

THE SCORE

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FADE IN:

EXT. LAKESIDE DOCK. MONTREAL -- AFTERNOON

It's a cool, early spring day.

ANGLE LOW -- TRACKING A MAN

walking down the dock in black suede TUXEDO SHOES. Then TILT UP to FIND...an EXTRA pair of TUXEDO SHOES dangling by their shoelaces, held in the hand of one NICK WELLS. Nick is an American. There's a world weariness about him. He's the kind of man who makes smart women of a certain age sigh wistfully and move on. The younger and less circumspect fall instantly.

A SEAPLANE

floats at the far end of the dock, the city looming beyond the sunlit waters. She's a beauty. He climbs aboard.

EXT. THE LAKE. MONTREAL -- MOMENTS LATER

The plane takes to the air. As it heads southeast, leaving the city behind...

ROLL TITLES and...

CUT TO:

EXT. A GRAND ESTATE. MARTHA'S VINEYARD -- NIGHT

EYE LEVEL WIDE SHOT

of the most lavish, Halloween-Birthday party Gatsby never threw. The estate embraces the moonlit ocean, perched upon the dunes, lighted with bonfires, as hundreds of PARTY-GOERS dance to a seventies-style GLAM-BAND. The house and grounds are wrapped with strings of PULSING LIGHTS.

ANGLE THE DRIVEWAY OF THE ESTATE

as a CHAUFFEURED TOWN CAR drives into shot and a young VALET opens the passenger door to FIND...

Nick tying the laces on his tuxedo shoes, wincing a tad.

Clearly they are too tight.

VALET

Welcome to the party, sir.

NICK

Thanks.

Nick then steps out and we CRANE UP to follow him. As he melts into the festive throng...

(CONTINUED)

SAMI (O.S.)

(Italian accent)

All-a-right-a, shut up-a, shut up-a!
I hope you are-a enjoy all-a deh muh-
ney I have-a spend on-a you dirty
BAS-tards!

TIME CUT TO:

THE PARTY -- LATER

ANGLE THE BANDSTAND

as the crowd laughs at the brazen charms of SAMI TORTELLI
[Italian, 40]. He wears the costume of a PIRATE. Eye patch,
puffy shirt, codpiece--the works.

He's coked up, voice booming over the microphone.

SAMI

Deh shrimp-a and-a deh lobster which
you are-a stuffing, have-a flying in
from deh most-a bella blah-blah-blahs
in-a deh world-a, so you must eat-a
dem like-a deh animals you ARE-A!

His guests laugh with him, reveling in the abuse.

PAN THE CROWD

to FIND...Nick now standing beside a WOMAN dressed like a
concubine from the court of Louis XIV.

He's the only one who isn't laughing.

SAMI (CONT'D)

I have-a only one-a more request-a!
I want dat dis-a party shall become
Un grande SCAN-dalo!

(the crowds spurs him
on)

Deh nineties in America will-a be
remember-eh as a years ruled by-a
deh fear-eh! By-a deh mean old blah-
blahs-blahs who never got-a the sex-
eh and-a the politicol-ehs with-a no
sense of-a humor! Well fuck-a dem
all! Drugs are-a fun, men are-a dogs,
and pussy is-a good!

Lots of whooping and applause. Nick leans into the ear of
the concubine, touching his stomach...

NICK

I think Sami overpaid for the shrimp.

(CONTINUED)

CONCUBINE

Just vomit and start over, honey.
That's what I do.

As Nick heads off, threading the crowd, Sami bursts into song, the band kicking in to support him...

SAMI

(singing)

Happy-a birthday to ME-O! Happy-a
birthday to ME-O!

(with the whole crowd)

Happy-a birthday dear SAMI! Happy-a
birthday to MEEEEEEEE-O!

At that, Sami DIVES into the crowd like Eddie Veder...

TRACKING NICK -- HEADING UP THE STAIRS

that lead from the pool to the house.

MAN

(slurred, drunk)

Hey, man, where's your mask?

Nick pops a stick of GUM in his mouth.

NICK

You're looking at it.

INSIDE THE HOUSE -- TRACKING NICK

heading through the vaulted foyer, down the hallway, passing
several festooned PARTY-GOERS...

REVERSE ANGLE -- THE OTHER END OF THE HALL

There's a door. Nick tries the knob. Locked.

A VOICE (O.S.)

Can I help you, sir?

Nick turns to find a young SECURITY GUARD at the other end.

NICK

I was looking for the bathroom.

The guard points toward the opposite end of the hall.

GUARD

Other end.

NICK

Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE THE GUARD -- AS NICK PASSES

He taps himself on the tummy, feigning an upset stomach.

NICK (CONT'D)

Too much of a good thing, you know?

INT. THE BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick locks the door behind him. He pulls a palm-sized TAPE PLAYER from his inside Jacket pocket. Attached to the recorder is a WIRE with a METAL PRONG tip.

He takes the GUM from his mouth and FIXES the prong to the brass doorknob, places the recorder on the floor, and presses PLAY. Nothing happens. Until he jiggles the doorknob.

The prong makes contact. Which produces a tiny SPARK. Which TRIGGERS the tape player. We HEAR the sounds of VOMITING and Nick calling out...

NICK

(On tape)

Sorry, I'll be out in a minute.

After a moment, the loop runs out, stops. Nick turns the volume all the way UP and then withdraws a pair of neatly folded GLOVES from his rear pants pocket. Nick is a man of many pockets--as you will see. Some obvious. Some not.

OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM WINDOW -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick climbs out, drops down, and moves along the glittering, tree-shrouded grounds that rim the rear of the house.

ANGLE ANOTHER WINDOW -- MOMENTS LATER

as Nick looks into the study. The coast is clear. He places a small SUCTION CUP on the glass above the window-latch and cuts a square with a razor sharp BLADE he pulls from the buckle of his belt. You'd never know it was there.

INSIDE THE STUDY -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick comes through the window and moves quickly to the bookcase. The SAFE is tucked into the cabinet. Just then...

he HEARS voices approaching from the hallway outside the study door. Nick SCANS the room for a place to hide.

There's fucking NOWHERE. A key JIGGLES in the door lock.

He eyes the open window but there's no time.

ANGLE THE DOOR -- AS SAMI ENTERS

with a tres hot young thing, dressed like a FAIRY PRINCESS.
Sami begins GROPING her as if the world were about to end.

FAIRY PRINCESS
Slow down, baby, slow down...

SAMI
I want-a to fuck-a you. I have-a to
fuck-a you. I need-a to fuck-a you.

Nick is nowhere to be found, the window still open. Sami
CLEARS the desks and lays her on it, reaching between her...

SAMI (CONT'D)
Tell me to fuck-a you!

FAIRY PRINCESS
Sa'mi...

SAMI
Tell me!

FAIRY PRINCESS
Fuck me!

ANGLE THE UNDERSIDE OF THE DESK

where Nick has wedged himself in, tight and tense.

INT. OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The security guard knocks on the door.

GUARD
You all right in there, sir?

The doorknob jiggles. A spark flies. The tape player rolls.

NICK
(on tape)
Sorry, I'll be out in a minute.

BACK TO NICK -- AS THE ACTION

continues above his head. Sami thrusts hard, penetrating.

SAMI
Am I-a big?

She can hardly speak, reeling....

FAIRY PRINCESS
Yes, yes...

SAMI

Say it! I am-a big! I am-a big!

FAIRY PRINCESS

I am big! I am big!

SAMI

Not-a you! Me-o! Me-o!

FAIRY PRINCESS

You're big! You're big!

SAMI

Dat's it-a, baybee! Dat's it!

Then Sami releases...

SAMI (CONT'D)

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa-uh-uh-uh.

and goes limp, panting.

SAMI (CONT'D)

Dat was-a good, no? When deh women
want-a to go, dey go, when dey want-
a to come, dey come-a to Sami.

Sami backs up, pushing his codpiece back into place.

SAMI (CONT'D)

Come on, let's-a dance.

ANGLE NICK -- LISTENING TO THEIR FOOTSTEPS

as they head out the door. It closes behind them. Click. He
breathes a sigh of relief, crawls out from under the desk...

and moves to the safe. He carefully removes the thinnest
piece of PLASTIC from the sleeve of his cigarette CASE. So
thin that it naturally ADHERES to the computer keypad of the
safe when he lays it over. Then...

he gently BLOWS his warm breath on the plastic as...

THE SMUDGES OF SAMI'S FINGERPRINTS -- APPEAR

over the numbers: 6,0,9,1

NICK

Six, zero, nine, one.

He punches in a random combination of those four numbers.

NICK (CONT'D)

Six, nine, zero, one.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)
 (doesn't open)
 Six, one, zero, nine...

Nothing. He tries another combo. And another. Nothing. Then...

NICK (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
 How old are you today, Sami?
 (calculates)
 Forty would be...1960. That's it.
 (punches the numbers)
 One, nine, six, zero.

Voila. The safe OPENS. Nick shakes his head.

NICK (CONT'D)
 (re: Sami)
 No control and less imagination.

Inside the safe: CASH, PAPERS, and a black JEWELRY BOX.

CU THE JEWELRY BOX -- AS HE OPENS IT

to FIND...an emerald and diamond NECKLACE of astonishing beauty. He drops it in the false inner lining of his jacket pocket, sealed with VELCRO. He puts the box back in the safe, shuts it and closes the panel. But just as he turns to go...

he SEES a NOTE PAD on Sami's desk. He hesitates a beat, then picks up a PEN. He sticks it between his middle and third finger. There is nothing smug about his expression.

He is quite serious.

ANGLE THE PAD -- AS HE PRINTS THE WORDS

Character is fate.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARBOR. MARTHA'S VINEYARD -- DAWN

The bay is still, the pelicans jabbering.

TRACKING NICK -- WALKING DOWN THE DOCK

in his tux, sipping coffee from a paper cup. At the end of the dock waits a barnacled OLD MAN in greasy clothes by a FUELING STATION. Nick's plane is floating beside it.

OLD MAN
 All gased up. Checked the oil too.

NICK
 What's the damage?

(CONTINUED)

OLD MAN
Seventy five.

Nick peels off a hundred dollar bill.

NICK
Keep the change.

OLD MAN
Thank you, sir. Fly safely now.

Nick boards the plane, smiles warmly at the Old Man.

NICK
I will.

INSIDE THE PLANE -- NICK

sits in the cockpit, flips the switches, gets her started.
The propellers spin and purr. While she's warming up...

he removes his tuxedo shoes, sighing with relief. He then
slips on his more comfortable pair, raps on the window of
the cockpit, getting the Old Man's attention.

NICK
All set.

At that, the Old Man takes his plastic pole and gives Nick a
little push. As he skies her into open waters...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ATLANTIC OCEAN. FLYING -- DAWN

The sun is almost fully risen as Nick sails over the waters,
leaving the Vineyard behind, two thousand feet up. Then he
rolls down the cockpit window...

and TOSSES those extra shoes. One. Then the other. Whoosh.

Off Nick, watching them plummet into the ocean...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE SKIES -- WIDE SHOT

Nick flies home as we...

END CREDITS and...

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFÉ DES ARTISTE. MONTREAL -- AFTER HOURS

as MAXIMILLIAN BEARD [70s] raps lightly on the glass at the front entrance. It is a classic French Bistro, yet something more. When you eat here you know there's nowhere else you're supposed to be. But it's closed now and only a few people are left: An angst ridden COUPLE, a tipsy party of FOUR.

INSIDE CAFÉ DES ARTISTE -- JEAN-HUGUE [THE HEAD WAITER] .

looks up from the bar where he and the other WAITERS are gathered, enjoying their late night drinks and cigarettes. He smiles at Max, and moves to the door.

ANGLE THE FRONT ENTRANCE -- AS JEAN-HUGUE

opens the door for Max. Max is an overstuffed Canadian connoisseur of all things beautiful and buttery. He wears a cashmere coat and uses a WALKING STICK with an ivory handle.

JEAN-HUGUE

(French accent)

Good evening, Monsieur Max. Ca va?

Max has a lazy tongue bordering on a lisp, his constipated tonalities calling to mind a regal old woman.

MAX

(entering tiredly)

Like a ship wreck, Jean-Hugue.

JEAN-HUGUE

(takes his coat)

I give you a big slice of the tartan.
You feel better.

MAX

As hot as you can get it. I like it
when the glaze is chewy. Is he?..

JEAN-HUGUE

In the back, making like Picasso.

As Max looks off in that direction...

ANGLE NICK -- SEATED AT THE BANQUET

in the far corner of the room. He taps the cold ash of his CIGAR onto the paper tablecloth...

and continues DRAWING with the tip of his ashen forefinger.

CU THE DRAWING -- OF A CRUCIFIXION

The lines are accomplished. But the crucified FIGURE is that of a nude woman.

MAX (O.S.)

Now there's a God you can pray to.

PULL BACK as Max takes a seat...

MAX (CONT'D)

You ought to let me show your work, Nicky. Crime & Punishment: A semi-sensual perspective in Cuban Cigar Ash by Nicholas Wells. We'll light the gallery with candles and fill the air with Frankincense and Myrrh.

NICK

(continues drawing)

You're late, Max.

MAX

I'm old. It takes twice as long to get half as far and when you arrive you've forgotten why you came.

Nick tosses him a glance.

NICK

You want me to remind you?

Max makes a face. Their terse frankness is born not of ill will, but of familiarity and friendship.

BURT (O.S.)

So whaddya think of this shit, Max?

Max looks up to FIND...BURT SLOTNICK [50s] reaching for what remains of the SCOTCH he had left at Nick's table. He's a big man with a face like a catcher's mitt.

BURT (CONT'D)

(eyeing Nick's work)

The man's an artist. Better than that fartsy crap you have on display.

Max takes a sip of water, WINCES at the taste.

MAX

We were just discussing that as a matter of fact. But he's too modest.

BURT

Fuck him, what does he know?

(smiles, then to Nick)

So tomorrow night. I got two on the ice, Canadians and the Leafs. They drop the puck at seven.

NICK

You're on.

BURT

Good.

(drains the scotch)

Nice to see ya, Max, you old cream puff.

Burt pats Max on the shoulder and moves off as...Jean-Hugue arrives with a plate of APPLE TARTAN and whipped cream.

JEAN-HUGUE

Voila, Monsieur. Hot, hot, hot.

MAX

Jean-hugue, do you have any bottled water that isn't French? This tastes like a whore took a bath in it.

NICK

Get him some tap water, Jean-Hugue. Then go ahead and cash out.

JEAN-HUGUE

Merci, boss.

Max's eyes WIDEN in horror as Jean-Hugue goes off.

MAX

(re: the tap water)

Tap water?

NICK

It's filtered, Max. But if you're worried about your health, I'll give ya five to one on the sugar and cigarettes--even money on the water.

Nick TEARS the paper tablecloth outside the edges of the drawing...

NICK (CONT'D)

Now where we?

and slips it into a leather SACHEL which contains his sketch pad and pencils.

MAX

Hard to remember. Conversation with you is such a magical mystery tour.

(sighs off his look,

loathe to tell him)

I'm afraid the news is less than satisfactory, dear heart.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAX (CONT'D)

But before you bite my head off, you should know that I'm just as upset, if not more, than you're about to be.

They lock eyes. Max steels himself...

MAX (CONT'D)

The buyer passed on.

Beat. Nick darkens...

NICK

He what?

MAX

I only know what I heard through channels and they're the kind of channels you don't cross. Seems the poor fellow, whoever he was, just keeled over the day before yesterday, leaving no posthumous instructions.

NICK

So there's no payment.

MAX

Now, now, it's not a total loss. The necklace is already on its way to Bangkok where it will be cut into eight separate pieces and sold at a very acceptable price.

NICK

What's acceptable?

MAX

You'll see a hundred and fifty, maybe more. I won't even take a commission.

Nick swears inwardly, rarely given to outward displays of vulgarity. His eyes are hard enough.

NICK

I needed that five spot, Max.

MAX

Did I tell you to buy the plane? Did I tell you to renovate a perfectly beautiful restaurant?

NICK

You're not my business manager, you're my fence.

MAX

(hurt)

Is that so? I thought I was your...
Well, somewhat less than a father
perhaps, but certainly more than a
fence. You really are becoming rather
harsh these days, you know.

Nick grabs his folder, rises.

MAX (CONT'D)

Nicky --

NICK

Enjoy your desert.

Nick bangs through the kitchen door and disappears. Jean-
Hugue returns with a glass of ice WATER.

JEAN-HUGUE

Voila. En ver du tap.

Off Max, looking after Nick...

CUT TO:

EXT. NICK'S LOFT. MONTREAL -- NIGHT

It borders the lake. We HEAR the sound of an answering MACHINE
playing back...

MARTA (V.O.)

(over the machine)

Bonjour, Nick. Ici, Marta. Are you
there? You're not screening your
calls, are you?

INSIDE THE LOFT -- NIGHT

The light is low, semi-dark. But what a place. Divided by
columns. Seventeen foot ceiling. The furniture is modern,
tasteful but austere. PAN the room as the message plays on...

MARTA (V.O.)

Oh well. I drank too much the other
night and ate too little. But I'm
better now.

(a slight laugh)

So call me. Ciao.

Beep.

ANGLE THE LIVING AREA -- WITH A VIEW OF THE HARBOR

to FIND...various SCULPTURE and PAINTING, tending toward the
religious. Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu, Native American.

(CONTINUED)

MAX (V.O.)

(over the machine)

God I detest Mondays. If we could only do away with Mondays and Sunday evenings I bet we could reduce suicide by half--worldwide. Hello, junior, it's the old man. How bout a walk on the Bridge at four thirty tomorrow? I have news.

Beep.

ANGLE A DRAWING TABLE -- BENEATH THE SKYLIGHT

Various SKETCHES and OIL PASTELS are spread out haphazardly.

The only sign of spontaneous disorder in the room.

WOMAN (V.O.)

(over the machine)

Hey, Nick, it's Diane. Just got back in town. I miss your cooking. Hint. Hint. You know the number.

Beep. PAN across the artwork: Nudes, details of hands, arms, legs from various perspectives. A student of form.

DETECTIVE RUGAT (V.O.)

(French accent, over the machine)

Mr. Wells? This is detective Paul Rugat from the Montreal Police. Sorry to disturb you, but I was wondering if you would come in for a brief interview. It is regarding... well, I should better explain in person. Would you mind calling me at --

ANGLE NICK -- SEATED BY THE WINDOW

in the dark. He's in his robe, hair still wet from a shower, a nightcap in his hand. As he turns to face the machine...

