

PLEASE RETURN
TO
RKO STORY
FILES

1656

TASKER MARTIN

Treatment

by

Herman J. Mankiewicz

JULY 6, 1950

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Prologue

Delacourte, Michigan, about thirty five years ago.

In and about its railroad yards, by moonlight, small searching parties are to be seen, with torches and flashlights, trying to find a missing dog belonging to the wife of the resident railroad superintendent. There are many groups of searchers after the promised reward. Grownups with their children, grownups alone, and, finally, one child alone - TASKER MARTIN.

Tasker Martin is twelve, poor, skinny, untidy, and obviously neglected. Wandering across the tracks, he is in danger for a moment, as a train roars by, but he jumps skillfully out of its way. A moment later, continuing his search, his attention is drawn to a wooden water tower from which suspicious yelps are coming. He clambers up a bank to the foot of the tower, and there, caught behind a hatch, he discovers the object of the search, a bedraggled, frightened, but very vicious-looking bull terrier. With some effort he extricates the dog, which runs howling down the bank.

Tasker, turning to follow the dog, now finds that he himself is trapped, his leg jammed up to the knee between two boards. Almost before he realizes his plight, a locomotive rumbles by with a frightening noise, emitting a dense cloud of smoke and shaking the tower. As he tries to extricate himself, gasping on the smoke, he finds himself even more firmly caught.

His position is now such that, when the smoke clears, he can see below, some hundred feet away, fellow searchers discovering the dog, chasing it, picking it up, and carrying it away in triumph. Too occupied with the chase to hear his shouts, the searchers extinguish their torches and flashlights, then gradually disappear into the distance. His shouts continue unheeded, are quickly drowned out by the noises of another passing train.

By the light of early dawn, wretched, exhausted, his face streaked with dirt and tears, Tasker makes another painful try at freeing himself. This time he succeeds. Sore and cramped, he starts to climb out of the tower and down the ramp, toward the tracks below, where a few switchmen and railroad workers are going about their business. But nobody is concerned with him.

With the light of the rising sun on his face, looking out at the distance, over the buttes, where presumably there is a town, he shakes his fist in its direction. "You go looking for a dog alright, but me -- You don't care what happens to me. I'm not even as good as a dog, that's what you think!" He spits. "Well, I'll show you. See if I don't! Some day you're all gonna come to me! All of you! You'll all come to me!"

Present day. A big industrial city. (It could be Chicago.)

An elegant conference room with murals of gleaming, extensive railroad tracks. Six substantial men are seated around

a shining board table. At the head there sits a seventh man, whose back only is visible, at first. Walter Harris, Tasker Martin's lawyer, is reading from a document. At the table, but apart from the group, sits Sarah Claus, a handsome woman in her late thirties, taking down a transcript of the proceedings.

HARRIS

(reading mechanically)

Therefore, recognizing the gains to the public, as well as to the parties concerned, the Interstate Commerce Commission hereby approves the merger, under the terms agreed upon, between the Overland Pacific and Illinois Western Railway.

There is an impressive silence. The men look at each other, nod, then one of them speaks up.

FIRST DIRECTOR

We're not questioning your control, Mr. Martin. It's your railroad now, and we know it. But where do we stand?

The man at the head of the table rises, as though he hadn't heard them, walks to the window, looks out, as if he were examining the weather. This is Tasker Martin, a man in his prime, powerfully built, perfectly groomed.

SECOND DIRECTOR

Mr. Martin, we're terribly anxious --

He stops as Tasker, without a word, turns and starts out of the room, tapping Harris on the shoulder, thus beckoning for him to follow. The men, nervous, uncertain, look at each other, but do not speak. Sarah Claus watches them with an odd air of triumph, mixed with pity and contempt.

The men look up expectant, as Harris returns to the room.

HARRIS

Mr. Martin will let you know his decision in due course.

There is a general exasperated protest.

HARRIS

(continuing calmly)

Mr. Martin has also asked me to tell you gentlemen that you could have made things easier for yourselves -- but you made a mistake. He had to send for you. You should have come to him.

He turns and leaves the room.

FIRST DIRECTOR

(exploding)

I wish I could figure out what he means by --

SECOND DIRECTOR

It means we're through. We do what he says -- when he feels like saying it.

FIRST DIRECTOR

But I've been willing to come to him any time for the past year.

THIRD DIRECTOR

The trouble is, every time you figure out where he is, he's not there!

SARAH

(quietly)

How right you are, Mr. Ferguson.

The men turn and look at her as she gathers up her things and leaves the room.

As Tasker enters his office, Ned Van Keuren, who has been waiting for him, rises. He is a slight man, a year or two older than Tasker, with soft eyes and a mouth that trembles easily, who skillfully conceals that one of his hands is withered. His manner toward Tasker is intimate but nervous, almost deferential.

TASKER

(as he goes
to his desk)

Yes?

NED

About the meeting? Everything go
according to plan?

Tasker doesn't answer.

NED (cont'd)

The papers have been calling me
and asking me --

TASKER

(good-naturedly)

Why don't you relax, Ned? I'll
see that the papers get everything
they need, when I get around to it.

There is a mild protest from Ned. After all, he's a partner. Tasker agrees, pointing out that they've been through all this before. Ned gets his share of the profits, doesn't he? And he hasn't had anything to complain of about the way the business is being run, has he? Including the way the Overland Pacific merger was just put through? No, Ned admits, but -- They'll get together soon, Tasker tells him, and he'll bring Ned completely up to date. But right now he's tired and trying to get home early and get ready for Gin Bishop's party. He'll be seeing Ned there, won't he? Indeed he will, says Ned. Tasker smiles at this, not noticing Ned's face has darkened. As a gentle way of indicating the interview is over, he starts to read a letter on his desk. Ned abandons any notions he may have had of continuing the discussion, takes the hint and leaves the room.

Outside the door, Ned pauses for a moment, his face agitated with an emotion close to hatred, but he arranges quickly to compose his features as he sees Sarah Claus approach, followed by Harris. There is a fleeting look of mute appeal on Ned's face, as his eyes meet Sarah's. With no response from her, however,

she goes past him with Harris -- there is an inter-change of greetings between Harris and Ned -- into Tasker's office.

TASKER
How'd they take it, Walt?

HARRIS
They took it.

Tasker hands Sarah the letter he's been reading.

TASKER
We'll be needing this tomorrow.

Sarah takes it and adds it to other papers, which she puts away in a briefcase during the following scene. (Tasker is getting ready to leave.)

TASKER (cont'd)
(to Harris, a bit
maliciously)
See you at Gin's tonight?

HARRIS
I sent Miss Bishop my regrets.

TASKER
(smiling)
What are you going to do after
Gin and I get married? Keep
sending your regrets?

There is no answer from Walt.

TASKER (cont'd)
You wouldn't be seeing Elizabeth
tonight, by any chance?

HARRIS
(unannoyed)
No.

TASKER
But you'll be out early in the
morning. Won't you? We won't
have much to clean up. Then we
can shoot a little golf.

HARRIS
I'll be early.

Tasker leaves.

Tasker in the elevator, alone except for the elevator man. The car stops for no red lights on the indicator. The elevator man looks with hero worship at Tasker and with scorn at these lights ordinary people are flashing, in vain.

In the arcade of Tasker's office building, he enters a high-class Beauty Parlor and goes toward a spreading, but still handsome, red-haired Juno, sitting behind the cash register, supervising proceedings. She smiles happily as he approaches.

TASKER

Ten o'clock tomorrow morning, Ruby?

RUBY

(familiarily)

Sure, Task.

(then she adds)

Big doings tonight --

(with slight

emphasis)

Mr. Martin?

TASKER

(with the same

emphasis)

Big doings -- Miss Calhoun.

They smile warmly at each other as he leaves.

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Outside of his office building, on Michigan Boulevard, Tasker gets into his limousine next to Bull, at the wheel. (Tasker has known Bull since they were both in their twenties. He is an enormous man physically, who has remained where he was, without either Tasker's looks or other talents.) Bull wears a dark suit, but not a uniform. As they drive, he reaches into his pocket and hands Tasker a small package wrapped in tissue paper.

BULL

I stopped at the vault and took the stuff around to Mrs. Martin, like you said. She kept the rest, but this she told me to give back to you.

Tasker frowns and opens the package. It is a glittering, obviously valuable, bracelet. He holds it up.

TASKER

Remember this, Bull?

Bull looks over, seems uncertain.

TASKER (cont'd)

My tenth wedding anniversary.
You remember my tenth anniversary,
don't you, Bull?

There is a pause. Bull continues driving, stoney-faced.

TASKER (cont'd)

Elizabeth makes gestures. Why
don't I make a gesture?

He starts to roll down the window.

TASKER (cont'd)

Why don't I just throw this out
the window?

BULL

(anxious)

Chief!

TASKER

Only I don't make gestures. At
my expense.

He rolls up the window, but keeps holding the bracelet in his hand, smiling to himself, but not easily.

Tasker's Lake Forest estate, vast and magnificent.

In Tasker's private gymnasium, Bull and Tasker, both in sweatshirts, are boxing, energetically, with heavy gloves. (Around the walls the visible equipment includes a punching bag, stationary rowing-machine, bar-bells, etc.)

Tasker, on a rubbing table, getting a hard massage from Bull. As Bull rubs him, his body is hard and fit under Bull's powerful hands.

Tasker gives Bull instructions for the following morning. He is to be waked at nine. Ruby is coming to give him a manicure at ten. And Harris will be there, too. It's likely to be a very rough night and Tasker will need a stiff workout.

Bull asks him if he wants him to drive him to and from the Gin Bishop party. No, says Tasker, he'll drive himself.

One of Gin Bishop's celebrated parties.

Its central point is an enormous room, like a small ballroom. A miniature electric railroad system is set out on long tables, running the length of the room. An electric train, with bell and toot-whistle, runs on a track that winds in and around miniature cows and houses and billboards, in addition to the various items of the extensive buffet, bowls of punch, champagne, etc.

There are guests dancing, mostly white tie and full decolletage. It's an upper level cafe society crowd.

In the great drawing room next door, a number of card games are in progress. Tasker is standing behind a men's game, watching the players. He is actually directly behind Ned, who is clearly nervously self-conscious. The hand finished, Tasker moves

on.

A PLAYER

Glad to see the chips are still
on the table!

ANOTHER PLAYER

The way things have been going, I
wouldn't have been surprised if
they'd gotten up and followed him out.

Tasker walks past the ladies' game on his way out, and
then across the ballroom and out onto the terrace. In his wake
we hear a number of women's remarks about him and Gin.

From one group:

A WOMAN

What a terrific looking guy!

ANOTHER WOMAN

I'd be a little afraid of a man
like that.

ANOTHER WOMAN

They say he got his start with
the gangsters.

From another group:

A WOMAN

Ginny's poor mother. She was always
such a stickler for background.
It's lucky she didn't live to -- But,
then, that's always the way, isn't it?

ANOTHER WOMAN

The man is worth millions, Madge!
Millions! How can you be so old hat?

ANOTHER WOMAN

And Ginny's no babe in the
woods, exactly. It isn't as
if she hasn't lived, if you
know what I mean.

From another group:

A WOMAN

They say his wife's terribly
broken up.

ANOTHER WOMAN

I met her once, at a service center
during the war. Seemed like a nice
little thing. Not too chic, of course.

From another group:

A WOMAN

It must be stimulating to
change husbands the way Gin
does.

ANOTHER WOMAN

She's really only had two. One
divorce and one convenient death.
You can't count that annulment
at college. So Tasker Martin
will really make only her third.

ANOTHER WOMAN

Gin Bishop sure gets away with
murder!

Tasker, having passed the porch and the terrace, is
crossing a wide lawn, when in the middle of the lawn, he sees a
pair of woman's shoes. He smiles as he picks them up and goes on
toward a sunken garden. There, he comes upon Gin Bishop, seated
upon a stone bench. She's in her early thirties, handsome, has
seen everything and done everything. She wears a low-cut,
strapless evening gown. She and Tasker look at each other for a
moment. Then, without a word, she rises and kisses him. It is a
long kiss, and she is the last to let go.

TASKER

(looking
at her
appreciatively)

How does that dress stay up,
Gin?

GIN

Sheer boredom. Waiting for you
to get out here!

(pauses)

What is it, Tass? You're worried.

He doesn't answer.

GIN

It isn't anything about the
merger?

TASKER

That was all cut and dried this afternoon.

GIN

Then you don't like the party.
Is that it?

TASKER

These stuffed shirts?

GIN

It's what you said you wanted.

TASKER

How's a man to know what he wants? He's not the same when he gets it as when he wanted it.

Gin steps back, to look at him appraisingly.

GIN

(after a silence)

Tass, you're not the philosopher type. What you're really saying is that you don't want me any more. You're tired of me.

Tasker laughs.

TASKER

You're a cocky little dame, aren't you? You think the whole world revolves around you, don't you?

(he pulls her

toward him)

Well, if I were the whole world, you'd be right.

GIN

You're my whole world.

TASKER

And I'm not tired of you, darling I couldn't be. You're beautiful and you're exciting! I'm crazy about you,

GIN

(willing to
be convinced)

Are you really?

(smiling)

Because that stock you needed for the merger was yours weeks ago. You don't have to marry me for that.

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TASKER
I never thought I did.

GIN
I never thought you thought
you did.
(to herself)
Too many thoughts?

TASKER
And not enough action.

They kiss again, but separate as steps are heard o.s. Then, as they turn to an o.s. cough, they see Ned Van Keuren, who looks troubled.

ELDERLY MAN
Look, Gin, you and Tasker
better come back to the house.
Ned Van Keuren's drunk and he's
acting up. He's just had a box
delivered to him and he's
rounding everybody up. Says
it's a present for you, Gin,
but you've got to open it.

Gin turns and starts quickly for the house, picking up the shoes as she goes.

ELDERLY MAN
(as he follows with
Tasker)
I've never seen Ned Van Keuren
like this before! I always
thought of him as a quiet chap.

In the ballroom, Gin is already standing with Van Keuren, the crowd gathered around them, as Tasker pushes his way through. Van Keuren has obviously had a lot to drink since we last saw him.

GIN
What do you mean, open it? The
box has holes in it. For all I
know, it might be a snake.

NED
Sno snake, I promise you! Go on,
Gin, don't be afraid of poor ol'
Ned. Go on now. Open it!

As he gives her a small push toward the box, Tasker grabs him by the shoulder and wheels him around.

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TASKER

The lady says she doesn't want
to open your present.

NED

(after a moment,
sadly)

Okay, okay, you're the bosh.
I'll open it myself. Ol'
Ned he'll open it himself.

Sitting on the floor, with the guests crowding around,
Ned Van Keuren opens the box with some difficulty. As he releases
the top, the sides fall simultaneously, revealing two snow-white
doves blinking in the light. They are dressed in wedding clothes,
a black stove-pipe and black cutaway on one; on the other, a white
lace crown and trailing veil.

The on-lookers are relieved. Everything's harmless.

