

The Game

by

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THE GAME

TITLE SEQUENCE

INT. BALLROOM - DAY

"HOME MOVIES" from the 1960's-- FLICKERING, GRAINY, HAND-HELD, COLOR faded. MUSIC OVER.

A LITTLE BOY with a blindfold spins round and round, the hands of OTHER CHILDREN keep him spinning. MAIN TITLE. It's a game of pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey. The dizzy boy is given a strip of felt, and the CAMERA follows as he stumbles toward a large cardboard donkey. He pins the tail on its nose.

The boy is SCHUYLER VAN ORTON, AGE FOUR, wearing glasses. We're at his birthday party, in an elegant ballroom hung with crepe paper and balloons. QUICK, RAGGED CUTS OF THE PARTY-- Schuyler blowing out candles, watching a clown show, opening gifts. High-society CHILDREN, MAIDS and BUTLERS hover about-- even a real-live PONY.

In the final SHOT, Schuyler poses with his parents, MR. and MRS. VAN ORTON, an elegant, formal-looking couple.

END TITLES.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - DAY (60'S PERIOD)

POV, MOVING SHOT through the side window of a limousine, past late 60's cars, the facades of gigantic mansions.

THE LIMO comes to a stop before the Van Orton home, an imposing Chicago mansion with a wrought-iron fence and a long set of stone steps to the front door. EIGHT-YEAR-OLD SCHUYLER (pronounced Skyler) gets out of the back, in a private school uniform, carrying his textbooks. He comes through the front gate, then looks up--

ANGLE UP-- Mr. Van Orton crouches on the ledge of the fifth story dormer window. He's in a robe and slippers, disheveled, unshaven, with a distant, mad look in his eyes. He stares down at his son.

ON YOUNG SCHUYLER-- puzzled and almost amused at the incongruous sight. He starts forward, cocks his head, waves timidly.

YOUNG SCHUYLER'S POV-- Mr. Van Orton waves back, expression blank.

CUT TO:

INT. BOARDROOM - EVENING (PRESENT-DAY)

A PORTRAIT of Schuyler's father, with his glasses on, looking noble and masterful. PULL BACK-- the figure almost seems to be staring down at SCHUYLER VAN ORTON, now an adult, dressed in a business suit and tie. He sits alone at the head of an enormous conference table spread with papers, maps and scientific journals, his back to the portrait. He seems distracted, far away in his thoughts. A VOICE FADES UP, intruding on his reverie--

VOICE

Sky? Sky...

Schuyler snaps out of it, turns toward the source of the VOICE--

BOB PLYMPTON, a soft-spoken, middle-aged lawyer, looks in on him from the doorway of the boardroom.

PLYMPTON

Still here, Sky?

SCHUYLER

(smiles)

I guess so.

PLYMPTON

You work too hard. Any plans for the evening?

SCHUYLER

Just going over to Elizabeth's for dinner. She wanted to throw a party, but I think I talked her out of it...

Plympton smiles tightly, nods awkwardly.

PLYMPTON

...oh.

SCHUYLER

(registering this)

Aw no. Don't tell me she--

PLYMPTON

(quickly, over him)

What are you working on?

SCHUYLER

(sighs)

Cedar Marsh. Their latest plan is to drain it for a mega-mall.

He gestures at a set of architectural sketches, depicting a post-modern monstrosity.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

Nice, huh? Now it'll take at least six-five to buy the land out from under them, plus two to set up the preserve.

PLYMPTON

Eight and a half million... is it worth it? For one sub-species that's probably going under anyway?

SCHUYLER

Maybe it's hopeless, but... we have to try. If we can't save the birds, we can at least save people from having to shop in places like this.

PLYMPTON

(smiles)

It's your money. I'll put together the bid next week.

SCHUYLER

Thanks, Bob. See you tonight.

PLYMPTON

Right--

Plympton pauses at the door, realizing his faux pas, looks back.

SCHUYLER

I mean Monday.

PLYMPTON

Mm. Happy birthday, Schuyler.

He exits, Schuyler turns back to his work.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - NIGHT

A tugboat TOOTS as it passes, pulling a barge. PULL BACK to show Schuyler, he wears a trenchcoat over his suit, his breath mists in the chill night. He reclines on a concrete wall, watching the boat go by... the world go by.

CUT TO:

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

THE FRONT DOOR of the house OPENS and a MAID emerges, reacts to something at her feet with a SCREAM. More SERVANTS rush out. A couple of them grab young Schuyler and start to pull him away from the landing at the top of the steps.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER'S POV-- the crumpled form of his father, flat on his stomach, disappears behind a crush of bodies as servants gather.

SCHUYLER looks up--

POV-- and sees a BUTLER in the open dormer window. The butler SLAMS the window SHUT.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The TRILL of his portable cellular phone startles Schuyler. It RINGS a few times before he walks to his car, a 1950's Jaguar sedan, parked behind him at the turnoff. He reaches in for the handset, checking his watch and wincing.

SCHUYLER (on phone)
Hello, Elizabeth...

We hear the VOICE of ELIZABETH, annoyed, in BG, SOUNDS OF A PARTY.

ELIZABETH (filter)
Schuyler, where are you?

SCHUYLER
I'm sorry, I lost track of the time--

ELIZABETH (filter)
I know it's impossible to surprise you, but please, make an appearance at least.

SCHUYLER
I'll act surprised. I promise.

She HANGS UP, Schuyler lingers a moment, then climbs into his car.

NEARBY, concealed by trees, a YOUNG MAN in an overcoat has been watching Schuyler intently. He smokes a cigarette, drops it at his feet and grinds it out with his shoe-- a pile of butts there.

CUT TO:

INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A modern, designer penthouse, a view of the lake. A PARTY IN PROGRESS... UPPER-CRUST types, young and old... ARTISTS and MUSICIANS... as many leather jackets as Armani suits. WAITERS distribute drinks and hors d'oeuvres, there's a PIANO PLAYER. AMBIENT VOLUME UP, it all should have a jarring, disorienting feel.

A BODY IN FG MOVES to reveal Schuyler opening the front door into the foyer-- he carries a bouquet of roses. A clutch of PARTYGOERS

(CONTINUED)

here-- Plympton among them-- turn and see his entrance. They chime in with the obligatory:

PARTYGOERS

Surprise!

Schuyler feigns surprise, hand clutched over his heart, staggering. WELL-WISHERS surround him, shake his hand, pecks on the cheek. The MIX OF VOICES needn't be decipherable. Schuyler maintains the silly smile of surprise and delight, keeps saying "WOW," as he makes a beeline for the bar.

As he passes the piano player, the man sees him and STARTS IN on a spirited rendition of "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU." Schuyler quickly claps a hand on the man's shoulder and shakes his head with a tight smile. The piano player gets the idea, nods, and segues to a JAZZY IMPROVISATION. Schuyler mouths "THANK YOU," moves on to the bar.

SCHUYLER

Johnny Walker Black. A tall one.

As the BARTENDER fixes the drink, Schuyler turns toward a lavish spread of food. In the center are the remains of a birthday cake.

ANGLE ON CAKE-- half eaten. In icing script: "HAP BIRT SCHU."

SCHUYLER grabs his straight Scotch, sips it, as ELIZABETH-- a pretty former debutante, wearing a very strained smile, makes her way to him and gives him a perfunctory kiss.

ELIZABETH

Darling! Happy birthday! So glad you could make it.

Schuyler smiles and holds out the flowers to her, she accepts them matter-of-factly.

SCHUYLER

Elizabeth... you shouldn't have gone to all this trouble...

ELIZABETH

It was no trouble. I like parties.

SCHUYLER

No, I mean, I know I said-- but I appreciate this, it's really...

He's floundering for the right thing to say. She eyes him.

ELIZABETH

Undignified? Well, just do what you do best, make believe you're not here. Do you know Jerry?

(CONTINUED)

Schuyler turns to see JERRY, a long-haired British musician, with a smarmy manner. He pumps Schuyler's hand.

JERRY

You're Schuyler Van Orton. I really admire you, man.

ELIZABETH

Jerry's working on an opera...
I'd better put these in water.

She moves off with the flowers. Schuyler reaches for a piece of cake, nibbles at it.

JERRY

A rock opera, actually, it's called "Long Pig." 'Ats what cannibals call human meat.

SCHUYLER

(swallowing)

Mm. How do you know Elizabeth?

JERRY

She interviewed me for the Journal...
we're still accepting sponsors, y'know.
Is it true you contribute to the arts?

Schuyler finally understands why this person is talking to him, he nods slowly and takes a long pull on his Scotch.

--LATER in the party-- TRACK OVER a table spread with mostly eaten chi-chi hors d'oeuvres, HANDS picking at them, bottles of champagne. CLASSICAL MUSIC on the stereo IN BG. We hear VOICES OF PARTYGOERS (upper-class, Schuyler's age more or less):

PARTYGOER #1 (O. S.)

You can't just ignore them--

PARTYGOER #2 (O. S.)

Giving them hand-outs is
condescending. Plus you know they're
just going to spend it on booze.

CAMERA MOVES to show opened gifts-- a tie, a \$100 bill in a glass paperweight, etc. CAMERA FINDS SCHUYLER removing an antique KALEIDOSCOPE from its package, he peers through it. The PARTYGOERS stand around, drinking and eating as they converse.

SCHUYLER

This is beautiful. Thanks.

PARTYGOER #1

What do you think, Sky?

(CONTINUED)

He turns in the direction of the speaker, peering through the kaleidoscope.

THE FRACTURED POV through the kaleidoscope, as Schuyler PANS during the following lines.

PARTYGOER #3
Van Orton's a bleeding heart, he
funds soup kitchens.

PARTYGOER #2
Beats getting your hands dirty.

PARTYGOER #3
Money's like fish, it gets old,
you throw it away.

SCHUYLER LOWERS THE KALEIDOSCOPE, uncomfortable at being talked about. The CLASSICAL MUSIC FINISHES.

SCHUYLER
Excuse me.

DIALOG IN BG as he moves unsteadily toward the nearby stereo.

PARTYGOER #1
They're talking about selling
coupons you can give to panhandlers,
only good for food and shelter.

PARTYGOER #3
Great, why not just round them up
and put them into camps.

PARTYGOER #2
Fact is, you can't really help them.
You can't really help anybody.

Schuyler puts on an old record album-- MUSIC STARTS, a CRACKLING, late-70's PUNK SONG, by a band like the Sex Pistols. Schuyler nods woozily to this for a moment, nostalgic... then he notices other guests looking at him with confused expressions, some wincing at the harsh MUSIC. He quickly switches back to the CLASSICAL MUSIC.

SCHUYLER
Sorry.

The guests turn back to each other, continue their conversations.

--MUCH LATER in the party, the crowd thinner. Schuyler wanders about, looking through the kaleidoscope as he moves, reeling a bit, holding his glass of Scotch. He's waylaid by a drunken female GUEST, who aggressively comes on to him.

(CONTINUED)

GUEST
You look familiar.

SCHUYLER
I do?

GUEST
Are you who I think you are? What
do you do?

SCHUYLER
Uh, I'm not sure-- excuse me.

The disoriented Schuyler moves past her, shoving the kaleidoscope in a pocket as he goes through a balcony door.

EXT. ELIZABETH'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Schuyler steps out on the large balcony, takes a deep BREATH of fresh air to clear his head-- then sees--

ELIZABETH and Jerry making out hungrily on a chaise lounge.

SCHUYLER retreats and quietly CLOSES the sliding door.

INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Schuyler moves toward the front door, in a hurry to leave. A HAND grabs his arm as he's about to go, he spins-- it's the young man who was following him at the lake-- his name is DAVID MARKHAM.

DAVID
Yo, Sky.

Schuyler's expression registers confusion and surprise.

SCHUYLER
David Markham!? What the hell are
you doing here?

DAVID
Crashing. It's been what, a
hundred years?

SCHUYLER
At least. God it's good to see you.

They seem like they're about to embrace, at least shake hands-- but don't. David is Schuyler's age, a more outgoing, flamboyant type, dressed in hip casual clothes. He has a sly, knowing manner.

SCHUYLER
You haven't made any of the reunions,
everyone figured you were in prison.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID
Nope. California.

SCHUYLER
Ah, the final frontier. You look great.

DAVID
You look like hell. So congratulations--
another year closer to death.

SCHUYLER
Yeah... listen, let's get out of here.
(escorting him out)
I know this great little dive, it's open
all night, I go there all the time...

As they head out the door, Schuyler glances once over his shoulder.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - NIGHT

David and Schuyler walk together on a fairly deserted street, old
friends catching up.

DAVID
I never thought you'd wind up
running your old man's foundation.

SCHUYLER
It's not that bad... I get to put band-
aids where I can. It passes the time.

DAVID
Wanna get high?

David pulls a joint out of his pocket. Schuyler stares.

SCHUYLER
Christ, you haven't changed.
You're not still dealing, are you?

DAVID
(lighting up)
Nope. I'm a psychologist.

Schuyler LAUGHS, then studies David, who's taking a hit.

SCHUYLER
You're kidding, right?

David shakes his head no, holding the smoke.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

But... you're... a lunatic.

DAVID

Not a problem.

He exhales and holds the joint toward Schuyler, who gives him a dubious look and shakes his head.

SCHUYLER

That stuff always made me paranoid.

DAVID

Lightweight.

SCHUYLER

Maybe I just grew up.

DAVID

I guess you did, huh? Too bad.

They walk on silently for a moment, David wets his fingertips and EXTINGUISHES the joint.

SCHUYLER

Remember Spaz Morehouse?

DAVID

Sure, we gave him a quarter once to eat a fly.

SCHUYLER

Congressman from New Jersey.

DAVID

No shit... So how are you, Sky?

SCHUYLER

Um... I'm fine...

DAVID

No. How are you, really?

SCHUYLER

Why? Trying to drum up a little business?

A STREET PERSON comes up to Schuyler, MUMBLING for change. Schuyler reaches automatically into his pockets.

DAVID

Just want to know if you're happy.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

Put your mind to rest. I'm happy
as a clam.

Schuyler hands the street person change, he and David walk on.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - NIGHT

An aged diner, outdated decor, pies under mirrors, an adjacent bar area... it should feel authentic, not a trendy recreation. A mostly foreign STAFF, few customers. Schuyler and David sit with their menus-- the conversation's run quite dry. David stares at Schuyler thoughtfully, smoking a cig. Schuyler glances up briefly.

SCHUYLER

I recommend the tuna melt.

DAVID

Sky, it's been a long time but... I know you. Talking as a friend now, not a shrink... You're totally fucked up.

SCHUYLER

Thanks, David.

DAVID

Of course you're not happy, you don't know how to be happy. You shut the door on happiness a long time ago. You keep your distance, try to stay above it all... You're getting too old for that, man, it's time to live your fucking life. I mean, shit or get off the pot.

Schuyler toys with the kaleidoscope in his hand, looks through it.

SCHUYLER

The meat loaf is good too.

David picks up a fork and jabs it into Schuyler's hand, he drops the kaleidoscope and lets out a CRY, stares at David with anger.

DAVID

Oh, you can feel something.

SCHUYLER

(rubs his hand; shakes his head)
You always were an incredible asshole.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID

(intent stare)

Listen. I know where you are-- I've
been there. And there's a way out.

A young, uniformed waitress with a slight Chicago accent--
CHRISTINE-- sets down glasses of water. She SPILLS Schuyler's.

CHRISTINE

Oh God, I am really sorry--

DAVID

So much for your tip.

She looks pained, Schuyler waves his hand-- David was kidding.

SCHUYLER

New, huh?

She nods with a helpless look. Together they grab napkins from the
dispenser, wipe up the spill. The tongue-tied waitress retreats,
embarrassed, to dispose of her fistful of soggy napkins.

David pulls out a pen, grabs a fresh napkin, starts writing on it.

DAVID

I'm giving you a phone number...
promise me you'll use it.

He hands the napkin to Schuyler.

INSERT NAPKIN-- the letters CRS and a phone number.

WIDER

SCHUYLER

CRS?

DAVID

Consumer Recreation Services. Very
exclusive, strictly word of mouth.
Not cheap, but... worth every penny.

SCHUYLER

All right, David, what are you selling me?

DAVID

I'm not selling you anything, I'm
just trying to help. Think of it
as a birthday gift.

SCHUYLER

Think of what as a birthday gift?
Have you joined some kind of cult?

(CONTINUED)

DAVID
Nothing like that. Look, I can't tell you
more because-- it's different for everyone.
All I can say is, CRS worked for me.

David leans closer, tapping the napkin with his finger.

DAVID
This is the key. It's the way out.

The waitress has returned.

CHRISTINE
Are you ready to order?

Schuyler breaks David's intense stare and nods to her, shoving the
napkin in his pocket.

SCHUYLER
Scotch. And an apple pie.

Christine wrinkles her nose as she writes the order down.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - NIGHT

David leans into the window of Schuyler's Jag, saying good-night.
Schuyler's behind the wheel.

SCHUYLER
Sure you don't want a ride?

DAVID
Nah, I'll take a cab.

SCHUYLER
Well, good seeing you, David.
Let's do this again.

DAVID
Call that number, Sky. It'll
change your life.

SCHUYLER
Right. Take care.

Schuyler puts the car into gear and drives away. David stands on
the sidewalk, watching the Jaguar recede into the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Schuyler's Jag pulls into the garage of the same home we saw in the opening scene. It's now gone slightly to seed. He emerges from the garage, climbs the front steps wearily.

INT. FOYER AND BALLROOM - NIGHT

The room from the home movies, now dusty and disused, sheets over most of the furniture. It feels oversized, echoey, empty. Schuyler opens the front door, turns on the light. He trudges up the formal staircase.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

PAN THROUGH an elegant, classy study: leather furniture, rich wood, a well-stocked bar, Persian rugs, books behind leaded glass, a huge, antique desk with a computer terminal; a large-screen TV, PLAYING with the SOUND LOW.

CAMERA FINDS SCHUYLER standing at a bookcase. He pulls out a distinctive black, leatherbound volume. He holds it in his hands, not opening it, studying it.

LATER. Schuyler reclines on the couch, still dressed, a bottle of Scotch and a glass on a table nearby. One hand rests on the book, which lies closed in his lap. In his other hand he holds the TV remote, idly FLIPPING CHANNELS. Somewhat disgusted, he TURNS THE TV OFF... then points the remote at his own head and PUSHES THE BUTTON-- CLICK, CLICK. He leans his head back and closes his eyes.

As he curls up to sleep, the book slides off his lap, and FALLS OPEN. It's hollowed out... inside is a pearl-handled revolver.

CAMERA MOVES from the gun to FIND the contents of his pockets on a table-- a wallet, keys, etc. HOLD ON the crumpled napkin with the letters CRS just visible.

FADE TO BLACK, then CUT TO:

SAME LOCATION, MORNING SUNLIGHT. A PHONE RINGS, waking Schuyler-- his clothes look wrinkled after having been slept in. He gets to his feet, fumbles for the receiver on the desk phone, groggy.

SCHUYLER

Hello...

He hears a bland, bureaucratic VOICE on the other end-- CYNTHIA.

