

"THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE"

BY

Ethan Coen & Joel Coen

Black.

ED (V.O.)

Yeah, I worked in a barbershop. But
I never considered myself a barber...

We track back from a barber's pole.

ED (V.O.)

...I stumbled into it--well, married
into it more precisely...

opening
head We track back from a shopkeeper's bell triggered by an
door. The pull back and tilt down show the top of the
of a customer entering in slow motion.

ED (V.O.)

...I wasn't my establishment. Like
the fella says, I only work here...

pomade,
aftershave, hair tonic, a whisk brush.

ED (V.O.)

...The dump was 200 feet square,
with five chairs, or stations as we
call 'em, even though there were
only two of us working...

across
one We track in on a big man in a barber's smock scissoring
a lock of hair that he pulls taut between two fingers of
hand. In slow motion, he laughs and chats.

ED (V.O.)

...Frank Raffo, my brother-in-law,
was the principal barber. And man,
could he talk...

clippers
Another man in a barber's smock is running electric
across a child's head. A cigarette between his lips.

ED (V.O.)

...Now maybe if you're eleven or
twelve years old, Frank's got an
interesting point of view, but
sometimes it got on my nerves. Not
that I'd complain, mind you. Like I

said, he was the principal barber. Frank's father August--they called him Guzzi--had worked the heads up in Santa Rosa for thirty-five years until his ticker stopped in the middle of a Junior Flat Top. He left the shop to Frankie free and clear. And that seemed to satisfy all of Frank's ambitions: cutting the hair and chewing the fat. Me, I don't talk much...

into He plucks the cigarette from his mouth and taps its ash
a tray.

ED (V.O.)
...I just cut the hair...

LATE IN THE DAY

and The barbershop is empty of customers. Late sun slants in
through the front window. The two barbers--the narrator
his brother-in-law--sit in two of the barber chairs, idly
reading magazines.

FRANK
Says here that the Russians exploded
n A-bomb and there's not a damn thing
we can do about it.

ED
Uh-huh.

FRANK
How d'ya like them apples?

Beat.

FRANK
...Ed?

ED
Huh?

FRANK
Russians exploded an A-bomb.

ED
Yeah.

FRANK
(shaking his head)
Jesus...

ED (V.O.)
Now, being a barber is a lot like
being a barman or a soda-jerk; there's
not much to it once you've learned
the basic moves. For the kids there's

the Butch, or the Heinie...

off: We cut to examples of the haircuts as they are ticked

ED (V.O.)

...the Flat Top, the Ivy, the Crew, the Vanguard, the Junior Contour and, occasionally, the Executive Contour. Adults get variations on the same, along with the Duck Butt, the Timberline...

Ed trims the fringe around a balding head.

ED (V.O.)

...and something we call the Alpine Rope Toss.

drapes He snips one long lonely strand of hair and carefully it across a bald pate.

ED (V.O.)

...I lived in a little bungalow on Napa Street. The place was OK, I guess; it had an electric ice box, gas hearth, and a garbage grinder build into the sink. You might say I had it made.

as We float slowly toward a white bungalow on a quiet street a black coupe pulls into the driveway.

ED (V.O.)

...Oh yeah. There was one other thing...

putting We track in through a bedroom door to discover a woman on a girdle.

ED (V.O.)

...Doris kept the books at Nirdlinger's, a small department store on Main Street. Unlike me, Doris liked the work, accounting; she liked knowing where everything stood. And she got a ten per cent employee discount on whatever she wanted--nylon stockings...

to Close on her legs as she rolls up a stocking and clips it the garter.

ED (V.O.)

...make-up, and perfume...

Close on an atomiser misting her bosom with Jungle

Gardenia

by Tuvache.

ED (V.O.)

...She wore a lot of perfume.

Doris in a flouncy dress is setting coasters on a coffee table.

ED (V.O.)

...Doris's boss, Big Dave Brewster, was married to Ann Nirdlinger, the department store heiress. Tonight they were coming over for dinner--as Doris said, we were 'entertaining'...