NED

See, tha's all! Jus' a coupla
lovebirds! For Gin and her
feller. An' -- an' they get
married and live happily ever
after.

(he reaches out
for the female
bird)

All I have to remember her by!
Jus' a l'il ol', last year's,
soilded dove! Jus' a l'il --

Without a word, Tasker knocks him down, stands looking
at him for a moment, seems as if he is about to kick him, then
changes his mind, and walks rapidly out of the room toward the
garden, the crowd parting for him.

Hours later. The front door of Gin's mansion. Dawn.
Guests are saying good-night to her casually. Cars are pulling
up and departing.

GUESTS

Swell party, Gin....That swim
was heavenly.....Call this a
party? No jewelry stolen, no
murder, no nothing! I want a
rain-check.....What about Ned?
.....Don't worry about him,
he'll sleep it off. (Etc.....)

A GUEST

(to Tasker)

Neatest Sunday punch I ever
saw, Tass.

TASKER

(laughing)

Get me to tell you some day
what I did to Philadelphia
Jack O'Brien.

There is laughter.

GUESTS

Lenore, are you coming? I'm
dead.....You sure you can
drive? I think I'd better.
Please, Joe.

Amidst further chatter from the guests, Gin, back in the
house, just inside the doorway, looks at Tasker, questioningly.

TASKER

I'll phone you during the day.

GIN

That's for your public. You'll
be back.

Tasker looks at her, smiles.

TASKER

(loudly)

Goodnight, Gin.

GIN

Drive carefully, Tass.

She stands in the doorway, watching him go, confident he will be
back.

Tasker is driving in his convertible. By now the sun is
almost up. He is not exactly dozing, but he is also not

completely awake and alert, and he is not keeping strictly to his side of the road. There is the sound of a police siren from behind him. Automatically, he pulls over as a motorcycle cop gets abreast of him. He stops as the cop dismounts and comes over to him.

COP

You've been driving all over both sides of the road, Mister! Let's see your license!

TASKER

(quietly)

I'm quite sure I haven't got it with me.

(pause)

I'm Tasker Martin.

The cop reacts, obviously impressed.

COP

(after a pause)

Look, Mr. Martin, if I were you, I'd turn right on the next crossroad. Keep you out of traffic. That way you can drive as slow as you want.

"Thanks," from Martin, as he starts to drive.

A narrow dirt country road. Tasker is driving along slowly, uncertain. He shakes his head, stops, gets out.

He runs his handkerchief over his face. His collar is bothering him and he takes it off, with the tie. Then his tailcoat. He puts them all carefully in the rear of the car. He starts to walk. Aimlessly, he leaves the road and, crossing a field, starts up a knoll, outlined against the morning sky. The sound of a distant train is heard. As he reaches the top, he pauses, then starts down. As he walks, he disappears from sight behind the skyline. At the moment he finally disappears, the train is heard again, but not seen, except as to smoke, passing at full speed somewhere close by, on the other side of the knoll.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

Sunday morning. Tasker's Lake Forest estate.

In the butler's pantry, Bull -- in a sweatshirt -- is holding a tray with a halved lemon and a tall glass, into which the butler is pouring hot water, as the front doorbell rings. (It is established as the front doorbell by the indicator behind them. Together with the butler, Bull enters the entrance hall, where the butler opens the door for Harris.

HARRIS

Good morning, Bull.

BULL

(on his way up
the stairs)

Good morning, Mr. Harris.

BUTLER

Could I get you some breakfast,
Mr. Harris?

HARRIS

I'll have come coffee later with
Mr. Martin.

(to Bull,
smiling)

And there's no way you can get
me into a fast volley ball game
this morning, if that's what
you're after.

Bull grins and goes on up the stairs as Harris goes into the library, and the butler retires to the pantry.

Outside Martin's door, Bull consults his watch, and enters. Without looking toward the bed, he sets down the tray, pulls the drapes, and opens the venetian blinds.

("Everything in Tasker's room is black and gold. The room is large and its size is enhanced by the floor-to-ceiling windows that open onto the garden. The furnishings are of the best American Empire -- the gold-cloth paneling on the walls and

ceiling, the Duncan-Fyfe sideboard, the barrel chair with black swan arms and gilded wings, an inlaid cellaret, a fifteen-foot cheval glass framed in curly maple, a striped settee with one arm, half a back and saber legs, an ormolu clock set, etc. etc. The dais is Tasker's own idea.")

As Bull looks toward the bed, he sees, to his alarm, that it is empty, unslept in. The pajamas, the dressing gown and slippers are untouched. He makes a quick dash into the bathroom and dressing room. They tell the same story.

Thoroughly disturbed, he makes his way quickly down the stairs. In the hall, he hesitates for a moment, glancing toward the library, then keeps on to the breakfast-room.

Sarah Claus, sipping her orange juice, looks up to see Bull enter, returns to her sipping.

BULL

Look, Miss Claus! I -- I --

She really looks at him for the first time.

SARAH

What's eating you, Bull?

BULL

The Chief's not home. He hasn't been home all night.

SARAH

It was probably a rough party.

BULL

You know no party's too rough for the Chief.

Sarah's gotten up and is helping herself from a silver dish on the sideboard.

SARAH

Some day they're going to find out kippers weren't meant to be eaten. Good building material, probably.

BULL

Aren't you going to do anything about it?

SARAH

Oh, stop mooning around like a lost dog, will you, Bull?

BULL

I tell you, I---
(bright idea)
Why don't you phone somebody?

SARAH

Get lost, won't you? I want to eat my breakfast.

She resumes her seat, as he watches her gloomily. Finally, she can't escape the play of emotions on Bull's face.

SARAH (cont'd)

All right! Hand me the phone.

She phones the Bishop home. The butler answers from the drawing room. In the shot, as he talks, is an enormous studio portrait of Gin, in a reclining position.

In answer to Sarah's discreet inquiries, the butler tells her that Miss Bishop is asleep, and has left orders not to be disturbed under any circumstances. The party broke up about 4:30 in the morning. Mr. Martin left in his own car, driving alone.

Sarah hangs up, informs Bull of what she has learned, and resumes her breakfast.

BULL

I think Mr. Harris ought to know.

SARAH

You go tell him.

Seeing his deepening distress, she sighs and pushes back her plate.

SARAH (cont'd)

Oh, all right.

With Bull at her heels, she finds Harris in the library. He's finishing reading a contract as they enter.

HARRIS

(referring to the
paper in his hand)

I've got this contract so tight,
not even a flea could squeeze
between the lines.

(to Bull)

How's he feeling after the shindig
last night?

BULL

He's not home!

SARAH

Didn't come home at all. Bull's
starting to get me worried.

HARRIS

Look, Sarah, he's going to marry
the woman. Why the commotion?

SARAH

I just spoke to her house. She's
not up yet.

HARRIS

(smiling)

That figures.

SARAH

He left with the rest of the
guests a little after four-thirty
this morning.

HARRIS

(unworried)

Well, this isn't the Gobi desert.
It's Chicago, and---

(smiles)

and environs. It's not as if he
were lost in a trackless waste.
We'll hear something. It's just
a matter of time.

Bull continues to fret, despite Harris' reasonableness.

BULL

I don't like it! If you could
see the notes I find in his suits!
From cranks -- and from women
who've seen his picture in the
paper -- and from people who don't
even know him, but think---

HARRIS

Everybody gets those notes, Bull.
Even Mrs. Martin used to. Of
course, in this particular case....

(he shrugs)

He's no saint. And he does have
more enemies than friends.

He pauses, for an amused glance at their outraged reaction, then
continues.

HARRIS

Anybody that's amassed a fortune
over a comparatively short period
of time -- you can't make that much
dough without stepping on necks.
And well, nobody likes to be stepped
on.

BULL

We should be doing something.

Harris thinks up other possibilities. Tasker might have had an
accident, fallen asleep at the wheel, had too much to drink.

SARAH

Mr. Martin never drinks too much!

HARRIS

(reflecting)

There are plenty of places he
could have gone. A hotel? A
Turkish bath?

SARAH

Except he's never done it before.

BULL

And with no change of clothes?

SARAH

(diffidently)

Maybe Mrs. Martin?

HARRIS

(unsmiling)

Elizabeth? Not a chance.

SARAH

(after an

awkward pause)

I think I'll go back to finish
my breakfast.

(belligerently)

If you don't mind, Bull?

She leaves, followed by Bull. The moment they've gone, Harris calls Elizabeth Martin. Elizabeth is shown at her end of the phone, in the room in the Martins' Chicago apartment. No, she has no idea where Tasker is. As Harris knows, she hasn't seen him for weeks.

HARRIS
I'm sure nothing serious has happened to him.

ELIZABETH
Not to Tasker! He's always acted as if he were going to live forever. Some way or other.

HARRIS
(smiling)
I think he will.

ELIZABETH
(with an odd smile)
I know he will.

They hang up. At her end of the phone, Elizabeth sits thinking, an enigmatic smile on her face.

Bull reappears in the library, agitated. There's a cop to see Tasker, and Ruby has showed up. He's told her to wait by the pool. He's done right about Ruby, says Harris. And he's to ask the policeman to come in.

HARRIS
(handing Bull
the contract)
And see that Miss Claus gets this, please, Bull. She'll want to copy it as soon as possible.

Bull leaves with the contract.

As the cop -- a motorcycle policeman -- appears, Harris introduces himself as Tasker Martin's lawyer. The policeman is very obsequious. They found Mr. Martin's car some miles away,

about an hour ago. It was empty, and completely undamaged. They're sure everything's all right, but -- where did they find the car? The cop tells him. Harris nods knowingly. That's where Mr. Martin left it, all right. He thanks him, and the cop leaves. Harris sits in the library, genuinely worried now, staring into space, the tips of his fingers pressed together.

Ruby, sitting alongside the pool, buffing her nails, hails Bull as he passes, the contract in his hand.

RUBY

Hey, Bull!

Bull stops.

RUBY (cont'd)

What's going on here?

BULL

(evasively)

Nothing.

RUBY

Don't tell me, nothing. What'd that cop want?

BULL

Well, as a matter of fact, the Chief didn't come home last night, and we were worried --

RUBY

What's to be worried?

BULL

I'm trying to tell you. He's missing!

Ruby laughs.

RUBY

Now I've heard everything! Birds do it, bees do it. But when he does it, he's missing!

Bull looks at her malevolently, as he leaves. Ruby leans back, smiling and relaxed, continuing to buff her nails.

Sarah, in her light, airy office on the grounds, in another wing of the house, receives the contract from Bull.

BULL

There was a cop in with Mr. Harris just now.

SARAH

He just called me. They found the car, empty, unscratched.

She notes his distraught appearance.

SARAH (cont'd)

Don't let it get you down, Bull.
You've been through worse than this with him.

Bull leaves, not visibly convinced. She keeps her cheerful look until the door closes after him. Then her real concern takes over

Bull kicks the door of the small, empty gym, dispiritedly. Without any particular animation, he hits the punching bag a terrific wallop.

Quick DISSOLVES THROUGH TO CLOSEUPS. Elizabeth, as we left her, at the phone; Harris, as we left him, in the library chair; Ruby, buffing her nails, in the sun; Sarah, as we last saw her; Gin, in an enormous bed, wide-eyed, hands clasped under her head, gazing at the ceiling; and finally back to Bull. (EACH IS THINKING, IN HIS OWN WAY, OF TASKER MARTIN. WHAT WE NOW SEE IS THE LIFE OF TASKER MARTIN, AS SEEN AND REMEMBERED BY THEM.)

Through the close-up of Bull, looking off in the distance, while the punching bag jiggles in front of him --

The front of a loudly-roaring truck drives into shot,

filling the screen. As it continues along, Tasker and Bull are discovered, sitting in the cab of the truck, Bull at the wheel.

Both men are fifteen to twenty years younger than when we saw them before. Bull is in work clothes. Tasker is a cheap, flashy dresser, in the style of the period.

They are driving through a long, crowded, covered, wholesale produce market, among stands at which commodities are bought and sold.

As they come to a stop in front of one of the stands, Tasker jumps off, some bills of lading in his hand. While Bull begins to unload crates of vegetables from the truck, Tasker enters the stand and goes through to a small office, where he comes upon Nellie, a moderately-young, bosomy brunette, with business papers spread out on a box before her. Her face lights up as she sees Tasker. But he's strictly business. He gives her the bills of lading to sign, but she's not satisfied. It is evident that her relations with Tasker were not always strictly business. With Bull listening and grinning appreciatively outside, a row breaks out between them.

According to Nellie, Tasker is no longer giving her the attention she thinks she's entitled to. He stood her up the night before, and the night before that. That's right, says Tasker. The argument becomes more heated.

He was glad enough to see her every night, says Nellie, when she was getting inside tips for him on the produce market, so he could get to the farmers ahead of the jobbers. Right again, says Tasker. He suggests that she got paid, in kind! Enraged,

she picks up a cantaloupe to throw at him. He knocks it out of her hand, casually, and adds that if she happens to have any more tips, they might get together again -- practically any night -- and talk things over. This offer further exasperates Nellie. It so happens there won't be any more tips, ever. Her uncle has been fired from Kelsey's club house! Tasker: "Oh, so that's where your information came from? Alderman Kelsey?" Nellie protests, but Tasker smiles. Her secret's out.

Tasker leaves, telling her he'll give her a ring one of these days. He's not to do her any favors, says Nellie, furious. But, as the truck drives off, she looks after him longingly.

As they drive, Tasker tells Bull he'll have to call off a date they have with a couple of dames for that night. He's just had an idea.

BULL

You and your ideas!

TASKER

You planning to keep right on behind a wheel the rest of your life?

BULL

If I'm lucky!

TASKER

Not me! I buy my own ticket and I get off at any station I want. And I'm going just one way. Up!

BULL

Me, I got my twenty-two bucks a week, and it's nobody's business what I do after six o'clock. I'm satisfied.

Tasker looks at him with pity and contempt.

Some days later, Tasker is waiting his turn in the parlor of Alderman Kelsey's club house, late at night. As the only other man still waiting finishes his whispering conference with Kelsey, Tasker moves into the chair beside the desk.

Tasker is polite but firm. He's been waiting three nights, he says, and he was prepared to wait longer. His proposition is very simple.

He has come to suggest a partnership. He does a lot of trucking around the produce market, and has all the natural market contacts -- the farmers, the agents, the drivers. Kelsey wants to know what this has to do with him. "I was just about to tell you," says Tasker. "First, in your position, you get pretty good advance information now and then about what's going on in the market, particularly when the city is buying." Kelsey looks interested, but remains silent. "Then," Tasker continues, "second, in your position, you could arrange for a little credit at the bank. Just long enough to turn the stuff over." Still no answer. "You and me, we belong together. A little tip here and there -- that's you! A man with brains and nerve that knows the market -- that's me! And we split down the middle!" Kelsey is quite noncommittal. He might let Tasker know, he might not. Tasker: "Just so you understand what it's all about." Kelsey assures him he does, but will still not commit himself. Tasker gives him his phone number, for when he makes up his mind.

