


WOODY
HARRELSON

ELISABETH
SHUE

GINA
GERSHON

PALMETTO



Screenplay By
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Based on the Novel
JUST ANOTHER SUCKER
By James Hadley Chase

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PROLOGUE

FADE IN

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

A muddy dirt road cuts a clean line through a mist covered swamp.

A lone vehicle appears. It's an old pick-up truck. A DOG rides in back.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

A middle-aged MAN is the driver (family optional). He barrels along, uses his hand to wipe the condensation from the windshield.

Suddenly somebody appears in front of the truck. The driver slams on the brakes...

...but it's too late. THUMP! The truck runs him over.

DRIVER

Oh, Gawd...

He stops the truck, jumps out.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

There's a MAN. He's down, conscious but in pain. There's blood all over his white shirt.

DRIVER

You hurt bad, mister? I didn't see you til it was too late.

MAN

I'm all right.

He struggles to sit up.

DRIVER

Be careful there. Lemme help you. We'll get you to a doctor.

MAN

No! No doctors. I'm all right, I tell you. I'm fine...

He sags, cringes with the pain. The driver opens the man's coat, examines his bloodied shoulder.

CONTINUED

DRIVER

Don't think anything's broke.
You probably hurt that ol' truck
more than it hurt you.

(BEAT)

But that gunshot wound's another
matter. Sooner or later you're
gonna have to get it looked after.

The man looks up, grits his teeth. The driver removes a red
bandana from around his neck, bandages the wound.

The man struggles to his feet, seems intent on running away.

DRIVER

It ain't gonna be easy, mister.
They're lookin' all over for you.
I seen it on the TV.

There's the SOUND of a helicopter somewhere off in the sky.

DRIVER

Might be best if you just gave
yourself up.

MAN

It's too late. They're not
gonna believe me when I tell
'em I didn't do it. Hell, I
wouldn't believe me either.
The set-up was too damn good.

(BEAT)

Better I make a run for it.

DRIVER

A man can die out there in that
swamp.

MAN

A man can die in prison too.

DRIVER

Swamp don't give a man a second
chance, even if he's innocent.
You give yourself up least you
got a chance to back up, turn
your life around.

The man stares pensively into the misty swamp.

CONTINUED

MAN

I wish I could believe that.

DRIVER

You seem like a decent man.

MAN

I used to think I was.

He struggles away into the bush.

The driver walks around to his truck, climbs in. He starts it up, is about to put it in gear when...

...the passenger side door swings open. It's the man.

MAN

You know Palmetto?

DRIVER

Yeah, I know Palmetto.

The man crawls into the front seat, pulls the door closed.

MAN

The DA's office at City Hall, ask for John Renick. Tell him somebody wants to talk to him...tell him it's Harry Barber.

The driver gives him a nod and puts it in gear. The truck rumbles away through the swamp.

FADE OUT

END PROLOGUE

FADE IN

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

A big fat Palmetto bug walks lazily over a pockmarked wall. Its antennae twitch and wave above its black eyes.

Sitting on a narrow bunk, Harry Barber watches with interest. It's as if they were old friends, which in fact they are.

(VO)

Prisoner #349B5.

The cell door slides back with a loud CLANK. Harry gets to his feet, steps out.

He turns and looks at the bug on the wall. Its antennae wave. The door slams shut.

INT. CORRIDORS - DAY

Harry shuffles through heavy security doors; is lead down a carpeted hallway past administrative offices...

INT. OFFICE - DAY

...into the sanctum sanctorum of prison bureaucracy. Suits and ties dominate the landscape.

One of these, Harry's LAWYER, puts on a big smile.

LAWYER

Mr. Barber, I've got some good news, I mean some really good news...

He holds up a sheaf of papers, waves them around.

LAWYER

Know what this is? It's your ticket outta here, that's what.

WARDEN

(OFFICIALLY)

Mr. Barber, your conviction has been overturned by a Federal Judge...

LAWYER

Flipped like a buttermilk pancake!

CONTINUED

WARDEN

Testimony in a related case contradicted key evidence presented at your trial.

LAWYER

What he's saying is somebody turned State's and fessed up you were framed.

WARDEN

Your sentence has been commuted. Effective immediately.

LAWYER

Don't thank me. Not much anyway.

WARDEN

The requisite paperwork has already been filed. You'll be released within 24 hours.

Harry sits there expressionless. The lawyer and the warden exchange a glance.

LAWYER

C'mon, Mr. Barber, why the long face? Your name's been cleared. You can walk outta this here like a free man. What more do you want?

HARRY

How about 2 years of my life back?

(LOUDER)

Huh! Who's gonna gimme that? 2 years! Gone! Wasted! For what? Because I was honest? Because I wouldn't play it dirty like everybody else?

WARDEN

Alright, Mr. Barber, this is something to discuss with your attorney.

HARRY

I want those 2 years back! Somebody gimme 2 years of my life back!

A GUARD leads Harry out of the room still kicking and SCREAMING.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Harry walks a slim twist of two lane blacktop running through eclipsing farmland.

Harry stops, lights a cigarette, looks up at the sky. It's dark, threatening rain.

He pays no attention to the car that shoots by, hangs a U in the middle of the road.

RENICK

Harry Barber!

JOHN RENICK smiles broadly as he pulls up along side Harry. He receives a scowl in return.

HARRY

Little out of your jurisdiction, aren't you, Renick?

He shifts the duffel bag he carries from hand to the other and starts walking.

RENICK

I give you a lift? It's supposed to rain.

HARRY

I can stand a little rain.

RENICK

Cats and dogs from the looks of it.

HARRY

I guess I can stand that too.

RENICK

I'm heading back to Palmetto. Sure you don't want a ride?

HARRY

I'm not goin' to Palmetto.

RENICK

Oh? Where you going?

Harry comes to a bus stop which consists of nothing more than a sign. He leans against it.

HARRY

Miami.

CONTINUED

RENICK

Miami?

HARRY

Miami's a happenin' town. Or hadn't you heard?

RENICK

Ah, you know me, Harry. Palmetto's a big enough pond for a fish my size.

HARRY

Pretty big fish, I hear. Assistant District Attorney, aren't you?

RENICK

That's right. After I quit the department I went back to school and got a law degree. I do most of the investigative work around the office. Cop background helps.

HARRY

Good money I suppose.

RENICK

Hey, you'll never get rich workin' for the county.

HARRY

I knew a guy or two did.

RENICK

That's all over, Harry. Palmetto's cleaned up, top to bottom.

HARRY

I'll just bet it squeaks.

Renick looks up at the sky, studies the rain clouds.

RENICK

Miami, huh?

HARRY

Miami, Atlanta, East Bumble Fuck. Just as long as it ain't Palmetto.

RENICK

What's Nina have to say about it?

CONTINUED

HARRY

(PIQUED)

I didn't ask her.

A CAR HORN SOUNDS. They turn to SEE a 10 year-old Chrysler (or
somesuch) pull up.

RENICK

Maybe you should.

He takes off as NINA gets out of the car. She's the dark
haired, fire-in-her-eyes type. She smiles...

HARRY

You shouldn't have come, Nina.

...throws herself in his arms...

HARRY

It was a long drive for nothin'.

...rubs his body against his like a cat, kisses his neck...

HARRY

I'm not goin' back to Palmetto.
Not now. Not ever.

...kisses him on the mouth. The duffel drops to the pavement.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The Chrysler blows by a sign that reads: WELCOME TO PALMETTO.

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Harry opens his eyes. He's got 3 days of beard on his face.
Nina's asleep beside him.

He grabs his pants, picks his way through the clutter of fast
food containers and coffee cups that surround the bed...

IN THE KITCHEN

...stumbles into the kitchen. He drinks cold coffee from the
pot, lights the remains of a cigarette, continues wandering.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Harry studies pictures of himself in happier times. He's
smiling and open, no sign of the bitterness evident now.

INT. STUDIO - EARLY MORNING

Enter Harry. The space is large and well lit, a skylight opens to the morning sun. He begins to poke around.

Ceramics of all shapes and sizes fill tables and shelves. There are also bottles of glaze and bundles of brushes.

In one corner is a kiln and the necessary tools for firing clay. It all seems very professional.

Harry runs a finger over a decorated plate. The designs are bold and bright.

NINA

Like it?

Nina stands in the doorway, her hair long and loose.

HARRY

Sure.

NINA

You don't have to, you know.

HARRY

No, I do. You have a real talent for this kind of thing. Anybody can see that.

NINA

Thanks. I sort of discovered it by accident. After you went away I got a job in an arts and crafts store. One thing led to another, and here I am with a business of my own. If you hadn't sent all my letters back unopened you'd know that.

HARRY

Listen, I think it's great, Nina. You've got a passion for what you do. You're lucky.

NINA

You make it sound as if you don't.

Harry shrugs, tries not to sound bitter and cynical.

CONTINUED

HARRY

I tried writing in prison, nothing came out that didn't sound bitter and cynical. After six months I threw in the towel. Who cares if the deck's rigged and the money's dirty? Just so long as everybody's gettin' their share.

NINA

I thought you cared?

HARRY

I did. Once.

NINA

You can't fool me, Harry. You haven't changed.

HARRY

Yeah? Is that why you waited 2 years?

NINA

Who said I waited? Maybe I just never found anyone special enough.

There's an awkward silence before she produces a small gift-wrapped box. She tosses it to him.

HARRY

Look, I feel bad enough...

NINA

Open it.

He does, finds a handsome wristwatch with a leather band.

NINA

You can look at the time now. It's on your side again.

He admires the watch, goes over and puts his arms around her.

HARRY

You know something?

NINA

What?

CONTINUED

HARRY
I'm glad you waited.

NINA
Harry?

HARRY
Huh?

NINA
I never said I waited.

She turns on her heel and leaves him standing there.

INT. BANK - DAY

A bald headed BANK MANAGER holds up a check and examines the watermark. A plump TELLER watches.

HARRY
That's Uncle Sam's signature on there. Good as gold.

BANK MANAGER
You work for the government, do you, Mr. Barber?

HARRY
Used to. Hell, I was pullin' down 29¢ an hour and 3 squares a day.

Harry grins. The man nods sternly.

BANK MANAGER
If you open an account this morning funds will be available on Thursday.

HARRY
You don't understand. The check's good now. Today. I mean, it's the federal government, for chris-sake.

BANK MANAGER
You can have the money Thursday.

HARRY
Look, I know it's only \$843 and 11 lousy cents, but I worked 2

CONTINUED

HARRY (CONT.)

years for that money. Now don't
tell me I have to wait until
fuckin' Thursday to get it.

A SECURITY GUARD suddenly appears.

BANK MANAGER

I'm sorry, Mr. Barber.

Harry grits his teeth.

NINA (VO)

It's okay, Harry. I'll run it
through my account.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

An angry and humiliated Harry signs over his check to Nina.

HARRY

You think maybe I could, you
know, get somethin' up front?

NINA

Sure. How much?

INT. BARNACLE BILL'S - DAY

A small pile of bills and some loose change lay on a table.
Lined up in a neat row beside the money...

...are 3 shot glasses full of bourbon and 3 empty coke backs.
The BARTENDER is just pouring the 4th of each.

He watches Harry pick up the bourbon, smell it, put it back down
and drink the coke. He shakes his head and walks away.

Harry goes back to his newspaper. He circles a few of the ads
in the employment section despondently.

TIME CUT TO:

Like the rest of the interior of Barnacle Bill's, the mounted
fish over the bar hasn't changed in 30 years.

There's also a juke box and a phone booth in the corner. On the
telephone is Harry.

He nods glumly at whatever it is he's being told before hanging
up. He exits the phone booth and goes back to his table...

CONTINUED

...where the bartender is just pouring him another round.

BARTENDER
Find anything?

HARRY
Naw.

He watches him perform his bourbon and coke ritual.

BARTENDER
Hey, mister, you been comin' in here everyday for a week and everyday you order the same bourbon straight up with a coke back.

HARRY
So?

BARTENDER
So as far as I can tell you never touch the bourbon. Mind if I ask why?

HARRY
'Cause I don't drink.

The bartender eyes him skeptically.

BARTENDER
Maybe tomorrow I'll ask you why you order bourbon if you don't drink.

HARRY
Maybe tomorrow I'll tell you.

He scoops up his change off the table and walks out.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Enter Harry, dog tired and dejected. He's got a stack of mail in his hand.

NINA (VO)
That you, Harry?

HARRY
Yeah, it's me.

He picks through the mail grumpily, wanders back to the studio.

IN THE STUDIO

TWO WOMEN examine plates. Nina gives Harry a kiss.

NINA

How'd it go today?

HARRY

Same as it went yesterday, and the day before and...you get the picture.

WOMAN

How much is this one?

NINA

Everything's marked on the back.

The women go back to their plates.

NINA

C'mon, Harry, you can't expect to find something good overnight.

