

WRESTLING ERNEST HEMINGWAY

by

STEVE CONRAD

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EXT. THIRD FLOOR APARTMENT BALCONY - NIGHT

Balcony doors open into a lighted room. Curtains hang loosely at the corners of the frames. And WALTER ALVARADO, 75, dances past. Dressed neatly in suit and vest, he turns in circles, sinking and rising, as if moving to a waltz. He glides past, gesturing softly, manipulating an invisible figure. He pauses, hands high, hanging like an unresolved note of music. The hands fall and he moves again in revolutions, gesturing to his imaginary partner.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

FRANK JOYCE, 75, dressed only in a pair of black socks, and face down to the tile floor, performing push-ups alongside a mirrored wall. He breathes out in quick bursts as he lifts and lowers himself. On his right arm, a woman's face: an exotic brunette tattooed in blue ink and moving with the muscles of the arm. Above her, Frank turns, looking sidelong into the mirror, watching his shoulder muscles stiffen and his back broaden with the motion. His legs, stretched out and straight, lift and lower with the same rhythm. Loud rapping sounds at an off-screen door.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Empty beer bottles and dirty dinnerware litter a table. Frank enters; his bare chest moves across the top of the table, his naked legs move beneath, the clutter of bottles covers his waist.

REAR PATIO - CONTINUOUS

The back door opens on to a metal balcony and stairwell: the rear of a cheap retirement complex. HELEN COONEY, 65, stands before Frank, a package in her arms. Her eyes widen at his appearance.

FRANK

What do you want, Cooney?

Helen, a transplanted New Yorker, holds the heavy accent.

HELEN

Joyce, if you don't put somethin' on I'm callin' the cops.

FRANK

I'll put something on when you fix the goddamn air conditioner.

HELEN

You're gonna stand right in front of me like that?

FRANK

Say what you got to say, lady. It's goddamn hot in there and I'm not walking back to my room for clothes.

Helen eyeballs Frank, refusing to look down.

FRANK (contd)

Say, Helen, it's kind'a nice out.  
(looking down to his genitals)  
I think I'll leave it out.

He winks kindheartedly, Helen thrusts the package forward.

HELEN

This came for you at the office.

FRANK

What is it?

HELEN

How the hell do I know? It's for you.

Frank takes the package and checks the address, ignoring Helen.

FRANK

It's from my son.

HELEN

Listen, Frank, I'm a fair woman. I been easy on you 'cause you're new here. But no more. You better put somethin' on. And you get your address straight 'cause I'm not U.P.S.; I got plenty else to do.

FRANK

I been expecting a letter.

HELEN

All I got was that box.

She turns and starts down the metal steps.

FRANK

It's for my birthday.

HELEN

I hope it's a pair of pajamas.

Helen disappears beneath the grating. Frank turns to the door.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Kitchen counter. Frank fumbles with the box, pulling out a light blue, cloth sun-cap. Modeled after the Sherlock Holmes Deer Slayer's hat, it has a brim both in the front and back. He holds it at a distance, then places it on his head. He searches through the hollow box, but finds nothing else. He feels the cap over, adjusts it, then returns to the balcony.

BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Frank moves to the railing. Below, Helen converses with two elderly female residents by a swamp-green pool.

FRANK  
(shouting down)  
Helen!

Helen glances up; the women do likewise. Frank stands proudly, still naked but for the black socks and the new cap.

FRANK (contd)  
I put something on!

He laughs to himself at the railing. The women's eyes open wide.

EXT. SWEETWATER, FLORIDA - DAY

The Atlantic moves in and out darkening the soft, white sand. Single-story buildings line a quiet section of downtown. Few people walk the sidewalk, a single bus moves down a two-lane street: a quiet Florida beach town out of tourist season.

Red petals and green leaves color a chalky sidewalk. Frank, wearing the cap, cruises by on a two-seater bicycle, an empty seat behind, the rear pedals left to spin around.

EXT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP - DAY

A breakfast and lunch restaurant: one step up from a diner. Signs advertising breakfast specials line the long windows of the restaurant. Below one, Walter Alvarado sits, moving his lips in speech, accenting with his hands. He is alone.

## INT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP

A waitress, ELAINE GUEST, 26, moves in and out of restaurant traffic, and up to Walt's booth. She smiles.

ELAINE  
Good morning, Walt.

Walt folds his hands, speaking with a slight Cuban accent.

WALT  
Good morning, Elaine-- I will have six pieces of bacon and four slices of toast please. And small juice.

ELAINE  
Walt, you order that every morning and every morning I tell you the same thing.

WALT  
I know. Bacon's not so good for me, but I like to make sandwiches with the bread. It's good that way.

ELAINE  
They might be good, but they're not good for you.

She stares down at Walt to see if her message has sunk in.

ELAINE (contd)  
You want it anyway, right?

He nods, smiling. Elaine takes the menu and breathes out in exasperation. Walt watches as she moves away. He takes a piece of bread and begins to butter it. Quietly, he speaks again.

WALT (contd)  
There is a dance at the Elk's club on the fourteenth of July. There is a band, too, coming from Jacksonville. It has eleven members.

Walt replaces the knife, folding his hands in his lap.

## INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

A man in a too-small suit turns into the store. At the counter, NED RYAN, 17, snaps to attention. The man moves beside him, pins

a manager tag to his shirt spies down the furthest aisle.

MANAGER

He's still here?

Frank Joyce's cap protrudes from down the aisle. he sits on a foot stool in a quiet corner reading a soft-cover book.

RYAN

Yes.

MANAGER

I know he is, Ryan. I'm looking at him. That was a rhetorical question. He's been here since ten. Has he bought anything?

RYAN

He asked for Following the Equator.

MANAGER

We don't have it.

RYAN

I ordered it for him. It'll be about three weeks.

MANAGER

Is he planning on waiting here?

RYAN

I don't know.

MANAGER

That was another rhetorical question.

The manager steps from behind the counter and inches over to the first bookshelf. He leans, peering down the aisle.

RYAN

I showed him the Hemingway section.

MANAGER

It's the goddamn air conditioning. These old bastards have nothing to do all day. They won't run their air at home because of the electric bill, so they use mine. This isn't a library. Get rid of him.

RYAN

What do you want me to say?

MANAGER

I don't care. Just make sure you get the postage for that book.

RYAN

He's already paid it.

MANAGER

Good. Get him out of here.

Ryan steps from behind the counter, nervous and unsure. He takes the long walk down the aisle and lingers before Frank.

RYAN

The manager says you've been here all day.

FRANK

Yes, I've managed to locate the Hemingway.

RYAN

Uh, the manager says you've been here too long.

FRANK

I'm just reading, son.

RYAN

You can't stay here...

Frank stares long at the young man, his words coming quietly.

FRANK

I got myself into a wrestling match with him once, you know.

RYAN

You wrestled my manager?

FRANK

No.

Frank closes the book and with a smile taps the cover.

RYAN

You wrestled Ernest Hemingway?

FRANK

I truly did.

Ryan eases, leaning against the towering bookshelf. Frank sits back, surrounded by the multi-colored backs of books.

RYAN

Did you win?

FRANK

That was 1940. Puerto Rico. I was the youngest captain in the caribbean--

MANAGER

Ryan!

Ryan straightens up and moves obediently back up the aisle toward the waiting manager, who stands shaking his head in contrived disappointment. He passes the clerk on his way to Frank.

MANAGER (contd)

If you're not going to buy that book, sir. I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

FRANK

What time is it, son?

MANAGER

It's almost noon. You've been here for two hours.

FRANK

Well, then I have someplace to be.

Frank lifts himself up. The manager steps aside allowing Frank to pass him up the aisle. He speaks to Frank's back.

MANAGER

Why don't you try the public library next time?

FRANK

(without turning)

I tried it. It's hotter than hell in there. They got no air conditioning.

Slowly, Frank moves on.

INT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP - DAY

Walt wraps a bacon sandwich into a napkin. He packages it carefully as Elaine passes.

WALT  
Please, Elaine. May I pay now?  
I have somewhere important to be.

ELAINE  
Another game?

WALT  
Yes. Today they will win.

ELAINE  
You say that before every game.

She places the bill before him. Walt holds the sandwich, smiling.

WALT  
I like to have the second one  
in the afternoon...

Elaine starts to step away.

WALT  
They used to make them at the  
Elk's club.

Elaine smiles, anticipating a conversation for which she has no time. CARL BURNEY, another restaurant regular, sits across the aisle, thumping his menu, eager to order. Elaine checks him and turns back to Walt, too kind to cut him off.

WALT (contd)  
Have you ever been there?

ELAINE  
Where's that?

WALT  
The Elk's club-- It has a dining  
room and a large dance floor, and--

CARL  
Elaine!

Elaine flips her head to Carl then back to Walt.

ELAINE  
I have to get back to work, Walter.

Walt stands, smiling, collecting his white, terry-cloth cap.

WALT

I have somewhere to go, also.

She smiles goodbye. Walt watches as she turns to Carl's table. He starts a slow walk to the cashier, his bill in hand.

EXT. MACARTHUR PARK BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

A pre-teen squad mans the field. Tiny red uniformed players line the bench cheering as a teammate walks, filling the bases.

BLEACHERS

A group of parents sits in wooden bleachers, applauding. Walt sits alone on the top row.

HOME PLATE

The chubby, nervous batter, HENRY SHOWENSTEIN, adjusts his glasses. He shakes at the plate in his sloppy red uniform, the bases loaded before him. DAVID SHOWENSTEIN, stands at the chain-link fence behind home plate, shouting rapid-fire.

SHOWENSTEIN

Not like last time, Hank. The bat at forty degrees. Square your haunches. Wait for your pitch. Don't pull your head...and relax, son.

Henry steps up, boggled by all the instruction.

BLEACHERS

Walt, smiling peacefully, mimics the calls of the parents.

WALT

Go red.

A young mother leans back to Walt.

WOMAN

Which is your grandson?

WALT

I have no grandson-- I like the games though, very much.

HOME PLATE

Three pitches. Three swings. Three strikes.

BLEACHERS

The spirit collapses. The bench boos the chubby youngster, then marches out for the obligatory handshake. Parents file from the stands. Walt rises sadly, orchestrates his way down the bleachers and finds LEO PEETES, a large, bearded man awaiting his son.

WALT

Sir, when does red play again?

LEO

Sweetwater Auto?

WALT

Yes, the red team.

LEO

Sunday. Eleven o'clock.

Walt nods and smiles in thanks. He starts away, but turns back.

WALT

They never win-- the red team.

LEO

No, they never do... One of these days, huh?

WALT

Yes. One of these days.

As the parents find their children and start to their cars, Walt turns another direction, carefully clearing a two-foot, wood fence, beginning a long walk across a neighboring field of grass.

INT. SWEETWATER CINEMA TWIN

The soft light of a projector filters through a balconied theater. Frank's cap stands out above the empty seats. A group of theater regulars surrounds him-- all older, all escaping the heat and boredom of the day. A man sleeps beside. To his left another reads by flashlight. An older woman sits several rows ahead. Title music sounds over the weak and broken cinema speakers, and floor lights illuminate. Frank remains seated. He waits for the woman, GEORGIA JOHNS, 68, to pass up the aisle, then starts away.

CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Frank walks along with Georgia toward the large exit doors.

FRANK

You haven't mentioned my new cap.

GEORGIA

I hadn't noticed, Frances.

FRANK

Well, how did you like the movie?

GEORGIA

Same as yesterday. It hasn't changed.

FRANK

Those speakers were working better yesterday.

Georgia raises a hand and pats her hair into place.

GEORGIA

This old theater's just like me. We're both falling apart.

FRANK

Well, I couldn't hear a goddamn thing in there today, Georgia. But you look all right to me.

GEORGIA

They're changing the movies soon. There'll be two new ones on the fifth.

FRANK

(important)

I won't be around here then. My boy's taking me to Ft. Lauderdale for the weekend, to watch the fireworks and what have you... He sent me this cap for my birthday, you know.

Frank stops before a second theater. Georgia turns and smiles.

FRANK (contd)

It ain't 'till tomorrow actually. July third. That's when he's coming to get me. The reason I like it, you see, is this extra feature.

(turning, touching the rear brim)

That'll keep the sun off your neck.

Frank reaches for the door to the second theater and pulls it open. Soft movie sounds - orchestrations, whispered dialogue - seep through as Frank gestures Georgia inside.

GEORGIA

What's the big idea, Frances?

FRANK

Say, Georgia, it's a real dog day today. How 'bout cutting in here with me for a double feature?

GEORGIA

You may think you're being gallant. I think you're being dishonest. You're going to get in trouble.

FRANK

Who's gonna catch me? The Runt?

Frank stares back down the corridor to an OLDER MAN in a black jacketed usher's uniform, sitting up in a chair and sleeping.

FRANK (contd)

He looks like a real pretty boy in that little get-up.

GEORGIA

I think he looks dignified. And he's got an important job, keeping trouble makers like you from sneaking in free.

FRANK

He's damn good at it, too. I've been doing this for a month.

(motioning her in)

Come on. Two movies for the price of one. You can't beat that. Besides, it's hotter than hell out there.

(touching at his hat)

You don't even have a good hat to keep the sun away.

GEORGIA

Being in the bright sun is safer than being in the dark with you, I suppose.

Georgia turns away with a smile, takes a step and turns back.

GEORGIA

And that's a real fine cap, Frank-  
Though a gentleman wouldn't wear it  
indoors.

Frank smiles bravely.

FRANK

I'm as gentle as they come, lady.

She turns away again, a quick pat on the hair for good measure.  
She reaches for the door and disappears into the bright day.  
Frank turns into the theater. The dark door swings shut behind.

INT. FRANK JOYCE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Frank, wearing a sleeveless undershirt, walks backwards in laps  
around his living room. His new cap rests upon his head. A screen  
door separates the living room from the walkway outside. Helen  
stands outside the screen, puzzled, as Frank completes his laps.

HELEN

What the hell are you doin'?

Frank turns his head to Helen and smiles.

FRANK

I'm jogging.

Frank continues around the room, elaborating as he passes.

FRANK (contd)

It occurred to me that walking  
forward- which is the way most  
people walk- that strengthens the  
front of the leg, but it neglects  
the back. And that's half your leg.

Frank rounds a third time and states his conclusion.

FRANK (contd)

This way you get the full  
effect. You see these fellahs  
walking crooked, bent over at  
the waist... Not me.  
(slapping his stomach hard)  
Straight as a soldier.

HELEN

Your son called.

Frank stops. He walks to her, anxious for word from his son.

HELEN (contd)

He called the office. You ought'a get a phone. I ain't a secretary.

FRANK

You ought'a get a husband, Helen. You wouldn't be so mean.

HELEN

I had a husband. That's how I got this way.

Frank opens the screen, propping it with his hand.

FRANK

What did he say?

HELEN

He won't be able to pick you up tomorrow. Something about his job.

FRANK

(confused)

That ain't the right message.

HELEN

He said he was sorry and that--

FRANK

(louder)

He was supposed to send a letter. I don't know anything about this calling business.

HELEN

I'm telling you what he told me.

FRANK

When he moved me into this shit-hole he said he'd take me south for the fireworks.

HELEN

Don't you insult my place.

Frank stops, stares down at his feet.

FRANK

He's busy, you know, with his wife. And that job. He's got a damn important job. They keep him working

through the holidays, you understand.

HELEN

I understand.

They stand before each other dumbly, in uncomfortable silence.

FRANK (contd)

It's my birthday tomorrow.

Frank looks behind him to the dining table.

FRANK (contd)

I got myself a book and a bottle of  
Scotch for the weekend.

He turns, and moves to the table. He reaches for the book and bottle, holds one in either hand and turns back, raising them.

FRANK (contd)

But I never was much for patience.  
I think I'll take 'em to the park...  
and see which one I can finish first.

She smiles with sympathy.

HELEN

I'll bet five bucks on the bottle.

FRANK

And I won't bet against you.

Frank winks, and walks from the room. Helen remains outside the screen, watching and feeling.

EXT. VICTORIA PARK, INTRACOASTAL - DAY

Victoria Park rests adjacent to the Sweetwater intracoastal. The waterway gives into Hibiscus flowers and brown palm trees. Children play at racing games, laughing loud. WALT sits at a bench before the water, working at a crossword puzzle. Beside, CYNTHIA WALLACE, 7, a tiny black girl, plays in a sandbox.