Two weeks later, Tasker gets a late call at his boarding house. It's from Kelsey, informing him that a certain party will be in the market for several carloads of Bermuda onions, a week

from Monday. He gives the name of a bank where credit is available to finance the operation.

Some days later, Tasker is in Kelsey's apartment, which is altogether too grand for an alderman. Kelsey's blonde is present. She, too, has an expensive look.

Tasker has come to deliver the profits from the first venture. The alderman is delighted and foresees a big future full of easy money for the two of them. (He's a little fried.) While Tasker is still there, there is a phone call for the alderman, and he lays a substantial bet on a horse. The blonde comments scornfully, "Sucker!" The alderman turns on her.

KELSEY

Fill Mr. Martin's glass! And shut up! And fill my glass, too!

A bank book. Over a period of several months, it shows successive deposits to the joint account of Tasker Martin and Lawrence Kelsey, beginning with \$2,632. This grows to a figure, on a next page, of \$17,432. This again grows to \$53,137. It ends with a final figure of \$64,923.

One night Tasker and a flashy dame, are at dinner, in a corner of a good restaurant. The headwaiter approaches Tasker. He's wanted on the phone.

Over the phone, next to the check room, Tasker learns from Kelsey, his voice trembling with excitement, that the Tri-State Canning Company has just gotten an order from the Government for 100,000 cans of tomatoes, to be delivered at once.

KELSEY

It's what we've been waiting
for. A killing!

Tasker replies that this time next week nobody's going to be able to buy a tomato 100 miles from here any direction you'd like to spit. Because he's going to have options on them all!

TASKER

It'll mean working all day and
all night. But at ten thousand
a day and night, I figure I can
take it.

(turns to the
hatcheck girl)

Give me my hat, will you, honey?

Tasker comes bursting into his little office at the produce market. It is the middle of the night; the place is completely deserted. He grabs a book from a drawer -- "Customer's Book of Names and Addresses" -- rushes back to his car, and drives off wildly.

In the restaurant, the blonde sits waiting patiently.

A montage of Tasker driving by day and night, going from farm to farm, buying up tomatoes.

Tasker signing checks, in three different kitchens, two by lamplight, one by early dawn. In each case, a different farmer is present, once alone, once with a wife, in her nightgown, once with eager-eyed children.

Tasker in a field, signing a check and handing it to a farmer, along with a paper for the farmer to sign. Tasker's eyes are tired. He rubs his forehead with his palm.

Tasker in a musty barn, next to a woman on a stool, milking a cow. He hands her a check.

Tasker driving, in pouring rain, along nasty country roads. He's up to his axles in mud. This DISSOLVES TO

Tasker, in horse and gig, by moonlight, barely able to stay awake, urging the horse on.

Tasker, in the gig, arriving back at the produce market, his mission accomplished.

Tasker and his equipage are greeted with hoots and laughter. The loudest laughter is from Bull, who stops his truck. Tasker, on edge, turns on him. A week from now, Tasker says, he'll have over \$100,000 in the bank. Bull, with his twenty-two bucks a week and nobody to question him about what he does after six at night! From now on, nobody's going to question Tasker about what he does, ever, anywhere!

Secure in the knowledge that he's made a real killing, Tasker continues on to his office, where he finds some mail under the door.

He opens the top letter, reads it, blinks uncomprehendingly, then reads it again. It's from the First Merchant Bank. A check for \$1,400, made out to Steve Grinhawk, one of the tomato-farmers, signed Tasker Martin, has come back "NSF".

We see Tasker, fighting off sleep, in a chair next to the manager's desk, at the bank. A clerk drops some papers on the manager's desk. The manager picks them up and nods.

MANAGER

I was sure we were right, Mr. Martin.
Here!

He hands a long narrow strip of yellow paper to Tasker. Tasker opens his mouth, but no words come out.

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MANAGER (cont'd)
As I told you, it's made out in
the amount of \$64,523 -- and it's
signed by Mr. Lawrence Kelsey.
After all, Alderman Kelsey -- and
a joint account --

Tasker continues to look at him.

MANAGER (cont'd)
I can see now that you knew nothing
of this, but -- well, we're a small
bank, after all, and so when this
check came to my attention, last
Friday, I reached Mr. Kelsey at
once, and asked if either of you
were dissatisfied with our service
or our policy. He said not at all.
The withdrawal was temporary and you
were not closing your account with us.

Tasker rises unsteadily. He starts out of the bank, keeping a
hand in front of him, as if he were warding off obstacles.

The front door of Kelsey's apartment. Tasker and the
superintendent. Tasker: "Open it." The superintendent hesitates
then complies. It's clear that Tasker will kill him if he doesn't.

They pause for a moment in the entrance hall, then walk
into the living room. It's messy with bottles, glasses, cigarette
butts, etc. On the floor, a revolver near his hand, lies Alderman
Kelsey. Tasker looks at Kelsey without a word.

SUPERINTENDENT
I heard tell he was having trouble.
Gambling. But I had no idea --

TASKER
Shut up.

The superintendent backs out of the room, frightened.

Tasker stands looking at Kelsey, his jaw muscles
working. Suddenly, he kicks him hard. Then he walks out of the
room, almost as if he were hypnotized, down the stairs and onto
the street. Bewildered, he starts off aimlessly, staggering, as

if he were drunk. He crosses against traffic to the next corner, narrowly escaping a serious accident. He walks a few feet further, and then collapses. A crowd gathers around him and policeman works his way through to Tasker's side. He kneels and feels Tasker's wrist. Tasker, his eyes closed, mumbling, so that the words are hardly audible: "They're all gonna come to me. Some day. They're gonna come and --" His mouth opens in a savage grin as he passes out.

A week later. The general ward of a large hospital. Lying motionless on a bed, staring up at the ceiling, is Tasker Martin. In the bed next to him lies Walter Harris, a young man of about the same age as Tasker. He is propped up on one elbow, reading a book. A nurse goes by, glances at Tasker, then smiles, as she catches Harris' eye and moves on.

HARRIS

(to Tasker)

How're you feeling?

Tasker continues gazing at the ceiling, ignoring him completely.

HARRIS (cont'd)

It can't be as bad as all that.

Still no answer.

HARRIS (cont'd)

I warn you, I'm going to keep right on talking until you answer me.

TASKER

(after a moment)

All right, I'll answer you. Drop dead!

Harris laughs.

HARRIS

The nurse wins a dollar! She says that's the first thing they always do when they start to get well -- tell you to drop dead! Proves they're going to live.

TASKER

(furiously)

Not me!

This is the first conversation between Tasker and a man who's going to play a very important part in his life, though neither of them knows it. (At this time, Harris has just completed his law studies, and, he, too, has come down with pneumonia, mostly from exhaustion due to overwork.)

In the following days, while they're both convalescing, a relationship very slowly develops between the two men. The initiative is entirely from Harris, but Tasker slowly responds. As they both improve, they are allowed to sit on a sundeck, and here, finally, Tasker begins to reveal something of himself. He never discusses his produce market career. Harris doesn't pry, and the assumption is that he will know nothing of the produce market episode -- perhaps for years to come, perhaps never. But on one occasion, Tasker does tell Harris of the childhood episode, involving the dog and the water tower, which has played such an important part in his life.

Harris on his part, reveals his ambition and ideals, which is to become a great lawyer - a foe of injustice and advocate of the underprivileged. This kind of talk about Justice and Honor makes Tasker impatient.

TASKER

You're not even dry behind the ears!
Wait till you get out into the world.
Wait till you have to shift for yourself.
You'll see how far you get with your
mealy-mouthed drool about service. You
live in an egg! I'll bet you've never
even seen a thousand dollar bill!

HARRIS
How many people have?

TASKER
Well, I have! I've seen them and
earned them and spent them.
(bitterly)
And been gypped out of them!
So don't dish out that schoolboy
pap to me!

Gradually, however, a distinct fondness develops between these two.

When the time comes for them to be dismissed from the hospital, we learn that Harris intends to convalesce in the small town in Wisconsin from which he comes, before returning to Chicago to begin a law practice. Tasker, on the other hand, has no place to go and no plans of any kind for the future. In a perfectly natural fashion, Harris -- partly out of human sympathy, partly because he has gotten to like Tasker, and understand him, he thinks -- persuades Tasker, against Tasker's strong initial opposition, to come with him to Wisconsin to recuperate there.

Harris' home town. Old-fashioned, pleasant, summer resortish, tree-shaded streets, moderate but comfortable houses, running down to the lake.

Wally and Tasker are walking together down the main street. From the many greetings from passersby, tradesmen, and etc., there is a clear picture of Harris' position in the little town.

They enter a small bookstore, and Harris is almost knocked off his feet by the greeting he gets from a very pretty girl, Elizabeth. ("She has a thin streak of a body and a tan-

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haired blob of a face... green eyes, underlined by tiny freckles, a ski-slide nose, a wide mouth, twisted to bite its inner side".) She berates Harris for not letting her know the train he was arriving on.

He is sheepishly pleased by this interest. She tells him there is a picnic the next day -- in honor of her birthday -- with all of their old friends. He'll be there, of course?

Harris: "Just try and stop me. I can bring Tasker, can't I?"

Suddenly he remembers he has not introduced them. "This is Tasker Martin. This is Elizabeth Sanderson. He's the Tasker I mean can I bring." Tasker, almost aggressively, before Elizabeth can answer: "I'm housebroken."

The day of the picnic.

Tasker and Harris are putt-putting across the lake on the way to the picnic. Harris is talking about Elizabeth. His eagerness to be with her is all too apparent.

TASKER
Is she your girl?

No answer.

TASKER (cont'd)
Going to marry her?

HARRIS
No.
(after a pause)
I mean, I haven't asked her.

TASKER
Why not?

HARRIS

I guess I'm afraid. I'm not sure about her answer.

TASKER

I can't understand any of you people. Knowing each other, year after year, and nothing happens. Nobody does anything, nobody gets ahead. Nobody --

HARRIS

(pointedly)
Nobody gets hurt.

Tasker shakes his head. That sort of life may be all right for some people, but not for him.

Later. The barbecue luncheon is ending. They're separating into little groups.

Tasker, Harris and Elizabeth, walking along the shore of the lake. Elizabeth is indulging her hobby, looking for certain kinds of stones and driftwood. Tasker finds this a harmless but profitless occupation.

Somebody comes running for Harris. There's a long-distance call for him at the boathouse. Tasker and Elizabeth are left alone.

TASKER

(suddenly)
Are you going to marry Harris?

ELIZABETH

I hadn't thought about it.

TASKER

I don't believe that. You don't believe it yourself.

ELIZABETH

All right, then, he hasn't asked me. Is that better?

Not at all. She still hasn't told him if she's going to marry

Harris. She flushes angrily. It's none of his business. Tasker smiles.

(It is obvious that for all the surface opposition between them, Elizabeth is powerfully fascinated by Tasker, who is quite different from anyone she has ever known.)

The talk comes around to the time Harris and Tasker were in the hospital together. Lightly, Elizabeth says she almost envies him his illness. Why? Because that's about the only place you can do all the reading you want. Tasker's reaction puzzles her. Reading has never seemed like a profitable occupation to him.

ELIZABETH

Profitable how? In dollars and cents?

TASKER

What else is there?

ELIZABETH

You mean, you've never read a book for just pleasure? Lying on your bed, missing a meal even, because you couldn't put the book down?

TASKER

(smiles)

I've missed plenty of meals, but not because I couldn't put down a book!

Elizabeth questions him about his reading. It is limited to an occasional story in one of the Success Magazines. When Elizabeth laughs at him, he is genuinely puzzled. She makes clear to him that there are good books and there are phoney books. "Rags to riches, bootblack to banker, that's phoney! It just doesn't happen!" But Tasker isn't listening. He is deeply and stubbornly in his own dream.

TASKER (cont'd)

It can happen! It's got to happen!

Harris returns. He tells them that the phone call was about his exams. He's passed brilliantly, but there's an oral exam the next day for which he must return that very night. Elizabeth takes this in stride. When he gets back to town, he'd better take his benighted friend in hand, introduce him to the nearest library, and show him what reading is. But Harris doesn't see any reason for Tasker going back with him. He'll be back himself in a few days. And Tasker can use a whole lot more sunshine and rest. Why doesn't she take him in hand? If he really wants to get educated, she can do a whole lot more for him than he can!

Shortly after dark. Campfire. Singing. Harris and Elizabeth are together, Tasker a few feet away. Tasker keeps staring at her, as though fascinated. Elizabeth's response is friendly, until, suddenly despite herself, she becomes self-conscious and confused. She looks away determinedly. Tasker's face shows a growing interest.

The local railroad station, at night. Tasker and Elizabeth are seeing Harris off. They make plans for what the three of them will do together when he gets back. The train leaves. Tasker and Elizabeth start to walk home.

When they get to her house, Elizabeth invites Tasker in.

TASKER

You ought to go to bed, Liz.
You've had a big day. I'm going
to shove off.

ELIZABETH

Don't go, Tass, please. Then it'll
be over. I want it to last. Stay
with me a few minutes. While I
think.

TASKER

About what?

She smiles, as they enter the living room.

TASKER (cont'd)

(after a pause)

You look very beautiful tonight.
You ought to have birthdays more
often.

ELIZABETH

You mean I look terrible the rest
of the time?

That's not what he meant. It's just that in everything she does
the way she looks, the way she talks, the way she acts -- she's
different from any girl he's ever known.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

You're quite handsome yourself.
(smiles)
You look like a man.

TASKER

Thanks.

ELIZABETH

Oh, lots of men don't look like men.
Some look like children -- and some
look like animals. Some look like
poets. Take Wally -- he looks like
a little boy. A rather sad one.

There's a long look between them. Then, suddenly, they
reach for each other in an embrace. It's a long, close kiss and
Tasker is the first to try to bring it to a close. But as he
pulls back, Elizabeth's lips follow and find his again. He is
nothing loathe; but the burning intensity, the complete abandon,
are clearly hers.

Doremo's, a popular, enormous, Chicago night club.

Tasker, Harris and Elizabeth are sitting, all dressed up, at a
table. Elizabeth, we note, wears a wedding ring. It's Elizabeth

and Tasker's wedding party, with Harris the host. He's trying to pretend he's terribly happy about the happiness of his two friends, and he is - even though Tasker's happiness is what he had once had in mind for himself. Elizabeth and Tasker try to include him in their conversation, but they are clearly, and naturally, concerned with each other.

There is a floor show, of very beautiful girls, and as a chorus line passes their table, Harris points out one of the most flashy of the girls, Ruby Calhoun. She's Nick Spingola's girl. He points out Nick Spingola, at a table by himself -- thin, pale, venomous - never taking his eyes off Ruby. (Spingola is one of the most prominent figures of the bootlegging era, the only serious competitor of Joe Dino, the head of the many rackets that have followed prohibition.)

Tasker pays scant attention to all this. He's got eyes and ears for nobody but Elizabeth. Now Harris raises his glass in a toast.

HARRIS

To your happiness, forever! And beyond that.

ELIZABETH

(lifting her glass)

I'll drink to that. I mean --

(to Tasker)

To you, darling.

