

RED HARVEST

Screenplay by
Bernardo Bertalucci
and
Marilyn Goldin

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

A train, seen from the air, moves over marshy, mountainous land, good for nothing. The shrill SOUND of the WHISTLE as the train slows, starts to brake.

INSIDE THE TRAIN

Even for the twenties, this is not the latest train...there is a pronounced rocking movement as it goes...The CONDUCTOR moves through the coaches, announcing the next stop.

CONDUCTOR
POI-sonville.

THE OP -- a man about forty, dressed with quiet elegance -- speaks to the RED-HAIRED MUCKER in the next seat.

THE OP
Did he say Personville?

RED-HAIRED MUCKER
That's right, Poisonville.

The Op looks out the window. The first few houses on the edge of town come into view:

OUTSKIRTS OF PERSONVILLE

Seen from the passing train.

IMAGES

As if from a moving train. The CAMERA MOVES PAST:

LEW YARD, a skinny, shifty-eyed man, stretching out his hand, an unhappy-looking MINER (with a WIFE hanging nervously on his arm) counts money into Lew's palm.

PETE THE FINN at his bootleg still, sampling a new batch of whisky. A rosey-cheeked giant, rather poetic looking, the Finn smiles with satisfaction.

WHISPER, a dark, almost pretty, very young man -- with features as regular as if cut from a die -- expertly shuffling a deck of cards, grinning. Whisper's real name is MAX THALER.

NOW THROUGH THE TRAIN WINDOW - THE STATION SIGN

The name of the town comes into view, letter by letter, filling the space of the window. We read:

P-E-R-S-O-N-V-I-L-L-E...

EXT. STATION PLATFORM - DAY

The Op gets off the train with his suitcase. The station is almost deserted. The Op buys a Morning Herald at the newsstand, flips through it as he arrives at the phone booth. He reads the phone number printed on the newspaper's masthead.

THE OP
(into the phone)
Personville 3743.

In the b.g. the train starts to pull away...then suddenly brakes. The Op turns to look.

A STUTZ BEARCAT has stopped on the tracks directly in front of the train, forcing it to a screeching halt. The Op watches THREE MEN get out.

The man in the middle is being dragged to the train. A FOURTH MAN carries a suitcase that's been packed in a hurry. A shirtsleeve and a piece of tie hang out of the sides.

Now that they are closer, the Op can see the man in the middle has a badly bloodied face.

THE ENGINEER pulls nervously on the train whistle. Passengers lean out of the windows to see better. But the only COP in sight ignores the commotion, too busy sewing a button back on his uniform to look up.

The hoods kick the bloodied man onto the train, throw his suitcase after him.

The Op sees WHISPER THALER step from the Stutz holding a bulky, professional photographer's camera.

WHISPER
Don't forget your camera.

Whisper smashes it against the side of the engine, tosses the remains onto the train.

THE OP
(into phone)
Get me Donald Willsson, please.

The Op glances at the front page of the Herald.

HEADLINE

"THE PIRATES OF POISONVILLE"

Underneath it, three photographs of the three men seen earlier: Lew Yard, loan shark and pimp, making a collection; Pete the Finn, bootlegger, sampling his wares; and Whisper Thaler, gambler and pimp, shuffling cards.

The Op looks up, recognizes Whisper as he goes back to his Stutz.

THE OP
(into the phone)
Donald Willsson, please.

The SOUND of the TRAIN WHISTLE is becoming unbearable. The three gangsters ignore it, take their sweet time leaving.

The Op finishes his phone call. .

THE OP
(into phone)
Okay, 10 p.m., 2101 Mountain Blvd.

He hangs up the phone, reaches automatically for his suitcase. His hand gropes around in mid-air...

A 13-year-old boy named SPORT is perched on the Op's suitcase a few feet away, putting on rollerskates.

SPORT
Great Western Hotel?

THE OP
Hey, wait a minute...

The boy skates off with the Op's suitcase.

SPORT
(over his shoulder)
Meet you there for a dime.

THE OP
(to policeman)
Stop him!

The POLICEMAN winds the thread around his button, bites it off.

POLICEMAN
Relax. You'll live longer.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DUSK

Carrying the Op's suitcase, a BELLBOY enters the room.

The Op sits on the bed, bounces to test the springs.

THE OP
(too tired to get up)
Open the window. Tell me what do
you see?

BELLBOY
An ugly city, two ugly mountains
and a grimy sky. I was born here.

The Op closes his eyes.

THE CAMERA follows the bellboy's gaze, MOVES OUT the window.

PERSONVILLE

A medium-sized industrial city that looks like it smells bad. The soot makes all the buildings look alike. In the distance, mines and slag heaps circle the town like a moat. Some of the streets are filled with heavy smoke. As daylight fades, the lights of the city come alive.

EXT. DONALD WILLSSON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

2101 Mountain Boulevard is a large handsome house in the best part of town.

The Op rings the bell, glances around.

Next door a party is going on. There is MUSIC, lighted windows, several expensive cars parked out front.

A small brunette, FRANCINE, in a maid's uniform, answers the Willsson door.

THE OP
(grins)
I have an appointment with Donald
Willsson.

FRANCINE
(heavy French accent)
Mr. Willsson isn't home.

MRS. WILLSSON, a slender blonde in her late twenties, dressed in green crepe, appears on the stairs.

MRS. WILLSSON
(faint French accent)
If my husband's expecting you, he'll
probably be back shortly. Come in.

The Op steps inside.

INSIDE THE LIBRARY

Mrs. Willsson fusses at the fireplace with an iron poker.

MRS. WILLSSON
Do you live in Personville?

THE OP
No, this is my first visit.

MRS. WILLSSON
How do you like our city?

THE OP
Haven't seen enough of it to know.

MRS. WILLSSON
Are you engaged in mining?

THE OP
Not really.

MRS. WILLSSON
Not yet, you mean. Everybody here
is mining in one way or another.

She slips off her shoes and wiggles her stockinged feet
in front of the fire.

MRS. WILLSSON (cont'd)
I don't know why, in this country,
my feet are always cold.

The Op says nothing. She keeps talking as if afraid of
silence.

MRS. WILLSSON (cont'd)
You're so excessively secretive, I
can't help being curious.

The telephone RINGS. She jumps, barefoot, grateful for
the interruption.

MRS. WILLSSON (cont'd)
(into phone)
Yes, speaking...I beg your pardon?
...Can't you speak louder?...Yes,
Hurricane Street...What??...Who is
this?...Hello? Hello?

Mrs. Willsson hangs up, runs to her shoes, puts them on and runs out, never once looking at the Op. Unperturbed, the Op lights a cigarette. The maid appears at the doorway.

THE OP
Glass of whisky, please.

FRANCINE
Sorry, it's against the law.

The clock in the library CHIMES the hour. After each chime, there is a slight echo -- the SOUND of bottles jiggling together.

THE OP
Okay, thanks.

As soon as the maid leaves, the Op goes over to the new Art Deco grandfather clock, opens the bottom. Inside is a completely equipped bar -- mirrored walls, glasses, bottles of every description.

OUTSIDE THE WILLSSON HOUSE - LATER

The party next door is thinning out, but young people dancing and drinking can still be glimpsed in open lighted windows, as Mrs. Willsson's sporty roadster pulls up.

Mrs. Willsson gets out, very pale and on the verge of tears. She sees a man's silhouette in the shadows nearby and gasps.

THE OP
(stepping into
the light)
I didn't mean to frighten you.

MRS. WILLSSON
I'm afraid you've waited for nothing. My husband won't be home tonight.

THE OP
Okey-doke. I'll reach him in the morning.

The Op pitches his cigarette near her feet. Instinctively, Mrs. Willsson puts it out with her shoe. The toe of her green slipper is covered with blood. She sees the blood stain for the first time, and the sight scares her.

The Op touches the brim of his hat politely and walks away.

EXT./INT. MOVING STREETCAR - NIGHT

The Op leans against a pole in the brightly lit interior. Outside, a PEDESTRIAN walks by, moving faster than the streetcar. The Op sees ANOTHER MAN or TWO running, obviously excited, around a corner.

A street sign reads Hurricane Street. The Op steps from the moving trolley.

HURRICANE STREET

A few POLICE CARS. An AMBULANCE. And a CROWD surrounding A DEAD BODY. MORE ONLOOKERS arrive by the minute -- MINERS in overalls, a few gaudy WHORES with a few gaudy CLIENTS, A MOTHER with a BABY in her arms.

THE OP
(pushing to the front)
What happened?

A MOTHER
Donald Willsson's been shot...

The Op leans forward curiously trying to look at the face of the corpse but he can't quite see it.

THE OP
Who shot him?

A MINER
Somebody with a gun.

CORONER
(to the Chief of
Police)
I'm pretty sure it was a thirty-two.

POLICE clear the path through the crowd so the Chief of Police, NOONAN, can get back to his car. Noonan, a fat man with a round jovial face, tries to look solemn.

A VOICE
(from crowd)
Happy now Noonan? Got your city
back now, Noonan?

BILL QUINT lets himself be pushed away by cops. Weary, a little drunk, he moves out of the crowd. People seem to make way for him.

THE OP
Who's that?

A STREETWALKER
Union man, I.W.W. from Chicago.

UNKNOWN MAN
Bill Quint.

STREETWALKER
A good friend of Donald Willsson's.

ANOTHER STREET - VENUS ALLEY

the red light district of Personville. Only MEN walking,
window shopping. PROSTITUTES hanging out of windows,
gather in doorways. Soliciting.

Following Quint, the Op thumbs through his card case as
he walks, looking for something. When he finds it, he
calls out:

THE OP
Quint!

Quint stops, waits as the Op approaches.

OP
(handing him the card)
Let me introduce myself.

Quint looks at the card.

INSERT

I.W.W. MEMBERSHIP -- HENRY E. NEILL -- Able Bodied Seaman

Quint studies the card.

QUINT
(moving off)
Let's go.

The Op falls in beside Quint.

QUINT
You've made a mistake. There's
no ocean around here.

THE OP
Where'd you get the idea I'm a
sailor?

QUINT
(handing the card
back to the Op)
That's what it says.

THE OP
If you want me to be a miner,
I'll get one for that tomorrow.

QUINT
No you won't. I run the union here.

He looks the Op over with new interest.

THE OP
Drink?

QUINT
When I can afford it.

INT. SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

A long narrow room with a bar running along one wall. Sawdust on the floor, wooden chairs and tables, etc. -- all the qualities of a blue collar taproom, except there are no windows.

A HEAVY-SET MAN guards the door.

At a table, the Op and Quint are in the middle of a conversation.

QUINT
So, for forty years, Willsson's old man owned Personville, heart, soul, skin and guts. President and majority stockholder of the Mining Company, the bank. The newspaper, the Water Company, the Gas and Electric plant, and practically everything else...including a U.S. Senator, the Governor, the Mayor and the Chief of Police.

THE OP
Sounds like he is the whole state.

QUINT
He was. Except for the union.
(pouring himself
another drink)
Seven years ago, he tore up the contract and tried to throw the union out of the mines. Chicago sent me out to handle it.

Quint pauses, drinks as if churning up the memory makes him want to get drunk.

A MINER
Mind if I join you, Bill?

QUINT
Sit down, Samuel.

THE OP
(passing him the
bottle)
Have a drink.

One by one, MINERS drift over to the table, to listen to the story and, we sense, to take care of Quint when he's drinking.

A SWEDISH MINER sits down next -- red face and white hair. He is albino.

THE OP
(to Swede)
Have a drink.
(to Quint)
How long did your strike last?

QUINT
Eight months. Eight bloody, bloody months. Old man Willsson hired scum to do his dirty work. Thugs, gunmen and scabs.

MIKE, a slight man in a leather jacket and cabbie's cap with a hack license stuck in the band, joins the group.

The Op slides him the bottle.

SWEDE
We were strong! We held out as long as we could.

MIKE
(drinking)
You're still strong.

QUINT
Yeah, like a used firecracker.

Quint slides the bottle to another MINER who just sat down with them.

QUINT

Willsson won the strike, but he lost the city. To beat us, he turned Personville over to thugs. Now he can't get rid of them. It's their city now. Pete the Finn...

SWEDE

(raises drink)

This is his stuff we're drinking.

SAMUEL

He's the strongest...

QUINT

Lew Yard -- bail bond racket, loan sharks off the miners, fences most of the stolen goods around.

SAMUEL

And runs the whores, don't forget...

MIKE

I gotta forget. I can't afford 'em...

QUINT

And young Whisper. Max "Whisper" Thaler. Punk. Gambling's his show. Got the most loyal group of young cutthroats in the state. They'd die for the little sonuvabitch.

THE OP

(reflective)

Poisonville must have one hell of a police chief...

QUINT

(tosses back a drink)

Noonan...

OUTSIDE THE SPEAKEASY

WHORES, DRUNKS, PRANKSTERS, NERVOUS CITIZENS pass by as the Op, Quint and Mike the cabbie emerge from the saloon.

A large poster catches the Op's eye. He stops to examine it.

THE POSTER

advertises a prize fight scheduled for Friday night, at Luna Park, with photos of the two featured boxers:

TIM NOONAN
VS.
IKE BUSH

TIM NOONAN'S photo reveals a big, clumsy lug of an Irish boy.

MIKE
(pointing)
That's the chief's kid brother.
Apple of his eye.

But the Op concentrates on the photo of:

IKE BUSH

trim, dark and muscular. And shifty-eyed.

QUINT
(hiccups; to Op)
What's the matter?

THE OP

jabs his finger at Bush's photo.

THE OP
Bush...I've seen him before...
some place.

Quint glances at Mike, cocks his head at the Op.

QUINT
So you're a cop.

THE OP
Kind of.
(impressed)
You're not as drunk as I thought.

INT. MIKE'S TAXI

Mike drives with Bill next to him. The Op sits in the back seat. They ride through the mean streets of Personville. Occasional clouds of SMOKE waft by. PEDESTRIANS look used to it. It is a peculiar sight. ONE MAN wears a neckerchief like a mask over his face. A WOMAN holds a handkerchief over her mouth.

THE OP
What's that?

MIKE

Stinking fire in the old tunnels.

QUINT

Fifteen years of discussion. Who's going to pay to put it out -- the city or the state or the mining company or the Federal Government? Meanwhile, the fire's still going -- burning houses, putting families out in the street, poisoning people.

SUDDENLY, through the cab window, THEY SEE:

A BLADE OF FIRE spurt up in an alley, run along the walls in crazy patterns like a wild animal. And disappear.

THE OP

Now I see why they call it Poisonville.

MIKE

There's no predicting which way it'll turn.

THE OP

Blood in the veins of Poisonville.
(ironic)
I suppose the fire -- always picks out poor neighborhoods?

QUINT

Are you kidding? The rich don't have to live on top of old mines. They get frim ground under their ass.

(pauses; then)

So who are you working for?

THE OP

I operate for the Continental Detective Agency, out of Frisco.

QUINT

What the hell brings you here?

THE OP

I don't know...

Quint eyes him suspiciously.

THE OP

Donald Willsson sent for me.

QUINT

Well, Don's gone to sit on the right hand of God.

THE OP

That's why I don't know why I'm here...he never got to tell me what he wanted.

MIKE

Who cares? He was his father's son.

QUINT

(violently)

Bullshit! He was his father's stooge, but he didn't know it. The old man brought Don and his French wife home from Paris and gave him the newspaper, to try and shake the thugs loose. I guess the thugs got tired of being shook.

THE OP

See you around.

They have reached the Great Western Hotel. The Op gets out of the cab.

THE OP (cont'd)

(to Mike)

Pick me up at ten if you want to put some money in your meter.

EXT. POST OFFICE - MORNING

Usual traffic in the street outside. The Op enters the post office and writes out a telegram.

INSERT: THE TELEGRAM

It is addressed to the "Continental Detective Agency, 829 Gough St., San Francisco."

The message is:

Client deceased. Investigation proceeding. More to come.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BOULEVARD - DAY

As Mike's cab approaches the Willsson house, the Op leans forward, peering out the windshield.

He looks at an exact replica of the Personville mines that stands near his bed. The mockup is very exact, from the highest mountains to the deepest tunnel, all made of moveable parts.

THE OP

While I was waiting for your son last night, your daughter-in-law came back with what looked like blood on her shoes.

The Op has attracted Elihu's full attention.

ELIHU

Is she in jail?

THE OP

Why should she kill him?

ELIHU

Because she's a French hussy!

THE OP

Was she jealous?

ELIHU

And domineering and spoiled and suspicious and greedy and mean and unscrupulous and deceitful and selfish...and French!

THE OP

Any reason why she should have killed him?

ELIHU

Haven't I just been telling you?

THE OP

Yeah, but none of that means anything. It's kind of childish.

ELIHU

Stanley!!

A small, weedy middle-aged MAN answers his call immediately.

ELIHU (cont'd)

(flatly)

Throw this bastard out.

Stanley turns to the Op. The Op shakes his head.

THE OP
Better get help.

Stanley hesitates, appraising the difference in their sizes. Then, with an apologetic smile to the old man, hurries away. As he goes:

THE OP (cont'd)
I saw Whisper Thaler go into your son's house this morning.

ELIHU
(after a beat)
So that's the way it is, is it?

THE OP
You were using your son to --

The door bursts open. The secretary is back with the burly bodyguards we saw at the front door.

ELIHU
CLOSE THAT DOOR!
(as they stop short,
bumping into one another)
I said, close it! and keep it closed.

Elihu waits for the door to close. Then:

ELIHU (cont'd)
Now, what was I using my son for?

THE OP
To put the knife in Whisper, Lew
Yard and the Finn, through the
Herald.

ELIHU
(calmly)
Liar.

THE OP
I didn't invent the story. It's
all over town.

ELIHU
It's a lie. I gave him the news-
papers. He did what he wanted.
That woman killed him.

THE OP
Maybe.

ELIHU

Damn you and your maybes. She did.

THE OP

Maybe. Your son sent us a check. The least I can do is find out who killed him.

ELIHU

The least I can do is run you out of town.

The Op looks for a cigarette. But his package is empty. He throws it away and opens a box on the table. Takes a cigarette and goes to the door.

Little lights begin to flash in the mockup in tunnel nineteen. The Op closes the door behind him. The plaster mountain shatters against the door.

EXT. ELIHU'S MANSION - DAY

The Op starts toward his cab, pauses.

THE OP'S POV

A PATROL CAR loaded with COPS and a SHINY SEDAN loaded with CROOKS pass each other headed in opposite directions on the street, going full speed. Both cars skid to a stop, make U turns, backtrack and stop parallel to each other.

COP

(calling to crooks)

Will you take a bet now, Lefty? We want to put some money on the fight.

LEFTY

Sure, who do you like?

COP

Ike Bush for knocking out the Chief's brother. Here's fifty dollars!

ANOTHER COP

Seventy-five!

LEFTY

(laughs, shaking his head)

The whole town's betting against that bum.

The policeman stretches a handful of money out the window. Before Lefty can take it, the Op's taxi zigzags between the two cars at full speed and carooms off down the street.

DONALD WILLSSON'S OFFICE - DAY

WILMA, Donald Willsson's secretary, a shy, small girl with chestnut eyes, answers the Op's questions self-consciously, making a row of finger-prints on the polished edge of Donald Willsson's desk.

Through the glass-encased walls, we can SEE the small Herald newsroom at work, four or five desks, some comings and goings.

Wilma closes her eyes to think better.

WILMA

Oh yes! A little before three, he wrote a check and went to the bank.

THE OP

Who was the check for?

She opens her eyes. The Op has moved. He is going through Willsson's filing cabinet.

WILMA

I don't know.

THE OP

Where's the checkbook?

WILMA

In here.

(tries the drawer)

Locked.

