

S T O R Y V I L L E

by

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Based on "Drunken Angel"
Screenplay by
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STORYVILLE by John Logan

INT.

KIT'S APARTMENT

EVENING

Darkness.

And then a sound...

Swoosh ... swoosh ... swoosh...

Steady and rhythmic, like a metronome...

Then a flash of light ... light slashing off the polished metal of a blade...

A straight razor is being stropped.

Swoosh ... swoosh ... swoosh...

We watch the lethal razor sweep back and forth. It is like a dance. The hands holding the razor and strop are expert. They do this every day, a ritual.

KIT TIBBEDEAUX knows the value of a sharp razor. He knows the unique song of a sharp razor as it whistles through the air. He knows the gentle, almost obscenely delicate pull as a sharp razor slices across flesh.

Kit is a handsome and slender young man. He moves gracefully and efficiently; absolutely no wasted movement. There is something coiled and kinesthetic about Kit. The promise of motion. The threat of action.

He is a dazzling monster.

Kit holds his razor up to the light.

As he carefully ... carefully ... studies the razor's edge we note the room is bathed in weird and lurid colors. It is the neon glow coming through the many floor-to-ceiling windows. Garish greens and purples and reds. There are no pastels here. These are the unnatural and bawdy colors of old time Vice.

Kit's apartment is airy; comfortable and clean. Not much in the way of personality, though we do note the signs of a woman in the apartment as well: shoes, cold cream, stockings, fur coats in the closet.

A ceiling fan rotates above uselessly. It is unbelievably hot. Sweltering all the time. Night and day. No relief. Everything drips.

Kit doesn't even notice the heat. He has lived with this insanely liquid heat every day of his entire life. He knows nothing else.

Finally satisfied with the chilling edge on his razor, Kit efficiently snaps it closed and tucks it into a jacket pocket.

Kit gives himself a quick once-over in the mirror. He is jauntily dressed: stylish bordering on gaudy. He wears a brave jacket -- pale yellow with black stripes -- over a flamboyant dark shirt and pale trousers. Shining black-and-white spectator shoes complete the almost Zoot-suited look.

Kit adjusts his pocket square, pats his razor pocket and, in a flash, is in motion--

Slashing his way through his apartment and out the door--

INT. KIT'S BUILDING -- LANDING/STAIRS EVENING

Kit flings himself from his second floor landing and rattles speedily down a very long and very steep stairway.

As he quickly descends the stairs we suddenly realize what Kit reminds us of -- the coiled power, the controlled and quick movements, the almost syncopated steps -- he reminds us of a dancer. A tap dancer. Cagney.

Kit reaches the bottom of the stairway, the building's tiny lobby, and pushes through the doors--

And he is suddenly in his city--

New Orleans.

Or, as it will always be known to Kit, Nawlins.

EXT. KIT'S BUILDING -- STREET EVENING

Music--

Like a living thing--

Embraces Kit as he strides from his apartment building.

Coming from a hundred windows ... blaring from a dozen radios ... and from the open doors of the many bars and clubs...

Music haunts this story and this world, ebbing and flowing, peeking around corners, insinuating itself, caressing and kissing, busting down doors ... hot Jazz ... and Blues ... and Swing ... and Zydeco ... and Dixieland...

Nawlins music. Sublime, sexy, magical.

Omnipresent as air.

It is the summer of 1944 and we are lost in the deep, dark heart of the French Quarter.

It is carnival and chaos. A dream, or nightmare, of decaying buildings, dank alleys, overhanging balconies, sinister whorehouses, yawning taverns, beckoning clubs and glittering gambling dens. Buzzing neon and buzzing mosquitos. Tourists and soldiers and hoodlums and cons and drunks and whores and gigolos and filth and sin and color and noise.

And this seductive, humid labyrinth is bustling all day and all night. It is like some always crowded-crammed-crushed jungle.

And Kit is, without question, the King of the Jungle.

Three young men -- ZOOK, YELLOW HENRY and LAVEAU -- are waiting for Kit outside his building. Without missing a step they fall into place alongside him as he strides down the street.

With panache -- with the deft click-clack flip of a shining Zippo -- Kit lights a cigarette as they parade:

KIT

Momma Josephine been stretching it too far this time. You ear the box? Lost a packet on her say-so.

ZOOK

Kit, you know better than to listen to that ol' witch for sportin' news ... For the charm or the hex, yeah, you bet on it, but she can't pick the horses no better than Yellow Henry.

When alone, the four old friends speak a unique form of urban Nawlins patois. It is very fast-paced and colorful; occasionally slipping into a sort of jazzy Creole Street French.

Kit, it should be noted, always speaks a mile a minute. He is verbal gymnast.

Here's his three friends:

ZOOK seems larger than all the others put together. Big and muscular, he is Kit's oldest comrade from the days in the gutter they don't talk about anymore.

YELLOW HENRY and LAVEAU are brothers. They are long and lean, almost identical but for the wasting signs of old illnesses that mark them both: a nasty bout of malaria that gives Yellow Henry

his sickly ocher pallor and his nickname -- and the ugly smallpox scars on Laveau.

All about Kit's age, these are his most trusted allies. They grew up together and any one of them would take a bullet for Kit. That is, more or less, what they are here for. They are his enforcers, his bodyguards, his gang.

The quartet struts down the street. They are like a dazzling force of nature. A tidal wave. People move out of the way. If we were a culture who bowed, people would bow before Kit. Still, the deference is clear.

Everyone notices Kit. He is a star.

KIT

The witch got no sight, Zook, but Momma Jo says she knows a jockey knows a trainer that tells her Jumping Boy guaranteed to win the second race 'cause Golden Flash be holdin' back. They holdin' him back for a big purse next week up Baton Rouge.

YELLOW HENRY

(crosses himself)

Kit, you know better than sling dirt toward Momma Jo. She will hex your dick right off your spine.

Kit laughs as they turn a corner to a wider, even busier street...

EXT. THE STREET EVENING

The Street.

The center of Kit's domain. Taverns and whorehouses and clubs and shops line both sides of the wide street.

The rush of humanity -- the sweating crowd filling the sidewalk and spilling into the street -- continues unabated. Whores lounge on the second and third floor balconies and call down to prospective clients: a steady, playful game of call and response. Cars inch along the packed street.

KIT

Yellow Henry, you are talkin' stuff and nonsense. Momma Jo can't throw no hexes. Only bayou witches can hex. Momma Jo's as Creole as me and thee...

As he continues to speak, Kit diverts to a little Flower Stall near the curb. He jauntily takes a carnation and expertly snaps off the bloom, inserts it into his lapel...

KIT

... She's an old Vieux Carre witch, east of Canal Street all her days.

ZOOK

Which somehow means she can't hex?

The FLOWER STALL OWNER, a nervous little man with a nervous little mustache, is proud that Kit takes flowers from his stall. He smiles and bows obsequiously:

FLOWER STALL OWNER

Thanks for stopping, Kit...

Kit ignores him and moves on.

KIT

Zookie-zook, listen, you gotta go into the swamp for the true hexin'. And you know I will have none of that. That is dire backwoods Cajun fucking bullshit, baby.

ZOOK

Point being, how much did you lose on Momma Josephine's tip?

KIT

It's not the money -- it's the principle. Person tells you such and such a thing is gospel, ought to be so. We only have our word, yes? We stand or fall by that and that alone. It is how we are measured. How this world measures us...

Kit stops. Some drunken Navy sailors are crowded together, oblivious, blocking the sidewalk. The rudeness annoys Kit.

He is a millisecond from exploding, but--

Like flowing liquid, Zook and the Brothers move in front of Kit and force a path through the sailors -- the sailors protest -- Zook snaps open a switchblade, holds it up -- the sailors back off -- Kit has already moved past them.

The potentially explosive moment has passed in the blink of an eye. On another night there would have been blood. So it goes. The whole city rests on nitroglycerine.

Kit and his friends continue on effortlessly:

KIT

Now we can all make mistakes, sure, but there was a certain rock-solid nature to Momma Jo's late prognostication--

YELLOW HENRY

(loves the word)

Oooo...

KIT

So I just want inquire, follow? Besides, she behind on her lagniappe, as well you know...

[Lagniappe: a bonus, a little something extra. Kit's code word for protection money.]

Kit diverts into a tatty little cigarette shop...

INT. CIGARETTE SHOP EVENING

The Street music is replaced by radio music...

The Cigarette Shop is run by MOMMA JOSEPHINE herself. She is an elderly black woman, cagey and imposing. Her son, also elderly, is CRIPPLED PETE. He has only one leg and helps her around the shop, limping on his crutch.

Kit sweeps into the shop, chattering and charming, and helps himself to some cigarettes. It is becoming clear that on these streets Kit doesn't pay for anything.

The others invade the shop as well, helping themselves to cigarettes and candy, lounging about, pushing Pete out of the way.

KIT

Momma Josephine! You break my heart every time with your tips and touts!

MOMMA JO

Mr. Kit -- How was I to know the fucking horse would throw a shoe, eh? Break my heart too ... (she slips into Creole Street French) ... For you, my baby boy, you know I foresee only health and wealth.

Kit smiles as he tucks some cigarettes into a beautiful silver cigarette case:

KIT

(Creole Street French)

Next time try to foresee a winner, eh? ... Hate losing money to my bookie, doesn't seem right, man in my position paying off to a knuckle-dragging Shylock like him.

MOMMA JO
 (Creole Street French)
Baby, trust your Momma Jo...

Kit leans casually against the counter as he lights a cigarette. Significantly, he doesn't use his Zippo this time. He uses a wooden match from the counter. He holds the match and lets it burn as:

KIT
 One more thing, one more observation: you a little slow with your lagniappe ... (to Zook) ... Week late now, eh?

ZOOK
 That so.

KIT
 Momma Jo, you know it ain't for me. Lagniappe don't go to me. I don't get rich ... I gotta answer to Mister Paul and he's gotta answer to the dagos.

MOMMA JO
 Mr. Kit, you know how things--

KIT
 (ice)
 Tomorrow. This time tomorrow, baby. Or this whole place--

He flicks the burning match across the room--

It lands on Crippled Pete's chest -- sparks -- he flails to put them out.

KIT
 You follow?

She nods.

He sweeps out, his friends following...

EXT. THE STREET EVENING

They continue on, weaving up the Street, effortlessly cutting through the pedestrian mobs: on the sidewalk then down into the street then back up on the curb.

ZOOK
 You ever meet the dagos?

KIT

Say what?

ZOOK

You ever meet the dagos? Seen 'em in real life, I mean?

KIT

Hell no! I don't think they even exist. I swear Mister Paul just made them up. Ever he talks: "The dagos want this ... The dagos want that ... Dagos says we gotta do this ..." But did anyone ever see one of these famous dagos? Not once!

They are heading toward their ultimate destination ... the largest building on the Street ... a towering facade that dominates everything ... four stories of sheer decadence...

An enormous, glowing, green neon sign crowns the building and proudly proclaims the name of...

CLUB NO. 1.

Kit and the others breeze toward the doors--

With perfect timing the tall doorman, GUS, salutes crisply and elegantly pulls the doors open--

GUS

And a good evening to you, sir!

Kit and his friends sweep into--

INT. CLUB NO.1 EVENING

--An explosion of music and color.

Swirling and sweaty couples fill a huge dance floor, their jitterbugging limbs flailing wildly as the stage band tears through a swing number.

Three bars, packed with patrons, are spread over the main level. Stairways lead up to three other levels, creating tiers with balconies looking down; like a series of opera boxes ringing the main floor. Gentlemen and their "ladies" sit at the balcony rails and gaze down on the adventures below.

Clouds of cigarette smoke billow up. Tuxedos and formal gowns rub shoulders with military uniforms and business suits.

The ching-chang of slot machines and the bestial roar of craps tables sound from adjoining gambling rooms. We see mobs swarming around the gaming tables.

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And there are women everywhere ... taxi dancers ... cocktail waitresses ... hostesses ... perambulating girls trying to pick up lonely sailors...

Club No. 1 is a busy, thrilling, frenzied castle of vice.

Kit parades through his club. He seems to know everyone -- a cocky wave to someone here -- a careful and knowing nod to another there -- the killer smile to all--

Then Kit sweeps past a particularly lovely taxi dancer -- MAMIE -- with a casual greeting:

KIT

Hey, Mamie, night good to ya?

MAMIE

(spinning her head after him)

Swell night, Kit--

But he is already gone.

To our surprise, we do not continue on with the indomitable Kit, we stay with her.

We sense there is, or will be, something important about Mamie. The longing intensity with which she watches Kit intrigues us.

She watches as Kit moves up to his usual table -- as he pauses for a moment to take in his world -- just as the swing number reaches a climax--

It is like the end of a Broadway showstopper -- the rousing crescendo of the wild swing song and the dancing -- just as Kit arrives at his table and stands--

On top of the world.

INT. CLUB NO. 1 NIGHT

It is later that night and swing has given way to torch.

ANGELIQUE -- the club's drop-dead gorgeous band singer -- is slinking her way through a sexy number. She is simmering and sultry. Every molecule of her is dangerous, but who can resist?

Mamie, meanwhile, is dancing with a pimply Navy Sailor. They shuffle across the dance floor. She does her best, but he is young and awkward. Nervous. First time with a working girl. Poor lamb.

MAMIE

Honey, maybe we oughta take a wee rest...?

SAILOR

Yeah, uh, that's good -- before I mash your feet too much.

MAMIE

How about we go upstairs, sugar? Loosen that tie a smidge, you like that...?

Before he can resist she is leading him off the dance floor and they are heading "upstairs."

Mamie shoots a final glance to Kit as she disappears through the crowd.

Kit -- at his regular table near the dance floor -- barely knows Mamie is alive. Right now he only has eyes for Angelique as she finishes her song.

Nice applause from the crowd and Angelique makes her way to Kit's table. The band launches into another song as conversation swirls around the table:

KIT

(kisses her)

That was terrific, honey--

ANGELIQUE

Thanks, Kitten--

She settles in next to Kit. He tosses a proprietary arm around her. He owns her.

ZOOK

You want something, Angie--?

ANGELIQUE

Partial to some champagne--

ZOOK

Yellow Henry, fetch the lady some champagne--

YELLOW HENRY

Laveau, fetch Angelique some champagne--

Laveau scurries off.

Kit watches the band as he lights a cigarette. He is studying BILLY BONES, a thin, young black kid playing the clarinet. He is a truly gifted musician.

As he plays, Billy Bones nods to Kit. Kit nods back.

KIT

Told you the kid had the chops.

ANGELIQUE

T'ain't kidding ... How'd you get him from Solly to begin with? Solly don't give up talent so easy.

KIT

Negotiation, Angelique. Everything in this life is open to negotiation--

ZOOK

He told Solly he'd torch his joint to cinders if he didn't let him have the kid--

ANGELIQUE

(cuddles Kit)

One day I swear I will smooth those rough edges to velvet--

KIT

All I got's my edges.

ANGELIQUE

Cigarette me.

Kit lights a cigarette for her as Laveau returns to the table with champagne for Angelique. Laveau now seems quite tense--

LAVEAU

Um, Kit -- t'was off gettin' Miss A's drink when who do I see big as life but--

ZOOK

(seeing someone through the crowd)

Jesus Christ...

Kit leans forward to see what Zook is looking at...

And his eyes turn to ice.

FRANKIE GIROD is moving across the dance floor with four of his thugs. Frankie Girod is a minor hood on the come. He is also a junkie, which makes him unpredictably dangerous.

KIT

Oh, this is not happening ... Frankie Girod did not come all the way 'cross the river to die here...

ZOOK

(concerned)

Take it easy...