(to Harris)

And to the most wonderful friend that ever lived!

All three drink together.

A booth in a Chop Suey joint.

Tasker and Elizabeth are celebrating their first

wedding anniversary with their good friend, Harris. The festivity though gay, is in marked contrast to that of a year ago.

The close of the dinner, as we come in upon it, is hurried. Tasker, in his work clothes -- (he is now, again, a truckman) -- has a night pickup to make, some miles away. Through the window they see him climb aboard his truck.

After he leaves, we learn from her talk with Harris that Elizabeth is, if possible, more in love with Tasker than ever. Their life is completely happy, from her point of view. Tasker worries quite a bit about money, to be sure, and she doesn't seem to be able to make clear to him how unimportant that is to her. Now, as they get up to go, we learn that they, too, have engagements for that evening. Harris is a public defender at a nearby night court; Elizabeth is attending a lecture at the University.

Some time later, Tasker, now in street clothes, is wearily climbing the dreary stairs to his apartment. On the landing he stops, hesitates a moment before entering. The small apartment, when he enters it, is as attractive as Elizabeth, with loving care and her natural good taste, has been able to make it. She rushes to embrace him. She is excited and happy to see him.

It takes a moment or two for her to notice that something has upset him. He explains what it is. That promotion he got last week - to assistant night-manager of the garage for which he's been trucking -- well, today he received his first new paycheck; and that's what the depression is about. Five bucks a

week raise! He had expected much more!

Elizabeth greets this with genuine sympathy at his disappointment, but tries to make clear to him how little it really means to her. They've gotten along all right. They'll continue to get along all right. Tasker finds it difficult to agree with this. There are so many things he had counted on doing with this extra money. A better apartment and clothes for both of them -- and, for her, those extra courses at the University she's been talking about. Elizabeth laughs. That doesn't have to bother him at all, she says. She won't be taking courses for quite a few months. Except, maybe, courses concerning expectant parenthood. Tasker is overjoyed at the news. And then, suddenly, he becomes even more furious at having been bilked out of his expected raise. Elizabeth tries to mollify him with affection.

The garage, some weeks later. Tasker is at his desk, behind an enclosing rail, on the mezzanine overlooking the floor of the garage. Here he is visited by an old friend, Bull -- a very resplendent Bull, sleek in flashy clothes. After preliminary greetings, Bull announces the purpose of his visit: to throw a bit of business the way of his old friend, Tasker. He, Bull, rides a truck -- belonging to his employer, and what his employer doesn't know won't hurt him -- to Canada and back, one night a week, for Nick Spingola. For this completely illegitimate and illegal business, he receives sixty dollars a night, with no questions asked or answered. He can get a similar night's work a week for Tasker.

He gestures with his hand to the garage floor below and winks. Surely Tasker will have no trouble "borrowing" one of these trucks.

To his surprise, Tasker turns him down cold. When Bull insists, Tasker becomes positively indignant. He invokes his marriage, his association with honorable people, an entire manner of decent living which he proposes to stick to. In the long run he tells Bull, that's what's going to pay off. Bull is flabbergasted. He leaves, almost convinced by Tasker's eloquence. Tasker watches him go.

The stage door at Doremo's, some days later, four a.m. The place is closing for the night. The floor show is over. Entertainers, musicians, waiters, etc., are on their way out. As they open the door to get to the alley, they have to make their way between banks of fresh-fallen snow.

Ruby, elegantly gotten up, complains to the doorman because there is no taxi waiting for her. Nick's in Detroit, and will be for a few days. But he has arranged for a special cab to pick her up each night. The doorman is apologetic and obviously frightened of offending Nick. The driver had called, he says. His cab has broken down in the snow. Get another one, says Ruby. He already has one waiting, says the doorman.

Not too well sheltered with a huge umbrella, the doorman escorts Ruby down the alley, to a waiting cab, helps her in, slams the door, then leans into the cab to give the address to the driver - whom we do not see. The cab drives off. The doorman watches it go, slipping into his pocket some bills handed him by the cab driver. Inside the cab, Ruby relaxes back into

the cushions.

The cab arrives in front of her apartment house, Ruby looks out at the deep snow on the sidewalk she'll have to cross.

RUBY

(to the cab
driver's
back)

I'm sure going to ruin my shoes.
I should have worn shovels.

There's no answer as the driver steps out of the cab, comes around, opens the door, and, still unseen in the darkness, stretches out his arms. Ruby laughs.

RUBY (cont'd)

I warn you, I'm no bantam-weight.

She settles into his arms as he carries her, with ease, across the sidewalk, her head on his chest, her coat pulled over her head for protection from the cold.

Inside the darkened hallway, with light coming only from the street, he sets her down.

RUBY

Thanks...That was sure nice of you.

There is no answer. But, now, as she looks at him, we see, for the first time, that it is Tasker Martin, staring at her boldly, eyes to eyes, as though there was a joke between them. Her hands fumble around in her purse. He stops her.

TASKER

Never mind the fare -- or a tip!
But I'm freezing to death. I
could go for a cup of coffee, if
you've got some.

RUBY

(smiling)
Coffee?

TASKER

(still not
taking
his eyes
off her)

Unless you'd like to rustle up
some scrambled eggs, too.

RUBY

(smiling)

Come on!

Ruby loads Tasker into the expensive, tasteless
livingroom Nick has provided for her.

RUBY (cont'd)

I hope you're not too hungry --
because I'd like to get into
something comfortable before I
wamble up that coffee and eggs.

Tasker, an unlit cigarette in his hand, inspects her carefully
and slowly, from the feet up, before he answers.

TASKER

I can wait.

As Ruby leaves the room, she pauses for a moment to look back at
him. He smiles at her. Ruby starts to respond with a smile, then
attempts to compose her features and leaves the room.

Tasker, who by this time has taken off his coat and his
jacket -- with his cap, they make a wet pile on a needlepoint
chairs -- turns from the window as he hears her re-enter the room.

Still with the unlit cigarette in his hand, he smiles
and whistles softly as he sees her. She's wearing a yellow-
orangey chiffon negligee, with maribou feathers and mules, also
trimmed with maribou. Tasker stares at her appreciatively.

TASKER

You sure look comfortable.

RUBY

Oh, I just use this old thing
for lounging.

(she notices his
unlit cigarette)

Didn't you find a match? I don't
smoke myself, but I always try --

She finds a pack of flat matches in an expensive cigarette box,
and walks toward him with it. As she gets to him, she lights
the match and he bends to it, with his cigarette.

Her hand trembles visibly as his gaze moves over her.

TASKER

You look like you're on fire in
that color -- and your hair's in
flames, too. But I suppose you
know how beautiful you are.

RUBY

I like orange sometimes. But my
favorite color is green. Of
course, a redhead would!

She is self-conscious and looks away. Then she quickly lights
another match.

RUBY

Would you like a match? I--
(she laughs)

Silly! I just lit your cigarette,
didn't I?

TASKER

Did you? I can't remember.
(looks at his
cigarette)

You must have. It's burning.

Ruby is the first to break the silence as he keeps his eyes on her.

RUBY

About my hair, I was thinking of
having it bobbed. But I don't
know -- you can cut it off, but you
can't put it back on, they say.
And so what if it looked simply
terrible, and there I was --

(she interrupts
herself)

Here I am, talking about myself,
and I don't even know your name.

TASKER

(still staring
at her, sits down
on the couch)

We can talk later. The evening's
young.

(pauses)

Why don't you sit down?

(indicates the
spot next to him)

Here.

RUBY

You tell me your name first.

TASKER

It's no secret. Tasker Martin.
Yours is Ruby.

RUBY

(only slightly
surprised)

You must have caught my act
over at Doremo's.

TASKER

Once. Now I'll go more often.
(after a pause)
Come over here.

Ruby slowly walks over.

TASKER (cont'd)

Would you like me to?

RUBY

(startled)

Would I like you to? To what?

TASKER

(smiling)

To go to Doremo's more often.

They look at each other; then he grabs her, pulls her down beside
him and kisses her hard. Her response is immediate and
enthusiastic.

Later that night, in Ruby's apartment, the phone begins
to ring. The ringing continues quite a while before Ruby finally
answers it. It is the long distance operator announcing an

incoming call. Ruby hesitates, is unsure whether to take it, when Tasker comes into the scene, smiling. Of course she should take the call: whoever it is, she mustn't keep him waiting. The call comes through, and from the way Ruby talks, it is quite obvious who it is at the other end of the line. Ruby is quite convincing -- about how she misses him and how lonely she is and about the snow storm; but the whole conversation is complicated by Tasker's antics - tickling her, blowing on the back of her neck, kissing her and trying in general, to confuse her while she tries to make sense on the phone. When she hangs up, her face is red from trying to keep from bursting out laughing. But soon Ruby is serious again. She warns him - Tasker almost got them both into real trouble that time. If the guy at the other end of that phone had suspected anything, "He'd just as soon bump a person off as --". Tasker smiles. He's not afraid of Nick Spingola! And when Ruby expresses her surprise at his knowing it was Nick, Tasker, quite frankly, tells her the true story of his coming here that night. He had planned it for weeks -- waiting for Nick Spingola to be out of town. As Ruby still doesn't understand, he goes on to explain that Spingola is in need of trucks, and Tasker can lay his hands on a whole garageful of trucks. He got the idea when a fellow came to him recently and suggested that he drive once a week, himself, for Spingola. That's not for him. Piker stuff.

The trouble has been, he didn't know how to get to Spingola. Finally he figured it out. The way to get to him was through his girl. Ruby is angry at first, then the whole thing strikes her as really funny.

Whatever apprehensions she may have, Tasker clears up for her. For one thing, she needn't worry about the regular cab and doorman. Tasker bribed them and they're so scared about Nick finding out that they'll never tell. Tasker elaborates his plan; Ruby is to introduce him to Nick. She can say he's a friend of her brother's in the trucking business. Tasker will take it from there. "Will you do it?" As his arms close around her again, Ruby agrees.

A few days later, at Doremo's Ruby brings Tasker to Nick's table. Nick believes the story, completely. Tasker amplifies and further explains what he has in mind, for both their benefits. Nick buys it quickly.

There's just one thing, Nick tells Tasker, honestly. He knows that there's practically open warfare between him and Joe Dino, doesn't he? Nick will give him as much protection as he can, but if he's not prepared for rough stuff, maybe he'd better quit before he begins. Tasker smiles at this. Somehow, he figures, the rougher the going, the bigger the money.

Ruby, her number over, comes back to Nick's table to join them in a glass of champagne, to celebrate the deal. She and Tasker exchange a quick significant look. But they are both careful. Nick suspects nothing. He even offers to provide Tasker with any one of the chorus girls he might fancy. Tasker thanks him. He's thoroughly satisfied with the way things are, he says.

Some months later. Late in the afternoon, Tasker is working in the railed mezzanine office in the garage. Below trucks are being tuned up. The activity indicates a booming prosperity. (Perched on a truck is Bull, now one of Tasker's many employees.)

Tasker looks up to find Elizabeth standing at the swinging door at the head of the stairs, smiling. He rises to greet her, but she tells him to keep on with whatever he is doing, because the quicker he finishes, the better. Since he won't come to her, she's decided to go out after him. She's waiting around until they go out to dinner together. Does he realize how little they've seen of each other recently? He does, and he's very apologetic. But -- indicating the activity below -- she sees how it is. She does, indeed, she says. She'd be satisfied with less of this -- she imitates his gesture to indicate the activity below -- and more of him.

Just then, a long, expensive, bullet-proof limousine pulls into the garage, and Nick Spingola emerges. He looks around, sees Tasker, and waves to him. Tasker waves back. Elizabeth watches in surprise, as Nick starts toward the stairs. At that instant, an open touring car, loaded with gunmen, pauses in the street, directly in front of the entrance to the garage. Tasker sees it, and shouts a warning to Nick.

It comes too late, for at this moment, shots start to pour into the garage. Nick starts to run up the stairs. He gets almost to the level of the mezzanine, when he finally collapses under the hail of bullets.

Meantime, seeing the danger approach, Tasker reaches for Elizabeth and pulls her down to the floor with himself. They remain in this position, as a second car approaches, pouring its fire into the garage.

Finally, the firing ceases, as the second car drives off. There is a sudden silence.

TASKER

(to Elizabeth)

Liz, you all right?

Elizabeth nods. Tasker gets up and runs over to the rail to ascertain what has happened below. Nick is writhing on the concrete floor. Two others lie among the wreckage. Then, behind him, he hears -

ELIZABETH'S VOICE

(very faintly)

Tass! Tass!

Tasker turns quickly and rushes to her side. As he bends over:

ELIZABETH'S VOICE (cont'd)

Tass, I think you'd better get me to a hospital.

Tasker looks at her. There is a look of deep alarm on his face.

Elizabeth's hospital room, late at night. Elizabeth lies still. Her face bares the traces of the crisis she has been through. Tasker is at the window, looking out. He hasn't left the room for two days. He turns as he hears a noise at the door. It is a woman, entering softly. It is Ruby. Tasker hurries to her.

RUBY

(anticipating
the
rebuke)

I couldn't help it.

TASKER

(concerned, he
looks hurriedly over
to Elizabeth. Her
eyes are closed.
He turns back to
Ruby)

You shouldn't have come here.

RUBY

The boys told me what happened.
I had to see you for myself.
I had to make sure.

Tasker says nothing, simply staring at her. She continues,
softly.

RUBY (cont'd)

Nick's dead. I don't care. I'm
glad! But your wife - how is she?

TASKER

She's still unconscious.
(again he glances
toward Elizabeth)
Ruby, you shouldn't be here.
Someone will see you.

RUBY

It's so late. No one but the
nurses.
(she moves closer)
Oh, Tass, Tass, you look so sad!
It's all I can do not to take you
in my arms. Are you sure you're
all right? Will your wife --

TASKER

(quietly)
I hope so. She's very weak. Please
go now. I'll come when I can.

They look at each other. Then she puts her arms around him,
kisses him, and leaves.

Tasker stays where he is, uncertain, then turns toward
Elizabeth. Her eyes are open and have been. Slowly, he
approaches her bedside. He bends down to kiss her. She suffers
his kiss, but doesn't respond. Tasker starts to straighten up.

Then, as she starts to speak, very faintly - he bends down the better to hear her.

ELIZABETH

(very faint)
I'm glad now -- I'm not going to have the baby.

Headline: BATTLE LOOMS FOR SPINGOLA EMPIRE

Bank: JOE DINO'S PLANS UNKNOWN

Some weeks later. Ruby's apartment. In addition to Ruby, some feet away, Tasker and Joe Dino are at a table, each with a lieutenant at his elbow. Bull is with Tasker. Dino is sitting, quiet under a terrific barrage from Tasker.

TASKER

(yelling)
You and your mad dogs! I like money as well as anybody, but the idea of having a bunch of bird-brains lousing up your business like you do --

Ruby looks terrified. Dino's lieutenant looks as if he thinks he ought to let Tasker have it. Bull is on the alert - Dino puts out a restraining hand.