CYNTHIA (filter)

Good morning Mr. Van Orton, this is Cynthia from CRS...

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

What-- how'd you get my number?

CYNTHIA (filter)

Dr. David Markham led us to believe you might be interested in our service...

Schuyler rubs his eyes, slowly absorbs this.

CYNTHIA (filter)

Why don't we make an appointment for you to come in?

SCHUYLER

Um... for what exactly? I'm not sure that I, um--

CYNTHIA (filter)

Alright, if you're not interested, I'm sorry for bothering you--

SCHUYLER

No, no, wait. Just-- I'm not quite awake...

CUT TO:

EXT. CRS BUILDING - EVENING

A new tower in a commercial district, a ramp leads to a parking garage beneath. A sea of white collar WORKERS. A cab pulls up in front and disgorges Schuyler, who stares at the building, undecided. We hear the PHONE CONVERSATION CONTINUE OVER.

CYNTHIA (filter)

We have an opening this evening at five PM. 636 State Street, thirty-eighth floor... Everything will be explained at that time.

Schuyler goes in.

INT. CRS LOBBY AND ATRIUM - EVENING

The very new, postmodern skyscraper is built around a central atrium with a sculpture garden, open to the sky. There's still some minor construction underway on the ground floor, scaffolding about. Schuyler crosses to a bank of lobby elevators.

INT. CRS ELEVATOR - EVENING

Schuyler looks out the glass elevator as it rises vertiginously. HIS POV as the atrium and its steel sculptures shrink below him.

INT. CRS OFFICES - EVENING

An ordinary office environment-- partitioned work spaces, computer terminals, clutter and disarray. Office doors open off the central space. CRS EMPLOYEES move about hectically. Schuyler enters, looking lost. A friendly Asian ASSISTANT, a young man in shirtsleeves, glances up from behind a desk.

ASSISTANT
Can I help you?

SCHUYLER
Is this... Consumer Recreation
Services? I have an appointment.
The name's Van Orton.

The assistant flips through an appointment book with a logo, CRS.

ASSISTANT
Sorry about the chaos, we're still in the
process of moving... yes, here you are...

SCHUYLER
I'm still sort of unclear as to
what this is all about...

ASSISTANT
First you'll need to fill out
these forms. Follow me, please...

He picks up a clipboard with a stack of papers, hands it to Schuyler, who follows him down a corridor. TRACK WITH THEM.

SCHUYLER
How long is this going to take?

ASSISTANT
Well, you need to take the physical...
Is there something you have to do?

Schuyler shrugs, shakes his head. As they walk, he reads the questions on the pages with growing disbelief.

SCHUYLER
What have I read in the last six
months? Do I prefer baths or
showers? How often do I masturbate?

ASSISTANT
Lie if you want, that can be useful too.
But we need you to answer every question,
then we can proceed with the other tests...

The assistant ushers him through a white door.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM AREA - NIGHT

Electronic MONITORS and PRINTERS record Schuyler's EEG and EKG. He's in a hospital gown. A TECHNICIAN takes his blood pressure.

SCHUYLER

Why am I doing this?

TECHNICIAN

You tell me.

SCHUYLER

No, I mean-- what are your, your services, what do you people do?

TECHNICIAN

Depends on the client. Right now we're determining your capabilities... your limits.

SCHUYLER

OK... then what?

TECHNICIAN

Then the fun begins... a different kind of fun.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCH LAB - NIGHT

A DRAWING FLASHES UP on a projector-- a large ant with an apron offering a covered dish to a human child, waiting at a table. We hear the O.S. VOICE of a female psychologist:

PSYCHOLOGIST

What's for dinner?

SCHUYLER sits in the darkened room, eyes on the screen. Wires are connected to his forehead, his chest, his fingers hover over a bank of three different colored buttons. The PSYCHOLOGIST sits nearby, monitoring an unseen panel. Schuyler's getting annoyed.

SCHUYLER

I'm sorry, this is getting ridiculous.
(starts to pull off wires)

PSYCHOLOGIST

You can't leave now--

Schuyler raises an eyebrow. He gets up to go.

(CONTINUED)

PSYCHOLOGIST

This is important. We're learning how to amuse you-- what turns you on. And off. That's how we play the game.

SCHUYLER

It's a game? All this for a game?

PSYCHOLOGIST

It's not like other games-- far more... interesting. Please, Mr. Van Orton, there are only a few more questions, it would be a shame to quit at this point.

SCHUYLER

Well...

Her look is pleading. Schuyler slowly returns to his seat.

SCHUYLER

What the hell. I like games.

PSYCHOLOGIST

(relieved)

So... what's for dinner?

SCHUYLER

(looks back at the screen)

Um... roast beef.

ON SCREEN-- The NEXT DRAWING shows a smiling man toppling backwards in a chair, perched on the edge of a cliff.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Why is the man smiling?

CUT TO:

INT. FEINGOLD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Schuyler sits on an overstuffed couch in an unkempt, haphazardly decorated office. PHOTOS of kids, humorous KNICK-KNACKS galore, a rack of COMIC BOOKS. Schuyler nibbles on a ROAST BEEF SANDWICH, swigs a beer, checking his watch impatiently.

The door opens and JOSH FEINGOLD hurries in-- he's in his 40's or 50's, heavy, affable, with a grotesque charisma; he wears an ill-fitting suit. He has a slew of COMPUTER PRINT-OUTS under his arm.

FEINGOLD

Sorry to keep you waiting.

A client's head exploded.

(winks)

Just kidding. How you like the sandwich?

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER
(swallows)

It's great, actually, thank you.

He wipes his mouth as Feingold pulls a chair very near Schuyler, opposite him, and plops down, relieved to take the load off.

FEINGOLD
Ah, gravity. I order from a little deli
in Skokie, won't eat anywhere else.
Josh Feingold. I'm a big fan of yours.

He leans forward and extends a meaty hand, which Schuyler shakes.

SCHUYLER
How's that?

FEINGOLD
(pseudo-Brit PBS voice)
"The World of Ballet' is made possible
by a grant from the Van Orton
Foundation, who invite you to join with
them in supporting public television."

Schuyler smiles and nods. Feingold doesn't give him a chance to speak, unfolding the unburst test read-outs sloppily in his lap.

FEINGOLD
You drink too much, don't get enough
exercise, don't get enough sleep...
I'm not judging mind you, got some
bad habits of my own.

He reaches for a cigar, bites off the tip and SPITS it out.

FEINGOLD
So-- what's this all about? Why do
we put you through all this shit?

He pauses, lighting the cigar, as if waiting for Schuyler to provide the answer. After a beat, Schuyler throws up his hands.

SCHUYLER
Frankly, I was hoping you'd know. I
gather it's for a game of some kind...?

FEINGOLD
Mm. Yes and no. First we gotta see if you
qualify. Most folks don't, not by a longshot.
(beat)
At least your credit references check out.
(a WINK)
Seriously, the prelims look good.
You're a basic T-A-1 personality.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

T-A-1.

FEINGOLD

Try anything once.

Feingold SLAPS Schuyler on the knee; he edges away.

FEINGOLD

Sorry. Forgot, you're big on personal space. An 8.4 I believe. Anything above nine-- we're talking serial killer.

Schuyler tries to steal a glance at the print-out, but Feingold takes it with him to his desk. He hunts for and finds some forms, hands these to Schuyler.

FEINGOLD

Just sign the forms and we can begin processing, then if all goes well we're on our way.

SCHUYLER

(glancing through forms)
Where to, exactly? Not that I expect you to tell me.

FEINGOLD

(a broad smile)
I will tell you this-- if you're selected, you won't be bored for an instant.

He continues to rummage through his desk, then finds what he seeks-- a cheap ballpoint pen-- and hands the pen to Schuyler.

THE PEN bears a logo-- "CRS."

SCHUYLER studies the forms. Feingold looms over him, puffing the cigar, reading over his shoulder. Pointing to a form:

FEINGOLD

That's a standard liability release-- like renting ski equipment, or sky diving. I won't kid you, there's an element of risk involved-- that's what makes it exhilarating. Nothing a guy like you can't handle.

SCHUYLER

(putting down forms)
Mr. Feingold--

FEINGOLD

Josh.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

Josh. You can't seriously expect somebody to pay for, for...

FEINGOLD

A pig in a poke? Of course not. That's why there's no charge up front-- zip. At the conclusion of services, we send a bill. And for what we provide, we think the price is very reasonable. If the client disagrees, or is not completely satisfied, he doesn't pay. That simple-- you're covered. But I assure you, we've never had an unsatisfied customer.

Feingold looms even closer to Schuyler.

SCHUYLER

I'll have to think about this, discuss it with my attorney...

FEINGOLD

Lawyers. They get paid to keep us from having fun. I should tell you, the only reason we're seeing you now is because we had a cancellation. Normally, there's a wait of six months or longer.

SCHUYLER

Did you ever, by any chance, sell used cars?

FEINGOLD

(hearty LAUGH)

Actually, I used to be a computer scientist. So I know what it's like to be ruled by reason. To want the numbers, the facts. But I've watched countless people come through here, take the leap of faith, and become transformed... become whole.

Schuyler's surprised at this sudden shift to philosophy. He holds Feingold's intense stare.

FEINGOLD

Go ahead, walk out that door. And on your deathbed you can say, "Hey, I played by the rules, I played it safe... so what if I forgot to live, it's OK! Who cares."

(beat or two for effect)

Really. Even if I'm completely full of shit... what have you got to lose?

Schuyler shakes his head at the hard sell, then CLICKS the

(CONTINUED)

ballpoint pen, leans forward to sign. Feingold grabs his wrist.

FEINGOLD
Wait. Sign in blood.
(a WINK)
Just kidding.

Schuyler smiles back and--

CLOSE, signs on the dotted line.

Feingold snatches up the forms.

FEINGOLD
Very good, Mr. Van Orton. Please,
keep the pen.

Schuyler shrugs, sticks it in his breast pocket, starts out.
Feingold pats him on the back.

SCHUYLER
So let's say I'm approved... when
does it start? Whatever it is?

FEINGOLD
Don't worry. You'll know.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOUNDATION BUILDING - DAY

A warm day, mid-afternoon, an older office tower in a ritzy business district. Schuyler and Plympton approach the entrance.

INT. FOUNDATION BUILDING - DAY

Elevator doors open in an opulent, traditional building. Schuyler, in a business suit, emerges with Plympton. TRACK WITH THEM.

PLYMPTON
--flight's at six AM tomorrow,
brunch with the mayor and the
groundbreaking at eight PM, black
tie... If you're not up for the
trip to L. A., I could make some
calls, round up another body...

SCHUYLER
No, it's OK, Bob, I could use a change.

They head through doors with an understated nameplate: "THE VAN ORTON FOUNDATION."

INT. VAN ORTON FOUNDATION - DAY

Wood paneling, fine art, a handsome suite of offices-- low-key
ACTIVITY, ASSISTANTS smile at Schuyler and Plympton.

SCHUYLER

Bob, you ever come across an outfit called
CRS-- Consumer Recreation Services?

PLYMPTON

(thinks for a beat)
No... why?

SCHUYLER

Well... they approached me about investing,
but I haven't heard back from them...

PLYMPTON

Just as well, entertainment stocks
are generally a bad idea.

Schuyler nods, they separate. His secretary, MARIA, sits near his
door, which has an engraved plate reading "SCHUYLER VAN ORTON,
PRESIDENT." She hands him a couple of phone memos.

MARIA

Nothing important. How was lunch?

SCHUYLER

Overpriced. Miss me?

She shakes her head and returns to work. He heads into his office.

INT. SCHUYLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Schuyler enters, tosses down the messages. The office is large,
tasteful, very old money. A window overlooks the Chicago skyline.

Schuyler sits behind the desk and tilts back in his leather chair,
thinking. He flips through his Rolodex, finds a number and dials
it on his speakerphone. He gets a MALE VOICE this time:

GARY (filter)

. CRS, this is Gary speaking.

SCHUYLER

Yes, hello Gary, this is Schuyler Van
Orton... I came in a few weeks ago...
I'm going to be out of town briefly
and, I was wondering when, um, your
service was supposed to start--

(CONTINUED)

GARY (filter)
(after a beat)
Yes... I have you here on the
computer... I'm terribly sorry,
Mr. Van Orton, but apparently your
application was rejected...

SCHUYLER
Really? But... forget it, thanks.

He hangs up, looks out the window with a disappointed expression.

CUT TO:

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

SCHUYLER comes out of the garage, heads for the front steps of his
home-- then freezes, blinks--

ON HIS DOORSTEP lies a body, face-down, apparently a WINO. Its
position recalls that of Schuyler's dead father.

This isn't lost on Schuyler. He recovers himself, gingerly
approaches the body, kneels by it, wondering if the man's alive.
He winces at the strong smell, hears SNORING.

SCHUYLER
Guy. C'mon guy. Look, you're
blocking my door, I can't get in...
(nudges him gently; no response)
I can give you some money, just--

WINO (MUFFLED)
Go fuck yourself.

SCHUYLER
Christ. Don't make me call a cop--

The "wino" suddenly SPRINGS UP like a jack-in-the-box, bending
backwards impossibly at the hips. Schuyler lets out a CRY and
scrambles back.

The head swivels to face him-- it's LIT from within, a grotesque
plastic harlequin's mask. The MOUTH DROPS OPEN and a tongue in the
shape of a corkscrew SPRINGS OUT.

Dangling from the tip of the tongue is a small key on a hook. One
of the harlequin's glass eyes WINKS.

Schuyler stares in amazement for a few moments, then starts to
LAUGH, releasing the tension. He looks around for signs of the
operator of this device-- nobody in sight.

He examines the clown-machine more closely, opening the stained

(CONTINUED)

shirt and finding a small electronic SPEAKER BOX imbedded in the plastic chest. He checks out the geared APPARATUS that caused it to spring up, nodding in appreciation of the gag.

SCHUYLER

Cute.

He hoists the lightweight dummy by the back of the neck, PUNCHES a code into an alarm box by the door, it FLASHES GREEN; he goes in.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Schuyler kicks the door shut, flips on a LIGHT. He props up the dummy in a Louis XIV chair, examines it for a moment. Schuyler studies the key on the end of its tongue, removes it and slips it into his pocket. As he climbs the staircase, HOLD ON the frightening clown face.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

LATER. Schuyler, in a bathrobe, enters from a bathroom off the study, pressing his fingers to his eyes-- taking out his contact lenses. A FIRE CRACKLES in the fireplace. He squints, fumbles for a pair of glasses from a drawer in a table near the couch, puts them on. A drink already sits on the table, his clothes are strewn on the floor. He sips the drink, FLIPS ON the TV with the remote.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER. The fire's reduced to embers; Schuyler's passed out in front of an old B&W MOVIE. Suddenly we hear a PIERCING WHINE from the set. Schuyler wakes with a start.

ON SCREEN, the white-on-black words "EMERGENCY BROADCAST" as the familiar WHINE continues. It stops suddenly, we hear an authoritative ANNOUNCER, apparently a recording:

ANNOUNCER (filter)

This is the Emergency Broadcast System.
Please stand by for an emergency
broadcast. This is not a test. This
is the Emergency Broadcast System...

The message REPEATS. Schuyler, rather frightened, breathing hard, picks up the remote and flicks it. Same thing on EVERY CHANNEL. He rises, looks out the window for signs of civil unrest.

ON SCREEN, the EBS sign is replaced by the face of Josh Feingold. With a serious expression, he continues to chant in his stern announcer's imitation:

(CONTINUED)

FEINGOLD (filter)
...Please stand by for an emergency
broadcast. This is not a test.

Then, as if just now realizing the camera's on him, he breaks into a broad grin, WINKS and returns to his own VOICE.

FEINGOLD (filter)
Just kidding. Howdy Schuyler. By
now you must have realized your
game has begun. So this is a good
time to lay out a few ground rules,
help you enjoy your adventure...

Schuyler's slightly irritated, but relieved. He sits back down on the couch, shaking his head.

FEINGOLD (filter)
You've received the first key. There
will be others. Pay attention-- you
never know where you'll find 'em, you
never know when you'll need 'em, so
hang on to them at all times...

As he speaks, Schuyler fishes the key out of his pants.

INSERT KEY-- small, gold, the CRS logo engraved on it. Schuyler starts putting it onto his keychain.

ON TV SCREEN-- Feingold points to the bottom of the screen where a phone number SCROLLS PAST.

FEINGOLD (filter)
You have our number, operators are
standing by 24 hours to assist... but,
uh, use it for emergencies only. Please
don't call to ask what the object of the
game is-- figuring that out is the
object of the game. We now return you
to your regularly scheduled program...

His image VANISHES, replaced by the old MOVIE.

SCHUYLER
I'll be damned.

He looks at the key in his hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Barefoot in his robe, Schuyler crouches by a coaxial cable line emerging from the side of the house.

(CONTINUED)

CLOSER-- he fingers a box with an antenna that's been spliced into the line. He starts to unscrew it, then--

SCHUYLER thinks twice about it. He decides to leave it alone, starts back inside.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAX - DAY

A jet taxis to a terminal.

INT. LAX TERMINAL - DAY

SCHUYLER comes out of the gate with a suit bag and a briefcase. He joins up with a CHAUFFEUR carrying a sign that says VAN ORTON, the man takes his suit bag for him.

As he and the chauffeur move through the CROWD, they pass a red-eyed, dreadlocked, homeless-looking RASTA MAN with a colorful stitched BAG around his neck, hassling other TRAVELERS. He turns his attention to Schuyler and begins walking alongside him.

RASTA MAN

Ay mon, got sometin' fo you mon.

SCHUYLER

No thanks.

RASTA MAN

Ay mon how you say dat you don't know what it is mon.

He holds up a stained, newsprint religious TRACT, Schuyler glances at it from the corner of his eye--

CLOSE-- we see the words "CRISIS, REVELATION, SOLUTION." The letters C, R and S are printed in a different color from the rest.

WIDER-- Schuyler barely registers the tract.

CHAUFFEUR

Get lost, pal.

The Rasta Man hangs back. He calls after Schuyler:

RASTA MAN

Jah Love mon, dat's the key, dat's the key...

EXT. LAX TERMINAL - DAY

The chauffeur opens the back door of a black limousine for Schuyler, gets behind the wheel.

INT. BLACK LIMO - DAY

Schuyler furrows his brow. He pulls the gold key from his pocket--
ON KEY-- the CRS logo.

ON SCHUYLER-- annoyed at himself for not paying attention before.

SCHUYLER

Damn it.
(to chauffeur)
Excuse me--

CHAUFFEUR

Yes sir?

Schuyler looks back over his shoulder toward the disappearing terminal building, questioning himself now. He looks at his watch.

SCHUYLER

Nothing. Never mind.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - NIGHT

We're in a FLOODLIT vacant lot in a desolate patch of South Central L. A.; burnt-out projects, etc. Schuyler is there, looking restless, along with other BUSINESS PEOPLE in black tie, who CLAP and CHEER around the RUMBLING backhoe at this ground-breaking ceremony. A lavish SPREAD of food and drink await. NEWS PEOPLE with FLASH CAMERAS lurk about.

