

P H O N E B O O T H

**Original Story
and Screenplay**

by

Larry Cohen

PHONE BOOTH

FADE IN:

NEW YORK CITY - AERIAL VIEW OF DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN - DAY

MULTIPLE STREET SCENES - DAY

The sidewalks crowded as usual. A sea of humanity. People come and go -- always in a hurry. Oblivious of one another.

A TRAFFIC JAM -- A STREET being torn up by construction workers; A SANITATION TRUCK loading up refuse; VENDORS PEDDLING nuts and salted pretzels; PANHANDLERS blocking a passerby. Intimidating. Demanding. Almost mocking.

We're surrounded by the teeming life of the city as we've come to expect it -- complete with a cacophony of sound.

MULTIPLE CUTS -- Phone kiosks and phone booths on the East Side and West Side -- uptown and down.

One frustrated caller has lost his money in the slot and he takes it out on the equipment -- smashing the receiver violently against the coin box until the instrument splinters into a dozen pieces.

NARRATOR

There are 237,911 pay telephones in the five burroughs of the city of New York. Many of them are still in working order.

DOZENS OF QUICK CUTS --

NEW YORKERS on the phone in extreme close up. We don't hear the words. Only the facial expressions inform us that these are human beings under tremendous pressure. Life in the city is wearing them down.

MULTIPLE SHOTS - JUST MOUTHS

Lips jabbering into receivers. Cross-cut against one another.

NARRATOR

Despite increased usage of cellular devices, an estimated four and a half million New Yorkers and two million visitors still utilize pay telephones on a regular basis. At thirty-five cents a pop...for the first three minutes.

ANGLE ON CORNER IN MID-MANHATTAN - DAY

There's a phone booth situated on the southeast side of the street.

NARRATOR

You're looking at the telephone booth at the corner of 45th Street and 8th Avenue in the heart of the Manhattan theatrical district. It has been scheduled to be removed and replaced by a kiosk. It's one of the few remaining phone booths left in the city.

CAMERA MOVES IN on the irate caller in the booth -- a very well-dressed gray-haired lady -- totally conservative in appearance.

WOMAN IN BOOTH

(into receiver)

You have lied to me for the last time, you lowlife prick bastard! I don't ever want to hear the sound of your fucking voice again.

(listens)

Yes, well fuck you, too!

She slams down the receiver and exits. The booth remains vacant for a brief interval.

NARRATOR

At least three hundred calls daily originate from this booth. The coins are collected twice a day. This booth has been burglarized forty-one times in the last six months.

Someone is approaching the booth, fishing in his pocket for coins. This is STUART SHEPARD, snappily dressed, his hair styled and his nails manicured. Here is a man who clearly takes excellent care of himself. He sports a Donna Karen suit and silk Armani tie.

He's about to step into the booth when he's accosted by a middle-aged man in a soiled apron who's run out of a nearby restaurant and has finally caught up with him.

MARIO

Stu, we got to talk.

STU

Wish I could accommodate you, Mario,
but this is my busy time of day.

MARIO

How come you cross the street every
time you go past the restaurant?

STU

Why don't I stop in later for some
lunch?

MARIO

There's no more drinks or free meals
until the restaurant starts showing
up in the columns like you said.

STU

I'm doing my level best for you
people.

MARIO

One lousy mention in the Post and
you expect to eat for six months!

STU

I got the food critic from the
Village Voice all lined up to give
you a review.

MARIO

That's what you tell me last July.
And he never shows.

STU

I was allowing you time to expand
the menu. Wallpaper the bathrooms,
for God sakes. You get only one
shot with these fucking critics and
I don't want you to blow a rare
opportunity.

MARIO

You the one blowing it. How long
you think you can fuck everybody?

STU

Hold on right there. I've got a
very excellent reputation around
this town.

MARIO

So how come you take two nice suits of clothes from Harry and never get his daughter on David Letterman?

STU

Hell, I'm not an agent. I'm a publicist.

MARIO

Mister, you're nothing!

STU

Believe me, Valerie's on the waiting list to audition. Harry's got no complaints. He just let me pick out this tie the other day.

MARIO

That Harry's a damn fool!

STU

Mario, please let me make this up to you. How about I arrange for the opening night party for this new off-Broadway show I'm handling -- to be held at your place with local TV coverage on nine and eleven? I mean I had it promised to another client -- who actually pays me money. But it isn't firmed up yet. And I could throw it your way. Maybe.

MARIO

What is involved?

STU

You'd toss in the buffet for say seventy or eighty. The producers would supply their own vino, of course. I'd deliver you a truckload of celebrities. And if they like the food, they'll all come back, naturally.

MARIO

What celebrities?

STU

You want Liza Minelli? An Oscar-winner. Or Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.?

MARIO

Is he still alive?

STU

I saw him last night going into the Four Seasons. I'll bring you over a whole VIP list when we come by for dinner.

MARIO

How come everybody wants to eat but nobody wants to pay?

STU

You can't think small like that. Hey, you still feature musicians Fridays and Saturdays?

MARIO

At least they work for their meals.

STU

What about Harry's daughter as an extra added attraction? She'll belt out five or six showtunes -- two sets a night -- and it won't cost you a fucking nickel.

MARIO

How come?

STU

Star Showcase! Let me handle setting that up. And when she eventually goes on Letterman, she'll announce I'm currently appearing over at Mario's fine supper club. Right over CBS she'll say that, Mario.

MARIO

You're full of shit. You know that? All bullshit!

STU

That's just a vulgar word for PR.

(placing an arm
around him)

Mario, you can't hurt my feelings. Even when I was a kid and they hurled certain invectives my way, it never bothered me. Other kids would fall apart if anybody called them a

(MORE)

STU (CONT.)

fucking name. Me, I just loved the attention! 'Shit-for-brains' -- that's what the bigger kids named me. And I answered to it. Hey, 'shit-for-brains' reporting for duty. Everybody loved me for that. I could take abuse. After a while, I kind of wore them down. There was nothing more they could say to me. So they stopped. I kind of missed it.

MARIO

I'm sorry I even talked to you.

STU

I'll bet your loving wife put you up to this. She saw me pass by and she sent you out in the street. But I don't hold it against you personally -- you still serve up one superior veal chop.

(entering phone booth)

Now I got urgent business to conduct, Mario.

He slides the booth closed in Mario's face.

The frustrated restaurateur glares at him through the glass before giving up and walking off -- talking to himself as he goes up the block.

INSIDE THE BOOTH, Stu inserts his thirty-five cents and dials.

STU

Hello, Mavis, sweet creature.

MAVIS' VOICE

Where have you been? Do you think I have nothing to do but wait around for you to call?

STU

I'm only a few minutes late, loveliest individual on earth.

MAVIS' VOICE

Stu, I'm so lonely. When can I see you?

STU

Good news in that arena. Kelly goes into rehearsal as of Monday. You know how dedicated she is. By the time she gets back from dancing her ass off, she goes right to sleep. We'll have both our days and certain nights. Not to mention when they take the show on the road.

MAVIS' VOICE

How long is that for?

STU

Four to five weeks -- minimum.

MAVIS' VOICE

Maybe I should quit my job so we can be together full time.

STU

I wouldn't do that.

MAVIS' VOICE

Sometimes I think if I have to give one more fucking manicure...

STU

That's how you met me.

MAVIS' VOICE

I never saw a worse set of nails. Bit right down to the quick.

STU

I'm much better groomed since you've been looking after me.

MAVIS' VOICE

I'm glad you admit it.

STU

Even Kelly remarked on it when I first met her.

MAVIS' VOICE

She could care less how you look. She's only interested in pushing her own career. Some wife you're stuck with!

STU

The marriage is not without its compensations. Do you imagine I could afford that apartment on what I'm earning? Not with everybody cutting back on the publicity. Not to mention a million college graduates coming into the profession trying to cut me out. And one thing you can't expect from your clients is loyalty. They get a couple of bad notices, they dump you. Goodbye.

MAVIS' VOICE

Don't go.

STU

I wasn't saying goodbye to you. I was saying how the clients try to give you the wave off without even a month's notice.

A conservative businessman now stands outside the booth waiting to use it. He deliberately glances at his watch a few times to demonstrate his impatience. This bothers Stu who slides the booth open a crack.

STU

(yelling)

What? Is your watch busted? It's twenty after eleven and I'm gonna be occupied indefinitely with my transaction. So get out of my face!

He closes the booth up again and turns his back to the gentleman who gives up and departs.

STU

Sorry, honey. There will be no further interruption.

MAVIS' VOICE

Why must you always be calling me from some booth?

STU

On account of that phone records are regularly subpoenaed in divorce proceedings. And I don't want some entry showing up on my cellular bill either. She gets the mail. She looks these items over. Sometimes she even dials up a strange number to see who it is.

MAVIS' VOICE

Then she suspects something.

STU

It's only because her last husband, the choreographer, ran around on her. She can't get that out of her head. That's how she caught onto him. The phone bills.

MAVIS' VOICE

She hasn't developed much skill at holding a man.

STU

You know what a self-fulfilling prophecy is? She was so sure I was going to find me a woman that she finally drove me back to you. I thought I'd feel all guilty about it -- but I guess it hasn't kicked in yet.

(beat)

Still, I wouldn't do anything to hurt her. Basically, Kelly's a decent individual.

MAVIS' VOICE

What about hurting me? Like last time?

STU

Hurt? You were glad to be rid of me.

MAVIS' VOICE

For a while I was, 'til I took stock of what was around. You're the lesser of many evils.

STU

That's about the nicest thing you ever said.

MAVIS' VOICE

I'll have it engraved.

STU

We've been up front with each other from the beginning. Let's keep it that way. How about a drink? Say seven o'clock? The Monkey Bar?

MAVIS' VOICE

Meet me in front. I don't like walking in there unescorted.

STU

Yeah, you're great enough looking to be mistaken for one of those thousand dollar a night girls.

MAVIS' VOICE

It happens all the time lately.

STU

And wear that short black number I bought you from Bendel's.

MAVIS' VOICE

Again? I don't know if it's me or that dress you like.

STU

Have a good day. Make plenty of tips. And leave the whole evening open. She thinks I've got Knicks tickets.

He hangs up. Then whips a tiny cellular phone out of his jacket pocket, flips it open and dials. Someone answers on the first ring.

COLUMNIST (VO)

Speak!

STU

(into cellular)

It's your boy Stuart. When was the last time I called you for a favor?

COLUMNIST (VO)

The column is already full.

STU

I just need one line. Anybody you wanna say was seen dining out at Mario's Stromboli restaurant.

COLUMNIST (VO)

Maybe you don't hear so good? I got no space for you.

STU

Who's asking any favors? I'm offering reciprocal information.

COLUMNIST (VO)

Since when were you ever a reliable source?

STU

Check it out. Tony award-winning producer Willie Beagle tossed his wife back into rehab again following her third attempt at diving off the terrace at their plush eighteen room residence at the San Remo. I got it from the doorman.

COLUMNIST (VO)

I got it from their maid yesterday. It's in the paper today. Or don't you bother to read my shit?

STU

Louis, my intentions were entirely honorable.

COLUMNIST (VO)

I'll drop your item in sometime next week. If you promise not to call me for a month.

