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THE SENTINEL

Screenplay

by

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"THE SENTINEL"

FADE IN

NOTE: INITIALLY, ALL THAT MEETS OUR EYE IS PHOTOGRAPHED IN SEPIA TONES AND IN A CONTAINED CINEMATIC RATIO. THE TIME IS SOME EIGHTEEN YEARS AGO ON THE CARMEL-MONTEREY COAST OF CALIFORNIA.

EXT. UP ANGLE - DAY - CRUCIFIXTION STATUARY

Sculpted hard against the sky is the tormented design of the crucified Christ. Camera pans down to discover the serene planes of a mission church and the furtive figures of two children up to no good whatsoever.

The girl, Allison Parker, is about nine years old, hoydenish, already the matrix of the beautiful woman whom we shall presently discover, whole-heartedly devoted to the companionship of the boy, Michael Farmer. He is a year or two older, bound upon asserting his maleness as they prowl their way to the open entrance to the deserted church.

INT. CHURCH - THE ENTRANCE - DAY - ALLISON AND MICHAEL

molten sunlight pouring through and the mischievous faces of Michael and Allison peering uncertainly inside. Their voices come in a conspiratorial hush.

ALLISON
Where is he?

MICHAEL
Sleeping maybe. Come on.

He takes her hand and they enter.

ALLISON
We shouldn't, Michael. Let's look at cows instead.

MICHAEL
(scornfully)
We always look at cows.

INT. THE CHURCH - WIDER ANGLE - THE CHILDREN

Hand in hand, they pass under the balcony which dominates the entrance and into the empty church, Allison somewhat reluctantly, Michael treating the premises as a proper subject for exploration. Gleaming, polished woods, harsh light leaking in, the symbols of Catholicism, their guardians occupied elsewhere on this head-struck afternoon.

Allison holds back. Michael pauses -- looks around -- keeps going.

ON MICHAEL

plunging deep into forbidden territory, mounting the altar itself. Now he faces Allison, a hand on either side of the pulpit, gravely priest-like. Then he raps with his knuckles: shave and a haircut, two bits.

ALLISON

eyes widening in dismay.

ALLISON
Michael!

THE CHILDREN

MICHAEL
(points a finger at her)
Pax Vobiscum.

Allison can't restrain a giggle. She comes forward, staring up at Michael, marveling at his audacity. He makes his voice very solemn.

MICHAEL
Allison Parker, do you believe in God?

She nods sincerely.

MICHAEL
Prove it.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Closing her eyes and clasping her hands about the tiny silver cross that dangles from her neck, Allison demonstrates her religiosity:

ALLISON
Holy Mary, full of grace....

But a giggle breaks through again and her eyes fly open.

ALLISON
What are we going to do?

MICHAEL
Maybe I'll marry us.

ALLISON
You can't.

MICHAEL
Yes, I can.

ALLISON
How?

Michael's right hand traces the sign of the cross.

MICHAEL
Kneel.

Well, okay. She kneels, but:

ALLISON
God'll strike you dead.

MICHAEL
No, he won't.

ANGLE TO BALCONY OVER ENTRANCE - FATHER CLAYMORE

An elderly priest, Father Claymore, has entered the balcony, his arms loaded with flowers.

FATHER CLAYMORE
Well, if He doesn't, I bloody will!

The children whirl in shock. Michael comes flying down to Allison's side, grabs her hand and jerks her toward the exit in a dead run, passing directly under Father Claymore as:

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CONTINUED

FATHER CLAYMORE
I'll see your father hears about this! You, too, Allison Parker!

But they are gone.

EXT. MISSION CHURCH - DAY - THE CHILDREN

hightailing it into some adjacent woods.

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT - FARMER ESTATE - DAY

We are given the stunning aspect of the Farmer home and its private approaches -- and a chauffeur-driven car winding toward the main entrance. Sounds of summer heat buzz over the scene, whisked by the rhythmic arcing of lawn sprinklers.

EXT. HOUSE AND CAR

Car stops by main entrance. The black-suited chauffeur emerges and opens the passenger door. It is he, Martin Parker, Allison's father, who is the focus of our attention. He is lean, hard, immaculate, in his early forties. A woman -- his employer, substantially faceless -- emerges and crosses to exit into house.

Parker's glance follows her for a bored instant, strips her naked and finds her worthless. He retakes the wheel and drives toward:

EXT. GARAGE - DAY - PARKER

The car approaches a two-story structure, the ground level of which is a garage already occupied by three vehicles. A fourth parking spot, empty, is blocked at the garage mouth by a boy's-style bicycle.

ANGLE ON PARKER

as he brakes. Mouth set angrily, he bursts from the car to snatch up the bicycle and slam it against the garage wall. Camera reveals the manufacturer's logo -- "Monarch."

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PARKER
Allison!

He thrusts up a flight of stairs to living quarters above the garage.

INT. PARKER QUARTERS - A CORRIDOR - DAY

Sound of o.s. door and:

PARKER'S VOICE
Allison!

He comes into shot and crosses to exit into:

INT. PARKER BEDROOM - DAY - MARTIN AND MILDRED PARKER

Martin's wife, Mildred, sits on the bed, sewing something from the pile next to her. She is a colorless woman, frequently unwell, wearing the livery of a housekeeper, struggling for energy against the heat and her own oppressive weariness.

As her husband enters, she nods toward the window.

MILDRED
She's playing with Michael.

Parker's mouth goes sour as he moves to the window, looks to see:

POINT OF VIEW WINDOW SHOT - THE CHILDREN

running toward the sea, disappearing around the main house.

PARKER AND MILDRED

PARKER
Playing too damned much with Master Smart-Ass Michael.

MILDRED
(without looking up)
They enjoy each other.

Parker turns from the window, gives her a raw, assessing look, crosses to take a can of beer from a small refrigerator.

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CONTINUED

PARKER
(cap from can)
Too bad they're not old enough to get her knocked up. Now that'd be worth a dollar or two.

He grins and drinks the cold beer.

EXT. GRASSY TERRAIN - DAY - THE CHILDREN

running across an expanse of grassy terrain that overlooks the sea. Michael is in the lead, camera racing with them, blurring a bit with the incredible speed of it all, marvelously free.

EXT. CLIFF EDGE - DAY - HIGH ANGLE SHOT - THE CHILDREN

slowing as they come to a cliff edge rising out of the cruel rocks that bound the sea far below. Together, they walk toward a great cypress tree thrusting out from the cliff.

ANGLE TO CYPRESS

as a hawk takes flight from the tree.

THE CHILDREN

Allison spotting the bird, pointing.

ALLISON
Hawk!

Their upturned faces watch the hawk for a few beats, then Michael's gaze narrowly probes the tree.

MICHAEL'S POINT OF VIEW - THE TREE

zooming in and finding a nest.

THE CHILDREN

MICHAEL
(pointing)
There's the nest.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

ALLISON
Bet it's a three-egger.

MICHAEL
Four.

ALLISON
Three.

MICHAEL
Four eggs.

ALLISON
Prove it.

Michael looks at her, moves to the tree, immediately starts to climb.

DOWN ANGLE - SHOOTING FROM TREE - MICHAEL IN F.G., ALLISON BELOW

Our angle emphasizes the drop to the rock-torn beach. Michael looks down to Allison and:

MICHAEL
Coming?

She shakes her head vigorously: no way. He continues to climb.

ALLISON

She squats contentedly, watching.

MICHAEL

his ascent carrying him out from the cliff face to:

THE HAWK NEST

and Michael inching carefully into shot, straining for a handhold in order to peer into the nest and:

MICHAEL
(triumphantly calling down)
Four eggs!

In this instant his braced foot slips, his handhold crumbles. And he falls.

DOWN ANGLE - MICHAEL

his body plummeting from the tree, his voice crying out in terror as he plunges to the beach and:

THE ROCKY BEACH

Michael's body falling, striking face-down amid the rocks. And still.

ALLISON

screaming Michael's name through the roar of surf pounding on the rocks.

THE SURF

bursting malevolently.

ALLISON

desperately making her way down the steep descent to the beach.

THE SEA

striking toward Michael's motionless body.

THE BEACH - ALLISON

reaching the base of the cliff, thrusting to Michael's side.

ALLISON AND MICHAEL

as she kneels beside him, turns him face up. He does not breathe. He does not move. His eyes are closed. There is a smear of blood at his temple. Allison touches him, shakes him, tries to open his eyes, wipes the blood from his head with a hand wet with sea spray. His body is flaccid. She recognizes death.

Spray wets her face and hair. She is sobbing. She tries to hold him, to cradle his head. Her silver-cross necklace glitters in the sunlight. Her voice strikes against the thunder of the surf.

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ALLISON
Please, God -- please make him alive!

THE SURF

A tumbling roar, throwing its spume against the sky.

ALLISON AND MICHAEL

ALLISON
I won't ever make fun again -- I'll do whatever you want -- I promise I'll always be good -- I'll pray and go to church....

THE SURF

roaring its answer.

ALLISON AND MICHAEL

She rocks him keeningly, her body capturing some primordial memory of mourning.

ALLISON
Please don't let him be dead -- please, Michael -- please, God -- please -- please -- please....

Her hand smooths at his face, wiping the spray away. As she does so, Michael's eyes open. For a few beats they stare at each other, each swept up on his private amazement.

ALLISON
I thought you were dead....

He tests his body.

MICHAEL
Well, I'm not.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He extends his hand, as if to show her that everything is working. Their fingers entwine.

ALLISON
Oh, Michael.

NOTE: AT THIS POINT OUR SCREEN RADIO WIDENS TO CONTEMPORARY, HEROIC PROPORTIONS. TIME IS SPANNED BY THE EMERGENCE OF COLOR UPON THE SCREEN. IT IS NOW THE PRESENT AND:

EXT. VATICAN CITY - ST. PETER'S SQUARE - DAWN - LIMOUSINE

Only the chauffeured limousine breaks the vast nakedness of St. Peter's Square at dawn as it makes its way to the Vatican Gate.

MAIN TITLE AND SUBSEQUENT CREDITS ARE SUPERIMPOSED THROUGHOUT:

DOWN ANGLE - THE SQUARE - THE LIMOUSINE

wheeling toward the gate.

EXT. GATE - SWISS GUARDS - THE LIMOUSINE

The car stops and a Swiss Guard from the gate detail approaches. A window lowers and we see its lone passenger. His name is Monsignor Franchino -- a man of about sixty -- tall and lean -- eyes brilliant and deep-set -- clerical garb exquisitelv tailored -- face ravaged as if by some profound and impenetrable sadness.

With recognition, the Guard touches his hat respectfully, gestures to the detail at the gate. It opens. The limousine drives through.

EXT. VATICAN - ANOTHER LOCATION - DAWN - THE LIMOUSINE

as the car stops near a complex of flowered terraces. The driver opens the passenger door and Monsignor Franchino emerges, carrying a dispatch case. He is met by a young Escort -- a priest -- who inclines his head, shakes Franchino's hand and, with some urgency, leads him up a stairway to enter an adjacent structure. Franchino holds himself erectly and moves with concentrated crispness.

INT. VATICAN GALLERY - DAY - FRANCHINO AND ESCORT

Footsteps reverberating through the splendor of the Vatican chamber.

INT. STAIRWAY COMPLEX - DAY - FRANCHINO AND ESCORT

Only these two, ascending through the awesome architecture of the stairway and its various levels.

INT. ANOTHER VATICAN LOCATION - DAY - FRANCHINO AND ESCORT

Crossing through, Franchino pauses at a vast crucifix. Here he kneels, hands clasped in prayer. We note that the backs of his hands are heavily tufted with white hair. The Escort looks a bit embarrassed by Franchino's devotions, glances at his wristwatch, coughs into a snowy handkerchief.

CLOSE ANGLE - FRANCHINO

His eyes are closed, lips moving slightly as he prays with desperate intensity. Beads of perspiration stipple his forehead.

DOWN ANGLE - FRANCHINO AND ESCORT

As a hint that they must be on their way, the Escort moves to open an imposing double door -- and waits. Franchino rises, strides toward him and through the door.

ANOTHER CORRIDOR - DAY - FRANCHINO

coming toward us -- and to still another door which the Escort holds open. Franchino hesitates, then abruptly follows his companion's invitation to enter the room. The Escort remains outside, closes the door after him.

INT. AUDIENCE ROOM - DAY - FRANCHINO

FINAL CREDITS as Franchino comes deeper into the room. Its centerpiece is a long and richly wooded table. He passes along its length -- toward its head -- and stops.

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We are aware of another presence -- see only the hand, a bit of crimson sleeve, of someone seated there. Franchino precisely sets his dispatch case upon the table, bends and kisses the ring of the man who has summoned him. The voice that comes to us is thin, dry, quiet, cultivated:

O.S. VOICE
The priest in New Orleans. He is dying.

A flicker of pain in Franchino's eyes.

FRANCHINO
Father Halliran?

O.S. VOICE
He is very old. And I am frightened.

Franchino's eyes close for an instant as if holding off some unbearable image, then:

FRANCHINO
How can I serve you?

O.S. VOICE
There is a young woman. Her name is Allison Parker.

The hand holds out a thin file bound in crimson leather.

O.S. VOICE
You will find her in New York.

Franchino takes the file into his own hands as:

FRANCHINO
(almost a whisper)
Must I?

O.S. VOICE
I ask that you again bring comfort to our agonies. Do what is necessary to save us.

And Franchino stares down at the file.

INSERT - THE FILE

Embossed in gold in the top, right-hand corner are the words: "ALLISON PARKER/SISTER TERESA."

FRANCHINO

His gaze returns keenly to the o.s. figure.

FRANCHINO
She knows?

O.S. VOICE
Nothing. You shall be her protector.

Opening the dispatch case, Franchino sets the file inside as:

FRANCHINO
And who shall protect us?

O.S. VOICE
The mercy of God -- through the blessed Sister Teresa.

Another sharp-edged glance from Franchino -- and he snaps the dispatch case shut.

EXT. NEW YORK SKYLINE - DAY

broad and panoramic. Over scene comes the voice (not very authoritative) of a priest whom we shall call Father Tanzer, repeating a sad and familiar litany.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
O God, by whose mercy rest is given to the souls of the faithful, in your kindness bless this grave.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY - FATHER TANZER

A Brooklyn cemetery which gives us Manhattan in b.g. A coffin is placed on its elevator at an open grave. Father Tanzer officiates. A shortish, plumpish, bespectacled man, he knew neither the deceased nor the single mourner at the graveside; still he does the best he can.

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FATHER TANZER
(continuing)
Entrust it to the care of your Holy Angel and set free from all the chains of sin ---

Camera angle is widening to reveal the following: an absence of flowers -- the Attendant who will operate the elevator -- and the lone mourner, Allison Parker. She is now a woman of about twenty-six, markedly beautiful, straight-backed and slender, wholesomely self-possessed. She is a mourner only in the sense that she is present at the burial. Her face is at rest -- impassive -- betraying no sense of loss.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
(continuing)
-- the soul of him, Martin Parker, Allison's beloved father, whose body is buried here, so that with all your saints he may rejoice in you forever.

Camera continues to drift and to discover Monsignor Franchino moving among the adjacent headstones. His dress now is non-clerical; despite his apparently casual strolling, he is watching Allison.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
(continuing)
Teach us who mourn, O God, to watch and pray, that when your summons comes, we may go forth to meet the bridegroom, and enter with him into life everlasting. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Franchino averts his face.

AT GRAVESIDE - ALLISON AND FATHER TANZER

Allison has lifted and turned her face a bit, not directly toward Franchino but to something else o.s.

FATHER TANZER
(continuing)
Dearest daughter, let us faithfully and lovingly remember our father whom....

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He breaks off, looks uncertainly at Allison whose remoteness disturbs him, then resumes as camera presses very close on her.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
-- whom God has taken from the trials of the world....

Again Allison's gaze goes o.s., and now we see:

CLOSE SHOT - FADED ROSES

A bouquet of faded roses placed by a headstone.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
(continuing)
O Lord, we implore you to grant this mercy to your dead servant ---

CLOSE SHOT - ALLISON

looking now to:

THE COFFIN

descending on its elevator into the grave.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
(continuing)
-- that he may not receive punishment in return for his deeds; so that as the true faith ---

UP ANGLE SHOT - THE DESCENDING COFFIN

shooting up from the grave so that the descending coffin is blacking out the screen.

AS ALLISON CAPTURES THE ENSUING FRAGMENT OF MEMORY, OUR IMAGES RETURN TO SEPIA AND TO THE SMALLER RATIO THAT COMMENCED OUR FILM.

ALLISON'S MEMORY - INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - ALLISON AND MOTHER

A tiny, spartan room in a Catholic hospital. Crucifix on the wall. Some wilted roses in a bedside vase, upon which our shot opens. Allison's mother, receiving intravenous glucose, lies sleeping.

Allison is about sixteen. She sits by the bed, doing some work in a school notebook. She marks the fact that her mother is sleeping soundly, rises silently, gathers up her books and exits.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
(continuing)
-- united him with the throng of the faithful on earth, your mercy may unite him with the company of the choir of angels in heaven. Through Christ our Lord.

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, hear our supplications and through your infinite love and mercy ---

ALLISON'S MEMORY - EXT. PARKER HOME - DAY - ALLISON

Allison's home, at the time of her recollection, is a two-story house in the lower middle class section of an eastern industrial community.

Arriving home, she curiously marks the presence of the family car in the driveway. She enters the house.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
(continuing)
-- grant to the soul of your servant departed the remission of all his sins, by which he may have deserved the severity of your punishment ---

ALLISON'S MEMORY - INT. PARKER HOME - DAY - ALLISON

Down angle as she unloads her books and ascends the stairs.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
(continuing)
-- in the world to come. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

ALLISON'S MEMORY - UPPER CORRIDOR - ALLISON

moving down the corridor toward her room. Now she pauses, turns back to her parents' room, holds for a beat, raps on the door, opens it.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
(continuing)
Almighty and most merciful Father, you know the weakness of our nature. Bow down your ear in pity to your servants---

ALLISON'S MEMORY - INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - DAY - ALLISON

riveted in horror at what she sees.

Drapes are drawn, darkening the room. Her father is there -- and two women, one very thin, the other gross. All are naked on the bed, her parents' bed, curled obscenely together.

All clamped in shock, transfixed in this awful, staring moment. Then the gross woman is laughing, head back, flesh quivering, pointing at Allison. The other one snatches up her clothing, as does Parker. Caught up in shattering panic, he is yelling at his daughter, telling her to get out, striking at the laughing woman.

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
-- upon whom you have laid the heavy burden of sorrow. Take away out of our hearts the spirit of rebellion, and teach us to see your good and gracious purpose working in all the trials which you send upon us.

Grant that we may not languish in unavailing grief as those who have no hope, but through our tears look meekly up to You, the God of all consolation.

And Allison, face stricken, is backing, turning, fleeing the assaulting images within the room.

AGAIN, OUR SCREEN RETURNS TO NORMAL COLOR AND RATIO.

EXT. THE CEMETERY - DAY - ANGLE ON DESCENDING COFFIN

as it reaches the floor of the grave and is still.

CONTINUED

FATHER TANZER'S VOICE
(continuing)
Lead us, O Lord, not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil ---

Camera angles to Allison and Father Tanzer.