A POLITICIAN in black tie and hard-hat nods to the CONSTRUCTION WORKER who operates the backhoe, the man KILLS THE ENGINE and the politician turns to the crowd, gesturing for quiet.

POLITICIAN

We've done it. A year from now this
dismal wasteland will be a model low-
income housing project for the less
advantaged citizens of Los Angeles...

As the pol. speaks, Schuyler pays no attention, checking his watch and scanning--

The CROWD OF LOCALS, mostly poor and black, at the perimeter of the ceremony-- they're being held back by police lines and L. A. COPS. Schuyler's trying to spot the Rasta Man.

POLITICIAN (cont.)

Our special thanks go to the Van Orton
Foundation, without whose generosity none
of this would have been possible...

(CONTINUED)

Prodged by those around him, Schuyler realizes he's expected to take a bow. He takes a step onto the backhoe's shovel, smiles and nods as the CROWD CLAPS for him.

CUT TO:

INT. LAX TERMINAL - NIGHT

Schuyler wanders through the terminal, carrying his bags, glancing periodically at the DEPARTURES monitor and the clock. His manner now has changed, he eyes every PASSERBY, especially the ODD ONES.

P. A. VOICE (filter)
Final boarding call, Flight 177 to
Chicago, Gate 14.

In exasperation, Schuyler finally starts hurrying toward the boarding gate. Suddenly a leg is thrust out from behind an advertising kiosk, Schuyler TRIPS and goes sprawling. The Rasta Man steps out.

RASTA MAN
Shit mon sorry oughta pay more attention.

Schuyler gets up, dusts himself off. The Rasta Man strides away.

SCHUYLER
Hey, wait a second. I thought you
had something for me.

The Rasta Man turns, grins and WINKS. He pulls the bag from around his neck and lobs it at Schuyler, who catches it one hand. In an inflection-less American accent:

RASTA MAN
Hurry up, you'll miss your flight.

He heads off into the crowd. Schuyler looks after him a moment, impressed, then dashes toward the boarding gate.

CUT TO:

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Schuyler makes his way into First Class, the last one on the plane. An irritated FLIGHT ATTENDANT hovers behind him. As soon as he's in his seat, he pulls open the drawstring bag and removes--

--an ordinary carrot. Schuyler holds the bag up, turns it inside out; there's nothing else there. He stares at the carrot, completely puzzled and amused.

CUT TO:

EXT. DINER - EVENING

Schuyler, in business clothes, heads into the old-fashioned diner.

INT. DINER - EVENING

Schuyler moves toward his usual table--

--and SMACKS into Christine the waitress as she hurries out of the kitchen carrying a large tray full of pea soup, spaghetti, chili--

--it SPRAYS EVERYWHERE, covering him from head to foot. He stands there, stunned and DRIPPING.

CHRISTINE

Oh Lord-- are you OK?

She reaches for napkins, but the Middle Eastern boss YUSEF pushes her out of the way and starts wiping at Schuyler with a rag.

YUSEF

I'm so sorry, sir, we give you
free dinner--

Schuyler's shaking his head, amazed. Yusef turns to Christine--

YUSEF

Chrissy, this is enough, last
time, that's it.

CHRISTINE

It was an accident Yusef-- please,
I didn't see him--

YUSEF

Go will ya, just go. You're fired.

Christine the ex-waitress BURSTS INTO TEARS. Schuyler suddenly begins to LAUGH, with annoyance.

SCHUYLER

This is good. Very good.

Christine stares at him dumbfounded, then dashes off into the kitchen. He continues to CHUCKLE angrily, pushing through the slop on the floor with his shoe, looking for something.

SCHUYLER

Where is it? Does she have it?

Yusef stares, uncomprehending... Schuyler goes after Christine, Yusef gesturing helplessly.

INT. DINER KITCHEN - EVENING

He crosses past a short-order COOK in the grimy industrial kitchen. He finds Christine in an alcove with a couple of lockers, as she finishes changing into her street clothes.

CHRISTINE

Mister--

Still SNIFFLING, she ducks out of view behind a locker door. Her brown uniform hangs from it, the nameplate "CHRIS" prominent.

SCHUYLER

That was an impressive display.

CHRISTINE

Look, I'm sorry, OK? I'd buy you a new suit, but I just got canned-- ain't that enough for you?

Schuyler smiles, shakes his head. He reaches toward the nameplate.

CLOSE as his fingers point to the CRS of CHRIS-- it even seems the H and the I have faded a bit.

SCHUYLER

I wish you people could be a little bit more subtle. Where's my key?

WIDER, she finishes dressing, SLAMS the locker, pushes past him. As she grabs her purse and leaves the kitchen, she throws a look back at him. Her expression is one of somebody fleeing a lunatic. Schuyler's face suddenly falls-- he's made a terrible mistake.

SCHUYLER

Wait-- you really work here.

She shakes her head and rushes out of there. Schuyler absorbs his blunder for a moment, then hurries after her.

EXT. DINER - EVENING

Schuyler catches up as Christine hurries toward a subway entrance.

SCHUYLER

Hold it, listen, I'm sorry I thought-- I thought it was a set-up.

CHRISTINE

Please leave me alone.

(half to herself)

I needed that job. Damn it!

She marches toward the steps. Schuyler hangs back, then SHOUTS:

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

I can help you get another job!

CHRISTINE

(pauses, turns)

Why wouldya wanna do that?

SCHUYLER

(approaching)

I feel responsible.

She studies him for a moment-- he seems sincere. She turns and comes closer to him, still a bit suspicious.

CHRISTINE

What kind of job?

SCHUYLER

I have interests in a few restaurants...

CHRISTINE

You may a noticed, I'm not much of a waitress.

SCHUYLER

Can you type?

She nods, shrugs-- a little. He pulls out a gold business card holder, wipes off soup, passes a card to her; she studies it.

SCHUYLER

Come by my office. We always need temps.

CHRISTINE

(mock impressed)

"The Van Orton Foundation..."

SCHUYLER

(shrugs)

It's a philanthropic organization...
We give money away.

CHRISTINE

Mm, tough job...

(moving on, holds up the card)

Thanks-- maybe I'll call. There's
a drycleaners around the corner.

SCHUYLER

I'll dock your first paycheck.

She flashes a warm smile as she heads down the steps. Schuyler looks down and finally winces at the state of his clothes.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Schuyler in front of the TUBE, foggily switching channels.

ON SCREEN, a SPECIAL BULLETIN graphic.

ANNOUNCER (filter)

The following is a special news bulletin.

SCHUYLER sits up alert, readies a pad of paper and a pen.

ON SCREEN, a NEWSCASTER comes on:

NEWSCASTER (filter)

Hurricane Ted is approaching the
coast of South Carolina...

SCHUYLER seems disappointed, flops back on the couch, throws down the pen, feeling quite foolish.

NEWSCASTER (cont.)

...threatening to buffet the city
of Charleston with winds of up to--

He CHANGES the channel.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOUNDATION BUILDING - DAY

Late afternoon. PUSH IN to a top floor window of the office tower.

INT. SCHUYLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Behind the desk, Schuyler appears to be working intently at his computer terminal.

The INTERCOM BUZZES subtly, Schuyler hits a button without looking away from the terminal.

SCHUYLER

. Yes Maria.

MARIA (filter)

There's a Miss Christine O'Malley to
see you, Sky... She has one of your
cards, said you asked her to stop by--

SCHUYLER

Right, right. Send her in.

As he hits the keyboard to close the file, we see ON SCREEN that he

(CONTINUED)

was playing a computer game, something like Tetris.

His secretary MARIA admits Christine. She's dressed to the nines for this appointment-- mildly revealing clothes, too-high heels, a fair amount of make-up, her hair teased up a bit. She's intimidated by the opulent surroundings.

CHRISTINE

Your name is Sky? Were your parents hippies or something?

SCHUYLER

Far from it. Christine, I'm glad you came.

Schuyler rises, smiles, gestures for her to sit. He perches on his desk, trying to put her at ease. She pulls out a piece of paper, keeps her distance from him.

CHRISTINE

This is my resume. There's not much there, but I was in the city anyway, Yusef owes me some money, so I thought what the heck I'm here I'll drop it off...

She places the paper on the far end of his desk from him, turns and starts to leave. Schuyler, amused by her, reaches for the resume.

SCHUYLER

What's your hurry? I don't bite.

CHRISTINE

No offense, your teeth look pretty sharp from here. This was nice of you and all... but let's get real. You're obviously an important man, and all I do is type.

SCHUYLER

(reading the resume)
Fifty words a minute. Please, Ms. O'Malley, do you really think I'd offer you a spot here just because you have a pretty face?

Christine nods-- why else? Schuyler seems a little embarrassed.

SCHUYLER

Well... I'll get this to personnel.

Christine starts toward the door again, decides something, turns.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

Um, Mr. Van Orton... maybe you shouldn't bother. Tellya the truth, I never worked in this kinda place... My mom said "A rich man, ooh you gotta go in, wear something sexy..." She typed the resume. I couldn't do fifty words a minute if you held a gun to my head.

SCHUYLER

You have a lot to learn about salesmanship...

She nods, smiles sadly and heads for the door.

SCHUYLER

Wait. I was just leaving myself, do you mind if I walk down with you?

She narrows her eyes at him as he joins her at the doorway. He shows her his teeth; she pretends to examine them.

CHRISTINE

OK.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOPPING DISTRICT - EVENING

MOVE DOWN from the handsome skyline to find Christine and Schuyler walking together. She keeps drifting to the fancy shop windows, making faces at what she sees, while Schuyler watches her.

CHRISTINE

So Joey sez tah me "Chrissy--"

SCHUYLER

Joey's your eldest brother?

CHRISTINE

No. Kev's the oldest, Joey's the cop.

SCHUYLER

Right. Kevin's the mortician.
And Bobby's at community college.
(off her impatient look)
I apologize, go on.

CHRISTINE

So anyways Joey sez, "Chrissy--"

Her attention's suddenly drawn to something in a boutique window--
an attractive COCKTAIL DRESS.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

Ooh, now that's a stupid dress.

Schuyler takes a moment to catch up with her train of thought.

SCHUYLER

Really? I think it's-- quite smart.

CHRISTINE

For twelve hundred bucks it's an exceedingly stupid dress.

(looks him over)

How much that suit go for anyway?

SCHUYLER

I think you'd have to call it mentally retarded.

CHRISTINE

Not funny. My sister Jane is retarded.

SCHUYLER

I am sorry.

CHRISTINE

Not your fault.

They walk in silence for another moment, Christine's getting self-conscious about Schuyler staring at her. Neither of them notices a HANSOM CAB IN BG, that seems to be tailing them... the vaguely sinister, elderly but muscular HACK watches them closely.

CHRISTINE

Why do you look at me like that?

SCHUYLER

Nothing, I just...I've only seen people like you on television.

No, I don't mean--

CHRISTINE

Fine, I'm a cartoon... That's all folks.

She walks briskly away from him, heading toward a bus stop where a bus waits-- but she almost FALLS OVER on her high heels and the bus pulls away before she reaches it. She sits down on the bench, CURSING her shoes, as Schuyler comes up and sits near her.

SCHUYLER

You should let me finish my thoughts.
Here you are, living with this enormous family, you all love one another...

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE
So? That's what it's all about.

SCHUYLER
(shakes his head)
Not where I come from.

CHRISTINE
Mr. Van Orton, I'm sorry if I have
trouble feelin' sorry for you.

SCHUYLER
I know, I'm not complaining, I
have no right to complain about
anything. Just... fine.

A standstill. The hansom cab has trotted very close by, the HACK
gestures at them.

HACK
Nice night for a ride, pretty
couple like you...

Both Christine and Schuyler seem uncomfortable with the idea.

CHRISTINE
No thanks.

The Hack looks pointedly at Schuyler.

HACK
Don't wanna miss this ride, son.

He WINKS. Schuyler almost jumps, eyes the man carefully. It looks
as though he's wearing age make-up. OLD-FASHIONED LETTERING on the
side of the cab: "CARRIAGE RIDE SOCIETY." CRS.

SCHUYLER
Uh... maybe it would be fun.

CHRISTINE
What? Horses gimme the creeps.
(the HORSE nuzzles her)
Couldja keep him back, huh?

HACK
Sorry miss.

SCHUYLER
Come on, let's do it.

CHRISTINE
This is not a date.

(CONTINUED)

He stands, plucks a flower from a container on the side of the cab and hands it to her with a little bow. Christine LAUGHS.

CHRISTINE
You're really weird.

He helps her in and is about to climb in himself, when the hack blocks his way with his hand.

HACK
Sorry, first things first.

Schuyler's puzzled a moment, then reaches for his wallet.

HACK
No sir, that's not the key. But
Bessie here is a might peckish.

After a moment, Schuyler gets it, grins. He reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out--

--the carrot, shriveled now, preserved in a zip-loc bag.

He removes the carrot and carefully feeds it to the horse, trying not to let the beast slobber on him too much.

HACK
Climb aboard.

ANGLE IN CAB-- Christine has watched all this, amazed. Schuyler settles into the seat beside her.

CHRISTINE
What is going on here?

ANOTHER ANGLE-- The hack CRACKS a whip, and the horse LUNGES FORWARD, the cab HURTLING off into the park at high speed.

ANGLE IN CAB-- Christine clutching Schuyler for dear life. It's a pretty wild ride.

CHRISTINE
What did you feed him?

Schuyler LAUGHS, he's enjoying this.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

The horse TROTS BRISKLY through wooded lanes, fast but under control, the hack urging him on.

ANGLE IN CAB-- Christine is getting used to it now, starting to share Schuyler's exhilaration.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE
I've never done this before. Is
it supposed to be like this?
Where are we going?

SCHUYLER
I have no idea.

EXT. CANAL - NIGHT

The cab suddenly comes to a halt at the edge of one of the canals. There's a log raft floating at the edge here. The hack helps Schuyler and Christine climb gingerly out of the cab.

HACK
Here you are.

ANGLE ON RAFT - There's an elegant table set for two, white linen tablecloth, candles, crystal, silver, large covered dishes.

SCHUYLER seems delighted. Christine's wary, genuinely disturbed.

CHRISTINE
Unh-uh, this is too much. I don't know
how or why you did this, but you shouldn't
have. You really shouldn't have.

SCHUYLER
(holding up his hands)
I didn't. I swear to you, I
didn't. They did.

CHRISTINE
Who's THEY!?

SCHUYLER
It's hard to explain.
(climbing on the raft)
I hope you're hungry.

CUT TO:

LATER. WIDE-- the raft floats under a bridge in downtown Chicago.

Schuyler and Christine are finishing dinner with a luscious-looking dessert, they each have a glass of wine before them. Schuyler's finished explaining the situation to her.

SCHUYLER
I never know what they're going to do next.
Like this... I have to admit, things have
become a lot more interesting of late.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE
That is so sick.

Schuyler didn't expect this response, awaits explanation.

CHRISTINE
I mean, talk about twisted. You're
paying somebody to give you a life.

Her tone is light but he's a little stung by this.

SCHUYLER
How was your dinner?

CHRISTINE
Delicious.

SCHUYLER
Enjoy the ride?
(off her nod)
That's life. Someone has to pay for it.

He flings his empty glass over his shoulder, it SHATTERS on the raft and shards SPLASH into the water.

CHRISTINE
One for you, Mr. Bigshot.

They both smile, then turn at the sound of THUMPING overhead.

ANGLE UPWARD-- a helicopter with a SPOTLIGHT approaches rapidly.

SCHUYLER
I was just starting to wonder how
we got off this thing...

ANGLE ON RAFT, now in the harbor. Schuyler and Christine cringe as the WIND from the hovering chopper BLOWS things every which way. A ladder drops down in front of them. Schuyler gestures toward it.

EXT. CHICAGO - NIGHT

AERIAL SHOT-- a breathtaking OVERHEAD VIEW of the city.

INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Schuyler and Christine sit close together in a seat behind the PILOT. More than the view, Schuyler enjoys watching Christine's pleasure as she points out places she knows with delight.

EXT. SCHUYLER'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

The helicopter lands in the wide street.

INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

The black pilot turns to face them as they start to get out.

PILOT

Sir! I think you dropped these.

Schuyler turns, the pilot is holding out--

--a pair of black sunglasses. Tiny gold keys are painted where the earpieces join the lenses.

Schuyler nods and takes them, then does a double take.

We get our first good look at the pilot as he WINKS-- it's the RASTA from the L. A. airport, without his disguise.

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Schuyler and Christine climb out of the chopper, which DEPARTS. They stand awkwardly by the front gate of Schuyler's house for a moment, then Schuyler unlocks it, Christine doesn't follow.

SCHUYLER

So... can I offer you a cup of coffee or something?

CHRISTINE

Hey, it's been a-- quite a time-- unique, y'know?... but look...

(blurting it out)

I'm not gonna put out so I probably shouldn't come in.

SCHUYLER

(LAUGHS)

Just coffee. I promise.

She smiles and heads up the steps-- he PUNCHES IN an alarm code.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Schuyler enters carrying a tray of coffee. He looks around, blinks and steadies himself, he seems a little disoriented.

SCHUYLER

Christine?

He shrugs and puts down the tray on a sidetable, pours coffee. Christine re-enters.

SCHUYLER

Have trouble finding the bathroom?

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

No. I got lost on the way back.

(beat)

Can I ask you something? Why do you live in a place like this?

(apologetically)

I mean, it's a nice house and all, but you don't seem to use much of it... and... it's kinda like, um...

SCHUYLER

A mausoleum?

CHRISTINE

(sits on the couch)

Yeah.

SCHUYLER

Well... I grew up here... after college I bummed around awhile and then I just... came back. It really demands servants to keep it up, but they make me nervous.

He hands her the coffee, sits on the couch too. She sips.

CHRISTINE

Where's the rest of your family?

SCHUYLER

Don't really have one. Some cousins... they call me up once in a while, I send them money.

CHRISTINE

(after a beat)

Your folks are gone?

SCHUYLER

(nods)

My mother died of cancer a couple of years ago. And my father, he, um...

There's a pause. Christine clearly wants him to continue.

SCHUYLER

He died too. When I was a kid.

(another beat)

He killed himself, actually.

CHRISTINE

Oh no, I'm sorry--

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER
Jumped from the attic window. I
was there...

CHRISTINE
God, how horrible--

SCHUYLER
(shakes himself)
Sorry, I almost never talk about
myself... Must be the wine. Never
excuse, never explain, never look back...

CHRISTINE
What I said about this game thing-- I
was wrong. You need it, don't you?
(off his look)
I mean-- you're one of the loneliest
guys I ever met...

Schuyler looks at her and LAUGHS uncomfortably.

CHRISTINE
Forget it, I'm dumb, I'll shut up.

SCHUYLER
No, I-- you're probably right. It's just...

He makes a helpless gesture.

CHRISTINE
You think about it, don't you?
Killing yourself.

Schuyler stares at her, a little surprised.

CHRISTINE
I mean, it's OK. I used to.

SCHUYLER
Really?

CHRISTINE
Doesn't everyone, sometimes? I kept
this bottle of pills in my purse,
figured if it all got too much for me .
I'd just down them. Like a spy, y'know?
It's funny, this little bottle helped me
take things a lot less seriously.

