

the nice guys
by
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Warner Bros. Television

FADE IN: TV SCREEN - A BUNCH OF DAMN PUPPETS

A Kitty, A Dragon, A Talking Clock... all vying for the attention of a pretty young thing in pigtails.

Her name? SUZY SHOEMAKER. The Hostess of TV's "The Bubble Barn."

WIDER - A CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A FOUR YEAR-OLD BOY watches "Bubble Barn" on TV. Rapt. Hypnotized... The puppets his personal friends.

MR. TALKY-CLOCK

Ms. Shoemaker! Ms. Shoemaker! It's nine o'clock! Time for bed, dragon-head!

DRAGON

Suzy, why must I have a bedtime?

SUZY SHOEMAKER

Because, silly, the whole world takes turns sleeping. Our mommies know when it's our turn to sleep, because they love us very much.

The kid watches, transfixed. And then:

BOY'S MOTHER (o.s.)

Brian! Dinner! Come pick up your toys!

After a beat, the boy stands, eyes never leaving the screen. Starts to move away -- but then stops again... Pause...

BOY'S MOTHER (o.s.)

Brian! Turn off the TV and get in here!

Brian starts to move again. Side-stepping. Slowly. Still transfixed by the television...

BOY'S MOTHER (o.s.)

BRIAN! NOW!

Brian hotfoots it out the door. CAMERA HOLDS on the now empty room. On TV the dragon puppet is singing a lullaby...

Pause. Pause. We HOLD... And then THE WALL EXPLODES-- Just DISINTEGRATES. The whole damn thing. Part of the CEILING going with it, as--

A LATE MODEL CAR

BLASTS into the room, moving impossibly fast. Showering DEBRIS. Trailing trees, brush...

It hurtles across the room.
DETONATES obstacles. BLOWS them to splinters.
Sweeps the place clean, doing 50, half on its side--

Then, just as promptly, DEPARTS.

Crash--! Sails OUT THE OPPOSITE WALL. Into the night.
Just like that. CAMERA PANS TO FOLLOW -- Peering out the
gaping HOLE, out and down --

Unbelievable. There it is, STILL GOING. Plunging down a
HILLSIDE. Tumbling. Chewing up huge GOUTS of dirt.

WHAM--! It slams to a STOP. A hundred yards down the hill.
Upside down. On fire... Stillness, then. Echoes, fading...

MATCH CUT TO: THE HILLSIDE

We see the swath cut by the car... The vehicle itself smolders
at the base of the hill, surrounded by emergency workers.

UP ABOVE - A POLICE CAR

Sits, parked on the road, overlooking the damage. A overweight
COP, in the front seat, finishes a conversation on his CB:

COP #1
Got it... Thanks, Ruth.

He clicks off. Steps over to the side of the road. Another
officer stands here, staring down the hillside.

COP #1
You know who that car's registered to..?

The other cop looks back

COP #1
... Suzy Shoemaker.

The other cop blinks. Stares back down the hill.

COP #2
The "Bubble Barn" chick...?
(cop #1 nods)
Oh, man... What am I gonna tell my kid?

END TEASER. BEGIN TITLES.

INT. GRADE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - CIRCA 1972 - LIGHTS DIMMED

The assembled kids (mean age of, say 7) all sit, eyes forward.

HEALY (v.o.)

When I was a kid, the world was different. Things were innocent... Well, maybe not innocent. But pretty harmless.

The kids are watching an ancient EDUCATIONAL FILM -- Subject: English GRAMMAR. ONSCREEN - A young boy holds up a white BEACH TOWEL:

NARRATOR (ON FILM)

Bart has a PLAIN towel.

The word "*adjective!*" appears on screen, DING...! And then Bart is replaced by a little girl clutching a YELLOW TOWEL:

NARRATOR (ON FILM)

Sarah has a BRIGHT towel.

DING...! Another kid, another towel. This one multi-colored:

NARRATOR (ON FILM)

Jonathan has a GAY towel.

The classroom erupts in LAUGHTER... Apparently this is the funniest thing ever. One kid actually falls out of his seat.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON - PRESENT DAY

Run-down basketball courts. A bunch of sullen gang-bangers high five. The OLDEST ONE talks earnestly with a YOUNG GIRL.

HEALY (v.o.)

Now? Here? In L.A.? Innocent doesn't even enter in to it.

IN A PARKED CAR we reveal a kind-faced MAN, mid-thirties. For the record? JACKSON HEALY. He's watching the older gang-banger.

HEALY (v.o.)

Take this a-hole I'm watching. He's maybe 18, already he's got a system: get 'em while they're too young to know any better.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - THAT NIGHT

A bad house in a worse neighborhood. CAMERA drifts slowly towards a cracked window. As we HEAR people having sex:

18 YEAR-OLD (o.s.)

Come on, baby. Who's the man, baby?

YOUNG GIRL (o.s.)
 ... You are. You're the man. Oh, yes.
 You're the man. You! You!

ANOTHER ANGLE - OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

In a CORNER SHADOW next to the window--
 We can just make out the form of HEALY.

He stands there, hidden -- looking bored, eating peanuts.
 He pops them one at a time... Munches. Listening:

YOUNG GIRL (o.s.)
 You're the man! You! You're my Bo-budda!

Healy pauses. Frowns: Bo-budda..?

YOUNG GIRL (o.s.)
 Bo-budda! Bo-budda! You are! You!

Healy shrugs. Picks through his handful of nuts...
 Whispers to himself:

HEALY
 ... Yeah, but is he the man...?

YOUNG GIRL
 Oh, yes baby! Yes! You're the man, baby!

Ah, that's better... Healy smiles as he finds a cashew.

HEALY (v.o.)
 Love... Grand isn't it..?
 (beat)
 Me? I was in love once. June Miller.

FLASH CUT TO: A NICE RESTAURANT

HEALY sits across a table from a knockout BLONDE. They stare into each other's eyes. A beat. Healy starts to say something--
 The blonde cuts him off:

BLONDE
 Jack... I slept with your father.

The guy at the next table does a SPIT TAKE.

BACK TO SCENE

Healy dusts peanut bits off his hands.

HEALY (v.o.)
 Marriage is buying a house for someone
 you hate... Remember that.

ANOTHER ANGLE - SAME HOUSE - LATER

The YOUNG GIRL we saw earlier exits. Gets on her bike. Rides off, alone... HEALY steps from the shadows. Stares after her.

HEALY (v.o.)

Yep, these days the world is an unromantic, vulgar place...

HEALY cracks his neck. Grimaces. Slips on a pair of BRASS KNUCKLES. Starts towards the front of the house--

HEALY (v.o.)

So I adjust.

Healy knocks on the FRONT DOOR. The 18 YEAR-OLD answers it.

HEALY

Are you the man?

18 YEAR-OLD

What...?

Healy slugs him. On the sound of a jaw CRACK!-ing we CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN BAR - HANK'S ALL AMERICAN - RAINY NIGHT

Through the rain-streaked glass we see Healy at a booth. Badly dressed (he's usually badly dressed,) in a SILVER LAME SHIRT. An older man sits across from him.

HEALY (v.o.)

I don't have a job title. I'm not in the yellow pages... But if you've got trouble with someone -- someone's threatening you, someone's messing around with your underage daughter. Whatever--

The older man gives Healy an ENVELOPE. Shakes his hand. Leaves.

HEALY (v.o.)

-- You might ask around for me: Jackson Healy... If the name's familiar, it's probably on account of the business with that guy went nuts at that Denny's last year--

FLASH CUT TO: CHAOTIC IMAGES, RAPID SUCCESSION - ALL M.O.S.

A DENNY'S DINER. Everyone is on the floor. A PSYCHOPATH with a shotgun. SCREAMING. HEALY LEAPS across a counter, collides--! A shotgun BLAST perforates his arm... Movement. Chaos--

BACK TO SCENE - ANGLE ON BARTOP

We see THE LEARNING ANNEX magazine. The cover includes HEALY, with the caption: "Real-Life tough guy JACKSON HEALY can teach you how to protect yourself."

HEALY (v.o.)

I took the guy out and got shot for my trouble... I didn't even get paid for it.

PAN UP TO: SOME DRUNK GUY. Scowling at the magazine.

HEALY (v.o.)

Not to mention the fact that, to this day, some guys just can't leave it alone... They gotta measure dicks.

THE DRUNK looks from the magazine to Healy-- Who never even looks up. Sighs. Makes a big show of yawning, stretching. Gets up, heads for the restrooms.

REVERSE ANGLE - As he passes CAMERA we see him calmly slipping on that same set of BRASS KNUCKLES. CUT TO:

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - GRAVEL TURNOUT - BREAKING DAWN

A canopy of CITY LIGHTS beneath a purple sky. Dazzling. TWO CARS are parked up here. Healy's convertible, and a Ford. Healy leans against the Ford.

HEALY (v.o.)

Sometimes I feel okay about myself. Not often. Scotty, my AA sponsor, keeps trying to get me to quit this kind of work.

Inside the Ford is a WOMAN. Her face is in shadow, a cloth HAT pulled low. Glow of a nervous cigarette. British accent:

GIRL

This guy's been asking for me everywhere. Talking to all my friends... I got a description from one of them. And a name.

She hands Healy a slip NOTEPAD PAPER... It's PINK. It's also shaped like a COW. Whatever... Healy looks it over. Pockets it. The woman pulls an envelope out of her purse.

GIRL

... You'll take care of him?

HEALY

(taking envelope)
Consider it done.

Healy starts to leave, counting the money in the envelope-- Then stops. Turns back. Leans in the window:

HEALY

... Um, you're short.

GIRL

... I'm... What?

HEALY

You're twenty bucks short.

GIRL

Oh... I'm sorry... Here, ummm...

She fishes through her purse for some cash. Finds a twenty.

ANGLE ON MULHOLLAND

The FORD drives off. Taillights, receding. Healy watches it go.

HEALY (v.o.)

I've been thinking about what Scotty said. I could try for an investigators license. Become a detective, you know..? Those guys help people.

(beat)

Maybe then I'd feel good in the morning.

CUT TO BLACK. Then, over this, the sound of an ALARM-CLOCK.

INT. RESIDENTIAL HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

A HAND dangles limply from the edge of a porcelain TUB. WIDEN to reveal a tousled-looking MAN, 40-ish. FULLY DRESSED, immersed in water up to his neck. Dead asleep... Meet HOLLAND MARCH.

Somewhere in the house the ALARM-CLOCK continues to RING. Slowly, March's EYES open. He sits up, sloshing water. Winces. Puts a hand to his throbbing temple. Stops, frowns...

There is something WRITTEN on the palm of his hand. With a permanent marker, in an unmistakably feminine script:

YOU WILL NEVER BE HAPPY

March just stares at it: How the hell did that get there..? A phone starts RINGING now. Adding in with the alarm-clock.

March ignores it, tries to remember how he ended up in the tub with his clothes on. Somewhere an answering machine picks up:

ANSWERING MACHINE (o.s.)

Hi. Holland March. Here comes the beep.

The beep comes, as promised. Followed by:

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (HOLLY) (o.s.)
 This is your daughter speaking... Tomorrow
 is my birthday and you promised me a quote
 special present un-quote--

March waves a hand at no one in particular.