HARRY

Something good? Right now I'd settle for the prison laundry again.

The two women steal a peek in Harry's direction.

NINA

Things'll work out. Don't be so down on yourself.

HARRY

I know, I know, but we need the money.

NINA

We'll get by. I'm doing fine with my ceramics. I've even got some of the big department stores in Miami interested.

HARRY

Miami...

CONTINUED

NINA

Don't start that again, Harry.
I'm not moving to Miami. There's
plenty of opportunity right here
in Palmetto.

HARRY

Maybe for you...

NINA

For you too.

HARRY

It's just that I've got to make
something happen, Nina. Soon.
That 843 bucks ain't gonna go far.
The last thing I wanna be doin'
is askin' you for lunch money.

NINA

I don't mind.

HARRY

Well, I do.

His voice is LOUDER now. The two women eye him furtively.

NINA

I suppose you could help me.
I've got an exhibition coming
up the day after tomorrow.
You could make the deliveries,
pick up supplies...

HARRY

(EXPLODING)

Is that what you want me to do?
Be your goddamn errand boy?

NINA

No, I only thought...

HARRY

Well, don't, Nina. You just
let me worry about Harry
Barber.

He storms out. Nina smiles at her customers apologetically.

EXT. BARNACLE BILL'S - NIGHT

The neon face of a grizzled sailor lights up the night.

INT. BARNACLE BILL'S - NIGHT

The bartender pours a shot of bourbon with a coke back and takes them over to where Harry sits at his usual table.

There are already half a dozen glasses lined up. Harry raises the bourbon to his nose and savors the smell...

...before putting it down and drinking his coke. The bartender watches. Harry sends him away with a dirty look...

...pulls out a newspaper. He skims the help wanted section with disgust, finally wadding it up and pushing it aside.

It's then that the door opens and Harry's fortunes suddenly change forever.

A WOMAN enters. She's tall and blonde with a silver anklet and an air of breeding only large sums of money can provide.

Breathless, Harry watches her walk to the phone booth and shut herself in. He studies her through the glass...

...the tight canary yellow slacks, the sheer top, the jewelry circling her wrists and fingers. Yes sir, a real thoroughbred.

Her call is brief. She hangs up and exits the booth. The scent of her perfume hits Harry as she hurries out.

His nostrils flare, eyes glaze...before he suddenly snaps out of his reverie and SEES it.

It being the woman's purse. It's canary yellow like her slacks and it's sitting in the phone booth.

Harry glances around, gnaws on a fingernail...then gets up casually and wanders over.

IN THE PHONE BOOTH

Harry picks up the receiver, tucks it under his chin. He wets his lips, opens the purse.

There's a gold cigarette case and matching lighter with the initials RM. And then he finds it, a platinum money clip.

The sight of it takes his breath away. He flips through the wad of bills. All 50's and 100's, close to \$2000.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

PUBLISHER (VO)

Go on, Harry. Take the money.

Harry looks up. There's a MAN sitting at a big desk. From the decor of the place it's obvious he works in the newspaper biz.

PUBLISHER

There's \$10,000 there. And it's all yours.

Harry gives him a disgusted look, tosses the money on his desk.

HARRY

I'm not for sale.

END FLAHSBACK

Harry looks at the money in his hand. His fingers twitch, his jaw tightens...then he slips the wad into his pocket.

He snaps the purse shut, pulls the door open...and is horrified to find the woman standing there looking at him.

RM

Excuse me, I think I left my handbag...

Harry swallows, reaches back and grabs it.

HARRY

I was going to give it to the bartender.

RM

Oh, how thoughtful of you.

The bartender appears, SEES Harry holding the purse.

BARTENDER

There a problem, lady?

RM

Oh no, no problem. I stupidly left my handbag in the phone booth and this gentleman was going to turn it in.

BARTENDER

Yeah?

He eyes Harry suspiciously.

CONTINUED

BARTENDER

Maybe you'd better make sure
everything's there.

Harry wants to run but the bartender stands in his way. All he
can do is watch helplessly as the woman digs through her purse.

RM

Yes, it's all here, thank you.

The bartender snorts and walks away.

RM

And thank you.

Harry smiles weakly.

RM

May I buy you a drink in grat-
itude?

HARRY

It's not necessary.

RM

But customary.

Harry shrugs, leads her back to the table. She looks over his
line up of bourbon.

RM

Tempting the fates, are we?

HARRY

Something like that.

RM

You don't mind if I do more than
tempt them then?

HARRY

You appear to be an adult.

The woman SNAPS her fingers. The bartender hurries over.

RM

Another round for the gentleman
and I'll have a vodka martini with
a twist.

CONTINUED

The bartender runs off. The woman pulls out a cigarette. Harry's there with a match, trying hard to impress.

HARRY

You lost?

RM

Do I seem lost?

HARRY

Maybe out of place is more like it.

RM

I'll take that as a compliment.

HARRY

Take it anyway you like. Name's Harry Barber.

He offers his hand...but the bartender reappears with their drinks. Harry watches her sip hers delicately.

RM

So, Mr. Barber, do you do anything else besides tempt the fates?

HARRY

What do you mean?

RM

How do you spend your time? What do you do?

HARRY

I don't know, what does anybody do? Try and survive, I guess.

RM

Maybe you'd like to do more than just survive?

HARRY

Who wouldn't?

RM

I might know of something. Would you be interested?

HARRY

I'm interested now.

CONTINUED

RM

The money's good. Very good.
In exchange there's a small
element of risk.

HARRY

Risk?

RM

Does that worry you?

HARRY

Does it worry you?

RM

If I could I'd do the job myself.

HARRY

What is this job?

She smiles, stubs out her cigarette.

RM

I like you, Mr. Barber. I
like a man with self control.

She picks up his pen, scribbles something in his hand.

RM

Why don't you call me tomorrow.
We can discuss it further.

He looks at his hand, then back at the woman.

RM

Let me settle the check.

(BEAT)

Oh, I almost forgot...

HARRY

I didn't.

He pulls the money from his pocket, slides it across the table.
She puts down a \$50 bill and gets up.

RM

Until tomorrow then.

Harry watches her walk confidently out the door. He picks up
the 50, throws down a 20 and follows her out.

EXT. BARNACLE BILL'S - NIGHT

The woman is already crossing the road and is headed for the marina on the other side. Harry has to run to keep up.

EXT. MARINA - NIGHT

Her blonde hair shimmering in the night, the woman runs along the dock and dashes aboard the biggest boat in sight...

...a 90-footer called the RHEA M.

Harry rubs chin, notices the marina office. In the window is a sign that says HELP WANTED.

INT. MARINA OFFICE - NIGHT

Enter Harry. A weather beaten old timer by the name of ED sits behind the counter. He wears overalls and a rubber apron.

ED

Evenin'.

HARRY

That sign in the window, what kind of help you lookin' for?

ED

Oh, the six-dollar-an-hour kind: pump gas, cut bait. We're open till midnight and it's only the wife and me. Need some hep.

HARRY

And that six-bucks-an-hour...is that on the books or off?

ED

Well now, that all depends...

He scratches himself in various places as Harry peers out the window and WHISTLES softly.

HARRY

Hey, that's some boat out there, the one called Rhea M. Who owns that, you know?

ED

Fella name of Malroux. Got an x on the end of it.

CONTINUED

HARRY

Got an x on the end of what?

ED

His name. French or somesuch.

HARRY

French, huh?

ED

Felix is his Christian name.
Got an x on the end of that
too, by the way.

HARRY

I'll remember that.

ED

Yessir, owns that boat and a big
house up on the hill. The old
Cranleigh estate.

HARRY

He bought that place? What's a
guy with that kind of money doin'
in a one-horse town like Palmetto?

ED

He's a lung cancer case. Here
for his health. Ain't got all
that long to live from what I
hear.

HARRY

And the blonde?

ED

Mrs. Malroux. Boat's named after
her. Got another boat named Odette.
That's his daughter. But he don't
keep 'er here. The boat I mean.

HARRY

Malroux...

He gazes out at the boat.

HARRY

Must be worth a fortune.

CONTINUED

ED

Wouldn't trade places with him for all the tea in Chinee. He's a lung cancer case.

HARRY

Yeah, but what a way to go.

He lights a smoke and turns for the door.

ED

Hey, mister? You still interested in that job?

HARRY

Thanks anyway, old timer, but I think I got a better offer.

EXT. MARINA - NIGHT

Harry exits the office, stands thoughtfully in the cool night air. He looks up at the stars and begins to WHISTLE.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

A big bouquet of flowers sits on the kitchen table. Nina comes in, reads the card with them. She smiles.

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Harry basks in the morning sun. Nina slips up behind him and gives him a kiss.

NINA

They're beautiful.

He grabs her playfully, pulls her onto his lap.

HARRY

I got a little bent out of shape yesterday. Sorry.

NINA

It's okay. I know this not working is making you crazy.

HARRY

So crazy I went out and did something about it.

CONTINUED

NINA

Harry, you got a job?

HARRY

Whoa now, hold on. It's only part time down at the marina. I'll be working nights, but it's 10 bucks an hour so I figured why not? Least til I get a real job.

NINA

Until you start writing again.

HARRY

Listen, baby, there's nothing worse than a writer who doesn't have anything to say.

NINA

But you do have something to say. You tell the truth.

HARRY

I tried that once and look what happened.

NINA

You've got to forget all that, Harry. You've got to forget it and get on with your life.

He runs his hand across her cheek tenderly.

HARRY

That's exactly what I'm tryin' to do, baby...exactly.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Nina carries a large vase swathed in bubble wrap to the car. She carefully places it in the trunk.

NINA

Harry, I'll be back in an hour.

Harry appears in the doorway.

HARRY

You goin' somewhere?

NINA

I've got a delivery to make.

Harry walks out to the car.

HARRY

Why don't you let me do that?

NINA

Are you kidding? After yesterday?

HARRY

Look, I told you I was having an off day. You've got plenty to keep you busy. Let me do this. It'll make me feel like I'm contributing something around here.

NINA

You're sure?

HARRY

Scout's honor.

She shrugs and hands over the keys and an address. He gives her a boy scout salute and hops in the car.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The Chrysler cruises along a road lined with expensive houses overlooking the water.

INT. CHRYSLER (MOVING) - DAY

Harry watches the houses slip past, slows when he approaches the biggest of them all, turns in the drive.

EXT. MALROUX HOUSE - DAY

Harry pulls up in front of the stately Malroux residence. He gets out, pops the trunk, grabs the vase.

He looks at the house, eyes the expensive cars lined up in their separate garages.

He RINGS the bell. The door opens. A pockmarked but handsome face appears. Its owner's name is DONNELLY.

DONNELLY

Yes?

Recognition flashes in Harry's eyes, but only for a second.

HARRY

Got a delivery for Mrs. Malroux.

DONNELLY

I'll take it.

HARRY

She's got to OK it herself.
It was a telephone order.

He smiles. Donnelly regards him suspiciously.

DONNELLY

Wait here.

The door closes. Harry takes off around the side of the house, lets himself in the gate leading to the pool in back.

EXT. MALROUX BACKYARD - DAY

There's a YOUNG GIRL swimming laps. She wears a cap and goggles.

In the garden on her hands and knees is Rhea Malroux. Her head is covered by a large sun hat, her hands by gloves.

CONTINUED

HARRY
Mrs. Malroux?

She looks up, quickly hiding her surprise.

HARRY
Hope I'm not disturbing you?

RHEA
Not at all.

She smiles and places a cutting of garden herbs in a basket.

DONNELLY
Hey you!

Donnelly charges out of the house like a pitbull.

RHEA
It's alright, Donnelly, I'll
handle it.

DONNELLY
Next time you got a delivery you
wait outside. You hear me?

He goes back in the house with a scowl. In an upstairs window
the figure of an OLD MAN appears. Rhea waves.

RHEA
I like your initiative, Mr. Barber.

HARRY
Just checkin' my facts.

RHEA
And what are your facts?

HARRY
That you're Rhea Malroux, Felix
Malroux's wife. That you have
a daughter named Odette and that
you live in the old Cranleigh place.

RHEA
Anything else?

HARRY
You have a job for me.

CONTINUED

RHEA

Your facts seem to check out,
Mr. Barber.

HARRY

Then let's talk.

RHEA

Not here. Do you know East
Beach?

HARRY

I know it.

RHEA

You know the bungalows for rent
by the water?

HARRY

I've seen 'em.

RHEA

Rent one. The last one on the
end.

HARRY

Then what?

RHEA

Meet me tonight.

Harry watches the girl in the pool for a moment.

HARRY

Give me one good reason why
I should.

RHEA

I'll give you 50,000 good
reasons.

He fights the sudden rush of adrenalin he feels.

DONNELLY

(REAPPEARING)

Phone call, ma'am.

Rhea's demeanor changes immediately.