The Op straightens a paper clip, moves to the desk, fiddles with the lock. Wilma gives a little gasp of illicit excitement as the drawer pops open. He gestures, inviting her to remove the checkbook. As soon as she does, he takes it from her.

INSERT

The last stub in the book is marked \$5,000. No name.

THE OP

THE OP

Didn't anything else happen before he wrote the check? Any messages? Letters? Phone calls?

WILMA
He did have a phone call.

THE OP
From a man or a woman?

WILMA
I don't know.

THE OP
Think. There'd be a difference
in his voice.

WILMA
(thinks; then)
Then it was a woman.

EXT. MORNING HERALD - DAY

The Op comes out of the Herald building, gets into his
waiting cab.

THE OP
First National City Bank.

MIKE
Roger.

The cab makes a U turn, stops directly across the street.
The Op looks out the window at the First National building.

THE OP
(getting out)
Very funny.

INT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK - DAY

The Op speaks to ROBERT ALBURY, a clean-cut young bank
teller at a grilled window.

ALBURY
I certified the check for Willsson.
Five thousand dollars. It was
drawn to the order of Dinah Brand.

Something about the way he says her name catches the Op's
attention.

THE OP
Know who she is?

ALBURY
Oh yes, I know her.

THE OP
Mind telling me what you know?

ALBURY
(with an open grin)
Nope, I don't mind. But they
would.

The Op looks around. Behind him, a restless line of people waiting to get to the window.

THE OP
(moving away)
Thanks anyway. I'll catch you
later.

EXT. TAXI CAB AND STREET - DAY

The Op leans in the window, to Mike, amidst the activity of downtown Personville at lunchtime.

THE OP
Where's the police station?

Mike points his thumb diagonally across the street, six doors down from the Herald.

THE OP (cont'd)
Meet me in an hour. And bring
Bill Quint along.

MIKE
What makes you think I'm going
to see Bill?

The Op climbs into the back seat.

THE OP
He told you to keep an eye on
me, didn't he?

The Op gets out the other side of the cab, walks across the street.

INT. NOONAN'S OFFICE - DAY

The Op sits opposite Chief Noonan. Noonan's greenish eyes twinkle as if he's running for election. He's studying Op's detective license.

NOONAN
How long will you be in town?

THE OP
I don't really know.

NOONAN
So, we're in the same business...

THE OP
Who is Dinah Brand?

NOONAN
(flourishing a
fat cigar)
A soiled dove, as the fellow says,
a de-luxe hustler, a big league
gold digger.

THE OP
Was she screwing Donald Willsson?

NOONAN
Wouldn't surprise me. Maybe. But
as far as I know, she's Whisper
Thaler's woman.

Noonan dumps the ash from his cigar, notices a pale blue envelope spotted with blood sitting in plain view on his desk. The Op notices it, too. Nonchalantly, the Chief picks up the blood stained envelope, to put it away.

THE OP
I saw Whisper Thaler calling on
Mrs. Willsson this morning.

NOONAN
(freezing)
Grease us twice! You saw Whisper
at the house?

THE OP
Yeah.

NOONAN
Man, you've done something. Whisper
shot him.
(gesturing with the
envelope; unconsciously)
Jealousy! Passion! Shit! I can
prove he shot him.

Realizing he still has the envelope in his hand, Noonan tucks the envelope in a pocket, beams at the Op.

NOONAN

Sure am glad to have you in town.
We're gonna wrap this thing up in
a jiffy.

INT. WILLSSON'S LIBRARY - DAY

Mrs. Willsson wears widows' weeds that are very becoming. She looks like she hasn't slept all night. She answers the Op's questions, haughty and submissive by turns. Her French maid circles protectively, Chief Noonan relishing the moment, smoking luxuriously.

MRS. WILLSSON

Yes, alright! I'm a very jealous person and this Brand woman is so notorious, I...I guess I was a little fascinated by her. So when I got the call I went to her house and...and hid. Then Donald came out and...

Her voice trails off...

THE OP

Where did the shots come from?

MRS. WILLSSON

I don't know. I saw Donald fall. By the time I got to him, he was covered with blood. Dead. Then Mister Thaler appeared out of nowhere. He helped me. He made me run back to my car and drive home.

THE OP

And what did he make you do this morning when he came by?

Surprised, Mrs. Willsson looks from the Op to the Chief of Police. Noonan inhales, blows a smoke ring.

MRS. WILLSSON

(defiant)

He said, if I told people I was there they'd say I killed him.

NOONAN

(pressing)

Did Mister Thaler shoot your husband?

MRS. WILLSSON
No. I don't know. I didn't see
him do it and he said he didn't.

NOONAN
And you don't know who phoned you
up last night?

MRS. WILLSSON
He didn't tell me his name. No.

NOONAN
What kind of voice was it?

MRS. WILLSSON
I had trouble understanding him.

NOONAN
Would you say he whispered?

MRS. WILLSSON
Yes, a hoarse whisper...

Mrs. Willsson looks startled, stares at Noonan, the Op.

MRS. WILLSSON (cont'd)
Whisper Thaler!

EXT. WILLSSON HOUSE - DAY

Noonan and the Op shake hands before they part, go to
separate cars. The Op pauses outside his taxi to watch
Noonan's patrolcar pull away. Speaks to Mike through
the window.

THE OP
Stick to the Chief, Mike.

The Op climbs into the cab. Bill Quint is waiting for
him in the back seat.

THE OP
(as he gets in)
Why is Noonan after Whisper?
You told me they were friends.

QUINT
They are.

THE OP
Not anymore. Things are changing.

The Op looks at Quint. The taxi follows the patrolcar, heading for downtown. After a moment:

THE OP (cont'd)
Slow down. Don't let them see you.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Chief Noonan's car stops in front of a pawn shop. Lew Yard is lounging in the doorway with RENO STARKEY, his strong right arm.

The taxi idles around the corner, out of sight but with a good view.

QUINT
That's Lew Yard's place. There he is -- that's Reno Starkey with him.

Reno walks over to Noonan's car. Noonan holds the blue blood stained envelope out the window. Reno takes it, the police car peels off.

Reno hands the envelope to Lew Yard. Both men disappear inside.

THE OP
Do you know Dinah Brand?

QUINT
(stiffening)
I know her.

THE OP
Think she killed Willsson?

QUINT
Sure, with a kick in the pants.

THE OP
Then you didn't?

QUINT
Hell, yes. The pair of us together. Any more questions?

THE OP
Yeah, but you'd only lie to me.
(to Mike; sharply)
What are you waiting for? Earn your money. Take me to Hurricane Street.

Bill Quint gets out of the car and the taxi drives off.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD SHOPPING STREET - DUSK

The Op watches Personville go by the window, spots something. Suddenly he speaks to Mike.

THE OP

Pull over.

Robert Albury, the bank clerk, is walking down the street with a thin, FRAGILE GIRL of sixteen. The street is filled with people shopping on their way home from work. The girl carries a bag of groceries.

THE OP

Hi, what's for dinner?

The Op falls in step with them. His taxi follows at a crawl.

ALBURY

Oh, hello.

YOUNG WOMAN

Chicken and fresh spinach.

ALBURY

This is my sister, Helen Albury.
Helen, this is --

THE OP

(pleasantly)
So who's Dinah Brand?

A little startled, Albury stops. They are in front of a florist.

ALBURY

Helen, uh, why don't you get some
flowers, for a change?
(when she hesitates)
We'll wait here...

Helen Albury reluctantly does as she's told, looks anxiously back at them as she goes.

ALBURY (cont'd)

(eagerly, as soon
as she's gone)
Have you met her yet?

THE OP

Nope.

ALBURY

You'll be disappointed at first.
Then before you know it, you'll
be telling her your life's story
and all your troubles and hopes.
(laughs boyishly)
And then you're caught. Absolutely
caught.

THE OP

I hear the lady likes dinero.

ALBURY

Yes, but you won't mind that. She's
so thoroughly mercenary, so frankly
greedy that there's nothing disagree-
able about it.

THE OP

Mind telling me why she kicked you
out of bed?

Albury flushes, embarrassed and a little surprised (how
transparent his feelings are). But recovers quickly.

ALBURY

It happened I finished the money.

He breaks off as Helen returns with her flowers and her
anxiety. The Op takes Albury by the arm with one hand,
opens the cab door with the other and, moving the clerk
in front of him, gets inside.

THE OP

(to Helen; as he
closes the door)

We'll be right back.

INT. THE CAB - DUSK

The window between driver and back seat is closed. Helen
Albury tries to keep up with the taxi, walks outside the
window, looking in as:

ALBURY

I had a little money. After that
was gone, there was the bank's.
If she hadn't stopped me...you
know what I mean...Anyway, that
was the end.

THE OP

I gather she's strictly pay-as-you
go.

ALBURY

No, she's very generous. Look at Dan Rolff.

The Op glances at Helen trying to keep up with the car, trying to see in. Albury ignores her, keeps on talking, almost enthusiastically about Dinah.

THE OP

Who's he?

ALBURY

A down-and-outer, has t.b. She's not in love with him or anything. She simply found him somewhere and took him in.

THE OP

Any others?

ALBURY

There was that radical. Quint.

THE OP

Quint was on her list?

ALBURY

That's supposed to be the reason he stayed here after the strike ended.

THE OP

So he's still on her list.

ALBURY

No. She told me she was afraid of him. He threatened to kill her.

Mike raps sharply, almost violently on the divider, calls out like a train conductor.

MIKE

Hurricane Street!

Albury jumps, suddenly looks a little frightened. The taxi stops and the Op gets out, puts the sister in his place.

THE OP

(to Mike)

Take them home and come back.

MIKE

Righto.

INT. DINAH BRAND'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A young woman sits at a table in a circle of lamplight. The table is covered with papers -- racing sheets, stock market forecasts, also, a stack of envelopes of the same color and size as the bloodstained one Noonan passed to Lew Yard.

She looks up as DAN ROLFF leads the Op into the room. He's a thin, pale man with a red spot the size of a silver dollar on each cheek.

DAN

Dinah, this gentleman comes to us from the Continental Detective Agency.

She gets up, kicks a few newspapers out of the way and comes toward the Op with one hand extended. She is broad-shouldered, full-breasted, round-hipped. Her hair needs trimming, is crookedly parted. Her dress gapes where she has neglected to snap the fasteners. Her twenty-five-year-old face already shows signs of wear. This is DINAH BRAND who has her pick of Personville men.

DINAH

(soft; lazy)

Donald's father sent for you, of course. Sit -- oh, wait a minute...

She clears a pair of lizard-skin slippers and the Sunday funnies off a chair.

DINAH (cont'd)

There. Have a seat.

THE OP

He sent for me himself.

DINAH

Don't go away, Dan.

DAN

Yes, sir.

Dan returns to the table.

DINAH

You mean, he knew somebody wanted to kill him?

THE OP

I don't know. I never got to see him.

DINAH

But do you --

THE OP

I'd like to know why you had Willsson certify that check.

Dinah notices a run in her stocking.

DINAH

Honest to God! I'm going barefoot. I paid five bucks for these yesterday. Now, look...every day, runs, runs, runs.

THE OP

It's no secret. I mean the check, not the runs. Noonan's got it.

Dinah glances at Rolff who stops watching the Op long enough to nod once.

DINAH

If you talked my language I might be able to give you some help.

THE OP

What's your language?

DINAH

Money. I like it.

THE OP

Noonan's planning to hang the murder on you and Whisper.

DINAH

Don't scare me, I'm only a child.

She picks up a pencil, begins to draw a moustache and a pair of specs on the photograph of Donald Willsson in the Herald.

THE OP

His wife saw him come out of your house and get killed.

DINAH

His wife!

THE OP

She says Thaler phoned. Told her Willsson had come here with the check.

DINAH

Max couldn't have known that.

DAN

These things concern Max "Whisper" Thaler, not Miss Brand.

THE OP

They're not exactly strangers.

DINAH

My God! If I was going to kill him I wouldn't have done it in front of my own house. What kind of dumb onion do you take me for?

THE OP

Why did Donald Willsson give you five thousand dollars?

DINAH

(doodling again)

If a girl's got something that's worth something to somebody, she's a boob if she doesn't collect. Like now for example. Next question?

(looking at Willsson's photograph; surprised)

What do you know! I've improved him...

THE OP

Do this one for charity. Pretend I'm Bill Quint.

DINAH

(laughs; to Dan)

He thinks I didn't make any profit out of Bill.

Dinah leans over, puts a hand on the Op's knee.

DINAH (cont'd)

(confidentially)

Suppose you knew when there was going to be a strike, huh? And exactly when that strike was going to be over. Could you take that to the stock market and make yourself some jack?

She squeezes the Op's knee.

DINAH (cont'd)
You bet you could. So don't go
around thinking Bill didn't pay
his way.

THE OP
You've been spoiled.

DINAH
It's not so much the money. It's
what money buys. My clothes, my
house, my...freedom. C'mon, loosen
up...

The Op leans over, brushes some cigarette ash from her
knee, then off her breast, gently.

DINAH (cont'd)
Sooner or later, I'm going to cost
you.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Dan Rolff goes to answer it. As he
goes:

DINAH (cont'd)
Tell him I'll be right out, Dan.

CHINLESS JERRY, one of the men we saw with Whisper at the
train station, is at the door. The Op catches a glimpse
of Whisper's sleek Stutz Bearcat outside at the curb.
Dan Rolff steps out with Jerry, closing the door behind
him.

DINAH (cont'd)
(getting up)
All right Mr. Knowitall, I'm going
to play with you. But I'll get
mine before we're through.

Dinah enters her bedroom, leaving the door open. She
appears and disappears fleetingly in the doorway, un-
dressing, in her underwear, in her slip, etc. as they
talk.

THE OP
So, what was the five thousand
for --

DINAH
For fun. Willsson was hunting
for scandal. So I sold him some.

THE OP
Why the certified check?

DINAH
So he couldn't stop payment.
Because he couldn't have used
what was in the envelope. It
was too good. It would have
put his father in jail with the
rest of them.

THE OP
(quietly)
Who else would it have nailed?

DINAH
The whole damned bunch -- Lew
Yard, Pete the Finn, Noonan --

THE OP
Whisper Thaler?

DINAH
He leads a pretty risky life.
But on the City Hall con he was
clean.

THE OP
So that's why Noonan must have
found that stuff in Willsson's
pocket, figured you sold it with
Whisper's say-so.

DINAH
Not even Noonan can be that dumb.

THE OP
Sister, take my word for it. That
crowd thinks you and Whisper have
sold them out.

Dinah reappears in the doorway -- transformed, glamorously
gowned and groomed. With a few details out of order.

DINAH
Stick around if you like. Play a
game of pinochle with Dan.

THE OP
If Whisper Thaler means anything to
you, you ought to tell him. Noonan
is trying to rib him.

An ALARM CLOCK suddenly goes off with a CLANG. Dan Rolff hurries in to turn it off.

THE OP
What's that for?

DINAH
(sweeping out)
To remind me: time is money.

DAN
And we are mortal.

The Op watches Dinah leave, then gets up himself.

THE OP
(as he goes)
This place is a mess, Dan. Don't
you ever clean it up?

Dan Rolff ignores the Op and goes over to a bottle of gin.

The Op pauses at the front door, watches Dinah enter the Stutz. He waits for the car to pull away, then runs to his taxi.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The Op reaches the cab. Whisper's Stutz has already vanished.

THE OP
Shit.

MIKE
It's a small town. I can beat
them there if you want.

EXT. WHISPER'S JOINT - NIGHT

A three-story building in the middle of the block. A candy store on the ground floor serves as entrance and camouflage for the gambling establishment upstairs. Cars arrive and leave. Elegant people mixed up with miners and the hoi polloi. MUSIC from the inside.

Whisper is hanging around inside the candy store. As his Stutz appears in the street, he emerges, gives Dinah a hand out of the car, a clumsy effort at gallantry that is almost touching. Amused, she moves into his arms, kisses his mouth.

The Op watches from across the street. He appears a little agitated as he watches the couple go inside, laughing.

THE OP
Take me home, Mike.

INT. THE HOTEL ROOM - 2:00 A.M.

The Op can't sleep. He lies in the dark, staring at the ceiling. Closes his eyes, tosses and turns. The PHONE RINGS.

THE OP
What?...What time is it?...Okay,
okay...Send a car for me, will
you?

INT. ELIHU'S MANSION - NIGHT

Elihu's secretary leads the Op upstairs. The clock points to 2:10.

SECRETARY
(upset)
And please...will you try to
persuade him to let us remove
the body?

INT. ELIHU'S BEDROOM

When the Op enters, the hefty butler is holding Elihu in his arms like a baby, lifting the magnate out of bed. A thickset man in brown lies dead on the floor with a piece of his jaw shot off. Elihu is still clutching his long-barreled blunderbuss. He waves it in the Op's direction.

ELIHU
Have you got as much guts as you
have gall?

THE OP
(to Secretary)
Tell the police you've got a dead
burglar here.

Elihu squirms in his bodyguard's arms; the bodyguard sets him down.

ELIHU
(to bodyguard)
Get lost!
(to the Op)
You're a great talker, but have
you got anything else?

THE OP

(examining the corpse)

I thought I told you not to bother me unless you wanted to talk sense.

ELIHU

You did my lad. And here's your sense. I built Personville brick by brick. I want a man to clean this pig sty for me, to smoke out the rats, little and big. Are you the man?

THE OP

What's the use of getting poetic about it?

(nudges corpse with his foot)

Do you recognize him?

ELIHU

No, but I know who sent him.

THE OP

Who?

ELIHU

Them!!

(looks down at corpse;
gives it a kick)

That'll show 'em there's still sting in the old man. I'll give you ten thousand dollars and a free hand.

THE OP

Be serious. Them! The people you want taken to the cleaners were your friends yesterday. They'll be friends again next week. I don't care about that but I'm not hiring out to help you kick them back in line.

ELIHU

I'll put it in writing -- you'll see.

Elihu pushes a button. The secretary enters immediately, as if he'd been waiting behind the door.

ELIHU

I want to issue a ten thousand dollar check to the Continental Detective Agency. With a letter authorizing the San Francisco branch to investigate crime and corruption in the city of Personville. As the agency sees fit.

As the secretary goes Chief Noonan bustles inside, over to the corpse, followed by THREE POLICEMEN.

NOONAN

(over the corpse)

Well, well, well. Yakima Shorty.

THE OP

Who does he work for?

NOONAN

The boy is a lone wolf. And will you look at the sap he's toting!

(offering the Op
a cigar)

You do it?

THE OP

Mr. Willsson.

NOONAN

(to Elihu)

Well, well, that certainly is fine, sir. Pack him out, boys.

ELIHU

I want to keep him!

NOONAN

Why?

ELIHU

After eighty years, it's good to see what I can still do with my hands.

THE OP

Why don't you have him stuffed?

Noonan signals two policemen to carry Yakima Shorty out. The third policeman carries Yakima Shorty's sap.

NOONAN

I'm on my way to arrest Whisper Thaler for your son's murder, sir.

THE OP
I'll go along.

NOONAN
Too dangerous.

ELIHU
Shut up, Noonan. Take my man
with you.

NOONAN
O.K. Whatever you say.

EXT. KING STREET - WHISPER'S JOINT - NIGHT

The dark street is full of moving shadows. Policemen
take up positions. Some carry guns, some rifles.

Noonan and the Op get out of a police car and work their
way towards Whisper's joint, staying close to the walls
to keep out of sight.

BIG NICK, a burly detective in a dark overcoat, hat pulled
down over his eyes, comes to meet them.

BIG NICK
Whisper's on to us. He just phoned
that he's not coming out. If we
think we can pull him out, try it,
he says.

NOONAN
Fine. Good.

THE OP
Anybody in there besides Whisper
and his boys?

BIG NICK
No.

