

TORSO
by
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Based on the graphic novel

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INT. A WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

FADE IN:

OVER CREDITS:

In a room CLOAKED IN SHADOW, the only light comes from a dim hanging light bulb. A FIGURE works. LEATHER GLOVED HANDS toiling away.

Piles of NEWSPAPERS. "THE CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER" AND "THE CLEVELAND PRESS", litter a worktable. GLIMPSES OF HEADLINES AS THE BUSY FIGURE'S SHADOW DARTS ABOUT THE ROOM. Chronological headlines read:

**CHI-TOWN'S ELIOT NESS AND HIS 'UNTOUCHABLES' MAKE MARK
NESS GIVES CAPONE THE SQUEEZE**

**YOUNG G-MAN SHOWS NO FEAR! CAPONE TRIAL NEAR
CHICAGO SHOCKER! CAPONE NABBED FOR TAX EVASION**

As the gloved hands work, more glimpses, half-images: razor-sharp blades being rinsed in brown water from a rusty faucet, newspapers grabbed, crumpled and wrapped around pieces, bundles of... what?

Twine is knotted and tightened around the bundles as WET STAINS soak the papers. Dark stains. Blood?

The hands continue their work, getting more agitated, more excited.

Newspapers are ripped aside until a headline from the "Cleveland Plain Dealer" appears. It reads:

UNTOUCHABLE NESS COMES TO CLEVELAND!

END CREDITS

EXT. A GRASSY HILLSIDE - DAY

CUT TO:

Bright sun reflects off of LAKE ERIE. The water lazily laps the shore near a rugged, grassy hillside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TWO RAGAMUFFIN BOYS (10-12) scream with laughter as they run along the shoreline, chasing each other in a game of tag.

Title: Cleveland, Ohio. September, 1935.

BOY #1
Too slow, Tommy!

TOMMY
I'm tellin' mom!

The boys dash up the steep hillside and into the tall, dry grass.

JOHN
Last one to the top is a rotten egg!

TOMMY
No fair cheatin', John!

JOHN cuts up a steeper section of the hill. He trips over something AND FALLS FROM VIEW. Tommy stops to catch his breath and sees John disappear into the tall grass.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
John? Where'd you go?

No answer. Tommy runs over to where John fell and finds him staring at the ground. Tommy turns to see what his brother is fixed on...

... A BLUISH-WHITE HUMAN ARM lays on the dead grass.

TOMMY's eyes widen in abject terror and he opens his mouth to scream. The only sound is a metallic pop. Followed by another. And another.

POP. POP. POP.

FADE TO WHITE.

EXT. CLEVELAND CITY HALL - DAY

A camera flashbulb pops. And another. And another.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOZENS OF REPORTERS are gathered on the steps of City Hall as MAYOR HAROLD TAYLOR (40's) speaks at a podium.

MAYOR

Yes, this city has been through a lot. The whole country has. But Cleveland is a city with its feet on the comeback trail. Hosting the Republican National Convention next month is but the first of many honors we will see. As your mayor, I have heard your cries for help...

The reporters roll their eyes. They have heard this all before. CLAYTON FRITCHEY, 20's, a bespectacled reporter, watches impatiently.

CLAYTON

You think he'd hear my cry if I begged him to move it along?

Laughter from a few fellow reporters.

MAYOR

As you know, Cleveland has had its fair share of no-goodniks, bootleggers, and bums. Previous administrations may have supported such behavior by taking a blind eye. But, as I said when I ran for this office, I will stand for none of it...

INT. CITY HALL - SAME

EDNA NESS, (20's) a stylish and striking woman, peeks through a doorway and watches the mayor.

Behind her, FOOTSTEPS CLICK on the marble floor of the rotunda. ELIOT NESS, visible only in silhouette, paces across the room.

EDNA

That man is very fond of the sound of his own voice.

NESS

They all are.

EXT. CITY HALL - SAME

The mayor continues drone on. Impatience is visible on the reporters' faces.

MAYOR

So, today, I am proud to present the latest edition to our beautiful city. The man who cleaned up Chicago, stared down "Scarface" Capone, and will help return the city of Cleveland to her rightful place of glory. Citizens of Cleveland, I give you our newest Safety Director: Mr. Eliot Ness!

ELIOT NESS enters on cue. He is barely 30, but his boyish good looks suggest he is younger, and his piercing eyes give him the air of confidence.

The scene erupts in noise and flashes of light.

Ness squints against the bright flashes as he makes his way to the podium. Edna, ever the good wife, steps to the side and allows her husband his moment.

In spite of themselves, some of the starstruck press actually applaud. The mayor grins and vigorously shakes the lawman's hand, leaning into as many photos as possible.

Ness, anxious but cool, takes to the podium.

NESS

Thank you for the glowing introduction, Mr. Mayor. And thank you to the press for showing such interest in a humble civil servant like myself. If I had known Cleveland was such a friendly city I might have left Chicago to Capone.

Boisterous laughter from the press. Ness already has them wrapped around his finger.

CLAYTON

What are your immediate plans?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NESS
I might unpack.

Laughter.

NESS (CONT'D)
Seriously, we are still assessing the
course of action that best...

REPORTER
Any comment on the rumor that most of
the police force was against you
coming to Cleveland?

NESS
Can't say that I've seen any evidence,
but that doesn't mean it's not so.

REPORTER 2
Come on, Ness! Everyone knows you're
here to clean house.

NESS
I am here to turn the police
department of this city into a
respectable law enforcement operation.
Am I going to stand for any of the
corruption that permeates this city?
No. I took this job because the people
of this city are being victimized on a
daily basis. Decent people trying to
lead decent lives. They deserve
better.

REPORTER #3
Mr. Ness, how do you feel about how
things went with the Capone
investigation?

NESS
Fine. He's behind bars and his mob is
in shambles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

REPORTER #3

But to have spent so much time chasing him, hunting him down, wasn't it hard to have to settle for the treasury department putting him away on tax evasion?

NESS

Settle? First of all, it wasn't my investigation. I was the government's. I was working for the city and people of Chicago.

(beat)

As far as Capone is concerned, all that matters is that he is in jail.

Nicely handled. The mayor beams.

NESS (cont'd)

Thank you for your time, gentlemen.

Ness walks away from the podium and heads straight towards Edna.

MAYOR

That's enough for today, boys. You'll get your pound of flesh from Ness later.

REPORTER #1

One more question! For you, Mrs. Ness...

NESS

Now, be nice to her, fellas. I can have you arrested.

REPORTER #1

Can you tell us what it's like to be married to a living legend?

Edna looks up at Eliot with a sly smile and back at the reporter.

EDNA

It's legendary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

A WALL OF LIGHT AS FLASHBULBS EXPLODE.

MATCH CUT TO:

FLASHING CAMERAS.

A CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHER snaps pictures in the tall grass.

EXT. THE GRASSY HILLSIDE - DAY

POLICE CARS and the CORONER'S WAGON are parked at the top of the hill. Police officers are scattered all over the beach front searching the ground.

TOMMY and JOHN sit pale-faced and shaken on the back of a police car. They nod weakly as they are questioned by an officer.

Down on the hillside, DETECTIVE WALTER MYRLO (40-50'S) lights up a cigarette as the crime scene photographer continues taking pictures.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Pardon me, Detective.

Myrlo crosses to another officer.

MYRLO

Any word from Doc Pearce?

OFFICER

The doc said, and I quote, "I'm old and I will get there when I get there. Try not to touch anything."

Myrlo rolls his eyes. ANOTHER DETECTIVE saunters down the hillside and waves at Myrlo.

DETECTIVE

Hey, Walt.

The detective is SAM SIMON (20's) young, handsome, very neat and pressed in contrast to Myrlo's lived-in look.

MYRLO

What took you so long, Sam?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON
Finishing the paperwork on the Keller
murders. Where do you think?

MYRLO
You gotta love it when they just
confess like that.

SIMON
It's the same amount of paperwork,
partner.

MYRLO
What do you want from me? We each have
things that we do well, and it works
out that you're the better speller.

SIMON
(smiling)
How lucky for you?

MYRLO
Ain't it?

SIMON
I'm telling you now, you're logging
this one. What's the story here?

Myrlo gestures to the body. Simon reaches his partner and
looks at the crime scene. The blood visibly drops from
the young detective's face.

SIMON
Jesus.

Laying in the grass before the detectives is the NUDE,
HEADLESS AND EMASCULATED BODY OF A WHITE MAN wearing only
one black sock ON ITS REMAINING FOOT. THE LEFT HAND IS
MISSING AS WELL. Despite the bluish pallor, the body
looks fresh.

Myrlo offers Simon a cigarette which he readily takes.

SIMON (cont'd)
Have they found the head?

MYRLO
Not yet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMON

Who found him?

MYRLO

A couple of kids skipping school.
Tripped right over him. Poor kids
gotta see shit like this.

Simon looks at all the officers combing the beach.

SIMON

What do you have all the flatties
doing?

MYRLO

Lookin' for a head. Maybe even a hand
or a foot while they're out there.

From the beach, AN OFFICER waves to get Simon and Myrlo's
attention.

OFFICER 2

Detectives!

Myrlo and Simon make it over to the officer who points to
what he has found.

MYRLO

(sarcastic)

I thought I told you to find a head.

Laying in the brush behind a large chunk of driftwood is
A SECOND MALE BODY. It, too, is HEADLESS and EMASCULATED,
but it is a shorter, older man. Patches of the skin have
an ODD ORANGE TINT.

CUT TO:

EXT. A DOWNTOWN CLEVELAND STREET - NIGHT

Couples dressed to the nines file into a well-lit,
popular dinner club in downtown Cleveland. Pockets of
HOMELESS PEOPLE hold out their hands to the rich, but are
summarily ignored.

SWING MUSIC from inside can be heard on the street as the
DOORMAN opens the door for the swanky patrons.

INT. THE CLUB - SAME

A BIG BAND plays and the dance floor is packed with swinging couples. Waiters carrying trays deftly weave through the dancers to the tables that encircle the dance floor.

ELIOT AND EDNA NESS eat their meal AT A FAR TABLE, but they are still the CENTER OF ATTENTION. Ness eats and smiles at his wife, but Edna is self-conscious with everyone staring at them and whispering.

NESS

They'll get bored eventually. We're not all that interesting.

EDNA

I should have had my hair done today.

NESS

It looks nice. You look nice. Eat.

EDNA

I can barely get the unpacking done with all the invitations and telegrams that keep coming to the house.

NESS

I wouldn't fill our dance card just yet. I'm suspending most of the cops whose wives sent us the invites. Can't imagine any of them will want to spend time with us after that.

A WELL-DRESSED MAN approaches the table.

MAN

Mr. Ness?

NESS

Yes?

MAN

You're really him, aren't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NESS

Really who?

MAN

Eliot Ness.

NESS

Yes. I'm really "him".

MAN

Wow.

The man stares at Ness in an excruciatingly uncomfortable silence.

NESS

Can I help you?

MAN

Oh! Yeah. Can I get your autograph?

Ness looks around for something to sign. Edna hands him a piece of paper. Ness shrugs and signs the autograph.

NESS

There you go.

The thrilled man takes the autograph and clutches it like it was a Da Vinci painting.

EDNA

(teasing)

"Are you really him?"

NESS

Ridiculous is what it is.

EDNA

You love it.

NESS

I love you.

Edna beams, but almost instantly turns serious.

EDNA

Have you thought about what we...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

1

NESS

Of course I thought about it
(looking Edna in the eye)
You don't have to worry about us
anymore. This is a new chapter for us.
So I'm not exactly a nine-to-five guy.
You know that.

EDNA

I certainly do.

NESS

Listen, there's no Capone here. No
"great white whale" anymore. There's
just you and me. And what's more
important than that?

CUT TO:

INT. THE CORONER'S OFFICE - SAME

DOCTOR PEARCE (70's) looks up from his microscope and
wipes his lip. MYRLO and SIMON stand in the doorway.

SIMON

Doc? Hello? We were talking to you.

The morgue is a large room filled with MEDIEVAL LOOKING
METAL EQUIPMENT. Beakers, bunsen burners and test tubes
line every open space on the shelves and walls. An entire
wall is lined with wooden, body-sized freezer drawers.

PEARCE

I was lost in thought. You should try
it once and a while.

MYRLO

You got anything for us?

Pearce hobbles over to TWO COVERED BODIES laying on
autopsy tables.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARCE

Pretty gruesome these two. Pretty gruesome.

SIMON

Any ID's yet?

PEARCE

No head equals no teeth equals no dental records. No hands equals no fingers equals no fingerprints. It's going to be tough unless someone's looking for these men.

Pearce removes the sheet covering the SECOND BODY found.

PEARCE (CONT'D)

What we do know is that this one is approximately 45 years old, 5 foot 6, let's say 165 pounds.

SIMON

Doc, why is he orange?

PEARCE

That is interesting. The discoloration is some sort of chemical base. We're analyzing it as best we can. First glance tells me it's a rudimentary preservative.

MYRLO

Meanin' what? That the killer kept the body for awhile?

PEARCE

As far as I can determine, the victim was dead for at least two weeks before he was found.

Pearce walks over to the first victim.

PEARCE (cont'd)

We're going to compare the body type to any recent missing persons reports in the area. See if we can't find a match. But everything is still up in the air. Quite a few tests to run. Quite a few.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MYRLO

So you have nothing.

PEARCE

I always have something.

Pearce matter-of-factly manhandles the STUMP OF THE NECK.

PEARCE (CONT'D)

They were both murdered by the same man.

MYRLO

How do you know that?

PEARCE

Both were beheaded between the second and third vertebrae. Identical location. Identical cuts. Incredible precision and incredible strength.

SIMON

What does strength have to do with it?

PEARCE

Decapitating someone is difficult work with a number of blows. Whoever did this, did it in one.

MYRLO

What about their, you know, their...?

PEARCE

Their genitals?

MYRLO

Yeah.

PEARCE

We found them stuffed in the chest cavities.

(beat)

And both bodies were totally drained of blood.

MYRLO

What the hell does that mean?

PEARCE

(sarcastic)

It means there's no blood in them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Pearce reaches into the body with his gloved hand and pokes around in the clean organs.

PEARCE (cont'd)

They may have been beheaded while they were alive. Bled out through the neck while the heart pumped its final beats.

MYRLO

Lovely.

PEARCE

Which means that if this is one of those gangland revenge things you're so fond of dropping in my lap, it's the oddest one I have ever seen.

MYRLO

So?

PEARCE

(irritated)

So, I need the heads.

MYRLO

Maybe our guy tossed the leftovers into the lake.

SIMON

Or...

MYRLO

Or what?

SIMON

Or maybe he kept them.

EXT. THE DINNER CLUB - NIGHT

Laughing, Eliot and Edna step out into the cold night air. Ness wraps Edna into her jacket. He doesn't let her jacket go. He turns her around and kisses her.