FATHER TANZER
(continuing)
-- from the gate of Hell. Amen.

The ritual accomplished, he looks at Allison, almost at a loss for his next words.

FATHER TANZER
I'm sure he was a fine person.

ALLISON
(calmly)
He was a son of a bitch.
(a beat)
I'm sorry, Father.

She turns abruptly and crosses away.

INT. 747 AIRCRAFT - DAY - FILM IMAGES

The soundless images before us are totally disjointed from our story, as if ripped from another picture -- which is precisely the case. We are witnessing the movie being projected in a 747 aircraft, camera angling back to give us our ambience. Passengers sit in dumb isolation, plugged into their headsets.

We find Allison. She sits in a window seat, disinterestedly eyeing the picture but without the sound device. There is an assortment of magazines in the seat pocket in front of her. She switches on her reading light and reaches for one of them. It is Vogue. She looks at the cover.

INSERT - THE COVER - VOGUE MAGAZINE

The radiantly lovely, haughtily posed lady on the cover is Allison Parker.

ALLISON

She makes a face at this austere creature.

ALLISON
Idiot.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

She flips the magazine open. A Stewardess leans into shot.

STEWARDESS
Anything I can get you? Drink? Coffee?

ALLISON
Not a thing, thank you. When do you serve up New Orleans?

STEWARDESS
(consults watch)
Fifty minutes.

She moves back through the plane.

THE STEWARDESS

checking her rapt passengers. Now she comes to another seat illuminated by a reading light. The reader is Father Franchino. He again wears his clerical collar.

STEWARDESS
How about you, Father? Ready for that drink yet?

FRANCHINO
May I have a Scotch, please?

STEWARDESS
You certainly may.

She moves o.s. Franchino leans back, closes his eyes, closes the folder he is reading. It is bound in crimson leather.

The movie is over now. Passengers are removing their head-sets, raising their window shields.

ALLISON

as she releases the blind at her window. Light bathes her face. She leans her forehead against the glass, feeling its pleasant coolness, thinking, thinking....

INT. NEW ORLEANS AIRPORT - DAY - BAGGAGE PICKUP STATION

Baggage revolves on an endless belt amid the hustle of claiming passengers. Camera zeroes in on a couple of large, feminine suitcases and Allison tips into frame as she grasps the handles. Simultaneously, another hand reaches for one of the grips -- and we meet Jennifer Cowan. She is Allison's age -- wearing levis -- smashingly long hair -- kinetically active -- uncosmetically attractive.

JENNIFER
Permit me, madam.

ALLISON
(with delight)
Jennifer!

JENNIFER
Where? Where?

They swing the suitcases off the conveyer and enthusiastically embrace.

TWO SHOT - ALLISON AND JENNIFER

Passengers are brushing past as they break and look at each other.

ALLISON
Oh, boy.

JENNIFER
Oh, boy.
(searchingly)
How dreadful was it?

ALLISON
I don't remember, kiddo.

Now we see Father Franchino walk past them.

JENNIFER
(with keen
sincerity)
Be happy in New Orleans.

ALLISON
I already am.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

And, indeed, she looks to be. She hoists a suitcase.

ALLISON
Lift.

JENNIFER
(she takes the other case)
Oh, my God! You brought your eyelashes.

She staggers under the load.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS FRENCH QUARTER - MADISON STREET - DAY - MONSIGNOR FRANCHINO

Carrying his dispatch case, Franchino moves along a street of the French Quarter lined with distinctively architected apartment blocks fashioned from the wrought-iron-balcony structures of another age.

His gaze becomes riveted on a specific, four-story house and he pauses across the street..

CLOSER SHOT - FRANCHINO

He shades his eyes and tilts his glance toward:

POINT OF VIEW SHOT TO DORMER WINDOW

A dormer window facing onto the street from the top story of the building. Reflective light ripples its surface. A flight of birds rises from an adjacent roof. Now camera zooms in on the window and we become aware of somebody seated inside, face turned outward to the street. Perhaps we can make out the aspect of a man -- very old -- dressed in black -- perhaps a clerical collar -- the glint of sunlight on what might be a large, silver crucifix he is holding. No more than that. Glare hides the rest.

BACK TO FRANCHINO

He drops his hand, holds for a couple of beats, then crosses the street to:

THE APARTMENT HOUSE ENTRANCE - DAY - FRANCHINO

Here, at the unobtrusive entrance door, he pauses again, as if summoning some inner strength. Then he enters and passes down a shadowed slot of a brick-lined passageway toward a flowered courtyard.

INT. CAFETERIA - FOOD SELECTION LINE - DAY - FIRST PERSON CAMERA

A maelstrom of too much food being snatched at by too many hands in this over-populated little cafeteria on the edge of the Quarter -- all seen through the eyes of the camera passing down the food selection line.

ALLISON'S VOICE
He called me out of the blue -- I didn't even know he was living in New York. He said he was very sick -- couldn't even walk -- and no one to take care of him and I was his only child. Which is a fact. So I took care of him.

INT. CAFETERIA - TABLE - DAY - ALLISON AND JENNIFER

Salad eaten, Allison hunches over braced elbows, introspectively examining a single, wilted rose in a glass vase. She has changed her clothes -- much more comfortable now. On the chair next to Jennifer is one of those largish tote bags that models seem to carry around.

ALLISON
After four months, he died. I held together -- more or less. And that is the story of my recent life.
(a reuful smile)
Did I say I was damned glad to be out of there for a while?

JENNIFER
Yes, I think you've made that point.

ALLISON
Good. I was afraid I'd missed it.

She finishes her coffee as a tweedily-dressed Woman arrives with a tray.

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THE WOMAN
Excuse me -- may I share?

They aren't exactly delighted, but:

JENNIFER
Yes, of course.

She removes her bag from the chair. The Woman exchanges smiles with Allison and sets her sensible lunch on the table. She is about forty-five, pleasant enough, certainly intelligent, a bit arrid.

Jennifer prepares to leave, gathering up the stuff to be stowed in her handbag as:

JENNIFER
(casually)
Ever know a boy named Michael Farmer?

Allison's eyes snap up in pure wonderment.

JENNIFER
Aha! Gotcha!

ALLISON
All I did was grow up with him. My father worked for his family. When we moved to Toledo, I wept for a month. Where in the world did you...?

JENNIFER
He's a friend of Jack Tucci's who I work for; and maybe you will, too, if I don't get fired for being late again.
(rising)
Want to meet him?

ALLISON
Of course I do. What's he like?

JENNIFER
Tucci or Michael?

ALLISON
Don't be cute.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

JENNIFER
(sitting again)
He said you and he had a very torrid affair.

She gives Allison the Groucho Marx eyebrows. The Woman looks amused. Allison glances at her, back to Jennifer.

JENNIFER
He's an attorney. Sort of bald. Dull, if you want to know.

ALLISON
Not my Michael.

JENNIFER
(rising again)
Somebody's Michael.

ALLISON
There go all my lovelorn dreams.
(takes up a folded newspaper)
Run along and get me work. I'm about to plunge into the great apartment hunt.

The Woman looks sharply at Allison.

JENNIFER
(a vigorous headshake)
Uh-uh. No deal. You belong to me, babe.

ALLISON
I belong to you, babe, but I also intend to belong to my own place.

THE WOMAN
Then maybe I can help you.

Allison and Jennifer exchange glances. The Woman, whose name is Ruth Logan, dives into her handbag, comes up with a business card.

LOGAN
I've been listening shamelessly to every word.
(card to Allison)
Ruth Logan. I do rental real estate. And I'm terrific.

CONTINUED - 3

Allison again looks at her friend, holds up the card, grins.

ALLISON
See?

JENNIFER
Go ahead -- throw yourself away on strangers.
(glances at watch)
Eek!
(to Logan)
Treat her good or you'll get sued by a bald-headed lawyer.

ALLISON AND LOGAN

ALLISON
Do you have any reasonable listings --
(glances at card again)
-- Miss Logan?

LOGAN
I'm afraid nothing on God's earth is reasonable anymore.
(a reassuring smile)
But we'll try to find something interesting.

EXT. MADISON STREET - DAY - LOGAN'S CAR

Allison and Miss Logan as latter's car pulls neatly into a parking place.

LOGAN'S VOICE
Are you acquainted with our French Quarter, Miss Parker?

ALLISON'S VOICE
The usual tourist walkabouts. I've visited before.

CONTINUED

ALLISON AND LOGAN

as they emerge from the car.

CONTINUED

LOGAN
Well, if it's roots you're looking for, you'll certainly find them here. We've quite a colorful history.

ALLISON
(not at all interested in being pried open)
It's not exactly roots I'm looking for.
(looks doubtfully at adjacent structure)
Is this it?

LOGAN
The one across the street.

Allison looks to:

POINT OF VIEW SHOT - THE APARTMENT HOUSE - DAY

The same structure which Monsignor Franchino entered after peering toward the figure in the dormer window. Now, in this light, the house does indeed look interesting, if a little grimy. In another place, another setting, it would be touched with a feeling of tenement; here, in the Quarter, it passes for picturesque.

ALLISON AND LOGAN

Allison does not look displeased.

LOGAN
Like it?

ALLISON
I don't think I'm supposed to admit to that.

They cross toward the house.

EXT. CENTRAL COURTYARD - DAY - ALLISON AND LOGAN

as they come toward us through the gloom of the long passageway from the street. Allison's eyes are everywhere.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LOGAN
The owner wasn't anxious about renting again. He had some bad experiences. But I'm sure he'll take my word that you're suitable.

They emerge into a small courtyard from which an ancient wooden stairway ascends to the railinged levels of the house.

There is a feeling of age and of moderate decay. Paint peels here and there. The courtyard itself holds an assortment of semi-tropical plantings. Its brick surface is worn and wet. Still, it has a certain antique charm.

Allison takes it all in as:

ALLISON
How do you know?

LOGAN
Excuse me?

ALLISON
(turning to face her directly)
That I'm suitable.

Miss Logan stares at her for a beat, reaches out a hand as if to touch Allison, lets her hand drop back.

LOGAN
(simply)
You seem very wholesome.

Allison is about to say something else, then lets it go with a courteous:

ALLISON
Thank you.

She looks around again as Miss Logan moves toward the stairway.

LOGAN
You're on the second floor.

She starts up the stairs.

ON ALLISON

Amused by the rental agent's presumption, she looks up to the second level.

ALLISON
Am I?

UP ANGLE SHOT - ALLISON AND LOGAN

ascending to second level balcony.

SECOND LEVEL BALCONY - ALLISON

She stands at the wooden railing, looking down into the courtyard.

ALLISON
It's very quiet.

We adjust to see Miss Logan searching through a collection of tagged keys.

LOGAN
Yes, always. Another world. I considered taking it myself.

She turns to unlock one of the two apartment doors leading off the balcony.

ALLISON
Why didn't you?

LOGAN
The owner won't give a lease. It's month to month.
(looking back to Allison)
I hope that's suitable.

ALLISON
(perfect!)
I could manage.

The door is held open for her. She goes in.

INT. THE APARTMENT - ENTRANCE AND KITCHEN AREA - DAY - ALLISON AND LOGAN

The immediate entrance is into a tiny kitchen area. Allison is taken aback.

LOGAN
You'll find everything very compact.

She is opening some cupboards: behold the dishes, stemware, et al.

CONTINUED

ALLISON
I think the word is 'quaint.' Is this really the front entrance?

LOGAN
The living room makes up for it.

She leads Allison down a corridor as:

LOGAN
The kitchen's complete, by the way. So are linens -- everything. And utilities.

She indicates a room midway down the corridor.

LOGAN
Bedroom.

They go in.

INT. THE BEDROOM - ALLISON AND LOGAN

The bedroom is nicely appointed, if a bit on the heavy side. Imitation antique -- or perhaps the real thing, for all we know. All is neat, spotless, waiting....

LOGAN
The bathroom was redone last year.

Allison crosses to stick her head into the open bathroom, turns back to draw open a heavy drape which exposes the only window in the room. Afternoon sunlight floods in. She turns to Logan with a delighted smile.

ALLISON
It <u>is</u> nice.

LOGAN
I'm glad.
(indicating overhead)
The apartment up there is vacant, so you'll find it's very quiet.

They exit into corridor.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM

and corridor, through which Allison and Logan approach.

LOGAN
(the clincher)
And this.

The living room is warm, comfortable, full of interesting corners. Again, the furniture is massive, a bit worn, richly textured.

LOGAN
The TV is color.
(draws a finger over some empty bookshelves -- finds no dust -- shows Allison)
You'll have to provide your own books.
(sinks into a chair, sighs contentedly)
I should have taken it myself.

She watches Allison as latter moves here and there, inspecting.

LOGAN
Would you be interested?

Allison seats herself on the couch, half-facing the agent.

ALLISON
Definitely.

LOGAN
Good.

ALLISON
But not at the price you quoted.

LOGAN
Oh. Believe me, it's a fair price, Miss Parker. There's a great deal of pressure on these old places.

ALLISON
'Old' isn't necessarily a virtue, Miss Logan. Not when you ---

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Stricken by a little twinge of headache and vertigo, she raises her hand to her temple, closes her eyes for a few beats.

LOGAN
Is something wrong?

ALLISON
No, I -- I've been under a bit of pressure myself lately.

LOGAN
I might manage to scrape off ten dollars....

ALLISON
Scrape off twenty-five and see what you find.

Logan bites her lip, thinks hard, then:

LOGAN
I think I have the latitude to do that. I'd require a check today.

Allison opens her bag, takes out a checkbook.

ALLISON
We have just made a deal. I think you just cured my headache.

She is already writing out the check.

LOGAN
First and last month in advance....

ALLISON
Oh, what about the telephone?

LOGAN
That might take a few days. When would you like to move in?

ON ALLISON

She looks up -- considers -- and that smile again.

ALLISON
What about tomorrow?

EXT. MADISON STREET - LATE AFTERNOON - ALLISON AND LOGAN

as they emerge from the house and cross to the car. Allison looks back to her new home, her eyes rising to the dormer window.

POINT OF VIEW SHOT - DORMER WINDOW

again the sense of somebody there, somebody watching.

ALLISON AND LOGAN

ALLISON
(curiously)
Who's up there?

LOGAN
Where?

ALLISON
In that window. Somebody's watching us.

Logan looks up, shades her eyes.

LOGAN
I don't think so. Watching us, I mean. That's old Father Halliran. He's blind.
(eyes to Allison)
Lord knows why he sits at that window. But he seems to spend most of his time there. Any other questions?

ALLISON
Not now, but I'll make a list.

She turns to the car.

DOWN ANGLE SHOT - ALLISON AND LOGAN

shooting down from the exterior vicinity of the dormer window as they drive off.

EXT. COMMANDER'S PALACE GARDEN RESTAURANT - LATE AFTERNOON

A fashion photographic layout is in the process of being created here in this sylvan idyll of an outdoor restaurant. Plenty of light and three models in dynamite clothes. Jennifer is one of them; the other two are Irene and Belinda.

The photographer is Jack Tucci -- about forty -- darkly bearded -- smoking a stub of cigar -- tough, arrogant, funny, and a very good fellow indeed. His assistant messes with the lights while Tucci talks with an agitated maitre de and the girls relax. Elsewhere, off the set so to speak, waiters are setting up tables.

Tucci placates the maitre de and moves to a tripod camera as:

TUCCI
All right, peasants -- if you'll assume the position.

The girls move into a posed triad. Tucci checks his composition through the camera.

TUCCI
They're getting antsy about turning this joint into a restaurant again. Jesus, it's fantastic. Jennifer you're a remarkably awkward child. Cheat that left knocker this way -- atta girl. I do believe....

He gets his picture, abandons the tripod camera for the two 35's hung around his neck, begins prowling the models for individual shots.

TUCCI
Anybody breathes, I'll break her bones.

35 MM VIEW FINDER SHOTS

As the camera clicks off the shots, we have a series of stills popping into mid-frame, two shots of each of the girls in altered positions until, incongrously, we are looking through the finder at Allison. She makes a funny face.

TUCCI AND ALLISON

Tucci lowering his camera, Allison standing at the perimeter of the setup.

TUCCI
Who're you?

ANGLE ON JENNIFER

JENNIFER
That's Allison

TUCCI AND ALLISON

TUCCI
(to Jennifer)
I didn't ask you, snooty.
(to Allison)
You want a job, Allison?

ALLISON
Yes.

TUCCI
You any good?

ALLISON
Yes!

TUCCI
Okay, don't yell.
(a hint of a grin)
See me day after tomorrow.

Hoisting a camera again, he starts to turn away, turns back for:

TUCCI
He's over there.

ALLISON
Who?

TUCCI
Who? Michael who. Who do you think?

He has indicated an adjacent garden area screened off by foliage from the restaurant proper. Allison crosses toward it.

EXT. GARDEN AREA - ALLISON

crossing through the garden's decorative statuary until she comes to a spot where a few pieces of white, wrought iron furniture have been placed. Michael is sitting there, holding a drink which he sets aside as he sees Allison. He is not

CONTINUED

balding and dull. He is beautiful and wise.

Allison has stopped -- stands staring at him -- recognizing in this man the boy she had once loved. He rises and comes to her.

ALLISON
Michael...?

Face to face, for a moment their eyes are full of each other. Then:

MICHAEL
(touched with humor)
Why did you let them take you away?

ALLISON
I belonged to them.

MICHAEL
No, you didn't.
(he gently cups her face, kisses her forehead)
Who did you belong to?

ALLISON
My bicycle. Which used to be <u>your</u> bicycle.

Her fingertips touch a scar at his temple.

ALLISON
You've still got the scar. You scared me that day.

MICHAEL
Just to test your devotion.

ALLISON
Jennifer said you were -- different.

MICHAEL
You should've heard what she said about you.

JENNIFER'S VOICE
My God, they're gorgeous together.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

Camera angles to include Jennifer and Jack Tucci -- watching them.

JENNIFER
Surprise. I'm the good fairy.

TUCCI
The only true beauty is character. I think he packs a knife. Come on, counselor, we're late for a conference or whatever the hell you people do.

Michael looks at Allison; he is reluctant to leave, or even to divert his eyes from her.

MICHAEL
Tomorrow night?

ALLISON
Yes.
(then)
I don't have a phone yet....

ANGLE ON JENNIFER

sweeping up her back hair.

JENNIFER
I do, Michael.

She bats her eyelashes at him.

EXT. ST. LOUIS CATHEDRAL - NIGHT - MONSIGNOR FRANCHINO

Monsignor Franchino stands poised, holding his dispatch case, staring at the cathedral. Now he turns and makes his way to an adjacent building.

EXT. THE ADJACENT BUILDING - NIGHT - MONSIGNOR FRANCHINO

and a polished plate which identifies the building as administrative headquarters of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Franchino moves on to:

EXT. AT ARCHDIOCESE ENTRANCE - NIGHT - MONSIGNOR FRANCHINO

A dim light within the plate-glass entrance doors reveals a formal foyer and a stairway ascending and descending -- and the single figure of a Nun. Black shrouded, head down, she stands just inside -- waiting. With Franchino's appearance her eyes come up. She is in her sixties, face deeply lined, expression impassive. For an instant her eyes lock with Franchino's; then she releases the door, admitting him. Door relocked.

We see them exchange a few murmured words, then the Nun leads him to the stairway and they descend.