THE OP
(disbelieving)
Dinah Brand's inside.

BIG NICK
(to Noonan)
You said let anybody leave who
wanted to but when Whisper showed
to --

NOONAN
(sharply)
-- Arrest him.

BIG NICK
Well...sure...arrest him.

The MELODIES of LA BOHEME playing on a gramophone filter out of Whisper's Joint. Cops behind their barricade listen to the music in silence.

Unsure of his next move, Noonan takes his anger out on a little policeman he sees hiding nearby, eating a sandwich.

NOONAN
What are you doing in there? You got a rifle, get your ass on a roof!
(as the cop reluctantly shuffles past them)
Jesus...

BIG NICK
(impatient)
When do we move?

NOONAN
As soon as it gets light.

BIG NICK
(aggressive)
It's light now.

Big Nick pulls his gun, handles it. Checks the chambers.

NOONAN
(cheerful)
All right, Big Nick. Run over and see if you can't talk him into being peaceable.

BIG NICK
The hell I will. There must be twenty guys in there.

NOONAN
Gee, I hate not giving young Whisper a chance.

THE OP
I'll go.

NOONAN
That's fine of you. I certainly appreciate it. See if you can talk him into coming along without any fuss.

The Op takes a step, but:

NOW A CONVERTIBLE appears from around a corner, careens to a stop between the two armed camps. It is filled with YOUNG PARTY-GOERS. Someone with a ukele is playing "Yes We Have No Bananas."

A YOUNG MAN in a tuxedo gets out of the car and walks unsteadily over to a fire hydrant.

NOONAN
(whispers)
Who the hell is that?

BIG NICK
Whittaker's boy.

NOONAN
Congressman Whittaker?

Big Nick nods. Noonan turns to the cop on his right.

NOONAN (cont'd)
(whispers)
Don't shoot him. Pass it on.

THE COP
(to the man on
the right)
Don't shoot him. Pass it on.

OTHER VOICES
(whispering down
the lane)
Don't shoot him. Pass it on.

NOONAN
What's he doing?

THE OP
(deadpan)
Seems to be pissing.

The line of grim policemen watch young Whittaker pee.

The youngster walks stiffly back to the convertible, oblivious of the guns. The convertible careens off.

NOONAN
(to Op)
Okay. Go.

The SOUND of "La Boheme" still fills the air as the Op crosses the street which is by now the color of smoke. His feet make a lot of noise on the pavement.

WHISPER'S JOINT

The Op knocks on the door of the candy store.

THE OP

(clears his throat)

Is Thaler where he can hear me?

WHISPER'S VOICE

Go talk to the lard-can that sent you.

THE OP

I'm the guy who tipped off Dinah.

I want five minutes with you.

I've got nothing to do with Noonan.

Let me in.

WHISPER'S VOICE

When we open, come in quick. And no stunts.

At the SOUND of the LATCH, bullets fly from across the street. The Op plunges inside with the door.

INT. CANDYSTORE - DAWN

Glass shot from the door and windows tinkles around him. The Op tumbles, twisting around to face the door with his gun in his hand.

THE OP'S POV

Across the street, Big Nick inside a doorway pumps shot with both hands. The Op squeezes his trigger. Nick crosses his guns on his chest and goes down in a pile, like an angel.

THE OP

Hands on the Op's ankles drag him back. The door slams shut. After the shooting tapers off we can HEAR "La Boheme" once again, coming from a gramophone on the soda fountain.

CHINLESS JERRY

Uh-huh, people don't like you.

The Op looks around, hunting for Dinah.

There are only five men present. One of them is Whisper with a glass of Scotch in his hand.

THE OP
Where's Dinah Brand?

WHISPER
What's it to you?

THE OP
(flares)
Where is she?

WHISPER
She left before the trouble started.
She told me about you.

THE OP
(spotting the half-
opened door)
What's in there?

WHISPER
Nothing. Let's go upstairs.

The Op opens the door, anyway. He sees a small, empty storeroom, full of candy bars and cigarettes. Then he follows Whisper upstairs. Two men remain downstairs.

UPSTAIRS

Whisper opens a door. In complete contrast to the squalid little candy shop, here is a large luxurious gambling den. Lush curtains, thick carpets, swank chairs. A roulette table and several card tables look like they have been abandoned in the middle of a game.

Lefty lingers in front of a mirror, smoothing his yellow hair. Chinless Jerry wanders up and down the room looking bored and humming "Rosey Cheeks" as the Op and Whisper talk.

WHISPER
How long is Noonan going to keep
this up?

THE OP
Till he gets you. He's not waiting
to prove anything in court.

WHISPER
No?

THE OP

You're supposed to be knocked off
resisting arrest.

WHISPER

What's he got against you?

THE OP

He thinks I'm going to be a
nuisance.

WHISPER

Too bad. Dinah said you were a
pretty good guy except kind of
Scotch with the roll.

THE OP

I had a nice visit. What do you
know about Donald Willsson's
killing?

Whisper puts his glass down. The Op picks the glass up
and studies a woman's mouth printed in lipstick on the
rim.

WHISPER

Willsson's wife said it was me on
the phone that night?

THE OP

Yeah. Once Noonan persuaded her.
She believes it now -- maybe.

WHISPER

(glances out window)
The same man phoned me that night.
I couldn't recognize his voice...
He was whispering.

THE OP

Thanks, that's what I came for.
What kind of gun do you carry?

WHISPER

A thirty-eight.

THE OP

I thought so. I know the rest.

WHISPER

You that hot? Who did it?

THE OP

Sleep late tomorrow morning. By lunchtime Noonan will owe you an apology. Now the only trick is how to get to our beds.

WHISPER

No trick at all.

He takes out a fat roll of bills and peels a few off the top.

WHISPER

Buy us a getaway Jerry. And don't give anybody any more than he's used to.

EXT. BACK YARD OF WHISPER'S JOINT - DAY

Broad daylight. Jerry is the first one out of the back door. He looks around and signals to the others. There are five of them plus the Op. As they go:

THE OP

Big Nick said there were twenty of you.

LEFTY

Twenty of us to stand off that crummy force?

A squad car is waiting at the gate with a uniformed cop in the driver's seat.

COP

Hurry it up, boys, please.

They climb in casually and the car pulls away.

EXT. DINAH'S HOUSE - DAY

The squad car drops Whisper off at Dinah's front door.

WHISPER

I'm going to take your advice.
I'm gonna stay in bed all morning.

He reaches in to shake the Op's hand through the window.

WHISPER

(a bit formal; like
a well bred child)
It was a pleasure to meet you.

Albury looks around, flushes.

ALBURY
Mr. Dritton, the cashier.

THE OP
Introduce me.

ALBURY
(calls; uncomfortable)
Mr. Dritton!

A large man with a smooth pink face steps over to their window.

ALBURY (cont'd)
(mumbling)
This gentleman wants to speak to you, Sir.

THE OP
We need a private place to talk in. This youngster probably won't confess 'til I've worked on him a while.

MR. DRITTON
Confess?

THE OP
Sure. Didn't you know Albury killed Donald Willsson?

Mr. Dritton clears his throat.

DRITTON
(heartily)
It's a splendid morning. We're having splendid weather.

THE OP
Okay, I'll take him down to City Hall.

DRITTON
Come back here.

Albury and the Op follow Mr. Dritton through a gate, towards an office whose door is labeled "President -- Elihu Willsson."

INT. THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

A portrait of Elihu dominates the room.

THE OP

You're an ex-boyfriend of Dinah's.
You're the only one who knew
about the certified check in time
to phone Mrs. Willsson and Thaler.
Willsson was shot with a thirty-
two. Banks like that caliber.
Gangsters prefer a thirty-eight.

Albury maintains his calm. The Op bears down. Mr. Dritton
is the one uncomfortably, fidgeting with his glasses.

THE OP (cont'd)

You were cuckoo over the girl.
You confessed to me that it was
only because she wouldn't stand
for it that you didn't take --

ALBURY

(gasps)

Don't -- please don't.

THE OP

You talked too much son.

Albury glances nervously at Mr. Dritton.

THE OP (cont'd)

Maybe the gun you used wasn't a
bank gun but I think it was. A
ballistics expert can tell. Where
is the gun?

ALBURY

In Harper's cage.

THE OP

(to Dritton)

Will you get it?

The cashier leaves as if he were glad to go. As soon as
he's gone:

ALBURY

I didn't mean to kill him. I
don't think I meant to.

INT. THE INTERROGATION ROOM - CITY HALL - DAY

The first thing we see is Noonan, listening to Albury's
confession, clearly a bit depressed by what he heard.
The Op, an ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY and a STENOGRA-
PHER are also present in the windowless room.

ALBURY

It was the check. Can you understand that? It was seeing Willsson with the check. And knowing I'd lost her because my money was gone ...I watched her house that night and saw him go in.

TIM, Noonan's brother jogging in place, dressed in workout clothes, sticks his head in the door, curious as a child. Noonan slams the door in his face.

ALBURY (cont'd)

I knew Willsson's wife was jealous. Everybody knew that. I thought if I called her -- and Thaler -- maybe they'd do something -- and I wouldn't have to. But they just stood there and let Willsson walk away.

(halting; short
of breath)

I remember taking the gun out of my pocket. I don't remember shooting but I remember the sound and I knew it was coming from my gun.

Albury doesn't realize his eyes are full of tears.

INT. HALLWAY - CITY HALL - DAY

Noonan accompanies the Op to the front door.

NOONAN

Well, well, I did Whisper an injustice. I have to hunt him up and apologize.

THE OP

He'll be happy he's alive to hear it.

NOONAN

By God! You had a narrow one last night -- the rats! I was sure they'd got you till we kicked in the doors. Tell me how those son-of-a guns got out of there.

THE OP

One of your men drove us home in a squad car.

NOONAN

One of my men did that! Well, well! I mighta known!

He holds the front door of City Hall open for the Op.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

Noonan shakes the Op's hand enthusiastically on the front steps of City Hall.

NOONAN

Congratulations, and thanks again.
Hey!

(points to the fight
poster nearby)

You're goin' to stick around for
a while, I hope. You see the
fight. That kid brother of mine
is some scrapper.

THE OP

I keep trying to remember where
I've seen that other mucker before.
Bush.

(shrugs)

No. I'm going back to Frisco, back
to work.

NOONAN

You'll be missing a swell fight.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The funeral of Donald Willsson is an important social event. Everyone who's anyone is there -- the few local ARISTOCRATS, REPORTERS and STAFF from the Herald, a few BLUE COLLAR TYPES and especially Personville's leading GANGSTERS.

The Op walks among the tombstones, suitcase in hand, approaching the funeral on foot. No one notices his presence but he sees all of them. He sees:

Noonan go over to Whisper, clasp his hand, chatting cheerfully and intimately in his ear. Noonan's beefy kid brother Tim hangs off to one side, grinning. The Op can't hear Whisper and Noonan but we do.

WHISPER

Everything's settled. Your brother
wins in the sixth round. Ike's
going down for the count.

NOONAN

Is that a promise?

WHISPER

(grins)

You can bet on it. I am.

NOONAN

(raising Tim's arm
like a referee with
a champ)

Winner and still champ.

Dinah moves closer to Whisper.

Lew Yard is right behind Noonan. He pats Whisper on the back like an affectionate father.

LEW

We're all gonna make a lot of
money.

Even Pete the Finn signals complicitously from a few feet away. Smiling at Whisper, he pantomimes a few punches alluding to the fight.

Peace has been restored to Personville.

The Op sees an immense LIMOUSINE parked absurdly in the middle of the gravestones a short distance away. Old Elihu watches his son's funeral from his car.

The coffin is lowered into the grave. A line of people forms around Mrs. Willsson, ready to make their condolences. She ignores them, turns on her heels and walks away, accompanied by her maid. Amazed at the rudeness, the mourners separate to let her pass and follow her with their eyes. With an air of determination, she goes straight for the limousine.

Elihu is scarcely visible inside. She seems to be addressing the car more than a person.

MRS. WILLSSON

I told Donald we should never have
come to this town! We should have
stayed in Paris. We were happy
there! We had people to talk to.

FRANCINE

(at her elbow;
murmurs)

Calmez-vous, Madame. J'ai peur.

MRS. WILLSSON

(pulling free)
Leave me alone!

(MORE)

MRS. WILLSSON (CONT'D)

(with cold fury)

Your son is dead. You can promise your friends the newspaper won't dig up any more dirt! Look around. They're so happy. This isn't a funeral. It's a celebration! Everything's lovely and peaceful again. You bastard! You bastard! You bastard!

Dinah watches the spectacle with sympathy.

DINAH

(admiring)

I'm crazy about her hat.

Suddenly, Dinah notices the Op leaving the crowd, carrying his suitcase, heading for town. She runs after him, catches up, walks alongside -- with only a row of gravestones between them.

DINAH (cont'd)

(indicating his valise)

What's that for?

THE OP

(without stopping)

I've got a train to catch.

DINAH

I hate people to leave.

THE OP

Didn't you hear? Everything's lovely and peaceful again.

DINAH

What's wrong with that?

THE OP

No reason for me to hang around.

Swiftly she moves between the gravestones and stops in front of him, blocking the path.

DINAH

(low; loving)

You -- Liar! Coward! Cocksucker!
Shit! Motherfucker! Son of a
bitch!

He listens. When she's finished he says:

THE OP
I'm wild about you, too.

Then he steps around her and walks away.

EXT. STATION PLATFORM - DAY

The station platform is empty. The Op watches the PORTER quietly pitching pennies against the wall with the STATION MASTER.

Noonan's car slides smoothly to a stop on the other side of the tracks. Almost immediately, another car pulls up, on a hill overlooking the station. The Op recognizes Lew Yard in the back. A third car comes to a halt further down the street, on the same side of the tracks as the platform. Pete the Finn lounges in the back seat of this one. Nobody makes a move to get out of the cars.

They watch.

In a moment, Elihu's limousine appears, cruising towards the Op on the platform itself. It stops a few feet away from him.

The Op looks at all four cars, one by one. Then he whistles. The BOY skates over.

THE OP
(hands him the
suitcase)
Great Western Hotel.

And flips him a dime.

SPORT
Right-o.

The boy skates off. Noonan, Yard and the Finn get out of their cars. The Op walks over to the limo and waits. The rear window rolls down, REVEALING the old man in black.

THE OP
(ironic)
Don't tell me. Let me guess.
You want your check back.

ELIHU
That check's a bonus for the work
you did.

THE OP

The Continental's got rules against bonuses.

ELIHU

Well dammit -- Aren't you leaving?

THE OP

I just changed my mind.

ELIHU

I was...we were excited last night.
That's all off.

THE OP

I expected something like this.
'Everything's lovely and peaceful again.' I really wanted to overlook it but -- look at that -- Everything but a brass band. Now I'm going to have my fun. I've got ten thousand dollars to play with. I'm going to open Poisonville up from Adam's apple to ankles. I hope you enjoy it.

Elihu starts shouting, apopleptic.

ELIHU

It's my money! I won't have it wasted on a lot of tomfoolery... etc.

But his words are drowned out by the clatter of the TRAIN pulling into the station. All we can see is an old man screwing his face up like an enraged infant yammering. The Op turns his back on Elihu and walks away.

EXT. PERSONVILLE - DAY

The Op re-enters the city. Looks around as he goes, amused and sinister like an aging Samurai surveying a battlefield. He has decided to challenge the entire city.

The FIRST CAR that passes him is Noonan's. He drives away fast. The Op turns into another street.

We have time to see Pete the Finn's CAR is the SECOND one to pass the Op. Pete's large, serious face in the window. Just a look, then it too speeds up and disappears.

The LAST CAR to approach the Op is Lew Yard's. He stares at the Op with gloomy curiosity. Reno Starkey, his right hand, is driving. He keeps the car a few steps behind the Op, going at the same speed as his walk.

At an intersection, A POLICEMAN is directing traffic with a fat half smoked cigar in his chops. As the Op passes behind him:

POLICEMAN
(over his shoulder)
Hey, buddy, got a match?

The Op strikes a match. As he cups it in front of the cop's face:

THE OP
How's business?

POLICEMAN
Can't complain.

The Op walks away. Lew Yard's car is still following him. The Op begins to WHISTLE ironically. Suddenly, OTHER VOICES join in, WHISTLING the same tune. THREE HEAVY-SET MEN have fallen into step behind him. He turns another corner. The whistling follows him, coming closer all the time. The Op can feel their breath on his neck. Suddenly, THREE MEN he's never seen before surround him. The Op stops, prepared for a confrontation. They are standing:

IN FRONT OF A MOVIE THEATRE - "THE BIJOU"

Grinning, one of the thugs goes to the box office.

1ST GANGSTER
Four tickets.

THE OP
I've already seen this movie.

Now he feels the pressure of the two guns in his ribs.

THE OP (cont'd)
I guess I can see it again.

As they go in, the Op catches a glimpse of Lew Yard's car, accelerating and driving away.

INT. THE BIJOU

At mid-day the theater is practically deserted.

They force the Op to sit in the first row, two men on either side, one man in the row behind him. For a moment, they watch the movie. It is a great forgotten masterpiece of the late twenties ("UNDERWORLD").

Then, without warning, a first violent punch hits the Op in the face. The Op absorbs the blow, scarcely reacts.

THE OP
Can't we discuss this?

In reply, a second even stronger punch comes from the other side. Lands in the same place. The Op responds rapidly, reaches for the two heads beside him and tries to bang them together. He almost succeeds, when a terribly heavy and compact blow falls on his neck from behind.

THE GANGSTER BEHIND THEM
That's the way I used to kill rabbits
for my mother.

The Op falls on his knees breathless. The few spectators present leave the theater on tiptoe. The three gangsters take their time now -- finish the Op off with a few leisurely nasty kicks. One of them never stops watching the movie.

GANGSTER
(his eyes on the screen)
That was the best part. Let's go.

Now the room is deserted, except for the Op who lies on the floor, unconscious.

INT. THE MEN'S ROOM - THE BIJOU

The Op splashes water on his face. He looks at himself in the mirror. His face is slightly disfigured. One lip is split and won't stop bleeding.

EXT. THE BIJOU

The Op walks out of the Bijou, cleaned up. He has pulled himself together. A HORN TOOTS cheerfully, repeatedly.

The Op sees Dinah driving a shiny BRAND NEW SPORTSCAR. Whisper sits beside her. They wave and pull over to the curb. The Op joins them.

DINAH
(jubilant)
What's the matter, miss your
train?

THE OP
(striking the paint).
What's this? Don Willsson's five
thousand?

DINAH
And I have enough left over to buy
you a hot dog.

She TOOTS her horn again at a VENDOR with a HOT DOG CART.

A few seconds later. Dinah, Whisper and the Op are
standing around the cart, eating.

DINAH
(to Whisper)
I knew he wouldn't be able to
leave.

WHISPER
I hear you've declared war on
Poisonville.

THE OP
Bad news travels fast. I've got
a client who wants the place
ventilated.

WHISPER
Wanted, not wants. Why don't you
chuck it?

THE OP
Poisonville is ripe for the harvest.
It's a job I like and I'm going to
do it.

WHISPER
While you last.

THE OP
I'm in it to the last nickel of
Elihu's ten thousand.

DINAH
(yawning)
I told you he was a pighead.

WHISPER
It's your skin.

DINAH
Isn't there anything to drink in
this dump?

VENDOR
(huge wink)
Water.

DINAH
Well, give us a round.

The vendor pours gin all around out of a water bottle.
Tim passes, jogging triumphantly in his new sweatsuit,
surrounded by CHILDISH SUPPORTERS.

WHISPER
I owe you. You got Noonan off my
back. Going to the fights tonight?

THE OP
I guess so.

WHISPER
I'll give you a straight tip.
Ike Bush will take a dive in the
sixth round.