EDNA

What was that for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NESS
(smiling)
Just because.

In a flash, TWO POLICE CARS, SIRENS BLARING, race down the street. Tires squeal against the turn.

Edna grimaces at the SIRENS as Ness, adrenaline racing, leaps into the street waving down the cars. They don't stop.

A TRIO OF BEAT COPS turn the corner running in the direction of the squad cars. Ness steps in front of one cop. THE YOUNG OFFICER recognizes Ness immediately.

NESS
Where are you racing off to, officer?

OFFICER
Mr. Ness! It's a bootlegging raid,
sir. We got a tip.
(running off)
I'm sorry Mr. Ness. I gotta go.

The officer starts to run, turns back and tips his hat.

OFFICER
Ma'am.

Ness looks to Edna.

EDNA
I'll catch a cab.

NESS
Are you- ?

EDNA
Go.

Ness hesitates.

EDNA (cont'd)
Go.

EXT. A WAREHOUSE ALLEY- NIGHT

FOUR SQUAD CARS and A DOZEN COPS fill A WIDE ALLEYWAY. The cops are divided into two groups. A YOUNG COP (20's) is chest to chest with an older cop DOYLE (50's).

YOUNG COP
This isn't right, Doyle!

DOYLE
Watch your lip, hot shot.

YOUNG COP
Why do you even bother putting on your uniform and badge, huh? How much bank is worth it? Huh? How much?

NESS arrives on the scene and makes his way to the officers.

NESS
What's going on here?

DOYLE
None of your business, pal.

NESS
What is your name, Sergeant?

DOYLE
Hit the bricks, pencil neck.

NESS
Eliot Ness.

DOYLE
You ain't on the job yet, so why don't you...

NESS
Read a paper, pal. I was sworn in this morning. Anyone want to tell me what's going on here?

YOUNG COP
Yeah. We picked up a local puddleskunk on a 340.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG COP (cont'd)
He's so far gone with the D.T.'s that
he drops the dime on the drum
warehouse where he's gettin' all his
illegal hootch at.

The older cop and his cronies glare at the young officer:

YOUNG COP (cont'd)
Says it's Moe Dalitz's place. So, we
gather up for a raid, but by the time
we get down here...
(pointing at the older cop)
...the desk sergeant here, and all his
mick pals, are already here to tell us
to turn it around!!

NESS
Is this true?

DOYLE
Ness, this has got nothing to do...

YOUNG COP
Some of us are tryin' to do our job
but every time we turn around, Doyle
or one of his pals is gummin' up the
works just like this!

The older cop punches the young cop right in the face.
All GUNS come out and aim at the most available target.

NESS
Enough!

All the cops freeze. Ness walks right up into the fray
and forcibly takes Doyle's gun out of his hand.

NESS (CONT'D)
Doyle, is it? Listen, I want you to do
me a favor. Swing by my office
tomorrow...

(beat)
and pick up your suspension notice.

Ness rips the gold badge right off Doyle's chest. All the
cops freeze. The older cops stares at Ness with a burning
hatred.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DOYLE

Is that the way it's gonna be?

NESS

It is now, tough guy.

OLDER COP

It's a small town, Ness.

NESS

And you're threatening a superior officer. Scram before I get angry.

Doyle stares at Ness, the muscles in his jaw almost snapping with the tension. But, after a beat, the cop walks away. Not knowing what else to do, his friends follow suit.

The young cop looks at Ness with adoration. Ness exhales.

NESS (cont'd)

Officer, I didn't catch your name.

YOUNG COP

It's Strati, Mr. Ness. Robert Strati.

NESS

Officer Strati, can you vouch for the character of these men?

YOUNG COP/STRATI

Oh, yeah. These are stand up cops, Mr. Ness.

Ness grabs A PICK AXE out of the squad car and beelines for the big warehouse door.

NESS (CONT'D)

Let me show you how we open doors in Chicago.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE - SAME

CRACK!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The thick, wooden door splinters inward from the blow of the axe. A FOOT kicks in the split door and Ness and the other cops rush in to find...

Hundreds of barrels fill the warehouse. Distillery equipment steams, as if it has just been turned off. Tons of evidence. Tons of hootch. But no people. The warehouse is recently abandoned.

STRATI

I'm sorry, Mr. Ness. That bastard Moe Dalitz has been running the show from so many angles for so long that...

NESS

From where?

STRATI

His place downtown. "Coturro's Restaurant". Some real heavy hitters hang out there. He runs a casino outta the back but...

Ness heads straight out of the warehouse. Strati and the others follow.

NESS

We're going to "Cotturo's".

CUT TO:

INT. COTTURO'S RESTAURANT

This upscale Italian restaurant is filled to capacity with extravagantly dressed patrons. MOE DALITZ (50's), rotund, bald, a notorious gangster and proprietor of the restaurant, chomps on a cigar and greets his patrons.

A table with TWO MEN catches his attention.

MAN 1

(tilting his wine glass)
Moe, this is some fantastic stuff
you're brewin'!

DALITZ

(crossing to the table)
Put a sock in it, counselor.
Prohibition may be over, but my stuff?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DALITZ (cont'd)
This is a special vintage. You boys
ready for dessert?

Dalitz leads the two men through the dining area, back through the kitchen, into a stock room, and opens a door that is nearly invisible in the wall.

INT. THE CASINO - CONTINUOUS

The door in the stockroom opens into a smoky, well furnished casino set up in the back of the restaurant building.

The TWO MEN following DALITZ trot down the stairway and head for a roulette wheel.

PATRON #1
This is quite a joint you got here,
Moe.

DALITZ
You up or down?

PATRON #1
I'm up.

DALITZ
(laughing)
Then keep playin.'

Dalitz sits the TWO MEN in from of a blackjack dealer.

DALITZ (cont'd)
Set 'em up Charlie.

Dalitz pats his friend on the back and continues mingling with the gamblers.

On the opposite side of the room, a STEEL DOOR is guarded by a monkey-suited BRUISER. This humorless lug watches for a flashing light above the door and peers through an eye slot when it goes off. He lets in another GROUP OF PEOPLE and locks the door.

After the bruiser locks the door, the light almost immediately flashes. The bruiser opens the eye slot and looks out. His face drops and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRUISER

Holy shit!

... he dives away from the doorway just seconds before it, and much of the brick wall around it, COLLAPSES INTO THE CASINO!

DALITZ

What the fuck?!

Bricks fall from the wall. A dust cloud erupts. The crowd screams, tripping over themselves, running for cover.

Through the dust cloud, headlights are visible, as is the POINTED METAL "ICEBREAKER" GRATE on the front of the Cleveland Police Truck that bashed in the wall.

Immediately, POLICE OFFICERS swarm into the casino as scared PATRONS fall over each other trying to get out through the hidden doorway. DEALERS gather their chips and cash. Dalitz quakes with fury as the cops round up suspects.

DALITZ (cont'd)

(grabbing Officer Strati)

What the fuck do you think you're doin'!? I pay you bastards every month!

STRATI

Not me, you piece of garbage.

DALITZ

What is this...?

Strati grabs Dalitz who struggles like an animal. Strati drops him to the ground, slaps cuffs around Dalitz's wrists and roughly pulls his arms behind his back.

DALITZ (cont'd)

You stupid kid! I got friends who can bust you back to beat cop!

ELIOT NESS emerges through the settling dust.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NESS

Maybe you did, Dalitz, but they no longer work for the city of Cleveland.

DALITZ

Ness, you cocksucker! I ain't afraid of some snot-nosed kid! Enjoy this while you can 'cuz I ain't gonna roll over like Capone!

NESS

Get this idiot out of here.

The cop shoves the fuming gangster out of the casino and Ness is suddenly bathed in the flashing light of a camera. Ness turns to see CLAYTON FRITCHEY (the bespectacled reporter from the press conference) and a PHOTOGRAPHER.

As Ness turns: POP! The photographer takes his picture. Ness crosses forcefully to the reporter...

...and hugs him like a friend.

NESS (cont'd)

Clayton! Great, you got the call.

FRITCHEY

"Eliot Ness' first bust in his new town!" This is why I followed you from Chicago!

NESS

Clayton, this isn't about me. It's about getting the word out that this cities days of corruption are over and...

(beat, smiles)

Are you writing this down? This is good stuff.

FRITCHEY

(writing and laughing)

OK. OK. Just talk slower...

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE ERIE - DAY

It is a blustery, grey autumn day. TWO POLICE BOATS slowly glide across the water not far from where the bodies were found.

SIMON (VO)
"Safety Director Eliot Ness did not rest on his reputation last night as he raided an illicit gambling operation, allegedly run by local businessman Moe Dalitz."

Inside one of the boats, FOUR UNIFORMED COPS with nets drag the lake as SIMON reads the latest edition of "The Plain Dealer".

Simon holds the front page up to Myrlo. An obviously posed photo of Ness "in action" accompanies the article.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Looks like we missed the excitement, huh?

MYRLO
Looks like.

SIMON
You met him yet?

MYRLO
Nope.

SIMON
Give him a break, Walt. He's a good lawman. So he grabs a little press.

MYRLO
Sammy, that ain't press. It's the "Eliot Ness Adventure Hour".

SIMON
Come on. He's only been here a day.

MYRLO
My point exactly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Simon stares off into the murky water as the boats continue their search.

CUT TO:

EXT. A DOWNTOWN POLICE STATION - DAY

A cold drizzle falls as MYRLO and SIMON stroll into the station house.

INT. THE POLICE STATION

Row after row of cluttered desks against cluttered walls, uniformed cops, secretaries, and detectives FILL the room.

Myrlo and Simon get to their desks before they realize how quiet the room is. They both look around at he many cops and detectives who are HOLDING THE SAME FORM LETTER.

MYRLO

(to a nearby cop)

Hey, Danny, what's the scoop?

Danny holds his head up. His eyes are teary. He takes his letter, balls it in his fist and tosses it onto Myrlo's desk. Simon uncrumples the letter as he quietly READS:

(ON THE LETTERHEAD OF "The Office of the Safety Director of the City of Cleveland".)

SIMON

"This letter is to inform you that you have been suspended from active duty, effective immediately, pending investigation...

A special commission is being formed to investigate allegations and evidence of corruption involving yourself and your on-duty activities...

You are required to surrender your badge, your sidearm, and any and all other equipment and documents...

Eliot Ness Safety Director."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MYRLO
I'll be damned.

SIMON
Did you get one?

Myrlo looks at his desk. Nothing. Simon does the same. No letter.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Good.

MYRLO
For us.

The DESK SERGEANT and TWO ADDITIONAL OFFICERS stand watch over the suspended cops and guiltily avoid eye contact with them.

On the other side of the room, one detective throws a punch at another.

DETECTIVE 1
Look what you got me into! What am I gonna do? How am I gonna eat?

Surrounding cops break up the brawl. The tension in the squad room is thick.

MYRLO (cont'd)
Ness must be out of his mind.

INT. AN OFFICE - DAY

A YOUNG SECRETARY (20's) sits at her desk and looks harried as she answers a steadily ringing set of telephones.

A PAINTER is putting the finishing touches on "Eliot Ness, Safety Director" on the glass door to the office behind her.

SECRETARY
Safety Director's office. No, I'm afraid not. A statement will be issued this afternoon. Thank you.
(another ring)
Safety Director's office. No, I'm afraid not. A statement will be issued this afternoon...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The painter finishes and closes the door to Ness' office.

INT. ELIOT NESS' OFFICE- SAME

NESS stands in the dark office and stares out his window at the POLICE STATION ACROSS THE STREET. He watches the officer's enter and exit from the building below. The phones continue ringing and the secretary continues her standard answer.

CUT TO:

INT. THE TOWN TAVERN - NIGHT

Cigarette smoke hangs heavily in the air and the regulars chat in the dark corners of the bar. Smoke and grease stained wood panelling only adds to the oppressive feel of the room.

A BARTENDER washes glasses in grey water behind the bar as an OBVIOUSLY DRUNK WOMAN (40'S) weaves precariously on her barstool. She is squat, double-chinned, with a mop of greasy grey/black hair and liver-spotted hands.

WOMAN

'Nother whiskey, Frank.

BARTENDER

Not unless a nickel magically appeared in your paw since the last time you asked me, Flo.

WOMAN/FLO

Put it on my tab.

BARTENDER

You know I can't do that. No cash, no drink.

FLO

Don't be mean, Frankie. Maybe I got something else you want?

BARTENDER

What? The clap?

FLO

Whatsamatter, Frank? Don'tcha like girls?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARTENDER
Girls? Yeah. Drunk old whores? No. Go home, Flo.

FLO
Have a heart, will ya'?

BARTENDER
Don't make me call the cops, Flo, because I will.

FLO
Fucking queer.

Flo stumbles off her stool and out of the bar.

EXT. THE TOWN TAVERN - SAME

Flo wraps her tattered coat around her and wobbles down the dark and empty street.

A CAR rounds the corner and Flo turns. As the car slowly passes, Flo tries her best to be seductive and leers grotesquely at the driver.

FLO
Heya, mister, lookin' for some female companionship?

The car continues on and Flo flips it the finger.

FLO (cont'd)
Sonofabitch! You don't know a lady when you see her.

The car STOPS and slowly BACKS UP towards her.

Flo tucks her greasy hair behind her ears and tries to smooth out her moth-eaten dress as the car pulls to a stop. Flo stumbles up to the driver's window, but the DRIVER'S face is hidden in shadow.

The only parts clearly seen of the driver are his hands. And they are wearing the EXACT LEATHER GLOVES FROM THE OPENING CREDITS.

FLO (cont'd)
Evenin'. You like whatcha see?

The unseen driver chuckles throatily and Flo hops in his car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLO

Hey, you got anything to drink?

The car drives away into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. MYRLO'S HOUSE - SAME

MYRLO and SIMON enter the comfortable, quiet home.

MYRLO

Hello? Anybody home?

TWO GIRLS (6 and 8) stop their game of checkers and run to their father.

GIRLS

Daddy!

Out of the kitchen walks DORIS MYRLO (30's), a feisty, handsome woman. She is followed by ELIZABETH (20's) a delicately pretty brunette.

DORIS

(smiling)

That can't be my husband, you're only an hour and a half late. The roast hasn't quite turned to leather yet.

SIMON

It's my fault, Doris. He was waiting for me.

MYRLO

(kissing his wife)

I'm sure the meal is still fantastic.

(to Elizabeth)

Please don't tell me you're another one of Doris' cousins who I've forgotten...

Doris puts her arm around Elizabeth presenting her to the men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DORIS

No, Walt, this is Elizabeth Quinn.
She's my sewing class and she's a
nurse at Mount Sinai.

ELIZABETH

Nice to meet you.