INT. LOWER LEVELS OF ARCHDIOCESE - NIGHT - FRANCHINO AND THE NUN

coming off a moldering stairway and passing through a vast, dimly-lighted storeroom of a chamber that contrasts strongly with the administrative blandness of the building's exterior and foyer. There is a feeling of great age here, of peeling paint and stifling mustiness. This sense of antiquity increases with:

ANOTHER STAIRWAY - NIGHT - FRANCHINO AND THE NUN

This stairway narrow and stone faced, debouching into still another aged chamber. The Nun switches on a light -- two bare, overhead bulbs.

The room is a kind of library, lined with stacks and shelves of ancient books and records.

The Nun remains by the stairway. Franchino strides ahead with familiarity.

MOVING SHOT - FRANCHINO

as he comes to an alcove protected by a locked and heavily-barred iron gate. From his case Franchino removes a key, opens the lock and passes into the alcove.

INT. THE ALCOVE - FRANCHINO

Again a switch and a bulb illuminating the stone-lined interior. A single setpiece dominates our attention: a massive, gothic tabernacle, ancient and shrine-like in its ornate complexity.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Its heart is a pair of doors, each about a foot square.

Franchino's hand hesitates -- opens the doors of the tabernacle. The movement generates a little swirl of dust.

Exposed are several crimson-bound folders similar to the one that Franchino now takes from his dispatch case. They are arranged flatly in little piles tied with ancient bits of ribbon, each pile made up of half a dozen or so folders, some of them faded to a lusterless pink, rotted, bursting.

His hand touches them, moves to the foremost pile, unfastens the ribbon, partially withdraws the top folder.

INSERT - HALLIRAN FILE

It is similar to the file on Allison but very old. Imprinted on its upper right corner are the words "WILLIAM CASPER/FATHER HALLIRAN."

CLOSE SHOT - FRANCHINO

Again we see a stipple of perspiration on his forehead.

INSERT - THE TABERNACLE INT.

as Franchino places the Halliran folder back onto its pile and then sets the "ALLISON PARKER/SISTER TERESA" file immediately on top. His hand remains poised for an instant, is then withdrawn and the doors of the tabernacle slammed shut.

EXT. MADISON STREET - DAY - WINDOW SHOT - ALLISON

shooting down from the Halliran window to discover Allison crossing the street, arms full of two large paper bags. She disappears from our view.

EXT. COURTYARD - ANGLE TO ENTRANCE PASSAGEWAY - DAY - ALLISON

She wears slacks and a bandana over her hair. The paper bags are filled with groceries; one of them is topped off with flowers.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

As Allison emerges from the entrance passageway and approaches the stairs, she moves by an open door to a basement and we have a glimpse of a woman in her sixties scrubbing the basement steps. The steps themselves disappear into darkness but the woman is seen clearly near their upper level, glancing up at Allison. She is the Nun whom we saw with Monsignor Franchino.

ALLISON

About to start up the steps, she looks up to see:

POINT OF VIEW SHOT - DAY - A WOMAN

A strange woman stands at the second-level entrance to Allison's apartment, peering into a window.

ALLISON

Puzzled, she calls out:

ALLISON
Hello!

THE WOMAN

She turns abruptly, as if caught in a misdeed, stares down at Allison. We shall know her as Gerde -- about forty -- severe featured -- rather tall -- straight-haired -- an expression of pinched anger on her face. The expression alters into a kind of smile. She speaks with a slight Swedish accent.

GERDE
You are the new tenant?

As she starts down the stairway, we see that she wears black ballet slippers.

ALLISON

ALLISON
Yes.

Her glance is taken now by an open door to a ground level apartment. Another woman stands there smiling -- indeed a smile, sweet and warm. Her name is Sandra. She is younger

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

-- about twenty-eight -- with a child-like beauty. No makeup. Wearing a blouse and tight levi's. And black ballet slippers.

Allison's gaze goes back to Gerde as latter descends to ground level.

GERDE
We heard the apartment was rented -- we were not sure. Some friends are visiting in a few weeks. We thought they might take the place for a while. My name is Gerde.

ALLISON
I'm Allison.
(arms still loaded, she makes a tip of her chin toward her apartment)
Sorry about that.

GERDE
Yes. Would you like some coffee? Or tea perhaps.

ALLISON
(gratefully)
Yes, coffee would be lovely, thank you.

Gerde indicates the open apartment and they go in -- Sandra also.

INT. GERDE/SANDRA KITCHEN AREA - DAY - ALLISON, GERDE, SANDRA

The small kitchen is well equipped -- all in a uniform pastel tone. Allison sets down her groceries. Gerde is already turning up the stove on a coffee pot as:

GERDE
Sandra will take your things up. Give her your keys, then you can be comfortable.

Sandra starts to take the bags as Allison protests.

ALLISON
No, I'll take them later. They won't melt.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GERDE
Don't be foolish. Sandra loves to help, don't you, dear?

Another dazzling smile from Sandra. But no words. And the eyes curiously empty.

ALLISON
Well -- thank you -- Sandra.

She gives the young woman her key and Sandra exits.

GERDE
Please -- go into the living room.

Allison wanders down the adjoining hall-dining room toward:

INT. GERDE/SANDRA LIVING ROOM - DAY - ALLISON

Allison taking it all in. The layout is almost identical to her own but the decor is airier, more open -- Scandinavian in style. There are several prints and paintings, all on the theme of ballet dancers.

Allison studies the paintings, removes the bandana, shakes out her hair, looks up as Gerde enters to join her.

GERDE
Where are you from?

ALLISON
New York. Toledo. California. Lots of places.

GERDE
I am from Oslo. Sandra is also from New York. She doesn't speak, you know.

ALLISON
No -- I didn't know.

She doesn't quite know what else to say. Gerde lets her hang there until:

ALLISON
Your place is lovely.
(the paintings)
You must be very interested in ballet.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GERDE
Yes, in the disciplines of the body. And you?

Allison sits on a couch.

ALLISON
I admire people who can do it. It's no special passion.

Gerde remains standing, watching her.

GERDE
You are a model.

ALLISON
(surprised)
How did you know that?

GERDE
One can see these things. You will live alone?

ALLISON
Yes.

GERDE
An occasional visitor, of course. One man? Many men?

Allison reacts uncomfortably.

ALLISON
I think that's a little personal.

GERDE
(flat -- almost mockingly)
Forgive me. I'm very frank. You must be also.

Her eyes are fixed challengingly on Allison's. Then Sandra enters.

GERDE
The coffee.

She crosses back to the kitchen.

SANDRA AND ALLISON

Sandra lights a cigarette, eyes fixed on nothing in particular. She stretches, arches her back, lets the smoke drift out of her mouth.

Now, slowly, languidly, she is unbuttoning her blouse, drawing it free of her levi's. Allison stiffens.

Sandra wears no bra. The blouse hangs open over her exposed breasts. She moves to the couch and curls there, smoking. Now, for the first time, she turns her head and looks full at Allison. Her hand reaches out. She takes Allison's hand and draws it toward her breast.

ALLISON
Jesus....

She draws back and snaps to her feet. Sandra remains curled on the couch, flaccid, undisturbed.

Now Allison's glance flashes to Gerde who has appeared with a coffee tray.

ALLISON
What the hell is this?

Gerde's gaze sweeps it all in. She sets the tray down.

GERDE
My little friend is displaying her affection.

She crosses to Sandra, looks down at her.

GERDE
She is a very affectionate person.

She swings her hand, and -- with a report like a pistol shot -- slaps Sandra across the face. Latter's body uncoils from the couch, arms reaching out, drawing Gerde's face down to hers. A long and very ardent kiss. Allison is revulsed.

ALLISON
May I have my key?

They are both looking at her now.

GERDE
(that mocking quality again)
No coffee?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

ALLISON
(hand extended)
Just the key.

Sandra's hand drops to her naked waist, is inserted into her jeans -- and appears with the key. Allison snatches it.

GERDE
You may stay. I have no objection.

ALLISON
(tightly)
I do.

GERDE
You might even learn. You might even enjoy.

ALLISON
I'm not interested.

She starts away from them. But Gerde has seized her by the hair, is bending her neck back.

GERDE
(spitting it)
You are an arrogant bitch!

Allison strikes out, breaking Gerde's grip.

GERDE
Get out!

And Allison does -- as quickly as she can.

EXT. STAIRWAY - ALLISON

distraughtly mounting the stairs to her apartment, coming to the second level balcony. A new irritant now: the door has been left slightly ajar. Also, something has been written in the dust on the kitchen window, but from the inside so that the words cannot be deciphered from the exterior. Allison goes in.

INT. ALLISON'S KITCHEN - DAY - ALLISON

as she enters and reads the words written on the window: "I will love you."

She grabs at a dish towel and furiously rubs them out.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Now, scrubbing at the window, Allison utters a little gasp as she becomes aware of somebody on the exterior, peering in at her. The figure turns to the door and we hear a light tapping.

Allison opens the door and Mr. Chazen is revealed. He is in his sixties, short, stocky, round-faced, bespectacled -- eyes amazingly bright; still, he manages to project a kind of ingenuous charm. He wears a nondescript, frayed, gray suit. Perched on his shoulder is a green and gold parakeet and in the crook of his right arm is a very large black and white alley cat.

CHAZEN
You look upset. I saw you come from their apartment. You mustn't be. Upset I mean. Can I help?

The opening is so sincere, so full of concern Allison smiles.

ALLISON
No -- thank you. There's nothing to help.

CHAZEN
Then say hello to Mortimer.

His eyes slide to the bird on his shoulder.

ALLISON
Hello, Mortimer.

The bird cheeps. Chazen comes into the kitchen as:

CHAZEN
(to the bird)
Yes, she is indeed. Remarkably pretty.
(to Allison)
A most sagacious and observant bird. Unfortunately he can't speak a word of English, so all his wisdom is lost.
(hoisting up the cat)
And this is Jezebel. She speaks perfectly. Say hello to the lady, sweetheart.
(nothing from the cat)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

CHAZEN (Cont'd)
Come on, say hello.
(still nothing)
I'm afraid she isn't too talkative today. I live here too. Back up there.
(he indicates the rear of the house on the floor above)
I'm Mr. Chazen.

ALLISON
(amused)
I'm Allison Parker, Mr. Chazen.

CHAZEN
Of course you are. May we visit for a few minutes?

Allison is ambivalent about the interruption. The kitchen (and presumably the whole apartment) is in disarray: dishes and cutlery piled to be washed, groceries to be put away, curtains down. But he is pleasant and funny and something of an antidote to her experience downstairs.

ALLISON
Well, I'm in the middle --
(her hand waves around)
-- if you don't mind absolute chaos. I'm just putting the place together.

She is already leading the way to the living room.

INT. CORRIDOR - ALLISON AND CHAZEN

CHAZEN
Your own way, of course.

ALLISON
Yes, my way.

Chazen pops curiously into the bedroom. We have a glimpse of bedding removed, window left in the process of being cleaned, empty luggage stacked. He re-enters the corridor.

CHAZEN
I'm sure it'll be just charming. Just like yourself.

A "thank you" smile from Allison.

ALLISON'S LIVING ROOM - ALLISON AND CHAZEN

Again the sense of intense cleaning in process.

CHAZEN
My, you're a very fierce housekeeper.

He sits on the couch, lowering the cat to his lap, stroking it.

ALLISON
Well, for openers, anyway.

She sits on the floor, facing him.

ALLISON AND CHAZEN

Chazen looks at her gravely for a few beats.

CHAZEN
Those women downstairs. You mustn't judge us all by them, you know.

ALLISON
I must say, it wasn't a very auspicious beginning.
(a beat)
I don't want to judge anybody, Mr. Chazen. I just want to live here.

CHAZEN
Have you met any of the others?

ALLISON
No, just you -- and them. And I saw that priest up on the top floor.

CHAZEN
Oh, yes. An odd bird, that. Sitting there at that window day and night. I hear he's blind, too.
(the parakeet)
A very odd bird, wouldn't you say, Mortimer?
(eyes back to Allison)
You're an incredibly beautiful young woman and you will live your life with great happiness. I know you will.

CONTINUED

ALLISON
Well, thank you, Mr. Chazen.

CHAZEN
(rising)
I must remember my manners and leave you to your work. May I number you among my friends?

Allison also stands.

ALLISON
I think I insist on it.

CHAZEN
Good. Then you'll be part of my surprise.

He starts down the corridor to the kitchen.

ALLISON
What surprise is that?

INT. KITCHEN AND CORRIDOR - CHAZEN AND ALLISON

coming toward us from living room.

CHAZEN
But if I told you, it wouldn't be a surprise, would it?

He comes to the door.

CHAZEN
Are you sure there's nothing I can do for you?

ALLISON
Not unless you can get me a telephone.

CHAZEN
I'm afraid I don't have one myself. Who would I call? Who would call me? All my friends are right here in this building.
(an intimate whisper)
Some of them are in this very room.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Allison smiles. He opens the door.

CHAZEN
Oh, I've left you a little house-warming gift. But you'll have to discover it for yourself. Good-bye, good-bye

And he exits. Allison shakes her head. Wow -- a cuckaboo, but very nice. Now back to work. She exits toward:

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - ALLISON

entering, removing folded blankets from the bed, looking around, going to the dresser where there are fresh sheets. She picks one up, then stares down at the dresser top, sets the sheet aside and picks up what seems to be a miniature photograph in a small, stand-up, oval frame. As she stares at it:

INSERT - MINIATURE PHOTOGRAPH

It is a picture of Mr. Chazen. He wears a bowler hat and a dark suit and a slight smile. He peers out of the frame directly at us.

BACK TO ALLISON

Puzzled, she glances at the door, at the photograph, unable to recall Chazen's coming this deeply into the bedroom. Well, however he did it, this is his little gift to her. She places it precisely on the dresser, steps back, looks at it.

ALLISON
You're a strange bird, Mr. Chazen. Just ask Mortimer.

She picks up the sheet, responds now to a brief sound from overhead -- the effect of two dragging footsteps, then silence -- another footstep. She looks at the ceiling. The apartment upstairs is empty. Nothing more. Silence again. Funny building. Allison comes to the bed, unfolds the sheet and waves it to full size, directly into camera.

EXT. RIVER BOAT DEPARTURE DOCK - NIGHT - CROWD SHOT

The Natchez is a great river boat in the grand, nineteenth century manner and it is from this point that it departs on its moonlight cruises. It is lighted up for fair and a steam organ pounds a jaunty tune into the night. Lots of folk on board and milling to get on board as the boat gives us a long whistle blast.

There is Allison in the crowd on the dock, looking prettier than you can possibly imagine despite the unsettling events of the day. She is alone, a bit confused, searching for a glimpse of somebody, turning this way and that as the crowd flows around her. Then we have Michael arriving -- trying to reach her -- waving to her -- she waving to him.

ALLISON AND MICHAEL

as he finally gets to her, takes her hands, admires her. She laughs. A few words buried in the steam organ and they are moving aboard.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI - NIGHT - THE NATCHEZ

.The boat moving up the river, sparkingly with light and joy.

ALLISON'S VOICE
Then there's Mr. Chazen with the world's smartest bird. Or maybe it's the cat.

INT. NATCHEZ DINING SALON - NIGHT - ALLISON AND MICHAEL

at an intimate table, faces low-keyed and illuminated by a tiny ship's lantern set between them, finishing dinner, rapt on each other. Michael listens to her chatter with a sense of pleasure and amusement.

ALLISON
Anyway he was very sweet and I'm going to be part of his surprise. Am I being interesting? The kind of girl you love to spend time with?

MICHAEL
(after considera-
tion)
Yes.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

ALLISON
That's a very short answer, counselor.

MICHAEL
(firmly)
Yes, Allison.

ALLISON
That's better.

She looks at his hands, at his cuff links distinctively fashioned out of gold nuggets, touches one of them.

ALLISON
Were those your father's?

Michael holds them up in astonishment.

MICHAEL
What a memory. How do you remember that? You'd make a terrific witness.

ALLISON
Right. Cross-examine me.

MICHAEL
(searching her face)
What about your father.

Allison's smile vanishes.

ALLISON
What about him?

MICHAEL
All those years without seeing each other -- something must've happened.

ALLISON
It was a long time ago.

MICHAEL
Not going to tell me?

ALLISON
Sometime.

She wrenches herself back to the mood of a few seconds ago, points a finger at him.

ALLISON
Your life first.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

MICHAEL
It's incredibly romantic.

Allison arranges her propped hands neatly under her chin and looks him directly in the eye.

ALLISON
Never mind the jazz. Just tell me if you're married.

MICHAEL
Twice.

ALLISON
Oh.

MICHAEL
Three kids.

ALLISON
Oh.

MICHAEL
Everything I just said is a lie.

ALLISON
(a different kind of "Oh")
Oh.

MICHAEL
My folks' money melted away like snow. I went to work. I went to college. I went to Viet Nam. I went to law school. I like New Orleans. I like my job. I think I'm going to fall in love with you.

ALLISON
Isn't that nice?

And a dazzling smile.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT - THE RIVER BOAT

making a 180° turn for the ride back to New Orleans.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT - MICHAEL AND ALLISON

Here and there couples find a bit of privacy on the deck, by the rail, watching the river flow past. We find Michael and Allison, so close that their voices are only murmurs. Again she touches the scar on his temple.

ALLISON
That day you fell -- I prayed for you. When you opened your eyes -- it was like a miracle.

MICHAEL
Do you believe in miracles?

ALLISON
(headshake)
Not even then. But what if it were?

MICHAEL
Then whoever arranged it would have to bring us back together again -- just like this. And that'd be its own miracle -- wouldn't it?

And so they stand, losing themselves in each other's eyes, there in the moonlight on the river.

ALLISON
I think you'd better kiss me now.

And they kiss.

EXT. NATCHEZ - NIGHT - ANGLE ON BOW

as the vessel sends its bow wave surging toward the shore.

EXT. LEVEE - NIGHT - LOW POSITION SHOT - THE WAVE

as the bow wave reaches the levee which forms the river bank, bursts into foam as if echoing the bursting surf at the time of Michael's accident.

We become aware of a pair of glossy black shoes nearby and slowly angle up to discover Monsignor Franchino. He stands alone in the rich darkness, hands thrust into pockets, for the first time separated from his dispatch case, face lined with concern, looking out toward:

EXT. POINT OF VIEW SHOT - NIGHT - THE NATCHEZ

its lights painting the black river with gaiety.

EXT. MADISON STREET - NIGHT - THE APARTMENT HOUSE

silent -- late-night deserted -- camera craning slowly to rediscover the dormer window -- zooming in -- and the sense of Father Halliran at the window, always and eternal, staring blindly into the night.

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - ALLISON

Allison lies sleeping. Moonlight floods through the window. With the same pace of advance as in preceding shot, camera is moving slowly in on her. Her sleep is restless, distressed, fevered, shot through with nightmare, even illness. Her face and hair are damp with perspiration.

At her bedside now, we hold a few beats to establish this, the ticking of a clock, distant traffic sounds. Then:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - DRESSER - INSERT - MR. CHAZEN MINIATURE

Mr. Chazen stares out of his framed photograph -- his little gift to Allison -- toward her bed.