Kit watches as Girod and his four thugs sit at a table. Girod smiles to Kit, waves. To Kit, this is all a hellish provocation.

KIT

(waves back)

Smile at me, you crumb, hello.

ZOOK

Forget it, Kit, who gives a toss?

Kit leans back and explains the world to his friend:

KIT

Zookie-zook, lemme tell you one thing. In the Tarzan pictures, you got Tarzan and you got a bunch of monkeys. Now Tarzan's the King of the Jungle 'cause he don't let them monkeys get too uppity, you follow? Monkey get too uppity and Tarzan slap that motherfucker down ... (Kit's eyes shoot to Girod) ... That cocksucking monkey come all the way 'cross the river from Algiers -- with his fucking monkey gorillas, I might add -- just to look old Tarzan in the eye. What's Tarzan supposed to do, I ask you?!

ZOOK

(smiles)

Tarzan slap that motherfucker down.

KIT

(smiles)

Tarzan slap him down.

They stand -- enjoying this now -- Yellow Henry and Laveau rise as well -- and move toward Girod and his thugs like gunslingers heading to a showdown.

As they walk, Kit tucks his hand into his razor pocket.

Angelique leans forward, watching eagerly, turned on by the promise of blood.

Girod and his thugs see Kit and the others approaching. They are tense. Girod gestures for his thugs to remain seated.

Kit arrives at the table. Coiled.

Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau take up strategic positions. Ready for action.

KIT

Frankie Girod come all the way from Algiers just to say howdy-do, that so?

GIROD

Been hearing how well you run things here, Kit, just wanted to take a look-see. Don't mind, do you now?

KIT

Hell, why would I mind?

GIROD

(gestures around)

This is all ... wildly impressive ... Sure Stokes will be impressed...

At the name "Stokes" Zook shoots a glance to Kit -- this name means something--

Girod smiles -- nasty rows of sharp, yellow teeth--

GIROD

We'll all be seeing Stokes pretty soon, I hear tell.

KIT

So I hear tell.

GIROD

Stokes will want to know things been looked after while he was in.

KIT

Amiable of you to take such an interest in the way we do things here ... But I ask myself, is Frankie Girod really an upmarket-high-toned-French-Quarter kind of fellow or is he an over-the-river-pretty-much-swamp-dwelling-Algiers kind of fellow? I think he belongs. where he came from, what say Zook?

ZOOK

Monkey oughta go back cross the river.

GIROD

Sure, sure ... Just toss the bones and maybe have a dance with some of your fine ladies--

KIT

Think maybe you boys oughta catch the next ferry and get cross the river 'fore it gets too late ... Yo mommas must be worried sick.

A long, tense beat.

Kit's senses are hyper-aware. He notices the smallest movements in Girod and his thugs. A hand twitching toward an inside pocket. A muscle tensing. A foot shifting.

Is this all going to explode into violence?

Then...

Kit sees a tiny bead of sweat at Girod's hairline.

Kit smiles, knows he has won.

KIT

Yo momma ... (finger to his lips) ... Shhhh ... Think I hear her calling.

Girod surrenders. He raises his hands.

GIROD

Kit, never meant no disrespect, you know that.

KIT

Nighty-night, Frankie Girod.

Girod and his thugs stand. Still tense. They leave.

Zook exhales.

KIT

Fucking nerve of him...

Kit watches Girod and his thugs leave the club, then moves back toward his own table with Zook and the others.

As he walks, Kit grows increasingly angry, finally furious:

KIT

Talking about Stokes -- using the name like a club -- Testing me, just like them boys from Metarie last month -- Got the brass to come into my place, look me in the eye and smile that yellow-tooth junkie cunt smile of his--

ZOOK

Ain't worth it, Kit...

KIT

Come on, baby, we gotta knock the monkey out the tree--

Kit swerves quickly toward the exit, wildly angry now--

Zook and the Brothers follow, exchanging a worried glance--

They cut through the club like knives.

EXT. THE STREET NIGHT

The ever-present music from the bars and clubs and cafes...

Frankie Girod and his four thugs are weaving through the Street, acting tough. Though they put on the good front, they are nothing but punks. Out of their league.

The phantasmagoria of the French Quarter is swirling all around them, so they are blinded, dazzled, not even aware of the quick approach of Kit, Zook and the Brothers from behind.

Kit times the meeting perfectly. He knows every inch of these streets, every lane, alley and dark corner, so he reaches Girod and his thugs just as they are passing the mouth to an alley--

Without a word--

From behind--

Kit lashes forward and SLAMS Girod's head, sending Girod careening wildly into the alley--

Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau strike -- battling Girod's thugs--

EXT. ALLEY NIGHT

The music from the clubs beyond provide a strange and sexy orchestration to the action--

Kit keeps up his brutal assault -- smashing Girod repeatedly -- flinging him against the hard brick walls of the alley--

Yellow Henry laughs wildly as he plucks up a trash can to battle Girod's thugs--

Zook is like a mountain, using his great bulk to batter away at his opponents. Zook doesn't even bother drawing his switchblade: Girod and his thugs are amateurs--

We see that Kit is a tough, merciless fighter -- taking advantage of every weakness -- Girod doesn't have a prayer--

Zook and the Brothers subdue the thugs as--

Kit easily avoids a punch and SLAMS his elbow into Girod's side, breaking ribs -- then Kit swings around and lays into Girod with a flurry of quick punches--

Again Kit reminds us of a dancer -- it is all elegant, in its violent way, and controlled--

Girod finally falls to the alley floor, panting for air, coughing up blood.

Kit gives him a quick kick to the ribs, like the period to the sentence, and then grabs his lapels and roughly hauls him up--

He slams Girod back against an alley wall and holds him steady.

KIT

Okay, Frankie Girod ... We understand one another?

Girod sees that his thugs have been subdued and are watching, watching his defeat, his humiliation.

KIT

We understand one another?

Girod nods, still panting for air.

KIT

Lemme hear it.

Girod tries to speak. Coughs. Spits out teeth. Glares at Kit.

GIROD

We ... understand.

KIT

Good boy. You go back cross the river, let your people mend you now...

A beat as, again, we almost literally see Kit's eyes turn to ice.

KIT

Next time I see you this side the river ... I will murder you stone dead.

With that, Kit releases Girod and turns to leave the alley--

But--

Almost too fast to understand what's happening--

Girod, the crazy junkie, snatches something from his coat--

A gleam of blue metal, an ugly little snub-nosed revolver--

Girod fires--

A DEAFENING SHOT--FLASH--SMOKE--

Kit jerks--

His left hand shot, from behind--

Zook and the others are shocked, frozen--

But Kit--

In one ... continuous ... beautiful ... balletic ... movement--

Spins around ... pulling out his straight razor ... snapping it open ... it flashes through the darkness ... the blade suddenly catching the light as it arcs toward Girod...

Slashing across his throat...

Girod's head jerks to the left...

Almost no blood yet, the razor is so sharp...

Then Kit instantly slashes back the other way...

Girod's head jerks to the right...

Now the blood comes...

As the gun falls from Girod's hand...

As his knees give...

As he falls into an ugly heap.

He's dead. Blood pooling from his twice-severed jugular.

Kit steps back, not wanting any more blood on his clothes. He shakes his left hand in pain.

Girod's thugs are stunned, speechless. They have never seen anything like this. One begins to cry.

Zook goes to Kit, starts wrapping his wounded hand in a handkerchief.

A beat as Kit glances down at Girod's body, and then glares up at Girod's thugs:

KIT

Get this garbage outta my city.



He starts to shut the door -- but Zook pushes past him and they enter the house...

INT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- OFFICE NIGHT

The first room of the long, thin shotgun house is Dr. Warren's medical office, a door leads back to the rest of the house.

Kit gestures for Yellow Henry and Laveau to remain outside.

Zook's great bulk looms over Warren:

ZOOK

You fix him up ... And don't give him no lip.

KIT

Go on, Zookie. The good surgeon here gonna take care of me ... (Zook isn't sure) ... Go on. Make sure that garbage gets into the river, yeah?

Zook goes.

WARREN

Sit down.

Dr. Warren lazily washes his hands as he watches Kit.

Kit sits in a desk chair and glances around. The doctor's office is small and disorganized. Clean enough, Kit is pleased to note, but still a mad jumble of bottles, vials, medical books, charts and shining surgical instruments floating in green disinfectant.

KIT

You know who I am?

WARREN

Who don't know you?

Warren slowly opens a bottle of whiskey and pours himself a glass, gazing evenly at Kit all the while.

KIT

You maybe wanna take a look at my hand?

Warren takes a nice long drink.

WARREN

Hold it up.

Kit does so. Warren swings a light toward it. Looks at it from across the room.

WARREN

What happen?

KIT

Whattaya mean "what happen"? Whattaya think happen? I got shot for Chrissake. Jesus, you're a one! Now get your ass over here and fix it up!

Warren doesn't move, just looks at him. One thing is transparent in Warren's even gaze: he loathes Kit.

Warren slowly takes another drink.

WARREN

You oughta go to the hospital, son, truly. I might do you some real harm. Hands aren't so steady anymore.

KIT

(snaps)

I can't go to the damn hospital and answer a lot of damn questions -- all of which you know damn well -- which is why I come to you -- which is why everyone comes to you, you damn nigger abortionist saw-boning motherfucker -- now this thing hurts like hell and you supposed to be a doctor so -- damn! -- start doctoring!

Warren is amused by Kit's colorful outburst.

He slowly pulls himself up and goes to Kit, bringing his glass of whiskey with him. He sits and pulls a strong desk light closer. Studies Kit's hand as:

KIT

Thank you very much -- Christ-on-a-crutch I thought you all took some kinda oath not to let folks bleed to death right there in front of you...

Warren takes a sip of his drink.

WARREN

Okey-dokey ... Just hold your hand out, and hold it real steady...

Kit does so. Warren sloshes some antiseptic onto gauze and cleans the wound. Kit hisses in pain.

Warren glances up to him.

WARREN

Whatsamatter? Ain't you a tough guy?

KIT

Doc -- you mind if I call you "Doc"? -- Fuck off, would you?

Warren is again amused.

He works quickly now: clamping and opening the wound with a series of long, metal clamps and then probing for the bullet. All of this is without anesthesia.

Kit grits his teeth and tries not to scream.

WARREN

(as he works)

Oh yeah, you're the number one tough guy. Seen you strutting like a peahen with all the little chicks jumping around your feet waiting for the feed that falls from your beak. Seen some of your work come in here over the years, too. A little slit, a little stab, a little slash. Sometimes worse. Then all them girls of yours. Girl get knocked up, come here, get fixed, go back, get old, get sick, get dead. Yeah, I know you ... Bad is bad ... Bad is bad.

With that, Warren pulls out the bullet and drops it into a metal bowl. Clink.

The ordeal momentarily over, Kit is covered in sweat, still panting for breath:

KIT

You don't got no anesthesia?!

WARREN

(smiles)

Oh, that's not for tough guys...

Warren bandages Kit's wound. Kit carefully uses his right hand to open his cigarette case and light a cigarette.

KIT

You got one hell of a bedside manner...

WARREN

Yeah, I know, I learned that in doctor school.

KIT

Been a long night, though, Doc, could ya spare me the disapproval. Everyone's got a job to do, right?

WARREN

Yeah, sure ... I'm a doctor, he's a soda jerk and you're a gangster. Just another job, just another day at the office--

Suddenly Kit begins to cough--

Deep, rasping coughs from deep inside him--

Warren's eyes shoot up from bandaging Kit's hand to watching Kit's face -- a flicker of something new in Warren's eyes -- a flicker of interest, even of concern--

Kit can't stop coughing for a moment. Finally gets his breath and stubs the cigarette out.

KIT

Damn things'll kill me yet. You know it's a habit?
Worse than a junkie I swear.

Warren completes bandaging Kit's hand and picks up a stethoscope.

WARREN

Take off your shirt.

Kit takes off his shirt. Dr. Warren listens to his lungs, chest and back, as:

KIT

Never could cotton to junkies. Always so dirty, you know what I mean? Living in the gutter and doing Devil-what-all for a fix. Hell, even your drunk has a little self respect. Take you, by way of example, you're a gone drunk, sure, but you don't look like some raggedy-ass scarecrow walked all the way from Mobile and never knew a cake of soap--

Warren, who has been listening intently to Kit's back through the stethoscope, hears something he doesn't like--

WARREN

Shut your damn mouth and take a deep breath ... (Kit does) ... And another...

Kit does, coughs a bit.

Warren's suspicions are confirmed.

KIT

We done here, Doc?

WARREN

Yeah. You need an X-ray of your chest.

Before Kit can respond--

The door leading to the rest of the house opens and ROSA enters.

She is a white woman in her late 30's. Solid, intense and given to nerves. She is buttoning on a white nurse's smock.

ROSA

Doctor, do you need my h--?

She stops dead when she sees Kit.

Like she is seeing a ghost.

KIT

Rosa...?

WARREN

(gruff)

I'm fine here, nurse. Go on inside--

KIT

Rosa, what the hell--?

ROSA

Kit.

A beat.

KIT

You been here? ... All this time? I can't credit that.

WARREN

Nurse, I do not require you tonight. Please go inside.

A beat.

Rosa looks at Kit deeply.

A long and hard look. Almost haunted.

ROSA

If you tell him ... he will kill me ... he will kill us all...

With that she goes ... slowly fading back into the darkness like a wraith ... the mysterious darkness swallowing her up.

A long beat.

Kit finally glances to Dr. Warren.

KIT

Bad is bad, huh?

Kit smiles. A nasty sort of smile.

INT. KIT'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Sweltering heat.

Distant music still echoes from the street below. A lonely guitar.

Kit enters quietly, the glow of his cigarette a beacon in the black.

A voice purrs through the darkness:

ANGELIQUE'S VOICE

Kitten ... They tell me you got bloody...

Kit moves through the apartment to the bedroom...

KIT

They tell you right.

ANGELIQUE'S VOICE

Come show me...

Kit moves to the bed.

Angelique, the sultry singer from the club, waits in the bed. Her body is sensually illuminated by the glow of the neon outside the windows.

He stands over her.

KIT

Just my hand...

ANGELIQUE

Show me, Kitten...

Kit removes his jacket, awkwardly pulls his shirt off over his bandaged hand...

She takes his bandaged hand ... gently kisses around the bandage ... her full lips softly caressing his hand ... his fingers ... his fingertips...

ANGELIQUE

We gotta watch out for infection now, everything rots in this heat.

KIT

How true.

ANGELIQUE
Does it hurt, baby?

KIT
Yeah.

ANGELIQUE
You killed a man tonight.

KIT
Yeah.

ANGELIQUE
With this hand.
He takes her face with his right hand...

KIT
No. This one.
He leans down and kisses her deeply...
Then folds himself over her...
Then they are making love.

EXT. THE STREET DAY

Kit's Street looks a little different in the cold light of day.

While still crowded -- jammed with people, actually -- the pace is easier and the mood less aggressive. Jazzy music still lures from scores of bars and clubs, but the Street seem less sexy now, less threatening.

Kit, feeling particularly jaunty today, is on his "rounds" with Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau.

KIT
... Stokes is just gonna have to accept things are things, huh? Things are how they are. Things have become how they are. Whole world don't stop spinning 'cause he's gone down the penitentiary, yeah?

ZOOK
Stokes tain't gonna like it.

KIT
Hell with him ... (in Creole Street French) ... The old alligator don't have so much bite.

ZOOK
(Creole Street French)
But watch out for his tail.

Kit laughs as they move to the Flower Stall. Kit snaps off a bloom, tucks it into his lapel, the owner is properly obsequious:

FLOWER STALL OWNER
Good to see you, Mr. Kit, good morning...