CONTINUED

RHEA

Let me just pay you for that
then. A hundred was it?

HARRY

Two.

She almost smiles at his audacity.

RHEA

Give the man his money and
show him the way out.

She returns to her gardening as Harry's lead into the house.

INT. MALROUX HOUSE - DAY

Harry puts the vase on the dining room table. He looks around.
There's a framed photo on a piano.

CU - An older man (the one in the window) and a woman on a boat.
Harry studies the photo...until Donnelly suddenly appears with
his money. He hands him two \$100 bills, leads him to the door.

EXT. MALROUX HOUSE - DAY

Harry exits. Donnelly's face hardens into a grimace.

DONNELLY

I mean it, pal. You trespass
on this property again, I'll
break you in half.

HARRY

You know, I believe you.

He gives him a wink and heads for the car.

EXT. BUNGALOW PARKING - DAY

The Chrysler pulls to a stop. Harry gets out, looks around.

INT. BUNGALOW RENTAL OFFICE - DAY

A BELL rings when the door opens. Enter Harry. There's
a horse race on the TV. Harry stares at it, lost.

FLASHBACK - A BELL SOUNDS, thoroughbreds bolt from a gate
in SLOW MOTION.

END FLASHBACK

BILLY

Harry Barber! You're Harry Barber. You used to write about sports for the Ledger.

BILLY HOLDEN, a muscular hunk of meat in an ex-jock's body, appears from the back room.

HARRY

I wrote about everything.

(SMILES)

Do you have something available for tonight...

BILLY

Don't you remember me? Billy Holden. They used to call me Wild Bill in school.

HARRY

Sure. You pitched for South Palmetto. Lefty, weren't you?

BILLY

Still am.

HARRY

I'd like the one on the end...

BILLY

I signed with a pro team my senior year. Played double A for two seasons then tore a rotator cuff.

(SHRUGS)

Hey, shit happens. You still write for the Ledger?

HARRY

Uh, no.

BILLY

How come?

HARRY

Shit happens.

(SMILES)

Now about that bungalow...

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Nina's cleaning glaze brushes in the sink. She looks up at the clock on the wall.

NINA

Harry, you're gonna be late.

Harry appears, pulls on a sport coat and looking just a little too good.

NINA

You sure you've got a job at the marina?

HARRY

(UNEASY)

What do you mean?

NINA

You look a little over dressed for cutting bait.

HARRY

I guess I'm just excited to be doing something again. Should I go back and change?

NINA

Naw. Impress the fish.

She gives him a kiss. He exits confidently.

EXT. EAST BEACH - MAGIC HOUR (SUNSET)

The sun sinks over the Gulf of Mexico. Harry stops to watch it a moment as he strolls casually along the beach.

EXT. BUNGALOW - MAGIC HOUR (SUNSET)

He pulls the key from his pocket, glances around before opening the door and going inside.

INT. BUNGALOW - EVENING

Enter Harry. He looks the place over, begins checking for bugs (the electronic kind).

The decor is neo south seas: bamboo furniture, floral print curtains to match the floral print bedspread, bad art.

Harry opens a few windows, lets the breeze in. He goes to the mini bar and pours himself a bourbon with a coke back.

He pulls a palm size tape recorder from his pocket, checks it over, puts it away. He takes his drinks, goes back outside...

EXT. BUNGALOW - EVENING

...slides into a lounge chair and lights a smoke. The view is nice, the waves breaking on the beach.

TIME CUT TO:

A pink glow is barely visible on the horizon. Harry looks at his watch, lights another cigarette.

RHEA

You know you can see a match
at sea for miles.

Rhea appears out of the darkness. She's wearing something white and diaphenous. She floats by and goes inside. Harry follows.

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Rhea sits, watches Harry close the curtains and turn all the lights off except for one.

RHEA

You seem worried, Mr. Barber.

HARRY

Just cautious.

RHEA

What are you being cautious
about?

HARRY

You tell me?

RHEA

My god, it's sticky. Every-
thing just clings. May I
have a drink?

CONTINUED

She adjusts her dress, revealing a little more of what Harry can't help but notice.

HARRY

Vodka martini with a twist?

RHEA

Bravo, Mr. Barber. You were paying attention in class.

He goes to the mini bar, begins fixing her drink.

RHEA

Are you married, Mr. Barber?

HARRY

No.

RHEA

Girlfriend?

HARRY

We live together.

RHEA

How old-fashioned of you.

HARRY

I didn't know we were here to talk about my personal life.

RHEA

Americans are always in such a hurry. That's what I like about Europeans, they know how to engage in polite conversation before getting down to business.

Harry pulls the tape recorder from his pocket, turns it ON and places it out of sight.

HARRY

Sorry, I'm all out of twists.

He hands her her drink, watches her take a sip.

HARRY

Okay, Mrs. Malroux, you wanted to talk to me about something.

CONTINUED

RHEA

I have a job for you.

HARRY

So you said.

RHEA

As I mentioned there's an element of risk involved.

HARRY

You mentioned that, yes.

RHEA

You do take risks, don't you, Mr. Barber?

HARRY

Do I?

RHEA

You took a rather large risk when you took the money from my purse.

He gives her a hard look.

HARRY

What kind of job, Mrs. Malroux?

RHEA

My stepdaughter is going to be kidnapped. The ransom will be \$500,000. I need someone to be the threatening voice on the telephone. For making the call and collecting the ransom I'm willing to pay you 10 percent.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

PUBLISHER

Don't be a sucker, Harry. Take it.

Harry looks at the money sitting on the desk.

END FLASHBACK

RHEA

That's \$50,000, Mr. Barber.

CONTINUED

HARRY

I know what it is.

RHEA

Are you interested?

HARRY

I'm no kidnapper.

RHEA

I don't need you to kidnap anyone because no one's going to be kidnapped. Odette, my stepdaughter, will simply disappear for a few days.

HARRY

Does she know that?

RHEA

It was her idea.

HARRY

What do you need \$500,000 for anyway? Your husband's rich, why don't you just ask him for the money?

RHEA

My husband believes that his daughter and I should be able to manage on the allowance he provides. I admit it's a generous allowance for reasonable people. But it so happens that neither my stepdaughter nor I are reasonable people.

She finishes her drink.

HARRY

What is it, the girl got a drug habit? An expensive boyfriend? Maybe a boyfriend with an expensive drug habit?

RHEA

Frankly, Mr. Barber, it's none of your goddamn business. May I have another drink please?

CONTINUED

He takes her glass, goes to the mini bar. The tape recorder still spins as he fixes her another drink.

HARRY

You realize of course that kidnapping is a federal crime. That means the FBI'll be in on this.

RHEA

First of all, there's not going to be any kidnapping. And secondly my husband won't involve the authorities.

HARRY

What makes you so sure?

RHEA

A sick man won't put up much of a fight when someone he loves is in danger.

HARRY

You probably know more about that than I do.

RHEA

Besides, he doesn't like publicity. He'll do as he's told and keep the police out of it. I'll make sure of it.

Harry places the drink in her hand.

HARRY

So let me get this straight. The girl disappears, I make a phone call, collect the money, take my cut, give you the rest, the girl goes home and everybody's happy. That the deal?

RHEA

Essentially.

HARRY

Sounds easy.

RHEA

It will be.

CONTINUED

He eyes her coldly.

HARRY

You a cop?

RHEA

Do I look like a cop?

HARRY

Answer the fuckin' question.

RHEA

No.

HARRY

You wearin' a wire?

RHEA

A what?

He yanks her to her feet and begins to frisk her. His hands search every inch of her body...

...cupping her breasts, feeling the curve of her ass, pushing bluntly between her legs.

She stands unflinching, holding his eye coolly. By the time he's done his breath comes in ragged gulps.

RHEA

Well, Mr. Barber, did you find what you were looking for?

Their faces only inches apart, he trembles.

RHEA

Maybe you'd better check again. You don't want to miss anything.

He can't stop himself now, he's on her in an instant, kissing her and tearing at her dress like an animal.

RHEA

In all this excitement, Mr. Barber, I don't remember you saying whether you were in or out.

HARRY

In all this excitement I didn't say.

CONTINUED

RHEA

I need to know. Time is of the essence.

HARRY

I wanna talk to this Odette.

RHEA

That can be arranged.

HARRY

Tomorrow night. Here. Alone.

RHEA

You might need a chaperon. She's only 17.

HARRY

You don't have to worry about me. I can behave myself.

RHEA

It's not you I'm worried about.

CU - The tape recorder spins, picking up every audio detail in the tiny bungalow.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door CREAKS open. Harry tiptoes in, sits on the edge of the bed and begins to undress. Nina rolls over sleepily.

NINA

How was it?

HARRY

(NONCHALANT)

Oh, you know, dull, tedious and boring in no particular order.

NINA

Hey, I got the strangest call tonight from Mrs. Wintergarden.

HARRY

Who?

NINA

The woman you made the delivery to this afternoon.

CONTINUED

HARRY

(UNEASY)

Oh?

NINA

She said she never got her vase.
Are you sure you went to the right
address?

HARRY

What are you sayin', Nina, that
I didn't make the goddamn deliv-
ery? Is that it?

NINA

No. It's just strange that's all.
Anyway, I told her I'd drop another
one off next week.

HARRY

Good. Now can we forget about
Mrs. Wintergarden?

He tosses his T-shirt in the corner angrily.

NINA

Are you coming to bed?

HARRY

Think I'm gonna shower first.
I smell like fish.

He gets up and disappears into the bathroom.

EXT. BUNGALOW PARKING - LATE AFTERNOON

The Chrysler pulls to a stop. Harry gets out, goes around to the trunk, opens it...

...removes a portable typewriter in a case and carries it to the rental office.

INT. BUNGALOW RENTAL OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

The little BELL jingles. Enter Harry.

HARRY

Hey there, Wild Bill.

BILLY

Hello, Mr. Barber.

HARRY

Listen, Billy, I'm gonna need that bungalow a little longer. I do that?

BILLY

Sure. The weather's been lousy. I've got cancellations up the wahzoo.

HARRY

Why don't you reserve it through the end of the week then.

HARRY

Paying with cash again, Mr. B?

HARRY

And don't bother with a receipt.

Harry pulls out his wallet, pays him in cold hard green.

BILLY

Hey, good luck.

Harry, halfway to the door, stops in his tracks.

HARRY

With what?

BILLY

Your writing.

He indicates the typewriter in Harry's hand. The color returns to Harry's face. He gives Billy a salute and exits.

INT. BUNGALOW - EVENING

Harry pulls on a pair of latex gloves and carefully puts a piece of paper into the typewriter.

He lights a smoke before starting.

CU - FELIX MALROUX, I HAVE YOUR DAUGHTER. I WANT \$500,000 OR YOU'LL NEVER SEE HER AGAIN...

He continues typing at a rapid pace, just like the reporter he used to be.

ODETTE (VO)

Harry Barber?

He turns, studies the silhouette in the doorway.

ODETTE

I'm Odette Malroux.

HARRY

(GETTING UP)

C'mon in.

Tall and lanky, ODETTE MALROUX is a lethal mixture of stunning good looks and young reckless energy.

HARRY

Wanna coke?

ODETTE

Don't you have anything stronger?

HARRY

Law in this state says you gotta be 21 to drink.

ODETTE

So?

HARRY

I always obey the law.

She smiles, watches him get her a coke from the mini bar.

ODETTE

Is Harry Barber your real name or did you make it up?

HARRY

What's the matter, you don't like it?

CONTINUED

ODETTE

No, I love it. Sounds delicious.
It's just that you don't look
like a Harry Barber.

HARRY

Oh? And what's a Harry Barber
supposed to look like?

ODETTE

I don't know. I've never met
one before.

She GIGGLES as he hands her her coke.

HARRY

Odette Malroux...what kind of
name is that?

ODETTE

Malroux's French. Odette's
on my mother's side. She was
from New Orleans.

HARRY

Was?

ODETTE

She drove herself off a cliff
in the Pyrenees mountains 3
years ago.

HARRY

Sorry.

ODETTE

They never did figure out if
she meant to or not.

She shrugs matter-of-factly.

HARRY

And Rhea's your stepmother?

ODETTE

I'd hardly call her my stepmother.
She's more like a big sister.
We're only 14 years apart.

CONTINUED

HARRY

She refers to you as her step-daughter.

ODETTE

That's her problem.

Harry lights a cigarette.

HARRY

Look, kid, I wanted to meet you tonight so...

ODETTE

(CUTTING HIM OFF)

You want to know if I'm in on this, right?

HARRY

That's a good place to start.

ODETTE

Yes.

HARRY

Yes what?

ODETTE

Yes, I'm going to pretend to be kidnapped. Yes, Rhea and I are going to ask my father for \$500,000. Yes, he'll pay it. Yes, yes, yes!

HARRY

Mind if I ask what you need the money for?