BACK TO ALLISON

The dread nature of her dreaming takes on the consistency of superimposed images as:

INT. CELL COMPLEX - NIGHT

Allison is trapped within a cramped complex of grimed, moldering prison cells. There are three tiers, the floors of the upper two fashioned from steel grid, thus admitting our vision to all three levels. There is an interconnecting stairway.

Here, on the mid-level, a narrow corridor flanks a handful of barred cells. Allison finds herself in the corridor, terrified by the figures within three adjoining cells: Sandra, Gerde, Mr. Chazen. Each strains at the cell bars, eyes pleading for release. Their distorted faces press against the steel; arms, hands, extend toward Allison, groping, beseeching....

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

At first Allison hangs back, frightened eyes probing for escape. Then she approaches them, approaches Gerde, drawn by her outstretched hands. And Gerde's hands fasten on her, grip her as in the apartment, draw her into the bars.

INTERCUTS - THE FACES

The faces have become smiling masks of maliciousness now, taking delight in Allison's pain.

NOTE: AT THIS POINT THE INITIAL IMAGE OF THE SLEEPING ALLISON HAS VANISHED; WE ARE TOTALLY WITHIN HER DREAM.

ALLISON, ET AL

With a wrench Allison frees herself and shrinks back toward the stairway. Suddenly, with a harsh clang, the cell doors slide open and her imprisoned tormentors -- Sandra, Gerde, Mr. Chazen -- are free. With a single stride, each steps from his cell.

ALLISON

turning in flight, making her way up the stairway.

TOP TIER - ALLISON

Allison comes from the stairway onto the grid-floored corridor facing onto a bank of empty cells. Here she falls, sinking to the grime-encrusted steel grid. Immediately below are Gerde, Sandra, Mr. Chazen. Arms and faces are upstretched toward her, hands grasping at the grid over which she is now crawling, pounding at it, shaking it so that a thumping, metallic rattle hammers at the scene.

Allison shakes in fear, face moist with perspiration, hair lank, saliva running from her lips. The door of the adjacent cells stand empty. She crawls into one of them, slides cowering into a corner. The cell door slams shut. The pounding rattle continues.

And now the shadow of some unseen figure looms and falls squarely across her face. She sees it. Her mouth gapes and her eyes widen in horror. A pathetic, doomed wail comes from her throat.

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - DRESSER - INSERT - CHAZEN MINIATURE

The photograph watching Allison as the wail becomes a scream o.s.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - ALLISON

The scream choked off as she awakens. Face and hair wet as in the dream. Her breath comes in rapid shallow pants. Her eyes flick desperately around the room, locating herself. She is ill, head pounding with pain. Her trembling hand rubs at her forehead. And now she is frozen by a shard of sound ripped from her nightmare: the sound of footsteps in the apartment above -- a single, thumping footstep followed by a metallic component, then the sound repeated -- and again.

POINT OF VIEW SHOT - THE CEILING

raked by Allison's gaze.

ALLISON

Silence in the room now -- only the ticking of a bedside clock and, beyond the open window, distant traffic sounds.

She lies rigid, motionless, eyes staring into the darkness.

INT. LOFT STUDIO - DAY - JACK TUCCI

Here, in this portion of Tucci's loft, all is blazing light, a forest of lamps, scrims, cameras. Tucci moves among them with imperial authority, adjusting this, that, calling out instructions.

TUCCI
A little to the left -- I said 'left,' fatty -- raise your chin!

He moves past a couple of relaxing models (Irene and Belinda again) to Allison and Jennifer, exotically posing vis-a-vis under the lights: another fashion layout. He makes a microscopic adjustment of Allison's chin, steps back as:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

TUCCI
Christ, they're savage. Two panthers. They'll tear each other apart.

Ducking behind a Hasselblad, he takes his picture, then moves back to maneuver them into a slightly different pose.

TUCCI
You're women -- you're soft -- obsessed with sex -- I love it -- you're adorable -- I admire you -- I desire you. The fact is it's been a long day and you're all a pain in the ass.
(satisfied)
Guard that pose with your life. It belonged to my mother.

And he's behind the camera again.

ANGLE ON TUCCI AND HESSELBLAD

With successive clicks and camera adjustments:

TUCCI
Fire one! -- two! -- three! -- dinner!

ALLISON AND JENNIFER

as they come to life.

JENNIFER
(hands to hair)
I'll settle for a shampoo.
(up)
Belinda, you eat my apple again?

She crosses off. Allison looks suddenly uncertain, blank. Lifting her hand to a forehead charged with pain, she takes a few footsteps bringing her full into a blast of white light.

Our scene is bleaching out, bleeding into the highest possible key that will still sustain an image as Allison's hands go again to her head and she begins to buckle. All movement now is thrust into slow motion as she falls, floating into the light standards, sending them toppling, gliding, with her. Accompanying sound effect is a thin, distant, echoing vibratto of a scream.

ALLISON - BLEACHED SCENE - SLOW MOTION

as she strikes the floor and rolls into the tumbling, bursting lamps. Scene now is drained to brilliant white.

TUCCI'S VOICE
Come on, talk to me, babe.

JENNIFER'S VOICE
Allison, can you hear me?

POINT OF VIEW SHOT - DAY - TUCCI AND JENNIFER, IRENE AND BELINDA

The dazzling whiteness becomes our shot: Tucci and Jennifer leaning over us. Irene and Belinda in b.g., watching anxiously. All bright lights have been extinguished. The loft has become a cavern.

They react with an easing of tension as:

ANGLE FEATURING ALLISON

lying on a couch, eyes open now, gravely studying their faces. She finds her voice.

ALLISON
I fell, didn't I?

TUCCI
Yeah, fell, that's it, that's the word, you got it. What the hell happened?

ALLISON
It was just -- a kind of sick numbness.
(she sits up)
No, it wasn't numb at all. It hurt a lot -- headache. Like migraine, I guess. What's migraine like?

The others look at each other -- shrug -- nobody really knows.

ALLISON
Well, whatever it is, I'm okay now.

She stands. No difficulty. The attack indeed seems to have passed.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

TUCCI
(doubtfully)
Sure, you're terrific. Jenny, you want to take her home?

JENNIFER
Come on, hon.

ALLISON
(pulling back)
Nobody's taking me anywhere. I can work....

TUCCI
You can, huh?

ALLISON
You've still got the black-and-whites....

TUCCI
They can wait.

ALLISON
Well, I can't. You refuse a girl the right to make a living?

Tucci glances gravely at Jennifer, back to Allison.

ALLISON
I'm fine -- honest.

TUCCI
Well, you're an honest girl. What are you wasting my time for?

Tucci gives her a little slap on the fanny and sends her o.s. toward the setup as:

TUCCI
Get to work, kid. Tucci's going to make you a star.

He watches her go.

TUCCI
(sotto -- to Jennifer)
She sleeping with Michael?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

JENNIFER
(an innocent)
Mercy, how would I know?

TUCCI
Well, whatever the hell he's doing to her, it's screwing up my business.

He winks at Jennifer, reaches up to flip on a light and adjusts its glare directly into camera.

EXT. TUCCI'S STUDIO BUILDING - NIGHT - ALLISON

Tucci's loft is located in the Quarter. Allison emerges in street clothes, carrying her model's tote bag. She is pallid, weary, grateful for the fresh air. She holds for a few beats, closes her eyes, breathes deeply. Her back straightens and her chin comes up in a conscious effort to put the incident behind her as she takes a few steps. Now she checks, gaze going to:

POINT OF VIEW SHOT - NIGHT - AMBULANCE, ET AL

An ambulance stands in mid-street, rear doors open and facing us. A few gawkers present as the attendants arrange something on a stretcher. A bicycle lies on its side nearby.

ALLISON

Troubled and depressed, she allows herself to be drawn toward this new vortex of tension. Approaching the ambulance, she comes alongside the bicycle.

She looks at it. A blue bicycle, old and beat up -- like hers in childhood -- identical to hers. There is blood there -- a lot of blood. The thin, screaming sound effect is beginning again, distant and echoing, growing out of the dead center of her soul.

Allison looks up to see the stretcher as it is slid into the ambulance.

THE STRETCHER - A BOY

A boy of nine or ten lies on the stretcher. There is a gash in his temple. The boy is young Michael -- identical to young Michael. An attendant gets into the ambulance. The doors are being shut.

ALLISON

face laced with shock and confusion. Her gaze goes again to:

THE BICYCLE

Zoom to logo on the old, blue bike: "Monarch."

VERY CLOSE SHOT - ALLISON

Her bicycle -- it is her bicycle.

ALLISON, ET AL

The ambulance is driving off. Allison is feeling ill again -- frightened by the irrationality of her thoughts. She shrinks back from the bicycle, starts blindly back to the sidewalk. Now the screaming effect is slashed off by the shrill of brakes and glare of headlights. And Allison is seized by a pair of hands thickly tufted with white hair, jerked into a tight two shot with a priest -- with Monsignor Franchino -- as a car jolts to a circus stop a few feet away.

Allison gasps in a fear reflex.

FRANCHINO
Careful, young lady. We don't want another accident.

She absorbs the situation -- understanding that the priest had acted to pull her from the car's path. He is accompanied by the Nun whom we saw earlier. The car drives on.

FRANCHINO
Did you know him -- the boy who fell?

Allison stares at him for a beat -- shakes her head.

ALLISON
No.

THE NUN
Are you ill, dear? What's wrong?

ALLISON
Nothing, I -- I haven't been feeling well.

CONTINUED

FRANCHINO
Would you like a cab?

Another pause as Allison gropes for the context in which she finds herself. Then:

ALLISON
(gratefully)
Yes.

Franchino hails a passing cab.

FRANCHINO
Taxi!

ALLISON
Thank you, Father.

The cab pulls in. He leads her to open the passenger door.

FRANCHINO
Where do you live?

ALLISON
Madison Street.

She gets into the cab.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT - ALLISON AND FRANCHINO

Franchino at the open door. Allison is staring at him.

ALLISON
Father -- do we know each other?

FRANCHINO
Are you a believer?

ALLISON
No -- not really. Not anymore.

FRANCHINO
(a faint smile)
Well, we know each other now.

He reaches in to pat her hand, then closes the door.

ANGLE ON ALLISON

She leans back -- hears Franchino address the driver.

FRANCHINO'S VOICE
One-seventeen Madison Street.

The cab takes off. Now Franchino's words register on her. She looks back through the rear window. The priest and the Nun can just be seen -- standing there in the lamp light.

Allison turns back, struggling to recall. Did she tell him her precise address? She isn't sure. She isn't sure of anything.

EXT. ALLISON'S APARTMENT COURTYARD - NIGHT

Night sounds -- the drip of water -- footsteps -- and Allison entering the courtyard. Lights are on in the Gerde/Sandra apartment. She pauses there, by the door -- then moves quickly to the stairway.

THE STAIRWAY - NIGHT - ALLISON

ascending the stairs to the second level balcony, reaching her door. Tote bag down and key out as her attention is taken by:

CHAZEN'S VOICE
Miss Parker....

Her glance goes to the third level balcony and:

EXT. UP ANGLE SHOT - CHAZEN

looking down to her.

CHAZEN
It's Mr. Chazen. Are you ready for our surprise?

INTER-CUTS - ALLISON AND CHAZEN

ALLISON
(nicely -- with regard for his feelings)
I'm sorry, Mr. Chazen -- I'm afraid I'm pretty beat tonight. Could we make it another time?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CHAZEN
(crestfallen)
I don't see how we could. I counted on you. It's very special. Very special.
(brightening)
Let me show you and if you'd rather, why, you come right back down. Is that fair enough? You wouldn't want to upset Jezebel, would you?

ALLISON
Is that the cat or the bird?

Chazen laughs.

CHAZEN
Why, the cat, of course. My word, if Mortimer heard that. Now how often do I get to invite a pretty girl to my apartment? What else would the neighbors have to gossip about?

Allison finds his simple-minded cheeriness a welcome anodyne. She relents.

ALLISON
In that case, I think you've won me over.
(she starts around the balcony and up the stairs)
Just for a minute, though....

THIRD LEVEL BALCONY - ALLISON AND CHAZEN

Allison joins him on the third level balcony. Her gaze goes to the apartment immediately above hers.

ALLISON
Mr. Chazen, are you sure no one's living in that apartment over mine?

CHAZEN
It's always been unoccupied. Why do you ask?

ALLISON
I heard something last night....

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CHAZEN
These ancient buildings, it's astonishing what one hears. The groans of decay. Why, my apartment was once the slave quarters. Imaging -- slaves right here.

Allison is looking at an alcove and a flight of stairs leading to a higher level.

CHAZEN
No, that's where Father Halliran lives. Here I am....

Chazen brings her to a door decorated with a rather pathetic Christmas wreath. He fluffs it out as:

CHAZEN
I know it belongs to Christmas but it is festive.
(thumps twice on the door)
Now give me your hand, Miss Parker --
(Allison does so)
-- and close your eyes. You must.

Allison closes her eyes. He opens the door.

INT. CHAZEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - CLOSE ON CHAZEN AND ALLISON

as he leads her in, holds.

CHAZEN
Now open.

Allison opens her eyes and reacts to:

POINT OF VIEW SHOT - NIGHT - THE PARTY

Here in Mr. Chazen's limited living-dining room, five smiling, nodding guests sit around a central table set for a birthday party. All eyes are fixed on Allison. The impression of cramped ambience is heightened by a portion of ceiling slanting down toward a window. Furniture is lumpily old-fashioned and bachelorish.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Party streamers festoon the light fixture above the table. Confetti is strewn over the colorful paper table cloth amid an unopened champagne bottle, champagne glasses, and an immense cake decorated with black and white icing. At the head of the table, resting on a box placed on a chair, is the cat, Jezebel, decked out in a paper ruff collar and a miniature, conical, party hat fastened under her chin with a rubber band.

The five guests are also outfitted with paper hats. Noise-makers are strewn over the table.

GROUP SHOT - FEATURING ALLISON

Mr. Chazen's blue eyes glitter with pleasure as he leads Allison to the table.

CHAZEN
Exactly as I promised -- our neighbor Allison Parker -- just in time for Jezebel's birth-day party.

The parakeet flutters down to his shoulder.

CHAZEN
No, we won't forget you, Mortimer. You can welcome Miss Allison.

The bird cheeps. Allison inclines her head in acknowledgment.

ALLISON
Hello, Mortimer.
(and to the cat)
Happy birthday, Jezebel. I'm sor-ry I haven't brought you a present.

The men have risen from the table. One of them, Dr. Palestrina, is perhaps forty, his prematurely-white hair beautifully groomed. He takes Allison's hand.

DR. PALESTRINA
Your charming self is gift enough. I'm Dr. Palestrina -- my wife, Emily -- we have the other apart-ment on the second floor....

He indicates the handsome, rather aristocratic woman seated next to him. Like her husband -- like the others, for that matter -- Emily Palestrina is dressed in a rather old-fashioned manner.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Now Allison's hand is taken by a pleasant-faced, plumpish man in his late forties.

STINNET
Malcolm Stinnet, my dear. From 3B. Mr. Chazen described you perfectly. Come and sit here.

He draws out a chair for her and indicates a woman seated by the cake. Rebecca Stinnet is huge, approaching three hundred pounds. She conveys a sense of ill-temper glazed with party manners.

STINNET
My sister Rebecca -- the creator of this imposing cake.

All the smiling and acknowledging accounted for -- or almost accounted for -- Allison sits next to Rebecca and directly opposite Mr. Chazen's fifth guest: a black woman -- light skinned -- middle-aged -- eyes luminous and intense. Her name is Marie Corbette. Some playing cards are laid out in front of her in an intricate pattern.

Allison's glance goes to the cake.

ALLISON
It's very unusual. I don't think I've ever seen a black and white cake before.

REBECCA STINNET
(irritably)
Black and white cat -- black and white cake, obviously.

But she smiles at Allison, an artificial smile, as if to take the edge off her impatient remark.

ALLISON
Oh.

DR. PALESTRINA
(the final introduction)
And this is our neighbor Miss Corbette -- Marie.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

Marie Corbette's acknowledgment is only a faint smile and a slight inclination of her head.

ALLISON
How do you do.
(around)
I'm pleased to meet all of you.

The slope-ceilinged room -- the ridiculous hats -- the very idea of a birthday party for a cat -- it is all rather bizarre, the quality of the moment amplified by Allison's weariness, illness and state of disconcertion.

ALLISON
I'm afraid I can only stay a minute.

STINNET
(passing her a paper hat)
All the more reason to wear your hat.

EMILY PALESTRINA
Now you can be as silly as the rest of us.

She blows a noisemaker. Mr. Chazen is opening a bottle of champagne. Rebecca Stinnet is cutting the cake. Allison accepts the hat, looks around, catches sight of an antique mirror on the wall, rises and crosses to it.

ALLISON AND MIRROR

The cracked, oval mirror is bounded by an illustrated border some four inches wide which in turn is encircled by the ornate excursions of a slender immortelle frame. Green, vine-like tendrils are thickly interlaced to create the border itself; pictured within this band are a cat and a bird, not unlike Jezebel and Mortimer, the former stalking the latter, drawing closer and closer as their images are repeated along the left-side border, across the top and down the right side until, in the lower right corner, the cat has the bird within its jaws.

At first Allison is quite unaware of all this as she consults her reflection in the glass and adjusts her paper hat.

UP ANGLE - CLOSE SHOT - MR. CHAZEN

narrowly watching Allison, eyes suddenly cold, chill light reflecting from his spectacles.

ALLISON AT MIRROR

Finally she cocks the hat over her forehead and turns to the others with a smile.

ALLISON
There? That dopey enough?

Angle widens for a little approving applause and raising of champagne glasses. Mr. Chazen is as benign as ever as he comes to offer her a glass.

CHAZEN
Splendid.

Allison accepts the champagne, sips it as she looks back at the cat-and-bird mirror.

ALLISON
They look like Jezebel and Mortimer.

CHAZEN
Yes, it's Jezebel's present. I found it in the flea market.

ALLISON
(re the conclusion of the depicted chase)
Is she supposed to do that -- eat the bird, I mean?

CHAZEN
I certainly hope not. We ignore that part.

ALLISON
(a toast)
To Jezebel -- and Mortimer, I think.

CHAZEN
(as they turn back to the table)
Marie's gift is telling Jezebel's fortune.

Allison's eyes go to the cards set out before Miss Corbette.

ALLISON
Then you'll have to tell mine, too.

She slips back into her seat.

GROUP SHOT AT TABLE

MISS CORBETTE
If you wish.

With quiet dignity she gathers up the cards and shuffles them. Chazen lingers at Allison's shoulder.

STINNET
She told us Jezebel will shortly attain her fondest wish -- whatever that might be.

CHAZEN
And live to a ripe old age.

Miss Corbette passes the cards over the table in a circular motion and sets them down.

MISS CORBETTE
Cut them -- touch them to your heart -- and to me.

Allison does as instructed and places the cards back in Marie Corbette's hand. Latter proceeds to lay them out in the same kind of intricate pattern as we saw earlier.

The others are eating their cake. A plate is placed in front of Allison.

ALLISON
Just a taste, thank you -- I shouldn't even have the champagne.

REBECCA STINNET
(a bit snappishly)
Eat what you want.

Allison lets her glance drift over the card pattern.

ALLISON
Will Father Halliran be coming?

EMILY PALESTRINA
I think that's highly unlikely, my dear.

DR. PALESTRINA
None of us has really gotten to know him.