He hangs up. Stu looks pleased as he folds the cell phone and tucks it away.

Then he starts to vacate the booth. The phone rings. And rings. Curious, he picks up the receiver. There's a voice on the other end of the line. A DISTINCTIVE MALE VOICE.

VOICE

Don't even think about leaving that booth.

STU

What?

VOICE

Stay exactly where you are and listen carefully.

STU

I've got a heavy day, mister.

VOICE

You know better than to disobey me.

STU

I don't know you at all.

VOICE

Are you absolutely sure?

STU

Who is this?

VOICE

Someone who's watching you.

STU

Get lost!

VOICE

Love the gray suit. That red and black tie makes a nice combination.

Stu is taken back by the accurate description of his apparel. He looks around nervously.

STU

Where? Where are you?

VOICE

Closer than you think.

STU

I don't see you.

VOICE

There are any number of windows. Check them out.

Indeed that street corner is surrounded by high rise buildings and hotels.

STU

Okay, you had your little joke.

VOICE

I'm not sufficiently amused. Not yet. We have more to talk about.

Stu knows he should simple hang up but something tells him not to. Perhaps it's the strange tone of the man's voice.

STU

Do me a favor. Call up somebody else.

VOICE

But it's you I'm interested in. You know how many people use that booth every day?

STU

Why don't you tell me?

VOICE

Better than two-hundred people on average.

STU

Is that what you do? Count them?

VOICE

What else do I have to do? It's interesting watching people. Trying to guess who they are. And what they're up to.

STU

What are you -- a shut-in of some kind?

VOICE

You might say that. I can't go out. I might be seen.

STU

Somebody's looking for you?

VOICE

Desperately.

STU

The cops?

VOICE

Not yet.

STU

The ex-wife. What'd you do -- run out on child support?

VOICE

What kind of man do you think I am?

STU

Frankly, I could care less. You had your fun. Now goodbye.

VOICE

It's not in your best interests to hang up on me. That would make me angry.

STU
Isn't that just too bad?

VOICE
For you.

STU
There's ten million names in the
phonebook. Pester somebody else.

VOICE
I never talk to people I can't see.
I need to study their reactions.

[REDACTED]

STU
Alright, bullshit artist, what am I
doing right now?

VOICE
Scratching your forehead with your
left hand. Now you're brushing your
hair back.

STU
Okay, okay, you got me in your
scrutiny. So what?

VOICE
So let's talk.

STU
Only I got nothing to say.

VOICE
Oh, you will. You'll do a lot of
talking before this conversation is
over. And it'll only end when I
want it to.

STU
Is that a fact? Well if you watch
closely, you will see me hang up.

VOICE
I don't think you will.

STU
Why not?

VOICE

I interest you.

STU

Why should I be interested in some creep who gets his jollies spying on strangers in phone booths?

VOICE

But you're not a stranger, Stu.

The sound of his own name sends a chill through him.

STU

Who put you up to this?

VOICE

You were my very own selection.

STU

Why me in particular?

VOICE

Because you're so afraid.

STU

Ha! What've I got to be afraid of?

VOICE

Just about everything. You have so much to hide.

STU

How do you figure that?

VOICE

Why else would a man with a perfectly good cellular bother to make calls from a pay booth?

STU

That's my business.

VOICE

I've made it mine.

STU

All of a sudden I'm required to give explanations to you?

VOICE

In explicit detail.

STU

What is this? Some kind of candid camera gag? Or like that thing on HBO where the cab driver is taping what goes on in the back seat?

VOICE

This is not showbusiness, my friend. This is reality.

STU

Your reality. Not mine, you lowlife fuck.

VOICE

Stu, you'll be made to suffer for your attitude, so let's dispense with the vulgarities.

STU

Now you're threatening me! Fuck you. Could that be any clearer?

VOICE

You're only making it easier for me to do you harm.

STU

Oh yeah. Right. Can you see how I'm trembling?

VOICE

You will be.

STU

Shit, this is a new one. Fucking threatening calls in a goddam phone booth. When are you going to start with the heavy breathing?

VOICE

I'm not the degenerate. You are, Stu.

STU

You don't know anything about me.

VOICE

Infinitely more than you know about me.

STU

Like what?

VOICE

Like the number you dialed when you first entered the booth.

STU

How would you know that?

VOICE

I'm watching through a scope and I could clearly read the buttons you pushed. I have another extension here by the window. Shall I dial that same number back for you? Would that convince you?

Stu nervously cranes his neck, looking around at all the tall buildings that surround the street corner.

STU'S POV

PANNING up at thousands of windows. The Voice could be coming from anywhere.

BACK TO STU IN THE BOOTH

VOICE

Let's see who's on the other end of the line.

STU

Don't.

VOICE

Too late.

(beat)

It's already ringing. I'll hold the receiver up so you can listen in.

Stu can hear the beeping as the other line rings.

Then Mavis' voice can be heard answering. Stu listens helplessly.

MAVIS' VOICE

Hello?

VOICE

Well, hello.

MAVIS' VOICE

Who is this?

VOICE

Someone who's really tight with your boyfriend -- who just called you from his favorite phone booth.

MAVIS' VOICE

You know Stu?

VOICE

Stu? Oh, I know him better than anyone. What he does -- how he thinks. How he lies.

MAVIS' VOICE

Who the hell is this?

VOICE

Stu is listening in. He knows what we're both saying.

MAVIS' VOICE

Stu? Is that true? Are you there?

VOICE

He doesn't feel like talking.

STU

(shouts)

Mavis! Just hang up the goddam phone.

VOICE

She can't hear you, Stu. Only me.

(a pause)

Mavis, I'm afraid Stu hasn't been totally honest with you. But then he can't be honest with anyone, can he?

MAVIS' VOICE

What's your name? To whom am I speaking?

VOICE

You've never heard of me, Mavis. He doesn't want you to know I exist. He wishes I didn't exist. But there isn't anything he can do about that.

(beat)

Still there, Stu? All you can do is listen.

STU

Mavis -- the guy is a fucking nutcase! Hang the fuck up.

VOICE

She doesn't want to. She wants to know all about us. Don't you, Mavis?

MAVIS' VOICE

Did his wife put you up to this? That bitch, Kelly?

VOICE

Oh yes, the bitch wife, Kelly. My very next call.

STU

(yells)

He doesn't know my wife! Don't tell him anything else.

Outside the booth, a huge, heavy-set black woman in a too tight dress, now appears with the clear desire to use the phone. Her name is FELICIA. She taps on the glass.

FELICIA

Could you hurry it along?

Stu ignores her and Felicia glares at him through the glass with hostility.

Stu has no inclination to deal with anybody else. He's too distracted by the madness happening over the telephone.

STU

Can you hear me, Mavis? Keep your big mouth shut.

VOICE

Is that any way to talk to a woman you love?

(beat)

Mavis, is he always that abusive to you?

MAVIS' VOICE

You're getting me all upset. I don't know who you are or how you know all this --

VOICE

I find out things -- from watching people and listening to them.

MAVIS' VOICE

Just what is your relationship to Stu? That's all I want to know.

VOICE

Well, what do you think?

MAVIS' VOICE

Answer me, goddam it!

VOICE

Well alright. Stu and I are -- longtime companions. A pair. Two of a kind. Closer than close. Peas in a pod. Spoons in a drawer.

MAVIS' VOICE

You pervert!

VOICE

That, too.

STU

Don't believe a word of it. It's all lies.

VOICE

Too late, Stu. She already believes it.

MAVIS' VOICE

You can tell that scumbag never to bother me again.

VOICE

He won't care. He'll still have me.

STU

It's not true. I do care.

From outside the booth, there's a louder rapping on the glass. Felicia really wants in.

FELICIA

Get done in there, mister. I got me an important call.

STU

Go away.

WOMAN

Shit I will! Finish up!

She continues to rap on the glass as Stu tries to focus on the two-way phone call.

VOICE

Why don't you tell me what you think of us?

MAVIS' VOICE

You're both disgusting.

VOICE

That's what he said about you. Well, if Stu didn't have the balls to come out and tell you the truth, I felt it was my responsibility to clear the air. Goodbye now, Mavis. Thanks for your time.

(the phone clicks
off; we hear only a
dial tone)

Back to you again, Stu.

STU

You total asshole! How could you do that?

VOICE

Speaking of females, that woman hovering outside the booth -- may as well tell her that you'll be on the line forever.

STU

Like hell I will.

VOICE

I'm ready for you to take out your cellular and phone home. And this time, I'll listen in.

STU

There's no chance of that.

VOICE

Or should I call Kelly and make up something totally outrageous? You must realize by now I have a vivid imagination.

STU

You don't know our phone number!

VOICE

Are you absolutely sure? I may have been watching you on a regular basis. Keeping track of all the numbers I see you dial.

STU

And I'm supposed to believe that?

VOICE

I've put a great deal of preparation into this -- prior to actually saying hello. Now do you want to dial 832-7165 -- or should I?

The sound of the actual number being spoken shocks him even more than the earlier mention of his name.

STU

What are you going to tell her?

VOICE

You'll do the talking.

STU

What am I supposed to say?

VOICE

Try telling her the truth.

STU

Look, I don't want to hurt Kelly. She's always there for me. It's just my nature to have a little 'strange' on the side. It doesn't mean shit.

VOICE

But you still find it necessary?

STU

Kind of like having a beautiful home. With everything you ever dreamed of. But you still need that vacation now and then. Some nice hotel room with a great view. Maybe a pool. Only you wouldn't want to spend more than a few days in any hotel. Eventually, you want to go back to your home and all your stuff. You're real glad to check out.

VOICE

Kelly is home and Mavis is a hotel?
I'm sure they'll both appreciate
that explanation.

STU

You're ruining my fucking life, you
sonofabitch.

VOICE

Didn't I warn you about calling me
names? It makes me vindictive.

STU

What else can you do to me?

VOICE

We haven't even begun.

STU

She's not home. She went out.

VOICE

I'll bet she's back. Now hold the
cellular up where I can see it -- so
I can be certain you don't misdial
on me.

(pause)

A little higher and to your left.
Now I have it in perfect view. Dial
slowly.

More violent rapping on the glass from the persistent black
lady outside.

FELICIA

If you got you a cell phone, how
come you taking up the whole fucking
booth! This here's an emergency!

STU

There's another booth on the next
block.

FELICIA

It's busted. Every damn phone on
Eighth Avenue is busted but this
one@

STU

Well I'm not through! Go in a
restaurant or someplace, but get
away from me!

FELICIA

I'm gonna pull you out of that booth
and snatch you ballheaded!

She tries to pull open the sliding door to the booth but Stu
jams it shut, right on her hand.

FELICIA

You assaulted my person.

STU

Let me hear from your lawyer!

FELICIA (CONT.)

You'll hear alright. I'm coming
back. And your ass better not be
around.

She stalks off obviously in search of assistance.

VOICE

Good work, Stu. Now let me see you
dial. Tuck the receiver under your
chin and dial your remote.

STU

I'm doing it.

He punches in the digits. The phone rings -- and rings.

STU

I told you she was out.

VOICE

Let it ring.

Then a girl's voice is heard.

KELLY'S VOICE

Shepard residence.

VOICE

Hold it close to the receiver so I
can hear.

KELLY'S VOICE

Hello?