ODETTE

My father wants to send me away to boarding school. One of those awful, boring Swiss schools run by awful, boring Swiss nuns. He doesn't like the idea of me being so American.

HARRY

Why don't you just tell him you don't want to go?

ODETTE

Why don't you tell him?

CONTINUED

She slurps her coke down, examines her nails.

ODETTE

Look, I love my father. I really do. But I'm not going away to that school. No way. I figure \$500,000'll get me through to my 18th birthday and then I'll be on my own.

HARRY

Half a million dollars is a lot of money.

ODETTE

Do you think it's enough? I don't really know anything about money. Rhea came up with the amount.

HARRY

Was this her idea?

ODETTE

Oh no. I thought it up. Do you like it?

HARRY

You ever seen the inside of a jail cell?

ODETTE

On TV.

HARRY

They make it look pretty on TV.

ODETTE

If we get caught I'll just say it was all a prank.

HARRY

The cops won't think it's funny and neither will I.

ODETTE

You're way too serious, Harry Barber. Lighten up...

BAM! He slaps her. Hard. She grabs her cheek, horrified.

CONTINUED

ODETTE

You son of a bitch! You hit me.

HARRY

Go on, get out of here before I hit you again.

(BEAT)

Get out, I said!

ODETTE

(DEFIANTLY)

No!

HARRY

I don't play games, you. Not when I could spend the next 20 years of my life in prison. If the cops get involved they're gonna question you til your ears bleed. If they suspect you're lying they won't let up until they rip the truth right out of you.

ODETTE

I'm a pretty good liar when I have to be.

HARRY

I don't doubt it. Be we need a story, a simple one, the kind you can hit with a hammer and not break to pieces.

ODETTE

(COOLLY)

Let's say I meet a girlfriend Saturday night. Let's say we're going to have a drink and go to a movie. Let's say my girlfriend shows up and can't find me. Let's say it's because somebody grabbed me out of the parking lot.

She gives him a wickedly innocent smile.

HARRY

Let's say we work on the details.

He lights a cigarette and begins to roll up his sleeves.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

An opening. A group show. Beaucoup PEOPLE. They talk, drink cheap wine, and occasionally look at art.

Harry slips in, worms his way over to where Nina holds court in front of some of her ceramics.

HARRY
Sorry I'm late.

NINA
Are you kidding, it's high tide.

He runs his hand over the sleek black dress she wears, smiles as she receives congrats for her work.

His eyes scan the room. Somebody waves. It's JOHN RENICK.

HARRY
You didn't tell me you were going to invite your sister.

NINA
Of course I invited her. Jesus, Harry, just because she married a cop doesn't mean I'm not going to see her. Besides, John isn't a cop anymore.

HARRY
Once a cop...

Nina's sister ALDA and John Renick make their way over.

ALDA
Hey, baby sister...
(THEY HUG)
Hi, Harry.

HARRY
How's it goin', Alda?

He's suddenly face to face with Renick.

RENICK
Well, I see Miami didn't work out.

HARRY
Not yet.

CONTINUED

RENICK

You look like you have a little more color that the last time I saw you.

HARRY

Yeah, freedom'll do that to you.

Renick grabs some wine off a passing tray.

RENICK

You working?

HARRY

Just some part time stuff down at the marina.

RENICK

You know the Ledger's got a new owner these days?

HARRY

I heard.

RENICK

Nice guy. I play golf with him on a regular basis.

HARRY

So?

RENICK

So if that part time stuff gets old, lemme know. I could mention your name.

HARRY

Don't do me any favors, Renick.

He turns, makes his way to the bar set up in the corner and grabs a coke.

He smiles at the TWIN BARTENDESSES, leans against the bar and prepares to ride out the storm.

CONTINUED

RHEA

Mr. Barber?

He looks over. There's a woman at the bar dressed in black. Her hair is long and dark. It's Rhea Malroux.

HARRY

What are you doin' here?

RHEA

Just checking my facts.

(BEAT)

Well?

HARRY

I'm in. Saturday night. I've got it all worked out. The girl knows what to do.

RHEA

And what do I do?

He uses a napkin to extract an envelope from his pocket.

HARRY

Make sure your husband finds this with the Sunday paper. It's a lock of Odette's hair and a ransom note. That and a phone call should convince him this is the real deal.

She slips the envelope into her purse.

RHEA

And then?

HARRY

Try and act like a grief-stricken stepmother.

He downs his coke and walks away.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

HARRY

Looks like rain.

Harry and Nina walk on a deserted beach under a dull gray sky.

CONTINUED

NINA

What time do you go to work?

HARRY

I told Ed I'd be in around 6.
Don't wait up. It's Saturday.
I'm sure it'll be busy.

NINA

I miss you when you're gone.
Even when I know you're coming
back.

She runs her arm through his, but Harry's got other things on his mind.

HARRY

I think we should get a new car.

NINA

A new car? Harry...

HARRY

Sorry. I was just thinkin' out
loud. The Chrysler's about had
it though.

NINA

It's not that bad.

HARRY

You deserve better, Nina. When
things get turned around for me
I'm gonna buy you a brand new one.
Whatever you want.

NINA

Oh, stop.

HARRY

I mean it.

NINA

I think you're luck's going to
change soon, Harry. I really do.

HARRY

So do I.

He smiles and kisses her hand.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Harry sits in the Chrysler and watches the cars roll in and out of a parking lot adjacent to a club called The Buoy Room.

A white Miata zips in and parks. Odette gets out. She's dressed casually and carries a small shoulder bag.

She looks around, SEES Harry. She suppresses a giggle and goes inside.

INT. BUOY ROOM - NIGHT

The place is crowded with the young and beautiful. Odette goes right to the bar, orders a drink, asks the time.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Harry looks at his watch, notices a GIRL Odette's age emerge from a car.

He watches her head inside.

INT. BUOY ROOM - NIGHT

Odette waits at the bar. She watches the door. When the girl enters Odette quickly slips off to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Odette enters a stall, peels off her clothes. She pulls a dress and a red wig from her bag. Seconds later she's unrecognizable.

BACK AT THE BAR

The girl looks around in vain...as Odette walks right past her and out the door...

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

...to her car. Harry starts the Chrysler as she goes to grab an overnight bag.

WHACK! Her car door swings wide and smacks the side of an expensive Mercedes parked next to her.

MAN

Hey! Watch what you're doin'!

An OLDER MAN, the golfing type, climbs out of the car. He's sputtering mad.

CONTINUED

MAN

Look at that. You put a dent
in my door.

ODETTE

Sorry.

MAN

Sorry? Is that all you can say?

IN THE CHRYSLER

Harry watches incredulously.

IN THE PARKING LOT

MAN

I hope you've got insurance, young
lady.

ODETTE

Look, I said was sorry. Now fuck
off.

She tries to push past him, but he blocks her path.

MAN

You can't leave the scene of an
accident. Lemme see your license.

ODETTE

Get out of my way!

They struggle. The man ends up with a handful of Odette's red
wig. It comes off in his hand much to his surprise.

THUNK! Harry appears out of nowhere and clubs the man with a
heavy flashlight. He drops to his knees. Harry hits him again.

He crumples at Harry's feet.

HARRY

Now you've done it. C'mon,
let's go before this guy comes
to and makes a scene.

They run to the Chrysler, jump in and speed away.

The man on the pavement GROANS as a very female pair of
legs appear (sporting a silver anklet). They climb into the
Miata, start it up and drive off.

INT. CHRYSLER (MOVING) - NIGHT

Harry's mad. It shows in the way he drives. Fast.

HARRY

Nice goin'.

ODETTE

It wasn't my fault.

HARRY

That kind of slip up could send us all to prison.

ODETTE

It was just a dent. I don't know why he had to make such a big deal about it.

HARRY

On top of making us late now we got a witness to worry about.

ODETTE

He didn't see you.

HARRY

You can't be sure of that.

ODETTE

Don't worry.

HARRY

That's what you're payin' me for.

He looks disgusted, watches her pull down the visor and check herself out in the little mirror.

ODETTE

Rhea said you were going to get \$50,000 for this.

(SMILES)

And you know what I said? If he's collecting 10 times that much what makes you think he won't take all the money and run? - this lipstick doesn't go with red hair - Anyway, Rhea said you wouldn't do that because you were predictably dishonest.

CONTINUED

HARRY

She said that?

ODETTE

I think she meant it as a compliment.

(DIGS FOR MORE MAKE UP)

Well, Harry Barber, are you? Predictable, I mean.

Harry shoots her a sideways glance, lights smoke.

HARRY

I was a writer once upon a time. Newspapers. One day I got a tip on a horse race. The tip was it was fixed. I did some investigating. Turned out they were all fixed. And everybody from the jockeys to the state racing commissioner was in on it. Even the local cops were gettin' a piece. I wrote up the outline for a big story and dropped it on my editor's desk. The next day the owner of the paper called me into his office. I thought they were gonna pin a medal on me. Instead he handed me a box of ashes - all my hard work - and a stack of \$100 bills. Ten thousand worth to be exact. 'Harry,' he said, 'I can't print your story. Take the money and forget you ever saw a horse.' Turns out he was in on it too.

ODETTE

So you took the money. You took it and threw it right in his face, told him nobody was gonna shut you up for \$10,000. Am I right?

HARRY

(ANOTHER LOOK)

When it all blew up those 10 big ones ended up in an account with my name on it. I was indicted on a federal racketeering charge. I served half a 4 year sentence in an upstate prison.

CONTINUED

ODETTE

And that did it. You swore you were never gonna be a sucker again. The next time somebody made you a large offer of small bills you were going to take the money and never look back.

Harry tosses his cigarette out the window, pulls to a stop by the airport terminal. He looks at her.

HARRY

Tell me what you're gonna do?

ODETTE

Not again.

HARRY

C'mon.

ODETTE

I buy a ticket using cash and the name Anne Hardaway. When I get to Miami I check into the airport Holiday Inn, yuck, and don't come out of my room until I hear from you.

HARRY

Good. Now get going.

She grabs her bag, gets out. Before he can pull away she leans back in the open window.

ODETTE

You know, Harry Barber, you don't look predictable. But I guess I'm just not a very good judge of character.

HARRY

How's that?

ODETTE

I bet Rhea \$100 you wouldn't take the money out of her purse. And you see, I lost.

She smiles and runs off. Harry looks gutshot.

A SLOW DISSOLVE...

INT. BARNACLE BILL'S - NIGHT

A Palmetto bug on a wall. Its antennae twitch spasmodically as it looks over the interior of the bar.

Harry's in the phone booth. His face is twisted and snarling as he talks into the phone.

INT. MALROUX HOUSE - NIGHT

Felix Malroux, kitchen phone to ear, listens with a pained look on his face.

CUT TO:

Harry hangs up, wipes the sweat from his face.

CUT TO:

Malroux looks shell shocked. Rhea puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

A DOORBELL RINGS. Harry, lying in bed, opens his eyes. Nina opens the door.

NINA

Harry, you awake?

HARRY

Yeah.

NINA

You better get up.

HARRY

(SITTING UP)

What is it?

NINA

There's somebody here to see you.

Harry tries to look calm as he climbs out of bed and throws on a robe.

IN THE LIVING ROOM .

HARRY

You wanna see me?

There's a COP standing there, young and freshfaced.

POLICEMAN

Yes, sir, Mr. Barber. Assistant DA Renick would like you to come down to the courthouse.

HARRY

Wha'd I do?

POLICEMAN

Nothing, sir.

HARRY

Not under arrest?

POLICEMAN

No, sir.

Harry looks at Nina, shrugs.

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Elevator doors open and Harry steps out. The secretary's desk is empty but John Renick can be seen in his office.

RENICK

Harry, c'mon in.

Harry strolls in, not a care in the world.

HARRY

What's up?

RENICK

Sorry for the wake-up call but I wanted to get you in on this as soon as possible. Lemme introduce you to my boss.

Renick's boss is District Attorney MILES MEADOWS, a silver haired man with the rugged face of an ex-marine.

RENICK

Harry Barber, meet District Attorney Miles Meadows. Boss, Harry Barber.

They shake.

MEADOWS

How are you?

HARRY

I'd be better if somebody'd tell me what I'm doin' in the DA's office at 9:15 on a Sunday morning.

Renick shoots Meadows a quick look.

RENICK

Harry, you ever hear of a man named Felix Malroux?

Harry sags, lights a cigarette to cover it.

CONTINUED

HARRY

Spelled with an x, isn't it?

RENICK

Know anything about him?

HARRY

He's rich.

MEADOWS

He's very rich.

HARRY

No law against that.

MEADOWS

I got a call early this morning from a banker acquaintance of mine. Seems Felix Malroux was especially anxious to get his hands on \$500,000 in small bills as soon as possible.

HARRY

So?

MEADOWS

Tell him about the girl.