VICTORIA PARK, PLAYGROUND

Three big-breasted, Jamaican nannies in large, white dresses stand behind a three-seater swing-set. Each pushes a white child into the air. The women enjoy the respite from housework as the kids delight in the swing. Frank passes with short, slow steps.

## VICTORIA PARK, INTRACOASTAL

Walt removes the covered sandwich from his coat pocket. He drapes the napkin over his knee, carefully placing the sandwich upon it, then turns to the puzzle. A voice disturbs his peace.

FRANK (O.S.)

That's a nice cap you have there,  
friend.

Frank sits directly across from Walt, the double-brimmed cap on his head, his book open on his lap, the bottle of Scotch beside. Walt looks up from his paper and over at Frank.

WALT

Thank you, sir.

Silence for a few moments as Walt returns to his puzzle.

FRANK

Of course-- You're putting the back  
of your neck in danger with a cap  
like that... The one I'm wearing has  
got this deluxe feature, you see.  
So there's no risk.

Walt looks up again curiously. Frank turns a little to the side, allowing Walt a look at the "deluxe" rear brim.

FRANK (contd)

That's what protects the back of the  
neck from the sun. I noticed your  
cap doesn't have a device like this.

WALT

No-- I don't have one like that.

Again Walt returns to the puzzle. Again Frank interrupts.

FRANK

The reason I like it, you see, is  
that it's like getting two caps for  
the price of one-- I'm talking about  
the extra brim feature... which your  
cap doesn't have.

Silence. Frank stares down at the sandwich.

FRANK (contd)

What do you got there?

WALT

I have a bacon sandwich.

Satisfied, Walt looks again to the page.

FRANK

I don't suppose you could get a hat like this around here. My son and daughter-in-law sent it to me for my birthday... from Fort Lauderdale.

WALT

You have a nice cap, sir. But I'm busy with my work.

Frank nods wearily. Past the seawall, a slow boat slides past. Frank turns to CYNTHIA, at play in the sandpile.

FRANK

How are you today?

CYNTHIA

I'm fine. How are you?

FRANK

I've seen better days, darling--

He removes his cap and runs his hand over his head.

FRANK (contd)

Most of them from the bow of a boat like that one. Say, why aren't you in school?

CYNTHIA

It's summertime.

FRANK

Well, You got the right idea hangin' around the water. Down here you get yourself a nice breeze. Takes the life out of a long day.

Cynthia stands up proudly, holding up a single finger.

CYNTHIA

I'll be in third grade in one month.

FRANK

(laughing)

Well, you take your time now. Because these summer days go slow--

Walt looks up, listening now.

FRANK (contd)  
 But let me tell you, sweetheart...  
 the years fly by.

PLAYGROUND

Laughter sounds. The nannies squeeze into the small leather seats of the swing-set, each swinging slowly, a small child in her lap.

INT. FRANK JOYCE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The glow from the open refrigerator lights the room. Frank stands before it, wet with sweat, holding a glass of the Scotch. He leans in to receive the cold blasts of air and sings drunkenly, his shirtless chest rises and falls with each breath.

FRANK  
 I'm Sweet Willy McGee,  
 Setting sail for the sea,  
 Happy as any sane fellah can be,

LIVING-ROOM DOORWAY - SAME

Frank sings out from the kitchen, his voice nearing.

FRANK (contd)  
 A man made for sailin',  
 My cock's fit for whalin',  
 My balls they weigh seventy pounds apeice.

Frank passes through, glass in hand. His chest shines with sweat.

FRANK  
 You know any ladies,  
 Who want to make babies,  
 Send them on to Sweet Willy McGee.

He stops, and leans his back against the living-room wall. He holds there, standing straight and staring ahead. And he reaches to his pants, pulling out a pocket knife, opening the blade and raising it over his head. Placing the knife atop his head, standing straight and tall, he cuts a line into the wall behind.

INT. HELEN COONEY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Helen sits alone in the light of the television, her dinner before her on a tray-table. Her hair is back. She wears a long, dull robe and worn slippers. Two thuds sound at her door.

EXT. HELEN'S APARTMENT DOOR

Frank pounds at the door, half-hidden in the dim light. She answers.

HELEN

What are you doing, Joyce? I was sleepin'.

Drunk, Frank wavers before her, his eyes glazed, his speech slowed and deliberate.

FRANK

You fix my air conditioner, lady.

HELEN

You smell like booze.

FRANK

(louder)

You fix my goddamn air.

HELEN

You're drunk. Go back to bed.

FRANK

I can't breath in there!

HELEN

Quit yellin', or I'll call the cops.  
Now go back upstairs.

FRANK

I'm melting in that goddamn room.

HELEN

You'll be all right for the night.  
I'll have it fixed tomorrow.

Helen turns and reaches for the door.

FRANK

Don't walk away from me, lady.

Frank moves behind, and stops as the door swings shut in his face. He pounds at it.

FRANK

Don't shut the fucking door on me.  
I'm melting in there. I'm dying in  
that room.

INT, HELEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Helen does not start away, but leans beside the closed door.  
Frank's voice sounds outside.

FRANK (O.S.)

And I'm shrinking.

Quiet. Then Frank's voice, weaker now, as if pleading.

FRANK (O.S.)

I used to be six foot three. Now I  
ain't even six feet... I  
measured myself.

The door shakes with Frank's fist.

FRANK (O.S.)

I ain't even six feet!

EXT. VICTORIA PARK, INTRACOASTAL - NIGHT

FRANK, ASLEEP ON THE HARD PARK BENCH beside the waterway.

EXT. VICTORIA PARK, INTRACOASTAL - DAY

Walt sits at his bench, his terry-cloth cap on his head, the  
crossword on his lap. Waves sound at the sea-wall. Walt stares  
curiously before him as a voice rings out in a sailor's chant.

FRANK (O.S.)

...My cock's fit for whalin',  
My balls weigh seventy pounds apiece.  
You know any ladies,  
Who want to make babies,  
Send them on to Sweet Willy McGee.

Frank leans back with a silent laugh, dishevelled from the night  
before and sitting at a bench directly across from Walt. Walt  
shakes his head then returns to the puzzle.

FRANK (contd)

I remember you, fellah.

Frank expects a reaction. He doesn't get one. Walt reaches into his pocket and pulls out his sandwich wrapped in napkin.

FRANK (contd)

You were here yesterday, and you were eating one of those.

Walt raises his head, unfolding his sandwich.

WALT

Yes.

FRANK

You eat one every day?

WALT

No.

FRANK

Well, you were eating one yesterday, right?

WALT

Yes.

FRANK

And I see you're eating one today.

WALT

Yes.

FRANK

And you're telling me you don't eat one every day.

WALT

Yes... I don't eat one every day.

Frank settles. Walt looks down to his paper, quiet for a moment.

WALT

I eat two every day... One at eight-thirty, for my breakfast, and one at two-thirty, for my lunch.

FRANK

Your wife make 'em for you?

WALT

No. Elaine makes them for me... at the Sweetwater Snack Shop.

Walt lifts the sandwich to his mouth. Frank watches hungrily. Walt peers back over the sandwich, stops before taking a bite.

WALT (contd)

It's two streets from here, down the beach.

FRANK

Well-- I'm going to buy myself a birthday sandwich.

Frank stands, starts to leave then stops before Walt's bench.

FRANK (contd)

Say, you sit around here all afternoon?

WALT

I don't only sit. I do my puzzles.

Frank starts away again, then stops and turns.

FRANK

You ought'a get yourself a fresh sandwich. That's been in your pocket.

WALT

My pockets are clean.

FRANK

No offense, friend. I thought you might want to get out of this heat. Get yourself a new sandwich, since you're just sitting around.

WALT

I don't want a new sandwich.

Walt looks back to his puzzle. Frank lingers hopefully for a few moments then begins to shuffle away.

WALT (contd)

Would they mind, you think, if I ate this one there?

FRANK

(turning back)

You bought it there didn't you?

WALT

Yes.

FRANK

Then hell no they wouldn't mind.  
If you bought it somewhere else  
then maybe they would mind. But  
not if you bought it there.

Walt folds his sandwich back up while Frank waits. He returns it to his pocket and the two begin away side by side.

FRANK (contd)

Are you from Puerto Rico, friend?

WALT

No-- I'm from Cuba.

FRANK

I was in Puerto Rico once. Got into  
a mix-up with Ernest Hemingway.  
You ever heard of Ernest Hemingway?

WALT

Yes. But I'm not from Puerto Rico.

FRANK

1938. I was twenty years old then--

The two fade into a green corner of the park.

INT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP - DAY

A bell rings above as the door pushes open. Frank takes a quick step inside, looking the place over. Walt follows behind. The restaurant is near-full, an empty booth at either side. Frank starts to his right. Walt begins to his left. They step several feet apart, then both stop and stare back at one another.

FRANK

Where are you going, pal?

WALT

I'm going to this side. To my  
regular seat.

FRANK

This side's better here.

WALT

That side's good, but this one is my  
usual side.

FRANK

Well, that's the wrong side.

Frank points right, to an air conditioning unit along the wall.

FRANK (contd)

This side here has got the air conditioner, you see.

The bell rings again. A COUPLE enters and passes the arguing men to their left.

WALT

I'm sure that side is nice, but this is the side where I get my sandwiches

FRANK

You get a sandwich on one side that you can't get on the other?

Walt nods.

FRANK

It's a bacon sandwich. You can get them anywhere.

Walt turns away, shaking his head and heading for his booth.

WALT

It's a special order. Only Elaine can get them. She works on this side, Bernice works on that side.

FRANK

For Christ's sake. We could have eaten already.

Frank follows behind. Walt takes several more steps then stops cold. Across the restaurant, the COUPLE sits down in his regular booth. Behind Walt's worried face, Frank smiles.

#### REAR WALL AIR CONDITIONER

Full blast. The air machine hums like an old automobile. Seated directly below, Walt, almost shivering, wearing his light-cloth wind-breaker. Frank, across the table, checking the menu.

WALT

I hope Elaine doesn't see me sitting on this side. I don't want to hurt her feelings.

FRANK

It's my birthday, you know...  
I'm seventy-five years old today.

Frank leans in a little and points down to his genitals.

FRANK (contd)

He would have been seventy-five  
today, too.

WALT

Who?

FRANK

Old Johnny One-Eye--  
(a wink)  
The Bald Headed Champ.

WALT

(not catching on)  
He was a friend of yours?

FRANK

My very best.

WALT

He was a boxer, this Johnny?

FRANK

Well, he's down for the count now.

WALT

I like boxing. But I like baseball  
better. There's a team here... Red-

FRANK

You don't have that problem, pal?

Walt begins to unwrap his sandwich from the napkin.

WALT

Which problem?

FRANK

With your cucumber.

WALT

I... I don't eat cucumbers. I  
always eat these bacon sandwiches.  
Elaine says they're no good for me  
but I eat--

FRANK

You know, you're a lot like a woman.  
You answer questions nobody asked.

Frank lifts the menu before him, as BERNICE GLEASON, 60, tight gray hair and stern features, steps beside the table.

BERNICE

What can I get you gentlemen?

Frank lowers his menu. Walt looks up from his sandwich,

FRANK

Let me ask you a question, darling.  
Would there be anything unusual  
about me ordering a bacon sandwich?

BERNICE

That's not on the menu.

Walt looks up from his sandwich proudly.

BERNICE (contd)

But I can bring you the bacon and  
bread. You'll just have to build the  
sandwich yourself.

Frank glances at Walt and folds his menu, point-proven.

FRANK

That'd be all right. Thank you,  
darling.

Bernice glares down.

BERNICE

My name's Bernice.

Frank smiles up.

FRANK

I'm Frances Joyce.

BERNICE

What I meant was that that was the  
second time you called me darling.

Frank stares up to her, extending his menu.

FRANK

Hang around, lady... I bet I can

think of something else to call you.

Bernice shakes her head, takes his menu and turns from the table. Walt avoids her look, glancing down. She leaves them alone.

FRANK (contd)

See that. You can get 'em anywhere.

Walt keeps his head low, taking a bite of his sandwich.

WALT

She didn't say not to eat them.

FRANK

Well, why would she say that?

WALT

Elaine always says not to eat them. She says they are not good for me. Bernice didn't say anything.

#### WAITRESS STATION

Bernice moves up behind Elaine as she exchanges orders and plates.

BERNICE

Walter's here.

ELAINE

He was here this morning.

BERNICE

Well he's here again.

Bernice points to Walt and Frank at the window.

ELAINE

What's he doing on that side?

BERNICE

Beats me. He's with a real loud mouth, I can tell you that.

#### FRANK AND WALT'S BOOTH

Frank in midspeech, Walt stares away, to the far side of the restaurant. Two men in a booth against the window drop dollar bills to the table and stand to leave. Walt turns back to Frank.

FRANK

I captained boats. Charter,  
Merchant, all kinds. I been  
to Puerto Rico plenty of times.

WALT

I'm not from Puerto Rico. There is  
an empty table on the other side now.

FRANK

I started sailing when I was fourteen,

WALT

Maybe I should move now. I don't  
want to hurt her feelings.

Walt stares longingly to the other side.

ELAINE

Twice in one day, Walter. What's the  
occasion?

Elaine stands beside the table, an empty water pitcher in either  
hand. Walt suprised, tries to speak. Frank beats him to it.

FRANK

My birthday.

ELAINE

Who are you?

FRANK

Frances Joyce.

ELAINE

How old are you, Frances?

FRANK

I'm seventy years old today.

Walt casts a look.

ELAINE

Well then you're old enough to know  
you shouldn't wear a hat inside.

FRANK

This is no ordinary, goddamn hat.

Walt winces at the swearing. Elaine scowls at Frank and he  
relents, removing his cap, pressing his messy hair down on his  
head. Walt notices the gesture.

FRANK (contd)

Well, I guess there's not much risk here from the sun. I'm in no danger.

Elaine turns to Walt who holds both hands atop the table.

ELAINE

(teasing)

And you. You're breaking my heart sitting in Bernice's section when there's a table open in mine.

Walt opens his mouth to speak, but she smiles and spins from the table. Frank watches as she walks. She stops a few feet away, refilling the pitchers at a service station. Walt looks to Frank.

WALT

You should not swear to her.

FRANK

I didn't say a goddamn thing.

WALT

You said "goddamn". And you told me you were seventy-five.

FRANK

I am for Christ' sake.

WALT

You told Elaine you were seventy.

FRANK

Well, when I saw her I felt like I was seventy again.

Frank smiles, his eyes fixed on Elaine. She keeps her back turned to the men, filling water. Frank holds his eyes low on the skirt of her uniform as she bends below to the ice container. Walt turns back to his crossword.

FRANK (contd)

She's got a great backyard.

WALT

I don't know. I've never been to her house.

Frank turns back to Walt.

FRANK

I'm talking about her ass.

Walt's mouth drops open. In a second, he sweeps up his hat, clutching it. He wraps the half-eaten sandwich and stands.

WALT

Excuse me.

FRANK

Where are you going?

WALT

There are seats open now in Elaine's section. I don't want to hurt her feelings. Excuse me.

Frank turns his head to watch Walt walk away. Walt moves slowly across the floor of the restaurant, his sandwich and cap in hand.

EXT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP - SAME

Empty sidewalk stretches wide to either side of the restaurant. Not a soul on the street or the walk. Walt emerges silently from the door, stepping carefully down. He pauses, places his cap to his head, and starts away to his left. Frank opens the door behind, steps down, stops, reaches his cap to his head and starts away to his right. The two men keep slow walks on the sidewalk, heading away from one another at the same speed.

INT. SWEETWATER CINEMA TWIN

The film sounds like an old 45 record, scratched and popping. The dialogue fades in and out through the tired speakers. Still, the sleeper sleeps, the reader reads, two young girls exchange quiet secrets in the front row. Georgia, sits alone, one seat from the aisle. Through the soft light of the film Frank appears, stepping down the aisle, stopping and sitting himself beside Georgia.

GEORGIA

What do you think you're doing, mister?

FRANK

I'm sitting here next to you watchin' the movie.

GEORGIA

You ask if you want to sit next to me. I'm a lady.

FRANK  
Well, can I sit here?

GEORGIA  
Yes, you may.

Frank eases back into his seat. Georgia gives him a sharp look.

GEORGIA (contd)  
Just what do you think you're doing now?

FRANK  
You said I could sit here.

GEORGIA  
I said you could sit here. I didn't say you could sit here today. You can sit next to me Sunday for the noon show. You've got to make plans for something like that. That's the decent way. Now sit somewhere else.