STU

Honey, it's me.

KELLY'S VOICE

What's taking you so long? I thought we were having some lunch at Mario's?

STU

Change of plan. We're not eating in that dump any more.

KELLY'S VOICE

How come?

STU

The Health Department gave them a 'C' rating -- that's how come. Here I'm trying to put the place on the map and he fucks it all up with a major roach problem.

KELLY'S VOICE

That's disgusting. Okay, I'll fix us a sandwich. Where are you now?

STU

Just in a phone booth.

KELLY'S VOICE

How come? The caller ID says you're on your cellular.

STU

Oh yeah, I am.

KELLY'S VOICE

But you're also in some phone booth?

VOICE

Explain that one, Stu.

STU

I only stepped in because the traffic was so loud outside.

KELLY'S VOICE

Well just hurry on back.

VOICE

Tell her you can't.

STU

Not for a few minutes.

KELLY'S VOICE

Are you sure you're alone? I hear
somebody in the background.

STU

The guy in the next booth. He's got
a bad connection and he's hollering
his fool head off.

VOICE

You've got an answer for everything.

STU

I love you, baby.

KELLY'S VOICE

Do you?

STU

You know that.

KELLY'S VOICE

Stu -- who was that man?

STU

What man?

KELLY'S VOICE

Some person who phoned fifteen
minutes ago -- just after you went
out.

STU

I don't understand...

KELLY'S VOICE

This total stranger rang up and told
me to wait by the phone -- because
you'd be calling me in a few minutes
-- from a booth. And I said what
would he be doing in any phone
booth?

STU

And what did this guy say?

KELLY'S VOICE

He said you'd be making phone calls.
What else?

STU

Making calls is part of my business.

KELLY'S VOICE

To whom?

STU

Clients. People. Planting items
like I do.

KELLY'S VOICE

Women?

STU

Once in a while one of them could be
a woman. I just called "Elaine's"
and talked to her to see who was in
there last night.

KELLY'S VOICE

You know exactly what I mean.

STU

You're not going to start that shit
again?

KELLY'S VOICE

I just feel something is wrong.

STU

What could be wrong?

KELLY'S VOICE

The way you sound. You don't sound
like yourself.

STU

Yeah? Who do I sound like?

KELLY'S VOICE

Someone who's scared. There's fear
in your voice like I've never heard
before.

VOICE

See, Stu? Kelly agrees with me.

KELLY'S VOICE

I want you to come back home. Now!

STU

I told you. In a while.

KELLY'S VOICE

No. I want you here now. In case
he calls back, I don't want to
answer again.

STU

Why should he call back?

KELLY'S VOICE

I feel like he's going to.

STU

You're the one that sounds
frightened. And of nobody.

KELLY'S VOICE

He's not a nobody. He knows about
us.

STU

You're not telling me all he said.
What are you holding back?

KELLY'S VOICE

I can't discuss it on the phone.
Just get over here!

CLICK! She hangs up.

STU

(into pay phone)

Why did you do that to her? She
never did you any harm.

VOICE

How would you know? Everybody does
harm to somebody. And then they try
their best to forget it.

STU

Maybe me -- but not her. Whatever
I've done, there's no reason to take
it out on her.

VOICE

Suppose that's the only way I can
get to you? You claim you love her.

STU

Yeah, I do.

VOICE

You don't even love yourself.

STU

But Kelly...I would never hurt.

VOICE

Still you have to uphold your status
as an honorary asshole.

STU

Listen, I've treated all my women
decent. I never laid a hand on any
of them, even when provoked. And I
always let them down easy.

(beat)

I'm not ready to let Kelly go.
Maybe I never will be.

VOICE

What if she dumps you first? What's
the odds she's already taken up with
somebody? One day soon you'll come
home and find her gone along with
the CD player and the VCR.

STU

I'm not gonna let you mind-fuck me
all day! That's it. This call is
ended.

VOICE

Not until I say it is.

STU

What happens if I hang up?

VOICE

You don't really want to find out.

STU

I'm dying to hear this!!! What the
fuck can you do about it -- up in
your fucking high window with your
goddam binoculars?

VOICE

I never indicated I had binoculars.
I said I had a highly magnified
telescopic image of you that brought
you up so close I could see where
you nicked yourself under the chin
shaving this morning.

STU

Oh -- while you're at it, have a
look up my ass.

VOICE

I may very well do that, Stu. In the meantime, think about what kind of device has a telescopic sight mounted on it.

STU

What? You mean...like a rifle?

VOICE

A high-powered .30 calibre bolt action Remington 700 with a carbon one modification and a state of the art Henzholdt tactical sniperscope. And you're in the cross hairs, Stu.

STU

I'm supposed to believe that?

VOICE

There's only one way I can prove it to you. Hang up the receiver and find out. At this range, the exit wound ought to be about the size of a small tangerine.

STU

And you're just going to kill me for no reason?

VOICE

For plenty of reason! Because you hung up. For years I've hated people hanging up on me. Ex-girlfriends. Women I didn't even know. Prospective employers.

STU

I get hung up on all the time. You get used to it.

VOICE

Or else you don't. I worked for month getting people to switch to MCI -- being insulted at and being hung up on hundreds of times a day. The ones that cursed me out for invading their privacy never bothered me as much as those that clicked off without even bothering to reply.

STU

Then why didn't you go after one of them?

VOICE

Maybe you are one of them.

STU

Hey, I have worked in a boiler room myself peddling "Term Life." I would never be rude to a fellow salesperson.

VOICE

Can you feel it on you now? The heat of it. I'm moving the strike zone down to your stomach area. Now I'm raising it up again. Directly above the chest cavity -- sliding up to the forehead just above the left ear.

STU

Shit -- I do feel it.

VOICE

Tell me where I'm going with it now.

STU

Across my forehead -- now back where it was before.

VOICE

I'm amazed how you can do that. You're amazingly accurate.

(beat)

Now I know what you're thinking. If I drop down on the floor of the booth and flatten myself out...

STU

No, I'm not thinking that.

VOICE

Oh yes you are. Can I crawl out using the booth as a shield? Can I crawl to that Chrysler illegally parked only three or four feet away? The shattering glass may cut me, but it'll only be superficial. Otherwise, this lunatic will never let me out alive.

VOICE

No. You will. I know you will. If I just cooperate.

VOICE

Where is it now? Think and feel for the warm spot.

STU

Below the shoulder?

VOICE

Which one?

STU

The right shoulder.

VOICE

Remarkable how we're in tune. You're doing far better than the others.

STU

What others? What do you mean?

(no reply)

You said 'others!'

VOICE

(finally)

I'm sure you read about the Italian tourist shot dead ten days ago at the corner of Forty-fifth and Eighth?

STU

I saw it on the news.

VOICE

And where are we now?

STU

Oh, God. Forty-fifth and Eighth.

VOICE

What else do you remember about that killing?

STU

I don't know.

VOICE

Try.

STU

He was gunned down. And nobody was caught. And they didn't even bother to take his wallet or his watch...or anything.

VOICE

Now you know why. It wasn't a robbery.

STU

What did he do?

VOICE

He hung up -- so I disconnected him permanently.

STU

Please -- don't do it to me. You got no reason to do it to me.

VOICE

Don't give me reason.

STU

I'm not looking to. Tell me what you want!

VOICE

Tell me about your job.

STU

What's to tell? I'm in Public Relations. They used to call us "flacks." Now we're media consultants.

VOICE

What do you do, exactly?

STU

Plant items in the paper and on the tube. More important sometimes, keep stuff out.

VOICE

What've you kept out?

STU

One of my people got nailed for indecent exposure. I managed for the cops to use his real name instead of his stage name so nobody picked up on it.

VOICE

You saved the little deviate's ass,
didn't you?

STU

He's in major therapy now. I swear
he is.

VOICE

You must hang with some major
celebrities. Journalists,
newscasters -- those types.

STU

I'm real close with Larry King. And
the "Hard Copy" people.

VOICE

Could you get him down here? Larry
King?

STU

Why would he want to come here?

VOICE

Because you asked him to.

STU

He comes from Atlanta.

VOICE

Well, who could you get?

STU

I don't know.

VOICE

Wolf Blitzer?

VOICE

Probably not.

VOICE

Regis?

STU

Definitely no chance.

VOICE

You'd be offering them an exclusive
newsbreak. I'm talking about more
than one homicide.

STU

How many?

VOICE

I don't answer questions. I ask them.

STU

I gotta have the facts. They might not believe me. My record isn't too good when it comes to hard news.

VOICE

You're not considered a reliable source?

STU

On a divorce or separation, maybe. Or who's gay. or who isn't gay any more. I kind of specialize in that kind of material. I mean I could probably get you Joe Franklin.

VOICE

How about Cindy Adams?

STU

I might have a shot. Are you familiar with Liz Smith?

VOICE

Do you know her number?

STU

Want I should call her? How much can I say?

VOICE

Tell her you're in direct touch with a killer who's willing to speak honestly if she shows up here alone and without notifying the authorities.

STU

She usually likes to have a celebrity involved. If you had an actor or a sports figure held prisoner instead of me, there'd be better odds she'd come.

VOICE

Then lie. Pick a celebrity and put them in the booth.

STU

Let's see. Who does she like? Who couldn't be reached to deny it?

VOICE

I'm anxious to see you in action.
Don't keep me waiting.

Stu uses his cellular again.

STU

(dialing)

Sometimes you only get her service.

(into cellular)

Hi -- Stu Shepard. Put me through.
I've got hard news for her. I can
only talk to her directly. But say
it regards -- Liza.

VOICE

Liza? That was imaginative.

STU

(into cellular)

No, I can't call back. I'll have to
lay it on somebody else. Alright,
but I can't hang on long.

(to pay phone)

She's coming on.

(to cellular)

Liz, hello. Sure I'll make it
brief. Killing two weeks ago in the
theatre district? Turns out a
sniper did the job. Yeah, a sniper
with a rifle. Now he's got another
victim lined up. Not just your
anonymous New Yorker, but Liza. Now
you can't call anybody or Ms.
Minelli's dead meat and so am I.
She's hostage in a phone booth right
in the sniper's sights. But he says
he'll talk to you and let her walk.
I know it'll take balls to do this,
but you're a fine and courageous
newspaper woman...

There's a click. Silence.

STU
Hello? Hello?
(to pay phone)
Either she's on her way over or she
doesn't believe me.

VOICE
You weren't particularly convincing.

STU
I didn't really believe in what I
was saying.

VOICE
Because you don't really believe my
Remington is pointed at you?

STU
I do.

VOICE
You're ninety percent sure.

STU
At least ninety-five percent, easy.

VOICE
Let me erase all doubt.

STU
No. Don't shoot.

VOICE
Control yourself, Stu. Glance down
at your chest. What do you see.

STU
Oh, my God. A dot. A fucking red
dot.

A tiny red dot now moves across Stu's chest.

VOICE
Like you've seen in the movies?

STU
The laser dot. Just before some
poor bastard always gets blown away.

VOICE
Usually a supporting player. That
lovely but by now generic special
effect of the bullet piercing the
forehead.

The tiny red laser dot dances around Stu's chest and stomach -- then jumps up and remains between his eyes.