As she speaks, she fishes in her purse, pulls out a glass container
and hands it to Schuyler. He examines it--

CLOSER ON BOTTLE-- a distinctive medicine bottle. Empty.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER looks at her questioningly. She shrugs.

CHRISTINE

I flushed the pills ages ago. Life is short, right? So why rush it? Sometimes it's pretty fun, and even the bad times are OK... once they're over.

SCHUYLER

You're incredible. No, you are-- you're absolutely right...

He hands the lucky bottle back to her, she drops it in her purse.

CHRISTINE

They were only aspirin anyway.

Christine takes his arm and looks at his watch.

CHRISTINE

Oh no. I never called, mom is gonna kill me. She's probably checking the hospitals by now.

They're very close together now, she still holds his arm.

SCHUYLER

Christine, I...

Impulsively, he kisses her. She lets it happen for a moment, then she pulls away when they're both getting too passionate.

CHRISTINE

Please. It's time to go.

As she hurries from the room, he follows, annoyed with himself.

SCHUYLER

Wait, I have a car...

He grabs his keys from the sidetable. CAMERA HOLDS on the table for a moment, then MOVES UNDER IT. There, we see a small LISTENING DEVICE planted below.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHRISTINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Schuyler's car coasts to a stop on a street of modest rowhouses.

INT. JAGUAR - NIGHT

ANGLE THROUGH WINDOW-- on the only illuminated house on the block.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

Aw Jeez, the light's on in the kitchen, they're all in there. Just drive a couple doors past.

ANGLE IN CAR-- as Schuyler drives onward.

SCHUYLER

I'll come up and speak with them if you'd like.

CHRISTINE

No, bad idea. It won't be so rough, they basically trust me, it's just they worry.

She starts to get out, Schuyler touches her.

SCHUYLER

When may I see you again?

CHRISTINE

C'mon Mr. Van-- Sky-- you don't really wanna--

SCHUYLER

Tomorrow night? Pick you up at seven.

CHRISTINE

(getting out)

...OK. But-- can we, like, maybe do something normal?

SCHUYLER

I'll leave that to you.
Good-night, Christine.

THROUGH WINDOW-- she waves and he watches her run back to the house, brace herself and head in. He puts the car into gear.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHUYLER'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON SCHUYLER'S WATCH -- a fancy gold Cartier. It's 10:15 A.M.

WIDER, at his desk, he can't believe it's still so early.

CUTS TO him checking his watch impatiently at different hours, in different settings--

--A FANCY RESTAURANT-- 12:45.

--A BOARDROOM MEETING-- 4:30.

INT. JAGUAR - NIGHT

THE CLOCK on the wooden dashboard reads 6:55.

WIDER-- Schuyler looks from the dash toward Christine's house--

EXT. CHRISTINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

She emerges dressed in trendy clothes, well made-up; she ARGUES with an unseen mother. Her face lights up when she sees Schuyler, who climbs out to open the door for her. He's embarrassed to be dressed much more casually, jeans and a sweater-- she doesn't mind.

INT. DISCO - NIGHT

The two of them DANCE to an INDUSTRIAL BEAT in this tawdry but festive club. He follows her lead, stiff and out of practice; she's a much better dancer than he is.

EXT. DISCO PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Schuyler and Christine, both perspiring and LAUGHING, walk out of the club arm in arm, MUTED BASS THUMP from inside.

CHRISTINE

Really, you're a good dancer, y'know?

SCHUYLER

Liar. Never felt so old in my life.

(old man voice)

In my day, we knew how to slam dance.

She kisses his cheek. As they near the Jag, parked among Camaros and pick-ups, a greasy, nervous TOUGH in his teens approaches them.

TOUGH

Hey man, this your car? Nice car.

SCHUYLER

Excuse me.

He reaches into a coat pocket at the passenger door; Christine seems frightened. She YELPS as the tough pulls a SWITCHBLADE. Schuyler turns to the guy, seems more impatient than scared.

TOUGH

Keys.

SCHUYLER

I'm starting to get tired of this--

TOUGH

Gimme the fuckin' keys!

(CONTINUED)

Schuyler studies the guy, SIGHS, and pulls from his pocket--

--the sunglasses he received in the helicopter. The tough just stares at them as Schuyler holds them out.

TOUGH

What the fuck? I don't want your fuckin' sunglasses--

CHRISTINE

Sky, give him the keys!

Schuyler smirks, shakes his head, then, taking the tough unawares, swiftly grabs the tough's arm and TWISTS IT down--

--but the tough SLASHES Schuyler in the leg with the knife--

SCHUYLER

Jesus!

On pure adrenalin, Schuyler THROWS him against the next car, its ALARM GOES OFF and the knife CLATTERS to the ground. The tough, dazed, runs at full tilt. Schuyler BREATHES HARD.

He picks up the sunglasses, then the blood-stained switchblade that did the damage-- no CRS logo, just a knife. In shock, terrified:

SCHUYLER

Shit. That was real.

He sits, almost collapses on the ground; Christine crouches beside him, checking the wound.

CHRISTINE

What the hell were you doing?!

SCHUYLER

I thought it was part of the game...

CUT TO:

LATER. A PARAMEDIC bandages Schuyler's leg.

PARAMEDIC

It's not deep, but... try to stay off it a few days.

Schuyler nods. IN BG, a few ONLOOKERS as COP #1 picks up the knife and puts it in a plastic bag. COP #2 finishes getting the story out of Christine; she starts walking away, very upset, hugging herself in fear. Schuyler gets to his feet, follows Christine.

SCHUYLER

Christine!

(CONTINUED)

She pauses, turns back, hardening her expression. He approaches her, limping slightly.

CHRISTINE
I cannot deal with this.

SCHUYLER
Come on, I--

CHRISTINE
What if it was a gun?! There are still
real people out here! I'm a real person!
You woulda gotten us both killed!

SCHUYLER
I'm sorry.

He tries to hug her, she won't have it.

CHRISTINE
No! So what if you're some blue-blooded
zillionaire... it's too scary being with
somebody who thinks the whole world
exists for his-- amusement.

SCHUYLER
Please, Christine--

CHRISTINE
I don't wanna see you anymore.
Not till you get a grip. Good
luck, and-- feel better.

She walks away toward a bus stop. Schuyler searches for something to say-- but finds nothing. The second cop taps him on the shoulder, he turns to him, feeling desolate.

COP #2
We've had a couple a these this
month, gotta be the same kid. Be
good if you come down with me to the
station, look over some photographs.

Schuyler nods. As they walk back to the crime scene, he looks over his shoulder-- Christine climbs aboard a bus, not looking back.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

The Jaguar pulls into the garage, Schuyler gets out, exhausted and miserable, heads up the steps.

INT. FOYER AND BALLROOM - NIGHT

Schuyler enters and shuts the door behind him. The clown's still there. Schuyler reaches for the lightswitch--

CLOSE-- ZAP! Blue SPARKS leap to his fingers, he pulls his hand away with a CRY.

SCHUYLER

Shit!

At first he assumes it's a short-circuit, he shakes out his hand...

CLOWN (filter)

Welcome home, Schuyler.

Schuyler GROANS, then SNARLS at the clown. He takes a few steps into the ballroom--

BOOM! LIQUID CONTACT EXPLOSIVES go off with a FLASH on the floor beneath his feet, he jumps, stumbles, almost dances across the room as more BURSTS greet his steps. These aren't dangerous, just mildly painful and frightening.

Schuyler gets to a standing lamp, BREATHING hard now, pissed off. He turns it on and BOOM! The bulb EXPLODES.

Schuyler LEAPS into a settee at the room's edge-- and hears a FARTING NOISE. He reaches underneath the cushion and finds a WHOOPEE CUSHION. Something is written on it, he squints to read it in the LIGHT FROM STREETLAMPS outside.

CLOSE-- the whoopee cushion reads: "BE COOL. THAT'S THE KEY."

SCHUYLER gets a hold of himself, thinking on the game's level. He understands the advice, removes the sunglasses from his pocket and slips them on.

HIS POV as the glasses come on-- they're SPFX POLARIZED to enable him to see LUMINESCENT ARROWS and FOOTPRINTS painted on the floors and walls, a map through the minefield of his home.

SCHUYLER gets up carefully, placing foot after foot carefully according to the UNSEEN diagram.

SCHUYLER

You fucking assholes.

QUICK CUTS as Schuyler disarms the booby-traps:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

SCHUYLER'S POV-- his enormous tiled kitchen. CAMERA FOLLOWS a GLOWING green arrow to a JUG with a GLOWING SMILEY FACE on it.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

A clear liquid SPILLS over the floor, SETTING OFF the soluble explosives. Schuyler, still in glasses, pours from the jug.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

SCHUYLER'S POV-- GLOWING FOOTPRINTS AND ARROWS lead to a fuse box. APPROACH the fuse box; AN ELECTRICAL BLACK BOX inside, with small ARROWS showing how to disconnect it.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

--THE CLOWN FLIES against a wall, the head SHATTERS.

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Schuyler SMASHES the cable interceptor box with a hammer.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

No longer wearing the sunglasses, Schuyler explores the study, looking for booby-traps-- and finds the listening device under the sidetable. He yanks it off, taking in the significance of this.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Schuyler studies himself in the mirror, breathing hard.

SCHUYLER

Idiot!

He opens it to reveal a medicine chest, TAPS inside, checks the contents of bottles.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

With a FLASHLIGHT Schuyler checks every inch of his spartan bedroom. On all fours he shines the flashlight UNDER HIS BED. He sees a sock, dust... and a small DEVICE that could be another bug. It's attached to a YELLOW WIRE, stapled to the baseboard.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Schuyler follows the yellow wire under rugs, around doorways...

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

He climbs a narrow servant's staircase. The WIRE runs upward.

INT. ATTIC ROOM - NIGHT

A low ceiling, exposed beams, dusty furniture piled up. Schuyler comes into this storage area, still following the mysterious WIRE.

(CONTINUED)

With the FLASHLIGHT he traces its path across the floor and...

Toward a dormer window at the far end of the room-- from it
STREETLAMP LIGHT STREAMS UPWARD. Schuyler slowly approaches this.

The wire runs over the windowsill and outside. Schuyler has to
struggle a bit to lift the closed window--

When he finally WRENCHES IT OPEN--

A BUCKETFUL OF WATER SPLASHES onto his head, drenching him. He
can't believe it, looks up slowly--

The bucket dangles from a rope at the top of the window. In the
bottom of the bucket are painted the words: "DEAD END."

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

EXTREME WIDE SHOT, Schuyler's tiny figure visible in the same
window from which his father leapt.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

The sky is LIGHT by the time Schuyler, hair damp, enters the
bedroom. Schuyler exhaustedly throws himself down on the bed, face
first on the pillow-- then immediately rises again. He pats the
pillow-- something hard there. He picks up the sunglasses from the
bedside table and slips them on again--

POV-- ON PILLOW-- a faintly glowing X.

SCHUYLER pulls off the glasses and grabs the pillow. He YANKS OFF
the pillowcase and tears it open, FEATHERS FLY. Inside he finds--

CLOSE-- a small metal hand-crank with a hexagonal nut on the end;
there's the image of a key embossed on the side.

SCHUYLER flings the crank across the room, it CLATTERS on the
floor. Schuyler finally puts his head down on the mattress to
sleep, closes his eyes with a GROAN.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STUDY - DAY

Schuyler, in a bathrobe, unshaven and pretty beat, sips coffee as
he dials the CRS number ON SPEAKERPHONE from the old napkin. He
toys with the handcrank, which lies on the table.

CYNTHIA (filter)
Hello--

SCHUYLER
Yeah, listen, this is--

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA (cont.)
--Thank you for calling Consumer
Recreation Services. All our lines
are busy, but please hold for the
next available operator. Thank you.

FILTERED MUZAK. Schuyler SIGHS, sips his full, hot coffee.

CUT TO:

LATER. An empty mug SLAMS down on the table, new MUZAK on the
SPEAKER. WIDER, Schuyler is now fully dressed. A VOICE breaks in:

CYNTHIA (filter)
We're sorry to keep you waiting. Your
call will be handled in the order in which
it was received. Please don't hang up.

Schuyler CRIES OUT in frustration, violently PUNCHES a button to
hang up, DIAL TONE. He goes through his address book, PUNCHES IN a
number. He picks up the handcrank and looks at it, paces the room
as the phone RINGS...

DAVID (filter)
Who is this?

SCHUYLER
It's me, Schuyler. David, what the
fuck have you done to me--

DAVID (filter)
No. Not on the phone, it isn't safe...
Remember the last place you saw me?

David's tone is off, very disturbed. Schuyler is thrown, slips the
handcrank into his pocket and furrows his brow.

SCHUYLER
Uh, yeah, the--

DAVID (filter)
Don't say it. I'll see you there in an
hour. Don't let 'em follow you.

A CLICK and DIAL TONE. After a long PAUSE, Schuyler pushes the
button to SHUT OFF THE PHONE.

CUT TO:

EXT. DINER - DAY

Schuyler gets out of a cab near the diner, pays the DRIVER. LIGHT
RAIN. David intercepts him by the entrance.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID
Keep moving.

They begin to move down the sidewalk at a rapid clip. David looks much worse than the last time we saw him-- haggard, scared, a man on the run. He leads Schuyler toward the subway steps.

SCHUYLER
What happened to you?

DAVID
I'm sorry Sky, I'm so sorry, I didn't know, see I thought it was over for me...

SCHUYLER
Slow down. What's going on.

DAVID
The game. I thought I'd finished playing, I paid the bill. Once I put them onto you, I was sure they'd-- then it started all over again.

David gestures for Schuyler to follow him underground.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY

David leads Schuyler to a filthy, but quiet corner, looks around for signs of people trailing them. Both DRIP from the rain.

SCHUYLER
Jesus, David, calm down. What the hell are they doing to you?

DAVID
Everything. The game doesn't stop, Sky. It just doesn't stop.

SCHUYLER
Look. That's crazy. It's a royal pain in the ass, I'll give you that, but why would they keep playing once you paid them?

DAVID
I don't know! I paid them MORE to make it stop, but they won't leave me alone!

SCHUYLER
David-- why don't you come home with me.

David stares at him, taking this in. A TRAIN COMES CLOSER.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID

Ah, so that's what this is all about...
you wanna help me...

(pacing)

Damn it. God damn it, I should've known,
it's obvious-- that's why they sent me to you
in the first place. You're one of them!

Schuyler tries to put a hand on David to calm him, but David hauls off and PUNCHES HIM in the face-- the TRAIN ARRIVES with a SCREECH.

SCHUYLER

Christ!

He backs off, holding his bloodied nose, staring at his one-time friend. David just shakes his head sadly, betrayed. A few COMMUTERS avoid this scene as they get off the train.

DAVID

I can't believe it. It makes
perfect sense, but-- I trusted
you-- you were my friend!

David dashes into the subway just as the DOORS CLOSE. Schuyler follows, BANGS on the glass, but the TRAIN'S already MOVING. Schuyler and David stare at each other through a graffitied window as the TRAIN MOVES AWAY. David's eyes are those of a madman.

AT A PAYPHONE in the station, Schuyler dabs at his BLEEDING nose with the CRS napkin. He looks at it, dials the number.

SCHUYLER

Hello!

FOREIGN VOICE (filter)

Ha-low!

SCHUYLER

Listen, this is Schuyler Van Orton, I'm
calling it off, it has to stop, now--

The FOREIGN VOICE BABBLES in an incomprehensible tongue.

SCHUYLER

Sorry, I must have the wrong number.

He hangs up, takes out another QUARTER, double-checks the number and DIALS AGAIN. A BUSY SIGNAL. Schuyler SLAMS down the phone, fishes out the quarter, tries one last time. We hear the familiar THREE TONES, and then--

(CONTINUED)

PHONE CO. VOICE (filter)
We're sorry. The number you have
dialed has been disconnected or is no
longer in service. If you believe you
have reached this recording in error,
please hang up and try the operator.

Schuyler slowly hangs up again. He knows there's no way he'll ever
get through to them... but he doesn't know what this means. He
crumples the napkin in his fist and tosses it in the trash--

CLOSE ON TRASH-- the napkin, only the letters CRS visible-- stained
with Schuyler's blood.

EXT. DINER - DAY

POV THROUGH CAR WINDSHIELD, as Schuyler emerges from underground,
obviously quite upset. The car suddenly MOVES FORWARD--

WITH SCHUYLER. He walks to the curb, distractedly raises a hand
for a cab. One pulls up instantly. He climbs in.

INT. CAB - DAY

A very aged, battered cab, probably a Checker. Bulletproof glass
separates the CABBIE from the back.

SCHUYLER
Six thirty six State, please.

The cabbie nods and hits the gas.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - DAY

The cab roars down the street, KICKING UP WATER from the gutters.

INT. CAB - DAY

Schuyler bites his cuticle, not paying attention to where they're
going; the windows are wet and fogged. Then he narrows his eyes.

SCHUYLER
Hey! What are we doing here,
you're heading the wrong way!

The cabbie says nothing. Schuyler, irritated, RAPS on the glass.

The cab driver turns IN PROFILE for a moment-- longish hair, an
earring, but there's something familiar about his face. Schuyler
glances at the driver ID on the back of the seat--

CLOSE ON PHOTO, the man is the HACK from the hansom cab in a new
disguise. The COMPANY NAME-- "CONSOLIDATED REGENCY SEDANS." CRS.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

STOP! Let me out of this fucking thing!

SCHUYLER tries the doorhandle when the cab stops at a stoplight, it doesn't work.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - DAY

The cab PEELS OUT when the light turns green, heads for a pier.

INT. CAB - DAY

Schuyler's looking around in an increasing panic.

SCHUYLER

Listen, I quit! I'll pay but I
just want out!

No response. But all of a sudden, the cabbie opens his own door and leaps out of the MOVING CAB.

EXT. PIER - DAY

The cab driver hits the ground and ROLLS expertly, his door slams shut again. The cab rockets to the end of the pier and--

GOES FLYING off the edge into Lake Michigan.

INT. CAB - DAY

Schuyler SCREAMS as the cab plunges and HITS the water.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - DAY

The STEAMING cab isn't going to float for long, the nose slowly DIPS below the surface.

INT. CAB - DAY

FILLING WITH WATER. Schuyler tries to roll down the window, the handle SPINS, nothing happens. He slides to the other side.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - DAY

The cab GOES UNDER with a BURBLE of BUBBLES.

INT. CAB - DAY

Schuyler CRANKS the other window handle desperately, now up to his waist in water, water POURS IN from overhead, INCREASINGLY DARK BLUE through the windows. The handle falls off in his hand.

UNDERWATER SHOT - DAY

The sinking cab, Schuyler inside KICKING at the window.

INT. CAB - DAY

Schuyler stops his frantic kicking, trying to think coolly. He's up to his neck by now. Angry at himself for not realizing it sooner, he pulls what he needs out of his pocket-- the HANDCRANK that was in his pillow. He takes a deep breath and--

SUBMERGED, inserts the crank into the window handle hole. A perfect fit. He CRANKS FURIOUSLY, WATER FLOODS IN.