CONTINUED

REBECCA STINNET
None of us knows him at all.

STINNET
I swear he never leaves that apartment.

He indicates the floor above.

ALLISON
But he has to leave sometime -- or somebody must take care of him....

CHAZEN
Your friends Gerde and Sandra, perhaps.

This provokes a little trill of laughter from the group.

CHAZEN
(to Allison -- intimately)
We've all had our little experiences with those two.

MISS CORBETTE
The last card -- here.

She holds out the remaining cards, inviting Allison to choose one and set it face up in the dead center of the pattern. Allison does so. All hunch a little closer, intent on what will follow.

FEATURING ALLISON AND MARIE CORBETTE

The black woman studies the cards, looks directly into Allison's eyes.

MISS CORBETTE
You have loved very deeply.

STINNET
Ahhh.

MISS CORBETTE
You were young -- very young. So was he.
(her hand is poised over a card -- drops back)
You were children.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Allison is not sure she likes this. It is all striking too close to home. Also, the ache behind her forehead is returning, and the sense of illness.

REBECCA STINNET
(mockingly)
Sweet puppy love.

CHAZEN
(still poised at Allison's shoulder)
I despise that expression. 'Puppy love' -- so patronizing. The most intense of all attractions, wouldn't you agree, Miss Allison?

ALLISON
(uncomfortably)
We'll see what the cards say.

Her gaze is snatched back to Marie Corbette by:

MISS CORBETTE
He died.

Allison stiffens. The others are all staring at her.

ALLISON
(dry-throated)
No -- that isn't so....

MISS CORBETTE
(evenly -- insistently)
His head was bloodied and he died.

ALLISON
He -- he fell. He had an accident. He recovered.

The woman shakes her head.

MISS CORBETTE
He is dead.
(then)
It's no use -- she's spoiling it.

Her hand destroys the card pattern and she leans back in her chair.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

MISS CORBETTE
He was taken by Baron Samedi.

Allison looks around in confusion....

REBECCA STINNET
(that mocking quality again -- to Miss Corbette)
'Baron Samedi.' Another one of your gods I suppose.
(to Allison)
Miss Corbette over-dramatizes.

MISS CORBETTE
(to Rebecca)
If you say so, Miss Stinnet.
(eyes level on Allison)
Why do you lie to us?

Allison rises unsteadily. Her hands are shaking. One hand goes to her forehead.

ALLISON
(to Miss Corbette)
I don't know what you're trying to do. If it's meant to be funny, it isn't -- it isn't at all.
(her voice breaking over into hysteria)
How do you know about these things? How do you know about Michael?

Chazen is at her elbow, placating, soothing....

CHAZEN
You're being very literal, Miss Allison. Marie was only trying to amuse you....

THE GUESTS

Their faces peering, probing at Allison, lively with concern and interest.

CLOSE SHOT - NIGHT - MINIATURE PHOTOGRAPH - MR. CHAZEN

There on the dresser in Allison's bedroom, the photograph of

CONTINUED

Mr. Chazen looks toward the bed. The ticking of the clock again -- the soft sounds of distant traffic -- and the camera taking us to Allison's bedside.

On the move, we once again touch the substance of her dreaming -- the superimposition of the malign, prison-cell complex, the narrow jail corridors and iron-grid floors -- and there Allison lies, sleeping, suffering, tormented by her illness, tormented by her dream. Gradually this image is lost as:

INT. UPPER TIER - NIGHT - ALLISON

Again Allison desperately crawls over the grid floor of the upper tier, seeking escape. Below her, in the central tier, reaching up to her, imploring hands stretching out, are Mr. Chazen -- Sandra -- Gerde -- and now the others also: the Stinnets, the Palestrinas, Marie Corbette. All dressed as we have seen them, hands again grasping at the grid, shaking it so that the scene pulses with a thumping, metallic rattle.

And, as before, Allison crawls into the adjacent cell, draws herself cowering into a corner. The cell door slams shut. The pounding rattle continues.

Now the shadow of some unseen figure looming. Her reaction of ultimate horror.

WITHIN THE CELL

as we also see the figure. It is a boy -- Michael -- exactly as he was when he fell. His temple oozes blood. His face is the face of death. He is dead.

He is dead.

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - ALLISON

as she awakens, trembling, staring into the night, riven by the hounding images of her dream.

And again the sound component of the dream has become the sound of footsteps overhead -- once, twice, three times. She cowers against the pain locked within her temples, eyes riveting on:

POINT OF VIEW SHOT - THE CEILING

A final footstep -- and silence. Camera slowly drifts across the ceiling to find the window and the curtain billowing gently. There is light beyond now -- almost dawn. The ticking of the clock comes to us strongly, reassuringly, measuring the seconds of Allison's pain, of Allison's life.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER STREET - DAY - CLOSE SHOT - JACKHAMMER AND OPERATOR

A jackhammer engaged in street repairs explodes its obscenely chaotic din over scene. Camera adjusts to give us a directly adjacent place of business. Arched, gold-leaf letters on a window identify "Ruth Logan, Real Estate and Rentals."

Through the window we see a small office -- Miss Logan seated at a desk -- Allison standing, speaking to her animatedly.

INT. LOGAN'S OFFICE - DAY - ALLISON AND MISS LOGAN

Allison appears pale and haggard. She wears a deep-pocketed top coat and holds a styrofoam cup of coffee, gestures a bit distraughtly as she thrusts her voice over the sound of the jackhammer.

ALLISON
There is somebody in that apartment. I know you said nobody's living there and Mr. Chazen said nobody lives there but I've heard it! Somebody's walking around up there.

Miss Logan sips her coffee, stubs our a cigarette. Her manner is police, vaguely troubled.

LOGAN
And who might that be?

ALLISON
I think that's your business, isn't it?
(she sits fretfully by the desk)
I haven't even been able to sleep -- and that God-damned jackhammer isn't helping!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Her hand trembles as she sets the coffee cup on the desk. Some of it spills. Miss Logan marks Allison's manner -- eyes the spreading slop of coffee -- dabs at it with a paper napkin. The jackhammer goes silent.

LOGAN
You say Mr. Chazen told you....

ALLISON
And while we're on the subject, you might have warned me about that lesbian act downstairs. And those others with their birthday party for a pussy cat

She makes a distraught little gesture. Miss Logan, looking embarrassed, leans back, makes a point of picking up a pencil in order to remove her eyes from Allison.

LOGAN
The others specifically being...?

ALLISON
(a wave of her hand)
The Stinnets. Dr. whatever -- Palestrina -- and his wife. That Corbette woman.
(picking up her bag)
Look, I can handle my neighbors. I just want you to know about the apartment upstairs.

Logan eyes her uneasily, taps the pencil against the edge of the desk. Finally, as the jackhammer rips up the atmosphere again:

LOGAN
You don't have any neighbors, Miss Parker.

Allison looks puzzled; it is difficult to hear....

ALLISON
What did you say?

The jackhammer goes silent.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

LOGAN
(loathing this)
You don't have any neighbors. Certainly you must know that. You and Father Halliran are the only tenants. No one else has lived there for three years.

Allison stares at her, starts to smile as she looks for a hint of jest in Miss Logan's eyes. There is none. Allison's smile fades. She shakes her head faintly, then vigorously. The jackhammer has resumed, its din filling the room, her senses, her head.

INT. THE APARTMENT HOUSE ENTRANCE PASSAGEWAY - DAY

shooting toward the street. The door opens and Michael comes toward us, hurrying through the shadowed passageway to:

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY - MICHAEL, ALLISON, LOGAN

as Michael emerges into the courtyard and finds Allison and Miss Logan waiting. Both are grateful for his appearance: Allison because she feels her whole basis of reality threatened by Miss Logan's insistant statement, Miss Logan because she continues to feel a deep sense of awkwardness in Allison's presence.

Allison tries to smile at Michael, to hold herself erect and to dominate the incredible nature of her situation. But she is close to tears.

ALLISON
Thank you, Michael.
(an acid quality)
Miss Logan wouldn't open the apartments until somebody was with us.

Michael glances at the real-estate woman, at the ring of keys held impatiently in her hand, then moves to embrace Allison, to hold her in his arms.

MICHAEL
Okay. Somebody's with you. With you. You're trembling.

ALLISON
(clinging to him)
Hell, I'm shaking like a leaf.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

ALLISON (Cont'd)
(then: re Logan -- almost in triumph)
Would you mind telling her what I told you about the two women who live here?

She nods at the Gerde/Sandra apartment, turns from Michael's arms to face Miss Logan challengingly.

LOGAN
(dryly)
I've already heard about Gerde and Sandra -- in infinite detail, Mr. Farmer. Why don't we just get this over with.

She crosses to the apartment door.

AT GERDE/SANDRA APARTMENT ENTRANCE - MISS LOGAN

opening the lock. Michael moves in, restraining her as:

MICHAEL
You told Allison no one's lived here for three years?

Miss Logan glances at Allison, shrugs.

LOGAN
It doesn't seem to make any difference what I tell her.

She opens the door. They step back, looking at Allison. Latter hesitates -- goes in. Michael follows. Then the real estate woman.

INT. GERDE/SANDRA KITCHEN - DAY - ALLISON, MICHAEL MISS LOGAN

A grimy, ancient sink -- an old refrigerator standing open and empty -- empty cupboards. The prevailing paint color is a dingy, flaking green. Dust everywhere, thick and pristine.

Allison's expression begins to dissolve into shock. Her eyes dart here -- there: no sign of the apartment as she had seen it, nothing to indicate the coordinated appliances that had previously keyed the immaculate kitchen. She looks at Michael

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

starts to shake her head, panic darting from her eyes, then rushes down the empty corridor to the living room.

Miss Logan glances at Michael. A slight raising of her eyebrows. There is nothing to say.

INT. GERDE/SANDRA LIVING ROOM - DAY - DRAPED WINDOW

Heavy-textured, dust-laden drapes are snapped open by a draw cord. Light filters through dirty windows. Now we see Allison turning from the window, eyes frantically raking the room. Michael and Miss Logan come from the corridor.

The room is carpetless, almost denuded of furniture. Such pieces as there are are nondescript Grand Rapids, circa 1930's. Everything layered with dust. Michael carefully controls his reaction. Miss Logan looks a bit smug: she has demonstrated it is not she who is fantasizing.

Allison whirls to them.

ALLISON
Where are they?

LOGAN
(slight shrug)
They never were.
(to Michael)
I really think....

ALLISON
(desperately)
I sat there -- on a white couch!
There were ballet pictures on the
walls! I'm not making this up!
Michael, look at me!

Michael, who has just exchanged a glance with Miss Logan, looks at Allison, at the evenly-distributed dust on the floor.

MICHAEL
(quietly)
Nobody's been living here, Allison.

Allison's hands rise to her face, cupping it. Her eyes close. Her nails press against the skin, almost breaking it, almost drawing blood.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LOGAN
(to Michael)
Would you like to see this 'Mr. Chazen's' apartment?

EXT. UP ANGLE TO THIRD LEVEL BALCONY - DAY - ALLISON AND MICHAEL

shooting from Allison's entrance area on second level. With Michael, Allison stands where Mr. Chazen had stood on the previous night, looking down to us.

ALLISON
He stood here, Michael -- he stood here and asked me to see his surprise. I was down there....

MICHAEL
That was after you fainted at Tucci's studio?

TWO SHOT - MICHAEL AND ALLISON

Allison quickly scans his face.

ALLISON
I was sick -- I wasn't crazy. There is a difference.

She crosses to Miss Logan who is unlocking the door to Chazen's apartment.

INT. CHAZEN LIVING ROOM - DAY - LOGAN, ALLISON, MICHAEL

as they pass inside. All aspects of the living room as it was for Mr. Chazen's party have vanished. Again the sense of mustiness, of rooms long locked up and given over to dust. The same green, flaking walls as we saw below, bare of all decoration. A few pieces of valueless furniture, also as we saw below.

Allison's face contends with the transformation. She looks pleadingly at Michael.

ALLISON
I -- I don't understand. They were all here....

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LOGAN
(to Michael -- quietly -- ignoring Allison)
We've managed the place for twelve years -- up until the owner decided the tenants were more trouble than they were worth. Except for Father Halliran upstairs. He was allowed to stay on.
(opens her bag)
I took the trouble to check the rental records. There never were any tenants --
(she consults a scrap of paper)
-- named Chazen or Palestrina or Stinnet. Or Corbette.

Now they are both looking at Allison, peering at her, waiting for her to speak, to act.

ALLISON
The table was here. Here! The cat was there -- on a box -- on a chair....

LOGAN
(a bit archly)
The cat with the paper hat?

Allison whirls explosively for:

ALLISON
They've changed it, Michael! Somebody's changed all of it!

MICHAEL
(very quietly)
Since last night?

ALLISON
Yes! Look at her -- look at her face! She knows I'm telling the truth! She knows why this is happening to me!

Hearing the shrillness in her own voice, she breaks off, gropes for an even modulation, for a recovered dignity as:

ALLISON
I want to see the apartment directly over mine.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

With a long-suffering gesture, Miss Logan again takes her keys from her bag and crosses to exit.

Allison and Michael are left facing each other, caught in a cloud of dust motes as the sun leaks through a murky window.

ALLISON
Do you believe me?

Michael's face and voice are carefully controlled.

MICHAEL
I believe you saw -- and heard -- everything you told me.

It is a lukewarm statement at best. Allison feels herself abandoned....

ALLISON
(a sarcasm)
Thank you, Michael. Thanks a million.

She exits to the balcony. Michael moves to the open door, looks down at the lock, reaches for the interior lock control.

EXT. THIRD LEVEL BALCONY - DAY - ALLISON

as she responds to the sound of a metallic click and turns to see Michael at the open door to the Chazen apartment, his hand on the lock control. Their eyes meet in an instant of shared secrecy: the knowledge that he has set the lock in an open position. Then Michael emerges, closing the door behind him; they move along the balcony toward Miss Logan at the door to the third level apartment.

INT. THIRD LEVEL APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

as the door is opened by Miss Logan. The design of the apartment is identical to Allison's: kitchen -- corridor -- bedroom off the corridor -- sitting room at the end.

The place is barren -- totally empty -- again the sense of dust-stifled neglect.

Allison looks around -- moves down the corridor to the bedroom.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LOGAN
(to Michael)
It has the same layout as Miss Parker's. The bedroom is over hers.

Michael nods, taking it all in.

INT. UPPER APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAY

as the door is abruptly thrust open. Allison stands looking in. She comes deeper into the bedroom, empty save for the sagging drapes and, lodged in a corner, a large bedstead and rotting mattress. Again, the floor is thick with dust. She looks up. Michael and Miss Logan stand in the doorway.

ALLISON
(voice tremulous)
Somebody was walking up here.

LOGAN
(entering)
Without any footprints?

Allison looks down at the floor, looks up to Michael. Again the disoriented little head shake. Fear hides in her eyes.

ALLISON
(plaintively)
Michael? What's happening to my life?

LOGAN
(mainly for Michael)
The other apartments are the same. I'll show them if you like.
(glance at watch)
I do have other business.

MICHAEL
Would it be possible to talk to Father Halliran?

LOGAN
(looking up -- sharply)
Why?

MICHAEL
He's the only other person in the building. Maybe he heard something, too.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LOGAN
I doubt that.
(quick glance at Allison)
Under the circumstances. Besides, I can't possibly disturb him. He's blind and very old. May I see you alone for a moment?

Michael looks at Allison, at Miss Logan.

MICHAEL
Surely.

They exit. Allison stands alone. Alone.

INT. APARTMENT HOUSE ENTRANCE PASSAGEWAY - DAY - MICHAEL AND MISS LOGAN

shooting toward street entrance. They stand in the entrance passage in full figure, their murmuring voices coming to us.

LOGAN
Your friend is ill, Mr. Farmer. I should think that would be obvious to you, too.

MICHAEL
I'm an attorney, Miss Logan. I deal in facts. The only fact we've established is that right now -- today -- only two people are living in this building. I still don't know what happened last night.

LOGAN
I'm sorry. It's all very distressing. She seemed such a lovely girl.

She turns away.

EXT. MADISON STREET - DAY - LOGAN AND HER CAR

Miss Logan is sliding behind the wheel of her car as:

MICHAEL'S VOICE
Miss Logan....

She looks up. He comes into shot.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MICHAEL
Allison said you told her Father Halliran never leaves the apartment.

LOGAN
That's true.

MICHAEL
I was wondering -- how does he pay his rent?

LOGAN
He doesn't. It's paid for him.

MICHAEL
And who does that?

LOGAN
The Archdiocese of New Orleans.
(a beat)
Will there be anything else, Mr. Farmer?

MICHAEL
Not right now.

He steps back as the woman starts the car and drives off. He looks after her thoughtfully -- a little doubtfully. Now he shades his eyes and looks up toward:

POINT OF VIEW SHOT - THE DORMER WINDOW

and camera zooming in again, showing us that the figure behind the curtains is still there. Once again we see the shape, the glint, of the crucifix.

INT. COURTYARD - DAY - MICHAEL

as Michael comes back into the courtyard and to the steps. He ascends quickly toward:

EXT. BALCONY - THIRD LEVEL - DAY - MICHAEL

as he attains the third level balcony and moves to the closed door to the Chazen apartment. He pauses -- turns the handle.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

The adjusted lock allows the door to open. We see Allison standing inside by the window. Her figure is slumped, hands sunk deeply into topcoat pockets, eyes down, already the walking wounded of a secret battle.

INT. CHAZEN APARTMENT - DAY - MICHAEL AND ALLISON

as Allison looks up at him. Slowly her right hand is withdrawn from her pocket, extending toward Michael. Her fist opens. There, in her hand, is the miniature photograph of Mr. Chazen.

ALLISON
(almost a whisper)
It's Mr. Chazen -- his gift to me -- that first day. Remember? I told you that night -- on the river.

Michael takes the photograph, examines it closely -- looks at Allison -- at the photograph again. She watches his face. His absence of response tells her that, of itself, the photograph proves nothing. Without comment, Michael sets it on the window ledge. Allison's eyes remain riveted on him..

ALLISON
You and Miss Logan -- you were talking about me, weren't you?

MICHAEL
Yes.

She tries to draw a sliver of humor out of her own flesh as:

ALLISON
And what was the conclusion? Temporarily insane? Incurably? How did it all come out?

MICHAEL
(gently drawing her to him)
It came out you're still my girl.

Allison lets her body rest against his strength, uttering only the exhausted, whispered syllables:

ALLISON
Oh, Michael.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He eases her back so that he can see her face.

MICHAEL
I want you to tell me everything you did here last night -- show me where everything was.

She nods -- moves from him.

ALLISON
They were all here -- around the table. The Corbette woman had the cards -- she was telling my fortune -- she said I -- loved a boy when we were young. That he had an accident. And died.

She is looking at Michael now. For a long moment they stare at each other. Then:

MICHAEL
Does the name Corbette mean anything?

ALLISON
(head shake)
I never heard any of their names before.

She returns to moving around the unseen table and:

ALLISON
First they gave me a paper hat. I put it on in the mirror -- it was old -- and oval-shaped -- with a kind of twisting, metal frame....

She looks around -- reacts to the place where the mirror had hung.

ALLISON
Michael -- look.