VOICE

This takes all the guesswork out of it. You know exactly where to expect it before I even tighten my finger on the trigger.

STU

Don't tighten. Don't even tickle that fucking trigger.

VOICE

How about Geraldo? He'd run his ass off to get in on this.

STU

You're talking about the old Geraldo. Look, I can try and reach cable NBC. They're hungry.

VOICE

I'm disappointed. I wanted to go first class.

VOICE

They do a great job. They'll haul a whole crew over to cover your surrender "live."

VOICE

I never expressed interest in giving myself up. There are so many other phone booths in the city. I'm just getting warmed up.

STU

That's entirely up to you. Your choice. I'm just trying to set you up with the proper communicator.

(beat)

I suppose Liza wasn't strong enough. I should've said Madonna.

VOICE

Now you're being creative.

Outside the booth, the angry black woman has returned, bringing with her a gaudily dressed pimp named LEON who looks like he means business. He slams his fist against the glass, nearly shattering it.

LEON

Drag your baggy butt out of that booth. We got business to conduct out of there.

FELICIA

He been in there all day.

STU

I'm not through.

LEON

Hang up that receiver or I'll make you eat the fucking thing!

STU

Fuck off or I'll call a cop.

LEON

Do you see one around here? What you think I'm gonna be doing while you're waiting for a prowler car to get assigned? I'm about to cut you a second asshole if you don't vacate those premises.

STU

I can't.

FELICIA

He's got him a fucking cellular. What's he need to be in our booth for?

STU

I can't explain it.

LEON

I'm not interested in your explanations even if you had any.

He withdraws a switchblade knife from his pocket but doesn't open it -- yet.

LEON

If I flick this, I use it.

STU

I'll make it worth your while to go away. How much do you want?

LEON

Make me an offer.

STU

Thirty dollars. It's all I've got in cash. Take it and go.

LEON

You're offering to rent my phone booth? For how long?

STU

I don't know. For as long as it takes.

LEON

What's so special in there?

STU

Do you want the money?

LEON

Is that a genuine Rolex you've got on?

STU

Come on, man. That's my good watch.

LEON

That's what it's gonna take.

STU

Then here. Take the damn thing.

LEON

And the thirty!

STU

Take it all.

The pimp pockets the watch and the money. But doesn't go away.

LEON

Now I'm satisfied. But you still got to deal with Felicia here. I believe you spoke harshly to her.

STU

I apologize.

LEON

And did her some injury.

STU

An accident. I'm sorry about that, too.

FELICIA

The man don't sound like he means it.

LEON

I agree.

(to Stu)

Why don't you hang up a minute so we can discuss this matter at length.

STU

It's long distance. I can't lose the call -- I might not get them back.

LEON

Do I have to rip that fucking phone out of ~~you~~ there?

STU

That wouldn't be a good idea.

(into pay phone)

Would it?

VOICE

Not at all.

STU

I gave you everything I've got.

LEON

That pinky ring looks attractive. Felicia might like that.

FELICIA

It might fit.

STU

You want the ring, you've got the ring. If I can get it off.

LEON

I can get it off you.

Leon reaches in and grabs Stu's ring hand.

STU

Let go of me! It's coming loose. There.

(he tosses it)

Okay, Felicia, with my deepest apologies. Goodbye now.

LEON

What's really going on in that booth
-- that escapes the naked eye?

STU

Nothing. Talk. That's all.

LEON

That your connection on the end of
the line? Or are you dealing?

STU

This has nothing to do with drugs.

LEON

You gotta be high on something to
willingly divest yourself of your
valuables -- just to maintain
occupancy of a fucking phone booth
that the local bums piss in every
night.

STU

I knew it smelled for some reason.

LEON

You look like you're ready to piss
yourself.

STU

Because I am.

LEON

Maybe if the city provided decent
public toilets, folks wouldn't
relieve themselves in the subway
stations and phone booths!

STU

I'll take it up with the mayor.

LEON

Next thing you now you're gonna
claim we mugged you -- took your
billfold and watch.

STU

No, you didn't. It was a fair and
equitable deal. You had territorial
rights to this booth and I paid a
license fee. Fair is fair. Now
leave me in peace.

LEON

You sure you're alright?

(to Felicia)

He don't look well.

FELICIA

Kind of pale. Even for a white man.

LEON

Jaundice they calls it. Probably advanced liver trouble.

(to Stu)

If it's cirrhosis, you better find yourself a twelve step program and quick.

STU

Thanks for your interest but I'm in perfect health.

FELICIA

So how come his hand is shaking?

LEON

The man is cracking up.

FELICIA

Lookit the sweat pouring off the sonofabitch. That's one sick mother you started up with, Leon!

LEON

Me? You're the one that brought me over and exposed me to all his germs.

STU

I'm terminal, okay? Now can I close the booth and continue my conversation?

LEON

I'm worried now it might be catching. All that money out of your sweaty pocket is probably crawling with some rare and incurable disease.

STU

Fine. Give it back.

LEON

What good's that? We done touched it.

STU

Well go wash your hands.

LEON

Come on now. Own up to what you're carrying. Is it some of that sexually transmitted shit? Cause in that case, we can relax.

STU

I'm sick of you. Now get out of my face.

LEON

Here we's being solicitous as to your health and you respond by heaping abuse!

FELICIA

Whip his arrogant ass.

Leon reaches into the booth and grabs Stu's jacket.

STU

Touch me and I'll throw up on you.

At this suggestion, Leon lets go quickly.

It looks like a stalemate. Stu isn't vacating the booth and Leon and his lady are reluctant to touch him further. He does indeed look sick.

STU

(into pay phone)

You can see what I'm up against here.

VOICE

Want me to get rid of him for you?

STU

What do you have in mind?

VOICE

I'll think of something.

Suddenly the red dot reappears on the forehead of the pimp.

Leon doesn't realize it's there. The hooker behind him has no way of seeing it. But to Stu, there's no way to miss it. He reacts.

STU

God -- no.

(into pay phone)

Don't. It's not necessary.

VOICE

You asked for my help.

STU

I'll handle it myself.

VOICE

You're not doing too well. I can
settle it in a fraction of a second.
Shall I demonstrate?

STU

No.

(to Leon)

For your own safety, mister, just
walk away.

LEON

Now the man is turning aggressive...
issuing threats upon my person.

STU

You're making this happen.

LEON

If you don't hang up and step out,
I'm about to topple this booth into
the gutter with you inside it.

Reluctant to touch Stu again, Leon assaults the booth
itself. He begins shaking it violently -- trying to rip it
from its foundation. And the rickety booth is not too
sturdy. It starts rocking back and forth.

Stu is thrown around inside it, barely keeping his footing.

STU

(into pay phone)

This isn't my fault.

(shouts)

Stop that!

But Leon continues rocking the booth. It won't come loose -
- so in frustration, he punches in a side pane of glass.

The glass shatters all around Stu, who does his best to
shield himself from the slivers.

STU
(into pay phone)
The guy's insane!

VOICE
Only one way to stop a mad dog.
Give me permission.

STU
I can't.

VOICE
If he forces you out of that booth,
I've told you what to expect. You
or him, Stu.

Leon is smashing other panes of glass now -- one after
another -- as Stu cowers inside.

FELICIA
Don't cut yourself, honey.

A crowd of derelicts and street people are now gathering to
watch the out of control pimp take out his wrath on the
booth and its occupant.

DERELICT
Looks like the fucker is comin'
loose.

STREET PERSON
Shove it out into the oncoming
traffic.

DERELICT
What'll you bet the bus could knock
that fifty feet?

The booth is being decimated but Stu hangs onto the phone.

STU
(into pay phone)
Hello? Hello?

VOICE
(with heavy static)
You're breaking up. We're about to
be cut off.

STU
I can't help it!

VOICE

That counts as a hang-up.

STU

No. It can't. That's not fair.

VOICE

I can still make him stop. Say the word. Can you hear me?

STU

Yes.

Stu sees the red dot reappear on Leon's chest as he continues to barrage the booth with punches and kicks.

Then Leon recoils, staggers a step backward. He doesn't realize he's been shot.

There's been no sound of gunfire. Perhaps a silencer was used -- or the downtown traffic drowned out the solitary discharge.

Leon looks confused at first. His ladyfriend has no idea he's wounded -- neither do the derelicts and street people who've assembled on the corner.

Even Stu isn't sure -- until the blood starts oozing from the wound on the pimp's chest -- staining his yellow vest.

He isn't assaulting the booth anymore. He's trying to keep his balance. He slumps forward, hanging onto the booth for support -- only a few inches from Stu's face. The blood runs down the side of the booth.

STU

(into pay phone)

You did it!

VOICE

You said 'yes.'

STU

I said 'Yes, I can hear you.' Not 'Yes -- kill the motherfucker!'

VOICE

Don't try to renege on it. I was following orders.

STU

You're twisting it all around. I didn't do this!

Meanwhile, Leon leans upright against the booth. Then his legs cave in and he begins to slide to his knees.

Felicia runs up beside him. She sees the blood.

FELICIA

I warned you not to cut yourself.

(to crowd)

Look at all that blood. He must've hit an artery.

She screams as Leon topples backwards onto the pavement. Now his chest wound is evident.

FELICIA

Oh, Jesus. What is that? Talk to me! What happened?

The crowd tightens around the fallen body. Street people who are fascinated but not shocked.

DERELICT

Gunshot!

STREET PERSON

Yeah. Sucking chest wound right over the heart.

FELICIA

Somebody call an ambulance.

STREET PERSON

Call the meatwagon. He's fucked up.

FELICIA

You shut the fuck up!

Her focus turns to Stu in the battered phone booth.

FELICIA

Why did you do that to him?

STU

I didn't.

FELICIA

(to crowd)

You all saw it! He shot my man without no provocation!

DERELICT

Yeah. Pumped one right into him at close range.

STU

How could I? I don't even have a gun. Look!

STREET PERSON

Everybody get the fuck back! They shoot one -- then they shoot everybody in sight! Kill all the fucking witnesses!

The crowd disperses to doorways and around the corner -- out of immediate range.

STU

Come back. You've got to see -- I'm not armed.

Only Felicia remains, leaning over the pimp's body, staring helplessly.

FELICIA

Hang up and dial 911. Get a doctor!

STU

I can't hang up. That's what this is all about.

FELICIA

You're gonna stand there and let him die?

STU

(takes out cellular)

I can use this.

(he dials)

Emergency. Yes. There's been a shooting at Forty-fifth and Eighth-- on the corner. A man is down. What's the difference who I am? I don't want to be involved.

FELICIA

(shouts)

That's bullshit. He's the shooter. You're talking to the shooter.

Stu quickly disconnects the cellular.

STU

That wasn't nice.

FELICIA

Go ahead -- make a fucking run for it. I hope they gun you down -- like you did him!

STU

I'm not going anyplace. I'm staying right here in this booth.

(into pay phone)

Unless you give me permission.

VOICE

You're attracting a lot of attention. I suppose when the police get there, you'll accuse me.

STU

What do you expect me to say?

VOICE

That's up to you. But any mention of me will not be appreciated.

STU

You mean...?

VOICE

You won't even get to finish your sentence. Oh look, that little red dot is dancing around all over you again. You saw how quickly it can happen. And how accurate I can be.