Myrlo and Simon give each other a look. They know Simon
is being fixed up again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE MYRLO'S DINING ROOM - SAME

Myrlo, Doris, Simon, Elizabeth and the girls sit around
the table and dig into the home-cooked meal.

MYRLO

Damn, these are good potatoes.

DORIS

Walter, watch the mouth in front of
the children. And Elizabeth made them.
Sam, Elizabeth is quite a good cook.

SIMON

Really?

DORIS

And did you know that she grew up in
Shaker Heights? Isn't that where
you're from, Sam?

SIMON

More or less.

DORIS

Maybe you could take Elizabeth on a
stroll by the lake one day?

SIMON

Yeah, maybe.

(beat, polite)

But my job keeps me awfully busy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Doris looks sadly at Sam. Another perfectly good fix up wasted.

EXT. KINGSBURY RUN - NIGHT

A filthy, flea-bitten DOG sniffs around a dark alley for its next meal. The dog is drawn to a BURLAP POTATO SACK overflowing with crumpled newspapers.

The dog sniffs at the sack and begins licking a WET SPOT at the base. It gnaws at the twine that holds the messy package together.

As it pulls hard, the twine snaps and the sack falls over. The dog recoils as something heavy rolls out of the sack.

The HEAD OF FLO POLILLO rolls into the view of the streetlight. Flo's milky dead eyes stare at the dog, reflecting rays of moonlight.

The dog looks at the head and BARKS AND BARKS AND BARKS...

CUT TO:

EXT. KINGSBURY RUN RESERVOIR - DAY

As the morning sun shines clear and bright, MYRLO and SIMON are overseeing a DIVING CREW preparing to explore the molasses colored water of the large reservoir.

UNIFORMED OFFICERS keep back the GATHERING CROWD that stares down at the filthy, concrete reservoir.

OFFICERS drag long wooden net-poles through the murky water as a DIVER suits up. (The diver's equipment is straight out of Jules Verne - heavy copper helmet, weighted suit, air turbine attached to a thick canvas hose. Think the toy divers at the bottom of an aquarium.)

DIVER

I'm ready when you are, detectives.

MYRLO

Knock yourself out, big guy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The diver slowly lowers himself into the muck.

SIMON

Do you think we'll find anything?

MYRLO

Those kids found John Does #1 and 2
right over there...

(pointing left)

...and Jane Doe's head was found down
there...

(pointing right)

I bet the check something's floating
around down there.

Simon stares into the dark waters.

MYRLO (CONT'D)

Doris was curious what you thought
of...

SIMON

Yeah, about last night. I really
appreciate what you and Doris are
trying to do, but...

MYRLO

Whoa, I had nothin' to do with it.

SIMON

I know.

MYRLO

But she did seem like a nice girl.

SIMON

Probably is.

MYRLO

So, what's the problem?

SIMON

I don't need fixing up. It just, it
isn't me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MYRLO

Good luck figuring out a way to stop her. Woman does what ever she wants. Gets an idea in her head and KAPOW!

Behind Myrlo and Simon, the small crowd is rapidly growing. They both notice the on-lookers but say nothing. As they stare into the reservoir....

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KINGSBURY RUN RESERVOIR - DUSK

Myrlo and Simon, their jackets and hats off, lean against a squad car and drink coffee while the dive team continues their work.

The CROWD is now mammoth. HUNDREDS of on-lookers fill the street surrounding the reservoir and dot the rooftops and fire escapes trying to get a good look at the police activity.

There is an eerie silence from the gathered humanity. In fact, the only noise comes from the pumping of the air turbine.

SIMON

Looks like we're the best show in town.

MYRLO

Lots of nothing leading nowhere so far.

SIMON

I wish I knew some soft shoe.

Myrlo laughs weakly as they continue to watch and wait. The diver's air tube makes gentle waves as the diver slowly searches beneath the surface.

INT. THE RESERVOIR - UNDERWATER - SAME

THE DIVER scans the dirty waters with his huge flashlight, but the filth is so thick he can only see about nine inches in front of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the diver searches, he is bumped by one of the NET-POLES gliding through the water. The diver is JOLTED, then annoyed. He turns away from the net to continue his search.

And he is bumped again.

The diver, now thoroughly agitated, turns to yank the net. His eyes widen in horror as he sees what has bumped him. It isn't a net.

A DECAYING, BLOATED ARM and AN EQUALLY DECAYED HEAD float not five inches from his helmet. The diver backs away in terror and is bumped again. He turns and sees a LIMBLESS TORSO behind him.

The diver's muffled scream echoes through his helmet and...

EXT. KINGSBURY RUN RESERVOIR - THE SURFACE - SAME

Myrlo and Simon see the violent jerking of the diver's air tube.

MYRLO

(to officers)

Pull him up! Pull him up!

The attending officers drop their nets and pull the diver out of the mire. The diver cannot get his helmet off fast enough and he VOMITS into the grass.

SIMON

What? What did you see, pal?

DIVER

(gasping)

Sweet Jesus!

The crowd senses the excitement and perks up. Simon grabs the net-pole and aims for the spot where the diver points.

Simon feels the pole hit something. He looks to Myrlo.

MYRLO

Sam, you got something?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON
I think so, but what about...
(nodding at the crowd)
...them?

MYRLO
We don't have a choice. Pull it up.

Simon pulls his pole out of the water. THE DECAYED HUMAN HEAD fills the net. An audible gasp washes over the crowd.

There is a beat of horrified silence until a NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHER leaps a fence and...

PHOTOGRAPHER
Over here, Detective!

Simon reflexively turns with his gruesome treasure and - POP! - the photographer snaps a picture.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELIOT NESS'S HOME - DAY

The morning rush begins on the street outside the Ness' modern home.

EDNA (VO)
Eliot? Eliot?

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - SAME

ELIOT NESS, still in his suit and tie, lays asleep on the bed. Edna Ness stands over her unconscious husband. Police file folders are spilled on the floor.

She picks a fashion book off her nightstand and drops it to the hard wood floor. BANG! Eliot is up with a jolt.

EDNA
Good morning, sweetie.

NESS
What time is it?

EDNA
Ten thirty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NESS
(rubbing his eyes)
Got in late.

EDNA
I noticed.

NESS
It was worth it.

EDNA
What was?

NESS
The big bust.

EDNA
And why exactly were you involved?

NESS
Only until I get the force in order...

EDNA
So what was this big bust?

NESS
It's in the paper.

EDNA
Where?

NESS
(rubbing his eyes)
Front page, no?

Edna scans the front page and begins searching the interior pages. As Edna flips through the paper, Eliot stares at the headline. Accompanied by an illustration of a madman with a giant knife, reads:

"TORSO KILLER WREAKS HAVOC ON CITY".

CUT TO:

INT. THE CLEVELAND CITY CLUB - DAY

The conference room is filled to capacity as CITIZENS and REPORTERS vie for the best seats.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE MAYOR and CITY COUNCIL sit at a long table at the front of the room. The council members stare at an EMPTY SEAT at the table and eye one another nervously.

ELIOT NESS, straightening his tie, walks into the room and up to the table. The Mayor smiles a smile of relief and pride.

NESS

(taking the mic)

Please, forgive my tardiness, ladies and gentlemen. I must say I'm gratified by such a turn-out to my first city club meeting, especially when I have such good news to share with you.

The crowd stares anxiously at Ness as he continues.

NESS (CONT'D)

I am sure you've all read about some of our midnight raids. In the course of six raids, we have confiscated thousands of dollars of illegal distilling equipment and put the screws to many casinos and brothels all over the city.

No reaction from the crowd.

NESS (CONT'D)

We are also very proud of the beginning of a Cleveland chapter of Boy's Club. This will give our youth an organized and healthy environment in which to play, keeping them off the streets and out of trouble.

The crowd grows restless. Ness presses on.

NESS (CONT'D)

One area for improvement is in traffic fatalities. Last year, over 400 people died in the downtown area due to traffic related accidents and...

A FRUSTRATED MAN in the crowd stands up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN

What are you going to do about this torso maniac?

NESS

Come again?

MAN

You're rattling on about stop signs and kiddie clubs while there's a maniac on the loose!

The crowd rumbles in agreement.

NESS

Sir, the police force is leading a thorough investigation of these murders. And I'm sure the men on the case are very competent and resourceful detectives.

ANOTHER MAN stands up and joins in the protest.

MAN 2

How do you know? You canned all the cops!

NESS

Any police officers I relieved of their badges were not serving the best interests of the city.

MAN 2

And you didn't answer my goddamn question! What are you going to do about the torso killer?!

Ness looks to the Mayor for assistance. The mayor turns away from him.

NESS

We have many excellent detectives working on the case. I have no doubt that we will apprehend this man soon. The citizens should remain calm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAN

What are you talking about? There is a maniac stalking us!

The protests and hysteria become a wall of noise. Ness tries to regain control to no avail.

CUT TO:

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

THE MAYOR, followed closely by NESS, makes a beeline for his office. THE MAYOR'S SECRETARY tries to hand him a pile of messages, but...

SECRETARY

Mr. Mayor, I have--

MAYOR

Hold all my calls, Sarah.

And, after Ness walks inside, the mayor slams the door to his office.

INT. THE MAYOR'S OFFICE - SAME

The Mayor is beet red with anger as he glares at Ness. Ness returns the mayor's gaze with an equally steely expression.

NESS

You hung me out to dry at the first sign of trouble? What happened to the teamwork you promised me?

MAYOR

Don't pin this on me, Ness. You just better make this "torso" thing disappear right quick, got it?

NESS

Pardon me, but, with everything else I'm doing, I certainly don't think getting involved in routine murder investigations...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Mayor holds up a newspaper with a CREEPY ILLUSTRATION of a knife-wielding "Torso Killer".

MAYOR

A headhunting killer is news. And what you were hired to do was make this city safe and respectable. So, stop spending all your time being chummy with reporters and do your job. Cleveland is hosting the Republican National Convention in a week. A week! And, if you want to keep getting paid, you'll find this maniac. Now. Today.

NESS

Let's get one thing straight: I am not your little show pony. I am here to clean up the mess you and your...

MAYOR

Now just one minute...

NESS

I'll take control of this case, but, for the good of the people, not to make you look good.

(beat)

You showed me your true colors back at that meeting.

MAYOR

So did you.

Exit Ness.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CITY MORGUE - NIGHT

MYRLO and SIMON walk past a NEWSSTAND on the street outside the morgue. A HEADLINE catches their eyes:

"I WILL CATCH THE 'TORSO KILLER', VOWS NESS - SAFETY DIRECTOR TAKES CONTROL OF THE CASE"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON

Wow. How do you think Ness is gonna do that?

The detectives laugh and enter the building.

INT. THE CITY MORGUE - SAME

DR. PEARCE sits at a desk covered with files as MYRLO and SIMON enter.

MYRLO

You're pullin' a late night, Doc. What do you got for us?

PEARCE

Quite a bit, actually.

Pearce holds up the DECAYED SKULL pulled from the reservoir.

PEARCE (CONT'D)

See this cut right below the third vertebra?

MYRLO

Yeah.

PEARCE

Exactly like the other victims. But the torso found in the reservoir doesn't belong to this head. So, now we're up to five victims.

SIMON

Do you have any good news?

PEARCE

Yes. We've identified two of the victims.

Pearce pulls TWO FILES from the top of his desk and hands them to the detectives.

PEARCE (CONT'D)

The woman whose head was found is Florence Polillo.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARCE (cont'd)
Age 42, 5' 7", 160, alcoholic, and a practicing member of the world's oldest profession. Her sister reported her missing a few days ago.

MYRLO
Wow. That's almost a lead.

PEARCE
And the first victim is Edward Andrassy, 23, 5'9", a local marijuana dealer, pornographer, and, when he had a spare moment, hustler.

Simon's face turns grey when he sees the PHOTO of ANDRASSY attached to the folder.

MYRLO
Great. Two whores. One drunk, one a nancy boy. So much for the vengeful mobster theory, right, Sam?

SIMON
(beat)
Huh? Oh, yeah. I guess.

PEARCE
I have some information on the orange chemical. It was identified as a preservative, but not one you can buy. Whoever put that on the body made it himself. He may have actually invented it.

MYRLO
So, he's smart, too?

PEARCE
He's much more than that, Detective Myrlo. It seems you now have, by definition, a mass murderer.

Pearce undoes his coat and pulls off his gloves.

PEARCE
Since the formal paperwork has already been filed, I should tell you this: I have resigned my post.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MYRLO

You what?

PEARCE

I am seventy years old. I have been in the business of death since before either of you had been born. I am tired and this case has made me realize just how tired I am.

Pearce grabs his outdoor coat and hat from a coat tree.

PEARCE (CONT'D)

I didn't want to have an unsolved case as my legacy. But this, this is too much.

(beat)

I wish you the best of luck, detectives.

Exit Pearce. Simon and Myrlo stand in shock.

MYRLO

This just keeps gettin' better and better, doesn't it?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELIOT NESS' OFFICE - DAY

NESS sits at his desk and stares at the "I WILL CATCH THE 'TORSO KILLER'" headline in disgust. He throws the paper in the trash and goes through his mail.

Amid the letters is a LARGE PICTURE POSTCARD OF THE CLEVELAND SKYLINE. Ness turns the postcard over. On the back of the postcard, a CRUDELY SCRATCHED MESSAGE reads: "HOW DO YOU PLAN ON CATCHING ME, ELIOT WORTHLESS-NESS?"

Ness checks the postmark and sees that it has been smeared. No distinguishing marks.

SECRETARY

(poking in the office)

Mr. Ness?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NESS

Yes, Grace?

SECRETARY

Detectives Myrlo and Simon are here.

NESS

Thank you. Send them in.

Enter Myrlo and Simon.

NESS (CONT'D)

Myrlo, Simon.

Ness rises to shake their hands.

MYRLO

I was wonderin' if we were ever gonna meet you.

NESS

Listen, with all the bad apples I've had to kick out of the building since I came here, consider my absence in your lives a compliment to your reputations.

Myrlo and Simon give each other a proud look.

NESS (cont'd)

This "torso" thing has taken on a life of its own, hasn't it?

SIMON

Yes, sir.

NESS

Maybe you noticed how the papers said I was going to take care of it personally?

MYRLO

Yeah, we saw something about that.

NESS

Well, I want the two of you to head up the "Torso" investigation team.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMON
Team? Who else will we be working
with?

NESS
Me.

Myrlo and Simon look at each other.

MYRLO
No shit? We get to be "Untouchables"?

NESS
No. No more "Untouchables". I need
subtlety. I want you to tighten the
screws on this killer quickly and
quietly. No press- at all. You both
have experience and spotless
reputations, a combination in short
supply. That's what we need. Can you
men handle that?

MYRLO
So, we're not "Untouchables"?

SIMON
Walt...

NESS
(smiling)
You want a name? How about "The
Unknowns"? And I want you to remain so
unknown that no one knows it.