CUT TO:

EXT. MONTREAL POLICE DEPARTMENT. RAINING -- AFTERNOON

Establish. A pretty good downpour.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT. RAINING -- AFTERNOON

DETECTIVE SAMUELS leads Nick into the waiting area.

DETECTIVE SAMUELS

Have a seat here, please.

Samuels disappears into the INTERVIEW ROOM, shutting the door. Nick takes a seat, looks up. The roof LEAKS. Drip. Drip. Is he nervous? You'd have to know him to see it. Detective Samuels then opens the door...

DETECTIVE SAMUELS (CONT'D)

We're ready for you now.

INSIDE THE INTERVIEW ROOM -- NICK

enters to FIND...Montreal police DETECTIVE RUGAT [French, 55] rising from the table. Seated nearby are DEPUTY INSPECTOR CAROL [English, 35, a tightly buttoned, BESPECTACLED woman] and INSURANCE INSPECTOR WRIGHT [Canadian, 40] .

AT THE COFFEE-MAKER -- A MAN

pours himself a cup with his back to Nick.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

We appreciate you coming in, Mr. Wells. I'm Detective Rugat. Can we offer you anything? Coffee...

NICK

You can tell me why I'm here.

CUMMINGS

(from Belfast)

Oh, you know why you're here.

E.C. CUMMINGS [50s] turns away from the coffee maker and faces Nick. He's a two-fisted Irishman, old school. Nick hides his surprise, but the first glimmer says he isn't thrilled to see him.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

I understand you're acquainted with insurance Inspector Cummings of Harcourt and Abbey?

NICK

(a nod)

Brought the weather with you, inspector?

CUMMINGS

What's an inspector without his raincoat? This is my deputy, Ms. Carol, and the Canadian bureau chief of Harcourt, Mr. Wright.

They exchange expressionless nods. Carol opens her NOTE PAD.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

A valuable piece of jewelry was stolen from the estate of Sami Tortelli in Martha's Vineyard on Saturday Night, Mr. Wells. The American police asked that the interview be conducted within the auspices of our department and protocol demands that we oblige the insurance company as well. I must inform you of your right to an attorney, if you should desire.

NICK

That's all right.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

Then please sit down.

Nick sits at the table. Inspector Carol takes notes.

CUMMINGS

So how long has it been, Nicky?

NICK

You tell me.

CUMMINGS

Seven years, four months, and 3 days.
(to Rugat)

Mr. Wells was stayin' at the Ritz in Monaco, lovely hotel, in a room just below the suite where a certain Tiffany broach was stolen, worth a pretty pension I'll tell ya that. Entered through the air conditioning vent, didn't ya?

NICK

It was a first class hotel. Full of underpaid housekeepers with master keys.

CUMMINGS

And then there was the Count Gustaf ruby collection in Vienna--where you just happened to be visiting. Had to have help on that one. Oh yes. State of the art alarm system. And when a similar crime was committed in Madrid three weeks later, presto, there you were again. And now, a necklace worth half a million pounds sterling is pinched from a man who's party you just happened to attend? What are the odds of that, do ya think?

NICK

I don't know, are you giving them or taking them?

Samuels places a cup of COFFEE before Nick.

DETECTIVE SAMUELS

Black all right?

NICK

I didn't ask for coffee.

SAMUELS

Oh, I thought you did.

NICK

(to Rugat)

So am I a suspect, detective?

DETECTIVE RUGAT

We have better things to do than suspect a wealthy Canadian citizen of a crime he did not need to commit, least of all in another country.

CUMMINGS

There are all kinds of needs, detective. Aren't there, Nicky? Maybe it starts with money and then becomes, what...habit? Addiction?

NICK

For the record, the only people who call me Nicky are beautiful women and old queens.

Cummings laughs. Carol scribbles furiously.

CUMMINGS

Speakin' of which...Are ya familiar with Maximillian Beard, detectives? International art dealer of the first tier. Lots of sticky fingers in lots of fruity pies, old Max. Mr. Wells was a poor American foster child. Mr. Beard turned him into a Canadian citizen when he was, what, seventeen?

NICK

If you're accusing me of being the adopted son of a respected art dealer, than I plead guilty.

CUMMINGS

I'm accusing you of being a thief.

Nick turns to Rugat, unflustered.

NICK

Detective, in 1993, Inspector Cummings followed me around Europe, embarrassed me in front of friends and associates, and tainted my reputation without producing one bit of evidence tying me to any crime. I believe this kind of brilliant detective work cost him his job at Interpol, which is why, I assume, he's now working for a third rate insurance company.

(to Cummings)

Am I right?

Nick gets under his skin. Cummings leans across the table.

CUMMINGS

In fact, I was resigned for beating a member of Green Peace into a coma with a lamp stand. But I'll admit to thinking of you at the time.

Rugat reviews the police REPORT from Martha's Vineyard.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

Mr. Wells, the American police found several footprints. Would you mind letting Det. Samuels measure your shoe size?

NICK

Go right ahead.

Det. Samuels measures Nick's feet with a tape measure.

DETECTIVE SAMUELS

Eleven and a half.

Rugat turns to Cummings, knowing the size doesn't match.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

Would you describe Mr. Tortelli as a good friend, Mr. Wells?

NICK

Not really. He produced a movie in town, ate at the restaurant a few times...Max knows him from the art circuit.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

And yet you flew all that way to attend his birthday party.

NICK

I've toyed with the idea of some low budget movie financing. He's a good connection.

CUMMINGS

You believe in karma, Mr. Wells?

NICK

Sorry?

CUMMINGS

Karma. What comes back to haunt ya.

NICK

I know what it is, Inspector.

CUMMINGS

Do you believe in it?

NICK

Actually, I do.

CUMMINGS

So that would mean then, if a man were a thief, say the kind of man who had acquired all these fine things, a fine lifestyle and so forth, if he had acquired it by sneaking through the dark and taking what wasn't his, then, sooner or later, he's gonna pay the piper, am I right? He's gonna be punished. I mean, that's the theory anyway.

Their eyes are locked. The others have ceased to exist.

NICK

That's the theory.

Rugat then pushes a pad and pencil toward Nick.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

Would you mind printing the words, "Character is fate", Mr. Wells?

Nick looks at him curiously.

DETECTIVE RUGAT (CONT'D)

It seems the thief left a note to Mr. Tortelli with those words.

BEAT. Nick then takes the pencil as he would normally and prints the phrase. The style is far different--of course.

He slides the pad across the table. Rugat glances at it.

(CONTINUED)

DETECTIVE RUGAT (CONT'D)
Thank you for coming in, Mr. Wells.

NICK
(rising)
You know where to find me.

Samuels opens the door. Nick walks out. Samuels closes it.

CUMMINGS
One thing's for sure, the necklace
is long gone.
(to Rugat)
With your good graces, sir, I'd like
to take a gander at his life here
for a week or two. Any assistance
would be greatly appreciated.

Detective Rugat rises...

DETECTIVE RUGAT
Mr. Cummings, I take the privacy of
Canadian citizens very seriously,
even those of American birth. Either
you present me with something more
substantial than coincidence linking
Mr. Wells to the crime...or I cannot
offer you the services of this
department. Bon chance.

Off Cummings, as Rugat and Samuels head out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK. SAN FRANCISCO. RAINING -- LATER

Nick exits the building, heads down the sidewalk.

TRACKING NICK

succumbing to the nervousness he was striving so hard to
control. Quick, shallow breaths. He moves into an alley,
ducks behind a dumpster.

And vomits up his guts.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A BRIDGE. OVER THE RIVIERE DES PRAIRIES -- DUSK

The rain has stopped. Nick looks out at the river below,
watching two men row a SKULL up stream. Then...

the puny YAP-YAP of a dog earns his attention. Max approaches,
leashed to a POCKET-SIZED CHIHUAHUA.

(CONTINUED)

MAX

Is Pepe leashed to me or am I leashed to Pepe? This is the question.

(eyes him a beat)

What's wrong, are you sick? You look pale.

TIGHT ON NICK

just staring at the river. Far off...

NICK

You realize this is the only line of work where, if you're any good, nobody finds out who you are?

MAX

As well it should be.

NICK

There's just a blank space where something valuable used to be to mark your whole existence.

MAX

I know you exist. And I can name a banker in Paraguay who knows you exist.

Nick just looks at him for a beat. Then...

NICK

I've lost my stomach for it, Max.

MAX

What do you mean?

NICK

I mean I'm too old for this shit. I like what I have. I don't want to lose it.

MAX

Who said you were going to lose it?

NICK

You believe in Karma, Max?

MAX

No. I believe in randomness. I believe nothing makes any sense at all.

NICK

And that comforts you?

MAX

Yes.

NICK

I believe if you're a two-by-four, sooner or later you're gonna run into a buzz saw. If you're a tomato, you're gonna get sliced.

MAX

Well, you're neither a two-by-four or a tomato, so you have nothing to worry about.

NICK

Cummings is in town, Max. Working for Harcourt & Abbey. He pointed the police in our direction.

Max takes it in, digesting the news. Then...

MAX

So let him point. You made a surgical strike. You left no sponge in the patient. C'est tout.

NICK

You're not listening.

Max links his arm with his...

MAX

Come, take a walk with the old man. There's something new on the radar.

EXT. THE RIVERSIDE -- MOMENTS LATER

TRACKING NICK & MAX

walking by the Riviere des Prairies.

MAX

A month ago, one hundred thousand dollars was wired into one of my tributaries as a demonstration of non-refundable good faith by a --

NICK

Max --

MAX

Just hear me out. The buyer is interested in a complete collection of ancient Tarot cards valued at 15 million pounds.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAX (CONT'D)

And he's willing to pay more than handsomely to acquire them.

NICK

Tarot cards?

MAX

Not just any ones. The original, 14th Century Tarot, printed by the Jewish mystics of the Cabala. They're said to contain the secrets of the universe, Nicky, foretell the future.

NICK

Tell your buyer he isn't playing with a full deck.

MAX

He isn't paying us for a psychological evaluation. Now they arrive today at the National Library Of Antiquities before moving onto the Smithsonian in Washington in two weeks.

NICK

You mean in Montreal?

MAX

(knowing his concern)
I know, I know.

NICK

We don't piss in our own pool, remember?

Max sighs with a weight...

MAX

The offer came through certain channels, Nicky. Channels...

NICK

You don't like to cross. Yeah, I know.

MAX

I owe these people. And you need the money.

NICK

2 weeks is a joke.

MAX

But 3 million is one hell of a punch line.

(CONTINUED)

NICK
3 million?

MAX
Two and a half for you, a nickel for yours truly.
(off his look)
Come on, Nicky, you can't quit. You're a big jungle snake. I scooped you out of the underbrush, I should know. And the snake must eat the pig. It's his nature.

Nick puts his hand on the old man's shoulder.

NICK
I love ya, Max, but the answer is no. Tell your buyer my luck is pushed.

CUT TO:

FULL SHOT -- OF A NEWSPAPER

It's the MONDAY Final.

One week later.

BRIAN (O.S.)
Do you know the way to Cherry Street?

PULL BACK to REVEAL a BUSINESSMAN lowering the paper...

INSIDE NICK'S BISTRO -- LATE THE NEXT AFTERNOON

to FIND...BRIAN [mid to late twenties]. He wears BIFOCALS, an ill fitting suit, and off-kilter tie, hair parted and slicked down. There's a Captain Picard STAR TREK BUTTON on his lapel. He is slow of speech and tongue.

BUSINESSMAN
What?

BUSBOYS are setting tables for dinner as WAITERS, WAITRESSES, and RENE [French, 40s] in the pristine whites of an executive chef, gather at a table, stealing themselves with espresso.

BRIAN
I said, do you know how to get to Cherry Street?

ANGLE NICK -- AT HIS BOOTH IN THE BACK

as he looks up from a pencil SKETCH on the paper tablecloth; a drawing which distinctly and grotesquely resembles Cummings.

(CONTINUED)

NICK

I know where it is, but it's a ways
from here. You have an address?

Nick wipes his hands with a rag and rises. Brian holds out a
crumpled NOTE--trembling in his hand.

BRIAN

It's on Cherry street.

Nick glances at it. Then, to the bartender...

NICK

Bobby, call him a cab, would ya?

BRIAN

(nervously)

No, no, my mom won't let me go in a
cab. I need to get back on the bus.

NICK

All right, calm down, calm down.
I'll take you to the bus, okay?

Brian rubs his eyes with the heels of his hands.

BRIAN

I like to sit behind the driver.

NICK

Me too. Come on.

Nick grabs his jacket, passes Rene...

NICK (CONT'D)

Rene, take the snapper off the menu
tonight. Let's stick with the sea
bass and the salmon.

RENE

(French accent,
bristling)

What is wrong with my snapper?

NICK

Nothing. I just don't want to serve
Thursday's fish on a Sunday night.

RENE

But I marinate! What are you talking?
With a Cajun pepper crust and
Raspberry coulis...

NICK

It's chowder, Rene.

(CONTINUED)

As Nick heads out, Rene storms off toward the kitchen--CURSING the Philistines of the world in his native tongue.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE BISTRO -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick holds the front door for Brian.

NICK

Tell your mother not to order fish on Sundays and Mondays, kid. On Sunday they try to finish off what's hanging by a thread, and Monday is the chef's day off. Little trade secret.

(beat)

So what's your name?

TRACKING NICK & BRIAN

heading down the sidewalk.

BRIAN

Brian.

NICK

I see you like Captain Picard.

BRIAN

He drinks Earl Grey tea. With milk.

NICK

Is that so?

BRIAN

But he never pees.

NICK

Sorry?

BRIAN

(oddly animated)

He never pees. I've seen every episode of Star Trek and I've never once seen a toilet of any kind. I mean no one ever says, I'll be out in a minute, or, hey, I've gotta pee. And their uniforms don't have pockets. Are you trying to tell me that no one in the future wants to carry a few mints, a stick of gum, a comb?

Nick looks at him slightly askance. Brian's speech is quicker

BRIAN (CONT'D)

And what about money?

(MORE)

BRIAN (CONT'D)

They have the gall to ask you to believe there's no need for it in their little pristine perfected sanitized universe, but I say bullshit. Money is currency, man, and currency comes from the word current, as in e-fucking-lectricity, hear what I'm saying? Juice. You gotta have it.

Nick stops in his tracks, hardens...

NICK

Who are you?

Jackie drops the act, removes the bifocals, and smiles.

JACKIE

The name's Jackie. Jackie Teller of Louisiana. But let's talk about YOU.
(sotto, with delight)

You, my friend, are a fucking thief. And I love you, man, because you're the best and I wanna fall at your feet like the Karate Kid and humble myself before the Master.

NICK

Look, I don't know what game you're running, but you picked the wrong mark.

Nick turns to go...

JACKIE

I got a nighttime janitorial job at the Library Of 'Antiquaries' is what I've got. And I start tomorrow. Now tell me that ain't a sweet situation?

Nick pauses, stunned.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Oh yes indeedy. The head janitor has a mentally challenged nephew, took pity on me. Or should I say, Brian. They'll never suspect Brian of anything. Whatever you need on the inside, master--Brian's your man. I mean I love Brian, don't you? One of my finest creations. Dude breaks my fuckin' heart.

Nick glances up and down the street. Anybody watching this shit? He stays cool but his brain is on red alert.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Don't worry, I'm all by my lonesome.
Tell ya what, I'll drop by tomorrow.
Say around noon?

Nick is steely silent.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Sure, Jackie. That's a great idea.

Jackie moves to the MOTORCYCLE at the curb, fires her up.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Great meeting you, Nick. Really.

At that, Jackie zooms into traffic...

TIGHT ON NICK -- MIND SPINNING

as he watches him go. His life will never be the same.

SMASH TO:

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE -- LATER

Nick POUNDS on the door of the grand, ornate residence. Max
peeks through the window. Then, opening the door...

MAX
Darling...

Enraged, Nick grabs a fistful of Max's shirt and pushes him...

INSIDE THE HOUSE

The place is GORGED with paintings, sculpture, and art objects
of a truly eclectic variety.

NICK
Who is he?! What did you tell him?!

MAX
Who? I don't know what you're --

NICK
Don't you fucking lie to me, Max! He
knew about the Library!

MAX
Nicky, please, calm down...

NICK
He knew who I WAS, Max! He knew who
I WAS!

JACKIE (O.S.)
 (matter of fact)
 Actually I didn't, but I sure do
 now.

WIDEN TO REVEAL -- JACKIE

at the top of the stairs, bare-chested, unlit cigarette in
 hand, a framed PHOTOGRAPH in the other. *{ Stripped of his
 Brian act, Jackie is a wildly attractive individual}.*

JACKIE (CONT'D)
 And he didn't tell me anything.

Nick looks at Max in grave disbelief, stunned...

MAX
 Nicky, as God is my witness --

NICK
 Are you screwing him, is that it?
 You gave me up for a piece of ass?

JACKIE
 Hey, hey, whoa...I don't care if he
 gets off with me in mind. In fact,
 I'm flattered. But I'm just a big
 tease. Isn't that right, Max?

Max turns to Jackie, utterly staggered, teary-eyed, faint...

MAX
 What have you done? How did you --

JACKIE
 (comes down the stairs)
 Calm down, pumpkin. Here, Siddown.

Max can hardly breathe. Jackie helps him to sit on the stairs.

JACKIE
 (to Nick)
 He has a weakness for fallen angels
 and pink champagne, what can I say?
 I mean the shit gives me a headache
 but any hoot, we met in down in New
 Orleans a while back, talked a little
 shop, and low and behold, he calls
 me last week, offers to bring me up
 to the majors. See if I could hit
 the curve, you know?

NICK
 (to Max, quite)
 You realize what you've done?

MAX

Nicky...

JACKIE

(re: the photo)

How old were ya in this picture,
master? Sixteen, seventeen? Sorry,
but I stuck my nose in your old crib.

WIPE PAST THE PHOTO -- IN JACKIE'S HAND

It's of Max and young Nick in front of the Louvre circa 1973.
Faux-Father-Fagan and his 17 year old protege.

JACKIE

Me I never knew my real father. But
they say we're a lot alike. 75%
nature, 25% nurture I guess, huh?

CU NICK

He's perfectly still, eyes steely, voice flat.

NICK

You talk too much, you know that?

JACKIE

I know. Sometimes if I don't keep
talkin' I think I'm gonna die.

MAX

You refused the job and I looked
elsewhere, Nicky, that's all. I swear!

JACKIE

Gospel fuckin' truth, man. All he
said was he knew the world's greatest
thief--and the guy never used a gun.
I mean I am big-time intrigued at
this point, who wouldn't be? So I
followed him to the restaurant and...