UNDERWATER SHOT - DAY

Schuyler SLITHERS OUT the open window. Cheeks puffed out, he kicks frantically for the surface.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - DAY

He BURSTS to the surface, SPLUTTERING, catching his BREATH. He treads water for a moment--

GIRL

Mister-- are you all right?!

Schuyler turns around--

A CABIN CRUISER is anchored nearby. A very beautiful GIRL in a yellow rain slicker leans over the edge, tosses him a life preserver and starts to haul him toward her.

EXT. CABIN CRUISER - DAY

With the girl's help, he clambers onto the rear ladder-- the name "POSEIDON'S CURSE" painted on the stern-- and up on deck. It's a large, luxurious boat. His teeth chatter.

SCHUYLER

Thank you... I'm very grateful.

GIRL

Shouldn't swim in the lake, you could get hepatitis.

Schuyler nods, looking around, recovering from the shock.

SCHUYLER

I have to get in touch with the police.

GIRL

You're freezing, I got some dry clothes below.

INT. BOAT CABIN - DAY

Schuyler's wet clothes hang from a hook, he's in a towel, starting to pull on a fresh set of casual clothes.

GIRL

Do you need any help?

His back is turned as the girl climbs down, opens her raincoat--only lingerie beneath. She could be a Playboy centerfold.

SCHUYLER

Uh, no. I'm fine. These fit...
(buttoning his pants)
...perfectly.

He turns slowly, just as the girl reaches behind her.

GIRL

Sure there's nothing I can do for you?

She WINKS as she lets her bra drop. Schuyler smiles strangely. She takes this for lust, approaches him with open arms. He GRABS her by the hair. Menacingly:

SCHUYLER

I am finished playing.

GIRL

OW! Let go! You're hurting me!

She pounds at him, tries to kick. He wrestles her to the floor, kneels on top of her. He seems about to hit her.

SCHUYLER

This has got to fucking STOP!

GIRL

Stop what?! I just got hired to
show you a good time! C'mon
please, don't hurt me!

Schuyler gets his rage under control, horrified at himself. He climbs off her, she scrambles away, afraid, covering herself.

GIRL

I am not into this kinda shit!

SCHUYLER

Who hired you.

GIRL

I don't know, the service set it up.

SCHUYLER
The service?

GIRL
My escort service. They said you
had this elaborate fantasy, I
should just wait in the boat...

SCHUYLER
Who else is aboard?

GIRL
Nobody... some black dude rowed me
out here...

Schuyler realizes he's not going to get anything more out of her,
pulls on a shirt and leaves the cabin.

EXT. CABIN CRUISER - DAY

Schuyler STARTS THE ENGINES and POWERS UP.

EXT. PIER - DAY

THE BOAT GRINDS roughly against the dock and Schuyler leaps off.
The girl, dressed again, leans over the deck.

GIRL
Doncha want your key? I'm
supposed to give you a key...

Schuyler ignores this, keeps walking purposefully.

CUT TO:

EXT. CRS BUILDING - DAY

Late afternoon, a RAINBOW arcs behind the skyscraper. TWO COP
CARS, marked and unmarked, pull up at the curb, lights FLASHING.

INT. CRS LOBBY - DAY

Schuyler and Plympton, the lawyer, are joined at the elevators by
two detectives-- BARNETT and GALLO-- and two UNIFORMS.

PLYMPTON
Thank you for your promptness,
officers. I'm Robert Plympton,
Mr. Van Orton's attorney--

SCHUYLER
Let's go. Thirty-eighth floor.

INT. CRS OFFICES - DAY

Schuyler enters, followed by the others. He stops short, reacts. WIDE SHOT reveals-- the same offices, now entirely empty. The partitions, the desks, everything has been removed.

CUT TO:

LATER. UNIFORM #1 SPEAKS into his walkie-talkie, CODED COP TALK; #2 pokes around in a box full of SHREDDED PAPER; Plympton CONFERS with the two detectives, nods, then the three of them cross to Schuyler, who sits on the carpet with his back to an empty wall. Barnett checks his notes.

BARNETT

Management company for the building said this floor hasn't been rented yet, sir. We checked with the Secretary of State and the county recorder, there's no listing of a "consumer research service."

SCHUYLER

Recreation service.

BARNETT

Whatever. No sign of the boat or the girl. Divers got the cab's VIN, the company junked it a month ago.

GALLO

So you're reporting a B & E in your house, a possible procurement, a reckless endangerment--

PLYMPTON

Attempted murder.

BARNETT

He said himself he hired these people to... show him a good time?

PLYMPTON

I'm not a criminal lawyer, but I'd say there's enough evidence to at least warrant an investigation for fraud.

BARNETT

No money changed hands, nothing's been stolen, we don't have any perps, we don't have any evidence.

SCHUYLER

What about this?

(CONTINUED)

Schuyler pulls from a pocket the pen Feingold gave him, hands it to Barnett-- CLOSER, the initials CRS.

SCHUYLER

They've driven a friend of mine insane.
They're trying to do the same thing to me.

BARNETT looks from the pen to Schuyler, expression blank.

BARNETT

Let's hope they don't succeed.

He gives Schuyler back the pen. Gallo eyes his partner.

GALLO

We'll do what we can, Mr. Van Orton.
But with all due respect, this city has
a significant rate of serious crime...

Schuyler nods; he realizes it's hopeless.

BARNETT

We'll follow up on this Feingold
guy, but my guess it's an alias.

The detectives gesture to the uniforms to leave; Plympton squats by Schuyler's side.

PLYMPTON

There might be a civil case, I know a
good personal injury man... if we ever
find a defendant.

SCHUYLER

Bob, I'm not interested in suing them.

PLYMPTON

(sighs)

You're under a lot of stress. You
know, you haven't had a vacation in a
while. Might be a good time.

Schuyler nods, looks down at the pen in his hand...

CUT TO:

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Schuyler enters, starts pouring himself a drink.

FEINGOLD (filter)

Hiya, Sky...

Schuyler turns, startled-- Feingold's huge head WINKS at him from

(CONTINUED)

the TV screen.

FEINGOLD (filter)
Howya doin'? Me, I feel kinda
cramped, guy my size...

Feingold looks around the perimeter of the screen. Schuyler takes in the image, rises and grabs the remote, points it at the screen and CLICKS. Nothing happens-- Feingold's still there.

FEINGOLD (filter)
You can't turn this off, so don't
try. We need to go over the rules
a little. It was a mistake crying
wolf to the cops-- your actions
have consequences...

SCHUYLER
Fuck you, leave me alone.

FEINGOLD (filter)
Not a very sporting attitude.

Schuyler starts, realizing this is a two-way conversation.

SCHUYLER
What? How'd you get in here--

FEINGOLD (filter)
You took your trousers off for your
physical-- we borrowed your keys
and copied 'em.

SCHUYLER
Why? Why are you doing this?!

FEINGOLD (filter)
We do it for you...

Schuyler shakes his head, gets on his hands and knees by the set. Feingold's eyes seem to follow him. As Feingold speaks, Schuyler YANKS OUT THE PLUG-- no change. Frantic now, he PULLS out the cable, also no effect.

FEINGOLD (filter)
When are you gonna realize, we're
doing it all for you? We're the best
friends you got, no one else ever
worked so hard to make you feel
alive. But you gotta let it happen.

Schuyler starts to pace, Feingold keeps watching him. Schuyler feels like he's losing his mind, tries to get a grip.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

What's happened to David Markham?

FEINGOLD (filter)

He's just playing his own game.
You might say he's at a more
advanced level--

SCHUYLER

You are fucking insane!

FEINGOLD (filter)

Hey, look who's talking to their TV set.

SCHUYLER

I swear to God, you can't fuck
with people like this-- you don't
know who you're dealing with.

Feingold LAUGHS loudly.

FEINGOLD (filter)

We know exactly who we're dealing with!
That's the whole idea! For a guy with
your test scores, you're pretty slow on
the uptake. Trust me, relax, just sit
back and let us entertain you--

THE SCREEN IMPLODES as Schuyler SMASHES IT with a heavy ashtray.

FEINGOLD (filter)

Ouch!

Schuyler peers into the SMOKING electronics, pulls out a battery
pack, a small video camera, a loop antenna; the SPEAKER's not dead.

He BASHES the equipment repeatedly on the floor with all his might.

FEINGOLD (filter)

Take it easy, guy. Remember--
(mocking, girly voice)
--even the bad times are OK-- once
they're over.

The speaker SPUTTERS OUT, Feingold's voice at last SILENCED.

CUT TO:

EXT. EL TRACKS - NIGHT

Schuyler's JAG SPEEDS toward Christine's house under an el train.

EXT. CHRISTINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Schuyler BANGS on the door, keeps TRYING THE BELL. All the lights are out, his Jaguar double-parked in front.

SCHUYLER
Christine!!

Suddenly a PORCH LIGHT COMES ON and the door OPENS-- Christine stands there tying a bathrobe, looking barely awake. She glances back over her shoulder, HISSES at him:

CHRISTINE
Sssh! What are you doing here, you're gonna wake up my whole family!

SCHUYLER
(whispering)
I'm sorry, I would've called, I was afraid you'd tell me not to come-- and I had to see you, I had to get out of that house--

She glances inside again, gestures for him to come in.

INT. CHRISTINE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

She FLICKS ON a lamp in this modest, over-decorated room: religious figurines, paintings of clowns, graduation photos, etc. They sit on a plastic slipcovered couch, keeping their VOICES LOW. Schuyler's extremely frazzled, on the verge of breaking.

SCHUYLER
I can talk to you, you're the only one besides me who's seen them--

CHRISTINE
The game people? What are they doing to you now?

SCHUYLER
You wouldn't believe it. They've been spying on me, they damn near drowned me-- I don't understand it-- everything's falling apart, I just don't get it!

CHRISTINE
Sssh. Don't talk. You're safe.

She wraps her arms around him, but looks very worried. She strokes his hair, he tries to relax, holding her. He turns his face towards her.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

Damn it, why couldn't I have met you
before this whole thing started...

She kisses him. They stretch out on the SQUEAKY couch, their
bodies entwine. Schuyler comes up for air, tries to move off her.

CHRISTINE

No, don't stop. Please... I want to.

SCHUYLER

Your parents...

CHRISTINE

They won't hear.

Christine reaches up and modestly CLICKS OFF the light, then pulls
his head down to her neck. She wears a gold chain with a crucifix
on it, which GLITTERS in the near-dark. But BRIGHTER are a pair of
classy DIAMOND EARRINGS. Schuyler stops nuzzling her for a moment.

CHRISTINE

What's wrong?

SCHUYLER

Your earrings... do you always
wear them to bed?

CHRISTINE

Mm-hm.

SCHUYLER

Diamonds...

CHRISTINE

Rhinestones.

She tries to continue their lovemaking. He opens her bathrobe,
INHALES her scent, his hands roam over her... he freezes again.

SCHUYLER

Your perfume... I know the scent...

CHRISTINE

Mmm... Woolworth's...

SCHUYLER

No-- Joy. It's three hundred bucks an ounce!

Now Christine freezes for a moment. Then, terrified, she bites his
ear, and WHISPERS directly into it, her ACCENT GONE.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

Don't stop. If they see you stop,
they'll know something's wrong.

SCHUYLER

Oh no-- oh my God, of course.

He tries to get up, she pulls him back down in a passionate clinch,
rolling on top of him, MOANING erotically then HISSING in his ear:

CHRISTINE

Shut up and listen to me. There's
two of them upstairs, they're
watching us. If they know you're on
to me, they'll kill us both.

SCHUYLER

Kill us? What?!

She CRIES OUT PASSIONATELY to cover this, by now she's almost
simulating sex.

CHRISTINE

I work for them! Do you want to
die? Don't you get it, they're just
after your money, it's a con game!

SCHUYLER

And they'll... they'll stop at nothing...

CHRISTINE

(crying out)

Yes!

SCHUYLER

Christine... Christine... you are
so full of shit!

He SHOVES HER unceremoniously on the floor.

SCHUYLER

That's it, game's over!

He reaches for the lamp and FLIPS IT ON--

CHRISTINE

NO NO NO!

SCHUYLER

Olly olly oxen free, come out
wherever you are!

An upstairs DOOR FLIES OPEN and two men appear-- one black and one
white, the Rasta/Pilot and the Hack/Cabbie, now without any make-

(CONTINUED)

up-- they're both carrying guns. Contemptuously:

SCHUYLER
Oh please--

Christine leaps and SWEEPS the lamp to the floor with a CRASH--
They FIRE-- A WINDOW BLOWS OUT, the BULLETS barely miss her.

CHRISTINE
COME ON!

She pulls the stunned Schuyler through a back door, MORE SHOTS behind them as the men race downstairs.

EXT. CHRISTINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Schuyler and Christine rush toward his car, make it inside and PEEL OUT as the two men emerge and FIRE--

INT. JAGUAR - NIGHT

The REAR WINDOW and the WINDSHIELD are hit, both turning into SPIDER WEBS. Christine cringes.

SCHUYLER
Jesus Christ!

He drives for all he's worth.

EXT. EL TRACKS - NIGHT

The Jag ROARS AWAY at top speed under the El.

INT. JAGUAR - NIGHT

Schuyler recovers from the adrenalin rush, looks behind him and HITS THE BRAKES--

EXT. SIDESTREET - NIGHT

He SKIDS over to the side of the road.

ANGLE IN CAR

CHRISTINE
What are you doing!?

SCHUYLER
Get out of my car.

CHRISTINE
We have to get out of town--

He leans over to open the door and push her out.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

They'll kill me if you leave me here!

She FALLS into the gutter, in her robe. He puts the car INTO GEAR.

CHRISTINE

Listen to me you bastard! I know what
they're doing, no one else is gonna tell you!

The Jag JERKS FORWARD-- then BRAKE LIGHTS and a SCREECHED STOP a few yards on. Christine approaches the car slowly. Schuyler looks at her coldly and THROWS OPEN the door.

SCHUYLER

Get in.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Jag SPEEDS north, out of the city, past a ballpark.

INT. JAGUAR - NIGHT

Christine looks out the side window, removing her earrings.

CHRISTINE

I'm an actress, OK? I needed the money, they
pay real well... but once you're in, they
don't let go. I was out with another mark
when they paged me-- I forgot about these.

(mad at herself, looks at them)
Fucking stupid of me.

SCHUYLER

Wait, before the game, you waited on me--

CHRISTINE

They planted me in advance. They knew
you were a regular there... they've had
their eye on you for a while.

SCHUYLER

How the hell did they think they
were gonna get my money?

CHRISTINE

Honey, they already got it.

She gives him a pitying look. Schuyler throws her a sidelong glance; this is absurd. CAMERA MOVES IN ON HIS FACE--

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE (O. S.)
That night I got lost in your
house... remember?

Her NARRATION CONTINUES over the following SERIES OF SHOTS:

--AN ALARM SYSTEM BOX in a closet as Christine's hands CLIP WIRES.

CHRISTINE (V. O.)
I zapped your alarm system in the hall
closet. They got in the next night--

--QUICK-MOVING HANDS with LEATHER GLOVES go at Schuyler's things.

CHRISTINE (V. O.)
--when we went dancing. It wasn't
just fun and games, they turned
your house upside-down. They
found a code on the bottom of your
upper-right hand desk drawer.

--THE GLOVED HANDS invert the desk drawer-- a string of LETTERS.

CHRISTINE (V. O.)
The combination to your floor safe.

--A MASSIVE FLOOR SAFE under the study rug as it SWINGS OPEN--
stock certificates, ledger books, safety deposit keys and computer
disks within. The GLOVED HANDS replace these with similar ones.

CHRISTINE (V. O.)
Stock certificates, deeds, bonds,
safe deposit keys, computer disks...
they took the real stuff and
substituted fakes, all meaningless.

--RAPID INSERTS from the CRS OFFICES: SCHUYLER'S SIGNATURE.
FINANCIAL FORMS. A TAPE RECORDER. TEST FORMS.

CHRISTINE (V. O.)
They had your signature, your
numbers, they'd taped your voice...
The tests told them who you were,
inside and out... with that data it
was easy for the computer to
generate your passwords.

--ON A CRT SCREEN as various combinations of letters and numbers
SCROLL BY, too quickly for the eye to read.

CHRISTINE (V. O.)
From there it was just a matter of
breaking into the financial networks
and disappearing some electronic ink.

(CONTINUED)

--PAN OVER BANKS OF COMPUTER TERMINALS in DARK OFFICES as financial READOUTS FLIP and CHANGE, VANISH. HIGH NUMBERS go to 0.00.

CHRISTINE (V. O.)

Did Feingold tell you he was a computer jock?

--MOVE FROM thick fingers at a computer keyboard UPWARD toward the screen. POLARIZE to show, in reflection... FEINGOLD'S FACE, LIT BY the BLUE-GREEN CRT LIGHT, a mask of evil.

CHRISTINE (V. O.)

He probably left out the part about doing
a five year stretch for hacking
Citibank... Guy's a genius all right.

END SERIES OF SHOTS, DISSOLVE TO:

MOVING IN ON SCHUYLER'S FACE... CAR LIGHTS through the FRAGMENTED WINDSHIELD cast weird PATTERNS on it. He's pumping sweat now.

WIDER-- he reaches for his cellular phone and dials. Despite the fear, he seems more controlled. Christine sounds quite sad.

CHRISTINE

I'm sorry. You're cleaned out.

SCHUYLER (on phone)

Overseas operator? I need you to
dial a number for me. I'm trying to
reach Allgemeine Bank in Zurich...

CHRISTINE

This game business, my Cinderella
act, all of it was just to buy time.

SCHUYLER (on phone)

Guten tag, heir Schuyler Van Orton.
Vilen dank, Englisch...

CHRISTINE

Just to distract you... sleight of hand.

SCHUYLER (on phone)

Account number B31998F65. Mother's
maiden name Colfax. Codeword Blue.
Authorization 690-D. Yes, I'll hold for
voice-print... Balance inquiry.

CHRISTINE

(nervously)

I think maybe you should pull over...

SCHUYLER (on phone)

You're absolutely certain? Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

Schuyler sets his jaw, then turns the wheel hard.

EXT. MAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Jag SCREECHES for an offramp.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Suburban. START ON-- a thermos full of coffee, foodstuffs, miscellaneous camping supplies as a CLERK rings them up. WIDER-- the clerk eyes Christine, who stands before him in her mud-stained bathrobe, with Schuyler's wallet. She gives the clerk a "So what" smile. CAMERA FINDS Schuyler on his portable phone OUTSIDE the window, leaning on the Jag as he pumps gas.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

SCHUYLER (on phone)
Bob, it's me. Come on, Plympton, I don't want to talk to your machine.... shit, OK, listen carefully, this is an emergency. Feingold and his people have drained our accounts, they've gotten their hands on everything--

THROUGH WINDOW-- INSIDE, the clerk eyes the credit card Christine's given him, looks at the credit machine. He shakes his head, says something. She fumbles in the wallet for another card.

SCHUYLER half-watches through the window as he continues speaking.