THE OP
You don't say.

DINAH
(to the Op)
You know, you're so much more
fascinating now.

WHISPER
(to Dinah)
Let's go.

THE OP
(ignoring Whisper)
Why?

DINAH
(ignoring Whisper)
There are at least ten thousand
reasons.

WHISPER
Let's go.

DINAH
No, why? I'm drinking.

WHISPER
Because I say so.

DINAH

Go yourself, if you're in such a hurry.

Glaring, furious, Whisper stalks off. As soon as he's gone, Dinah leans closer to the Op.

DINAH

If I help you, will you give me some of that money?

THE OP

(amused)

We'll see...Goodbye.

DINAH

Wait a minute. Help me put the top up...I say goodbye much better in a car.

The Op helps her close the roof of the convertible. She sits in the driver's seat and motions him to sit next to her.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Dinah takes the Op's face in her hands and kisses him on the mouth. Then, she turns the key in the ignition.

DINAH

Goodbye.

The Op watches her drive off. For the first time he looks confused. First punched, then kissed and it's only the afternoon.

INT. UNION HALL - DAY

The Op enters a storefront that has been converted into the union hall. A few offices and in the rear, a huge space for meetings. There are posters on the walls, union flags and many rows of chairs and benches. Fifty or sixty miners are there, some of them with their wives and girlfriends.

At the far end of the room, standing up behind a table, Bill Quint is making a speech about the situation in town. Personville is the city with the greatest number of millionaires in proportion to the size of the population. There is even an Opera House. In spite of this, it is also the city with the greatest number of accidents and deaths on the job.

In the first and second rows of chairs, people are listening with interest. But as THE CAMERA MOVES away from the podium, the Op notices the audience is more and more distracted. Some of them are playing cards. Others are playing chess or eating or discussing the prizefight.

Bill Quint cuts his speech short since almost nobody is listening. The Op goes over to him.

THE OP

You know what I just heard? Ike Bush is going to take a dive in the sixth.

BILL

Too bad.

(looking at the crowd of miners)

Objectively, Ike Bush is the better fighter.

THE OP

Objectively, your people will lose their bets. Whisper gave me the tip.

BILL

I can't ask them to bet on a palooka named Noonan -- like the worst son-of-a-bitch in town.

THE OP

So, you've got to help me find out who Ike Bush is. I've seen him somewhere. But I can't place it.

Bill calls over two men who are just entering the Union Hall.

BILL

Otto...Swede...Seen the champ?

OTTO

Yeah, we just stopped by the gym. The Kid's doing great.

SWEDE

Scissors is working him like mad.

The Op jumps to his feet.

THE OP

Scissors...Scissors Haggerty?

SWEDE

His trainer.

THE OP

Where do they live?

MIKE

(who has joined
the group)

Same place as you.

THE OP

I've got to get into his room.

BILL

(to Mike)

Mario.

MIKE

(complicitous)

Mario Soldati, of course.

BILL

(to the Op)

I'll go with you.

As they go:

THE OP

There's only one Scissors Haggerty.
(looking at the
miners)

They can stick with Ike Bush. He's
the favorite. He'll win.

INT. GREAT WESTERN HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Bill introduces the Op to the concierge at the hotel desk. He is MARIO SOLDATI, an Italian friend, elegantly dressed in pinstripe trousers. He has a thick moustache like Groucho Marx. From a distance, we can see that Mario grasps the situation immediately.

As the three of them go towards the elevator, the Swede and Mike arrive, running.

SWEDE

Ike and Scissors are on their way
back.

BILL

We've only got a few minutes.
Mike, you and Swede stay here.
Keep an eye out. Let us know
when they're coming.

INT. CORRIDOR - THIRD FLOOR

Mario opens the door with his passkey. Scissors and Ike Bush share a room. The Op begins to search it. He is very professional.

INT. THE LOBBY

Swede the albino signals from the door. Mike is waiting in the elevator. As soon as Scissors and Ike Bush enter, jogging, Mike closes the elevator door. The elevator boy -- a 50 year old midget perched on a high stool -- takes the lift to the third floor.

INT. IKE'S ROOM

The Op continues meticulously. He puts everything back where he found it. Mario and Bill watch him work in silence.

INT. THE CORRIDOR

Mike runs to the door. He enters.

INT. IKE'S ROOM

MIKE
(entering)
They're in the lobby.

Mario and Bill exchange a look.

MARIO
Maybe we better go.

MIKE
Relax. The elevator's out of order.

The Op keeps going as if he hadn't heard them. He can't find what he's looking for.

INT. THE LOBBY

Ike Bush, sweating through his gym suit, is imploring his trainer.

IKE
Have a heart. Scissors. Let's wait for the elevator.

SCISSORS
C'mon Al. One...two...one...two...

Ike sighs and begins running upstairs. Scissors follows him slowly.

INT. IKE'S ROOM

Everyone is very still. All eyes are on the Op, the only one active. He seems to move in slow motion.

MIKE

Take it easy. We've got plenty of time.

He watches the hall through a crack in the door. The Op finds something hidden casually -- a guidebook of PHILADELPHIA. He picks it up.

THE OP

We can go now.

MIKE

(closing the door;
very pale)

Too late. He's in the hall.

Bill and Mario look at Mike as if they could kill him.

INT. THE CORRIDOR

Ike Bush reaches his door, jogging. He looks at his trainer, who appears at the end of the corridor.

IKE

Hurry up, Scissors. I have to take a leak.

Scissors looks tired, ignores him, panting from the stairs.

IKE

If you don't open the fucking door, I'll pee on the carpet.

SCISSORS

(pausing to catch
his breath)

I'm the one who's pissing blood.
You're killing me.

He puts his key in the lock.

INT. IKE'S ROOM

The Op, Bill, Mike and Mario disappear into the next room through the connecting door.

Mario gets the door closed the same instant that Scissors opens his. Ike races for the bathroom.

INT. THE CORRIDOR

The four men file out of the adjoining room. Silently they head for the elevator where the midget is waiting nervously. The Op is the last one out. He is leafing through the Guide Book to the City of Brotherly Love.

THE OP

Listen to this. "Come back to Philly Al. I miss you. Your sweetiepie forever...Marilyn." Al. Al Kennedy. The Keystone Trust knockover...two years ago. The rest of them got copped. But Al Kennedy and Scissors made the sneak.

(entering the elevator; excited)

That's why he's out here in the bush. See? That's why he's a pork-and-beaner when he's as good as the best.

EXT. LUNA PARK - NIGHT

The Op is in a crowd going to the fights. The crowd gives a wide berth to Lew Yard who is talking excitedly to Pete the Finn in the middle of the midway of a rundown circus. In the b.g. a large circus tent. When the Op approaches close enough he hears:

LEW YARD

The odds hit the ceiling. We're going to make a fortune.

PETE THE FINN

(affable)

You oughta see Noonan's face. He's ecstatic. Here he comes. Look at him.

The Op looks over his shoulder. Noonan is arriving with his whole STAFF in dress uniforms. The Chief is beaming, prepared for a triumph.

The Op slips off to the side.

EXT. DRESSING ROOMS/TENT - NIGHT

The Op moves behind the tents, passing aging LIONS in cages, toothless TIGERS.

Near the dressing room, he pauses. Noonan and Whisper are coming, arm in arm, fast friends again. The Op turns his back to them, studies a tired old BEAST in a cage.

NOONAN

Know something? I'm glad my brother isn't the favorite. I'm going to be even prouder of him when he wins.

WHISPER

He will. C'mon, I want you to meet his trainer...Scissors! Come out here.

Scissors Haggerty comes out of a shed and closes the door behind him. He walks away with Noonan and Whisper, confabulating. The Op moves to the back of the shed.

INT. SHED - THE DRESSING ROOM

Ike Bush is perched on a massage table, ready to go into the ring. The image of sadness.

THE OP

(off)

Hello. Going to win tonight.

IKE

(without turning around)

Hope so.

THE OP

(off)

So do I...I'd hate to have to send you back to Philly, Al.

IKE

Huh?

Ike turns and sees the Op outside a little window. His face in the frame of the open window looks like a dark portrait.

THE OP

(placidly)

Ike Bush isn't your name, you're Al Kennedy. You and Scissors Haggerty are wanted for armed robbery back east. Remember the Keystone Trust, Al?

Ike's expression is too set to show any emotion but he begins to advance slowly towards the open window.

IKE

I don't know what you're talking about. Who are you?

THE OP

If you were smacked down by a bum like Tim Noonan, I'd get peevish.

Suddenly, Ike lunges forward and puts his arm through the window trying to grab hold of the Op. The Op just takes one step backwards, out of reach. He watches the boxer's hand grabbing nothing but air. Then:

THE OP (cont'd)

Don't do it, Al. Nobody wants to go back to Philadelphia.

INT. THE TENT - NIGHT

The tent is packed tight. Smoke. Stink. Heat. NOISE.

The Op fights his way down a crowded aisle. He stops beside Dan Rolff sitting with Dinah in the third row. She looks like money tonight -- marcelled hair, huge fur coat, jewels.

DINAH

Get down on Tim Noonan?

THE OP

No, you playing him heavy?

DINAH

You bet.

THE OP

(leaning past Dan)

The dive is off. Copper your bets while you can.

DINAH

(husky)

You mean it? How do you know?

The Op smiles and moves back.

DINAH (cont'd)

Is Max on?

The Op shrugs. Dinah chews her lower lip.

THE OP

Take it or leave it, but it's a gut.

Dinah opens her bag and drags out a bankroll the size of a coffee can. Part of the roll she pushes at Rolff.

DINAH

Here, get it down on Bush. Hurry.

Rolff hurries away. The Op takes his seat.

DINAH (cont'd)

Christ help you if you've made me drop that dough.

The Op picks out GANGSTERS on the four sides of the ring. WHISPER'S GANG -- all young, flashily dressed, exuberant. LEW YARD'S GANG -- somber, studying their programs. Reno Starkey sits next to Yard. Opposite Whisper's section, Noonan with a big band of policemen stands up to greet Pete the Finn. The rest is a huge crowd of miners.

The trapeze artists fly through the air over the ring, finishing their routine.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, the main event. In this corner, wearing yellow trunks and weighing one hundred and eighty pounds, Personville's own TIM NOONAN.

Tim Noonan, rosy cheeked with excitement, salutes the crowd. A loud CHORUS of BOOS.

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

And in this corner, wearing red trunks and weighing one hundred and sixty five pounds -- IIIIIIKE BUSH!

A pause, then WHISTLING and CLAPPING.

Dan Rolff comes back. The Op gets out of Dan's seat and disappears into the crowd.

The match begins. Ike Bush has class -- nimble legs, a smooth left hand and a right that gets away quick. It would be murder to put him in the ring with Noonan if Bush were trying. Tim Noonan waddles flatfooted around the ring, throwing punches at will.

The audience is BOOING before the first round is over. We pick out the faces of Yard, the Finn and Whisper. Everything is going their way. Noonan is jubilant. Dinah is the only one who looks sour, nervous. She squirms in her seat, craning her neck for a glimpse of the Op.

The second round is even worse.

VOICES FROM THE AUDIENCE
Throw 'em out! Why don't you kiss 'em?
Make them fight!
etc.

Suddenly, in a lull, one voice can be clearly heard.

VOICE
Back to Philly, Al!

It sounds like the Op's voice. Bush stops everything to look for the shouter. The volume of BOOING increases. SOMEONE in the hall, noticing Bush's reaction, picks up the cry.

SECOND VOICE
Back to Philly, Al!

Bush reacts again, turning in that direction as well.

THREE QUICK INSERTS:

A. A lot of KIDS with no money are listening to the fight over loudspeakers OUTSIDE THE TENT. They hear BOOING and a few more VOICES calling "Back to Philly, Al!"

B. A POOL HALL. A FEW MEN stop playing billiards, to listen to the SOUND coming from a radio: MORE VOICES repeating the same phrase.

A POOL SHARK
(with a smile)
Back to Philly, Al!

C. A TUNNEL IN THE MINES. MINERS stop shoveling to listen to the fight broadcast coming over a loudspeaker rigged up to a radio. It sounds like the whole tent is chanting 'Back to Philly, Al!'

RADIO ANNOUNCER
(feverish)
What's come over Ike Bush, ladies
and gentlemen?! He's coming on
strong! Another right! A left!
Noonan is dazed!!

THE RING

The whole crowd has picked up the chant. But the one who's shouting loudest is Dinah.

DINAH

Back to Philly, Al!!

In the ring, Ike Bush pummels Tim Noonan.

The Chief of Police is enraged and looks around for Whisper. Whisper whispers something to Chinless Jerry and TONY AGOSTI and walks out.

The Op looks around at the gangsters' reactions and movements, pleased. All around him, spectators are chanting:

SPECTATORS

BACK TO PHILLY, AL!!

Ike Bush throws a combination. Everybody in the room feels the punch. TOTAL SILENCE. Tim Noonan crashes to the floor. The referee takes a minute to count ten seconds.

The referee raises Ike Bush's hand reluctantly. The crowd of miners CHEER wildly. They all won money. The Op catches Bill Quint's eye. Quint signals congratulations. Tim Noonan struggles to his feet, starts to stagger to his corner.

A HIGH TWINKLE OF LIGHT

A short silver streak flashes through the ring and ends with a thud in Tim's neck. The kid brother has walked into a knife intended for Ike Bush.

QUICK CLOSEUP OF DINAH

Her eyes meet the eyes of the knife holder. Immediately she looks back at the ring.

Tim paws at the knife handle with his boxing gloves, like a man in a dream unable to close his hands...He takes a few steps...Falls over the ropes, dead.

Pandemonium. Pete the Finn, Lew Yard and all their gangsters are looking for Whisper. They are furious, but Whisper is vanished.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

People run in panic in every direction. The Op finds Dinah at the wheel of her sports car.

DINAH
Is he dead?

THE OP
Very. Let's get out of here.

DINAH
I've got to wait for Dan.

Bill Quint comes over to the Op, purposely ignoring Dinah.

BILL
You all right? Need any help?

THE OP
Things got a little out of hand.
It's moving faster than I expected.

DINAH
Hi, Bill.

BILL
(averting his gaze;
stiff)
Hello Dinah.

DINAH
(kidding)
Bill -- it's been a long time.
You didn't love me that much?

Bill is too emotional about it. Unable to answer, he leaves.

DINAH (cont'd)
(to the Op)
A little out of hand? Is that
what you call it? The poor kid
is dead.
(as it suddenly
dawns on her)
Are you behind this mess?

Before the Op can answer, Dinah spots Dan wandering around looking for her, HONKS her horn and he comes over.

DINAH (cont'd)
(snapping her
fingers at him)
Did you collect?

Dan takes out a wad of money and holds it out.

Whisper's car screeches to a stop at that moment. FIVE
FACES look out the window at Dinah's bankroll.

WHISPER

(to Dinah)

You're the only one I know who won
tonight.

(to the Op)

And you -- you go back to Frisco.
Tonight.

(to Dinah)

I'll take care of you later.

A GROUP OF POLICEMEN have come running out of the tent.
Now, as they locate Whisper, they begin to shoot at him,
despite the crowd. People SCREAM and run to get out of
the line of fire. Whisper's car, carooming to avoid
people, screeches out of sight.

The Op pushes Dinah to the floor of her car, out of the
line of fire. Dan Rolff stays in the rumble seat,
indifferent to the bullets flying around him.

THE OP

Your boyfriend didn't like the
way things turned out...

Like a spring, the girl jumps up, yells in the direction
Whisper went.

DINAH

To hell with you little tin horn
runt.

The Op pulls her over again. There is very little room.
They are almost on top of each other.

DINAH (cont'd)

How did you come out?

THE OP

Didn't bet.

DINAH

What kind of ass are you? Not
betting when you have a thing
sewed up.

THE OP

I wasn't sure it was sewed up.

DINAH

You mean you were taking chances
with money?

THE OP
(amused)
It's called gambling.

DINAH
(incredulous)
With my money?

They suddenly realize it's gotten quiet outside. The Op and Dinah get up. All around them, the fairgrounds are almost deserted. Dan Rolff is watching pieces of paper blow in the winds. In the main entrance of the tent, Noonan appears, surrounded by POLICE. He moves slowly, his brother's CORPSE in his arms, fury and despair on his face.

DINAH (cont'd)
(with tears in
her eyes)
I'm starving.

DINAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

At the stove, Dan Rolff is dressed in an apron. He cooks, drinks laudanum at the same time. Dinah is counting her money on the kitchen table, surrounded by vegetables, cooking utensils. She interrupts her arithmetic to complain.

DINAH
All I did was get in on the win.
I didn't have any more to do with
it than a baby, did I?

DAN
Whisper's afraid the others'll
think he was in on it too.

EXT. THE HOUSE

The Op is checking the street, a glass of gin in his hand. The street seems empty. All he sees is a curtain move slightly in a window across the street. The Op starts back up Dinah's front steps. He can see her through the kitchen window and hear:

DINAH
Fuck, I lost count. I have to
start all over again.

The Op reaches the top step. It CREAKS LOUDLY. He pauses, puts his weight on it again. The same SOUND. The Op can see Dinah react to the same NOISE in the kitchen. For an instant, their eyes meet.

INT. THE KITCHEN

As the Op joins them, Dan Rolff is separating money from lettuce leaves and complaining bitterly about it.

DAN
For God's sake, Dinah, can't you
keep your cash out of the salad.
They're both green, but -- Jesus.

DINAH
(ignoring Dan)
Do you really have ten grand to
spend cleaning up the city?

THE OP
Yeah.

DINAH
And if I help you, will I get
some of the ten?

Dan Rolff stops cleaning the lettuce.

DAN
You can't do that, Dinah. That
would be utterly filthy.

DINAH
I'm going to do it.

DAN
I said, to betray your friends
would be utterly filthy.

Dinah gets up quickly, puts her face very close to Dan's.

DINAH
It's too bad a gentleman of your
purity, even if he is a bit
tubercular, has to associate
with a filthy bum like me.

DAN
(slowly)
That can be remedied.

He takes his apron off, prepared to leave. Dinah's face is flushed, hard cruel. Dan is very pale, the effect of the laudanum (liquid opium) having taken effect. Dinah takes one of his wrists and twists it until he is on his knees. With her other hand, she slaps his face six or seven times. Dan makes no effort to protect himself with his free hand. He doesn't move. Dinah lets go of him and turns away.

Rolff gets up slowly, one cheek on fire, the rest of his face very pale. He looks at the Op with hatred, reaches behind the salad bowl and picks up a gun without changing expression...his movement is slow, almost lazy, stoned. The Op pushes the barrel of the gun down and lands his fist full force in Rolff's jaw. The gun fires, the shot splintering the floor. Rolff falls backwards, lies still.

DINAH

You didn't have to bust him like that!

The Op turns around. Dinah throws herself at him, fists flying to defend Dan. The Op grabs her wrists. They struggle.

THE OP

He's drugged to the scalp. What is it, laudanum?

Dinah stops struggling. He lets her go.

THE OP

Better get him to his room.

They carry Dan together.

DINAH

Crazy that he'd shoot you and not me...

THE OP

You can't expect him to enjoy having another man see you slap his face. So I poked him to give him back some self-respect.

DINAH

I used to think I knew men.

THE OP

The problem now is: Who's cooking our dinner?

INT. THE KITCHEN

They drink gin in silence. The Op watches the soup simmering on the stove.

THE OP

There could be a cut of the Willsson money for you...

DINAH

How much?

THE OP

Whatever you earn.

DINAH

I can give you the stuff, brother.
I know my Poisonville. Shit, look
at that. Another run...I swear,
I'm going barefoot.

THE OP

Your legs are too big...put too
much strain on the material...

DINAH

Why did you uncook the fight?...