RENICK

Malroux's got a daughter. She's young, 16, 17. Last night she went to meet a friend and never came home.

HARRY

Maybe she eloped.

MEADOWS

She doesn't have a boyfriend.

HARRY

So maybe this Malroux's a lousy poker player. Maybe he wants to wallpaper his bathroom...

RENICK

Look, Harry, Malroux's bodyguard is an ex-cop. I spoke to him an hour ago. He confirmed the girl didn't come home. He also said Malroux found a ransom note with

CONTINUED

RENICK (CONT.)

his morning paper along with a
lock of his daughter's hair.

MEADOWS

There was also a phone call
late last night.

They both look deadly serious.

HARRY

You still haven't told me what
I'm doing here?

RENICK

Sooner or later the media people
are gonna get hold of this. You
know what that means. We need
someone to handle it, be the press
laison for the DA's office. Of
course you'd be on the payroll.

HARRY

Why me?

MEADOWS

Renick told me all about you,
Barber. Told me what they did
to you. We need somebody like
you, somebody with integrity,
somebody who's incorruptible.
You know the press, you're one
of 'em. I don't want this thing
to turn ugly, become a circus.
The stakes are too high.

HARRY

That's right. It's an election
year.

Meadows gives him a dirty look.

RENICK

Harry, Malroux hasn't come to us
yet. We can't act until he does,
not officially anyway. That's why
things have to be handled care-
fully. Once the media gets its
teeth into this there's no telling
what might happen to that girl.

(BEAT)

Well, Harry, will you do it?

CONTINUED

Harry stubs out his cigarette.

HARRY

Sure. Glad to help out.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - DAY

A small office with a desk and phone. Enter Harry and Renick.

RENICK

We'll set you up in here, Harry.
There won't be much to do right
now, but I got a feeling it's
just the calm before the storm.

He turns for the door.

HARRY

(COOLLY)

Thanks, Renick. I guess I owe
you one.

RENICK

Let's just say you and Palmetto
are even now.

He gives him a smile and exits. Harry picks up the phone.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The PHONE RINGS. Odette, painting her toe nails and watching a
soap opera, finally manages to answer.

ODETTE

Hello?

(CUTTING BETWEEN THEM)

HARRY

It's me.

ODETTE

Who?

HARRY

Turn that damn thing down.

She does.

ODETTE

Is that you, Harry Barber?

CONTINUED

HARRY

Listen to me. The jig's up. I'm callin' the whole thing off.

ODETTE

What do you mean off?

HARRY

I mean off as in finished, over, kaput. Now get on a plane and get back here as fast as you can.

ODETTE

I think you're scared.

HARRY

You're damn right I'm scared. The cops know all about this. Now get your ass on a plane and get back here. You understand?

ODETTE

Not until you get me my money.

HARRY

Listen, you, I'm callin' the shots around here...

ODETTE

No, Harry Barber, you're just the hired help. Now if you don't get me my money I'm going to have to do something adolescent and stupid like call the police and tell them what you did to me in that bungalow.

She abruptly hangs up. Harry CURSES and redials.

(VO)

Reception.

HARRY

Anne Hardaway.

(VO)

That line is busy.

Harry CURSES AGAIN and slams the phone down. He gets up, kicks a garbage can.

INT. RENICKS'S OFFICE - DAY

Harry wanders in, superficially cool. He's got a cigarette in his mouth. Renick lights it for him.

Harry leans against the wall looking pensive.

RENICK

Something on your mind, Harry?

HARRY

The girl...

RENICK

Odette Malroux?

HARRY

You guys act like you got the biggest kidnap case since the Lindburgh baby. No offense, Renick, but I think you're all off on a wild goose chase.

RENICK

Believe me, the thought crossed my mind.

The PHONE RINGS.

HARRY

It wouldn't surprise me if she showed up and announced it was all a big joke.

Renick answers.

RENICK

Hello?

His face changes colors several times before he hangs up. Harry watches him put a cigarette in his mouth and light it.

HARRY

What is it?

RENICK

Our ex-cop. Said the girl just phoned her father. Told him if he didn't pay the ransom she'd be sent home, one piece at a time.

(BEAT)

That doesn't sound like a joke, Harry.

CONTINUED

HARRY

I guess it doesn't.
(CHECKS HIS WATCH)
Mind if I go get my typewriter?
It won't take long.

RENICK

Use one of ours. We got plenty.

HARRY

I'd prefer my own. Call me super-
stitious.

RENICK

Sure, go on then.

Harry bolts.

INT. BUNGALOW - DAY

CU - FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS EXACTLY AND YOUR DAUGHTER WILL BE
RETURNED TO YOU UNHARMED...

Harry latex gloves and all, pounds away on his typewriter.

INT. BARNACLE BILL'S - DAY

Harry stands at the bar as the bartender pours him the usual.
He gulps the coke down, leaves the bourbon.

HARRY

Gimmie the change in quarters.

The bartender hands him change.

BARTENDER

Doin' your laundry?

Harry ignores him, heads for the phone.

The bartender pulls out a funnel and pours the bourbon back into
the bottle.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A cell phone RINGS.

CU - A mouth, red lips, a cigarette - a la Tom Wessleman.

CONTINUED

RHEA
(INTO PHONE)
Hello?

HARRY (VO)
The people I was worried would
get involved are already involved.

RHEA
But how?

(CUTTING BETWEEN THEM)

HARRY
For starters that pitbull of
yours, Donnelly, is an ex-cop.
Or didn't you know?

RHEA
How would I?

HARRY
Maybe the same way you knew I'd
take the money out of your purse.

RHEA
All right, Mr. Barber, you can
call the whole thing off right
now if you want.

HARRY
There's nothin' I'd like better.
But it's too late, the girl's
taken matters into her own hands.
She telephoned her old man...

RHEA
Yes, I heard.

HARRY
There's no telling what she'll
do next.

RHEA
And how do you know all this?

HARRY
Let's just call it my day job.

CONTINUED

RHEA

Well, if it makes you feel any better the money's here already. The president of the bank dropped it off himself.

HARRY

All right, then let's get this over with. I'll call the house after I've made the pick up. Make sure you answer. If anybody asks tell 'em you're goin' to get Odette. We'll meet at the bungalow and split up the money. Unless of course you don't trust me?

RHEA

Of course I trust you.

HARRY

Just remember, watch what you say. Donnelly's an ear for the police.

REHA

Thanks for the tip.

She puts the cell phone down. She's lying in bed. There's a man next to her. It's Donnelly.

EXT. BARNACLE BILL'S - DAY

Harry exits, looks across the road to the marina office. He pulls an envelope from his pocket, gives it a lick.

INT. MARINA OFFICE - DAY

Ed and his WIFE are in back cutting bait. The door CHIME SOUNDS.

ED

Be right with you.

He wipes his hands, goes out front...but there's nobody there. Just an envelope on the counter addressed to FELIX MALROUX.

ED

Ma, I'm a run up to the Malroux place, deliver a letter.

He peels off his rubber apron, grabs car keys from a hook.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

There's a KNOCK at the door. Odette opens it. A CLERK stands there holding an envelope.

CLERK

Fax for Ms. Hardaway.

ODETTE

Thanks.

She takes it, tears it open. A big smile crosses her face.

ODETTE

I take it back, Harry Barber.
You are predictable.

She begins throwing things into her overnight bag.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

A low bridge over brackish water. The Chrysler stops. Harry gets out, goes to the trunk, pulls out his typewriter.

He glances in both directions before giving it a toss. It lands with a SPLASH and disappears from sight.

EXT. LONG TERM PARKING - NIGHT

A jet thunders by overhead. Harry watches it pass, flicks his smoke away and turns to SEE a bus drop Odette off.

He goes over and picks up her bag. They don't speak as they walk to the car.

INT. CHRYSLER (MOVING) - NIGHT

They exit the parking lot. Odette starts to remove her wig.

HARRY

Better keep it on.

She rolls her eyes, pushes it back into place.

Odette

Aren't you gonna ask me how
Miami was?

Harry gives her a look, says nothing.

CONTINUED

ODETTE

I'd rather spend the rest of my
life with Swiss nuns than another
night in a Holiday Inn.

He smiles to himself in the dark.

EXT. BUNGALOW PARKING - NIGHT

The Chrysler pulls in, lights off.

INT. CHRYSLER - NIGHT

They sit in silence. Harry looks at his watch.

HARRY

In an hour this'll all be over.
You'll have your money.

ODETTE

And you'll have yours.

HARRY

Go on in there and wait.

She grabs her bag, opens the door.

ODETTE

You know, I can't help but think
about what happened in that bun-
galow the other night.

HARRY

Nothing happened.

ODETTE

I know. And that's a shame.

She gives him a quick kiss and scampers off.

EXT. MALROUX HOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens, Felix Malroux, a cannister of oxygen slung over
his shoulder, exits. He climbs into a late model Mercedes.

A moment later Donnelly follows. He carries a heavy leather
briefcase, hands it to Malroux before he drives away.

EXT. BUSHES - NIGHT

Harry smokes a cigarette in the darkness. When a pair of headlights appear he throws it away and crouches down.

INT. MERCEDES (MOVING) - NIGHT

The road is deserted. Malroux squints into the darkness, presses an oxygen mask to his face.

EXT. BUSHES - NIGHT

Harry's got the big flashlight. As the car approaches he flicks it on and off several times.

INT. MERCEDES (MOVING) - NIGHT

Marloux SEES the flashing light, rolls the window down and manages to shove the briefcase out.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

It lands with a thud as the Mercedes speeds off.

Harry emerges from the bushes and pounces on it. He flips a latch, but when more headlights appear in the distance...

...he snaps it shut and escapes into the night.

INT. CHRYSLER (MOVING) - NIGHT

The car passes. Harry slips the Chrysler in gear and eases out onto the road, only then turning on his own lights.

He looks at the briefcase sitting there beside him. He can't help but smile as he gives it a pat and heads for the bungalow.

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

The door flies open and Harry rushes in, lugging the heavy briefcase with him.

HARRY

We did it! We sure as hell
did it!

He tosses it on coffee table...and suddenly freezes in his tracks.

The red wig lays on the floor.

CONTINUED

Odette Malroux lies dead on the bed. Her eyes stare blankly, there's a stream of blood coming from one ear.

Harry swallows dryly, goes to her. He reaches out, touches her cheek, pulls his hand away as if burnt.

He looks around helplessly, tries to think. He turns the lights off and goes to the phone.

His hand shakes as he dials.

DONNELLY (VO)

Hello?

HARRY

Lemme talk to Mrs. Malroux.

DONNELLY (VO)

I'm sorry Mrs. Malroux is asleep.

HARRY

I don't care. Wake her up. I have to talk to her.

DONNELLY (VO)

Mrs. Malroux wasn't feeling well. She's gone to bed. If you'd like to leave your name...

Harry hangs up. Raindrops hit the window.

EXT. BUNGALOW PARKING - NIGHT

The white glow from a TV set comes through the rental office window. Harry quietly slips past...

...carrying Odette's body wrapped in the floral print bedspread. He opens the trunk of the Chrysler and places it inside...

...tosses the briefcase and the red wig in after it, shuts the lid as quietly as he can...

INT. CHRYSLER - NIGHT

...jumps behind the wheel. The rain is coming down harder now as he starts the car and takes off.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The car speeds along a narrow road, sending up a rooster tail of water behind it.

INT. CHRYSLER (MOVING) - NIGHT

Harry drives fast. A little too fast. He comes to a curve, steps on the brake...

...but nothing happens. His foot goes to the floor. A guardrail looms into view. He jerks the wheel over...

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

...SMACK! The car slams into the guardrail, skids across the pavement, spins several times and comes to rest in a ditch.

INT. CHRYSLER - NIGHT

Harry's shaken. There's a bump on his forehead. He pushes on the brake pedal. It goes to the floor. He gets out...

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

...SEES the front left tire is flat. He CURSES and crawls under the car.

He finds the brake line, follows it to where it's been neatly cut. It still leaks brake fluid.

(VO)

You all right under there?

Harry looks over to find a pair of boots. He slides out from under the car. A big COP holds a big flashlight.

CONTINUED

HARRY

Yeah. I just took my eye off the road for a second and damn if I didn't hit that guardrail back there.

COP

Slick out all right.

He shines his light in Harry's eyes.

COP

Been drinkin'?

HARRY

I don't drink.

The light moves to the car.

COP

Yours?

HARRY

Girlfriend's.

COP

Lemme see your license and registration.

HARRY

(PULLING OUT HIS WALLET)

Look, Officer, I work for the DA's office...

(SHOWS HIS ID)

I know it's late, but if you call Assistant DA Renick he'll vouch for me.

COP

You mean John Renick?

HARRY

You know him?

COP

Went to the acadamy together.

HARRY

He's married to my girlfriend's sister.

ne

CONTINUED

COP

He was a good cop.

