

P R I M A L F E A R

Screenplay & Revision
by
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Based on the Novel
by
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UNDER BLACK/UNDER CREDITS

The SOUNDS of someone hastily dressing mixed with the sputtering of a malfunctioning bathroom sink.

CONNERMAN O.S.

Six or seven years ago, you defended a small time stick up man named Bernie Crews...

VAIL O.S.

Who now sells real estate, right... Damn... These stupid things are making me late.

CONNERMAN O.S.

A key piece of evidence was a hat, supposedly belonging to the defendant...

VAIL O.S.

Yeah... Jesus, the guy who invented these studs should be shot...

CONNERMAN O.S.

You kneecapped the prosecution, proving the hat couldn't have belonged to your client and tucked the case into your pocket. Then, when it was over, according to the court reporter, you promptly walked over to the property man and said... my client wants his hat back.

VAIL O.S.

Of course, I was only kidding... There, got it. Now the damn tie.

(calls out)

Naomi!

CONNERMAN O.S.

Let's say you have a client who you know is -

VAIL

(cutting him off)

No. Don't even start with that. Our justice system doesn't care about that and neither do I. Every defendant - no matter who he is - regardless of what he's done - has a right to the best defense his attorney can provide. Period.

CONNERMAN O.S.

(laughs again)

So with Bernie Crews, where were you with the truth?

FADE IN:

CREDITS OUT

INT. VAIL'S OFFICE - DUSK

Tight on a sputtering water faucet and hands. Into a cup, splash to the face and mouth. Vail. Tuxedo shirt on. Studs finally in place. Top button undone. Tie drapes over his shoulder.

VAIL

Truth? How do you mean?

In the adjacent room, a magazine writer sits at a coffee table cluttered with notes, pencils, ashtray and ashes.

CONNERMAN

Well, I'm not sure how many ways there
are to mean it.

Vail appears in the bathroom door attempting to knot the bow tie of his tuxedo.

VAIL

There's only one? One truth?
(loudly)

Naomi!!

(shrugs)
You're right there's only one that
matters -

NAOMI CHANCE, an attractive Black woman comes in from another room. Vail needs her help with the tie. To Connerman, continuing -

VAIL

The one I create in the minds of those
twelve men and woman sitting on the
jury. If you want to call that the
illusion of truth? - well, that's up
to you.

NAOMI

You're awfully late.

VAIL

Jack, I have to get out of here. You
want to continue this - when?

CONNERMAN

You're schedule's tighter than mine.

VAIL

Tomorrow sometime? My secretary will
set it up.

MORE

VAIL (ct'd)
 (to her, re: the tie)
 Thank you.

CONNERMAN
 Thank you, Mr. Vail.

VAIL
 My pleasure.

He grabs his beeper and car keys and disappears out the door, only to reappear a moment later.

VAIL
 This is a cover story, right?

CONNERMAN
 Yeah.

Satisfied, Vail leaves. Naomi smiles and exits, leaving Connerman to ponder this guy.

EXT. - GRAND CHICAGO HOTEL - NIGHT - HELICOPTER

Distant voices - a BOYS CHOIR a capella. Limousines line the street. A police presence is clear, providing security, as Vail arrives, hands his car over to a valet and steps into the hotel.

INT. GRAND CHICAGO HOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT

The wondrous choir voices dominate the proceedings as cameras flash on a picture of pure Chicago power. The Mayor, the Chief of Police, a couple of major patrons, State's Attorney JOHN SHAUGHNESSY, Chicago's Archbishop RICHARD RUSHMAN. The smiles are broad, the camaraderie real and political.

INTERCUT

With the room and fifteen hundred formally attired guests representing Chicago's financial and society elite. A blue neon sign above the stage reads:

"The Chicago Bar Association and
 Catholic Charities Ball"

Below it, looking angelic, are twenty or so teenage boys, the choir. The camera takes brief notes of two, AARON STAMPLER and ALEX COX.

Peeling away from the bar, drink in hand, Deputy State's Attorney BURT YANCY moves past the breaking up photo session and John Shaughnessy being pulled aside by Archbishop Rushman into an urgent and whispered moment.

From the direction of the powder room emerges Assistant District Attorney JANET VENABLE, striding past the just arrived Vail, who in this gathering causes a subtle stir. Vail and Venable acknowledge each other before Vail's attention is distracted by others interested in him.

Both Yancy and Venable arrive at their place at the Shaughnessy table just as Shaughnessy sits down. Several tables away, the Archbishop sits down with his circle of priests. His attention is drawn to the choir as it concludes to applause. The orchestra teacher says "dance time" - people go to the dance floor as orchestra plays a standard. Suddenly, off Burt Yancy's surprised look, Vail closes the gap to Shaughnessy's table.

SHAUGHNESSY

(smiles)

Marty - what an unexpected surprise.

VAIL

(affable)

I'm still a member of the bar and the last time I looked I was still a catholic - fallen, but still welcome.

(to Yancy)

By the way, Burt - the meter's running on Pinero.

Yancy glares. Shaughnessy's cool.

SHAUGHNESSY

What's it going to cost?

VAIL

(shrugs)

The jury said five million but this is hardly the place to discuss money.

SHAUGHNESSY

Ten O'clock. My office. Tomorrow morning.

VAIL

Done. Have a nice evening - (smiles)
- but think big.

Vail's gone. CAMERA HOLDS on scene - a beat.

INT. - BAR AREA

Fairly deserted, an occasional guest crosses to the restrooms. The bar affords a distant view of the ballroom and proceedings. Vail at the bar.

BARTENDER

Yes sir?

VAIL

Stoli - rocks - and a splash.

The bartender prepares the drink - Vail stares off at the ballroom. Venable sidles up to him, a cigarette in her hand.

VENABLE

Got a light, Counselor?

Vail smiles, takes out a slim gold lighter - flames it. She glances at him over the light as she inhales.

VENABLE

It's been a while.

VAIL

Too long. What are you drinking?

VENABLE

The usual.

Bartender places Vail's drink.

VAIL

A vodka stinger, please.
(to Venable)
You look terrific, Janet.

VENABLE

I don't feel terrific.

VAIL

You still torching it for that alto-sax man?

VENABLE

(shrugs)
I've never had much luck with men.

VAIL

Neither have I.

The bartender places her drink. They raise their glasses and click.

VENABLE

To convictions.

VAIL

To acquittals.

VENABLE

How's things on the opposite side of the courtroom?

VAIL

No complaints.

VENABLE

Guess not - you've struck gold defending Mafiosos, dealers, laundry men and assorted white collar pricks.

VAIL

My my - how far we've come from Bryn Mawr and debutante balls.

VENABLE

I'm worn out, Marty - if I have to depose another rape victim, I'll throw myself off a bridge.

VAIL

Good catholic girls don't commit suicide. They give notice and head for the straight world.

VENABLE

As a matter of fact, I've tendered my notice to Yancy but I'm not going straight. I'm going to run for the State Senate.

VAIL

Why not? Shaughnessy ought to be able to help you - hell, he owns half the Senate.

VENABLE

His influence won't hurt.

VAIL

Stay tuned.

VENABLE

You've never forgiven him for that kid, Harper.

VAIL

And I never will. I prosecuted. The kid's public defender was a well meaning Avon lady. And if that wasn't enough - Shaughnessy withheld disclosure. I could have withdrawn and caused a mistrial but I stepped back - did nothing. Harper gets five to ten in Joliet where he's raped around the clock and hangs himself. I don't blame Shaughnessy. The constitution doesn't exist for him, only convictions and connections. I blame myself.

VENABLE

Inmates are murdered all the time.

VAIL

Right - so I do my best to keep them out.

VENABLE

Why don't you cut the crap? When was the last time you took a pro bono case for an indigent defendant?

VAIL

(smiles)

Nolo contendere, Counselor.

He drapes his arm around her and whispers in her ear.

VENABLE

We've been there -

VAIL

It wasn't terrible... As I remember.

VENABLE

It was terrific but we wound up dealing pain cards - by the way, you ever hear from you ex?

VAIL

Only her lawyers. What's that perfume you're wearing?

VENABLE

Why?

VAIL

Should be a felony.
(to bartender)
Let's have two more.

THE BALLROOM.

We HEAR a drum roll. The dancing stops. The orchestra leader steps up to the mike.

ORCHESTRA LEADER

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests - it's my pleasure to introduce our long time public servant, State's Attorney, John Shaughnessy.

A wave of applause as Shaughnessy is hit with a "follow spot" as he strides toward the stage acknowledging various people. He reaches the podium, adjusts the mike.

SHAUGHNESSY

Thank you... (holds his hands up).
 Since we have altar boys present, I'll
 be brief. I want to express my
 appreciation to all of you for honoring
 the Archbishop tonight. No one has
 worked harder for the underprivileged
 of our city. No one has contributed
 the diverse and extraordinary charitable
 organizations as has his most reverend
 self. Ladies and gentlemen it is my
 distinct honor to introduce our beloved,
 Archbishop Richard Rushman.

Standing ovation as Rushman rises and makes his way to the
 podium.

VAIL - VENABLE

Venable drains her stinger - kisses him on the cheek.

VENABLE

Take care, Marty.

She turns to go.

VAIL

Janet!

She stops.

VAIL (ct'd)

You think Catherine the Great had an
 affair with her horse?

VENABLE

Probably - she was famous for practicing
 safe sex.

She goes with all her curves playing for Vail.

VAIL

Watches her moves with some interest.

INT. - THIRD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM - CRIMINAL COURT BLDING - DAY

Burt Yancy and John Shaughnessy sit opposite a casually dressed
 Vail. The long table is spotless except for a bowl of peanut
 shells being cracked by Vail.

YANCY

I don't fuck'n believe we're talk'n
 about a settlement. That Spic deserves

MORE

YANCY (ct'd)
 twenty to life in Joliet: Dealing,
 money laundering, and attempted murder.

VAIL
 All alleged. Joe Pinero's never been
 convicted for a traffic violation.
 Four of Chicago's finest undercover
 assholes jump him and leave him for
 dead in the snow - it's a miracle
 he survived. No more bullshit
 gentlemen. Let's hear numbers.

YANCY
 You're worse than the scumbags you defend.

SHAUGHNESSY
 That's enough Burt.
 (to Vail)
 This is not negotiable. A million five.

VAIL
 Sounds right as rain.

SHAUGHNESSY
 With one codicil. Pinero leaves the state.

There's in intercut of Vail and Yancy exchanging puzzled glances.

VAIL
 (rises)
 I'll do my best but I can't guarantee
 him leaving. You can call these people
 Spics, but unlike us they have a sense
 of family and community - not to mention
 that restricting the right of a citizen
 to live where he or she desires is un-
 lawful.

SHAUGHNESSY
 You're in for half of one five, Counselor;
 let me worry about the law.

VAIL
 We'll be in touch.

He takes a step, stops and tosses the peanut bag to Yancy who
 catches it in self defense.

VAIL
 Take a day off, Burt go to the zoo.
 Feed the elephants.

EXT. - ST. MICHAEL'S CATHEDRAL / RECTORY - DAY

A quiet cobblestoned plaza. A U.S. Postal Service van pulls up in front of the Gothic church. The postman climbs out and bundles against the flurry of snow as he carries a packet of mail toward the entrance.

INT. - ARCHBISHOP RUSHMAN'S PRIVATE QUARTERS, ST. MICHAEL'S - DAY

A huge crucifix above a king-sized bed. The quarters are sumptuous. Leather and silk. A stereo plays opera music at high volume.

The Archbishop emerges from the bathroom in a robe, toweling at his silvery hair. He stretches out on the bed and closes his eyes. His hand moves toward the low night table on which rests a rosary, crucifix and his gold-emerald ring -

The blade of a carving knife flashes down, severing fingers.

EXT. - ST. MICHAEL'S - SAME TIME - DAY

About to get back in his van, the postman stops as he hears SCREAMS coming from the Archbishop's bedroom. He sees struggling shapes before the window suddenly shatters, sending a shower of glass shards to the cobblestones below. The postman jumps into his van and picks up his radio mike.

EXT. - BARRIO - DAY - HELICOPTER SHOT

Vail's Jaguar moves across city, the Amtrack rail yards, the Chicago River and into the Barrio.

THE JAG - GROUND LEVEL

Vail double parks in front of a grungy bar "La Cantina". A few tough looking bangers lounge at the entrance. As Vail approaches, they nod, and move aside respectfully.

INT. - BAR - DAY

A stereo plays the soulful "La Donna" by the Gipsy Kings. A few hard-eyed regulars sit at the bar. One of them greets Vail and leads him toward a back room. This is a real bar.

INT. - BACK ROOM - BAR

A pool ball drops into a corner pocket. JOE PINERO, wearing an Armani jacket and expensive slacks, lines up his next shot.

Vail nods to Pinero's body-guards. The music is piped in here, too. Pinero keeps shooting pool during:

VAIL

Nice tune.

PINERO
(to bodyguard)
Chucho, dos guisano rojo.
(the man rises, goes)
What'd they say?

VAIL
A million - five - from Shaughnessy himself.

PINERO
What do you think?

VAIL
I think we take it - unless you want
to spend the next two years of your
life tied up in appellate court.

PINERO
Fuck that, close it.

The bodyguard comes back in carrying a tray with a bottle of
tequila and two shot glasses. Pinero moves into the light; his
face is criss-crossed with scars. He hands Vail a shot glass and
fills it.

VAIL
There's a little more to it, Joey.
(sips drink)
Salute!

PINERO
Salute!

VAIL
They want you out of the state.

PINERO
(surprised)
You gotta be kidding - what kind of
a fucking deal is that? This is my
turf. Who came up with this idea?

VAIL
Shaughnessy. He want's you gone.

PINERO
Why?

VAIL
You tell me.

PINERO

Knows something. His eyes are wary.

PINERO

(shrugs)

I don't know.

VAIL

Maybe you do but you don't remember.
Did you ever have any business with the
State Attorney's office?

PINERO

No.

VAIL

What about the City Council?

Pinero stares at Vail a beat, then shouts at Chucho.

PINERO

Chucho, quando llegar, Martinez?

CHUCHO

Mas or menos, Decembro.

PINERO

Last December, Alderman Martinez
asked me to help him. The City Council
wanted to tear the Barrio down and turn
it into expensive Anglo-condos. They
were calling it "South Shore Development."

VAIL

Was this before or after the cops jumped
you?

PINERO

Before. Anyway I organized the neighbor-
hood - we shot it down.

VAIL

I remember the protests at City Hall. A
lot of money went down with South Shore.

PINERO

What's it got to do with me?

Vail puts his arm on Pinero's shoulder.

VAIL

Listen, Joey. They tried to kill you
once. The next time it won't be cops.
It won't be obvious. It's going to
be someone you know - someone you
trust. This is the system and no one
beats the system and stays alive.

Pinero studies Vail for a beat.

PINERO

Chucho, dale la musica para Liscencado.

Chucho goes. Pinero and Vail start for door.

EXT. - BAR - DAY

The gangbangers move aside as Pinero and Vail come out. We HEAR choppers overhead and the distant WAIL of sirens.

PINERO

Get the money, Marty.

(smiles)

Tell those cocksuckers that I left town.

Tell them I'm doin' a burro act in

Tiajuana.

Chucho hands Pinero a C.D.

VAIL

What's this?

PINERO

The song you liked - it's the 4th cut.

Pinero heads back to La Cantina. Vail watches him a beat before getting back into the Jag.

EXT. - ST. MICHAEL'S - DAY

Uniformed cops are rapidly securing the area with police tape and barricades as other squads arrive past emptying Crime-Scene Unit vehicles.

Looking like a medieval Tintoretto canvas, a solemn crowd of neighborhood citizens stands silently in the cold watching the scene as CAPTAIN ABEL STENNER, Chief of Violent Crimes Division, arrives with his driver, LT. TURNER. Turner buttonholes a passing uniform, and Stenner nursing a head cold, surveys the scene.

An eerie silence is suddenly punctuated by the barking of police dogs being let out of a van.

INT. - RECTORY - VESTIBULE

Stenner enters to find a middle-aged COP mid-way up a staircase. As he starts up toward him.

STENNER

Run it for me.

SGT. TRAVERS

The call came in at 11:08. Postal Clerk, Donald Harriman, who heard screams. Unit 82 happened to be cruising on Cleveland and arrived on the scene at 11:12.

STENNER

Who's been inside?

SGT. TRAVERS

Only me, sir. CSU just went up.

STENNER

Touch anything?

SGT. TRAVERS

The stereo was on very loud. I turned it down with my pencil... I don't feel so good.

STENNER

Go on outside. Get some air.

Stenner blows his nose and starts for the bedroom.

INT. - BEDROOM / HALL - DAY

Stenner stands at the threshold to the bedroom staring at a scene of horror: The bedspread, the walls and carpet are soaked and smeared in blood. Crumpled at the foot of the bed is the naked butchered corpse of the Archbishop. And beside it, a bloody butcher knife. Opera music plays softly from unseen speakers.

Stenner glances about the room as CSU begins its forensic routine. Cook County Chief Forensics Examiner, HARVEY WOODSIDE, approaches the Archbishop's body. Stenner suffers a short burst of coughing.

WOODSIDE

You should be home in bed, Abel. It's going around.

Stenner nods, turns and notes Cook County Medical Examiner, EMILE WEIL, arrive with two men carrying aluminum cases. Stenner and Weil silently acknowledge each other and the horror around them. Stenner moves to check out the bathroom, then heads for a large walk-in closet, as -

WOODSIDE

Christ, what a mess.

(to assistant)

Carl, lay out some paper before we get any more footprints on this rug.

(to Weil)

The Archbishop's all yours, Emile.

The younger man, Carl, starts unspooling a roll of paper to the body as Weil takes out a microcassette recorder.

INT. - ARCHBISHOP'S CLOSET

Stenner enters. The Archbishop's clothes and personal effects are all neatly hanged and arrayed. Stenner notices a few dozen VCR cassettes stacked at the baseboard. Putting on gloves, he picks one up.

"Sermon: God, Man and Science 3/22/94"

He puts it back. The others are similarly marked. He leaves the closet.