MARCH
 Yeah, yeah...

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (HOLLY) (o.s.)
 Also, I hope you remembered that you have
 a surveillance this morning.

March blinks. A beat, then:

MARCH
 Oh, shi--

He's already leaping out of the tub... as we TIME-CUT TO:

BATHROOM - MORNING

March cleaning up. Shaving. He keeps NICKING himself.

MARCH (v.o.)
 If I had to guess, I'd say about 80% of
 my clients are old people... I got a guy,
 runs security for a local retirement
 park... He kicks a few cases my way --
 slam dunks, most of 'em.

INT. OLD WOMAN'S CONDO - LEISURE WORLD - DAY

March wears a professional smile. Writes in a little notebook
 while an OLD LADY relates her problem:

OLD LADY
 It's my husband. Fred is his name. He's
 gone missing.

MARCH
 (professional concern)
 Missing..? I see.

OLD LADY
 I'm terribly worried... Fred's just never
 been gone for this long.

March gives an understanding nod, writes--
 Then he notices something out of the corner of his eye:

There is an URN sitting over the fireplace.
 He squints at the PLAQUE affixed to it:

FRED MILLER.
A devoted and loving husband.

March frowns.

MARCH
Um... Mrs. Miller... Your husband Fred...?
Exactly how long has he been missing?

OLD LADY
Oh, let's see...
(furrows her brow)
Probably since the funeral.

March nods.

MARCH
I see... I see...
(puts away notebook)
Well, I can start today if you like.

INT. EMPTY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Workers just setting up for the night's business. March stands at the bar talking to the BARTENDER. He slips the guy a twenty.

MARCH (v.o.)
Some of the time it's a crap job, sure...
You peep in windows like Santa. You see
scumbags all over women like cheap
suits... There is, at all times, a cheap
suit all over you like a cheap suit.

MARCH starts writing his name and number on a bar napkin.

MARCH
... This Alice, if she comes in again --
alone or with a guy -- I want you to call
me here--

The bartender just frowns:

BARTENDER
Wait. You don't even have, like, a card
or anything?

MARCH
No. I don't... What are you, my mother?

He hands the guy the napkin.

MARCH (v.o.)
But hey, no worries. I mean, it's not
like I deal with real criminals. It's not
like I ever see dead bodies...

EXT. THE VALLEY - SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

SUN, dazzling. March swings his '79 Z-28 Camaro to the curb.

MARCH (v.o.)

I'm not saying it's easy; I'm just saying
it's easier than your job.

He parks. Clambers out, starched, shaven and hung over.
Notices his hand again. YOU WILL NEVER BE HAPPY.
Faded, but still there. He scowls at it.

A BLACK CAT darts out of a nearby bush. Crosses right in
front of March... Out into the street.

Something very weird happens then. As March watches the cat
cross the street -- A CAR APPROACHES.

But it's okay. The car has plenty of time to avoid the cat.
Only it doesn't. Instead it deliberately veers TOWARD THE CAT.

PUSH IN ON MARCH as he watches, horrified. We HEAR the
impact; REFLECTED in March's windshield, something flung...!

MARCH (v.o.)

Oh, and sometimes? You do see dead bodies.

March runs out into the street. Jumps IN FRONT of the car.
Forces it to swerve...! With a SCREECH, it strikes a curb. Halts.

MARCH

What the hell's the matter with you!?!

Now a MAID comes running out of a big, gaudy house. Wailing
what we assume to be the cat's name (Jiji, if it matters.)

The DRIVER stumbles out. A heavy-set, middle-aged MAN.

MARCH

Are you crazy?! You went right for it!!

DRIVER

Okay, okay, take it easy. I... I'm sorry.
It's just, I've got five g's on the Mets--
(motions)
And when I saw a black cat crossing right
in front of me...

March blinks. Utter disbelief.

TIME CUT - MINUTES LATER

March and the MAID head toward the gaudy house. He's cradling
a towel-wrapped bundle. Listening as the maid sobs:

MAID

... And I can't tell him Jiji just ran away, his friend saw the whole thing. Oh, God, this cat, it's... his whole life...

March pauses at her door, thinking quickly:

MARCH

How long until Johnnie gets home?

EXT. ENCINO ANIMAL SHELTER - DAY

MARCH careens up in his Z-28. Leaps out holding a cardboard box.

INT. ENCINO ANIMAL SHELTER - SAME

THE COUNTER GIRL is a punkish-looking freak with pierced everything. She emerges from a back room holding a sleek, beautiful, very pissed off BLACK CAT.

COUNTER GIRL

I'm totally not supposed to do this. You sure you're not a psycho?

MARCH

Pretty sure. Here, go pierce something.

He hands over a stack of twenties. She passes him the cat. It yowls and squirms a little.

MARCH

Okay, buster, none of that... Maybe I should show him his buddy in the box.

(beat, looking cat over)

Um, listen, he looks really, um, alive and great and everything, but--

COUNTER GIRL

But what? You want another dead one? Listen, Mr. Psycho--

MARCH

No, look. It's very simple: I want him to look like he got hit by a car and survived... Get it?

COUNTER GIRL

So what, then? You gonna break his leg?

MARCH

No, no. But, aw, hell, can we... goop him up or something? You got any hair gel?

COUNTER GIRL

No. My hair naturally sticks straight up like an arrow, sorry... Such a good idea, too, 'cause a speeding car will usually gel an animal--

MARCH

That's funny. You're very funny.

CUT TO: THE UGLIEST BLACK CAT EVER

Its hair is gooped in odd directions, and it's been rolled in dirt or gravel or both. It looks pissed. Also confused.

EXT. GAUDY HOUSE - FRONT PORCH

MARCH grins as he presents the cat to young JOHNNIE, age 9. The kid stands surrounded by several friends.

JOHNNIE

Yeah, it looks like my cat... Mine's dead, though.

March blinks. Not what he was expecting.

MARCH

Oh, well, then... Uh, here's this one. Like a new cat, a replacement--

JOHNNIE

Are you trying to sell me something? My cat's dead, mister.

KID

Plus, his dad gave him \$200 bucks!

JOHNNIE

I gotta go buy something now. Bye.

They head off across the lawn. March watches them go. Sighs. Stuffs Mr. Ugly Cat back in his box. Starts for his car, as--

MAN

Ho. Excuse me, Mr... March, is it?

He turns in time to see a well-dressed, middle-aged MAN leave the porch and jog forward, hand extended --

MAN

Phil Hazeltine.

There's a \$50 bill in his hand. March waves him off.

MARCH

Forget it. Your money's no good here.

HAZELTINE

Mr. March, please. I truly appreciate what you tried to do for my son.

A PAW darts out of the cat carrier. Swats March a good one.

HAZELTINE

Well... Hey, look, I'm having this Halloween party tomorrow night -- would you consider coming? Least I can do.

March reaches his Camaro, opens the door. Tosses the box inside like a piece of luggage. It thuds down inside.

MARCH

Party...? Hmmm. I did have plans, but...

He looks thoughtful. As we CUT TO:

A STACK OF SURVEILLANCE PHOTOS--

All of the man we just saw. PHIL HAZELTINE.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: We're inside March's "OFFICE" now (a converted cabana behind his house.)

March casually tosses a pair of "HAZELTINE'S HALLOWEEN HAUNT" tickets down on top of the photos... Smiles across the desk at his client -- Krista Kelp -- a classic California bimbo:

MARCH

... and Hazeltine was so grateful, he even gave me tickets to his Halloween party... Pretty good, huh?

Ms. Kelp ain't exactly gushing with gratitude.

KELP

What the hell good are those..?

MARCH

Um, well, Ms. Kelp -- Krista -- they're tickets to Hazeltine's party, and--

KELP

I don't care about his Goddamn party! I know about his Goddamn party! I hired you to find out about his MISTRESS!

MARCH

(blinks)

Wait... I thought you were his mistress.

KELP

I AM! I'm talking about his OTHER mistress! The girl he's cheating on me with! The tramp!

MARCH

Yes, I know. Uh, what's her name... Um...
(steals a glance at his notes)

... Alice! Right? You mean Alice... Hey, I'm hot on her trail. Truly... And I'm a hundred per cent confident that I'll learn more at this party...

(professional voice)

Now, on that subject... We spoke earlier about a thousand dollar figure upon completion. And I can't help thinking that part of that should be paid to me now... I'm at a critical juncture--

The bimbo hurls the stack of photos at him.

KELP

Fat chance, moron! You get paid when you get me information! Otherwise drop dead!

She storms out of the office. March starts to protest-- Then gives up. Stares out the door, watching her go...

JIJI THE BLACK CAT pads over, rubs up against his leg.

MARCH

You still here...? Beat it! Scat! Shoo!

The cat runs off in terror.

MARCH (v.o.)

Yep. I'd have to say I'm happy with things as they are... Except for all the stuff I'm not happy about.

(pause)

But it's best not to think about that.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD - PANORAMA - LATE AFTERNOON

The waning sun casts a mellow glow. We HEAR a TV NEWSCAST play:

NEWSCASTER (o.s.)

... In what police are calling a bizarre suicide, Suzy Shoemaker, star of the popular children's show "The Bubble Barn" drove her car off a Mulholland Drive cliff late last night...

INT. HEALY'S ONE-ROOM APARTMENT - SAME

Our first glimpse of Jackson Healy's apartment. Small. Spartan. It looks like a monk lives here. The NEWSCAST plays on his TV:

NEWSCASTER (on TV)

... Friends say Suzy was distraught over the release of a now-infamous amateur sex tape, which showed Shoemaker having intercourse with an unidentified male.

The CAMERA finds a BED; Healy atop rumpled sheets. Eyes open. Staring at the ceiling. He glances at the alarm clock: 5:01 PM. Sighs. Sits up.

TIME CUT: HEALY BUTTONING HIS DRESS SHIRT.

He stops to sprinkle some fish-food into a saltwater aquarium. On the news, in the background, an OLD WOMAN makes a tearful statement for the cameras. She's identified as LILLY SHOEMAKER:

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Whoever put that tape out there... killed my little Suzy. Killed her... just as if they shot her--

Healy frowns at the TV screen, shuts it off... A daily "tear-off" CALENDAR sits on top of his set: Your word for the day!

Jackson tears off yesterday's page. Revealing today's word:

Equanimity \e·qua·nim·i·ty\, noun: The quality of being calm and even-tempered; composure.

HEALY

She accepted their problems with grace and he with equanimity.

Healy smiles, pleased with himself. Finishes with his shirt. Grabs his coat, exits the room... SLAM!

In the foreground we see something he forgot-- Something shiny... His BRASS KNUCKLES.

WITH HEALY - DRIVING - LATE AFTERNOON

Healy, on the way somewhere. Cruising up Laurel Canyon. As he nears a construction area--

POV HEALY -- UP AHEAD:

He sees a cute YOUNG GIRL. 13, maybe 14 years old-- Sees her snake beneath a chain-link fence. Once inside, she stands. Dusts herself off.

Paces off 10 steps across the scorched, barren ground.
5 steps forward... 6 over, 3 back --

Healy, puzzled. This is really very odd behavior.

She SITS, then. Facing north. Takes out a BOOK.
Starts to read aloud. We have no idea why she's doing this.