The man smiles, hands Harry back his wallet. Harry's feeling better already.

COP

Alright, you wanna get your spare outta the trunk there I'll give you a hand with that tire.

HARRY

(STIFFENING)

The spare...the spare's no good.

COP

You sure? Maybe we'd better have a look/see. Could be your girlfriend had 'er fixed.

HARRY

No. She didn't. She wouldn't. I mean, you know women. They don't bother about things like spare tires.

COP

Be foolish not to check.

He shines the light on the trunk lock. Harry pales.

COP

Go on there and open 'er up. Might be surprised what we find.

Harry stares at the trunk. The cop stares at him. Harry takes the key out, misses the lock several times...

...finally slips it in, turns it hard. SNAP! Breaks it off.

COP

Well, I'll be damned. How do like them bananas?

Harry holds up the remains of the key, shrugs nervously.

COP

Guess I'm a have to call you a tow.

CUT TO:

The Chrysler's front end is lifted off the ground. A greasy tow truck DRIVER works the winch.

INT. TOW TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Harry bounces along next to the driver.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

It's pouring still as the sour-faced driver stands by his truck with his hand on the control knob.

DRIVER

Tow's 50 bucks. Car comes off the hook when you pay me.

HARRY

50 bucks?

He digs in his wallet, comes up short. The driver watches him count change. He's still short.

HARRY

Be right back.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Dripping wet, Harry enters. He looks around, eyes Nina's purse on the table. He opens it.

NINA (VO)

That you, Harry?

HARRY

Yeah, baby, it's me.

He extracts a handful of singles, is about to close the purse when he spots her car keys. He pockets them and slips back out.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Harry counts out his change again and barely manages to come up with the 50 bucks. He hands it over.

The driver lowers the car down, unhooks it. He climbs back in his truck.

HARRY

Hey, can you help me give it a shove?

CONTINUED

DRIVER

Mister, you can shove it all by yourself.

He grinds it into gear and takes off.

Harry puts his shoulder to the bumper and finally manages to push the heavy car into the garage.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Enter Harry. He looks numb. He slumps into a chair, wipes the water from his face with a hand.

His eye catches the bottle of bourbon in the liquor cabinet. Before he knows what he's doing he's poured himself a drink.

He looks at it a long time, holds it up to the light...then finally drinks it down in one swift motion.

SLOW DISSOLVE INTO:

The Palmetto bug...

FADE OUT

A phone RINGS.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Nina comes out of the bedroom to answer it.

NINA

Hello?

Harry cracks an eye open, regards her from the chair. He still wears the same wrinkled clothes from the night before.

NINA

Harry, it's John Renick.

He takes it. She looks at the empty bourbon bottle.

HARRY

Yeah, hello?

He rubs his head and listens.

HARRY

I'm gonna need a ride. Can you send someone by?

CONTINUED

He hangs up, turns to Nina.

HARRY

You're gonna see it all over the news anyway so I guess I can tell you. Girl's been kidnapped, held for ransom. The money was paid but the girl hasn't shown up yet. Her father made it official and brought the cops into it a few minutes ago.

NINA

Why, Harry?

HARRY

For the money, I suppose.

NINA

That's not what I'm talking about.

He looks at the bottle, suddenly feels worse than ever.

HARRY

Nina, I haven't had a drink in over 2 years...

NINA

Then why now?

(BEAT)

What's the matter, Harry?

HARRY

Nothing's the matter.

NINA

I know something's wrong. I can feel it.

HARRY

I don't know what you're talking about. I had a drink or two, so what? A man's entitled to a drink now and then.

NINA

I never asked you to stop drinking, Harry. It was you that wanted to stop. You said it effected your judgement, remember?

CONTINUED

HARRY

I was wrong. My judgement's
as bad as it ever was.

NINA

What is it? Tell me?

HARRY

Nina, I...

(BEAT)

I gotta get cleaned up.

She watches him disappear into the bedroom.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Renick HONKS, watches Harry run out and climb in.

HARRY

You didn't have to pick me up
yourself, you know.

RENICK

It was on the way. You may as
well come along for the ride.

HARRY

Where to?

RENICK

You'll see.

They drive in silence. Finally Harry can't help it...

HARRY

What finally got Malroux to
call in the cavalry?

RENICK

Wife talked him into it.

HARRY

His wife?

RENICK

About time too. We've already
been in touch with the FBI in
Miami. They're sending up an
agent this afternoon.

Harry looks like he's going to be sick.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Felix Malroux's big black Mercedes creeps along the road. Donnelly's behind the wheel, Malroux's in back with his oxygen.

Renick walks beside the car, eyes scanning the ground.

MALROUX

Exactly here, Mr. Renick. I set the odometer when I left the house.

The stop. A POLICEMAN picking his way through the outlying weeds waves excitedly.

POLICEMAN

Hey! Over here!

Trailing along in Renick's car, Harry watches them make a beeline for the exact spot where he waited the night before.

He gets out of the car. Donnelly stands by the Mercedes. They exchange a look before Harry joins the others.

EXT. BUSHES - DAY

Renick squats, examines the soft ground. There are footprints and tire tracks all over the place.

RENICK

Get somebody down here to take some impressions.

The uniform runs back to his patrol car.

RENICK

Hey, Harry, put your foot next to that print.

(HE DOES)

What size shoe you wear?

HARRY

Same size as the kidnapper it looks like.

His eyes flick over to Donnelly, who regards him impassively.

RENICK

Well, this guy was no pro, I can tell you that. The whole thing's sloppy, half-assed, and from what I know so far, not very well thought out. I'd bet he's local.

CONTINUED

If Harry weren't so scared he'd be insulted. It's then that he notices the cigarette butt. His own from the night before.

He tries to be casual as he steps on it, attempts to push it under the dirt with his toe.

RENICK

Harry! Watch it!

He comes over, uses a pencil to nudge the butt into a plastic baggie.

RENICK

That could be important evidence you're standing on.

HARRY

Sorry.

Malroux begins to COUGH and WHEEZE.

MALROUX

Am I still needed, Mr. Renick?

RENICK

Not here, Mr. Malroux. You can go on back home if you like.

Malroux starts back to the car with Donnelly.

HARRY

Hey, Renick, who is that guy?

RENICK

Donnelly? He's the ex-cop I was telling you about.

HARRY

He looks familiar.

RENICK

He should. He was the bagman for your racetrack friends. He plea bargained his way out of any jail time. But he had to quit the force.

Harry eyes him with contempt.

INT. CAR - DAY

Harry watches Renick in the rearview. He takes something from Malroux...

...returns to the car and climbs in. He places something on the seat. It's an identical briefcase to the one Malroux put the money in.

HARRY

What's that?

RENICK

It's an identical briefcase to the one Malroux put the money in.

He points to the engraved initials by the handle.

RENICK

Wife gave it to him for Christmas. His and Hers.

(LAUGHS)

These rich people.

He starts the car.

RENICK

Got a cigarette, Harry?

Harry reaches for his pack and then stops.

HARRY

Uh, no. I'm tryin' to quit.

RENICK

Wish I could.

He puts it in gear and they take off.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

The car wheels around the corner and into its assigned spot. There are REPORTERS and CAMERA CREWS waiting.

INT. CAR - DAY

RENICK

Damn. I told you they'd be on this like shit on a stick. Well, looks like it's time for you to earn your keep, my friend.

Harry takes a deep breath and climbs out.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

HARRY

My name's Harry Barber and I'll be the press liaison for the DA's office.

Harry addresses a gathering of MEDIA TYPES in a small conference room.

HARRY (CONT.)

Some of you may know me already...

ERNIE

Hey, Harry!

The crowd LAUGHS. ERNIE, an old acquaintance, smiles.

HARRY

Hiya, Ernie. I used to be one of you so I know how anxious you all are to get going. I, that is the DA's office and police department, are asking however that you hold off on your stories for the next 24 hours.

ERNIE

Why, Harry?

HARRY

We don't know a heck of a lot more than you do, pretty much what's in that statement you all were given. The District Attorney feels that he doesn't want to jeopardize the girl's chances by jumping the gun and breaking this too soon.

CONTINUED

ERNIE

C'mon, Harry, we're not talkin' about a kidnapping. This is a murder case. The cops know it. You know it. I know it.

HARRY

Now, just hang on a minute...

REPORTER

Do they have a suspect?

ERNIE

If they don't now they will soon.

REPORTER

What's the motive?

ERNIE

The money, stupid.

REPORTER

If the girl's already dead then why are we sittin' on the story?

ERNIE

They're just tryin' to flush the killer out. Right, Harry?

Harry looks like he's just had the wind knocked out of him.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Harry splashes water on his face. He takes a paper towel, wipes himself dry, exits the bathroom white as a ghost.

EXT. HALLWAY - DAY

RENICK

Kinda rough, huh, Harry?

Renick grabs Harry by the arm and leads him down the hall.

HARRY

You know the press. Think they know everything.

RENICK

They'll cooperate though, won't they?

CONTINUED

HARRY

For now. How's it with you?
Anything I should know?

RENICK

We've sent the ransom note and
drop-off instructions to the
FBI. They're gonna see what
they can come up with.

HARRY

You mean like fingerprints?

RENICK

This guy's dumb but not that
dumb. They'll take saliva
samples from the envelopes,
profile his DNA with it.

HARRY

They can do that?

RENICK

Don't you watch TV?

They stop by a door.

RENICK

Here's something more concrete
though. Some people would call
this dumb luck, but I like to
look at it as good investigative
police work.

He smiles, opens the door, leads them into...

INT. WITNESS ROOM - DAY

RENICK

I checked through the routine
police reports the night the
girl was taken.

Harry stands next to a large mirror built into the wall. Renick
turns the lights off, flicks a switch.

Harry's suddenly face to face with the man he clubbed uncon-
scious in the parking lot outside the Buoy Room.

CONTIUED

His head bandaged, he's not more than a few feet away. But he's looking at two-way glass and can only see himself.

RENICK

This guy was found out-cold in the parking lot where we found the girl's car. Somebody gave him a good thump on the head.

The man is talking to Meadows. Renick hits another switch and turns the AUDIO ON.

MAN

...'I'm sorry,' she said, 'now fuck off.' That's when she swung at me. I ended up with a handful of her hair, but it wasn't her hair it was a wig.

MEADOWS

A wig?

MAN

Yes, sir, a red wig. Came right off in my hand. It was then this guy appears outta nowhere and cold-cocks me.

MEADOWS

You get a look at him?

MAN

You betcha. 'Bout this tall...

He holds his hand up. It's level with the top of Harry's head.

MAN

....'bout yea wide...

His hands frame Harry's shoulders perfectly.

MAN

...short hair, square jaw...

He goes on to describe Harry to a T.

RENICK

Jesus, Harry, he could almost be talkin' about you.

CONTINUED

HARRY

Me and a hundred other guys.
I'm gonna grab some lunch.

RENICK

Oh, I almost forgot, Nina called.
Said she couldn't find her car keys
and...

HARRY

(PANICKED)
The car.

RENICK

Something wrong?

HARRY

It's nothing.

He nervously pulls out a cigarette and lights up.

RENICK

Hey, I thought you quit?

HARRY

That's right, I did.

He drops it, grinds it out with his heel.

HARRY

See you after lunch.

Renick watches him go, then picks up the cigarette. He studies
it curiously.

INT. CITY HALL LOBBY - DAY

Harry hurries down the stairs through the expansive interior of
the lobby.

NINA

Harry!

It's Nina, a smile on her face. Harry tries to look happy to see
her, almost succeeds.

HARRY

Hey, there. Renick told me
you called.

CONTINUED

NINA

I know you're busy, but it's about the car...

HARRY

The car. I forgot to tell you. Broke down last night. The brakes are shot. It can't be driven. That's why I took your keys.

NINA

Oh, Harry. I've got to have a car. I've got a hundred things I have to do this afternoon.

HARRY

What do you want me to do?

NINA

Can't we rent a car?

HARRY

That's an idea.

NINA

Good. I'll see you later.

HARRY

Hey, c'mon. As long as you're here lemme buy you lunch.

He gives her a smile, takes her by the arm and leads her off to the little coffee shop next door.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

HARRY

Look at a menu. I know what I'm having.

They slide into a booth. Harry fidgets nervously, checks his watch several times.

NINA

Is something wrong, Harry?

HARRY

Not at all. Why?

CONTINUED

NINA

You seem edgy. Is everything okay at the DA's office?

HARRY

Okay as it can be.

NINA

Have they found the girl?

Harry shakes his head solemnly.

NINA

Poor thing. I wonder what happened to her.

HARRY

Maybe we'll never know.

NINA

That's a gruesome thought.

(BEAT)

What are you having?

HARRY

Just coffee. Order for me, will you, I'll be right back.

He gets up, heads toward the bathrooms. Once out of sight, however, he ducks into the kitchen and out the back door.