Jackie holds his hands out in a gesture to Nick...

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Guess who fit the profile?

MAX

You vicious little brat.

NICK

Shut up.

MAX

He lied to me about his capabilities!

NICK

I said, shut up.

JACKIE

Who doesn't cheat on their resumé a little? I just told him I could handle the job alone and...I exaggerated, okay? But nothin's compromised here. All I want is a piece of the score, and a lesson or two from the master. I mean, fuck, there's more than one fly to a cow paddy, right?

NICK

Kid, you're in so far over your head, you've already drowned and you don't know it. There is no score. We never had this conversation. You don't exist.

JACKIE

I don't?

Nick heads for the door.

NICK

Go talk yourself to death.

JACKIE

(a sigh)

All right then. I didn't want to do this, but... I printed this out from your computer, Max.

Jackie pulls a sheet of PAPER from his back pocket.

JACKIE

It's a trail of a certain item passing through Montreal to Bangkok by way of...

(mispronounces it)

Kuwhala Lam-pur, is that it? This is just a copy of course.

Nick stops where he stands. Max SNATCHES the paper from Jackie and eyes it in disbelief.

MAX

How did you --

JACKIE

Once you drag information into the recycling bin, you gotta remember to empty it, Max. You put it in the trash and forgot to take it out.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE (CONT'D)
(to Nick, tapping
himself on the temple)
Short term memory's the first thing
to go.

Nick fixes his coal black stare on Max.

MAX
Dear God...

JACKIE
Hey, let the record show, you forced
my hand.

MAX
...How much do you want?

JACKIE
If it was just about money I wouldn't
mess around. I'd just pop that in
the mail, give you two a figure,
you'd pay me for my silence, and I'd
be off. But you can't put a price on
an education like this.
(sincerely, to Nick)
I want to learn from you, man. I
wanna LEARN.

Max looks at Nick, pale as a ghost...

MAX
There's nothing here that implicates
you directly, Nicky. It's my problem.

Jackie is betting otherwise, looking right at Nick.

JACKIE
And what, leave you to twist in the
wind? He wouldn't do that.
(beat)
Would you, Nick?

TIGHT ON NICK

considering all the possible moves. He has no reply for now.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BEARD GALLERY -- MORNING

A tres exclusive showroom of contemporary art. Mr. Wright,
and Deputy Carol get out their car and head...

INSIDE THE GALLERY

to FIND...the attractive gallery manager, LYDIA [30] with a CUSTOMER. They are examining a large Matisse LITHOGRAPH.

MR. WRIGHT

Excuse me, Miss? Is a Mr. Maximillian Beard on the premises?

LYDIA

He's not due till this afternoon. Is there something I can help you with?

Deputy Carol holds up a COURT ORDER.

DEPUTY CAROL

This is a Court Order allowing us to review his financial records. Any failure to cooperate will result in your arrest.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S BISTRO. THE OFFICE -- MORNING

The BUSBOYS are setting the tables for lunch as Nick enters to FIND...Cummings and one ferrety little man named MR. SPECK [40s] coming out the kitchen...

holding Nick's accounting REGISTERS and other PAPERS. Nick's EMPLOYEES are frozen where they stand.

BARTENDER

Sorry, boss. They had a --

Cummings holds out the COURT ORDER.

MR. SPECK

By authority of the Fifth District Court, this order allows me to review your books and tax returns for evidence of money laundering and other violations.

Nick takes the Court Order, looks it over.

CUMMINGS

My friend Mr. Speck is from the Internal Revenue Service of Canada. They say he is to a calculator what Tommy was to a pinball machine.

Mr. Speck nods. Nick looks up, addresses the room...

NICK

It's all right, everybody. Go on
with your business.

(they don't budge)

I said go on.

As the busboys gradually return to their tasks, Cummings and Mr. Speck head for the door.

CUMMINGS

Have a good day, Mr. Wells.

Off Nick, watching them go out...

CUT TO:

EXT. A MODEST HOTEL. MONTREAL -- NIGHT

as JOE CARSON [late thirties] gets out of a CAB. She's dressed very wash-and-wear, her loveliness understated.

INT. THE HOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER

She heads down the hallway, pulling the KEY from her purse.

INSIDE HER HOTEL ROOM -- JOE

enters. As the door closes behind her, a HAND covers her mouth...

and a GUN is pressed against her temple.

A MAN (O.S.)

Just gimme what I want and everything
will be fine. Nod if that's a yes.

She nods. He removes his hand from her mouth.

WIDEN TO REVEAL -- JACKIE [WEARING THE BRIAN BIFOCALS]

giggling to himself in his underwear. She whirls around...

JOE

You stupid asshole! How did you get
in here?!

He holds the gun to his lips.

JACKIE

Shhh. When the housekeeper turned
down your bed. It's amazing how people
open up to the mentally impaired.
God bless Forest Gump, you know?

JOE

Well fuck you.

/CONTINUED/

JACKIE

That's my girl.

(loses the bifocals)

So the first time you came to see me
in prison you thought I was a "wild
animal"?

She SEES her NOTE PADS on the bed beside a clump of his BRIAN
CLOTHES.

JOE

Were you reading my notes? You were
reading my notes, weren't you?

JACKIE

Hey, this is my story. I got a
'proprietary' interest in it's
authenticity.

She gathers them up with outrage.

JOE

Don't ever go through my stuff again.
You hear me? That wasn't part of the
arrangement.

JACKIE

Fuckin' you wasn't part of it either.

Whack. Her SLAP stings like a jelly fish bite.

JOE

I mean it.

Whack. He SLAPS her back and YANKS her close.

JACKIE

So do I.

He rips open her blouse...

JOE

Motherfucker...

She struggles in his arms...

JACKIE

Don't worry, in two weeks I'll buy
you a hundred more. The score is on.

She knows the meaning, gives up the struggle.

JOE

It's on? What about the --

JACKIE

The master? Oh, we really hit off.
Still have a few details to hammer
out, but...

JOE

Details? What details?

Jackie slides his hand past the butterfly TATTOO just above
her waist. His finger penetrates and disappears to the hilt.

JOE (CONT'D)

Who said you could touch me there?

He lifts her right off her feet. She sucks in air, wrapping
her legs around him, pelvis open to his grinding hand. Then...

JOE (CONT'D)

Tell me about him. The master.

JACKIE

You wanna talk about another man, do
ya? Little whore, you're old enough
to be my mother.

He pulls her bra down, tugs at one of her nipples.

JOE

Just tell me.

Jackie TWISTS that nipple, so taught it hurts to watch. She
cocks her head, hanging onto the pain like a cliff. Yet one
would classify the effect on her as...pleasurable.

JACKIE

He's smooth as a fuckin' ice cube.

She reaches into his pants, takes hold of him...

JOE

What does he look like?

JACKIE

What do you care what he looks like?

She smiles, enjoying the glimmer of jealousy in his eyes.

JOE

Cause I want to fuck him.

JACKIE

What?

JOE

You heard me.

JACKIE

Say it again.

JOE

I want to fuck him.

JACKIE

Say it again.

JOE

I want to fuck him!

What follows is quite primitive. Not one of those tender displays of love and intimacy. He can't thrust hard enough. I'll leave the rest to your imagination.

TIME CUT TO:

THE SAME -- LATER

Jackie and Joe lie in bed, naked, used up. Jackie stares at the ceiling.

JOE

You think he's the one who pulled the Vineyard heist? The master?

JACKIE

(coy)

Maybe yes, maybe no. He's got no reason to discuss it with me.

JOE

The thing I don't understand, is if he's so great, why hook up with a hick from the sticks like you?

Jackie turns to her, taken aback.

JACKIE

Luke Skywalker was just a hick from the sticks once too, honey. And you're hooked up with me--so fuck you.

JOE

(matter of fact)

I'm hooked up with you because I want to do an intimate study of an all American sociopath that makes the best seller list and gets me a six figure Hollywood option.

He gets right in her face, low and hot.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE

You're hooked up with me cause you're a freak. And I've made myself indispensable for your information. I'm working inside the --

She puts her fingers on his lips, shakes her head.

JOE

You can't tell me until after the fact, honey. That's what makes me a journalist and not a co-conspirator. Remember? You wouldn't want me to have to tell on you...would you?

JACKIE

I wouldn't want to have to kill you either.

Off the moment...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LIBRARY OF ANTIQUITIES -- EARLY EVENING

Establish. A grand old edifice.

WIDE SHOT -- A BUS

pulls up to the corner and Jackie [as Brian] gets off. As he heads for the SERVICE ENTRANCE...We HEAR the sound of a phone RING and pick up. A mildly schizophrenic computer jock named STEVEN answers. He's in a constant state of paranoid tension.

STEVEN (V.O.)

(over the phone)

Hello?

NICK (V.O.)

(over the phone)

It's Nick, you got anything?

STEVEN (V.O.)

(testy)

Of course I got something, don't I always get something?

EXT. THE LIBRARY. SERVICE ENTRANCE -- MOMENTS LATER

Jackie/Brian rings the buzzer as the phone call continues...

STEVEN (V.O.)

His real name is Brian Colbert, but he's used two aliases. Jackie Teller and Billy Rickles.

NICK (V.O.)
They sound like comedians.

STEVEN (V.O.)
Yeah, he got five years of stand-up
for extortion and mail fraud.

THE LIBRARY. SERVICE AREA -- JACKIE/BRIAN

enters to FIND...a SECURITY GUARD [40], DANNY [50] the head janitor], and three other JANITORS milling about in uniform on the other end of an Airport-like METAL DETECTOR.

DANNY
There he is. How are you today, young man?

JACKIE/BRIAN
Fine, Mr. Danny.

We HEAR the O.S. sound of a computer KEYPAD. Tap-tap.

STEVEN (V.O.)
Says here he wriggled his way out on good behavior in three and a half.

Jackie/Brian hesitates before the metal detector.

DANNY
Go on now, it won't hurt ya.

Jackie then takes a deep breath, SHUTS his eyes, and DASHES through the detector. The janitors laugh.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Attaboy!

CUT TO:

INT. A PRIVATE MEN'S CLUB. MONTREAL -- EARLY EVENING

Nick and Burt are seated at a table by the second story window. They're BOTH on the line with Steven, two separate phones. The club is all old-world elegance, manned by ATTENDANTS with white napkins on their arms.

STEVEN (V.O.)
(over the phone)
What did you do to deserve this geek?

NICK
It's complicated. I'll be in touch.

Click. Nick and Burt hang up.

BURT

A con who cons the cons. Nice racket,
if you got the balls for it.

TIGHT ON NICK

replying quietly, almost to himself...

NICK

It's more than that. He wants to be
me. He wants my whole life.

BURT

Fuckin' Max, he was always crazy. I
say you let the old bastard twist on
this one--all by himself.

NICK

I can't do that.

Burt sighs, knowing Nick, knowing all about such loyalty.

BURT

Yeah, I know. So then what?

Nick glances out the window.

THEIR POV -- THROUGH THE GLASS

Cummings sits on a bench directly across the street, reading
a NEWSPAPER. Then he looks up...

and SEES Nick and Burt through the glass darkly.

ATTENDANT

Monsieur Wells? Would you and your
guest care for a cigar?

ANGLE NICK AND BURT

as they turn to FIND...an ATTENDANT holding an open HUMIDOR.

BURT

Don't mind if I do.

ATTENDANT

May I recommend the selection on the
left, sir. It's hand rolled by a
Cuban farmer from his private stock.

BURT

Whatever you say, buddy.

Nick glances back at Cummings.

NICK
Not for me, thanks.

ATTENDANT
(to Burt)
Shall I clip it for you, Monsieur?

BURT
Nah, I'll just bite it off like a man.

The attendant retreats. Burt bites off the tip...

BURT (CONT'D)
Tell you what, how bout I pay the comedian a visit? I'll get the original sheet...put the fear of Jehovah into him. Better me than you under the circumstances.

NICK
He might not have it. He might've given someone the original, told 'em to pop it in the mail if anything goes wrong.

BURT
If he had the time, or trusts anyone that much. But what's the alternative, kill him? Take him under your wing and pull the score with the heat all over? I'd rather take a broom up the ass.

Off Nick, on the zip-click of a CAMERA...

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE MEN'S CLUB -- MOMENTS LATER

POV -- THROUGH A STILL CAMERA LENS

as Burt exits the building. The camera zooms in tight on Burt's face. Click. He gets into his car. Click.

Zoom in on the REAR PLATE. Click.

ANGLE DOWN THE STREET -- AS DEPUTY INSPECTOR CAROL

aims her CAMERA through the passenger window of a parked CAR. Click. Inspector Wright sits beside her.

NICK (O.S.)
Pretty tedious work.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SQUARE -- AS CUMMINGS

turns on the bench to FIND...Nick standing right behind him.

CUMMINGS

I'm a patient man.

NICK

(a nod)

Lemme save you the trouble. I'm on my way to the restaurant. I'll be there all night and back at the loft by two. You have the address, or should I write it down for you?

Off Cummings, to the sound of fingers DRUMMING on a table...

CUT TO:

FULL SHOT -- OF A COMPUTER SCREEN

SCAN to READ: Dear Joe, checked with police in Martha's Vineyard. Man named Cummings is insurance investigator, assigned to case by Harcourt & Abby--London based. In Montreal as we speak. Spoke with him on grounds there might be a connection to another theft here in New Orleans. He mentioned two men--OFF THE RECORD: Nicholas Wells and Maximillian Beard. Wells owns a restaurant called Cafe Des Artiste, Beard is gallery owner, art maven. Hope it's of some help.

Don't get into too much trouble this time. The boys say hey.

Det. Roberts N.O.P.D.

P.S. You owe me a beer, doll face.

PULL BACK to REVEAL Joe...

INSIDE HER HOTEL ROOM -- AFTERNOON

seated in front of her laptop, DRUMMING her fingers on the table. Then she thumbs through a PHONE BOOK as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LIBRARY. SERVICE ENTRANCE -- MAGIC HOUR

as Jackie/Brian exits the library with the other JANITORS. They say their good-byes and the janitors move to their cars.

Jackie/Brian heads for the BUS STOP on the corner.

ANGLE BURT -- INSIDE HIS CAR

watching from across the street, eating a powdered donut.

Then a BUS pulls up. Jackie/Brian gets on. It belches black and pulls away. As Burt follows after...

INSIDE THE BUS. DRIVING -- MOMENTS LATER

Jackie/Brian sits in the front seat of the nearly empty bus. The BUS DRIVER turns, kind to the mentally challenged...

BUS DRIVER

How ya feelin' tonight, Captain?

Jackie forces a smile, mumbles under his breath...

JACKIE

Like a retard, how do you think?

CUT TO:

FULL SHOT -- OF A COMPUTER SCREEN

in the middle of a RAPID SEARCH. Names, addresses, license and passport photos fly by until...

BURT'S DRIVER'S LICENSE PHOTO

appears on screen. PULL BACK to REVEAL Deputy Carol...

INSIDE THE OFFICES OF HARCOURT & ABBEY -- MAGIC HOUR

as Burt's info pours out of the PRINTER, page after page. She tears one off and reads it to Cummings and Mr. Wright.

DEPUTY CAROL

His name is Burt Slotnick. Retired from the police force in 1989, now a licensed private investigator. It says here he was disciplined and put on probation in 1985...reasons not specified.

CUMMINGS

Check Mr. Slotnick's passport. See if he was in Europe in 1993, particularly Vienna and Monaco.

Deputy Carol pulls another page, then looks up...

DEPUTY CAROL

He was. In Vienna.

Off Cummings...

EXT. BOWERY DISTRICT -- LATER

The bus empties Jackie in the tawdry beer-sodden bastion of the hapless and hopeless. He heads down the street as...

Burt parks about half a block away. Jackie then heads inside one of those roach motels. A battered sign says: THE IMPERIAL COURT HOTEL. Yeah, right.

INSIDE BURT'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

He settles back and waits.

TIME CUT TO:

INSIDE BURT'S CAR -- NIGHT

Burt pulls a .38 from beneath the seat of his car.

INT. THE ROACH MOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER

Burt enters the decrepit lobby, deserted but for the depressed PAKISTANI MAN [40] who sits behind the IRON MESH of the hotel counter, watching TV. Burt approaches, flashes his P.I. BADGE.

BURT

A man came in a few moments ago.

PAKISTANI MAN

What you want?

Burt slides HUNDRED DOLLARS across the counter.

BURT

None of your business.

INT. HALLWAY. ROACH MOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER

Burt heads down the hall, stops at room number 12. An OLD WOMAN peeks her head out of another room. Burt gives her the evil eye and she ducks back inside. Burt puts his ear to the door of room number 12. Paper thin. TV'S on, SHOWER running.

He slides a credit card in the jam. Voila. He opens the door as far as the CHAIN will allow. Bathroom door is partially open in the B.G. Jackie is in the shower SINGING...

"If I Only Had A Heart" from the Wizard Of Oz. Then...

Burt pulls an ALUMINUM BAT from his coat, WHACKS the chain.

INSIDE THE SHOWER -- JACKIE

doesn't hear the sound, head bent to the steaming stream.

Burt then YANKS the curtains aside.

BURT

Hello there.

(CONTINUED)

Is Jackie startled? Put yourself in his birthday suit, buddy.
Burt JAMS the bat into his ribs, doubling him over.

JACKIE

AAAAAAAHH!

He takes Jackie by the wet hair and drags him naked...

INTO THE SHIT-BROWN ROOM

There's a single bed, chest of drawers, TV, sick yellow lamp.
He pushes Jackie face down on the bed...

and WHACKS him in the back of the legs with the bat...

JACKIE

AAAAAAAHH! Stop it, please!

BAM! He WHACKS him again on the bottom of his feet. Bam!
Bam! He writhes and howls.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

AAAAAAAHH! Fuck! Fuck! Who are
you? What do you want?!!

Burt turns the TV way UP. One of those late night USED CAR
commercials BLASTS the room...

COMMERCIAL

Come on down, folks! No money down!
One year warranty! Instant financing!

JACKIE

Look, man, I don't know what the
fuck you're -- AAAAAAAH!

Burt puts the barrel of the gun right in Jackie's...

BURT

Know what a colostomy is? Cause you
don't tell me where those copies are
in three seconds, I'm gonna give you
one, courtesy of Smith & Wesson.

JACKIE

(whimpering)

They're in the drawer. In an envelope.
Please God, don't hit me anymore!

Holding the gun on Jackie, Burt steps back, moves to the
drawers.