ANGLE ON HEALY, GOING BY...
His gaze lingers a moment, curious. Then he turns the corner.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DUSK

HEALY pulls up. Takes a slip of NOTEPAD PAPER out of his pocket. It's PINK. And shaped like a COW. Healy checks it--
Then get out of the car, whistling a jaunty tune.

He crosses to a 50's-modern house, patting his coat pockets as he goes, looking for something: His brass knuckles. Gone, shit.
He shrugs it off... KNOCKS--

VOICE (O.S.)
Just a minute..! Who is it?

HEALY
Messenger service. Holland March home..?

The door opens -- revealing none other than HOLLAND MARCH.
Distracted-looking, shirt half-untucked. Eating an Oreo cookie--

MARCH
Hi.

Healy SLUGS MARCH full in the face.

March drops as though pole-axed.
Healy steps past him. Inside. Shaking his hand in pain...
Shuts the door. Looms over March. Poised like a dancer:

HEALY
Mr. March, we're gonna play a game.

MARCH
This is a mistake, you got the --OOFF--!

HEALY
It's called, "Shut up, unless you're me."

MARCH
(gasping)
I... I LOVE that game.

Healy spots March's WALLET on a nearby counter.

SLUGS him again for good measure, then crosses -- begins idly flipping through the wallet. Stops. Whistles low:

HEALY

You're a private investigator?

MARCH manages to sit up. Props himself against the wall.

MARCH

Look... take... take what you want.
There's \$200 there, it's yours.

HEALY

I told you, I'm a messenger.

(looks around)

Nice. You afford this on a p.i.'s salary?

MARCH

At night I'm a superhero. What's the message?

Healy kneels down next to March--

HEALY

Stop. Looking. For Alice.

MARCH

Fine. Hey. 'Nuff said. Put a fork in me.
I'm done. Don't really put a fork in me.

Healy stands, tosses the wallet back on the desk.

HEALY

That's fine, Mr. March. Alice will be happy to hear you got the message. Almost done. Last thing..?

MARCH

You wanna know who hired me to find her.

HEALY

Bingo. Now, we can do this the easy way--

MARCH

Her name's Kelp.

HEALY

Or we can do this the hard way--

MARCH

My client's name is Krista Kelp. She thinks Alice is boffing her boyfriend. She hired me on Tuesday.

Healy stops, momentarily thrown. March spits blood.

MARCH
Anything else..?

HEALY
You just gave up your client.

MARCH
Well, I made a discretionary revelation--

HEALY
No, you gave her up, just like that. Some poor woman pays you good money and that's how you treat her..? Man, you suck.

March just shrugs. Supports himself on a coffee table... Stands. Slowly, painfully... Covertly slipping one hand into an OVERTURNED COOKIE JAR--

March comes up with a .9MM AUTOMATIC. Spins toward Healy.

Only Healy isn't where he was, he's dropped, he's on the ground, foot lashing out -- KICKING THE COFFEE TABLE.

-- WHAM! -- the whole damn thing comes up from the ground. SLAMS MARCH in the face. Knocks him back on his ass.

Healy is on him in a flash. Grabs the gun. Pulls the clip out. Ejects the cartridge. Tosses it aside... Says, genuine sadness in his voice:

HEALY
I'm sorry you didn't get the message.

MARCH
I get it now. I do. Like, 100 per cent.

Healy grabs March, wrenches his right arm up behind his back. Pins him against the wall.

HEALY
Listen, when you talk to your doctor, tell him you've got a spiral fracture of the right humerus... Got that?

MARCH
Wait, wait... Jesus, man, STOP.

HEALY
Deep breath.

Healy twists March's arm PAST THE BREAKING POINT -- CRACK! -- March screams as we SLAM-CUT TO:

EXT. MARCH'S HOUSE - DUSK

Healy comes out the front door. A YOUNG GIRL, carrying a grocery bag, is headed the opposite way, swigging a drink--

The same girl he saw in the FENCED-OFF LOT earlier. This, we will come to realize, is March's daughter HOLLY.

HOLLY

Hi. Want a Yoo-Hoo?

HEALY

A Yoo-Hoo..? Man, I haven't had one of those in about 10 years.

HOLLY

Knock yourself out.

(hands him one)

You a friend of my Dad's?

HEALY

Business associate. He's inside... resting.

(vigorously shaking the bottle)

Didn't I see you crawling around an empty lot a few blocks over..?

HOLLY

... Maybe... I read there sometimes.

Healy nods. Takes a swig of his drink. Smiles.

HEALY

Damn, that's good...

(nods again, a beat)

Well, uh... Thanks.

The girl waves. Walks up to the house. Healy gets into his car. Takes another sip of Yoo-Hoo. Smiles. Drives off. CUT TO:

INT. MARCH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's much later now. March sits at the kitchen counter, on the phone. His arm in a CAST. A bottle of pain killers nearby.

MARCH

... Look, Ms. Kelp, the fact that you never said *anything* about any danger--
(listens)

Okay, well, call me what you will -- I still think a substantial hazard bonus would not be out of -- Hello..? Hello..?

March curses. Hangs up. Holly enters frame, busily preparing dinner. A pause... Then March looks up:

MARCH

Holly -- I'm not a coward, am I..?

HOLLY

(distracted)

Yeah... Pretty much.

March scowls, itches his cast.

MARCH

Ha. Ha. Funny girl.

INT. THE COMEDY STORE - NIGHT

LAUGHTER... A STAND-UP holds forth on the lighted stage. Ronnie the Comic... He's only half-funny at best.

HEALY enters the club. Carrying a WHOLE CASE of Yoo-Hoo. Goes through an UNMARKED DOOR at the back of the room. Heads up a FLIGHT OF STAIRS to another DOOR--

Someone enters the stairwell behind him... Healy looks back-- TWO GUYS stand at the base of the steps.

The OLDER one is average-looking, a trifle paunchy. The YOUNGER one, a dead ringer for Tom Cruise.

HEALY

Hey... Sorry guys, this area is private. If you're looking for a bathroom--

The younger guy smiles.

TOM CRUISE

Actually, we're looking for Alice.

A BLUR OF SILVER

Flashes through the air.

TOM CRUISE has a STEEL BATON. He SWINGS it hard and fast--

Healy has no time to react. Hands full -- WHAM! -- It catches him on the side of the temple. And down he goes. Yoo-hoo's SMASHING as we CUT TO BLACK.

END ACT ONE

INT. HEALY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

WHAM--! Healy smacks against a wall. Then crumples as--
TOM CRUISE steps into frame. Looms over Healy.

In the background Tom's OLDER FRIEND is tossing the place.
Emptying drawers. Throwing stuff... Tom kneels next to Healy:

TOM CRUISE

Look, sport, we know Alice hired you. Tell
us what she told you. Tell us where she is.

Healy makes himself sit up. He looks resigned, weary.
A wave of LAUGHTER wafts up from the club below.

HEALY

... Got nothing to say... Except, you can
tell your buddy March I'm impressed. He
had me fooled...

The older guy and Tom exchange bewildered looks. They have
absolutely no idea what he's talking about. Healy frowns:

HEALY

... March didn't send you?

Tom's PARTNER looks thoughtful, remembering... Crosses to the
desk, snatches up the cow-shaped NOTEPAPER. Presents it to Tom.

TOM CRUISE

(reads)

Holland March... Huh. Thanks for the tip.
I guess we'll visit him, too.

TOM KICKS Healy in the chest. No warning. WHAM! Folds him over.
A pause. Then, with effort, Healy hauls himself upright again.

TOM CRUISE

You don't tell us about Alice -- we're
gonna have to start breaking your
fingers... You understand.

HEALY

I understand.

The OLDER GUY calls out:

OLDER GUY

Got some kind of hidden cabinet here.

TOM stands, crosses the room. Starts pounding on the cabinet.

HEALY

Um, YOU WANNA BE CAREFUL WITH THAT --

They get the cabinet open. Inside is a heavy canvas BAG.

HEALY

You don't want to open that... It's not mine. My friend wanted me to hold it for him... Trust me, don't --

TOM ignores Healy, rips the bag open--

AN EXPLOSION OF BLUE PAINT. Just like one of those charges they hide with stolen bank money. Sprays every which-way-- Turns Tom's face an impossible, shocking BLUE.

At which point, through the floor, comes the BIGGEST BUZZ YET of LAUGHTER... Like a sitcom soundtrack.

HEALY

That's, um... that's not gonna come off.

TOM snarls. Savagely wipes his face on towels. Crosses to the AQUARIUM, dips his face, scrubs --

HEALY

Tried to tell you.

Tom looks up, pissed. His still-blue face dripping wet. A beat. Then he reaches into the tank and grabs a TROPICAL FISH. FLINGS it across the room... It SMACKS the wall wetly. Next to Healy.

HEALY

Come on, the fish...? Don't do that.

No dice. Blue-Face Tom just sneers, grabs another fish. Throws it on the floor. Healy appeals to the older guy:

HEALY

Can you please tell this guy to act like a professional?

TOM looks up.

TOM CRUISE

You don't get how this works, do you--

HEALY

No, you don't get how this works. You're doing my job, only you're doing it badly.
(beat)

You could have come in here. Beat up on me. Tossed the place... I wouldn't have cared. It's what I expected... Instead you're acting like monkeys.

Tom takes out his gun.

TOM CRUISE

Stand up.

Healy gets to his feet. It's slow going. He's in pain.

HEALY

The second you point that thing at me,
you're changing the rules... you realize
that, right..?

TOM RAISES THE GUN AND FIRES.

Healy's already in motion..! The bullet goes wide.
Past Healy's shoulder... Keeps going --

OUT THE OPEN WINDOW

Hits a WOMAN in the APARTMENT across the street.
Just like that. Her half-open window SHATTERS, pop--!
Arm wound. She goes down with a YELP. Drops from sight.
The OLDER GUY knocks Tom's gun hand aside.

OLDER GUY

You stupid son of a bitch!

Now there's VOICES from across the way. YELLING.
Healy scrambles for his room. For the GUN under the bed--

Comes up with a Mossberg SHOTGUN. Lunges, rolls--
Fetches up against the DOORFRAME. Racks the slide.

Quick look... Front door, open. Still swinging...
Visitors, gone.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STAR LANES - BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Googie architecture sparkles in the afternoon sun.

INT. HOLLYWOOD STAR LANES - SAME

March endures a party for young Holly. A gaggle of giggling
GIRLS fling balls in the general direction of the pins--

INT. BOWLING ALLEY RESTROOM - SAME

MARCH, in a closed stall. On the pot. Reading the newspaper.
Arm, clearly bugging him. He fishes out a cigarette, lights up.

He hears the door open. Clipping FOOTSTEPS. Looks down--
ALLIGATOR BOOTS. Outside. A hand TAPS politely:

MARCH

This one's occupied.

HEALY (o.s.)
 It's me, Mr. March. I intend you no harm.
 You're safe. Say "yes" if you understand.

OUTSIDE THE STALL

Stands JACKSON HEALY. Calm, casual. The stall door swings wide--

MARCH

... Yes.

Reveals MARCH, still on the throne. Holding the door open with his bad hand. The other's got a GUN trained on Healy.