INT. - ARCHBISHOP'S BEDROOM

Medical Examiner Weil is hunched over the body as Stenner exits the closet.

WEIL

(into recorder)

Numerous slice marks and punctures -
arms, legs, hands, feet abdomen -
eyes gouged out, left thumb and
fore-finger amputated, genitals in
victim's mouth. The symbol - B32.156 -
carved into the chest. Body temper-
ature, still warm, no signs of rigor -

Lt. Turner, appears in the doorway, walkie-talkie in hand.

LT. TURNER

Captain! We've got a live one on
the run.

Stenner hurriedly follows Turner out as -

WOODSIDE

(to forensics team)

All right, complete wash - floor to
ceiling. Shoot it, print it, bag it.
And find those missing fingers.

EXT. - RAILYARD - DAY

A TERRIFIED BOY, soaked in blood, stumbles wildly through bushes along a rail line. BARKING DOGS in pursuit. News helicopters SCREAM overhead. The SOUND of a coming train in the near distance.

HELICOPTER (LIVE-TV) SHOT

As the kid breaks out of the bushes toward the rail tracks that lead under McCormick place. Following him fifty yards back and

gaining, uniforms and detectives give chase behind leashed dogs and a couple of squads hurtling over the tracks.

ON THE BOY

As he struggles up a rise to another track. A train rips by, almost killing him, while obscuring him from his pursuers.

INTERCUT: SCENE HELICOPTER POV

As the boy disappears into a tunnel under McCormick place and out of view of the helicopter, the train clears. The police tear over the tracks and head into the tunnel.

INT. - TUNNEL - HOLE IN WALL - DAY

Cowering in the beams of incoming flashlights is Aaron Stampler, the angelic young man we saw singing in the boys choir at the Charity Ball, hugging his knees to his chest, exhausted, in a trance.

Stenner slides in among the arriving cops and stares down at Aaron.

INT. ALIBI BAR/RESTAURANT - DAY

A lawyer hangout. On a TV over the bar -

A NEWS HELICOPTER SHOT

of Aaron Stampler being brought out from under McCormick Place, handcuffed and surrounded by dogs. Stenner and Turner trail the group. A newscaster talks over.

Buried in conversation at the bar, and not noticing the TV set, are Vail and Connerman.

VAIL

I'll tell you what I hate. They rant on about putting criminals away? They're the first to tell you to look the other way when their cousin gets picked up - or their kid.

CONNERMAN

Is that what it is with Shaughnessy?

VAIL

Shaughnessy believes in Shaughnessy.

CONNERMAN

You got him this time.

VAIL

How do you figure that?

CONNERMAN

You're almost a million dollars richer; that should be a consolation. How're you going to celebrate?

VAIL

Look, I went to work today. I made some money. I'm taking a break. When the bar closes, I'll go home.

Connerman shrugs, flips a page of his note pad, writes. As he does, Vail's glance drifts to the TV across the room and the lawyer-clientele gather around it. Barely audible -

NEWSCASTER

The shocking murder this morning of one of Chicago's most beloved figures, Archbishop Richard Rushman, has left the city numbed -

CONNERMAN

So when did you know you had them?

VAIL

(distracted)

What?

CONNERMAN

Was there a moment during the Pinero trial when you said to yourself, "I got them."?

VAIL

(getting up)

Yeah - when the verdict came in.
Excuse me.

Vail crosses to get a better look at the news report. A live broadcast from outside the cathedral shows a reporter amidst a mob of other news people, police and spectators -

REPORTER #1

Police have detained -

(referring to pad)

Aaron Stampler - a 19-year-old white male. According to Captain Abel Stenner, the suspect was captured in a train tunnel under McCormick Place shortly after the killing...

The reporter is jostled by those around him as the CAMERA SWINGS over to catch the suspect being led to a police van. The boy looks bewildered and, even with blood on him, angelic.

CONNERMAN O.S.

What's going on?

In the bar, Connerman joins Vail, whose glance shifts from the television to the lawyers, who are salivating already at the news. He slaps a twenty on the bar and leaves.

VAIL
(to Connerman)
Give me a call. We'll reschedule.

INT. - VAIL'S OFFICE - DAY

The television here is on, too. It shows State's Attorney Shaughnessy holding a press conference, live -

SHAUGHNESSY
The victim in this case is not only
the Archbishop, it's also us, the people
of Chicago. With cold-blooded savagery a
beacon of hope has been taken from us -

Naomi and others on Vail's staff are watching. She answers a ringing phone -

NAOMI
Law offices of Martin Vail.

VAIL V.O.
You got the news on by any chance?

NAOMI
We're watching it.

INT. - ALIBI BAR - DAY

VAIL
Call Sullivan in Judge Trotter's office.
Find out where they took him and call me
right back.

INT. - VAIL'S OFFICE - CONTINUED

Naomi hangs up and immediately begins dialing a number she knows by heart. On the television -

SHAUGHNESSY
I promise you this crime will not go
unpunished. The police have taken the
first step, acting with speed and de-
termination with the arrest, and I -

EXT. - POLICE PRECINCT - DUSK

Vail exits his car and moves through a sea of media peppering him with questions to which he answers all with "No Comment." "Is Stamper your client?" "Why did you take the case?" "Is Stamper going to plead innocent?" Etc...

INT. - POLICE PRECINCT - FRONT DESK - DUSK

The place is alive with activity. Vail moves briskly through it all nodding with familiarity at the front desk SERGEANT who steps toward him with a file in hand. The preliminary report on Stampler. The Sergeant falls in with Vail as they head down the hallway.

VAIL

How are you doing, Herb? Your brother staying clear?

SERGEANT

So far.

VAIL

Send him my regards...

(re: folder)

That it?

SERGEANT

(nods)

Copies. Let's go for a walk so I can at least...

VAIL

(interrupts)

There's no time. Has the prosecutor left yet?

SERGEANT

Yeah. Yancy, no less.

The detective gives him the folder.

VAIL

Thank's. How's the rest of the family?

SERGEANT

Sit down, I'll tell you. I'll get you some coffee.

VAIL

Got to do this now, Herb. You understand.

SERGEANT

Sure.

INT. - PRECINCT HOLDING CELLS - DUSK

Vail is shown into the cell area by a GUARD. Inside a holding cell, Aaron Stampler sits handcuffed and shackled at the ankles.

VAIL

Take all that crap off him, Tim.
I'll holler when I'm through.

The guard unlocks the shackles and handcuffs and leaves. Vail pulls up a chair and pulls out a notepad and pen.

VAIL

You know who I am?

AARON

No, sir.

VAIL

Don't you read the paper?

AARON

(shrugs)

Sometimes.

VAIL

My name is Martin Vail. I'm what
some people call a big shot attorney.
Which means I'm expensive.

AARON

(pause)

I don't have any money.

VAIL

I didn't think you did. I'm taking
you case "Pro Bono." You get all my
expertise free of charge.

Aaron doesn't seem to Vail to be suitably grateful. Maybe he's just stupid. Finally -

AARON

Why would you do that?

VAIL

Out of the goodness of my heart.

Aaron studies Vail. The statement is as spurious as it sounds.

VAIL

Or if you prefer, you could have a
court-appointed public defender who
will almost certainly escort you
to Death Row.

Aaron finally nods, albeit a little absently.

AARON

I'd surely be grateful for anything you
can do for me.

Vail glances through the police report. Aaron watches him.

VAIL
Your full name is -

AARON
Aaron Luke Stampler.

VAIL
You from Kentucky, Aaron?

AARON
Yes, sir. Creekside.

VAIL
How long have you lived in Chicago?

AARON
Two years next month I think.

VAIL
Ever been arrested?

AARON
No, sir.

Vail finishes writing some notes.

VAIL
Do you know why you're here?

AARON
The police say I killed Bishop Rushman.

VAIL
Who says?
(from the report)
Captain Stenner?

AARON
I guess. Him and a black fella.

VAIL
Lieutenant Turner?
(Aaron shrugs)
They read you your rights?

AARON
I don't remember. I was scared.
(Vail jots down
"Miranda?")
I was tellin' them I didn't do it.
I didn't do it. I loved Bishop
Rushman. He was like a father to
me.

Vail walks to the far side of the cell, a beat. He turns to Aaron. His voice assumes a sudden harsh prosecutorial tone.

VAIL

A father, huh... You know what I think, Aaron? I think you're full of shit. I think you cut the Bishop up, copped his ring and washed your hands in his blood!

Aaron pulls his knees to his chest and rocks back and forth.

AARON

No.. No... I swear to God. I loved Bishop Rushman. I was an altar boy. God, Jesus - help me.

VAIL

A certain empathy in his eyes.

INT. BOXING RING - SMALL GYM - DUSK

Two men wearing protective headgear spar in earnest.

TRAINER

Goodman! Phone!

One of the fighters, ex-cop Tommy Goodman, leans over the ropes so the trainer can tuck the cellular phone between his shoulder and head - his hands are useless in the gloves.

GOODMAN

Yeah -

INT. PRECINCT FRONT DESK AREA - DUSK

Vail is on the phone.

VAIL

Three, three-fifty a day plus expenses.

THE GYM - CONTINUED - DUSK

GOODMAN

Three-fifty a day?

VAIL V.O.

If you say four I'm hanging up.

GOODMAN

Where and when, Marty?

VAIL O.S.

My office 10 a.m.

INT. - VAIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Vail, nursing a vodka, watches a replay of the days event, the preliminary report in his lap.

ON SCREEN

is a replay of the chase across the railyard from a news helicopter POV.

ANCHOR V.O.

... after a brief chase across the railyard behind the Archbishop's mansion, Stampler was apprehended in a hole under McCormick Place. He was covered in blood...

Vail switches channels.

SHAUGHNESSY ON TV

We've taken the first step in the process. I can now take your questions.

REPORTER ON TV

Can you tell us anything about the altar boy group Aaron Stampler was a part of?

SHAUGHNESSY ON TV

Not much at this time.

REPORTER ON TV

Have you ruled out the involvement of any other altar boys?

Vail switches channels again, to -

SHAUGHNESSY ON TV

We have no reason to suspect anyone other than Stampler.

Vail switches again to see himself wading through reporters outside the precincts as he enters.

Vail switches again to -

ANCHORPERSON ON TV

... statement of disbelief and grief and condolence from the Pontiff this afternoon in Rome. Not since the riots of 1968 has an event so rocked Chicago.

Vail switches back to the original channel, kills the sound and just stares at the screen as in extraordinarily slow motion, the blood covered Aaron Stampler is being led into the police van by two hulking Chicago cops.

EXT. - COOK COUNTY CRIMINAL COURT HOUSE - 29TH ST. - HELICOPTER
A bronzed, green-tinted statue of "Lady Justice" above the bldg.

INT. - SUPERIOR COURT - MORNING

District Attorney Burt Yancy quietly lets himself into the court room. Judge Shoat sits on the bench, peering down at a young black defendant and his court-appointed attorney.

SHOAT

Your suggestion of a meeting with the defendant's probation officer prior to sentencing is denied. You know why?

PUBLIC DEFENDER

No, Your Honor.

SHOAT

Because your client's probation officer hasn't been born yet. Twenty years in Statesville Correction Center.

(the gavel comes
down)

Court is in recess.

The prosecuting attorney, Janet Venable, smiles as she gathers her paperwork. On her way out, she sees Yancy (her boss), and approaches him.

VENABLE

Judge Shoat kills me.

YANCY

We need to talk.

Venable follows him.

YANCY

Mr. Shaughnessy was a childhood friend of the Archbishop's. I don't know of anyone closer to John than Rushman.

VENABLE

I know... I'm sorry.

Yancy acknowledges her sympathy with an almost imperceptible nod.

YANCY

Shaughnessy called me late last night and asked me for my best man. I said Janet Venable hands down.

VENABLE

I appreciate that, Burt, but I've given notice - I don't have time to

MORE

VENABLE (ct'd)
prepare a run for the Senate and try
a capital case.

YANCY
Listen to me. You haven't got a prayer
to win that election without the help of
John Shaughnessy. He's got the organ-
ization and the money. You have brains
and ambition and that'll get you one
vote - yours. You'll get more press
than Marcia Clark. This case will
assure your election - besides it's
open and shut - a dead lock.

She stares at him knowing it's true.

VENABLE
If it's open and shut, you don't need me.
I'm trying to clean up my own case load.

YANCY
Forget the fuck'n case load. Just handle
this. Shaughnessy wants this butcher boy
put down.

VENABLE
(rises, paces)
The P.D.'ll plead "nolo contendere" and
throw the kid on the mercy of the court.

YANCY
There is no public defender. Aaron
Stampler has an attorney - a man we all
know and love - Martin Vail.

CLOSE - VENABLE

The bait's been swallowed.

INT. - VAIL'S OFFICE - DAY

Vail enters. Naomi is reading the Tribune. Goodman is pacing.

VAIL
(energized)
Sorry I'm late. We have a new client.

NAOMI
I was afraid you were going to say that.

GOODMAN
Who?

NAOMI

(to Vail)

You know what they're calling him? The Butcher Boy of St. Michael's Cathedral.

VAIL

I like that.

NAOMI

Good, you're going to be hearing it a lot.

GOODMAN

Correct me if I'm wrong but I think you're suggesting that the kid who chopped up the Archbishop is our new client.

VAIL

(to Goodman)

You really have to try harder to get the word "alleged" into your vocabulary.

(refers to notes)

Aaron admits he was in the room when the killing occurred but didn't actually see it happen -

GOODMAN

Can I stop you right there - ?

VAIL

No. He was returning a book to the Archbishop's private library. He heard loud voices coming from the bedroom. Which turned out to be opera music. He came in. Saw the Archbishop stepping out of the bathroom - then a shadowy figure - and he blacked out and -

(ignores Goodman's raised hand)

- next thing he knows he's huddled in a tunnel under McCormick Place. Surrounded by cops, and covered in blood, with the Archbishop's ring in his jeans pocket.

GOODMAN

He stole the Archbishop's ring?

VAIL

I didn't say that. I said it was in his pocket.

Goodman and Naomi wait for the rest, but apparently that's it, the end of their client's story...

GOODMAN

Is that it?

VAIL

Not quite. There was a third man in that bedroom.

GOODMAN

And you expect a jury to buy that?

VAIL

Why not? I did. The arraignment's this afternoon. The kid was transferred to Cook County Jail this morning. Section 9.

GOODMAN

Sounds right.

NAOMI

Huh?

GOODMAN

Psyche ward.

VAIL

Let's get to work. B32.156. Naomi, write it down. It was carved into the Archbishop's chest.

GOODMAN

Allegedly.

VAIL

No, that's a fact, Tommy, but I appreciate the effort. It's some sort of index.

(to Naomi)

Track it, Naomi.

NAOMI

B32.156?

VAIL

Right: Data base - Hall of Records. Public Library - whatever. And Archbishop's so-called charities.

(Naomi sighs)

Also - case histories on murder by stabbing, murder by mutilation, murder by race, gender, religion... and I'm gonna need a psychiatrist.

NAOMI

You're telling me.

VAIL

And not the kind that lives in a witness box. We need a real one this time. And check out Creekside, Kentucky, where Stampler's from.

(to Goodman)

Tommy, write this down: Savior House. Rushman's home for runaways. He found Stampler begging under Wacker Drive and took him there where he lived for a year and a half. Talk to the kids there, anyone who knew him - then check out the Roosevelt - where he stayed after leaving the halfway house - that transient place on Madison.

NAOMI

What does he look like in person?

VAIL

Innocent.

EXT. - ST. MICHAEL'S CATHEDRAL / RECTORY - DAY

The area is cordoned off by yellow "Crime Scene" tape. Several patrol cars are parked along the sidewalk along with civilian cars and the Coroner's lab van. Vail parks, climbs out, ducks under the tape and goes up the steps to a uniformed cop by the church doors.

VAIL

I'm Martin Vail, I'm defending Aaron Stampler. I need to inspect the murder site.

The cop takes a long look at Vail. Of course he knows him.

COP

The Butcher Boy?

VAIL

Thank you, yes, I forgot his real name.

The cop steps aside, allowing Vail to pass.

INT. - RECTORY / VESTIBULE - DAY

Vail starts up the stairs as Venable descends.

VENABLE

My God, is nothing sacred?

VAIL

I thought you resigned Senator?

VENABLE

Postponed. I'm staying on through the case. Stenner and the medical examiner are upstairs working. You'll be permitted access in forty eight hours.

She comes down and escorts him out.

EXT. - CHURCH - DAY

She stands on the step. He looks up at her.

VAIL

Shaughnessy must want this one pretty bad.

VENABLE

So do I. Your angelic client made steak tartar out of a truly great man.

VAIL

Allegedly. What did Shaughnessy promise you?

VENABLE

Oh fuck off Marty.

VAIL

Forgetting Bryn Mawr, we're in church Janet.

VENABLE

I'm a little off my game today, Marty. You can't imagine what it's like in that bedroom.

VAIL

Well I hope they leave a swatch or two for me.

VENABLE

Not to worry. There's enough blood in that room to swim in. And your client's prints are all over the place.

VAIL

(smiles)

Open and shut.

VENABLE

I'll send a set of the victim's pictures and preliminary autopsy report to your office.

VAIL

You're not gonna show those pictures to the jury are you?

VENABLE

What do you think?

VAIL

It's a mistake. No one's gonna tie that kind of savagery to an angelic altar boy. You're gonna need one hell of a motive.

VENABLE

You want to try the case for me?

VAIL

Hell no, you're not only the best prosecutor in town, you're also the sexiest.

They stare at one another for a beat - he goes. CAMERA HOLDS on Venable - she looks after him with a trace of sadness.

EXT. - COOK COUNTY JAIL - SECTION 9 - DAY

Vail exits his car with a suit bag and shoe box and enters the jail.

INT. COOK COUNTY JAIL - PSYCH WARD - SECTION 9 - DAY

Vail, with suit and box, is escorted by a guard past cells peopled with prisoners peering at him from window slits. He moves to a cell and looks through a slit to Aaron rocking back and forth on his bunk.