BURT

It's a dangerous game you're playing,
kid. A dangerous fuckin' game.

(CONTINUED)

Burt tries opening the drawer. It catches. He pulls harder.

POP-FLASH! Burt SCREAMS and grabs his burning eyes, BLINDED by a ROAD FLARE cut lengthwise and rigged to burst.

Jackie SPINS off the bed like a scythe in the hand of the grim reaper. The flare HISSES and fills the room with smoke as Burt...

CRASHES into the chest of drawers. BANG! The gun goes off wildly--puncturing the mattress. Jackie brings the aluminum bat down on Burt's gun hand, SHATTERING his wrist. He cries out and rolls on the floor. BAM! Jackie hits him again. In the legs, the side. Then, tiring, panting...

Jackie looks down at Burt...

JACKIE

You're fuckin' right it's dangerous.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BISTRO -- NIGHT

The place is packed, a hive full of buzz and color.

INSIDE THE NICK'S OFFICE -- JUST OFF THE KITCHEN

Nick reviews the night's receipts as Max appears in the doorway. He looks haggard, stricken.

MAX

You haven't returned my calls.

Nick looks up, no welcome in his eyes...

NICK

We're over-booked tonight, Max. You might want to get your food to go.

MAX

What are we going to do, Nicky?

NICK

We?

MAX

Tell me what to do. Please.

Nick shakes his head bitterly, rises.

NICK

Good night, Max.

Off Max, as Nick heads out the door.

INSIDE THE MAIN ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick comes out of the kitchen and runs into a gorgeous French MODEL. She plants her lips on Nick's cheek.

MODEL

Thanks for the table, Nicky. C'est parfait.

NICK

You're not driving, are ya?

MODEL

(sleepy-drunk)

No, I'm flying. You fly, don't you?
You promised to take me sometimes.

Her DATE calls out jealously a few doors down...

DATE

C'est tout, Jeanette. Alon.

She makes a funny sound with those lips.

MODEL

Mon salo. Ciao.

NICK

Ciao.

Nick's face darkens as she moves off. He checks his watch.
10:45. Jean-Hugue approaches...

JEAN-HUGUE

Boss --

NICK

Has Burt called, Jean-Hugue?

JEAN-HUGUE

No, boss, but there is a woman who
wish to speak with you.

(hands him a CARD)

She says she is a writer?

Nick glances at the card, then looks across the room.

JOE

is seated at the far end of the bar, sipping a Cosmopolitan.
She raises her glass to him, smiles.

NICK

Thanks.

PUSH IN ON JOE -- AS NICK APPROACHES

Her NOTE PAD and pen are on the counter. As he arrives....

JOE

Mr. Wells?

NICK

Nick.

She extends her hand. He shakes it.

JOE

Joe Carson, New Orleans Picayune.
You have a wonderful place, here.
And the light...my God, I love it.

NICK

Thanks. It seems to agree with you.

JOE

(flattered)
Oh, well...

NICK

Have you eaten?

JOE

Couldn't get a table. But I did use
the rest room. Spotless.

NICK

Always use the rest rooms before you
eat in the restaurant. If they're
dirty--run for your life.

JOE

I'll remember that.
(beat)
You know, you don't sound Canadian.

NICK

Buffalo, New York. I drifted up when
I was sixteen, stuck around.

JOE

Drifted?

NICK

It's a long story.

JOE

The longer the better.

(CONTINUED)

Off the moment...

TIME CUT TO:

INT. A BANQUET -- MOMENTS LATER

as Joe slides in and takes her seat.

NICK
Mind if I order for you?

JOE
Please.

Nick turns to Jean-Hugue, standing at the ready.

NICK
The onion goat cheese tart and the
roast chicken.
(to Joe)
You like garlic?

JOE
Sure.

NICK
Steak frite or mashed potatoes?

JOE
Steak frite.

NICK
(to Jean-Huge)
And a bottle of the Brunello.

JEAN-HUGUE
Yes, boss.

NICK
(sits)
We don't like to show off here. We
just serve the classic stuff in the
classic way.

A BUSINESSMAN exchanges hellos with Nick as he passes. Then...

NICK (CONT'D)
So you're writing about the city?

JOE
Uh, no, not exactly.

NICK
I thought you were a travel writer.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

The only exotic islands I'm familiar with are the ones outlined in chalk on a bloodstained sidewalk. Actually, I write about crime.

NICK

Crime.

JOE

I wrote for the New Orleans Picayune, but I'm on sabbatical. And I know you're a suspect in the Martha's Vineyard heist.

Pause. He just stares at her, losing his good humor.

JOE (CONT'D)

I have a data base which feeds me the latest info on high-profile crimes throughout North America. That one was interesting because the thief was probably invited to the party, a very exclusive party, which means he or she is either successful or beautiful or both. Yet the thief operated so skillfully, reading the fingerprints off the key pad...even though he would have no way of knowing in what order the numbers were arranged.

NICK

I'm in the restaurant business, Ms. Carson.

JOE

You were also a suspect in several other extremely skillful, unsolved thefts in Europe a few years ago.

NICK

And how do you know that?

JOE

Privacy is a thing of the past, Nick. We exchanged it for information.

(beat)

You know what all these crimes have in common?

NICK

No.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Each was accomplished without violence. The only difference in this case is the thief left a note: Character is fate. Which means maybe the thief felt morally justified in his act, I don't know, because the victim made some lousy movies, or perhaps he's just experiencing a crisis of conscience. Either way, it makes him very, very interesting.

Eyes locked with his, she leans forward...

JOE (CONT'D)

I'm not a cop, Nick. I don't solve crimes, I report them. The mechanics are less important to me than the sociopathology of the criminal. In other words: His character. Tell me your story and I'll promise to conceal your identity until either you're tried and convicted, or you die.

Nick glances across the room. Max is heading out the door.

NICK

Just for argument's sake, let's say you found your man.

(beat)

What's in it for him?

She takes the devil's pause, prepared for the question.

JOE

Immortality.

Off Nick....

EXT. NICK'S LOFT -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Nick gets out of his car as another TENANT exits the building. He's a bearded, downtown artist type, who wears TINTED SPECS and a BERET over graying shoulder length hair, tied in a PONYTAIL.

POV -- THROUGH BINOCULARS AT A HUNDRED YARDS

Nick and the tenant exchange hellos. Then...

ANGLE NICK -- AS HE OPENS THE BUILDING DOOR

glancing down the street before going inside, feeling watched.

INT. INSIDE THE CAR -- DOWN THE STREET

Mr. Wright and Deputy Carol have been watching.

INT. NICK'S BUILDING HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick exits the elevator and approaches the door. Burt's P.I. PHOTO & BADGE are pinned to the door.

JACKIE

Would've done the same if I was you,
so no hard feelings.

Nick turns to FIND...Jackie at the other end of the hall.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

And you can return this too.

He pulls Burt's .38 from his belt, holds it out to him.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Why is it you never use 'em anyway?
Guns I mean.

NICK

(low and hard)

Cause they have a way of going off.
Is he --

JACKIE

He's fine, maybe a little sore in
spots, but...

PUSH IN TIGHT ON NICK -- SEMI SLOW MOTION

as reality dawns and TIME seems to STOP. Jackie, Cummings,
Joe, Jesus. He tugs at his collar. Feels like a noose. The
globes of his eyes spin the combinations. Then...

NICK

So you wanna go to school, huh?

JACKIE

Yup.

NICK

It's a one shot deal. After that,
you disappear for good and leave Max
alone. Do anything to compromise him
again and I'll kill you.

JACKIE

I'm flexible.

(CONTINUED)

NICK
 (opens the door)
 I'll contact you through Max.

He disappears inside the loft. Jackie takes a breath as if to reply...then smiles and heads down the stairs.

INSIDE THE LOFT -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick takes off his jacket, puts his keys down. Then something catches his eye.

His MAIL has spilled off the kitchen counter onto the floor.

He SCANS the space. All else seems in order. Then...

ANGLE THE PHONE ON THE KITCHEN COUNTER

Nick picks up the RECEIVER and opens it up. There's a tiny RADIO MIKE in the battery casing.

But he leaves the mike in place and puts down the phone.

ANGLE NICK'S COMPUTER STATION -- MOMENTS LATER

as Nick types the words: I'VE GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU, STEVEN.

CUT TO:

INT. STEVEN'S LAIR -- CONTINUOUS

STEVEN [late 30s] is at his elaborate work station, seated before one of THREE COMPUTERS, reading Nick's message. He's very tall, painfully gaunt. GALACTIC CHARTS cover his walls, AIR FILTERS and HUMIDIFIERS HUM. He types his response...

STEVEN: IT'S A BAD TIME, MAN. THE CONCENTRATION IS SHOT. MY MOTHER'S TOTALLY OUT OF CONTROL!

INTER-CUT THE COMPUTER CHAT -- AS NICK TYPES HIS ANSWER

NICK: ARE YOU TAKING YOUR MEDICINE?

STEVEN: DOESN'T HELP. I STILL WANNA TAKE A KNIFE TO HER. SHE'S A GHOUL! SHE'S EVIL!

NICK: STEVEN...IRONCLAD SECURITY HANDLES THE ALARM SYSTEMS FOR ALL GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS. I NEED THE BLUEPRINTS AND PASS CODES FOR THE LIBRARY OF ANTIQUITIES. DOUBLE YOUR USUAL PRICE.

Steven's MOTHER then knocks on his door, calls out O.S.

MOTHER (O.S.)
 Steven? It's time for your medicine.

STEVEN
I'M ON THE PHONE, BITCH! NOW LEAVE
ME THE FUCK ALONE!

Steven taps out his plea to Nick with great agitation...

STEVEN: DO YOU KNOW WHERE I CAN GET SOME ARSENIC?

NICK: RELAX. JUST TELL ME IF YOU CAN HACK INTO THEIR FILES.

Steven SCRATCHES himself, wanting to crawl out of his skin.

STEVEN: I THOUGHT WE NEVER PEED IN OUR OWN POOL?

NICK: WE WON'T BE SWIMMING IN IT AGAIN. FROM NOW ON DON'T
CONTACT ME. I'LL CALL YOU. THE HEAT IS ON.

STEVEN: SOUNDS LIKE FUN. GIVE ME 24. LESS IF MY MOTHER EXPIRES
UNEXPECTEDLY.

HOLD ON NICK -- AS HE LEANS BACK IN HIS CHAIR

He grips the arm rests until his knuckles whiten.

CUT TO:

EXT. A PHONE BOOTH MONTREAL -- MORNING

Nick turns Joe's business card over to read the telephone
NUMBER written there. Then he dials the phone.

INT. JOE'S HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The phone rings. She appears from the bathroom, wrapped in a
towel, wet from the shower. She answers...

JOE
Hello?

NICK
(over the phone)
Do you believe in the Tarot?

Off Joe...

EXT. LIBRARY OF ANTIQUITIES. RAINING -- AFTERNOON

BANNERS draped across the front of the grand old edifice
read: **The Ancient Tarot. Secrets Of The Universe.**

ANGLE JOE -- STANDING BENEATH AN UMBRELLA

at the top of the steps as Nick gets out of a CAB below.

He holds her gaze for a moment before heading up the steps.

INT. THE LIBRARY -- NICK & JOE

enter the foyer as an agitated looking MAN [55] accidentally BUMPS into Nick on his way out. He has a slight LIMP.

THE AGITATED MAN

Sorry.

Nick turns to watch him hurry off, then...

NICK

Here, let me take your coat.

Joe is on a kind of delightful edge. She's not sure what the game is yet, but she's willing to play.

JOE

Thanks.

INT. THE BAG CHECK AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick heads in with their coats, eyeing the LOCK on the open door, taking mental note. He hands the coats to the claim-check GIRL. He SEES a BIN in the corner behind her marked: LOST & FOUND. She smiles, hands him a numbered STUB.

CHECK GIRL

We close at six.

INSIDE THE FOYER -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick and Joe pass the SECURITY GUARD standing near the foot of the GRAND STAIRCASE...

JOE

So why meet in a library? Any particular reason?

NICK

You said you wanted a story. This is where they keep the first editions.

The mouse turns to the cat. The cat smiles.

JOE

I'm listening.

INT. THE GRAND STAIRCASE -- TRACKING NICK & JOE

as they climb the steps.

NICK

Once upon a time, there was a punk kid...

(CONTINUED)

Nick SEES the MOTION SENSOR poised on the wall above and a large ALARM BELL stamped with logo: **IRONCLAD SECURITIES**.

NICK (CONT'D)

He ran away from the orphanage and followed The Grateful Dead up to Canada. They were on tour.

JOE

Sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll, huh?

NICK

(nods)

He got caught pinching a silver ashtray from the house of a local art dealer. But instead of turning him in, he offered him a job and a place to stay, gave him an education.

JOE

What kind of education?

NICK

(dry)

Liberal Arts. After a few years, he legally adopted him, turned him into a citizen.

ANGLE 2ND STORY LANDING -- AS THEY ARRIVE

and Nick pauses to stare down a long, arched CORRIDOR. At the far end is a door with an emergency EXIT sign.

JOE

What happened to your parents?

NICK

My parents?

She plays on, conceding...

JOE

His parents.

NICK

The father died when he was five.

INSIDE THE CORRIDOR -- NICK & JOE

pass beneath the arches. Lined with old leather bound BOOKS.

NICK

He was a plumber. The only thing the kid remembered about him was the smell of shit and bilge on his clothes. It disgusted him.

(CONTINUED)

Nick SEES a strip of wire running the length of the wall.

JOE

How did he die?

NICK

One night he found out his wife was sleeping with the next door neighbor. So he snatched the kid up, stuck him in the car, sped off into an ice storm. He slammed into the divider on the interstate. They found him 50 feet down the road.

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. A HIGHWAY. ICE STORM -- A SURREAL NIGHT

TIGHT ON THE ICY WINDSHIELD OF A CAR -- SEMI SLOW MOTION

The wipers have no effect on the enveloping frost. Behind the glass, fogged and obscured by the ice, a MAN sits behind the wheel, his five year old SON in the passenger seat.

ANGLE THE WHEELS OF THE CAR -- IN COLD SILENCE

as they SPIN helplessly on the icy road and SKATE across it.

DIRECTLY AT CAMERA.

BACK TO NICK & JOE

pausing at the end of the corridor...

JOE

And the kid?

NICK

He was in a coma for three days. He and his mother moved around for awhile until she went off the deep end and the state took over.

JOE

Is she still alive?

NICK

(matter of fact)
I have no idea.

Off Joe...

INSIDE THE EXHIBIT -- THEY ENTER

to FIND a perfectly reconstructed Medieval room beneath a vaulted ceiling, 15 feet to the base, it's angled glass

(CONTINUED)

windows blurred with rain. In the middle of the room is a long WOODEN TABLE of the period, set with three CANDELABRAS.

TIGHT ON NICK -- QUICKLY SCANNING

the room. There's another MOTION SENSOR in one corner and an ALARM BOX, perched on the ledge at the base of the ceiling.

THE TAROT CARDS

are contained in two GLASS CASES in the middle of the room. Each card is like a separate work of art; multifaceted astrological DIAGRAMS of astonishing beauty and complexity. A small PLAQUE reads: From a private collection. Donor, anonymous.

PUSH IN...on one TAROT CARD in particular. It is of a NAKED man at the center of a COSMIC WHEEL in a star filled sky. A HOUND-LIKE CREATURE explodes from his loins.

ANGLE NICK & JOE

as they appear before it...REFLECTED in the glass case.

JOE

Secrets of the universe, huh?

NICK

The mystics considered man to be the heavens in miniature. To know oneself was to know the universe.

Cummings then appears REFLECTED in the glass, entering the room in the B.G. Nick SEES him without turning.

JOE

And women? What about them?

PAN to FIND the next TAROT CARD. This time a NAKED WOMAN is at the center of the wheel--SNAKES coiled around her throat.

NICK

They were just dangerous.

They lock eyes. Nick then glances at his watch.

NICK (CONT'D)

Would you excuse me for a moment? I have to call the restaurant.

JOE

Sure.

Nick goes out the other end of the room. Cummings gives her the once over from the corridor entrance. PUSH IN on Joe as she feels his stare and turns to meet his gaze.

(CONTINUED)

JOE'S POV -- OVER CUMMINGS' SHOULDER -- THROUGH THE CORRIDOR

Jackie [as Brian, in his JANITOR'S UNIFORM] is pulling a trash BAG from the GARBAGE CAN at the top of the grand staircase in the deep B.G.

He doesn't see her.

TIGHT ON JOE -- PARALYZED FOR A MOMENT

realizing the significance of Nick's choice of venue. Then...

ANGLE JACKIE -- BY THE GARBAGE CAN

as he feels the attention. He looks up and peers down the corridor to FIND...no one. Joe is gone.

NICK (O.S.)

Anything?

INT. THE LIBRARY. A BANK OF PAY PHONES -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick is on the phone with Steven.

STEVEN

(over the phone)

I hacked in to Ironclad okay, but I bumped into a weasel on the other end.

NICK

Speak English, Steven.

INTER CUT WITH:

INT. STEVEN'S BASEMENT -- CONTINUOUS

as Steven paces in his bare feet. He's anxious, speeding...

STEVEN

Someone who works inside Ironclad, man! I'm rooting around, doing my thing, and then I catch a bulletin with the words: "Nothing in life is free, asshole." Can you believe that? The guy calls me an asshole!

NICK

Steven...

STEVEN

So I say, "How much for a library card?" Get it? And he says, "You mean for the alarm system?"

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN (CONT'D)

And I say, "Maybe". And he says,
"TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND, U.S.!" So I
say, "Fuck you." And he says, "No,
fuck you!" And I say, "No, fuck YOU!"

Nick SEES Cummings drift out of the other room in the B.G.

NICK

Can you find out who he is?

STEVEN

CAN I FIND OUT WHO HE IS?! I traced
him to an on-line porn site and pulled
his credit card number. I can tell
you where he eats lunch every Tuesday.
I can tell you where he LIVES!

ANGLE CUMMINGS -- AS NICK HANGS UP

and takes a purposeful walk right past him...

NICK

Planning my next heist.

Unamused, Cummings stays put, eyes following Nick down the
hall where Joe stands waiting. Then...

ANGLE JOE -- AS NICK ARRIVES

and Cummings fades into the background...

NICK (CONT'D)

Everything all right? You look pale.

JOE

A lot of dust on these old books,
that's all. I need some fresh air.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFE DES ARTISTE. THE BACK ALLEYWAY -- EVENING

Nick pulls up in his BMW 740. Jackie waits by the dumpster.

