, Kiki in silent agony, the sac expands and contracts making a horrible "schlupping" sound. Parrot feathers float down like garish snowflakes and stick everywhere.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONT'D:

Lee runs up to the cage and grabs it, shakes it, cries out in horror to Kiki.

LEE  
(horrified)  
Kiki! Kiki!

But it's too late. As Kiki turns to look at Lee, we see that he is in fact beginning to dissolve, to fall apart and then be absorbed and assimilated by the rapidly bloating Carleton. Kiki tries to mouth a word but there is no longer any structure left in his face, which begins to sag like a boneless turkey.

Lee backs away, stunned, then turns and runs.

71 INT. LEE'S ROOMS - NIGHT

Lee bursts into his flat. The Mugwriter, which had been dozing comfortably on Lee's table, snaps awake.

MUGWRITER  
Hello, Bill. What's up?

Lee doesn't answer. He walks straight past the Mugwriter and into his bedroom.

72 INT. LEE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lee feels around under his mattress for something, then finally fishes out a spherical canvas carrying case with a leather handle that looks as though it could hold a large, irregularly-shaped bowling ball.

73 INT. LEE'S ROOMS - NIGHT

Lee comes back from the bedroom and unceremoniously plunks the bag down on the table beside the Mugwriter. He unzips the bag and spreads it open.

MUGWRITER  
I don't like this mood, Bill. Are  
we going out?

At this point the Mugwriter's teat has erected temptingly and fluid is spurting.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONT'D:

MUGWRITER

Why don't you just write something and calm yourself down? You are obviously not in a professional state of mind.

Lee ignores the Mugwriter's blandishments. He gets a few stringy towels from the kitchen and packs them around the base of the machine to soak up the dripping teat-goop.

MUGWRITER

Bill, are you thinking of getting rid of me?

LEE

I have to consult with Smith-Corona. I think a trade of hostages is the only possible technique.

MUGWRITER

Really, Bill, if you get rid of me you sever ties with reality. F'rinstance, you take the case of the female agent who forgot her real identity and merged with her cover story - she is still a fricoteuse in Annexia.

Lee continues to ignore the Mugwriter and begins to stuff him and the mucousy towels into the canvas bag.

MUGWRITER

Now, an agent is trained to deny his agent identity by asserting his cover story. So why not use psychic jiu-jitsu and go along with him? Suggest that his cover story is his identity and that he has no other. His agent identity becomes unconscious, that is, out of his control; and you can dig it with drugs and hypnosis. You can make a square heterosex citizen queer with this angle... We've lost some of our best agents to this technique.

(shudders)

Could happen to any one of us:

The Mugwriter is still talking from inside the bag as Lee carries him out the door.

74 EXT. FROST FLAT BLDG. - NIGHT

Lee walks up to the building, spherical canvas bag in hand.

LEE

(muttering to himself)

I feel like a bowler from Missouri  
out for a hot night in Interzone.

75 INT. OUTSIDE FROST'S DOOR - NIGHT

Lee knocks. Hafid answers. He is surprised to see Lee, but doesn't panic, doesn't slam the door. He turns away, speaks into the room.

HAFID

It's Lee. I don't know, Tom. Yes,  
all right.

(turning back to Lee)

Tom wants to know, have you come  
in peace or should he load his  
pistol?

76 INT. FROST FLAT - NIGHT

Tom and Hafid look on as Lee plunks the bag onto a table.

LEE

I've brought you a new typewriter  
which conveniently dispenses two  
types of tasty intoxicating fluids  
when it likes what you've written.

FROST

Are you proposing to trade back  
for your Smith-Corona?

LEE

Thinking of it. Has it written  
anything good for you?

FROST

No. It's too damned all-American  
for my tastes. I guess I've gone  
foreign or something.

LEE

Well, the Mugwriter here is so  
foreign it's almost alien. Yer'  
gonna do yer best work on 'er,  
guaranteed.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONT'D:

Frost laughs and holds out his hand. Lee shakes it. Hafid stands to one side, arms folded, not convinced. Frost turns to Hafid.

FROST

Hafid, get the machine in question for Bill, will you?

Hafid leaves the room grudgingly.

FROST

And how are you enjoying your affair with Joan? Literate, complex and neurotic, I would imagine?

LEE

I haven't seen her in weeks. She ran off with Fadela and her coven.

Frost nods sagely.

FROST

Ah, too bad. Yes, she does that when she feels attracted to a man. Don't give up, though. It's a good sign. With Joanie, the courtship period can involve years of passionate ambivalence.