THE OP

That was just an experiment, to
see what would happen.

DINAH

For a fat, middle-aged, hardboiled
pig headed guy --

THE OP

(interrupts; stirring
the soup)

-- Plans are all right sometimes
and sometimes just stirring things
up is all right. If you're tough
enough to survive and keep your
eyes open to see what you want when
it comes to the top.

DINAH

If stirring things up is your system,
I've got a swell spoon. They built
a new City Hall a while ago and all
of them made plenty. All except
Whisper.

THE OP

Tough. I want to start with Whisper.

She takes the spoon from his hands and tastes the soup.
She licks her lips, passes the spoon to the Op. He
licks it too.

DINAH

Why? I thought you liked him in a
way.

THE OP

I do. But I can't spend the rest
of my life in your kitchen
protecting you from Whisper
Thaler.

DINAH

Maybe I saw who threw the knife at
Tim Noonan.

THE OP

One of Whisper's boys?

DINAH

Maybe. How much?

The Op pauses. In the silence, the SOUND of the top step
CREAKING. Both the Op and Dinah hear it and both pretend
not to.

THE OP

You won't get rich with maybes.

Dinah, paralyzed, waiting for other sounds.

DINAH

(whispering)

Forget Whisper. I'll give you
all the dirt on Noonan.

THE OP

Whisper first, Noonan later.

Dinah is almost trembling.

WHISPER'S VOICE

(to Op)

Sit down.

He stands in the doorway, a big gun in his little hand.
Behind him, stands BIFF, a very young tough with a
scarred cheek. In the other doorway -- leading to the
hall and the stairs -- stands Chinless Jerry and BLONDIE,
an angular youth -- each with a gun in hand.

WHISPER

Where's Dan Rolff?

CHINLESS JERRY

In his bedroom. He was asleep
but I sapped him a little to
keep him down.

Dinah turns on Whisper. She is not shaking anymore.

DINAH

Max Thaler, you are a lousy little --

CHINLESS JERRY

(nonchalant)

If I shoot a pin from under her,
she'll sit down -- and maybe shut
up.

From his spot, the Op can't see Whisper. Dinah is standing
directly in his line of vision.

WHISPER

(to Jerry)

Not now.

(to Dinah)

Get out of the way. I want to
see him.

Dinah slowly moves, leaving Whisper staring straight at
the Op.

WHISPER (cont'd)

I gave you that tip as a favor.
Just look what you did. All my
friends lost money. They are very
upset with me. And now, you and
Noonan want to paste his brother's
death on me.

THE OP

It doesn't need pasting. It's
natural.

WHISPER

You're not fair, Mister "Continental
Op".

THE OP

I played your side when he tried to
frame you. This time you are copped
the rights.

Dinah explodes in the center of the room.

DINAH

Get out of here, the whole bunch of
you! Get out and leave me alone!

Blondie moves past Jerry into the room, yanks Dinah
harshly by the hair.

Dinah SCREAMS, spins on Blondie, socks him in the belly -- a respectable, man-sized wallop! Blondie gulps a mouthful of air, reels backward, then steps towards her again, pulling his blackjack.

Chinless Jerry laughs.

WHISPER

Lay off!

And fires. The bullet smacks Blondie under the right eye and drops him back in Dinah's arms.

Now the Op yanks his gun and fires at Whisper -- the bullet misses Whisper but hits Biff in the throat -- Jerry shoots at the Op, burning his wrist -- the Op switches his gun to the other hand as Jerry heads for him -- Whisper can't fire without hitting Dinah --

Dinah heaves Blondie's corpse at Chinless Jerry. The dead yellow head bangs into Jerry's knees, as the Op jumps at him. The Op and Chinless Jerry fall through the door into the hall.

The Op gets control of Chinless Jerry hitting him, with a quick flurry of well-placed blows from his gun. Jerry lies there, blood trickles from his mouth, the corner of one eye, out cold.

The Op tries to rise, catching his breath, when a SHADOW COVERS him. He looks up: Dinah stands in from the living room door, smiling with her tongue between her teeth.

The Op rises, follows her cautiously into the living room, gun extended.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Whisper stands in the middle of the room, his hands empty, as is his face. Dan Rolff, his face covered with blood seeping from his matted hair, has a gun tilted at Whisper's kidneys -- Dan is wobbly, unsteady on his feet, but determined. He holds a second gun aimed at the Op as the Op moves carefully into the room, his own gun aimed back at Dan.

DAN

(blinks blood from
his eyes)

Where the hell'd this blood come
from...?

DINAH
It seems to be Dan's party...

DAN
(to Op)
Put down that gun...

THE OP
Guess again...

DAN
(dizzy gesturing
with guns)
Want me to shoot, Dinah?

DINAH
(laughs)
How much do you bid, fellas?

THE OP
(quickly)
A hundred dollars.

DINAH
My God! I've actually got a cash
offer out of you...

Whisper shoots Dinah an angry look.

DINAH (cont'd)
...but not enough.

THE OP
(poker-faced)
Two hundred...

Dinah prowls the room as Dan Rolff keeps his guns wavering
at the Op and Whisper.

DINAH
(enjoying this;
to Op)
You're getting reckless -- but
I still can't hear you...

The Op's gun is still raised.

DINAH (cont'd)
The skinflint's talking cash,
Whisper -- don't you want to
better the offer?

She moves very close to him. She kisses him lightly on the
lips. When she pulls back, he says:

WHISPER

Not one red cent, darling. I'm
different from the others. Remember?

DINAH

One last offer...?

THE OP

(bored now)

Two hundred dollars and ten cents
and that's it.

Dinah moves behind Dan Rolff.

DINAH

(to Op; angry)

You big bum...

But she laughs, winds her arms around Dan, who is

DAN ROLFF

Dinah -- you wouldn't...

Dinah pulls Dan's arms down, pinning them at his sides,
slides her hands down his arms, removing the guns from
his hands.

Dan collapses into a chair, defeated.

Holding his gun on Whisper, Op steps over Blondie's body,
picks up the phone, waits a beat, speaks:

THE OP

(into phone)

Get me Chief Noonan at home, operator.
Emergency.

Dinah moves to Dan Rolff with a wet handkerchief, begins
cleaning his bloody head. He slowly loses consciousness.

Whisper reaches into his jacket suddenly -- the Op reacts,
levels his gun at Whisper's head -- Whisper casually removes
a cigarette, grins, lights it. The Op relaxes his gun
glightly.

THE OP (cont'd)

(to Whisper)

Cute...

(then into phone)

Noonan! I'm holding your brother's
killer at Dinah Brand's place.

(a beat; looking at
corpses)

Better send a meat wagon too.

The Op hangs up.

THE OP (cont'd)

(grins)

Know what he said? "Mother of God. Don't kill him till I get there."

Dinah looks up from tending Dan's wounds.

DINAH

(to Op)

You're wrong. Whisper didn't do it.

THE OP

How do you know?

DINAH

Because I saw who did it.

THE OP

You're just full of surprises.

Dan Rolff GROANS. Dinah resumes helping him.

The Op puts his gun away; Whisper bends quickly to lift Chinless Jerry who is regaining consciousness. The confrontation is over. A SIREN is heard in the distance.

THE OP (cont'd)

(to Dinah)

Tell him to hurry. This is a small town.

Dinah moves to the front door, opens it, watches Whisper carry his friend outside. The SIREN draws nearer.

DINAH

That's it for us, Max. We're over.

WHISPER

(looks back gently)

I told you I'm not like the others. We are through when I say so.

SIREN louder.

DINAH

You better get going.

The Op watches from the living room doorway as Dinah closes the door behind Whisper. Without turning, she speaks to the Op.

DINAH
He saved my ass once.

THE OP
So who killed Tim Noonan?

Dinah turns, moves back towards the Op, looks in his eyes.

DINAH
(challenging)
It's gonna cost you...

THE FRONT DOOR

Suddenly bursts open behind Dinah -- Chief Noonan rushes in, pistol drawn, followed by SGT. McGRAW (carrying a Tommy Gun) and several UNIFORMED COPS. Noonan passes Dinah and the Op without a glance, kicks over the two corpses lying on the floor and stares at them momentarily, looks at the Op, as his men run from room to room, guns drawn.

NOONAN
(furious)
Where is he? I told you to hold him.

The Op shakes his head apologetically, spreads his hands open.

THE OP
Chief...he flew away...

NOONAN
(after a beat;
very quietly)
You let him go.

Now STRETCHER BEARER MEN enter -- the meat wagon ATTENDANTS -- and move to the corpses, preparing to remove them.

Sgt. McGraw, crouched near Dan Rolff, speaks:

McGRAW
Chief, this one is still alive...
(to nearby cop)
Armitage, call an ambulance.

DINAH
And tell them to step on it!

NOONAN
(snarls)
Screw the ambulance. Throw him
in the meat wagon with the other
stiffs.

Noonan moves close to the Op.

NOONAN (cont'd)
I thought you were hot "Continental
Op." Shit.

Noonan points his finger in the Op's face.

NOONAN (cont'd)
I'll get Whisper. And I'll make
you watch it.

Noonan turns from the Op, leading his men out.

NOONAN (cont'd)
(to Dinah in passing)
Slut.

DINAH
Thank you, chief.

EXT. DINAH'S - SEEN FROM A WINDOW ACROSS THE STREET - NIGHT

Dan Rolff holding his head, is placed in the rear of the
meat wagon with the corpses.

Chief Noonan's car screeches away, followed by two patrol
cars...and the meat wagon.

INT. DINAH'S

Dinah is chipping away at a block of ice from the fridge
with an ice pick, preparing drinks.

DINAH
Funny how you didn't tell Noonan
that Whisper didn't kill his
brother.

THE OP
(snaps his fingers)
Slipped my mind. That reminds me.
Who did?

Dinah pours gin into two glasses, adding ice chips.

DINAH

(serious)

You want more blood don't you?
You like it.

THE OP

I can't think about that. If I
take time to feel guilty, I'm
dead.

EXT. DINAH'S PLACE - DAWN

The Op exits the front door, starts down. The first step
CREAKS loudly. The Op stops, turns back to see Dinah
appear nervously at her front window. A moment. The Op
tips his hat, heads off into the gathering dawn.

As the Op disappears, we HEAR a bicycle approaching.
Chinless Jerry glides his bicycle to a stop in front of
Dinah's. He props the bike against the bottom step and
climbs the stairs with a bunch of flowers plucked from
some garden. The top step CREAKS -- Jerry raps lightly
on Dinah's door.

NEW SOUND of CAR approaching -- Jerry glances nervously
around. Dinah opens the door. Jerry thrusts the flowers
at her as the car -- A DARK SEDAN -- comes into view.

CHINLESS JERRY

From Whisper...

Jerry slams the door closed in Dinah's face and races
down the steps as the sedan comes closer...Jerry leaps
on his bike, pedals frantically away.

The SEDAN accelerates, roars down on Jerry. Jerry does
a racing-turn around the corner. The Sedan overshoots
the side street, makes a smoking U-turn, wheels screeching,
and disappears after Chinless Jerry...

INT. DINAH'S PLACE

Dinah hears the sedan wheels SCREECHING. She double-
locks the door, attaches the chain and carries Whisper's
bouquet to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

She puts the bouquet in a vase. Among the flowers she
finds a note from Whisper. THE NOTE:

"Meet me at my home away from home. PLEASE."

She puts the vase on the table.

EXT. RAILROAD SIDINGS - DAWN

In the mist of early morning, Dinah gets out of her car and walks alongside an empty TRAIN. This is the shipping area near the mines. Four parallel lines of track and switches. RAILROAD CARS filled with mineral ore and BOXCARS.

A VOICE comes out of the fog:

VOICE

About time. We can't stay here much longer.

DINAH

Tony?

TONY AGOSTI emerges from the fog.

TONY AGOSTI

It's too dangerous here.

They walk in silence to a boxcar at the end of a row. It is obviously a permanent fixture in the freight yard. Whisper appears in the doorway.

WHISPER

Where's Jerry?

He leans over to give Dinah a hand, pulls her onto the boxcar.

DINAH

I don't know. He took off on a bicycle.

TONY AGOSTI

(laughing)

Chinless Jerry. Bicycle thief.

DINAH

Why do you call him Chinless? He has a perfectly beautiful chin.

WHISPER

Where is that son of a bitch?

TONY

Fast asleep on Venus Alley, I bet.

DINAH
(to Whisper)
Thanks for the flowers.
(suddenly remembering)
I heard a car...right after Jerry
left.

WHISPER
(grim)
I told you. We can't use this
place for a while.

DINAH
Where are you going?

WHISPER
The only safe place in town.

Tony goes to get the car.

WHISPER (cont'd)
(to Dinah)
Will you do me a favor? Go to my
place and tell the kids to stay
free. They'll hear from me later.
I'll send Tony.

DINAH
Sure, why not?

Tony Agosti brings Whisper's Stutz up to the boxcar.
Whisper jumps down first and helps Dinah. She lands
in his arms. He kisses her.

WHISPER
Be careful.

DINAH
(in his arms; softly)
Just remember -- I belong only to
myself.

INT. WHISPER'S JOINT - EARLY MORNING

The end of an all night party. FOUR of WHISPER'S BOYS
and THREE GIRLS are hanging out in the roulette room.
Half-naked. Alcohol. MUSIC.

DINAH
(getting ready to go)
Anyway, I'm glad you're having fun.

LEFTY

(with a smile)

Just trying to forget we'll die soon. Sure you don't want to join the party?

THE THREE GIRLS

C'mon Dinah...Stay!...There are only three of us...

DINAH

I'd love to but duty calls.

Lefty gets up to walk her to the door. He takes her hand as if the human contact reassured him.

LEFTY

Duty? What duty?

DINAH

Somebody owes me money.

DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CANDY STORE

Lefty lets go of her hand to unlock the front door.

LEFTY

I'm jumpy. Lew Yard's cars have been up and down the street all night. What's going on?

Dinah shrugs, caresses his cheek affectionately and leaves.

EXT. KING STREET - DAY

As Dinah is getting into her car, she sees the SEDAN cruising down the street towards Whisper's Joint. There are FOUR GANGSTERS inside it. Three of them look Whisper's Joint over. The fourth, Reno Starkey, looks steadily straight at Dinah. She drives away in the opposite direction.

INT. OP'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON the Op, asleep. His face is gently caressed with soft hair. The Op's nose twitches, he begins to awaken, his eyes blink open.

Dinah is sitting on the bed, leaning close to him, moving her hair back and forth across his face.

DINAH

(smiling)

Morning...

THE OP
Would you mind stopping that?

DINAH
Would you mind settling our debt?

The Op reaches for his jacket on the back of a chair, removes his wallet. He counts out ten twenty dollar bills, gives her a dime from the bed table. Then he puts his wallet under his pillow, rolls over, goes back to sleep.

Briskly, Dinah yanks the sheet totally off the Op's naked body. His revolver lies beside him.

DINAH
He sleeps with his gun!

THE OP
(grabbing sheet)
Hey!

Dinah gets up, moves to the door. He pulls the sheet up over his head.

THE OP'S VOICE
(from under sheet)
Hope you've got a gun...

DINAH
What for?

THE OP'S VOICE
(from under sheets)
That guy...

DINAH
(moving slowly back)
Which guy?

THE OP'S VOICE
(from under sheet)
The one you tried to sell me...
the knife thrower.

Dinah stalks to the bed.

DINAH
(suddenly angry)
What do you mean? What do you
mean?

Slowly the Op peeks from behind the sheet.

THE OP

Nothing.

DINAH

You think I'm in danger?

The Op yawns, stretches, the sheet falls to his waist.

THE OP

I'm thirsty...

Dinah quickly pours a glass of gin from the bedside bottle, hands it to the Op. The Op rubs his eyes, takes a long drink from the glass.

THE OP (cont'd)

It can be dangerous to keep a secret like that.

DINAH

Okay. If I'm in danger will you protect me?

The PHONE RINGS on the bedside table. The Op and Dinah look at the phone.

DOWNSTAIRS

Chief Noonan is on the house phone in the lobby of the Great Western. Sgt. McGraw stands beside him.

NOONAN

(into phone)

I know where Whisper is. I want you to see him get it. I'll give you two minutes to get downstairs.

Noonan hangs up, turns to McGraw.

NOONAN (cont'd)

(to McGraw)

Take off -- Pick up the boys on traffic as you go. Be ready when I get there. Move!

UPSTAIRS - THE OP'S ROOM

The Op is quickly throwing on his clothes.

DINAH

(confused)

This is a wild goose chase.

THE OP
(struggling into pants)
I'm going for the ride anyway.

DINAH
Noonan doesn't know where Whisper
is. Believe me.

The Op grabs his shoes, forces them on, pockets his revolver.

DINAH (cont'd)
I'm going to a fancy bash tonight.
You're protecting me...

The Op is dressed. He reaches for the door, looks at Dinah.

THE OP
I don't dance.

DINAH
(disappointed)
You don't?

THE OP
(exiting)
Pick you up at eight.

DOWNTOWN PERSONVILLE

The Op sits beside Noonan in the back seat of the Chief's car, a LEATHER FACED COP at the wheel, speeding along, a vanguard of PATROL CARS hot on their trail. No Sirens.

THE OP
Where we going?

NOONAN
Cedar Hill Inn. Deserted old hash
house. Outside of town.

THE OP
Who tipped you?

NOONAN
(grim)
I've got friends that care.
(to driver; impatiently)
Come on, man, this is the kill!

THE SQUADRON OF POLICE CARS

roars out of Personville, headed for the hilly, wooded territory to the south.

NOONAN'S CAR

swerves around curves in a country road, passing a sign indicating: CEDAR HILL INN, Entrance 500 feet.

Suddenly the SOUND of intense GUNFIRE up ahead.

NOONAN

Shit.

POV FROM NOONAN'S CAR

rounding a bend in the road, jamming to a halt. There ahead is...

CEDAR HILL INN

The building literally jumps under a barrage from unseen machine guns, rifles, pistols.

The squat old roadhouse dances its life away in the face of the extraordinary fusillade.

NOONAN'S CAR

SCREAMS to a halt outside the front gate of the Inn, as the assault continues.

Noonan jumps from the car, extends both arms skyward in a ceasefire gesture. He blows furiously on a police WHISTLE clenched between his teeth. Within moments the unseen army ceases fire.

The air is filled with smoke. A portion of the Cedar Hill's porch topples apart, riddled with holes.

Now POLICEMEN begin to appear from the underbrush.

NOONAN

marches towards the smoky ruins. The Op on one side, McGraw with a tommy gun on the other. THREE DETECTIVES, one carrying a large red axe, go with them.

McGRAW

(volunteering)

Sorry we couldn't wait Chief, they shot first.

NOONAN

(mounting the steps)

So long as Whisper's dead...

DETECTIVE WITH AXE
(stepping to the door)
Allow me, Chief.

He chops the door off its hinges with one blow and is instantly shot between the eyes -- A MORTALLY WOUNDED MAN in overalls totters just inside the door, a pistol in his hand -- the Op, Noonan, the others scatter as the dead detective falls forward on his axe. The dying workman collapses on top of him, gone.

INSIDE

Noonan, the Op, McGraw, others enter, dizzy from the fumes of spilled hooch, which creates a visible aura in the air.

McGRAW
(confused)
It's a goddamned distillery...

THREE MORE DEAD BODIES in overalls lie practically in pieces near the windows.

The Op's feet make a SQUISHING NOISE in the mixture of booze and blood that covers the floor. He examines scattered cases of bottled liquor...a demolished still... a discarded rifle...

NOONAN'S VOICE
(horrificed)
My God...

THE OP TURNS

Noonan stands over the DEAD BODY of a YOUNG MAN whose handsome face is ruined -- The Chief, stricken, covers his eyes with both hands.

A SIREN is heard approaching outside.