FRANK  
For Christ's sake. I can't figure-

He stands and moves one row back, behind Georgia, and one to the right on the aisle. Once settled, she turns back to him.

GEORGIA  
What are you doing here anyway? You said your son was taking you to Ft. Lauderdale for the weekend.

FRANK  
Now you want to talk to me. It'd be a hell of a lot easier if I was up there with you.

GEORGIA  
That wouldn't be proper. What happened to your plans?

FRANK  
I decided I'd rather be with you.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Hey, pal. Pipe down.

Frank turns to see the SLEEPER in the seat behind him.

FRANK

Hey, you're alive. I thought you  
were a dead body.

SLEEPER

Just keep it down, will ya'?

FRANK

Go to hell.

SCREEN

The sound cracks over the black and white film. A handsome young man holds a defiant woman in his arms. She resists at first, but his kisses warm her. She acquiesces and they embrace.

THEATER

Frank leans forward, whispering to Georgia, She turns her head.

FRANK

There's the idea. That'd be better  
than staring at the back of your head.

GEORGIA

We'll discuss that on Sunday.

Frank's eyes widen as she turns back to the screen with a girlish laugh and a pat at the hair.

EXT. SWEETWATER, BUS STOP - DAY

Walt sits alone at a bus stop bench, his hand resting in the empty space beside him. An obese black woman in nurse's uniform ambles toward him. He looks nervously from her to the empty space. She is upon him and collapses on to the bench. Walt, dwarfed by the huge woman, stares up at her.

WALT

Uh... this seat is occupied.

NURSE

You're damn right it is. And my  
tired ass is not moving.

WALT

No-- my friend sits there.

NURSE

Is this an imaginary friend?

WALT

No. She is real. She's just late.

NURSE

She can just stand then. Besides, if you were a decent man you'd give her your seat.

Walt leans his head past her large frame. Elaine walks toward him up the sidewalk. She wears the skirt of her uniform, her apron in her hand, her white blouse buttoned loosely. Walt stands.

ELAINE

Oh, Walter. Sit down. I can stand.

WALT

No, Elaine. You sit. You stand up all day at work. I sit all day.

The nurse smiles at him and nods her head.

The city bus pulls to a stop before the bench, closing the discussion. The nurse walks to the door and squeezes herself in. Walt stands by politely, allowing Elaine to enter first. Once on the bus, they pay their fares and move down the aisle

WALT

You should live in Sweetwater. Then you wouldn't have to take the bus to work every day.

ELAINE

Then I wouldn't get to see you every afternoon.

Walt and Elaine take the large seat in the rear. The bus starts a slow pull away from the small town.

ELAINE

So who's your friend?

WALT

Frank? I only met him in the park. I think he slept there all night.

ELAINE

I've never seen you in there with anyone else. That's too much eating alone, Walter. And that's as bad for you as those sandwiches.

WALT

That guy Frank, he wanted to know where there was a good place to eat, so I told him the Sweetwater Snack Shop has the best food.

ELAINE

You've eaten one thing there... and it's not even on the menu.

WALT

I told him anyway, for good business for you... He's seventy-five.

Walt turns to face her. Elaine blinks.

WALT (contd)

He told you he was seventy. He's seventy-five. Like me. He knows you for only one minute and already he's saying one lie and one curse.

Elaine just smiles.

WALT (contd)

Some guys swear all the time. There was a man at the Elk's club... he swore so much for two weeks I didn't even know he was speaking English. I never heard those words before.

She fumbles with her purse, wrapping the apron inside it.

WALT (contd)

Have you been to the Elk's club?

ELAINE

I didn't think women were allowed.

WALT

Women can come on certain nights.

Out the window, the bus passes a line of wild citrus trees.

WALT (contd)

Sometimes they have shin-digs there, with decorations and blue napkins.

Elaine reaches back inside her purse, half-listening.

WALT (contd)

Sometimes, even, they have a

band come from Jacksonville.

Walt's reflection takes shape in the window as the bus moves against the green of the citrus trees.

INT. BUS - LATER

The bus is empty but for Walt who has moved to the seat behind the driver, EARL, the ocean on the right as the bus heads north.

WALT

They always lose, Earl. Some days Red never even gets one hit.

EARL

Sounds like every team I played on.

WALT

I always got hits. Every game.

EARL

You played ball, Walt?

WALT

Yes. In Cuba, all year long. Even winter. Here, in winter they play football. But I like baseball better. I was little, like the red guys, but I was a good hitter.

EARL

End of the line, Walt.

The bus is back where it started: the same Sweetwater stop. Walt finds his cap, places it on his head and moves to the door.

EARL (contd)

Walt, can I ask you a question?

WALT

Yes.

EARL

You ride the bus every day and you never get off anywhere.

WALT

I get off here.

EARL

This is the same place you get on.

WALT

What is the question?

EARL

Well, you get on the bus here. We stop twice in Crystal Beach, three times in Carter Bay, then we come back here. Why do you even get on?

WALT

I pay my seventy-five cents.  
Is that against the rules?

EARL

Well, no, I don't think it is.  
It just doesn't make any se--  
(thinking the better of it)  
We'll see you tomorrow, Walt.

WALT

We'll see you tomorrow, Earl.

Walt steps down from the bus. The doors swing shut behind him.

INT. FRANK JOYCE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Two young men in gray work-shirts crouch in the corner of Frank's living room. The small air conditioner rests unattached against the wall. A new unit, twice the size of the old one is in its place. Helen Cooney hovers close behind, observing the work.

HELEN

When I was a little girl in New York, we didn't have a refrigerator. We had an ice man who brought an enormous block of ice twice a week. And when I misbehaved, my Father would make me sit my bare ass down on that block of ice to contemplate my wrong. I want it that cold. Like a motel room in the morning.

EXT. SWEETWATER DOWNTOWN - DUSK

Frank, a grocery bag in arm, heads up the sidewalk past the small shops. Sweaty shopkeepers fan themselves in the open doorways.

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Frank enters. Helen reclines in his chair.

FRANK

What are you doing in here, Helen?

HELEN

I'm freezing my ass off-- It feels great...What's in the bag?

Frank notices the new machine, and steps toward the hum.

FRANK

It's for you. A testament to last night's sobriety.

HELEN

You weren't sober last night.

FRANK

I was sober enough to know I was drunk. I got you some Guinness, Cooney. Good old Irish stuff. Two old Irish dogs shouldn't be barking at each other.

HELEN

That's nice. Only, I ain't Irish.

FRANK

Well, what the hell kind of a name is Cooney if you ain't Irish.

HELEN

Remember that husband I told you about?-- He was Irish. He left. I got stuck with the name.

FRANK

It's a good name. How long were you married to the man?

HELEN

Fourteen years.

FRANK

Ah, then you did your time.  
(extending the bag)  
You're Irish enough.

HELEN

No thanks, Frank. Fourteen years

with him and I got no taste for anything Irish.

FRANK  
(in Irish accent)  
Irish wool?

She shakes her head.

FRANK  
Irish eyes?

Again, she declines.

FRANK  
(slowly)  
Irish Whiskey?

HELEN  
One more year he would have killed that too.  
(she winks)  
But he left just in time.

FRANK  
It's a sorry sea-captain who's got no Irish Whiskey, I'll be back, and we'll christen this new air machine.

Frank walks to the kitchen. Helen remains, raising her voice.

HELEN  
I stayed with him long enough to raise suspicions about the Irish that you've confirmed, Joyce.

FRANK (O.S.)  
And what would those be?

HELEN  
That the Irish are foul mouthed, lazy bastards who parade around naked.

Frank returns with a bottle and two glasses. He places one glass on the dining table, fills the other and hands it to Helen. Frank lifts his glass for the toast. Helen reaches hers to his.

FRANK  
We'll call her the S.S. Cooney.

HELEN  
That's quite an honor.

FRANK

I'm not naming it after you! I'm naming it after that poor suffering bastard Mr. Cooney, and the fourteen years of hell you put him through.

Frank smiles and throws back his drink.

EXT. CUBAN COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

A separate side of Sweetwater. Spanish signs line the colored brick store fronts of Cuban markets, newspaper stores and a Cuban coffee shop. The sun has set, the sidewalk before the coffee shop is crowded with tables and metal chairs and Cuban men in groups, playing dominoes, with Cuban bread and steaming coffee beside. Their voices sound in Spanish, with the quick and melodic Cuban accent. A din of foreign words, laughter and cigar smoke, argument and demonstration with fast-moving hands. And apart from the noise of the groups - Walter, at a table to himself, alone with his coffee and a Cuban newspaper. His head low to his reading, the noise goes on around him.

INT. FRANK JOYCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The hum of the air conditioner fills the dark apartment. Frank sits in numb comfort, strategically positioned beside it, fully reclined in his chair, in white underwear, and dead asleep.

EXT. WALT'S APARTMENT BALCONY - NIGHT

Walt, dressed in his dark gray suit, dances past his open window. His room is empty for a beat, then he glides past again.

INT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP - DAY

Closed for the holiday. Lights off. Empty tables bare of silverware. And Walt, his face pressed at the glass, peering through the dark window from the sidewalk, confused.

EXT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Walt draws back and moves to the door. He tries a weak pull, then a knock at the glass, and stands waiting. No response. He sits in the stoop before the door, taking out his sandwich.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

A double-brimmed cap rounds the corner, moving in reverse. Frank is "jogging," walking backward with an easy pace. Walt's face wrinkles at the sight. Frank turns at the step, nods a greeting and reaches for the door. Walter watches behind, smiling.

WALT

It is closed.

FRANK

That's bad news.

Frank sits beside Walt, both bodies wedged between the walls.

FRANK (contd)

I could eat the asshole out of a bear.

Walt winces at the expression. Frank stares down at Walt's sandwich. Walt notices and tightens his body around it.

WALT

What are you doing here?

FRANK

I came for lunch. What about you? I thought you were in the park this time of day.

WALT

I am usually, but I have a question to ask Elaine.

FRANK

So ask her tomorrow.

WALT

I was going to ask her today. Why should they be closed now?

FRANK

Well, this is no ordinary afternoon. This is the Fourth of July. That's a special day. Nobody works on the Fourth of July-

Frank stops.

FRANK (contd)

Most folks don't work. My son's working. He's got a special job, you

see. That's different.

Walt lifts his sandwich. Frank's eyes are glued to it.

FRANK (contd)

Now what am I supposed to do for lunch?

Walt takes a bite, noting Frank's hungry eyes as he swallows.

WALT

She will be at the fireworks.

FRANK

Who?

WALT

Elaine.

FRANK

You get the fireworks here?

WALT

We don't have the fireworks here. Only in Carter Bay, where Elaine lives. She will be there probably.

FRANK

I'd like to see that show.

WALT

They are miles away, even four possibly. And there's no bus today. That's too much to walk.

FRANK

I thought I might drive.

WALT

(jealous)  
You drive?

FRANK

Sure.

WALT

You are driving to the fireworks?

FRANK

I might.

Walt takes another bite. Frank follows with his eyes.

WALT

I don't drive. I would go to them too if I could. You're going alone?

FRANK

Yeah.

WALT

I wish the bus was working. Then I would take it to the fireworks.

Walt catches Frank staring at the sandwich.

WALT (contd)

You're hungry, huh?

FRANK

Yes, I am.

Walt looks down to his sandwich, smiling with an idea.

WALT

All the restaurants are closed. There is nothing to eat from here to Carter Bay today, I bet. Only this sandwich.

Walt smiles, lifting the sandwich. Their eyes meet.

EXT. SWEETWATER - DAY

A smooth, white picket fence rests just below the reach of straying palm branches. Above the fence and below the trees, a double-brimmed cap glides by; a soft-white one follows in synch.

EXT. A1A AVENUE

The road runs along the Atlantic coast. July fourth traffic stands still. Cars wait in long lines. Horns honk, dogs bark, Frank and Walt cruise by on the tandem bike, gliding past the stagnant traffic, Frank up front, pedaling strongly, Walt in the rear, not quite mastering the spin of the pedals.

WALT

You said we were driving, Frank. This is not driving, this is riding.

FRANK

Back there you're riding, up here,

I'm driving, I got the steering to worry about, and you'd make it a lot easier if you used your pedals.

WALT

They're moving too fast.

FRANK

I'm eighty years old, Walt. If you don't start pedaling I'll die before we get there.

WALT

You said you were seventy-five.

FRANK

I am goddamnit. I was exaggerating to make a point. Now pedal.

Walt tries to find the form, pedaling awkwardly. They move past more sea and stopped cars.

WALT

Frank?

FRANK

What!

WALT

Do you think we could stop at a restroom?

Frank stares ahead at the two lane highway and beside at the expanse of sea. No chance of a restroom for miles. He smiles.

FRANK

Next one we see. Now just pedal for a while, will ya'.

Walt tries again, fails, then lifts his legs from the pedals, placing them on the forks, freeing himself from the effort. Frank checks back, and with a start, Walt replaces his feet.

EXT. CARTER BAY PARK, PARK BENCH, THE ATLANTIC

The bicycle rests against a tree. Frank and Walt sit at a bench near a sea-wall and a large jetty, the ocean before them.

WALT

I don't think they have restrooms out here.

FRANK

I'll find you a bathroom. After we finish the sandwich.

Frank looks at the sandwich with his pocket knife, his hat by his side. Walt stares at Frank's wild hair, blowing with the wind.

WALT (contd)

I was a barber.

FRANK

I cut my own hair.

WALT

Yes. I can tell.

FRANK

Say, you look like you have some Italian in you.

WALT

No... I'm not Italian. A good haircut makes a man respectable.

FRANK

My first wife was Italian.

WALT

I'm not an Italian. I was good. I could make you look like a gentleman.

FRANK

We met in Saint Kitts. I was twenty years old. Her name was Isabel.

Walt sighs. Frank passes half the sandwich.

FRANK (contd)

Boy-- she loved to screw.

(biting his half)

And not just with me. That was part of our problem. I don't think about her that often. But she was Italian. Of course, She's probably dead now.

WALT

God rest her soul.

FRANK

Amen -- She could use the rest.

WALT

You should not talk that way about the dead. In heaven you can hear everything that is said about you on earth.

FRANK

That sounds like hell to me.

Walt lifts the sandwich to his mouth, taking a small bite. Frank reaches beside to the bike and the small bag at the handle bars. He pulls a bottle of Scotch from the bag.

WALT

Frank?

FRANK

Yeah?

WALT

If she was not nice, why did you marry her?

Frank pauses thoughtfully, smiles wide, and laughs.

FRANK

I married her because she wasn't nice. I just thought I was the only one she wasn't going to be nice to.

Walt watches as Frank, laughing, drinks from the bottle.

WALT

We'll just rest for a minute. Then maybe find a restroom. I want to get to the fireworks on time.

FRANK

You ain't tired.

WALT

I ain't tired.

Frank smiles and nods. The ocean hits hard at the jetty's rocks. Walt leans back a bit. His mouth opens into a yawn.

CARTER BAY PARK, PARK BENCH - NEAR DARK

Walt, in the same spot, dead asleep. Beyond him, far across the bay, a single, distant blue light slides into the sky and splits into a shower of light. The fireworks are underway. Walt's eyes

open slowly. He looks to his side. Frank is gone. He checks behind. The bike leans at the tree. And he stands, scanning the park for Frank. Nothing. He moves toward the sea-wall.

WALT

Frank!

Walt walks up and down the sea-wall, searching. Fireworks engage over the water. He stops, staring out at the water. And at the edge of the jetty, sitting on a large rock out over the sea, a silhouette - Frank's form peaceably still. Walt walks to where the rocks begin, not daring to set foot upon them.

WALT (contd)

Frank!.. Frank! We're late. We're missing them.

Nothing. Walt sets a foot to the rocks, then freezes, afraid.

WALT (contd)

And I still need to find a restroom!

No response. With apprehension, Walt starts across the rocks. The waves wash below his feet as he steps cautiously to the edge. He stops beside Frank and the half-gone bottle of Scotch.

WALT (contd)

Frank, we're missing the fireworks.

Frank is dulled from the drinking; he stares out to sea.

FRANK

I was seventeen the first time I got laid.

Walt stares down, confused. Frank holds his look ahead.

WALT

We should leave now, Frank.

FRANK (contd)

I was sailing to Freeport on a barge. She must have been forty years old.

A red dart flies into the sky before them, igniting into a circle of red light and falling to the sea.