MYRLO
Look, I don't know how you did stuff
in Chicago, but it's gonna take a lot
more than two over-worked gumshoes
and, well, you, to solve this case in
a timely fashion.

NESS
In Chicago, we did a lot more with a
lot less.

Ness throws open the Torso killer files.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NESS (cont'd)

So, what can you tell me about the "Torso" case that I can't read in these reports?

SIMON

Not much. He's working alone. He's smart. Book smart. And with no heads or hands, most of his victims are still "John Does." The city is our worst enemy as far as that's concerned.

NESS

How so?

SIMON

Boat, train and foot, we have so many people coming here looking for work everyday. Faster than we can keep count. Giving him a lot of fresh victims with no roots, no ties.

MYRLO

And don't forget the genitals.

NESS

Excuse me?

SIMON

The victims' private parts. Removed.

MYRLO

Clean as a whistle. This guy's some kind of a sicko sex fiend.

NESS

This- this isn't what I do. This is some nasty business. I don't think I've ever even heard of anything like this.

A heavy silence hangs in the office for a beat.

SIMON

There was one other case.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MYRLO

There was?

SIMON

In another city. Not too different from Cleveland now that I think of it. The killer there preyed on the poor. Targeted prostitutes. All of them butchered. This guy, he gutted them, sliced them from their genitals to their throats.

(lighting a cigarette)

Each victim, there were five of them, I think-- each of them was more brutalized than the last. Sometimes their organs were missing. The police were baffled, but didn't pay it too much mind. I mean, after all, it was only whores, right?

Ness and Myrlo listen intently, hanging on every word.

SIMON (CONT'D)

That is until the press caught wind of it. Then the story consumed the city, the whole country. People were afraid to go out at night. Panic was so thick, you could almost... and then it got even worse. The killer started sending the cops notes. And presents.

(beat)

Pieces of his victims. Ears, skin, livers. Sometimes he sent letters or wrote little messages at the crime scenes. But he was never caught. And the case still hasn't been solved.

MYRLO

That ain't no real case. You've been reading too many of them crazy pulps.

SIMON

London, 1888. Ever hear of "Jack the Ripper"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Ness picks the POSTCARD from his desk and hands it to Simon.

SIMON

What is this?

Simon and Myrlo examine the postcard.

NESS

A present.

GRACE and A YOUNG OFFICER enter the office.

GRACE

Excuse the interruption, Mr. Ness, but...

OFFICER

Detectives, they told me to get you immediately. There's something big going on at the County Courthouse.

MYRLO

Spill it.

OFFICER

The county sheriff is holding a press conference. He says they caught him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

NESS, MYRLO and SIMON arrive on the scene with the screech of a tire. A growing CROWD OF REPORTERS gathered on the courthouse steps.

Standing in front of the assembled press is SHERIFF MARTIN O'DONNELL (50's), a burly man with a thick mustache.

SHERIFF

I am happy to tell you that an anonymous tip has led to the arrest of a man we have officially charged with the murder of Florence Polillo.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF (cont'd)
Evidence has come to light linking the suspect, Frank Dozal, to the other victims attributed to the maniac you press-types have nicknamed...

FOUR DEPUTIES haul out a chained FRANK DOZAL (40's) disheveled, glassy eyed, confused looking. He is a troll of a man. Dozal's face is red with the beginnings of some deep bruising and there is DRIED BLOOD at the corner of his slightly swollen lip.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
...the Torso Killer.

Flashbulbs blind Dozal and questions are screamed at the sheriff. As Sheriff O'Donnell fields the queries, he sees a seething Eliot Ness and smiles widely.

INT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Ness, Simon and Myrlo storm through the hall of the county sheriff's office. Ness's famous face turns heads as the detectives breeze past the secretary and swing open the sheriff's office door.

SECRETARY
Mr. Ness, you can't just...

INT. THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SAME

The sheriff looks up from the paper as Ness and Co. enter.

SHERIFF
I'll be damned. Eliot Ness right here in my office. These those untouchables everybody talks about?

NESS
You don't know who these men are?

SHERIFF
Can't say that I do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

5

NESS

They are the detectives leading the torso killer investigations and, considering that you have charged someone with those murders, I would think you would have found a moment to contact them and, I don't know, compare your evidence?

The sheriff puts his newspaper down.

SHERIFF

Things have been moving mighty fast around here, so...

NESS

What evidence do you have against this Frank Dozal?

SHERIFF

He confessed.

NESS

That's funny because, at that circus of a press conference, you said that "evidence had come to light."

SHERIFF

I misspoke. He confessed.

MYRLO

Before or after you took him down to the basement and took turns poundin' his melon?

The sheriff stands, going nose to nose with Myrlo.

SHERIFF

That's the way the guy came in here.

MYRLO

We didn't just fall off the goddamn apple wagon.

Ness stands between the men, getting in the sheriff's face himself.

(CONTINUED)

NESS

I'd like to see him.

SHERIFF

Why? So you can charge him for income tax evasion?

(beat)

Look at you. Somebody else gets a little taste of the spotlight and you get all in a tizzy.

NESS

Enjoy it while you can, sheriff. They tend to turn on you quickly.

SHERIFF

You don't have any jurisdiction here, Ness. You wanna talk to my suspect, you get some paperwork from a judge.

The sheriff starts to leave the office.

SHERIFF (cont'd)

Otherwise, you're wasting my time. Excuse me, gentlemen. I have an interview to go to.

Ness locks eyes with the sheriff. A stalemate. After a beat, Ness, Myrlo and Simon exit.

NESS

See you soon, sheriff.

SHERIFF

I'll be here.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KINGSBURY RUN - NIGHT

A YOUNG MALE HUSTLER (20's), wearing a tight T-shirt, stands provocatively on a dirty street corner. The hustler's arms are covered with TATTOOS.

As the hustler casually lights a smoke, a BLACK CAR pulls up. A GLOVED HAND waves the hustler over to the car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

52

TATTOOED HUSTLER
Evenin', mister. Lonely?

The DRIVER of the car leans out the window and is clearly visible. It is DETECTIVE SAM SIMON.

SIMON
Yes.

The hustler smiles lasciviously and hops in the car.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CUYAHOGA RIVER - DAY

THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION is underway.

Thousands of affluent partygoers have gathered to meet heads of state. A giant banner reads: "WELCOME REPUBLICAN PARTY!".

PRESS from around the country are covering this event and MAYOR TAYLOR makes sure he stands in the finest photo ops.

A CABOOSE decorated with red, white and blue streamers rests on the tracks running parallel to the river. A BRASS BAND plays the patriotic music as a crowd forms around the train car.

Standing at a podium on the back of the caboose is STATE SENATOR COSGROVE (60's), a distinguished, silver-haired man with an imposing voice and the air of old money about him.

SENATOR COSGROVE
Ladies and gentlemen, I think I speak for all the members of the Republican Party when I say "thank you" to the city of Cleveland for providing such a glorious home to this year's convention! And thank you, Mayor Taylor, for showing us the true strength of America!

Cheers. Photos. The beaming Mayor steps up to the podium and warmly shakes hands with the senator.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

53

MAYOR

Thank you, Senator Cosgrove. I must say that...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

NESS, MYRLO and SIMON walk up the stairs of the courthouse. There is still a CONTINGENCY OF PRESS hanging around the building. A REPORTER stops Ness on his way inside.

REPORTER

Mr. Ness, what do you have to say about a county sheriff catching the killer who eluded you?

Ness pauses to say something, but decided otherwise. Myrlo and Simon quietly acknowledges Ness' restraint.

Ness and Myrlo enter the building.

INT. THE COURTHOUSE - SAME

A SECRETARY reads the "Cleveland Press" with the headline "TORSO KILLER NABBED - AND NOT BY NESS!". A handsome and stern photo of Ness along with the story.

She lowers her paper. Ness is standing in place of the photo. The secretary jumps.

SECRETARY

Mr. Ness, uh...

Ness reaches into his coat and pulls out a DOCUMENT. He shoves it at the secretary.

NESS

This is all I need. Which way to the holding cells?

SECRETARY

Down the hall to the right, but...

EXT. THE CUYAHOGA RIVER - SAME

The MAYOR, SENATOR COSGROVE, and OTHER FAT CATS hobknob at an elegantly decorated outdoor reception on the riverbank. AN AFFLUENT WOMAN sips champagne as she chats with Mayor Berman.

AFFLUENT WOMAN

This is a beautiful city, Mr. Mayor.

MAYOR

Thank you, ma'am.

AFFLUENT WOMAN

My cousin Rita had travelled here a few years back and she said that the entire city smelled like, what did she say? Oh yes. She said the whole city smelled like a foot. But this place is absolutely charming.

MAYOR

Thank you, ma'am.

AFFLUENT WOMAN

And the lake and this river. Stunning.

The woman sees something BONE WHITE bobbing down the river. She squints at it. As realization hits her, the woman lets out a BLOODCURDLING SCREAM.

INT. THE HOLDING CELLS - SAME

Ness, Myrlo and Simon make their way through a surprisingly deserted jailhouse.

NESS

Where are the guards?

MYRLO

You sacked 'em?

NESS

This isn't my jurisdiction, remember?

They stop in front of a cell and their faces fall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

5!

MYRLO

You've gotta be fuckin' kidding me.

EXT. THE CUYAHOGA RIVER - SAME

THE PARTYGOERS fill the banks of the river as they stare in horror at what they see. Floating in the dark water is a MALE HEAD and a LIMBLESS MALE TORSO.

Bedlam ensues. The polite and affluent are now a stampede of screams and panic running over hired help. The mayor, frozen in shock, is overtaken by the hysterical crowd.

INT. THE HOLDING CELLS - SAME

A PAIR OF LEGS gently dangle from the ceiling of the holding cell. FRANK DOZAL has seemingly hung himself on his cell door and looks to have been dead for some time.

NESS

This is rich. He shouldn't even have a belt in there!

MYRLO

Wish I could tell you this was a first. Suicide watch around here means they watch you commit suicide.

NESS

That's no suicide.

Ness stares at Dozal's lifeless body.

EXT. THE CUYAHOGA RIVER - SAME

POLICE have now arrived on the scene. The Mayor oversees the chaos as the police drag the body parts ashore. The HEAD AND TORSO are those of the TATTOOED HUSTLER.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE NESS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

NESS sits in the kitchen with stacks of police files and newspapers all around him. Edna sees the violent crime scene photos all over her kitchen table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

56

EDNA
Are you hungry?

NESS
(cold)
I'm fine.

Edna stares sadly at Eliot. The PHONE RINGS.

EDNA
(exiting)
I'll get it. Can you grab the mail?
You could use some fresh air.

Eliot crosses to the front door and empties his mailbox. He flips through the bills and stops at A PICTURE POSTCARD. It reads, in the same frantic scrawl: "YOU KNEW IT WASN'T ME, DIDN'T YOU, ELIOT HOPELESS-NESS?"

Ness checks the card. ANOTHER UNREADABLE POSTMARK. He peers out the front door and scans the street. Nothing. All is quiet.

EDNA (CONT'D)
Eliot? It's a Detective Myrlo. He says they need you at the coroner's office.

Ness, white as a sheet, doesn't answer. Edna reenters.

EDNA
What is that?

Ness hands her the card.

EDNA
Oh, Eliot, can't you see someone is playing with you? Remember how many of these we got in Chicago?

NESS
This is different. This is...

EDNA
No, it's not. I'm beginning to see that no matter where we are, there will always be "one more case".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NESS

You didn't even let me--

EDNA

Because you're being silly. I am not humoring this.

NESS

Edna...

EDNA

You go run around all you want. I obviously can't stop you. But I am going about my day.

Exit Edna.

INT. THE CORONER'S OFFICE - SAME

NESS and MYRLO stand in the hallway outside the morgue. MEDICAL EXAMINER GERBER (LATE 20'S), wiry, glasses, opens the door to let the men in.

GERBER

This way, gentlemen.

MYRLO

Who the hell are you?

GERBER

I'm the new Medical officer for the county, Dr. Gerber.

MYRLO

Doctor? What are you? Nine years old?

GERBER

I have two medical degrees. How many do you have?

MYRLO

Seven.

INT. CITY MORGUE - SAME

Ness and Myrlo gather around the work area of Doctor Gerber.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

58

The doctor has laid out a series of crime photos, samples, charts and graphs. It is a gruesome show and tell. As Gerber speaks, his speed borders on manic.

GERBER

What I have taken the liberty of doing, with all due respect to my predecessor, is start from scratch.

Gerber points to a dateline charts of the murders that hangs behind a ROW OF TAGGED SKULLS.

GERBER (CONT'D)

Cases 3, 6, and 7 show the bodies were cleanly dismembered at the shoulder and hip joints, each by one precise cut around said joints, followed by a strong twist wrenching the head out of the cavity.

NESS

We already know the "how", doctor. What about the "why"?

GERBER

That's where it gets tricky.

MYRLO

Tricky?

GERBER

Difficult to evaluate.

SIMON, a bit flustered, enters the morgue. Gerber glares at the interruption of his wisdom.

SIMON

Sorry I'm late. Those new traffic lights are slowing everything down.

GERBER

May I continue?

NESS

Please.

(CONTINUED)

GERBER

I believe we can eliminate sexual deviation as a motivation. Most sex crimes are committed on one gender or the other, not both.

(before Myrlo can protest)

Yes, in some of these earlier cases there was some genital mutilation. But is this mutilation any more perverse than the mutilation done to the ankle or neck? Is it a perversion or just another cut?

Gerber pulls open one of the freezer doors. He pulls back a sheet revealing the REMAINS OF THE TATTOOED HUSTLER. Simon's face drops upon seeing the remains.

GERBER

Take the latest victim, for example. This work is deliberate and detailed disarticulation. While gruesome, it is controlled. Sexual attacks are usually more frenzied.

NESS

What does that leave us?

GERBER

Based upon the social histories of the two victims we could identify, we can agree that our killer seems to be feeding upon the lowest strata of society.

MYRLO

Strata?

GERBER

Social class. The poor, disenfranchised. So, the murderer must be someone who can move freely in this strata. At the same time, our killer seems to have an education. His knowledge of anatomy alone is quite impressive.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

GERBER (cont'd)

Perhaps he was living in a higher strata and, because of unfortunate events, sank into a lower strata.

(beat)

Or, for whatever reason, he now chooses to live in this lower strata.

MYRLO

Stop saying "strata".

Ness smirks in spite of himself. Gerber, on the other hand, does a slow burn. No patience.

NESS

What possible motivation could make someone do this?

GERBER

The type of person most likely to commit murders like this fall into three groups. The truly insane...

MYRLO

No shit.

GERBER

The paranoiac. He will commit the murders as a result of his delusions of persecution. There is the schizophrene, who kills entirely without motive or passion. Then there is the constitutional psychopath: an individual who cannot comprehend between right or wrong. But, see, I doubt this is the case with the "Torso Killer".