JACKIE

You said, 6:30, master. You're late.

NICK

Stop calling me master. You ain't a
Jedi and I ain't fucking Yoda.

Nick gets out of the car, glances up and down the alley.

(CONTINUED)

NICK (CONT'D)

(all business)

There's 2 1/2 on the table. Even split. But I control the drop. Even Max won't know where it's gonna be until the last moment--so don't fuck with me.

JACKIE

With all due respect, how do I know you won't fuck with me?

NICK

You want guarantees go work for Timex.

Nick takes his jacket off the hook in the back seat...

NICK (CONT'D)

Get a passport photo in a suit and tie. Shave and comb your hair normally. I want you looking official.

JACKIE

Why?

NICK

Just do it. And we'll need you workin' the night shift, can you angle that?

JACKIE

Sure.

NICK

Good.

(moves off, then)

Oh, and a couple of insurance investigators are watching me constantly, tapping my phone.

JACKIE

Which means?..

NICK

Welcome to the big leagues.

Off Jackie, as Nick enters the kitchen without another word...

CUMMINGS (O.S.)

Excuse me, Bartender!

CUT TO:

INT. THE BISTRO. BAR AREA -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Cummings gruffly squeezes between a gaggle of GODDESSES and leans against the counter. He's had a few. He calls out...

(CONTINUED)

CUMMINGS
I said excuse me!

BARTENDER #1
En moment, Monsieur. En moment.

Cummings nods, turns to the gaggle beside him and laughs.

CUMMINGS
En moment, he says. Even "fuck off"
sounds better in French, eh?

They continue their conversation and ignore him completely.

CUMMINGS (CONT'D)
I said, even "fuck off" sounds better
in French!

Still no response from the goddesses. Then...

BARTENDER #1
What would you like, Monsieur?

CUMMINGS
How bout some decent company?
(laughs, then)
Just gimme a double shot of whiskey.

The Bartender serves him up. Then...

CUMMINGS (CONT'D)
How much I owe ya?

The bartender glances over Cummings' shoulder.

BARTENDER #1
Sur la maison, monsieur.

CUMMINGS
La maison, eh?

Cummings turns. Nick lock eyes with him from across the room.

CUMMINGS (CONT'D)
Ah, well...
(raises his glass,
calls out)
May I have your attention please?!

BARTENDER #1
Monsieur, si vous plait...

CUMMINGS
I said, may I have your attention
please?!!

The restaurant falls SILENT--all eyes on Cummings.

CUMMINGS (CONT'D)

I'd like to make a toast in the grand Irish tradition! To women who won't give ya the time of day, pricks that refuse to rise without chemical aid, and to thieves who steal for no reason other than the fact that they're greedy, sick motherfuckers!

He's smiles--staring right at Nick. No doubt. Cummings then drains his glass to the sound of startled SILENCE.

ANGLE NICK -- AS A HUNDRED PAIRS OF EYES

fall naturally on him, a restaurant full of confused people. Then he looks at the WOMAN in the table nearest him, gestures toward her GLASS of red wine.

NICK

May I?

WOMAN

...Sure.

He picks it up, hoists the glass, and says...

NICK

I'll drink to that.

He drinks. The laughter starts slowly, then fills the room.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BISTRO -- MOMENTS LATER

Cummings exits, pulling on his coat. As he hails a cab...

CUMMINGS

Taxi!

As the cab pulls up, Nick steps outside in the B.G.

NICK

Cummings!

(Cummings turns)

You haven't found a goddamn thing, have you?

CUMMINGS

You know, Nick, the only thing you have in common with any thief I've ever known, is that somewhere deep down--you want to get caught.

(beat)

Have a good evening.

(CONTINUED)

Off Nick, as Cummings gets into the cab and drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROACH MOTEL -- AFTERNOON

Jackie waits on the corner in a conservative suit and tie. He wears dark SUNGLASSES, transformed yet again. Burt then pulls up, honks his horn.

ANGLE BURT'S CAR -- AS JACKIE

leans in the passenger window. Burt wears a CAST on his arm.

JACKIE

Surprise, surprise. Healin' up okay?

BURT

Yeah, how bout you sign my cast.

JACKIE

Hey, my feet hurt like a bitch, motherfucker.

Then Nick's VOICE comes over the hands-free SPEAKER PHONE.

NICK (V.O.)

Get in the car, Jackie.

JACKIE

Where the fuck are you?

INTER-CUT WITH:

INT. THE MEN'S CLUB. THE SMOKING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Nick sits at the window table, on the house phone, SKETCHING on a pad with charcoal as he talks. In the B.G. CLUB MEMBERS are gathered at the bar watching a ball game on TV.

NICK

(into the phone)

You're on need-to-know basis. Now get in. You're going for a drive.

INSIDE THE CAR. DRIVING -- MOMENTS LATER

Burt drives through the streets of Montreal.

INTER-CUT THE PHONE CALL

NICK

You have the photo?

Jackie pulls a small envelope from his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE
Right here.

NICK
How does he look, Burt?

BURT
Like a bureaucrat.

NICK
Good.

Burt tosses Jackie an FBI ID. A blank SPACE for his photo.

BURT
Just don't stick your picture in
upside down. It's a dead giveaway.

JACKIE
Fuck you.

NICK
In a few minutes, you're going to
knock on the door of a man by the
name of Ralph Saperstien. He works
at Ironclad Securities. You will
introduce yourselves as agents of
the American FBI. Burt will handle
the rest of the talking, so keep
your mouth shut and you might learn
something. Got it?

JACKIE
Sounds like a sweet situation.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT. MONTREAL -- AFTERNOON

Burt and Jackie get out of the car in front of a MODEST HOME.

INTER-CUT THE SCENE -- AS NICK LISTENS FROM THE CLUB

The sound via the cell is SCRATCHY but clear enough.

BURT (V.O.)
(over the phone)
Here we go.

ANGLE THE FRONT DOOR -- AS BURT

sticks the phone in breast pocket, rings Saperstien's bell.
After a moment, the door swings open to REVEAL...a shy, middle
aged woman who looks a little frightened of life.

MRS. SAPERSTIEN
Can I help you?

(CONTINUED)

They flash their badges.

BURT

FBI. We'd like to speak with Mr.
Saperstien. Ralph Saperstien?

Her pupils dilate with concern.

MRS. SAPERSTIEN

Ralph...

A chunky man with an emphysema-like wheeze, appears in the
B.G. The same nervous guy who bumped into Nick in the foyer
of the library. RALPH SAPERSTIEN [50s] walks with a LIMP.

SAPERSTIEN

Yeah?

They flash their badges again.

BURT

Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mr.
Saperstien. I'm agent Jeffries, this
is agent Teller. May we speak with
you in private, please?

NICK -- STRAINS TO HEAR

the conversation; fuzzed and muffled by Burt's jacket pocket.

MRS. SAPERSTIEN

What have you done, Ralph?

SAPERSTIEN

Nothing, nothing.

The Club Attendant arrives...

ATTENDANT

A plate of olives, sir?

NICK

(distracted)

Uh...yeah, thank you.

Saperstien limps outside and closes the door behind him.

SAPERSTIEN

Can we talk out here?

BURT

I'll come to the point. We know
someone tried to hack into Ironclad
and was offered access for a cool
two hundred Gs by a weasel on the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BURT (CONT'D)
inside. That weasel would be you,
wouldn't it?

SAPERSTIEN
I don't know what you're --

JACKIE
Shut up.

BURT
We piggybacked a little virus onto
the hacker's signal, unbeknownst to
the hacker, so anyone communicating
with him is automatically infected.
Understand what I'm saying?

Jackie digs the setup, eyes smiling.

NICK -- PRESSES HARDER ON THE CHARCOAL
drawing darker lines as the reception EBBS and comes back.
TIGHT ON SAPERSTIEN -- AS THE BLOOD DRAINS FROM HIS FACE

SAPERSTIEN
Oh my God. What have I done?

BURT
You tell me.

His wife PEEKS at them through the window curtain.

SAPERSTIEN
(tearing up, crumbling)
Look, I never did anything illegal
before, I swear to God. It's just I --
I did a little day trading, you know?
Couldn't meet my obligations...I
borrowed too much from the wrong
people. Look at this, they broke my
kneecap with a hammer.

BURT
Who did? What are you talking about?

TIGHT ON NICK

He's picking up every third word.

SAPERSTIEN
These animals I owe money too. Russian
guys. So I catch someone hacking
into my files and I see a financial
opportunity, that's all. I'm not a
bad person.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE

All right, here's the deal. Take it or leave it.

Burt tosses Jackie a hard look. The mouth is off and running.

NICK -- CLENCHES AND SITS UP

as Jackie gets in Saperstien's face.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

We wanna catch the thieves, break their ring. Work with us, we'll look the other way, help clean your debt. If not, we'll turn you over to the Canadian police right now and send you up river to drown.

SAPERSTIEN

Okay, okay, anything you want.

Nick relaxes a tad as Saperstien swallows the bait.

BURT

Good. Next time the hacker logs on, you offer to deliver the blueprints and pass-codes in exchange for two hundred in cash.

(hands him a CARD)

The number's on the back. Call me when it's done and we'll arrange the meeting place.

Saperstien wipes the tears from his eyes.

SAPERSTIEN

Thank you. Thank you both.

SMASH TO:

INT. INSIDE BURT'S CAR. DRIVING -- MOMENTS LATER

Jackie SQUEALS with delight. Nick is back on the hands-free.

JACKIE

Oooh, baby-baby! A piggyback virus? Who came up with that shit, master? Was it you? That was sweet.

BACK TO NICK -- AS HE RISES

from his chair, quietly burning...

(CONTINUED)

NICK

Listen to me, that was your first test and you failed. Open your mouth again without permission and the deal is off. I don't care what game you run.

JACKIE

Fine, sure, whatever.

Click. Nick hangs up, drains his brandy and heads out.

HOLD ON JACKIE -- AS BURT DRIVES ON

JACKIE (CONT'D)

So this hacker guy, he's part of the crew too?

BURT

Too? You're not part of the crew, kid. You're a piece of dog shit that stuck to the sole of his shoe.

Jackie just shakes his head.

JACKIE

Nobody fuckin' appreciates me.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BISTRO -- NIGHT

as a CAB pulls up and Joe gets out, looking ravishing.

INT. THE BISTRO -- MOMENTS LATER

Jean-Hugue opens the door for Joe. The place is EMPTY.

JEAN-HUGUE

Good evening, mademoiselle.

JOE

Good evening. Where is everybody?

NICK

We're closed for a private party.

Across the room, Nick stands near his normal booth, beside Rene, in his chef whites. The table is set. Off Joe...

JOE (O.S.)

So the kid moves to Canada. Then what?

TIME CUT TO:

THE SAME -- LATER

Dinner is over. Joe spoons the edges of her desert, eyes dreamy with the grape. Nick sips a glass of port, smokes.

NICK

He learns how to be invisible.

JOE

And how is that?

NICK

By appearing to be the opposite of what he is.

JOE

Go on.

NICK

First he cultivates taste, knowledge of business, art, food...This makes him impressive, but it's not enough. So he increases his powers of observation. He learns to read people, learns to listen. As a result, he gains access, inspires trust...

JOE

Like picking a lock.

NICK

And when he finds something he wants, he makes the fewest number of moves, and leaves nothing behind.

JOE

Except what isn't there.

He just looks at her. Jean-Hugue appears.

JEAN-HUGUE

May I get you anything else, boss?

NICK

I think we've had it. I'll lock up.

JEAN-HUGUE

Merci, boss. A demain.

NICK

A demain.

Jean-Hugue moves off. Joe extracts a cigarette. Nick lights it.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

There's something I don't understand.
Why develop all those skills for
such a lowly purpose? To be a great
thief instead of a good man?

NICK

I'll introduce you to him sometime.
You can ask him yourself.

JOE

I'm asking him now.

Beat.

NICK

What about you? Why write about crime?
Why not something else?

JOE

Because I'm bored by everything else.

NICK

Then maybe you don't have to ask
him. Maybe you already know.

A current passes. Off the moment...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOE'S HOTEL -- MUCH LATER THAT NIGHT

The streets are deserted. Joe gets out of a CAB in front of
the hotel, heads for the entrance.

JACKIE

You know, I get beat with a baseball
bat, I got bruises all over, and
where the fuck are you?

He's standing under in building doorway just next door.

JOE

I was out. Who hurt you?

Jackie flicks the butt of his cigarette, approaches.

JACKIE

Answer the question.

JOE

What are you, my chaperone?

JACKIE

No, I'm your whole fuckin' story,
and don't you forget it.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

(a sigh)

Look, I'm sorry, I met this couple at a gallery and they invited me to a party on the Isle de Boucherville, all right? The ferry broke down and I was stuck there half the night.

JACKIE

That's so loopy it almost sounds true. You smell like sex.

JOE

It's Calvin Kline. Now I'm tired, can we catch up tomorrow?

She moves off. He grabs her by the arm and squeezes--TIGHT.

JOE (CONT'D)

You're hurting me.

JACKIE

I'm just expressing the innate contradictions in the male-female experience. Besides, I thought you liked it that way.

She jerks her arm free.

JOE

I like it a lot of ways.

Off Jackie, as she heads for the hotel entrance...

EXT. IRONCLAD SECURITY FIRM. MONTREAL -- LATER THAT EVENING

Establish. Lights dim for the night. An armed GUARD out front.

INT. SAPERSTIEN'S OFFICE

Saperstien sits before his computer, glowing like a lantern in the dark. He taps away at the keys...

CU THE SCREEN -- AS HE WRITES

Two hundred thousand in small bills in exchange for blueprint and pass-codes on a floppy, IBM compatible.

A security GUARD peeks in the doorway.

GUARD

Stayin' late tonight, Mr. Saperstien?

SAPERSTIEN

You know how it is. Work, work, work.

(CONTINUED)

The guard moves off. Saperstien presses ENTER to send.

INT. STEVEN'S BASEMENT -- CONTINUOUS

as Saperstien's MESSAGE appears on his screen.

CU STEVEN'S COMPUTER -- AS HE REPLIES

Deal. But make it MAC compatible. Bill Gates is the devil.

BACK TO SAPERSTIEN -- GETTING STEVEN'S MESSAGE

He fumbles for Burt's card, DIALS the number on the back. He HEARS only FOUR BEEPS on the other end of the phone. A PAGER. He punches in his number and hangs up.

INT. A BOXING GYM. CLUB MATCH -- CONTINUOUS

Two FIGHTERS go at it as Burt looks on with twenty or so OTHERS. The pager on his belt VIBRATES. He checks it.

INT. THE LIBRARY HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Jackie/Brian is mopping the floor, headphones over his ears, listening to his WALKMAN. The CELL-PHONE is ringing inside his pocket. Danny appears at the other end of the hall, waves to Jackie...

DANNY

Hey, kid! Your cell phone's ringin'!

Jackie pulls the headphones off...

JACKIE/BRIAN

What, Mr. Danny?

DANNY

Your cell phone.

JACKIE/BRIAN

Oh, gee, thank you, Mr. Danny.

(answering)

Mommy?

NICK (V.O.)

(over the cell)

Tomorrow, LaFayette Square, ten pm.
Call in sick.

INTER-CUT WITH:

EXT. A NEWSSTAND. PAY PHONE. DOWNTOWN -- CONTINUOUS

NICK

(on the pay phone)

There's an envelope at the bottom of the trash can by the bus stop. Follow the instructions.

Click. Nick hangs up.

HOLD JACKIE/BRIAN

answering like he was still there.

JACKIE/BRIAN

I will, mommy. I won't forget.

He puts away the phone, pretends to fight a COUGH.

DANNY

Everything okay?

JACKIE/BRIAN

My mother wants to make sure I take my medicine, Mr. Danny. I think I'm coming down with the flu.

BACK TO NICK

taking an ESQUIRE MAGAZINE off the stand. To the SELLER...

NICK

How much?

SELLER

Three fifty, monsieur.

Nick hands him the money. But as he does, something catches his eye--tweaks his curiosity.

He wrinkles his brow and bends to pick a...

N.Y. TIMES -- OFF A STACK ON THE GROUND

PUSH IN on the paper--too quickly to read it. Then...

SELLER (CONT'D)

Sir?

TIGHT ON NICK

as he absorbs what he reads there.

SELLER (CONT'D)

Sir?

(CONTINUED)

Nick looks up.

SELLER (CONT'D)
Your change, sir.

NICK
(troubled, taking it)
Thanks.

On the ringing of a phone...

CUT TO:

INT. CUMMINGS' CHEAP HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

as the phone RATTLES the night table. He's watching TV, eating
POPCORN from a bag.

CUMMINGS
Yeah.

NICK (V.O.)
(over the phone)
It's Nick.

CUMMINGS
How'd ya get this number?

INTER-CUT WITH:

INT. NICK'S LOFT -- CONTINUOUS

Nick talks on the phone he knows is tapped. The N.Y TIMES is
on the counter in front of him.

NICK
I just wanted to invite you to dinner.

CUMMINGS
What?

NICK
I don't think there's a conflict.
We've known each other all these
years...Why not share a meal?

INTER-CUT WITH:

INT. A BASEMENT OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

as Deputy Carol monitors their conversation over the wire,
ROLLING TAPE...

CUMMINGS (V.O.)
I wanna know how ya got this number.

NICK (V.O.)

Say ten o'clock? I'm a late eater.

CUMMINGS (V.O.)

What's the house specialty?

BACK TO NICK

NICK

The sitting duck.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BUS STOP. OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY -- LATER

Jackie pulls a letter ENVELOPE from the trash can.

INT. THE BUS. DRIVING -- MOMENTS LATER

Jackie sits in the front seat. He opens the envelope, pulls out a CASSETTE. He sticks it in his walkman, presses play.

NICK (V.O.)

(on tape)

At nine pm tomorrow, Burt will pick you up a white car with phony plates. The two of you will wait on the northwest corner of the square while I make the exchange with Saperstien. I'll be carrying ten grand passing for two hundred. It's usually pretty deserted out there, but if a cop shows up while you're still in the car you'll pretend to be a couple of gay tourists.

Jackie digs it, forgetting himself. He says mumbles loudly...

JACKIE

It's like fuckin' Mission Impossible or some shit.

BUS DRIVER

Sorry?

JACKIE

Nothin'.

NICK (V.O.)

(on tape, continuing)

Once I make the exchange, you'll play FBI and slap the cuffs on me. Burt will take the floppy, give Saperstien the ten grand as a show of good faith, and tell him to go

(MORE)

NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
home. Understand? This tape will
self destruct in three seconds.