TASKER (cont'd)

(angrily)
No wonder you all die young!
You haven't even got the sense to stay alive!

Dino says nothing. He lets Tasker rave. Tasker stops talking, finally, and there is a dead silence.

DINO

You know, Mr. Martin, nobody talks to me like that. And goes out walking. But the fact is -- I agree with you. It don't pay to be a bullhead. I don't approve of making a shooting gallery out of a great business.

DINO (cont'd)

Sometimes my boys don't act smart.
That's why I appreciate a man like
you.

TASKER

Thank you for nothing.

DINO

(smiles)

I like you, Mr. Martin. You got
brains and you got nerve and you're
a business man. Now, sit down and
I'll tell you what I have in mind.

What he has in mind is that he has decided to turn more
and more to touring cars and sedans for his own illicit
transportation needs. The entire trucking end, which will be
devoted to apparently legitimate business, is to be handled by
Tasker. The trucks will be bought and registered in Tasker's
name. Dino will get him the shipping contracts. Big stuff, like
produce and milk and coal, livestock and manufacturing and farm
products. Maybe cleaning and laundry loads. All these contracts,
too, will be in Tasker's name. Nobody has to know Dino's part
in it.

The meeting ends on a cordial note. Dino and his
lieutenant leave. Bull hesitates, then he, too, prepares to go.
He hesitates, watching Tasker and Ruby.

BULL

I guess I'll be running along.

TASKER

(nodding)

Look, Bull. Give Mrs. Martin a
ring a little later, will you? Tell
her I probably won't be home. I'll
give her a ring from the garage in
the morning.

Months later, in Harris' little coop of a law office. .
Tasker has dropped in to sign some shipping contracts Harris has
been checking for him. While he is signing -

HARRIS

It may not be any of my business --

TASKER

(sinking into
a chair)

Every time anybody starts a sentence
like that -- I'm quite sure it
isn't! Shoot!

He sits down to listen. Harris disapproves strongly of Tasker's
present alliance with the underworld.

HARRIS

You may be in the money -- but
your life isn't worth two cents!
Tass, for heaven's sake, think
of Elizabeth! She lost the baby --
isn't that enough?

Tasker rises impatiently and cuts him off. Harris should stick
to his law books, and let Tasker do his own worrying. He knows
what he's doing. Joe Dino's his friend -- with a grim smile he
adds -- "as long as I play it his way!" And anyway it's too
late --

TASKER

I'm in too deep now, don't
you understand?

Harris is unconvinced and Tasker continues. He knows what he's
doing. This is no fly-by-night gangster operation! This is
Big Business! The Business of the Future!

TASKER (cont'd)

I'm building the biggest fleet of
trucks in the middle west! I've
got accounts coming up -- you wouldn't
believe! I'm going into freight on
a scale nobody ever heard of before!

(he's genuinely
excited)

Overnight, in all directions! Door
to door service! No operating
franchise! No nothing! You'll
see, the railroad operators - men
like Van Keuren - soon they'll be
begging to play ball with me!
Don't think they won't! Before
I'm through with them --

(he grins and adds,
more quietly)

I've always wanted to own a railroad.

50

A private parking enclosure, at the Turf Club, alongside a race track. People are wandering towards their cars. One group, happy, noisy, consists of Dino, Tasker, Bull and Dino's bodyguard of before, Ruby and another flashy young woman. As they come to a striking, open, custom-built, new Duesenberg, Dino and the two women get into the car first, Tasker getting last into the driver's seat. The Bodyguards get into an ordinary sedan convertible, right next to the Duesenberg.

As Tasker has his foot on the starter, another little group appears, confidently headed towards the Duesenberg. This group consists of Gin Bishop, beautiful and soignée; Fred Van Keuren, a distinguished looking man in his late fifties; a blond polo player; and another young woman. They come up to the Duesenberg as though it were theirs, startles to see intruders in it. Gin Bishop is the first one to speak.

GIN

You've made a mistake, haven't you?

Bull and Dino's bodyguard, sensing trouble, get out of their car and walk toward the Duesenberg.

TASKER

Have I?

GIN

(still superior)
This happens to be my car.

TASKER

(he laughs)
Nervy little piece, aren't you?

GIN

Will you please get out of my car?
Or do I have to call the police?

THE POLO PLAYER

(pushing Gin
aside gently)
I'll handle this, Gin.

BULL

(moving in)
What about it, Chief?
(points to the
Polo Player)
Do we handle him?

TASKER

Relax, Bull! You too, Mister --

VAN KEUREN

Van Keuren.

Tasker reacts at the name.

TASKER

Frederick Van Keuren?

Van Keuren does not dignify this with an answer.

TASKER (cont'd)

I've heard of you. Oh! This
is Mr. Dino and Miss Calhoun.
And Miss Amente.

(to Gin)

What did you say your name was?

GIN

I'm Virginia Bishop.

TASKER

Glad to meet you, Miss Bishop.
I've heard of you, too.

VAN KEUREN

(stepping forward)

We've all heard of you --

(significantly)

-- and Mr. Dino. But I can't say
that I'm glad to meet either of you!

The Bodyguards move forward but Tasker motions them back.

TASKER

This happens to be my car, Miss
Bishop. It was made according
to my specifications.

GIN

(aggravatingly)

And you specified the initials V.B.
on the door?

TASKER

Not exactly. T. M. -- for
Tasker Martin!

As the door swings, they can both read the initials T. M. with a small but quite pretentious crown above them. Gin gapes in astonishment, then smiles to cover her embarrassment.

TASKER (cont'd)

(getting back
in the car)

Don't bother to apologize.

From the next row of cars, the Polo Player and the girl are calling, having discovered Gin's car, an identical Duesenberg Special.

VOICES

Come on, Gin! It's over here!

GIN

(to Tasker)

Of course, you thought I was a car thief?

TASKER

(smiling)

Amateur, at best.

She turns and starts off towards her car, accompanied by Van Keuren. Tasker watches them go; then he calls out.

TASKER (cont'd)

We'll meet again some day, I hope.

She turns and gives him a look; Van Keuren walks on without a word. Tasker watches them go, then gets back into his car and roars off.

The Duesenberg with Tasker at the wheel drives up a ramp and enters the garage of a magnificent new apartment house. Tasker gets out, goes towards the elevator.

Tasker lets himself out of the elevator into his apartment, which has a private entrance from the elevator.

He walks through one elegantly furnished room after another, on his way to his bedroom. He passes the open door of

Elizabeth's sitting room, which is adjacent to her bedroom. (He and Elizabeth occupy separate suites.) Elizabeth's suite is in marked contrast, in simplicity and taste, to the rest of the apartment. She is at her writing desk. Tasker sees Elizabeth and stops. She looks up from her desk, but says nothing.

TASKER

Well, this is a surprise! We meet again!

ELIZABETH

(pleasantly)

Hello, Tass.

TASKER

Then you do remember me?

Elizabeth is not amused. She is polite and friendly, but reserved. Tasker turns on his charm but with little success. He tries another tack. On his way home, he tells Elizabeth, he's had a wonderful idea. They'll get in the car and he'll take her out to a small wonderful French restaurant he knows on the edge of the Lake. Elizabeth smiles. How does that fit in, she asks, with the three phone calls that have come in the last half hour, reminding him that he's guest of honor at a party being given for a movie star passing through town? Tasker grins. He admits he'd have difficulty cancelling the earlier date. In that case, Elizabeth says, she doesn't have to cancel her engagement to attend a meeting of the Philharmonic Orchestra Committee. Tasker starts towards his bedroom, then comes back a moment later, having removed his coat and collar and tie.

The scene that follows is played with Elizabeth at her desk and Tasker coming in and out in progressive stages of undressing and dressing for his evening's activities.

The argument, which starts quietly, then builds under Tasker's needling, has to do with each one's estimate of the life the other is leading. It is evident that they have almost nothing in common these days.

ELIZABETH

I don't happen to like your friends.

TASKER

They're not my friends! They're my business associates.

(he adds)

They don't exactly whistle when you go by, either.

ELIZABETH

That's the thing I like the best about them!

TASKER

In case you're interested, I have the same trouble with your associates. The men keep their hands on their hips and the women wear Indian jewelry.

ELIZABETH

If you don't like them, why do you come in when they're here?

TASKER

Your door's wide open. I have to pass that door to get to my room. What am I supposed to do? Pull down my hat and sneak past?

Tasker turns and goes back into his room. He's getting into his shirt when he sees Elizabeth standing in the doorway, behind him.

ELIZABETH

Tass, I'm sure I don't care what you do, or whom you see -- just so we stop this arguing. I want peace, that's all. It's not civilized to bark and snap at each other like this. Why do we do it?

Tasker doesn't turn, but continues adjusting his tie in the mirror.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

And why do we dodge the most
important thing of all?

(there is a
long pause)

Do you want me to give you a divorce?

Tasker continues adjusting his tie. Elizabeth waits for an answer. Getting none, she turns and starts back to her room.

In her room, she sits in front of her dressing table.

She is troubled, and sad. Suddenly Tasker comes in again. Without a word, he goes over to where she sits, goes down on his knees, and buries his head in her lap. He begs her to be patient with him. Somehow -- he doesn't quite know how -- he feels that things are going to change between them. For one thing, his present associates won't be his associates much longer. He has a big idea, he can't tell her about it yet -- but he'll tell her when it happens. Elizabeth assures him, very sincerely, that she will be patient.

Some months later. Sarah Claus is taking dictation from Frederick Van Keuren in Van Keuren's private office.

(These are the same offices that Tasker Martin is seen occupying in the beginning of the picture. He will take them over from Van Keuren, in due course, along with the Van Keuren enterprises.)

Van Keuren is proud, forceful and overbearing, with a face like an eagle.

Tasker Martin is announced on the inter-com. Sarah rises with her book. Van Keuren motions her to keep her seat.

VAN KEUREN

Stay in here. I'll get rid of that hoodlum in a moment.

Tasker enters, arrogant and sure of himself. Conceal it though she will, it is impossible to avoid noticing the first impact Tasker has upon Sarah. Her hand going in a revealing, unconscious feminine gesture to adjust the curl of her hair.

VAN KEUREN

(coldly)

Well, Martin?

Dropping into a chair without an invitation, Tasker begins at once to explain the advantages for the Illinois Western Railroad, which Van Keuren controls, of an association with the Martin Trucking Corporation. Van Keuren interrupts him. He has Tasker's lengthy letter in front of him -- he lifts it off the desk -- presenting all the arguments. Tasker interrupts. Sitting deep in the chair, his legs wide apart in front of him, his hands hanging over the chair arms, his eyes fixed on the formidable figure of Van Keuren, he states his case.

TASKER

The point is, Mr. Van Keuren -- the railroads can make an ally of their enemy, the truck. Eliminate the competition by matching it! By joining up with us, you reduce your operating costs and you release railroad equipment for long-distance hauling. You also relieve terminal congestion. This sort of merger would work out especially well on a small mid-western line like yours. What do you think of it?

Van Keuren smiles. It's an encouraging smile.

VAN KEUREN

Not a bad idea, Martin. Not bad at all. I've thought of it myself -- more than once.

(he takes off his glasses, taps the palm of his hand with them)

But where do you come in, Martin? I'm sure you haven't devised this plan purely in the interests of Illinois Western?

TASKER

(leaning forward eagerly)

It was my thought, sir, that I could furnish and handle the trucks. I'd load my trucks aboard a string of your flatcars. The railroad would get a straight fee. This could bring you an additional gross revenue of seven hundred thousand, maybe a million, a year. Does that still sound like a drop in the bucket, Mr. Van Keuren?

VAN KEUREN

(quietly)

I still want to know, what do you gain, Martin? We make a million more a year. What do you make?

TASKER

I'm thinking of the future, Mr. Van Keuren.

VAN KEUREN

Very good, Martin. Very good. It's young men like you who will blaze new trails in the field of transportation --

On Tasker's face it is evident he thinks he has won. Sarah, who knows her boss, knows that exactly the opposite is true.

VAN KEUREN (cont'd)

You're unquestionably right. And the Illinois Western unquestionably will get around to such a combination of media in due time.

(he pauses, smiles and then continues)

But when we do, Martin, we'll operate our own trucks. We have the capital. It would be of no advantage to us to form a tie-up with a firm like yours.

TASKER

Except --

(smiling)

I know the trucking business and you don't.

VAN KEUREN

We could hire men that knew. Some Martin-trained men, perhaps.

TASKER

The maestro always knows a few tricks he doesn't pass on to his pupils.

VAN KEUREN

You don't suffer from lack of confidence, do you, young man?

TASKER

There's no reason why I should.

Ned Van Keuren enters without knocking, a document in his hand. Tasker rises. Seeing that his father has a visitor, he is about to excuse himself when Van Keuren tells him to sit down, pointedly neglecting to introduce him to Tasker, who remains standing. Ned is ignored by Van Keuren until Tasker leaves, but there is a quick look between Ned and Sarah. (In his father's presence, Ned has a nervous, diffident look.) Van Keuren turns back to Tasker.

VAN KEUREN

Look, Martin, I like you. And I'm going to be honest with you. Illinois Western isn't the biggest railroad in the country, but its nose is clean. I inherited it from my father, and I've built it up. I'm proud of its good name, and it's going to have a good name --

(gesturing
toward Ned)

-- when I pass it on to my son. There have been rumors about your company, Martin. Some say it's backed by Public Enemy Number One.

TASKER

(without flinching)

He's got a name. Joe Dino.

VAN KEUREN
Not the kind of name I could
approve of in an associate.

Tasker grins and comes over to Van Keuren, his hand outstretched
He realizes there is nothing to be gained by staying. But he
won't admit he is defeated.

TASKER
When we do come to the point of
partnership, Mr. Van Keuren,
we'll exchange books.

He turns and starts out of the office. As Tasker is about to
reach the door --

VAN KEUREN
Oh, Martin!

Tasker turns.

VAN KEUREN (cont'd)
Never wear a grey felt hat.
Wear a brown one. Something with
a smaller brim.

Tasker doesn't take offense. He grins, while he examines his
hat.

TASKER
Thanks for the tip, sir. Anything
else?

VAN KEUREN
Since you ask me -- Your jacket
is too tight, and that pin stripe's
too broad.

TASKER
Thanks a lot, Mr. Van Keuren.
(he grins again)
It hasn't been a wasted afternoon,
after all.

He turns and goes out.

VAN KEUREN
I'd hate to meet that young man
in a dark alley. Ned, did you
notice those shoulders?

Ned shrugs.

SARAH
(brightly)
I did.

Van Keuren. Sr. looks at her and smiles. Ned does not.

The hot sands of Florida. Gin Bishop is sunbathing on a private beach.

Propped up on one elbow, rubbing oil on herself, she notices, with a general but not a particular interest, the figure of a man approaching. He is in bathing trunks.

It is Tasker, taking an idle stroll along the sands. After a moment, he sees this rather intriguing figure, lying half-naked on the sand and walks over to investigate more closely.

It is only after he is standing over her that Gin acknowledges his presence.