MARCH

Don't move. First off, what the hell are you doing here, and secondly, how stupid do you think I am? I got a permit to carry, dumbass, and since your little "visit" yesterday *this* baby stays right here, right where I can--

As he goes to pat his holster, the STALL DOOR starts to swing closed, he has to BANG it back open. He looks ridiculous. The cigarette falls from his lips, burns his leg. He swears --

HEALY

Need any help?

MARCH

Just stay right there, you mother.

March reaches for his pants, the STALL DOOR swings shut again. He BANGS it open -- he can't hold his gun, and the door, and pull his pants up.

MARCH

... I got this.

HEALY

You mind if I look away or something..?

March shifts. Tentatively rises up... Gives up. Sits again.

MARCH

All right, this is pissing me off... What do you want?

Healy takes a deep breath -- smiles, shrugs:

HEALY

Well, it's actually sort of embarrassing.
 (clears his throat)
 I want to hire you.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - SAME

March traversing the vomit-laden red carpet. A hand jammed in his pocket. Covering HEALY, who walks three steps ahead.

MARCH

Move it, loony-toon. Straight ahead.
Toward the phone.

HEALY

You're gonna call the cops on me? What
about witnesses?

MARCH

My daughter saw you --

HEALY

You're not gonna involve her in this.
(shakes his head)
You won't. Not if I got you figured.

MARCH

If you had me "figured," jagoff, you'd
start running -- and you wouldn't stop
'til all the signs were in Spanish.

HEALY

You mean like, a block from here..?
(glancing back)
March, listen to me; you've got the gun,
we're in a public place... I'm sorry I
hurt you; you seem like a stand-up guy.
(beat)
Have some pie. Hear me out.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - HEALY & MARCH, SEATED - SAME

Healy, attacking a piece of pecan pie. Studiously not looking
at March, as March growls:

MARCH

Two people tried to kill you -- and you
gave them MY NAME??

HEALY

I, uh... might have inadvertently let it
slip, yeah... In relation to Alice --

MARCH

(stunned)
But... but I'm off the case.

HEALY

RIGHT. I hear you. Except, see, thing is -- I neglected to tell THEM you were off the case.

MARCH

Oh, God.

HEALY

I know, I feel terrible, believe me.

MARCH

Did you neglect to tell them where I live?

HEALY

I didn't say a word.

MARCH

Good.

HEALY

Unfortunately, they found your address on some notepaper --

MARCH

Oh, God.

HEALY

Mr. March, I'm trying to help you --

MARCH

I'm off the CASE. You broke my arm, you gotta TELL them --

HEALY

I will. We'll fix this. I promise.

He fishes in his pocket, finds wad of BILLS. March stops, mid-retort; registers the money as Healy casually plunks it down.

HEALY

That's two days in advance. Six hundred.

There it sits. All rolled up and pretty.

MARCH

I'm sorry. Say again, you..?

HEALY

I want you to find Alice.

(smiles)

Consider yourself back on the case.

Reality goes twang! in March's head. Healy, oblivious.
Shoveling pie, he holds up a finger --

HEALY

The Kelp woman pays you. I pay you. You
get paid twice..

March blinks at the money. Taps it with his finger...

MARCH

You're not looking to help Alice. You
want the guys. That it?

Healy touches a finger to the tip of his nose.

MARCH

And if I say no, take a hike?

HEALY

You lose my ability to protect you.

March nods. About what he expected.

HEALY

Take this on, make some bread... I'll
make sure the two guys never touch you.

March counts the money on the table. Slowly, reluctantly almost.

MARCH

First off, to be honest, I don't know what
Alice looks like. Never got that far.

HEALY

(shrugs)

I do. She's average. Five-five maybe.
Brown hair. Actually --

He points at the newspaper sitting in front of him.

HEALY

She kinda looks like that.

He's pointing at the picture of Suzy Shoemaker.

MARCH

Like Suzy Shoemaker?

Healy nods. Before they can continue, March's daughter HOLLY
appears at the table, plops down next to March:

HOLLY

I'm still waiting for my special presen--

She sees Healy and freezes... Blinks...

HOLLY

... You're the guy that beat up my dad.

MARCH

It's okay. He won't hurt me, he only did it for money. He's a nice guy... aren't you, slick?

Healy manages a lame smile. Holly stares at him.

HOLLY

You beat people up... and charge money? Is that true..?

HEALY

Yeah.

HOLLY

Wow. No way... So, um... How much would you charge to beat up my friend Amber?

HEALY

How much you got?

MARCH

Enough. Conversation over... Honey, we're kind of busy here.

HOLLY

Go ahead. I'm not interrupting.

She shoves the newspaper out of the way, grabs March's plate. Starts eating. Seemingly oblivious; she's not. The truth is, she's keeping an eye on dad. Meanwhile, March ignores her -- Pockets Healy's money.

MARCH

Okay, so the deal is, I help you find Alice -- you make those two guys to leave me alone.

HEALY

That's it.

March nods.

MARCH

Great. There's a party tonight. Halloween bash. I was gonna look for Alice there.

HEALY

Why there..?

MARCH
This guy Phil Hazeltine's throwing it.
Supposedly he's fu-- er, sleeping with
Alice. Sorry, Holly.

HOLLY
(mouth full)
I'm traumatized.

HEALY
Can you get me in?

MARCH
Sure. You just bought yourself a ticket.
For \$600 dollars.

INT. MARCH'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Holly bustles around the house, picking the place up, draining
the still-full bathtub, etc... March shadows her, talking:

MARCH
... Hey, it's not like I want to hang out
with the guy -- it means money.

Holly grabs an empty cup off the front window sill, looks out--

HER POV - HEALY - Standing out front. He glances around the
neighborhood, crushes a bug on the sidewalk, whatever...

HOLLY
Yeah, but look at him... He looks like
he's getting ready to shoot the neighbors.

MARCH
See...? I like him better already.

HOLLY
I just don't trust him, dad...
(shakes her head)
Then again, I don't trust you either --
so I guess it evens out.

MARCH
(final word)
Look, I'm going to this party. And you're
staying at Jessica's tonight. No argument.

HOLLY
Dad--!

MARCH
Or argument, whichever --

EXT. MARCH'S HOUSE - EVENING

March stands on the front porch. Shrugging on his coat.

MARCH

You coming?

Healy emerges from the house. Carrying a coffee cup.

HEALY

Thanks for the coffee.

MARCH

Coffee's cheap.

They start across the lawn in silence.
March's neighbor is watering next door.

NEIGHBOR

Hey, March, not to be a pest -- but, your
house could use a lick of paint.

MARCH

Yes it could, Rod.

NEIGHBOR

What happened to your arm?

MARCH

Spiral fracture of the right humerus.

They stop at the car. March squints across at Healy.
Pause, then:

MARCH

Should I be trusting you?

HEALY

(shrugs)

You never know till you try.

March just nods at that.

MARCH

Okay, slick... You drive.

He tosses the keys to Healy.

EXT. THE VALLEY - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

Hazeltine's gaudy house mobbed with costumed revelers.

MARCH AND HEALY

Drive up in March's Camaro. Get in line behind a string of cars waiting for the VALET.

HEALY

Wow. What a big tacky place... This Hazeltine's in porno you said?

MARCH

He distributes, mostly... Does porn versions of TV shows. Doesn't even change the names.

HEALY

Really? What shows?

MARCH

(shrugs)

You know... Leave it to Beaver, Different Strokes -- crap like that.

A VALET hurries over. They climb out, March takes the ticket... Then stops--

A LOUD NOISE emanates from the back of the car... A steady POUNDING. The valet, utterly thrown. Healy, bewildered --

Not so, MARCH. His face settles in a SCOWL. He grits his teeth. Stalks to the trunk of the car. Heaves it OPEN -- His daughter HOLLY is inside.

HOLLY

I know what you're gonna say -- but since I'm already here, you might as well take me in with you, right..?

March's expression doesn't flicker. He simply shuts the trunk again. Calmly walks to the valet, hands him the keys:

VALET

(over renewed POUNDING)

Senor... I cannot take your car like that. Against the rules.

March sighs, flicks a look to Healy that says, "You see what I put up with..?" Goes back to unlock the trunk... CUT TO:

MARCH HUSTLING HOLLY ALONG THE SIDEWALK

Taking her away from the party. Healy trails behind them. Holly, wide-eyed; watches GIRLS flounce by in teensy costumes--

HOLLY

Dad, there's like, whores here and stuff.

Looking around for a cab.

MARCH

How many times have I told you..? Don't say, "and stuff." Just say, "There are whores here."

HOLLY

Well, there's like, a ton.

A CAB pulls to the curb nearby. March waits for a guy in an oversized SNOOPY COSTUME to clamber out.

HOLLY

Dad, come on! I said I was sorry. I can even help. I'll ask around for this what's her name, Alice. Dad--!

He shoves Holly inside. Gives her some money. Slams the door. Watches as the cab pulls away. Shaking his head.

HEALY

Cute kid.

MARCH

If you say so.

HEALY

What happened to her mom, anyway?

MARCH

She died... House fire. Burned to death.

HEALY

Oh. Uh, Jesus... Sorry.

MARCH

Yeah. Happy subject... Shall we?

They turn. Head back for the party. AND WE SEE BUT THEY DON'T--
HOLLY'S CAB stops at a light, fifty yards away--

And HOLLY jumps out. Flings open the door and just runs for it. A tiny cab driver head sticks out the window, "Hey!"

INT. HAZELTINE'S HOUSE - PARTY IN PROGRESS - NIGHT

Thronging cretins. SERVERS in silly Aladdin outfits, pushing inedible appetizers. Our guys, bumped, JOSTLED --

HEALY

(looking around)

We're gonna spot Alice? In here? Not too damn likely.

MARCH

Take it easy. We do this my way. 68 and sunny. Calm. Cool.

HEALY

Fine. Sunny. What if we can't find Alice?

MARCH

(shrugs)

Then we talk to the host, Hazeltine. I'll come on like the good guy -- you blind his son, or whatever. Work your magic--

HEALY

Let's just find this chick and get out of here. I'll look inside.

He peels off. March watches him vanish into the assembled loons. Turns, nearly collides with a passing WAITRESS --

MARCH

Whoa, incoming..!

He sidesteps, deftly snags a DRINK off her tray. Heads off.

TIME CUT: A HALF HOUR HAS PASSED - PARTY IN FULL SWING

SERIES OF SHOTS: PEOPLE spilling out of doorways, windows.

INT. LIVING ROOM - WET BAR - SAME

MARCH enters frame. Smiles conspiratorially at the bartender:

MARCH

Hi. I've managed to misplace an absolutely top-flight girlfriend. About yay-high..? Answers to Alice?

BARTENDER

You already ASKED me, ten minutes ago, except you said it was your wife.

MARCH

(momentary confusion)

My... wife. OH. Wife, yes. I did. Right. Well. Just not my night, huh?

(as if noticing all the drinks)

Hmmm, well... Long as I'm here...

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

MARCH exits the living room, carrying a FRESH DRINK. Sing-songing the TV THEME to "Alice" under his breath... As he goes past, we catch sight of HOLLY. Face averted, hugging the wall--

He's gone. She turns back around. In her eyes, a bleakness born of familiarity: she knows when Dad's crocked.