NOONAN
...Pete the Finn's nephew...
another family in mourning...

McGraw covers the young man's body with a booze drenched piece of canvas.

McGRAW
Pete's gonna go berserk when he
hears about this.

NOONAN
I can't believe it -- Lew's tips
are always right...what happened...

A MOTORCYCLE COP fishtails his bike to a stop, framed in the open doorway. As his SIREN dies down:

MOTORCYCLE COP
Chief! The First National's been
robbed!

The Op pockets one unbroken bottle of Dewar's.

NOONAN
(pulling himself
together)
Whisper foxed us! Damn him!

DOWNTOWN PERSONVILLE

Noonan and the Op approach the CROWD in front of the First National Bank. It's like a scene from a silent movie -- there's an AMBULANCE, the ubiquitous MEAT WAGON -- SMALL GROUPS of PEOPLE -- One especially LARGE GROUP surrounding A DEAD BODY, MINERS, WORKERS, WOMEN, DECENT CITIZENS openly weeping over this one...

As Noonan and the Op move through the crowd, a thick CLOUD of SMOKE envelopes the scene -- people cough, cover their faces with kerchiefs, hats, etc.

The Op and Noonan arrive at the dead body in the center of the crowd...It is the Swede, the albino from the Union Hall. Bullet hole in his chest, curled up as if asleep, like a baby, at rest. Bill is covering his face with his jacket.

BILL
He was just walking down the
street.

The SMOKE hovers the air.

THE OP

stares down at the Swede's body. The SMOKE makes his eyes tear. He turns away, joins Noonan at a SECOND, MASKED CORPSE.

Noonan squats, pulls the mask off the face of Chinless Jerry.

NOONAN
(enraged, rising)
Chinless Jerry...Whisper again!
He murdered my brother, caused that
massacre at Cedar Hill, and knocks
over the bank in the bargain.

Noonan turns to McGraw.

NOONAN (cont'd)
(in the b.g.)
Double the road blocks; search
every inch of this town -- twice!

The Op pries the revolver from Jerry's death grip, opens the cylinder and spins it -- no cartridges fall out. The Op snaps the cylinder closed, returns the gun to Jerry's hand.

INT. DINAH BRAND'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE on DINAH as she revolves, prances, backs away from the Op, displaying a beautiful new dress, as if in a fashion show.

DINAH
(radiant)
...It's called 'rose beige', and
the brocade on the sides...is pure
silk...

THE OP
Charming.

DINAH
You really think I look good in it?

THE OP
You always look good. Dan still
in the hospital?

DINAH
(turned off)
You don't give a damn about my
dress. And you don't give a damn
about Dan either.

THE OP
How can you say such a thing?

DINAH
The only reason you're here is
probably to find out where
Whisper's hiding. Well, forget
the party. You're not going to
take me out after dark.

She kicks off her shoes and putting both hands behind her back, unbuttons the first four buttons of her dress, revealing her naked shoulders.

THE OP

(ignoring her nudity)
Let me see...Whisper's probably
hiding at Elihu Willsson's but
I haven't been interested enough
to find out.

(not guessing)

And you don't want to go to the
party because you're afraid of
bumping into somebody who plays
with knives, and that could be
embarrassing.

DINAH

Think you're pretty smart, don't
you?

THE OP

Sometimes.

DINAH

Well you don't know everything.
(brightens)
I do.

THE OP

You're built like a boy. I like
that.

DINAH

(amused)

I might've known. Another virile
pansy.

THE OP

Me?

DINAH

Man meets man when man meets me.

She turns her half naked back to him.

DINAH (cont'd)

Button me up.

THE OP

Cold?

DINAH

I changed my mind.

EXT. DINAH'S CONVERTIBLE - NIGHT

Driving through the woods outside of Personville, the top
is down, Dinah at the wheel, the wind blowing her hair,
the Op reclining in the passenger seat beside her.

DINAH

The Silver Arrow's not a bad dump,
but their bourbon tastes like it's
been drained from a corpse.

The Op looks over, bemused, places his hand gently on her leg.

THE OP

No runs tonight?

Dinah stares straight ahead, glances furtively at his hand, pulls the convertible to the side of the road.

The car is parked at a stretch with no trees nearby. The MOON shines brightly overhead.

DINAH

I was raised in a convent. I won
the Good Behavior Prize every year.
I thought little girls who put an
extra spoonful of sugar in their
chocolate went to hell for gluttony.

(looks over)

Does that surprise you?

THE OP

I'm going to fall in love the
minute I have a minute.

The Op moves his hand on Dinah's leg, pulling the dress up slightly, exposing her knee.

DINAH

For a mere twenty-five dollars I'll
tell you why the first Mrs. Lew Yard
was sent to the insane asylum.

The Op bursts out laughing.

THE OP

You can't help it, can you? You'll
never learn. I need dynamite now.
Keep trying.

Angry, Dinah puts the car back in gear.

EXT. THE SILVER ARROW ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

A very electric-lighted imitation castle set close to the road, a myriad of twinkling red and blue lights. The parking lot is packed with FANCY AUTOMOBILES. MUSIC plays within.

The Op stands near the front door watching Dinah pace back and forth between the door and the parking lot.

DINAH

You know why? You know why? You know why? You don't give a damn about my life! I don't like the way you use people, like Ike Bush and Tim Noonan and Whisper and me for example!

Dinah heads off toward the car. The Op watches deep in thought, then:

THE OP

(calls to her)

Don't go away mad!

Dinah, stops, turns to him.

THE OP (cont'd)

Just go away.

Dinah pauses, walks back to the Op.

DINAH

I don't love you. I couldn't possibly love you. I will never love you. Absolutely out of the question.

(reaching for the door; slips her arm through his)

Let's go.

INT. THE SILVER ARROW

A BLACK ARMBAND encircles Pete the Finn's upper left arm, matching the concern and tragedy of the expression that wreathes his face as he moves somberly through the crowded dance floor. PEOPLE murmur their condolences about his nephew as they dance by.

Pete's desire for social respectability is evident from the assembled guests -- WEALTHY YOUNG FLAPPERS and THEIR ESCORTS, RICH RANCHERS in cowboy hats dancing with their WIVES, a healthy chunk of the Personville HOI-POLLOI; Lew Yard, OTHER SUCCESSFUL HOODS...and Pete the Finn's RELATIVES and MOB...

THE OP AND DINAH

enter the party, Dinah strikes an attitude of measured nonchalance which is broken by:

DINAH
Look who's here...

THE OP AND DINAH'S POV

MADAME WILLSSON is seated at a ringside table, dressed in several glamorous shades of black, with her maid, Francine, is opening an elegant, little valise. Removing a bottle of champagne, she POPS the cork. Heads turn to watch from several directions as Francine pours glasses for herself and Madame. They toast, drink, as the

ORCHESTRA

finishes their number. Momentary silence, then a VOICE from the speakers:

PETE THE FINN'S VOICE
(spoken)
The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from
heaven. Upon the place beneath.

PETE THE FINN

visibly moved -- appears from behind the curtain flanking the bandstand, holding a hand microphone, powerfully reciting:

PETE THE FINN (cont'd)
(gesturing)
It is twice blest -- It blesseth him
that gives, and him that takes. 'Tis
mightiest in the mightiest. It
becomes the throned monarch better
than his crown. It is enthroned in
the hearts of kings. It is an
attribute to God himself; And earthly
power doth then show likest God's
when mercy seasons justice.

THE ASSEMBLED GUESTS

burst into applause. Pete fiercely thrusts his hands aloft, waving off the ovation.

PETE (cont'd)
(into microphone)
My nephew Eric loved to hear me
recite Shakespeare. That's why I
decided to go on with this party --
to memorialize his tragic death as
he would have wanted -- the day of
my birth...

CLOSE ON PETE

He draws himself up proudly.

PETE (cont'd)
So, if music be the food of love...
(gestures to orchestra)
...play on...play on...

The MUSIC begins.

THE ASSEMBLED GUESTS

Applaud, begin dancing.

MRS. WILLSSON AND FRANCINE at their table.

MRS. WILLSSON
You see Francine. Nobody asks us
to dance. American men are stupid.

FRANCINE
Maybe they're superstitious. You're
in mourning, Madame.

MRS. WILLSSON
They have too much respect for the
dead.

FRANCINE
And not enough for the living.

MRS. WILLSSON
Merde! I want to dance!

She stands up and walks in the direction of Pete the Finn.

MRS. WILLSSON (cont'd)
(to herself; crossing
the dance floor)
Leaving tomorrow, dancing tonight.

Just before she reaches his side, Pete's wife takes his
arm and pulls him away, to whisper in his ear. Mrs.
Willsson shrugs, changes direction -- Now she heads for
Lew Yard.

MRS. WILLSSON (cont'd)
Dancing tonight. Leaving tomorrow.

Lew Yard puts his hand on her shoulder and moves her bodily
to one side. She was blocking his view of a commotion at
the entrance of the Silver Arrow.

The Op is approaching the door. He discovers:

Chief Noonan and HIS WIFE being barred at the door by a group of PETE THE FINN'S MEN -- all wearing black arm bands.

Noonan -- in fancy dress uniform -- himself wears a black arm band. Mrs. Noonan is dressed in a discreet black evening gown, a fur around her shoulders.

NOONAN
(confused; gestures
to arm band)
We're all brothers...in mourning...

Noonan catches the Op's eye in the crowd for a second -- aware of the attention he's creating.

FIRST BOUNCER
We're sorry, Chief. Pete's orders.

NOONAN
(looking at the crowd)
The whole town is here...He can't
do this to me.

Pete's bouncers won't budge. By now most couples have stopped dancing -- staring at the confrontation.

Noonan's wife takes Noonan by the arm, leads him back outside.

NOONAN'S WIFE
(murmur)
I knew we shouldn't have come...

NOONAN
This is crazy...I've got to express
my condolences to Pete...

EXT. THE SILVER ARROW

The couple head arm-in-arm for their car, Noonan bent, looking thirty years older. The MUSIC follows them from inside.

The Op appears beside their car, waits for them.

THE OP
Pete didn't give you a fair shake
in there.

NOONAN

I never meant to kill his people.
It was a mistake: You know that.
You were there.

Mrs. Noonan gets into the car to avoid hearing the conversation.

NOONAN (cont'd)

I'm getting sick of this butchery.
It's getting to me -- on my nerves,
I mean. Everybody's killing everybody.

THE OP

Sick enough to forget your brother's
killing, if it'll make peace?

NOONAN

I am.

THE OP

Then be at Elihu Willsson's place
tonight at midnight.

NOONAN

What for?

THE OP

A meeting. To make peace.

NOONAN

I'll be there.

Noonan gratefully pumps the Op's hand.

NOONAN (cont'd)

Thanks.

INT. THE SILVER ARROW

Pete the Finn stands face-to-face with Lew Yard, in the corner of the dance floor. COUPLES have resumed dancing and drinking around them.

LEW YARD

Sorry, Pete. I've got to leave
now. Noon and I go way back.
I'm sure you understand.

PETE THE FINN

Tiger, tiger, burning bright --
in the forest of the night.

LEW YARD

What?

PETE THE FINN

Good night, Lew. Sorry you couldn't stay.

Lew nods, turns suspiciously, leaves Pete.

The CROWD on the dance floor opens before Lew. Lew's SUPPORTERS falling in behind him with their DATES, creating an exiting VANGUARD and a certain tense vacuum amongst those remaining.

Reno Starkey, Lew's right hand, comes to his side near the exit.

RENO

I'll catch up with you in a minute, Lew.

LEW YARD

Make it fast, Reno. And be on your toes -- there's tigers out tonight.

RENO

Tigers? You bet...

Reno looks over at Dinah as Lew exits. On the bandstand, in the b.g., Pete the Finn gestures to the orchestra.

PETE THE FINN

(passionately)

Come on play! Dance everybody!
This is a party, isn't it?

DINAH AND MRS. WILLSSON

are together, sitting at the same table. Mrs. Willsson is pouring champagne for Dinah.

MRS. WILLSSON

...that you and my husband were not lovers...

DINAH

(simply)

It wasn't like that.

MRS. WILLSSON

Then how was it?

DINAH

Our relations were strictly business.

MRS. WILLSSON

(moved)

That's too bad. You're very beautiful...

DINAH

You're not so bad yourself.

MRS. WILLSSON

(warm and sincere;
ingenuous)

So -- now -- since we like each other. You can tell me -- What's it like being you?

DINAH

(amused and gratified)

What do you mean?

MRS. WILLSSON

You know --

DINAH

No, tell me, exactly what you want to know.

AN ELEGANT YOUNG GANGSTER chooses this moment to approach the table.

ELEGANT YOUNG GANGSTER

Dance, Dinah?

Dinah doesn't even look at him, waves him away with a gesture.

DINAH

Later.

MRS. WILLSSON

For instance, these gangsters you like to go with -- What are they like...in bed? Tell me, how do they fuck?

DINAH

With...their...cocks...

MRS. WILLSSON

(laughing)

Que je suis conne (How silly I am).

DINAH

What?

MRS. WILLSSON

I'm being silly, I know, but --
are they different in bed?

DINAH

Oh, yeah, they're very very
different.

MRS. WILLSSON

I knew it!

DINAH

These guys, you know, they like
danger. They like excitement.
You can't stop them. They're
never tired.

MRS. WILLSSON

They're never tired?

DINAH

The problem is, they're all so
vain. And selfish.

MRS. WILLSSON

You're the one who's generous.

Dinah blushes. Mrs. Willsson bursts out laughing.

MRS. WILLSSON (cont'd)

You're blushing!

DINAH

I never blush.

MRS. WILLSSON

Yes you are -- you're blushing.

PEOPLE at adjoining tables watch the two women laughing,
partly disapproving, partly tantalized. ONE MAN moves
towards them across the length of the hall.

MRS. WILLSSON

Look, there's one. Isn't he vain?

Both women's heads turn to watch Reno Starkey coming.
In fact, the whole room watches.

MRS. WILLSSON (cont'd)

Which one of us does he like?

DINAH
(in a different mood)
Not me I hope.

Mrs. Willsson catches her breath.

RENO
Let's dance, Dinah.

She shakes her head and looks to Mrs. Willsson.

RENO (cont'd)
Come on, let's dance.

He takes her arm and pulls her on to the floor. Mrs. Willsson watches them, marking her disappointment.

All eyes immediately on Whisper, who remains cool.

EXT. THE SILVER ARROW

The Op passes Lew Yard who is walking to his car.

THE OP
(without stopping)
Guess I'll be seeing you at the meeting.

Lew Yard stops in his tracks.

LEW YARD
Hey! What meeting?

CUT TO:

INT. THE SILVER ARROW

Dinah Brand dances, uneasy in the arms of Reno Starkey.

RENO
I want to see you later tonight.

DINAH
I'm busy.

RENO
Tomorrow night?

DINAH
Busy.

RENO
What about the night after?

DINAH

Very, very, very busy.

Across the floor, the Op and Pete the Finn are in conversation. Pete the Finn keeps nodding his head in agreement. But the Op is distracted -- his eyes keep dancing with Dinah and Reno. After a moment they shake hands and the Op moves away.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR

Reno now clutches Dinah in an embrace -- too tight an embrace -- As he whirls her across the floor, the MUSIC picks up tempo.

THEY CRASH into the Op, who holds his ground as Reno recovers balance, turns to the obstacle -- sees the Op staring him down.

THE OP

Mind if I cut in?

DINAH

Are you kidding?

Dinah moves quickly to the Op's side. Reno looks at Dinah.

RENO

Thanks for the dance.

(leaving)

Hope you can squeeze me in soon.

DINAH

I plan to lead a quiet life, Reno.

(calling after him)

I really do --

He doesn't show it, but the Op's upset as he watches Reno leave the Silver Arrow. Dinah is catching her breath.

DINAH

Thanks for cutting in.

THE OP

I'm taking you home.

DINAH

You can't.

THE OP

Why not?

DINAH

I'm driving.

THE OP
What's the matter Dinah?

DINAH
Reno's the one that stuck Tim
Noonan.

THE OP
(he likes it)
Dinah --

EXT. ELIHU'S MANSION - JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT

Dinah's convertible pulls to a halt in the street in front
of the mansion. Dinah nervously pulls at the parking brake.

DINAH
Stay with me. I'm scared.

THE OP
Go home.

DINAH
I'm really scared.

The Op climbs out of the car, turns back to Dinah.

THE OP
He doesn't know you saw him, does
he?

DINAH
I'm just not sure.

The Op reaches back, pulls the convertible top over Dinah
enclosing her inside.

DINAH (cont'd)
You're coming over later?

The Op snaps the top in place.

THE OP
Soon as I'm finished here. Go
home. Lock yourself in. Relax.
I'm not going to let anybody hurt
you.

The Op turns, anxious to get inside, heads for the mansion
gate.

INT. ELIHU'S LIBRARY - NIGHT

Elihu sits fuming in a huge over-stuffed chair that
emphasizes his diminutive stature.

The Op is arranging five chairs around the massive table in the dimly-lit library. The clock CHIMES midnight.

ELIHU
(outraged)
That scum gathering in my home!
I'm an old man...

THE OP
Relax. This won't take long.

Stanley appears silently in the doorway.

STANLEY
Excuse me, sir. The Chief of
Police is here...

Elihu glowers as the Op turns off one electric light, crosses to another lamp, switches that one on.

ELIHU
(to Stanley)
Send him in.

THE OP
Stanley! While you're at it,
tell Whisper to join us.

Stanley, confused, looks to Elihu, as the Op tests another lamp -- on, off, on.

ELIHU
Max Thaler? In my house?

THE OP
Everybody knows he's camping here.
It's the worst kept secret in town.

EXT. THE MANSION - LATER

Several cars are now parked at intervals outside the mansion walls. Gangsters, police officers, drivers, huddle in small groups, smoking, eyeing each other cautiously.

INT. THE MANSION

Seated now at the table in the library are Elihu, at the head of the table; Pete the Finn to Elihu's right; Lew Yard sits next to Pete; Whisper is tilted back in an oaken chair to Elihu's left; next to him, the Op; Noonan sits on the Op's other side.

ELIHU

(glaring around table)
We're all sensible men, reasonable men. I'm sure we all want to stop this insane killing. I'm sure we can discuss everything frankly, without turning Personville into a slaughter-house.

Silence.

THE OP

Not a bad oration...

Elihu looks quickly at the Op, pleased. Now Whisper looks past the Op at Noonan. All eyes turn toward Noonan, whose face slowly gets red.

NOONAN

(huskily)

Whisper, I'll forget you killed Tim.

Noonan rises, extending his arm.

NOONAN (cont'd)

Here's my hand on it.

Whisper whispers coldly.

WHISPER

Your bastard of a brother is better off dead, but I didn't put him there.

Noonan lunges for Whisper -- the Op grabs Noonan, holds him back.

THE OP

(quickly)

Wait, Noonan! We're going at this wrong. We won't get anywhere unless everybody comes clean.

Noonan relaxes a little, sits, glaring at Whisper. The Op sits again, looks around the table, back at Noonan.

THE OP (cont'd)

(dynamite)

Lew Yard killed Tim, not Whisper.

Lew Yard grabs inside his jacket.

LEW YARD

That's a lie!

With a gentle THUMP, Whisper whips his pistol onto the table. Lew's hand freezes inside his coat.

ELIHU

(shrieks)

Wait! Both of you -- everybody --
hear the son of a bitch out!

Noonan stares at his old friend Lew, as Lew and Whisper re-conceal their guns.

THE OP

(to Whisper;
compliment)

You're pretty fast...You didn't
kill Tim. Not personally, Lew.
Your man Reno Starkey did.

LEW YARD

(snarls)

Who said?

THE OP

A little bird told me.

LEW YARD

Dinah Brand?