INT. - AARON'S CELL - PSYCH WARD, COUNTY JAIL - AFTERNOON

Vail buttons the white shirt he's brought for Aaron to wear in court. He's already wearing the slacks. A jacket and tie are laid out across the blanket of the bed.

VAIL

We'll be sitting at a table together. Along with two of my associates. Once the charges are read, the judge will ask you how you plead -

AARON

Not guilty.

VAIL

No -

AARON

But I'm not guilty, Mr. Vail.

VAIL

I don't care. You don't say anything. You don't open your mouth.

Vail picks up the tie and slips it around Aaron's collar. Aaron thinks he understands.

VAIL (ct'd)

The law says the accused is entitled to one friend. One person in whom they confide and trust. I'm that one person. Almost everyone else in this city wants you dead - understand?

AARON

Yes suh... But I'm innocent.

VAIL

Listen to me, Aaron. When we're in that courtroom, I do the talking. You're silent. You just sit there and look innocent. Now put this on.

The jacket. Vail holds it up for Aaron to slip into, stands back and considers his client.

VAIL

That's how I want you to look. Just like that. Remember that look. Look in the mirror if you have to.

AARON

(smiles)

I don't have to try to look like this, Mr. Vail.

VAIL

Don't smile, Aaron. Because that jury will be told that you made sushi out of a saint. Don't ever let me see you smile.

Aaron stops smiling. Vail steps back up to him, straightens the knot on the tie, and steps back again.

EXT. - COOK COUNTY COURT HOUSE - DAY

A throng of people, some carrying signs with block-lettered messages like, "The Butcher Boy Must Die," surround the area. Local and national television units are setting up. Vail, totally in his element, moves up the Court House steps with Goodman and Naomi.

REPORTER #3

It's been said before, Mr. Vail, you put the victim on trial to gain sympathy for your client. That might be a little difficult in this case, don't you think?

VAIL

A victim in this case is my client. We have two victims and no suspects. There were fifty threats on the Archbishop's life last year. The State's Attorney is well aware of this.

INT. - COOK COUNTY CRIMINAL COURT HOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

As Vail, Naomi and Goodman blow out the elevator toward the courtroom intersecting with the arriving Venable, her assistants, LOU and GEORGE, and Yancy.

BAILIFF V.O.

All rise.

INT. - ARRAIGNMENT COURTROOM - AFTERNOON

There's a rumble as the defense and prosecution teams and everyone behind them in the packed courtroom rises out of their chairs. Shaughnessy is there, just behind the prosecutors. Arraignment JUDGE MULLOWNEY crosses to the bench.

MULLOWNEY

Call the first case.

BAILIFF

State versus Aaron Stampler.

MULLOWNEY

Is everyone present?

BAILIFF

Yes, sir.

Mullowney looks at Vail, Aaron and Naomi at the defense table.

MULLOWNEY

I see, Mr. Vail, you haven't made it to a barber shop since our last encounter. Madam Prosecutor?

VENABLE

The State charges the prisoner, Aaron Stampler, with the crime of murder in the first degree.

MULLOWNEY

How does your client plead, Counselor?

VAIL

Your Honor, if it pleases the court, I motion that my client be remanded to a state mental hospital before any charges are brought against him.

Mullowney sighs. He knew he couldn't get even a plea from Vail without pulling teeth.

VENABLE

The State has more than enough evidence to warrant the allegations, Your Honor.

MULLOWNEY

I agree, motion denied. Mr. Stampler? Do you understand the charges brought against you?

AARON

Y -

VAIL

(interrupting)

Your Honor -

(sharp look to Aaron)

- my client refuses to answer that on the grounds that his response may tend to incriminate him.

MULLOWNEY

(groans)

The defendant is taking the fifth on whether or not he understands the charges?

VAIL

Yes sir. Until we have a complete psychological examination, he will take the fifth on any and all questions posed to him.

(approaches bench)

State versus Appleby, for your review for precedence.

He hands up some papers. As Mullowney takes a look, Vail glances across to Venable, who shakes her head in dismay. This is going to be a very long road.

EXT. - COURTHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Vail and his entourage emerge from the courthouse and head eagerly toward the press. Just as he reaches and greets the reporters, he hears, from a different direction -

VOICE

Marty, you got a minute?

It's Shaughnessy, in the backseat of a limousine at the curb. Reluctantly, Vail excuses himself from the reporters and approaches the State's Attorney.

SHAUGHNESSY

Climb in. I won't keep you from them long, I promise.

As Vail gestures to Naomi - I'll be right back, keep the reporters there - Shaughnessy gestures to his driver to take him around the block. Vail climbs in.

INT. - BACK SEAT, LIMOUSINE - LATE AFTERNOON

The reporters slide past Vail's tinted window as the car pulls away from the curb. As it makes a right turn, Shaughnessy, in his usual way, puts a spin on his words with an affable tone -

SHAUGHNESSY

They love talking to you. You speak their language. You know how to turn human suffering into theater as well as they do.

VAIL

Oh, come on, John, I know how to do it better than them.

The driver makes another right. Shaughnessy studies Vail.

SHAUGHNESSY

(warm, gentle)

I'm very proud of you Martin. Your success has validated my faith in you. Every semester I select a few law students from our great universities - young men and women in whom I perceive extraordinary legal talents. I took care of your tuition. No dishwashing for you. Just study and top of the class grades.

(he pats Vail's knee)

I wish Martin Vail's grew on trees. Oh, and by the way, that cover story in City Magazine is terrific! I know you've disliked me ever since that Harper case. The boy's death in Joliet still haunts me. It breaks my heart to see a young felon murdered in our correctional institutions - but I can't be everywhere. If you choose to keep me on the cross of that boy's death there's nothing I can do about it. These kids die everyday.

VAIL

Right. If it isn't AIDS; it's a knife.

SHAUGHNESSY

(nods)

It's a tragic comment on contemporary society. The barbarians are at the gates.

(motions to bar)

A drink?

VAIL

No thanks.

SHAUGHNESSY

You'll be interested to know that there are people in high places who are delighted that you're defending this killer.

VAIL

Really?

SHAUGHNESSY

Yes because the bleeding hearts will have no complaints. Stampler will have been represented by the finest criminal attorney in the city.

VAIL

What is it you want, John?

SHAUGHNESSY

Just a private word. I have nothing but admiration for you; but I also have a grave responsibility to maintain order in this city. Therefore, I cannot stand by and see this trial turned into a circus to gratify your hunger for publicity. I won't have you sully the memory of the Archbishop.

VAIL

I have a responsibility to defend Aaron Stampler to the best of my ability and I'll use any means within the law to prove -

SHAUGHNESSY

(calm but deadly)

To prove what? Richard Rushman was the quintessential symbol of goodness, selflessness and charity. Don't put a brutally murdered saint on trial. Don't even think about it.

VAIL

As always, I appreciate your advice, John.

SHAUGHNESSY

By the way, we cut the Pinero settlement check. I trust he'll keep his end of the bargain.

VAIL

As soon as the money's deposited.

The limo turns a corner and pulls up to the courthouse.

VAIL

Thanks for the lift, John.

They stare at one another for a beat, Vail gets out. The limo moves off.

VAIL

Glances up at the statue of Lady Justice.

LADY JUSTICE

Arm outstretched - holding the scales. A blindfold covers her eyes.

THE SCENE

Vail walks toward the gaggle of newsmen.

EXT. - COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A freight train roars past a crossing - as it clears it reveals Vail behind the wheel of a rental car. He bumps over the tracks.

A SIGN - VAIL'S POV FROM MOVING CAR

"Creekside, KY Pop. 872"

EXT. - CREEKSID - DAY

A high, wide-shot - Vail drives slowly through town.

EXT. - CREEKSID - DAY

Vail pulls into an old two pump gas station/county store. A pick-up truck full of working locals pulls out of the station as Vail exits his car and approaches a woman seated outside the store. He presents his credit card.

WOMAN

Help you, mister?

VAIL

Yeah... Pump number -
MORE

VAIL (ct'd)
(there are no
numbers)
Well, that one there.

ATTENDANT
You pay afterwards.

VAIL
You're kidding.

Vail notices a jar on the shelf above the cooler labeled "Black Lung" with a couple of coins in it.

VAIL
Let me have an RC.

ATTENDANT
(getting it)
Fifty cent.

Vail hands her a five. The woman makes change from her pocket and hands back the change. Vail folds the four dollar bills and drops them into the jar.

VAIL
You know who Aaron Stampler is?

The woman is still staring at the jar. No one's ever put that kind of money in there.

VAIL
Know what they're saying he did?

ATTENDANT
Kilt a preacher up North.

VAIL
Yep.

ATTENDANT
Caint say I knew him well. Come in fer
candy or a Coke sometimes. Knew his
daid, but his daid is daid.

VAIL
Know anyone who knew the boy...?

EXT. - CREEKSIDE - ESTABLISHING - DAY

High shot overlooking the town and its coal processing plant and railroad tracks as Vail leaves the station and drives toward the school house.

EXT. - SCHOOLHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Vail parks outside a barracks-like structure. A sign reads:
"Creekside Public School - Donated by Daggett Mining Co."

INT. - CLASSROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Twenty-five desks and bench-chairs, artwork neatly arranged on the walls. Vail comes in quietly and sees an attractive woman in her 40's, hair pulled back in a ponytail. She methodically erases the blackboard. Sensing someone's presence, she turns.
No accent -

REBECCA

Mr. Vail. Have a seat, I've been expecting you. I'm Rebecca Kramer. Don't look so surprised. The miracle of CNN even reaches Creekside.

(gesturing)

Wherever you like.

She takes the chair behind her desk. Vail looks around and realizes the only place for him to sit is at one of the kids' desks. He slides onto on in the front row, absently clasps his hands together on its surface.

REBECCA

How's Aaron?

VAIL

In a word? Scairt.

REBECCA

Don't judge him by his accent; it's beneath your dignity. Aaron was the best student I ever had.

VAIL

(rises, smiles)

Why don't I go out and come back so that we can start over. I know you're distraught but I'm not a schoolboy being kept after class.

REBECCA

You're right. I am distraught. I can't bear the thought of Aaron caged up waiting to die.

VAIL

Neither can I. That's why I'm here.

She rises, takes a cigarette out of her bag.

REBECCA

Will this bother you?

VAIL

No...

She lights it, unbuckles the pony tail. Her hair falls across her shoulders and she looks curiously seductive. There is a sense of mystery about her. She rises and goes to the window.

REBECCA

How can I help you?

VAIL

I'm hungry and I'd like to ask you some questions. Is there a decent restaurant in town?

REBECCA

Yes.

(smiles)

At my house.

EXT. - SCHOOL HOUSE - DAY

Rebecca comes into view riding a bike trailed by Vail in his car.

EXT. - CREEKSIDE - DAY

MONTAGE of Vail following Rebecca through the environs of Creekside.

EXT. - REBECCA'S HOUSE - DAY

They arrive at her house, set against a slope of pines.

EXT. - REBECCA'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Vail sits looking toward the barren hills. Rebecca comes through the door with iced tea.

VAIL

How'd you find this town?

REBECCA

Long story, sort of. I was part of that Kennedy/Johnson domestic peace corp. thing. Me to teach, my husband to doctor. We divorced. He left. I didn't.

VAIL

Why?

REBECCA

I felt needed and respected.

VAIL

And Aaron?

REBECCA

I had him in several classes from the time he was twelve until he was sixteen. He was starved for knowledge. Books sustained him. He read constantly, joined book clubs, haunted the Library. I kept a small collection of his favorite authors here. I still have it in the other room.

VAIL

Why'd he leave Creekside?

REBECCA

The books opened up the world to him. He had to go see it for himself. He was always a step ahead of his classmates; several steps actually. They teased him but he ignored it. He was a beautiful boy.

The adjective strikes Vail as slightly odd coming from a teacher.

VAIL

Why'd they tease him?

REBECCA

Aaron was determined to avoid the inevitable below-ground fate awaiting all Creekside children. His classmates resented him and yet secretly admired him. None of them look forward to a life down there in that black hole.

VAIL

Not hard to understand.

REBECCA

Not if you have a shred of humanity. I felt like celebrating the night Aaron's father fell to his death in the mine shaft while in a drunken stupor. His father was a self-proclaimed preacher and a vicious alcoholic. He used to whip Aaron with his belt. Aaron's thighs and backside would be raw. I treated those wounds and did my best to comfort him.

VAIL

How did Aaron react to his father's death?

REBECCA

(shrugs)

Acceptance - nothing more.

VAIL

And what of Aaron's mother?

REBECCA

The years and the struggle took its toll. She was mentally disturbed.

VAIL

Did Aaron ever have blackouts in school?
Amnesiac seizures?

REBECCA

(pauses)

Not that I ever saw.

(gets up and opens
the door)

Let's talk in the kitchen, I'll make something to eat.

VAIL

Can I use your bathroom?

REBECCA

Sure. Upstairs to the left.

INT. - REBECCA'S HOUSE - 2ND FLOOR - DAY

Vail heads for the bathroom, hesitates then Detours into -

REBECCA'S BEDROOM

Vail notices the books she mentioned: Classics mostly.

He moves to her dressing table. Amongst several framed photographs of Rebecca and her parents is a striking one of her and Aaron.

INSERT: PHOTO

Vail picks this one up. It shows them seated on the living room floor next to a blazing fireplace. She has her arm draped around the boy's shoulder. There is an unmistakable sense of intimacy in the pose.

REBECCA O.S.

Mr. Vail -?

THE SCENE

The closeness of her voice startles him. She's in the doorway, studying him in her bedroom with obvious disdain.

REBECCA

No one locks their doors around here.
That's not the way it is in Chicago,
I guess.

VAIL

No, it isn't.

REBECCA

I think you should leave now.

He nods somewhat chagrined and she follows him out.

EXT. - PORCH - VAIL AND REBECCA - NIGHT

A spill of light from overhead lamp.

VAIL

I'm sorry for snooping but its an occupational hazard.

(gives her card)

You may want to touch base with me at some point.

She takes the card.

VAIL

I'm trying my best to save him.

REBECCA

Goodbye, Mr. Vail.

He goes down the porch steps, gets into the rental and drives off. CAMERA HOLDS on Rebecca as she stares after him.

EXT. - COOK COUNTY JAIL - SECTION 9 - DAY

Establishing.

INT. - AARON'S CELL - PSYCH WARD - DAY

Vail has brought several books, which Aaron keeps on his lap like precious possessions, leafing through the one on top.

VAIL

I would have brought you some books before if you would've asked.

AARON

I never would've asked. You're doing enough for me.

Aaron glances back down at the one in his hands, turns a page.

VAIL

Rebecca Kramer sends her best wishes.

(Aaron glances up)

I told her you were doing all right.

MORE

VAIL (ct'd)
That I was looking after you. She told me about your dad - the way he treated you and the way he died. The prosecution might try to make something of it.

AARON
Of what?

VAIL
The way he died. Alone out there at the mine at night. Nobody else around.

AARON
Are you asking if I killed him?

VAIL
No. What matters to me is how it looks. Although, I believe it to be inadmissible.

AARON
I tried my best to stay away from him; but I didn't hurt my father. I never hurt anyone in my life.

VAIL
Including the Archbishop?

AARON
Why would I hurt him? He was the father I wisht I had.

VAIL
Did you love him?

AARON
I cared might'ly about him but I don't really know what love means.

VAIL
Didn't Miss Rebecca love you?

AARON
She was my best and only friend.

Vail x-rays him but detects no hidden agenda.

VAIL
When you lived at Savior House was there anyone you were afraid of?

AARON
I was afraid of leaving. I was afraid of the streets.

VAIL

Do you blame the Archbishop for that?

AARON

No suh. Bishop Rushman kept me longer than most. There's rules - they need the beds and food for new kids.

VAIL

Okay, Aaron - now remember the rules. I'm your only friend. You speak to no one else except a very nice lady named Dr. Molly Arrington. She's a psychiatrist working for us. She'll be in to see you and don't be afraid to tell her anything. Anything at all - understand?

AARON

Yes, I surely do. Thank you. I'll take good care of the books.

EXT. - ROOSEVELT HOTEL - DAY

Goodman parks in front of the brooding, 5-story red brick structure and stars across the street.

INT. - LOBBY - ROOSEVELT HOTEL - DAY

It is almost empty, an OLD MAN half asleep behind the desk. He looks up as Goodman approaches.

OLD MAN

What do you want?

Goodman is looking at a decrepit human wreck, his face a vista of cracks and wrinkles and grey scraggle of beard.

GOODMAN

Looking for the room a kid named Aaron Stampler stayed in.

OLD MAN

You the police?

GOODMAN

I'm his uncle.

(takes out a
five dollar bill)

Show me his place and you get this and ten more.

OLD MAN

Second floor, on the end.

INT. - SECOND FLOOR - ROOSEVELT HOTEL - DAY

GOODMAN'S POV: a tunnel-like corridor, with only one or two bar light bulbs working.

Goodman walks to the door at the end of the corridor and knocks. There is no answer.

Goodman rattles the door once, there is no response. He takes a ring of keys out of his pocket, checks the lock and searches for the right key. It isn't but a moment before he unlocks the door. As he steps inside we CUT TO:

INT. - TWO ROOM APARTMENT - SAME (FORMERLY A56)

The apartment is sparsely furnished: several mattresses, some chairs, clothes strewn across the floor and paperback books everywhere. Goodman disappears into the second room and comes back a moment later. There is no sign of anyone. He crouches down, takes a look at some of the books, finds in one a Polaroid of a teenage girl, with neat cursive writing on it, "Love, Linda." As he's slipping it into his shirt pocket, he's attacked from behind -

The flashlight spins across the floor. Goodman grapples with his assailant and is knocked off his feet. In random desperation, Goodman grabs at the figure, finds an ear, feels an earring dangling from its lobe and rips it free. The attacker screams in pain and runs, his footsteps echoing away.

Goodman climbs back to his feet, takes some time catching his breath. He limps back across the floor and the books, and retrieves the flashlight. He points its beam at the thing in his hand - an inch-long silver earring shaped like a dagger - or crucifix.