Gerber returns to the tattooed hustler to use as a prop.

GERBER (CONT'D)

Considering the cold blooded method of the killing, the dissection of the body and the simple disposition of the remains, I would say we are dealing with good old fashioned arrogance.

Simon's glassy eyes are still locked on the hustler's remains.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

6

NESS

This latest victim seems to be... His head and face are in good shape. All those tattoos make him distinctive. Someone somewhere has to remember this man.

SIMON

(weakly)

If you'll excuse me.

Simon quickly exits. Looks are exchanged by everyone else in the room. Ness nods at Myrlo and Myrlo follows Simon.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CITY MORGUE - NIGHT

Myrlo finds Simon sit at the pavilion in front of the building. From this vantage point, one can see some of the cities most amazing sights - the bridges, the lake, the Terminal Tower skyscraper.

MYRLO

Simon? What the hell's going on with you?

SIMON

I just couldn't sit in there anymore.

MYRLO

Since when are you squeamish, ya' nancy?

SIMON

That guy on the slab...

MYRLO

The human funny pages?

SIMON

I knew him.

MYRLO

You busted him before?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON

No. I knew him.

MYRLO

You knew him? What? You were pals?

SIMON

(beat)

What do you think of Gerber's theory?
That the killer isn't some sex maniac.

MYRLO

I think there's such a thing as too
much education. A queer killer makes
more sense to me than a cranky doctor.

SIMON

So, a nancy-boy, a homosexual, well,
that's insane, right?

MYRLO

Well, according to the planet, yeah.

SIMON

(long beat)

What if I told you that I was a
homosexual? What then?

Myrlo laughs hard.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Come on, Walt. Would I be insane?

MYRLO

OK, I'll play along. If you were a
homo, then, yeah, you'd be nuts.

SIMON

How many years have you known me? Best
cop you've ever worked with. Your
words, Walt. Am I insane?

MYRLO

What? Of course you ain't insane. And
you ain't no fag either.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

(beat)

Well, Walt, I am.

Myrlo stares at his partner in shocked silence.

SIMON (CONT'D)

That's how I knew the tattooed guy.
And Eddie Andrassy.

MYRLO

Knew them?

SIMON

Do you need me to paint you a picture?

MYRLO

Christ on the cross.

(beat)

If this is true, you shoulda spilled
the beans on this--

SIMON

What was I gonna do? Announce this to
the world? You know what would happen
to me. Ever met a queer cop? You
haven't. 'Cause there aren't any.
There aren't any queer cops in the
world, Walt. The only queers are the
boy-whores, the prissy old bachelors,
right?

Walt cannot meet Simon's gaze. He just looks at the
ground.

SIMON (cont'd)

I'm sorry, Walt. This isn't fair to
you. I should have said something
earlier. I- I never meant to put you
in a position where...

(beat)

I'll tender my resignation to Ness in
the morning. I won't give a reason.
Nobody will know you had a queer
partner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Myrlo sits quietly. Simon, with nothing left to say, briskly EXITS.

MYRLO
Shit.

INT. THE CITY MORGUE - NIGHT

Myrlo walks back through the swinging doors. He looks like death warmed over.

NESS
Is everything OK?

MYRLO
Oh, yeah. He's just, uh, been putting in long hours is all. This stuff gets to the best of us after awhile.

Gerber leans over the corpse of the TATTOOED HUSTLER.

GERBER
I might have an idea, Mr. Ness.

NESS
Dazzle me, please.

GERBER
Paper mache.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TERMINAL TOWER - DAY

A PAPER MACHE CAST OF THE TATTOOED HUSTLER'S HEAD. The hair is a wig. But the features are lifelike and a good likeness. It hangs in a glass case with a DIAGRAM OF HIS TATTOOS below it. Underneath a sign that reads:

DO YOU KNOW THIS MAN? IF SO PLEASE CONTACT THE CORONER'S OFFICE AT GF1-2323

The case is displayed in Cleveland's answer to Grand Central Station. Dozens of people look at the hanging death mask, but no one recognizes it.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DOWNTOWN ARCADE - NIGHT

The ARCADE is an enclosed multi-level area of UPSCALE SHOPS AND EATERIES running the length of a city block and linking two skyscrapers. The arcade itself is a striking art Deco building with a GLORIOUS LEADED GLASS SKYLIGHT.

Tonight, the shops are closed as the arcade hosts a BLACK-TIE AFFAIR. A STRING QUARTET plays softly. HUNDREDS of Cleveland's HOI POLLOI are decked out in tuxedos and ball gowns as tray-wielding WAITERS pass out flutes of champagne.

ELIOT and EDNA appear at the top of a marble staircase. Ness removes Edna's fur and takes it to coat check while she surveys the moneyed folk around her.

There is a visible buzz at the Ness' arrival. But the buzz is different then before, almost scandalous. As Eliot takes Edna's hand and leads her down the stairs, SENATOR COSGROVE crosses to them.

SENATOR COSGROVE
Ness, old boy!

NESS
Good evening, Senator.

SENATOR COSGROVE
So glad to see you and...
(kissing Edna's hand)
...your lovely wife could join us.
Make some time for me before the night
is over.

The Senator continues schmoozing and the Ness' wind through the crowd. A TUXEDOED MOE DALITZ waves his glass of champagne at Ness.

DALITZ
(laughing)
Uh-oh! Don't arrest me! This is legal
stuff, Ness!

Ness clenches his jaw and turns to see the MAYOR.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

66

MAYOR
Edna, Eliot.

EDNA
How nice to see you, Mr. Mayor.

MAYOR
You look lovely this evening, Edna.
Would you mind terribly if I borrowed
your crusader husband for two minutes?

EDNA
Sorry, you get him all week. Tonight
he's mine, your honor. Get your own
date.

The Mayor grabs Ness by the shoulder and pulls him away.

MAYOR
We won't even be two minutes.

INT. ARCADE GARDEN - SAME

Ness and the Mayor are in a quiet alcove of the indoor
garden. From here point, they can view the party below.

MAYOR
How much more do I have to pay you to
get you to return phone calls?

Ness doesn't answer.

MAYOR
There's egg on my face, Ness. The
convention was a disaster. Do you
understand what this means?

NESS
The killer is a Democrat?

MAYOR
Chicago warned me about your attitude.

NESS
I wish someone would have warned me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

6

MAYOR
Listen, Ness...

NESS
No, you listen. I've been devoting all my energies to this "torso" case. I have done everything I was brought to this city to do. And not once have I dragged your name through the mud, something we both know I could have done...

(snapping his fingers)
...like that. Did you really think I wouldn't find out about your arrangements with Moe Dalitz?

The Mayor gives Ness a withering glare.

NESS (CONT'D)
I have offered you public support. Support that I find sorely lack towards me. So, I would just as soon you leave me to do my job in peace and we can stop pretending that we don't know what the score is.

MAYOR
Sounds like you might have higher aspirations, Ness. Mayoral ones, maybe?

NESS
Why do I need the title?
(beat)
I already do the job, don't I?

Ness exits.

INT. THE DOWNTOWN ARCADE - SAME

Jaw clenched with silent rage, Ness weaves through the adoring throngs. Ness spots Edna talking to a TALL, DARK-HAIRED GENTLEMAN (His back is to us. We never see his face). Edna laughs heartily as Ness takes her arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

68

EDNA

Eliot, there you are. Come meet Mr. Sundheim. The Senator's nephew and a fan of your work. He...

NESS

(pulling Edna aside)

Excuse us, will you?

(to Edna)

Let's go.

EDNA

What?

NESS

Let's go.

EDNA

We just got here.

NESS

Please don't argue. It's time to go.

Eliot escorts the confused Edna upstairs.

INT. THE COATROOM - SAME

Eliot helps Edna into her fur coat.

EDNA

I can't believe this. I got all dressed up. Would you care to tell me what's going on?

NESS

We'll talk about it later.

EDNA

When exactly is "later", Eliot? You use that word a lot with me, but later never seems to come.

As Edna slides her arm into the RIGHT SLEEVE, a POSTCARD tumbles out and hits the marble floor.

EDNA (CONT'D)

Eliot?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ness picks up the card and turns it over. NO POSTMARK OR STAMP. It was HAND-DELIVERED BY SOMEONE IN THIS ROOM.

The card reads: QUITE A PARTY. THE WIFE IS A PRIZE, TOO.

Ness spins around, scanning the crowd. Dozens of people entering and exiting. Ness runs to a railing and looks down at the sea of people. A NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK.

CUT TO:

A "MOVIETONE" NEWSREEL.

The black-and-white newsreel unspools with a WALTER WINCHELL-esque announcer reading the news. A TITLE CARD blares "Cleveland Crimes Capture Globe's Fancy!"

Over a shot of the Cleveland skyline...

ANNOUNCER (VO)

Dateline: Cleveland, Ohio. This city on the shores of Lake Erie was enjoying a rapid rebound from the dark days of the Great Depression, but the recovery was short-lived as the spectre of another evil cast its long shadow on the city. The Torso Killer!

A montage of FOOTAGE OF THE RESERVOIR BEING SEARCHED, THE HUSTLER BEING FISHED FROM THE RIVER and NEWSPAPER HEADLINES OF THE TORSO KILLER.

EXT. A TRAINYARD - DAY

MYRLO mingles amongst the men riding the rails. He shows the WINOS A PHOTO OF THE TATTOOED HUSTLER.

(The "Movietone" announcer's voice over is continuous as we cut back and forth between newsreel and non-newsreel scenes.)

ANNOUNCER (VO) (CONT'D)

This butchering maniac has cast his spell of terror over this city! Police are desperately trying to identify the killer's victims and seek the public's help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEWSREEL FOOTAGE: NEWSPAPER boy holds up a gruesome headline to the camera. Reads: TORSO KILLER HUNTS HIS PREY.

ANNOUNCER (VO) (CONT'D)
The case has captivated the world! In fact, none other than Germany's Adolph Hitler had a few choice words about the madman! It seems to Adolph that the Torso Killer is yet another sign of democracy's rotten core. Well, Mr. Torso killer, you know you are one bad apple, if even happy Hitler doesn't think much of you.

NEWSREEL FOOTAGE: ADOLPH HITLER giving an outdoor speech to assembled thousands.

NEWSREEL FOOTAGE: Ness walking quickly past the camera into the police station.

ANNOUNCER (VO) (CONT'D)
And while on the subject, one has to wonder what Cleveland's shining star Eliot Ness actually has planned to stop this maniacal butcher!

INT. NESS' OFFICE - DAY

Ness, slumped in his chair with "Torso" files spread out on his desk, stares at the CRIME SCENE PHOTOS and his COLLECTION OF POSTCARDS.

ANNOUNCER (VO) (CONT'D)
With one gruesome murder after another, one has to wonder if "golden boy" Ness is feeling all that untouchable himself these days.

EXT. NESS' HOME - NIGHT

CUT TO:

A visibly fatigued NESS walks up to the front door of his dark house.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - SAME

Ness steps inside the house noticing how unusually quiet and dark it is.

NESS
Edna?

Ness gets to the bedroom. The bed is still made.

NESS (CONT'D)
Honey?

A KNOCK at the door startles Ness. Ness heads toward the door. A chill. He stops halfway down the hall.

NESS (CONT'D)
Who is it?

VOICE (OS)
It's the police, sir. Detective Myrlo asked me to come get you.

Ness opens the door to a YOUNG OFFICER.

YOUNG COP
They found another body. Just a block from here. And they wanted me to tell you that it looks fresh.

NESS
Man or woman?

YOUNG COP
I think they said it was a woman.

Ness spins around his empty home. His ashen face tells us he fears the worst.

CUT TO:

EXT. CRIME SCENE - NIGHT

Ness furiously runs up to the open crime scene one block from his house. MYRLO and GERBER talk by a sheet covered body laying in the brush of an empty lot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A DOZEN ON-LOOKERS have gathered and whisper in awe when Ness arrives.

MYRLO

Our pal is getting brave. A fresh body in a nice neighborhood.

NESS

Any way to identify the victim?

GERBER

The head is gone, but he left one arm.

NESS

Let me see her.

Gerber walks Ness over to the body and pulls back the sheet. Ness winces as he sees the word "NAZI" CARVED INTO THE VICTIM'S BACK.

MYRLO

Well, we know one thing...

GERBER

What?

MYRLO

We know he goes to the pictures.

Ness crouches down by the body and lifts the victim's arm. He examines the hand and relief washes over him.

GERBER

Mr. Ness, the evidence...

Ness glares at Gerber, immediately silencing him. He grabs the YOUNG COP.

NESS

What's your name, son?

OFFICER

Ricketts. I worked with you on the Dalitz raid.

NESS

Good. Listen, I want you to stand guard at my front door.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NESS (cont'd)
And you call me at my office the
minute my wife shows up. The minute.
You understand?

OFFICER
Yes.

NESS
You see anybody else lurking around
there and I want you to earn your
badge, you understand?

OFFICER
Yes sir.

NESS
Good. Now go.

The officer quickly heads to his post. Without looking
back, Ness sprints towards his car.

CUT TO:

INT. NESS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Eliot barges through the door to his office. Inside,
sitting alone in the dark, is EDNA.

EDNA
Hello, Eliot.

NESS
Edna! Thank God. I went to the house
and I thought you were... thank god.

Ness notices TWO SMALL SUITCASES on the floor.

EDNA
I want to talk to you. I figured I had
a better chance waiting here than at
home.

NESS
What's going on?

EDNA
I'm leaving.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NESS

Leaving?

EDNA

You. I'm leaving you.

Eliot, in shock, leans against his desk.

EDNA

You made promises, Eliot. And they aren't being honored, so I'm leaving. I need to do it now before I find a reason to start hating you instead of just being disappointed.

NESS

Edna, I...

EDNA

You know what's really funny? I don't blame you. I knew. I knew, deep down, that it wasn't going to be any different here.

NESS

I can't believe this.

EDNA

Eliot. I just can't do it anymore. I have ambitions, too. I have things that I want in life.

NESS

Like what?

Edna picks up her bags and smiles sadly.

EDNA

We've been married seven years, Eliot. If you just knew the answer to that question, I probably wouldn't need to leave.

Ness sits in stunned, defeated silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDNA

It's a good thing that we never had children, don't you think?

Silence.

EDNA

Goodbye, Eliot.

Edna's footsteps echo through the empty office, trailing off to nothing. An emotionally and physically exhausted Ness can do nothing but watch her go.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIMON'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

SIMON, carrying two grocery bags, pauses when he sees MYRLO leaning against the front stoop smoking a cigarette.

MYRLO

Evenin', Sam.

SIMON

Walt.

MYRLO

Smoke?

SIMON

Sure.