Kit ignores him. They continue on, nearing Club No. 1. Kit is surprised to see Dr. Warren waiting outside the club. Warren wears a soiled white linen suit that has seen better days.

Warren is obviously pissed off. His anger is currently directed at Gus the Doorman, who has refused to let him enter.

Warren sees Kit approaching and immediately launches in:

WARREN
This sonofabitch make me wait out here on the street
like some nickel whore don't even got crib money--

KIT
(amused)
Don't get the apoplexy, Doc. He's just doin' his job.
No coloreds in the club, you know.

They enter, Warren shooting Gus an angry glance as he passes...

INT. CLUB NO. 1 DAY

The Club is less frenzied during the day, but still does brisk business.

KIT
What can I do for you?

WARREN
You neglected to pay me for my services last night. I
am not in the charity business.

KIT
Zook, take the boys on the rounds while I attend to the
surgeon here.

Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau head out again as Kit leads Dr.
Warren to one of the bars:

WARREN

I don't know what that "no coloreds" crap is all about -- you got colored girls here and colored musicians up there, whole place is nothing but your own little Harlem Renaissance.

KIT

They're employees ... No colored patrons.

They reach the bar. Kit moves behind the bar and rings open a cash register.

KIT

How much I owe you?

WARREN

Four dollars.

KIT

That's steep.

WARREN

I charge more to treat animals.

Kit is amused.

As he gives him the money, he notices Warren's eyes scanning the liquor bottles. Kit pulls a whiskey bottle down and pours two glasses. Warren instantly drains his glass as:

KIT

You really don't like me, do you?

WARREN

That is really right.

Kit pours Warren another glass. Warren drains it quickly as Kit lights a cigarette.

KIT

So why are you here?

WARREN

Last night ... You saw Rosa. She been straight and off the needle and off the game for these seven years ... Oughta stay that way.

KIT

No business of mine.

WARREN

And when Stokes come back? ... It any business of his?

Dr. Warren is watching Kit intently.

Kit pours Warren another drink. This time, Warren does not gulp it down. He waits for Kit to answer him.

KIT

What is she to you?

WARREN

Do I screw her you mean? Yeah, I do.

KIT

You do not.

WARREN

Then I don't. Answer me.

KIT

You two can paint yourselves blue and dance the hully-gully for all I care. Ain't no business of mine. And it ain't no business of Stokes ... Let's just say I never saw her.

A beat.

Then Warren nods. Just the tiniest inclination of his head: thank you.

Warren drains his drink.

WARREN

There is one other thing.

KIT

Isn't there always with you...?

WARREN

You gotta get that cough looked after ... (Kit tries not to react) ... You hear me, son?

KIT

I hear you.

WARREN

You know what we're talking about here, yeah? ... (again, Kit does not respond) ... We're talking about the T.B.

KIT

(a quick laugh)

Jesus, a little summer cold and you got me with the T.B.--!

Warren rivets him with a steely glare:

WARREN

That ain't no summer cold -- which you know goddamn too well -- only you're too scared to do anything about it. Well, lemme tell you, you let that go and you're nothing but a goddamn dead man.

KIT

(the killer smile)

I been a dead man from the day I was born.

WARREN

You think it's funny, do you? Death nothing but a big old parade, huh?

KIT

(snaps)

Nothing I run from.

WARREN

If it were just you, I wouldn't give one good goddamn, we'd all be a lot better off -- but it's not just you - - you could be spreading this filthy disease with every breath--

Kit is getting angry now--

KIT

Leave it, Doc, I'm no longer amused--

WARREN

I don't give a tinker's damn, boy, you get a goddamn X-ray or I'll report you to the Board of Health--

KIT

Hold it one minute--!

WARREN

They'll drag your ass into the isolation ward before you can spit--

Without warning--

Like a rampaging tiger--

Kit grabs the bottle of whiskey and SMASHES it on the bar -- it SHATTERS loudly -- heads spin, everyone looks--

Then he grabs Dr. Warren by the lapel and VIOLENTLY HAULS him along the length of the bar -- glasses smash, bottle tumble, patrons leap out of the way--

Kit drags Warren through the club and then FLINGS him toward the doors--

Gus the Doorman is waiting, he catches Warren--

Kit only needs to gesture with his head: get him out of here.

Gus drags Warren out of the club.

Kit stands for a moment, getting his breath. He smoothes down his hair and suit. Then he quickly lights a cigarette.

He almost immediately begins hacking. Awful, rasping coughs.

Kit flings the cigarette away in absolute fury.

And then he angrily stalks off, moving deeper into the club.

The club swirls around him ... day becoming night ... the patrons exponentially increasing until...

INT. CLUB NO. 1 NIGHT

...The joint is jumping.

Kit is sitting at his usual table, but he is unusually quiet. He is hunched over a bottle, well on his way to being drunk.

Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau are with him. They exchange a concerned glance: what's up with the Boss?

Angelique, meanwhile, is singing a number with the band.

Billy Bones -- the young black kid on the clarinet -- soars through a particularly exhilarating riff in the song. Scattered applause. Billy nods toward Kit. Kit raises a glass, acknowledging the fine riff.

Kit has finished the bottle he is working on.

KIT

Yellow Henry -- (indicates bottle) -- another.

ZOOK

Come on now, Kit...

KIT

Zookie-zook, do not moralize at me--

ZOOK

Nothing going tonight, why don't we head on home--?

Kit abruptly rises, his chair falls -- he is a little unsteady--

KIT

That's a fine idea -- why don't you all go home, I'm sick of the sight of you anyway -- you bore me, the three of you -- day after day the same tedious chitter-chatter...

He stalks off.

Yellow Henry is concerned, he starts to rise as if to follow, but Zook takes his arm and shakes his head. Obviously Kit wants to be alone.

Kit makes his way to one of the bars and sits awkwardly. Thump. Gestures for the bartender to keep 'em coming.

Kit tries to light a cigarette but his tipsy hands are unsteady, he can't get his Zippo to work. Flick. Damn. Flick. Damn--

Then a woman's hand moves in ... takes the lighter ... lights his cigarette...

MAMIE'S VOICE

I got you...

He turns.

It is Mamie, the beautiful taxi dancer we met before.

KIT

Thanks...

She hands the lighter back, sits on the stool next to Kit and gestures to the bartender for a drink.

MAMIE

Tough night?

KIT

You have no idea.

MAMIE

Try my job.

He smiles. Drains his glass. The bartender quickly refills it.

KIT

You ever think much about the future, Mamie?

She glances at him. This quiet, philosophical tone is highly unusual for him.

MAMIE

The future?

KIT

Yeah.

MAMIE

You mean spacemen and rocketships, like that?

KIT

No, I mean your future ... What you're gonna do later on, when you're old and grey.

MAMIE

Not much.

KIT

Why not?

MAMIE

We're not in the future business, honey.

Kit nods. He understands completely.

KIT

People like us ... We shouldn't think about it. Your grey flannel suit man, he can think about the future. Your mommy with the shiny new refrigerator machine, she can think about the future ... But not us.

He drains his drink. It is quickly refilled.

Kit coughs lightly. Quickly stubs out his cigarette:

KIT

Killers, these things, absolute corpse-makers...

He instantly lights another cigarette.

KIT

You ever wish you were a mommy with a refrigerator machine?

MAMIE

Not in the cards.

KIT

Commendable to be so realistic ... We should always look at things dead on real...

He laughs. A bit more drunk than he had thought.

She watches closely. Why is he acting so strangely tonight?

KIT

Okay ... okay ... but what about this ... What if I were a magic genie and I could wave my arms and all of a sudden turn you into a mommy with a refrigerator machine and a nice husband, the good solid upstanding type, you know ... Would you want that?

She opens a compact and fixes her makeup, as:

MAMIE

Aren't you imaginative tonight?

KIT

Answer me.

MAMIE

No, I wouldn't want that.

KIT

You're lying.

MAMIE

No ... (she looks at him over her compact) ... What makes you think I want a good man?

Her look is provocative. He smiles.

MAMIE

Better get back to work. Still got some toes need crushing ... (he smiles) ... Later, baby.

She snaps her compact shut and goes.

He watches her move into the throngs of people ... toward the dance floor ... attaching herself to a middle aged businessman... leading him to dance...

Surprisingly, Kit finds this all a little sad.

He finally turns away. Gestures to the bartender. Keep 'em coming.

EXT.

DR. WARREN'S HOUSE

NIGHT

The slum. The river. The tilting shotgun house. The music from the various clubs in the distance echoing through the night...

INT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN NIGHT

The kitchen is at the very back of the house.

Dr. Warren sits at a ratty, formica table, reading a catalog of medical equipment he will never be able to afford. He wears glasses and nurses a drink as he reads.

Rosa is washing up the dinner dishes while she listens to a radio drama.

The omnipresent jazzy music from the clubs sounds through the open window directly over the sink.

ROSA

You mind, I turn this up?

WARREN

Go.

She turns up her radio drama a bit. Continues washing the dishes. Wipes some sweat from her brow.

ROSA

Wish I could shut the window.

A beat.

ROSA

That evil music. Always that evil music.

A beat.

WARREN

Gotta get us a fan for in here.

He continues reading his catalog.

She has finished the final dishes and now just leans against the sink, listening to the radio, her arms folded like an Edward Hopper figure.

Both are content.

It is an oddly domestic moment.

Then--

A loud sound from the front of the house -- a banging on the door -- an inarticulate howl -- Kit's voice--

Warren rises, concerned--

WARREN

Stay here.

He goes.

EXT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- PORCH NIGHT

Kit is leaning unsteadily on a porch rail, a cigarette dangling from his lips. He is raging drunk, wildly swooning.

He kicks the door:

KIT

Lemme see you right now -- do not keep me waiting -- I am not to be kept waiting--!

Warren opens the door--

WARREN

Get the hell away from my house--!

KIT

You can't send me off, Doc. You took some kinda oath, remember we talked about that?

WARREN

You go on -- 'fore I call an officer--

KIT

(laughs)

"Call an officer," he says -- Listen, Sonny Jim, I own all the officers in this town. I keep them here in my pocket and I feed them crumbs that fall from my fingers--

He laughs again--

Then stumbles unsteadily, falling--

CRASHING to the floor of the porch--

Warren reaches to help him--

Kit lashes out savagely from the floor--

KIT

KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF ME! How many little babies you killed with those hands, huh? You oughta be ashamed of yourself -- HAVE THE NERVE TO LECTURE ME!

Some lights go on in houses nearby, neighbors disturbed by the ruckus--

WARREN

Be quiet now -- you better come inside--

KIT

Inside there? Inside the boneyard? ... No no no no ...
Nobody comes back from the boneyard ... They're all
dead in there. Chopped up. Autopsy boys. Or in the
river ... Sometimes we just throw them in the river for
the gators to eat ... Isn't that so, Doc...?

Kit lolls back, almost passing out now.

He fumbles to light another cigarette as he winds down, his
energy flagging:

KIT

Once the gators get 'em, they never come back ...

He gives up on lighting the cigarette, too complicated.

KIT

We don't ever want 'em to come back ... All our sins,
we toss them in the river for the gators to eat...

Then he sees a concerned Rosa standing in the doorway beyond
Warren. The sight of her seems to calm him, to tame the beast.

KIT

Hey, Rosa...

ROSA

Hey, Kit.

WARREN

(firm, to Rosa)

Get inside.

KIT

No, let her stay...

He raises a hand. She goes to him, takes his hand, kneels next to
him.

KIT

Rosa ... Rosabella ... You remember the days? I was on
my way up and Stokes took note ... You remember the
days?

ROSA

I remember.

KIT

We was young, Rosa ... Feel so goddamn old tonight ...
All done ...

He passes out.

Dr. Warren and Rosa watch him in silence for a moment. In sleep he looks strangely angelic, the manic aggressiveness drained away.

Then Warren notices something just protruding from the inside of Kit's jacket. A large envelope, folded over.

Warren pulls it out. Looks at it. He is surprised.

He removes a chest X-ray from the envelope and holds it up to the bare bulb that illuminates the porch. He swipes moths away from the bulb and examines the X-ray.

We watch Warren's face closely as he studies the X-ray.

His face tells the whole story.

His diagnosis is confirmed.

Tuberculosis.

Sickness, decay and death.

A silent beat as Warren looks down at Kit. And decides.

WARREN

All right, best get him inside...

ROSA

Inside our home? ... You know what he is?

WARREN

He's my patient.

For Warren the words are sacred. No more needs to be said.

She helps him pull Kit inside as...

We slowly pull back...

Away from the tilting house...

EXT. STREETS NIGHT

We float away from the slum...

In real time ...

Following the music from the clubs... as if the jazz is drawing us ... floating through the night ... toward the glowing neon sign of Club No. 1...

We float over rooftops and through twisting alleys ... closer and closer to the crowded streets...

EXT. THE STREET NIGHT

Then we are floating over The Street itself ... packed with tourists and whores and soldiers...

It is a bustle of movement and life. Everyone seems to be moving from place to place...

Except for one man.

He stands, frozen, in the middle of the sidewalk. The crowd moving around him.

He just stands there. Taking it all in.

He is STOKES.

Stokes is a physically large man, yes, but his looming, threatening bulk are only part of his dark power; his grim expression and dense Cajun accent make him even more mysterious and more formidable.

He is a predator.

Stokes is standing across the street from Club No. 1, watching the people moving in and out, studying the patrons, getting a sense of the club, the new lay of the land.

Then he sees Billy Bones and another black musician entering the club after a break.

Stokes does not like this.

He finally decides to move. He walks across the street, toward the club. It is like watching a Grizzly Bear move: the head is down; the shoulders roll; the muscular arms are always slightly bent and flexed -- the better to strike without warning.

Gus the Doorman sees Stokes approaching. He recognizes him instantly, is surprised and excited:

GUS

Mr. Stokes...!

STOKES

Gus.

GUS

Welcome back, sir! You got no idea how--

STOKES

(interrupts, terse)

You lettin' coons in now?

A tiny beat.

But for this tiny beat Gus is making one of the most important decisions of his life: who will he support in the inevitable power struggle to come?

Kit or Stokes?

Gus comes to his decision quickly:

GUS

It was Kit, sir, Kit done it. Started hiring the niggers. Seems like soon as you went in.

Stokes considers this.

Then disappears into the club.

INT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- SITTING ROOM MORNING

Kit awakes in the tiny sitting room of Dr. Warren's house. He is on the sofa, his tie loosened and his jacket off.

He coughs, suffering from the excess of the previous night. He reaches for his jacket, pulls out his cigarette case, lights up. Ah, that's better.

Kit smokes as his gaze moves around the room ... messy stacks of books ... framed prints from the Saturday Evening Post on the wall ... cheap little porcelain figurines on the mantle ... all very snug and domestic, oddly endearing ...

He slowly pulls himself up and follows the sounds and smells of cooking food to the kitchen...

INT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN MORNING

Dr. Warren is at the ratty kitchen table, reading his newspaper. Rosa is at the stove, cooking.

Warren glances over his paper to Kit.

WARREN

Good morning, Princess.

Kit smiles, sits. Rosa brings him a cup of coffee.

KIT

Thanks, Rosa ... I feel like General Sherman's troops is marchin' to the sea right through my head...

Rosa plops a plate down for Kit. Fried eggs, bacon, toast, tomatoes, grits. In his weakened state, the sight is sickening.

KIT

Maybe I'll just stick to the Joe...

WARREN

Eat.

Kit lights another cigarette as he forces himself to eat. He rattles away as he smokes, drinks and eats simultaneously:

KIT

Hope I wasn't too much of a pill last night -- don't know what got into me. Normally I'm not so much of a drinking fellow, no booze hound with the old greased elbow, right? Last night though--

Warren calmly reaches across the table and pulls the cigarette from Kit's mouth--

Kit stops cold, in mid-oration--

Warren drops the cigarette into Kit's coffee cup.