STU

They can't blame me -- I'm not armed.

VOICE

Who's going to believe that? With all those witnesses to the contrary.

STU

They can see with their own eyes.

Not far away, we hear the BLAST of POLICE SIRENS drawing closer.

VOICE

Remember to leave me out of it.

STU

How can I?

VOICE

You'll put the proper spin on it.
Isn't that your specialty? Feeding
the public a story that may not have
a shred of truth -- and making it
totally believable?

STU

This isn't a story. This is real.
This is murder.

VOICE

If you'd only dealt with the man
reasonably, shown him some respect,
this might not have been necessary.

STU

I gave him my money, my watch...

VOICE

But not your respect. Which is what
he required of you.

STU

He was a fucking thief.

VOICE

And now he's a fucking dead thief.
Do you feel better about that?

STU

I don't feel a bit guilty. This is
all your doing!

VOICE

Now you're being disrespectful of
me. You never learn. Your job is
to deal with people -- but you're
not good at it.

STU

Hey, I'm not taking any more
criticism from some lunatic sniper
who gets his kicks killing
strangers.

VOICE

You keep insisting I'm a stranger.
Probably because you don't recognize
the voice. But there are cheap
electronic devices available that
disguise the voice. I might not even
be a man. I might be one of those

(MORE)

VOICE (CONT.)

many women you've almost totally forgotten. One who doesn't forgive easily. One who wants to watch you squirm.

STU

You're a man. I know you're a man. Women don't kill with telescopic rifles. They stab you.

VOICE

You sound so sure of that. But you've never provoked any man as much as have the women in your life. And so many of them, Stu.

(a beat)

Do you even remember their names?

STU

I've got no time to rehash my whole life. Oh my God! The cops are here.

Police cars are pulling up on all sides of Eighth Avenue.

Traffic has suddenly been shut down. Prowl cars have now blocked the streets.

PRODUCTION NOTE: Everything is seen from Stu's perspective without intercuts.

Half a dozen cops now emerge and approach with drawn guns.

FELICIA

(pointing)

That's him -- in the booth. He's got a gun!

As she hurls accusations, she's lugging Leon's lifeless body out into the gutter into the center of Eighth Avenue.

It's a bright afternoon. In the distance, we hear the maddening HONKING of uptown traffic that is now being rerouted, creating a huge bottleneck and raising the anger of irate motorists and bus drivers whose horns provide their simplest form of protest. It's a discordant concert that echoes the confusion and frustration which Stu now feels...

As the cops surround the booth -- at a distance.

SERGEANT
(into bullhorn)
Throw down your weapon and come out
with your hands raised.

STU
(into phone)
They're ordering me to come out.

VOICE
I can see that. Ignore them.

STU
What if they open fire?

VOICE
They probably won't. Look across on
the east side of the street. Do you
see the tourist with the home video
camera?

STU'S POV

A distant crowd gathering on the opposite west side corner
behind the police cars. Some tourist is capturing the event
on video.

BACK TO STU

STU
What about him?

VOICE
He's going to keep the police on
their best behavior. So long as you
don't take what could be interpreted
as hostile action, you'll be safe.

STU
You call this safe? Six cops with
guns pointed my way?

VOICE
You want me to reduce them to
three -- or two?

STU
Absolutely no more shooting. Now is
that clear?

VOICE
You can always change your mind.

SERGEANT

(with bullhorn)

You know the drill. Hands clasped behind the back of your neck -- moving slowly -- step out of the booth. If we see any sign of a weapon, we will respond.

STU

(shouts)

You won't, because there isn't any.

SERGEANT

(bullhorn)

I repeat. Raise your hands.

STU

I can't. I'm on a phone call.

Now a black POLICE CAPTAIN arrives and takes full command of the situation.

CAPTAIN RAMEY

You have thirty seconds to comply.

STU

I told you. I'm busy. Come back later.

VOICE

Very good, Stu.

The cops take cover behind parked cars, keeping Stu clearly in their sights. He has no place to hide. He's in the battered phone booth in plain view from all sides.

RAMEY

You've been given an order.

The Sergeant slides up beside the Captain to confer.

PRODUCTION NOTE: We remain in LONG SHOT of the cops -- always from Stu's POV. But we can hear their voices and all that is said as if they were in close up. It has an odd, unreal and distancing effect.

SERGEANT

We're dealing with a mental case. He's looking for us to kill him.

RAMEY

Well he's not getting his wish.

In the center of the street, an ambulance pulls up and a team of medics jump out. They rush to Leon's body. (Again we hear their voices close, even though visually they are far off).

FELICIA

Tell me he's gonna be alright.

MEDIC

Step aside. Let us look at him.

The medics push her aside -- then examine the victim. He's DOA.

MEDIC

Nothing we can do. Don't touch the body. They'll need it to mark the crime scene.

Far across the street, the Captain confers with his subordinates. They are small figures on the screen but we hear them sharply.

SERGEANT

Same corner as two weeks ago.

RAMEY

Maybe it's more than a coincidence. Cover me. I need to talk to him.

SERGEANT

You've got your vest on?

RAMEY

What do you think?

The Captain steps out of cover and boldly approaches the phone booth. He stops cautiously about fifteen feet away.

RAMEY

I'm not armed.

STU

Neither am I.

RAMEY

Yeah, sure. I need to know what happened.

STU

Can't talk about it.

RAMEY

Sure you can. My name's Ramey.
Captain Ed Ramey. What's yours?

STU

Look, I don't want to be friends.

RAMEY

You look like you need a friend.

VOICE

Tell him you've already got a
friend.

STU

(yells)

I've got a friend, okay.

RAMEY

Is that who you're talking to on the
phone?

STU

None of your business.

RAMEY

When somebody gets shot, it becomes
my business. Let's not have anybody
else killed. I want to hear your
side of it.

STU

I've got no side of it.

VOICE

Don't worry, Stu. I've got him
fixed right in my sights. I won't
let him hurt you.

RAMEY

Has this happened to you before?
The need to hurt someone? To put a
bullet in them?

STU

You won't believe anything I say.

RAMEY

Try me.

STU

I couldn't shoot anybody. I'm not
armed.

RAMEY

You're right. I don't believe you.
What's that bulge in your pants
pocket?

STU

That? That's my cellular.

RAMEY

A cellular? Then what are you doing
in a phone booth making calls?

STU

Do you want to see it?

RAMEY

Don't reach for it, mister.

STU

Then how can I show it to you?

RAMEY

I don't need to see it. I know
what's there. All these witnesses
saw you use it on him.

From behind a parked car, a HOMELESS PERSON calls out.

STREET PERSON

(hollers)

Damn straight!

Another DERELICT, crouched in a doorway, joins in.

DERELICT

(shouts)

Yeah! Shot him down like a dog!

STU

They're all lying. Nobody saw it
because it didn't happen.

RAMEY

A man is dead but it didn't happen.

STU

Not on account of me! This is like
some bad dream.

RAMEY

You're walking through a bad dream
and you can't wake up. Do you want
to wake up?

STU

I'm trying.

RAMEY

And in this dream, you killed that man. He was bothering you so you iced him.

STU

No.

RAMEY

Then who did?

VOICE

Don't tell him, Stu. Or it'll be the last thing he ever hears. His blood will be on your hands.

STU

(to Ramey)

I don't know.

RAMEY

But you saw it happen?

STU

Yes.

RAMEY

You were the closest one to him. You must've seen who did it.

STU

No.

RAMEY

We're trying to be honest with each other, aren't we?

STU

Not necessarily.

VOICE

I'm losing patience with this cop.

STU

(into phone)

I'm handling this.

RAMEY

Who do you keep talking to on the phone?

STU

Nobody. My psychiatrist.

VOICE

Excellent, Stu. You're getting good at this.

RAMEY

What's this doctor's name? It's important we know.

STU

He says not to tell you. It's privileged information.

VOICE

Damn good reply. Now you're having fun. Admit it.

STU

Whatever you say. .

VOICE

Playing it so close to the edge. I'll bet you've never felt so alive. That's how I feel when I look through the sight and select somebody.

The Captain begins advancing a few steps closer.

RAMEY

I respect your right to privacy. I've been to therapy myself. The department provides it. I know it's not good form for a cop to be admitting that, but... .

VOICE

Tell him not to come any closer.

STU

Stop right there. Back up a few steps. Back where you were.

RAMEY

If it makes you more comfortable.

VOICE

Tell him to read you your rights.

STU

I want you to read me my rights and stop asking questions.

RAMEY

At least tell me your first name.

STU

It's my right not to have any name.

RAMEY

No gun and no name. You're a highly underprivileged person.

VOICE

Demand a lawyer.

STU

And get me a lawyer, too. I want a lawyer brought down here to negotiate my surrender.

VOICE

Brilliant, Stu. Keep winging it.

RAMEY

It'll be hard to find a lawyer willing to risk his life. But if you hand over the gun...

STU

How can I when you won't let me take it out?

RAMEY

We'll take it out for you -- as soon as you exit the booth with your hands raised and...

STU

(interrupts)

Now we're back to that again. It's always 'Get out of the booth.' 'You can't stay in the booth.' Well, I like it in the fucking booth. It's my whole world now. It's my booth and I'm never coming out.

RAMEY

We're not about to force you because there could be a miscalculation and then we'd never find out why this happened.

STU

Why is it so important to know? The guy is dead. Isn't that enough? Knowing isn't going to make him alive again. So who gives a fuck!

RAMEY

It's what makes the job interesting. Finding out why. Something drove you to do this. You didn't go out today expecting this to happen. It was a nice day. You were out for a walk. And then suddenly it all changed.

STU

All I wanted was to make a phone call. One lousy phone call for thirty-five fucking cents.

VOICE

Careful, Stu. Don't volunteer too much.

RAMEY

You got some bad news on that call.

STU

The worst.

RAMEY

Something that pushed you over the edge?

STU

And I've been falling ever since.

RAMEY

Time to land.

STU

When you hit bottom, you die.

RAMEY

I'm your safety net.

STU

If I tell you what you want to know -- you'll die, too.

Something about the implied threat sends a chill through Captain Ramey.

INSERT SHOT

The Captain's head as seen through a telescopic sight.

Ramey could be dead in an instant.

(NOTE: The only time we deviate from Stu's perspective is when we see the sniper's POV through his scope).

ANGLE BACK ON STU IN THE BOOTH,

the detective fifteen feet away.

Ramey decides to back off momentarily.

RAMEY

I'll go see about that lawyer.

STU

Now that's a good idea.

The Captain withdraws back across the street.

VOICE

He's lucky. I had him centered in my cross hairs. I really had to restrain myself.

We hear the approach of a helicopter.

Stu peers upward as not one but two choppers appear above the tall buildings.

VOICE

It's not the police. It's the media. You're news, Stuart.

The helicopters circle above.

VOICE

You've never gotten this much press for any of your clients. I'm making you a famous person.

STU

They're just hoping for coverage of me dying in the gutter.

VOICE

Their presence is putting the police on their continued best behavior.

STU

Those cops are just looking for any excuse.

VOICE

Then don't give them one.

Then, as if on cue, Stu's cellular phone in his pocket starts ringing.

But he can't allow himself to reach for it. To do so might cause the police to believe he was trying to draw his gun.