Hafid enters the room with the familiar Smith-Corona carrying case. As Lee reaches for it, Hafid can hold his tongue no longer.

HAFID

I think we should take a close look at his machine first, Tom. Test it thoroughly. Don't you, Tom? You both have different... writing styles.

Tom smiles. He reaches into a drawer and pulls out the Star .380 semi-automatic. Hefts it, then places it carefully on the table beside the Smith-Corona.

FROST

Bill Lee has always been a man of powerful instinct, Hafid. If he says I'll do my best work on his machine, why then, I'm sure it's prophecy.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

76 CONT'D: (2)

FROST (Cont'd)

Take the gun too, Bill, in barter  
for the nice intoxicating fluids.  
No American should find himself  
in a foreign land without a  
pistol.

LEE

You wouldn't be trying to set me  
up, would you, Tom?

FROST

(with lethal amiability)

You've already set yourself up,  
Bill. I just want to give you  
a fighting chance.

77 EXT. MEDINA STREETS - NIGHT

The medina streets are deserted. Lee finds a urine-stained  
corner and hunkers down in the darkness, unzips the  
typewriter case. An insect leg twitches out spastically,  
then another. Lee has to lift the obviously stricken  
Smith-Corona out of the case. He tries to lay him down,  
but the creature yowls and clacks at him. The inside of  
the case is smeared with brackish insect goop.

LEE

S-C, speak to me. It's Bill Lee.  
Your favourite agent, remember?

Smith-Corona speaks to him with a tremulous voice.

SMITH-CORONA

They tortured me, did unspeakable  
things to me. They were just  
waiting for you, waiting for their  
mark to show up.

LEE

I'm no mark. I left them a time  
bomb, and I got you back.

SMITH-CORONA

Not for very long, I'm afraid.  
I'm on my last legs, the bastards.  
Tell me what you left them.

LEE

Frost will use the Mugwriter, suck  
the Mugsperm and become addicted  
to our cause.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONT'D:

SMITH-CORONA

That's oh so tasty, Bill. Thank you. But what can I do for you?

TWO ARABS walk past Lee's corner and see a crazy drugged-out American typing his novel on a battered machine using sheets of toilet paper to write on. The Arabs pause to consider the spectacle, then move on. Lee is oblivious to them.

LEE

Tell me how to reach Joan Frost. I've got to find Benway through her.

SMITH-CORONA

Stay away from Joan Frost, Bill. You don't need her.

(twittering laugh)

I found out more from them than they did from me.

Smith-Corona starts to spout green insect blood.

SMITH-CORONA

Fadela. She is the key to Benway.

(more blood)

Leave me now, before it's too late! A corpse like mine will raise too many eyebrows for you to remain effective in the field. Even here in Interzone

Lee tries to stuff the thing back in the case, but Smith-Corona's insect shell begins to boil over with hot, toxic fluids.

SMITH-CORONA

(a grotesque, bubbling voice)

Go now, vaya con Dios...!

The hot blood forces Lee to drop Smith-Corona onto the flagstones of the street. Toxic fumes rise. Lee covers his face and backs away coughing. Soon, he turns and runs from the bubbling, smoking little corpse.

78 EXT. MEDINA STREETS - NIGHT

Lee gets hold of himself in the casbah streets, checks the gun's clip - yes, it is full of chunky little .380 calibre bullets. Lee slides the magazine back into the pistol, listens for its small click home.

79 EXT. MEDINA STREETS - MORNING

Lee has spent a rough night sleeping in a construction site in the medina, in a hole, in a piece of sewer pipe. He stretches, wakes up.

80 EXT. SOCCO GRANDE - MORNING

The streets are beginning to throng. Lee makes his way to the place he first saw Fadela with Joan, the grain and vegetable market.

Lee finds Fadela's crate, but it is empty. In front of it, sitting on a mat, is a woman selling henna, dyes, cosmetic roots. Her toes are dyed henna red, as though she's been walking in blood.

Suddenly, Lee is speaking perfect Arabic, and we are reading subtitles.

LEE

(in Arabic)

Where is Fadela? You know, the big mannish dame who sells centipede steaks right over there, in that crate?

HENNA

What do you want her for? You can buy better things from me.

LEE

I have money for her, and a very important message.

HENNA

Maybe you have a little money left over for me.

Lee throws her some money. She insists on giving him a packet of henna in return.

HENNA

You know the old deserted restaurant by the sea? She is there.

LEE

Why has she gone there?