A WAITRESS prepares to take Nina's order. In the window Harry can be seen hurrying down the street.

WAITRESS

What can I get you?

INT. RENT-A-CAR - DAY

HARRY

Something with a big trunk.

Harry stands at the counter of an old mom & pop style rent-a-car. It's got a new coat of paint and been swallowed up by a national chain.

TED

I got a Pontiac out there with a big trunk. It's red though. Some people don't like red.

CONTINUED

TED, the guy running the place, has no jaw and a bad hair piece.

HARRY

I like red. Red's fine.

TED

\$39.95 a day plus tax. Insurance is extra.

HARRY

Just the mininum.

TED

Need your driver's license and a major credit card..

This stops Harry in his tracks.

HARRY

Ah, c'mon, I've done business here for years. I never needed a credit card before.

TED

Don't know where you been, Mister, but this is one of them franchise outfits now. Gotta play by the rules or they'll yank the thing out from under me. Sorry.

HARRY

How 'bout I give you my watch as collateral?

TED

Can't do that, Mister.

HARRY

(DESPERATE)

Isn't there anything you can do? I need that car.

TED

\$500 deposit'll get you a car.

Harry raises an eyebrow.

HARRY

Why didn't you say so.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Harry bursts in, out of breath and sweating. The house is quiet. He goes straight to the garage.

IN THE GARAGE

There's the car. He rummages through a tool box, pulls out a screwdriver and a hammer, goes to work on the lock.

A couple of bangs and a twist or two and the trunk pops open. A sick look comes over his face.

He turns his head, reaches for the briefcase. He slams the trunk lid closed...but it won't stay down.

He finally gives up, goes inside.

IN THE KITCHEN

He closes the door to the garage, heaves the briefcase onto the kitchen table, flips the latches...

NINA

Harry?

He freezes. Nina stands in the doorway.

HARRY

Nina...

NINA

What's in the briefcase, Harry?

HARRY

You have to stay out of this, Nina.
It doesn't concern you.

NINA

If it concerns you it concerns me.

CONTINUED

HARRY

Not this time.

NINA

Tell me what's in the briefcase?

HARRY

No.

NINA

It has something to do with that girl, doesn't it? The one who was kidnapped.

HARRY

Nina, please, for God sake...

NINA

I want to know what's going on?

HARRY

I just need some time alone.
Now get out of here!

NINA

What's wrong, Harry? Tell me what's wrong?

HARRY

Nothing! Nothing's wrong!
Now get out!

She looks at the door to the garage, makes a dash for it. He catches her just in time.

They struggle in front of the door. She grabs the knob, gets the door partially open. He pushes it closed again...

...grabs her arm, pries her hand from the knob. She finally gives up, holds her arm painfully.

NINA

You hurt me.

HARRY

I'm sorry. Now get out of here and leave me alone.

NINA

No.

CONTINUED

HARRY

Nina, goddamn it!

NINA

I didn't leave you before, Harry.
I'm not going to leave you now.

Harry takes a deep breath, sinks into a chair. All the fight seems to have gone out of him.

NINA

She's in the garage, isn't she?

HARRY

Please, Nina...

NINA

Answer me, Harry. She's in the garage, isn't she?

HARRY

Yeah...she's in the garage.

NINA

Dead?

He nods.

NINA

Did you kill her?

HARRY

Nina, you know too much already.
You'll be an accessory...

NINA

Harry, I'm asking you. Did you kill the girl?

HARRY

No...I didn't kill anybody.

He hangs his head dejectedly. Nina pulls up a chair, sits down beside him.

NINA

Better tell mommy what happened.

TIME CUT TO:

CU - A drop of water hangs from the end of the kitchen faucet. It finally falls with a PLINK.

Harry and Nina sit motionless. Somewhere the PHONE RINGS. They ignore it. Finally it stops.

NINA

I knew something was wrong.
But my God, Harry...

HARRY

Now do you see why I want you
to get out. You can't be in-
volved in this.

NINA

I told you before I'm not going
to leave you.

He gives her a grateful look.

NINA

What do we do now?

HARRY

One thing's for sure, we've got
to get rid of that body.

NINA

(SHUDDERING)

God, I wish you wouldn't talk
like that.

HARRY

I'm sorry, Nina, but I'm not a
good little scout who's just
lost in the woods. Not anymore.

He reaches for the briefcase, flips the latches.

HARRY

I'm going to rent a car and
dump that body somewhere.
I've got the money right...

He stares in disbelief at the contents.

NINA

What is it, Harry?

CONTINUED

He grabs the briefcase, turns it over. But it's not money that spills out all over the table...

...it's neatly bundled strips of old newspaper.

He shakes his head, half smiles.

HARRY

Once a sucker...

NINA

It was Rhea Malroux, wasn't it?

He nods glumly.

HARRY

And I thought I was one step ahead of her the whole time. She played me like a game of Chinese Checkers.

(BEAT)

All she wanted was the girl dead and somebody to pin it on.

NINA

But why?

HARRY

Her husband doesn't have long to live. When he dies his daughter is gonna be entitled to some of his fortune, maybe most of it depending on inheritance laws and the old man's will.

(SLAPS THE TABLE)

Why didn't I see it comin'!

NINA

What about the \$500,000? You don't think Felix Malroux kept it, do you?

HARRY

Not a chance.

CONTINUED

NINA

Then what happend to it?

HARRY

Good question.

NINA

Maybe Rhea Malroux's got a friend.

HARRY

What kind of friend?

NINA

The kind her husband doesn't know about.

HARRY

Donnelly.

NINA

Who?

HARRY

He works for Malroux. He's an ex-cop. A dirty one.

NINA

Maybe he's still dirty.

The PHONE RINGS.

HARRY

Don't answer it.

It finally stops.

HARRY

That'll be Renick. He's no fool. It's only a matter of time til he puts 2 and 2 together and comes up with the name Harry Barber.

NINA

Why don't you tell him what happened, Harry? John'd believe you, I know he would.

CONTINUED

HARRY

Believe what, Nina? That I intended to extort \$500,000 from Felix Malroux but not kill his daughter?

NINA

But it's true.

HARRY

It'd be Rhea Malroux's word against mine.

He suddenly SNAPS his fingers.

NINA

What is it?

HARRY

Rhea Malroux's word.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A black Mercedes pulls to a stop in front of a Catholic church. Donnelly gets out, opens the door for Felix Malroux.

He escorts the old man inside, comes back out to the car...

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

...climbs in and FREEZES when he SEES a woman sitting in the backseat. It's Nina.

NINA

I have a message from Harry Barber.

DONNELLY

Who's Harry Barber?

NINA

Maybe this'll ring a bell.

She holds up the tape recorder, hits the PLAY BUTTON.

HARRY (VO)

Like I said, what kind of job?

CONTINUED

RHEA (VO)

My stepdaughter is going to be kidnapped. The ransom will be \$500,000. I need someone to be the threatening voice on the telephone. For making the call and collecting the ransom I'm willing to pay you...

DONNELLY

I've heard enough.

Nina turns the tape OFF.

DONNELLY

What's this got to do with me?

NINA

You're fucking Rhea Malroux for starters.

DONNELLY

Tell me what you want.

NINA

There's a girl's body in the trunk of my car. It needs to be taken care of or somebody's going to find it.

DONNELLY

And if it's taken care of?

NINA

Then nobody has to hear this tape and you can go on fucking Rhea Malroux.

Donnelly says nothing, studies her in the rearview.

NINA

(OPENING THE DOOR)

I expect to hear from you.

DONNELLY

I'm not the only one who's been fucking Rhea Malroux. Maybe you should listen to the rest of that tape.

She gives him a cold look and gets out.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Nina climbs into a waiting cab.

INT. CAB (MOVING) - DAY

In the backseat she holds the tape player on her lap, looks out the window, finally can't help herself...

...hits the FF button. The tape SQUEALS. She stops it, pushes PLAY.

RHEA (VO)

Did you find what you were
looking for, Mr. Barber?

The DRIVER looks back. Nina turns it down, holds it to her ear.

CU - Nina's face as she listens to Harry and Rhea fuck their brains out in stereo.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Harry lights a cigarette, looks at his watch. He touches it fondly, polishes the crystal with the front of his shirt.

The SOUND of a car door slamming sends him to the window. He peeks out, SEES Nina, goes to the door to meet her.

She enters.

HARRY

What took you so long? I've
been on pins and needles.

BAM! She slaps him. Hard. He touches his cheek.

HARRY

Well, you two must have had
quite a little chat.

NINA

You said you told me everything.

He looks at her, says nothing.

NINA

I listened to that tape. All
of it.

HARRY

It didn't mean anything, Nina.

CONTINUED

NINA
You sounded sincere.

HARRY
Nina...

NINA
I can take a lot, Harry, a hell
of a lot. But what I can't take
is a liar.

HARRY
I didn't lie to you.

NINA
Close enough.

Harry suffers silently.

NINA
Why'd you do it, Harry?

HARRY
I don't know. We were alone,
it just happened...

NINA
I'm not talking about Rhea Malroux.
I'm talking about the whole thing.
Why? Was it for the money?

HARRY
No...

NINA
Then why?

HARRY
I guess maybe it was a way to
get back those 2 years, a way
to make up for lost time. I
guess I figured somebody owed
me.

The loud silence is interrupted by the DOOR BELL. Nina
answers it. It's Donnelly.

NINA
Well, if it isn't the missing
link.

CONTINUED

Donnelly enters. In one hand he holds a gym bag, in the other a 5 gallon plastic container.

HARRY

I should have guessed you were mixed up in this, Donnelly. A snake can't change the fact it crawls on its belly for a living.

DONNELLY

Sticks and stones, Barber. Now I want that tape.

HARRY

You take the body, you get the tape. That's the deal.

DONNELLY

I'm makin' the deals around here, shitbird. Gimmie the tape.

Nina reluctantly hands it over.

DONNELLY

Now the other one.

HARRY

I don't know what you're talkin' about.

DONNELLY

You met Odette alone in that bungalow. If you taped Rhea you taped the girl.

Nina looks at Harry, smiles sweetly.

NINA

Well, Harry? Did you tape the girl too?

HARRY

You don't have to stay, you know?

He disappears into the bedroom and returns with the other tape. Donnelly grins as he hands it over.

CONTINUED

DONNELLY

Now, about that problem of yours...

He hoists the 5 gallon container onto the table.

DONNALLY

Here's the answer. This stuff dissolves the flesh right off the bones, then dissolves the bones. Just like piss on a snowman.

(BEAT)

'Course you don't have to be dead for it to work. So no copies of these tapes better show up. Do I make myself understood?

HARRY

You're as subtle as a blowtorch.

DONNELLY

Where is she?

HARRY

Garage. Through the kitchen.

He goes out. The PHONE begins to RING again. They stand in painful silence until it stops.

Donnelly reappears, the bedspread shrouded body slung over his shoulder like a side of beef.

DONNELLY

Got a bathtub somewhere?

NINA

You're not going to do it here?

DONNELLY

It won't take long.

Harry jerks his head toward the bathroom. Donnelly disappears.

NINA

My god, I can't stand this anymore.

She runs out of the room.

IN THE BATHROOM

Donnelly pulls big rubber gloves and a gas mask from the gym bag. He puts them on, opens the container and begins to pour.

IN THE STUDIO

Harry and Nina sit gloomily silent. Harry looks at his watch. They can hear Donnelly HUMMING from the bathroom.

IN THE BATHROOM

Donnelly, sweaty and red, pulls and gas mask from his face and turns the shower on.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Harry's waiting by the door when Donnelly emerges from the bathroom. Donnelly smiles, another day another dollar.

DONNELLY

Let the water run for a while.

He tosses Harry a package wrapped in brown paper.

DONNELLY

There you go, Barber. Guess you earned it.

He exits. Harry opens the package. \$50,000 in small bills spill out onto the floor.

NINA

There's your money, Harry.

Nina watches him gather it up.

NINA

I don't know how you can stand to touch it.

CUT TO:

Harry packs the money in his old duffel bag, goes out to the garage.

IN THE GARAGE

He looks the Chrysler over, is angered to find the red wig still in the trunk. He puts it in the bag, slams the trunk lid.

It stays down (or doesn't). He gives it a dirty look, exits.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

HARRY

I'll be back in a while.

EXT. ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

The duffel at his side, Harry walks along the shoulder of the road.

EXT. BRIDGE - LATE AFTERNOON

A high bridge spanning a river. Harry stops, looks down. He hoists the bag up, seems intent on throwing it in...

...when a CAR HORN spins him around. It's Renick. He pushes the passenger side door open. He isn't smiling.

RENICK

Takin' kind of a long lunch,
aren't you, Harry? Get in.

Harry wants to run, but there's nowhere to go. He clutches the duffel to his chest and climbs in the car.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - LATE AFTERNOON

In the side mirror Harry notices a patrol car behind them.