Jackie stares at the tape, excited. One, two...Nada. Then...

NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(on tape)
You watch too much TV.

Off Jackie, had...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MONTREAL SKYLINE -- TIME LAPSE

The night passes into day and then night again.

INT. NICK'S LOFT. THE BATHROOM -- EVENING

He fits a long grey WIG onto his head, tied in a PONYTAIL.

EXT. OUTSIDE NICK'S LOFT -- A MISTY EVENING

POV -- THROUGH BINOCULARS

Nick's bearded TENANT exits the building wearing tinted specs, a leather jacket, and a beret over his shoulder length ponytail. He carries a black SACHEL. As he walks down the street...

INT. INSIDE A CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Mr. Wright lowers his BINOCULARS and sighs with boredom.

EXT. THE SIDEWALK -- MOMENTS LATER

TRACKING NICK -- CONTINUING DOWN THE SIDEWALK

Just another French-Canadian artiste out for a stroll.

He disappears around the corner and hails a CAB.

EXT. LAFAYETTE SQUARE -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Nick walks through the mist, down the cobbled PROMENADE that runs down the center of the square, carrying the satchel. The promenade is framed by trees, park benches here and there.

There are no other pedestrians in the park. Deserted.

ANGLE A PARK BENCH -- AS NICK

takes a seat. He checks his watch. 9:50

EXT. STREET CORNER. LAFAYETTE SQUARE -- CONTINUOUS

Burt and Jackie wait in a nondescript white car. They are parked facing the square, in the shadows, with a clear VIEW of the promenade. Burt peers through a pair of BINOCULARS.

POV -- THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

Nick lights a cigarette.

BURT

There he is.

BACK TO NICK

taking a drag, looking around.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BISTRO -- NIGHT

Cummings enters the crowded restaurant.

EXT. LAFAYETTE SQUARE -- NIGHT

A MERCEDES pulls up, parks across the street, directly opposite Nick and perpendicular to Burt and Jackie. Two MEN in heavy leather jackets get out of the car with Saperstien.

They look like hockey goons. As they cross the street...

NICK

sees them and tightens. But he doesn't move.

BACK TO BURT & JACKIE

Burt SEES them too through the binoculars. He mutters...

BURT

That stupid...I told him to come solo.

JACKIE

What's wrong?

BURT

We got company. I make the two for the Russian goons he told us about.

Burt puts down the binoculars, pulls his gun.

BURT (CONT'D)

You take the wheel. I'm gonna double around behind him. Anything happens, ride in like the fuckin' Calvary.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE

Just be careful, sweetie.

Burt tosses him a look, gets out of the car.

TRACKING SAPERSTIEN -- CARRYING THE ENVELOPE

He limps between the two men, nervous as a mouse.

SAPERSTIEN

Please, just let me handle it. I
don't want any trouble.

Goon #1 has a thick Russian accent, slaps him on the back.

GOON #1

Act like man. Relax.

ANGLE NICK -- AS THEY APPROACH

He keeps his cool, stealing himself.

SAPERSTIEN

Evening, uh...

NICK

Deal was you came alone, friend.

SAPERSTIEN

These are my associates.

NICK

I don't give a shit who they are.

SAPERSTIEN

How did I know you wouldn't shoot me
once I gave you the floppy?

NICK

If I shot ya I couldn't do business
with you again, could I?

ANGLE BURT -- MOVING STEALTHILY THROUGH THE PARK

using the trees as cover, out of sight.

BACK TO NICK -- AS GOON #1

snatches the envelope from Saperstien and runs his mouth in
a stream of RUSSIAN.

NICK (CONT'D)

(to Saperstien)

What's he blathering about?

(CONTINUED)

SAPERSTIEN

(sweating bullets)

I owe them money, that's all. They're looking after their interests.

GOON #1

(mock friendly)

You show money. Like Tom Cruise.

NICK

Tell you what, you show me the floppy, I'll give you the money, and everybody goes home happy, all right?

GOON #1

Where you from, guy?

NICK

Where am I from? Where are YOU from?

GOON #1

I from Russia. But I love Canada. My friends and I we come only two years ago, make a little, how you say?

(mimes a gun)

Bang-bang? Now we run whole city.

NICK

Is that so?

ANGLE BURT -- BEHIND A STATUE

no more than twenty yards away.

BACK TO NICK & THE GOONS

as Goon #1 takes a seat beside Jackie--WAY TOO CLOSE. Goon #2 takes a seat on the other side of him. Nice and comfy.

GOON #1

See, the Italians, Chinese...They paying me to suck my dick since 1997. So I am much surprised to find some independent like you wanting action without he checking with us first, paying good price for privilege.

Goon #1 pulls a .44 from his shoulder holster--sticks it in Nick's ribs. Saperstien goes white.

SAPERSTIEN

Oh God, fellas, please...

GOON #1

Shut up.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GOON #1 (CONT'D)
(to Nick)
You understand what I saying?

Nick then SEES Burt appear in the shadows behind Goon #2. He nods to Goon #1 and replies humbly...

NICK
Oh yeah, I understand. You lost the cold war, you can't build a decent car, and you like it up the ass.

As Goon #1's shock becomes a terminal response...

BURT
FREEZE! FBI!!

It happens all at once. Goon #2 spins and FIRES at Burt as...

Nick JAMS his elbow down on the Goon #1's arm, grabs for the gun, and SLUGS him in the throat...

BACK TO JACKIE -- SEEING IT HAPPEN

He puts her in gear and speeds toward the promenade...

ANGLE NICK -- FIGHTING

furiously for the gun with Goon #1. But he won't let go. They roll off the bench as...

Burt RETURNS FIRE. Bang. Bang. Bright bursts of heat.

Goon #2 takes one in the neck, SPRAYING LEAD...

and HITTING Saperstien. The bullet WIPES the features off his face like the paw of a grizzly as...

BURT

staggers, clutching his stomach.

BACK TO JACKIE -- JUMPING THE CURB

Pedal to the metal, cobble stones THUMPING under his wheels.

ANGLE NICK

rolling over on the ground with Goon #1, struggling as...

BURT

drops to his knees in shock, calling out weakly as...

BURT (CONT'D)
Nick...

(CONTINUED)

TIGHT TWO -- AS NICK

gets the best of Goon #1. He PINS him down, their hands still wrapped around the gun--the barrel JAMMED beneath the goon's chin.

NICK

Let it go! Let it go!

CU THE TRIGGER -- THEIR FINGERS INTERLOCKED

as Goon #1 refuses to concede, his teeth grinding to powder.

NICK (CONT'D)

Let it go!

Bang. Brain matter explodes from the goon's skull. Nick reels off him, his face and clothes spattered with blood as...

GOON #2 -- FATALLY STAGGERED

but not dead, levels his gun at Nick in the B.G. as...

JACKIE SPEEDS INTO FRAME -- HORN BLARING

JACKIE

Motherfucker!!!!

GOON #2 -- WHIRLS

turns to face 3,000 pounds of oncoming steel as...

THE CAR -- CLIPS HIS GUN-ARM

at full throttle--LIQUEFYING THE BONE. The car SPINS OUT and stops as...

Nick SEES Burt lying on the cobblestones--face down.

NICK

Burt...

ANGLE BURT -- AS NICK TURNS HIM OVER

His eyes blink like the wings of a hummingbird, BLOOD leaking from his mouth...moments from the end.

NICK (CONT'D)

Burt, Jesus God...Hang on!

SIRENS in the distance. Jackie grabs the envelope and the satchel, pulls Saperstien's wallet from his jacket.

JACKIE

Leave him, man! We gotta get the fuck outta here!

(CONTINUED)

Burt tries to speak. Nick gets very close, trying to hear...

NICK

What? What?...

Burt manages a last sigh of terminal resignation...

BURT

Character...

Burt's eyes go death-blank. Nick hangs his head, devastated.

JACKIE

I said, let's go!

The SIRENS grow closer. Nick looks up at Jackie, his bearings briefly lost. Then...

he pulls Burt's wallet and I.D. from his jacket pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BISTRO -- NIGHT

Cummings sits at Nick's private booth, well into his second cocktail, checking his watch, restless and waiting as...

Jean-Hugue approaches with a bottle of fine RED.

JEAN-HUGUE

Excuse me, sir. But Monsieur Nick has been detained and unfortunately will not be able to dine with you tonight. He ask that you accept this bottle of Chateau DeBrillion '76 and his sincere apology.

Off Cummings, feeling like the sitting duck indeed.

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

She's at the laptop, writing. The phone rings.

JOE

(answering)

Hello?

JACKIE (V.O.)

Chapter eight: Jackie cheats fate.
I'll call you when the coast is clear.

JOE

Jackie --

(CONTINUED)

Click. Off Joe...

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S LOFT -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Camera TRACKS through the space like a disembodied presence, following the sound of a TV NEWS BROADCAST concerning the shoot-out at the square. [It's big news. Two of the dead are described as "known mobsters", the other bodies unidentified].

TRACK into THE BEDROOM to FIND...the TV. [We SEE shots of the police, the bodies, etc]. The bathroom door is open.

INSIDE THE BATHROOM -- NICK

is in the shower, still in his clothes, his world come apart at the seams.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY. NICK'S LOFT -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Max raps on the front door. No response. He calls out...

MAX

Nicky, it's me.

No response. He tries the knob. The door OPENS.

INSIDE NICK'S LOFT -- MAX ENTERS

to FIND...Nick sitting by the rear window in the dark. The window is WIDE OPEN to the cool night air, the sounds of the city and the harbor wafting in...

MAX

(approaching)

Jackie called. Are you all right?

ANGLE NICK -- STARING OUT THE WINDOW

NICK

You who know Jackie is? He's the bill collector. You and me, we're finally paying up.

There's a new fatalism in his tone. An eerie resignation.

MAX

They haven't caught us yet.

Nick turns, locks eyes with him.

(CONTINUED)

NICK

You're the anonymous donor, aren't you?

MAX

What?

NICK

I checked the provenance on the cards. You don't need to know the secrets of the Universe to know the only person who'd pay three million to steal a bunch of Tarot Cards had to be the owner himself. Because the owner knew the truth.

Max is very still. Nick shakes his head, rises...

NICK (CONT'D)

It's in the N.Y. Times today, an article on the Smithsonian. All about some kind of new technology they've got to root out forgeries. You said that's where the cards were headed, right? Once the truth came out, ancient objects insured for 25 million, wouldn't be worth a damn.

(beat)

Would they?

Max lowers his eyes.

MAX

No. They wouldn't be worth a damn.

NICK

Why didn't you tell me?

Max takes a deep breath, sighs...

MAX

Every link is a weak link, darling. You simply didn't need to know.

Nick takes Max's head in his hands with almost unbearable intensity...

NICK

I blew a man's brains out tonight, Max! There's a link for you! My friend is dead! My friend is dead!

MAX

I'm sorry...I'm sorry...

(CONTINUED)

There are tears in Nick's eyes. After a moment, he lets him go and turns away. Then, trying to regain his composure...

NICK

Tell "the buyer" the job just got more expensive. I want another million on top of Jackie's cut--and half my total share in diamonds. We pull the job day after tomorrow and then I disappear for good.

MAX

Don't do it for me, Nicky. If you need to go, just go. Go tonight.

NICK

It's not about you anymore, Max.
It's about the money.

It cuts like a blade. Max's mouth is open to speak, but nothing comes out.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. STEVEN'S HOUSE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Nick and Jackie [dressed for work as Brian, but not behaving like him] wait at the door. SHOES are lined up on the porch. The door then opens as far as the chain will allow...

STEVEN

You're late. My mom's supposed to be home in a half an hour.

NICK

Let us in, Steven.

STEVEN

Take off your shoes.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

It's decorated Hippie-style. The feeling is musty, oppressive. There's a PHOTO of Steven's mother. [See Mama Cass].

Steven gives Jackie/Brian the once-over.

STEVEN

Who's the retard?

JACKIE

When was the last time they let you out your cage, man? That word is out of fashion.

(CONTINUED)

NICK

This is Jackie. Brian's his alter-ego. Our inside man.

STEVEN

Jackie? What are you, a comedian?

JACKIE

Why, are you a joke?

Steven turns to Nick.

STEVEN

I don't like him.

INSIDE THE BASEMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

They head down the stairs. Humidifiers hum.

JACKIE

Sweet little situation you got here, Steven.

STEVEN

Don't touch anything. I just disinfected.

ANGLE STEVEN'S COMPUTER -- AS HE TAKES A SEAT

BLUEPRINTS of the security system appear ON SCREEN.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

There's good news and bad news. Anytime security is breached, the police are automatically signaled by phone line. So cutting the line's as good as setting off the alarm.

NICK

What's the good news?

STEVEN

The good news is, the entire system is monitored by computer and with these pass codes I can trigger the perimeter alarm from here.

(eyes the blueprints)

The circuit control box is hidden behind an air conditioning vent in a room outside the monitoring station. Is there a green room of some kind?

JACKIE

There's like a little lounge area.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

That's where it is. Once the alarm is turned off, you can rewire it to go from a closed to an open circuit.

JACKIE

Just like that, huh?

STEVEN

Change six little wires and you could ride out the front door on an elephant and no one would know it.

NICK

Aren't there 3 tiers to the system?

STEVEN

Three, yeah.

JACKIE

I thought there were only two?

STEVEN

Are you doubting me?

JACKIE

I'm not doubting you, I'm --

STEVEN

(to Nick, very agitated)
He's doubting me. He comes into MY world and DOUBTS me!

NICK

Steven...

STEVEN

I am in a state of complete LOATHING with this person. I want that understood.

JACKIE

The feeling's mutual, geek.

NICK

Shut up, both of you. Just go on.

Steven takes a breath.

STEVEN

There are 3 systems. 3 as in 3. The 3rd is the simplest but also the trickiest. There are these grids of electrical conducting tape hidden in floor and running up the wall.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN (CONT'D)

They're connected to a separate room alarm at the base of the ceiling, almost like a smoke alarm. Even with the building alarm and the motion sensors off, you crack open that display case --

NICK

We're gonna get an earful.

STEVEN

Exactamento.

JACKIE

Why can't we just cut the electricity?

STEVEN

Cut the electricity?! How about an automatic police response? HEL-LO?! Where'd you find this dufus, Nick?

NICK

Finish what you were saying, Steven.

STEVEN

Well tell him not to speak.

NICK

Don't speak.

Jackie shakes his head, finds it almost amusing.

STEVEN

The only way to defeat that alarm is kill it. Open it up, rip its guts out.

JACKIE

How'd you two find each other anyway? I bet that's a wack little tale.

NICK

He said don't speak.

(beat, to Steven)

How high up is the alarm?

STEVEN

According to this, it's 15 feet.

JACKIE

(to Nick)

What are you gonna do, drop through the roof, Mission Impossible style?

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

OH MY GOD! That was total horseshit! Hanging by those wires? One drop of sweat and he's a goner? Five dollar motion sensor from K-MART nabs him easy!

(to Nick)

Where'd you get this wannabe?

JACKIE

It's a good question!

Nick rises and takes a breath.

NICK

Steven, I want you to set off the alarm tonight, say one or two in the morning. There'll be no sign of forced entry, so they'll chalk it up to the wind. We'll clock it, see how long before they reset the alarm.

(to Jackie)

That'll be all the time you have to rewire the circuit.

JACKIE

Another fuckin' test, huh?

NICK

Just before quitting time, you plead a sudden case of food poisoning, ask to lie down in the lounge. Once the alarm goes off, you should be alone long enough to do the rewiring while the guards search the building. When you're done, go back to your motel room and wait for me to contact you.

JACKIE

What about you?

NICK

That you don't need to know.

JACKIE

I don't, huh?

NICK

No. Steven will now instruct you in the fine art of wire splicing.

Nick heads back up the basement stairs. Steven picks up a handful of multicolored WIRES, shakes them in front of Jackie.

STEVEN

Ready, genius?

(CONTINUED)

Off Jackie...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LIBRARY -- NIGHT

as the ALARM BELL rings out.

INSIDE THE LIBRARY -- JACKIE/BRIAN

stands at the top of the grand staircase with MOP in hand as MR. TOMS [60, head of security] and two SECURITY GUARDS hurry across the foyer below. Unlike the other guards, Toms wears a suit and tie--and proud of it. Jackie checks his watch.

EXT. LIBRARY GROUNDS -- MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Toms and the guards SCAN the area with a FLASHLIGHT to FIND...

nothing but leaves skating across the stone.

EXT. ENTRANCE OF THE LIBRARY -- LATER

Two POLICE CARS roll up as Mr. Toms comes out the front doors.

OFFICER #1
Everything all right?

MR. TOMS
(a cockney accent)
Just the wind, sir. System's touchier
than the little woman.

INT. STEVEN'S BASEMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Steven is at the computer, the alarm BLUEPRINTS on screen--a RED BAR BLINKING. He's got Nick on the speaker phone...

STEVEN
(to the speaker phone)
It's still on.

INT. NICK'S LOFT -- CONTINUOUS

Nick stands at the window, on the cell phone. He has a STOP WATCH in hand--ticking...

BACK TO STEVEN'S COMPUTER SCREEN -- AS THE RED BAR
goes BLUE.

STEVEN
The alarm's back on. It's back on.

(CONTINUED)

BACK TO NICK

as Nick stops the watch, checks it.

NICK

Eight minutes. Is that enough?

STEVEN

(over the phone)

All the retard has to remember is
black to red, green to blue, white
to yellow. Can he handle that?

TIME CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S KITCHEN -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Nick slides the refrigerator out of its nook to REVEAL a
secret DOOR. He opens it and goes...

INSIDE A SMALL WORK ROOM

All his tools are here. Drills, tape player, wires, UV light,
etc. On the work table is a fairly hefty BRIEFCASE with a
large SLEEVE in the trunk and a TANK of pressurized air in
the well. Beside the tank, secured to the well of the case,
are a pair of heavy COILED SPRINGS with attachments, and two
DIALS for PRESSURE and WEIGHT. Nick then...

picks up a METAL PADDLE, similar in shape to a ping pong
paddle--TEN INCHES IN DIAMETER. Using an electric
SCREWDRIVER...

he begins securing the paddle to the springs.

TIME CUT TO:

THE SAME -- LATER

The paddle is in place. He sets the air pressure, turning
the switch on the tank. A soft HISS as the NEEDLE on the
dial rises into the RED. Then he picks up a small REMOTE
CONTROL and presses the button.

BANG! The paddle pops straight up with considerable force.