Simon takes a cigarette and Myrlo lights it for him.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Thanks.

MYRLO

Ness sent me to get you. There's another body.

SIMON

You didn't...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MYRLO

Say anything? Nope. Didn't have to. He told me he refused your resignation.

SIMON

Yeah.

(impersonating Ness)

"You're a good cop, Simon. I know this case is taking a toll on all of us. I can give you a few days to get it together, but that's all."

MYRLO

Sounds just like him.

SIMON

Let me grab my pistol.

Sam heads up the stairs to his apartment.

MYRLO

Hey, Sam?

SIMON

Yeah?

MYRLO

He made the right decision. It would be bad for the force to lose you.

Simon stops and looks at his partner.

MYRLO (CONT'D)

After your little bombshell, I went home and talked to the wife. Seems that, from her perspective, I was quite the ass.

SIMON

Oh.

MYRLO

And it also seems that she had your little secret figured out after the last failed set-up. She thinks you're the bee's knees and that I'm lucky to have you as a partner.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

And what do you think?

MYRLO

I think she's right.

(smiles)

I always think she's right. It's what keeps our marriage together.

(beat, serious)

That don't mean I get it. What you do. 'Cause I don't.

SIMON

I know.

MYRLO

It just ain't how my brain works. But I got a question.

SIMON

Shoot.

MYRLO

You don't have the hot tamales for me, do ya'?

SIMON

(laughing)

No, Walt.

MYRLO

Then we're good, right?

SIMON

Yeah. We're good.

MYRLO

Then why are we standin' around? We got a killer to catch.

SIMON

Maybe we should head over to your house and see if the wife knows who the killer is.

CONTINUED: (3)

78

They both laugh.

FADE TO BLACK:

MYRLO (OS)

Ness!

INT. NESS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Eliot Ness, hunched over his desk, jumps awake. MYRLO and SIMON stand over him.

MYRLO

Sorry to wake you, boss. We got someone here that we thought you'd wanna talk to.

Myrlo gestures someone in the outer office and A UNIFORMED OFFICER escorts an OLD MAN inside.

The old hobo has wild hair and a beard and looks like he hasn't bathed in a long time. The hobo is visibly nervous and cannot meet Ness' eyes.

MYRLO

This Joe came up to some cops by the river. He's got something you should hear.

(to the old man)

Listen old timer, tell Mr. Ness here what you told us. Word for word, OK?

The old man quakes and looks as if he's about to cry. As the hobo sits, Ness crosses to the front of his desk and leans into the old man like a familiar friend.

NESS (CONT'D)

It's OK. Go on.

OLD MAN

Well, ya' see, I've been living down in Kingsbury Run, down by the lake. I gots a shanty down there. I been what you might call a bit down on my luck.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

7

OLD MAN (cont'd)
The other night, I was warmin' myself by my fire and this fella, this stranger, ambled up ta me and offered me a shot of his hootch. And, well, I'm not much in the position lately to refuse.

NESS
What did he look like?

OLD MAN
It bein' so dark and all, well, I didn't get a good look at him I'm sorry to say. But he was big.

NESS
Big? He was fat?

OLD MAN
No. Not fat. Just big. A big fella. Hey, you got any water?

NESS
(to the officer)
Do you mind?

The Officer exits.

OLD MAN
So, this big fella, he gave me a shot of his hootch and I felt all hot and my head got all fuzzy. Everything just sorta went blank, y'see. I don't know how long I was out, but the next thing I remember is hearin' this sound. And I was in a tub. A wash tub. I'm in my clothes, I'm still dirty, but I'm in a tub. And the sound just got louder and louder.

The Officer re-enters with a glass of water. The old man gratefully takes the water and drinks it in one gulp.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Thank you kindly, sir. I'm mighty parched.

(CONTINUED)

NESS

This sound, could you tell what it was?

OLD MAN

Oh, yes. I knew exactly what it was. I remember it from my days in the stockyards. It was choppin' meat.

Ness, Simon and Myrlo exchange looks.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

I was gettin' scared, so I, I pulled myself outta the tub and snuck out as quiet as I could. Last thing I remember was turnin' to see if I was being followed. I saw a big house.

NESS

A big house?

OLD MAN

Or a barn. See thing is my vision was all blurry and I slipped. I just slipped and rolled. Next thing I remember, I was wanderin' around back at Kingsbury Run. That's when I saw some officers and I knew it happened for a purpose.

NESS

Why is that?

The old man reaches into his threadbare jacket and pulls out a PICTURE POSTCARD. Myrlo freezes. This he didn't know about.

OLD MAN

(handing the card to Ness)
I reckon I was supposed to give you this.

Ness takes the postcard. FAMILIAR scratch handwriting. It reads: ...NO ONE WILL MISS THEM.

Ness is visibly shaken by the card. He looks at Jay suspiciously, but Jay is just a lost and weary old man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

8

NESS

Officer, will you take Jay here to a motel and make sure that he is put up for the night?

OLD MAN

Mr. Ness, I ain't one for charity.

NESS

It isn't anything of the sort.

The Officer leads the old man out of the office.

OLD MAN

Bless you, sir. Bless your heart.

Myrlo looks to a mysteriously quiet Ness. He's never seen him like this.

NESS

The shantytown, this "Kingsbury Run."

MYRLO

Yeah, it's down by the river, almost a mile long. What are you thinkin'?

Ness grabs his jacket and storms out of his office.

NESS

Gather up the men.

SIMON

Who?

NESS

All of them.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE RIVERBED SHANTYTOWN - NIGHT

The lower banks of the Cuyahoga River have been taken over by the poor and downtrodden. A ramshackle SHANTYTOWN has been erected one piece at a time.

Tin and wood huts covered in tarps and cloth. Hundreds of them piled one on top of another and going on for a mile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

82

Bonfires burn, underfed kids play. It is a scene right out of "The Grapes Of Wrath.

Then: CHAOS!

UNIFORMED OFFICERS, some on HORSEBACK, others on foot, lead the confused RESIDENTS out of their tin shacks and herd them into awaiting PADDY WAGONS.

NESS, unshaven and intense, orders officers with axes to begin knocking down the empty huts. MYRLO and SIMON arrive and survey the scene with confusion.

MYRLO

What's the word, Mr. Ness?

NESS

The word is this. Maybe we can't find him, maybe we can't stop him, but we can damn well take away his victims.

TWO OFFICERS approach Ness.

OFFICER 1

It's empty, sir. We moved them out, every last one of them.

NESS

Torch it.

SIMON

What?

NESS

Burn this eyesore to the ground.

SIMON

Mr. Ness, you can't! What about the--?

Ness looks coldly at Simon. Myrlo grabs his partner's arm and pulls him back.

NESS

(to the officers)
You heard me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

8

The officers signal their men and gasoline is poured on the huts. ANGRY RESIDENTS begin yelling as they see the cops dousing their homes.

Ness lights a TORCH and ignites the nearest shanty. It goes up IN A FLASH. Flames shoot through the enclave like lightning.

Most of the officers cover their mouths with cloths and back away for cleaner air, but Ness, TORCH STILL IN HAND, watches the RAGING INFERNO. The light from the flames casts severe shadows across Ness' haggard face making Eliot look like he's at the end of his rope.

CLAYTON, the reporter, and a NEWS PHOTOGRAPHER make their way down to the fire's edge and snap a photo of NESS SILHOUETTED BY THE BURNING SHANTYTOWN.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON THE B&W PHOTO OF NESS.

The newspaper headline accompanying the photo reads: "MISGUIDED ZEAL - Inhumane Ness Torches Hobo Jungle!"

MAYOR (OS)

The press is an amazing beast, isn't it?

INT. ELIOT NESS' OFFICE - DAY

The morning edition of the Cleveland Plain Dealer is dropped onto Eliot Ness' desk. NESS, in smoke-stained clothes, looks up at the grinning MAYOR.

MAYOR

One minute they love you, the next, well, you can read, can't you?

NESS

The reasons for the shantytown raid were valid. Our immediate concern was preventing the "Torso Killer" from preying on those people any longer.

MAYOR

Uh-huh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

84

NESS

And its entire existence was against
the law in the first place.

MAYOR

Well, Ness, too bad you're the only
person that sees it that way. You know
what my favorite part of the article
is?

Ness stares silently at the grinning maw of the mayor.

MAYOR

All of it.

(turning to exit)

Oh, and say "hello" to your wife for
me.

Exit the mayor.

Ness fumes alone at his desk. In a rage, he throws his
"Torso" files across the room scattering gruesome photos
and postcards on the floor.

NESS

What do you want from me?!

Ness looks at the paperwork littering the floor. And
something CATCHES HIS ATTENTION.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE POLICE STATION - DAY

As a tired-looking SIMON trots up the stairs to the
station house, MYRLO comes barrelling down the opposite
way.

MYRLO

You look like shit.

SIMON

Feel like it. I was helping the Red
Cross all night.

Simon turns and follows Myrlo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

8

MYRLO

Aren't you "Florence Nightingale."
What were you doin' that for?

SIMON

(angry)

Because Ness' raid last night left
five-hundred people more homeless than
they were before.

MYRLO

Hey, listen, I'm no cheerleader for
Ness, but cut him some slack. We've
been chasin' shadows for so damn long.
What else was he supposed to do?

SIMON

I don't know, Walt, but it sure
doesn't look like we're any closer to
catching this guy.

The steps and sidewalk are filled with down and out
citizens, shantytown refugees, in different states of
police processing and being fed by volunteers.

MYRLO

Tell it to the man. We've been
summoned.

CUT TO:

INT. NESS' OFFICE - SAME

Ness stands with his back to the detectives as he stares
at his POSTCARD COLLECTION, which is now tacked to the
wall.

NESS

Look at these postcards, gentlemen.

Myrlo and Simon cross to the wall of cards.

NESS

What do you see?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

8

MYRLO

A man with way too much time on his hands.

SIMON

(pointing)

This one. It has a postmark.

NESS

Yes, and that is the last postcard I received.

Tight on the postmark.

MYRLO

Maybe he's getting sloppy.

Ness stares at the postmark, emotionless.

NESS

He has been so careful with everything. Every detail. He wanted me to see this. This was an invitation, and I should've noticed it before. I should have been thinking like a detective and not kicking down doors like a bootleg raider. He's laughing it up today.

Ness picks up files from his desk.

NESS (cont'd)

So, the old man gave us a description, however vague, and now we have a location.

MYRLO

However vague...

Ness pulls out a postage route MAP of an area of Cleveland, block by block.

NESS

The postmaster provided maps of the area covered under that postal code.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Ness points to the area with the number matching the postal code of the postcard.

CUT TO:

EXT. KINGSBURY RUN - DAY

NESS, MYRLO, SIMON and THREE UNIFORMED OFFICERS stand outside the bar where Flo Polillo was last seen, right in the middle of the most run down part of the city.

OFFICER 1

The six of us are gonna canvas this whole neighborhood? Why don't we bring in some more guys?

NESS

Because this is very hush-hush, got it?

MYRLO

Let's get goin' on what I'm sure will be a very exciting afternoon.

Ness, Simon and Myrlo, with a cop each in tow, split up.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE OF NESS, MYRLO AND SIMON SEARCHING.

The detectives go house to house. An old woman, a couple of children, a working man, Chinese laundry workers, the bartender, bar patrons, each nod negatively at the description.

Simon and his cop arrest a large, DRUNKEN MAN with BLOOD STAINS on his shirt.

EXT. A CORNER GROCER - LATER

Ness and his cop stand outside as a VENDOR closes up his shop.

FRUIT VENDOR

Big fella? Oh, yeah. Every day, an apple.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

81

NESS
Today?

FRUIT VENDOR
Yeah, why?

NESS
Name?

FRUIT VENDOR
There's not how my business works.

NESS
Could you describe him?

FRUIT VENDOR
He's a big guy, like you said. I think
he lives around here somewhere.

NESS
What makes you say that?

FRUIT VENDOR
He's always walking.
(pointing)
He comes from that way.

EXT. A STREET - DUSK

MYRLO and his cop, visibly fatigued, continue on their
door to door. A young, uptight woman points them to a
ONCE-BEAUTIFUL, now DILAPIDATED VICTORIAN townhouse
across the street.

UPTIGHT WOMAN
There's a man like that lives right
over there. Doesn't talk. Doesn't say
hello. Comes and goes all hours.

MYRLO
(following her finger)
That house there?

UPTIGHT WOMAN
What did he do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

8

Myrlo and his cop cautiously cross over to the townhouse. No movement. No shadows. The familiar car is parked in the driveway. Its shiny chrome in direct contrast to the run down surroundings.

Myrlo tries to look in the windows on the porch. Nothing. Empty, plain furnished house.

VOICE (OS)
Detective, I'm hurt...

Myrlo and the cop whip around, drawing their guns.

A LARGE FIGURE, silhouetted by the setting sun, stands in the middle of the street.

FIGURE
...I was hoping for Ness.

NESS (OS)
Drop everything! Hands in the air!

The TALL, HULKING MAN slowly turns to see NESS AND HIS COP, guns out. The man turns to Ness, drops his half eaten APPLE to the ground and... smiles. He holds his wrists out in front of him, ready to be cuffed.

CUT TO:

EXT. A HOTEL - NIGHT

ELIOT NESS pulls up in front of a flea-bag hotel downtown. SIMON talks to MYRLO in front of the building.

SIMON
Can't believe it went down without me. Been on this case every second of every day and I missed it. He just walked up to you and that was it?

MYRLO
One creepy bird.

Myrlo smoking a cigarette, brings Ness up to speed as they all walk into the hotel.

(CONTINUED)

NESS

Is everything ready?

MYRLO

Just like you said. They're hooking him up right now.

SIMON

Why aren't we at the station house?

NESS

No more circuses.

INT. THE HOTEL LOBBY - SAME

Simon and Myrlo can barely keep up with Ness as he briskly winds his way through the lobby, up the stairs and down a long hotel hallway.

NESS

Who is he?

MYRLO

Gaylord Sundheim, 28, no priors. His record is clean.

NESS

What about his house?

SIMON

Cleaner.

NESS

These are not things I want to hear.

They turn a corner and see TWO ARMED GUARDS standing outside a room.

MYRLO

You might find this interesting. Seven months ago, Mr. Sundheim was expelled from medical school for, get this, anti-social behavior.

Ness stops. Really?

CONTINUED:

9

MYRLO (cont'd)

And we contacted National City Bank.
Seems Gaylord has over \$15,000.00 in
savings.

SIMON

\$15,000.00? Maybe I should hit him up
for a loan.

MYRLO

But here's the kicker. Sundheim's
uncle?

NESS

Yeah?

MYRLO

The Mayor's pal, Senator Cosgrove.

Ness looks like he just got punched in the stomach.

MYRLO

You want us in there with ya'?

NESS

No.

Ness slides into the room.