Ed sits on the living-room davenport in an uncomfortable suit, smoking.

ED (V.O.)

...Me, I don't like entertaining.

The doorbell rings.

THE DOOR

Ed opens it to reveal a large man in a suit and his bird-like wife.

demure,

DAVE

How ya doin', Ed?

ED

OK. Take your coat, Ann?

DINNER TABLE

The two couples are in the middle of the meal.

DAVE

Japs had us pinned down in Buna for something like six weeks. Well, I gotta tell ya, I thought *we* had it tough, but, Jesus, we had supply. *They* were eating grubs, nuts, thistles. When we finally up and bust off the beach we found Arnie Bragg, kid missing on recon; the Japs had *eaten* the sonofabitch, if you'll pardon the, uh... And this was a scrawny, pimply kid too, nothin' to write home about. I mean, I never would've, ya know, so what do I say, honey? When I don't like dinner, what do I say?

Ann smiles wanly.

DAVE

...I say, Jesus, honey, Arnie Bragg--

again?!

He roars with laughter.

Ed gives an acknowledging smile.

DAVE
...Arnie Bragg--*again*?!

He dries his eyes with the corner of a napkin.

DAVE
...Were you in the service, Ed?

ED
No, Dave, I wasn't.

DORIS
Ed was 4F on account of his fallen
arches.

DAVE
Mm, that's tough.

FRONT PORCH

down.
and
Ed is standing alone on the porch, watching the sun go
Crickets chirp. From inside the house we hear laughter
clattering dishes.

ED (V.O.)
...Yeah... I guess Doris liked all
that he-man stuff. Sometimes I had
the feeling that she and Big Dave
were a lot closer than they let on...

house.
He turns and looks through the screen door into the

brightly
the
laughter
Across the dim living room we can see a sliver of the
lit kitchen. Big Dave, wearing a frilly apron, stands at
counter drying dishes. His broad back heaves with
while Doris, just hidden by the wall, chats away, handing
dishes across.

ED (V.O.)
...The signs were all there plain
enough--not that I was gonna prance
about it, mind you. It's a free
country.

Footsteps approach the front porch.

With the squeak of the screen door, Big Dave emerges.

DAVE

Holding down the porch area?

relaxes,
front
Ed gives a half-grin of wry acknowledgement. Big Dave
forearms against the porch railing, gazing out at the
lawn.

DAVE

...That's quite a wife you got there.

ED

Mm.

DAVE

She's a rare one.

ED

How's business, Dave?

DAVE

Couldn't be better. These're boom
times in retailing. We're opening
another store, Big Dave's Annex,
there on Garson. This is strictly
haberdashery--casual wear, pyjamas,
ladies' foundations and undergarments.
Matter of fact, I'm thinking of making
Doris the comptroller. How're things
at the, uh, the barbershop?

ED

All right, I guess.

DAVE

...Fine. Fine. Well, you might want
to drop by the Annex when we open,
update your suit--'course, you're in
the smock all day.

He chuckles.

DAVE

...Say, where do you get those things
anyway?

ED

Specialty store down in Sacramento.

DAVE

Uh-huh.

Big
There is a silence. At length, gazing out at the lawn,
Dave clears his throat.

CHURCH

ED (V.O.)

Doris and I went to church once a
week...

We are tilting down a long stained-glass window depicting the resurrection of Christ.

ED (V.O.)
...Usually Tuesday night...

Faintly, we hear an amplified voice:

CALLER
I... seven...

Ed sits at a long table, staring at the window, a lit cigarette in his mouth.

CALLER
...Bee... Four...

ED (V.O.)
Doris wasn't big on divine worship...

Doris is concentrating on the six cards spread in front of her.

ED (V.O.)
...and I doubt if she believed in life everlasting; she'd most likely tell you that our reward is on this earth and bingo is probably the extent of it...

Still focused on her cards, Doris mutters to Ed:

DORIS
Watch your card, honey.

CALLER
I... sixteen...

Ed continues to gaze off at the window, smoke pluming from his cigarette.