FRANK (contd)

I spoke just three words to her.

Frank looks up to Walt with a smile.

FRANK (contd)  
I told her that I loved her.

He laughs, turning again to the sea.

FRANK (contd)  
And I did love her... For about  
seven seconds, I remember.

Frank drinks, lowers the bottle and turns back to Walt.

FRANK (contd)  
Sit down with me, Walt.

WALT  
You said you would drive me to the  
fireworks.

FRANK  
Sit down. Have a drink with me.

WALT  
You tricked me to come out here.  
You said you had a car. Then you  
made me drive a bike.

FRANK  
Have a drink with me, Walt.

WALT  
You said you would find me a restroom  
and now I'm standing on a rock, and  
we're far away from the other people,  
and I still have to pee.

Walt looks dolefully out to the water, giving up.

FRANK  
You're right, goddamnit. I told you  
I'd take you to the fireworks. And I  
told you I'd find you a bathroom.

Frank stands unsteadily, pushing up with one hand.

FRANK (contd)  
Come here.

Frank moves past him, stepping to the edge of the rocks.  
Walt stays behind. Frank stands alone at the edge.

FRANK (contd)  
Come here, Walt.

Walt, uncertain, takes the several steps to Frank's side. Frank keeps his look over the water, swaying drunkenly at the edge.

FRANK

What do you see out there?

Over the bay, fireworks ignite, spreading color over sea and sky.

WALT

(admitting)

I see some fireworks.

Frank nods, then reaches to his pants. The sound of a zipper.

FRANK

Now reach in, take out your pecker  
and feed the fish.

WALT

Feed the fish?

FRANK

Piss in the ocean.

Frank stands holding himself, swaying at the edge of the rocks.

WALT

You have to pee too?

FRANK

I'm seventy-five years old.  
I always\_have to pee.

WALT

You can't pee in the ocean. People  
swim in there.

FRANK

She's an old friend. She won't mind.

Frank rocks back and forth. Walt watches, unable to bear it.

WALT

She won't mind?

Frank turns his head back with a smile.

FRANK

I promise. She won't mind.

Walt stands carefully, moves beside Frank and unzips his fly. The

men stand side by side, holding themselves, postured identically. They are quiet. No sound. No splash at the water. The fireworks engage silently before them. Frank stares up at the sky.

FRANK

You have any children, Walt?

WALT

No. I have some family, in Cuba.

FRANK

I've been there, you know.

WALT

I'm not from Puerto Rico.

FRANK

I'm talking about Cuba.

Walt turns. Frank is looking to him.

FRANK (contd)

It was a beautiful place. Why'd you leave.

WALT

I left in 1960. There was not so much peace there then.

Still no sound at the water. The men stand still, side by side, their hands before them, their knees slightly bent.

FRANK

Say, remember when this didn't take so long?

WALT

It takes you long too?

Frank nods, laughing slightly. He turns to Walt with a smile.

FRANK

I spend half my day holding my dick in my hand, waiting to pee.

Walt looks down at himself and, with a glimpse of a smile on his face, he speaks quietly.

WALT

Sometimes I think I will fall asleep standing like this I wait so long.

Frank lets go with a strong laugh. Walt turns, almost suprised.

FRANK  
That's funny as hell.

The two men's shadowed backs against the glare of the water. Finally, a sound, a single weak splash. Soon, another, no stronger. Frank and Walt exhale simoultaneously, relieved.

FRANK (contd)  
Aah,.. feeding the fish.

And almost as soon, the sound stops. Frank fixes himself and sits again on the rocks. Walt finishes but stands alone, staring out over the water, watching light fill the sky. Frank stares at Walt and smiles behind his back, his lips parting slowly.

FRANK  
Sientate conmigo.  
(Sit with me.)

Walt turns his head, suprised. Frank smiles up at him, his hand wrapped around the bottle. With his other, he pats the rock beside, speaking softly, speaking fluid, flawless Spanish.

FRANK (contd)  
Sientate.  
(Sit.)

Walt turns around completly.

WALT  
You can speak Spanish?

Frank nods. Walt stands warily.

WALT (contd)  
Tell me something else.

Frank pauses, thinking. He lifts the bottle to his lips.

FRANK  
Tu eres una mujer muy hermosa.  
(You are a beautiful woman.)

Frank laughs a little. Walt smiles and begins to sit himself beside Frank absentmindedly.

FRANK (contd)  
I only know a few phrases. Sweet  
talk mostly.

Frank, lifting the bottle to his lips and smiling. He lowers it and leans in close to Walt, whispering.

FRANK (contd)

I used it to seduce.

Walt stares back, interested.

FRANK (contd)

To get women to sleep with me. I spent a lot of nights in other countries, you see. That would have been a lot of lonely nights. So I picked up a few sentences to win me some company.

WALT

What else can you say?

Frank leans in, whispering again.

FRANK

Yo quiero desayunar desnuda contigo.  
(I want to eat breakfast with you naked)

Walt reels back, laughing a little, placing a hand over his face in shame. Frank laughs too.

WALT

You speak very well.

FRANK

Well, I had a lot of practice.

WALT

You've known many women, huh?

FRANK

I've known a few.

WALT

I haven't known so many.

Frank drinks again and stares up to the sky. Walt looks up, then turns back to Frank.

WALT

That woman you were talking about...  
You slept with her after only three words?

FRANK

Actually, the words sort of came in the middle. The four dollars, they came before.

WALT

You paid four dollars to have sex with her?

FRANK

Well... I'll tell you all about it. But first...

Frank looks long at Walt, lifting the whiskey bottle and smiling.

FRANK

Toma un drago conmigo.  
(Have a drink with me.)

Walt turns to see Frank staring hard into his eyes, offering the bottle before him.

FRANK (contd)

Toma un drago conmigo.  
(Have a drink with me.)

Frank extends the Scotch. They look long at one another over the bottle. And Walt reaches for it. He raises the bottle to his lips. Frank leans back against the rocks, stretching his legs before him. Walt swallows and sets the bottle between them. A second, and he stretches out by Frank's side.

FRANK

Now, I remember every detail, you see. I have what you might call a pornographic memory. When I first saw her she was smiling at me from...

The fireworks create a silent spectacle before the two, rising in many colored darts of light and falling in showers to the sea.

EXT. CARTER BAY, JETTY ROCKS AND SEA - DAYBREAK

The sun lifts over the sea. Frank's bottle rests near-empty on the rocks. Frank's arm lays still beside it. Four pairs of legs lay flat, four feet face the sun.

EXT. MACARTHUR BASEBALL PARK - DAY

The cheer of the crowd, chatter from the field, as tiny, blue-uniformed infielders await the next pitch. They pound their open

mits with their fists, shouting encouragement to their pitcher.

THIRD BASEMAN

Two down! Come on, Allen. No batter!

Chubby HENRY SHOWENSTEIN stands in the batter's box, inching closer to home plate. A voice sounds behind.

SHOWENSTEIN

You own the plate. Step in there, Big Hank! Challenge him.

BLEACHERS

Walt, tried and true, at his place in the top row. Today though, Frank fills the space beside, dressed in sleeveless undershirt, his top shirt across his lap.

WALT

That's Henry. He doesn't get so many hits.

DIAMOND

Henry steps close to the plate, glancing from feet to father.

SHOWENSTEIN

Step in the, Hank. Challenge him.

Henry inches further still and turns to the pitcher. He lifts his bat behind as the pitcher winds and delivers...

An errant throw, headed straight for Henry. His eyes bulge as the ball nears. He turns his back, fleeing as the ball barrels down on him. He drops his bat. The ball crashes into his big rear end.

A second of quiet as Henry stands straight up, rubbing his rear, but unharmed. The umpire steps up from behind, removing his mask.

UMPIRE

Are you okay, fellah?

Henry nods. The umpire points to first base, with a slight smile.

UMPIRE (contd)

Then take your base.

He starts a wounded jog to first base. Henry's teammates rise as one from the bench, applauding sarcastically. Behind the chain-link fence, Showensteins beams with pride.

SHOWENSTEIN

Ohh-kay, Hank. That's first base,  
baby. Way to be.

BLEACHERS

Frank, his hat in hand, wipes at the sweat on his forehead.

WALT

Today is the day they win...

(looking over)

Look at that crazy hair. You need  
a good haircut.

FRANK

It's goddamn hot here. We ought'a be  
out on the ocean. Today's the kind'a  
day you want your worm in the water.

WALT

I like to go fishing. Oh, no. Big  
Henry's too far off first base.

DIAMOND

First base. Henry, rubbing his rear, leading off bravely.

SHOWENSTEIN (O.S.)

Okay, baby, take a nice lead off.  
Challenge him.

Growing brave, Henry ventures away from the bag. The pitcher  
whirls around and throws fast to first base. Henry is frozen as  
the first baseman catches the ball and tags him out. The final  
out. The blue team cheers from the field, victorious.

BLEACHERS

Spirit collapses. Walt, dismayed. The parents start away.

WALT

I thought today would be the day for  
certain.

(turning to Frank, smiling)

One of these days.

Frank reaches for his shirt, pulling it over his arms. Walt  
stares down, captivated by Frank's tattoo. Together, they step

down from the bleachers as walt points to Frank's tattoo.

WALT

Who is she, Frank?

FRANK

Well, That depends on who you ask.

Frank and Walt split from the group, starting across the field.

FRANK (contd)

My second wife thought it was her.  
My third wife thought the same  
thing. My fourth, well, she was a  
red-head...

(a smile)

She thought it was my mother.

Frank looks long at his arm, squinting his eyes in thought.

FRANK (contd)

The truth is, I don't know who she  
is or where I got her. I just woke up  
one morning and there she was... Sort  
of like my first wife.

WALT

How did you get so many wives?

Frank looks from left to right, as if protecting a secret. He  
gestures Walt in for the whisper. Walt leans in close.

FRANK (contd)

Aftershave.

WALT

Aftershave?

Frank nods, smiling.

FRANK

Say, Walt. What time is it?

WALT

It's twelve and forty minutes.

FRANK

Well, then I'm late for a date. I  
got a lady friend to meet.

WALT

Yes. I have a lady friend to meet

too.

The two head together toward the thick trees of the perimeter.

EXT. SWEETWATER CINEMA TWIN - DAY

The old-time marquee stands out over an empty sidewalk. No line at the box office, an empty lobby, it seems deserted.

EXT. SWEETWATER FLOWER SHOP - DAY

Across the alley, Frank leans against the rust-stained white of the flower shop wall, his eyes held fast to the theater doors.

THEATER

GEORGIA exits the theater on to the empty sidewalk. She stands beneath the marquee. Spotting Frank, she turns away and begins past the peeling paint of the building, coming upon the small houses of the oldest district of Sweetwater. She moves past the white fences. Frank appears behind, gaining ground.

FRANK

Georgia!

GEORGIA

I don't wish to speak to you.

FRANK

Slow down will ya'. Give a man a chance to catch up.

GEORGIA

We had plans, Frances.

FRANK

Don't give me the high hat, Georgia.  
I got a reason.

She stops and spins around. He's caught dead in his tracks.

GEORGIA

You had me sitting alone in that theater, mister!

FRANK

You sit alone every day!

GEORGIA

Today was different. We made plans.  
We had a date.

FRANK

I tried to come in for the last half  
hour, but the kid tried to charge me  
full price.

GEORGIA

Why did you miss the first part?

FRANK

I was out late last night...  
(proud, straightening up)  
In fact,.. I was out all night.

GEORGIA

All night?

FRANK

All night.

GEORGIA

And who were you with all night?

FRANK

(smiling, suggestive)  
I was with a friend.

GEORGIA

A lady friend?

FRANK

I don't spend the night with guys.

She turns away. Frank reaches for her.

FRANK (contd)

Come on, Georgia. You don't want to  
rough up a guy on his birthday.

GEORGIA

(pulling away)  
It's not your birthday anymore,  
mister. Go bother your "friend".

She turns, pats the top of her hair with her hand and leaves  
Frank standing in the middle of the small street.

EXT. SWEETWATER BUS STOP - DAY

Elaine and Walt wait for the bus. Neither speaks. Elaine notices something in the air. She breathes in deeply, squinting her eyes.

ELAINE  
What's that smell?

Walt looks to her.

WALT  
That's my aftershave.

ELAINE  
(teasing)  
Do you have a date tonight, Walter?

WALT  
No. No date.

The heavy nurse moves beside the bench, taking the small space of seat to Walt's right. Walt, trapped between Elaine and the huge woman. She notices the pungent scent. Her face tightens.

NURSE  
Lord, what is that stink?  
(looking down to Walt)  
Is that you?

He ignores her.

NURSE (contd)  
Whew, if you washed half that off  
you'd still have too much on.

The bus pulls before them. Walt, anxious to get away from the nurse, boards first; the nurse moves up behind. He steps up through the doors of the bus. She places her foot on the step.

NURSE  
I'm surprised they let you on  
the bus smelling like that.

Walt stares ahead. His lips part slowly.

WALT  
I'm surprised you fit through  
the doors.

A quick smile from Walt. The door shuts behind a suprised Elaine.

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT - DAY

The back-door open, the sea is visible beyond the balcony.

WALT (O.S.)

You live like in prison, Frank.  
You have no record player, or  
television, or even a telephone.

The bare walls of Frank's apartment. The sound of scissors.  
Frank's gray hair, in cut clumps on the floor. Frank sits in the  
middle of the room, a bed sheet over his shoulders and tight at  
his throat. Walt stands behind working a comb and scissors at  
Frank's hair. Frank moves beneath the cloth uncomfortably.

FRANK

Just your regular trim, huh? I  
don't want to look like a pretty boy.

WALT (contd)

I know what I'm doing. Now stop  
moving so much or I'll make a  
mistake and cut off your ear.

Walt smiles to himself behind Frank's back.

WALT (contd)

That's what I told little children.  
You are like them, always moving.

Walt lifts Frank's hair with the comb and cuts across swiftly  
with the scissors.

FRANK

I'm used to doing this myself.

WALT

Yes, well, you don't do such a good  
job. I was a barber fifty years and  
I never heard of a man who cuts his  
own hair.

Walt finishes at Frank's hair, running his open hand smoothly  
over the neatness, the sharp and clean shape.

WALT (contd)

Now you have a good haircut, for at  
least once in your life.

FRANK

I look respectable?

Walt edges around, checking Frank out, squinting uncertainly.

WALT

Well, maybe for you a haircut is not enough. Maybe you need a shave too.

Frank runs his hand over his new haircut. Walt reaches beside to his equipment bag, preparing a straight razor and white lather from a shaving bowl. He rubs lather into his palm, taking another look around the apartment walls. He turns back, the razor in hand, the palm full with lather.

WALT (contd)

You don't even have one picture.

Walt reaches his hand to Frank's face, and with a slow, circular motion he rubs the lather over the rough beard. Frank tightens his face, enduring the touch.

WALT (contd)

Even men in prison they have pictures.

Walt touches at Frank's throat, his long fingers lathering below Frank's chin.

FRANK

When I was in the service, we had a saying-- All a sailor needs is a straight back, strong legs and a stiff pecker... and every port is home.

WALT

I don't understand.

FRANK

It means a man can wash up anywhere, and he can take care of himself.

Walt brings the razor around and touches it to Frank's cheek. Frank withdraws. And Walt lifts the razor away.

WALT (contd)

Stay still, Frank. I won't hurt you.

Walt touches the razor down again, lightly. Frank stays stiff as Walter draws a clean line along his cheek.

WALT (contd)

You spent a lot of time at sea, huh?

The razor passes beneath Frank's eyes, following his cheekbone. Walt's hand passes behind, wiping at the water.

FRANK (contd)

I used that water like a faucet.  
When things got hot here, with a  
wife, with the boy, that's where  
I'd go.

Again, the razor crosses the face, lower. The white lather  
gathers along Walt's hand.

WALT

Was it not hard to be from your  
family?

FRANK (contd)

It was hard. Not because I was away.  
But because, sometimes, I tell you,  
I didn't want to go back.

Water drips from Frank's wet head, passing along his face. Walt  
works his razor slowly, cutting close to the Frank's lips.

FRANK

Those are hard feelings to face. Most  
men fight them off, I suppose. I  
never could. I wanted to be alone.

Walt works the razor at the throat, holding Frank's chin with his  
hand.

FRANK (contd)

And I got my wish.

Frank eye's close almost shut as the straight razor moves across  
his cheek, leaving it clean.