She moves to the wall. So does Michael. This portion of the wall faces a window across the room. Years of sunlight have darkened it, except for the outline of the oval mirror and its unique immortelle mounting. Within the oval are markings of a lighter color, a kind of handwriting perhaps -- script-like letters; or perhaps just random fade-marks on the wall.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

ALLISON
It was hanging here -- you can see where the frame was....

Her hand traces the sweeping curlicues of the immortelle design.

ALLISON
(glance at window)
The light from the window -- Mr. Chazen said he'd just bought it, but it must've been hanging here for years.
(then)
Michael -- there's writing -- Latin or something -- you can see the letters -- like old script....

Her hand traces the faded marks on the wall. Indeed, they might be construed as letters.

MICHAEL
(doubtfully)
There's something -- I can't make it out....

ALLISON
Don't you see them? An 'M' -- and an 'E'....

MICHAEL
How do you know it's Latin?

Haltingly, she reads out two Latinesque words. Michael looks sharply between the markings and Allison's pleading eyes. From his inner jacket he draws a pen and an envelope.

MICHAEL
Try to write it down. Can you do that?
(she nods)
Exactly what you see.

Allison takes the envelope and pen, begins to painstakingly copy the markings. Michael watches her for a few beats, crosses toward the window. Allison's eyes follow him, searching for reassurance.

ALLISON
Something <u>was</u> hanging here ---

ON MICHAEL - AT WINDOW

ALLISON'S VOICE
-- wasn't it?

Michael, his back to Allison, has picked up the Chazen photograph, stands staring down at it.

ALLISON'S VOICE
Wasn't it, Michael?

MICHAEL
Yes. Something was here.

He returns to the mirror wall, to Allison. And as she copies the markings, camera slowly presses in, carrying us into the clearly formed letter 'O' and through to:

INT. UNIVERSITY GYMNASIUM CORRIDOR - NIGHT - MOVING SHOT

camera pulling back as Michael moves urgently down the corridor of a university gymnasium, the place thrumming with echoes of o.s. jockstrap activity. Plenty of students around -- some in gym gear or sweatsuits, others fully dressed and lugging books.

Michael's progress is thrusting, intense. He pauses, looks around, passes through an arched entrance to:

INT. BASKETBALL COURT - BLEACHERS - NIGHT - MICHAEL

O.s. sound of a thudding basketball as Michael enters upon the lower level of seats overlooking the basketball court. Camera finds a single player, sweatsuited, whirling, dribbling and shooting with manic virtuosity. His name is Rudinzky. He is about thirty, tall and lean and bespectacled and tousled.

MICHAEL
(calling out)
Professor Rudinzky?

RUDINZKY

He sinks a basket, turns, waves at Michael, chases after the ball.

INT. ALLISON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - ALLISON

The room is unilluminated. Allison is seen in the flickering blue-milk light of the o.s. television set. She is half-curled on the couch, not really watching the set, locked in tension,

CONTINUED

one hand gnawing at her forehead, the other fiddling with an old flashlight. Its operation is erratic as she flicks it on, off, on, off.

THE TELEVISION SCREEN

The black-and-white antics of W.C. Fields. Allison's hand slams against the switch. The picture perishes. A lamp is switched on. We find Allison by the lamp. She stares at herself in a wall mirror. Camera closer now as she perceives her own haggard image, hand rising to the dryness of hair and skin and then touching the surface of the mirror, palm flat against the glass as if to touch her other self and thereby learn the secret of her disordered universe.

INT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT - MICHAEL AND RUDINZKY

Michael is in one of the seats, Rudinzky in front of him, sweating profusely and vigorously towelling head and face.

RUDINZKY
Not a professor. Not yet, counselor. Classic languages aren't exactly your hot item these days. But we got a long shelf life. Let's see your troubles.

Michael hands him the envelope. Rudinzky glances at it in some surprise, looks up at him.

RUDINZKY
Uh-huh.

He picks up a briefcase standing by the edge of the court and moves to sit next to Michael.

TWO SHOT

RUDINZKY
This is real ancient stuff. Know any Latin?

MICHAEL
High school. I can't make any sense out of it.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

RUDINZKY
Yeah, well, when they invented your Latin, this variation was already buried.

He opens the briefcase, extracts a pencil and a yellow, legal pad.

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - ANGLE ON CEILING

Camera comes from ceiling to discover Allison. Clothed as we last saw her, she lies on the bed. Her eyes are open, her gaze riveted overhead. The flashlight lies on the bedside table. She stirs, turning her glance to the window. The clock ticks. She waits.

INT. BASKETBALL COURT BLEACHERS - NIGHT - MICHAEL AND RUDINZKY

Michael standing as Rudinzky works over his yellow pad.

MICHAEL
Can you translate it?

RUDINZKY
Me? You think you're playing with kids?

He grins, licks the end of the pencil, continues writing. Distantly, a low roll of thunder is heard.

RUDINZKY
(intent)
I don't do this kind of work for nothing, you know. Either you got to get me off a murder rap or buy me a coke.

The thunder again, closer now, and the spattering sound of rain drumming through the gymnasium.

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - ALLISON

Allison is seen closer than in previous shot, still lying on the bed. Her eyes are closed now. They open on a vicious, immediate clap of thunder, directly overhead, and a flare of lightning. Simultaneously, a rush of wind and rain. Her face radiates fear.

THE WINDOW

Curtains threshing wildly, rain driving through. Allison moves in to slam the window shut.

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT - RUDINZKY

He drains a bottle of coke, scratches out a word on his pad, substitutes another. Rain continues to drum down.

RUDINSKY
(calling out)
Okay. This is a very high class job you're getting. You want it?

Camera finds Michael in mid-court. He crosses to Rudinzky.

MICHAEL
Please.

The scholar rips off the page of foolscap, hands it to him. For several beats Michael studies it, frowning, puzzled. He looks at Rudinzky, then reads aloud:

MICHAEL
'Upon this place shall be appointed a blessed guardian....'

RUDINZKY
Naw, gimme that.
(he takes the sheet, scribbles a changed word)
Guardian's a shitty translation.

MICHAEL
(searchingly)
What does it mean?

RUDINZKY
Beats me. Haven't got a clue. It sounds theological. You want meaning, try the theologians. They're up to their ass in meaning. Behold:

He reads his text, taking his time, letting the phrases echo through the great tympanum of the court.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

RUDINZKY
'Upon this place shall be appointed
a blessed sentinel --- '

EXT. MADISON STREET - THE APARTMENT HOUSE - NIGHT - UP ANGLE

It is raining. The apartment house is seen in a flash of lightning; then we are zooming toward the dormer window as:

RUDINZKY'S VOICE
' -- against all the evils of Hell,
always and forever --- '

We are on the window, on the shaded figure who looks out into the night. Now, in another burst of lightning, the face of Father Halliran is for the first time revealed: incalculably old, white hair matted and powdered with dust, skin as pale as moonlight. He is indeed blind, his eyes clouded with cataract, milkily blank. He clutches the crucifix.

RUDINZKY'S VOICE
' -- that the miracle shall be returned from his hands --- '

EXT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM WINDOW - NIGHT - ANGLE ON ALLISON

Behind the window we perceive Allison's figure, huddled, near catatonic.

RUDINZKY'S VOICE
' -- and give us joy.'

In another blaze of lightning, we see her eyes come up to the ceiling as camera presses in to:

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - ALLISON

With our presence in the room, we hear again the clank-footstep sound overhead. Silence as she stares upward. Then a repetition -- another.

UP ANGLE SHOT - THE CEILING

Again -- footsteps. Camera comes down to Allison, to the aching dread in her upturned face. She is forcing herself to move now -- forcing each step -- crossing through the darkness to the bedside table. She grasps the flashlight and turns to the door.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT - ALLISON

Moving through the corridor -- the kitchen. Thunder, distant and rolling.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - ALLISON

To the kitchen door to exterior -- freezing for an instant -- turning to a drawer -- sliding it open.

INSERT - CUTLERY DRAWER - ALLISON'S HAND

hesitating -- grasping a butcher knife.

ALLISON

drawing out the knife -- to the door again -- exiting to the balcony.

EXT. SECOND LEVEL BALCONY - NIGHT - ALLISON

coming from her apartment. Wind-driven rain flagellates the balcony. She makes her way to the stairs, grasping the knife, grasping the flashlight.

Such light as exists is barred from the stairway. Something moves there -- shadow against shadow.

ALLISON

Hair and face wet with rain, eyes dilated, she pauses -- raises the flashlight, flicks on its beam. Horror freezes into her face.

POINT OF VIEW SHOT

There, crouched on the steps, is the cat Jezebel, its bloody jaws clamped on the broken body of the parakeet. It leaps toward Allison and into the darkness.

ALLISON

A stifled scream, body pressed against the stair railing, trembling. Now, following the beam of light, she ascends the stairs, one by one, until:

EXT. THIRD LEVEL BALCONY - NIGHT - ALLISON

She comes to the door of the apartment immediately above her own, checks, reaches for the knob. With her touch the door eases open. Darkness within. Her flashlight plays over the derelict kitchen and the corridor beyond. The light flickers out; she shakes it; the beam returns. She extends the knife -- and enters.

INT. KITCHEN - THIRD LEVEL APARTMENT - NIGHT - ALLISON

Slowly, one step at a time, following the light beam through the kitchen -- the corridor -- her breath coming in tight, terrified spasms -- the knife pointing the way.

Until she reaches the closed door to the bedroom. Flashlight out. Listening. Only the rain. The distant thunder.

ANOTHER ANGLE - ALLISON

Her hand is on the bedroom door. Opening it. One step inside.

INT. BEDROOM - THIRD LEVEL APARTMENT - NIGHT - ALLISON

in darkness trammeled only by the wisp of light oozing from the window -- Allison's breath catching in her throat as she sees:

THE BED

The bed nestled within the cornered walls. Something is there -- something moves there.

ALLISON

The knife extended -- the flashlight flicked on and:

ALLISON'S POINT OF VIEW

the flashlight beam panning across the wall -- finding the bed -- the tangled bedding and two women: naked, one very thin, the other gross. The gross woman is laughing silently, head back, flesh quivering, pointing at Allison.

In this instant an o.s. sound inflicts its transcending horror: a footstep, dragging, metallic. The light beam swings to discover another figure in the room. It is Allison's father.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He is naked, approaching her.

He is older now, diseased as he was at the time of his death. His right leg is paralyzed, dragging. Clamped to it and hooked beneath his instep is a metal brace.

ALLISON

staring out of a masque of terror as she stumbles backward. The scream that has been tearing at her throat finally finds emission. As she falls:

THE BED

The two women are instantaneously illuminated by a sweeping flash of light.

THE FLASHLIGHT

extinguished as it hits the floor. Allison snatches at it, futilely tries to resurrect the beam as the footsteps approach. It remains dead. Darkness.

Now she crouches against the wall, knife upheld, as the figure of her father enters shot. His hands reach out for her -- touch her. In the instant of contact, a single syllable is ripped from the roots of her terror:

ALLISON
Noooooo!

CLOSE ANGLE - HAND AND KNIFE

as the knife strikes upward, embedding in her father's chest. And his shriek of agony.

ALLISON

twisting, clawing for the flashlight, rising to the door, stumbling against it, escaping to:

INT. THIRD LEVEL APARTMENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT - ALLISON

Her demented flight.

EXT. THIRD LEVEL BALCONY AND STAIRWAY - NIGHT - ALLISON

Her body only partially responding to the instinct for escape, she flounders to the stairway, drops the flashlight. Its beam flashes on as Allison holds to the rail in her headlong plunge to:

EXT. SECOND LEVEL BALCONY - NIGHT - ALLISON

Sobbing, whimpering, embedded in hysteria, she thrusts down the stairs and is suddenly snatched motionless by a man's figure.

MICHAEL
Allison....

Her fists pummel blindly at him. He restrains her, shakes her....

MICHAEL
Allison!!

The fact of Michael's presence leaks through to her. She is sinking now, slumping, crouching against the bannister. Her breath comes in quick, moaning sounds threaded through:

ALLISON
Upstairs -- the bedroom -- God!
Oh, God! My father! I killed
my father....

Michael's glance flashes upward. He breaks for the stairway.

EXT. STAIRWAY TO THIRD LEVEL BALCONY - NIGHT - MICHAEL

He finds the fallen flashlight, grips it, rushes upward to:

INT. ENTRANCE - THIRD LEVEL APARTMENT - NIGHT

as the entrance door is thrust open and Michael appears. Flashlight on. Through the kitchen and down the corridor to the bedroom....

INT. CORRIDOR AT BEDROOM DOOR - NIGHT - MICHAEL

The bedroom door is a few inches ajar. Michael hesitates, abruptly bangs it fully open with his foot. He raises the flashlight and slowly enters.

INT. THIRD LEVEL APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT - MICHAEL

and his flashlight playing over the room, the empty room save for the bedstead in the corner, covered by the bare, rotting mattress. On the bed, caught full in the light beam, is the black and white cat, Jezebel, back suddenly arching, hissing.

MICHAEL

tightening as he recognizes the cat from Allison's description.

JEZEBEL AND MICHAEL

and the cat leaping from the bed, running past Michael and through the door, Michael swerving aside, struggling against a sense of dread as the flashlight beam explores the stifling, dust-choked atmosphere of the bedroom: nothing. Nothing. Only the bed. He crosses to it. Outside, the rainstorm has been replaced by wind, building quickly in great, sweeping gusts.

AT THE BED - MICHAEL

There, where Jezebel had lain, is a butcher knife. Michael picks it up, inspects it. The blade is clean. No sign of blood. A final glance around as he backs out of the room.

EXT. STEPS - NIGHT - MICHAEL'S LOWER BODY - THE KNIFE

The wind tearing at Michael's clothing as he descends the steps. We see only the lower portion of his body -- and the knife clenched in his hand. Now he freezes as we hear running footsteps in the courtyard. Camera comes up as he looks to:

POINT OF VIEW SHOT

a glimpse of Allison's figure disappearing into the passage-way to the street.

EXT. SECOND LEVEL BALCONY - MICHAEL

MICHAEL
Allison!

Then he is releasing the knife, running down the steps toward courtyard and passageway.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT - LOW POSITION SHOT

A street lamp casts its light into a puddled pool of black rainwater. Within it appears the image of Allison's chalky face and its surface ripples in the wind; her feet splash through and we angle up to see her running from us, running across the windswept street to the protection of an old building's brick facade.

EXT. THE FACADE - NIGHT - ALLISON

Wind-driven, wetted from the earlier rain, tormented gaze turned inward with shock and despair, Allison comes flush against the brick surface, cheek pressing against it, arms outflung, lips thrusting out the whispered words:

ALLISON
Help me -- God, help me.

An o.s. car approaches. Its headlights find her, hold her instantaneously in their limed glare as her eyes open wildly in renewed fright. Then the car drives on and Allison moves erratically along the brick wall, hand steadying her until it touches a piece of statuary, a figure of the Virgin Mary set within a niche flanking a great doorway. Her eyes focus on her surroundings, recognize the entrance to a church. And sanctuary. With an exhausted little sound of gratitude she thrusts against the vast door. It opens. And she enters.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT - DOWN ANGLE SHOT - ALLISON

as Allison comes into the vaulted gloom of the church. The interior is in the process of reconstruction so that great latticeworks of piping and scaffolding jar incongruously against the mystical ambience. The church is indeed old and cavernous, illuminated only by a few bare bulbs fastened here and there to the high scaffolding.

A central aisle leads between disarrayed rows of benches toward the denuded altar area. There is no sign of attendant or occupancy.

ALLISON

moving uncertainly down the aisle, confused by the indications of construction, by the sense of abandonment. She pauses, raises a trembling hand to her lips, calls out:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

ALLISON
Is anyone here?

Her words echo like little stones against the bleak walls.

ALLISON
Father?

Anguish creeps toward hysteria as her voice breaks and:

ALLISON
Won't somebody help me?

Again the echoes. She pivots around, eyes darting feverishly into the shadows.

PANNING SHOT

irrational, canted, searching the unwelcoming silence.

ALLISON

Exhaustedly, numbly, she drops onto a bench. With a little gesture of capitulation she allows her forehead to sink against the back of the bench in front of her. For a moment she rests, open-eyed, hopeless. Then her eyes close and her voice finds a child-like prayer. It comes from her lips in the full sense of prayer -- a plea, a child's beseeching of God....

ALLISON
(disjointedly)
Angel of God, my Guardian dear,
To Whom God's love commits me here,
Ever this day be at my side,
To light, to guard,
To rule, to guide....

She remains so -- until startled by the sound of the great entrance door thrust shut. Allison whirls to see:

ANGLE TO ENTRANCE - A FIGURE

A black-clad figure emerges from the vestibule and stands, only partially perceived, in the gloom of the entranceway.

THE FIGURE
Allison.

ALLISON

She gasps -- shrinks back....

THE FIGURE

coming forward into the light. It is Monsignor Franchino.

ALLISON

frozen -- peering toward him.

ALLISON
How -- how do you know my name?

THE FIGURE

continuing forward and into scene with Allison, his clerical collar clearly seen now. His eyes hold her firmly; his voice is softly pitched.

FRANCHINO
We met before -- don't you remember? The boy in the accident. You almost walked in front of the car.

His hand extends, steadying her, the back of the hand thickly tufted with white hair. Her eyes rise to his -- an uncertain nod of recognition.

FRANCHINO
You're trembling, child. Why are you so frightened?

ALLISON
I -- I had a knife....

FRANCHINO
Yes?

ALLISON
I killed -- my father....

FRANCHINO
But your father's already dead. You buried him yourself. You stood at his graveside.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Fright rekindled, Allison pulls away from him, bewildered eyes locked to the priest's face, head shaking, forcing the words:

ALLISON
How -- how...?

FRANCHINO
No, don't be afraid. We're God's children. We share God's knowledge. Nothing can harm you here. Give me your hand.

She allows him to take her hand and he grips it firmly, reaffirming the strength of his presence. Her eyes plead with him.

FRANCHINO
What nightmares penetrate our souls -- and drive us to God's arms.
(a beat)
Is there a god, Allison? Does He still exist?

ALLISON
(finally -- almost inaudibly)
No. Not for me.

Slowly he releases her hand, drifts back from her.

FRANCHINO
But once you prayed to Him -- not a child's prayer -- but truly prayed -- for Michael's life.
(his voice rising -- striking with authority)
Did God give you Michael's life?

ALLISON

Her hands rise anguishedly to her face. She no longer questions the priest's knowledge.

ALLISON
He wasn't dead!

FRANCHINO

In his face we read the reflection of Allison's suffering. He moves now along the perimeter of the church -- to a large crucifix shrouded in workmen's canvas. His voice echoes across the distance between them.

FRANCHINO
But if he were, Allison. If it was -- a kind of miracle -- a miraculous gift of life -- then who gave you Michael's life?

DOWN ANGLE - FRANCHINO AND ALLISON

Still Allison struggles against the priest's implacable voice.

ALLISON
He didn't die....

CLOSE SHOT - FRANCHINO

gaze fastened on her -- then turning back and upward to the crucifix. Again we are conscious of the glaze of perspiration on his forehead, his tension, his pain.

FRANCHINO
But if he did.

UP ANGLE - THE CRUCIFIX

FRANCHINO'S VOICE
Then you'd owe a debt to God -- wouldn't you, Allison?