ED (V.O.)
I wasn't crazy about the game, but, I don't know, it made her happy, and I found the setting peaceful.

CALLER
Gee... nine...

Doris sucks in her breath.

DORIS
Jesus, bingo--BINGO!

BARBERSHOP

Sun slants in through the big window at the end of the day.

floor,
the

Ed sweeps hair trimmings, looking intently down at the
a cigarette dangling from his lip. Frank sits on one of
vinyl waiting chairs, talking at Ed's back.

FRANK

...so you tie your own flies, Ed. I mean, if you're really serious. You tie your own flies, you do a--I know it's maticless, I know, people say, hey, you can buy flies at the store-- but you can buy your fish at the store, Ed, you see what I'm saying?

ED

Uh-huh.

FRANK

The point is there's a certain art to the process. The point is not merely to provide, and let me point out, these fish are not as dumb as you might think.

ED

Uh-huh.

FRANK

Sportsmanship! That's my point. June fly, Ed? Mosquito? Which of these? Well, what fish do you seek?

ED

Yeah.

FRANK

Sure, go to the store. Go there, describe to the man where you will be fishing, and for what, and the weather conditions, sun, no sun, whatnot, and so forth, and then you might as well have the man go ahead and sell you the goddamn FISH, Ed...

windows

We see a black-suited figure approaching through the
at the far end of the shop. He is almost blown out by the
late-day sunlight hitting the window.

FRANK

...My point is, this is a man who knows nothing no matter how much you tell him, so sell him the goddamn FISH, Ed.

middle-
too

The bell over the front door tinkles, and the swarthy
aged man walks in. He is well dressed--perhaps a little
snazzily for this small town--and has a sporty pencil

mustache.

MAN

OK, boys, which of you gets the privilege?

FRANK

We're just closing, friend.

MAN

Oh, happy days! I wish I was doing well enough to turn away business! More power to ya, brother! The public be damned!

FRANK

Hey, what's your problem, friend? This is a business establishment with posted hours--

Ed cuts in with a jerk of the head.

ED

I'll take care of him, go ahead, Frank. Have a seat, mister.

Frank looks sourly at the stranger.

FRANK

...You sure, Eddie?

ED

Yeah, yeah--go home.

As Frank leaves:

FRANK

In your ear, mister.

The stranger chuckles.

STRANGER

Oh, those fiery Mediterraneans. Say! Not so fast there, brother--

him Ed has switched on the clippers, but the stranger waves back; he lifts off a toupee.

STRANGER

...Pretty good, huh? Fools even the experts. 100 percent human hair, handcrafted by Jacques of San Francisco, and I'd hate to have to tell you what I paid for it.

ED

Uh-huh.

STRANGER

Yes, it's a nice rug. I'm paying for

it down on the installment plan...

Ed starts to trim the stranger's fringe.

STRANGER

...A lot of folks live with the pate exposed. They say the dames think it's sexy. But for my money it's just not good grooming--and grooming, my friend, is probably the most important thing in business--after personality, of course...

He twists around to offer his hand.

STRANGER

...Creighton Tolliver, pleased to know ya.

ED

Ed Crane. What brings you to Santa Rosa?

CREIGHTON

A goose, friend. I was chasing a wild goose. Ed, have you ever heard of venture capital?

ED

Uh--

CREIGHTON

Well, it's the wildest goose there is. Risk money. Very speculative. Except, Ed, in certain situations, it's not, see? I thought I had a prospect here. Well, I make the haul up and this lousy so-and-so tells me his situation has changed--all his capital's gonna be tied up in expansion plans of his own. Thank you, mother! Pop goes another bubble! It's only the biggest business opportunity since Henry Ford and I can't seem to interest a soul!

ED

That right.

CREIGHTON

It's called dry cleaning. You heard me right, brother, 'dry cleaning'--wash without water, no suds, no tumble, no stress on the clothes. It's all done with chemicals, friend, and your garments end up crisp and fresh. And here's the capper: no shrinkage.

ED

Huh.