GIN

This is a private beach. Or
didn't you know?

Tasker doesn't answer immediately. He smiles, bends down and reaches into her beach-bag, takes out two cigarettes and lights them - and offers her one. She takes it.

TASKER

That's not the way to welcome
an old friend.

Gin is frankly puzzled.

TASKER (cont'd)
Don't pretend you've forgotten.

GIN
I won't pretend I've forgotten.
I have forgotten!

Tasker, unembarrassed, sits down on the sand beside her.

TASKER
Then I'd better remind you.

In the sand, with his fingers, he traces the initials T. M. He looks at her, grinning.

TASKER (cont'd)
You tried to swipe my car.

GIN
I didn't get away with it?

TASKER
No.
(after a pause)
I told you we'd meet again.

Now Gin is smiling too, lying on the sand, looking up at him. Of course she remembers. As a matter of fact, since that afternoon at the races, she has been hearing a good deal about him -- as who hasn't? It is clear that she is intrigued by his connection with the underworld, just as he is impressed by her intimacy with such people as the Van Keurens.

What is Tasker doing down in Florida, she asks? Tasker replies that he's here to play and enjoy a well-earned rest.

GIN
You'll find it pretty quiet here.

TASKER
Not any more. I intend to spend most of my time with you.

GIN
They forgot to tell me that you're very naive.

TASKER

But very well informed. I've heard a lot about you. You get around!

GIN

Any names I'd remember?

TASKER

(smiles)

You'll remember mine.

GIN

You think?

He bends down and kisses her. She does not resist, but finally she pulls away. He looks at her, smiles and gets up.

TASKER

We might as well begin with dinner tonight.

GIN

Might we?

TASKER

The Martillion. Eight o'clock?

GIN

If I'm not there by ten, go ahead without me.

TASKER

You'll be there - at eight.

The living room of Tasker's elegant hotel bungalow. A table is being set for two, under the watchful eye of a captain, to whom Tasker is giving last minute instructions. The phone rings in the bedroom. It is Harris, from Chicago, telling Tasker that Joe Dino has just been indicted for income tax evasion. It is evident that this news comes as no surprise to Tasker. He and Harris may even have had something to do with it. Harris tells Tasker he is required to appear before the Federal Grand Jury in the morning. Tasker hesitates, then says he'll fly back at once.

During the call, Gin has come in, suitably garbed for what she thinks the occasion will be. She overhears the end of the phone conversation. When Tasker hangs up, she is curious and wants to hear more. Tasker is jubilant. Now, maybe, her friend, Mr. Keuren will change his attitude. Gin says she doubts it. Fred Van Keuren's a proud, tough old man.

In the meantime, a porter has appeared in the bedroom to pack Tasker's things. Tasker gives instruction about plane tickets, etc. Gin stands in the doorway, watching him curiously. Tasker becomes aware of this and goes to her.

GIN

What a pity! We might have amused each other.

TASKER

We would have.

GIN

We'll never be sure now, will we?

TASKER

Don't worry. I'll be around for you some day. And when I show up, you'll look at me and say -- "It's about time."

GIN

(smiling)

Is that the way I'll say it?

Before he can answer, the porter comes through with Tasker's bags.

BOY

All ready, Mr. Martin.

TASKER

Thanks.

(turning back
to Gin)

And when we do get together, you won't be disappointed! Remember that!

He kisses her lightly. Gin smiles and watches him go.

Streamer Headline: JOE DINO SENT TO ALCATRAZ ON
FIFTEEN YEAR INCOME TAX RAP

DISSOLVE TO ANOTHER

Streamer Headline: MARKET COLLAPSE CONTINUES
RAILROADS LEAD DECLINE

Again Van Keuren's office.

Van Keuren has aged considerably, but he is still an impressive figure of a man. There is an open bar along the wall, from which Sarah is bringing him a straight drink and a glass of water. Tasker Martin is announced on the inter-com. Van Keuren says to send him in. Ned is standing beside the desk. He looks worried.

NED

You're not serious, Father?

Van Keuren swallows the drink, not answering. He returns the empty glass to Sarah.

NED (cont'd)

They're saying all over La Salle Street that you're thinking of making a deal with Martin. That you're taking him in as a partner --

The old man does not answer.

NED (cont'd)

It's not true, is it?

There is a long pause. The old man stares at his son.

VAN KEUREN

Who can I take?

(scornfully)

You? What do you know about running a railroad? When did you ever show any ability to run the business? I need help now. I need money and a man to help me out of this mess --

NED
(contemptuously)
A man like Martin?

VAN KEUREN
(angrily)
Tasker Martin is twice the man you
are, or ever will be!

This strikes home. Ned, drawing his withered hand close to his side, seems about to answer, changes his mind, and leaves the room. In the doorway, he almost collides with Tasker. Ned walks past him without a word.

Tasker, with a smile, walks on toward Van Keuren's desk. His manner is calmer, less aggressive than before. And he is wearing a suit which, by its conservative cut and color, can not help satisfying Van Keuren. He puts down on the table a brown hat with a narrow brim, but remains standing. Van Keuren watches. Their eyes meet over the hat. They both smile. This time Van Keuren invites him to sit down.

VAN KEUREN
I understand you were smarter than
the rest of us. You got out of
the market in time.

TASKER
I was lucky. I did get out with
most of my shirt intact.

VAN KEUREN
According to the talk, you did a
lot better than that.

TASKER
To tell the truth, Mr. Van Keuren,
I did well enough so that I'm now
sole owner of my outfit.

Van Keuren says nothing.

TASKER (cont'd)
And I'm sure you'll be glad to know
the nose of the Martin Express
Company is now clean. (cont'd)

(pauses)
I've also got some cash to work
with.

(there is a
long pause)
Interested, Mr. Van Keuren?

They look at each other.

VAN KEUREN
Sit down, Tasker.

As Tasker sits down and they smile at each other, it is clear that with the simple use of the name "Tasker", it is now an accomplished fact that Van Keuren and Tasker are associates. To celebrate the occasion, Van Keuren instructs Sarah to open a bottle of champagne. She does so. From the flow of champagne --

A MONTAGE. Flashes of scenes showing the progress, simultaneously, of Tasker's and Van Keuren's business and social association. Tasker knows how to make money, Van Keuren is teaching him how to spend it. To all intents and purposes, Tasker has become old Van Keuren's son -- the son Ned has failed to be.

FREDERICK VAN KEUREN enterprises are seen changing to
VAN KEUREN - MARTIN enterprises.

Van Keuren and Tasker are seen gay at a night club,
with two women, one of them, Ruby.

Letterheads of important industries change from Van
Keuren to VAN KEUREN - MARTIN.

Van Keuren and Tasker, white-tied, are in the third row
on the aisle, at a musical opening.

A board meeting, recognizably in the board room where
Tasker is first introduced at the beginning of the picture, in

which Tasker is haranguing, and practically ordering, fellow directors, with Van Keuren looking on, smiling appreciatively.

Shortly before dawn, Tasker and Van Keuren are in a duck blind, with attendants, dogs, and other appropriate accessories of the sporting life.

Tasker and Van Keuren, at a broad desk, are signing very important-looking documents, with Harris at Tasker's side. The papers signed, Van Keuren and Tasker shake hands. From the look of triumph on their faces, it is clear that a big deal has just been put over.

A railroad train, rushing through the night. On the rear of the train is Van Keuren's private car. A gay party is in progress. Nobody, except perhaps Tasker, is completely sober. A few girls are dancing to the blaring music. Another young couple is doing some serious drinking. But the major entertainment is centered around a circular poker table, with Tasker and Van Keuren, friendly but determined in their game, two of the six participants. Ruby is standing behind Tasker's chair.

The same car, lights out, shortly after dawn. (Through the windows, the endless western plains are visible.) For the moment, Ruby, still in evening clothes, is alone in the car, her head on the table, in the midst of scattered cigar butts, cards, chips, etc., utterly miserable.

Tasker enters, in pajamas and bathrobe. He watches her in silence. Finally, Ruby loses the game of pretending that

she doesn't know he has entered, and lifts her head to him. Her face is tear-streaked.

TASKER

Why don't you get to bed?

She doesn't answer.

TASKER (cont'd)

(more gently)

Go on, Ruby, get to bed.

RUBY

You've made me feel bad before!
But you've never insulted me
like last night.

TASKER

(quietly)

I haven't insulted you.

RUBY

Playing poker -- with me as the
stakes! Losing me to Van Keuren!

TASKER

(smiling)

He had one chance in a million to
draw that king, Ruby. I didn't
think I could lose.

RUBY

You always think you can't lose.

TASKER

(coldly)

I never have yet.

RUBY

Gambling me away, as if I were
a horse or an order on a tailor
or something.

They look at each other.

RUBY (cont'd)

What kind of a life do you think
this is for me --

(makes a desperate
attempt at tenderness)

Tass?

TASKER

The kind of life I care to
give you.

RUBY

(wildly)
Well, I'm not satisfied with it!

TASKER

I am.

Ruby rushes out of the car. Suddenly, Tasker hears a light cough from the other end of the car. He turns slowly and sees Sarah. She is busy tidying up the poker table at the other end of the car. Tasker goes towards her. She has discovered, in an ash tray, under a pile of ashes and cigarette stubs a huge solitaire set in a platinum ring. She flicks off the ash and holds it up for Tasker to see.

SARAH

Do you happen to know who this belongs to, Mr. Martin?

TASKER

(smiling)
Ever hear of finders keepers?

She looks at Tasker, then back at the ring.

SARAH

I don't like the setting.

Tasker laughs. Then, as he is about to go -

SARAH (cont'd)

I'm sorry. Maybe I should have coughed earlier. I couldn't help overhearing --

TASKER

Not at all. You might as well know the kind of man you're going to work for.

SARAH

(looking at
him steadily)
You sure you know the kind of man you are, Mr. Martin?

They look at each other for a moment. Then Tasker walks out.

Sarah continues tidying up the poker table.

Sarah's private cubicle in the office of the extensive Van Keuren-Martin enterprises. Sarah is at the phone. Sweetly, but quite ruthlessly, she is assuring Ruby that Tasker is not in. She's evasive about Tasker's reaction to all the messages that Ruby has left for him. She's sorry but she's not interested in whether Ruby thinks she's not telling her the truth. Wearily, she repeats, yes, she'll tell Mr. Martin that Miss Calhoun called.

As she hangs up, she becomes aware of Ned, standing before her desk. Is his father still in with Tasker, he wants to know, pointing? He is, says Sarah. They haven't sent for him, have they? No, says Sarah.

Ned is disturbed and humiliated at the secondary position to which he is being relegated. Sarah, sensing his deep distress, comforts him gently. She understands how he feels. But she can't conceal her genuine belief that whereas he may be entitled to his own personal dissatisfaction, Martin, in a business way, is the best thing that has ever happened to the firm -- and the family. Ned looks at her, upset that she too has gone over to the Martin side. Ned asks her please to tell his father that he was here. Sarah says she will. It is evident that she is torn between sympathy for Ned and hero-worship for Tasker Martin.

Ruby's apartment. Some time later.

Walter Harris is sitting with a tear-stained but dignified Ruby. She has summoned him and he does not quite understand why. In answer, she hands him a newspaper clipping, which, she says, has kind of convinced her. It is a picture of

Tasker and Elizabeth, radiantly happy against the background of a tropical cruise. If that's how it is, says Ruby, she's only too glad to give Harris her word that she will surrender all claim on Tasker. Harris is as tactful as he can be. She knows how Tasker feels about her. He has left most empathic instructions that she is to be generously provided for.

RUBY
(aggressively)
He don't have to worry about me!

HARRIS
(smiling)
Maybe he's worrying about himself.

During Ruby's ensuing recital of the grievances she has suffered at Tasker's hands, it becomes clear that he remains the most important thing in her life, and that she would be willing to crawl back to him on her hands and knees any time he sent for her. On the other hand, she bears him no real ill will for getting rid of her, now that she has outlived her usefulness to him. For that's all that people mean, really, to Tasker, says Ruby. It's just a question of what use they can be to him. "And yet --"

HARRIS
(interrupting her)
You've just summed him up as well as anyone I've ever known.

Ruby is bewildered.

HARRIS (cont'd)
Those two words. "And yet --"

RUBY
(after a pause)
He must have hurt you pretty bad, some time, too.

Harris looks at her.

HARRIS

(quickly)

As I was saying -- Mr. Martin is
very anxious that you be free of
any financial concerns from now on --

Ruby says actually she's done very little thinking about the future. But, casually, there is one business she might like to go into. A beauty shop. A really high-class place. And it just so happens she heard a few days ago of a wonderful location. Right in the arcade of the Van Keuren-Martin building. Would Tasker mind? Harris is sure he would not. Then he smiles -- Ruby certainly has a lot of information on a subject she's only just started to think about! Ruby winks a tearful eye. They smile at each other.

INSERT Cable blank on which a hand is
finishing writing the following
message to Walter Harris in Chicago:

HAVING WONDERFUL TIME. GLAD YOU'RE
NOT HERE. WISH THIS WERE TRUE OF ALL
PASSENGERS EXCEPT US TWO. BUT WE DO
LOVE YOU. YOU KNOW WE DO.

It is Tasker and Elizabeth who are jointly composing this cable seated in deck chairs on board a luxurious cruise ship in tropical waters. From the steward who takes the cable to the radio room, we gather this is the only message Tasker has sent all week. He and Elizabeth sit there, carefree, contented, and relaxed -- very much as we saw them in the newspaper clipping in Ruby's apartment. Every now and then one looks at the other curiously, is caught looking, and they both smile. But behind

Elizabeth's smile, there lurks the inevitable question: can this be true? After all the deviations and detours, are she and Tasker really back on the road they thought they had entered upon in the first months of their marriage? On the surface, it seems so.

Tasker sits beside her; now he is reading a book -- War and Peace. He is at page 205. Elizabeth smiles, remembering when she first started him on it -- can it really be ten years ago? When she looks again, Tasker has closed the book and is staring out to sea.

Newspaper Headline: FREDERICK VAN KEUREN DEAD
HEART ATTACK FATAL TO
RAILROAD MAGNATE.

Ned Van Keuren, the next morning, alone, in old Van Keuren's office. He is sunk deep in a chair, motionless, as the door opens. He does not look up.

TASKER

It's me.

(he goes over
to Ned)

I can't tell you how sorry I am, Ned.
You know how I felt about the old man.

NED

I know.

There is a silence. As Tasker puts his arm around Ned's shoulder.

TASKER

I want you to know I'll do everything
I can. You won't have to bother
about details. I'll take care
of things --

NED
(sincerely)
You're very kind.

Tasker continues, pacing about the room - all energy.

TASKER
When the news gets out, a lot of our stockholders will get scared, and the sharks will smell a chance to get in on a good thing. Somebody's got to protect our interests. Your father and I were partners. We're partners, now, Ned.

NED
I know how much my father believed in you --

TASKER
I'm calling a meeting of the Board for Tuesday. Some of the men are away, but that can't be helped. I don't expect you to be there, of course. If you'll just give me your proxy, so I can vote for both of us --

NED
(passes a hand
over his weary eyes)
Certainly. By all means.