FRANK (contd)

I washed up here. After all the  
moving I've done, this port here's  
my home.

Walt's hand follows along, cleaning more of the white. Again at  
the other side, the palm crosses the cheek, cleaning the  
remaining lather.

FRANK

But, my back is still straight, and  
my legs are still strong.

A single spot of white on Frank's face. And Walt's brown hand  
opened full to Frank's cheek. The hand wipes away the last of the  
lather. Frank holds still at Walt's touch. The hand draws away  
leaving the face clean, the roughness removed. A moment and the

hand moves again touching the cleanness, caressing the cheek.

DOORWAY

Beyond the patio, the ocean holds its steady motion.

EXT. SWEETWATER BOAT YARD - DAY

The many docks extend like fingers out to the water. Tied at either side of each dock, lines of empty skiffs and small, single engine touring boats. A TEENAGER's voice.

TEENAGER (O.S.)

The boat has to be back by sundown.  
Any damage to the fishing poles  
comes out of your deposit.

The TEENAGER stands on the dock, staring down. Walt stands in one of the small boats below him, nodding, listening carefully, holding tight to a fishing rod, wearing slacks, a short-sleeve shirt, and a huge, neon orange life-vest. Frank is beside, vestless, ignoring the boy, releasing the lines from the cleats.

TEENAGER (contd)

Your life vests are to be worn  
at all times... Sir? Are you sure  
you know how to operate a boat, sir?

Frank looks up, a hard line of sunlight in his eyes.

FRANK

This isn't a boat, son. This is a  
toy.

TEENAGER (contd)

Well, we have rules. Number one,  
you're to put on your life-vest.  
Number two--

Frank reaches to the start cord, and with a single pull fires up the engine. The teenager yells over the noise.

TEENAGER (contd)

Wait until I'm done with the rules!

Frank fires the throttle, tearing away from the dock. Walt jerks back and sits down quickly, his hands tight around his vest.

EXT. THE ATLANTIC - SAME

The breadth of the Atlantic ocean. Blue sea. Blue sky. The glare of the mid-day sun spreads like a sheet over the water. Frank's tiny boat leaves a white wake of water as it slides through the scene. Frank is in back at the engine, shouting ahead to Walt.

FRANK

It must be a hundred degrees. I can't wait to get my worm in the water.

WALT

I'm going to catch a Marlin, or even a Swordfish maybe.

FRANK

Well, we got to find the right spot. You can't do it just anywhere. I'm going to speed her up. You be careful now!

WALT

Okay.

FRANK

And don't stand up. The ocean can be dangerous. I lost my second wife on a boat ride.

WALT

(shouting back)  
I'm sorry.

FRANK

(smiling)  
Yeah, well, I'm sure someone's found her by now! Hold on! Here we go!

Frank laughs to himself. The boat speeds ahead.

COVE - SAME

A coastal inlet, a recess sheltered to the west by a line of Florida Pines, secluded from the east by wide islands of banyan trees. The boat enters by a channel to the north. The engine rips through the quiet. And on top, Frank's voice.

FRANK

Well, I married number one for her looks. I thought she was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen... Then I saw number two

Frank sits behind at the engine. Walt sits forward at mid-boat.

FRANK (contd)

Number three, she was young, boy.  
Now, I was getting up there in years  
when I met her, and I married her, I  
suppose, because she wasn't.

WALT

(over the noise of the engine)  
Why did you marry number four?

FRANK

Let me see, I was sixty-eight when I  
asked number four. I married her  
because she said yes.

Frank laughs from behind, surveying the sequestered cove. The engine whines.

WALT

I never have been married!

FRANK

What?!

WALT

(shouting)  
I never have been married!

Frank scans the surroundings with a smile.

FRANK

This is perfect! Right here!  
I'm gonna put out the anchor.

The sound of the engine stops cold. The boat slows to a drift.

WALT

(quiet now)  
I never had a wife.

Walt looks out past the bow. Frank is out of sight, making noise at the stern. Walt doesn't turn, but continues staring out ahead.

WALT (contd)

I think if I stayed in Cuba I  
would be married.

FRANK (O.S.)

I'm going to get my pole out.

More noise from the rear of the boat. The boat stills. lifting only up and down with the water. Walt stares on ahead.

WALT (contd)

I think If I had not come here so late. I was already forty-two years old. Half of my life was gone. And I had to start a new one here, to learn English, to make my barber-

Footsteps sound behind, growing nearer. Walt remains in his seat, talking. And Frank, COMPLETELY NAKED, steps by.

WALT (contd)

-shop. Those days were so slow, but before I knew, the years were go--

Walt stops. His eyes open wide as Frank, nude and unabashed, passes and continues without breaking stride to the bow.

WALT

Frank... you're naked.

Frank stops at the bow, standing tall, holding his hands at his hips, his look straight ahead. He breathes in deeply and breathes out with a sound. Then...

FRANK

Yaahooo!

He dives from the boat. A huge splash. Frank, in the water. He kicks out, turning on to his back, flashing a smile up at Walt. Frank's naked body floats on the clear water.

FRANK (contd)

What are you waiting for? Come on in!

Walt looks down, bewildered.

WALT

You're swimming naked?

FRANK (contd)

Sure. You never went skinny-dipping when you were a kid?

WALT

Yes... but I wore a bathing suit.

Walt watches from the boat, stands a little in his seat.

WALT (contd)  
You said we were going fishing?

FRANK  
I hate fishing. I said we were going  
to put our worms in the water.

Frank kicks back, and sings out.

FRANK (contd)  
I love to go simmin',  
With bow-legged women',  
And swim between their knees.

WALT  
(calling out)  
Are you going to be a long time?

FRANK  
I may be a while.

WALT  
(sitting back down)  
I will wait.

Frank pushes away, throwing his arms behind him. Walt watches on like a little boy longing to participate.

WALT  
(calling out again)  
Is it cold?

Frank doesn't answer, only splashes in the water.

WALT  
I don't have a bathing suit. If I  
had a bathing suit I would go in.

Walt moves to the stern, as Frank lounges in the water.

WALT (contd)  
Maybe I can go in my pants!

FRANK  
Walt, do me a favor. Look around.  
Tell me what you see.

Walt looks from left to right. Far from the boat, a pair of seagulls skate the surface. Below, fish shine beneath the water.

WALT  
I see some birds only, and a fish.

And you.

FRANK (O.S.)

Are any of us wearing pants?

WALT

No.

FRANK (O.S.)

Then we won't mind if you don't.  
Get in the goddamn water.

Frank dives under. Walt stands alone now on the stern. He looks carefully again from left to right, searching. Then slowly, half-sure, he reaches a hand to his pants....

BOAT BOTTOM - LATER

The two life vests rest side by side on the bottom of the boat. Beside them, two piles of clothes - shirts, pants, socks - two fishing poles, and two pairs of shoes.

WATER

The two men's naked bodies, moving under the clear blue of the water. Frank lounges, wide like a whale, floating on his back, smiling up at the sun. Walt moves fluidly, swimming with smooth strokes. He ducks in and out of the water like a dolphin, disappearing at times from the surface, his lithe body working beneath. Frank sings out and splashes close to his side.

WATER - LATER

Far from the boat. Frank and Walt stand in water, the sun shining down on them. Frank walks backwards as he speaks to Walt, the water reaching only to his chest.

FRANK (contd)

We must be on a sandbar.

Frank smiles, back-pedaling.

FRANK (contd)

You know they got those sharks  
that sleep right beneath the sand.

Walt's eyes widen.

FRANK (contd)

They'll sneak right up on you. Pull you under. So be careful you don't step on one of those motherfu--

Frank drops from the surface. Wild splashing as he is submerged. The thrashing below mucks the water. Then nothing, stillness.

WALT

Frank?

Walt, alarmed, takes cautious steps ahead. Still nothing in the water, not a sound or a splash. Walt freezes, staring down at the murky water, afraid to move. Then, like a flash, he disappears. More thrashing underwater. Two forms wrestle below. And Frank springs to the surface, laughing strong. He lifts Walt out of the water, his arms wrapped from behind around Walt's chest and shoulders. He thrashes Walt back and forth, laughing.

FRANK

Look out for those sharks, boy!

Walt shakes, laughing in his grasp, swinging back and forth. And Frank releases, swimming away a little and catching his breath between laughs. Walt laughs along, breathing heavy. Frank turns, and they face one another, standing under the sun in the chest-high water and catching at their breath. Frank's laugh slows to a smile as the water settles around them.

FRANK

You never had a wife, huh?

Walt shakes his wet head.

FRANK (contd)

Well, look at it this way... You probably never had a headache either.

Frank winks. Walt smiles, but his face seems pained. He stands perfectly still.

FRANK (contd)

Are you all right, Walt?

Walt closes his eyes, not answering, standing still. Frank takes a step to his friend, concerned. And Walt opens his eyes, beginning a strange, relieved smile.

WALT

I'm feeding the fish.

Frank's eyes open wide. He backs quickly away, splashing to get distance. Walt let's go a laugh. A high-pitched, boyish laugh.

And splashing, he kicks into a swim, chasing after his friend.

INT. HELEN COONEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Helen sits at the dining room table, paperwork before her. She reaches a hand to her reading glasses, looking up from the pile of papers. Her eyes hold on something and she stops.

Beyond her long living-room window, the metal stairway behind Frank's apartment. Frank, shirtless and suntanned, moves up the metal steps, his tattooed arm at the rail, the other holding a bourbon glass, half-full. He reaches the top and stops, breathing out, then turns and starts down again.

Helen keeps her look at the window, her glasses lowered now.

Out the window, Frank stops at the base of the steps. He sips from the glass. A breath, and he begins again, heading up.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING-ROOM - NIGHT

An ironing board set in the middle of the wide room; the gray jacket of Walt's dancing suit draped over. Beside, a white dress shirt and the gray suit pants, spread to their length for ironing. Behind the board, an old phonograph player, and Walt, standing before it. He lifts a record on to the player. The scratching sound of older records. The sound of a single guitar as Walt steps to the ironing board. His brown skin is dark underneath his white undershirt, and as he lifts the iron to the board, running it over his pants, the first words of the song sound. Spanish words. A Cuban ballad. As it plays behind, Walt's hand runs up and down the length of the pants, creasing them. He keeps his head low to his work, and without a sound, his lips move with the words of the song.

EXT. SWEETWATER, DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC LIGHT - DAY

A single car waits at a lone traffic light. Red turns to green and the car inches forward then suddenly slams on the brakes. Frank and Walt glide past the front of the car on their tandem bike, Frank in front, Walt behind. They blissfully move beneath the signal, both capped, their legs pumping in perfect time.

INT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP - DAY

Elaine and Bernice work together in the near empty restaurant, clearing a table along the window, leaning over.

BERNICE

I'm telling you, he patted me on the ass.

ELAINE

Get out of here.

BERNICE

He did. Right on the ass. Like we were in a truck stop.

ELAINE

Why would he do that?

BERNICE

Because I was stupid enough to turn my back on him...

(looking out the window

Here comes the son of a bitch now.

Outside, cruising along the window on the sidewalk, Frank and Walt, pedaling the bike in perfect time.

BERNICE

Heckel and Jeckel. I haven't seen them apart in a week. I bet they sleep together.

ELAINE

Leave them alone. You know, I'll probably miss those two more than I'll miss you, Bernice.

Frank and Walt enter, Frank first. Walt speaks from behind.

WALT

Why can I not drive ever?

FRANK

(mocking the language)

You cannot drive ever because up front you have to pedal and steer. And you just learned how to do the first part. You ain't ready yet.

They pass along the windows to Walt's spot and sit. Elaine and Bernice work at the table behind. Elaine speaks over to them.

ELAINE

Is today the day you two surprise me and order something intelligent?

FRANK

I thought about what you said the other day, sweetheart. I really did, but I can't resist those damn things. Bring us our special ingredients.

ELAINE

You've got to learn how to say "no," Frank. Be a little more strong of will.

FRANK

I am strong of will, Elaine. I'm just weak of won't. It's always been so goddamn hard for me to say "no."

Frank winks. Elaine laughs. Bernice scowls over at Frank. He smiles. The waitresses return to their conversation and Walt leans forward, speaking to Frank in a stern whisper.

WALT

You should not swear so much when you speak to her. You should learn to watch your mouth. She is a nice girl.

FRANK

You should get a goddamn hearing aid. I didn't say a thing.

WALT

Yes you did. You said one "damn" and one "goddamn."

ELAINE AND BERNICE'S BOOTH

They work condensing ketchup bottles, filling the sugar shakers.

BERNICE

I tell you, Elaine, you need some men in your life who own a comb. You're around bald men all day lone and you want to move away and marry a Marine. That makes very little sense.

(looking back to Frank)

If he touches my ass again, I swear I'll stick a fork in him.

ELAINE

You better get used to it.

BERNICE

I'll serve that Frank all the bacon  
he can eat. Maybe he'll drop dead.

Elaine leans in closer, talking quieter and laughing slightly.

ELAINE

I've been serving Walter turkey  
bacon for six months now. He's  
never noticed the difference.  
Neither has Frank. So you make  
their sandwiches with that. Don't  
tell them, though. If they find out  
it's good for them they won't like  
it anymore.

WALT AND FRANK'S BOOTH

Walter hold his cap in his hand and rubs at his head.

WALT (contd)

I thought that Red would win  
yesterday. They were so close.

FRANK

They were doing just fine until  
the fat kid dropped the ball. I  
swear, that kid looks like someone  
sat in his lap and didn't leave.

WALT

They will win-- One of these days.

FRANK

They don't play tomorrow, do they?

WALT

No. Friday.

FRANK

Good, meet me at the movies  
tomorrow, for the noon show. I got  
a surprise for you.

WALT

I don't want to see two movies  
for the price of one anymore.

FRANK

It ain't that. It's a surprise.

WALT

I never enjoy the first one  
because I am too nervous about  
going to the second one for free--

FRANK

Goddamnit, Walt, just meet me at  
noon. But don't wait for me  
outside. Go ahead and buy your  
ticket. I'll meet you in the lobby.

Frank shakes his head at the difficult Walt, then calls out.

FRANK

Hey Elaine! How about that bacon!

EXT. HELEN COONEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Her door open, Helen stands within the apartment. Frank stands  
outside, wearing a fresh white shirt and clean black slacks.  
Helen, her arms up at Frank's throat, works a black bow tie  
underneath his collar.

HELEN

You got'a button the top button  
if you want it to hold.

FRANK

It's too damn tight.

HELEN

You're not used to wearin'  
ties, that's all.

FRANK

I had a tie, lady.

HELEN

A tie?

FRANK

It was my marrying tie.

Helen finishes, gently tugging either end of the bow tie.

FRANK (contd)

How do I look?

HELEN

You look good-- You ought'a  
wear clothes more often.

FRANK

Say, Helen why don't you invite me in for a spell?

HELEN

I got some work to do, Frank.

FRANK

Just as well. You'd let me in and next thing you know we're married.

HELEN

That quick?

FRANK

I've done it quicker.

HELEN

Not likely.

FRANK

(raising an eyebrow)

You marry an Irishman. You'll never want another.

HELEN

That's God's truth. I've married one Irishman, and I sure as hell don't want another.

Frank laughs, reaching a hand to his tie.

EXT. SWEETWATER CINEMA TWIN, BOX OFFICE - DAY

The CASHIER towers above Walt, who reaches behind for his wallet.

WALT

I'd like a ticket for the noon show.

The cashier takes the money. Walt reaches for the ticket, then pulls back, hesitant. He finds his wallet again.

WALT (contd)

I would also like a ticket for the two o'clock show.

Confused, the cashier's voice sounds through the glass.

CASHIER

You want one ticket for the

noon show, and another one for  
the two o'clock?

WALT

Yes. Is that against the rules?

CASHIER

I guess not. Here you go.

Walt completes the transaction and moves to the Cinema entrance.

INT. SWEETWATER CINEMA TWIN LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The doors to the Cinema open. Walt walks between the velvet ropes toward the ticket taker. His head down, he prepares the tickets.

FRANK (O.S.)

Your ticket, sir.

Walt looks up. Frank stands before him in a black coat, white shirt, bow tie, black slacks and a big smile; the name "Frances" above his pocket on a tag marked SWEETWATER CINEMA TWIN.

FRANK (contd)

How about this suit?

WALT

It's beautiful-- When did you get  
this job?

FRANK

I applied for it last week, after  
my haircut.