WARREN

First off, you gotta quit smoking.

Kit looks at him.

WARREN

Second off, you gotta quit drinking ... And running around and screwing around. And pretty much everything else that makes up your sorry excuse for a life.

Kit looks at him.

WARREN

Then you gotta get more rest. I mean at least one nap a day. And a lean-back vacation kind of situation would do you some good. In the sun someplace--

KIT

Hey, Doc, whatever you think--

WARREN

It is time to trim your lamp, my son ... Take the pledge and trim your lamp.

KIT

(laughs)

Now listen, Professor, before you go all diagnostic on me, let's just--

WARREN

(interrupts, firm)

You have tuberculosis.

There, it's out. The words have been spoken.

Even Kit has no glib response to that.

WARREN

That's what your X-ray told you. That's why you got drunk and that's why you came here ... You have tuberculosis and none of your high-flying, dandy-stepping, crack-gangster motherfucker colleagues and comrades can do you one bit of good ... You're mine now, son.

KIT

Doc...

ROSA

Listen to him, Kit.

A beat.

Kit finally leans back, looks at Dr. Warren. Warren speaks quietly, but pulls no punches.

WARREN

Your lungs are infected, you understand? They just cannot take the strain of your life. They need to heal. You need to let them heal. So you listen up -- If you smoke, you die ... If you drink, you die ... If you stay up late and going on burning the candle at both ends like tomorrow's never gonna come, you die ... Point is: tomorrow's here and she's a bitch.

A beat.

WARREN

You must learn to live a quiet life.

KIT

A "quiet life" ... Do you happen to recall what I do for a living, Doc? Jesus Christ, you want me to start taking naps?!

Kit laughs, shakes his head.

Without a word, Dr. Warren rises and leaves the room.

A beat.

Rosa looks at Kit, as if about to speak. But she doesn't.

Dr. Warren returns with his own hat, and Kit's.

He gruffly hands Kit his hat:

WARREN

Come on.

INT. ICE HOUSE -- TB WARD DAY

The twisted man is young. About Kit's age, in fact.

Pale like ivory and thin as a skeleton, his chest is grotesquely concave, his spine hunched in on itself. A nasty metal and leather brace is strapped tightly to his torso like a torture device.

Every breath is a tiny, gasping wheeze.

Kit and Dr. Warren stand in the hallway outside a hospital isolation ward, watching the Thin Young Man through the window.

They are in the New Orleans Isolation Hospital -- well-known to the local (and feared) as "The Ice House."

It is a state-run medical horror. Industrial yellow brick. Stained formica. Buzzing and sputtering lights. Sweltering heat. Flies.

Nurses, bored behind their white air masks, pay little attention.

Kit and Dr. Warren watch as the Thin Young Man slowly moves across the ward ... as he stretches awkwardly to pick up a magazine ... as he slowly halts back across the ward...

WARREN

He's had about ten ribs removed ... They remove the ribs so that the diseased part of the lung will collapse and the infection won't spread. That's the theory anyway ... Can't seem to draw breath, can he?

Kit watches, his insides churning unpleasantly.

WARREN

Every time he inhales it's like a prize fight ... You sit down and stand up, you're a champion ... You actually walk across the room, little baby steps even, you're Joe Louis.

Kit watches the Thin Young Man slowly halting across the ward...

WARREN

The TB sanitoriums ... the Charity Hospitals ... Even private wards ... All pretty much the same. When the disease gets this far, when it has been allowed to get this far, the body just wastes away.

Kit watches the Thin Young Man slowly, slowly lowering himself into a chair...

The ward is filled with ailing TB patients. Not all are bent from having ribs removed, but all are weak and emaciated. Pale as ghosts and fragile like crystal.

In Kit's eyes, it is Hell.

Warren notes the haunted look in Kit's eyes.

WARREN

These ones ... lucky.

INT. ICE HOUSE -- E.A.P. WARD DAY

The terrible, slow hiss and gurgle of mechanical breathing.

Dr. Warren is walking with Kit past a series of Equalizing Alternating Pressure chambers. These experimental machines look very similar to Iron Lungs: patients lie completely enclosed in complicated steel tanks, like coffins.

The silent, desperate eyes of the patients watch Kit and Warren pass upside down through the mirrors on their machines.

WARREN

When it really gets bad, when all hope is gone, they might put you in one of these ... They breathe for you, see that? ... But before too long all your muscles atrophy. You can still think and feel and see and hear, just can't move ... So you're stuck here, not really alive, not really dead ... Somewhere between earth and heaven...

These words ... the hissing machines ... the tragic faces ... the silent, pleading eyes ... are finally too much for Kit.

He turns and leaves the ward quickly.

EXT. ICE HOUSE -- STEPS DAY

Outside, the sun is shining.

Kit is sitting on the grand front steps of the Isolation Hospital, breathing deeply, trying to recover his equilibrium.

Pedestrians move up and down the stairs, paying him no mind.

Dr. Warren moves down the steps to Kit. Remains standing over him.

WARREN

So that's our illustrious Isolation Hospital. The Ice House ... Kinda homey, yeah?

KIT

You go straight to hell...

WARREN

(smiles)

That's my boy.

A beat.

WARREN

So whattaya gonna do?

Warren plops on his hat and goes.

Kit sits.

He watches a streetcar rumble past in the distance. Watches the pedestrians going to and fro, men and women, young and old, living their lives, oblivious.

Kit instinctively reaches into his jacket, pulls out his cigarette case, snaps it open, tosses a cigarette into his mouth, flicks his lighter, is about to light the cigarette--

But he stops.

He looks at the flame from his lighter, only an inch away from the end of the unlit cigarette. Suddenly it seems like the inch between life and death, between earth and heaven.

He snaps the lighter closed.

He tosses the cigarette away.

He lets out a long breath.

And then he just sits. Under the blazing New Orleans sun.

Alone.

Sobered.

Scared.

EXT. THE STREET NIGHT

Night has fallen and the Street is alive.

Kit moves toward the Club. He seems unaware of the crowds tonight, in his own world.

He absently passes the Flower Stall, takes a bloom...

FLOWER STALL OWNER
Thanks for stopping, Kit...

Kit continues on to the Club.

Gus the Doorman pulls open the doors without a word.

Kit enters, just mildly aware that there was no snappy greeting from Gus. Unusual.

INT. THE CLUB NIGHT

Kit moves through the Club.

It seems too crowded tonight. The dense clouds of cigarette smoke are noxious; the ching-chang of the slot machines is loud and annoying; the sweating patrons are like demons.

He moves toward his usual table ... he sees Angelique sitting with Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau...

They are all talking to someone, a man, his back to Kit...

Kit stops.

A thunderbolt in his head.

It is Stokes.

Kit can see Angelique looking at him, leaning in and whispering to Stokes, Stokes turning...

They lock eyes for a millisecond.

Kit and Stokes.

Each assessing the other. Judging. Considering the odds, the angles, the vulnerability, the point of attack. Preparing for combat.

Kit smoothly moves to the table. They shake.

KIT

Stokes, you're a sight for sore eyes--

STOKES

Flash Kit Tibbedeaux.

Zook instantly stands to give Kit his seat. Kit sits.

KIT

(re: nickname)

Don't hear that one too much anymore.

STOKES

Still suits you right to the ground. You are nothing if not Flash.

Stokes slides a bottle of whiskey across the table to Kit. Kit indicates with his hand he doesn't want any. As:

KIT

How long you been out?

STOKES

This morning. Come right here.

KIT

How does the old place strike you?

STOKES

Mm. Changes.

KIT

Seven years.

Angelique, Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau watch them both very, very closely.

While the words might seem innocuous, this is all deadly: two lions circling each other before the inevitable battle.

STOKES

Street outside, just the same.

KIT

Only more soldiers. We got the war on now. You hear about that in prison?

STOKES

On the radio, sure ... (he looks around the club, takes a drink) ... So much new in here. Feel like a different world ... Don't know I like this world.

KIT

World is what it is. When could we ever change that? Planet spins, dinosaurs live and die, cavemen come and go. Is what it is.

Stokes offers Kit a cigarette from his pack. Kit instinctively takes it. Shit. Now he's stuck with the cigarette.

Stokes lights his own cigarette and then moves his lighter toward Kit.

Kit, seeing no option, allows Stokes to light his cigarette. Kit smokes. Ah, feels good.

STOKES

You think the dinosaurs minded?

KIT

Minded what now?

STOKES

When the cavemen came along, took over.

KIT

Shit no, dinosaur nothing but an ugly old swamp gator. Might snap his teeth and whip his tail, but he knows he's never getting outta that swamp. He was born there, and there he'll die.

A beat as Stokes, the deep swamp Cajun, looks at him. Takes this in.

Zook and the others are a bit alarmed, Kit is being very provocative.

Stokes smiles a completely humorless smile and pours Kit a glass of whiskey. He slides it across the table. Again Kit waves it away with his hand.

STOKES

You take the pledge?

KIT

No...

STOKES

Maybe your gut's bothering you? Butterflies and such?
You nervous?

Kit notices Angelique and the others watching closely. He smiles and takes the glass. Drains it.

Stokes immediately refills it.

STOKES

You know where Rosa is?

KIT

Who?

STOKES

Rosa. You remember my Rosabella..

KIT

Shit, that was a long time ago, my friend.

STOKES

You heard anything about her?

KIT

Nothing.

STOKES

Been asking. Girl vanished into thin air.

KIT

Must have done.

STOKES

You should of kept track of her for me.

KIT

Should I have?

STOKES

That was a responsibility, Flash Kit. I'm inside and my girl's out here, all alone. Should have kept an eye on her. I'm disappointed in you.

KIT

Sorry to disappoint.

STOKES

I'll find her. Whore can't end up but two places: cat house or death house.

He refills Kit's glass. Kit keeps up with Stokes drink for drink.

Kit lights another cigarette.

A beat as they gaze over the club.

Kit catches Zook's eye. Zook looks extremely nervous. Kit gives him a look: calm down.

Kit looks over his club. He sees Mamie dancing with a fat conventioneer.

She is looking right back at Kit over the conventioneer's shoulder. There is something penetrating about the look.

Kit doesn't like Mamie's look. He turns away and watches the band. Enjoys watching Billy Bones play his clarinet so expertly.

Then he turns back--

To find--

Stokes is staring right at him.

STOKES

Never took you for a coon fucker.

KIT

Never knew I was.

STOKES

They all over the place like maggots. Figure you must be fuckin' 'em.

KIT

Even the guys in the band?

A tense beat.

Stokes leans forward on the table, deadly serious. The stakes are rising.

Angelique and the others watch, almost breathless.

STOKES

Why are there coons in here?

KIT

Because I want 'em in here.

STOKES

You wanna explain that?

KIT

Times change since you went in, Stokes.

STOKES

What? We in the Civil Rights business now?

KIT

Coloreds are good for the bottom line, simple as that.

STOKES

I'm not following.

KIT

White boys love them dark girls. It's wicked, something special. They pay extra, you follow? ... And as for the boys in the band, hell, I just like the way they play. You gotta problem with that?

A long beat. Stokes staring at Kit. Kit staring back.

Finally Stokes smiles his grim, humorless smile and refills Kit's glass. Kit drinks.

STOKES

Well, as ya say, things surely have changed.

KIT

Only for the better, my friend.

STOKES

Mm ... Never thought I'd see niggers in my club.

Kit is on this like a hawk:

KIT

"Your club" is it?

STOKES

Always was. Always will be.

KIT

Mmmm. Well. Time will surely tell.

A tense beat.

They both look over the club. Their club.

Time passes as the long, hellish night continues...

Dancers swirl past...

Kit and Stokes drink...

Zook and the boys look on, concerned...

Angelique watches the contest, amused and excited...

Kit and Stokes lean back, lean forward, chat, drink, smoke, gamble, test the water, gauge the enemy...

Later:

Kit is slumped a bit in his chair. Drunk and unsteady.

The table before him is littered with glasses and ashtrays filled with cigarette butts.

Stokes is completely in control of himself. Stokes is always completely in control of himself.

Zook and the boys can barely stand the tension. Angelique, sitting between Kit and Stokes, is enjoying the battle.

The club is hotter now. Unnatural and oppressive. There is no air. Cigarette smoke thunderheads loom, nothing circulates.

The band starts up a nice dance number, a swing song.

Both Stokes and Kit stand, turning to Angelique to dance--

She must choose.

A beat.

She stands and leans toward Kit, he smiles, victory--!

But she turns to Stokes.

He takes her hand and leads her to the dance floor.

Kit is shocked.

He has been publicly rejected, shamed. Angelique has made her choice.

ZOOK

Sit down, Kit, it don't matter--

Kit shakes him off and strides down toward the dance floor--

Zook watches him go, concerned. He glances to Yellow Henry and Laveau. This is bad.

Kit zooms to the dance floor. He sees Mamie dancing with a sailor. He pulls her away from the sailor--

SAILOR

(protesting)

Hey--!

Kit shoves him away brutally. The sailor stumbles off grumbling.

Kit spins Mamie into a dance. He is rough, almost violent.

The swing song picks up momentum. It is too hot, too feverish. Kit dances wildly, out of control. Mamie tries to calm him, he pays her no mind.

Stokes and Angelique dance nearby. He keeps an eye on Kit all the while. Whispers to Angelique. She laughs. Kit hates that.

Zook watches from the table. He is sorry to see Kit acting so recklessly. It is a form of weakness.

Kit continues to dance wildly with Mamie, flinging her about roughly, sweat pouring through his clothes, flicking from his hair--

Then--

He slips--

He falls awkwardly to the dance floor--

Other dancers move away--

Kit is on the floor, embarrassed -- tries to pull himself up, but he's too drunk--

Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau watch, pained to see Kit in such a state.

Mamie finally helps him up. Stokes, nearby, calls:

STOKES

You need a hand there, Flash?

Kit sees Angelique is amused.

Mamie helps Kit move off the dance floor.

MAMIE

Pay them no mind, Kit--

He jerks his arm away from Mamie and stalks off alone--

He moves to a secluded area of the club, near the bandstand -- the pounding swing music is like a relentless jackhammer in his head -- the tension -- the heat -- the crowd -- the cigarettes -- the drinking -- it's all too much--

He coughs--

Can't stop coughing--

Shoves a handkerchief over his mouth, still can't stop coughing--

Finally gets his breath. Stops coughing. Can breathe a little.

He removes the handkerchief from his mouth.

Is shocked to see a nasty red stain.

Blood.

He quickly clenches the handkerchief in his fist, hiding it. He looks around. Has anyone seen?

No. His secret is safe.

But then he sees that one person has seen...

Mamie. She stands a bit away, watching, concerned.

He fishes for his cigarette case and lights up. Trying to appear normal.

He stands, a little hunched, smoking nervously as the club swirls hellishly around him.

And we fade to...

INT. KIT'S APARTMENT DAY

Music snakes in from outside.

Kit is rhythmically stropping his razor, honing it to that fine edge.

It is brutally hot and Kit really seems to be suffering from the heat today. He's a bit disheveled, not showing his usual crispness.

And he looks tired. A little drained. Even ill.

He finally tucks his razor away, takes a deep breath, and leaves his apartment...

INT. KIT'S BUILDING -- LANDING/STAIRS DAY

Kit moves from the second floor landing and begins to descend the stairs.

We saw him do this at the opening of the story and he rattled speedily down these stairs like a tap dancer. Now he lumbers.

He even has to stop midway to catch his breath. He leans against the wall, feeling rotten. And he's worried. This feeling is more than a hangover. This feeling is deep within him. It reeks of unwholesome disease and illness.