HOLLY

Oh, God -- that's like his fourth drink!

Seated beside her, a cute REDHEAD. She frowns:

REDHEAD

Who is that guy?

HOLLY

He's nobody... Just some creep my Dad knows.

Holly retrieves her composure by force of will. Takes a breath and then, affecting nonchalance:

HOLLY

Oh, by the way, I'm supposed to meet someone here. Do you by any chance know a girl named Alice..?

REDHEAD

Hmmm... What's she look like?

HOLLY

Well... sorta like that woman on TV, that kids show chick who died--

REDHEAD

The one who just offed herself? That was rad! She's all, "remember kids, politeness counts," meanwhile she's like, doing anal and stuff.

HOLLY

Don't say "and stuff" -- just say, "She's doing anal."

INT. BACK AREA - SAME

HEALY searches the back of the house. Fewer people back here. He finds an office. Waits for the right moment, tries the door--

INT. HAZELTINE'S OFFICE - SAME

Healy steps into the office. Shuts the door, locks it-- Flips the lights on.

The place is JAM-PACKED with VIDEOTAPES. Floor to ceiling. Everyone one of them carries an identical label:

Shoemaker Sex Tape

Healy grabs one off a nearby stack. Stares at it. Thinking.

INT. BACK AREA - SAME

Healy heads around a corner, quickly--
And blunders right into HOLLY.

She looks up. Caught. Healy looks down.

HEALY

Holly.

HOLLY

... Uh, Hi. Mr. Healy.

Awkward pause. Holly deciding how to play this.

HOLLY

Um, you can't tell me what to do, or
anything.

HEALY

I'm not.

HOLLY

(blinks)
... Oh.

Some young DORK walks up, spotting Holly.

DORK

Hello, girly-girl. Got a name..?

Without looking, Healy reaches out. SWAP! Flicks the guys nose.
Hard. It looks damn painful. The dork YELPS, starts to get mad--

Takes one look at Healy and decides against it. Exits quickly.

HEALY

Tell you what... You leave the party now.
I'll forget I saw you here.

Holly just huffs at that. Scowls.

HEALY

Look, your father will make it home in
one piece. I promise... Deal?

HOLLY

(not happy about it)
Alright. Deal.

She turns on her heel and exits.

EXT. OUTSIDE DECK - OVERLOOKING CANYON - NIGHTTIME

March steps outside, a little tipsy, takes in a lungful of night air. Sees a STRAGGLER out on the deck. Five-nine. Blonde.

BLONDE

Hey.

MARCH

Hey, yourself. What's your gig, blondie?
What do you do?

BLONDE

I do a little acting.

MARCH

Little acting? Hey! Me too. Do this.

He motions for her to shoot him; finger-gun. She does--

BLONDE

Bang!

March takes it high in the chest. GRUNTS. Staggers.
Executes a death-pirouette.

Topples over the railing, into the night.

The BLONDE laughs, claps... pause... frowns.
Steps to the edge, peers over the railing--
Sees MARCH bounce down the canyon like a rag puppet.

EXT. BOTTOM OF HILL - SAME TIME

MARCH tumbles to a halt like tennis shoes when you stop the dryer. Sits up, trailing weeds. From above, faintly:

BLONDE (o.s.)

Woooo! That was great!

She wanders away, already disinterested.

MARCH takes stock. Miraculously, his cast is intact.
Checks for cuts and scrapes. Pats his jacket --
Aw, no. His gun, GONE. Jarred loose.

Shifts to his knees -- duck-walks in a circle, searching.
Intent, focused -- UNAWARE of a new ARRIVAL. A VOICE says:

VOICE (o.s.)

Is this what you're looking for?

March FREEZES. The voice stops him cold.
We've seen this moment before in movies -- so has he.
He raises his hand. Swallows hard. Turns, defeated...

What he doesn't expect is a guy dressed like a HIPPIE.
Holding out a plastic HONEY-BEAR.

HIPPIE GUY

Is this what you're looking for?

The hippy wiggles the bottle provocatively.

MARCH

Is this what I'm... no, it's not. NO!!

HIPPIE GUY

You... You're not Adrian?

(March shakes his head)

Oh! Um, geez. Sorry!

The hippy guy flushes bright red. Scurries off... March blinks.
Whatever; GUN. Find the gun... He starts pawing the ivy again.

Bingo. He finds it. Stands up, checking the weapon over.
Takes a step back -- AND TRIPS OVER SOMEONE.

March "YELPS!" loudly. Stumbles, twisting around--
HIS GUN GOES OFF, just as he falls on his ass... BLAM! BLAM!

The shots, MUFFLED in all the party noise--
No one upstairs even seems to have noticed.

March sits in the dirt. Slack-jawed. Blinking.
He just shot someone. In the chest. Twice. That's the bad news.

The good news is the guy was already dead.
This slowly dawns on March as he stares at the body...
The STIFF, CHALK WHITE body. Propped against a tree.

PHIL HAZELTINE'S BODY.

HEALY (o.s.)

March! What are you doing?

March jumps about a foot. Snaps his head upward--

EXT. OUTSIDE DECK - OVERLOOKING CANYON - SAME

Healy stands, looking down. A guy in an OVERSIZED SNOOPY
COSTUME leans against the railing nearby.

MARCH (o.s.)

Get... Get down here... Now.

Healy frowns, puzzled -- March doesn't sound so good. Healy
looks around -- the coast is clear -- HOPS THE RAILING.

Hits. Scrambles downhill, showering dirt... Slides to a stop.

A beat, as he registers the corpse for what it is: a corpse.

HEALY

This is the host, I take it..?

March nods...

MARCH

Hazeltine... I, uh... shot him.

HEALY

You what?!

MARCH

It wasn't my fault, I tripped... Anyway, it doesn't matter. He was already dead.

HEALY sighs heavily... Glances around, licks dry lips:

HEALY

Anyone see you?

MARCH

Some dude, yeah. He can place me at the scene... I vote for Plan A: I throw up -- then we move the body.

HEALY

I'm down with that.

MARCH

Great. Hang on.

March bends over and begins executing his plan. CUT TO:

EXT. PARTY - VALET AREA - SAME TIME

Holly, waiting on a cab. SNOOPY costume guy waits next to her. A HAND taps her on the shoulder. She whirls around, startled...

VALET

You the one been asking about Alice?

Holly does a double take. Unsure how to handle this...

HOLLY

... I, uh, may have said something.
(swallows hard)

She's... well, she's my sister, see. I need to warn her. Yeah, see, two guys came around..? They're all, where is she, where is she -- Scared me, kinda.

VALET
(beat, nods)
I'll take you to her.

EXT. TREES & BRUSH - WITH OUR GUYS - SAME

Our guys, grunting and sweating, drag Hazeltine's body through the brush. Healy's got his legs. March has hold of an ugly tie:

HEALY
How the hell'd you spot him, that's what I'm wondering. From way up top..?
(dawning realization)
Wait a minute. You didn't... Did you FALL down that hill?

MARCH
Oh, come on... I had three lousy drinks--

HEALY
Sure. That's why you can't walk straight.

MARCH
For Chrissakes, I'm carrying a dead body! I'm sorry I'm not Baryshnikov here--

HEALY
Ha! You can't say "Baryshnikov!" You DID, you fell down here!

Something FLUTTERS out of Hazeltine's pocket. Healy notices. Stops. Releases his half of the body.

MARCH
What? What are you doing?

Feeling very much like a detective, Healy gingerly retrieves a slip of NOTEPAPER. Small. Pink -- Shaped like a cow.

HEALY
This paper, the paper... This cow-whatever paper... Alice uses this.

MARCH
Great! Terrific! Can we get this guy out of sight, please?

Healy pockets the paper. Picks up his end of the body... They plod toward a wooden FENCE, separating properties. PARTY NOISE, wafting on the night air.

HEALY
Ready? On three; one... two... THREE.

They heave the corpse over the top. It DROPS from view..!

ANOTHER ANGLE - OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

At the end of the day? It's not their fault, I mean, really, how could they know there was ANOTHER party at the neighbors'?

Below the fence, 30 feet straight down?

DEAD HAZELTINE plummets out of the sky and EXPLODES a glass table. Takes out a busboy. 150 people watch, thunderstruck.

BUSBOY

JESUS! MY LEG! Oh my God! My leg!

Healy and March, uncomprehending. They peer over the fence:

MARCH

I think he's still in sight.

They promptly BOOK. Spin and exit frame. As we CUT TO:

EXT. PARTY - VALET AREA - SAME

THE VALET leads Holly through stack-parked cars. To a waiting TOWN CAR. Plush, expensive. Engine idling.

Holly hesitates... Then climbs in, heart thudding. The valet SLAMS THE DOOR. Collects \$50 from the guy in passenger seat.

VALET

Alice's sister.

As he departs, the passenger says:

PASSENGER

Is that a fact..?

Cranes his head around for a look -- his FACE, a scrubbed but no less vivid shade of BLUE: It's evil Tom Cruise.

TOM CRUISE

Good times.

END ACT TWO

INT. TOWN CAR - WITH HOLLY - NIGHT

Faced with a scary looking Blue Tom Cruise, and his equally scary older partner, HOLLY is suddenly losing her nerve--

TOM CRUISE

So you're Alice's sister...

HOLLY

Uh, you know what? I'll catch her later, my boyfriend's gonna wonder where I am.

TOM

(groans)

Boyfriend. How typical is that? You meet a pretty girl, within, like, two seconds she's gotta slip that in the conversation.

OLDER GUY

That's L.A. for ya.

TOM

"Pardon me, miss, did you see a three-headed cocker spaniel run this way--?"
"No, but my boyfriend has three heads, blah blah blah..."

Holly LUNGES for the door. Blue Face catches her wrist. CLAMPS.

TOM CRUISE

No. No. No. You're not leaving yet--
(to partner)
Get us out of here. Go.

OLDER GUY

... Oh, brother, now what?!

Blue Face stops. Turns to see what his partner is reacting to:

OUTSIDE - THE SNOOPY COSTUME GUY

Has taken an interest in the goings on... He's headed this way.
The Older Guy sticks his head out the window:

OLDER GUY

Get the hell out of the way!

Paws clasped behind him, the pup does a little JIG, up to the driver-side window. Tries to stick his nose inside--

OLDER GUY

Look, buddy, move your a--AAAAGGGH!!!

What the...? TOM CRUISE, spins round to see the older guy;

THRASHING. Bumping the horn. Tom SWEARS, reaches for his gun..!

SNOOPY hits him with the PEPPER SPRAY.
He recoils, gun forgotten. HISSING in pain, and meanwhile--
HOLLY'S BEING HAULED BODILY from the car. In shock, confused...

SNOOPY

GO! I'm right behind you.

Before Holly knows it, she's moving at a dead run.
Zigzagging through the crowded parking lot.
Slamming into cars. Into people. SNOOPY, right behind.