(pointing to the name tag)

I thought I'd use my formal  
name. It's more respectable. Goes  
better with the suit, I think.

WALT

I think so too.

Walt smiles and passes Frank on his way to the theater.

FRANK (contd)

Hey, Walt. I need your ticket.

WALT

Oh-- I'm sorry.

Smiling, Frank takes it and tears it in half.

FRANK

Got'a do my job. I can't get  
caught slackin' off my first day.

MOVIE SCREEN

Spotty black and white film. A seductive female lead stands in the corner of her bedroom, batting her big eyes as she reaches behind for the zipper of her evening gown. Seated on the bed, the male lead looks on with lust as she begins to remove her dress.

THEATER

FRANK and WALT, side by side, alone in the last row of seats, wide-eyed and open-mouthed, gazing up at the screen. The vast theater near-empty. The Sleeper sleeps in the middle. Georgia, before him, to the front.

FRANK

(whispering)

See that one near the front?

He points to Georgia. Walt nods.

FRANK (contd)

She thinks I'm something special.

I'm going to pay her a visit..

Frank stands, stalking away bravely, leaving Walt alone.

GEORGIA'S AISLE

Frank appears at the end of the aisle, turns sideways and heads toward her. Georgia turns, suprised, as he sits himself beside.

FRANK

Now, before you get excited, lady,  
I'm not just some jerk sitting down  
beside you. I'm doing my job. This  
is one of my responsibilities. I'm  
supposed to... try out each chair.

He turns to the screen with a smile, pleased.

FRANK (contd)

Usually I'm working the door. That's  
an important job too. Got to keep  
things moving. Say, Georgia, you  
look real pretty today.

She smiles slightly. Frank leans in a little closer.

FRANK  
What do you think of the suit?

GEORGIA  
(quick)  
It's nice.

FRANK  
Nice! Come on. Take another look.

GEORGIA  
(she turns, admitting)  
You look very handsome.

Frank smiles, leaning closer still, his shoulder at hers.

FRANK  
I had a shave, you know. You ought'a  
feel my face. It's something smooth.

He turns behind, scouting, and sees the Sleeper a row behind.

FRANK (contd)  
Hey, pal! Hey! Why don't you go  
sleep in the other theater.

SLEEPER  
(waking)  
Why should I do that?

Frank raises up in his seat, turning and showing his uniform.

FRANK  
You see this uniform? That's why.

The Sleeper shakes his head, stands and moves up his aisle.  
Frank turns back to Georgia, closer still.

FRANK  
He ought'a show a little respect.

The love scene plays above. Frank smiles, and carefully, without disturbing her, he moves his arm behind her, their forms alone among the theater's sea of empty seats.

FRANK  
(whispering)  
I believe we're all alone.

The couple kisses on the screen above. Below, Frank's shadow leans in closer.

GEORGIA  
Now, Frances...

FRANK  
It's romantic, I think.

GEORGIA  
You just get back on your side.

FRANK  
It's like they're playing the picture just for us.

Frank, letting his arm on to her shoulder and pulling her closer.

FRANK (contd)  
You're a beautiful woman, Georgia.

GEORGIA  
Listen, mister--

FRANK  
A beautiful, beautiful woman.

GEORGIA  
That's enough.

FRANK  
Come on, Georgia...

Frank reaches his other hand to her side. She brings an arm up to stop him. He pushes forward, trying for the kiss. She draws back. Between them, a flurry of moving arms, Georgia pushing away, Frank reaching out to her, awkward in his seat. With fast moving hands, Georgia beats his arms down, reaches one of hers back and slaps a hand across his face. He stops cold, blinking and breathing out. Stunned, he sits staring and silenced.

GEORGIA  
You're acting like a fool, Frances.

Georgia stands, grabbing her purse, and moving out of the aisle.

And WALT, far behind and alone at the rear of the empty theater forward in his seat and watching. He lifts his wind-breaker from the seat beside, and stands, draping the jacket over his arm and moving out of the aisle.

## INT. MEN'S ROOM

Empty. A broad mirror above the sinks. Frank steps inside, moves slowly to the sink and runs the water. He holds his hands beneath the faucet and looks into the mirror. Staring at the side of his face, he touches a wet hand to his cheek. And leaning in, he looks up, into his own eyes. The sound of running water in the sink below. His eyes drop. His hand lifts to his bow tie, straightening. He runs a palm along his clean, white shirt and clears his throat. He moves away from the mirror to the door. It opens with a sound, and closes behind him. At the sink, the water still flows from the faucet.

## EXT. SWEETWATER, DOWNTOWN - DAY

Walt walks along the sidewalk, past the small shops and the stilled cars on the street. He passes the SNACK SHOP, steps past the door, then turns back, walking slowly up the steps.

## INT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP - DAY

The restaurant empty but for Walt, at his regular booth and staring out the window. A woman's voice turns his head.

BERNICE

Where's your pal?

Walt turns quickly. Bernice stands before him, her pad and pen in hand, ready to take the order.

WALT

(suprised)

He is working.

BERNICE

That lout got a job?

WALT

Yes... because I cut his hair.

Walt folds his hands, then silence. They stare at one another dumbly: Bernice tapping the pen at the pad, waiting for Walt to order, Walt smiling politely up, waiting for Bernice to leave.

WALT (contd)

You should see him, he has some fancy suit.

She nods, still tapping at the pad. Walt nods also, then looks down to the table. A second, and he looks up again. She's still

there. He smiles, nodding again. She nods back, then finally...

BERNICE

Can I get you something to eat,  
Walt?

Walt, confused, dashes his head from left to right.

WALT

I am in the wrong table?

BERNICE

(looking around)  
You're the only one in here, Walt.

WALT

Yes, but this is not Elaine's side?

BERNICE

Elaine's not here.

Walt looks around the restaurant again, searching.

WALT

She is sick?

BERNICE

I'd say so. She's marrying a Marine.  
That's almost as bad as marrying a  
sailor.

Walt's eyes bulge.

WALT

She's getting married?

BERNICE

Yes, contrary to my advice. She's  
moving to Pensacola, also contrary  
to my advice.

Walt turns away a little, as is speaking to himself.

WALT

Pensacola?... She'll take a new bus then  
to work?

BERNICE

Pensacola's about eight hours away,  
Walt. I think she'll get a new job.

Walt turns from her completely, staring ahead. Bernice looks down.

BERNICE (contd)

She's working Wednesday lunch as a favor, if you want to say goodbye.

Walt's no longer listening, only staring down at his hands. She still stands with the pad.

BERNICE

So what would you like to eat, Walt?

No response. Walt doesn't stir.

BERNICE

Walt?

Walt looks quickly up then back down again.

WALT

Oh... I am not so hungry.

BERNICE

You're not hungry?

WALT

No.

BERNICE

So you came into a restaurant?

Walt doesn't respond.

BERNICE (contd)

Maybe you'd like a drink?

WALT

Maybe.

BERNICE

Well, what would you like?

Walt keeps his head low, and speaks quietly.

WALT

Small juice.

Bernice gives the pad a final tap and turns away. Walt doesn't look up, only holds his hat in his hands.

EXT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP, EAST WINDOW - SAME

Below the "Special" signs that line the window, Walt alone at his booth, holding his hat in both hands, his head low to his chest and his small glass of orange juice beside.

EXT. SWEETWATER CINEMA TWIN - NIGHT

Frank exits the theater under the dark marquee. The box office is empty, closed for the night.

EXT. SWEETWATER SIDEWALK - NIGHT

A quiet sidewalk before darkened shops. Frank passes.

EXT. SWEETWATER NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Frank steps from the curb to the street and stares up at the building before him.

EXT. WALT'S BALCONY - SAME

A single lighted room. The balcony doors open out toward the street. The curtains collect in the corners of the frames moving scarcely with the weak summer wind. And Walt, suit and vest, hair straight back and shiny, dances past the open windows.

STREET

Frank stares up at the singular dance across the street.

BALCONY

Underneath the chandelier, Walt moves in sweeping circles.

STREET

Frank's eyes tighten around the sight. Walt is away in a dance of reverie, and Frank leaves him there, stepping back from the street to the sidewalk, and heading home.

EXT. FRANK'S APARTMENT PATIO - MORNING

Walt stands before Frank's back door. He knocks, then reaches to his head and removes his cap. The door opens with a noise. Frank's face fills the opening. He looks haggard, hung-over, messy

hair and a growth of beard.

WALT  
Good morning, Frank.

Frank swings the door open further and stands before Walt in his underwear.

FRANK  
Walt, hey. Come on in.

Walt, his cap in his hands, follows Frank.

INT. FRANK'S LIVING ROOM

Frank heads for his chair. Walt follows behind, scanning the apartment. Empty liquor bottles litter the tabletop.

FRANK (contd)  
Say, what time is it?

WALT  
It's eleven o' clock.

FRANK  
That late, huh?

Frank stops before his chair, turns and sits, smiling.

FRANK (contd)  
Well, I didn't get much sleep last night, you see.

Walt stops before the chair and stares down.

FRANK (contd)  
You remember that woman from the movies yesterday. The one who got a little fiesty?

Walt nods.

FRANK (contd)  
Well, she stopped by here late last night with a bottle of wine. To apologize, she said.

Frank sits back smugly.

FRANK (contd)  
So I was up most of the night, you

see, accepting her apology, so to speak. You just missed her.

Walt stares down blankly.

WALT

Frank, I came to ask if you are going to your work today?

FRANK

Four o'clock.

WALT

I thought maybe I could use your bicycle today. If you don't need it.

FRANK

I don't know. That's no easy job. Up front you got to steer. What do you need it for?

Walt's eyes narrow as he stares down to Frank.

WALT

How come you haven't shaved today?

FRANK

Ah, it's a pain in the ass. What about the bike?

WALT

I want to go to the Pier Market... to buy something.

FRANK

What?

WALT

(reticent)

A gift.

Frank just stares up from the chair.

WALT (contd)

For Elaine... She's leaving.

FRANK

A goodbye gift, huh? Well, I'll give you a ride down there. We'll pitch in, get her something nice.

WALT

I don't know. Maybe you could give me the ride and I could buy her something myself.

Frank turns away a second then looks back to Walt's eyes.

FRANK

You've never even said hello to a woman, Walt. How would you know how to say goodbye?

Walt does not answer, only stares back down to the chair.

FRANK (contd)

Saying goodbye to women takes a touch. I've been married and divorced four times. I'm an expert on the subject. Let me handle it. Just give me a minute and we'll get going.

Frank rises from the chair with a groan. He stands in his underwear staring at Walt and scratching at his face.

FRANK

She was really something last night, boy. I didn't sleep a wink.

Walt looks up silently, and Frank turns. Walt watches him walk away and turn the corner to the hallway. And Walt stands waiting, alone in the room.

EXT. PIER MARKET - DAY

The pier extends far over the ocean. Thirty feet wide, small open-air booths line either side of the pier. Vendors stand behind counters pitching token jewelry, fruits, flowers, sea-shells. Customers line the sides, dealing with the vendors. The ocean washes below. Frank and Walt move through the middle.

WALT

I don't know what she would want.

FRANK

She's a woman, right?

WALT

Yes.

FRANK

That's easy then. She wants

everything you don't have.

Frank steps on, slightly faster than Walt who lags behind.

WALT

I don't have so much money. Maybe some candy would be good.

FRANK

Are you kiddin' me?

WALT

I thought that women liked candy.

FRANK

Little girls like candy. Women want something with more of a kick.

WALT

I don't know things with kicks.

FRANK

That's why you're with me.

#### PIER BOOTHS - LATER

Noise. Crowds line three people deep at each booth, haggling. Vendors hawk their wares with sing-song pitches. A reggae band plays at the beach end. Every step of the walking traffic is a slap at the wood planks. And all the time, the sea rushes below. Frank and Walt negotiate through the mass of people. Frank pushes through, Walt follows along, his body tight, shrinking from the noise and the jostling crowds. Frank muscles through the scene. Walt tries to keep up, ducking and dodging. And a large man cuts between, his shirtless form stalling Walt and blocking him from Frank. The man passes and Frank has disappeared into the crowd. Walt stops. The crowds team past him. He stares to where Frank would have been, and he turns the other way.

#### FLOWER BOOTH

The final booth on the pier. Sea water washes underneath. Walt moves toward the booth, pulling away from the crowds. He stands at the counter, awash in flowers. An older man sits in a lawn chair behind. He smiles up at Walt. The sound of ocean is clear, the din of the crowds distant. Walt is quiet.

WALT

They're pretty.

The flower slips from Walt's hand to rest on the dark wood counter. The two turn away, leaving the blue flower behind.

INT. PIER CONVENIENCE STORE - SAME

Frank and Walt stand side by side before a towering rack of liquor bottles.

WALT

I don't think vodka is such a good idea for a gift, Frank.

FRANK

(ingnoring him)  
Smirnoff vodka. If I had a dollar for every time I promised to stop drinking Smirnoff...

Frank reaches for a bottle of the vodka and holds it before him.

FRANK

(smiling, turning to Walt)  
...I'd probably use it to buy more Smirnoff.

Frank turns away from the rack. Walt follows behind, reluctantly.

WALT

This is nothing to get her. We sh--

FRANK

This is what I would want if I was a woman.

WALT

This is not a gift for her. This is something for girls who are easy.

FRANK

I've known a lot of women, Walt. And none of them were easy. They were just difficult in different ways.

WALT

Maybe I should buy her something myself.

Frank stops, turns around.

FRANK

I know how to please women, Walt. I

know what they like. Besides, maybe she'll give us a sip. Did you ever stop to think of that?

The two converge on the counter. Behind, a YOUNG MAN stands at the register. Frank sets the bottle down.

YOUNG MAN

I'm going to need to see some I.D.'s.

He laughs. Frank doesn't crack a smile.

FRANK

Put it in a bag, Peckerhead.

EXT/INT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP

The restaurant is nearly empty. Elaine deposits the breakfast orders before Frank and Walt. Frank looks on expectantly, Walt, subdued and melancholy, holds his head in his hands.

ELAINE

You would think, on my last day, you would order something else-- just to make me happy.

FRANK

You smell nice.

ELAINE

I smell like bacon.

FRANK

(pointing to Walt)

That's him. You smell like morning-- Early, I mean. Before the assholes get up. When there isn't a sound, not even a goddamn bird chirpin'.

ELAINE

I'm going to miss hearing those sweet things from you, Frank.

FRANK

We got you a going away present.

He lifts the bottle wrapped in paper bag. She takes it, laughing.

ELAINE

This is so nice of you guys, but I don't drink.

FRANK

You got to drink something.

ELAINE

Not that stuff. But I know plenty of people who do.

FRANK

So do I. One's sitting right here. If you're going to give it away, give it to me.

Walt looks coldly at his friend. Elaine kisses Frank on the cheek. She does the same for Walt.

ELAINE

You guys are sweethearts.

She turns from the table. Walt waits, his eyes narrowing.

WALT

She did not want it.

FRANK

How the hell did I know she doesn't drink? I thought everybody drank.

Walter broods.

EXT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP - SAME

Two YOUNG BOYS stand at the corner waiting to cross. People mill about. Frank and Walt exit the restaurant behind and head up the sidewalk. Frank holds the vodka bottle in hand. Walt's face is tense with irritation, his gestures wiredrawn.

WALT

You said you knew what she would like. We should have got her something nice. That was stupid. And You said "goddamn" again-- And "asshole."

FRANK

Who was talkin' to you?

WALT

You should not speak that way to her. especially when she is leaving. Even a sailor can watch his mouth.

FRANK

(loud)

I wasn't a sailor, I was a captain. And captains say whatever the hell they want.

Heads turns to the noise. The two young boys stare from their spot on the street. Walt's anger is constrained by the presence of passers-by.

WALT

Leave your ugly words for the water. Women should not hear such things.

FRANK

(louder)

Don't tell me about women, Walt. I've had four wives.

Walt stops along the restaurant windows, halting Frank.

WALT

I think maybe that does not mean you know women so well--

They lock eyes.

WALT (contd)

I think maybe that means you don't know women at all.

FRANK

I got news for you, pal. Women like me--

WALT

Women slap you in the face.

Frank stops cold, hurt, embarrassed.

WALT (contd)

Because you know only how to be rude.

FRANK

I'm sure you've learned a lot about women dancing around your apartment by yourself.

Stunned, Walt moves away, quickly up the sidewalk. Frank moves behind. The two young boys start from their spot, following.

FRANK (contd)

I saw you the other night,  
spinning around your living room.