TASKER
Harris will bring around some papers for you to sign tonight -- purely routine.

Teletype Machine: STRONG BUYING AT THE OPENING OF THE MARKET TODAY SENT VAN KEUREN-MARTIN ENTERPRISES TO A NEW HIGH FOR THE YEAR AND DISCOUNTED FEARS THAT OUTSIDERS WOULD BE ABLE TO ACQUIRE CONTROL IN THE CONFUSION FOLLOWING THE SUDDEN DEATH OF FREDERICK VAN KEUREN.

Tasker Martin, behind his desk, in what was formerly old Van Keuren's office. To make the similarity complete, Sarah is seated nearby.

Without knocking, Ned Van Keuren comes in. On Sarah's face, we can follow the conflicting emotions with which she faces the scene to come. Tasker is very calm, almost debonair.

TASKER

Sit down, Ned.

NED

(stiffly)

Thank you, I prefer to stand. I've only a few things to say, and --

TASKER

I'll say them for you. Actually you've only got one thing to say. I've double-crossed you, haven't I?

NED

(his mouth trembling)

You took advantage of my father's death and --

TASKER

I've always wanted to own a railroad -- and now I do. Without the proxies I got you to sign, I might not have been able to get it as quickly as I did.

NED

But --

TASKER

Even if your father had lived, I'd have wound up with the railroad. We never discussed it, but he knew it as well as I did. It was just a question of time.

NED

That doesn't alter the fact that you took advantage --

TASKER

(interrupting sharply)

Ned! Do you want your proxies back? You can have them. You can have them and the responsibility and the risk of running that railroad -- and all that goes with it!

NED

I --

TASKER

Do you think for one moment
you'd be able to handle it?

Ned stands staring at him. But no sound passes his trembling lips.

TASKER (cont'd)

Let's not discuss it any
further. Right?

NED

(slowly)

I guess I --

Tasker gets up and puts his arm around Ned's shoulders.

TASKER

Look, Ned. I don't mind at all
your coming in here and taking
this up with me. But I want it
understood -- you've taken it up.
And it's settled. I'm in charge.
In full charge. You'll get all
the money you're entitled to --
(smiles)
More than you're entitled to, if
you want to look at it honestly.

NED

It's not a question of money.
It's --

TASKER

It's what?

Ned doesn't answer.

TASKER (cont'd)

Exactly! You don't know,
because it isn't anything. You
have no grievance -- against me.
(there's a pause)
And you have no objection to my
having changed the name of the
corporation to Martin, do you?

NED

(bitterly)

Would it do me any good if I
did?

TASKER

No.

Ned turns and goes out.. Only Sarah watching him go, knows the full extent of his humiliation.

In a very elegant restaurant, Tasker and Walter Harris, both in white ties, and Elizabeth, extremely pretty and extremely décolletée, are having dinner together.

This is their tenth wedding anniversary. Elizabeth is wearing the expensive bracelet that we saw Bull return to Tasker earlier (CF page 8). Throughout the scene, there are inescapable memories of the other two similar dinners we have seen: the first one at Doremo's and the one, the following year, at the Chop Suey joint.

The reason for their being so elaborately dressed up is that after dinner they're all going to the most important ball of the season -- one which Tasker, secretly, and not too secretly at that -- is flattered to have been invited to. There is some teasing of Tasker about this, and this brings the talk around to the theme of "no more worlds to conquer". What is Tasker going to do next, they ask him - now that there is nothing left for him to go after. Tasker answers jokingly, but it's clear that the thought vaguely troubles him. He admits that without the excitement of the hunt and the struggle, life would have no savor for him. Elizabeth objects that life is not all fighting and climbing. "When it isn't," says Tasker, "you die!" And with this, he puts an end to a conversation he is beginning to find enervating. They leave for the ball.

The ball.

It is quite a party, with a mixture of old-line society, the newly-rich, and cafe society.

Tasker is dancing with Elizabeth. Suddenly, he becomes aware of Gin Bishop some distance away, dancing with Ned Van Keuren. His pause, as he sees Gin, is not marked enough for Elizabeth to become aware that anything has happened.

At the end of the dance, Tasker contrives to bring Elizabeth close to where Harris standing, so that it is the most natural thing in the world for Harris to come over and claim Elizabeth for the next dance.

As the music begins, Tasker leaves them and walks over rapidly to where Gin is about to begin dancing with Ned. Gently, but firmly, he brushes Ned aside. Gin, making no secret of her approval, moves into Tasker's arms, as they dance off.

TASKER

Well?

GIN

Well what?

Tasker doesn't answer. Gin looks at him, smiling.

GIN (cont'd)

It's about time!

(after a pause -
with a smile)

Is that the way I'm supposed
to say it?

Tasker still does not answer. They dance on for a moment. Then he stops, takes her arm, and walks with her, off the floor.

TASKER

Come on! Let's get out of here!

Gin laughs. Just a moment, she has to get her coat. As she goes off towards the cloak room, she looks back, smiling at Tasker.

Tasker goes quickly toward Harris, who is at the buffet, getting Champagne for himself and Elizabeth.

TASKER

Walt, I'd like you to do me a favor.

(as Harris looks,
questioningly)

I'd like you to take Elizabeth home.

HARRIS

(puzzled)

I don't understand. I --

TASKER

(sharply)

You don't have to understand.
I said I'd like you to take Elizabeth home.

HARRIS

Look, Tass, I --

TASKER

All right, I'll spell it out for you. I shan't be taking Elizabeth home. I'm asking you to.

As far as Tasker is concerned, the scene is over. He walks off.

Harris continues to watch him, and sees him join Gin. As if he were afraid of what he were going to see, he glances in Elizabeth's direction. His fears are well-founded. Elizabeth has also seen Tasker and Gin; she watches them leaving the party together.

Shortly before dawn, Tasker lets himself into his apartment. He pauses before Elizabeth's door. It's closed, and he proceeds to his own suite.

There, hollow-eyed, is Harris, who has spent the night waiting for him.

Tasker attempts to ward off a scene with badinage, but Harris isn't having any. He has waited to see Tasker, he tells him, at Elizabeth's request, to acquaint him with her decision. She has left for the cottage in the country, (where she has spent a good part of her time during the past few years), and has no intention of returning. He can have a divorce if he wants it. She leaves it up to him. But he is to understand that as far as their life together is concerned, this is the end.

Tasker has no immediate answer to this.

And then Harris adds, as long as they're on the subject of leaving, he wants Tasker to know that he's quitting, too. He has no desire to continue working for Tasker. He is quite aware of what a financial sacrifice it will be - but he can't imagine a worthier one.

Tasker refuses even to consider Harris' resignation. Quickly he puts him in the wrong. Harris, who was very firm and eloquent on Elizabeth's behalf, has no strength at all in vindicating himself. He knows that he has compromised himself too often and too thoroughly, in Tasker's service, to take a moral stand at this late date.

As he leaves Tasker in his dressing room, it is quite apparent that he will stay on the job as Tasker's lawyer.

Tasker, left alone, puts in a call to Elizabeth at the Kenilworth home, then, before he gets through, cancels it.

The terrace of Gin Bishop's home in Lake Forest (Cf Page 9). It is late at night. The last of the dinner guests have just departed. Tasker, alone, remains behind for a last drink. Gin heaves a sigh of relief, kicks off her shoes. As she sinks into an easy chair, she tells him she thought the others would never leave. Tasker, smiles, tells her how much the whole evening has impressed him.

TASKER

You were wonderful, Gin! You seemed to be ignoring the whole thing, yet it moved like glass. The service, the talk, the food. I'm proud of you!

More particularly, he was impressed by the wines - their variety and quality. What kind of wine was it that was served with dessert?

GIN

"Chateau Yquem." '87.

TASKER

'87? Are you kidding?

GIN

(laughing)

My father had one of the great cellars in the country. So did Grandpa before him!

Tasker smiles to himself.

TASKER

It sure makes a difference who you travel with! Cranston called me "Tass" tonight. Did you hear him? Not that he wouldn't stick a knife in my back for the controlling interest in Illinois-Western -- but tonight it was Tass!

GIN

(wearily)

Sid Cranston's a bore! I don't know how anyone puts up with him.

TASKER

He may be a bore to you, baby, but
to the rest of the world he's
\$40,000,000 bucks of farm machinery!

GIN

(smiling)

So he's a \$40,000,000 bore!

TASKER

And your cousin, Mr. Sterling Mullen --
he's accepted introductions to me
regularly, for years. I got so I wanted
to paste him one every time he gave me
that fishy stare. But tonight he said,
"Let's get together for some golf soon,
Tasker -- I hear you are breaking
eighty these days." You sure passed me
the master key, Gin.

Gin looks up at him, smiling.

GIN

I'm glad you're happy, Tass.

She waits for him to say something, then continues.

GIN (cont'd)

Don't you want to know if I'm
happy?

TASKER

(suddenly serious)

Gin, I'll be honest with you. If
it's happiness you're looking for --

GIN

(interrupting -
quietly)

I'm satisfied.

TASKER

Knowing the kind of man I am?

GIN

(smiling)

What kind is that?

TASKER

The kind you're not used to.

He sits down on the edge of a chair - leaning forward earnestly.

TASKER (cont'd)

When I was a kid in Delacourte, I use to see girls like you - but they didn't see me. I was just a ragged little runt whose father put up their screens and fences. How I hated the world for putting me on the wrong side of the fence! How I hated fences and the rich who built them! All my life I've been full of hate. Burned with it! That's why they couldn't keep me out. I've broken their fences -- and made them like it!
(with a smile)
You were another fence I had to knock down. Pretty lush fence, too...
You're quite a woman, Gin Bishop!

GIN

Am I?

(reaching for him)
Because I want to be -- for you!
And I don't care how much you hate -- so long as you don't hate me.

TASKER

Hate you?

He leans forward and kisses her. It is a close embrace.

The garden of Elizabeth's home in the country. Harris has brought the divorce papers for Elizabeth to sign. Trying to do his duty as her lawyer and a friend, he wonders whether Elizabeth shouldn't make another try at working out their marriage. Elizabeth shakes her head, reaches for the papers and quickly signs them.

When it is over, Harris says he's glad. He had to try but as far as he's concerned she should have done it long ago. She hands the papers to Harris.

ELIZABETH

It's kind of funny, that my last act as his wife is to confirm him in his opinion that things come to an end only when he wants them to and as he wants them to.

HARRIS

It's been our fault. From the first day, we've let him call the tune -- and we've let him decide when the song is over. I had no choice, maybe -- but why did you put up with it so long?

ELIZABETH

You know as well as I do. Because we love him.

Harris looks at her then starts to gather up his papers preparing to leave - he hesitates, then

HARRIS

You'll let me know if there's anything I can do for you.

ELIZABETH

(putting her hand
on his arm)

You're sweet.

HARRIS

That's the worst thing a woman can say to a man that's in love with her.
(after an
affected lightness)
You know I love you, don't you?

ELIZABETH

(quietly)
I've always known.

He turns to look at her. She continues, quietly.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Don't worry about me, Wally.
(with a strange
smile)

This is one time Tasker didn't decide when the song was over.

Harris is about to say something but she anticipates him.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

(smiling)
And you are sweet.

The night of Gin's great Engagement Party as previously seen (CF page 9). The following scenes show in part, but not in whole, scenes that we have seen before though not necessarily shot from exactly the same angle. There is, first, an establishing shot of the ballroom, the miniature railroad, people dancing, and the men and women watching Tasker make his way among them. There is part of the scene in the garden in which we gather that his enthusiasm for high society is waning but in which he reassures Gin that he is crazy about her. Their embrace is interrupted by the news that Ned Van Keuren has the mysterious box in the ballroom. They start towards the house.

We see the latter part of the bitter scene with Ned, as he releases the doves, through Tasker's knocking Ned down.

There are goodbyes from the guests and the parting words between Tasker and Gin.

TASKER

I'll phone you during the day.

GIN

That's for your public. You'll be back?

Tasker looks at her, smiles.

TASKER

Goodnight, Gin.

She stands in the doorway, watching him go, confident he'll be back.

FADE OUT

BACK TO THE MONTAGE of those six persons whose partly disturbed, partly contemplative reflections have constituted the basis of TASKER'S life-story from his produce-hall days to his departure, a few hours ago, from Gin's party:

First, to Gin, still in her lush bed, her face a mixture of memory and pleasant anticipation. Propping herself up on an elbow, she looks at a clock on her night-table. (The sun is pouring in through the window.) It reads one-fifteen. She frowns starts to reach for the phone, then decides against it.

Bull, in the gymnasium, is seated dejectedly on a stool, a few feet from the punching-bag, his hands on his knees, his head bent, his brow wrinkled with worry.

Elizabeth, at a window, looking out upon a pleasant countryside, seems to have a vision of faraway places and is smiling contentedly to herself.

Ruby, alongside the pool, her manicure-weapons on a table beside her, is tapping her teeth with a fingernail, her eyes squinted against the sun.

In the library, Ned Van Keuren has poured a drink and is pausing before putting it to his mouth.

NED
(almost as if
asking permission)
I'm sorry, but --

HARRIS
(very concerned,
not caring about
Ned)
Go ahead.

As Ned swallows the drink, there is a knock on the door and the butler enters.

BUTLER

(to Harris)

A police officer is here, sir.
To see Mr. Martin.

HARRIS

(after a moment -
rising)

I'll see him.

He goes out into the hall and talks to the patrolman in the entrance hall, with Ned listening from the library door, and Bull appearing, during the scene, to listen from the head of the steps.

The officer is very deferential. On his way home, he has found Tasker's car, unoccupied, pulled up alongside the road, about a mile north of Ralston Village, and he was wondering --

Harris comes to a quick decision. He's much obliged to the officer, he says, but everything's all right. They know all about it. They'll send for the car immediately. They should have sent for it earlier.

The officer is relieved that all is well. In fact, he made this special trip to the Martin home because he had seen Tasker much earlier that morning, driving home, and he had seemed -- well, a little unsteady, oh, definitely not under the weather, but all the same -- he had even advised Tasker to drive into a back road where there was very little chance of traffic, which would account for the car being at Ralston Village. "Fine, fine," says Harris. "And that would be about -- " "Eleven after five in the morning," says the officer. Just turned light. He'd made a note of it. The officer leaves.

It's perfectly okay with him to keep it off the record. It had never been on the record.

With the officer gone, Harris takes command and gives orders quickly. Bull is to go get the car, and the whole thing is to be kept quiet until there are new developments, if any. He'll notify all concerned of the need for secrecy. In the meantime, Tasker can easily be reported as being incommunicado - at home with a severe cold. For several days, if that should turn out to be necessary.

HARRIS

Until we learn different, we'll just assume he knows what he's doing. Whatever it is.
(almost belligerently)
That's all right with you, isn't it, Bull?

BULL

Sure, sure.

HARRIS

Then go get that car.
(to Ned)
The time fits all right with when he left the party.
(reflectively)
Eleven after five --

DISSOLVE

A clock on an automobile dashboard, reading 5:11.