He folds the paddle back into position, closes the case...

and spins the four numbered COMBINATION lock.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S LOFT -- THE NEXT DAY

Nick puts on his raincoat. THE CASE is on the counter by the
phone. He picks up the phone, speed-dials a number.

(CONTINUED)

It rings twice on the other end. Then we HEAR the outgoing message on Burt's answering MACHINE.

BURT (V.O.)

(over the phone)

Hi, this is Burt. I'm probably out wastin' money, so leave a message and I'll get back to ya.

Beep.

TIGHT ON NICK

hesitating, his throat constricted by the loss. Then...

NICK

Burt, it's Nick. I'll meet you at Churchill Fields at midnight.

He puts down the phone. Then he takes one last look around the loft. At all his things. His objects. Then...

he walks out the door.

INT. A BASEMENT OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Deputy Carol is ROLLING TAPE, writing the words: CHURCHILL FIELDS on her pad. She picks up the phone, dials. Then...

DEPUTY CAROL

(into the phone)

Inspector? Are you familiar with a Churchill Fields?

MR. WRIGHT (V.O.)

(over the phone)

It's a small airport, just outside of town.

DEPUTY CAROL

Wells and Mr. Slotnick are meeting there at midnight tonight.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARKING GARAGE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Nick pulls his ticket and drives in.

INT. THE PARKING GARAGE -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick parks beside one of those old VW vans, painted wildly in the style of the flower children. He gets out of the car as Steven gets out of the van. Steven's not all that pleased about being free of his hermetically sealed environment, jumpy as hell, eyebrows TWITCHING nervously.

(CONTINUED)

NICK
Hanging in there?

STEVEN
I increased my dosage, but I still
don't like it. It's smoggy, it's
loud...it's chaos out here, man.
It'll swallow you up and spit you
out.

Nick takes his RAINCOAT off the hook in the back seat and
puts it on.

NICK
You'll be home soon, don't worry.

Nick takes THE CASE out of the trunk and hands it to Steven,
along with his car KEYS.

NICK (CONT'D)
When you're done, park it in the lot
near the subway station.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GARAGE -- MOMENTS LATER

Steven exits onto the sidewalk, carrying THE CASE, stepping
gingerly, as if the ground were hot instead of cold as...

Nick appears a moment after, and crosses the street against
traffic, heading in the other direction.

INT. THE LIBRARY. BAG-CHECK AREA -- LATE AFTERNOON

Steven hands THE CASE to the check-girl and receives his
STUB.

CHECK GIRL
We close at six.

INT. JOE'S HOTEL -- LATE AFTERNOON

She's in bed, writing on the laptop. The phone rings.

JOE
(answering)
Hello?

NICK (V.O.)
(over the phone)
It's Nick.

JOE
I was wondering what happened to
you.

INTER-CUT WITH:

EXT. A PHONE BOOTH. DOWNTOWN -- CONTINUOUS

NICK
(into the phone)
Mind if I come up for a minute? I'm
only a couple of blocks from you.

JOE
Um....

Joe looks around. Bit of a mess. Checks herself in the mirror.

JOE (CONT'D)
Can you give me fifteen minutes?

TIME CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S HOTEL ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

A knock. Joe comes out of the bathroom, quickly freshened...

JOE
Coming...

She opens the door to FIND...Jackie--dressed as Brian.

JACKIE/BRIAN
(acting the part)
Special Olympics.

JOE
Jackie.

JACKIE
(dropping the act)
Expecting someone else?

JOE
No, no, I --

JACKIE
(entering)
What?

She closes the door behind him...

JOE
Actually, I was on my way out.

JACKIE
Out, out. Always goin' out. You
oughtta stay in and write this epic.

Jackie tosses a pair of AIRLINE TICKETS on the bed.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE (CONT'D)

So there they are, baby. Two tickets to paradise. This time tomorrow we'll be on our way to Cancun and I'll give you enough crazy shit to win you a prize. The money's gonna get wired direct. Just wish I had it now, so I wouldn't have to fly coach.

JOE

I saw it on the news, Jackie. They said four people were dead.

JACKIE

Correction, four assholes are dead and I nearly got my head blown off, but thanks for caring.

She just looks at him.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

What?

JOE

Did you kill anyone?

JACKIE

(dismissive)

You spent half your life goin' to crime scenes just to smell the blood.

JOE

I said, did you kill anyone?

Beat. He makes a dismissive, almost sheepish face.

JACKIE

I'm not proud of it, but I ran for my life.

She's hardly convinced.

EXT. JOE'S HOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

Nick approaches the building, enters. Then...

BACK TO JOE & JACKIE

JACKIE

One thing I can tell ya, is the master lost complete control. Motherfucker went off like a pipe bomb. Makes me almost afraid to go through with it.

JOE

What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE

I mean he's a fuckin' killer.
(pulls her close)
Now gimme some juice. I need a boost.

He tries to kiss her. She recoils.

JOE

(re: the Brian getup)
It's hard to kiss you when you look
like this.

He stares at her, suspicious. Then he glances at his watch.

JACKIE

Well...duty calls.

JOE

Good luck.

He nods, moves to the door. Then he pauses and turns back.

JACKIE

(icy)
I can still trust you, can't I, Joe?
Cause trust is the cornerstone of
healthy relations.

Off Joe, feeling the palpable threat...

INSIDE THE HOTEL ELEVATOR -- NICK

rises to the sixth floor. Ping.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick gets out and heads down the hall just as...

the DOOR to the stairwell creaks slowly closed in the B.G.

ANGLE NICK -- PAUSING TO LOOK BACK

as the door clicks shut.

INSIDE THE STAIRWELL -- CONTINUOUS

Jackie leans against the wall with his mouth open--stunned.

JACKIE

You fucking little cunt.

He tries to catch his breath. He GRIPS the doorknob. Should
he go back and confront them? Goddamn it. He checks his watch.

No. There's a better way. As he heads down the stairs...

(CONTINUED)

JOE (O.S.)

Can I can get you anything? There's
little bottles of --

INT. JOE'S HOTEL ROOM -- JOE

moves to the bar-fridge, trying to conceal her racing heart.

NICK

No, that's okay, I can't stay long.

There's a vulnerability about him now. He's staring down the
tunnel, seeing the light of the oncoming train.

She twists the top off a little bottle of SCOTCH.

JOE

You don't mind if I indulge, do you?

NICK

Not at all.

She drops a cube into a glass, empties the bottle. He glances
at her laptop.

NICK (CONT'D)

So how's the writing coming?

JOE

I need more detail.
(raises the glass)
Cheers.

NICK

Cheers.

She drinks. A larger than average swallow.

NICK (CONT'D)

So how long did you say you were in
town for?

JOE

I didn't. Why?

NICK

I was thinking of heading south for
awhile. I have a little seabird.
Thought I'd head down to Rio, Costa
Rica maybe.

JOE

A seabird. I like the sound of that.

(CONTINUED)

NICK

There's a hotel in the middle of the rain forest. Monkeys hanging from the trees outside your balcony...We could touch down on the Amazon, ski into a private lagoon. There'd be no obligation to --

JOE

Sleep with you?

He just looks at her.

JOE (CONT'D)

Actually, I like to get as close as possible to my subjects.

NICK

What happen to objectivity?

JOE

There's no such thing.

(beat)

When would you leave?

NICK

Tomorrow.

JOE

Tomorrow?

He nods. Beat. She knows he's pulling the job.

JOE (CONT'D)

Sounds like a sweet situation.

Beat. Nick visibly darkens.

NICK

What?

JOE

I said it sounds like a...

(catches herself,

tries to cover)

sweet situation. It's from an old Professor Longhair song. "A Sweet Situation". He was the King of New Orleans.

NICK

Oh.

(beat)

Tell you what, if it's a yes, meet me in front of your hotel at noon.

(CONTINUED)

JOE
Just like that?

NICK
Anything for a story, right?

Off Joe...

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY. OUTSIDE JOE'S ROOM -- NICK EXITS
and closes the door behind him. His face is as hard as stone.

INSIDE JOE'S ROOM -- JOE

moves to the phone, cursing her stupidity. She dials 411. It rings. She lights a cigarette. Her hand SHAKES.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
(over the phone)
What city and listing, please?

JOE
Montreal. Harcourt & Abbey Insurance
Company.

EXT. THE LIBRARY STEPS -- DUSK

Nick climbs the steps and enters the building.

INT. OFFICES OF HARCOURT & ABBEY -- DUSK

Mr. Wright is at his desk. His SECRETARY appears in the doorway.

SECRETARY
There's someone on the line for
Inspector Cummings, sir. Says it's
urgent.

Mr. Wright picks up...

MR. WRIGHT
(into the phone)
This is Inspector Wright, can I help
you?

INT. THE LIBRARY FOYER -- DUSK

Nick passes through the METAL DETECTORS, still wearing the raincoat. He heads up the grand staircase, passing a SECURITY GUARD named LARRY [65] .

INSIDE CUMMINGS CAR. TWO LANE ROAD. DRIVING -- LATE AFTERNOON

Cummings cell phone rings as he and Deputy Carol pass beneath a SIGN that reads: CHURCHILL FIELDS 2 MILES.

CUMMINGS
(answering)
Cummings.

MR. WRIGHT (V.O.)
(over the phone)
Inspector, I just received a rather odd tip with regard to the Library of Antiquities.

Off Cummings, listening to the news...

EXT. THE TWO LANE ROAD -- MOMENTS LATER

Cummings turns the car around and heads back to the city.

INT. THE LIBRARY -- DUSK

Nick sits reading a book like an ordinary Library-goer.

A VOICE (V.O.)
(over the intercom)
The Library will be closing in five minutes. Please head for the exits.

As he looks up...

INT. FIRST FLOOR -- MOMENTS LATER

Jackie/Brian wheels his MOP & BUCKET out of the JANITOR'S CLOSET, leaving the door open as...

Nick approaches in the B.G.--wearing GLOVES. They lock eyes for a beat before...

an elderly VOLUNTEER appears at the opposite end of the hall. Jackie/Brian tries to distract her...

JACKIE/BRIAN
(slow, shy)
Mrs. Hartley, may I...Could I...

VOLUNTEER
Yes, Brian?

JACKIE/BRIAN
Well, I was just wondering, um...If you, you know, like, diddle yourself?

VOLUNTEER
Excuse me?

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE NICK

slipping into the janitor's closet unseen.

JACKIE/BRIAN

I mean, will that make you go blind?

VOLUNTEER

Well, I'm not going to encourage you to...diddle yourself all day, Brian, but your mother is medically mistaken.

Off Jackie/Brian, turning back as she heads off...

INT. THE JANITOR'S CLOSET -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick is wedged behind some BIG CARDBOARD BOXES of detergent. Jackie then peeks his head in the door...

JACKIE

'nighty night.

and shuts off the lights. The door clicks shut.

TIGHT ON NICK'S EYES -- IN COMPLETE DARKNESS

Like a cat's.

OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY -- THE SKY DARKENS WITH RAIN

as the last group of LIBRARY-GOERS exits the building and Larry the Security Guard locks the doors from the inside.

DETECTIVE RUGAT (O.S.)

But she refused to identify either Mr. Wells or this other individual by name.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS. RUGAT'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Det. Rugat is at his desk. Cummings stands before him with Deputy Carol.

CUMMINGS

She fears for her life. If she told us their names the trail back to her would be too obvious.

DETECTIVE RUGAT (O.S.)

Are you suggesting that Mr. Wells would be stupid enough to attempt such a theft right under your nose?

CUMMINGS

Stupid isn't the word I would use.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CUMMINGS (CONT'D)

Arrogant, perhaps. All I know, is that the woman asked to speak directly to me, and suggested a link between the violence of the other night and the man she knew I was interested in. Now how would she know that?

Rugat presses his speaker button.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

(into the speaker)

Have we received the I.D. on that third body, yet, Mrs. Montgomrie?

SECRETARY (V.O.)

(over the speaker)

Yes sir. It just came in, sir.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

Would you bring it in, please? And ask Detective Samuels to pop by.

(then, to Cummings)

We received the first fingerprint analyses on one of the bodies. We should get the last one in tomorrow.

The Secretary enters, carrying a FOLDER. Rugat takes the folder, opens it, examines the contents. Then...

DETECTIVE RUGAT (CONT'D)

Does the name Burt Slotnick mean anything to you?

Cummings exchanges a glance with Deputy Carol.

CUMMINGS

Only that he was Wells' best friend.

DEPUTY CAROL

But that's odd.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

Sorry?

DEPUTY CAROL

He left a message for him this afternoon, telling Mr. Slotnick to meet him at Churchill Fields.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

Who left a message?

She realizes her mistake, looks at Cummings. He covers...

(CONTINUED)

CUMMING

She was following Mr. Wells this morning, overheard him on the phone.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

Following him rather closely I should say.

CUMMINGS

Ears like a rabbit, sir.

Beat.

DETECTIVE RUGAT

You haven't crossed the line, have you, Inspector?

CUMMINGS

No, sir.

Rugat is not quite convinced. Detective Samuels enters.

DETECTIVE SAMUELS

You wanted to see me, sir?

DETECTIVE RUGAT

I want you to stake out the Library Of Antiquities tonight. It seems something might be up.

CUT TO:

INT. STEVEN'S BASEMENT -- NIGHT

Steven is at the computer, checks his CLOCK. It reads: 12:30

DISSOLVE TO:

INSIDE THE LIBRARY -- JACKIE/BRIAN

mops the stairs on the grand staircase. He glances at the CLOCK above the foyer. The hands read: 1:35

INSIDE THE HALLWAY -- FIRST FLOOR

Danny walks toward the closet, JINGLING his keys.

INSIDE THE JANITOR'S CLOSET -- MOMENTS LATER

The door opens. The lights go on. Danny takes something from the closet.

TIGHT ON NICK

hearing the door close after him.

INSIDE THE FOYER -- MOMENTS LATER

Larry, the old guard, sits in a chair at the bottom of the grand staircase, SNORING. Danny empties the trash nearby.

JACKIE/BRIAN

Danny?

Jackie/Brian appears behind him with mop and bucket.

JACKIE/BRIAN (CONT'D)

(feigning queasiness)

May I lie down for awhile please?

I'm not feeling so good.

EXT. THE LIBRARY -- CONTINUOUS

Cummings sits in his car across the street with Deputy Carol. He pulls out a FLASK and takes a sip of the dog.

EXT. THE REAR OF THE LIBRARY -- CONTINUOUS

Detective Samuels sits in his car with a view of the back of the building and the park that surrounds it.

INT. STEVEN'S LAIR -- STEVEN

is at the computer. His clock reads: 2:30 AM.

STEVEN

All right, retard, don't fuck it up.

As he logs on...

INSIDE THE LOUNGE AREA -- JACKIE-BRIAN

lies on the couch, staring at the HEATING VENT as...

Mr. Toms passes by the open doorway.

MR. TOMS

Y'alright, young man?

JACKIE/BRIAN

(very weak)

Tummy ache.

Just then, the ALARM rings out.

MR. TOMS

Aw, for goodnessake. Here we go again.

BACK TO CUMMINGS -- IN THE CAR

He HEARS the alarm.

(CONTINUED)

CUMMINGS

Well, whaddya know.

BACK TO NICK -- HEARING THE ALARM

He checks the glowing hands of his watch. Right on time.

INT. THE LOUNGE -- MOMENTS LATER

Jackie hops off the couch, looks down the hall, closes the door and locks it. As he starts unscrewing the grating...

EXT. THE LIBRARY GARDENS -- MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Toms and two other GUARDS come out of the building with FLASHLIGHTS and scan to FIND...Cummings, Deputy Carol, and Detective Samuels behind the gate that surrounds the garden.

CUMMINGS

Good evening, sir.

MR. TOMS

Who in the blazes are you?

BACK TO JACKIE/BRIAN -- AS HE REMOVES THE GRATE

to FIND...the CIRCUIT CONTROL. He pops the lid off. SIX WIRES intertwined, each a different color. He whips out a WIRE CUTTER. Then, under his breath...

JACKIE/BRIAN

Black to blue, green to -- No, black
to green, blue to --
(can't remember)
SHIT!

As he whips out his CELL PHONE...

INTER CUT WITH:

INT. STEVEN'S BASEMENT -- CONTINUOUS

as the phone rings beside his computer. He picks up just as his MOTHER picks up on the other end.

STEVEN

Well?

MOTHER (V.O.)

Who is this?

STEVEN

GET OFF MY LINE, MOTHER!

(CONTINUED)

MOTHER (V.O.)

Well who on earth is calling you at
two thirty in the morning, Steven?!

(re: the alarm in the
B.G.)

And what is that noise?!

STEVEN

NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS! NOW GET OFF!

JACKIE

(desperate)

Steven, I forgot the colors.

STEVEN

You what?

JACKIE

The colors! I forgot the colors!

MOTHER

Who is this?!!

STEVEN

GET OFF THE PHONE, YOU BITCH!

MOTHER

Who are you involved with Steven?
Are you selling drugs, is that it?

STEVEN

I DON'T SELL DRUGS, YOU HAG, I USE
THEM. I ALSO DEAL IN WHITE SLAVERY
AND STOLEN BODY PARTS, IS THAT WHAT
YOU WANT TO HEAR?!!

Jackie checks the clock. Seconds ticking past...

JACKIE

Steven! We're running out of time!

STEVEN

HOW COULD YOU FORGET THE FUCKING
COLORS?!

MOTHER

I'm going to call the police, Steven!
You hear me?! I've had it!

She BANGS down the phone. Steven calls out up the stairs...

STEVEN

YOU MAKE MY LIFE A LIVING HELL!
(distraught, to Jackie)
She makes me want to kill myself!

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE

Would you calm down, motherfucker?!
I can't remember my wires!

STEVEN

BLACK TO RED, GREEN TO BLUE, WHITE
TO YELLOW, YOU FUCKING RETARD!

JACKIE/BRIAN

Black to red, green to blue, white
to yellow. Black to red, green to
blue, white to yellow.

Jackie clicks off. As he prepares to splice...

INSIDE THE EAST WING -- MR. TOMS RENTERS

the building with Cummings, Det. Samuels, Deputy Carol and
the guards as the alarm continues to RING excruciatingly...

MR. TOMS

The wind hammers the windows and
sets it off, Detective, that's all.

DETECTIVE SAMUELS

Still, Mr. Toms, we'd like to search
the building--just to be sure.

MR. TOMS

Suit yourself.
(into his walkie-talkie)
Reset the perimeter, and leave the
motion sensors off. We're searching
the building.

The Alarm bell CEASES.

BACK TO JACKIE/BRIAN -- MADLY SPLICING

the black wire to the red wire, dripping sweat...