Finally he straightens his jacket and tosses back his hair: preparing himself to play his part.

Then he quickly goes outside...

EXT. KIT'S BUILDING -- STREET DAY

As before, Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau are waiting.

KIT

You believe the Arcadian son-a-bitch acting like all that?!

The others fall into step with Kit as he strides through the streets. He is pretending to be the jaunty Kit of old. But the quickness and light are strained today.

ZOOK

Penitentiary did nothing for him, he just the same --
(Creole Street French) -- The turtle dreams of flying,
but he got no wings.

KIT

(Creole Street French)
More bug than turtle. More snake than bug.

YELLOW HENRY

He's cold, that Stokes, freezes all the city with a breath.

LAVEAU

Mad as a cut snake.

ZOOK

So what are we gonna do, Kit?

KIT

We do our job, Zookie-Zook, just like always. Mister Paul knows he can trust us. Who can trust Stokes anymore? Man goes into a cage for seven years he comes out demented, snap at everything like a wild animal, follow?

ZOOK

Mister Paul gonna back you up? You sure?

KIT

Ain't gonna come to that. Mister Paul never gonna give it no notice -- I can deal with Stokes. Whattaya do with a cut snake, after all? You stomp its head under your shoe and cut it off ... So it shall be.

They turn a corner to...

EXT. THE STREET DAY

The usual cacophony of music... The usual mob of tourists and soldiers and whores...

ZOOK

You notice how Stokes is all hot about finding his Rosabella? Why he care so much for one old squeeze?

KIT

(Creole Street French)

Who can understand the heart?

Kit and the others sweep past the familiar Flower Stall. Kit takes a flower, tucks it into his lapel--

FLOWER STALL OWNER

Thanks for stopping, Kit...

Kit ignores him and moves on.

KIT

Rosa long gone by now, Stokes gonna have to find him a new girl--

Kit stops speaking, because sees something peculiar...

Ahead of him a couple of the black taxi dancers are emerging from Club No. 1, they have their belongings, makeup cases and such, with them.

Kit goes to them:

KIT

Hey, what is this now--?

BLACK TAXI DANCER #1

You talk to that bastard inside--

BLACK TAXI DANCER #2

Told us, hit the road--

BLACK TAXI DANCER #1

All the colored girls, Mr. Kit, every one. Even slapped old Liza when she talked back. Said his club got no place for nigger girls--

Kit is no longer listening, his fury is too great--

He sweeps past Gus the Doorman and launches himself into the club--

INT.

THE CLUB

DAY

The club isn't quite so crowded during the day, but customers still circulate and dance. The taxi dancers still ply their trade. The gaming tables are still busy.

The band is just setting up for a set.

Billy Bones sees Kit approaching--

BILLY BONES

Kit, got this lowdown new riff you gotta hear--

KIT

Yeah, Billy Bones, in a minute--

Kit continues on.

He sees Stokes holding court at his table. Angelique is at his side. Three well-dressed TOUGH MEN sit and talk with Stokes. Kit instantly recognizes these men for who they are: thugs, muscle, the beginning of Stokes' new gang.

Zook and the others are just behind Kit--

ZOOK

(urgently)

This ain't the time, Kit -- Don't let him force your hand--

YELLOW HENRY

We ought talk with Mister Paul--

KIT

Fuck that fat man--

ZOOK

(re: Stokes' men)

He's got muscle already--

Kit continues on. Stokes glances up. Sees Kit coming. Sees the fury in his eyes--

Stokes prepares himself: this might be it, the final battle, first and last blood--

His hand casually but carefully reaches into his jacket and stays there. Angelique separates slightly from Stokes--

Kit sees all of this. The hand in the jacket. A knife? A gun? Zook's right, now is not the time--

Kit forces himself to slow down and to smile as he reaches the table. He nods to Stokes and sits, his words pouring out at dizzying speed, an attack of language--

KIT

Afternoon, you been a busy bee, my friend -- (nods to Stokes' thugs) -- Good day, Gents -- (back to Stokes) -
- Yes, a real busy bee. Just buzzing hither and yon, hither and yon -- (he waves for a cocktail waitress) -- Into the hive and out of the hive, from flower to flower, pollinating as you go, getting into all sorts of mischief--

Stokes eyes him coldly. He hates Kit's verbal acrobatics.

KIT

Likely stinging everything in your path, as bees are known to do -- But here's the amazing thing about bees -- (to the cocktail waitress) -- Bourbon, neat -- (back to Stokes) -- The truly astounding thing about bees, about honey bees, is that once they sting -- once they prick you -- (he lights a cigarette as he continues) -- they die. No kidding, they sting you and then they just up and die--

Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau are keeping an eye on Stokes' thugs. Moving into position. Ready for battle. Stokes' thugs are ready too.

It is all very tense.

KIT

Nothing to be done for it, they are stone-cold doomed, the bees I mean, poor little things -- Which is sorta like the moral of the story, I suppose. Gotta have a moral in a story or what's the fucking point, right? -- So moral of this story is: don't be too quick to be a busy buzzing bee. You follow?

Kit exhales a cloud of cigarette smoke. The exclamation point to his aria.

STOKES

I never could understand one goddamn word you say.

KIT

Perhaps I should make my meaning clearer? -- (the bourbon arrives) -- Thanks, honey -- (he drinks) -- Perhaps I might bring it down to a redneck, dumbass, peckerwood Cajun level so you can follow?

Stokes looks at him. He does not rise to the bait.

It is like a test of wills. Who will strike first?

Stokes smiles his humorless smile. Turns to his men:

STOKES

See what I mean about this one? All them words? ... (turns back to Kit) ... All mouth.

Kit lets it pass.

STOKES

Ain't that right, Kitten?

Kit lets it pass.

Meanwhile, the band is warming up, getting ready to play a set, the instruments going up and down the scale.

ANGELIQUE

I gotta sing...

She gives Stokes a kiss, her eyes never leaving Kit, as if to spite him. Yes, she has surely made her choice.

ANGELIQUE

(to Stokes)

See you soon, lover.

She rises and moves away from the table. As she passes Zook, he whispers to her:

ZOOK
Treacherous bitch.

She continues on.

Kit watches her go to the bandstand and start warming up with the band.

KIT
(to Stokes)
Whatta gal she is. Real fine performer. And she takes requests. But I suspect you've discovered that by now. Not that it's any--

STOKES
Enough!

KIT
Pardon?

STOKES
Say what's on your fucking mind.

KIT
Excuse me?

STOKES
Stop dancing and say it.

KIT
Hold it, hold it -- (calls to Billy) -- Hey, Billy Bones, play that new riff for me, make me weep, baby!

Billy Bones waves back and launches into a ferocious jazz riff on his clarinet.

Kit closes his eyes and listens. He leans back casually. Slipping his hand into his razor pocket. Zook sees this, is alert.

Stokes steams. Hates to be kept waiting.

Billy Bones continues playing as Kit speaks. Kit is still leaning back, his eyes still closed:

KIT
On my fucking mind is this: you come in here and start giving orders like you still run the street, when in point of fact you run jack-all nothing. On my fucking mind is this: that is one fantastic clarinet player and I sure hope I don't have to cut your throat before he finishes playing.

A tense beat...

The air is ready to crack open with tension. Stokes' thugs are poised. Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau are poised...

Kit remains leaning back. Eyes closed. Or seemingly closed. Hand in his pocket, on his razor...

Stokes still leans forward. Hand inside his coat...

Zook can barely breath...

Stokes' thugs are straining...

Kit remains leaning back...

Then...

Rather unexpectedly...

Stokes stands.

Kit watches.

Stokes turns and walks toward the band...

Kit watches...

Stokes arrives at the band...

Kit watches...

Without a word of warning, without a moment's hesitation...

Stokes grabs one of Billy Bones' hands -- pulls it brutally away from his clarinet -- the riff ends in midnote -- Stokes pulls a switchblade from his coat -- flash and slash -- incredibly quickly--

Stokes chops all of Billy's fingers off--

Blood sprays, Billy screams--

Kit is up in a heartbeat, his chair hurled back--

He moves--

And then everything seems to be moving at once--

Kit pulls his straight razor from his coat pocket--

As he strides toward Stokes--

As he snaps open the razor--

As it catches the light--

As Stokes turns to confront him, hunched, switchblade ready--

As Angelique leans in eagerly to watch--

As Billy pulls his mangled, bloody hand to his chest--

As Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau face off with Stokes' thugs--

As Kit stalks closer and closer--

As his arm arcs back for his lethal slash at Stokes--

But--

Then--

Kit stops. Suddenly.

He lurches to a halt. His whole body convulses in coughing. A painful spasm. It is agony. His lungs gasping for air. His spine jerking--

Then he doubles over--

As blood explodes from his mouth!

It is a violent internal hemorrhage. A gush of crimson blood splashes to the floor.

Stokes steps back, disgusted.

Angelique gasps.

Zook and the others look on, stunned.

A dreadful beat.

Kit remains standing, barely. Blood still trickling slightly from his mouth, pooling at his feet.

Kit's eyes dart up. A flash of his eyes: frightened and vulnerable. Weak.

Stokes stares back at him.

They lock eyes.

In that one glance, it is all over.

Stokes smiles his humorless smile. He knows he has won.

Kit just stands there, hunched, blood trickling, swaying.

It is Mamie who finally comes to Kit's aid. She sweeps in quickly and takes his arm before he collapses. He leans on her for support.

She leads him away from Stokes.

Kit looks at Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau as he approaches. It is a sad moment: Kit's face covered in blood; his eyes a combination of anger, embarrassment and fear.

Zook and the others are unsure what to do, how to respond.

Mamie is steel:

MAMIE

(to Zook)

Help him.

Zook takes Kit and, with the others, helps lead him out.

Stokes remains standing, victorious.

INT. KIT'S APARTMENT DAY

Mamie is in the kitchen, filling a basin of water.

In the other room, Kit is sitting up in bed, very weak, talking closely to Zook.

KIT

... I gotta see him...

ZOOK

Just telephone him, Kit--

KIT

I gotta see him, you understand? Can't attend to Stokes without Mister Paul's okay. Him and me, we gotta mess of talking to do ... You go see him and set it up.

ZOOK

All right, won't be back until tomorrow.

KIT

That's fine. But remember -- keep it quiet -- no one can know. Not Yellow Henry or Laveau or no one. Just go right now, slip out of town and be gone.

ZOOK

Okay.

A beat. Much unsaid between them.

KIT

And listen, don't tell Mister Paul about me being under the weather, follow?

ZOOK

(nods)

I'll see you tomorrow, catch some rest.

Zook pats him on the arm, rather awkwardly, and goes.

Kit lies back.

Mamie comes to him with the basin of water:

MAMIE

Lean your head back.

He does so. She uses a washcloth to clean the blood from his face:

KIT

Aren't you afraid of me?

Mamie doesn't answer.

KIT

You oughta be afraid of me.

MAMIE

I'm not.

KIT

It's the TB.

MAMIE

I know.

A beat.

MAMIE

I've known men to be afraid of.

KIT

You don't know me.

MAMIE

Sure I do.

He grabs her hands. Stops her cleaning his face.

KIT

No. You don't.

His eyes burn into her, intense, like a warning: this is your last chance, turn back now.

She will not be warned away. She finishes cleaning his face.

MAMIE

Get some rest before the doctor gets here.

She takes the basin back into the kitchen.

He lights a cigarette.

Without a word, she walks back, gives him a look, takes the cigarette from his mouth, returns to the kitchen, stubs it out.

He watches, almost amused by her nerve.

INT. WARREN'S HOUSE DAY

Yellow Henry and Laveau are negotiating with an angry Dr. Warren as he fills his medical bag:

YELLOW HENRY

... Look, I don't know, just know you gotta come right now--

WARREN

This is going to cost that hoodlum but plenty. House calls are expensive no matter how you cut it--

LAVEAU

We'll pay you, just get a move on, the man is sick--

Just then--

Rosa enters from the back of the house. She is preoccupied sorting through some medical records:

ROSA

Wendell, do you need me to--?

She stops dead when she sees Yellow Henry and Laveau.

YELLOW HENRY

Rosa...?

WARREN

(firm)

Go inside, nurse...

Rosa quickly turns and disappears into the house as Warren snaps his medical bag shut and tries to distract Yellow Henry and Laveau:

WARREN

(loud)

All right, you want me to come, well then let's get moving before he spits up a lung, for God's sake!

He flings open the door and stomps out, Laveau following immediately.

Yellow Henry lingers for a moment, his face still registering his surprised recognition: yes, that was Rosa.

WARREN

(calls from outside)

Come on!

Yellow Henry goes.

INT. KIT'S APARTMENT EVENING

The ever-present music from the streets outside invades. It is a lonely, sad guitar.

Mamie is in the kitchen, looking through the icebox and cupboards, trying to find some food. All are practically empty. Clearly Kit isn't much for cooking.

She starts making a pot of coffee as:

Warren enters, goes to the sink to wash his hands.

WARREN

I gave him a sedative, force him to sleep some. He's gonna have to rest or this is just gonna get worse, you understand me, honey?

MAMIE

I do.

WARREN

Ought to be in hospital. Or even a private sanitarium if he can afford it. He still has a chance, just got to take it.

MAMIE

Would it help if he left the city?

WARREN

Best thing for him ... Best thing for all of us.

She thinks about this as she continues making the coffee.

Warren begins folding down his sleeves and loading his supplies into his medical bag.

MAMIE

Will you stay for coffee?

WARREN

No, thanks ... You owe me six dollars.

MAMIE

My purse is right over there. Go ahead.

He gets the money from her purse, as:

MAMIE

Why do you care?

WARREN

Sorry?

MAMIE

Why do you care what happens to him?

WARREN

I don't. He's just a patient.

MAMIE

Just your job?

WARREN

Yeah ... (he sees a bottle of whiskey on the counter)
... You mind?

MAMIE

Go ahead.

He pours himself a big glass of whiskey and leans against the kitchen counter, drinks. Looks at her.

WARREN

Why do you care?

MAMIE

(smiles)

Thereby hangs a tale...

He smiles. He likes her.

A beat as she watches the coffee pot on the stove and he drinks.

WARREN

He'll only bring you heartache. But I suspect you know that.

MAMIE

That I know, doctor.

He pours himself another glass. Drinks.

A beat.

WARREN

See, I was in and out of the penitentiary when I was his age. No good to no one ... One time I got into a brawl and I got stuck with a knife. Would have died but for this one man. He was a doctor ... And we'd talk while I was recovering, day after day, just talk ... Meanest cuss I ever met. One bad Negro ... But he was my savior ... (he nods toward Kit) ... That man in there ... That man trying to die so hard ... He has no savior. That is why I care.

He drains his glass. Takes his bag. Puts on his hat. And goes.

She remains standing by the stove, quietly moved by Warren's story.

The lonely guitar music echoes through the night.

INT. KIT'S APARTMENT MORNING

Sunshine through the windows. The sounds of morning from the streets below.

Kit is asleep. Or seems so. His face is bathed in sweat. His pillow stained with it. His shallow breath wheezes a bit.

Across the room, Angelique is quietly sorting through the closet, getting her things: fur coats; handbags; shoes; etc.

She glances back to Kit: still asleep. Good.

She begins loading her things into a little pink suitcase, trying to keep quiet, trying not to wake him.

She moves into the bathroom and gets some of her makeup, brings it back to the suitcase and starts quietly putting it in.

She glances back to Kit--

He is staring right back at her--

She jumps, surprised.

KIT

Did I scare you?

ANGELIQUE

Go back to sleep, Kitten...