INT. - VAIL'S OFFICES - DAY

Vail blows into the office, finds Naomi at her desk. He sees photographs of the Archbishop's body, some showing numbers carved on the chest.

NAOMI

Venable's office delivered a set of crime photos in glorious color and an autopsy report. I sent everything over to Dr. Arrington at the Drake.

VAIL

How's she doing?

NAOMI

"Absorbing the data" that's a quote.

VAIL

Anything turn up on that B32.156?

NAOMI

No such catalogue number in the
downtown library.

VAIL

Keep trying. I grew up in libraries.
That type of catalogue number preceded
computerized records.

NAOMI

(sighs)

You're not going to be much happier with
this:

(brings up info
on computer screen)

The Archbishop's charities and investments.
Nothing startling here except for the wide
variety of charitable organizations.

As the information scrolls up, Vail glimpses something and hits a
key that pauses the screen: "South Shore Development Corp."

VAIL

What's this? He was involved in that
South Shore deal?

NAOMI

What South Shore deal?

VAIL

The one that went belly up. All those
rusting buildings out there - blocks of
them - some righteous citizens took a
hell of a bath on that one.

She highlights the line and hits a function-key which brings up a
list of names under the heading Investors. There are about
forty, but one of the names leaps out at Vail -

VAIL

Shaughnessy...

VAIL

Get Joe Pinero on the phone.

GOODMAN O.S.

Three fifty.

Vail and Naomi turn, see Goodman striding across the room to a
water cool/refrigerator. He gets some ice, wraps it in his
bloody handkerchief and nurses his jaw.

GOODMAN

Three fifty a day plus expenses.

INT. - AARON'S CELL - PSYCH WARD - DAY

Vail, alone in the room with Aaron, hands over for his inspection Goodman's find, the earring.

AARON
(softly)

Alex.

VAIL
Who's Alex?

AARON
One of the altar boys.

VAIL
An altar boy wore this?

AARON
Well, not at Mass.

VAIL
This - altar boy - conducted himself in a very un-altar-boy-like matter. He attacked a colleague of mine. Hurt him pretty bad. Now, what do you suppose he was doing lurking around your room?

AARON
Is that where -

VAIL
Yeah. What could he have been looking for.

AARON
(shrugs)
I had a radio and some books.

VAIL
Who's Linda?

Aaron doesn't answer. Vail hands him the Polaroid Goodman found in Aaron's room at the Roosevelt.

VAIL
Your girlfriend?
(Aaron nods)
Where is she?

AARON
I don't know.

VAIL
What aren't you telling me, Aaron?

AARON
I'm telling you the truth.

VAIL
I don't think you are. Does it surprise
you that Alex attacked my friend?

AARON
He has a temper. He used drugs.

VAIL
It is possible that Alex was the
figure you saw in Archbishop's bedroom?

AARON
I just can't say. I blacked out.

Vail sighs, paces for a moment, changes his tone.

VAIL
Tell me about the choir boy meetings.

AARON
No much to tell. We had to do our lessons.

VAIL
What kind of lessons?

AARON
The Archbishop would deliver sermons
about the Devil, about temptation
and quote from the Bible. We'd make
notes. And Linda would type the
questions and answers - like a secretary.

VAIL
How many boys were there?

AARON
Four.

VAIL
And Linda was the only female?

AARON
Yes.

VAIL
Where did these sermons take place?

AARON
Sometimes in the rectory - and sometimes
in the library/study.

VAIL
How often?

AARON

Once a week.

VAIL

Were these sermons mandatory?

AARON

We had to be there.

VAIL

Did anyone object to those sermons?

AARON

I don't remember.

VAIL

Suppose you didn't show up?

AARON

Well, if you missed two weeks you had to leave Savior House.

VAIL

Was anyone thrown out?

AARON

No - once or twice we got scolded.

VAIL

Aaron, they're gonna strap you down and shove a needle in your arm and poison you. I can't help you if you don't cooperate. Did anyone have reason to kill or be made to kill the Archbishop?

AARON

Why would anyone do that? Everyone loved Bishop Rushman.

VAIL

Not everyone, Aaron. Someone had cause to slice Rushman like a side of beef and shove his genitals in his mouth.

There is a slight flicker, a gleam in Aaron's eyes. His mouth grows taught, his eyes narrow, his fingers flex.

AARON

I just don't know who would do such a thing.

VAIL

Were the altar boys forced to convert to Catholicism?

AARON

No. We just had to know our Bible.

VAIL

And you never saw Alex attack anyone?

AARON

No.

VAIL

Did you sleep with Linda?

AARON

Yes.

VAIL

Were you in love with her?

AARON

No. She was a runaway and - well it wasn't.

VAIL

Wasn't what?

AARON

Serious. You just have to believe me.
I never saw anyone raise their voice to
Bishop Rushman.

Vail nods, tousles Aaron's hair.

VAIL

All right. Get some rest, Aaron.

INT. - ALIBI BAR - DAY

Lawyers, judges, politicians, fashionably dressed men and women.
The lunch rush is almost over. Patrons sip espressos and toy
with desserts.

Vail moves through the crowd toward the exit with a bandaged
Goodman. As they pass a booth -

VENABLE V.O.

Marty!

Vail turns, sees her apparently alone.

VAIL

Hello, Janet.

VENABLE

Got a minute?

VAIL
(to Goodman)
I'll catch up with you, Tom.

Goodman goes and Vail slides into the booth and kisses Venable's cheek.

VAIL
Why didn't you call me?

VENABLE
What for?

VAIL
I 'd drop everything before I'd let you eat alone.

VENABLE
There are times when I prefer my own company. Coffee?

VAIL
No thanks. I'm coffeed out.

VENABLE
Is that heavy set fellow your partner?

VAIL
No. Tommy's an old fashioned gumshoe.

VENABLE
He looked familiar. I've seen him in court.

VAIL
How goes the People's case?

VENABLE
The Serology and DNA is conclusive. Stampler's fingerprints are on the knife, walls and his bloody footprints lead from the scene to the sidewalk.

VAIL
All circumstantial.

VENABLE
True. Everyone at Savior House described the Butcher Boy as "sweet" - it seemed to be the operative adjective. We also talked to a lady you probably have interviewed.

VAIL
Who's that?

VENABLE

Rebecca Kramer, a schoolteacher in the thriving metropolis of Creekside - she too described Stampler as "sweet." I've other evidence I can't discuss. The kid is doomed, Marty.

VAIL

It certainly looks that way.

Venable turns and stares into Vail's eyes.

VENABLE

This is off the record and confidential - promise?

VAIL

We're in the confessional booth.

VENABLE

Would you accept a plea-bargain of life without parole?

Vail studies her a moment.

VAIL

Is this from Shaughnessy?

VENABLE

This is from me.

He smiles and shakes his head.

VAIL

You have a wealth of circumstantial evidence. Everything but an eye witness and most important - a motive. This case screams for motive.

VENABLE

I'm confident Stampler will be convicted with or without motive. I'm trying to be compassionate. I think he's sick and you'll plead Guilty by Reason of Insanity.

VAIL

I haven't decided. My psychiatrist is reviewing Aaron's history. I haven't yet consulted with her.

VENABLE

Think about my offer. He won't walk.

VAIL

I can't even consider it, Janet. Because he's just as dead in jail. I made that mistake once before. Can you protect a kid like Stampler in Joliet? He's just as dead there - might even be kinder to hit him with the poison dart.

VENABLE

I had to ask. I'm not a fan of the death penalty; but you're not wrong.

VAIL

My law professor said, "Maledicti Sumus Omnes" - we're all cursed.

He kisses her cheek, rises.

VAIL

Take care, Janet.

EXT. - ABANDONED SOUTH SHORE DEVELOPMENT - SUNSET

The rusting steel frames are silhouetted in the backlight. Vail, Pinero and conservatively dressed Latino: ALDERMAN MARTINEZ stroll past the rubble.

PINERO

- about a month later two plainclothes cops came into La Cantina. They say testify that Alderman Martinez launders hot money and we'll owe you one.

VAIL

They told you to set up Mr. Martinez?

MARTINEZ

It's an old tactic, Mr. Vail - now and then it works.

PINERO

I told them to go fuck themselves. How am I gonna frame Mr. Martinez when he's the only one holding out against the South Shore condo thing? What must they think of me? I'm gonna rat out my compadre? Fuck them.

VAIL

It looks like you fucked them to the tune of \$60 million. That's heavy traffic. It took courage to blow the whistle.

MARTINEZ

I did what I thought was right. I went straight to Archbishop Rushman and asked him, Where are these displaced people going to live? They'll be on the street. And these are good Catholics - every one of them. That's all it took. The Bishop acted immediately.

VAIL

Was Shaughnessy's name ever mentioned?

MARTINEZ

No. Not then. The Archbishop just told me not to worry.

VAIL

Is that all?

Martinez hesitates, looks at Pinero.

PINERO

Dice todo. No se preocupado. Senor Vail esta con nosotros.

Vail doesn't understand the language but perceives the sense of what Pinero has said. (It's okay for Martinez to talk.)

MARTINEZ

You have to forgive my caution, Mr. Vail we've never met but Joey vouches for you. I have reason to be careful.

VAIL

I understand.

MARTINEZ

Several weeks after my session with the Archbishop, he summoned me to another meeting in his study. As I passed by the altar I heard loud, angry voices coming from the study. I entered. There were perhaps a dozen men in the room - amongst them was John Shaughnessy. The Bishop motioned me to leave. His face was white, like chalk.

A beat. Vail studies the rusting beams.

VAIL

Would you be willing to testify, Mr. Martinez?

MARTINEZ

With pleasure.

INT. - VENABLE'S OFFICE - MAGIC HOUR

A window overlooking the lake - the day is giving way to night. A few city lights blink on. On the wall, behind Venable's cluttered desk is a huge blowup of an endless sea of crosses - imprinted over the tombstones are the words "Marlboro Country." Venable sits at her desk, smoking and going through files and making notes. A beat. Yancy enters.

YANCY

Stenner called. He's got a line on that B32.156.

Venable doesn't look up from her notations.

VENABLE

(dismissive)

Great...

YANCY

What's wrong with you? This could be an important break.

Venable leans back, stretches.

VENABLE

We're rich with circumstantial evidence.

(leans forward)

We have no motive and -

YANCY

Motive? Fuck that. This is a Catholic city - that kid's dead meat.

VENABLE

Are you saying this is a lynching?

YANCY

You heard me.

VENABLE

I don't believe that - if I did I'd resign tonight. No jury's going to convict without a motive. It's we who have to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

YANCY

Don't give me lessons sweetheart. This case is a walkover.

VENABLE

I offered Vail a deal...

YANCY

State of shock.

THE SCENE

YANCY

You what?

VENABLE

I offered life without parole - he refused.

YANCY

Are you fuck'n nuts? If Shaughnessy ever finds out you're on the street.

VENABLE

Is that right? Listen to me you imbecile. I'm filing fourteen fucking motions with no fucking help and I would appreciate your getting the fuck out of my office. If you want to try this fucking case start by learning how to read and write!

Yancy goes out. She walks to the window, rubs her arms, looks out over the city - then turns and glances at the blowup of the cemetery and crushes her cigarette out.

INT. - INTERVIEW CELL - PSYCH WARD - DAY

As DR. MOLLY ARRINGTON hooks up video equipment, Vail sits quietly in a corner watching Aaron. Molly smiles at Aaron.

MOLLY

Sorry about all this, Aaron.

(the equipment)

You sure you don't mind the video recorder?

AARON

No, ma'am.

VAIL

(to Aaron)

I'm just gonna hang out here while Dr. Arrington talks to you.

Molly adjusts focus on the camera.

AARON

I can do that for you, ma'am.

MOLLY

Well, thank you.

She stands aside while Aaron fiddles with the camera, and exchanges a glance with Vail.

VAIL

Where'd you learn about video cameras?

AARON

From Bishop Rushman.

Aaron finishes with the camera and steps away. Molly takes a look through the lens: Aaron appears in the viewfinder as he returns to the cot and sits back down.

MOLLY

I'd like to begin by talking about your home town.

AARON

Not much to talk about there.

MOLLY

Well, let's start with your family. Your father. Did he say you were bad?

AARON

Yes.

MOLLY

What about your mother?

AARON

She was nice.

MOLLY

Anything else about her?

AARON

She wasn't all there. Talked to chairs and stuffed toys.

MOLLY

I understand you had a teacher who was important to you.

He seems to disappear momentarily; as if he's elsewhere. Molly glances to Vail, and back to Aaron.

MOLLY

Are you all right?

AARON

I thought - I felt like I was gonna lose time. It happens to me sometimes, I lose time; can't rightly say when it comes on.

Vail studies Aaron carefully. The boy smiles ingenuously.

AARON

Miss Rebecca was my teacher. She saved me you could say. With books. She taught me about books.

MOLLY

Did you enjoy Archbishop Rushman's sermons?

AARON

I surely did.

MOLLY

Did Linda enjoy them?

AARON

I told Mr. Vail, Linda was like a secretary - but...

VAIL

But what?

AARON

I don't know. I lost my thought. I'm tired. I didn't sleep. There's people screaming all night.

(to Molly)

Do you think you could bring me some lemon pie and a Coke next time?

MOLLY

I'd be happy to.

EXT. - MICHIGAN AVENUE RAMP - DAY

As Vail's Jaguar drops down to lower Wacker and pulls in behind Goodman's car. Goodman moves out from behind a pillar and slips into Vail's car. Beyond them, where the kids were panhandling, the street is not empty.

GOODMAN

I'll go through that grate, you go through the one down at LaSalle street.

Goodman points to a rusted grate a block away.

GOODMAN

If he's between here and there, I'll flush him to you. Be careful. Assume he's dangerous.

And they are out of the car and moving to their respective destinations.

INT. - WACKER/MICHIGAN AVENUE TUNNEL - DAY

Vail is revealed in silhouette entering from outside. Suddenly he hears running footsteps. Goodman's voice echoes out.

GOODMAN

Marty! Marty! He's coming at you!
He's coming at you! He's got a knife!

And into frame hurtles Alex who loses his footing on the icy tunnel floor and slides wildly into Vail, sending them both through people gathered around a fire. Goodman tears into the melee, pinning the thrashing Alex to the frozen floor as Vail wrestles a switchblade knife away from him.

ALEX

Who the fuck are you?! What do you want?!

VAIL

My name is Martin Vail.

ALEX

I've seen you. Your picture's all over the newsstands.

VAIL

That's right, Alex. I'm famous.

ALEX

I don't give a shit who you are.
You got no right doing this to me.

VAIL

Don't talk to me about rights you little shit - I'm Aaron Stampler's lawyer.

Alex suddenly twists in a final effort to break free. Goodman slams him back onto the cement.

VAIL

What do you know about the Archbishop's murder?

ALEX

Nothing.

VAIL

Bullshit.

ALEX

I swear it!

Vail signals Goodman to let up on Alex.

VAIL
What were you looking for in Aaron's
room? What did he have that you
needed -

ALEX
A tape.

VAIL
(pause)
A tape?

ALEX
Yeah. A video tape.

VAIL
(pause)
Of what?

ALEX
An altar boy sermon.

VAIL
What's so special about that?

ALEX
Nothing if you like hard core porn.

VAIL
(puzzled)
What are you talking about?

ALEX
Do I have to draw you a picture?

VAIL
Who were the actors?

ALEX
The altar boys and Linda -

VAIL
(pause)
And Aaron?

ALEX
No. He shot it for the Archbishop.

Vail is really thrown now. He exchange a quick glance with
Goodman.

VAIL
Are you telling me that Archbishop
Rushman was involved in -

ALEX
(nodding)
He called it purging the Devil. He'd deliver a sermon on evil for like ten minutes, then tell us what to do.

VAIL
Did he ever get in front of the camera?

ALEX
The Archbishop?

VAIL
The Archbishop or Aaron?

ALEX
No. Neither one.

VAIL
(pause)
So you were looking for the tape?
(as Alex nods)
What were you going to do with it?

ALEX
Destroy it.

VAIL
Was there only one tape?

ALEX
(nodding)
He'd keep using it over and over, recording over it.

VAIL
Why'd you think Aaron had it?

ALEX
I figured maybe he got it, then went back and killed Rushman. He did kill him, didn't he?

VAIL
You know where Linda is? The others?

ALEX
No. I'm just hiding out here, man. I don't know where the rest are. I swear.

Vail looks at Goodman. A moment of understanding goes between them.

VAIL
Get up, Alex. Let's go.

Alex struggles to his feet.

ALEX

Where to?

GOODMAN

A warm bunk and three meals a day.

ALEX

What do you mean? You can't arrest me.

GOODMAN

Don't bet on it. There's a law that says it's not nice to assault a fellow citizen with a deadly weapon - but for now it's Motel 6 - on us.

EXT. - CATHEDRAL / RECTORY - DAY

Vail and Goodman exit his car and enter the rectory.

INT. - RECTORY- DAY

A uniformed officer stationed outside the crime scene glances up from City Magazine (with Vail on the cover).

DUTY OFFICER

Look who's here.

VAIL

Don't get up. Finish it, it's a good article.

DUTY OFFICER

You know the rules - nothing disturbed and nothing removed, or it's my ass.

VAIL

Relax, Pete.

Vail and Goodman step inside the bedroom. The place looks like Jackson Pollack painted it in blood. Swatches have been cut from the blood-stained carpet. He moves past the bed to the large walk-in closet.

INT. - CLOSET - DAY

Vail steps in and switches on the light. He kneels down at a VCR player and two neat stacks of video tapes in the far corner. They face out and are labeled and ordered according to sermon, subject and date.

Vail slides a finger along the first stack, hesitating at a tape near the bottom with a well-worn label suggesting it's constant

use. He slips the cassette out without tumbling the stack and carefully peels off the label -

"ALTAR BOYS - SERMON - 1/19/94"

He sticks the label onto the spine of a blank tape he pulls from his waistband, slides the fresh tape into its former spot.

INT. - VAIL'S OFFICE - DAY

The room is darkened. The VCR on "Play." Vail, hand on his hips, watches a particularly uninspiring Archbishop Rushman rehearsing a sermon on the monitor.