SCHUYLER (on phone)
Get on this immediately, trace the money, do whatever it takes, they can't possibly get away with it. Tell the cops I've got one of Feingold's people with me, she'll testify...

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

CLERK
Miss, they tell me I have to confiscate these cards... all of 'em.

She fishes in the wallet for cash, comes up with THREE DOLLARS. The register reads \$62.39. She shrugs sheepishly at the clerk, raises a finger and moves outside-- CAMERA FOLLOWS.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

SCHUYLER (on phone)

--They're trying to kill me, I'm gonna lay low-- I'm heading for the cabin in Wisconsin, you have the number. Bob, these bastards are extremely dangerous, so be careful... but I swear to God we're gonna nail them... That's it.

He hangs up. Christine holds up the three dollar bills.

CHRISTINE

How come rich people never carry cash? Your cards are all dead.

Schuyler's incredibly angry, but maintains control, pokes his head in the door and calls to the clerk--

SCHUYLER

I have money in the car!

He takes Christine by the arm, marches her to the car, then replaces the gas nozzle on the pump and hops in the driver's seat. He PEELS OUT as the clerk comes charging out of the store--

CLERK

You son of a bitch!

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The Jag CHOKES TO A STOP on a deserted country road.

LATER, Schuyler works by FLASHLIGHT under the open hood. Christine stands beside the car as he TINKERS with the carbs.

CHRISTINE

It was fun at first... but I'm sort of relieved it's finished, I was in way over my head.

SCHUYLER

You'll be put in a witness protection program, I imagine.

CHRISTINE

A new identity, swell... I'll just call up one of my stock characters.

SCHUYLER

Like the struggling waitress with a heart of gold...

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

(beat)

Uh-huh. Or the frigid bitch, or
the femme fatale...

SCHUYLER

Or this one, the good-girl-gone-bad.

CHRISTINE

(a dirty look)

You have no idea how easy it is to
push a man's buttons.

SCHUYLER

You're a pro, no question. Carbs
are clean now. Start it.

Christine leans in and TURNS THE KEY-- it RUMBLES to life.
Schuyler CLOSES THE HOOD and gestures her to the passenger side.

SCHUYLER

God damn it, I can't believe I...
I fell for you hard.

CHRISTINE

Don't give me too much credit. They knew
you'd be a tough one... so I had some help.

He gives her a questioning look as they get back into the car.

ANGLE INSIDE JAG

CHRISTINE

The night on the raft, your wine
glass. It was coated with a mild
euphoric, a derivative of MDMA. Also
some sodium pentathol.

SCHUYLER

Jesus...

CHRISTINE

The feelings you got from the drugs,
you've been associating them with me
ever since-- love and honesty.

Schuyler puts the car into GEAR and pulls forward. Bitterly:

SCHUYLER

"Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty..."
Thank you for telling me. All of it.
In some perverse way I feel better. At
least I can make sense of things now.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

It was nothing personal, you know. I really do like you... not that that means anything at this point.

She yawns and settles into her seat for a nap.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAWN

The Jaguar ZIPS AROUND a logging truck on a DIRT ROAD.

INT. JAGUAR - DAWN

Schuyler, bleary-eyed, glances over at the sleeping Christine, her head tilted toward his shoulder. He stares at her for a moment, having no idea what to make of her, then SIGHS and turns away.

CUT TO:

INT. WISCONSIN BOATHOUSE - DAY

The CLICK of a padlock being removed and a SHAFT OF DAYLIGHT as a large door SLIDES OPEN to reveal two luxurious, 60's era MOTORBOATS in slips, another door to the water behind them.

Schuyler and Christine, who's very sleepy, enter, the Jag parked behind them. He SLAPS a WHACK-IT button and the door to a beautiful Northern lake slowly RISES.

SCHUYLER

Island's been in the family a long time... assuming they haven't stolen it yet. But then again we stole it from the Indians...

CHRISTINE

CRS can't get everything. I bet you're still pretty well off.

SCHUYLER

You're acting like they just picked my pockets! A hundred million fucking dollars, it didn't belong to me! That money kept a lot of people employed, it kept a lot of people alive!

He climbs onto one of the boats, starts to help Christine-- she waves him off, then--

STEPS ON A FISHHOOK with her bare feet, and CRIES OUT in pain.

CHRISTINE

Shit!

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER raises an eyebrow, helps her hobble to a seat. He carefully removes the recurved hook from her foot.

SCHUYLER
Hold still...
(eying hook)
Hardly any fish left, the lake's
dying-- acid rain.

He tosses the HOOK aside.

EXT. WISCONSIN LAKE - DAY

The boat MOTORS quietly across the lake; dense forests on the islands and mainland, pines and spring foliage, chilly and crisp.

ANGLE IN BOAT-- Schuyler at the helm, blinking, his eyes tired. Christine's fully awake now, she puts a band-aid from a first-aid BOX on her foot.

SCHUYLER
The fortune goes back to about 1850...
I come from a long line of butchers.
(off her look)
We built the slaughterhouses. Blood
money, my dad called it. When I was
little I told him I'd use it to build a
spaceship, then we'd set out to colonize
a new planet... He said it was too late
for that. Didn't want me to have any
illusions...
(disgustedly)
So now I've lost it all, threw it away.
Why? Because I was bored. God, what
I'd give to be bored again...

VIEW FROM BOAT-- as they round a large island and the ENGINE SLOWS.
There's a surprisingly humble cabin on it.

CUT TO:

INT. WISCONSIN CABIN - DAY

Genuinely rustic-- hewn wood, fishing rods, pot-bellied stove. Schuyler finishes taking out his contacts, DROPPING them in a coffee cup of water. He slips on his glasses, then looks at a photo on the coffee table in front of him.

ON PHOTO-- Schuyler's father, with young Schuyler, on a boat with fishing equipment.

CHRISTINE enters the room as Schuyler ponders the photograph. She's wearing very classy casual wear from the early 1960's.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

Your mother had good taste. Everything comes back into style.

Schuyler stares at her, a bit disturbed.

SCHUYLER

You actually look like her...

Christine has no response, moves to a kitchen area.

CHRISTINE

I don't know about you, I could use a drink.

The old rotary PHONE RINGS, he snatches up the receiver; IN BG Christine opens a cabinet, finds a bottle of gin and some tonic, makes a couple of drinks.

SCHUYLER

Robert...

PLYMPTON (filter)

Yes, it's me, Schuyler... I got your message... I'll admit, I was very disturbed.

Plympton's tone is careful, worried.

SCHUYLER

So. What's our next move.

PLYMPTON (filter)

I just got off the phone with the president of the bank... your accounts are intact, nothing's changed, there's been no activity whatsoever...

SCHUYLER

What?! That's not true--

PLYMPTON (filter)

(more commanding, quickly)

It is true, Schuyler, no one is after your money, no one is trying to hurt you--

SCHUYLER

Oh, God. Oh Jesus.

PLYMPTON (filter)

Listen to me, Sky!

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

What are they paying you, Robert?
Piece of the action? Shall I try
to go higher?

PLYMPTON (filter)

Stop it! Look, you've done the
right thing going up there, maybe
it's best if you just sit tight for
a while, forget about everything,
it's all under control--

Schuyler HANGS UP VIOLENTLY, breathing hard, pacing. He calls
toward the kitchen:

SCHUYLER

We have to get out of here!

She emerges from the kitchen with two tall gin and tonics, sipping
hers, looking terrified.

CHRISTINE

What is it?

Schuyler grabs the drink, pounds half of it, frantic.

SCHUYLER

My lawyer, they've gotten to him.

CHRISTINE

Oh no...

The PHONE RINGS again, Schuyler finishes his drink, puts it down
and violently YANKS THE PHONE out of the wall, tosses it aside.

Christine sits down, watches him closely. He keeps balling his
hands into fists as he paces, trying to think out his next play.

SCHUYLER

OK, they've gotten to him. Is
there anyone we can trust?

CHRISTINE

I don't know... but I wouldn't
worry about it...

SCHUYLER

What do you mean?

CHRISTINE

It's out of your hands.

He takes a step, stumbles, shakes his head to clear it. She rises,
picks up his glass and heads for the kitchen area.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER
Christine!!

CHRISTINE
That's not my name.

With a CRY OF RAGE he lunges after her, but CRASHES into the table, KNOCKING OVER photos. He falls to the ground, PANTING for air like a fish out of water, clutching his stomach, nauseated.

HIS POV-- SIDEWAYS, LOW ANGLE. SFX, BLOOD POUNDING in his head. Schuyler's eyes FOLLOW the GROOVES of the hardwood floor, they lead to-- and almost seem to point to-- Christine, moving about the kitchen area nonchalantly.

ANOTHER ANGLE, CLOSE-- she picks up a half-empty vial of powder from the kitchen counter, slips it into the seam of her robe, which hangs from a chair. She starts to fix herself another drink.

SCHUYLER's eyes roll into his head as he struggles against the effects, tries to get to his hands and knees. His glasses fall off, he collapses again, fumbling for them.

SCHUYLER'S POV-- everything a BLUR NOW, except in EXTREME FG-- the photo of himself and his father, which lies on the floor now.

FLASH-CUT TO: FLASHBACK POV-- CLOSE on the dead face of Mr. Van Orton, right after the impact-- one eye staring lifelessly through a cracked glasses lens, blood flowing in a stream from his head.

CUT BACK TO: SCHUYLER writhes on the floor, fighting the drug.

SCHUYLER'S POV-- FROM FLOOR-- Christine moves INTO FOCUS, studying her victim almost clinically. She strokes his hair.

CHRISTINE
Poor little rich boy... Relax.
Just let it go...

The SFX POUNDING STOPS, and--

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN ON:

X-CLOSE, A PILE OF REFUSE. HARSH SUNLIGHT on the disgusting, slimy garbage-- organic remains, animal bones, etc. FLIES, CENTIPEDES crawl over the junk. FINGERS EMERGE from the trash, sweep it away to reveal Schuyler's wide, unfocused eyes. MOVE WIDER, we're in:

EXT. FILTHY ALLEY - DAY

A cul-de-sac in a slum, extremely hot, bleached by the sun. TRAFFIC NOISES, CROWDS not far away. Schuyler thrashes his way out

(CONTINUED)

from beneath the trash, with a SCREAM of horror. He sits still for a moment, trying to get his bearings, BREATHING hard and squinting.

He gets unsteadily to his feet, FALLS again, his legs weak. He makes his way on hands and knees to a wall, pulls himself up against it, looking for all the world like a hopeless wino. His clothes are torn and filthy, he's drenched in sweat. He pats his pockets-- no wallet, no glasses, no ID. He does find a piece of paper, which he holds directly in front of his face. Mouth dry, he CROAKS OUT a questioning SOUND.

SCHUYLER'S POV-- the scrap of paper has a tiny key printed on the top, something printed in Spanish. He moves it OUT OF FRAME, looks toward the end of the alley. A STREET, but so BLURRY he can't discern any details.

Schuyler makes his way toward it, stumbling over junk.

EXT. BUSY STREET - DAY

TIGHT SHOT on Schuyler emerging from the alley, immediately JOSTLED by a sea of PEOPLE.

SCHUYLER'S POV-- WALKING TENUOUSLY. The world's a BLUR, FACES move in and out of FOCUS. They're dark, foreign. Most of them look at him askance, with revulsion. Many POOR PEOPLE, missing teeth, poverty-scarred features. Scraps of SPANISH. He grabs a DARK MAN.

SCHUYLER

Where am I?!

The man replies with an EXCLAMATION of disgust in SPANISH, pushes Schuyler away, CAMERA TUMBLES--

OBJECTIVE SHOT-- Schuyler's on his knees in the middle of this third-world thoroughfare, utterly disoriented. STREET VENDORS sell weird-looking foods, squads of SOLDIERS march with rifles, MUSICIANS PLAY odd instruments... Schuyler clutches his head, as if trying to wish it all away.

A COP IN BEIGE UNIFORM suddenly prods at him with a nightstick, YELLING AT HIM in SPANISH to move on.

SCHUYLER'S POV-- the COP looming over him, a BLURRY menace, the end of the nightstick SHARP in FG as it POKES at him.

ANOTHER ANGLE-- Schuyler pleads with the man:

SCHUYLER

Please, help me, I'm an American!
I'm lost! Please!!

This doesn't seem to help. He tries to get away from the stick, but the cop pursues. He bangs into people as he tries to move quickly, the stick right behind him.

(CONTINUED)

Schuyler FALLS over a BEGGAR on the ground, in far worse shape than he is. The cop YELLS at him. Schuyler covers his head, holding out the SCRAP OF PAPER, which the cop finally snatches away. He studies it for a moment, then BARKS with LAUGHTER.

SCHUYLER'S POV-- the cop reaches down to him--

OBJECTIVE ANGLE-- Schuyler cringes, expecting a blow, but the cop just pulls him to his feet. He drags him away with him, speaking more gently IN SPANISH, amused. Schuyler nods thankfully.

HIGH ANGLE-- the THRONGS on this crowded street.

CUT TO:

INT. FOREIGN POLICE STATION - DAY

A sympathetic-looking DESK SERGEANT brings a glass of water to Schuyler, who trembles, terrified, on a bench with various grim VAGRANTS and CRIMINALS. Schuyler takes the glass and drains it gratefully, holding it in both hands, spilling it on himself.

The sergeant looks at the note as he kneels by Schuyler, talks to him in THICKLY ACCENTED ENGLISH as if he were a child.

DESK SERGEANT
Do you know where you are?

Schuyler shakes his head quickly, grateful for an English-speaker.

DESK SERGEANT
You are in Guatemala City.

SCHUYLER
(beat)
Guatemala!?

DESK SERGEANT
(nodding, smiles)
Yes, good. You have become, lost
from, from your father...?

SCHUYLER
What are you talking about, my father's
dead, God damn it. I have to get to
the United States embassy.

The sergeant cocks his head, confused. Indicating the note:

DESK SERGEANT
Do you know what this says?

CUT TO:

INT. AMERICAN EMBASSY LOBBY - DAY

An Hispanic embassy WORKER behind a desk with a U. S. flag
TRANSLATES THE NOTE aloud in amazed, unaccented English.

WORKER

"I am an American. I am an idiot.
My father is very rich. If I
become lost, please take me to the
police. There is a reward."

ANOTHER ANGLE-- Schuyler, utterly humiliated, sits in a chair on
the other side of the desk, staring at something in his lap.

WORKER

What are you doing here, Mr. Van Orton?

SCHUYLER

I was playing a game. When did
this arrive?

WORKER

Just this morning, as a matter of fact.

ANGLE ON SCHUYLER'S LAP-- a small parcel with his name on it, "C/O
U. S. EMBASSY, GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA." He TEARS IT OPEN.

CLOSER IN BOX-- his passport, comb, keys, glasses-- even his watch.
He holds this in his hand, examines it.

WIDER

WORKER

Do you have any means of getting
back home?

SCHUYLER

(indicating watch)

Yeah... Where can I pawn this?

CUT TO:

EXT. MAYAN RUINS - DAWN

Jungle-encrusted Mayan ruins, such as Chichen Itza or Palenque;
deserted. OVERHEAD, an AIRPLANE crosses the sky.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHICAGO TERMINAL - DAY

CLOSE-- NO-DOZ tablets spill from a bottle into Schuyler's palm.
He pops them into his mouth, washes them down with cola.

(CONTINUED)

WIDER-- He's at a payphone, awaiting an answer, receiver cradled on his shoulder. He's dressed in the sort of clothing you can buy in an airport-- shorts, a Guatemalan message T-shirt, sneakers.

SCHUYLER

David, we need to talk--

JACK (filter)

Uh-- this is Jack Markham, David's brother...

Schuyler takes a moment to readjust.

SCHUYLER

Jack, right-- this is Schuyler Van Orton, I think we met once... is David around?

JACK (filter)

Oh. You haven't heard then...
Dave's in the hospital.

SCHUYLER

Oh no...

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO TERMINAL - DAY

CONVERSATION CONTINUES IN V. O. as Schuyler comes out of the terminal, approaches a cab--

JACK (V. O.)

Um, it's a sanitarium actually, he had sort of a breakdown. He's in pretty bad shape--

SCHUYLER (V. O.)

(over this)

Yeah, OK, where, where?

He thinks better of the cab, backs away, heading instead for a bus.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANITARIUM GATES - DAY

A BUS MOVES OUT OF FRAME and we see Schuyler walking past hedges toward the gate.

JACK (V. O.)

Um, the Sorenson hospital, it's out in Wheaton...

The conversation FADES as Schuyler enters the gate and heads down a

(CONTINUED)

driveway, CAMERA FOLLOWING toward a large brick building.

CUT TO:

INT. SANITARIUM - DAY

MATCH MOTION as a NURSE leads Schuyler down an institutional corridor lined with doors, past SAD PATIENTS in wheelchairs. It's a relatively ritzy bin.

NURSE

It's not uncommon for mental illness to strike people in the profession... The medication seems to be helping... unfortunately we're going to have to transfer Dr. Markham to a public institution in a few days, his funds are entirely exhausted...

She KNOCKS at a door, OPENS IT a crack and lets Schuyler in.

INT. SANITARIUM ROOM - DAY

A pleasant, safe institutional room. David, in pajamas, sits in a chair, eating colorful bland food from a plastic lunch tray. He watches a GOLF MATCH on a tiny TV inches from his nose, we'll hear it IN BG. He doesn't react as Schuyler enters, moves to his side.

SCHUYLER

Hello David...

David slowly turns to him, half-smiles; food particles on his lips.

DAVID

Sky...

He turns back to the television set. Schuyler reaches, TURNS DOWN THE VOLUME. He leans close to David, whispers.

SCHUYLER

You were right about the game--

DAVID

The game. There is no game.

SCHUYLER

You can talk to me about it, it's OK, I'm not one of them--

DAVID

There never was a game.

SCHUYLER

They're trying to break me, same as you!

(CONTINUED)

David turns UP THE VOLUME again, speaks by rote as he eats.

DAVID
The game was just a fantasy of mine.
A self-aggrandizing delusion...

Schuyler follows David's eyes to the TV SET--

ON SCREEN-- a golf ball rolls on a green and PLOPS into the cup.

CUT TO:

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - EVENING

SCHUYLER trudges exhaustedly toward his home. At the front gate, he pulls his keys from his pocket and tries them--

ON LOCK-- the key doesn't fit. The lock's been changed. He quickly tries another similar key, same story.

SCHUYLER's worried. He grabs a neighbor's trash can, climbs on it to get over the fence, TEARING his clothes on the iron spikes.

CLOSE ON ALARM PAD-- at the front door. Schuyler's finger PUNCHES IN THE CODE-- the light still FLASHES RED.

THE FRONT DOOR KEY doesn't work, Schuyler's not surprised.

SCHUYLER climbs up an ivied trellis to a second story window.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

He finishes changing into warmer clothes in the barely-lit room; pants, shirt, jacket. He hesitates before putting the useless keys in his pocket, does it anyway.

FLASHLIGHT BEAMS from the hallway, FOOTSTEPS. Schuyler freezes as two UNIFORMED SECURITY PEOPLE, male and female, THROW OPEN the door, guns drawn. Schuyler's quite calm.