WALT

(loud, moving fast)

You just leave Elaine alone. She is  
my friend. You don't have a right  
to buy her awful gifts and tell her  
they are from me. I would not buy  
her something so awful. Now she  
thinks I am awful too.

FRANK

Are you thinkin' about Elaine while  
you're dancin' around in that suit?

WALT

(wanting to get away)

I am only practicing.

FRANK

Practicing, or fantasizing?  
'Cause there's a difference.  
One's for candy asses.

Walt stops hard before an alleyway and spins, shouting.

WALT

You have the fantasies! You lied  
that that women slept with you last  
night. You pretend to be a king with  
women, wearing that stupid hat like  
a crown! It is a stupid hat! Only a  
stupid seven dollar hat. And women,  
they think you are a clown.

Walt breathes heavy at the alley entrance, almost frightened of  
the loudness of his voice. Strangers stare from the street.

FRANK

This was a gift from my son. It's a  
damn fine hat.

WALT

It is not. It is a terrible gift.  
Like what you bought Elaine. It's  
thoughtless. Only a terrible son  
would buy that gift for his father.

Frank tears the cap from his head and clutches it.

FRANK

I don't need to take any shit from you. You're worse than a woman! You're a man without balls.

Frank begins away, takes the first steps into the alley, then spins back, red-faced, louder.

FRANK (contd)

And don't tell me I got a terrible son. I do, goddamnit, but don't you tell me that! That's life. That's what life does to you. You don't know that because you've never lived one. You got no balls. Just your goddamn baseball games and crossword puzzles.

Walt moves into the alley, closer to Frank.

WALT

I had nice things to do until you came with your stories, always talking so I can't even have peace. You never even listen. Only talk.

FRANK

What the hell do you know, anyway? You only known me a couple'a weeks.

WALT

I know Elaine was my friend before you came here with your filthy mouth! I know I could have breakfast here and she would be nice to me, and now she won't be here anymore! I should not have even brought you here. She never wanted to leave until she met you. You may have a fancy job, and a spiffy jacket, but you still are only a dirty sailor.

Walt starts away, down the alley. Frank stands still. Behind, the TWO YOUNG BOYS peek from around the corner, standing in the sun.

FRANK

See you later, soft shoes.

Walt's feet sound hard on the alley floor.

FRANK (contd)

(yelling to Walt's back)  
And I was a captain!

Walt doesn't turn, only steps further away. Frank's eyes close. Regret. A few hard words too much. Frank turns back, and passes the young boys on to the sidewalk. Frank leaves the cap in his hand as the sun hits his head; he holds the bottle tight.

EXT. GRASS FIELD - EARLY MORNING

The field is deserted, early morning. Walt walks alone on the wet morning grass, carrying a folding lawn chair.

MACARTHUR PARK BASEBALL FIELD

The park, quiet. The bleachers empty and the baseball field barren, but readied for the day's game with baselines and raked infield dirt. Walt appears beside the bleachers, holding the chair. He ducks his head and turns beneath the bleachers, lifting his legs over the metal railing, climbing beneath the large structure. He pulls the chair in after him.

EXT. MACARTHUR PARK LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The sounds of baseball: the chatter of the players, the calls of coaches and fans. Walt's team, the red uniformed Sweetwater Auto, is at bat. One player stands at first.

BLEACHERS

Frank sits alone on the top row; Walt's familiar seat beside is empty. Frank shifts his attention from the diamond to the grass field behind the bleachers. He searches for his friend.

MOTHER

Come on, Sweetwater Auto. One more to tie, two to win.

FATHER

Bottom of the ninth. Get tough boys.

And down beneath the bleachers, WALT, his fold-out chair set under the stands. He peers out quietly from between the planks, intent on the action of the game, and hiding from Frank.

DIAMOND

The next batter walks on balls. Chubby HENRY takes his final practice cuts and steps nervously to the plate. The familiar

voice sounds behind.

SHOWENSTEIN

Drive 'em in and we win, Hank.  
Come on now. Not like last time.  
Choke up, son. Keep that left foot  
planted. Big gap in right. Forty  
degrees on that bat--

MCGUINNES(O.S.)

Hey Showenstein!

BLEACHERS

A thin man, SID MCGUINNES, wearing glasses, stares to the fence.

MCGUINNES (contd)

Why don't you shut the hell up  
and let your son bat?

Showenstein stands at the fence, silenced, and stared at by the  
entire bleachers. He is embarrassed into aggression.

SHOWENSTEIN

You got a big mouth, McGuinness.

MCGUINNESS

Just shut the hell up for once.

Showenstein turns full face toward the bleachers, pretending  
toughness, looking ridiculous as he starts to the stands.

SHOWENSTEIN

You want a piece of me, Sid?

DIAMOND

At the plate Henry shakes his head in determined frustration. He  
has had enough of his dad. He's going to take it out on the ball.  
The pitch is delivered. Henry lifts the bat mightily behind...

BLEACHERS

Showenstein has made it to Sid. As the men scuffle above, Walt,  
below, looks between their legs to the field. Frank stands at the  
top row not allowing the disruption to take him from the game.  
Then, the ring of the aluminum bat sends the stands to their  
feet. Henry CRUSHES the ball to left field. Showenstein and  
McGuinness break off fighting. Showenstein runs to the fence.

SHOWENSTEIN  
 What happened?! What happened?!

DIAMOND

Young Henry's body shakes fiercely as he runs. The ball has got past the outfielders. Henry thunders toward second as the tying run scores. The winning run rounds third at top-speed.

SHOWENSTEIN (O.S.)  
 Keep running, son. Keep running!

As Henry closes in on third, the winning run scores. RED WINS! The red bench clears. Henry, a run-away train, needlessly slides headfirst into third where he is mobbed by his teammates.

BLEACHERS

Jubilation. Parents cheer. Showenstein and McGuinness embrace. All the while Frank stands at the top row, a smile on his face and sadness that his friend is not there to see the victory. Frank steps slowly down and, with a sad smile, passes the happy parents on his way from the bleachers. And beneath him, concealed and sitting comfortably in his fold-out chair, Walt, wearing a proud smile as he stares out to the celebration on the field.

BASEBALL DIAMOND - CONTINUOUS

Young Henry, buried beneath his teammates at third base.

INT. HELEN COONEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Helen, alone on her sofa, in the soft light of the television. She sits forward on the seat, a cup of coffee in her palms. A soft sound at the door. She looks from the set. She touches at her hair and stands tying her worn robe at the waist. She steps to the door, turns back to the television and shuts it off.

HELEN  
 Who is it?

FRANK (O.S.)  
 It's Frances.

She runs her palm against the nape of her neck. The other hand slides along the robe bunching into a soft fist at her leg.

HELEN

You better not be drunk.

She guides the door open. Frank steps to the opening, dressed in full uniform, his hands behind his back. He speaks quietly.

FRANK

I'm not drunk. I been at work.  
And a man doesn't drink on the job.

He moves his hand from behind, lifts a whiskey bottle before her.

FRANK (contd)

He drinks after the job.

HELEN

You shouldn't be comin' around here so late. Especially in that good lookin' suit. I don't want people talkin'.

FRANK

They all go to sleep before the sun sets. Nobody's looking.

HELEN

It's almost midnight. I was sleepin' myself.

FRANK

Sleeping, huh? Now how come I heard the television before you came to the door?

HELEN

(staring back)  
You got good ears for an old man.

FRANK

I just want to sit down for a little while, Helen. How 'bout it? Just one drink and I'll be on my way.

Her hand drops from the door as she sets it full open.

INT. DINING TABLE - LATER

Frank, drunk, his jacket covering the back of his chair, his shirt folded loosely on the table top, his bow tie near the bottle. He sits in his sleeveless undershirt, one hand on the half-gone bottle. Helen sits across the small table, her hands

folded around her coffee cup. Frank, weary-eyed, speaking low.

FRANK

Ordinarily, this fat kid couldn't hit the water if he fell out of a boat. But he hit that ball so goddamn hard I thought the bat was broke in half.

Frank swallows all the whiskey from his glass.

HELEN

You think you can drop a little of that in here?

Helen pushes her cup to him. Frank smiles, starting a slow tilt.

FRANK

It was a great goddamn thing to see. The fat kid stood six feet tall.

Frank lifts the bottle back up. Helen holds her cup beneath.

HELEN

A little stingy, weren't you?

He smiles again, and pours more liquor into her cup.

HELEN (contd)

You know, Frank. Before you came around, I'd forgotten how much I liked Irish whiskey.

She lifts the cup to her lips, smiling over it to Frank. He stares long at her face.

FRANK

Helen... I ever tell you about the time I met Ernest Hemingway?

HELEN

If you're gonna tell that story again, fill it to the top.

He does, then fills his own glass.

FRANK

I was twenty-one years old, you see.

Frank raises the glass to his lips, swallowing long.

FRANK (contd)

Now, Hemingway was much older, and he was strong, mind you. A fisherman. He used to like congregate with the other fishermen and sailors, drinking in coffee shops. This one night he was tight as a drum. And he stands up and shouts out how he could whip any man in the room... Which was a stupid thing to say.

HELEN

Why was that?

FRANK

(smiling wide)

Because I was in the room, lady...  
And I was a sight to see.

Frank makes fists with his hands and drops them to his thighs.

FRANK (contd)

My arms were as wide around as these legs. And these legs were as big as banyan trees. I was rough. Tougher than hell. I was hard as a rock, you see.

He moves the glass to his lips, swallows and sets it down.

FRANK

So I walked up to him, and I smiled, and I said... Whip me. You just try and whip me.

Frank stares down at the table, half-awake, quiet.

FRANK (contd)

I was hard as a rock.

He stares up into Helen's face, his eyes opening and closing.

FRANK (contd)

You're a beautiful woman, Helen.

Helen stares back over her coffee cup.

FRANK (contd)

You're a beautiful, beautiful woman.

She lowers her cup and stands, pulling her robe together.

HELEN

You've had a lot to drink.

FRANK

And you got great tits... All my wives  
had great tits.

Frank drinks the last from his glass, sets it, and rises slowly.

FRANK (contd)

Come here, Helen.

HELEN

Pick up your clothes, Frank.

He begins around the table with slow steps.

FRANK

Let me feel those tits against me.

HELEN

Get back upstairs. It's late.

Helen steps to the door, turning her back on Frank.

FRANK (contd)

Don't walk away from me, lady.

She continues without turning. Frank begins after her.

FRANK (contd)

Don't walk away from me. You're not  
going to send me to bed like some  
goddamn kid. I came down here to  
spend the night with a woman.

Helen stops at the door and turns back.

FRANK (contd)

Not to have my goddamn tie fixed.  
Not for a drink. But for a night,  
for a morning... like a man.

Frank steps across the room, swaying slightly, unbalanced.  
Helen stares almost-sad, stopping her resistance, lowering her  
arms and letting him come.

He stops before her, standing still and breathing. And dumbly, he  
lifts a hand, placing it on her shoulder, letting it move over her  
robe. She stands stiff, unfeeling, her back against the wall.

Frank keeps his eyes from her. He watches his hand work over the  
thick cloth at her neck, and he swallows as it begins along the

Helen lifts her head to see Frank frozen, only breathing before her and staring at his stilled hand. He holds there, his palm against the soft cloth at her chest. And slowly, his hand drops from her. Without a sound he backs away and turns for the table.

She watches him walk, his bare arms barely moving at his side. He stops at the table and reaches for his white shirt. He lifts his jacket from the chair and turns back to her, standing still and holding his clothes. Helen opens the door beside her. And with an effort, Frank smiles.

FRANK

I used to pick women up in my arms.

Frank offers his arms before him, his shirt and coat draped over.

FRANK (contd)

I could carry them up stairs.

He cradles his work uniform and stares down to his arms.

FRANK (contd)

Now I'm carrying my clothes like a clown.

Frank stares at her and in a second, starts forward. Helen watches him walk toward her again, quiet this time. He steps beside her at the open doorway and stops, looking up and parting his lips to speak.

FRANK (contd)

Let me have the couch, Helen.

Helen, still, quiet.

FRANK (contd)

(loud)

I'll sleep like a fucking dog on your couch. Just let me walk out of here in the morning like a man.

Frank lifts his shirt before him.

FRANK (contd)

Let me leave in the morning with my shirt in my hand, like a man.

HELEN

Like a man?

Helen balls her hand to a fist and pounds Frank in the chest.

HELEN (contd)

Like a dumb, goddamn, Irish man.

She swings again.

HELEN (contd)

You want to leave in the morning  
with your pants undone so the  
neighbors can see you! So you can  
feel like a man again!

He catches her arms, holding her, standing tall over her and shouting.

FRANK

(shouting)

I can't screw anymore, lady! I can't  
pick you up with these goddamn arms  
I can't carry you to the kitchen.  
But I don't want to leave!

He holds her arms low, breathing heavily.

FRANK (contd)

I don't want to go back to that  
goddamn room tonight. I don't want  
to be up there alone... while you're  
down here alone.

Frank quiets, standing before her.

FRANK (contd)

Just give me the couch.

HELEN

(quiet)

I don't want you to sleep on the  
couch, Frank.

She pulls a hand from his grasp and lifts it to his face. Helen, touching below his eyes, running the hand along the cheek.

HELEN (contd)

I want you to sleep with me.

Frank looks up.

HELEN (contd)

You don't need to pick me up. You don't need to carry me anywhere.

Helen touches Frank at the wrist and lifts his hand.

HELEN

You can stand right here and touch me.

She lifts his hand to her, placing both palms at her face.

HELEN

You didn't come down here tonight so you could leave tomorrow. You didn't come down here to screw me. You came down to tell me about that game. You came down to be with me.

Frank looks on as Helen guides his hand across her face.

HELEN (contd)

So be with me, Frank. Not on my couch. With me. Sleep with me.

Helen closes her eyes. Her fingers tighten around his. She lifts herself higher, a hand at Frank's back, pulling, pressing him forward. They kiss. Helen draws back leans her head aside to rest on Frank's shoulder. They keep their bodies close. Frank smiles behind her, speaking softly.

FRANK

...great tits, lady.

EXT. VICTORIA PARK - DAY

Children play in small gangs, chasing one another between the trees. Walt sits alone beside the sandbox, the newspaper on his lap, surrounded by scattered groups of children. Beside, in the sand, CYNTHIA WALLACE, 7, and her sister TANYA, 5, dance separately and spasmodically to music coming from their small radio.

A shadow falls over Walt as the space beside him is filled. Frank sits down with a grunt. Walt looks beside, then turns his head to his lap. Neither speaks. Frank turns to the young girls. They dance frantically as he stares in amazement. He speaks quietly.

FRANK

Excuse me, ladies-- What do you call that activity there?

Cynthia stops and turns to Frank, a proud smile on her face.

CYNTHIA

We're dancing.

She starts again, demonstrating. Frank nods, turning ahead. Walt holds his head low. A moment, and Frank speaks to him.

FRANK

You know, I been thinking. This town is fairly large. If a man wanted he could manuever himself around so as not to see another person. There are enough places to sit so he could sit all by himself someplace, if that's the way he wanted it.

No response from Walt. Frank looks back to the girls, who flail their arms to the rhythm.

FRANK

Now, what do you call that?

CYNTHIA

We're still dancing.

Frank laughs quietly, and settles, staring ahead again.

FRANK

For example, if you were sitting here, I could sit clear on the other side of town. We wouldn't even have to see each other. We could do that every day if that's what we wished.

Walt scribbles sporadically: a pretext of interest.

FRANK (contd)

But that would take energy, of course, some effort and attention. And I'm just not up to it. So I'm going to stay right here. And if you don't want to sit beside me... Well then, you're going to have to move. 'Cause I'm too damn tired.

Walt folds his paper, touches his hat, but sits, silent. A while and Frank turns to the girls.

FRANK (contd)

Now, I'm sorry. ladies. But that ain't dancin'. You two are three feet apart. And one's moving around

without the other. You need a partner to dance.

Frank smiles down. Walt looks up from the page.

FRANK (contd)

And say a nice young boy came up and asked you to dance. You move around like you were just doin', the poor boy'll run away afraid.

CYNTHIA

We hope they run away.

FRANK

(laughing)

Well, you won't feel like that forever. You should learn to dance nicely with a boy.

CYNTHIA

I don't know how.

FRANK

There's nothing to it. You want to learn?

CYNTHIA

(shy)

Okay.

Frank stands up, smiling. She stand stiff, looking up at him.