INT. THE HOTEL ROOM- SAME

Sitting in a chair, unmoving, unblinking, is GAYLORD
SUNDHEIM. Like the old man described, Sundheim is a BIG
MAN. Not fat, not freakish, simply BIG. IMPOSING.

TWO TECHNICIANS finish affixing an arm cuff and a
headband to Sundheim. The wires lead to a CUMBERSOME,
RUDIMENTARY POLYGRAPH (one of the first actually ever
used). ANOTHER OFFICER keeps watch.

Ness pulls up a chair across from Sundheim and, for a
beat, there is a heavy silence between them.

When Gaylord starts to speak, the temperature in the room
seems to drop. He speaks in cool, measured tones and
wears a slight smirk on his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

92

GAYLORD

Is this how you treat all concerned citizens?

NESS

The station house is a zoo. We wanted to talk to you in private.

GAYLORD

You must be furious at your reporter friend. "Ness must believe the myth of his infallibility. Why else would he burn a mile of the river front to cinders?"

GAYLORD

What exactly do you have me wired up to here?

NESS

It's called a polygraph machine. A new device that enables us to gauge your answers.

GAYLORD

A lie detector? How amusing. Perhaps you can read my tea leaves when we're finished?

NESS

Do you know why we are here today?

GAYLORD

Because I'm the "Torso Killer".

The tech looks at the needle. No movement.

NESS

Now why would I think a smart man like you is the "Torso Killer"?

GAYLORD

How do you know I'm smart? You either mean to compliment me or patronize me. Whatever the reason, I find you presumptuous.

(CONTINUED)

NESS

You went to medical school. Not exactly a stooge farm. But you didn't answer my question.

GAYLORD

Yes, I did. I am the "Torso Killer".

(beat)

Or so you say.

NESS

Have you been sending me postcards?

GAYLORD

Postcards? Is that against the law?

NESS

Sending threatening mail to a public official certainly is.

GAYLORD

Were they threatening? What did they say?

NESS

I'm asking the questions here.

(beat)

Why does someone of your economic means live in such a run-down part of town? Or hang around a shantytown?

GAYLORD

Is that why you burned it down?

NESS

Did you hang around down there?

GAYLORD

If I did, I can't anymore.

The needle remains still.

NESS

Is that why you were kicked out of medical school? Your smart mouth?

CONTINUED: (3)

GAYLORD

You'd have to ask them.

NESS

We did.

GAYLORD

And what did they say?

NESS

What do you think they said?

GAYLORD

Personality conflicts with authority figures. I'm sure you of all people could relate.

NESS

No, I graduated.

GAYLORD

And I didn't, thus, I must be the Killer.

Ness looks at the needle. Nothing.

NESS

Does it bother you that they didn't let you finish your schooling?

GAYLORD

I wasn't happy there. Their thinking is... antiquated.

NESS

Antiquated how?

Gaylord stares over Ness' shoulder in silence. Ness stares back and then looks over his shoulder to see what Gaylord is looking at. As soon as he turns Gaylord starts speaking.

GAYLORD

The medical profession is very- well, they always seem to be the last ones to know, don't they?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

NESS

I don't follow.

GAYLORD

Take this killer, for instance. The professional thinking is in terms of good and evil. "The Mad Butcher." "The Cleveland Headhunter." "The Maniacal Torso Killer." Good. Evil. Mad. Butcher. Whore. Doctor. Drunk. Hobo. Homosexual. Neanderthal.

(beat)

Labels. You see, Mr. Ness? You see how easy it is to conjure an image with a word? Every word instantly creates a picture in your mind.

(beat)

You meet someone for the first time. You see their skin, their clothes, their smell. You make an estimation of their worth as a person based on what? Based on physical appearance? Based on stature? On birthright? On an educated guess of the human condition? But you look into the eye. The light reflects. The spark of life. The soul of creation. The charwoman can have the eye of wisdom. The gentleman can have the vacant eye of the morally bereft.

(beat)

Imagine, Mr. Ness, having the secrets of humanity revealed. Where do those secrets lie? In the intangible, the illusive, the soul. What a gift it would be to be able to strip away all the layers. All the confines. All the biological identity of a person. And reveal the soul. To harvest it from the ugly confines of the flesh. To take that essence and examine it. Understand it. Because within lie the keys to immortality.

NESS

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

GAYLORD

Someone is killing these people, yes. But, if, in the end, those killings would bring on the next step of human evolution? Well, what do you think people would call him then, Mr. Ness?

Ness doesn't answer.

GAYLORD (CONT'D)

Perhaps that is what motivates your "mad butcher". Aren't the lives of a dozen nameless people worth the cost? This "Torso Killer" should be commended for his research, don't you think?

(beat, with an icy grin)

Or, he could simply be a raving, dribbling lunatic.

The technician shakes his head at Ness. The needle hasn't moved.

NESS

Gaylord, I think you killed these people. I think you are sloppy and arrogant and...

GAYLORD

Think, Mr. Ness? Prove it.

The standoff is broken by a COMMOTION in the hallway. The door bursts open to reveal the MAYOR and a WELL-DRESSED MAN (50's) pushing their way past MYRLO and the ARMED GUARD.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

The party's over, Ness.

NESS

(standing)

Who the hell are you?

BERMAN

Mr. Daniel Berman, Esquire. Mr. Sundheim's attorney. Is Mr. Sundheim being held in connection with a crime?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

9

The mayor motions for the technicians to unhook Gaylord.

NESS

Yes, he...

BERMAN

Have you officially charged Mr. Sundheim?

NESS

No. I am in the middle of...

BERMAN

Do you have sufficient evidence at this time to charge Mr. Sundheim?

NESS

No, I...

Gaylord stands and smiles at Ness.

BERMAN

Then, unless you are prepared to charge Mr. Sundheim right now, I have to ask that this interview ceases immediately and that you discontinue any and all harassment of my client.

Berman takes Sundheim by the arm and starts to lead him to the door.

BERMAN (CONT'D)

At such time that you feel another meeting may be necessary, one can be scheduled when both Mr. Sundheim and I see fit. Otherwise you are to stay away from my client.

They are already in the hallway. Gaylord's gaze never leaves Ness. The mayor stays and Ness stands in angry shock.

NESS

(furious)

Do you know what you just did?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MAYOR

I'm going to put this to you as bluntly as I can. I hired you and I can fire you. You have a contract with this city and I will honor it. But if you continue to abuse your position to harass and cause embarrassment to my political affiliations as some backhanded way of getting at me...

The mayor rips off the polygraph paper...

NESS

What? I'm running a police investigation that has nothing at all to do with...

...and crams it into Ness' chest.

MAYOR

You bother that boy again, you can pack your bags. Got it?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE HOTEL - NIGHT

The mayor glares at Ness as he drives off. Myrlo and Simon turn the corner, food in hand, and see Ness, holding the crumbled polygraph results.

SIMON

He didn't...

Ness fumes. He did.

MYRLO

What do you want to do?

Ness looks down at the pile of paper that the lie detector spit out. He sees the endless straight line.

NESS

Catch that arrogant fuck in the act and let's end this.

CUT TO:

EXT. KINGSBURY RUN - DUSK

MYRLO'S CAR is parked across from a seedy pub in Kingsbury Run.

MYRLO (OS)
You ready yet?

SIMON (OS)
Getting there.

INT. MYRLO'S CAR - SAME

MYRLO keeps an eye on the pub's steady stream of customers as SIMON slicks his hair with pomade. Simon is definitely not in his cop drag. Instead, he wears a tank top T-shirt, suspenders and natty pleated pants.

MYRLO
In my father's day, we'd take that palooka down to the station and the guy would just disappear. Ya know?

SIMON
(uncomfortable)
How do I look?

MYRLO
You know what I think? I think we're untouchables.

SIMON
We're not untouchables.

MYRLO
No, I know.
(beat)
But I think we are.

SIMON
Try to stay awake, OK?

Simon exits the car and joins the riff-raff outside the pub. He blends right in.

CUT TO:

INT. NESS' OFFICE- SAME

NESS sits at his desk absentmindedly drumming his fingers on the open "torso" file. The postmarked postcards. Through his open door, he calls to GRACE.

NESS

Any word from Simon or Myrlo?

GRACE

Not yet, Mr. Ness.

Grace enters his office with a look of concern.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Mr. Ness, if I may...why don't you go? Maybe make yourself a meal. I can stay here and hold down the fort for a few hours. I'll call you as soon as I hear.

NESS

Grace, it's late. You don't have to do that.

GRACE

But I - I want to.

NESS

You promise you'll call if...

GRACE

The second I hear from them.

Ness grabs his coat from the back of his chair and heads out of his office. He stops short and turns to Grace.

NESS

Thank you, Grace.

CUT TO:

EXT. KINGSBURY RUN - LATER

Myrlo fights to keep his eyes open on this stakeout. Simon steps out of the bar and lights up a smoke as he scans the street. A DRUNKEN FLOOZY makes a move on the detective which Simon deftly declines.

Myrlo stifles an enormous yawn as the TORSO KILLER'S CAR pulls up by Simon. Myrlo sits up, suddenly alert, as Simon smiles at the driver, laughs, and gets in the car.

MYRLO

And away we go.

Myrlo starts his car and slowly follows Simon's ride.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ness ambles out to the parking lot. A UNIFORMED OFFICER passes him.

OFFICER

Good night, Mr. Ness.

NESS

Officer.

EXT. THE CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Myrlo continues to tail the Torso Killer's car from a safe distance. The Killer winds his way through a heavily industrial area with next to no traffic, so Myrlo has to be adept in his tailing.

The Killer makes a turn between two warehouses and crosses RAILROAD TRACKS to a dirt road leading out towards the lake.

Myrlo gives the car a few extra beats to get ahead. He notices a POLICE CALL BOX near the tracks before he, too, hops on the dirt road.

As soon as he leaves the paved road, Myrlo TURNS OFF HIS HEADLIGHTS.

EXT. THE DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Myrlo follows the trail of dust kicked up by the Killer's car. Suddenly, the CAR TURNS OFF the dirt road and drives through the FIVE FOOT HIGH WEEDS that run as far as the eye can see.

Realizing he cannot follow without giving himself up, Myrlo hits the breaks and can barely make out the roof of the car and the dim glow of its headlights as it cuts a path through the weeds and dead grass.

Getting out of his car, Myrlo looks out toward the lake. Near the shore (about a half a mile from Myrlo) are FOUR SEEMINGLY ABANDONED BARN/ WAREHOUSE STRUCTURES.

The car is now out of Myrlo's sight line. He looks nervous as he peers into the darkness after his partner.

MYRLO

Dammit! Hang in there, Sam.

Myrlo hops back in his car, turns around and speeds back towards the call box.

EXT. POLICE STATION - SAME

Ness actually begins to look relaxed at the thought of some time in his own home. But the look of relaxation dissolves when Ness sees his car. Tucked under the wiper blade of Ness' car is a PICTURE POSTCARD.

EXT. THE CALL BOX

Myrlo screeches up to the call box and leaps out of his car. He cranks the phone.

MYRLO

Garfield 1-23-23 pronto. This is Detective Walter Myrlo. Patch me through to Ness's office. Yeah, Eliot Ness. Now!

(to himself)

Come on! Come on!

(beat)

Whaddaya mean I just missed him? Well, then put me through to his office.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MYRLO (cont'd)
No, I can't wait. Just tell him Myrlo
and Simon need backup and we need it
now!

Myrlo squints as he looks around for markings.

MYRLO
55th and Lake. A bunch of old
farmhouses, just past the train tracks
on the lake shore.

Myrlo slams down the phone, jumps into his still-running
car and speeds off toward the weeds.

EXT. POLICE STATION PARKING LOT

Ness approaches his car in an almost trancelike state. He
gently pulls the postcard from the windshield wiper and
turns it over. THE POSTCARD IS BLANK.

NESS
Oh my God.

INT. THE BARN - SAME

SIMON is led through the dark barn/warehouse by GAYLORD.

A lone lamp casts a pool of light in the inky shadows.
The barn's decor is that of a bombed out junkyard. Tools,
wood, barrels, wheels, pipes and wiring. Rusty, tetanus
covered edges from every angle. All ominous in the
shadows.

Gaylord does not have the cool look he had during the
polygraph. He looks more agitated, his chilling smirk now
more of a twitch.

SIMON
This is some place you got here.

Gaylord does not answer. He only leers lasciviously at
Simon and disappears into the darkness. Simon plays it
cool and waits for his eyes to adjust to the dark.

SIMON
So, what are you up for tonight?

Silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

10

SIMON (CONT'D)
Hide-and-go-peek isn't really my bag.

The silence is abruptly broken by a severe CHOPPING SOUND. Simon jumps and reaches for the CONCEALED GUN IN HIS SOCK.

Simon hears another CHOP! And follows the sound.

Again: Chop! Chop! Chop!

Simon looks towards the door he came in. Looks toward the direction of the rhythmic sound.

SIMON (cont'd)
Hello?

Simon decides to follow the sound. Gun cocked and ready, Simon hugs the walls as he follows the noise.

CHOP!

A WIDE STAIRCASE leads to up to a SECOND FLOOR. Simon peers up the stairwell and only a black void stares back.

SIMON
(to himself)
Where are you, Walt?

Simon takes a deep breath and begins inching his way up the staircase.

At the top of the stairs, Simon is hit by a STENCH SO FOUL he can barely contain his gagging. He covers his nose and presses on.

As he rounds a corner, Simon sees a FAINT LIGHT shining from beneath a DOOR. Now dripping with sweat, Simon heads for the door and turns the knob...

INT. THE ROOM - SAME

Simon stares in silent horror as he steps into the room. This is the work room. The butcher's den. A Hieronymous Bosch painting of hell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

10

Puddles of CONGEALING BLOOD pool beneath a steel autopsy table. KNIVES, SCALPELS and MACHETES of all sizes lay on a gouged and stained wooden butcher's block.

Vats bubble on a rusty gas stove. And then Simon sees the pieces. What the police never found. A COLLECTION OF HEADS in various states of rot line a shelf. HUMAN LIMBS are hooked to chains and hang from the ceiling like drying flowers.

And splayed out in a washtub are TWO LIMBLESS, HEADLESS TORSOS. They are split down the middle and soaking in the orange preservative used on Eddie Andrassy's body.

Simon struggles against his body's instinct to vomit as he backs against a wall. A WALL COVERED WITH NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS OF NESS' ARRIVAL IN CLEVELAND and CHRONICLING THE "TORSO" CASE. The Killer's unique scratchy handwriting all over the clippings.

In the doorway behind Simon, the SHADOWS MOVE, unnoticed by the shocked detective.

GAYLORD (OS)

An impressive sight, isn't it...
Detective Simon?

Simon spins around, gun raised high in the darkness. A FLASH OF SILVER and...