The image breaks up, is replaced with an equally poorly-lit shot of a girl with glasses sitting like a secretary "taking dictation." It's the girl from the Polaroid. Linda. Alex - with hair - enters the frame and slowly paces around like he's her boss. An off-screen voice speaks calmly -

RUSHMAN V.O.

Unbutton her blouse.

Alex does what he's told without breaking character.

RUSHMAN V.O.

Take off her glasses.

It goes on from there, played entirely on Vail's face as he watches. Rushman's voice-over commentary, "Okay, Alex... Good.... Now, Aaron bring the camera in closer ..." segues into the requisite moaning and grunting from the players.

VAIL

Jesus Christ...

INT. - AARON'S CELL - DAY

Aaron sits in a corner hugging his knees, rocking slowly back and forth and staring into space. Pulling back reveals a total wreckage of the room - and further back, Vail, Molly and a guard surveying the scene.

GUARD

We found it like this when we came on duty. We left it so you could see it.

VAIL

What did the night guards say?

GUARD

No mention of it in their log. There's a lot of ranting and raving on this floor...

INT. - INTERVIEW CELL - PSYCH WARD - DAY

Molly sets up the video camera as -

MOLLY

Aaron? I brought you a Coke and a piece of lemon pie.

AARON

I don't like lemon pie.

MOLLY

(pause)

You asked me for it yesterday.

She considers him a moment, then Vail, and lets it go. She hands him the container of Coke and continues setting up her video equipment.

VAIL

What happened here?

(Aaron doesn't seem to know)

You don't remember anything about last night?

AARON

Only a bad dream. A nightmare. But I don't want to talk about it.

MOLLY

(pause)

What should we talk about?

Aaron shrugs. Molly switches the camera on.

VAIL

How about Linda?

Aaron's glance shifts from Molly to Vail.

AARON

I told you. She was kind of a secretary.

MOLLY

What were her duties?

AARON

At our altar boy meetings. Bishop Rushman had her take notes.

MOLLY

(knowingly)

Were these lessons video-taped?

Now Aaron really studies him.

AARON

(pause)

I'm sorry, I don't know if I can do this right now. I'm awful tired.

Molly checks with Vail. Should they press it or leave? He answers by getting up and motioning to her to do the same.

VAIL

All right. Maybe later today. After you've had a nap. How would that be?

He raps on the steel door as Molly picks up the paper bag (the lemon pie). Vail gathers the camera equipment and raps on the door.

MOLLY

You're sure you don't want this.

(he doesn't)

All right. Get some rest.

The door is opened. To the guard -

VAIL

We're done for now.

GUARD

Let's go, kid.

INT. - VAIL'S OFFICE - LATER - NIGHT

The Polaroid of Linda and pictures of other players and suspects in the case are on a peg board trying to make sense of it Vail scrawls names, connections, cross-references, among them: "Aaron-Alex-Linda; Rushman-Shaughnessy-Martinez; South Shore; tape;" and, underlined boldly, "Third Man" A half dozen City Magazines are spread across a coffee table. Naomi has her coat on.

NAOMI

The Pinero settlement check came in. I've never seen a check with seven numbers.

VAIL

(turns to her)

Deposit it and cut a check to Joe Pinero for his share. Tell him I advise him to put it in a five year Treasury Bill.

NAOMI

First thing in the morning.

She's standing at the doorway that separates their offices.

NAOMI

I made a fresh pot of coffee - see you
Tomorrow.

VAIL

Wait a minute - ask Joey for his
mother's name and address.

NAOMI

Why?

VAIL

Just do it.

Vail rises, goes to the peg board and studies the photos, cards,
data.

VAIL

Somewhere in this jigsaw is a critical
piece.

NAOMI

What makes you so sure that Stampler's
innocent?

Vail

Lemon pie...

NAOMI

(puzzled)

Lemon pie?

VAIL

Lemon pie.

NAOMI

(shakes her head)

Goodnight.

She goes.

VAIL

(to peg board)

Come on you sonofabitch, talk to me.

INT. - INTERVIEW CELL - PSYCH WARD - NEXT MORNING

Molly's back, but Aaron doesn't look at her or the camera - which
is on again, the little red light blinking. His head is down, he
stares at the floor.

MOLLY

Aaron? How are you feeling?

(nothing)

Are you feeling any more rested?

AARON
 (nods but doesn't
 look up)
 I'm sorry yesterday, Miss Rebecca. I
 needed a nap. I'm feeling much better
 now.

The mistake doesn't escape Molly, but does Aaron. She considers him carefully, and, finally -

MOLLY
 Good. Then we can talk.

Aaron's head is down again. Molly watches him.

MOLLY
 You called me Rebecca.

AARON
 (now he looks up)
 What?

MOLLY
 I thought maybe you missed her. Maybe
 she was on your mind. Have you spoken
 to her at all since you've been in Chicago?

He doesn't answer. Molly glances at her notes as Aaron looks back down.

MOLLY
 I want to get back to the altar boy
 lessons. There was one that morning?
 I believe that's what you told Mr. Vail?
 (Aaron doesn't
 answer)
 Aaron?

Aaron looks up at her again, only this time he looks like someone else. It's his eyes. They narrow and glitter. But then another change happens, a change back, and Molly has to wonder if anything actually changed at all.

AARON
 I'm sorry Miss Molly, could you
 repeat that last question?

EXT. - CHINESE "PAGODA - ARCH" - CERMAK & WENTWORTH - NIGHT

Tourists and locals crowding "Little China." A meter maid ticketing Vail's Jaguar, parked in a red zone.

INT. - LEE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

All the tables in the main room are taken. At the rear are several private booths partitioned by black and red trellis.

PRIVATE BOOTH

Vail and Shaughnessy and a turntable with a variety of appetizers. The big man uses his chopsticks like spears.

SHAUGHNESSY

You know what people think? They think this great city runs itself. They think it gets up, goes to work, and crawls into bed at night just like they do. They're unaware of what it takes to make sure the whole damn thing doesn't break down: Crime, fire, riots -- the goddamn water pipes bursting under the city -- Christ, what a mess that was.

(stabs a spring roll)

And who does the Water Commissioner call? The contractor? No, he calls me. They all call me -- Transportation, Education, Treasury, the Mayor...

(re: food)

Goddamn, this is terrific. They call me because I keep the peace. That's my job. This city doesn't burn because I won't permit it. You think the people get that? Truth is they don't care. The dumb bastards don't even vote. They eat, sleep, watch TV, and occasional fuck their wives.

VAIL

Maybe someday they'll erect a statue to you on Michigan Avenue.

SHAUGHNESSY

(chuckles)

Or at least dedicate a park on Lakeshore Drive.

VAIL

You've got my vote, John.

SHAUGHNESSY

Your boy Pinero is not honoring his side of the deal.

VAIL

Is that what this lunch is about?

SHAUGHNESSY

In part.

VAIL

We just got the check. Pinero understands the deal. What's the other part?

SHAUGHNESSY

Your assistant has been digging around in the Archbishop's financial affairs. How is that any of your business?

VAIL

(cool)

I just wondered how much you and your friends lost on the South Shore deal.

SHAUGHNESSY

Let me tell you something, son. It's a mistake to stick your thumb in the eyes of the most powerful people in this city. Do not fuck with me, Vail.

VAIL

(loses it)

Don't fuck with you?! You son-of-a-bitch?! Fuck with you? Corruption is a way of life with you. Don't go along with the great John Shaughnessy and he'll finance a memorable wake. Don't threaten me, John. I have a feeling that South Shore is gonna jump up and bite you in the ass.

SHAUGHNESSY

(as deadly as
deadly can be)

You've just crossed the line, boy. Understand that.

VAIL

(rises)

I crossed that line a long time ago. Enjoy the egg rolls.

Vail leaves. Shaughnessy watches him go - then stabs a piece of roast pork.

INT. - PSYCH WARD / AARON'S CELL - MORNING

CAMERA MOVES slowly down the corridor. We HEAR echoing SCREAMS of inmates...

CAMERA REACHES Aaron's cell. He's wearing the suit Vail bought him. He faces a mirror, combs his hair, straightens his tie...

EXT. - CRIMINAL COURTS BUILDING - DAY

Mounted police keeping crowds in line. Press and TV vans, vendors selling drinks and hotdogs. Vail smiles and waves at people, answering no questions as he moves into the building.

INT. - CRIMINAL COURTS BUILDING - CORRIDOR - DAY

Vail enters the courtroom.

INT. - 4TH FLOOR COURTROOM - DAY

Packed. Press. Civilians. Sketch artists. Clergy.

Seated at the defense table: Vail, Goodman, Naomi and Aaron (wearing the Brooks Bros. suit). And immediately behind them - four burly sheriffs.

The prosecution table: Burt Yancy and Venable's assistants. Immediately behind them: John Shaughnessy.

They all watch Venable who is in the middle of her opening statement to the jury:

VENABLE

- You will hear evidence that the Archbishop took the defendant off the street, providing him with food, clothing and shelter. And for all of that, this

(holds up the tagged
butcher knife)

was the Archbishop's reward. The evidence will show that Aaron Stampler thrust this blade into Archbishop Rushman's body seventy-eight times - almost decapitating him - then went about desecrating the still-warm body. Forensic experts will testify that the defendant's fingerprints were found on this knife, on the rugs, the floors, the walls and banisters - throughout the Archbishop's private quarters.

(sets down the knife)

The evidence will also show that shortly after the time of death, Aaron Stampler was apprehended in a tunnel near the Cathedral, soaked in the Archbishop's blood... and...

(revealing the ring from
within her closed hand)

in possession of the Archbishop's ring.

(places ring back in pocket)

I have no apprehension, as one sometimes does at the beginning of a trial. I have nothing but confidence that once you've heard the evidence, you will reach the only conclusion any thoughtful person can - that Aaron Luke

MORE

VENABLE (ct'd)

Stampler is guilty of this grisly murder - beyond any reasonable doubt. Thank you for your service and patience.

JUDGE SHOAT

Mr. Vail.

All eyes are on Vail. He rises and walks slowly toward the jury.

VAIL

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Martin Vail. And I want you to know that almost everything you've just heard from the prosecutor is true. When discovered, my client was bathed in Archbishop Rushman's blood. The Bishop's ring was in his pocket. Aaron Stampler's fingerprints were on the murder weapon, the floors, the walls - everywhere. I will also tell you that the evidence will show that Aaron Stampler was in the apartment that night when the Archbishop was murdered. The facts, you say then, are obvious. But there's a problem. The problem is, the facts the prosecutor has chosen to tell you about are too obvious.

What she has not told you is that when you've heard all the facts, you will know that Aaron Stampler had no motive whatsoever to kill Archbishop Rushman. And you will know that many others did: the evidence will show that other altar boys in the church choir are no missing, that the Archbishop received more than fifty death threats for each of the last five years, and that some of the Bishop's investments have resulted in big losses.

Now ask yourselves, ladies and gentlemen: why would Aaron Stampler brutally murder this man who was so unusually kind to him? What possible motive could he have had for committing this terrible crime? The prosecution doesn't know and will present no facts in support of one. The answer turns out to be deceptively simple: Aaron Stampler did not kill Bishop Rushman. Someone else did. The evidence will show that some one - or others - framed this young man. The evidence will show that when Aaron Stampler went to return a borrowed book to the Archbishop's private library, he inadvertently stumbled on to a murder-in progress that triggered in Aaron a condition called a fugue state, causing him to black out. Police reports will show that when Aaron was found in that tunnel,

MORE

VAIL (ct'd)

all he could remember was the presence of someone in the shadows of the Archbishop's quarters.

Ladies and Gentlemen, that someone - and their possible accomplices - are still out there. And they're at large because the State has refused to even look for any of the many people who potentially had a motive to kill one of the most prominent figures in this city. If you remain open to all the evidence, if you insist that the truth be discovered, then I am the one who is confident today - confident you will find Aaron Stampler not guilty beyond a reasonable doubt and, in so doing, force the prosecution to do their job by bringing the real killers to justice. Thank you.

Vail goes back to the defense table and sits.

SHOAT

Call your first witness, Madam Prosecutor.

A SKETCH ARTIST

Working on a nearly complete rendering of Medical Examiner Harvey Woodside holding a handkerchief.

WOODSIDE IS ON THE STAND

nursing a head cold he probably caught from Captain Stenner. He watches Venable collecting photographs from a shaken jury foreman.

VENABLE

The People place these 32 photographs in evidence - having been identified by Doctor Woodside, County Medical Examiner.

SHOAT

So ordered; bailiff will index.

BAILIFF

Photographs 1 through 32, State number 5B

VENABLE

Dr. Woodside, the victim clearly suffered a great number of stab wounds.

WOODSIDE

Yes, he did. Seventy-eight. He tried to defend himself, which explains the cuts on his hands and forearms.

VENABLE

And your report concludes that the puncture wounds could have been fatal?

WOODSIDE

One to the chest and one to the liver - but in my view, the throat wound was the fatal one.

VENABLE

Dr. Woodside, is there any scientific question about whose fingerprints are on the knife and the walls?

WOODSIDE

(matter-of-fact)

No. They belong to the defendant.

VENABLE

And the bloody footprints leading from the bedroom to the kitchen?

WOODSIDE

The lethal throat incisions and many others were made from an angle strongly suggesting a left-handed person was using the knife.

VENABLE

To your knowledge, is the defendant left-handed?

WOODSIDE

Yes. He is.

VENABLE

Based on the physical evidence at the crime scene, do you have an opinion to a reasonable degree of certainty as to the path the killer took through the apartment?

WOODSIDE

I believe the killer entered the kitchen wearing gloves and took the carving knife from the drawer. A glove fiber was found on the knob. Then he went through the kitchen, entered the bedroom, and proceeded to attack the Bishop.

VENABLE

Tell the jury what happened next, Dr. Woodside.

WOODSIDE

The killer left a trail of bloody footprints that lengthen in distance moving away from the corpse. My analysis of this data suggests

MORE

WOODSIDE (ct'd)
that the killer was startled by something during the mutilation and ran from the bedroom, down the stairs through the kitchen, and out.

VENABLE
Thank you. No further questions at this time.

Venable returns to her chair.

Vail rises and comes around from the defense table.

VAIL
Doctor, can you swear that the same person and weapon made all the various cuts, slices, incisions, gouges, and punctures so graphically displayed in those photographs?

WOODSIDE
Do you mean, is there a possibility someone else might have made some of them using an additional instrument?

VAIL
Or instruments, yes.

WOODSIDE
I can safely say a left-handed person used a knife as the murder weapon.

VAIL
Well, what about the two potentially lethal wounds you testified about? You described them as straight-in punctures, if I heard you right.

WOODSIDE
That's correct.

VAIL
Isn't it possible, Doctor, that those two puncture wounds could have been made by a right-handed person using an ice pick or some other such instrument?

WOODSIDE
Anything is possible, Mr. Vail.

VAIL
Yes or no, Doctor. Can you tell this court to a reasonable degree of scientific certainty that no one else was in that room at the time of the murder?

WOODSIDE
(pause)

No.

VAIL
Thank you, Doctor. Now, one last question.
You've been Cook County's medical examiner
how long?

WOODSIDE
Twenty-three years.

VAIL
Twenty-three years of examining countless
murder sites?

WOODSIDE
More than I care to remember.

VAIL
Then tell me, when did you last determine
that a killer opened a drawer wearing gloves,
then removed those gloves to kill someone
with his naked hand wrapped around the
murder weapon?

WOODSIDE
(long pause)
I'll admit that it defies logic.

VAIL
So will I, Doctor. No further questions.

THE SKETCH ARTIST

working on a nearly complete rendering of Captain Abel Stenner on
the stand.

STENNER ON THE STAND

VENABLE
And what is your conclusion regarding
the defendant's claim that he saw another
person as the Archbishop was attacked.

STENNER
I believe the evidence points to a
single assailant who planned the murder,
carried it out, bungled it and got caught.

VENABLE
Your witness.

Vail approaches the witness box.

VAIL

Captain Stenner, when did you first see the accused?

STENNER

Hiding in a tunnel underneath McCormick Place.

VAIL

Did you question him?

STENNER

We chatted. I asked him his name, where he lived, that kind of thing - after I read him his rights.

VAIL

Didn't you, in fact, ask him why he killed the Archbishop?

STENNER

Something along those lines, yes.

VAIL

And didn't he say he saw someone else in the bedroom before he blacked out?

STENNER

Yes.

VAIL

And your opinion of that was -?

STENNER

I thought it was a feeble excuse for murder.

VAIL

You don't believe he experienced a blackout.

STENNER

Nope.

VAIL

As a matter of fact, you don't acknowledge that the medical world recognizes fugue states as real.

STENNER

The condition can be faked.

VAIL

You ever see someone in the grip of an epileptic seizure?

VENABLE
Objection. Irrelevant.

SHOAT
Overruled.

STENNER
Yes, as a matter of fact I have an epileptic sister.

VAIL
Does she fake her seizures?

SHOAT
That's argumentative, Counselor.

VAIL
Are you a trained physician, Captain?

STENNER
No.

VAIL
Thank you. What qualifies you as an expert on sudden blackouts induced by a fugue state?

STENNER
It's my opinion based on years of experience.

VAIL
Are you saying your belief in the defendant's guilt is based entirely on your impression he's a liar?

STENNER
The 78 stab speak for themselves.

VAIL
Are you telling this jury that 78 stab wounds indicate cold, calculated pre-meditation?

VENABLE
Objection. Call's for speculation.

SHOAT
Sustained.

VAIL
No further questions, Your Honor.

INT. - VAIL'S LAW OFFICE - NAOMI'S AREA - EVENING

Naomi "scores" the day on a chart she's made and tacked to a bulletin board. As far as she can tell, Venable's ahead. Goodman comes in from the outside.

GOODMAN

Hello, boys and girls. Read any good books lately?

NAOMI

Huh?

Vail has noticed the book in the investigator's hand and waits for him to tell him what it is. Goodman waits for Vail to ask.

VAIL

All right, what's with the book?