It rings quietly -- virtually inaudible outside the booth. Drowned out by the traffic horns, the static from the police radios and the newly introduced sound of television helicopters circling over Eighth Avenue taking video coverage of the event below.

VOICE

Who could it be?

STU

Kelly. She was worried about me.

Stu is afraid to reach in his pocket lest the cops think he's going for a gun.

VOICE

Maybe she's seen this on television.
It must be on every channel by now.
Breaking news.

STU

She doesn't watch daytime TV.

VOICE

One of the neighbors could've alerted her.

The cell phone keeps ringing, almost drowned out by the sound of helicopters circling overhead.

STU

Why are you saying this? You want me to reach in my pocket so you can see them open fire?

VOICE

That's an unwarranted accusation and very unbecoming in light of the good advice I've given in the past. Have I ever steered you wrong?

STU

God -- how I'd love to hear her voice.

VOICE

It might even be worth it. She's insistent, isn't she?

The cellular won't stop ringing.

STU

If she knows I'm in trouble, she won't give up.

VOICE

Probably glued to the TV by now. I'm watching coverage on two stations now. Channel surfing.

(pause)

Well, there you are on two and four and five. Not any decent angles on you, though, stuck inside there.

The cell phone continues beeping until the sound of it is maddening. Stu is still afraid to reach for it and provide the cops with an excuse to open fire.

VOICE

But if you'd take one or two steps outside and look up, I think they could get a clear picture of you.

STU

You said I'm not allowed to leave the booth.

Finally the cell phone stops ringing.

VOICE

I might be willing to bend the rules and let you enjoy your moment of fame. Set the phone down without hanging up...and take a step or two outside. Just for a minute. Then come straight back in or I'll be forced to provide 'live' coverage that should rival the historic Zapruder footage.

(beat)

Nothing like an exploding head to excite viewer interest.

STU

No, thanks. I'll stay where I am.

VOICE

It was only a suggestion. Since you're convinced I'm going to plug you anyway, it can't matter much.

STU

If you shoot me, you give yourself away.

VOICE

Even without a muffler, they'd never hear the report with all this noise. Afterwards, it'd take them a good ten minutes to realize you weren't plugged by some overzealous officer. Then they'll blame the media for inciting a crackpot vigilante to come down here and do the SWAT team's job for them.

STU

You expected them to come. You had this all worked out.

VOICE

I write the scenario and you all play your parts -- as directed.

The damned cell phone starts beeping again. Stu fights the temptation to grab for it and hear Kelly's voice for one last time.

STU

Poor Kelly. What she must be going through.

VOICE

Why don't you tell her how you feel about her?

STU

I'd never get the words out. Not with fifteen or twenty rounds in me.

VOICE

You can't be certain they'd fire. They'd see it was only a phone.

STU

They wouldn't wait to see.

The cellular ringing continues jangling Stu's nerves.

STU

Why doesn't she hang up?

Then Stu notices something in the crowd gathering far across the street behind the police barricades. Countless faces rubbernecking, probably hoping to see some display of violence that would end with him face down dead on the pavement.

And in the midst of them -- one face familiar to him. A female, quite pretty...even in tears. It's Kelly. (We see her only in LONG SHOT -- a distant figure in bright green jacket that makes her stand out from the crowd).

STU

It's her! She's not calling me.
She's over there.

VOICE

Is she?

STU

The blonde girl in the green jacket.

VOICE

Can't miss her. Very attractive,
isn't she?

STU

She must've heard all the commotion
and come downstairs.

The cellular is still ringing.

STU (CONT.)

It's somebody else who knows my cell
number.

(beat)

It's you!

VOICE

You continue to impress.

STU

Why is it so important that they
kill me?

VOICE

Because that's how I win.

STU

This time you won't. If you want me dead, you'll have to do it yourself.

VOICE

Either way I can't lose.

STU

It's all a game to you -- because you're incapable of feelings. You're not even human.

VOICE

I pride myself on that. What's so great about being human? It's the lowest form of life on this planet and I've taken it upon myself to thin the herd.

STU

I quit. I'm not answering back any more. I won't hang up but I'm not playing.

There's silence now between them.

VOICE

Stu? Stu, don't be that way. You're taking the pleasure out of it.

Stu doesn't take the bait. He remains absolutely silent.

A stalemate has been reached.

WE RACK FOCUS ACROSS THE STREET TO THE POLICE

clustered behind an emergency vehicle. The Sergeant brings a civilian to meet Captain Ramey of the SWAT unit. The newcomer wears coveralls stenciled "AT&T." (Although they are very far away, we hear their voices close up as they come into sharper focus).

SERGEANT

This here's Helfand, of New York Telephone.

HELFAND

Glad to help out.

RAMEY

Have you got the number of that booth?

HELFAND

Sure do.

RAMEY

Can you tap into that call?

HELFAND

It can be done.

SERGEANT

But not without a warrant. you could be violating this psycho's civil rights. Especially if he's on the line with his fucking psychiatrist.

RAMEY

Shit. I don't want to blow this on a technicality. Tracing the call isn't any violation, is it?

SERGEANT

As long as we don't listen in.

We remain in LONG SHOT of the POLICE as they continue in heated conversation.

RAMEY

(to Helfand)

Okay, we've got to know who he's talking to and their current location.

HELFAND

That I can handle. As long as they keep the circuit open.

RAMEY

I need the number and an address to go with it.

Helfand rushes off. At the corner, we can glimpse him entering a phone company utility truck parked on Forty-Fifth Street.

RACK FOCUS BACK TO PHONE BOOTH

Stu remains tight lipped and silent, refusing to give his tormentor the conversation he so craves.

VOICE

Stuart, my friend. Do you want to see how close I can come without actually hitting you?

Stu resists pleading because he knows his silence is more powerful.

There's no glass in the left side of the booth since the late Leon smashed it all out.

Nothing to shatter when the sniper squeezes off his shot.

VOICE

May I call attention to the yellow pages?

The frayed yellow phonebook dangling from a chain under the telephone shudders under the impact of a direct hit.

There's been no sound of a gunshot, but the damage is there to behold.

Stu reaches for the phonebook.

There's a bullet hole straight through it. Pieces of the .30 calibre slug have shattered into many tiny fragments and are imbedded between the pages, half-way through the thick volume.

Stu pries pieces out of the pages of the directory. He looks at them in the palm of his hand.

VOICE

Hollow points are designed to break up on impact. It would've behaved differently if it had pierced your soft flesh. The pieces would've bounced around looking for a way out. That's where the real damage occurs -- finding an exit -- deflecting off all that bone..

Stu wants to shout "STOP," but restrains himself. Not talking gives him some degree of power.

VOICE

Still the silent treatment? My father used to dish that out when he chose to punish me. Not a word spoken -- one time for over a month. I'd try and goad him to acknowledge I existed, but he stared right through me. You're bringing back my unhappy childhood, Stu. That's not wise.

Stu still declines to answer. His silence seems his only weapon. He tosses the bullet fragments out of the booth onto the pavement.

VOICE

Since you're ignoring me, I'll focus on someone else.

(a beat)

There she is -- nice and sharp. I can even see the two little punctures in each earlobe and my God, what kind of a girl would have her nostril pierced?

Stu realizes the sniper now has Kelly in his sights.

STU

No!

VOICE

What was that? Louder, Stu. We must have a bad connection.

STU

Leave her out of it.

VOICE

I didn't expect her to show up here. But since she has -- I'll improvise.

STU

Don't. Please don't. I'm sorry. I'm talking to you again. I'll talk all you want!

VOICE

It's a bad dye job. The black roots are growing in and it makes her look cheap.

STU

I've screwed up her life enough already. Please don't hurt her.

VOICE

I don't necessarily have to kill her. I could be persuaded to settle for a reasonable mutilation. Which part of her displeases you most? If she turns a bit more in profile, I'm accurate enough to remove the tip of her unpleasantly protruding nose.

(MORE)

VOICE (CONT.)
It's just cartilage. Any decent
cosmetic surgeon will have her
looking better than ever.

STU'S POV - FOCUS SHIFTS TO KELLY

in the crowd. Distant yet distinct amongst the curious
onlookers.

JUMP CUT

CLOSER ON KELLY -- OBLIVIOUS TO HER DANGER.

AS SEEN THROUGH CROSS HAIRS OF TELESCOPIC SIGHT

following her as she forces her way through the crowd toward
the police officers.

Her face virtually fills the screen. (PRODUCTION NOTE: The
only time we deviate from Stu and his POV is when we see the
sniper's own POV through his telescopic sight).

VOICE
You can see her talking to the
police now. She's identifying
herself as your wife. They're very
interested in who you are. They're
taking her over to see the officer
in charge. What was his name?

SNIPER'S POV

Through the cross hairs of the sniperscope, we can see Kelly
conversing with Captain Ramey. She's in a state of complete
agitation.

ANGLE ON STU

half leaning out of the booth, staring at his wife and the
cops in the distance.

RACK FOCUS TO THEM --

and suddenly we can hear them clearly in spite of the
distance.

KELLY
What do you mean psychiatrist? He
doesn't see any psychiatrist.

RAMEY

Then who'd your husband be talking to?

KELLY

There was some guy that called the house this morning and said weird stuff to me.

RAMEY

Stu seems to be checking things out with this person.

KELLY

He hasn't got many friends -- I can tell you that.

RAMEY

Remain here, please. We may need you later.

KELLY

You won't hurt him?

RAMEY

We'll do our best not to.

Kelly is left alone as the Captain returns to their command center.

Kelly is once again a solitary target. She could be picked off without attracting undue attention.

VOICE

She won't even feel it when it happens.

BACK TO PHONE BOOTH

STU

Take me instead.

VOICE

Don't distract me. Now's the time to be absolutely still. I have to hold my breath as I squeeze gently--

STU

No! I'm hanging up. That's it.

Stu hangs up the receiver. He disconnects.

RACK FOCUS to LONG SHOT --

The police as they react. We see a flurry of activity across the street. Voices become clear as focus shifts.

RAMEY

Shit. He hung up.

SERGEANT

Maybe they already traced it.
Anyhow, it doesn't matter. Looks
like he's coming out.

RACK FOCUS BACK TO STU --

slowly stepping out of the booth. His hands are raised.

STU

(shouts)

I'm giving myself up. Take me!

SWAT OFFICER

(distant)

First the gun. We want to see you
toss away your weapon!

STU

Shit. I can't.

SWAT OFFICER

(distant)

Freeze where you are! Turn around
and keep those hands clasped.

(signals the others)

Take him.

The SWAT OFFICERS in protective gear now step out of cover and fan out as they approach the booth.

TIGHTER ON STU

He's just outside the booth -- expecting to feel the sniper's bullet go through him at any moment.

Then the pay phone starts ringing.

The sniper is calling back. RACK FOCUS AGAIN to the police.

All the cops react. Particularly the Captain and the Sergeant. Their voices seem close up when they sharpen in focus.

SERGEANT

What is going on with these fucking phone calls?

RAMEY

(shouts)

Hold your fire. Let him answer it.

The SWAT team backs up but maintain their aim.

SERGEANT

Are you nuts?

RAMEY

Let them talk. He's not going anywhere.

(shouts)

He's going back inside the booth.