EXT. THE WEEDS - SAME

Myrlo pulls his car to a stop where Gaylord drove through the weeds. Visibly anxious, Myrlo looks at the row of barn/ warehouses. Which one? Which one did they go to?

Suddenly, A GUN SHOT RINGS OUT.

MYRLO

Sam!

Myrlo jumps back in the car and floors it! Plowing a path through the tall weeds as he barrels toward the barns.

INT. MYRLO'S CAR

Myrlo's car bounces over the bumpy terrain and comes to a violent stop just feet from the Killer's barn.

EXT. THE BARN

Gun unholstered and a FLASHLIGHT in his other hand, Myrlo races to the barn and kicks open a bolted door.

INT. THE BARN

Myrlo sweeps the room with the ray of his flashlight trying to get his bearings.

MYRLO

Simon?!

THE SOUND OF RUNNING on creaking floorboards over his head startles Myrlo. He follows the sound with his flashlight beam across the ceiling. The sound is gone as quickly as it came.

MYRLO (CONT'D)

Simon?

Another sound. Rats scamper by Myrlo's feet.

MYRLO

This is the police! Come out with your-

Myrlo hears a ROLLING SOUND. Something being DROPPED DOWN THE STAIRS. With his gun drawn on the location of the noise, Myrlo tries to find it with his flashlight.

MYRLO (CONT'D)

Simon?

SIMON'S DECAPITATED HEAD rolls into the flashlight beam on the floor beneath Myrlo's feet.

MYRLO (CONT'D)

Sam! You didn't...oh, god!!

From out of nowhere, A SHADOWY FIGURE appears behind Myrlo and brings his full weight down on the back of the detective's head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

1

Dazed and bleeding from the face, Myrlo tries to shake off the blow. He sees his flashlight rolling across the floor. It rolls by his gun, illuminating its location.

Myrlo dives for it as THE FLASHLIGHT BEAM rolls by MOVING FEET in the shadows.

EXT. THE DIRT ROAD - SAME

ELIOT NESS, followed by a HALF DOZEN POLICE CARS, sirens blaring, and the "ICE-BREAKER" TRUCK race down the dirt road. Ness sees the gaping hole cut in the weeds by Myrlo's car and swerves into the tall grass.

The police force follows suit and the approaching vehicles look like some sort of mechanical monster eating their way through the dead weeds. The headlights peaking over the tall weeds as they approach.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BARN - SAME

Myrlo, stunned by the blow and his partner's death, stares vacantly at Simon's head. He does not notice his GUN LAYING ONLY INCHES from him.

MYRLO

oh god, oh god, oh god--!

Myrlo doesn't notice the shadows shift in front of him. Or the MACHETE BLADE RISING over his head. Or the growing roar of the SIRENS APPROACHING the barn.

EXT. THE BARN

The BATTERING RAM TRUCK crashes through a wall of the barn. The ancient wood splinters and collapses on the hood of the truck, lodging it in the barn's wall.

INT. THE BARN

The truck's headlights reveal Gaylord, blade in hand, hovering over Myrlo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

1

Gaylord, Simon's blood striped across his face and chest, takes a step back toward the shadows as Ness crawls through the hole in the wall.

NESS

Myrlo, get down!

Ness fires. Gaylord lunges backwards as if hit. The blade drops to the floor with a clang and Gaylord is thrown into the shadow of the barn corridor.

NESS (CONT'D)

Grab some air, Gaylord!

The other cops fall into formation around the building as Ness faces off against Gaylord.

NESS (CONT'D)

Now!

Gaylord hovers for a minute, then disappears into the darkness. Ness fires.

NESS (cont'd)

(to the other officers)
Surround this thing! No one in or out!! Myrlo, where's Simon?

MYRLO

(incoherent)

He's... Sundheim... oh god...

Ness quickly crosses over to Myrlo and pulls the detective towards the entrance. As he grabs Myrlo, Ness sees SIMON'S HEAD.

NESS

Sweet Jesus!

Just as Ness and Myrlo are inches from the door, Gaylord rips a KEROSENE LAMP off the wall, lights it and throws it across the barn. The lamp hits the battering ram truck and EXPLODES in front of Ness and Myrlo.

The dry, old wood of the barn INSTANTLY GOES UP IN A WALL OF FLAME. The heat of the flame drives Ness and Myrlo back towards the center of the room, trapping them inside. Weak from his injuries, Myrlo collapses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

109

Ness frantically looks around for an escape route as the FLAMES DANCE ACROSS THE WALLS. The fire moves quickly. Too quickly. As if they were treated.

Suddenly, Gaylord throws something down on Ness. Collapsing under the heavy weight, Ness sees the he has been hit with SIMON'S HEADLESS CORPSE.

GAYLORD

How does it feel having someone die for you?!

Gaylord, holding an enormous, bloody blade, stands atop the stairs. The flames roar around Sundheim and create a wall between Ness and himself.

Wrestling with the bloody corpse, Ness fires at Gaylord. And fires again! Gaylord drops the blade to the floor. CLANG! Gaylord tumbles down the stairs, landing only feet from Ness.

Pulling cuffs from a woozy Myrlo's belt, Ness runs over to the injured Gaylord. As Ness leans in to cuff him, Gaylord EXPLODES WITH RAGE, BACKHANDING NESS. Ness virtually flies across the room and loses his gun.

Gaylord lunges at Ness, picking him up like a sack of potatoes. With a BESTIAL HOWL, he throws Ness into a wall.

Ness lands like a rag-doll Ness sees the mad, blood-soaked Gaylord readying for another attack. Ness frantically looks for a weapon, any weapon. And he sees one.

SIMON STILL CLUTCHES HIS WEAPON IN HIS DEAD HAND.

Ness dives to Simon's body as Gaylord laughs. The enormous man quickly closes the gap between himself and Ness as Ness struggles to pull Simon's gun free.

Ness' hands, slick with Simon's blood, cannot get a grip. Gaylord only feet away. Gaylord grabs a partially burning chunk of beam and raises it over his head as...

...BAM! A bullet tears through his right bicep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

11

Startled, Gaylord looks to see Ness manipulating Simon's dead fingers to fire the gun. Through the heat and smoke, Gaylord keeps coming.

BAM! Still he will not fall.

BAM! A third.

Gaylord stumbles and drops the beam as the ceiling begins to collapse around them. Ness can barely see Gaylord through the giant tongues of flame.

GAYLORD

One day! One day the truth will out!
Just laboratory rats found in the
gutter! No one missed them!

(beat)

NO ONE MISSED THEM!

And Gaylord is engulfed in flame! Gone from sight. Ness gets to his feet and grabs the woozy Myrlo. Covering Myrlo with his jacket, Ness uses his only option...

EXT. THE BARN

...Ness and Myrlo dive through the burning wall and crash to the dirt outside. OTHER COPS run to Ness' side and use blankets to put out Ness and Myrlo's smoldering clothes.

Ness leaps to his feet with fear and adrenaline. The cops lead Myrlo to safety, Ness stares back at the inferno.

INT. THE BARN

Inside Gaylord's work room, flames consume all his tools of death and the ashes of the burning news clippings fill the air like black snow.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BARN - DAWN

MORNING FOG slices through the rising dawn. A SMOLDERING HOLE and SKELETAL FRAME are all that remains of the barn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

111

Exhausted police and firemen pick through the rubble while Ness sits next to a bandaged Myrlo on the back of his car. AN ASH-STREAKED OFFICER and CORONER GERBER come up to them.

NESS

What have you found?

GERBER

Multiple human remains, all charred beyond recognition.

NESS

What about Sundheim? Could any of them be him?

GERBER

It's possible, but I won't know for anything for at least a few days.

NESS

Fine. Fine. Anything else?

OFFICER

Yeah. There's a bunch of old tunnels under the place that made it through the fire...

Ness and Myrlo snap to attention.

NESS

Tunnels?

OFFICER

Yeah. They dump out about a half mile down the shore and...

CUT TO:

EXT. GAYLORD'S HOUSE - MORNING

NESS' CAR squeals around the corner and jerks to a stop in front of Gaylord's house. As Ness and Myrlo step out, they see MOVERS finishing the loading of a MOVING TRUCK with Gaylord's furniture.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

11

MYRLO

What the fuck?

NESS

(to the movers)

Hold it right there, fellas. Could somebody tell me what's going on here?

The movers ignore the order and close up the truck.

VOICE (OS)

Mr. Ness?

Ness turns to see a LIMOUSINE idling by the curb. Ness and Myrlo approach the car to see SENATOR COSGROVE staring out at him.

NESS

You?

SENATOR COSGROVE

My nephew, Gaylord, is a very sick boy...

NESS

Where is he, Senator?

The moving truck backfires, then pulls away.

SENATOR COSGROVE

You and your men have shown him just how ill he really is.

NESS

Where is he?!

SENATOR COSGROVE

As we speak, Gaylord is voluntarily checking himself into a state mental hospital. There, hopefully, he will be able to heal himself, physically and mentally. And for that, I thank you.

MYRLO

Thank us?

(CONTINUED)

SENATOR COSGROVE
For helping him realize the depth of
his delusions. He actually believed he
was the "Torso Killer", the poor boy.

MYRLO
"Poor boy"? You son of a bitch!

DANIEL BERMAN, the senator's lawyer, bursts out the other
side of the limousine.

BERMAN
Curb your dogs, Ness.

MYRLO
Your "boy" murdered my partner!

LAWYER
And what physical evidence do you have
to prove that?

NESS
Excuse me?

LAWYER
All you have is a pile of ash on the
lake front So, until you get some
solid proof, I advise you to stop
slandering my client!

Myrlo lunges for the lawyer, but Ness holds him back.

LAWYER (CONT'D)
And you damn well know the law on this
one Ness. Because my client checked
himself into a psychiatric facility on
his own volition...

MYRLO
Fuck you and your client!

LAWYER
... That means, for the length of his
stay, he can not be charged with any
criminal act.

Ness grimaces. He knows this is true.

(CONTINUED)

MYRLO

What?

LAWYER

Thus, it is against the law to publicly accuse, malign, or defame Mr. Sundheim in spoken word or print.

MYRLO

What is he talking about?

NESS

I want to see documentation that he entered that facility.

MYRLO

What are you--?

LAWYER

You'll get your documents, Ness, but I warn you, you don't play ball on this one and you're done. I will have you in court for the rest of your life.

SENATOR COSGROVE

That's enough, Daniel, get in the car.

The lawyer obeys. The senator's face disappears as his window is rolled up.

MYRLO

Ness, what are they talking about? This can't be! Ness, are you going to let them get away with this!?

The car pulls away. Tight on Ness

NESS

No.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A MENTAL INSTITUTION - DAY

The sun shines brightly on the well-manicured grounds of the state psychiatric facility.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

115.

NURSE (OS)
Gaylord Sundheim?

INT. THE INSTITUTION - SAME

Sitting in the social room and staring contentedly out a window is GAYLORD SUNDHEIM. He looks well-rested and, well, normal. A small suitcase sits in his lap. He snaps to attention and warmly smiles as his name is called.

GAYLORD
Yes, I'm ready.

The NURSE and TWO LARGE MALE ORDERLIES push a wheelchair over to him.

NURSE
Please. Have a seat.

GAYLORD
I can walk.

NURSE
Regulations.

GAYLORD
Of course.

Gaylord beams as he gets in the wheelchair and is pushed out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. INSTITUTION/ THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The DIRECTOR of the institution sits at his desk, across from SENATOR COSGROVE and HIS ATTORNEY. ELIOT NESS stands over the senator. A document lays out in front of Cosgrove. He hesitates signing it.

NESS
You heard the man. Sign it. You wanted him in here? Fine. But he's staying. He will never set foot outside of here again. Because if he does, Senator, I may have to leak a story to the press.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

116.

The Senator looks at the Director.

WARDEN

I assure you the records of this institution are private. Completely. This does not leave this room.

Cosgrove holds for a moment...then signs Gaylord in for good. Cosgrove snarls at Ness.

SENATOR COSGROVE

You don't know it now, Ness, but this'll cost you.

NESS

Fine. As long as it costs him more.

INT. A CORRIDOR - SAME

As Gaylord is wheeled down the hallway, he notices he is being turned away from the exit, and deeper into the institution.

GAYLORD

What's going on here? I'm supposed to get out of here today. That's the-

Gaylord tries to get up, but the ORDERLIES force him down as the Nurse fastens restraints around his wrists.

GAYLORD (CONT'D)

What are you doing? You'd better explain yourself, bitch! My uncle will have your head!

The nurse and the orderlies ignore Gaylord's protests as they push him through swinging double-doors. As Gaylord continues ranting, a SIGN is visible above the doors. It reads: ELECTROSHOCK THERAPY - CAUTION.

Over Gaylord's muffled screaming, the lights dim and flare as his treatment is administered.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STEPS OF CITY HALL - DAY

Flashbulbs pop as NESS holds a press conference similar to the one that welcomed him to the city. DOZENS OF REPORTERS jockey for position in front of the podium.

TITLE: ONE YEAR LATER.

A BANNER behind Ness reads: "ELIOT NESS FOR MAYOR".

NESS

...as I stand before you today, the proud servant of this city, a city so much better off than when I first came here, I officially announce my candidacy for the office of mayor.

The flashbulbs explode again. The reporters' yells become a chorus of "Ness! Mr. Ness! Over here!". A REPORTER in front gets his question out over the throng.

REPORTER

Ness, what about the "Torso Killer"?

The crowd freezes, hanging on Ness' response.

NESS

(beat)

That case is closed. Thank you for your time.

Ness leaves the podium, drowning in a SEA OF QUESTIONS and flashbulbs. Among the crowd, MYRLO adjusts his hat and walks away.

INT. NESS' OFFICE - LATER

Ness sits in his chair staring out his window. GRACE enters and sets a bundle of mail on his desk.

GRACE

Eliot, I'm going to lunch. Can I bring you something back?

Ness, lost in thought, doesn't answer. Grace leaves the mail and exits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

111

On top of the bundle, Ness sees a familiar sight. A POSTCARD. Ness turns it over. In a the familiar scrawl: "YOU HAVE MY VOTE."

Ness opens his desk drawer and drops the card inside. We see the drawer is OVERFLOWING WITH HUNDREDS OF POSTCARDS from Gaylord.

TITLES:

ELIOT NESS LOST HIS BID FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR OF CLEVELAND ENDING HIS POLITICAL CAREER.

NESS DIED AT THE AGE OF 54, FIVE MONTHS BEFORE THE PUBLICATION OF THE BOOK "THE UNTOUCHABLES" WOULD ENTER HIM INTO THE PANTHEON OF AMERICAN FOLK HEROES.

ALL FILES ON THE "TORSO KILLER" HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY DISAPPEARED.

THE "TORSO" CASE HAS NEVER OFFICIALLY BEEN SOLVED.

FADE TO BLACK.