HENNA

(cooly)

Maybe when you give her her money, she will tell you.

81 EXT. SEASIDE - DAY

A battered taxi pulls up a mountain road and parks near a concrete block, corrugated-tin-roofed building which still bears the remains of a sign that says "California Restaurant." Lee gets out of the cab, which then pulls away and disappears.

Flinty sand dunes sloping down steeply to the water of the Atlantic. A few ragged dogs chase each other up and down the slopes. Lee approaches the doorway of the building, which does bear all the signs of being long deserted: door hanging off hinges, peeling paint, garbage in various nooks and crannies, some minor graffiti.

Lee enters.

82 INT. SEASIDE RESTAURANT - DAY

The inside of the place is somehow, impossibly, much larger than the outside.

It reminds Lee of a huge milking-cow barn, except that the milkers, maybe a hundred of them, are human slaves of all ages and sexes shackled to rough timbers which criss-cross the interior to form rows of open stables strewn with filthy, matted straw. A haphazard network of scabrous metal troughs seems to function as a latrine leading to nowhere that Lee can determine.

The cows in this analogy are Mugwumps, one for every two slaves, seated above the milkers on toilet-like pedestals. Each of the slaves is sucking greedily, like a calf, on a Mugwump sex organ in the voluptuous smokey twilight of the restaurant. The slaves are clad only in the remains of their rotting street clothes.

Walking the rows like a galley-slave master, checking the odd chain here, the odd timber there, is Fadela, strutting in her jodphurs and riding boots. Tagging along after her, now with a limp and a half-closed eye, is Joan, who jots obscure notes down on a clipboard.

Lee stands motionless while Fadela, her patrol of the cows and milkers apparently through, strides off to the far end of the restaurant and disappears through a doorway, leaving Joan to stand scribbling her final notes.

Lee eases himself up beside her in the shadows.

LEE

Joan. I've come to claim you. I've come to bring you back.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONT'D:

Joan whirls around. She stares at Lee in astonishment for a moment, then speaks in a voice that is still fresh and girlish.

JOAN

Bill.

(sadly)

They'll never let me go.

LEE

We'll see, we'll see. Take me to her.

JOAN

Are you sure? You're not afraid?

LEE

I've got nothing to lose.

Lee takes Joan's hand in his and they begin to walk towards the door at the end of the restaurant.

As they walk they pass a Mugwump slave we know: Hans.

Hans turns to look at Lee as he passes without letting go of the Mugwump teat. His eyes light up. Hans has the grey look of borrowed flesh of the hopeless junky. He is missing some teeth, his hair is falling out, he stutters as he speaks, his hands shake. He holds onto the teat with one hand and only then takes his mouth away. The teat oozes the opalescent fluid with which Lee is so familiar.

Hans calls out to Lee.

HANS

Lee! Dr. Benway has forgiven me!

Hans begins to weep tears of joy, then sticks the teat back into his mouth and sucks madly away, still weeping.

LEE

(to Joan)

Benway's here?

Joan nods.

JOAN

You'll see.

83 INT. RESTAURANT BACK ROOM - DAY

The restaurant back room is a completely up-to-date and sumptuous 1953 executive's office. Fadela sits behind a large desk smoking a cigar. She looks up as Joan and Lee enter, then gets up from the desk with a smile on her face.

FADELA

Well, well, if it isn't William Lee. I got to say I'm proud of you, son. It took you a while but you got us red-handed. Full marks, boy, full marks.

LEE

I expected to see a major Black Meat processing operation here. What's with all the Mugwump jissom?

FADELA

The Black Meat concession turns out to have some unfortunate political strings attached. We've just cut those strings. From now on, Interzone is strictly Mugwump territory. As you can see, we've made a flying start here in our modest dispensary.

LEE

There will be consequences, Fadela. Aren't you worried about that?

Fadela looks surprised for a moment, then laughs a big, roaring, masculine cigar-smoke laugh. When she speaks now, it is with the voice of an American man.

FADELA

Fadela? Oh, you mean this old thing!

And Fadela rips open her dress to expose her breasts, then digs her fingers into her breastbone and pulls apart her skin, shedding it like any old dress. Out steps a fiftyish distinguished-looking man whom we have seen before but perhaps do not remember where. It is, in fact, Dr. Benway.

Benway wraps his Fadela-skin around him like a towel, its breasts flopping obscenely. Somehow, he has managed to keep the cigar in his mouth throughout the whole transformation. He approaches Lee and extends his hand.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONT'D:

BENWAY

I'm Dr. Benway. We met once before stateside. I'm afraid I was forced by the tenor of the times to prescribe some of that wretched Black Meat powder for you. Hole-in-wall operation, limited resources, you understand the problems.