Goodman turns the book so Vail can see the cover - "The Scarlet Letter" - then turns it sideways so he can see the spine and the piece of masking tape, on which is printed, "B32".

VAIL

Naomi, you might want to come back in here a minute.

GOODMAN

Three fifty a day plus expenses - shame on you, Counselor.

VAIL

If we win - you'll get a bonus. A year's supply of bandaids.

Naomi has joined them.

GOODMAN

After I took the tape back, I checked the Archbishop's library. It's nothing more than a big bookcase in his study - with a rather pretentious cataloging system.

VAIL

Aaron said he was in that library.

GOODMAN

I have a feeling he was telling the truth. The B32 is the I.d. number.
(displays the book
spine to Naomi)

NAOMI

Okay.... and 156?

VAIL

Page 156?

Goodman makes himself comfortable. Licks a finger and calmly turns the pages of the book to 156. He splays it open so the others can see that a passage has been lined in yellow marker.

GOODMAN

(reading)

"No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true."

VAIL

Let me see that.

Goodman hands him the book, glances over to Naomi.

GOODMAN

I'd say somebody felt his Holiness wasn't exactly what he pretended to be. And not without reason I might add.

INT. - PSYCH WARD - NIGHT

Vail is led by a corrections officer to Aaron's cell.

INT. - AARON'S CELL - SAME TIME

Aaron glances up from a book as Vail enters the cell alone.

AARON

Hello, Mr. Vail.

VAIL

I was wondering if we could talk for a few minutes.

Vail sits - not as close to Aaron as he used to...

AARON

What do you want to talk about?

VAIL

A book.

AARON

What book?

VAIL

The Scarlet Letter by Hawthorne.

AARON

I... I... don't know that book.

VAIL

You know it all right. You were impressed enough to mark a certain passage in it. A passage to do with masks.

Aaron shifts uneasily. Gets up and paces but doesn't speak.

VAIL

If you're lying to me, Aaron; I'll stick that needle in your arm myself. Don't make a fool of me!

Aaron stares at the cell floor and mumbles incoherently.

VAIL

Answer me, goddamnit!

Aaron looks up at the ceiling, raises his arms and seems to be pleading with some private deity.

AARON

Roy? Please, Roy...

Vail freezes, spooked by Aaron's aberrant behavior.

AARON

(tough, street voice)

What the fuck do you want?

The voice is street. The timber tough and older. The accent gone. A frightening, and riveting metamorphosis has occurred. His lips are drawn back, his jaw muscles flex. His eyes are slits - his arms seem to swell and he swaggers as he paces.

AARON/ROY

Quit crying you fucking shitkicking coward.

(stops, turns,
studies Vail)

What the fuck are you looking at, Clarence? Or am I wrong - ain't you Clarence Darrow!

He howls maniacally. Vail steels himself trying to get a grip on his nerves.

VAIL

I'm looking at you, Roy.

AARON/ROY

You cocksucker. You fuck'n shyster! You think that Hawthorne quote is gonna bring me out? Is that what the shrink

MORE

AARON/ROY (ct'd)
told you? You want me to come out in front of the jury so Aaron is off the hook. You lose Clarence because the little wimp's gonna die.

VAIL
If that happens, you die with him.

AARON/ROY
Wrong Clarence! Fucking wrong! It goes like this Little Aaron gets the needle and I get someone else. That's the way it goes down. I been with that creep too long anyway, the hell with him. He couldn't handle all that holy blood. You should've been there Clarence - the old bastard bled like a pig.

VAIL
Where's Aaron?

AARON/ROY
(looks around)
Whimpering in a corner somewhere. He didn't have the stomach to do what had to be done. Had to ask me.
(imitating Aaron)
Caint take it nor more, Roy. Bishop's evil, Roy. Please, Roy. You gotta do this for me, Roy. Just this one last thing -
(back to Roy smiling)
I got the Bishop to drop the mask.

VAIL
The mask -?

AARON/ROY
Jesus Christ, where the hell did they find you?

VAIL
Did you kill Rushman because of Linda?
Roy stares at Vail a second, then explodes -

AARON/ROY
You know about the tape!
He comes back at Vail and grabs him by the throat.

AARON/ROY
I told him. Get the tape! Get the
MORE

AARON/ROY (ct'd).
 fucking tape! That's motive, you prick.
 But he froze. Blacked out. Then split.

He throws Vail aside like a rag doll, who crashes into the wall.
 Roy leaps across the room grabs Vail, pins him.

VAIL
 Let go of me, Roy.

AARON/ROY
 What are gonna do Counselor - have me
 (smiles and releases Vail)
 indicted. You're lucky I like you, Clarence.
 For an asshole shyster you stand up pretty
 good - but don't try to lay this off on me.
 (Smashes his fist
 into his palm)
 Aaron gets the beating; I get the pain.
 He get's laid. He comes. I watch. He
 gets pissed off. I do the killing. It's
 over! I want that little shit dead. I
 hope the poison takes a long time. Now
 get the fuck out of here!

Roy goes to cot and slumps down onto it. His hands to his face.
 Vail straightens his rumpled shirt collar and tie, brushes back
 his hair. The cell-door slat slides open.

OFFICER V.O.
 You okay, Mr. Vail?

Vail's eyes riveted to slumped figure on the cot.

VAIL
 Yeah, Pete - I'm fine..

The boy on the cot tucks his knees to his chest and rocks. And
 rocks. Aaron is back.

INT. - PSYCHIATRIC WARD CAFETERIA - LATER

Kitchen workers clear pans and dishes at the serving area. Vail
 and Molly aren't eating anyway; they're sitting at a table in the
 almost deserted dining room. There are visible bruises on either
 side of Vail's neck.

MOLLY
 Multiple Personality Disorder.

Vail just stares. Finally, incredulous -

VAIL
Sybil?

MOLLY

In my opinion, yes. Roy must be a manifestation of Aaron's frustration and anger. The fugue states permit him to extract revenge unknowingly through Roy. When Aaron feels hurt or pained or threatened - Roy kills.

He hates the possibility. He doesn't want to hear it.

MOLLY

I kept seeing the signs - the background, the abuse, the fugues, the ellipses in thought, this self hatred manifested by Roy.
(the video)
You haven't noticed he's ambidextrous.

VAIL

No. I haven't.

MOLLY

Neither did I, until today. He was sitting there drawing, with his right hand. I know this screws up everything you're doing but if my diagnosis is right, Aaron may actually want to die.

VAIL

He may get his wish. I don't want you to be alone with him anymore.

MOLLY

I've handled worse. The clinically insane have an uncanny vision of truth. You have to be honest with them. I'm sorry I didn't detect it sooner.

VAIL

It's not your fault. It's not anyone's fault. Christ, even if Shoat granted me a change of plea which is almost never allowed - I'd have to prove guilt by reason of insanity; it almost never works. And when you consider the victim's power and prestige - forget it. We've got to go on with what we have.

INT. - PSYCH WARD - AARON'S CELL - NIGHT

Aaron holding his knees rocking. The screams of other inmates reverberate.

INT. - VAIL'S OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Vail, Molly, Naomi and Goodman. Folders and other papers are stacked on a table. Nearby, the altar boy tape. Vail in shirtsleeves. Holds a drink. Studies the chart on wall. Shakes his head in dismay. They watch him. He looks exhausted.

GOODMAN

Look, we can prove his father brutalized him. His teacher seduced him. His mother was out of it. And the topper is Rushman. The one man Aaron trusted forces him to tape his girlfriend doing numbers with the altar boys.

MOLLY

That's enough psychic damage to destroy anyone.

VAIL

But its no excuse for murder.

GOODMAN

Suppose you laid it out for Shoat in chambers? I mean the MPD thing.

VAIL

Not a chance. Shoat's an elected official and the citizens want Aaron dead. No judge is going to let this drift into a mistrial.

Vail walks to the bar, freshens his drink, loosens his collar.

VAIL

I've saved some real losers. I mean guys that fuck up their own wet dreams. I've had them all: first degree murder, solicitation to commit murder, manslaughter - voluntary, involuntary, bribery, rape, conspiracy, forcible detention, extortion, money-laundering, embezzlement - all colors, all ages, all genders - all guilty. But if they create a shadow of doubt in my mind, I take them on because I can create that same doubt with at least one juror.

(he comes around bar,
shakes his head)

But this kid, this Huck Finn of Creekside is innocent - he's a mental paraplegic and he's gonna die.

Vail goes to the desk, picks up the porno cassette, balances it in his hand as if Aaron's life is in his palm.

VAIL

We've got one shot. This tape graphically demonstrates that the beloved Rushman was a very sick man. The tape also sets up the possibility of other suspects - every altar boy and choir boy could have had reason to kill Rushman. This may be the tip of the iceberg. At the very least this tape will generate sympathy for the defendant.

NAOMI

It could have a reverse spin. By using it you're defaming the memory of a saint. People don't want to know about that.

VAIL

Right. Which is why I'm not going to introduce it - but it's going in.

INT. - VENABLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She's working, reading police reports and interview transcripts and making notes. The small living room is cluttered.

There's a knock. Venable rises, walks to the door. Opens it. No one there. She peers out at the hall. No one. She looks down. A bulky manila envelope on her doorstep.

She returns inside with it. There's no name, no label, nothing. She feels it. Opens it. Finds a video cassette inside, also unmarked.

She notices the cassette has been cued to the middle of the tape. She slips it into her VCR, switches on the TV and hits "Play."

It's a copy of the altar boy tape. Rushman rehearsing a sermon a moment before cutting to the "secretary" taking notes and Alex coming in and unbuttoning the blouse...

Venable just stares in revulsion.

INT. - VAIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Vail sips a drink listening to "La Donna" by the Gipsy Kings - Pinero's CD. The phone rings. Vail finally gets it on the third ring -

VAIL

Hello?

VENABLE V.O.

What the hell is this?

VAIL

Who is this?

VENABLE V.O.

You know damn well who it is. Meet me at the Alibi. Ten minutes.

The call disconnects. Vail smiles. Rises. Picks up his jacket.

VAIL

The things we do in the name of justice.

INT. - THE ALIBI BAR - NIGHT

A few late night losers.

VAIL AND VENABLE - A BOOTH IN REAR

She smokes. She's tense. Vail is cool.

VENABLE

Where'd you get it?

VAIL

Janet, I swear to you. I don't know anything about it.

VENABLE

And I'm starting at Fullback for the Bears. I know we've had a rather fucked up relationship but there was always a semblance of honesty.

VAIL

Chill out for a second and think. If this tape is all you say it is the last thing I'd do is give it to you - it's motive for Chrissake.

VENABLE

You had to give it to me. Now the jury will despise me, not you - for dishonoring the Bishop's memory. I'm the vindictive bitch pursuing a guilty verdict at any price while you sit back and gain sympathy for your abused client.

VAIL

No one's forcing you to use it.

VENABLE

You're a failed Catholic - I'm not. I have no intention of using this tape.

MORE

VENABLE (ct'd)
(signals waiter)
Another stinger, please.
(to Vail)
I offered you a goddamn deal at the
risk of my professional career and now
you're sand-bagging me.

VAIL
Forget about it. Shaughnessy will
never let you use it anyway.

VENABLE
Fuck him and the horse he rode in on.

VAIL
(smiles)
Well, well - fuck Shaughnessy -

She lights another cigarette off the hot end of the butt.

VENABLE
Now I'm chain smoking - thanks a lot.

VAIL
I wish I could convince you - this
is the first I've heard of a porno
tape.

The waiter places her drink. She takes a big gulp.

VENABLE
Save it, Marty. Pretty cute sending a
messenger. You think I'm going to open
a door with a tiger waiting for me on the
other side.

VAIL
Well, you had better come up with
a motive pretty soon - time's running
out.

VENABLE
We had thing for each other once but you
don't really know me.

She stares at him, sips her drink and notices the purple bruises
on his neck.

VENABLE
Someone give you hickeys on both
sides of your neck?

VAIL
Everytime my ex-wife's attorney calls
I get those bruises.

VENABLE
And what did the girl look like?

VAIL
(pauses)
Happy. Let's go to the Blue Note,
listen to some jazz.

She drinks her drink, rises.

VENABLE
How can your timing be so perfect in
court and so awful in life?

She leaves. CAMERA HOLDS on him. A trace of sadness at how his
ploy has shaken out.

EXT. - NEIGHBORHOOD CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT - RAIN

A few come out - a few come in. Homeless woman huddled inside a
carton.

INT. - CHURCH

Almost deserted. Votive candles burn. A palpable silence
disturbed only by the rain hitting the stained glass windows.

VENABLE

On her knees in front of the statue of Mary. She genuflects.
Rises - moves to the altar and lights a candle.

CLOSE - REVERSE - VENABLE'S FACE

The flickering candlelight dances in her eyes.

SHOOTING THROUGH: GLASS WINDOWS INTO VENABLE'S OFFICE - DAY

She sits behind her desk studying forensic evidence and dictating
notes to a young female paralegal. Shaughnessy comes around the
corner office, and opens Venable's door.

INT. - VENABLE'S OFFICE

SHAUGHNESSY
(to paralegal)
Would you be kind enough to leave
for a moment?

PARALEGAL
Of course.

She gathers up her files and leaves.

SHAUGHNESSY

I've seen the tape.

VENABLE

(rubs her eyes)

Pretty graphic isn't it?

SHAUGHNESSY

Listen carefully - I don't want any mistakes. I forbid the introduction of that "altar boy" tape.

She stares at him a beat. The anger and juice rising.

VENABLE

You've got a short memory, John.
I never wanted this case - remember?

SHAUGHNESSY

I know but you are -

VENABLE

Don't interrupt me! Where the hell do you come off saying you "forbid" ? Are you suggesting that I suppress critical evidence in a capital case? As long as I'm the lead attorney for the people, I intend, God help me, to use that tape. If that doesn't sit well - I'm out of here.

SHAUGHNESSY

Slow down... I know you're overwrought but think for a minute. You've been around long enough to know that Vail sent that cassette - and it wasn't out of any priori need to disclose. He's a highly skilled, ruthless litigator. Once you introduce the tape, you're shifting the jury's empathy from the victim to the accused. You're putting the Church on trial.

Venable rises, lights a cigarette.

VENABLE

Don't throw the Church at me, John. The Catholic Church has survived all manner of aberrations for two thousand years: Mad Popes, inquisitions, invidious political alliances and worse. But it endures. It endures because the vast majority of its servants are dedicated men and women. And it will survive

MORE

VENABLE (ct'd)
this trial. My job is to protect
the public safety and I don't give a
backseat fuck where the chips fall.

Shaughnessy glares at her, turns and at the door -

SHAUGHNESSY
I'd advise you to remember your political
aspirations, Counselor.

He slams the door. She walks to the window overlooking the city
and blows the smoke against the pane.

VENABLE
(sotto)
Fucking Vail...

INT. - COURTROOM - DAY

Vail watches Venable at the prosecution table, knowing she's
wrestling with whether - and how - to introduce the tape.

SHOAT
Madame Prosecutor?

VENABLE
(a long pause)
The State calls Thomas Goodman.

Vail does a double-take. So do Goodman and Naomi.

VAIL
Objection, Your Honor. Not only is
Mr. Goodman not listed as a State
witness - he's also part of the defense
team and therefore not at liberty to discuss
any aspect of the case in this courtroom.

SHOAT
Please approach the bench.

Vail and Venable cross toward the judge for a sidebar
conversation, Vail giving her a what-the-hell-is-this look on the
way. Shaughnessy, obviously, doesn't know what's going on
either.

VENABLE
Your Honor, I assure you I will not
question Mr. Goodman on matters that
could compromise client-attorney
privilege. Believe me, the last thing
I want here is a mistrial.

SHOAT

Without Mr. Vail's consent, I have to deny your request to call this witness. Let's proceed.

VAIL

Wait a minute. Within the parameters Miss Venable had described, I have no objection.

SHOAT

All right, let's proceed.

Those at the defense and prosecution tables watch the trio up at the bench. Finally, Vail and Venable come away from it and head back to their respective tables.

SHOAT

Miss Venable.

VENABLE

The People call Thomas Goodman.

THE SKETCH ARTIST

draws Goodman on the stand as we hear his swearing-in.

Venable approaches the witness -

VENABLE

Mr. Goodman, have you ever been to my apartment? By that I mean my apartment building.

Goodman steals a glance at Vail. Vail nods faintly.

GOODMAN

I've been there.

VENABLE

To what purpose?

GOODMAN

I was delivering something.

VENABLE

For whom?

GOODMAN

Martin Vail.

VENABLE

Mr. Vail sent you to deliver something to me?

GOODMAN

Yes.

VENABLE

What was it?

GOODMAN

A video tape.

Venable crosses to her table, meeting Shaughnessy's stare on the way, and takes from her briefcase a video tape.

VENABLE

Could this have been the video tape you delivered for Mr. Vail?

GOODMAN

It appears to be.

VENABLE

The People place this half-inch video cassette in evidence, Your Honor.

SHOAT

So ordered. Bailiff, please index.

VENABLE

Mr. Goodman, where did Mr. Vail get this tape?

GOODMAN

From the closet of Archbishop Rushman.

VENABLE

Did someone take it from the Archbishop's closet?

GOODMAN

Yes.

VENABLE

And who was that?

GOODMAN

Mr. Vail discovered that cassette while examining the crime scene. I made a transfer for him and returned it.

VENABLE

Can you describe for me what's on this tape?

GOODMAN

A sermon by Archbishop Rushman, a rehearsal
MORE

GOODMAN (ct'd)
of a sermon I should say... followed by...
a kind of home movie.

VENABLE
A home movie... of what?

GOODMAN
Some altar boys and a girl.

VENABLE
Doing what?

GOODMAN
Having sex.

A loud murmur runs through the courtroom.

VENABLE
A porno movie?

GOODMAN
Yes.

VENABLE
Why is it that you connected the
Archbishop to this tape?

GOODMAN
The Archbishop's voice is on the tape
orchestrating the action.

VENABLE
There's no mistake?

GOODMAN
Just play it, Counselor.