SCHUYLER
Relax, I set off the alarm by
accid-- Christ.

Before he can finish his sentence, they've GRABBED him and THROWN him against the wall, frisking him.

SCHUYLER
I'm Schuyler Van Orton, I live here.

They SPIN him around, the woman SNAPS a HANDCUFF onto his wrist, the man starts to drag him toward a bedpost. He seems passive.

(CONTINUED)

SECURITY MAN
We'll look into it.

SCHUYLER
This is quite unnecessary--

SECURITY WOMAN
(picking up the phone)
Handcuff yourself to the bedpost.
This will just take a minute.

Schuyler nods, seems about to CLICK the thing onto the bedpost-- then suddenly SWINGS the chain into the security's man face, he CRIES OUT and covers his eye, Schuyler bolts for the door as the woman drops the phone and pursues, gun drawn.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Schuyler ducks into another room as the woman and man come out--

SECURITY WOMAN
Freeze! I'll shoot!

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Schuyler quickly SLIDES away a wall panel behind a couch and goes through it, a subtle doorway, SHUTTING IT after him just as the man and woman enter, looking around with their FLASHLIGHTS.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

The doorway's a passage to the wood-paneled study. Schuyler quickly, quietly moves to the bookshelf and removes the hollowed-out leather-bound volume containing the gun. With this in his hand, handcuff dangling from his wrist, he darts out of the room--

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Schuyler sprints down the front walk, the gate now open. At the sidewalk he does a double-take at the sight of the white SECURITY SEDAN double-parked there--

ON DOOR-- the crest for CHICAGO RESIDENTIAL SECURITY, the CRS larger and italicized.

CUT TO:

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Barnett, the detective from earlier, sits across his desk from Schuyler, who's been trying very hard to be rational.

(CONTINUED)

BARNETT

So we got the fat guy and this
real evil waitress-- we don't know
her name... which one you think's
the mastermind?

SCHUYLER

I don't know. She isn't really a waitress.

BARNETT

Interesting. Interesting.

Gallo, behind Schuyler in the office doorway, gestures to Barnett,
who holds up a finger and WINKS casually at Schuyler.

BARNETT

'Scuse me, gotta confer with my
partner a minute.

He gets up, as he passes he glances at the dangling handcuff and
the leatherbound book, which Schuyler clutches very possessively.

BARNETT

Whatcha reading?

SCHUYLER

Nothing.

Barnett purses his lips, nods, steps out. When he's out of sight,
Schuyler quickly opens the door a crack and peers into the hallway.

INT. POLICE STATION HALLWAY - NIGHT

Schuyler slips down the hall, listens to a HUSHED conversation
around the bend:

GALLO (O. S.)

--just spoke with that Plympton
guy. Van Oreo's a wacko--

WITH THE DETECTIVES-- Barnett's hearing what he already knows.

GALLO (cont.)

--we should probably hold onto him
until the lawyer can get down here.

Barnett nods, together they head back around the corner to his
office, he takes a breath and opens the door--

ANGLE THROUGH DOOR-- the office empty, Schuyler's flown the coop.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

LIGHTS FLICKER on and off in a moving SUBWAY CAR on the EL.

SCHUYLER clicks the free, dangling handcuff on the same wrist as the other, pulls his sleeve down to hide the bracelet.

He sits tensely at the end of the car, clutching the book in his lap, a plastic bag between his knees. He looks up, eyes wild, starts SCANNING the subway car slowly, sensitive to it all. By now he's definitely the sort of person you'd avoid in a public place.

INTERCUT POV with his REACTIONS, as everything falls into place in his increasingly febrile mind...

SCHUYLER'S POV-- SLOW PAN OVER the sparse assortment of late-night RIDERS-- a couple of TEENAGERS, an OLDER WOMAN with shopping bags, a DRUNK or two. CAMERA PAUSES on GRAFITTI: typically unreadable SCRAWL, but the letters could be CRS.

CAMERA MOVES to the overhead ADVERTISEMENTS: one for hemorrhoids, a seasonal bank ad featuring the Easter Bunny, then PAUSE ON a PHOTO of an ecstatic LOTTERY WINNER holding up a wad of cash with the words "YOU CAN'T WIN IF YOU DON'T PLAY THE GAME."

SCHUYLER smiles at this.

SCHUYLER'S POV-- an ELDERLY MAN nearby is looking at Schuyler with a blank expression. The man suffers from a facial TWITCH that causes one eye to BLINK rapidly.

SCHUYLER narrows his eyes at the man, then looks away pointedly. He opens the plastic bag, pulls out a kid's school notebook and a new ballpoint pen, begins SCRIBBLING feverishly.

EXT. ELEVATED TRAIN - NIGHT

The subway car SHOOTS into a tunnel.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAWN

Schuyler in the same seat, more dazed than asleep. Suddenly SUNLIGHT STRIKES HIS FACE and he sits up alert-- the train emerges from the tunnel. He's been riding all night.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOUNDATION BUILDING - DAY

LONG SHOT through TRAFFIC, morning RUSH HOUR CROWDS. A cab pulls up in front of Schuyler's building, and Bob Plympton gets out, pays the driver. A man in a jumpsuit-- the HACK/CABBIE-- waits nearby.

(CONTINUED)

REVERSE ANGLE-- Schuyler hovers in a doorway across the street. He's watching intently as this situation develops.

SCHUYLER'S POV-- there's a white CRS VAN parked at the curb. Plympton nears the Hack/Cabbie, who starts to walk alongside the lawyer. They enter the building together.

SCHUYLER backs away, staying out of sight, suspicions confirmed. He heads quickly down the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - DAY

Schuyler's a walking antenna, finding meaning everywhere he looks.

--A MESSAGE BOARD scrolls GAME FINAL 1-0. SCHUYLER stares at this for several moments.

--A CANDY BAR WRAPPER on the sidewalk has a key printed on it. SCHUYLER picks it up, examines it carefully.

--A LUNATIC YELLING on a corner stares directly at Schuyler, who stares right back hanging on his every SENSELESS WORD.

--SCHUYLER passes a garbage can, tosses his hollowed leather book into it. CLOSE-- it falls open, we see the gun is gone.

EXT. ELIZABETH'S BUILDING - DAY

Elizabeth greets the DOORMAN as she leaves her high-rise, dressed for work, carrying a briefcase. Schuyler lurks nearby. He follows her for a moment, then comes up beside her, startling her.

ELIZABETH

Schuyler? Jesus, you scared the shit out of me--

SCHUYLER

I need to talk to you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Sky, um, I'm not up to this right now. I thought we were gonna just let things lie--

SCHUYLER

I've got a story for you. It's important.

ELIZABETH

(studying him)

Must be. I don't think I've ever seen you perspire before...

He starts to hustle her down the street in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - DAY

ELIZABETH FLIPS THE PAGES of Schuyler's notebook-- page after page of psychotic-looking scribbling, dense UNDERLINES, many EXCLAMATION POINTS. ON ONE PAGE-- CRUEL RANDOM SHIT."

WIDER-- an upscale joint; uncrowded at this hour. A LARGE-SCREEN TV plays MORNING PROGRAMS. Schuyler stares at Elizabeth awaiting reaction. She's very freaked out.

ELIZABETH

It's... we don't usually run this sort of material...

SCHUYLER

I realize you'll have to clean it up some.

ELIZABETH

I'm a business reporter--

SCHUYLER

This is business news! They're a major, major conglomerate. They're in the business of robbing people and driving them insane, that way no one listens. This corporate strategy has made them a very profitable enterprise.

A BARMAID brings their order. Schuyler stares at her suspiciously as she hands him an unopened bottle of water and a glass, puts a cup of coffee before Elizabeth. He tests the seal on the bottle.

SCHUYLER

Has this been opened?

BARMAID

No sir. Just like you said.

He watches her as she retreats, opens the bottle and drinks straight from it thirstily. Elizabeth registers the handcuffs.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry Sky, I should've realized you might... that you...

Schuyler wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

SCHUYLER

What are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH

Just... you never seemed to care,
so I didn't think our break-up
would hit you this hard...

SCHUYLER

Are you listening to me? You're
thinking exactly what they want you to
think. What kind of reporter are you?

The last words die in his mouth as he's distracted by something on the TV screen. Suddenly he lets out a STRANGLED CRY. Elizabeth turns her head to see what he's looking at.

ON TV SCREEN-- It's JOSH FEINGOLD, clutching his head, rubbing his temples with a look of pain. CHEESY MUSIC, THROBBING SPFX.

SCHUYLER's out of his seat, approaching the set. He addresses it:

SCHUYLER

You bastard! You fucking bastard!
How did you find me here!?

Elizabeth gets up, tries to pull him back to the booth, he pushes her away, not taking his eyes from the set. PATRONS react nervously to the deranged man.

FEINGOLD (filter)

Ooof-- my head is killing me!

SCHUYLER

Fuck you!

THE TV IMAGE WIDENS, a COMMERCIAL ACTRESS rubs Feingold's neck.

SCHUYLER

Who are you?

ACTRESS (filter)

Honey, have you taken anything?

FEINGOLD (filter)

Sure, some aspirin--

The actress' CLUCKS her tongue, shakes her head.

SCHUYLER's starting to get the picture.

SCHUYLER

He's an actor...

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH
(very frightened)
Of course he's an actor, Schuyler,
it's a commercial.

SCHUYLER
(a revelation)
He's just a fucking actor...

ON TV-- Feingold holds up a colorfully marked bottle of pills,
studies them with a shit-eating grin. SOOTHING MUSIC.

FEINGOLD (filter)
My head feels great! Thanks to
Ambutol, I'll never use aspirin again!

FEINGOLD gives way to the image of A BOX OF AMBUTOL.

SCHUYLER lets Elizabeth escort him back toward the booth. He's
completely absorbed in his own thoughts.

ELIZABETH
Sky, have you taken something?

SCHUYLER
What?

ELIZABETH
Are you tripping?

He shakes his head, waves his hand dismissively. He's thinking
about something else. Elizabeth is near tears.

ELIZABETH
God Sky, I swear, I'll do whatever
I can to help--

SCHUYLER
Great. Listen, who makes Ambutol?

ELIZABETH
(confused)
Um, um... Wingate Pharmaceuticals...

SCHUYLER
Who does their advertising?

ELIZABETH
Sumner and Stone, I think.

Schuyler tries to sound normal, claps her on the arm.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

Thank you, Elizabeth. Don't worry
about me, everything's fine.

Schuyler pecks her cheek, heads for a bank of payphones by the restrooms. Elizabeth looks after him with a pained and puzzled expression, unable to process this. She returns to the booth, glances back toward Schuyler, checks her watch-- she has to go.

BY THE PHONES-- Schuyler's on top of the situation.

SCHUYLER (on phone)

Oh yes, your headache spot was first-
rate... yes he does possess a very
appealing screen presence, we feel
he'd be perfect for our public service
ads... what's his name again?

(scribbles on the wall)

You wouldn't have his number... No,
we're non-profit, we don't deal with
agents-- I prefer to speak with him
directly... if you would, thank you.

He grins as he finishes writing, hangs up and DIALS again.

ON WALL-- "JOSH = BILL JOHNSON" and a number.

ELIZABETH finishes scribbling a note on a torn-out page, bites her lip, puts down some money and guiltily gets out of there.

SCHUYLER watches Elizabeth leave, he doesn't care.

SCHUYLER (on phone)

Hiya, Josh. Oh, right, Bill. Sky Van
Orton here... yeah, I'm back in town
pal, love to get together. Now.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO ZOO - DAY

SCHUYLER sits at a bench, watching the crowd with manic energy.

SCHUYLER'S POV-- ZOO-GOERS gazing at the ANIMALS... CAMERA FINDS Feingold/Johnson, wearing tacky clothes, eating a popsicle. He makes eye contact with Schuyler, waves sheepishly. He's just another sloppy fat guy, far from impressive-- the Wizard of Oz after the curtain's been pulled.

CUT TO:

LATER, SCHUYLER AND FEINGOLD walk together through the zoo.

(CONTINUED)

FEINGOLD

Once I got somethin' juicy to work with, I can improvise, I dunno, I always been pretty good at that... I needed the money, y'know?

SCHUYLER

Yeah, I've heard it before. And I thought you... ugh, you're totally pathetic.

FEINGOLD

(hurt)

Come on, I got a family to feed!

SCHUYLER

I'm sick of dealing with foot soldiers, I've gotta get to whoever's really in charge.

FEINGOLD

Nobody knows who's really in charge.

(off Schuyler's menacing look)

CRS is a huge bureaucracy! Like the Mafia or something.

(looking O. S.)

God, I hate that--

Schuyler looks where he's looking, sees--

YOUNG TEENS, THROWING ROCKS at the monkeys.

FEINGOLD (O. S.)

You kids! Hey, c'mon, cut it out!

They turn, one FLIPS HIM OFF and they saunter along.

SCHUYLER's not interested in the zoo drama. Feingold looks towards him with some apprehension.

SCHUYLER

How do I get to the girl?

FEINGOLD

I told ya, I don't even know this girl--

SCHUYLER

How do I get to any of them!?

Their offices were abandoned--

FEINGOLD

They run the building, they just move from floor to floor.

SCHUYLER

OK... You're going to get me inside.

(CONTINUED)

FEINGOLD
(shaking his head)
Uh-uh, no way, I'm sorry and all,
but-- it's too dangerous.

Schuyler cocks his head and steps in front of him, right in his face, smiles demonically.

SCHUYLER
You don't seem to understand. Right
here, right now-- I'm the danger.

Feingold gets the message.

CUT TO:

EXT. CRS BUILDING - NIGHT

LIGHTS OFF in the building. A battered STATION WAGON rounds a corner, PAUSES before the ramp to the garage entrance.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

FEINGOLD drives, looking very tense; a kiddie seat strapped next to him, junk galore; he's apparently alone.

FEINGOLD
We're here, Sky. They said
someone'd meet me inside the garage.

BEHIND THE SEAT-- Schuyler crouches under a blanket.

SCHUYLER
Drive in, then.

FEINGOLD
Look-- what are you gonna do? Really?

SCHUYLER
I don't know. Improvise. Now drive!

INT. CRS GARAGE - NIGHT

The station wagon stops at the bottom of the ramp. An ELDERLY GUARD behind glass gestures to Feingold, who waves. The STEEL GATE RISES and the station wagon drives in.

THE STATION WAGON parks near an elevator bank; a handful of EXPENSIVE CARS, a few white CRS SECURITY VEHICLES and VANS parked nearby. Feingold climbs out, trying hard not to look scared. ELEVATOR DOORS OPEN and the male SECURITY GUY who harassed Schuyler at his house waves-- he now has a bandage on his nose. Feingold joins the man.

(CONTINUED)

The instant the elevator doors CLOSE, Schuyler POPS into view in the backseat. He lets himself out, looking around cautiously, stealthily approaching the elevators.

THE DIGITAL READOUT showing what floor the elevator's on GOES UP quickly, SLOWS and STOPS at 45.

SCHUYLER touches the elevator's UP BUTTON, an adjacent set of doors OPENS and he steps inside.

INT. CRS ELEVATOR - NIGHT

SCHUYLER presses the button for 45-- the top floor.

ON PANEL-- nothing happens, the button LIGHTS for an instant but GOES OUT again. The elevator won't move.

SCHUYLER's getting exasperated.

ON PANEL-- he tries BUTTONS all over, same story.

OLD GUARD

Hey!

ANGLE INTO GARAGE-- the old guard has left his booth, heads TOWARD the elevators.

SCHUYLER's starting to panic. Then he sees--

AT BASE OF PANEL, a gold keyhole. CLOSER-- the letters CRS are printed beneath it, very small.

SCHUYLER pulls out his keys, then stops, shakes his head-- it couldn't be. He almost doesn't want it to be.

SCHUYLER

No...

ANGLE INTO GARAGE-- the guard's getting closer, pulling a gun.

GUARD

Get outta there!

SCHUYLER tries anyway.

ON PANEL-- the gold key, the first he received, fits into the hole; he turns it and PUSHES THE BUTTON for 45.

WIDER-- the DOORS CLOSE. Schuyler's on his way up.

THE GLASS ELEVATOR RISES through completely blackened spaces. Schuyler PULLS his gun out of his pocket, flips open the chamber.

CLOSE ON CHAMBER-- we see the brass jackets of six bullets:

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER closes the chamber. He holds the gun in front of himself in both hands... then he closes his eyes, steeling himself, almost in an attitude of prayer.

INT. ATRIUM - NIGHT

PITCH BLACK but for the LIT ELEVATOR ascending swiftly through the darkness... Schuyler, like a solitary spaceship pilot, looks upward toward his unknown destination.

INT. CRS ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The DIGITAL READOUT slows as it comes to 43, 44, 45-- and STOPS.

SCHUYLER comes out of his trance, slips the revolver back into his jacket pocket, keeps a hand there, and stands against a wall of the elevator as the DOORS OPEN ON DARKNESS--

INT. 45TH FLOOR - NIGHT

Schuyler carefully steps out, surprised at the absence of activity in this CLUTTERED, DIM space. Complete SILENCE as he moves through it with great stealth. The elevator doors SLIDE SHUT behind him.

The area seems to be in the process of being set up; a MAZE of BOXES OF PAPER, COMPUTER TERMINALS, MEDICAL EQUIPMENT and more MYSTERIOUS MACHINERY, piled against the HALF-FINISHED WALLS.

He opens a DOOR marked ROOF ACCESS, he pokes his head in-- A WELL-LIT STAIRCASE. He lets the door close gently.

IN A DARK CORRIDOR, A SHAPE LUNGES OUT at Schuyler, grabs him--

--it's FEINGOLD, he's been shot in the chest and neck, BULLETHOLES, lots of blood. He GASPS something unintelligible, then falls to the floor, dragging the SCREAMING Schuyler down with him.

FEINGOLD DIES, eyes open. Schuyler GAGS, staggers to his feet, backing away, looking at himself-- blood all over him.

CHRISTINE

Don't move, Sky.

FLUORESCENT LIGHTS COME ON as he freezes. He looks behind him--

CHRISTINE stands there, holding a GUN trained on him with both hands. She's flanked by the HACK/CABBIE and the RASTA/PILOT, both of whom carry guns. He turns, knows he should have been ready.

CHRISTINE

I've already called the police.
They're on their way.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER
(gestures at Feingold)
Why...?

CHRISTINE
He had a big mouth, we couldn't trust him.

SCHUYLER
And you killed him...

CHRISTINE
No. You did. The cops know you hated him.
You lost all your money in foolish
investments, then you lost your mind. Poor
man became the target of your psychosis.

SCHUYLER
So I lose...

CHRISTINE
Don't feel bad. Nobody ever wins.

Schuyler nods, looking totally defeated-- then suddenly he THROWS all his weight into a STACK OF BOXES, which tumble in the direction of Christine and the thugs-- they jump out of the way-- he RUNS. The thugs have a clear shot, train their guns-- Christine puts up a hand to stop them.

CHRISTINE
Don't. He has no place to go.

She follows him at a relaxed pace, gun at her side.