CLOSE ANGLE - ALLISON

FRANCHINO'S VOICE
Wouldn't you?

She remains motionless, eyes no longer searching for the priest, a supplicant within an unseen confessional. Then the single word:

ALLISON
Yes.

FRANCHINO

He kneels before the crucifix, for a few seconds immersed in the intensity of private prayer, his eyes closed. Then he crosses himself, his eyes reopen. He remains kneeling as:

FRANCHINO
In a way, then, you'd be God's servant.

He rises now -- returning to her as:

FRANCHINO
All these years -- all this time -- the servant of God.

He is next to her -- her eyes turn to his.

ALLISON
I don't know what you mean.

Franchino draws her to her feet, draws her forward toward the front of the church, past the iron gates that guard the splendor of the altar place -- this as:

FRANCHINO
You've endured so much. And what did you turn to, Allison? Where did you run to? God's house.

Here they stop, before the altar. Gently his hands urge her to kneel. Behind her, he touches her shoulders and repeats:

FRANCHINO
God's house. Your flight from evil.

Angle widens as he moves back from her, back among the scaffolding and shadows.

FRANCHINO
There is a war between good and evil, my child. Malignant and holy, locked always and forever.

Still he moves from her.

ALLISON

in the kneeling position of prayer -- but her eyes open, hearing his voice, fearing it again....

CONTINUED

FRANCHINO'S VOICE
That's why you're tormented so. In a way you can't understand yet, every instant of your life has brought you to this place -- and soon beyond this place -- to return to the house of evil. The servant of God.

With the reference to the house, Allison's position breaks.

ALLISON
No!

She whirls, upright now, eyes wildly searching for Franchino.

WIDE ANGLE - ALLISON

He is no longer there -- only his voice, striking and repeating against the stone walls.

FRANCHINO'S VOICE
The souls who came to you in that house -- it's you they fear, Allison. They want to destroy you -- to drive you away -- to triumph over God.

CLOSER SHOT - ALLISON

stricken by the priest's voice:

FRANCHINO'S VOICE
In the end they must fail. And you will serve. In the end, Allison, you will go back....

From Allison, a protracted cry. She breaks past the enfolding gates, thrusting blindly toward the exit, caught now amid the jungle of pipe-like, scaffolding supports.

ANOTHER ANGLE - ALLISON

as she caroms off one of the supports, starts to fall, clutches at another upright. It trembles under her hand.

UP ANGLE SHOT - SCAFFOLDING

as something above gives way -- a temporary catwalk tearing loose, spilling its planks.

ALLISON

as the support topples, throwing her to her knees, and the planks knife down like assaulting spears, narrowly missing her prostrate figure. Portions of the pipe-support grid are also breaking loose. Dangling elements sway amid the swirling dust that clouds the scene, and for a few seconds there is a sound-sense of the entire structure rumbling.

AT ENTRANCE DOORS - MICHAEL

Michael is seen transfixed against the open entrance doors, staring toward Allison. He bursts toward her. Debris continues to fall.

MICHAEL AND ALLISON

He reaches her, kneels to her in the silence. She is unconscious, face and clothes streaked with dirt. Convulsively he holds her against himself, eyes closing for an instant, his own body trembling. Then he rises, lifting her in his arms, carrying her toward the great doors.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAWN - A NUN

A Nun, an unfamiliar face, moves down a corridor within an old hospital building. She pauses as camera shows us Michael standing by a window, illuminated by a blood-red dawn.

THE NUN
Mr. Farmer.

Michael looks at her. He is raw-eyed and unshaven. He comes toward her.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAWN - MICHAEL, NUN

The door opens, held by the Nun who remains outside as Michael enters the shaded hospital room. Door closes behind him. Now we see Allison sleeping. On the wall above her bed is a crucifix. A resident named Barish is also in the room. He is in his late twenties, fiercely moustached, a tired man making a note in a chart. He gives Michael a keen, evaluating glance.

DR. BARISH
You Michael?

CONTINUED

MICHAEL
Yes.

His troubled gaze goes to Allison.

DR. BARISH
My name's Barish. I do psychiatry around here. She's out cold. Only way I could bring her down. Every kind of cockamamey fright reaction. She was raving pretty good. Religious girl, would you say?

MICHAEL
Not particularly. Not at all.

Barish nods at:

ANGLE ON ALLISON'S HAND

Gripped in her hand is a rosary and crucifix. Michael touches it. We come up on his puzzled look at Barish.

DR. BARISH
She asked one of the nuns for it -- just before she conked out. Sometimes it all comes back.
(then)
Well, no head injuries -- nothing systemic or pathological. We'll watch her for a few days.

He moves to the door, leans his head back against it, looks at Michael with that same evaluating expression.

DR. BARISH
She -- ah -- she seems to have got hold of the idea that you died. And God brought you back to life. What's that all about?

MICHAEL
Something that happened -- a long time ago. An accident.

DR. BARISH
And the priest with the white hair on his hands?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MICHAEL
There wasn't any priest. Nobody else was in the church.

DR. BARISH
Her father and the knife....

MICHAEL
There was nobody in that room either.
(his hand rises to rub unconsciously against the scar at his temple)
She's been -- I know she's been hallucinating. But there's something else -- I'll know more about it -- maybe later today. Can we talk then?

DR. BARISH
(a beat)
Sure. I'll be around.

He exits.

MICHAEL AND ALLISON

Michael moves around to look directly down at Allison, at her sleeping face, cheek turned into the pillow. She stirs, bringing the crucifix across her body to the pillow, between her and Michael. Gently he starts to remove it. Her hand clenches it. His fingertips touch her forehead, stroke her hair. His eyes are fixed on her face.

MICHAEL'S VOICE
(introspectively)
Upon this place shall be appointed a blessed sentinel -- against all the evils of Hell -- always and forever -- that the miracle shall be returned from his hands. And give us joy.

She remains sleeping -- at peace. Tenderly Michael kisses her.

INT. ARCHDIOCESE - DAY - YOUNG PRIEST, ET AL

The sense, within the Archdiocese is of the grooved activity of a corporate head office. A pleasant-faced and rather eager Young Priest descends a stairway and approaches the reception area where Michael stands waiting.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

YOUNG PRIEST
Mr. Farmer...
(Michael turns to him)
You requested the interpretation?

MICHAEL
Yes, I gave it to the receptionist....

YOUNG PRIEST
I saw the passage. It's very interesting. Monsignor Franchino has it now. Perhaps he can help you. If you'll come this way.

He leads the way back up the stairs.

INT. ARCHDIOCESE OFFICE - DAY - FRANCHINO

The office is large, cool, sparely elegant. An Empire table serves as a desk. Monsignor Franchino stands by a window, face partially averted, holding a folded sheet of paper.

FRANCHINO
What do you wish to know, Mr. Farmer?

MICHAEL'S VOICE
What it means.

Now Franchino looks toward the voice.

FRANCHINO
May I ask how this came into your hands?

He moves into shot with Michael who is seated facing the desk.

MICHAEL
It's a translation -- from some form of Latin. A young woman found it -- where she lives. She's -- important to me.

As Franchino sits:

FRANCHINO
(the paper)
And why is <u>this</u> important?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MICHAEL
It may help explain certain -- ideas she's been having. I know that doesn't make much sense, Father, but I have to know.

Franchino hesitates, scans Michael's eyes -- the strain, the intensity -- then places the paper on the desk. His palm rests on it.

FRANCHINO
I'm sorry. The passage is totally unfamiliar.

MICHAEL

his gaze going to the paper, to Franchino's hand. And, as the nature of the hand registers, Michael stiffens.

CLOSE SHOT - FRANCHINO'S HAND

the back thickly tufted with white hair.

MICHAEL AND FRANCHINO

as Michael's gaze rises to Franchino's eyes.

MICHAEL
(a brittle quality)
Maybe some additional information'll help. Last night this young woman -- her name is Allison -- had a particularly terrifying experience. One of several. Later, in a deserted church, she spoke with a priest. She said the backs of his hands were covered with white hair.

Franchino raises his hands. Their eyes remain locked.

FRANCHINO
Like mine, Mr. Farmer?

MICHAEL
Like yours, Father.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FRANCHINO
(hands dropping; quietly)
Do you believe in Hell? An explicit repository of damned souls?

MICHAEL
I have a limited capacity for superstition.

FRANCHINO
Ahhh. You're a rational man.

Anger coarsens Michael's voice: it thrusts with raw hostility.

MICHAEL
I don't believe in your suffering hells and serene heavens.
(rising -- poised over the desk)
I believe a girl's sanity is on the chopping block. I also believe you know exactly what I'm talking about.

FRANCHINO
If I were withholding a truth, it might be because you could never comprehend it. Or even conceive of it. Perhaps, Mr. Farmer, it could even destroy you. And so, under certain protective circumstances, I might indeed lie to you.

A beat. He rises, extends the paper to Michael.

FRANCHINO
But as I said, I know nothing of this.

Michael takes the folded sheet. In his eyes, stance, manner, there is a sense of barely contained violence.

MICHAEL
(tightly)
We'll see.

FRANCHINO
You contemplate violence. This collar -- my age -- they barely restrain you. But whatever you

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

FRANCHINO (Cont'd)
do or don't do, I tell you that in the end it will be the same.

MICHAEL
Go to hell -- Father.

He exits.

FRANCHINO

holding -- the early, grave sadness returning to his face.

INT. ARCHDIOCESE LOBBY AND RECEPTION AREA - DAY - MICHAEL

making his way toward the exit.

THE STAIRWAY - DAY - YOUNG PRIEST

The Young Priest descends the stairway, spots Michael and:

YOUNG PRIEST
(calling out)
Mr. Farmer.

MICHAEL

turning.

YOUNG PRIEST

Enthusiastically he races down the stairs, skirts flapping, approaching Michael.

YOUNG PRIEST
Did the Monsignor help you?

MICHAEL
No. Thanks all the same.

YOUNG PRIEST
(a bit crestfallen)
I thought surely -- I saw the passage. It's most unusual. Perhaps -- there <u>are</u> other scholars, you know.

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT - BOURBON STREET - DAY

Afternoon on Bourbon Street. The sleazy bars and strip joints offering male and female flesh. Junkies, winos and wandering tourists, hand in hand with their spruce children. Jazz, blues, thumping strip music all bleeding into each other.

YOUNG PRIEST'S VOICE
A first-rate man named Reardon.
(confidentially)
I'm curious myself to know what it means.
(then)
He's not in the church. Still....

Camera finds Michael making his way through the crowd.

CLOSER SHOT - MICHAEL

A blank-eyed, scrawny, fifteen-year-old girl tries to stop him, lets her fingers drift around his belt as she whispers something. He presses on. She doesn't bother looking after him.

EXT. STRIP JOINT - BARKER

The Barker is squat, immensely fat. His voice is a croak. He looks as if he has been fished up for his job from a sleeping place in a gutter. He is probably paid off in hourly booze.

THE BARKER
(a toneless pitch)
Boys, boys, all young boys inside. Yes, sir, yes, sir. Show of a lifetime, folks. Everyone guaranteed as pretty as a picture.

Michael comes into shot, eyes scanning the joint. The Barker's gaze screws onto him.

THE BARKER
(to Michael)
You found it, young fella. Come on in and enjoy it.

Michael goes in.

INT. STRIP JOINT - THE CHORUS LINE

Here, ignited by colored lights, a half dozen pathetic young men, clad in G-strings, prance and turn on a shallow stage jutting into the gloom.

A TABLE - REARDON

Seated at a table, smoking, watching, is the man named Reardon. He is in his fifties, fingers nicotine stained, his skewed tie an approximation, his suit likewise, eyes sharp, quick, tragic. His glance turns from the stage toward:

MICHAEL, ET AL

shooting past a few dancers toward Michael and a cocktail waiter, the latter indicating Reardon.

REARDON

He looks back to the stage, chain-lights another cigarette. Michael tips into shot.

MICHAEL
Mr. Reardon?

REARDON
Please sit down.

Michael does so. Only now does Reardon look at him.

REARDON
(dryly)
We take our pleasures where we find them, Mr. Farmer. Such as they are. I'm really a remarkably learned man. Would you prefer my lecture hall? Or a clerical collar?
(he touches his Adam's apple)
Mine was given up. My own peculiar sacrifice.
(he drains his glass)
Want a drink?

MICHAEL
The passage I read you on the phone....

REARDON
The sentinel against evil? -- the return of the miracle -- and joy. Christ, the same old boogeymen gibbering at the foot of the bed.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MICHAEL
Then you know what it means....

REARDON
If I were an ancient Greek I'd know that Orpheus descended into Hell -- into the netherworld to reclaim his beloved doxie. If I were a practicing Christian I'd know the wages of sin are damnation and death. Damnation is what we suffer on earth. Some of us. Hell is where we go next -- down into the satanic empire of the fallen Lucifer -- if we were nasty enough. Or so they say.

The music tells us that the dance act is terminated. Michael follows Reardon's glance as it goes to the dancers and:

DANCERS

Camera singles out a particular young man -- the object of Reardon's attention. Making an exit from the rear of the stage with his fellow dancers, his arm goes around the waist of another boy; the embrace is returned.

MICHAEL AND REARDON

as Reardon throws down a few bills.

REARDON
Jesus, let's get out of here.

He rises. So does Michael.

EXT. BOURBON STREET - MOVING SHOT - DAY - MICHAEL AND REARDON

making their way through the throng, the regulars and the tourists, the jazz and the barkers. Reardon speaks fluidly with little jabs of self-mockery, humor, sardonicism.

REARDON
Your passage, Mr. Farmer, seeped its way through a dozen religions and into the early Church. If there is a pit into which the doomed soul is tossed -- a fresh recruit for Lucifer's army

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

REARDON (Cont'd)
of the damned -- then where is Hell's own entrance? Where did Orpheus descend? Better yet, given the Gate of Hell, what is there to prevent the devil's legion of dead souls from erupting back into this very world of yours and mine -- and penetrating their awful evil into every pore of our bodies? You see the problem: it's a question of waste disposal; how does the church prevent evil from oozing back from the netherworld?

Michael stops; all of it -- Reardon's voice, manner, flow of ideas -- is an intangible insanity. They stand against a building facade, the foot traffic flowing around them.

MICHAEL
Look, with all due respect, this is so much gibberish....

REARDON
With all due respect, one man's gibberish is another's faith. The game is to knock the two together and count the sparks. Which are known as wisdom. The early Church, in its own primitive wisdom, believed it had a duty to discover the entrance to Hell -- or entrances, if you like. And there to post a sentinel -- a blessed soul bearing a crucifix, his very presence a shield against evil. Our shield. Against the armies of the night. An unbroken chain of sentinels, Mr. Farmer, down through the ages, each replacing the other at the moment of death -- our eternal guardians. Madness, isn't it?

Reardon grins, rather pleased with the whole effect. He takes Michael's arm and they move on.

REARDON
As to the identity of these guardian souls, they were believed to be men -- women -- embraced by God at some significant point in their lives. Those who

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

REARDON (Cont'd)
had once received some special gift of divine grace. A miraculous intercession -- a prayer answered. But now the miracle must be repaid -- the cosmic books balanced -- and the sentinel takes his appointed place.
(a quick look at Michael)
To give us joy, Mr. Farmer. To shield us from the demonic souls who have died before us. Who beat against the Gates of Hell for reentry to our pretty world.
(he pauses)
So runs the belief. Curious. But one comfort: it leaves men like us free to choose our own damnation without satanic influence. Free will. But that's another problem. Perhaps we'll speak again sometime.

Reardon turns abruptly and moves off into the crowd. Michael starts after him, holds, lets him go.

REARDON

moving to a narrow stairway leading to quarters over one of the jazz joints. As he disappears from view, camera slowly cranes up to a wrought-iron balcony. Here, stepping onto the balcony and looking down into the street, we see the figure of Miss Logan.

DOWN ANGLE -BOURBON STREET CROWD - MICHAEL

Michael is moving off.

SHOT TO BALCONY

as Miss Logan is joined by Reardon and they watch:

THEIR POINT OF VIEW - MICHAEL

disappearing into the throng.

INT. ALLISON'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - ANGLE ON JENNIFER, ROSES

Jennifer holds a bouquet of roses in a vase. Camera circles her closely as she moves to set the flowers on the night table by Allison's bed. And we see Allison, head turned toward us, eyes slightly open. Now Jennifer realizes that her friend is no longer sleeping. Her deep concern for Allison is nicely masked with a surface cheerfulness.

JENNIFER
Well, you're awake.

ALLISON
I've been.

JENNIFER
My God, you're getting what I've always wanted: a nice rest.

ALLISON
People always say that in hospitals.

JENNIFER
People have to say something.

ALLISON
Where's Michael?

JENNIFER
Out and around.
(she fluffs out the roses)
He sent you these. I'd prefer rubies; but then I'm avaricious.

ALLISON
(reaching to grip Jennifer's hand)
He'll go back to that house, won't he? To find out.

Jennifer looks sharply at her, marking the anxiety in Allison's voice, Allison's face.

JENNIFER
He told me what's been going on. Some of it anyway. No, I don't think he'll go back there.

ALLISON
I don't want him to....

CONTINUED

JENNIFER
(sitting on edge of bed)
That's nice, because he doesn't want you to either.

Now Allison shifts her hand and Jennifer becomes aware of the rosary and crucifix. She reaches for it:

JENNIFER
Hey, when did you get so religious?

Allison draws back.

ALLISON
I -- it's for Michael....

JENNIFER
(puzzled)
Did he give it to you?

ALLISON
No -- I don't know -- he was bleeding when he fell -- I don't want him to die....

Jennifer responds to Allison's distraught state by drawing a soothing hand over her forehead.

JENNIFER
It's all right, hon. Michael's all right. He'll come here soon. I brought you a nice, sexy nightie.
(she indicates a coat and suitcase)
And some going-away clothes.

Allison's eyes are closing now, closing heavily.

ALLISON
I want to sleep....

JENNIFER
I'll sit for a while....

ALLISON
No -- please -- just sleep. Tomorrow?

Jennifer stands, leans over her, kisses her cheek.

JENNIFER
Sure. Tomorrow.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

She takes her own coat from a chair and exits.

ALLISON

With the closing of the door, her eyes reopen. Her hand rests by the pillow, by her cheek. The beads, the crucifix. Her eyes are deeply thoughtful. Her hand turns. The beads click.

INT. NEWSPAPER MORGUE - DAY - CLERK

Here, in a library-like complex of reference books and endless file cabinets, a Clerk assembles a collection of files and clippings and limps through several aisles to:

INT. NEWSPAPER MORGUE - DOWN ANGLE - COUNTER - DAY - MICHAEL AND CLERK

The Clerk comes to a front counter where Michael is waiting and proceeds to lay out his files. Hanging nearby is a pad of large, crimson-numbered, individual calendar sheets. The date is October 11.

CLERK
What we got is what we got.
As of --
(glance at calendar)
-- October eleventh, nothing dead or alive on your Mr. Chazen. Not in this paper, anyway. And we been around a while.

TWO SHOT - MICHAEL AND CLERK

MICHAEL
The others?

CLERK
Dead. Long gone.
(looks oddly at Michael)
You sure got some curious kind of curiosity, Counselor.
(opening a file -- handing some yellowed, stapled clippings)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CLERK (Cont'd)
The Stinnets, brother and sister, hanged 1922. Admitted poisoning twenty-two victims. Most of them strangers.