Indeed we see Stu re-enter the battered phone booth and pick up the receiver. FOCUS RETURNS TO STU.

STU

(into pay phone)

Yeah?

A strange voice begins chattering away in Spanish. Totally unintelligible to Stu.

STU

(into pay phone)

You got the wrong number. Hang up.

The voice, probably a Puerto Rican gentleman, rattles on in Spanish.

STU

Wrong number. Wrong number.

Then the voice on the phone suddenly alters the Hispanic accent. It is the now familiar tone of his tormentor.

VOICE

Aw, relax, Stu. Only yanking your chain. Now can we start over?

STU

Those cops won't wait much longer.

VOICE

What else can they do? They can't afford to just shoot you like I can. Not with so much media coverage.

(MORE)

VOICE (CONT.)

Not unless you make some stupid aggressive move.

(beat)

The ABC Mobile Unit just rolled up.

Across the street, Stu can see various TV units from local stations setting up cameras on roofs of trucks.

STU

Will you look at that? I must be going out over the network. Bet they're pre-empting usual programming.

VOICE

And just think -- if you survive this, your trial will be televised. And you can try and make the world believe I ever existed. I'd be your only defense.

STU

How are they gonna prove that I killed anybody when there's no gun?

VOICE

They'll plant one. The police aren't above that -- when they're desperate to convict.

STU

No, sir. No gun and I walk.

VOICE

Don't you think I took that into account? Am I a fool?

STU

What do you mean?

VOICE

Haven't I considered every eventuality? I knew they'd come and cordon off the block.

(beat)

And that there'd have to be a gun someplace.

STU

Where?

VOICE

It's a small booth, Stu. Have you checked every inch of it?

STU

(looking up and down)

It's not on the floor.

VOICE

Then what's left?

STU

Up above.

VOICE

Could be. Why don't you reach up there and lift the plastic sheet -- and feel around.

STU

If they see me reach for something, they could open fire.

VOICE

They could. But you have to know if it's there. Don't you?

STU

I totally don't give a shit.

VOICE

In a narrow space, tucked just to the left of the fluorescent bulb. You can almost see it outlined if you look closely.

Stu peers upward at the clouded plastic, now stained and dirty. There are shadows of objects above in the shallow area around the light fixture that automatically goes on when the door to the phone booth is tightly closed.

Stu opens and closes the door a few times, watching the light click on -- watching the shadows around the light.

Could that be an accumulation of dirt, dust, or dead insects? Or could something be stashed up there?

STU

It doesn't matter. I know about ballistics. The slug in that dead guy came from your rifle, not any handgun.

VOICE

You saw how hollow points splinter on impact. There's nothing much for ballistics to match to. The same make .30 calibre bullets are in that hand- gun. The prosecution rests.

STU

There's no gun up there. I don't see a damn thing.

VOICE

Slide your fingers up under the plastic and you'll feel the cold metal surface. There are four rounds left in it. Should you decide to shoot your way out.

STU

I could never shoot anybody.

VOICE

You could shoot me, Stu. You'd do that in a minute if you could.

STU

And I'd fucking love it!

VOICE

Now you're speaking from the heart. Come on, just lift the partition a few inches and feel what's there for you.

STU

I'm not getting my fingerprints on your fucking weapon. What about powder residue? There isn't any on my hands. How are they going to explain that to a jury?

VOICE

Do you think that'll matter with so many eye witnesses?

(beat)

Do it...or should I re-focus my attention on Kelly?

STU

No.

VOICE

You carefully distracted me from her before and I let you get away with it. But if you're not going to play fairly --

(a pause)

There she is again. So close I feel like I could touch her.

STU

Get off her!

VOICE

Then mind me when I speak.

STU

Look! I'm reaching up with my left hand. I'm pushing against the partition. It's giving. I'm feeling around with my fingertips. It's filthy up there.

TIGHT SHOT - STU'S FINGERS feel about inside the shallow space. The shriveled remains of dead flies -- a layer of dust -- and then a .30 handgun.

STU

I'm -- touching something.

VOICE

One of the finest handguns Remington makes. Lightweight, efficient and highly accurate.

STU

I'm not picking it up.

VOICE

Not right now. But eventually...

Stu lowers his hand, still empty.

STU

I wouldn't have a chance.

VOICE

I never said you would.

STU

I'm not insane.

VOICE

But you're getting there. It wouldn't take much.

STU

That won't happen.

VOICE

You could pull the gun down, shove it in your own mouth and jerk the trigger. That's another option.

STU

Why would I do that?

VOICE

To please me. And ensure that nothing happens to Kelly. I don't necessarily have to deal with her today in the midst of a crowd of cops. I can take her out any time I like. When she goes to pull down her blinds at night or when she walks the dog first thing in the morning. What is it -- a Jack Russell?

STU

Okay. I know you can do it. But don't talk about that. Please.

VOICE

I'd rather see you remembered as the gallant gunman who tried to shoot his way past an army of police--than as a coward who sucked the barrel. I'm doing your PR for you. Creating a final image that'll endure. The outraged New Yorker who was pushed too far. When some lowlife street person tried to invade his territory, he retaliated. And when the forces of the law closed in, he was defiant...to the end.

STU

Like that nerdy sonofabitch who blew those three wiseass kids away on the subway?

VOICE

Exactly. Nobody minded that he was a sicko. He was living out a New Yorker's pet fantasy. Can you remember that movie where Peter Finch started screaming 'I'm not taking it anymore!' And everybody picked up on it.

STU

'I'm mad as hell and I'm not taking it anymore.'

VOICE

That was it. Poor Finch got himself an Oscar for that. But he was dead by then. I mean he really died. Maybe playing that part took too much out of him.

STU

(softly to himself)

'I'm not taking it anymore.' 'I'm not taking it anymore.'

VOICE

That's the way! Psyche yourself up. Everybody respects a man who fights back, even if he goes a little berserk in the process.

STU

Fighting back. That's what it's about.

VOICE

Exactly! We all understand the poor schmuck that gets laid off and comes back and shoots all his bosses. We all thought of doing that. But only he had the balls. The terminally ill husband who gets his policy canceled and machine guns the insurance company offices. Maybe somebody will finally get the message. You can fuck human beings over for so long before they come back at you. I'm still holding on Kelly and she looks very concerned. I could relieve all that anguish in a fraction of a second. Shall I?

Stu is hearing these words but thinking only of what the man on the line has done to him! His turn has come to fight back. He has an idea.

If the sniper is focused on Kelly, he can't be watching Stu.

Turning his back to the police, Stu slowly sinks to his knees.

STU
I'm on my knees begging you.

VOICE
Stand up, Stu. You're embarrassing
yourself.

TIGHT ANGLE - Stu now down on his knees in the booth. He's curled up almost into a fetal position.

By doing so, he hopes to hide the fact that he's reaching into his pants pocket and pulling out his cellular phone.

He half expects to hear a shot ring out either from the sniper or the cops. But nothing happens.

VOICE
Stu -- I want you back on your feet
facing me. So you can see what I'm
going to do to her.

Stu ignores the command. He's quickly dialing.

911.

He's calling police emergency.

SNIPER'S POV

Stu seen through the cross hairs of the sniperscope, crouched, doubled up at the foot of the booth. But the cell phone is hidden in front of him.

VOICE
Be a man, Stuart. Don't let them
see you like this. You're an
embarrassment to me.

WIDER SHOT - THE BOOTH

with Stu still kneeling.

RACK FOCUS to police across the street as their voices become clear --

SERGEANT
(listening to
transmission)
Officer on east side of the street
reports subject removed a dark
metallic object from his pocket. We
better move.

RAMEY

Hold all fire until you actually
identify a weapon. We're doing this
on fucking TV!

RACK FOCUS BACK TO -- STU IN THE BOOTH

crouched forward. The pay phone receiver dangles just above
his head. The cellular remains cupped in his hand.

Stu never lifts the cell phone. He keeps the palm of his
hand over the speaker of the phone to muffle any sound from
the other end.

It rings and finally someone answers.

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

(faint)

Police. Is this an emergency?
Hello? Is someone on the line?

But Stu addresses himself loudly to the pay phone which he
now grips in his other hand. Hoping that his words will be
picked up by the emergency operator listening via the
cellular. To help in this regard, he reaches back and
slides the door to the booth tightly closed.

He pretends to be talking to the sniper but his words are
meant for the 911 operator to hear.

STU

(loud)

You've made your point. Who's going
to believe I've got a sniper with a
telescopic sight holding me in a
fucking phone booth at 45th and 8th?

VOICE

It took you a while to believe it
yourself.

STU

If you'd put a bullet in that
Captain Ramey, it would've been a
different story -- but you were too
wise to do that.

VOICE

Why don't you do it for me? Wave
the old captain back over and get
him nice and close and then use the
handgun on him.

STU

(talking loud)

Why me? You could pick off any of those cops from your window up there. Like you did that pimp. And that tourist last week. But this time you want me to do your killing for you.

VOICE

And you will! To save Kelly.

EXTREME TIGHT SHOT - CELL PHONE

cupped in Stu's hand and held low. Can they hear him on the other end?

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

(muffled, almost
inaudible)

Can you speak up, sir? What is your name?

Stu is concerned that the sniper might hear the voice of the emergency operator. He sets the cell phone down flat on the floor of the booth facing upward. He puts his foot over the receiving end to muffle the incoming voice. Then he stands up.

VOICE

That's better, Stu. Now turn around so I can see you.

Stu talks close into the pay phone receiver now. But keeps his voice raised.

STU

This booth. It's my whole world -- shrunk down to four feet by three feet. Not much bigger than the size of a coffin.

VOICE

They can put handles on the booth and bury you in it.

STU

(loudly into
payphone)

When I saw you put that bullet into that black dude, I knew you'd never let me out of this phone booth alive.

VOICE

You're wasting my time. Reach up
and take the gun.

STU

(peering upward,
squinting)

Let me see you first. What harm can
that do you? You're in one of those
windows. I've got to know which
one.

VOICE

No need for that.

STU

Being so far, I could never identify
you. I don't even want to.

VOICE

What is it then?

STU

Don't worry that I'd try to point
you out. You'd shut me up with one
of your .30 calibre hollow points
before I could even raise a finger.

VOICE

Why does it matter so much?

STU

I want to see that you exist. Like
God exists. It's not enough to
believe. You want to see him --
just once -- even at a distance.

VOICE

And then you'd take the gun down.
And use it. We have a deal on that?

STU

Show yourself to me and I'll take
the gun down. I swear.

There's a pause as the sniper mulls it over.

VOICE

I don't have to make deals. And
you're irritating me by trying to
negotiate. God doesn't have to
prove anything. He just strikes you
down when he gets in the mood.

STU

Stop! I won't ask to see you anymore.

VOICE

I'm glad that's settled. But look who else has showed up?

STU

Who?

VOICE

I guess she saw the coverage on TV and just couldn't keep away.

STU

What are you talking about?

VOICE

The 'hotel' just arrived. And a very beautiful little hotel she is. Actually, I'd classify her as more of a motel.

STU

Mavis? I don't see her.

VOICE

She's too far back behind the police line. But I've got a fine shot at her from up here.

STU

You don't even know what she looks like.

VOICE

You're in an enviable position now, Stu. You get to choose between them. Tell me which one.