SCHUYLER rushes for the ROOF ACCESS door, dashes through it.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

SCHUYLER takes the steps three at a time, shoves through a STEEL EMERGENCY DOOR at the top-- an ALARM SOUNDS, CONTINUES.

CHRISTINE follows, gun ready, calmly ascending. She goes through the same door...

EXT. CRS ROOF - NIGHT

A HIGH LEDGE surrounds the roof on all four sides. The NUMBER "636" is painted large for helicopters; there are air conditioning vents, ducts, etc.

As Christine comes through the door, Schuyler LEAPS from the roof of the stairwell dormer, KNOCKS HER down, KICKS the gun away--

--it SKITTERS across the cement to the BRINK of the atrium, a black pit in the center of the roof with a recessed GLASS COVER.

(CONTINUED)

Christine lies on the ground, stunned, wind knocked out of her--

SCHUYLER THROWS the HEAVY BOLT on the stairwell door as the two thugs come POUNDING UP behind, then moves between Christine and her gun as she's scrambling to her feet. The ALARM CONTINUES, but MUFFLED up here. Schuyler pulls his own gun and points it at Christine, his back is to the atrium pit.

SCHUYLER
Surprise. We both lose.

Christine's hard expression dissolves at the sight of the gun, she steps instantly out of character.

CHRISTINE
Oh God Jesus Christ what's that?

SCHUYLER
My gun... I never imagined I'd use it
on someone else.

Christine's eyes move to the bolted stairwell door, she SHOUTS to be heard over the ALARM--

CHRISTINE
He's armed! He's got a real gun!!
Real Situation! REAL SITUATION!!

POUNDING from the other side, MUFFLED VOICES that can't be heard.

SCHUYLER
Yeah, it's a fucking real
situation all right.

CHRISTINE
Schuyler this was all fake, it's
all part of the game--

SCHUYLER
Stop it. Every word out of your
mouth is a lie--

Christine's desperately panicked, fumbling for words.

CHRISTINE
The key!! We, we gave you a key to
the elevator! Why would we do
that?! We wanted you to come up--

SCHUYLER
Of course you did. So you could
frame me for murder.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

No, no, it was THE GAME!! He's not dead, he's fine, open that door and I'll show you, he's on the other side!!

Schuyler hesitates a moment, looking in the direction of the door.

SCHUYLER

I open the door and I'm dead.

ON THE DOOR-- POUNDING DESPERATE, but the ALARM DROWNS out the sounds of VOICES on the other side.

SCHUYLER turns quickly as she takes a step towards him. He points the gun at her again. He looks like he'll use it any second.

SCHUYLER

You move again I swear I'll kill you, you fucking thief.

CHRISTINE

Please! We never-- they never stole a thing, Sky!

SCHUYLER

We? They?

CHRISTINE

Your bank, you called your bank from a cellular phone-- they doctored all your phones, they intercepted the call, you were talking to one of our people-- and your credit cards, that was nothing, we, they had the numbers, they just reported them lost! Please, your lawyer was telling you the truth, he was never in on it, your money hasn't been touched, they couldn't do that it's impossible--

SCHUYLER

Shut up!! Shut the fuck up! You're making this up as you go along!

CHRISTINE

I'm not I swear to God I'm not-- THINK ABOUT IT!! They followed you every step of the way, the cab, in the trunk, we had a diver, two guys in Guatemala, there was always a safety net, always...

SCHUYLER

Stop. Fucking. With my head!

Schuyler runs a hand over his sweating forehead, the gun TREMBLING

(CONTINUED)

in his hand. Christine's regaining control.

CHRISTINE

Please just open the door, Feingold's out there, he's fine-- so is your friend David-- he was part of the act.

Schuyler's eyes dart back and forth between her and the door--

AXES DENT the metal door, which BULGES.

SCHUYLER's mind whirls, he GROANS, almost crying as he considers for the first time that she might be telling the truth.

CHRISTINE

Please... when you open the door, the game ends... just open the door...

Christine rises slowly. She can see she's getting through, starts to approach him. Her voice becomes soothing.

CHRISTINE

Why would we do the crazy things we did, if it wasn't part of a game. We thought you knew that...

SCHUYLER

Please don't come any closer.

CHRISTINE

(still coming)

You're not going to shoot me. Just open the door. The game ends now...

Schuyler lowers the gun as she puts her arms around his neck. She's almost SOBBING with relief.

CHRISTINE

Now that this is over we can be together, like two normal people...

CLOSE, Christine's hands slide down his body and toward the gun.

CHRISTINE

I really care about you. That wasn't a lie...

CHRISTINE GRABS THE GUN, trying to wrest it from his grip.

SCHUYLER suddenly tenses, coming to his senses, struggling. The GUN GOES OFF. Christine STIFFENS, falling backwards onto the ground, clutching her BLOOD-DRENCHED stomach. Schuyler just stares. Blood SPILLS from her mouth as she GASPS in pain...

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

Oh God. I blew it... I blew it...

A BLOW OF THE AXE SEVERS the deadbolt and the door flies open behind Schuyler. FEINGOLD, still drenched in fake gore, is the first of a group to come charging through, he holds the axe.

SCHUYLER spins, points the gun at this axe-wielding man, then, utterly stunned, lowers it in disbelief.

FEINGOLD looks from Schuyler to the dying Christine. He drops the axe with a CLATTER and runs to her side, cradling her head in his lap. His voice CRACKS.

FEINGOLD

Oh God. You shot her!? No! Oh God no...

THE TWO THUGS come out on the roof looking very disturbed. One throws a ROOF SWITCH and the ALARM STOPS, just as DAVID emerges from the stairwell. Feingold looks to their horrified faces.

FEINGOLD

Somebody call an ambulance! He fucking shot her!!

Schuyler backs away from them, the gun hanging limply. The Hack/Cabbie dashes down to call. David approaches Schuyler.

DAVID

Jesus, Sky... just-- take it easy man, OK?

Schuyler stares at Christine, now motionless. He DROPS the gun. Feingold WEEPS, looks up. In a disbelieving, helpless voice:

FEINGOLD

She's dead.

He closes her eyes with his fingertips. Schuyler backs away.

SCHUYLER

No...

Feingold's ANGRY and CRYING now, struggling to his feet. At David:

FEINGOLD

You said he could handle it!!

DAVID

I thought he could...

Schuyler backs away from all of it, around the pit toward the high street-side ledge at the far end of the roof. Weakly:

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

It isn't my... She was gonna kill
me, she had a gun...

Feingold snatches her gun up from off the ground, points at his own
chest and PULLS THE TRIGGER-- MORE BLOOD, Feingold doesn't flinch.

FEINGOLD

Blanks! Blood pellets! Explosive caps!
None of our guns are real, none of it's
real... it was all... special effects...
(quietly, staring at Christine)
You know, she wanted to quit... she was
falling in love with you...

DAVID follows Schuyler, trying to calm him.

DAVID

Schuyler, it's going to be all right,
nothing's gonna happen to you... it's
our fault, we pushed too hard, worst
they could call it is manslaughter--

SCHUYLER

I killed her...

He lowers his eyes--

SCHUYLER'S POV-- moving from Christine's bloody, motionless body to
the Atrium pit directly in front of him.

SCHUYLER's sickened, filled with self-loathing.

SCHUYLER

Of course. It was just a game...

He looks up, squeezing his eyes shut--

FLASH-CUT TO: QUICK SHOT, POV-- MR. VAN ORTON on the window ledge.

CUT BACK TO: FEINGOLD, DAVID and the RASTA/PILOT close in on
Schuyler.

FLASH-CUT TO: QUICK POV-- Mr. Van Orton DIVES off the ledge.

CUT BACK TO: Schuyler opens his eyes, takes a step away.

SHIFT TO SLOW MOTION:

SCHUYLER SPRINTS for the edge of the pit...

THE OTHERS react in HORROR, SHOUT "NO!!", lunging TOWARD HIM...

SCHUYLER's almost at the edge now...

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE'S EYES suddenly OPEN WIDE...

SCHUYLER takes a step off the edge...

CHRISTINE sits bolt upright, a hand extended, SCREAMING...

SCHUYLER sees this as he LAUNCHES HIMSELF INTO SPACE...

THE TWO OF THEM make terrified, helpless eye contact across the void, arms outstretched, like lovers dashing to embrace.

SCHUYLER has time to register his irrevocable error as he seems to hang suspended above the pit for an agonizing MOMENT...

THEN HE FALLS.

LEAVE SLOW MOTION:

INT. ATRIUM - NIGHT

SCHUYLER CRASHES through the glass cover, TUMBLING-- SPARKLING SHARDS surround him like stars as he PLUNGES, SPINS, SCREAMING.

RAPID CUTS-- the CLOWN, CHRISTINE's face, HIS FATHER's head striking the landing. These FLASH PAST so rapidly we can't quite process them.

INTERCUT WITH: INCREASING DARKNESS, THE GROUND RUSHING CLOSER...

ON SCHUYLER'S FACE as he experiences the epiphany that comes before the end. BRILLIANT ANGELIC LIGHT suddenly illuminates him, then--

ANGLE FROM ABOVE-- the LIGHTS are real, they've COME ON to show--

SCHUYLER'S IMPACT-- he LANDS on his back, arms outstretched--

--and is swallowed by an ENORMOUS INFLATED LIFESAVING CUSHION that covers the floor of the atrium.

SCHUYLER BOUNCES in the cushion a few times, gradually coming to a rest, harmless bits of BREAKAWAY GLASS showering down around him. He doesn't move a muscle.

HIS POV-- UP the now illuminated tunnel formed by the walls of the building around the atrium. THE CRESCENT MOON in the very center through the hole in the glass.

The lighted glass ELEVATOR DESCENDS, packed with people.

SCHUYLER absorbs the reality of the situation. He's alive. It was all part of the game. He begins to LAUGH, with rising HYSTERIA.

CUT TO:

INT. CRS LOBBY - NIGHT

THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS from Handel's "Messiah" plays. David has his arm around the glassy-eyed, open-mouthed Schuyler, guiding him from the atrium into the lobby of the building. CUSHION DEFLATES IN BG.

DAVID

...like we'd really leave a loaded
gun lying around your house. We
packed it with blanks.

SCHUYLER'S POV-- a SURPRISE PARTY that works: A STEREO, STREAMERS and BALLOONS, a CHAMPAGNE FOUNTAIN, CAKE and FOOD. CRS EMPLOYEES (mostly ordinary-looking office workers) CLAP and CHEER for Schuyler. They wear PARTY HATS, blow PLASTIC HORNS.

SCHUYLER is buffeted by people eager to SHAKE HIS HAND, offering CONGRATULATIONS. An older woman-- CYNTHIA-- gives him a hug.

CYNTHIA

Remember me?
(operator voice)
This is Cynthia from CRS...

Schuyler nods weakly, still shaky like a newborn calf.

RASTA/PILOT

Good one, buddy. We really had
you going didn't we?

HACK/CABBIE

(laughing)
That look on your face up there?
Shit, I almost lost it.

The office ASSISTANT POPS a bottle of Dom Perignon and hands it to Schuyler. Not knowing what else to do, he takes a slug. The GIRL from the boat KISSES his cheek. TECHNICIANS, the NURSE from the asylum, the SECURITY PEOPLE, all want a piece of him.

The "MESSIAH" FADES and an R & B BAND breaks into ROUSING MUSIC as Feingold approaches and gives Schuyler a MASSIVE HUG. He still wears his smeared gore make-up, lights himself a cigar.

FEINGOLD

Sure glad you jumped, compadre. Otherwise
I was gonna have to throw you off.

The initial rush is passing; Schuyler's only now capable of speech, but his voice sounds numb, distant.

SCHUYLER

Amazing. Truly amazing. You...
you're amazing.

(CONTINUED)

FEINGOLD

Me? I really am just an actor.

SCHUYLER

So who's in charge?

FEINGOLD

Well... we're not, exactly, entirely a hundred percent legal, so... it's all need to know.

SCHUYLER

And I don't need to know.

Feingold nods and WINKS, blows a smoke ring.

SCHUYLER

I-- I could've been killed...

FEINGOLD

So? We woulda saved you the trouble.

(a CHUCKLE)

Seriously, sorry you got stabbed-- that guy wasn't part of the game. We're pretty good at playing God, but... it's still a dangerous world out there.

SCHUYLER

(looking around)

Where... where is she?

FEINGOLD

Oh, um... She was kinda upset by the whole thing. So whaddya think?

SCHUYLER

(a beat; genuine wonder)

Wow.

IN BG, people are starting to dance, having a great time. Schuyler turns to David who holds up his hands with a grin.

DAVID

. Told you it would change your life...

Schuyler nods... then hauls off and SLUGS HIM, David goes TUMBLING back into the bandstand, Schuyler JUMPS ON HIM, genuinely trying to strangle him-- the MUSICIANS hit FALSE NOTES but KEEP PLAYING.

Feingold PULLS Schuyler OFF, holds him. David COUGHS, Schuyler blinks, gets a hold of himself, Feingold releases him. He takes a few breaths, looking pretty crazed, but spent. Feingold pats him on the back. David rubs his jaw, still seated on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID
Perfectly natural reaction. It'll
take a little while to decompress.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SCHUYLER'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A white LIMOUSINE cruises down a street of the high-toned area.

INT. WHITE LIMO - NIGHT

Schuyler and David sit side by side in the red leather back seat.
Schuyler's mostly recovered from the shock.

SCHUYLER
So... what do you get out of all this?

DAVID
I work on commission, throw a patient
their way every now and then. You're a
friend, so they asked me to play along.

SCHUYLER
Slightly unethical.

DAVID
Hey, whatever it takes. Some
cases need shock treatment.

The limo COMES TO A STOP in front of Schuyler's home. Schuyler
looks out the window toward it.

DAVID
Here's your life back... Good as new.

SCHUYLER
So what's the grand total?

DAVID
They send a bill. It's itemized.

SCHUYLER
Ballpark.

DAVID
Well, turned into a real logistical
nightmare... Parts and labor,
research, personnel, bribes... plus
they're not a charity.

SCHUYLER
We're talking six figures?

(CONTINUED)

DAVID

Hey, it's not like you can't afford it. They got cheaper packages, but you're a deluxe kind of guy.

SCHUYLER

Who says I have to pay...

DAVID

C'mon, Sky. You've seen what these folks can do. Besides... can you honestly say it wasn't worth it?

Schuyler sighs, shakes his head.

DAVID

And from a professional standpoint... I really do think it was good for you.

SCHUYLER

Maybe so.

DAVID

So how do ya feel? Happy?

Schuyler thinks about it a moment, then smiles and nods.

DAVID

You played it great, by the way. Really kept 'em on their toes.

Still smiling, Schuyler starts to get out, David stops him.

DAVID

Oops-- almost forgot.

He pulls a small key from his pants and--

CLOSE-- David UNLOCKS the cuffs from Schuyler's wrist.

EXT. VAN ORTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Schuyler climbs out, SHUTS the limo door, the WINDOW ROLLS DOWN.

DAVID

I love you, man. I mean that.

SCHUYLER

(surprised)

Gee... thanks, David.

The limo slowly pulls away, David WAVING.

WIDE SHOT, Schuyler turns and faces his home; the Jag's parked nose

(CONTINUED)

out in the open garage, sparkling clean, with a new windshield. Schuyler stands on the sidewalk for a few moments, quite still.

INT. FOYER AND BALLROOM - NIGHT

Schuyler lets himself in, starts up the steps.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Schuyler enters, opens the TV cabinet-- all back to normal. He SIGHS, then turns to the sofa and freezes--

Christine sits up, rubs her eyes. She was napping there. She wears a lovely cocktail dress, the one she saw in the store window.

CHRISTINE

Hi.

She seems a bit embarrassed under his scrutiny, stands up and plucks at the hem of her dress.

CHRISTINE

Do you like this? I bought it for your party, then... I couldn't bring myself to go. But I had to apologize... I'm sorry. For everything...

SCHUYLER

Y'know... it's OK. I was just starting to regret that it was over.

She comes close to him...

CHRISTINE

It doesn't have to be... we're on the same side now.

SCHUYLER

I don't even know your name.

CHRISTINE

Rachel. Rachel Adams.

A BEAT. Schuyler considers this.

SCHUYLER

I don't know you.

CHRISTINE

(smiles)

Do you want to?

He hesitates, then takes her in his arms, they're about to kiss. He takes her face gently in one hand, as if to pull her toward him. His tone becomes suddenly icy, his smile cruel.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

Fuck you, you bitch.

He tightens his grip on her jaw, she freezes in shock, eyes wide.

SCHUYLER

I'd rather kiss a corpse.

He pushes her backward with one hand, as if shoving away garbage. She staggers, deeply wounded, eyes filling with tears. Schuyler walks calmly to the phone, picks up the receiver.

SCHUYLER

I'm calling the police.

She starts to back toward the door, shaking her head, devastated. She turns and reaches for the doorknob. Suddenly Schuyler grabs her from behind, spins her around to face him.

SCHUYLER

I owed you that, Rachel.

He kisses her hard, almost violently. She resists for a moment, then responds, as he lifts her against a wall. They claw hungrily at each other's clothes, the passion intense.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

THE NEXT MORNING, BRIGHT DAYLIGHT slanting in the window. Empty bottles of champagne and glasses, Schuyler's clothes strewn everywhere-- it was a wild night. Naked under the sheets, Schuyler stirs, blinks, looks around-- no sign of Christine.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

ANGLE IN MIRROR, the REFLECTION of Schuyler, pulling on a robe, entering the room, looking for her. He freezes--

CAMERA SHIFTS FOCUS to reveal Christine's lucky medicine bottle sitting on top of an envelope on the counter in front of the mirror. There's a rolled-up message inside the bottle...

SCHUYLER picks up the bottle, pulls out the paper and unrolls it--

CLOSE-- the message "GAME OVER" written in lipstick. He grabs the envelope, tears it open and pulls out-- a long, long BILL with the CRS LOGO. We needn't see the final figure. A PHONE RINGS O.S.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Schuyler enters, punches the button for the SPEAKERPHONE.

(CONTINUED)

SCHUYLER

Hello?

The female VOICE at the other end has a pronounced SOUTHERN ACCENT.

JANET (filter)

Is this Schuyler Van Orton?

SCHUYLER

I think so, yeah...

JANET (filter)

This is Janet at CRS central headquarters. I'm calling to find out if you've been satisfied with our service, or whether you have any questions or comments...

He sits on the sofa, speaks flatly, clutching the bill.

SCHUYLER

No. No questions. I get it.

JANET (filter)

I have a very special offer for you today, sir... Having completed Level One, most of our clients elect to move on to Level Two...

SCHUYLER

You've gotta be kidding... I have to keep playing?

JANET (filter)

Sir, that's entirely up to you... But the next level is free of charge...

Schuyler furrows his brow; the accent seems to have faded... and the VOICE suddenly seems to be in the room with him. He turns to the doorway to see Christine/Rachel/Janet, standing with his cellular phone to her ear. She lets it drop to her side.

CHRISTINE

. And you can't play alone.

A smile spreads over Schuyler's features.

CUT TO BLACK... HOLD FOR A FEW BEATS...

Then MUSIC UP, ROLL CREDITS.