Now Shoat has to silence the crowd in the room. Shaughnessy
looks like he wants Venable's head. Once the noise dies down -

VENABLE
Does the defendant appear to you to
be enjoying performing in this film
with his girlfriend?

Goodman glances again to Aaron, with a look of apology. Vail, on
the other hand, watches the jury members.

GOODMAN
The defendant is not on camera.

VENABLE
Why is that?

GOODMAN
He operated the camera.

VENABLE
He took the pictures of his girlfriend
engaged in all manner of sex with his
friends?

GOODMAN
Yes.

VENABLE
Willingly? Or was he coerced?

VAIL
Objection Your Honor, calls for
speculation.

SHOAT
Sustained.

VENABLE
No further questions.

SHOAT
Does the Defense wish to cross?

VAIL
No, Your Honor.

VENABLE
The Prosecution rests.

SHOAT
You're excused, Mr. Goodman. Jury
members, you will have an opportunity
to view this tape as soon as it can be
authenticated. Court is in recess -

He bangs the gavel. Venable gathers her things. She glances
over at Shaughnessy who is so irate with her he can't seem to get
out of his chair. As she walks past him, she sarcastically says:

VENABLE
Cheer up. We're going to win.

INT. - COURTHOUSE CORRIDOR - DAY

Vail runs the gauntlet of the press without comment. Venable, on
the other hand is surrounded by reporters.

VENABLE
I'm trying to convict a killer, and
last time I looked the State of Illinois
still observes the separation of Church
MORE

VENABLE (ct'd)
and State. This case is about murder
not religion.

INT. - VAIL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vail tosses and turns in his sleep. The phone on the nighttable rings insistently. His eyes open. He registers time and place and reaches for the receiver.

VAIL
Vail...
(his eyes open wide
he sits up)
Christ... I'm on my way.

EXT. - LAKE MICHIGAN - PRE-DAWN LIGHT

TWO FROGMEN who have just surfaced in the icy waters. We see the same cop who earlier gave Vail the case file - and two other UNIFORMED COPS. One of them signals to the crane operator on a police barge. The operator puts the winch in motion. The screech of a winch breaks the general quiet.

CLOSER IN as a corpse is hoisted from the depths of the water, water sloshing out from his clothes.

REVERSE ON VAIL who stands on the barge, his collar turned up against the wind, as he watches. The body is swung over the barge and lowered to the deck. It's Joe Pinero. His chest shredded by 9mm slugs.

VAIL - FULL SCREEN

His eyes rise from the corpse. He stares out at the horizon line. His expression is one of profound sorrow and helplessness. The SHOT HOLDS for a long beat.

INT. - COURTROOM - SAME MORNING

Aaron, Goodman and Naomi stare at Vail who contemplatively taps a pencil on the table top. Vail turns around, glances at the gallery, and sees Alderman Martinez seated behind them.

SHOAT
Mr. Vail? Are you prepared to proceed
with your first witness?

VAIL
(rising)
Yes, Your Honor, the defense calls John
Shaughnessy.

There's an uproar. Goodman and Naomi stare at Vail as if he's lost his mind. D.A. Yancy looks to Venable to object but she doesn't. He gets up -

YANCY

Your Honor, the People object. Mr. Shaughnessy has never been identified as a possible witness and cannot possibly offer testimony germane to this case.

SHOAT

Sustained.

VAIL

Your Honor -

Vail approaches the bench. Venable walks over and joins Vail and Shoat for another sidebar -

VAIL

My client is on trial for his life. He has from the beginning, contended that a third person was in that bedroom and -

SHOAT

- and you expect Mr. Shaughnessy to somehow confirm that?

VAIL

Your Honor, the Constitution of the United States takes precedence permitting the calling of any witness to promulgate evidence of innocence. This is clearly stated in the 6th Amendment and is also profound in the Brady Vs. Maryland. The defense is well within its rights to call this witness; for the record, I'm willing to state that Mr. Shaughnessy is a reluctant witness.

Shoat motions to his LAW CLERK who comes over. They have a brief whispered conversation before Shoat nods, sighs and addresses Vail -

SHOAT

Take the stand Mr. Shaughnessy.

Shaughnessy is sworn in and is seated in the box.

VAIL

Mr. Shaughnessy, do you serve on the board of an organization known as the Rushman Foundation?

SHAUGHNESSY

Yes. I have that honor.

VAIL

Would you briefly explain the nature and purpose of the Rushman Foundation.

SHAUGHNESSY

Its purpose is to fund charitable projects.

VAIL

How does the Foundation finance its various charitable works?

SHAUGHNESSY

By contributions of corporate and private investors and managed by a volunteer board of directors.

VAIL

And how are these charitable funds used?

SHAUGHNESSY

To help finance various city and state housing projects.

VAIL

Under the flag of Archbishop Rushman's name?

SHAUGHNESSY

I don't know what you mean by "flag". The investments are made in the name of the Rushman Foundation.

VAIL

Is it fair to say these projects required the approval and blessing of the Archbishop?

SHAUGHNESSY

Of course.

VAIL

Was that also true in the case of the now bankrupt South Shore Housing Development?

SHAUGHNESSY

(shifts in his chair)

Yes.

VAIL

Sir, can you tell the court why the South Shore project has been abandoned?

SHAUGHNESSY

There was a difference of opinion as to the costs.

VAIL

Wasn't there also a divergence of opinion on the City Council?

SHAUGHNESSY

I don't recall but the approval of any costly project is rarely unanimous.

Vail's tone softens dramatically. He becomes almost collegial.

VAIL

(smiles)

I don't know why we're so formal - can I call you "John"? Would that be all right?

SHAUGHNESSY

That would be fine.

VAIL

Thank you. Can I have a moment Your Honor?

SHOAT

Certainly.

Vail goes back to the desk and acts as though he's seeking a document but whispers to Goodman and Naomi:

VAIL

Here we go.

He returns to the podium and microphone.

VAIL

(oozing geniality)

John, you know a young man named -
(he checks a document)
Pinero? Joseph Pinero?

SHAUGHNESSY

Yes.

VAIL

In what connection do you know Mr. Pinero?

SHAUGHNESSY

I believe he sued the city for assault and battery.

VAIL

And was he successful in his lawsuit?

SHAUGHNESSY

You represented him. You ought to know.

VAIL

I represent a lot of people, John - they come and go - now if you know, please tell the court how this action was resolved.

Shaughnessy glances at Venable expecting an objection but she seems to be studying a document. She glances up from time to time so that we know she's enjoying this.

VAIL

Did you understand my question, John?

SHAUGHNESSY

Yes. Mr. Pinero won a large monetary award.

VAIL

Were there any stipulations to that award?

Shaughnessy squirms - tucks at his collar. Venable finally rises.

VENABLE

Objection. Relevance?

SHOAT

I assume this line is foundational Mr. Vail?

VAIL

It certainly is, Your Honor.

SHOAT

Objection overruled. Witness may answer.

SHAUGHNESSY

Mr. Pinero was to leave the state.

VAIL

Is that a usual stipulation to an egregious battery settlement?

SHAUGHNESSY

I wouldn't know.

VAIL

Didn't you authorize that settlement?

SHAUGHNESSY
Pinero was a drug dealer. I did what
I thought was proper.

VAIL
You said "was" - why?

SHAUGHNESSY
No reason.

VAIL
(gently)
Have you seen Mr. Pinero lately?

SHAUGHNESSY
No.

VAIL
(hard)
I have - early this morning. I
viewed his body - riddled with bullets
and fished out of the lake. I'd say
he's left the state.

VENABLE
Objection. Inflammatory and baseless.

SHOAT
Sustained. You're on thin ice, Mr. Vail.

VAIL
John, do you know Alderman Martinez?

SHAUGHNESSY
I've seen him at City Hall.

VAIL
Doesn't Martinez represent the Latino
district in which the late Mr. Pinero
exerted a strong influence?

SHAUGHNESSY
I have no idea.

VAIL
Didn't the failed South Shore project
involve Mr. Martinez's district?

SHAUGHNESSY
Yes. I believe so.

VAIL
And wasn't there a difference of opinion
between the investors and the late
Archbishop?

SHAUGHNESSY

Alderman Martinez had convinced the Archbishop that South Shore would displace a large portion of the district's Latin population. The Archbishop agreed with him.

VAIL

I take it you did not share the Archbishop's humanitarian concerns?

SHAUGHNESSY

Yes, Mr. Vail, I did share the Bishop's humanitarian concerns.

VAIL

With whom? Certainly not Mr. Pinero.

Yancy glares and nudges Venable to object but she does not.

VAIL

How much money was invested in this failed South Shore enterprise?

SHAUGHNESSY

(pause)

Sixty million dollars.

There's an audible murmur from the spectators.

VAIL

Isn't it a fact, Mr. Shaughnessy, that Archbishop Rushman refused to permit the investors - you being one of them - to write off their South Shore losses as charitable contributions?

SHAUGHNESSY

(pause)

I don't recall.

VAIL

Isn't it a fact that you and the other Foundation members used the late Archbishop as an unwitting laundryman for an illegal slush fund?

VENABLE

Objection. Inflammatory.

SHOAT

Mr. Vail, now I'm warning you with a threat of contempt -

VAIL

(ignoring Shoat)

Isn't it true you reduced our late, beloved Archbishop to the status of "bagman?" A tax shelter in a red robe?

SHOAT

You're this close -

VAIL

Didn't you and your South Shore investors have sixty million reason to kill Bishop Rushman?

SHOAT

That's it -

SHAUGHNESSY

You little cock -

VAIL

You're not only a thief - you're a killer and I wish to Christ I could nail you.

SHOAT

You're in contempt, Mr. Vail - ten thousand dollars worth. Court recorder will strike this witness's entire testimony. The jury is ordered to disregard it. Witness is excused, court will take a brief recess.

Shoat bangs his gavel. The crowd rises's. The press dogs Shaughnessy as he shoves his way toward the exit.

VENABLE

Rises, whispers to her paralegals and turns to leave. Yancy confronts her.

YANCY

You won't be able to run for dogcatcher

VENABLE

(smiles)

I never even considered that office.

EXT. - STEPS OF CRIMINAL COURTS BLDG. - LADY JUSTICE TOWERS ABOVE - DAY

As Shaughnessy exits, Yancy bulls his way forward to clear a path through the swarming press: There are shouts of: "Is South Shore gonna be audited?" "What do you know about the Pinero hit?" "Was the Archbishop your bagman?" "Why did you want Pinero out of the state?"

Shaughnessy looks straight ahead as he goes to his waiting limo. Yancy shouts "Later boys. The State's Attorney will answer all your questions at City Hall."

The chauffeur opens the door and grim-faced Shaughnessy gets in, Yancy runs around to the other side and snaps at the chauffeur:

YANCY

Move it, Luis!

INT. - LIMO

The faces of shouting newspeople pressed against windows - Shaughnessy is impassive, stares ahead.

HIGH ANGLE - THE SCENE

The limo pulls away leaving unanswered questions and a frustrated press corps.

INT. - COURTROOM -DAY

Packed. Expectant. Molly Arrington is on the witness stand.

VAIL

Dr. Arrington, do you have any idea how much time the State's medical experts spent examining the defendant?

MOLLY

Approximately sixty hours.

VAIL

During that time, did he ever experience - did you ever witness what is medically referred to as a fugue state - or blackout?

MOLLY

Yes.

VAIL

On how many occasions?

MOLLY

Two, I believe.

VAIL

Now, are you talking about light-headedness or fainting spells of the variety most of us have experienced at one time or another?

MOLLY

No, I'm speaking of the kind that almost always accompanies schizophrenia or MPD.

VAIL
Can you explain MPD?

MOLLY
Multiple Personality Disorder.

VENABLE
Objection, Your Honor -

VAIL
Dr. Arrington is merely stating what she personally observed -

VENABLE
Your Honor, I request a sidebar.

She brushes past Vail on her way to the bench. Vail follows and joins her for a sidebar with Shoat.

VENABLE
Your Honor - if he wants to question his client's sanity, I'd be happy to let him if he changes his plea from Not Guilty to Guilty by Reason of Insanity.

VAIL
My plea remains Not Guilty.

VENABLE
Fine. Not Guilty means what it says, Your Honor. Mr. Vail should not be allowed to discuss mental disorders of any kind.

SHOAT
She's absolutely right, Vail, you can't have it both ways.

VAIL
Your Honor, I am merely trying to establish a medical foundation for blackouts.

VENABLE
That's not what he's doing. He's saying the defendant is mentally unbalanced.

VAIL
No, I'm not. Again, Your Honor, I'm attempting to prove the defendant suffers from blackouts - seizures of unconsciousness.

Shoat studies him.

SHOAT
I'll allow you to continue if you tread very, very carefully with this witness.

VAIL

Thank you, Your Honor.

They come away from the bench, Venable going to her table and whispers something to an assistant. Vail returns to the examining lectern.

VAIL

Dr. Arrington, without mentioning the medical condition you previously referred to can you tell me - what are some of the causes of blackouts?

MOLLY

There are many, but I'm not sure how much I can elaborate within these legal restrictions.

VAIL

Let's try approaching it this way. Did the defendant, in his conversations with you, ever discuss his father?

MOLLY

Yes, he did. His father worked in a Kentucky coal mine. The "black hole," as Aaron calls it. He also beat Aaron on many occasions.

VAIL

Did Aaron say how his father died?

MOLLY

Yes. It was a mining accident.

VAIL

What about Aaron's mother? Did he discuss her with you?

MOLLY

Yes. She spent the last several years of her life in an asylum in Morgan City, Kentucky.

VAIL

Why?

MOLLY

She was diagnosed - can I say it?

VAIL

Well, you're speaking about her, and it's a matter of record -
(more to Shoat)
- so I don't see why not.

MOLLY

She was schizophrenic.

Vail glances at Shoat, who allows it with a slight negative shake of his head.

VAIL

Could constant beatings, a mother's mental instability and a violent family death produce, in your opinion, disorientation in a 15-year-old - any 15-year old.

VENABLE

Objection, Your Honor.

SHOAT

Too close for comfort, Mr. Vail.
Sustained.

VAIL

(to Molly)

Is it possible - rather I should say, could a reasonable medical assumption be made - that Archbishop Rushman was murdered while the defendant - for whatever reason - was blacked out?

VENABLE

Objection.

VAIL

I didn't say anything that hasn't already been said.

SHOAT

Overruled.

MOLLY

Medically that is possible, yes.

VAIL

Is it also possible that someone wielding a knife and attacking the Archbishop could have been the actual trigger for such a blackout?

VENABLE

Objection.

SHOAT

Overruled.

MOLLY

Yes.

VAIL

In your opinion - and we realize it is your opinion - is Aaron Stampler capable of murder?

MOLLY

No. Aaron is too timid to express normal anger and frustration. He keeps these emotions repressed which is why his psyche has splintered and created an entirely separate personality that is.

VENABLE

Your Honor -

VAIL

I didn't say it -

SHOAT

The jury will disregard the last statement from this witness, as will the court. Mr. Vail - I remind you that you've been warned. Twice now. Do you really want to pursue this line of questioning? I suggest you think long and hard before you answer.

VAIL

No further questions, Your Honor.

SHOAT

Madam Prosecutor, do you wish to cross?

VENABLE

Yes, Your Honor.

Venable approaches the lectern.

VENABLE

Since you brought it up Dr. Arrington, against the instructions of this court - I'm curious to know is schizophrenia or MPD your primary area of expertise?

MOLLY

Yes, I've had years of experience with patients suffering from MPD.

VENABLE

Patients who have experienced blackouts?

MOLLY

(pause)

In some cases.

VENABLE

How many cases of MPD induced blackouts have you personally dealt with - just an estimate.

MOLLY

I'd say hundreds.

VENABLE

Have you ever known this condition to be faked?

MOLLY

Well I -

VENABLE

Yes or no, Doctor - have you ever known this condition to be faked?

MOLLY

(distracted)

Yes...

VENABLE

Thank you. No further questions.

Shoat excuses the witness. Venable tosses Vail a smug look on her cross back to the prosecution table. Molly leaves the stand and, as she passes the defense table, pauses as if to say something, but thinks better of it and continues out.

It's a dejected group at the defense table. Aaron, Goodman and Naomi stare at Vail who contemplatively taps a pencil on the table top.

SHOAT

This is a good time for our lunch recess.

(bangs gavel)

Court will resume at 1:30 p.m.

INT. - ALIBI BAR - DAY

Noisy, crowded: lawyers, clients, paralegals, business types, a few glamorous women - full tilt of lunch and martini's.

Vail's making his way from the entrance towards the rear - nods, waves at colleagues - his arm is suddenly grabbed by Connerman who holds a whisky-soda.

CONNERMAN

Venable shot your shrink down.

VAIL

Happens...

CONNERMAN

One thing though - you sure as hell torpedoed Shaughnessy - he'll be answering questions for 30 years.

VAIL

He ought to do 30 years.

Vail keeps moving and bumps into Venable who has crossed from the bar.

VENABLE

Marty - I'm sorry about Pinero.

VAIL

So am I. Should've handcuffed him and sat alongside, first class to Mexico City; at least his mother will get the money. Listen, thanks for letting me run away with Shaughnessy.

VENABLE

It was my pleasure.

VAIL

Rough on you, I guess.

VENABLE

Not really - Yancy is sponsoring me for City Dogcatcher -
(pause)

You should have tried the insanity route. It's a no win case, Marty.

VAIL

You look terrific, Janet - maybe when it's over we'll -

VENABLE

Maybe -

They stare at each other for a beat, jostled by customers and each go their own way.

CAMERA MOVES with Vail as he heads toward a rear booth where Rebecca Kramer sips a martini and smokes.

Vail sits down opposite her and signals the waiter.

VAIL

Vodka, rocks, splash.

He then turns to her. She wears a black dress that makes a case for simplicity. Her thick hair frames her face. She's not unattractive.

VAIL

It was kind of you to come.

REBECCA

I'm glad you asked.

VAIL

You understand the spot you're in.

REBECCA

More or less.

VAIL

Think "more". You may ruin your life
and still not save Aaron's.

REBECCA

I understand.

VAIL

Okay, let's eat before the ulcers
kick in. The crab cakes are terrific.