Lee finds himself shaking Benway's hand.

BENWAY

But I understand from Carleton you're onto our good stuff now. Mugwump jissom can't be beat. Well, as you can see from our solution to the Fadela-Black-Meat-lesbian-cartel question, we got ourselves a few more friends and a few more dollars now.

Benway slaps Lee heartily on the back. He swings Fadela's face like a fake fox fur.

BENWAY

This little Fadela number is something I developed during my tenure as Chief Physician to the President of Annexia. El Presidente liked to walk the streets amongst his people in drag and, well, one thing led to another...

Benway flips a limp wrist.

BENWAY

An elegant way of striking terror into the heart of the enemy, wouldn't you say? "Old Fadela must be on the rag. She's been acting subversive lately." But speaking of new uses for old technology, I think the new order has a place for a man of your calibre, 30 ought six, wasn't it?

(sly chuckle)

That is what you're here, for, isn't it? I mean, setting all the baboon shit aside.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

83 CONT'D: (2)

BENWAY (Cont'd)  
Hell, I need a reliable man I can  
send to Annexia...

LEE  
I came for her.

Lee gestures towards Joan, who lowers her eyes modestly.

BENWAY  
Her? This purulent little cunt?  
What for?

LEE  
I need a new writing machine.

Benway smiles a cosmic smile.

BENWAY  
Mr. Lee, I feel confident that  
we can work something out.

84 EXT. ANNEXIA RIVER - DAY

Lee steers a boat down a beautiful, Wind in the Willows  
river - lush green river banks, willows weeping their  
branches into the water, swans paddling serenely by, otters  
frolicking, no sign of humans anywhere. The boat is a  
narrow, covered canal boat with sizeable living quarters  
and a sturdy if noisy diesel motor.

85 EXT. ANNEXIA LOCK CONTROL. LATER - DAY

The canal boat arrives at a quaint border control which  
is a small lock on the river. Signs on the lock wall read:

ATTENTION: YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER ANNEXIA

Lee throws the ropes out to two Nazi-like uniformed border  
guards, who tie up the boat and then board it. Other guards  
stand around smoking and talking. Lee disappears into the  
hold.

86 INT. CANAL BOAT - DAY

The two guards make their way through the narrow hatch and  
into the boat's living quarters. They are Hauser and  
O'Brien in uniform. They seem to have acquired vaguely  
Germanic accents.

(CONTINUED)

86 CONT'D:

O'BRIEN  
Papers, please.

Lee hands over papers.

HAUSER  
What is the purpose of your visit  
and what is your profession?

LEE  
I write reports. I am a writer  
and I intend to write reports on  
life in Annexia for the citizens  
of the USA.

HAUSER  
Do you have any proof of what you  
say? How do we know you are really  
a writer?

LEE  
Well, I have a writing machine.

O'BRIEN  
Show us.

LEE  
Show you?

HAUSER  
Yes. Write something on it.

Lee moves over to one of the two beds at the rear of the hold. For the first time we notice a sleeping figure under some blankets. Lee gently shakes the sleeping form until it stirs, then props itself up on an elbow.

It is Joan, looking haggard and ghastly. She smiles at Lee.

JOAN  
What is it, Bill? Are we there  
yet?

LEE  
Almost, Joan. But first we have  
to show these gentlemen our  
William Tell routine.

Lee stands up and takes three steps backwards.

Joan sits up the edge of her bed like a little girl. She looks around, spots her night-time glass of water on the floor near the head of the bed, and picks it up.

(CONTINUED)

86 CONT'D: (2)

JOAN

Sure, Bill.

Joan puts the glass of water on her head and, when she is sure it will stay there, lets go of it with an expectant grin on her face.

Lee pulls Tom Frost's Star .380 semi-automatic pistol out of his jacket pocket, aims it at the water glass and fires.

Joan slumps sideways onto the bed without a sound, then slips gracefully to the floor. There is a small spot of red at her temple. The water glass rolls in concentric circles beside her, unbroken.

Lee pockets the gun and turns to look at Hauser and O'Brien.

Hauser and O'Brien smile at each other, then turn to face Lee. They snap off two beautifully synchronized salutes, then step forward to shake Lee's hand.

O'BRIEN

(enthusiastically)

Welcome to Annexia.

HAUSER

Yes. Welcome to Annexia.

THE END