He sits up slightly in bed. She sees this takes some effort. She is surprised he is so weak.

KIT

I'm sick, Angelique. Maybe you could stay here and look after me? Be sorta like my Angel of Mercy.

ANGELIQUE

You know that's not going to happen ... And maybe you oughta think about going away for a while, getting out of town.

KIT

But this is my city, honey.

ANGELIQUE

Not no more, baby.

He looks up at her. Smiles darkly.

KIT

Just like that, I'm done.

ANGELIQUE

You beyond done.

KIT

You're really enjoying this.

ANGELIQUE

No, I just made the choice I had to make. To survive, you know. It's all about backing the right horse in the big race ... Aw hell, you're right, I am enjoying it. Bye bye, sweetie.

She snaps the suitcase shut and turns to go--

KIT

Hey, Angie, could you fetch me a cig before you go? In my jacket? Have a heart.

She takes his cigarette case from his jacket, gets a cigarette and brings it to him. She hands it to him--

Suddenly--

He grabs her wrist, fast and hard--

He is much stronger than he was pretending to be--

He pulls her close to him--

She struggles but he holds her still--

He grabs her by the back of the neck and pulls her face close to his--

Very close--

As if to kiss her--

But he breathes on her instead.

A slow exhale.

Contagion. Pestilence.

Tuberculosis.

Right into her face.

Then he releases her--

She jerks back, horrified and disgusted--

She stumbles back, wiping her mouth urgently, trying to spit out his breath--

She glares at him, furious--

ANGELIQUE

He's gonna gut you for that. GUT YOU!

She grabs her suitcase and bolts out.

She sweeps past Mamie, entering.

Mamie gives the departing Angelique a glance and then takes the bags of groceries she is carrying into the kitchen.

Kit sits up.

KIT

Mamie, come on in here...

MAMIE

(from the kitchen)

Go back to sleep...

KIT

Christ, I been lying here all night and all morning, like to go mad if I spend another minute here, it's goddamn awful, honey, and I'm dying for a cigarette, come on in here...!

She returns from the kitchen.

MAMIE

I'll make you something to eat, whattaya favor?

KIT

(sitting up)

I favor getting outta here. I favor a goddamn walk in some fresh air--

MAMIE

Doctor said you gotta rest--

KIT

That man's a quack and I have done with resting! Come on, let's go out, any place you want, I mean it.

He stands. Feels okay actually. Anything to get out of this room.

KIT

I'm gonna hop in the shower and then we're gone. You decide where you wanna go ... Like a good old fashion date.

He shoots her his killer smile and disappears into the bathroom.

She stands for a moment. A date. A good old fashioned date. She knows she is being manipulated, but doesn't much care.

She continues to unpack the groceries.

EXT. AUDUBON ZOO DAY

The people of New Orleans are enjoying the day at the famous Audubon Zoo.

Kids run around with balloons and pinwheels. Young romantic couples stroll arm in arm, nestling and necking. Mothers chase errant daughters. Fathers point out animals to eager sons.

The omnipresent jazz of Kit's streets has been replaced by a symphony of laughter and happy screams; by lion roars and elephant trumpets.

Even the weather seems better here. Milder, not so humid.

It is a place of ease and gentle relaxation.

And how out of place seem Kit and Mamie!

He is dressed in one of his flashy outfits. She has done herself up, but just doesn't fit in with all the bustling suburban mothers.

Further, he is still pale and weak. Walking slowly.

Kit notices Mamie watching a passing couple.

KIT

You want I should buy you a balloon or something?

MAMIE

(smiles)

No, thanks.

She takes his arm. This is half to support him and half an attempt at romance, to make this more of a "date." An awkward moment or two, but she keeps it up.

Gradually they are more comfortable walking arm-in-arm, though he is frankly unused to this sort of traditional romantic behavior.

She is thinking deeply about something. Finally comes out with it:

MAMIE

You ever think about getting out of the city?

KIT

To do what?

MAMIE

You know, just live, someplace else.

KIT

(smiles)

Honey, this is Nawlins, there ain't no place else.

A beat.

MAMIE

I think I might go to Phoenix ... My sister lives there. She's a cook at one of them dude ranches. Her husband works with the horses. They say the life is fine there, just fine.

KIT

That what they say?

MAMIE

Yeah, and my sister tells me they're always looking for folks to hire on at this place. Lots of jobs. And you make decent money. Legal money.

KIT

Legal money? What will they think of next?

She smiles. But keeps at it:

MAMIE

And it's healthy. Desert would be good for you. Good for your lungs ... Maybe you ought think about spending some time there.

KIT

With you?

A beat.

MAMIE

Maybe just until you're better.

A long beat as they walk.

He is feeling a little tired.

KIT

You mind, we sit down?

They sit on a bench.

Across from them there is a tiger cage. An old tiger lies in the corner of its cramped, fetid cage. The sad creature doesn't even have the strength to pace anymore. It just lies there. Panting for air. Waiting to die.

A long pause.

He does not look at her.

Kit watches the dying tiger.

KIT

I was born in the old Storyville neighborhood, you know. In a cathouse on Iberville, just off Basin. It was a wide open place then. Cops didn't even set foot in Storyville. Wouldn't dare ... That's where I grew up. No momma, no daddy, just me...

A beat. Kit watches the dying tiger.

KIT

Started running my first crib whores when I was twelve. Zookie-Zook and me ... (he smiles) ... We was flash pimps at twelve. Rolling the occasional John when the opportunity presented itself. Little by little you make a name and you move up...

A beat. Kit watches the dying tiger.

KIT

Here's what I'm saying ... I am a Nawlins creature, honey. To the bone. That's what I am. I never been outside this city a day in my life. Seriously, not once ... 'Cause you know what's outside my city? ... The swamp ... Nothing but the Demon Swamp.

A beat.

He finally turns to her:

KIT

What am I gonna do in Phoenix? Be a cowboy?

She looks at him.

The poignant absurdity of her dream is clear.

Kit again watches the dying tiger for a moment. He finds it deeply moving, even tragic: this noble creature of the jungle reduced to a pathetic, impotent wreck, dying for the amusement of the passers-by.

She cannot bear to look at Kit. She turns away.

She watches a passing family. Do they know, she wonders, who they are walking past so casually? Do they know this pale man next to her is -- was? -- a gangster of real importance? A genuine villain?

Her ruminations are cut short when one of the kids in the family she is watching glances at Kit--

The kid's eyes shoot wide -- he grabs his mother, clearly upset by what he is seeing--

Mamie turns quickly back to Kit--

She gasps--

His eyes are closed, his head lolling forward, a thin trickle of blood falling gently from his lips--

Unconscious--? Dead--?

MAMIE

(shaking him)

Kit--?!

He groans.

Mamie spins back urgently to the family for help:

MAMIE

Help me, please!

The father pulls his family away, not wanting them to get involved with all this blood and sickness--

Kit groans, she supports him--

Mamie looks around urgently for someone, anyone, to help--

MAMIE

Please -- could you help me?! -- Please...

No one seems to want to help.

Blood continues to trickle slightly from Kit's mouth. The people passing by are repulsed -- and oddly resentful, as if Kit's bleeding was an intentional attack on their carefree day at the zoo.

INT. DR. WARREN'S HOUSE -- SITTING ROOM AFTERNOON

Kit's eyes open...

He looks around and realizes he is again on the sofa in Dr. Warren's sitting room. He sits up. Feels pretty good, all things considered.

He notes the blood stain on his shirt. Can barely remember being sick at the zoo, seems like a lifetime ago. Shakes his head in an effort to clear it.

He pulls himself up and follows voices. Goes into Warren's office...

INT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- OFFICE AFTERNOON

Dr. Warren is not in his office. The voices are coming from the porch outside.

Kit goes to the door, peeks out the window...

He sees Stokes!

Outside, talking to Dr. Warren and Rosa.

Kit pulls out his straight razor and leans against the door, ready to intercede if he has to. He listens...

EXT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- PORCH AFTERNOON

Stokes stands at the bottom of the porch steps, looking up. Warren and Rosa stand on the porch itself.

Stokes' eyes are intense and cold.

They are in mid-conversation:

ROSA
How did you find me?

STOKES
Don't matter.

A tense beat.

STOKES
You come on now, Rosabella.

Rosa looks down at him. Shakes her head. Although clearly frightened, she stands her ground.

ROSA
I got a life here, Stokes. I got a real job. I'm a nurse. That's a real job for decent folk.

ings

eing
in an

the

STOKES

(stern)

No foolishness, get down here--

WARREN

You get off my property, right now--

STOKES

(venom)

Shut your mouth, nigger, 'fore I slap you back to Congo Square.

Warren takes a deep breath, his anger building.

STOKES

Rosa, don't make me ask again ... Get your ass down here -- (she doesn't move, he takes a step up the stairs to fetch her) -- I said get your ass--!

WARREN

(thunders)

That's enough!

Stokes stops.

Dr. Warren pulls himself up to his full height. He almost seems to physically transform, he stands bravely: Rosa's protector.

WARREN

Not another step. She ain't going but nowhere with you. This is her home.

STOKES

White girl livin' in this sewer with you?!

WARREN

Better than whoring and getting stuck with the needle living with you.

STOKES

Who's the brave nigger today?

WARREN

Yeah, I know you boys. Real tough boys, aren't you? Get them hooked on smack. Whore 'em around. Slap 'em around. Maybe break a rib or two. Just like she was when she came here--

STOKES

You dare even look at me, boy?!

WARREN

You think I'm scared of you? You think I'm scared of some little drug-pushing RACKETEER?! Some cracker of a lowlife HOODLUM?! Scared of YOU?! -- (he holds up his hands) -- You know how many people I've killed with these hands?! -- YOU'RE AN AMATEUR, BOY!

Stokes looks at him. Struck by the dark and self-lacerating outburst.

Some people passing by the house also glance up at Warren.

Inside:

Kit tightens his grip on the razor, ready...

Outside:

Stokes turns his cold gaze on Rosa, speaks quietly:

STOKES

You wanna spend the rest of your life humping this old coon then you can damn well rot in Hell doing it. Which you will, 'cause this is abomination ... But I am not leaving here without my son.

Inside:

Kit is stunned. Son?!

Outside:

STOKES

Where's my baby?

Rosa looks at Stokes, with anguish, and almost with a sort of pity.

ROSA

Why do you think I came here in the first place? ... There is no more baby.

Stokes looks at her, comprehension slowly dawning.

STOKES

There is no more baby...

WARREN

You go on now, Stokes, you got no more business here...

STOKES

There is no more baby...

Sensing Stokes is about to snap, Warren gently pulls Rosa to his side, protecting her with his body.

A beat.

Stokes looks up at Warren. His tone is frightening and hushed, a ghastly whisper:

STOKES

You killed my baby. You killed my son ... Be seven years old now.

WARREN

Done is done. Get on your way.

STOKES

Was it a boy?

WARREN

Yes.

A beat as Stokes takes this in.

Inside:

Kit knows Stokes is about ready to ignite. He puts his hand on the doorknob, turns it slightly, preparing to leap outside.

Outside:

STOKES

Mother has her own baby murdered not worth living ... Nigger who did the deed not worth living. With his black nigger hands he did the deed...

He reaches into his pocket as he begins to climb the steps, to murder them both on the spot--

But just then--

A mother and her daughter, both black and poor, show up for an appointment with Dr. Warren. The daughter wears a leg brace. She calls happily:

DAUGHTER

Good day, Dr. Warren!

Stokes stops--

WARREN

And good day to you, Lucy! Don't you look pretty!

MOTHER

We a little early today, Doctor...

WARREN

(beckons them)

Oh that's fine, you come on up. Nurse, show them into the office...

The mother and her daughter move past Stokes on the steps. Rosa leads them into the house.

Stokes just glares up at Warren.

WARREN

That's it. Get on home.

STOKES

(low and lethal)

One day ... or one night ... You will turn around and I will be with you ... And we will be alone ... For a long time.

He turns and goes.

Warren lets out a long breath. He leans against a porch rail, exhausted. And frightened.

INT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- OFFICE AFTERNOON

Moments later.

Dr. Warren is examining the daughter's leg.

Rosa leaves the office and moves into the house...

INT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- SITTING ROOM AFTERNOON

She moves past Kit, who is pretending to be asleep on the sofa.

She disappears into the back of the house.

He opens his eyes. With the certainty that the world will keep on spinning, Kit knows one thing: Stokes will be back for his vengeance.

EXT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- PORCH EVENING

The hot jazz music from the streets echoes. The green neon of CLUB NO. 1 glows in the distance.

Kit sits on the porch steps, talking closely with Zook. Kit seems energized, back in business. He is also wearing a clean, new

outfit, one of his bold suits.

ZOOK

... Mister Paul said not to worry...

KIT

That exactly what he said?

ZOOK

Not to worry, he says, exactly. He says he'll meet you tonight ... I'm sure he's gonna let the hammer fall on old Stokes.

Kit smiles. He is mightily relieved.

KIT

I knew Mister Paul was gonna come through; fat man knows wherein his bread is buttered.

ZOOK

Look, just to tell you, I think he's gonna make us do it ... I mean kill Stokes.

KIT

Wouldn't want it any other way ... Would you?

Zook smiles, shakes his head.

KIT

When and where?

ZOOK

He'll be motoring in. Wants you to meet him, corner of Conti and Robertson at 8:00. Be prompt, said he.

KIT

You search up Yellow Henry and Laveau. Have them here tomorrow morning first thing ... Provided Mister Paul gives me the okay, we get Stokes then.

ZOOK

You want I should come tonight?

KIT

No, I'm jake ... Be sure to tell the boys that it might be rough tomorrow. Stokes got them new gorillas we're gonna have to deal with, yeah?

ZOOK

Okay ... (he glances at the house, smiles) ... What? You living here now?

KIT

(smiles)

No, Mamie just got some of my clothes and -- long story ... You best find the boys. Make sure they get some sleep tonight.

ZOOK

(stands)

Will do.

KIT

And Zook ... Thanks.

Zook waves it off. He goes.

Kit leans back on the porch.

He listens to the jazzy music from the clubs floating through the warm evening air.

He smiles as he imagines the busy, sinful streets. His streets.

He seems content. Ready. Himself again.

Dr. Warren pokes his head from inside:

WARREN

There's supper if you want it.

Kit rises quickly and goes inside, a jaunty spring to his step. Flash Kit Tibbedeaux is back.

EXT.

STREET CORNER

NIGHT

Kit waits on the darkened corner of Conti and Robertson.

A little off the beaten track, this area of town is a little more industrial and run-down. It is isolated and hauntingly deserted.

Also haunting are the walls of St. Louis Cemetery No. 2 right across the street. Kit finds this location morbidly appropriate to the morbid business he is going to conduct tonight with his boss, the infamous Mister Paul.

Kit can see the towering tombs and imposing monuments of the ancient cemetery reaching up like skeletal fingers through the murky night. A little spooky, he thinks. Voodoo time.

Kit shifts, pulls out his cigarette case and snaps it open. Damn. He doesn't smoke anymore. He snaps the case closed again and tucks it away. Ought to sell it.

He unwraps a piece of chewing gum and chomps on that. Hates it. Poor substitute for a smoke.

Then...

A car lumbers down the street toward him. Big. Dark sedan.

Kit prepares, quickly spitting out the gum and adjusting his suit, wants to look good for his boss. The car's headlights sweep over him. The car keeps going. Lumbers away. Damn. Not Mister Paul.

Kit waits.

His eyes are invariably drawn back to the cemetery: reaching angels silhouetted against the sky; brooding sepulchers illuminated by the moon; all so macabre.

Then...

He hears footsteps echoing...

Then he sees three dark figures approaching on the other side of the street. Approaching somewhat warily. Strategically.