ELIHU

Forget who told who!

The Op lowers his eyes, caught.

WHISPER

(murmurs to Op)

You just signed her death warrant.

THE OP

(attacking)

Admit it Lew! It's all got to
come out.

NOONAN

(ashen faced)

Lew?

Lew looks at Noonan, his face falls apart.

LEW YARD

(beseechingly)

Noon, that blade was meant for
Ike Bush. He deserved killing.
Tim didn't, God rest his soul.
He was like family to me. Fucking
tragedy.

Noonan drops his head, stunned.

NOONAN

(croaks)

Mother of God...

THE OP

I've got my own confession to make.
It was me that got Bush to fight
straight.

WHISPER

(patronizing)

You dirty dog.

THE OP

What can I say? We've all got to
come clean. Pete, how do you feel
about the accident at Cedar Hill?

PETE THE FINN

(stiffens)

One Hell of an accident.

ELIHU

(hits table

with fist)

Peace Conference...Peace Conference!

Pete leans back, sighs.

PETE THE FINN

The men...even my nephew, Eric...
get paid for taking chances...
Nothing can bring them back now...
The destruction of my property?

(to Noonan)

Twenty-five grand will take care
of it.

Noonan, already broken, apprehensive of further revelations,
answers quickly.

NOONAN

All right, Pete, all right. I'll
give it to you.

(MORE)

NOONAN (CONT'D)

And I'm so goddamn sorry about
your nephew, I swear to God. I
didn't know it was your place. I
had bad information...

Noonan and Lew Yard exchange a glance, Noonan suddenly
grabs for his holster, turning on Lew Yard.

NOONAN (cont'd)

Lew! You killed Timmy!

Lew Yard throws up his hands in defense. Elihu screams
at the top of his lungs.

ELIHU

Enough!!

Noonan and Lew Yard freeze. Noonan slowly lowers the gun.
Lew drops his hands, angry, humiliated, feeling a tight-
ening trap.

ELIHU (cont'd)

Everybody put your gun on the table.

Nobody moves. Everybody looks at the others. The Op is
first to reach casually inside his jacket, remove his
automatic, lay it easily in front of him.

Reluctantly, the others follow.

ELIHU (cont'd)

Oh, no.

(points in front
of himself)

Down here. That's right.

The guns are slid down to Elihu, who leans across the
table, scooping them into a pile, out of the others'
reach.

ELIHU (cont'd)

Where were we?

THE OP

(to Elihu)

Do you want to squawk about your
bank being knocked over?

All eyes immediately on Whisper, who remains cool.

WHISPER

Maybe you should give us what
you've got before anyone else
beefs.

(MORE)

WHISPER (CONT'D)

If you've got something to give...

THE OP

A few observations, a few guesses...

(to Lew)

Want to help me out here, Lew?

LEW YARD

Where?

THE OP

At the bank.

LEW YARD

You're doing the guessing.

THE OP

Lew wanted to protect two things -- his man Reno Starkey and his friendship with the Chief. The quicker Whisper was killed for Tim's murder, the safer for Lew. Nobody would ever know the truth. So he grabbed Chinless Jerry and leaned on him to find Whisper.

(to Whisper)

Jerry lied. And sent Noonan on a wild goose chase to Cedar Hill.

LEW YARD

Fuck you and your guessing game! Chinless Jerry knocked over the bank with Whisper.

ELIHU

Whisper was here.

The news is like a bomb. Whisper looks at the Op with a small smile.

PETE THE FINN

Your fat's in the fire, Lew.

NOONAN

Lew, you didn't tell me -- the bank?

LEW

Are you going to listen to this son of a bitch -- Continental Agency Operative detective shit cop? Don't you see what he's doing to us?

THE OP

Excuse me -- how about this? With the whole police force out of town, it was a perfect time for Lew to knock over the bank. And if he kills Chinless Jerry at the scene of the crime, Whisper gets the blame.

Whisper is staring at Lew Yard, turning pale.

PETE THE FINN

(interjects to Lew)

Not bad -- then you could take over Whisper's gambling action in the bargain.

(getting mad)

Not bad, Lew. Not bad at all.

THE OP

(lights cigarette;

casual)

Of course, I'm just guessing...

Whisper's hoarse voice is quieter than ever before as he speaks to Lew.

WHISPER

Tell me, Lew. Chinless Jerry. Torture him? Suffer a lot? Before he conned the fucking shit out of you...

Lew looks back at Whisper with dull eyes.

LEW YARD

(calmly)

What of it?

WHISPER

Deal me out.

Whisper rises slowly, starts moving down the table.

WHISPER (cont'd)

Be seeing you, Lew...You too, Chief...

Whisper snakes his hand out, grabs his revolver from the pile in front of astonished Elihu --

ELIHU

Max!

Whisper is holding the gun in the direction of Lew Yard and Noonan.

ELIHU (cont'd)

Not here.

Whisper holds a beat -- relaxes his gun hand, starts backing out of the room as Pete the Finn slowly rises.

PETE THE FINN

You Whisper; Lew -- all of you.
This damn gun work is over -- this
busting the town open is no good
for business. You be nice boys, or
I'll make you. You want to fight?
I'll give you fighting.

(recites with
solemn verity)

"Approach ye Furies
O Fates, come, come!
Cut thread and thram

(in a morose voice)

That's all.

Whisper looks thoughtful for a moment, then vanishes. Pete approaches Elihu, reaches for

THE PILE OF GUNS

Pete's hand removes his German Luger...Another hand removes a pearl-handled cowboy revolver...and a baretta...Noonan's service revolver vanishes...only the Op's AUTOMATIC remains.

THE LIBRARY

The Op strolls down the table towards Elihu, the only two people left in the room. He picks up his automatic, puts it inside his coat.

ELIHU

As the Good Book says, you're
the smelliest hog at the trough,
and none of the other pigs even
noticed.

THE OP

Translation --

ELIHU

How would you like to be Chief of
Police?

THE OP

Forget it. I'm a rotten errand
boy.

ELIHU

(nods to door)

Not with that bunch -- after we
get rid of them.

THE OP

The agency takes good care of me.
I like my job most of the time,
but it's starting to get ugly
here. Are you behind me?

ELIHU

If you win.

THE OP

(heading for door)

I hope to Christ you get caught
with them.

Elihu giggles merrily.

ELIHU

I reckon you do, but I won't.

INT. DINAH BRAND'S PLACE - NIGHT

Half-asleep, Dinah is slumped in an armchair in the living
room. Beside a half-filled glass of gin, a radio PLAYS
quietly. She awakens with a start at the SOUND of the
CREAKING front step, switches off the radio, looks nervously
to the front door.

DINAH

Who is it?

No answer. Dinah approaches the door cautiously. She sees
a small white calling card slide under the door. Dinah
bends to read it.

THE CARD

Continental Detective Agency, with a San Francisco address.

DINAH

grins with relief, unlocks the door, finds the Op staring
at her in the doorway.

THE OP

At your service.

DINAH

You look tired.

THE OP
(entering)
That peace conference should result
in at least a dozen killings.

Dinah glances out at Hurricane Street before closing the door behind him.

GUNFIRE is HEARD off in the distance.

THE OP (cont'd)
First fruits of the peace conference...

NOW A SIREN is HEARD from across town, traveling fast.

THE OP (cont'd)
Where's the gin?

The Op goes to the kitchen, opens the fridge, attacks the ice block with an ice pick. The PHONE RINGS. Dinah answers. The Op returns to the room.

DINAH
(into phone)
Hello?

Dinah listens a beat, passes the phone silently to the Op.

EXT. VENUS ALLEY - NIGHT

Mike the cabbie speaks on a pay phone amongst the passing WHORES, CUTTHROATS and THIEVES of Venus Alley as an AMBULANCE races past, SIREN WAILING. Mike's taxi idles at the curb.

MIKE
(into phone)
Heard about Noonan?
(pause)
Oh, you never saw anyone deader.
(pause)
Son of a bitches even shot his dog.
(pause)
Righto.

BACK AT DINAH'S

The Op holding the phone away from his ear with Dinah beside him so both could hear.

DINAH
That poor old sack of shit.

The Op hangs up. Both move tensely to the sofa, sit down.
The Op takes a big swallow of gin.

THE OP

If I don't leave soon I'll be
going blood-simple like the
natives. This burg is getting
to me. How many murders since
I got here?

DINAH

Hmmm...ten?

THE OP

More --

DINAH

Twelve?

THE OP

I lost count. Donald Willsson...

DINAH

(counting on fingers)
Chinless Jerry, Tim Noonan...

THE OP

The four goons and the dick at
Cedar Hill.

Dinah flashes a second handful of fingers.

THE OP (cont'd)

(remembers)

The copper I potted my first night
in town...and the one Elihu
killed, Yakima Shorty...

DINAH

Don't forget the two kids who died
right here.

THE OP

And now the Chief.

DINAH

That makes thirteen.

(shivers)

Jesus. That gave me goose bumps.

THE OP

Plus one.

DINAH

The Swede.

For a second they look away from each other.

THE OP

Fourteen.

GUNFIRE AGAIN from outside, this time closer to Hurricane Street.

THE OP (cont'd)

(walking to kitchen)

And more coming up.

DINAH

(looks at him seriously)

That's music to your ears, isn't it?

THE OP

Maybe I'm the worst of all.

She looks out the window.

DINAH'S POV

Across the street...the old tenement with a This Property is Condemned sign on the front...at the second floor window...the movement of a curtain.

INT. DINAH'S

The Op returns from the kitchen, a fresh drink in one hand, the ice pick held in the other.

THE ICE PICK is a six inch awl-shaped blade set in a round, blue and white handle.

THE OP

I've seen a killing or two in my time but I've never caught the fever before. Donald Willsson called me. He got killed. I got the job.

Dinah moves quickly to him, pats his shoulder, her eyes uneasy.

DINAH

C'mon. Drink up.

The Op looks at his hand, looks thoughtfully at the pick.

THE OP

(swallows his drink)

Not a bad thing to pin a man to his clothes with.

DINAH

Put that down! Say, why don't we go to Salt Lake for a day or two. Keep this up and you'll have the heebie jeebies for sure.

THE OP

Somebody's got to stay here and count the dead.

Dinah flicks on the radio. As it begins to warm up, a staticky TORCH SONG begins to PLAY.

DINAH

(pacing)

Yeah, but you're getting paid for it and I'm not. I want out of here.. Too many pissed-off people running around. Gives me the creeps.

THE OP

(quietly)

Forgetting that Donald Willsson was killed because of you.

Dinah carries the empty glasses through the kitchen door. The Op lights a cigarette, sticks his hand out in front of his face, spreads his fingers. The hand is steady. Dinah reappears, seen full figure by the Op through his fingers, carrying new drinks. She moves into CLOSEUP, peering at the Op through his fingers.

DINAH

I don't like to see my heroes shaking.

Dinah puts a glass to the Op's hand, curls his fingers around it.

DINAH

If you won't take me away, the next best thing is to get plastered and forget everything for a few hours.

THE OP

There doesn't seem to be much body to this gin.

DINAH

That's you, not the gin.

Dinah studies the Op's face for a moment. He smiles inscrutably back.

DINAH (cont'd)

Do you want an honest to God jolt?

THE OP

I'd drink Nitroglycerine tonight.

Dinah opens the cabinet beneath the radio.

DINAH

That's just what you're going to get.

Dinah withdraws a slender, smoky-blue bottle from the cabinet, unscrews the lid.

THE OP

What've you got there?

DINAH

Something from the Orient.

THE OP

Dan's opium, eh?

Dinah pours a shot into the Op's gin, looks at him.

DINAH

There's your kick, mister.

The Op swallows it slowly.

THE OP

Sweet.

DINAH

Yeah.

THE OP

(takes another slug)

Gonna join me?

DINAH

Can't. I've got to protect you.

THE OP

Let's dance.

Without waiting for her the Op begins to glide around the room, one arm outstretched, the other encircling an imaginary partner.

DINAH

The guy who couldn't dance...

His movements are funny, awkward.

DINAH (cont'd)
You're getting a little goofy...
wait for me.

She moves into his arms. They embrace, swaying to the MUSIC.

OUTSIDE

Seen through the porch window, the couple is entwined.

INSIDE

Dinah suddenly breaks the embrace.

DINAH
Somebody is watching us.

THE OP
Quit worrying. I'll take care of
it.

The Op removes his automatic with a flourish from inside his jacket. Humming, he glides to the door, the pistol his new partner.

DINAH
Oh, God...

OUTSIDE

The front door swings open...the Op moves dramatically, playfully, onto the porch, gun extended. He stops, gazes around. The street is deserted, serene.

THE OP
It's beautiful out here.

GUNFIRE ERUPTS far off in the distance, a sustained, rhythmic EXCHANGE. The Op leans against the doorway. The GUNFIRE dies out.

A light RAIN begins to fall.

INSIDE

Dinah comes cautiously, frightened. She sees the Op from behind, leaning against the doorway.

DINAH
(softly)
What's going on?

No answer. The automatic dangles in his hand. Dinah touches him lightly on the arm, peering over his shoulder at the deserted street.

DINAH (cont'd)
(whispers)
Anybody out there?

No answer. Dinah steps around the Op, looks at his face. His eyes are closed. In a swift unexpected movement he enfolds her.

THE OP
Gotcha!

And kisses her. When they separate:

DINAH
I want to be drunk, too. Come
inside.

The SOUND of a huge EXPLOSION nearby. Dinah turns to look.

DINAH (cont'd)
My God -- that's Whisper's Joint.

THE OP
(gently turning her
head back to him)
At least they're too busy to think
about us.

LATER

Dinah is lounging in her armchair looking at the insides of a glass.

DINAH
You've got to have a name. Everybody
has a name -- tell me your name.

The Op, very stoned, moves towards her on top of the long table.

THE OP
It's gonna cost you.

THE CAMERA MOVES toward the window. In the near distance, a huge fire discolors the sky.

INT. DINAH BRAND'S PLACE - DAWN

The Op wakes up. He is lying on the table, face down.

The first thing he sees is Dinah's face, very near him. Her eyes are open and empty.

She is dead.

She is lying on her side, one arm elegantly abandoned over her head, her legs partly under his legs.

The Op's right hand is wrapped around the handle of the ice pick buried in Dinah's left breast.

Slowly, as if afraid of awakening her, the Op slides off the table. He begins to dress up. He puts on his trousers. His face is blank, an expression meant to suppress an expression.

Automatically the Op takes his handkerchief and wipes his fingerprints from the handle of the ice pick. He sees a run in the front of her stocking. The Op traces the run with a finger and begins to cry.

He cries desperately. He's like a fifteen-year-old boy; he can't stop crying. He kisses her on the mouth, on the body. He embraces her.

EXT. THE HOUSE

Hurricane Street in cold grey light of dawn. The Op goes down the front steps, looking around him. The street is empty, except for TWO BAKERS, covered with flour, kidding around in front of the bakery, playing cops and robbers.

The Op begins to move in the other direction but suddenly freezes and fades into a doorway.

Dan Rolff is stumbling down the street. The bandages around his head have come loose and look like a bizarre bloodstained turban. He weaves towards Dinah's house, muttering to himself.

DAN ROLFF

F---ing madhouse. Won't let a man sleep. Mount Royal Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland, I've seen better men die. Gotta protect her. F---ing gunshots. I gotta protect her.

WHISKY TOWN - DAY

The Op continues his impossible manhunt. Now he is wandering through the labyrinth of Whiskytown. Warehouses. No sign of life. No sound of gunfire. Then, in the silence, a voice yelling.

LEW YARD (O.S.)

Pete! Hey, Pete!

The Op follows the sound of his voice. It takes him to the opening of:

AN INTERIOR SQUARE BETWEEN THREE WAREHOUSES

Trucks parked on all sides. Signs of a furious battle are everywhere.

PETE THE FINN (O.S.)

(yelling back)

What? You wanna give up?

The Finn's voice comes from the warehouse on the right.

LEW (O.S.)

(from the left)

Fuck you! You give up! I counted your dead!

QUICK CUT TO:

LEW'S WAREHOUSE

His soldiers are catching their breath between skirmishes. A few dead bodies lie where they dropped. Other men bind their wounds, reload their weapons.

PETE (O.S.)

Fucking Shylock! Always counting!

LEW

Fish-eating asshole! You got nothing left!

QUICK CUT TO:

PETE'S WAREHOUSE

His gang is in ruins. He has only five men left against Lew's twenty. Many cadavers around the room.

PETE

One of my men is worth ten of yours!

The Op is hiding behind a truck at the entrance of the square. He waits. He sits down on a loading platform, takes out his gun and aims casually at a tin can on a windowsill nearby. BEHIND HIM:

RENO (O.S.)

Pete! Listen, this is Reno! I'm coming out with my hands up! I've got a proposition for you! Both of you! Don't shoot!

At the sound of Reno's name, the Op turns. He watches Reno come out of the warehouse on the left, his hands on his head. He stops in the middle of the square.

RENO (cont'd)

Pete! Lew! What are you fighting about? This is all Whisper's fault! You both fell into his fucking trap! If that's not true, shoot me!

He slaps his chest in a theatrical gesture of sincerity.

PETE (O.S.)

What do you want?

RENO

Both of you! Stop shooting and talk!

LEW (O.S.)

Where?

RENO

You choose, Pete. We're on your ground.

Behind the truck, the Op levels his gun, aims straight at Reno.

PETE (O.S.)

The building on my right.

LEW (O.S.)

Check it out, Reno.

QUICK CUTS TO:

LEW YARD AND PETE THE FINN

watching Reno check out the third warehouse.

The Op watches Reno walk out of the warehouse into the sights of his gun.

RENO

It's clean...

Silence.

RENO

What are you waiting for? I'm the target! I'm risking my fucking life here!

Lew and Pete the Finn appear in opposite doorways. They begin to walk slowly towards the third warehouse. Step by step, staring straight in each other's eyes.

The Op shifts his aim. Turns his back on the square and aims at the tin can again. Target practice.

Pete and Lew are halfway across the square, completely without shelter.

The Op fires at the tin can. Empties his gun.

A battery of guns explode in both camps. Lew Yard scurries for cover. Pete the Finn pulls a machine gun out of a garbage can and fires at Lew who dies, screaming insults. Reno shoots down the Finn from the shelter of cases of whisky.

With the two bosses lying dead in the square, the GUNFIRE slowly tapers off. Sirens SCREAMING, four or five police cars speed into the square and stop in a circle. Twenty or thirty policemen take positions with rifles and guns, protected by their cars.

McGRAW

Guess what boys? The war is over.
Everybody out now.

Relieved, men begin to appear from both warehouses. They look tired, wounded, shocked, glad to throw their weapons on the ground.

McGRAW (cont'd)

(looking at
their faces)

Whaddya know. The jail must be empty today.

McGraw inspects the corpses of Lew and Pete the Finn.

McGRAW (cont'd)

Well, well, well. All Indians and no chiefs.

Reno appears at McGraw's side, putting his gun in his belt. He is the only gangster who has not thrown his weapon to the ground.

RENO
(opening a bottle
of whisky)
Look what I found. You look like
you could use a shot.

McGraw takes the bottle and drinks.

BEHIND THE TRUCK

The Op watches Reno and McGraw talk, clearly doing business together. Policemen swarm over the square. As they approach the Op's hiding place, he turns away reluctantly and leaves.

INT. GREAT WESTERN HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

The Op looks wearily around the hotel lobby before going in. Mario Soldati, the desk clerk, spots him and beckons him over.

MARIO
You're wanted for murder...

THE OP
I know. Did they search my room?

MARIO
I took them personally. I knew
you weren't there.

THE OP
Thanks.

MARIO
Now what do we do?

The Op moves towards the elevator. Mario stays with him.