Michael looks at the clippings. He moistens his lips.

MICHAEL
Dr. Palestrina?

CLERK
(another file -- more clippings)
And his wife.

He hands these to Michael also. Latter scans them; he is deeply shaken.

CLERK
Your Gerde and Sandra must have been these two. Some of the local children were disappearing.
(more clippings to Michael)
Give you what you need?

MICHAEL
Yes, I -- thank you.

CLERK
(clippings returned to file as:)
You can check out Marie Corbette for yourself. Everybody knows Madame Marie. Queen of the Voodoo Queens. St. Louis Cemetery Number One. Tell her I sent you and ask her how many she killed. We'll put it in the files.

He grins.

EXT. ST. LOUIS CEMETERY - DUSK - MICHAEL

The cemetery is unique to New Orleans, marked not with graves but with rows of oddly miniaturized, marbled, mausoleum-like crypts in varied sizes and styles.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Michael moves among the burial places, coming at last to the one he is searching for. Throughout, from somewhere o.s., comes the steady clink-clink of a stonemason's chisel.

MARIE CORBETTE STONE - DUSK

A stone identifies the resting place of Marie Corbette and her death in 1897. Michael comes into shot, marking the stone, the name, the date, the freshly-painted red-crosses on the slab, the withered roses that someone has left there.

He holds for a moment, afflicted with a sense of dread, starts to turn as the o.s. clinking sound ceases abruptly. The silence is sudden and heavy. Michael stands listening, then walks away.

ST. LOUIS CEMETERY - DUSK - ANOTHER ANGLE - MICHAEL

His pace slows as he comes to a place where a white marble crypt has been newly erected. The shallow doorway stands open. It is empty. Stonemason's tools lie on the identifying, vertical slab. Michael draws closer, reads the freshly-cut letters.

THE SLAB

and the words:

FATHER MATTHEW HALLIRAN

SENTINEL OF GOD

Born
Apr. 23, 1891

Died
Oct. 11, 1976

Camera emphasizes the date of death.

ON MICHAEL

and, dawning in his eyes, the shattering knowledge of Allison's fate.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELEVATOR DOORS - NIGHT - MICHAEL

as the elevator doors open and Michael emerges, moving quickly, desperately, past the nurse's island toward the corridor to Allison's room. A Nun looks up -- the same Sister whom we first saw with Monsignor Franchino at the Archdiocese and later scrubbing the steps at Allison's apartment house.

THE NUN
Mr. Farmer....

He is already into the corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT - MICHAEL

hurrying toward Allison's room, entering.

INT. ALLISON'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT - MICHAEL

and his relief as, by the single night light, he sees Allison sleeping, her back to him. Michael crosses to her, leans over her -- and sees the nasal drain tube, the unfamiliar face, this stranger. He whirls as the door opens.

INT. ALLISON'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT - MICHAEL AND NUN

The Nun stands at the door.

THE NUN
You must leave this room. The patient....

MICHAEL
(slicing in harshly)
Where is she?

THE NUN
Miss Parker was released from the hospital -- perhaps an hour ago. I really....

MICHAEL
How the hell -- what about that psychiatrist -- Barish. Didn't he try to stop her?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

THE NUN
(evenly)
I wouldn't think so. It was Dr. Barish who gave the approval.

Michael's stricken eyes hold on her for an instant.

MICHAEL
God Almighty....

Then he is thrusting toward the door, exiting. The Nun moves to the night light, switches it off. Click.

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - NIGHT

Our moving camera explores the moonlit courtyard. Night sounds -- the steadfast drip of water into the dampness. And the sound of o.s. footsteps. We discover Michael at the base of the stairway. He looks around -- looks up -- then hurries up the stairs.

EXT. SECOND LEVEL BALCONY - NIGHT - MICHAEL

Michael comes to Allison's apartment. The door stands open, as on the previous night. Darkness within. His hand presses the door wider. He moves inside.

INT. ALLISON'S KITCHEN AND CORRIDOR - MICHAEL

as he ventures into the darkness.

MICHAEL
Allison?

Perfect silence. He draws back -- back to the door and to:

EXT. SECOND LEVEL BALCONY - NIGHT - MICHAEL

as he emerges. Listens. Again he looks up -- moves to the stairs -- starts to ascend. He sees something on the stairway, bends to pick it up. It is the butcher knife he had abandoned there. He grips the handle, continues to climb.

EXT. THIRD LEVEL BALCONY - NIGHT - MICHAEL

as he approaches the entranceway to the final, interior stairway leading to Father Halliran's apartment. Again -- continuing up the stairs.

INT. FATHER HALLIRAN'S STAIRWAY - NIGHT - MICHAEL

still gripping the knife, moving under the oppressively slanting ceiling, coming to the top of the stairway and to the door that waits for him there.

AT FATHER HALLIRAN'S DOOR - NIGHT - MICHAEL

his face bathed in perspiration, eyes dilating with fear. He tries the door. It is locked. His knife hand rises to its surface, then falls. He moves back a step. Suddenly, convulsively, his foot kicks against the lock, smashing the jamb, splintering the rotting wood. And the door swings stiffly open.

Michael enters.

INT. FATHER HALLIRAN'S ROOM - NIGHT - MICHAEL

as he crosses the threshold. The barren room is shaft-like, coffin-like in its length and breadth. Open iron gates stand a few yards within the entranceway. On one side, beyond the gates, inset into the stone wall, are what appear to be two rows of ancient crypts, one above the other.

SHOOTING FROM BEHIND MICHAEL

toward the curtain window. Moonlight floods through. A high-backed chair stands there, facing outward. Silence.

Michael moves forward -- past the gates -- toward the chair.

MOVING SHOT - MICHAEL

He stops. Something lies on the floor. He sees that it is a large, silver crucifix. He moves on -- toward the window -- toward the chair. Now he is there -- directly behind it -- hand clenched on the knife.

He moves to one side -- another step -- and we see the figure in the chair.

It is Mr. Chazen. The cat rests in his lap. He strokes it. He is looking at Michael.

CHAZEN
Hello, Michael. Jezebel and I have been waiting for you.
(he smiles)
And Allison.

MICHAEL

as his hand flashes with the knife -- across camera.

INT. APARTMENT HOUSE ENTRANCE PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT - ALLISON

as the door closes behind her. Allison stands poised for an instant, listening, then moves through the passageway to:

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT - ALLISON

as she enters the courtyard -- moves to the stairway -- again hesitates, then starts up the stairs. At mid-stairway she stops. Something glints there in the moonlight, something gold and crimson. She bends to pick it up.

INSERT - ALLISON'S HAND AND CUFF LINK - NIGHT

Michael's cuff link in her hand. It is wet with blood.

ALLISON

and the primal scream:

ALLISON
Michael!

Only the drip of water in the courtyard. Now she is rushing up the stairs to:

EXT. SECOND LEVEL BALCONY - NIGHT - ALLISON

thrusting blindly toward the haven of her apartment, the entrance door standing open. She lunges inside.

INT. ALLISON'S APARTMENT AT ENTRANCEWAY - NIGHT - ALLISON

entering, pressing herself against the closing door, locking it, shooting the deadbolt of the second lock. She turns, back against the door, again calling into the darkness:

ALLISON
Michael?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

And the knowledge of her aloneness. The lights now -- Allison's hand stabbing at the kitchen switch. A ceiling light goes on. But there, on the whiteness of the wall and the switch plate -- a smear of blood. Allison looks at her hand: the bloody cuff link. She whirls to the corridor, turning on another light as she rushes toward the living room.

INT. ALLISON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - ALLISON

bursting from the corridor, hand raised to a wall switch as the television set, yards away, suddenly flashes on. The high-level sound engulfs her: a roar of sighing, moaning, fluttering. And her gaze stabs to the dread picture forming, shaping before her eyes:

THE TELEVISION SCREEN - CELL COMPLEX

Allison witnesses the substance of her own afflicting dream -- the cell complex, steel bars and iron grids which imprison the naked, twisting, writhing, sweating bodies of the damned. Here are Chazen -- the Stinnets -- the Palestrinas -- Marie Corbette -- Gerde and Sandra. And others. A host of others. Body upon body, hellishly entrapped, arms extended, faces upturned, imploring, straining.

And in the f.g., shrinking from their touch, abandoned to them, is the boy Michael, temple and cheek running with blood, calling out to her:

YOUNG MICHAEL'S IMAGE
Allison -- Please, Allison -- don't let me be dead -- help me -- please, please....

CLOSE SHOT - ALLISON

the shifting colors of the television set reflected in her face. Initially, the onslaught of the images drives her back against the wall. Then, bursting through the paralysis of her fear, she breaks to the TV. Her hand slams against the switch. Sound vanishes; images vanish.

Breath coming in torn sobs, she whirls back to the wall switch: no light answers her command. Frantically she works the switch up and down. The light is dead. She springs to a lamp. Also dead. Another lamp. Dead. The room remains in darkness. The only light comes from the corridor. She runs to it.

INT. ALLISON'S CORRIDOR - NIGHT - ALLISON

in the corridor now. The light here begins to flicker. Allison's eyes flash to the ceiling. The light goes out. Only the kitchen light remains. And the locked kitchen door to the exterior. And the sounds that are coming from that door: the gentle, scratching sounds and the turning of the handle. Allison is riveted, staring toward:

ANGLE TO KITCHEN DOOR TO EXT.

The handle turning -- the sound of someone pressing to enter.

INT. CORRIDOR - ALLISON

hands compressed at her mouth, moving back now, back to the bedroom.

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - ALLISON

She is within the bedroom, hand flaying at the wall switch. Light! Allison swinging the door shut, locking it with another deadbolt, fading back from it.

Beyond the door, she hears the sound of footsteps. The footsteps in the corridor now. Wildly her eyes probe for an escape: the window. She rushes to it.

AT BEDROOM WINDOW - NIGHT - ALLISON

Allison sweeping the drapes aside. There is no window. Where it once was is now a blank wall. A cry comes from her throat. Her fists pound against the wall. And then the sound at the door. Her eyes turn to see:

THE BEDROOM DOOR

and the handle turning.

ALLISON

as she shrinks along the wall -- toward the closet -- the final refuge of the closet. She is almost there. Her eyes never leave:

THE DOOR

Someone is straining to enter.

ALLISON

reaching the closet, hands almost incapable of opening it. At last she is inside.

INT. THE CLOSET - ALLISON

closing the door. Light seeps from under it. Nothing exists but her fear. Fear is the universe. Saliva runs from the corner of her mouth. Her breathing ceases.

Footsteps.

Footsteps within the bedroom. Moving away from her. Her hand comes from her pocket. The rosary and crucifix. Pressed against her mouth. The footsteps are returning. To the closet door.

INT. THE CLOSET - THE DOOR KNOB

It is turning.

ALLISON

The terror has reached her throat. She is choking. The door swings open.

REVERSE ANGLE - THE DOOR

and Michael. His voice is soft with pity.

MICHAEL
Allison.

MICHAEL AND ALLISON

It is seconds before her consciousness registers.

ALLISON
I -- I...Oh, Michael.

She comes forward into his arms. They enfold her, comfort her.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MICHAEL
It's all right -- it'll be all right now -- away from this place. I know now -- what they've been doing to you. That madman in the church -- that priest -- he wanted to keep you here -- a living death -- the sentinel to guard the Gate of Hell -- like Father Halliran.

She clings to him, trembling, still beyond the comprehension of his words. But now, looking past him, she sees and reacts to:

POINT OF VIEW SHOT - BEDROOM DOOR

and zoom to the lock -- still deadbolted.

ALLISON AND MICHAEL

Allison's eyes widen.

ALLISON
Michael?

MICHAEL
The people you saw -- they're dead, Allison. Dead and damned.

ALLISON
(a thready whisper)
How did you get in?

She wrenches out of his arms, stares into his eyes.

ALLISON
(a dread wonderment)
The door's still locked....

Michael cups her face.

MICHAEL
I've learned so much. It was Chazen who tried to save you -- to send you away before it's too late.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

And in this instant she sees his cuff links -- one at each wrist -- intact -- the links that were once his father's. Slowly she opens her closed hand on the third link. And with this realization:

ALLISON
You're not Michael....

She backs from him -- toward the bolted door. His hand extends pleadingly.

MICHAEL
Listen to me! Get out of this house! There's only death! Father Halliran is dead!

Her head twists from side to side.

ALLISON
Michael's dead!

ANGLE ON MICHAEL

With her words, his hand falls back. His eyes close. The wound at his temple appears to open. Blood courses down his cheek. His eyes reopen. He cocks his head to one side, much like Mr. Chazen. A little smile -- like Mr. Chazen's. And when he speaks it is with Mr. Chasen's voice, reprised from his first meeting with Allison.

MICHAEL
(Chazen's voice)
You're an incredibly beautiful young woman and you'll live your life with much happiness. I know you will.

ALLISON

back against the door now, thrusting the bolt open, fleeing into the corridor.

INT. ALLISON'S CORRIDOR - NIGHT - ALLISON

lunging through the kitchen and:

CLOSE SHOT - KITCHEN ENTRANCE DOOR - NIGHT - THE LOCKS

Allison's hands tearing at the locks -- at the door -- Allison exiting to:

EXT. SECOND LEVEL BALCONY - NIGHT - ALLISON

emerging onto the balcony and suddenly frozen as she perceives something o.s., her response an apotheosis of anguish as camera angles to reveal the sprawled body of Michael. The corpse lies in the same position as the young Michael who had fallen from the cliff. There is blood at his temple. His hands are outflung. The sleeve is torn from one bloodied wrist. There is no cuff link there.

ALLISON

turning from Michael -- turning to the descending stairway, to her last, tormented flight from Hell.

There, just below her on the stairs, stands Monsignor Franchino. She checks, shrinks against the adjacent wall.

FRANCHINO

The ravaged quality of his face has softened. It is deeply compassionate, ineffably sensitive to every aspect of her agony.

FRANCHINO
Allison....

ALLISON

A slight tremor of her head.

ALLISON AND FRANCHINO

FRANCHINO
(gently)
Once Michael's life was God's gift to you.
(his glance rises above and beyond her)
They killed him. To force you from this house.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Slowly Allison looks up and back, following his gaze to:

THE DAMNED

On the balcony, disappearing into the rising stairway to the third level, are the figures of Gerde and Sandra -- Malcolm and Rebecca Stinnet -- Marie Corbette -- the Palestrinas. They stand like satanic sentries, motionless, iced eyes fixed on Allison, projecting their profane hatred.

Among them, between them, lining the facade that adjoins the stairway, are the cast shadows of other figures, the malign presence of an unseen host.

ALLISON

Her stare is blank -- beyond comprehension -- beyond fear. She looks back to Franchino. Camera goes to him. His voice enfolds her like a protective cloak.

FRANCHINO
I told you every instant of your life would bring you to this moment. God's servant. Against God's enemy.
(He extends his hand)
For the love of God -- Sister Teresa.

MED. CLOSE SHOT - ALLISON

her eyes questioning.

MED. CLOSE SHOT - FRANCHINO

his eyes drawing her to him.

CLOSE SHOT - ALLISON

A kind of peace is returning to her face, and with it the erasure of the lines of torment. It is the first accepting of acceptance.

CLOSE SHOT - FRANCHINO

A slight nod -- an assurance.

VERY CLOSE SHOT - ALLISON

Her eyes are clear, no longer clouded with suffering.

VERY CLOSE SHOT - FRANCHINO

his gaze suddenly shifting to:

FRANCHINO'S POINT OF VIEW - THE DAMNED

watching.

ALLISON AND FRANCHINO

The priest's hand still outstretched -- and Allison's reaching out to it. With his touch, she comes from her position against the facade. He ascends toward her. With Allison at his side, he comes onto the balcony -- to the stairs to the third level -- passing under the contemptuous stone stares of Gerde and Sandra -- into the jungle of shadow-presences on the stairway.

EXT. STAIRWAY - ALLISON AND FRANCHINO

ascending toward the third level -- past Malcolm and Rebecca Stinnet -- toward Marie Corbette. Latter's arm is suddenly outthrust, as if to block them. Only now do Franchino and Allison look at her. The arm falls back. Again they are mounting the stairs, penetrating the shadowed figures that flank their progress.

POINT OF VIEW SHOT

the camera ascending toward Dr. Palestrina and his wife, shoulder to shoulder on the stairway. They move aside, revealing the presence of Mr. Chazen on the third landing. Camera stops.

CLOSER SHOT - UP ANGLE - CHAZEN

He is an immensity, an obscenely divine, prideful presence, scornful eyes blazing out of the glitter of his spectacles.

DOWN ANGLE - CHAZEN'S POINT OF VIEW - ALLISON AND FRANCHINO, ET AL

Allison is frozen by Chazen's gaze. Franchino continues toward us, to a point where camera adjusts to include Chasen. His head turns minutely to look into the priest's eyes; a faint smile touches his lips and is gone as he looks back to Allison.

CLOSE SHOT - ALLISON

transfixed by Chazen's gaze. All signs of her torment have vanished. Again, she is radiantly beautiful.

CLOSE SHOT - CHAZEN

the awesome force of his presence thrusting at Allison, driving into her soul.

VERY CLOSE SHOT - ALLISON

Her eyes go to:

VERY CLOSE SHOT - FRANCHINO

looking down to her.

FRANCHINO
Sister Teresa?

DOWN ANGLE - ALLISON

still holding -- and now she continues up the stairs -- to Chazen -- past Chazen. And Chazen's gaze returns to the priest. He inclines his head -- a bow -- a concession of defeat. Franchino returns the gesture, Servant of God to God's Fallen Angel. He turns toward:

ANOTHER ANGLE - FRANCHINO AND ALLISON

and the entrance to the stairway leading to the dormer apartment. They approach the stairs.

INT. FATHER HALLIRAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

shooting toward the iron gates and, beyond them, the doorway. Allison appears. A step forward. She stops.

ALLISON'S POINT OF VIEW

toward the curtained window -- the high-backed chair -- the place of the sentinel. Now camera finds and emphasizes the crucifix on the floor.

ALLISON

as she starts forward again, moving past camera. And now we see Monsignor Franchino enter -- his hand on the gates -- slowly closing them.

LOW POSITION SHOT - THE CRUCIFIX

A shadow falls across the crucifix. Allison's hand grasps it, rises with it. Camera continues to rise, tilting now, craning toward the glassed skylight.

As we approach it, the darkness beyond is brightening, becoming dawn, becoming day.

EXT. THE APARTMENT HOUSE ROOF - DAY

and our camera slowly descending to discover the curtained dormer window. Someone is seated inside, face turned outward to the street. Distantly, church bells begin to ring. Perhaps we can make out the aspect of a beautiful young woman, the black-and-whiteness of a nun's coif, and the glint of sunlight on a large, silver crucifix. The sound of the bells is stronger now.

EXT. VATICAN CITY - CLOSE SHOT - DAY - BELLS OF ST. PETER'S

The bells ring with awesome presence, delivering a message of tintinnabulary joy as camera zooms back and down to discover the Vatican and St. Peter's Square -- the rich, teeming life of mid-day Rome -- the miracle of life itself -- the marvel of God's joyous creatures. What could harm them on such a splendid day?

And the credits. And the singing of the bells.

FADE OUT

THE END