Kit knows instantly:

This is a setup. A trap.

Damn.

How could he have been so stupid?

The three figures near...

Kit tucks his hand into his razor pocket. His eyes dart to the side, looking for an escape route.

Then the three approaching figures pass under a streetlamp and are suddenly visible:

Zook, Yellow Henry and Laveau.

Zook waves to him.

Kit does not wave back. Kit does not breath a sigh of relief. Kit does not relax.

Kit's heart breaks.

He has been betrayed.

Zook and the others approach somewhat carefully: trying to behave casually and yet keeping a strategic, triangulated formation.

ZOOK

Hey, Kit ... Thought you might need our help...

YELLOW HENRY

One for all and all for one, like in the--

KIT

You here to kill me?

A dreadful beat.

ZOOK

Jesus, Kit...

KIT

(steel)

Come on, Zook ... This what Mister Paul wanted?

A beat. No response from Zook.

KIT

Zookie.

ZOOK

Never went to see Mister Paul ... Went to see Stokes.

A beat.

KIT

Why you do me that way?

ZOOK

Like you woulda done any other?

KIT

Yeah, maybe I woulda.

ZOOK

So Stokes runs the street again. Big fucking deal to us, right? We never gonna run anything. We just soldiers, Kit. We just General Patton's soldiers, do what we're ordered.

YELLOW HENRY

You can't imagine how bad we feel...

KIT

(laughs)

That's a comfort.

A beat.

All are very tense.

KIT

All right then. How you wanna do this thing?

ZOOK

Well, best is if you just--

SUDDENLY--

Like a flash of lightning cutting through a black night--

Kit's arm SLASHES UP--

Slicing RIGHT THROUGH his jacket pocket--

His straight razor SLICING UP--

EVISцерATING Laveau from belly to throat--

In one horrible GASH.

Kit instantly spins and races off--

Toward St. Louis Cemetery No. 2--

A shocked second--

And then Zook is on his heels--

As Laveau finally falls--

Yellow Henry catches him, horrified--

ZOOK

(calls back to Yellow Henry)

GET ON! AFTER HIM!

Yellow Henry sets his brother down and takes off after Zook--

Ahead of them:

Kit sprints toward the high walls of St. Louis Cemetery--

The hulk of an abandoned car, long since stripped of its rubber and glass, is parked by the walls--

Without missing a beat, Kit vaults to the hood of the car and then the roof and then over the wall--

INT. ST. LOUIS CEMETERY NO. 2 NIGHT

Kit falls into the cemetery and is immediately up and off. He sprints through the maze of tombs and monuments; past the endless series of decaying crypts and foul mausoleums.

Behind him, Zook and Yellow Henry climb more slowly over the wall and jump down into the cemetery.

ZOOK

(calls)

No need for all this, Kit!

His voice echoes bizarrely through the necropolis.

ZOOK

We can still do this with dignity!

No response.

ZOOK

You make us hunt you like a dog?!

No response.

Zook pulls a snub-nosed revolver from his coat. He hands it to Yellow Henry. He indicates for Yellow Henry to go in another direction and they set off separately to stalk Kit.

Meanwhile:

Kit is still moving through the ghastly tombs at a quick clip, swerving left and right, weaving almost blindly in and out of the rows of imposing vaults.

But then he's not moving so quickly, he's slowing, slowing...

Then he stops, grabbing one of the tombs for support, doubles over...

Wheezing for air...

The pace is killing him. He can't keep it up...

Gasping for air...

Then he starts to cough!

The harsh, rasping coughs echo through the night.

He clasps a hand over his mouth desperately.

Meanwhile:

Yellow Henry's head snaps: he hears the coughing. He follows the sound quickly, his revolver ready.

Meanwhile:

Kit is finally getting his breath. He leans back on the crypt and tries to breathe deeply. He knows there is no way he will be able to outrun his pursuers. He's just too weak, the exertion too much.

He doesn't panic. He thinks.

Meanwhile:

Yellow Henry is still moving stealthily, creeping closer and closer to the spot where he thought he heard Kit coughing.

Yellow Henry moves dangerously, quietly and with sinuous grace, like a serpent.

Finally he is at a corner of a tomb, he thinks Kit is just around this corner.

He prepares his revolver and then--

Leaps around the corner, gun pointed--

Nothing.

A long avenue of tombs. No sign of Kit.

But then something catches his eye.

Something glinting at the base of one of the crypts. Something shining, catching the light.

Yellow Henry is wary. He approaches the crypt, gun ready.

To his surprise he discovers the shining object is Kit's cigarette case. It is on the ground, leaning gently against the crypt.

Yellow Henry looks down at it.

Exactly as Kit had intended.

Kit suddenly leaps down from ON TOP OF THE TOMB--!

He SLAMS into Yellow Henry and they CRASH to the ground -- the gun FIRES! -- a blinding FLASH OF LIGHT and deafening EXPLOSION--

Meanwhile:

Zook spins and races toward the sound of the gunshot--

Meanwhile:

Kit and Yellow Henry roll awkwardly across the ground, struggling for control of the gun--

Another SHOT! -- wild -- a spray of debris and dust from a nearby crypt--

Kit and Yellow Henry continue to roll clumsily across the ground -- Kit manages to shove them into position and then BRUTALLY SLAMS Yellow Henry's gun hand back against a tomb -- again and again -- Yellow Henry's wrist finally breaks -- he screams -- the gun goes flying--

Yellow Henry manages to kick Kit off him -- Kit rolls back and pulls out his razor--

Yellow Henry turns his back on Kit and uses the tomb to desperately pull himself up -- he wants to get to his feet, to escape--

But Kit is too fast--

He lunges forward and slashes with his razor--

Yellow Henry's spine arches -- jerks -- he screams--

Then Kit is completely on him, from behind, enfolding his entire body with his arms, pulling his head back, Kit's razor swinging around to Yellow Henry's front and quickly--

Cutting his throat--

Yellow Henry almost immediately falls, his body twitching as Kit lurches away from him awkwardly--

Kit wastes no time -- he has no time! -- he knows Zook must be on the way--

He begins searching furiously through the darkness for the revolver, he is on his hands and knees, hands grasping wildly -- he finds the gun--!

Just as--

Zook turns a corner and sprints toward him, pulling out a switchblade--

Just as--

Kit, still on his knees, spins blindly and FIRES!

Zook shudders -- hit -- but keeps coming--

Kit FIRES AGAIN!

Zook, that huge mountain of a man, keeps coming--

Kit FIRES AGAIN!

Zook stumbles, but keeps coming--

Kit FIRES AGAIN!

Zook finally STOPS.

He stands. A few feet away from Kit. Swaying. Bleeding.

Kit is still on his knees, looking up at his friend, gun ready.

But Zook just stands there. Swaying. Bleeding. Dying.

A beat.

ZOOK

This is a goddamn thing, huh?

KIT

Goddamn thing.

A beat.

ZOOK

You remember Storyville?

KIT

Sure.

ZOOK

The old days ... You and me and Yellow Henry and Laveau
... And the street. And the city.

He looks up at the night sky.

ZOOK

Had it all, baby.

He falls.

Dead.

Kit finally collapses back, exhausted, gasping for breath.

He looks at his friend. Tormented.

And we fade to...

EXT. PIER NIGHT

A crumbling pier over the Mississippi. The shadows of the city in the distance.

Kit stands, slumped, talking to a one-eyed pirate of a River Captain.

KIT

There and back.

CAPTAIN

It be a right maze they about. Five dollar.

KIT

Yeah.

Kit climbs down into the Captain's tatty old pirogue.

EXT. BOAT -- THE SWAMP NIGHT

The long, flat-bottomed pirogue creeps through the hideous bayou, maneuvering through various serpentine tributaries.

Kit sits hunched in the front of the boat, his eyes nervously taking in the aching darkness of the swamp. For a thoroughly urban creature like Kit, this is all very disquieting. The trees. The dirt. The water. The creatures. Even the air, he feels, is fetid and alive with impure microorganisms.

It is like Kit's worst nightmares made real: the Demon Swamp.

It is almost garish in its horror...

The alligators ... their cold and blazing eyes catching the light... their gnarled, prehistoric hides ... a sudden eruption of water as one slashes its enormous tail...

The lethal water snakes undulating past the boat ... the clicking bats ... the stinging mosquitoes ... the hanging moss and stabbing nettles ... the bloated ticks and croaking toads ... all things slithering and squirming...

Kit tucks his hands into his armpits and folds in on himself tightly. Even though the night is sweltering, he feels chilled.

The lonely boat continues on, ever deeper into the shadows of the swamp.

EXT. SWAMP -- MANSION NIGHT

Kit leans forward, peering into the darkness.

When the boat rounds a bend in the river, he can see light in the distance: a house emerging from the bleak night.

Kit blows out the lantern on the boat.

The pirogue approaches a huge mansion on the bank of the river, tucked into the trees. The house is imposing and alive with light; an antebellum wonder lovingly restored to its original splendor.

Kit finds it highly incongruous: this marvel of a mansion somehow managing to survive alone in the heart of his Demon Swamp.

The Captain maneuvers the boat to a lovely dock that extends into the river.

KIT

Wait for me.

He climbs from the boat and carefully approaches the mansion...

EXT. MANSION NIGHT

Kit leaves the boat and the river behind as he silently crosses the massive yard toward the mansion.

He sees the silhouette of a guard moving lazily across the roof. Another patrolling a balcony. Both hold Thompson submachine guns.

Kit has no trouble avoiding them. He sneaks to the house and peeks into a dark window. An empty, silent study.

He carefully climbs through the window...

INT. MANSION NIGHT

Inside now, Kit can hear music from a phonograph elsewhere in the house. Cloying Viennese operetta. He hates it.

He cautiously peeks out the door: sees a long corridor, deserted.

He steps out of the darkened study and moves down the long hallway toward the music, which seems to be coming from a large, illuminated room ahead.

He finally reaches the doors to the large room, slightly ajar, and peeks in:

All he can see are two LITTLE GIRLS, maybe ten years old, sitting side-by-side on a sofa. They are dressed in frilly little white dresses, oddly appropriate to the saccharine 19th century music.

There is something disturbing about these two girls, though Kit can't immediately place it.

Then a voice from behind surprises him:

GUARD

Maybe you ought go inside?

Kit turns. A guard has his Thompson gun leveled on him.

Kit sighs. So much for stealth.

INT. MANSION -- LIVING ROOM NIGHT

The two little girls are smiling at Kit.

MISTER PAUL is also smiling. It is the indulgent, somewhat sickening smile of an overly-doting parent.

Mister Paul is an obese trunk of a man; a decadent creature whose many sins seem to hang from him, swelling him with pounds of fat.

Kit sits across from Mister Paul, awkwardly sipping a snifter of Brandy. Two bodyguards wait, stone-faced and ready.

Kit glances at the two little girls again. He notes they are wearing a lot of makeup. And that they are identical twins.

Mister Paul speaks slowly. He has a deep, deep Southern accent from the deep, deep South. Mississippi.

MISTER PAUL

They no need for such stealth, Kit. You got no reason to creep. We all collegial here ... Like Tulane, you know. Collegial.

KIT

Truly glad to hear it, Mister Paul.

MISTER PAUL

Never a college man myself. Always liked the idea of Princeton, though. The colors and history of the place. Go Tigers, rah-rah ... I even donate money there, like an alumni. A quirk, I grant you.

KIT

Where are we without our quirks?

MISTER PAUL

(smiles)

Amen, amen ... So you come all the way here through the deep, dark bayou -- I imagine you got something on your mind.

KIT

I do ... I got a lot on my mind, sir. Hard to figure things these days.

MISTER PAUL

Good you come to me then. That's why I'm here, Brother Tibbedeaux.

Kit notes one of the little girls reaching for a pastry on a table before her. Notes the needle tracks in her arms.

Kit forces his eyes back to Mister Paul:

KIT

I come to talk about Stokes.

MISTER PAUL

Mister Stokes, ah yes ... (he peers) ... Is that blood on you?

The little girls' eyes dart up, excited.

Kit uses his handkerchief to attempt to wipe some blood from his face. It's dried by now.

MISTER PAUL

Dear dear dear ... Must it always be bloodshed?

KIT

Mister Paul ... I been a good worker for you, you know that. Regular with the lagniappe and keep the clubs running steady ... Now Stokes is back and acting all too trumped up, you follow? I would like your permission to ... to resolve this situation.

MISTER PAUL

No euphemisms, I implore ... What do you intend to do? How will you "resolve" this situation?

KIT

I intend to...

Kit stops when one of the little girls gets up and goes to Mister Paul. She climbs onto his enormous lap. The other little girl hisses slightly. The first little girl just sits in Mister Paul's lap, gazing placidly at Kit.

It is an extremely disturbing image.

KIT

I intend to kill him. With your permission.

A beat.

MISTER PAUL

You know, Kit, we're gonna win this war mighty soon. And all them soldiers are gonna come back to us. To the bosom, as t'were ... They will have tasted of death and they will want life. With both hands they will want to shovel life into them, gorge themselves on it...

Kit watches him carefully. Where the hell is this going?

MISTER PAUL

And our business will change -- will evolve -- to accommodate their vast needs. It's already happening in places like Kansas City and Chicago and Las Vegas. And it will happen here too. Right here in Looziana. Can you imagine?

KIT

I'm afraid I don't--

The little girl sitting on Mister Paul's lap puts a finger to her lips, gently shushing Kit:

. LITTLE GIRL

Shhhhh...

MISTER PAUL

It's evolving into something I don't even recognize ... Sad fact is, you and I don't belong in the game anymore. We have too much character. Too much personal style ... The future belongs to Stokes and his ilk. The faceless organization men. The colorless syndicate men ... We are poets, Kit, in a world of accountants.

A beat.

MISTER PAUL

So maybe it's best you leave the parish. Leave the state. Discover new horizons and be gone with you.

KIT
With respect, sir--

MISTER PAUL
(sudden ice)
You are dying. He is not ... You are weak. He is strong
... You are the past. He is the future ... You are
finished. You are dead, dead, dead, dead, dead.

The little girl on the sofa giggles.

A beat. Kit is stunned.

MISTER PAUL
We have chosen to support Mr. Stokes in his new
endeavors ... You are hereby deprived of our
protection. From this moment, you are a rank leper. Be
gone with you, Brother ... For you are alone.

Silence.

Kit stands.

The guards lead him out.

Mister Paul leans back, satisfied with a good night's work, happy
listening to the cloying operetta.

The little girl on the sofa giggles.

EXT. THE STREET MORNING

Kit slowly limps down the street. His street.

He is a ghost of the man who used to be. He is hunched, thin and
grey. People barely notice him; in the morning's happy bustle of
tourists and tradesmen he is practically transparent.

He moves toward the always-glowing CLUB NO. 1 sign. It seems to
draw him. He has no real plan, he is but a moth to the flame.

Almost by instinct, he passes the familiar Flower Stall, takes a
blossom, continues on...

But the Flower Stall Owner goes after him:

FLOWER STALL OWNER
That's a dime.

Kit stops, turns.

FLOWER STALL OWNER

Dime for the flower.

Kit looks at him. The Flower Stall Owner is enjoying this, taking sadistic pleasure in Kit's downfall.

FLOWER STALL OWNER

You heard me ... Gimme a dime or gimme that back.

Without a word, Kit hands the flower back. The Flower Stall Owner can't resist twisting the knife:

FLOWER STALL OWNER

You oughta clean yourself up ... You a disgrace to the Quarter, boy.

He returns to his stall, smug and happy.

Kit turns and continues mechanically on toward Club No. 1.

He sees Gus the Doorman at his usual post. He sees patrons already going into the club.