JACKIE/BRIAN

Black to red, green to blue, red to --

He pulls his hands away. Voila. The Perimeter light goes on.

INSIDE A HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Toms and the others head down the hall.

DETECTIVE SAMUELS

How many guards and janitors are
still on duty, Mr. Toms?

(CONTINUED)

MR. TOMS
Besides myself, four. All upstanding
men, I assure you.

CUMMINGS
And the janitors?

BACK TO NICK -- INSIDE THE CLOSET

He HEARS their muffled conversation, recognizes that brogue.

MR. TOMS (O.S.)
They've all gone home. Uh, except
one, that is.

BACK TO CUMMINGS

CUMMINGS
And who would that be?

INT. THE LOUNGE -- MOMENTS LATER

Cummings and the others enter to FIND...an empty room.

MR. TOMS
Hmm, he was just here.
(into the walkie-talkie)
Donald, have you seen Brian?

SECURITY GUARD
(over the talkie)
He went home a few minutes ago, sir.

MR. TOMS
(to Cummings)
He wouldn't help you much anyway.
Poor kid is mentally challenged.
Lives with his mother, watches Star
Trek all day.

EXT. THE SIDEWALK. OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY -- NIGHT

Jackie walks away from the building, turns a corner.

INT. THE LIBRARY -- MOMENTS LATER

SERIES OF CUTS & DISSOLVES:

Mr. Toms, Cummings and the others search the building. They
open doors, look through rooms, check locks, etc. Then...

INT. THE HALLWAY. OUTSIDE THE JANITOR'S CLOSET -- LATER

Mr. Toms unlocks the door, opens it, turns on the light.

(CONTINUED)

MR. TOMS

This is the last of it.

Cummings enters the room, moves between the narrow corridor of BOXES to FIND...an EMPTY SPACE where Nick used to be. Cummings then OPENS one of the boxes, stacked atop another. GALLONS of liquid detergent inside. As he looks up...

TILT to FIND the grating of an AIR VENT.

CUMMINGS

Toss me your flashlight, will ya,
Mr. Toms?

Mr. Toms tosses it. Cummings climbs atop the boxes, points the flashlight into the vent, peering through the slats. Nothing. All four SCREWS are tight.

CUMMINGS (CONT'D)

Very well then.

Cummings gets down, heads out. Mr. Toms turns off the light and shuts the door behind him. After a moment...

IN ALMOST TOTAL DARKNESS -- THE BOX

that Cummings opened MOVES a little. Then a little more. Until it slides off the one beneath it and TIPS over. Two bottles of detergent tumble onto the floor. Then...

Nick emerges, panting, covered in sweat.

MR. TOMS (O.S.)

Truth is, they never catch the smart ones.

EXT. THE LIBRARY SERVICE ENTRANCE. RAINING -- MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Toms shows Cummings and the others the door.

MR. TOMS

It's just most criminals are too dumb to make a go in the real world. Look at those Berkeley radicals. The ones from the 60s? FBI after them for 25 years, what. Only reason they caught 'em is they turned themselves in.

Off Cummings...

EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY. RAINING -- MOMENTS LATER

Detective Samuels, Cummings, and Deputy Carol approach Cummings' car in the downpour.

(CONTINUED)

DETECTIVE SAMUELS
Mr. Cummings, with all due respect,
I think we've been had.

CUMMINGS
(nods)
I think I'll hang about anyway, if
ya don't mind. Would you give my
Deputy a lift to her hotel?

DEPUTY CAROL
But --

CUMMINGS
I won't be very good company tonight.

INT. LIBRARY HALLWAY -- LATER

Nick emerges from the janitor's closet. There above the
archway, is the MOTION SENSOR.

He waves hand in front of it. Nothing happens.

INT. THE BAG CHECK AREA -- NICK

works the lock with two metal PRONGS and a JIMMY.

INSIDE THE BAG-CHECK AREA -- NICK

switches on the light. He ducks beneath the counter, finds
the CASE in the corner in the bin marked: LOST AND FOUND.

OUTSIDE THE BAG-CHECK AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick sticks his head out the door. The coast is clear.

TRACKING NICK

climbing the grand staircase in the dark.

INT. CORRIDOR OF ARCHES -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick walks quickly down the corridor, carrying the case.

INT. THE EXHIBIT ROOM -- NICK ENTERS

The rain spatters the skylight. He places the case on the
floor and opens it. He secures the plastic band of the miner's
light to his forehead. The PIN-SPOT of light dances on the
wall and lands...

ON THE TAROT CARD -- BRIEFLY ILLUMINATING

the naked woman in the cosmic wheel with the snakes around
her throat. TILT UP to FIND the ALARM BOX, fifteen feet high.
It's red light BLINKS in the dark. Then...

(CONTINUED)

Nick takes off his coat, peels back the Velcro from the inner lining to REVEAL a secret POCKET. Out of which he removes a heavy duty SQUIRT GUN in TWO PIECES. He screws the plastic barrel to the gun handle, the chamber sloshing with water.

ANGLE THE MEDIEVAL TABLE -- AS NICK

climbs on top of it. He AIMS the gun and FIRES. A long and powerful stream of water arcs through the air and SPRAYS the electric room alarm until...

several SPARKS burst from it's plastic shell and it shorts itself out with a little ZZZT-ZZZT sound. The Red light dies.

Off Nick..

INT. THE LIBRARY FOYER -- OLD LARRY

takes his seat at the bottom of the grand staircase and settles in, hearing nothing as...

INT. THE LOUNGE -- CONTINUOUS

Mr. Toms and the other guards settle down for a game of CARDS.

EXT. AN ALLEYWAY. RAINING -- NIGHT

as Jackie pulls a REVOLVER from bottom of a trash bin and tucks it in his belt.

EXT. THE SIDEWALK. RAINING -- MOMENTS LATER

Jackie puts on his helmet, hops on his motorcycle, and speeds off...

BACK TO NICK -- POPPING THE WOODEN FRAME

off the glass that covers the first set of cards. He takes the glass out whole and lays it on the ground. He then takes a RAZOR BLADE and slices into the mounting...

cutting along the outline of each card.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY. RAINING -- CONTINUOUS

Cummings sits in the car, rubbing the fog off the rainy window glass, his attention still on the Library as...

CUMMINGS' POV -- SLOW MOTION

Jackie's MOTORCYCLE rolls down the street in the other direction, his EYES finding Cummings behind the glass.

JACKIE'S POV -- ROLLING BY

as Cummings' eyes follow him past...

(CONTINUED)

BACK TO NICK -- FINISHING UP

He slips the cards into the sleeve in the trunk of the case, shuts it, and spins the combination lock.

BACK TO CUMMINGS -- IN THE CAR

as Jackie, wearing his helmet, RAPS on the window.

JACKIE

Excuse me! Can you help me, please?!

CUMMINGS

What is it?

JACKIE

There's a man in the street. I think he's dead!

Cummings rolls down the window.

CUMMINGS

What, where?

JACKIE

Right over there!

Bam. Jackie SMASHES him in the EYE with the handle of his gun. Then he leans in and batters him in the head again.

As Cummings' world goes dark...

INT. THE LIBRARY -- MOMENTS LATER

Nick walks gingerly across the second story landing, carrying the case. At the end of the CORRIDOR is a DOOR identified with a glowing EXIT SIGN. He pauses and then...

HEARS the sound of Larry's SNORES from down the stairs.

ANGLE THE SECOND STORY LANDING -- AS NICK

arrives at the top of the grand staircase and looks down. After a moment's hesitation, he proceeds down the stairs.

He does not rush. He measures his steps. Like the last decent.

ANGLE LARRY -- SOUND ASLEEP

as Nick passes, headed for the front door.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY. RAINING -- JUST BEFORE DAWN

The streets are deserted, gutters flush with rain as...Nick exits, turning to shut the door quietly behind him. BOOM!

(CONTINUED)

Jackie SMASHES his gun on the back of his head. He goes down, dropping the case. Then...

ANGLE NICK -- CLINGING TO CONSCIOUSNESS

as Jackie LOOMS over him in a BLUR.

JACKIE

You had to walk out the front door,
didn't you, master? I knew you
couldn't resist.

NICK

(woozy)
Fuck you...

Jackie puts the gun to Nick's head.

JACKIE

No fuck you. It's gonna be the coolest
Heist story ever told and you're
just the second banana. Now tell me
the combination.

NICK

Why should I tell you...when you're
going to kill me anyway?

JACKIE

Cause if you tell me, I won't shoot
you in the balls first. I'll just
put a bullet through your head and
be done with it.

Nick manages a nod, replies weakly...

NICK

6, 3, 7.

JACKIE

You wouldn't trick me now, would ya?

Jackie sets the numbers...

JACKIE (CONT'D)

6, 3, 7.

ANGLE NICK -- SLIPPING HIS HAND

into his coat pocket, and grabbing hold of the REMOTE as...

Jackie OPENS the case, leaning forward as he does, perplexed
by what he sees inside. Bang.

(CONTINUED)

THE PADDLE -- SLAMS INTO JACKIE'S FACE

crushing the bones to SPLINTERS. The gun flies from his hand and SKIDS across the stone as...

INSIDE THE LIBRARY -- LARRY THE SECURITY GUARD

jerks awake, eyes blinking and...

INSIDE CUMMINGS' CAR -- CUMMINGS

emerges from unconsciousness, his face swollen and bloody.

BACK TO NICK -- TRYING TO STAND

on WOBBLY legs. Jackie is SPITTING teeth and blood, monstrous with blood, also trying to stand.

BACK TO LARRY -- RISING FROM HIS CHAIR

He SEES two figures--OBSCURED through the rain-blurred doors.

ANGLE JACKIE -- TEETERING LIKE A PUNCH DRUNK FIGHTER

He reaches out for ropes that aren't there, laughing...

JACKIE
(garbled with blood)
Motherfucker...Is that the best you
got? Is it, master?!

NICK

picks the gun off the ground and turns to face him...

BACK TO CUMMINGS

sitting up...

HIS POV -- THROUGH THE CAR DOOR WINDOW

He sees two FIGURE through his blood--filled eyes.

BACK TO LARRY -- INSIDE THE LIBRARY

He POUNDS on the glass doors.

LARRY
Hey! Hey!

ANGLE NICK & JACKIE

Jackie LUNGES for him, SWIPING at the air like a wounded bear. Bang. Nick FIRES into his chest. Bang. Bang. Bang. Jackie's dead before he hits the ground but it doesn't matter. Nick empties the chamber as if emptying himself.

(CONTINUED)

He keeps pulling the trigger even after all the bullets are gone.

INSIDE THE LIBRARY -- LARRY

hurries down the hall, fumbling for his walkie-talkie...

LARRY

Mr. Toms! Mr. Toms!

ANGLE JACKIE -- TUMBLING

end over end over end down the stone steps as...

CUMMINGS -- FUMBLES FOR THE DOOR HANDLE

his brain scrambled, calling out...

CUMMINGS

What's going on?! What's going on?!

ANGLE THE BASE OF THE STEPS -- AS JACKIE

comes to rest with a soft THUD in the rain. Nick stands still at the top, looking down, the gun SMOKING in his hand.

TIGHT ON NICK -- KNOWING

that everything he was now lies at the bottom of those steps.

NICK

(quiet, to himself)

You win.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAX'S HOUSE. BACK ENTRANCE -- DAWN

Pepe yaps away as Max shuffles down the hall in his robe and slippers. Someone is knocking on the door.

ANGLE THE DOOR -- AS MAX OPENS IT

Nick wears a fresh set of clothes and a different coat.

NICK (CONT'D)

I dumped them in the river. If I were a soothsayer, I'd say they were at the bottom by now.

Off Max, realizing the meaning...

INSIDE THE LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Max shuffles in, moves to the BOOKCASE. Nick appears behind him, moving slower.

(CONTINUED)

The room is filled with an even greater CLUTTER of art and art-objects.

NICK
Getting crowded in here.

MAX
I'm remodeling the gallery. I took
some pieces in.

NICK
More orphans, huh?

Max turns...

MAX
You know me.

Nick SEES the photograph of him and Max in front of the Louvre in 1973, poised on the shelf. PUSH IN on the photo. Until Nick's young EYES fill the frame, staring back at him, at us. Read into them what you will. He has those kind of eyes.

The kind which contain everything and nothing. Then...

ANGLE THE BOOKCASE -- AS MAX

pulls back a copy of 'Crime & Punishment'. This triggers the opening of a secret panel to REVEAL..a SAFE in the wall. He spins the combo, opens it, and withdraws a small velvet SACK.

MAX (CONT'D)
The two million U.S. will be wired
into your Latin account as soon I
settle with the insurance company.

Nick takes the sack, opens it. DIAMONDS glitter inside.

NICK
Jackie's dead, Max.

MAX
Dead?

NICK
He tried to nail me when I came out
of the library. I figured he would
so I was modestly prepared.

Max can hardly draw a breath.

NICK (CONT'D)
That's another dead body. If I were
you, I'd get the hell out of town.

(CONTINUED)

MAX
Where would I go?

NICK
Paraguay.

MAX
Too many fascists.

NICK
Bolivia.

MAX
Snakes in the toilet bowls.
(a sigh)
No, I'm too old to change my life
now.

Nick just nods, takes the photograph for himself.

NICK
See ya, Max.

Nick turns to go.

MAX
Nicky...
(off his look)
Where will you go?

NICK
A week ago I would have told you.

Nick exits. Off Max, on the ringing of a phone...

CUT TO:

INT. A HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM -- DAY

as a DOCTOR stitches Cummings' brow. The Cell PHONE rings in his pocket. Cummings answers...

CUMMINGS
Cummings.

MAX (V.O.)
(over the phone)
Mr. Cummings? It's Maximillian Beard.
How are you this fine morning?

INTER CUT WITH

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Max is seated at his French, eighteenth century, scribes desk writing on a piece of fine paper with an old QUILL and

(CONTINUED)

ink. He has Cummings on the SPEAKER-PHONE, Pepe curled in his lap. The TV is on in the B.G. with pictures from the LIBRARY CRIME SCENE. The sound is too low to hear.

CUMMINGS

How did you get this number?

Max is completely calm, his tone quiet and matter of fact as he continues writing--in calligraphically perfect script.

MAX

That's not important. Now listen carefully. Last night, I stole some ancient Tarot Cards from the Library Of Antiquities with the help of someone who went by the name of Jackie Teller. A struggle ensued and I was forced to kill him.

CUMMINGS

You're lying. It was Wells. It had to be Wells!

MAX

In fact, Mr. Cummings, the cards were forgeries, purchased by me through a phony holding company in 1995. You'll find all the remaining details in a letter at 13 Rue de St. Charles. I'll leave the door open for you.

(beat)

Aur revoir, Mr. Cummings.

He hangs up and signs the confession. Then...

MAX (CONT'D)

Come Pepe, it's time to go.

As Max rises from the desk...

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE SAME -- LATER

The quill now rests upon the signed letter. Then PAN off the desk to FIND...Max lying on the bed, Pepe curled in his arm, his big eyes sad and confused.

There's a bottle of POISON on the night table.

ANGLE MAX -- ON THE BED

His body is stiff with death, eyes open. In SILENCE then...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE LAKESIDE DOCK -- DAY

as Cummings and several DETECTIVES approach Nick's seaplane, still moored at the far end. They check the plane.

There is no one on board. Off Cummings...

DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT -- OF A NEWSPAPER HEADLINE

Local Gallery Owner Dead In Apparent Suicide.

SCAN to READ the first paragraph: Maximillian Beard, well known Montreal Art Impresario, was found dead in his house the morning after a robbery at the Library Of Antiquities in which one man was found dead at the scene. In a signed confession, found at Mr. Beard's residence, he took full credit for both the murder and the theft.

PULL BACK to REVEAL Nick, dressed like a Bohemian artist, wearing the grey wig and ponytail and the tinted specs...

INSIDE AN AIRPORT TERMINAL -- DAY

folding the paper and tucking it under his arm.

A VOICE (V.O.)
(over the intercom)
Last call for flight 567 for Panama.
Last call.

As Nick heads through the gate...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A BOOK STORE. MONTREAL -- DAY

ON SCREEN: One year later.

PUSH IN...on the window to FIND one particular BOOK on display. The cover reads: **Portrait Of Two Thieves...by Joe Carson**. Beside the book, an ANNOUNCEMENT rests on an EASEL. It reads: **AUTOGRAPH SIGNING TODAY**

INT. INSIDE THE BOOK STORE -- JOE

is signing autographs. The line is rather long.

JOE
Who should I make it out to?

She looks up to FIND...Steven. His eyebrows are TWITCHING.

STEVEN
Make it out to Steven..

(CONTINUED)

JOE
(signing)
All right.

STEVEN
And this one too.

He holds another COPY.

JOE
And who's this one for?

STEVEN
This one's for Nick.

Her mouth is open, speechless. Someone in line calls out...

SOMEONE
Would you hurry it up, please?

JOE
(swallows, then)
What should I write?

STEVEN
Just write, 'Character is fate'.

TIGHT ON JOE

as she forgets to breathe. Then...

CU THE BOOK -- AS SHE WRITES

Dear Nick, Character is fate. Best wishes, Joe. Then...

she closes the book and hands it to Steven.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
Thanks.

JOE
You're welcome.

ANGLE STEVEN

as he turns and walks off.

STEVEN
(under his breath)
Fucking bitch.

TIGHT ON JOE

watching him go. Then...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A LATIN MARKETPLACE -- DAY

It's thriving and full of life. People buy and sell fruit and vegetables, food of all kinds, arts and crafts.

ON SCREEN: Buenos Aires, Argentina

TRACKING A LITTLE ARGENTINEAN GIRL -- WALKING

through the market, holding her MOTHER'S hand. Until she pauses before a small WATER COLOR on canvas. It rests against a stone wall with a number of other SKETCHES and PAINTINGS.

The water color is of a little PEASANT GIRL, kneeling at the river's edge. The Argentinean girl smiles, pointing at it.

ARGENTINEAN GIRL

Mama, dame lo. Dame lo.

MOTHER

Quando, Señor?

PULL BACK to REVEAL...Nick, seated before an easel in a painter's smock. His hair is much longer and he wears a beard.

NICK

Nada. She can have it.

He hands the picture to the little girl.

NICK (CONT'D)

Para ti.

LITTLE GIRL

Gracias, Señor. Gracias.

He smiles and watches her go off, clutching the water color like a prize possession.

Then...

he turns back to his sketch, and continues drawing.

FADE OUT:

The End