OFFICER'S VOICE (o.s.)

The way you're feeling, you better take that back road past Ralston Village, Mr. Martin. That way you're sure not to run into traffic.

MARTIN'S VOICE (o.s.)

(very tired)
Thank you, officer.

His hands are seen shifting the gears to start the car.

DISSOLVE

The same clock now reads 5:19. As the CAMERA PULLS BACK, Tasker is seen, alone in his car, very, very tired, driving very, very slowly.

The car comes to a stop. Tasker, nearly asleep, shakes his head to keep himself awake, breathes deeply, his eyes half-closed, then looks out.

The car is stopped on the side of the road alongside a small knoll.

Wearily, Tasker gets out of the car, shuffles rather than stamps his feet, without much energy. He's still very drowsy. His face is hot and flushed and he rubs his hand across his eyes and forehead.

To relieve his discomfort, he takes off his tailcoat, collar and tie. He looks around, probably for some place to sit down, and finds none. Wearily, he climbs the few feet that get him to the top of the knoll, just beyond which is a double railroad track.

As he gets there, a train sweeps by, full of noise, dirt and dust that don't help him any. Extremely groggy, he closes his eyes, then opens them. On the further track stand four or five boxcars, one of them with its door invitingly open. Tasker wets his lips, swallows tiredly, nods to himself, with an effort, crosses the passenger track, and climbs into the open boxcar.

Within the car, he's so tired that he does nothing but sit upright, for a moment. Then, dragging his tailcoat with him, he crawls to a far corner of the car, adjusts the tailcoat into

the semblance of a pillow, and stretches out. He is asleep almost as fast as his head touches the coat.

DISSOLVE

Broad daylight. A freight train is moving through the open countryside.

Now it is night. Inside the car, Tasker sleeps - his position unchanged, completely oblivious to the jolting and jarring of the moving train.

Darkness inside the car, which is moving slowly, with moonlight through the door the only illumination. A young, tough-looking brakeman is shaking Tasker, who slowly awakes.

BRAKEMAN

Hit the deck!

As Tasker continues to look at him dumbly, the brakeman yanks him to his feet.

BRAKEMAN

(jerking his thumb
toward the open door)

Out!

Tasker is still not alert, and the brakeman pulls him, unresisting, to the door. Tasker, at the door, is turned the wrong way, and the brakeman twists him in the direction of the motion of the car.

BRAKEMAN

Want to break your neck? Out!

Tasker hesitates but, as the brakeman moves as if to push him out, he jumps.

Tasker hits the gravel, alongside the traveling freight cars, with force enough to send him off his feet. He

rolls several times, then sits upright. Suddenly, as the last car passes him he smiles, wanly. It reads: "Overland Pacific."

Inside the car he has left, the brakeman is holding up Tasker's tailcoat and regarding it with puzzled distaste. Then he throws it out into the darkness.

Tasker, now on his feet, his face dirty and bruised, his pants and shirt a mess, looks after the train, almost passed into the distance. Nothing else is to be seen, except the gleaming tracks and level fields.

A little later, Tasker is trudging across a field, wearily. He stops and looks off. There's a light in a house, some distance away.

With very little strength left, Tasker approaches the door of a modest farmhouse. He knocks. After a time, a middle-aged farmer, (Hopkins), answers, his wife in back of him.

Tasker's first request is for the use of the phone. They smile. They have no phone. As he starts to ask if they have a car and can drive him to the nearest town, the wife gently interrupts. To her mind, what he really needs is to get to sleep -- the way he's weaving on his feet.

While he's washing up at the kitchen sink, he's handed a glass of milk. Apologetically, they tell him they have no bed for him, but he can sleep in the shed. Gratefully he accepts.

Next day he wakes to find Hopkins watching him, with Tommy, the grandson (five years old). It's late in the morning, but they felt they should let him sleep. The farmer says he's

going into town shortly, as soon as Jimmy -- the young hired man who's been helping him -- comes back with the car. Through the open door of the shed, Tasker notices a tractor in a field near the house. It's broken down, Hopkins explains, and Jimmy is the only one who knows how to fix it. Tasker smiles as he sees the trade-mark, VAN KEUREN-MARTIN, on the tractor's side.

TASKER

(modestly)

I happen to be connected with the outfit that makes these things.

The farmer reacts dubiously to this remark, then watches as Tasker goes to work on the tractor, confidently. He picks up a stick and dips it in the gas tank. He is a trifle disappointed to find that the wet line is halfway up.

He climbs on the seat and presses the starter. The motor grinds, but doesn't catch.

TASKER

(confidently)

Carburetor.

He gets off and drains the carburetor. He is pleased with himself. The carburetor drained, he presses the starter. It whirs, but again it doesn't catch. He gets out, wipes his sweaty face, and kicks the tire. Quickly, as if he might catch it napping, he jumps into the seat and again starts the motor. Again it doesn't start! The farmer, still watching, has reached the justifiable conclusion that Tasker does not know what he is doing.

Irritated, Tasker unscrews a spark plug and examines it. Then, with a screwdriver and a pair of pliers, he is about to tear the distributor apart.

Unnoticed by Tasker, the farmer has been joined by Jimmy, the hired man, a bright tow-headed farm boy. They watch Tasker with much amusement - but finally Jimmy intervenes.

JIMMY

Trouble?

TASKER

(exasperated)
I've been over this engine with a fine-tooth comb. Carburetor, spark plugs, distributor --

JIMMY

Let's have that screwdriver.

(taking it)

The governor's loose. This little screw-valve here, put it in myself. Them big farm-equipment outfits -- they never did listen to the farmers --

(demonstrating)

Controls the flow of gas. Keeps the tractor going at an even speed when you release a heavy load.

Jimmy jumps into the seat. There's the sound of the starter, and then the sound of the motor roaring.

JIMMY

Sorry I was late. Could've saved you some hot work.

The tractor lumbers off leaving Tasker staring after it and the farmer roaring with laughter.

Dinner is a heavy country meal of which Tasker partakes voraciously. Present are Hopkins, Mrs. Hopkins, the grandson, Tommy, and his mother, the Hopkins' daughter-in-law. Her name is Martha. She is an attractive woman in her early twenties. Jimmy now breaks his bad news. He has to stop working for Hopkins; his own father is seriously ill and he has to go back at once to look after the farm. Hopkins is upset.

He doesn't blame Jimmy, but he's shorthanded himself now, and this is the busiest time of the year. They discuss possible workers. There's no one in the neighborhood.

Jimmy looks inquiringly at Tasker, but Hopkins shakes his head deprecatingly. Jimmy nods understandingly. Tasker sees this and speaks up. He'd like to take on the job -- if it's only for a few days. The farmer is frankly doubtful, but is willing to let Tasker try.

As Jimmy is about to drive off, the farmer remembers that Tasker wanted to get to town to phone. He can give Jimmy the message.

TASKER

(reflectively)

It can wait. Come to think it over, there's nobody I could have phoned that -- that not hearing from me for a few days won't improve. Except one, maybe, and she --

(he shrugs)

They don't have to hear from me -- not right away!

The farmer is puzzled, but says nothing. He has one suggestion, however. There's a pair of jeans around. Tasker's dress pants have taken quite a beating..

A MONTAGE of Tasker at farm work, early morning, high noon, late afternoon, for a period of two or three days. Without exception, these shots involve manual effort. (For one, he's milking a cow, for another, he's operating a harvesting machine.) Tasker's hands get sore, his legs stiff, and he's genuinely and pleasantly exhausted at night.

A hot night, some days later. Hopkins, his wife, and

Tasker are sitting on the porch while Martha is upstairs putting Tommy to bed. The Hopkins are congratulating Tasker on his work; frankly they had not thought he would last more than a day. Now they'd like him to stay. Tasker is very proud and pleased but replies that he hasn't quite decided on his future plans. (This happens to be true.) The farmer good-naturedly chides him for this remark. He's talked pretty big quite a few times, and it's all pretty silly for a grown man. Particularly for a man who can really earn his board and keep, as Tasker can. Tasker smiles good-naturedly at this rebuke.

Now Hopkins and his wife retire to bed. The thrashing-crew will be showing up early in the morning. He advises Martin to turn in too, which Martin is about to do, when Martha appears on the porch for a breath of air. They talk for a moment and he mistakes her pleasure with the beauty of the summer night for coquetry. Almost without his realizing it, the old Tasker goes to work. But all his routines - the compliments, the double-meanings, the questions about missing her husband, etc., - bounce right off her directness and simplicity. She isn't even aware that he's making a pass and she smiles as he tries to impress her with intimations of what he could do for the community through his influence with the railroad. He has gotten absolutely nowhere when she smilingly bids him good night and goes in. He looks after her, smiling too. He knows this is only the beginning.

The following morning the thrashing is well under way on the Hopkins' farm. The roar of the thrashers and clouds of

dust fill the air - with Tommy admiringly gazing up at the machines. Some distance away, Tasker is lifting into a cart the cans and boxes in which the lunch for the crew had been brought out to them. Martha, takes these from him. Her nearness excites him. Tasker resumes his advances, this time rather boldly. He assures her she must believe him - she's unquestionably the prettiest girl he has seen in years. He moves towards her and now, suddenly, Martha decides to put a stop to this. She tells him off simply, but firmly. She's not angry. In fact, she is smiling as she tells him he should stop making a fool of himself. He can't be serious - talking that way to her. He, an old man!

Tasker takes this hard. He snaps back at her. He even starts to tell her who he is. But now she isn't listening -- for she has looked off and there is an expression of horror on her face.

Tasker follows the direction of her gaze. He sees what it is. Tommy, accompanying the threshing machine has stumbled into its path. Martha screams but before the thresher can be stopped, the child has gone down and disappeared. Tasker rushes forward and dives for the child. He succeeds in saving Tommy from the blades and is able to toss the child clear, but he is caught and goes down heavily as the machine comes to a grinding, belated stop.

A HOSPITAL ROOM. Tasker opens his eyes slowly. Very gradually, he turns his eyes to the side of the room and there, sitting quietly by the window, he sees Elizabeth. She has been

watching him - hastens to him.

ELIZABETH
(supporting his head
as he sips from the
glass)
Here, darling. The doctor says
as much of this as you can take.

TASKER
How long have I been here?

ELIZABETH
Four days. You had a concussion.
It was pretty bad. But you're all
right now. Does your head hurt?

TASKER
(feeling his head)
Not much. Just a little dull
ache --
(as she starts
to move away)
Don't go!

They look at each other. Then Elizabeth smiles as Tasker looks
around him, bewilderedly.

ELIZABETH
You needn't worry. It's been on
the grand scale. You've had half
the specialists in the country.
You've had X-rays, blood-transfusions,
spinal punctures, intravenous feedings --
all sorts of things.
(she pats
his hand)
You've been a great bother to everyone.

TASKER
I feel very honored.
(suddenly)
Where am I?

ELIZABETH
Division Point, South Dakota. It's
a railroad hospital. It was the
first place they could get you to --

TASKER
(bewildered)
South Dakota?

ELIZABETH

Yes, Tass.

(smiling)

As usual we came to you. We all did. Walter's here -- and Bull and --

(she hesitates)

--and the usual collection of business associates and secretaries....

TASKER

That's a lot at that, I guess. Three friends. Bull and Walter -- and you,

(slowly)

Why did you come, Liz?

ELIZABETH

Because you kept insisting, while you were delirious, that you wanted me.

Tasker reaches out and takes her hand.

TASKER

Liz, I can't tell you how good --

ELIZABETH

(interrupting)

You shouldn't be talking so much right at first. Please, Tass, you ought to try and sleep --

TASKER

You just told me I've been sleeping for four days. I'm all right. I want to talk!

(he watches her)

Liz, you didn't really want to come?

ELIZABETH

No I didn't, really.

He does not react. She moves away, back to the chair by the window.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

There were times when I almost wished they'd never find you at all.

He keeps looking at her.

TASKER

I know, Liz. I know I've hurt you --
but that's all past -- way past!

(with rising
emotion)

The point is I love you. I've
always loved you -- you know that,
don't you? We love each other,
Liz. That's everything. We're
not kids any more. We need each
other more than ever, don't you see?

ELIZABETH

No, Tass, I don't. Love isn't
everything, no matter what the
story books say. I've loved you.
Maybe I still do. I don't know.
But it doesn't work. We just hurt
each other over and over again.

TASKER

This time it's different. I know,
now, that nothing means anything
to me if you're not there.

ELIZABETH

(shaking her head)

Oh Tass! Why don't you ever try
to face things? It's too late for
you and me. Can't you see that?

TASKER

If you mean Gin Bishop --

ELIZABETH

I don't. I know she could never
have meant anything -- not really.
She was just -- just because you
couldn't find what you really
wanted.

There is a long pause. He looks over and Elizabeth is staring
out the window.

TASKER

Liz -- those few days when I was
away, something happened to me.
Maybe it was the quiet and the peace
-- and those people -- and being on
my own, being judged for what I was,
not who I was. I found I wasn't
worrying about things that --

Elizabeth is watching him now, as he continues:

TASKER (cont'd)

Maybe I've always known I wasn't great. Maybe that's why I had to knock myself out all the time -- and you, too -- trying to chin myself up to the level of the great. I did stinking things to gain my ends -- because I couldn't get there any other way. Well, I'm through with all that.

(with rising intensity)

I'm through, do you hear me? From now on, I'm all finished with --

(he sees Elizabeth smiling and interrupts himself)

Why do you make me shout at you? Come here.

ELIZABETH

I'm here.

TASKER

(indicating his side of the bed)

No, way over here.

Elizabeth comes over and sits beside him. Holding her hand, he proceeds more quietly.

TASKER

From now on, Liz, all I ask for is peace and quiet -- with you. We'll get a farm somewhere -- anywhere! You and I together, we'll --

Elizabeth laughs out loud. Tasker interrupts himself.

TASKER

What are you laughing at?

ELIZABETH

You. You don't want peace and quiet, Tass. You think you do, now, because you're tired -- and sick. But as soon as you're well, you'll run from them again, even if you can find them. I can't run with you any more. The best I can hope for is to have the courage to run from you.

TASKER

If that takes courage, it means that you still love me.

ELIZABETH

(rising)

Yes, I love you. I hate you. I'm sick of you. I'm lost without you. What's the difference? It doesn't work. It hasn't worked for years. Why should it work now?

TASKER

It will.

ELIZABETH

I want a little peace of mind, too, and when I'm around you, it pulls me apart. I don't know what's right and what's wrong, because you don't know.

TASKER

I do know now. And about people not changing. You're right about that. Only I'm not going to change. I'm just going to try to stop being the man I never was.

They look at each other. He's exhausted and his head is back on the pillow, but his eyes are on her.

ELIZABETH

Try to sleep.

TASKER

Don't go away.

Suddenly she leans over and kisses him.

TASKER (cont'd)

Promise you won't go away?

ELIZABETH

I'll be back.

He watches her as she leaves. They're both smiling.

FADE OUT