THE OP
Now I want to wash my face, shave,
have a drink...Find Mike for me,
will you?

MARIO
Sure. I'll let you know if they
come back. But hurry it up, you
can't stay here long.

THE OP
Thanks.

The Op tucks a bill in Mario's handkerchief pocket.

THE OP (cont'd)
Buy something for your wife.

MARIO
 (gives it back)
 I'm a bachelor.

The Op pauses, frankly surprised.

THE OP
 Why should you help me?

MARIO
 (macho complicity)
 Dinah was a great lady...out of
 my reach...but I liked her a lot
 ...and yet, a man like you...I
 understand...you lost control...
 it's not your fault...

The fifty-year-old midget running the elevator opens the door for the Op. The Op looks weary, older, than his years.

MARIO (cont'd)
 (as the doors
 start to close)
 Wait! I forgot -- this came for
 you.

He hands the Op a telegram.

INT. THE ELEVATOR

The Op reads the telegram:

"UNJUSTIFIABLE FAILURE TO REPORT
 PROGRESS WILLSSON OPERATION STOP
 YOU ARE BEING REPLACED STOP
 RETURN IMMEDIATELY SAN FRANCISCO"

INT. THE OP'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The Op is in front of the mirror, his shirt off, his face covered with shaving cream. He has trouble keeping his hand from shaking, but persists.

A KNOCK at the door. The Op levels his gun at the door. He is not shaking anymore.

THE OP
 Come in.

Mike opens the door, comes in with his hands up.

MIKE
 Good morning.

The Op puts his gun on the table. Mike drops his hands with a smile.

THE OP
What took you so long?

MIKE
They're shooting in the streets,
brother. And the police are
looking for you for stabbing the
girl like an animal.

The Op is drying his face with a towel.

THE OP
With an ice pick.

MIKE
How do you know? They didn't find
the weapon.

THE OP
You know because I'm telling you.

The Op turns back on Mike, reaching for his shirt on a
hook by the sink.

MIKE
What happened to you? Sleep with
a cat?

THE OP
What do you mean?

MIKE
Look at your back.

The Op checks in the mirror. Dinah's fingernails have
left bloody tracks in his back. The Op collapses. All
the emotion he's been holding back overwhelms him. He
sags on a chair.

THE OP
I don't remember what happened.
I was drinking laudanum.

MIKE
A lot of people in this town had
reason to kill Dinah Brand.

THE OP
Reno...Whisper...If they didn't
do it, I did.

Mike doesn't know what to say. He pours himself a drink
from the bottle on the bureau, then refills the glass for
the Op.

MIKE
(holding out
the glass)
Hair of the dog...

The Op doesn't even see the glass. His gaze is interior, fixed on the pieces missing from his memory. Fingernails SCRATCH the outside of the door. The Op doesn't hear it, doesn't move.

Mike answers the door.

The newcomer is young, thin, gaudily dressed. We have seen him before with Whisper. He walks right past Mike, holding out his hand.

TONY
(to the Op)
I'm Tony Agosti. Do you remember
me?

The Op turns his head for the first time and looks at Tony.

THE OP
You're a friend of Whisper's.

TONY
You bet.
(holds up two fingers
pressed together)
Just like that, me and him.

The Op stares at him with no reaction. Tony checks the room, nervous and pale, looks Mike over, and then smiling uneasily makes his proposition.

TONY (cont'd)
I'll knock him off for you for
half a grand.

THE OP
Whisper?

TONY
Yep, and it's dirt cheap.

THE OP
(rousing; beginning
to act like himself
again)
Sit down. This needs talking over.

Mike pulls out a chair for Tony. Tony looks even more nervous now and does not sit down.

TONY

You either want him knocked off
or you don't.

THE OP

Then I don't.

Tony mumbles something incomprehensible down in his throat and turns to the door.

THE OP (cont'd)

(standing up)
So, Whisper's dead?

TONY

(his back to
the Op)
I don't know nothing about it...

Tony starts to open the door. But the Op slams it shut.

THE OP

Who got Whisper?

TONY

I ain't done nothing to you.

THE OP

(quietly)
You don't understand my problem.

He slaps Tony's face with his open hand many many times. Mike gapes at them, counting each blow with a bob of his head. When the slapping stops, Mike gulps the whisky he's still holding in his hand.

The Op holds Tony up and repeats his question.

THE OP (cont'd)

Who killed Whisper?

FLASHBACK: EXT./INT. RAILROAD SIDINGS/BOXCARS

Dan Rolff -- even bloodier and more delirious than before. He approaches the MUSIC coming faintly from the interior of Whisper's boxcar. He pauses in front of the closed door. He gathers his strength, then calls out:

DAN

Whisper...

The MUSIC stops. No sign of life.

DAN
Whisper. It's me...

The door slides open. Whisper appears, with a friendly smile and a gun in his hand.

WHISPER
Dan. Hey, look at you, man. How
come they let you out of the
hospital?

He reaches out and pulls Dan up into the boxcar.

DAN
You forgot this.

With his free hand, Rolff plunges Dinah's ice pick into Whisper's gut. Whisper reacts automatically, empties his gun into Dan who falls into the space between the two boxcars.

Whisper looks down at the ice pick completely amazed as if it weren't sticking in his own stomach.

WHISPER
Look at this.
(pause; then)
Dinah...

As he says, he collapses into Tony Agosti's arms. Tony pulls him back inside, lowers him to the floor in a comfortable position.

TONY
Son of a bitch! Here...let me...

He reaches for the ice pick to pull it out.

WHISPER
NO!...It hurts when you pull it
out, man.

TONY
I'll get a doctor.

WHISPER
Get me Reno Starkey. And that Op...
Dinah is dead.

TONY
You're dying Max.

WHISPER

I'll stay alive long enough to get them both.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MIKE'S CAB - DAY

Mike is driving along the railroad sidings. The Op is interrogating Tony in the back seat.

THE OP

So, smart boy, how much did you collect for killing him after he was dead?

TONY

I had to raise a getaway stake. C'mon, this won't be no place for Whisper's pals when it gets out he's croaked.

THE OP

Who paid up?

TONY

I got a century and a half from the new Chief of Police and I thought you'd kick in with something.

The cab stops.

THE OP

And Reno Starkey?

TONY

Son of a bitch didn't believe me. The Finn and Lew Yard would've paid plenty. He wouldn't give me a cent.

The Op gets out of the cab.

EXT. RAILROAD FREIGHT YARD

THE OP

I want to see the body.

He yanks Tony Agosti out too.

THE OP (cont'd)

(to Mike)

Wait here.

MIKE
(getting out)
No, I'll come with you.
(confidentially
to the Op)
Take it easy, you didn't kill her.

The Op shoves Tony along in front of him.

THE OP
Where? Where?

They walk between two lines of freight cars. Suddenly Tony stops in his tracks. He hears something. He crouches to look under the cars. The Op and Mike crouch too. They see:

POV

Someone's legs walking towards them on the other side of the boxcars.

The Op moves ahead of Agosti, into the lead. Now he can see the legs stop on the other side of the same boxcar as them. The Op crouches further. He sees the feet poke an inert form and roll over. It is dead Dan Rolff.

A VOICE
(guarded; suspicious)
Whisper?

No answer.

The Op slips to a better vantage point -- Now he can see inside the boxcar as:

Reno Starkey appears, framed in the doorway. The Op follows his gaze to the end of the car.

Whisper Thaler is lying on the floor, his back propped up on the wall. He looks very dead, the ice pick still sticking out of his belly.

Reno holsters his gun. Placing both hands on the boxcar floor, hoists himself into the car. Approaches Whisper. He kneels to look closer.

At that instant, Whisper's eyes open. Stare straight in Reno's.

WHISPER
I knew you'd come. I stayed alive...
for Dinah.

Reno lunges for his throat; Whisper fires twice with the gun he's been holding under his body. Point blank.

The Op jumps into the car, reaches them and tries to pry Reno Starkey's hands from Whisper's throat. It is a tough job and a useless one. Whisper is dead and Reno is dying.

His eyes are dull, his horse face as wooden as ever.

THE OP
(to Mike)
Get a Doc.

RENO
No good.

THE OP
Don't die, Reno. Say you killed her. Say it.

RENO
(dying; his last words)
I didn't kill the bitch.

His head falls back.

The Op lowers Reno's head to the ground. When he stands up, his expression is terrible; to his despair had been added rage, accumulating violence.

MIKE
(lamely)
So Reno wasn't the one...Maybe,
somebody else...

The Op looks at him sharply. Mike can't meet his eyes. The Op moves so close to Mike, there is no way for the cabbie to look away.

THE OP
You mean, did I kill her?

MIKE
Stop it. Say you didn't. Now
is a good time to say it.

THE OP
I don't know, Mike.

EXT. WILLSSON MANSION - DAY

It's the only peaceful place in town. Mike watches the Op push the doorbell many times before the CHAUFFEUR answers.

The chauffeur carries a billiard cue in one fist and looks annoyed at having his game interrupted.

THE OP

I want to see Willsson.

CHAUFFEUR

Inside you.

INT. ELIHU'S BEDROOM - DAY

The old man in his underwear, perched on the edge of his bed. His feet hang inches off the ground like a child. His VALET kneels beside him, puts on his socks, attaches them to garters, etc.

ELIHU

(beaming; with a
friendly smile)

So you finally come back to the
old pirate.

THE OP

(collapses in a chair)

I'm tired. I'm through. Please
don't treat me like an old friend.

ELIHU

You won.

THE OP

You came crying to me that some
nasty men had taken your city
away from you.

The valet holds Elihu's pin-striped trousers ready. Elihu
steps into them.

THE OP (cont'd)

Noonan died last night. Lew Yard
and Pete the Finn died this morning.
Whisper a little while ago. I'm
giving Personville back to you,
whether you want it or not.

ELIHU

I never thought it could be done.
Congratulations. Really remarkable
work. Let's have some champagne,
Edgar.

The valet disappears momentarily to relay the order.

THE OP

Keep still till I'm finished.
You're going to tell the governor
your city police have got out of
hand. You're going to ask him
for help -- the National Guard
would be best.

ELIHU

I'm ahead of you. The soldier boys
are on their way.

The valet reappears and the dressing of the magnate
continues. Elihu holds out his arms. The valet slips
a shirtsleeve over each arm in turn and starts to button
his shirt.

THE OP

Then you'll have your city back,
all nice and clean and ready to go
to the dogs again.

The valet buttons Elihu's jacket.

ELIHU

What about you? Are you ready for
a promotion? I'm going to make
you Mayor.

THE OP

(exhausted; humorless)
A Mayor who's wanted for murder.
That's the funniest thing I've
heard since the hogs ate my kid
brother.

ELIHU

What are you talking about? You're
not wanted for anything.

THE OP

Dinah Brand.

ELIHU

You? How could you do it? You
were sleeping like a baby. You
missed the whole show.

The old man preens in a mirror.

Only now do we realize he is wearing a formal morning suit
-- from stand-up collar to tails. He looks more elegant
and self-assured than ever before.

THE OP

What?

ELIHU

What did she give you? Alcohol?
Opium? I hear the Angel of Hurricane
Street made expert love potions.

THE OP

How the hell do you know that?

ELIHU

Don't you think I look gorgeous? I
wish I had somewhere to go.

THE OP

Don't play with me. You know who
did it.

ELIHU

Of course I know. Bill Quint.

THE OP

Quint? What are you trying to pull?

ELIHU

Me? Nothing.

It is evident -- from the Op's expression -- that he wants
to be convinced but needs final proof of his own innocence.

THE OP

Quint...Okay. How did he kill her?

ELIHU

With an ice pick. Isn't that what
they found in her body?

THE OP

(pressuring him)

Nothing! They found nothing in
her body. Dan Rolff got there
first and took it. How can you
know about the ice pick?

ELIHU

There is an eyewitness. The little
girl next door.

THE OP

Helen Albury?

ELIHU

She was peeping in the window. I don't know what's wrong with kids today.

THE OP

She told the police it was me.

ELIHU

So what? You frightened her. She's a bit cuckoo, poor child.

(twirls his finger
next to his ear)

But she knows what she saw. She saw Quint come into the room where you were...shall we say, performing? She saw him hide in the shadows.

THE OP

Quint...

ELIHU

Where are you going?

THE OP

To get Quint.

ELIHU

That's been taken care of too.

THE OP

Where is he?

The BUTLER comes in with an iced bottle of champagne and two glasses.

ELIHU

You've done enough. Relax. Have some champagne. That man is scum. Always making trouble, addicted to violence. Union man, cancer of the country. I knew sooner or later, he'd murder somebody.

THE OP

(pushing the butler aside)
Where have you got him?

ELIHU

I don't have him yet. But I will. Any minute now.

THE OP

Shit! I have to talk to him.

The Op disappears, leaving the door open. Elihu turns back to the mirror.

ELIHU

All this excitement makes me feel younger.

EXT. STREET AND UNION HALL - DAY

Mike HONKS his horn repeatedly. The cab can hardly move. The street is jammed with people -- a volatile emotional CROWD of MINERS and their FAMILIES pressing towards the Union Hall. Some of them are armed -- with improvised household weapons -- ready to fight.

The entrance to the Union Hall is blocked off by a cordon of POLICEMAN and SQUAD CARS.

The Op gets out of the cab, pushes through the mob. Angry voices screaming at Policemen tell him what's going on.

1ST VOICE

Give him back to us!

2ND VOICE

You have no right to arrest Bill Quint!

3RD VOICE

Go arrest gangsters, and not Union leaders!

4TH VOICE

The Union Hall belongs to us.

5TH VOICE

We're not gonna let you take him!

6TH VOICE

Quint is our representative, legally elected.

7TH VOICE

One Big Union. (chanted as a b.g.)

The Op has trouble getting through the crowd. At the police barrier, he shows his badge to an officer who lets him pass.

A flurry of GUNSHOTS inside the hall. Sudden and total SILENCE in the street.

The Op looks back at the crowd. They stand completely still, as if paralyzed by the gunshot.

The Op runs into the building.

INT. THE UNION HALL

Other armed POLICEMEN stand around the lobby in small confused groups, all heads turned towards the entrance to the assembly room. The door opens and the new Chief of Police walks out.

McGRAW
(friendly; unalarmed
to Op)
There you are! Your colleagues
were looking for you.

The Op shoves him aside and enters.

THE MAIN ASSEMBLY ROOM

At first sight the room looks empty. Just scores of folding chairs in neat rows.

Then SOMEBODY who has been crouching near the podium gets to his feet. A squarish figure in a dark suit.

THE OP
(uncertain)
Linehan?

A SECOND MAN stands up, looks toward the Op.

THE OP (cont'd)
Foley?

LINEHAN
(looking down)
Too bad.

As the Op walks toward them, he sees little by little the corpse of Bill Quint appearing between the chairs.

FOLEY
Where the hell have you been?

THE OP
(staring down at
the corpse)
Resisting arrest?

LINEHAN
You bet.

THE OP
With what? A chair?

Linehan holds out an old-fashioned Western pistol.

FOLEY
Call this a chair?

LINEHAN
He didn't want to be taken alive.

THE OP
How much did the old man pay you?

LINEHAN
That's a fine How-do-you-do.

FOLEY
(moving towards
the door)
You were wanted for murder. We
just saved your ass, brother.

LINEHAN
(following Foley)
And your job.

They leave the room. The Op sits on a chair and stares
down at Bill.

INT. THE TRAIN - DUSK

The same obsolete coach as in the beginning of the story.
The Op gets the window open. Mike passes the Op his suit-
case from the platform outside. The Op puts it in the
overhead rack. The two men shake hands through the window.

MIKE
It wasn't your fault.

THE OP
I feel like I've sucked up all
the poison in Poisonville.

Mike shakes his head. The train is getting underway. He
couldn't say anything more if he wanted to.. We catch a
last glimpse of him waving goodbye before he disappears
from sight tipping his hat.

NOW - THROUGH THE WINDOW - THE STATION SIGN

SPORT the little boy is standing under it, waiting for
the Op to pass. When he sees him, he begins to skate
along the platform, waving goodbye.

The Op leans out the window and throws a gift to Sport. Something shiny and silver which the boy catches in both hands.

SPORT'S POV

The boy opens his hands:

The Op's badge -- "CONTINENTAL AGENCY OPERATIVE"

INT. THE TRAIN

The Op is sitting, watching Personville go by.

OUTSKIRTS OF PERSONVILLE

Seen from the passing train.

IMAGES

As if from a moving train, the CAMERA MOVES PAST:

WHISPER'S JOINT - burned out.

LEW YARD'S PAWN SHOP - in ruins.

WHISKYTOWN - bombed out.

Small GROUPS of NATIONAL GUARDSMEN are patrolling all these places. The last image in the series:

HURRICANE STREET

The CAMERA MOVES TOWARDS Dinah's house. The front steps. The door. The window. The lights are on inside.

CLOSEUP - THE OP IN THE TRAIN

his expression troubled by the memory of Dinah's voice.

DINAH'S VOICE

You've got to have a name. Every-
body has a name. Tell me your name.

THE OP

(smiling; remembering)
It's going to cost you.

The Op watches his memories visualized in the window of the train, as if it were a screen.

FLASHBACK - INSIDE THE TRAIN WINDOW

The missing pieces from the night of Dinah's murder are starting to fall into place like the pieces of a puzzle.

The Op is lying on his back on the dining room table. Dinah is slouching in a chair near his head.

THE OP

If a guy's got something that's worth something to somebody, he's a boob if he doesn't collect.

She grabs his hair, pulls him towards her.

DINAH

I'll give you something worth a lot of money. Because I'm not scotch with my roll like some people I know.

She holds up a small square object tied in a red ribbon and slaps it on his nose. Then, turning to his jacket on the back of her chair, she slips it in his inside breast pocket.

He crooks his finger and beckons her. Dinah leans closer, her ear near his mouth. He whispers his name (inaudibly). She bursts out laughing.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. THE TRAIN

The Op reaches inside his jacket, takes out the package Dinah put there. He places it on his knees and unties the ribbon.

There are four letters addressed to Dinah in a shaky sclerotic hand. The Op takes one out and turns it over immediately to see the signature. Then he begins to read -- as he does, we hear:

ELIHU'S VOICE

My darling.
Enclosed please find another thousand dollars. The dream I had last night is worth every penny. Surrounded by idiots, my desire for you is all that's keeping me alive. Why won't you come to see me? I'm an old man but I have so much to give.

The Op is not reading anymore. He is watching the FLASHBACK continue in the train window.

FLASHBACK - INSIDE THE WINDOW

They are on the table. Their heads are very close together. The Op is on top of her.

THE OP

Tell me again.

DINAH

I don't love you. I won't love you. I'll never love you...

We HEAR a NOISE. A LIGHT TAPPING, OFF. The two lovers don't seem to notice.

It's the tip of a cane tapping across the living room. PAN UP to a pair of gnarled hands folded on the handle of a cane. Elihu Willsson is sitting in the shadows watching them fuck.

DINAH

I don't love you. I don't want to love you, I can't love you...

Her voice grows huskier, more excited. The old man sees her nails dig into the Op's back. Elihu turns his head. THE CAMERA PANS to a chair near their bodies. On it, the ice pick.

ELIHU'S VOICE

Oh...my letters...

END FLASHBACK.

INT. THE TRAIN

The Op is still looking in the window. But the images of the flashback have been replaced by the blackness of night and the blurred reflection of Elihu's face. The old man is sitting on the train in front of the Op.

ELIHU

I'm not going to let a man like you get away from me.

The Op glances around, quickly.

HIS POV - ELIHU'S MEN

His secretary, chauffeur and four bodyguards are scattered around the coach in different seats.

The Op is surrounded.

ELIHU

I want you to run for governor.

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The train streaks past the CAMERA at close range and disappears into the night.

THE END.