INSIDE THE TOWN CAR - THIRTY YARDS BACK

Blue Tom Cruise. Eyes, slitted. Streaming RED. He looks up...
Spots them, getting into a tan Chevy NOVA, as --

INT. CHEVY NOVA - WITH HOLLY AND SNOOPY

The SNOOPY HEAD comes off -- lands in the back seat.
HOLLY gets her first good look at her new companion:

A PRETTY GIRL, 25, TOPS. Sweat-slicked hair, long and blonde.
Oh, yeah, one more thing: She looks exactly like Suzy Shoemaker.
She fumbles the key into the ignition.

HOLLY

Um, thanks for saving me and everything--
But... Who are you?

SNOOPY

You were with Healy, right?

HOLLY

... Yeah. That's right. I'm Holly.

SNOOPY

Great...

(looks up)

... I'm Alice.

She darts a look in her rear-view mirror, swears --
HEADLIGHTS. The TOWNCAR, behind them, coming up fast.

ALICE

Hold on!

She FLOORS IT..! As we CUT TO:

EXT. YOUR BASIC GAS STATION - ELSEWHERE - NIGHT

Healy and March emerge from the restroom, swabbing themselves
with paper towels. Healy's got the cow-shaped NOTEPAPER:

HEALY

Listen to this: 28-10 Burbank RC, Flight
9. See? 12:00, we got an hour.

March barely glances at it: 28-10 BURBANK RC, FLT 9, 12:00 am.

MARCH

Lovely. Got any aspirin?

HEALY

You're not even gonna look at it! I
shelled out 600 bucks for a detective,
someone who finds clues --

MARCH

I found Hazeltine's body, didn't I?

HEALY

Found it? You fell on it. You fall down a
manhole, you don't go, "Hey, look! I
found the sewer!"

(beat)

This doesn't just go away, March.

MARCH

Yeah? Well, I do. I go away just fine.

He presses a palm to his forehead. Stands stock still for a
moment. Then takes a deep breath, says:

MARCH

Okay. Okay. So here's what I'm thinking:
we find Alice, we hand her over.

HEALY

Hand her over.

MARCH

Yeah. Like a... a peace offering.

HEALY

To the two maniacs.

MARCH

That'd work, right?
(off Healy's look)
What?

HEALY

Yesterday, you give up your client, today
you're fixing to give up mine..?

MARCH

She's what they want!

Healy turns, starts to walk away.

MARCH

Hey! Wait!

March reaches for Healy's shoulder. Healy just shoves him away. March stumbles, lands on his ass. Bottles of motor oil tumbling around him. He sits, pathetic. Healy, looming above.

HEALY

I'll find these guys myself. I don't need a pathetic idiot.

MARCH

(feebly)

Oh, you don't need a pathetic idiot.
Ahhh, see, I had it confused --

Healy heads toward the highway. Says over his shoulder:

HEALY

You're the world's worst detective.

MARCH

Yeah, but I got a really cool ad.
(sits up)
Say hi to Alice for me.

HEALY

I will.

MARCH

Enjoy busting heads.

HEALY

Always do.

March wipes blood off his hand, says:

MARCH

'Course, you won't have much luck at the airport... Seeing as it's not a flight.

Healy stops. Turns back, frowning. March shrugs:

MARCH

Your note. It's not a flight. Look at it.

Healy looks at the note again:

28-10 BURBANK RC, FLT 9, 12:00 am

March speaks unerringly from memory:

MARCH

Most airports -- Burbank included -- have
nighttime overflight curfews. 10 to 6.
Plus that first number? It's today's date,
reversed the European way -- which makes
sense when you see FLT. That's not flight.
My guess? It's flat. As in apartment.

Pause. Healy stands, thunderstruck. Licks his lips, thinking...

HEALY

Burbank RC..?

MARCH

Burbank Retirement Community. I been
there, I'm chummy with one of the gate
guys... Sure you don't have any aspirin?

Pause... Then Healy nods slowly, says:

HEALY

We don't hand over Alice.

MARCH

Fine. These two guys, we take them apart?

HEALY

Yeah.

MARCH

I'm happy.

(stands, legs shaky)

All this concern over Alice... What the
hell'd she ever do for me?

INT. TAN CHEVY NOVA - CAR CHASE - NIGHT

Alice and Holly burn rubber downhill. TOWN CAR in pursuit--
They corner, DOING 50. The NOVA shuddering. Fishtailing.
The wheels catch, the GIRLS hurtle forward --

SCREECH TO A STOP

At a red light. Sit, adrenaline pumping. Pause. Holly frowns:

HOLLY

Have you ever been in a car chase?

ALICE

Uh-uh.

HOLLY

I don't think you're supposed to stop at
red lights.

Pause... Alice nods, this sounds correct -- She PUNCHES it.
Swerves between oncoming cars. HORNS BLARE.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The Nova slingshots into view. A HUBCAP goes dancing down the road, straight as an arrow... ALICE swerves into an alley, as--

THE TOWNCAR -- Makes the turn, chassis striking SPARKS...!
Plunges ahead, after the retreating HUBCAP.

WITH ALICE -- She watches the towncar blow through frame in her rear-view. Skids to a stop. Pause... She frowns:

ALICE
... Wait... They just kept going.

HOLLY
(looks back, blinks)
... Oh...

Chase over. Just like that. The two girls just sit there, catching their breath... Finally, Holly looks at Alice:

HOLLY
Those guys... What do they want with you?

ALICE
(hardly believing it)
... I think they want to kill me.

Holly looks shocked. She has no idea how to respond to that...

HOLLY
Um... Bummer.

ALICE
(abruptly)
We're close to the Indigo, aren't we?

HOLLY
You mean the hotel...? I don't know.
Listen, Mr. Healy wants to help you --

ALICE
I can't handle this, oh, my God, where's
Phil, where the hell is Phil?
(spins)
You got any money?

Holly shakes her head numbly.

ALICE
I gotta skip town. Get out while I can.
(shakes her head)
This wasn't supposed to happen--

Alice makes a decision. Reaches across, opens Holly's door:

ALICE
Get out. You're safer if you're not with
me. GO. I mean it.
(Holly just stares)
Look, I've got a... friend. He's my
contingency plan. I'll be fine.

Holly climbs out of the car. Looks back:

HOLLY
What do I tell Healy?

ALICE
Tell him thanks for nothing.

She drives off... Holly stares after her. Unsure what to do.

Walks back to the main road. Spots a cab just letting someone
off. She runs over... The driver looks her over skeptically:

CAB DRIVER
You need a ride?

HOLLY
The Indigo Hotel. You know where that is?

INT. MARCH'S CAR - NIGHT

Healy drives. March consults a map.

HEALY
You sure you know where this is?

MARCH
It's here... Turn. Turn.

They turn into a long driveway, stop at a GUARD SHACK.
The guy on the night-shift leans out... Says warily:

GUARD
Can I help you folks..?

March leans across Healy to talk:

MARCH
Uh, Hi... I'm Holland March. I think
we've met -- I'm friends with Marcus..?

GUARD

Oh, yeah. Sure, I know you... Sorry.
Thought you was a reporter.
(off their blank looks)
Lily, one of our residents...? Her
daughter died. Suzy Shoemaker. From TV...?

March and Healy exchange looks.

HEALY

Are you saying Suzy Shoemaker's mother
lives here?

GUARD

(nods)

Number 9. Damn reporters been sniffin'
around all day.

EXT. BURBANK RETIREMENT COMMUNITY - MAIN COMPLEX - SAME

MARCH and HEALY head up the sidewalk to #9. Passing a line of
slightly dilapidated BUNGALOWS.

HEALY

Is it just me, or is the whole world
coming up Shoemaker?

MARCH

Let's reserve judgment until--

HEALY

Until what, man? I think we're into
something way bigger than a missing girl.

MARCH

Why? 'Cause you saw the name Shoemaker a
couple times?

HEALY

Try a couple hundred.

(off March's look)

I didn't tell you. Hazeltine has a whole
stack -- did I say stack? Try BOATLOAD --
of those Shoemaker sex videos in his
office. That's point number one --

MARCH

Look, man, I know where you're going with
this --

HEALY

Number two is everyone's favorite Alice,
a dead ringer for Suzy Shoemaker. You
follow me--?

MARCH
Yeah, yeah, and Hazeltine's a porn
producer --

HEALY
-- Producer, exactly, you see a pattern
emerging?

MARCH
The Shoemaker sex tape.

HEALY
(touches his nose)
Is that it? Is that what we're into...? I
mean, think about it. Suppose the tape's
a clever fake. Engineered by Hazeltine.
Starring Alice. That'd be big.

MARCH
Yes. It would. But long as you're playing
junior detective, allow me to poke two
truck-sized holes in your theory.

HEALY
What?

March stops in front of #9, turns:

MARCH
First, Suzy's own mother -- the woman
that lives right there -- confirmed the
tape was real on national television.

HEALY
So she's senile. What's two?

MARCH
Two is, Suzy Shoemaker killed herself.
And people don't kill themselves over
fake sex videos... They sue.

An OLD MAN on one of those THREE-WHEEL SCOOTERS is headed
down the sidewalk. He scowls at them:

OLD MAN
You with that fellow was here earlier...?
That colored man?

Pause. Pause.

HEALY
Oh, great. Welcome to the middle ages.

March smiles at the old guy:

MARCH

Actually, no, sir. But you better get back inside. General Sherman's troops have surrounded the compound.

OLD MAN

Don't patronize me! Move!

He starts his scooter and heads off. March shakes his head. They continue up to the PORCH of #9 -- Ring the doorbell. Wait. March scratches at his cast... No answer. They decide to knock--

MARCH

Hello...? Mrs. Shoemaker...?

KNOCK-KNOCK-CREEEEK... The front door is open. Unlocked. March takes a step back. Healy frowns at him--

MARCH

Colored man.

HEALY

What?

MARCH

He was describing your Blue Guy. That's what he meant by colored man.

HEALY

What are you, nuts?

MARCH

Look: we find this address on a dead man's body. We show up here, late at night -- door's hanging wide open. We call her name, old lady doesn't answer --
(shakes his head)
I watch TV, man -- she's dead in there.

HEALY

(rolls his eyes)

Oh, brother.

Healy swings the door wide, steps across the threshold--

INT. LILY SHOEMAKER'S HOUSE - FOYER - SAME

Healy enters. March, stepping cautiously behind him, draws his GUN from the waistband of his trousers.

HEALY

Hello...?

Ambient noise: Clock ticking... Heater throbbing...
They round the corner into a tiny living room--

LILY SHOEMAKER is propped in a chair in the middle of the room. Her eyes are closed. She's not moving.

March and Healy just stare at her. Pause... Pause...

HEALY

Ooops.

(pause)

... Uh... Well... Check her for a pulse.

March sighs heavily, curses... Walks over, reluctantly... Reaches for the old lady's wrist -- recoils:

MARCH

She's ice cold...

(swallows)

... I think I'm gonna be sick.

HEALY

I don't get it... Why kill her?

MARCH

I dunno, I... Excuse me --

March tries to run for the door. Doesn't make it. Healy jumps out of the way just as March throws up all over the foyer.