But before he can cross the street to the club--

Mamie, who has been waiting, appears out of the crowd and intercepts him:

MAMIE

Jesus, Kit, where you been? I been looking for you all over the...

She finally gets a good look at him. His terrible state is wrenching for her.

MAMIE

Lord ... Come with me, honey, come on...

She gently pulls him away.

INT.

CAFE

MORNING

Mamie watches him closely, concerned.

Kit sits before an uneaten breakfast. He just sips coffee. His eyes are haunted.

KIT

... So I had to kill him. Old Zook ... Just like that
... Tragic.

He sips coffee. Deep in his own world.

KIT

Then I went to see Mister Paul ... Black hood time.
Death sentence, you know.

He spreads his hand like a casino dealer after a shift--

KIT

Walk away from the table. Hands in view ... All gone
... All done ... So long, Big Time.

A beat as Mamie waits for more, but apparently Kit has finished speaking.

MAMIE

I think it best you let Dr. Warren have a look at you.
Give you some medicine. You might need some medicine.

The following is emotional, difficult for her:

MAMIE

Kit, look at me ... (he does so) ... You and me, we
finished out of the money here ... We gotta get out of
this place.

He does not respond.

MAMIE

I got ... um ... two tickets for the Thunderbird
Limited. Take us all the way to Phoenix. Two sleeping
berths.

He looks at her.

A rock solid resolve comes over her features, quietly banishing
the emotion she feels. She is, and will always be, a survivor.

MAMIE

That trains pulls out of South Rampart station at 9:15
tonight ... I will be there. I will be on that train.

She stands.

MAMIE

I will have a life beyond this place.

She puts down some money to pay for his breakfast and goes.

He watches her leave.

A long beat.

He glances out the window ... the passing crowd ... the tourists ... the soldiers ... the whores and hucksters ...

Then he notices his own face reflected in the window ... the unshaven face ... the pale skin ... the haunted gaze ...

He is shocked at how sad and sick he looks.

How doomed even.

EXT. WARREN'S HOUSE NIGHT

The usual jazzy music reaches through the night air relentlessly, as if stretching out to strangle the tilting shotgun house.

INT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN NIGHT

Still the music invades.

Kit, Warren and Rosa are finishing up dinner. All are quietly preoccupied. Kit finally breaks the silence.

KIT

Hey, lemme ask you something ... You know anything about Phoenix?

WARREN

Sure, I been to Phoenix.

KIT

You like it?

WARREN

Hard to say, after I got beat up at the train station for being an uppity Negro, didn't give the place much of a chance.

KIT

You have led a life, Doctor, I will give you that.

Warren gets up to pour himself a glass of whiskey:

WARREN

Enough for two men, at least. But all in all, amen, it has been a life.

He remains standing, leaning against the kitchen counter, drinking his whiskey.

Kit glances at the kitchen clock. Almost 8:00.

Warren, meanwhile, seems to come to some decision:

WARREN

Rosabella ... why don't you go on to the sitting room and listen to your programs in there, I gotta have a word with Kit.

Rosa is instantly alert, concerned.

ROSA

Wendell...

WARREN

Go on.

ROSA

If this is about--

WARREN

(gently)

Shhh. Go on. Just for a few minutes.

She glances to Kit and goes.

A beat as Warren listens for the radio to go on in the sitting room. It does.

Then Warren goes to a high cabinet and roots through to find something hidden at the back. Pulls out something wrapped in a towel.

He nods for Kit to follow him. They go out the back door...

EXT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- BACK PORCH NIGHT

They stand on the rickety back porch -- really nothing more than a decrepit staircase leading precariously down to the banks of the river.

Warren unwraps his hidden object: it is a gun. An ugly old police service revolver.

Kit looks down at it. Then up at Warren.

Warren just looks down at the gun. Sickened at the very sight of it.

WARREN

Went over to the Treme to get this ... Probably paid too much ... I don't know how to use it. I want you to show me.

KIT

What? You gonna sit up every night, waiting for him?

WARREN

If I must.

KIT

And then you shoot him?

WARREN

If I must.

KIT

Just like that, huh?

WARREN

(intense)

Never in my life could I see myself holding this thing. Or using it ... I'm supposed to be a physician ... That is what I am. That is what I have made myself ... What will this make me?

Kit looks at him. This is tearing Warren apart.

WARREN

Stokes'll be back. You know it too ... I need to protect Rosa ... I will kill for her. I will die for her.

It is so simple. So pure. Such love.

Kit is moved. Genuinely moved. A strange feeling for him.

A long, difficult beat.

Kit takes the gun. He efficiently checks it: loaded; oiled; chamber spins easily. He hands it back.

Warren takes it awkwardly, like holding an adder.

Warren follows Kit's instructions:

KIT

Hold it in one hand ... Feel the weight of the thing ... Good ... Now point it ... Just hold it out, feel the weight...

Warren's gun hand is shaking.

KIT

Hold it steady, Doc--

Kit glances to Warren's face.

He sees tears in Warren's eyes.

For some goddamn reason he doesn't understand, this hits Kit like a punch in the gut.

KIT

Okay ... Look along your arm and to that little metal notch on the barrel ... When it comes to it, aim for the middle of the body, follow? ... (Warren nods) ... And then squeeze the trigger, don't jerk it ... No matter how scared you are, try not to jerk the trigger or your shot's gonna go wild, yeah?

WARREN

Yeah.

KIT

And just keep on shooting until there's no more bullets. That should scare off anybody. There'll be a lot of smoke and noise, but just keep on ... That's it, you can put it down.

Warren lowers the gun. Sets it on the porch rail. Doesn't want to touch it. Even looking at it degrades him. He looks out over the river.

WARREN

Thanks.

Warren just stares out over the river.

Kit is deep in thought.

He knows there is no way Warren will be able to stand up to Stokes, gun or not. No way in the world. Warren and Rosa are as good as dead.

A long pause.

We watch Kit's face.

Finally, he looks at Warren deeply.

KIT

Doctor ... (Warren turns to him) ... Let me tell you what I know about killing ... It's very simple, it's only one thing really: when you murder someone it's not a crime ... it's a sin.

A beat.

KIT

It is the sin from which you do not recover ... There is no redemption...

He smiles gently. He reaches out and puts his hand on Warren's heart.

KIT

No redemption.

A beat.

Then, without another word, Kit turns and goes. He quickly moves down the back stairs, disappearing into the night.

Dr. Warren peers after him. Nothing but the night.

INT. WARREN'S HOUSE -- SITTING ROOM NIGHT

Rosa sits listening to a radio drama, smoking nervously.

Warren enters with a glass of whiskey. He sits.

ROSA

Kit gone?

WARREN

He's gone.

A beat.

ROSA

He be back tonight?

WARREN

He won't be back.

INT. TRAIN STATION NIGHT

Mamie waits.

The shining and splendid Thunderbird Limited is boarding. Final passengers are climbing on quickly. Porters haul luggage. A Conductor paces the platform and calls:

CONDUCTOR

Final call ... 9:15 Thunderbird Limited to Houston, Albuquerque, Phoenix and Los Angeles ... Final call, all aboard...

Mamie looks around. No sign of Kit.

But he is there.

Hidden in the darkness. Next to a soaring column, his collar pulled up, watching her from the shadows.

Mamie cranes for sight of him. Nothing. She checks her watch. Will he come?

Kit watches her.

How easy it would be to step into the light ... to take a step ... to walk to her ... to embrace her ... to get on the train ... to escape ... to live.

He just remains in the shadows.

He sees the conductor talking to her. Time to go, ma'am.

A last look around for him...

And then she is gone. Into the train.

The train almost immediately begins to lumber out of the station. Picking up speed. Gone.

Kit watches.

Mamie, at least, has escaped.

EXT. THE STREET NIGHT

That blazing, green neon sign...

CLUB NO. 1.

We are so close to the sign that we can hear the low buzz of the neon crackling away like hellfire.

Below this familiar invocation to diversions and delights, the street is mobbed. Teeming. Must be a weekend. Soldiers on leave ... Fathers at conventions ... Young Swells on the hunt ... College Bucks drunk, ready and randy...

Jazz and Blues and Swing and Zydeco and Dixieland seem to erupt from every doorway, every window, creating that unique musical cacophony that is Nawlins.

Kit stands across the street, secluded, fading into the landscape. He watches the doorway to Club No. 1. Sees Gus the Doorman going about his business. Kit decides against a frontal assault.

Using a passing mob of young yahoos for cover, Kit crosses the street, staying hidden behind the yahoos. When they clear he nips into a long alley alongside the Club...

EXT. LONG ALLEY NIGHT

The long alley ends at a brick wall in the distance. Kit carefully moves down the alley, further and further from the street.

A series of industrial service doors enter the Club. Kit positions himself across from one, leaning against the opposite wall of the alley.

He waits. Listens to the music from the Street. Sounds good. He glances back down the alley. Sees people moving back and forth. Oblivious to him.

Then--

The big metal door across from him opens and a worker appears with a heaping trash can, carries it down the alley to dump it. Kit nips into the open door...

INT. CLUB -- SERVICE CORRIDOR NIGHT

A long service corridor. Buzzing fluorescent lights. Rows of trash cans.

Kit walks quickly, with great purpose. He knows exactly where he is going.

He rounds a corner and goes into...

INT. CLUB -- KITCHEN NIGHT

The kitchen is noisy, crowded and busy. Steam and stoves, food and drink. Music from the Club beyond can now be heard.

Kit moves swiftly through the kitchen -- a few glances from surprised workers, but no one much cares--

Kit picks up speed--

Just before he leaves the kitchen, he grabs a meat cleaver from a counter--

Music from the Club grows as--

Kit pushes through a final doorway--

INT. CLUB NIGHT

Into the Club itself now, Kit strides--

Past the taxi dancers and whores, past the gamblers and musicians and cocktail waitresses and patrons of every size and shape--

Nothing distracts Kit. He is a man on a mission.

He continues to stride--

Cutting expertly through the crowd, no one much notices him--

Still picking up speed--

Heading straight toward his goal--

Stokes and his three thugs, sitting around his table--

Kit hefts the cleaver, preparing--

He's almost to them--

Stokes' eyes dart up, a shocked flash of recognition--

He opens his mouth to cry out--

One of the thugs begins to stand and turn--

Too late--

Kit slashes brutally with the cleaver--

Slicing the standing thug in the neck--

He falls, dead, as--

Kit instantly flings the cleaver at one of the other thugs--

The cleaver pinwheels through the air--

As Kit grabs the first thug as he falls, tearing his gun out of his shoulder holster--

The cleaver slams and slices into the chest of the other thug, he falls--

Stokes is lurching back--

As the final thug is just rising, pulling his gun--

As Kit raises the gun he took from the first thug -- a cannon of a .45 automatic--

And FIRES!

He follows his own advice to Dr. Warren--

He keeps on firing--

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

The final thug is hit -- but fires back -- won't die easily--

Kit and the final thug keep firing at each other, from very close range -- darting behind tables--

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

All the while, Kit looks for Stokes, who has dropped to the floor--

Meanwhile--

With the first gun shots -- loud as bazookas -- the Club has gone insane! People are running everywhere, frenzied, chaotic. Tables are upset. Dancers trampled. Absolute panic. Screams.

Kit and the final thug maneuver for position -- moving through the panicked crowd, ducking for cover, pushing people aside--

Still firing--

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Then--

CLICK!

The thug is out of ammo! -- he roars in frustration and ejects the spent clip, rushing to reload--

Kit darts up, takes aim--

BLAM!

The final thug falls.

Meanwhile, Stokes has crawled to the thug that Kit hit in the chest with the thrown cleaver -- the thug is still alive but useless, clawing pathetically at the cleaver still protruding from his chest--

Stokes rips through the man's jacket and pulls out his gun, an ugly little revolver--

He lurches to his feet and fires at Kit wildly--

Kit is hit -- bullets slam into his left arm, his side--

He recoils and spins--

Still firing--

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Stokes is winged -- a stray shot slicing into his leg--

He dives for cover -- and then scrambles to escape--

Using the rushing, panicked crowd for cover, Stokes crawls and runs his way toward the doors to the kitchen--

Kit follows, limping urgently to keep up with Stokes, trying to get a clear shot--

Stokes spins back and fires desperately, wildly--

A man near Kit is shot, falls--

Bullets ricochet--

Kit aims--

CLICK!

Kit tosses the empty gun aside and pulls his straight razor, following Stokes--

Stokes bursts through the doors to the kitchen, disappearing--

Without hesitation, Kit follows--

INT. CLUB -- KITCHEN NIGHT

Kit weaves quickly through the kitchen--

Which is deserted, and suddenly quiet after the deafening pandemonium in the club--

He follows the trail of blood from Stokes' injured leg--

INT. CLUB -- SERVICE CORRIDOR NIGHT

Down the long service corridor, toward the doors out to the alley--

Kit is wary as he approaches the doors. He slows.

He finally stops, right behind the doors. He thinks.

EXT. LONG ALLEY NIGHT

Stokes is waiting.

Panting for air. Bleeding.

He stands right across from the doors, leaning back on the alley wall. Gun held level in both hands. Ready to blast Kit to bits the moment he appears.

He waits. Blinks the sweat out of his eyes.

Then--

Suddenly--

The doors CRASH OPEN--

Stokes fires--!

Kit is barreling through the doors with a trash can held in front of him like a shield--

Stokes' shots thud into the trash can--

Kit keeps charging--

SLAMS into Stokes--

They SMASH into the alley wall--

An unholy jumble as they both struggle to get up -- to get to each other -- clawing and fighting--

Stokes' gun is gone, lost in the action--

Kit is slashing with his razor--

Stokes is snapping open his switchblade--

They stab and slash -- kicking and rolling awkwardly across the floor of the alley--

Finally, they separate and stand--

Panting for air. Eyes locked.

Kit ready with his razor. Stokes poised with his switchblade.

Kit has gotten the worst of it. He can barely stand.

A terrible, tense moment.

Who will move first? Who will attack?

Incongruously, though, people are still moving back and forth at the end of the alley, on the Street. They are enjoying the night, completely unaware of the life and death struggle being enacted a few yards away.

The relentless jazz from the Street pounds.

We watch Kit and Stokes from the end of the alley. Like two animals they are hunched and coiled.

Then they attack.

We remain at the end of the alley.

We see them slam together and fight. They move away from us, toward the brick wall at the far end of the alley. We are thankful to have a little distance now; we don't want to be too close to the slashing, slicing blades and the blood.

We see their forms, like a macabre dance, locked together, slamming into the walls of the alley.

Finally they almost disappear as they reach the far end of the alley. We see shapes only, writhing against the brick wall.

Then the movement stops.

Both figures fall. One topples. The other sinks down the alley wall.

No one is standing anymore.

We slowly approach...

Floating closer, over the pools and sprays of blood...

We near the end of the alley...

We see Stokes is the one who has toppled. He is dead. His evil, animal eyes stare up.

Kit is sitting, leaning back against the brick wall. Staring forward. Only a whisper of life remains.

How lonely this is, he thinks.

He looks down the long alley.

He can see the people passing back and forth at the mouth of the alley. Having a good time. Enjoying the Street. Oblivious to his death.

So this is how it ends for Flash Kit Tibbedeaux, Prince of Storyville.

He smiles.

As he dies.

He remains sitting there. His eyes open.

Then his head lolls forward.

A beat.

Then his body slumps and falls sideways.

A beat.

Then we slowly pull back...

Moving away...

Past Stokes...

Back down the alley...

To the Street...

Kit's Street.

We turn and move up, taking in the whole magnificent madness of it. The crowds and noise. The color and music.

Sin and, on occasion, even salvation.

Storyville.

The End.