STU

I can't.

VOICE

Which will it be? Kelly or Mavis? Or should I simply select one?

INSERT SHOT - THE CELL PHONE

lying face up on the floor of the booth. Is anybody listening?

BACK TO STU

Stu looks down at the cellular. He has no way of knowing if the police operator can hear any of his words.

STU

I need time to think...

VOICE

You've got to be more in touch with your feelings. You said you love Kelly.

STU

I do.

VOICE

Then I'm doing you a favor putting you out of the way of temptation.

STU

It wasn't Mavis' fault. It was all my fault.

VOICE

Then take the third option. Reach above you and pick up the gun.

STU

You'll let them both alone?

VOICE

There won't be much point in harming them without you around to impress.

STU

I'll do it.

VOICE

Let me see you do it.

STU

I need one minute. One last minute, please. Can you give me that?

VOICE

Don't tell me you're going to say your prayers?

STU

Something like that.

We RACK FOCUS away to LONG SHOT - THE POLICE
assembled on the opposite side of the street.

RAMEY
They should've traced the fucking
call by now.

SERGEANT
(listening on
transmitter)
There's something else coming in. A
911 operator says your name was
mentioned by somebody that's still
on the line. Somebody talking about
a phone booth. And a sniper.

RAMEY
Patch me through. Hello, this is
Captain Edward Ramey. What about
that call?

EMERGENCY OPERATOR
The line is still open. It's
originating from a booth at 45th and
8th.

RAMEY
We're there! Can you play me back
your recording of the entire call?

EMERGENCY OPERATOR
I can't replay the tape while it's
still running.

RAMEY
Then switch to another machine and
play back what you've got.

EMERGENCY OPERATOR
It's awful faint. He's not talking
directly into the receiver.

Ramey begins to listen. We hear snatches of Stu's call
picking up words which are at times incomprehensible.

STU'S VOICE
(faint)
'Who's going to believe I've got a
sniper with a telescopic sight
holding me in some fucking phone
booth...'

The uniformed TELEPHONE TECHNICIAN now joins Ramey and the Sergeant.

TELEPHONE TECHNICIAN
Got what you wanted. The call's coming from up the street. The Hotel Broadway.

RAMEY
Have you got the room?

TELEPHONE TECHNICIAN
It's not that easy. Electronic switchboard.

RAMEY
(to Sergeant)
Move your SWAT units to the hotel. No...wait. Any movement will alert the sniper. If he sees any of us withdraw, he may panic.

SERGEANT
There's another SWAT unit on the way.

RAMEY
Intercept them. Divert them to the hotel.

SERGEANT
It's done.

RAMEY
Send them in from the Forty-third Street side. I don't want any activity the sniper might catch sight of. He's probably high up and facing that booth. He's got to continue to believe our full attention is focused on the man inside -- whoever the hell that poor bastard is.

(to emergency operator)
Hello 911 operator, I missed some of that. Run it halfway back and repeat it.

STU'S VOICE (REPLAY)

(faint)

'...Like you did that pimp. And that tourist last week. But this time you want me to do the killing for you...'

RAMEY

(listening)

Jesus...he's a dead man.

BACK INSIDE PHONE BOOTH

VOICE

The police seem all excited about something, Stu.

STU

Are they? I wasn't looking.

VOICE

I can't wait any longer. Say amen, then reach up for the gun. When your hand comes down, I want to see it.

STU

I'm too afraid.

VOICE

For once, be brave. Surprise yourself.

STU

I'm shaking all over.

VOICE

Guys in combat situations even shit their pants. But they follow orders.

STU

As soon as the cops see a gun, they'll open fire.

VOICE

Then I'd advise you to fire first.

Stu's arm goes up in a supreme act of willpower.

His fingers run along the two clouded plastic sheets that cover the roof of the booth. It raises up easily at the middle where two sheets join.

TIGHT INSERT SHOT -

The space between the roof of the booth and the sheets of clouded plastic. We see the fluorescent lighting fixture covered with dust. The solitary object -- a cruel-looking weapon.

Now Stu's fingertips protrude into the small space. He touches the gun, brushes back and forth, feeling the roughness of the grip.

TIGHT SHOT - STU'S FACE

as below he continues to hesitate -- it's agony --

The sweat pours down his forehead and his eyes are squeezed tightly shut. He can already imagine the police bullets tearing into him.

A POLICE SNIPER IS MOVING INTO POSITION.

POLICE SNIPER
(int transmitter)
Give me the word.

RACK BACK TO STU - IN THE BOOTH

His arm still raised. He hasn't brought it down with the gun in it. Not yet. He holds the payphone receiver jammed up against his mouth.

VOICE
Hard part's over. Drop your arm and point it like you'd point your finger and squeeze.

STU
No. You do it. If you want me dead, then fucking murder me!

VOICE
Why must I keep invoking some poor girl's name every time we come to an impasse? I'm focused back on Kelly again. You're obviously not willing to trade your life for hers.

STU
I am! I'm doing it!

He pulls the handgun down into full view. Curiously, the police do not open fire.

STU
There! You see it? They all see
it.

(he waves the gun so
nobody can miss it)
Where are you? Damn you!!

He drops the receiver and steps halfway out of the booth.

Still the cops do not open fire.

Then Stu starts shooting.

Not at the police, but at the high rise buildings across the
street.

At the thousands of windows that look down upon him.

He gets off two shots before a solitary rifle shot rings out
in response. RACK FOCUS TO:

THE POLICE SNIPER

He has fired.

ANGLE ON STU

The remaining glass on the south side of the booth shatters.
Stu tumbles forward, sprawling out of the booth onto the
pavement.

RACK FOCUS TO

KELLY

She screams, tries to break through but cops restrain her.

INT. THE BOOTH

ANGLE ON DANGLING RECEIVER

as it sways back and forth. From it, we hear the voice.

VOICE
Thanks for such an interesting
afternoon.

THEN THERE ARE OTHER SOUNDS EMANATING FROM THE DANGLING
SWAYING PHONE.

A wooden door being battered open. A few incomprehensible
shouts as a SWAT TEAM dashes in. Stu's stalling for time
has paid off.

THE SOUND OF A BARRAGE OF GUNFIRE.

THE SOUND OF A MUFFLED SCREAM.

The police have broken in on Stu's tormentor and there has been a rapid exchange of shots.

A HAND reaches into the booth and grabs the receiver.

ANGLE WIDENS as Ramey places it to his ear.

RAMEY

Hello? This is Captain Ramey.
Somebody talk to me.

SWAT OFFICER'S VOICE

Yeah. We took him out, Captain.
Nobody else got hurt.

RAMEY

What's his condition?

SWAT OFFICER'S VOICE

Critical. The sonofabitch took two.
Probably won't survive the ride.

RAMEY

Get a statement from him. I'll be
right over.

He drops the receiver so that it dangles again.

CAMERA FOLLOWS RAMEY to where Stu lies surrounded by cops and medics. He's stunned, but very much alive.

MEDIC

Don't try to sit up.

STU

What was that?

RAMEY

(kneeling)
Rubber bullet.

MEDIC

You'll have one hell of a nasty
welt. Busted rib. Maybe a
permanent scar there.

STU

It couldn't hurt much more if you
really shot me.

RAMEY

Somebody was going to and we thought it may as well be us.

STU

Did you get him?

RAMEY

Sure as hell did. Thanks to you.

STU

Still alive?

RAMEY

Barely.

MEDIC

We'll be giving him a hypo for the pain. It'll put him out for a while.

Kelly is now brought over by a female cop. She drops to her knees beside Stu and tries to embrace him. The medics restrain her.

STU

It's okay. I'm not really shot.

KELLY

I was so afraid. I thought...

STU

I thought so, too. But we're going to be alright. Both of us.

KELLY

Remember how you swore up and down you'd get me on TV? Well, you did. I already got interviewed on Fox and Channel Eleven and they even want me on A.M. America tomorrow morning.

STU

Bet you didn't think I could deliver on that.

MEDIC

Will you please let go of him, Miss?

A gurney is wheeled over from a police ambulance. The medic is about to administer the hype but Stu pushes him away.

STU

No. No hypo. I want to see him first.

The medics are now ready to lift Stu onto the gurney and cart him off. But Stu struggles against them.

RAMEY

Relax. The guy's dying.

STU

That's why I've gotta talk to him. Please!

RAMEY

We'll see.

MEDIC

(to Kelly)

You can ride with him in the ambulance.

The woman cop escorts Kelly to the waiting ambulance.

Ramey meanwhile tries to resume contact with the SWAT team inside the hotel.

RAMEY

This is Ramey. Over. This is Ramey. Ten-Four.

There's nothing but static, mixed up feedback and multiple garbled voices on the other end of the line.

RAMEY

Shit. Get everybody off this wavelength.

He crosses back to the phone booth -- picks up the dangling receiver.

RAMEY

Hello. Hello! Pick up! Yeah, it's Ramey again. Can you hold the phone close enough so the perp can listen?

COP'S VOICE

He's not saying a word, Captain.

RAMEY

He's not about to talk to us. Maybe to him.

Ramey looks back to where the medics are still trying to lift Stu onto the gurney.

RAMEY
Forget that. Stand him up.
(to Stu)
Can you stand?

STU
I can try.

RAMEY
Help him over here.

The medics support Stu and inch him back to the booth. It's painful, but Stu ignores it.

Ramey holds the phone up so Stu can both listen and speak.

RAMEY
Here. Speak up.

STU
(into payphone)
It's me. Do you hear me? Answer me.

VOICE
(wheezing)
Had to have the last word, Stu.

STU
I finally beat your ass. Admit it, you fuck.

VOICE
But you'll never forget me. I gave you the most thrilling day of your life. Say thanks.

STU
Now you're gonna die, you bastard.

VOICE
I lost a lot of blood. Don't you want to donate some for me? Then we'd really be part of each other.

STU
Hang on. I can't wait to see you at the hospital. So I can yank your fucking air tube out.

VOICE

Wish I could give you that pleasure.
You deserve it.

(coughing)

...Only I'm out of time.

STU

What's your name? At least tell me
who you are.

There's more violent coughing, then silence. Then a cop's
voice is heard.

COP'S VOICE

He's gone.

Stu stares at the receiver.

RAMEY

Don't worry. We'll find out who he
is. And why he picked you.

STU

No. You won't.

(a beat)

What do you want to bet you won't?

Stu reaches over and hangs up the receiver. CLICK.

STU

I'll spend my whole life trying to
figure that out.

Then he sinks into the arms of the medics who lower him onto
the waiting gurney.

The hypo is finally administered. It kicks in immediately,
relieving the pain.

He's wheeled away from the booth to the waiting ambulance.
Kelly is already inside waiting to accompany Stu to the
hospital.

STU'S POV - BEING WHEELED AWAY FROM THE EMPTY BOOTH

pulling away in LOW ANGLE.

CAMERA SLIDES BACK inside the ambulance with Stu. The doors
shut, obliterating our view of the phone booth that was his
entire world until moments ago.

STU
(groggy)
Gotta sleep now. No phone calls...

Kelly smiles down at him as the image blurs. Stu passes out
-- into a deep sleep he much deserves.

A SIREN BLARES.

CUT TO BLACK

FINAL CREDITS