FRANK

First, find some beneficial music.

Frank leans to change the radio station. Soft music sounds.

FRANK (contd)

Now, take my hands. And put your feet on mine so I don't squash 'em.

Cynthia reaches her arms up and places her hands in Frank's. She steps atop his large feet.

FRANK

The two of you are sisters, right?.. So the little one follows you wherever you go?

CYNTHIA

Uh-huh. She even cries in the morning

because we go to different schools.

FRANK

Now, all you do is think of your right foot as you, and your left as your little sister. Wherever you go your sister follows. For instance...

Frank begins to shuffle his feet, carrying hers along, moving his right foot first, bringing his left to meet it. The two shuffle before the bench. Tanya laughs beside. Cynthia smiles as she falls into form. Frank handles her gently as he moves before Walt. Cynthia looks down, concentrating on her feet. Frank looks up to Walt; his feet move absent-mindedly beneath him.

FRANK

You should have been to the game yesterday. I'm ashamed I kept you away.

Walt, a glimmer of interest.

FRANK (contd)

It was a sight to see. Let me tell you, Walt, that fat kid...

Frank looks away thoughtfully. He changes his mind.

FRANK (contd)

That fat kid's never going to get a hit, I guess. They could have won this time. But he struck out again, I'm afraid.

Frank and Cynthia continue a little distance from the bench, turning. Behind, Walt smiles warmly. Beside, Tanya is no longer laughing at her big sister. She watches them dance with wide, jealous eyes, then moves up to Walt.

TANYA

Will you teach me how to dance?

Walt looks down at her kindly. He sits motionless, the little girl looking up at him. He offers her his hand.

WALT

My dear, we will teach them how to dance.

Walt stands and lifts the tiny girl on to his feet. He begins to glide with her around the bench. Frank and Cynthia drift closer to the two new dancers. Walt turns his head beside.

WALT (contd)  
Red lost, you say?

FRANK  
Yeah. Same old story. You didn't miss a thing.

WALT  
I'm not so sad they lost this time. I would feel bad if they won and I was not there to see it.

FRANK  
You'll be there when they win, Walter. And it'll be a sight to see.

Walt smiles broadly, moving with the tiny girl's hands in his. Cynthia laughs over at her sister. Tanya looks down at her feet. The two men stare at one another as the girls laugh beneath them. Frank swallows, looking into Walt's eyes, wanting to speak. Walt looks back warmly.

FRANK (contd)  
Walt, ... I been married and divorced four times. I got plenty of enemies. But I'm kind'a short on friends.

Walt smiles. Frank spins Cynthia slowly.

WALT  
I'm sorry I made fun of your hat, Frank.

FRANK  
Well, it's a damn fine hat.

WALT  
That was a sad day. I never even said goodbye to Elaine.

FRANK  
So go to her house.

WALT  
Yes, but the bus doesn't work today. It is Sunday. I don't know how I would get there.

FRANK  
You ought'a say goodbye.

Frank smiles with an idea, shuffling along.

FRANK (contd)

I'll get you there.

The four continue the dance, the tiny girls laughing, the two old men smiling strong, sweeping them across the soft sand.

EXT. AIA AVENUE

AIA thins to two-lanes, becoming a bridge over the bay. Cars fly by the slender streak of sidewalk. The tandem bike moves against the slight incline of the bridge. Frank, up front, pushes down on the pedals; Walt works hard behind. They move in precision.

EXT. CRYSTAL BEACH, NEIGHBORHOOD

They speed past white fences and green lawns. Frank breathes in deeply, tiring. Walt pushes on behind. Frank lifts his legs from the pedals and brakes the bike, stopping along a cement wall.

WALT

Why are we stopping, Frank?

FRANK

I need to sit.

Frank steps from the bike, and moves tiredly to the wall.

WALT

But Elaine..?

FRANK

You go ahead.

WALT

Alone?

FRANK

I got to catch my breath.

WALT

I'll wait with you.

FRANK

If you don't move your ass you'll miss her.

WALT

I'm not certain I can steer, you--

FRANK (contd)

Get going! I'll wait here. You can pick me up on the way back.

Walt moves to the front of the bike. Once there, he turns a helpless look to Frank, staring back, unsure.

WALT

You'll be here when I return?

FRANK

I'll be here. Now get moving!  
You'll do fine, just keep peddling.

Walt takes a clumsy step on the peddles and begins down the road, awkwardly. Frank laughs silently from his seat as Walt soon falls into form, pedaling stronger, with confidence, holding an easy pace down the sidewalk. Behind, Frank smiles proudly.

FRANK

(quietly, to himself)  
Don't let those balls get in the way.

INT. ELAINE'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - SAME

A sea of clothes: Shirts on the sofa, blouses and skirts stacked high on the coffee table, dresses draped over the back of a chair. Two suitcases sit in the middle of the cluttered floor. Elaine sits beside, folding and packing. A knock at the door.

INT. FRONT DOOR

Elaine swings the door wide. Walt, a step beneath her, removes his cap. The bike leans against a long column below the porch.

WALT

Hello.

ELAINE

Walter!

She runs her fingers on top of her ear, pushing her hair behind. Walt breathes out heavily, worn from the trip.

WALT

I wanted to say goodbye.  
(folding his hat in his hands)  
That last day in the restaurant, I did not want to leave, but Frank--

he made me mad.

ELAINE

He's got a way about him.

WALT

He's not a bad guy. He's just used to being alone all the time.

ELAINE

How did you find my house?

WALT

We looked in the phone book, but I don't know your last name. So I went back to the Snack Shop and they told me where you live.

He looks down from her face, to her faded sweatshirt and shorts.

WALT(contd)

You look different, Elaine.

She looks down, then smiles.

ELAINE

I'm not in that awful uniform.

WALT

It wasn't so awful.

ELAINE

(laughing)

I've known you for a year and you've never seen me in anything but my ugly waitress outfit.

He runs his hand across his sweaty forehead.

ELAINE (contd)

Why don't you come inside?

WALT

I have to go back.

ELAINE

You just got here-- How did you get here anyway?

WALT

Frank let me use his bike.

ELAINE

You came all this way on that?

WALT

It wasn't hard. I'm in good shape.

ELAINE

Well, you better come in for a drink just the same.

WALT

Maybe I could have some water.

They step inside, leaving the bike alone on the gray porch.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Elaine moves to the sofa, clearing a space among the clothes.

WALT

You have many clothes.

He steps around the suitcases to the sofa, setting himself down in the small space, the clothes folded high around him.

ELAINE (contd)

You still going to the big dance?

WALT

It's not so big. I don't think too many people will be there even.

ELAINE

Who did you ask?

WALT

Nobody yet.

He stirs back between the clothes. She smiles.

ELAINE (contd)

I'll be back with your water.

Walt nods, folding his hands at his lap. She turns away.

WALT (contd)

I wanted to ask you.

Elaine turns back, suprised.

WALT (contd)

To the dance, but you're moving, so  
I'm going to ask someone else.

She smiles at him. He smiles back.

WALT (contd)  
I'm a very good dancer.

ELAINE  
You're making me sorry to move.

Elaine passes into the kitchen, still smiling.

ELAINE (contd)  
That's a long way to ride a bike.  
Almost four miles. You must be beat.

WALT (O.S.)  
I can ride more miles than that.

#### KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A bare kitchen, brown boxes on the counter. Elaine searches through them for a glass. She rinses it out, fills it with water from a bottle, then heads for the living room.

#### LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Walt, sound asleep, still clutching his cap, leaned back between the high stacks of Elaine's clothes. He makes slight breathing sounds as she places the glass on the table, smiling. She finds a seat on the floor beside her suitcases, begins at folding her clothes, and smiles up at the sleeping Walt, speaking quietly.

ELAINE  
Goodbye, Walter... I'll miss you.

#### EXT. AIA, THE ATLANTIC - SUNSET

Near dusk. The twilight of the day sits atop the water. Alone on the road, the tandem bike crosses, two shadows heading home.

#### INT. SWEETWATER SNACK SHOP KITCHEN - DAY

A COOK turns from the kitchen, placing two plates stacked with toast and bacon on the service counter. A woman's hand takes them down. Bernice turns from the counter with a plate in each hand. She stops, turns back and speaks through the opening to the cook.

BERNICE

This is the turkey bacon, right?

The two cooks nod. Bernice starts away.

RESTAURANT DINING AREA - SAME

Morning noise. A din of restaurant talk. Frank and Walt seated at the booth below the air-conditioner. BERNICE approaches the table, a bacon sandwich on a plate in either hand.

BERNICE

Here's you go, you two. Maybe I can get you a glass of fat to go with that. Make it really healthy.

FRANK

(smiling up)

This'll do just fine.

Bernice turns from them. Frank lowers his hand from the table.

FRANK (contd)

Thanks, darling.

As she steps away, Frank gives her a whallop on the the behind. She spins around. He laughs. She approaches him with an open hand, then breaks into a smile.

BERNICE

You dirty old man.

FRANK

Don't turn your back on me, Bernice. I'm dangerous.

She slaps playfully at his hands. He laughs. Walt watches on.

BERNICE

You're harmless. If you were as good looking as Walter, then you'd be dangerous.

She laughs and leaves them alone. Walt smiles up at Frank, proud of the compliment, then returns to the puzzle.

FRANK (contd)

Put that crossword puzzle down, will ya? I never seen you get more than two of those damn boxes filled.

WALT

It's not fun if you know all the  
the words.

FRANK

Then you ought'a be having a  
helluva time.

WALT

I do them when you are at work,  
at your fancy job.

FRANK

Well, you don't need to worry  
about that anymore.

WALT

What happened?

FRANK

I got sacked. Too much time in the  
theater. Not enough in the lobby.

WALT

I'm sorry.

FRANK

So am I. That was the first job  
I ever had that wasn't on the  
water-- I was getting to like it.

Walt takes a bite of his sandwich.

WALT

There is a dance tonight at the  
Elk's club. A band is coming  
down from Jacksonville. It has  
eleven members.

Walt lowers his hands.

WALT (contd)

Do you want to come with me?

FRANK

Are you asking me on a date, Walt?

WALT

No-- as friends. It's not just  
dancing. There is a raffle and  
games. And free booze.

The two sit in silence. Frank considers.

FRANK

Will there be women there?

WALT

Yes...

(smiling)

Old women.

FRANK

That's all right. I like all kinds.

WALT

Me too.

FRANK

What time does this belly rub begin?

WALT

It begins at eight.

FRANK

Well, Why don't you come over at seven for a cocktail or two?

WALT

That would be all right.

FRANK

I think I'll wear my black jacket.

WALT

Your work jacket? Weren't you to return it?

FRANK

I thought about doing that--  
But I look damn good in it.  
They can keep the job. I'm  
keepin' the jacket.

WALT

I don't have a fancy jacket.

FRANK

I got'a have something. When  
you step out on that dance  
floor, you're gonna make me look  
like a stiff fool. From what I  
seen, you're one fine dancer.

WALT  
I probably will not dance very  
much tonight.

Bernice returns, wiping at their table top with a rag, leaning  
far over Frank. He stares at her breasts.

FRANK  
You never know, Walt. We might  
meet up with a pair'a peaches.

Frank raises his eyebrows, referring to the breasts. Walt smiles.

WALT  
Maybe, but there are never too many  
women there that are not married.

FRANK  
Free booze, huh?

WALT  
Yes, free booze.

FRANK  
Then who needs 'em.

A smile spreads over Frank's face. Walt laughs a quiet laugh,  
looking up at his friend.

EXT. FRANK'S BUILDING - DUSK

Walt passes along the peeling gray of the building, his thin hair  
streaked straight back, his coat stiff on his shoulders. His face  
is dark against the clean white of his shirt collar.

EXT. FRANK'S DOOR

Walt knocks gently, then takes a step back- a quick hand to  
adjust the tie. He waits. He steps up and knocks again. Nothing.

WALT  
Frank!

Walt pounds the soft side of his fist against the door.

WALT (contd)  
Frank! It's after seven, Frank.

EXT. HELEN COONEY'S APARTMENT

Helen and Walt face one another at the open doorway.

HELEN

Frank Joyce is at work.

WALT

He doesn't have work. He was fired.

HELEN

Fired? I helped him with his tie an hour ago.

WALT

We have a dance.

HELEN

He didn't tell me he got fired.

WALT

Please. We will be late. Sometimes he falls asleep for no reason. It is hard to wake him. You can open his apartment, please?

HELEN

A dance, huh? He didn't tell me about any dance either.

WALT

We should wake him now or we will be late.

HELEN

Let me get the key. Then we'll see what we can do about wakin' the lazy bastard up.

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT

The strong hum of the air conditioner. Frank is reclined in his chair with an absolute stillness, his eyes closed, his head stooped. He wears his white work shirt and black bow tie- no pants. Black socks reach to his thin calves. An open bottle of Scotch rests on the table beside him, a half-filled glass beside it, and an open book in his lap. Helen's voice.

HELEN (O.S.)

Open up, Frank. Someone's waitin'.

No movement from the chair.

HELEN (contd)

Frank!!

Stillness. The constant sound of the air conditioner. The door opens slowly. The weak light of dusk moves across the room. Helen steps in, her eyes immediately to the chair. Walt follows behind.

HELEN (contd)

Come on, Frank.

More steps, and she notices the drained face in the chair, the stillness of the chest and the hanging of the hands over the armrest. She stops. Walt continues closer.

WALT

We are going to be late, Frank.  
You should be dressed. Wake up.

The two stand before the chair waiting for a response that will not come. Helen's lips part and she touches Frank softly to the side of his face. Her hand draws back and drops.

HELEN

(quiet)

He's not sleepin'.

WALT

Yes. He is asleep.

Helen slowly shakes her head. Walt's reaches for his friend, his hand unsteady with alarm, dread in his strained voice.

WALT (contd)

He falls asleep often.

HELEN

(quiet)

He's not asleep.

Walt touches his hand to Frank's shoulder without force.

WALT

He is drunk probably.

Walt's hand shakes slightly at Frank's shoulder.

WALT (contd)

Why should you be drinking now,  
Frank? I told you, tonight is free  
booze.

Helen steps forward.

HELEN  
He's not drunk.

Walt's hand moves away. He steps back, understanding; his eyes hard on his friend.

HELEN (contd)  
Would you know who to call?

WALT  
(weak)  
No...We had breakfast together  
in the mornings and sometimes we  
would go to baseball games but I  
did not know so much about..

HELEN  
Do you know if he had a doctor?

WALT  
No.. I don't know that.

HELEN  
I have to call someone to come.

Walt holds his eyes on Frank.

WALT  
Who will you call?

HELEN  
The city will send someone.

WALT  
He has a son.

HELEN  
I'll call his boy, once they  
take care of things.

Helen steps through the open doorway into the kitchen.

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Helen moves her back against the wall, away from the open doorway. She has teared. She looks to the bare walls of the kitchen, and moves her hands to her face. She breathes several deep breaths, her face wet and red from the rubbing of her hands. She turns back to the living room.

## LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Walt stands still before his friend. Helen passes him on the way to the doorway.

HELEN

He has no phone. Why should he have a phone? He doesn't have a pair of pants.

She reaches for the door.

HELEN (contd)

I have to call from downstairs. Would you wait?

Walt answers, his back to her.

WALT

I will wait.

Helen opens the door and moves out. Walt turns his back to the chair and moves across the living room to the hall closet. He reaches inside at a hanger and works a pair of dark slacks down. His hands work tiredly at the fold in the slacks. He turns back to Frank and walks the slacks to the chair, bending down to Frank's feet and the black socks.

WALT

You should not leave here like this.

Walt reaches to Frank's heel, holds his leg from the chair and pushes the pants on to Frank's sallow legs. His hands shake, his work frustrated by the dull weight of Frank's legs, his voice alone in the emptiness of the room.

WALT (contd)

You should be dressed.... like a gentleman.

His head low to his work, Walt dresses his friend in the quiet of the room.

## EXT. ELK'S CLUB - NIGHT

The circle symbol of the Elk's lodge hangs above the doorway. Below, Frank's bicycle leans against a wall. Muted music fills the lot. Inside, beyond a long window, couples move together on the dance floor. Old and elegant, they slide past and move away.

Each steps in perfect time. The floor- a mass of cadenced movement- a dance to which each knows the steps. And Walt, one hand at her waist, the other in her hand, turns a small woman to the window. They move along, a safe space between them, and fall back to their place in the dance.

THE END