HEALY

Good one, Quincy. I'm gonna check around outside--

Healy exits. March watches him go... As, behind him, WE SEE BUT HE DOESN'T --

MRS. SHOEMAKER calmly sits up. Hugs herself with a shiver. Stands, adjusts her dress, whatever, the point is, she's clearly alive... She was just sleeping --

MARCH

(utterly oblivious)

Healy. There's a pack of gum in my car--

MRS. SHOEMAKER WALKS RIGHT UP BEHIND HIM

Pulling a woolen SHAWL tight around her shoulders.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Excuse me, do I know you--

That's as far as she gets... March lets out a strangled "YELP!" Spins. Jumping back -- HIS GUN GOES OFF!

BLAM--! Blows to pieces a Franklin Mint DINNER PLATE on the wall. Fragments rain down. Plaster. Dust. Mrs. Shoemaker hits the dirt. Yowling. And we CUT TO:

A TEACUP AND SAUCER, JITTERING, AS

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

LILY attempts, hands shaking, to sip tea. Everyone's seated around a small coffee table. Awkward.

MARCH

(clears his throat)

... We're really sorry we thought you were dead.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

That's... that's all right. At least you weren't more reporters. Goodness, I... I'm still shaky, I'm going to... have a chocolate.

(extends the box)

Care for one? They're imported.

HEALY

Thanks, but no. Ma'am, getting back to cases...

(leans forward)

Is there a chance, even a remote possibility that the performer in the sex video is NOT your daughter...? In other words --

MRS. SHOEMAKER

No.

(calm, emphatic)

I appreciate that you want to help me... but the answer is no. It's my Suzy.

MARCH

How can you be so certain..?

MRS. SHOEMAKER

She told me so.

(wrinkles her brow)

She called me on the night she died, said... said she was sorry, didn't... mean to... to embarrass me...

She bursts into tears. Reaches for the box of chocolates, her solace. Just then, March's CEL PHONE rings. He scowls, answers:

MARCH

Yeah..?

HOLLY (o.s.)

It's me, Daddy.

MARCH

Holly...? Are you at Jessica's?

INTERCUT - HOLLY

Stands at a payphone in the lobby of a hotel.

HOLLY

Um... okay. Not exactly...?

INT. INDIGO HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

MARCH and HEALY sweep in through the front doors. Cross to the downstairs BAR. Scanning for Holly, not finding her --

Just then, Holly comes out of the restroom. She runs over. Jumps up and hugs her dad.

MARCH

What were you thinking? Are you okay?

HOLLY

I'm fine. I'm fine, I just--

March sets her down. Just like that his concern is overridden; Holly's fine? Good. Back to business:

MARCH

Where's Alice? How'd you even find her?

HOLLY

It's a long story. Look, she needed money to skip town, couldn't find Hazeltine. Said she had a contingency plan --

(frowns)

So, um... I think she's upstairs being a whore.

Healy and March exchange glances.

HOLLY

You gotta go up and save her.

Behind them, the BARTENDER chimes in:

BARTENDER

You guys don't want to go up there.
(off their looks)

She's with some Arab dude. Seriously. He's got those bodyguards with him. Big guys. You know the kind -- had their balls removed, what's that called?

HEALY

Marriage.

MARCH

I guess we could wait down here for her.

BARTENDER

Exactly... Like I told your friends--

Red flag.

HEALY

Friends?

BARTENDER

The other two... One had that Halloween
crap on his face..?

March and Healy exchange looks again. Step away from the bar.
Confer in low voices:

MARCH

That's our guys, right? What do we do?

Holly tugs on his sleeve, pleading --

HOLLY

They're gonna kill her, Dad. She said so.

March looks to Healy...

HEALY

The bodyguards will have guns. Blue Face
and Co. will have guns. I don't want to
walk into the middle of a shooting match.

(shakes his head)

We should just wait this one out.

All eyes are on March now -- there's only one set that
matters. March meets his daughter's gaze... nods, says:

MARCH

Holly's right. We can't just leave her.

He looks to Healy again. Healy draws a ragged breath, shrugs.

HEALY

Sure. Piece of cake.

INT. INDIGO HOTEL LOBBY - BANK OF ELEVATORS - SAME

Ding-! Healy and March step inside the elevator.
Healy punches the button for the penthouse. They ascend.

It's a glass elevator, you can see the city outside.
They stare at the elevator doors. They've seen the city.
MUZAK plays, serene. All of life's rough edges, blunted.

MARCH
(abruptly)
Munich.

HEALY
What?

MARCH
That's it, right? What you call a guy,
had his nuts removed? A Munich?

Healy slips on his brass knuckles. Flexes his hand.

HEALY
Munich is a city in Germany.

MARCH
Oh.
(brightens)
Hitler only had one ball.

HEALY
Yeah, I'd heard that.
(watching the floor indicator)
Okay, here we go.

They face forward. Shoulders squared. Ready for anything. The
elevator glides to a stop, ding--! The doors open. They're
both about to exit, when--

LAUGHTER fills the corridor. Healy frowns, listening...

Wheezing, asthmatic laughter -- the kind, you think you're
gonna pass out, the joke's so damned funny.

HEALY leans out, cautiously... Just in time to see

A SUITED MAN

Stumbling toward him. Weaving, side to side. Equilibrium,
gone. Wheeze... Stumble... Healy draws a sharp breath:

From the guy's collar, a sad little spritz.
Like a kids' drinking fountain. Bright blood. Arterial.

HIS THROAT'S BEEN CUT.
The guy collides with the wall. Eyes, pleading with Healy...

POUNDING FOOTSTEPS, NOW.
These from the OTHER direction. MARCH stares, eyes wide--

A SIMILARLY DRESSED MAN

Comes rocketing out of a side corridor.
 Passes through the hallway. SCREAMING his head off.
 Behind him, someone else is yells "DIE!DIE!DIE!" over and over.

The wheezer finally COLLAPSES, weeping with pain.

HEALY doesn't say a word. Never changes expression.
 Leans back into the elevator. Reaches past March--

Pushes the "Lobby" button.
 The doors glide shut, erasing the corridor.

OUTSIDE

THE PICTURE WINDOW right next to the elevator CRACKS --
 As a man is HURLED against it.

Muzak plays, soothing. The elevator starts down.
 Healy slides the brass knuckles off. Stashes them in a pocket.

Their visit to the penthouse, 15 seconds in duration.
 You know, it was never all that hot of an idea.

MARCH

Feels... like I'm gonna...

HEALY

Don't even think about it.

CUT TO: MARCH'S CAR

Squealing up out of the parking garage. Onto the street.

INT. CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

HEALY and MARCH, up front. Neither saying a word.
 HOLLY in back, arms crossed. Scowling blackly... A pause...
 No one saying anything... And then Holly sits bolt upright.

POV HOLLY - A WOMAN. Barefoot. Long, cheetah strides. Hair
 flying... Holly sputters, madly jabs a finger:

MARCH

Hey! That's her! Alice! I just saw her!

MARCH

Holly, please. I'm not in the mood.

HOLLY

I'm serious. Go back. GO BACK.

Healy and March exchange looks. Look at Holly...

Healy throws a U-turn -- Screeech...! The following happens as they zoom up, down and around the same two-block radius:

HOLLY

She musta used the stairs.

HEALY

Look, are you sure it was Ali--

HOLLY

Yes! It was her! HERE, turn here!

Healy SWERVES onto a side street... Alice is nowhere in sight.

HOLLY

Keep going, we can cut her off!

MARCH

Cut her off where?!

HOLLY

Up here! Turn!

They go squealing around another corner. And another.

HEALY

This is wrong, she's gotta be back that way --

MARCH

Maybe not. Just throw a louie.... What are you, mental? I said LEFT!

HEALY

You pointed and said, "throw a louie," I'm supposed to know what that means?

HOLLY

Here! Here! Turn! NOW--!

And so they screech around the corner and immediately plow into ALICE and fling her across the top of the car.

HEALY & HOLLY & MARCH (together)

AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

Alice does a lazy summersault... Hits the ground with a THUD.

END ACT THREE

INT. PARKING GARAGE - QUEEN OF ANGELS HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Here come HEALY and MARCH, an unconscious ALICE supported between them. They guide her toward the emergency entrance--

Into a WHEELCHAIR supplied by HOLLY. They arrange Alice. Prop her up, almost perky-looking --

MARCH

We'll call it in from the road, let's go.

He runs for it. Gets ten feet, stops, turns back -- Alice is starting to come around. Mumbling.

MARCH

Come on.

HEALY

Shhh. Hang on, she's trying to say something.

MARCH

Who cares!

HEALY

I think it's about the video.

Alice's meandering gaze arrives at a face, Healy's... She gathers herself. Produces a whisper --

ALICE

I... didn't mean it... Just a...

(swallows)

Stupid video... I'm sorry...

Her head lolls drunkenly to one side, eyes glazing over... Just before she passes out, she manages:

ALICE

... I never even got paid for it...

Then she's out like a light. Our guys, left cold. CUT TO:

EXT. MARCH'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

The end of a long and unsatisfying night. HEALY and MARCH emerge from within. Start across the lawn. Huddled against the chill, breath pluming in front of them.

HEALY

Not to rub it in or anything, but looks like I called it. The Alice thing, I mean.

(March just grunts)

You doubt my wisdom?

MARCH

Still doesn't make any sense.

HEALY

What doesn't?

MARCH

Why Suzy Shoemaker went off that cliff.

(shakes his head)

You see this fake sex video. First thing you do: Kill yourself? I don't think so.

HEALY

Well, it's out of our hands now. Alice will tell the cops what she knows. They'll take care of it. End of story.

MARCH

Right. Right.

(strained smile)

Well, guess this is goodb--

March breaks off, claps a hand to his head.

MARCH

Oh, no. Aw...

HEALY

What? What's wrong?

MARCH

I forgot to get Holly a present.

(looks at watch)

Shoot, what's open, *nothing* --

HEALY

Whoa, whoa. Back up. I thought you already had a present for her.

MARCH

Huh..? No. I mean, I had a couple ideas, I just didn't... shhhh, I gotta think --

He looks at his house, the light from within. Turns to Healy:

MARCH

You got anything in your car?

HEALY

What?

MARCH

Some, whatever, book or something, she likes to read --

HEALY

NO, I don't! Oh, my God. This is your "special present?" The one she's been waiting all damn day for?

MARCH

Look, it's been a long day, just... back off. I'll... tell her I lost it.
(exhales raggedly)
I gotta go.

Healy starts to say something, checks himself...
Heads for his own car.

HEALY

Goodnight.

March nods distractedly, crosses the drive, full of self-loathing. Tells himself, hey, he tried; then remembers he didn't. Reaches the door, braces himself to turn the knob--

A glimpse of MOVEMENT. He turns, key still in the lock--

JIJI THE BLACK CAT

Emerges from the bushes. Still hanging around the neighborhood. March scowls. Starts to turn away--
Pulls up short. Struck with a sudden notion.

MARCH

Here, kitty-kitty... heeeeere, kitty...

Healy's turns, watches from the front lawn. March doesn't care, begins creeping forward, across the driveway--

MARCH

Kitty like a minty Tic-Tac...?

March bends down, slowly... a little more... POUNCES.
Scoops up the poor animal up just as--

THE FRONT DOOR OPENS

Holly steps onto the porch, bleary-eyed.

HOLLY

... Dad...?

March spins. Holds the cat up with a flourish.

MARCH

Happy birthday!

Holly sees the cat and lights up.