REBECCA

Anything you say...

INT. - COURTROOM - DAY

Vail rises.

VAIL

The defense calls Ms. Rebecca Kramer.

He glances at Aaron, whose face shows concern.

REBECCA - ON STAND

Vail tries to put her at ease with a pleasant manner.

VAIL

You're one of the very few people
Ms. Kramer, who can tell us about the
defendant's character. You've known
Aaron for many years.

REBECCA

(nodding)

I was his teacher. I had him in my
classroom from 7th grade on. It was a
one-room schoolhouse.

VAIL

What kind of boy was he? How would you
describe him?

Lou Waltz and George mouth to each other "sweet".

REBECCA

Sweet - bright, sensitive, caring - and sad. He didn't come from the stablest of homes.

VAIL

We've heard about his very difficult and tragic homelife. His father beat and -

VENABLE

Your Honor, I'm sorry, but is Ms. Kramer on the stand, or Mr. Vail?

SHOAT

I agree. Mr. Vail, please refrain from testifying.

VAIL

Miss Kramer you described Aaron as sweet, sensitive and caring - correct?

REBECCA

And sad.

Vail nods. The, with a glance to Aaron and back to Rebecca, changes the tone of his questioning from gentle to harsh.

VAIL

You used another word to describe him when we spoke last month.

REBECCA

Did I?

VAIL

You said Aaron was beautiful. At the time it seemed a rather strange adjective coming from a schoolteacher describing her young student.

REBECCA

I may have said that.

VAIL

You did. I'm sure you remember. I certainly do. Because it made me think. And that made me snoop. Remember? You caught me poking around your bedroom and you threw me out.

REBECCA

I asked you to leave.

VAIL

And I left. But I saw something in that bedroom before I left. A snapshot. It was in a place of honor on your night table.

(another half-glance
to Aaron)

I'll describe it to the court, and if you disagree with my description, we can get a search warrant, and present it to the court.

REBECCA

I don't think that will be necessary.

VAIL

I don't think so either. Feel free to interrupt any time you think I'm not doing it justice. The picture showed you and the defendant - when he was about what, 14 years old -?

REBECCA

I believe so.

VAIL

- sitting together in the living room of your house. You had your arm draped around him in a way which I can only describe as suggestive. Is that a fair assessment?

REBECCA

I suppose a stranger could regard the pose as suggestive.

VAIL

Apart from the suggestive pose, I became curious about, who took it. I decided you did - using a camera with one of those self-timers on it.

REBECCA

I took it with one of those cameras, yes.

VAIL

How old was Aaron when you started having sex with him?

A loud buzz and murmur. The judge bangs the gavel for order.

REBECCA

Thirteen.

VAIL

Thirteen. That's unusually young, don't you think?

REBECCA

Yes, but it wasn't the way you make it sound. Aaron was in pain. He had an abusive father who belittled and beat him constantly, and a mother who did nothing to stop it. I was the only person in his life who cared for him.

VAIL

And was he the only person in your life?

She doesn't answer.

VAIL

Ms. Kramer, I'm sure I could find medical experts who could tell me if there's a link between sexual and spatial disorientation. I could ask them specifically about 13-year-old boys being taken to bed by their teachers. What do you think? Do you think this kind of thing might possibly confuse a child?

REBECCA

I didn't think that at the time.

VAIL

What do you think now?

REBECCA

I would tend to agree with you.

VAIL

Let me ask you this. You're obviously indignant toward the father who abused Aaron - how do you feel about the teacher who did?

REBECCA

I despise her. It's unforgivable.

Vail is unprepared for the answer. She glances past him to the defense table, and, very quietly -

REBECCA

I'm sorry, Aaron.

Vail watches Aaron, fully expecting the transformation of Roy to take place, but it doesn't happen. He just looks pathetic.

VAIL
(almost like an
apology)
No further questions.

SHOAT
Ms. Venable.

VENABLE
No, Your Honor. No questions. This
witness can be excused.

Rebecca steps down, passes Aaron without the courage to look at
him. Vail watches after her.

SHOAT
Mr. Vail? Your next witness?

VAIL
(collects himself)
Your Honor, the defense calls Aaron
Stampler.

There's a surprised reaction from the spectators and press - not
the least of which from Aaron himself. He seems suddenly at a
loss, anxious, scared. And Vail isn't helping; barely looks at
him. Aaron slowly makes his way to the stand.

SKETCH PAD

The sketch artist draws Aaron with his right hand raised.

VAIL O.S.
How old are you, Aaron?

AARON ON THE WITNESS STAND

AARON
Nineteen.

VAIL
Where were you born?

AARON
Creekside, Kentucky.

VAIL
What's Creekside like?

AARON
A coal town. A place you'd never
want to visit. It was hard growing
up there.

VAIL
Where do you live now?

AARON
Here in Chicago.

VAIL
Where, though?

AARON
In that old building on Michigan and
Cermak.

VAIL
And what's that like?

AARON
No lights, no heat, no water, no
toilets. But it provides shelter
in the winter.

VAIL
How long have you lived there?

AARON
About six months. From the time I left
Savior House until I was arrested.

VAIL
Why were you asked to leave Savior
House?

AARON
Had to make room for younger kids.

He blinks back a tear.

VAIL
Did you continue to serve as an altar
boy for the Archbishop once you left
Savior House?

AARON
Yes, sir.

VAIL
Now - on the day Archbishop Rushman
was murdered - on the day this man
who was like a father to you was
killed - had there been an altar
boy meeting?

AARON
It was scheduled, but canceled.

VAIL
Why?

AARON

The Bishop said he was tired.

VAIL

Did you leave the church with the other altar boys?

AARON

No. I went into the Bishop's library to borrow a book.

VAIL

And did you?

AARON

Sir?

VAIL

Did you borrow "The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne?

AARON

I may have. I heard strange noises - like someone arguing. I went back upstairs. It was classical music - opera music - playing very loud...

VAIL

Go on.

AARON

(pictures the moment
in his mind)

I saw the Bishop come out of the bathroom in his robe, and... I... can I have some water?

VAIL

It's right there.

As Aaron pours a glass of water from a pitcher, Vail glances at the jury members. They're riveted.

VAIL

Are you all right?

AARON

Yes, sir. I... saw this shape, this shadow of a man. He came out of the kitchen with that knife.

(indicates evidence
table)

The Bishop didn't see him, but it looked at me.

VAIL

What do you mean by "it?"

AARON

The shape. Its face was sorta floating by itself and it looked at me. I thought my heart would stop. Everything went hazy... and I lost time.

VAIL

You blacked out?

AARON

Yes.

VAIL

What happened after you blacked out? When you came to? What was the first thing you saw?

AARON

The Bishop's body. And my hands covered in blood. And blood all over the walls - and the knife... The knife was in my hand. I heard sirens and I ran. I ran as far and as fast as I could.

VAIL

To the railroad yards?

AARON

Yes sir.

VAIL

You want some more water?

Aaron nods and pours himself another glass of it. Vail has the jury right where he wants it; lets Aaron take his time.

VAIL

Aaron, you've experienced blackouts before, haven't you - even back in Creekside.

AARON

Yes, sir.

VAIL

But you never told anybody about it.

AARON

No sir.

VAIL

Why not?

AARON

I wuz scared.

VAIL

Scared of what?

AARON

Scared they'd do to me what they did
to my mother: put electric switches in
my ears.

VAIL

Why'd they do that to her?

AARON

She talked to furniture and things.
Blacked out herself sometimes.

Vail glances briefly to the jury again; still with him.

VAIL

Aaron, do you know anyone named Roy?

AARON

(thinks)

No.

VAIL

Did you have any reason to want
Archbishop Rushman dead?

AARON

On, no - no - I loved him -

(begins to sob)

He was the only man that ever
treated me like I was a person of
worth. I loved him with all my heart.

VAIL

Your witness.

Venable walks slowly toward the witness stand. Aaron is the soul
of wounded innocence.

VENABLE

Would you like a recess, Mr. Stampler?

AARON

No, ma'am, I'll be all right.

VENABLE

You sure?

AARON

Yes, ma'am.

VENABLE

Did you believe that Bishop Rushman wore masks?

AARON

What?

VENABLE

Do you think he acted one way in public and another way in private?

AARON

No.

VENABLE

Isn't that why you underlined the Hawthorne passage?

AARON

No.

VENABLE

And you didn't carve the numbers referring to that quote into his chest?

AARON

No, ma'am.

VENABLE

You loved him. You loved him like a father, even though he made you photograph your girlfriend performing demeaning sexual acts for his own gratification.

A LOUD murmur from the spectators. The judge raps the gavel for order. Aaron flexes his fingers; the subtle gesture triggers a quick glance between Vail and Molly.

AARON

He... he needed to cast out the Devil.

VENABLE

He needed to get off, Aaron, come on, let's be honest with each other.

The hand flexes again.

VENABLE

That's what he was doing. That was the meaning of his altar boy lessons. That's what he needed you for. To photograph Linda performing like a circus animal - worse than a circus animal. That was your function in his life, wasn't it?

Aaron doesn't answer. He hangs his head. Again, everyone expects Vail to object, and again he doesn't.

VENABLE

Mr. Stampler, I'm tired and I've had just about all I can take of this sordidness, I want to get it over with and go home and wash my hands and forget about you and Archbishop Rushman... Did the Archbishop force you to photograph your girlfriend and others performing perverted sexual acts while he directed these orgies? - Yes or no?

AARON

(pause)

Yes.

VENABLE

Did he threaten you with expulsion from the Savior House if you refused to partake in these dehumanizing sessions - yes or no.

AARON

Yes.

VENABLE

Don't you think that's another side - another face; a mask of a man we all thought we knew?

Head still down, Aaron slowly nods.

VENABLE

You know what I'd do if somebody did that to me? I'd stab them 78 times with a butcher knife; I'd slash their throat open; I'd cut off their fingers; I'd carve numbers on their chest; I'd chop their nuts off and stuff them in their mouth, I swear to God that man would never draw another breath.

His head still down, Aaron again slowly, very slowly, nods.

VENABLE

No further questions.

SHOAT

The witness may step down. Mr. Vail?

VAIL

The defense rests, Your Honor.

SHOAT

Mr. Stampler, you may step down.
Madam Prosecutor?

VENABLE

Prosecution rests, Your Honor.

AARON/ROY

(softly menacing)

Where do you think you're going?

Venable glances over her shoulder as she's reaching the prosecution table.

VENABLE

(pause)

Excuse me?

SHOAT

Mr. Stampler, you're excused.

AARON/ROY

I said, where do you think you're going?

Everybody stares at the defendant. He seems to change right before their eyes - his face distorting, eyes narrowing, lips drawing back, the accent long gone - Roy is out.

Suddenly he emits a shriek, leaps from the witness box and hurls himself upon Venable. Shoat, the jury, the bailiffs - everyone but Venable - is stunned and momentarily motionless. She's trying to fight him off. One of Roy's arms circles Venable's throat; the other yanks at her hair.

The courtroom explodes in a panicked rush to the doors, people falling over each other, sheriffs and bailiffs trying to get past the stampede to reach Venable. Judge Shoat is riveted in place. Vail rushes toward Roy.

VAIL

Let go of her, Roy!

AARON/ROY

Oh, it's you again.

(to Venable)

Rebecca, you are dead -

Venable's eyes are wide in fear. She gasps for air, her hands desperately clawing at Roy's arms. Behind Roy, two marshals, billy-clubs in hand, move cautiously toward him. Sensing their presence, he whirls around and, still clasping Venable's neck, kicks at one marshal and straight chops the other's face. Both go down.

Vail manages to get a grip on the hand clamped on Venable's throat. Goodman circles in from the opposite side and throws a

wicked right cross crashing into Roy's cheekbone. He's staggered and loses his hold on Venable. She slumps to the floor. Roy grabs a fallen marshal's club and waves it back and forth.

AARON/ROY

Come on! Come on! I'll kill every
fuck one of you!

He swings the club wildly in blind rage at three bailiffs closing in on him. They spray him with mace. He screams; his hands go to his eyes. The bailiffs move in but Roy still manages to toss one of them over the jury railing. A sheriff grabs Judge Shoat and shoves him out a side door.

Vail delivers a hammer-like blow to the back of Roy's neck and his body suddenly goes limp. He sinks to the floor. The bailiffs pull his hands behind him and cuff him, but there is no fight left. Roy is gone. It's Aaron.

INT. - JUDGE SHOAT'S CHAMBERS - DAY - (RAIN)

Venable stands at the window watching a heavy spring shower. Her back is to Vail who sits in front of Shoat's desk. There's a rip in the sleeve of his jacket and a bruise on his cheek.

Venable turns, crosses to the desk and takes a pack of cigarettes out of her bag. There are visible bruises on her throat.

VAIL

Shoat won't let you smoke in here.

Venable just gives him a look and lights up. The door opens and Judge Shoat enters. He hangs his judicial robes up, sits down, pours himself a scotch and slides the bottle across to Vail, indicating a tray with glasses.

SHOAT

Sit down, Miss Venable. Have a drink
and please extinguish the cigarette.

She sits down and reluctantly crushes her cigarette. Vail pours her a drink. Shoat drains his and asks Vail with only a gesture if he'd be so kind as to refill it. As Vail does - to Venable -

SHOAT

How's your neck?

VENABLE

I'll live.

SHOAT

I have a solution in mind that will
prevent a mistrial and avoid public
airing of that tape and save the tax
payers millions of dollars. But in

MORE

SHOAT (ct'd)

fairness to the prosecution, I will declare a mistrial - it's up to you Miss Venable.

VENABLE

The prosecution doesn't want to try this case again, even if could - which it can't - at least not by me - and I think I can guarantee you there's no one else in the DA's office who will.

Shoat nurses his drink and nods.

SHOAT

I think you're to be commended. No one will profit from a retrial. Stampler is obviously insane. I'm dismissing the jury in favor of a bench trial and blind plea of Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity. The defendant will be committed to Maynard Institute for the Criminally Insane for no less than seven years. Should he ultimately be deemed cured, a second panel of psychiatrists appointed by the Attorney General will examine him and present its findings to a tribunal of Appellate Court judges before setting Stampler free. Do either of you have a problem with that?

VENABLE

Prosecution consents.

Shoat nods, drains his second scotch, rises.

SHOAT

I have something to say to both of you. Ms. Venable, it was ethically wrong of you to permit Mr. Vail's examination of the State's Attorney with almost no objection. It was obvious to me you were serving a personal agenda. As were you Mr. Vail. I remind both of you that you're officers of the court and using this venue to even a personal score with anyone is disgraceful.

(pause)

Finally, I blame myself for getting caught up in a rush to judgement. We came too close to executing a sick young man.

MORE

SHOAT (ct'd)
(sighs)
We're imperfect people caught in an
imperfect system and we seek perfect
results.

Goes to hat rack, picks up his coat, hat and umbrella.

SHOAT
Help yourself to the scotch. You'll
find an umbrella in the closet Janet.
I'll see you both at nine a.m.

He leaves.

VENABLE
I feel lucky about one thing. I'd
hate to think I had a hand in executing
a sick kid.

VAIL
Get off the cross, Janet, you did your
job. We all did. Shoat's right.
This isn't a perfect world.

VENABLE
(genuinely asking)
Don't you ever just say to yourself -
"I don't know." Wake up at night, and
you just don't know.

He stares at her thoughtfully.

VAIL
.... the trouble is I do know.
(pause)
I have to tell my client what's in
store for him. The Alibi in a half
an hour?

VENABLE
(smiles)
This could be a long night.

He kisses her cheek and leaves. She takes the umbrella from the
closet and starts out.

INT. - HOLDING CELL - EVENING

Aaron is seated in the far corner, his hands cuffed behind him,
his feet shackled together, bandage on his cheek. Two sheriffs
guard him. Vail enters and Aaron brightens a little.

VAIL
I'd like a minute alone with him.

The men nod and step outside. Vail pulls a chair close to Aaron.

VAIL

I've been in conference with Judge Shoat. This is what we've come up with. You're to be committed to Maynard State Hospital for treatment. There's a chance that in time you'll be freed.

Aaron breathes a heavy sigh of relief. Vail almost manages to suppress a smile of pride for the fine job he's done.

AARON

Can I tell you something, Mr. Vail? When they found me in that tunnel, I was scared outta my wits. But then I met you - and from that moment I knew everything was gonna be all right. You were an angel sent down from heaven.
(a slight change
in his voice)
Took you long enough to find the tape. I thought you were never gonna find it. I thought I was gonna have to tell you where it was.

Vail cocks his head slightly. Aaron winks.

AARON

Hang in there, Marty, it gets better. Who you want to talk to? Me? Or Roy? What do you think?
(accent switching
to street)
Well, I got a secret for you. A client-attorney-privilege-type secret. You'll get the same answers whether you talk to me or Aaron -
(switches back to
twang)
I had to throw Daddy down that mine shaft. I had to, way he was treating me. You'd a done the same, I swear.
(back to street)
Not to mention a few others - besides the Archbishop. But you don't want to hear about them right now, do you? Maybe some other time.

Aaron/Roy smiles. Vail rises and stares at Stamper.

VAIL

... There was never a "Roy."

AARON/ROY

You still don't get it. I can't believe it. Hotshot lawyer like you, taking my case out of the "goodness of your heart." Hell, you missed the whole magic show.

(pause)

There was never an "Aaron," Counselor.

EXT. - CHICAGO COURT PLAZA - EVENING - RAIN

Vail exits the court house. On the steps below, and on the other side Venable speaks to a crowd of journalists. They all hold umbrellas which shield Vail from view. His collar is up but the rain runs down his cheeks. He glances up at the bronze face of "Lady Justice."

CLOSE: LADY JUSTICE

The rain streaming down lends the illusion of tears.

CLOSE: VAIL

His eyes express pain and sadness - if he could he'd tear the blind fold from her eyes - the system no longer works.

THE SCENE

Alone, Vail goes down the steps and away from the camera towards the corner. TITLES ROLL - We hear Pinero's song "La Donna" By the Gipsy Kings.

FADE OUT.