RENICK

Well, what do you think?

HARRY

About what?

RENICK

Don't tell me you haven't heard?
They found her?

HARRY

(CONFUSED)
They found her?

RENICK

Odette Malroux. She's dead al-
right.

(BEAT)

Know where she was? In a bunga-
low down at East Beach. Figures,
huh? Right under our noses the
whole time.

EXT. BUNGALOW PARKING - LATE AFTERNOON

The car pulls to a stop in the parking lot. It's quickly surrounded by the PRESS. Renick jumps out.

Harry's not quite so fast. He clings to the duffel, looks dazed as he follows Renick across the parking lot.

(VO)

Hey, Harry, they find the girl?

(VO)

She dead? Is she dead, Harry?

Harry doesn't answer.

INT. BUNGALOW - LATE AFTERNOON

The familiar bungalow. Only now it's crowded with the usual homicide team: CORONER, PHOTOGRAPHER, DETECTIVES, et al.

The body's on the bed, mercifully covered by a sheet. Harry stares at it dumbly, looks around...

...SEES his typewriter on the desk. Somebody's dusting it for prints.

Photoflash lights up the room. Harry seems in shock, even when Felix Malroux is escorted in.

RENICK

Mr. Malroux, I hate to do this to you, sir, but it's important.

MALROUX

Let's get on with it.

He's led to the body.

RENICK

Is this your daughter Odette?

The sheet's pulled back. Malroux sags, his hand goes to his face. He nods as silent SOBS rack his body and he's led away.

Harry stares at the dead girl. It's the girl he saw go into the Buoy Room that night, the one Odette was supposed to meet.

More people enter.

CONTINUED

COP
Mr. Renick, this is Billy Holden.
He manages the place.

RENICK
It was you that called it in?

BILLY
Yes, sir. The maid found her a
little while ago.

RENICK
Was the girl renting the bungalow?

BILLY
No, sir.

RENICK
Who was?

BILLY
Why, Harry Barber.

They all turn to Harry...who throws down the duffel bag, pushes
a cop out of the way and bolts out the door.

EXT. BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

Renick and the others pour out of the bungalow.

RENICK
Harry, stop!

A cop raises his service revolver, FIRES off a single shot.

Renick grabs his arm. They watch Harry sprint down the beach,
dodging SUNBATHERS, before he disappears from sight.

Somebody hands Renick the duffel bag. He opens it, finds the
red wig and the money.

Harry's goose is cooked.

EXT. MALROUX HOUSE - NIGHT

It's raining again. The surface of the pool is choppy, the light reflected from the house, splintered.

Harry appears. He's soaked to the bone. He stays in the shadows, creeps toward the house.

INT. MALROUX HOUSE - NIGHT

A sliding glass door slides open. Harry slips in. He moves cautiously through the dining room...

...past Nina's vase filled with flowers on the table, and up the stairs where somewhere CLASSICAL MUSIC PLAYS.

CU - A soggy footprint and drops of blood mark his accent.

UPSTAIRS

More of the same spot the hall. Harry pushes open a door.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Felix Malroux lies in bed, hooked up to a tank of oxygen. The MUSIC PLAYS. He appears to be asleep.

Harry moves to the end of the bed. Malroux opens his eyes.

MALROUX

Who are you?

HARRY

My name's Harry Barber.

Malroux puts his glasses on, examines Harry.

MALROUX

Do I know you?

HARRY

We have a mutual acquaintance
or two.

MALROUX

What do you want?

HARRY

I've got my head in a noose and
I wanna get it out. You're my
only chance.

CONTINUED

MALROUX

Does this have something to do
with my daughter?

HARRY

Unfortunately.

MALROUX

Do you know who killed her?

HARRY

Yes, sir, I do.

Malroux sits up.

MALROUX

I'm waiting.

HARRY

It was...

The barrel of a gun is suddenly placed against Harry's temple.
Donnelly's on the other end.

DONNELLY

Shall I call the police?

Malroux holds up his hand.

MALROUX

Continue, Mr. Barber.

Donnelly cranks Harry's arm back. Harry spews it all out.

HARRY

It's your wife and Donnelly. I
know you don't wanna believe me,
but it's true. They suckered
me into goin' along with a phoney
kidnap scheme. They just wanted
your daughter dead. It's all for
money. They're in it together,
the two of 'em.

Marloux says nothing, reaches for the phone.

CONTINUED

MALROUX

Rhea, could you come in here.

(HANGS UP)

I don't like doing this. My wife is very upset.

HARRY

It's an act. I'm tellin' you, your wife and Donnelly killed your daughter.

A door opens, FOOTSTEPS in the hall. Donnelly turns Harry around to face the door.

Rhea Malroux appears. She's blonde and beautiful and well into her 50's. She dabs at her eyes with a handkerchief.

The look on Harry's face says it all:

MALROUX

I'm sorry, cheri, it's nothing.

She exits. Malroux gives Donnelly the high sign. BAM! He clocks Harry with the butt of his gun.

Harry drops like a bag of wet laundry.

EXT. MALROUX HOUSE - NIGHT

Harry's thrown to the pavement. His hands are cuffed behind him. The rain pounds his face.

Felix Malroux stands under an umbrella and watches Donnelly open the trunk of the Mercedes.

MALROUX

Although this is a death penalty state, Mr. Barber, I won't live long enough to see you die for the murder of my daughter.

HARRY

I didn't kill your daughter.

MALROUX

That's certainly not how the evidence looks.

(TO DONNELLY)

Make sure he isn't found. Ever.

Donnelly grabs Harry, throws him in the trunk.

CONTINUED

HARRY

I didn't...

SLAM. Donnelly shuts the lid. Malroux stands in the pouring rain and watches them drive away.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The Mercedes pulls out onto the road and zooms into the night.

EXT. WHARF - NIGHT

An old wharf, dark and dying. The Mercedes pulls to a stop in front of a delapidated cannery.

Donnelly gets out, unlocks a sliding door, pushes it back. He drives the car inside.

INT. CANNERY - NIGHT

It's big and it's empty and it's dark...except for a light at the far end.

The Mercedes stops. Donnelly jumps out, opens the trunk, yanks Harry from within...

...leads him around the car into the light. Harry looks around, SEES a woman strapped to an old swivel chair. It's Nina.

HARRY

Nina!

Her eyes widen but her mouth is taped shut.

DONNELLY

Had to get her involved, didn't you, dumbfuck?

He jerks Harry off his feet, hangs him on a hook by the back of his jacket. The hook is attached to a track suspended from the ceiling.

(VO)

Hello, Mr. Barber.

A woman emerges from the shadows. Although her hair is cut short and the patina of wealth is gone, she's still recognizable as...

HARRY

Rhea Malroux...

CONTINUED

MRS. DONNELLY
It's Donnelly. Mrs. Donnelly.

DONNELLY
Say hello to the wife, Barber.

HARRY
Only hello?

Donnelly slugs him in the gut. Harry GROANS.

DONNELLY
FYI, she said you were lousy.
Just like your writing.

MRS. DONNELLY
Oh, you weren't so bad. Just
a little predictable.

She gives him a smile.

DONNELLY
Like showin' up tonight at Malroux's.
The wife figured you would.

There's an old bathtub sitting in a corner. Donnelly drags it
into the middle of the room.

DONNELLY
'Course it don't take a brain sur-
geon to know most guys comin' out of
of prison on a bum charge are gonna
be lookin' to even the score.

MRS. DONNELLY
It's only human nature.

DONNELLY
Wife's good at that human nature
stuff. She had you pegged for a
sucker the minute she laid eyes
on you. You should have seen
yourself, Barber, pantin' like
a big dog on a hot day.

He opens his gym bag, pulls out a pair of rubber gloves and an
apron, begins putting them on.

CONTINUED

HARRY

So I'm a sucker, me and that poor girl you had playin' like she was Odette Malroux.

DONNELLY

She was a good little actress, wasn't she? Some runaway from the Midwest. Idaho, I think.

MRS. DONNELLY

That's the Northwest, hon.

DONNELLY

Who cares. Nobody'll ever see her again anyway.

He opens a 5 gallon container and begins to pour the contents into the tub.

Harry looks at Nina. There's fear in her eyes.

HARRY

Don't tell me you killed her and Odette Malroux just for the ransom money?

DONNELLY

Listen to you, Barber. A guy so broke his cash bounces. 500,000 bucks is 500,000 bucks.

HARRY

You always were small time, Donnelly.

DONNELLY

Fuck you with a pile driver.

MRS. DONNELLY

Hon, which one for the plane ride? I kind of feel, I don't know, dark and mysterious.

She holds two wigs. One blonde, one brunette.

DONNELLY

Surprise me.

She takes the wigs and a small valise and retreats to a dingy little bathroom in back to change.

CONTINUED

Donnelly finishes pouring, opens another container.

DONNELLY

Wife and I are goin' to Vegas for a little R an' R. We been puttin' in a lot of hours for Malroux. That's how we met. She does the cooking. Grows her own herbs. In the garden.

(CHUCKLES)

Yeah, I gotta hand it to you, Barber, you came awful damn close to blowin' the whole deal. You got a knack for that, you know? I had a good thing goin' with the horses til you fucked that up. You should have taken the money. But no, not you, you had to be Mr. Clean. And now this. You just don't learn, do you?

HARRY

Maybe next time.

DONNELLY

You're outta next times, Sunny Jim.

He empties the last of the liquid into the tub, picks up some scissors and a roll of packing tape, cuts a piece off.

DONNELLY

Sorry, but the noise is godawful.

He wraps the tape around Harry's head, covering his mouth, pushes him along the track to the tub.

Harry dangles above it like a fish on a hook.

Nina watches, horrified.

Donnelly reaches into his gym bag and brings out a gas mask. He puts it on, tightens the straps.

Harry lets out a muffled YELL as he twists and turns. A shoe falls off, hisses and bubbles beneath him.

CONTINUED

DONNELLY

You know, the world is full of Harry Barbers. Guys who wanna play in the big leagues but just don't have the talent.

He picks up the scissors and begins cutting Harry's jacket right up the back. Snip, snip...it starts to come apart.

Harry squirms, hangs by a thread.

DONNELLY

My advise to you is, don't go in the deep end if you can't swim.

One more snip and the jacket tears. So does Harry's shirt, the buttons popping off, revealing his bare torso...

...and the tiny microphone taped there.

Donnelly rips the gas mask off, his face full of surprise.

DONNELLY

A wire. You're wearin' a fuckin' wire for the cops.

He reaches for the gun under his arm, points it at Harry's head.

RENICK (VO)

Don't do it, Donnelly!

Donnelly swings around, FIRES a shot into the darkness.

Harry sees his chance, kicks out and sends Donnelly flying backwards into the bathtub.

Donnelly disappears, but only for a second. He's back up in a flash, the most GODAWFUL NOISE coming from his mouth.

He shudders and shakes, twists and jerks, finally flopping onto the floor in hideous convulsions.

Renick and half a dozen COPS and PLAINCLOTHES rush from the darkness, stare mutely at Donnelly in his death throes.

Harry gives a muffled YELL. Renick eases him off the hook, pulls the tape from his mouth.

CONTINUED

HARRY

Jesus Christ, Renick, what the hell were you guys doin'? You know what's in that tub? Stuff that'll burn the flesh right off your bones and then...

RENICK

Take it easy, Harry. We were there the whole time.

HARRY

I notice that didn't stop me from gettin' my head cracked open.

RENICK

Malroux had to make it believable if this was gonna work.

NINA

Harry!

Nina's been released, runs over. They embrace as bolt cutters are used to remove the cuffs from Harry's wrists.

Meadows brings up the rear. He's wearing a dinner jacket and a campaign button. REELECT MEADOWS it says.

MEADOWS

You did it, Barber. Nice work. Read him his rights.

HARRY

Ah, for chrissake, I gave myself up and wore your damn wire. You're gonna get reelected.

New cuffs are put on his wrists. He looks at Nina. She smiles.

PLAINCLOTHES (VO)

Over here!

The tiny bathroom is surrounded. A floodlight illuminates the door.

PLAINCLOTHES

C'mon out of there.

Nothing.

CONTINUED

Gun drawn, HE moves in, turns the knob. The door swings open.

The former Rhea Malroux hangs dead from a pipe in the ceiling, a silk scarf around her neck.

Harry and Nina stand there looking at her.

HARRY

Looks like she went blonde
afterall.

They turn and walk away into the darkness.

ENDE

~~109~~ 109 Alternate

CONTINUED

Gun drawn, HE moves in, turns the knob. The door swings open.

Mrs. Donnelly, the former Rhea Malroux, is putting the finishing touches on her platinum colored hair.

She turns and steps through the doorway.

MRS. DONNELLY

What can I say...I decided to go blonde afterall.

ENDE