HEALY takes all this in from the street... Watches as Holly jumps up and down. Clutches the cat to her. MARCH glances back, WINKS... Disappears inside with his overjoyed daughter.

Healy turns, looking thoroughly depressed. Starts for his car.

INT. MARCH'S HOUSE - SAME

Holly couldn't be happier. Cuddling her new pet. March shrugs off his jacket. Puts his gun in a drawer...

HOLLY

Dad, thank you...! I was scared you... maybe forgot or something.

MARCH

Forgot??

(clutches his chest)

How could I? A kid like you? Forget, hah!
Like I could do that, betray your tru --

He trails off. Eyes, suddenly distant. You can see the wheels turning, as an idea forms...

HOLLY

Dad..?

EXT. MARCH'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

HEALY driving away--

THE FRONT DOOR OPENS. Out comes March, flagging him down. Healy hits the brakes. March runs up, leans in the window:

MARCH

I need a ride.

(off Healy's look)

I know why Suzy killed herself.

INT. LILY'S BUNGALOW - BURBANK RETIREMENT COMMUNITY - NIGHT

Lily enters in the dark, fumbling with her purse. Switches on a light, SHRIEKS--!

Healy and March are seated in her living room. They both toss her tiny waves.

HEALY

Hi, Mrs. S. -- Back from bingo..?

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Couldn't sleep, I -- How did you get in--

MARCH

Trouble sleeping, huh? I got that. Sign
of a guilty conscience.

Lily, flustered. No idea how to respond.

MRS. SHOEMAKER
Please leave. The orderlies will be here
any minute --!

MARCH
Good. They can call the cops... Why'd you
lie to us, Lily?

She stands rooted. Speechless. March says mildly:

MARCH
Your daughter never called you the night
she died. You lied, dear--

Pause. She starts to protest... then her face collapses, she
slumps to the couch. Reaches atomically for her chocolates.

MRS. SHOEMAKER
How... How did you know?

MARCH
People don't kill themselves over fake
videos, ma'am... But they do kill
themselves over betrayal.

The words stab at her like knives. Her lower lip trembles.

MARCH
Who first approached you? Hazeltine?

MRS. SHOEMAKER
... No... no, it was... two men. They
said they'd found a way to... to make a
video. But they needed me, to...

MARCH
To validate it. Make people believe it
was Suzy.

She nods miserably. Healy, playing catch up, frowns:

HEALY
You helped ruin her life. Her own mother.
I hope it paid well.

MRS. SHOEMAKER
(bristling)
I didn't do it for the money!

She's a mess, coming apart before their eyes. She raises feeble arms, as if to encompass not just the room, but the surrounding neighborhood.

MRS. SHOEMAKER
Look at this place, just LOOK at it,
would you live here?
(starts to sob)
Suzy... left me here. In this foul place.
DISCARDED me. What would you do?

MARCH
She's my kid. I'd think about forgiving her.

MRS. SHOEMAKER
I never wanted... I NEVER thought she'd...

A pause. The old woman loosing it. March hardly seems to notice. Thinking out loud:

MARCH
When Suzy killed herself, everything changed, didn't it? An investigation, police involvement --
(beat)
And Alice got cold feet, is that it?

He leans forward--

MARCH
Did she threaten to blow the whistle?

LILY
(softly)
... They... said they'd keep her quiet...

March and Healy exchange looks; now they're getting somewhere.

MARCH
Who's they, Mrs. Shoemaker. Who's they?

MRS. SHOEMAKER
I... I'm not going to say any more.

She looks down at her beloved box of candy.

MRS. SHOEMAKER
You don't understand... There are so few comforts... afforded an old woman.
Please, if I go to prison... I won't have my chocolates any more. They're imported.

This last, somehow very important to her. March stares with thinly -- no, make that unveiled -- contempt. Ditto Healy.

HEALY

Um... I got a silly question: Where does a nice old lady -- well, an old lady, anyway -- come into contact with the kind of lowlifes, would put together a scheme like this?

Before Lily can respond, someone answers from BEHIND THEM:

VOICE (O.S.)

Like she said, this place ain't exactly the Ritz.

March and Healy turn as one--

TWO MEN, each armed.

Dressed in the starched white uniforms of ORDERLIES.

Blue Tom Cruise. Older Guy. They WORK HERE.

EXT. GROUNDS - BEHIND BURBANK RETIREMENT COMMUNITY - NIGHT

Healy and March are escorted at gunpoint through fog-shrouded WOODS abutting the complex. Blue Tom and partner keep a safe distance. Tom is limping. The Older Guy wears a bandage.

In addition to his gun, TOM CRUISE carries a SHOVEL.

MARCH

(re:injuries)

So, you guys get that fighting the munichs..?

TOM CRUISE

Shut up and keep walking.

Weird thing? It's like someone tripped a switch in March's brain. Even scared shitless, he can't help puzzling this out:

MARCH

I still don't get it. If Alice was the threat -- why'd you kill Hazeltine?

TOM CRUISE

Shut up.

(he grins at HEALY)

Before you get yours..? I'm gonna make you squirm, have a little FUN.

Healy literally rolls his eyes at that.

HEALY

Goddamn amateurs.

(to March)

You go up against a pro, you know where you stand, it's... nothing personal, you know? Morons like these? Vicious. No rhyme or reason.

MARCH

Yeah... like, for instance, why'd they kill Hazeltine?

OLDER GUY

Would you shut up? We didn't touch him.

This buys a puzzled look between Healy and March. TOM gestures for them to STOP. Holds the SHOVEL out.

TOM CRUISE

Hokey-doke. Start digging.

Pause. March regards the shovel; mingled fear and disbelief.

MARCH

My arm's in a cast, dillweed. You dig.

Tom raises his gun -- Healy sighs, holds out a hand.

HEALY

Whatever. Sold. I'll dig.

What happens next happens fast.

Tom hands the shovel to HEALY, who, without missing a beat, FLIPS AND SWINGS IT. Sledgehammer force..!

MARCH has no idea what's going on.

He looks up in time to see an urgent BLUR --

WHAM--! WHAM--! Four seconds, tops.

Blue Face and Older Guy are on the ground. Maybe dead, maybe not. Healy doesn't especially care. He casually retrieves the fallen guns, says:

HEALY

Rule number one...? Never hand a man a weapon.

(shakes his head)

Goddamn amateurs.

LONG SHOT - WOODS - SAME

Healy and March, trudging back the way they came.

It's over so fast it's comical; the "anti-action" action beat.

MARCH

You hang back while I take out the old lady...

DISSOLVE TO...

EXT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATE NIGHT

MRS. SHOEMAKER is perched, birdlike, on a hard metal chair. Three huge COPS, looming above her. She's scared.

Camera PULLS BACK, through the observation window... Into the relative calm of L.A.P.D.'s third watch. Glides next door to ANOTHER observation window. PUSHES IN...

March and Healy sit here, eating Lily Shoemaker's chocolates.

HEALY

I think I like the cherry best.

MARCH

I'm gonna be sick...
(beat)
Gimme a coconut.

A sour-looking PATROL COP leans in:

COP

Okay, you can go.

The men stand, stretch. Healy tosses the box to the cop.

HEALY

For you. They're imported.

We follow them out into the corridor. March says:

MARCH

There's still one thing bothers me... If those two happy ho-hos didn't kill Hazeltine--

HEALY

Yeah, good point. Who did..?

CUT TO: A TELEVISION SCREEN - IMAGE GRAINY

We watch as Hazeltine's bimbo mistress KRISTA KELP (the girl who originally hired March) is led from her home, handcuffed.

NEWSWOMAN (O.S.)
 ... said to have acted alone in the
 murder. Police sources confirm that Ms.
 Kelp was fueled by jealousy over what she
 termed "a laundry list of lovers."

PULL BACK -- From the TV to

EXT. MARCH'S BACK YARD - OVERLOOKING THE CITY - MORNING

HEALY and MARCH stand out by the pool. Beyond March's back
 fence, Los Angeles is spread out for all to see.

They stare in at the TELEVISION through sliding glass doors.

MARCH
 ... I should've known.

March has a bottle of scotch out. He pours himself a drink.
 Healy shrugs on his coat.

MARCH
 I'm curious, where do people like you
 come from..? I mean, as a child, were you
 already deadly and inscrutable?

Pause. Healy frowns, thinking... shrugs:

HEALY
 I always wanted to be a detective.

MARCH
 Well, the key to being a great detective,
 I always say..?
 (holds up the bottle)
 Is to buy a bad detective a drink.

HEALY
 Huh.
 (heads for the door)
 Well, I guess I'll just have to go find a
 bad detective... See you around.

MARCH
 It's a small world.

Healy exits. March turns. Stares at his pool. CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE MARCH'S HOUSE - SAME

As Healy exits, he takes out a pen and tiny notebook.
 Opens to a blank page, writes:

Inscrotable (?)

Tucks the book in his pocket. Gets in his car.

INT. HEALY'S CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

Healy headed away from March's house, down Laurel Canyon. He spots something out the side window, squints:

BEHIND SOME CONSTRUCTION FENCING

We can just make out the beam of a FLASHLIGHT -- held by a small figure sitting in the dirt... Reading from a book.

HEALY hits the brakes. And we CUT TO:

LITTLE HOLLY MARCH

Sitting Indian style in the middle of the vacant lot -- this is exactly how we first met her... Only now it's 5 in the morning.

Healy steps into frame behind Holly... She doesn't look up:

Hey. HOLLY

Hey. HEALY

Healy glances around. No one else here.

HOLLY
You've got your foot in the toilet.

HEALY
... What?

HOLLY
(turns)
Your foot. It's in the toilet.

HEALY
Oh.

Healy takes a couple of steps forward.

HOLLY
You just knocked over the lamp.

HEALY
Right. Sorry... Was this your room?

HOLLY
... No. Mom and Dad's.

Healy nods: Oh.

HOLLY

... Mom loved detective stories.

Healy looks round the "house." Pause, then:

HOLLY

I know my Dad didn't really have a present.

HEALY

Come again?

HOLLY

I saw the cat.

(beat)

Earlier, it was over at the Wylers'...
Plus it had toothpaste stuck to it.

(shakes her head)

Doesn't matter... he was working.

She meets Healy's eye. Smiles wistfully.

HOLLY

He couldn't get me a gift... because he was too busy working...

This pleases her.

HOLLY

Just like before. Just like he used to.
(shrugs)

... That's a good enough present for me.

There's a lot of ghosts in this vacant lot. For a moment,
Healy can almost see them...

HEALY

Happy Birthday, Holly.

Healy turns, heads off toward his car.

HOLLY stares after him.

Takes in a deep lungful of night air. And snaps her book SHUT.

FADE OUT

OPTIONAL CODA:

EXT. MARCH'S BACK YARD - EARLY MORNING

March sits by the pool. Alone. Wasted.
A broken bottle of scotch on the table next to him.

He rolls a MARKER PEN in his fingers. Ponders it a moment...
Begins to write on his own HAND. Despite his drunken state
(he'll not remember doing this) he's remarkably precise.

Writes in a tight, distinctly feminine scrawl, and what he
writes is: YOU WILL NEVER BE HAPPY.

FADE OUT.