CREIGHTON

That's right! Dry cleaning--remember the name. It's going to revolutionize the laundry industry, and those that get in early are gonna bear the fruit away. All I need is \$10,000 to open my first store, then I use its cash flow to finance another, and so on-- leap frog, bootstrap myself a whole chain. Well, me and a partner. Cleanliness, friend. There's money in it. There's a future. There's room to grow... Say, that's looking pretty good. Let's see it with the hairpiece on...

BATHROOM DOORWAY

It is evening. Ed leans against the bathroom doorjamb contemplatively off, hands thrust into his pockets, a cigarette between his lips pluming smoke.

ED (V.O.)

Dry cleaning...

The reverse show Doris soaking in the tub, reading a magazine.

ED (V.O.)

...Was I crazy to be thinking about it? Was he a huckster, or opportunity, the real McCoy?

Ed takes the cigarette from his mouth, exhales.

ED (V.O.)

...My first instinct was, no, no, the whole idea was nuts. But maybe that was the instinct that kept me locked up in the barbershop, nose against the exit, afraid to try turning the knob. What if I could get the money?

DORIS

Honey?

ED

Mm.

She lifts one leg and rests the heel on the rim of the tub.

DORIS

Shave my legs, will ya?

Ed saunters over, perches on the tub and puts the cigarette back in his mouth to free his hands. He picks up a bar of soap and starts soaping the leg.

He sets down the soap and picks up a safety razor.

The razor takes long slow strokes along the lather, dark bits of hair flecking the white foam.

ED (V.O.)

...It was clean. No water. Chemicals.

across

He shakes the razor in the tub. Shavings float away the soap-slicked water.

DORIS

(absently, as she reads)

Gimme a drag.

fingers,

Doris

Ed pulls the cigarette from his mouth between two uses the two fingers to flip it over, and holds it for as she sucks.

to

He brings the cigarette, now marked with lipstick, back his own mouth. She murmurs:

DORIS

...Love ya, honey.

A DOOR

We hear a voice, muffled through the door, breaking into laughter.

A hand enters to knock.

VOICE

Yeah, come in.

shirtsleeves

The door swings open to show Creighton in his sitting on the bed, talking on the phone. A tray of room-service dishes sits near him.

He is bald; his hairpiece sits on the pillow next to him.

CREIGHTON

(into the phone)

OK... yeah. I'll see you tomorrow.

He hangs up, looks quizzically at Ed.

CREIGHTON

...Oh, I thought you were the porter... Can I help you?

Ed stands awkwardly by the door.

ED

...I'm, uh, Ed.

The stranger's look does not show recognition.

ED

...Ed Crane. Remember? Today?

CREIGHTON

Sorry, friend, I, uh, you got me at a disadvantage.

ED

I'm, uh, I'm--the barber.

CREIGHTON

Jesus! The barber! I'll be a sonofagun. Why didn't you say so? 'Course--the barber.

Ed nods, his smile faint and forced.

CREIGHTON

...I didn't recognize you without the smock. Did I--damn--did I leave something at the shop?

ED

No. I might be interested in that, uh, business proposition--

Creighton, surprised, quickly picks up his hairpiece and arranges it on his head.

CREIGHTON

You got the dough?!

ED

I can get it, yeah.

CREIGHTON

Come in, come in, sidddown over there. Coffee?

ED

No. I--tell me--

CREIGHTON

Sure.

ED

What's involved, aside from putting up the money? What're you looking for the partner to do?

CREIGHTON

Do? Hell, nothing. Well, you'll want to keep tabs on your investment, of course, but I'm looking for a silent partner. I've done the research, I've contacted the vendors, the deal is set. I'm just looking for venture

capital, friend. Disappear if you want, check in whenever you like--I want the dough; I don't take attendance.

ED

And how do we share--

CREIGHTON

Fifty-fifty, straight down the line. You and me. Finance and expertise. So--you've got the dough then, do ya?

ED

I'll have it in a week.

CREIGHTON

Well, I'll be damned. The barber! And I thought this trip was a bust. Well...

stand He reaches for a bottle of bonded whiskey on the night
and hands Ed a glass.

CREIGHTON

...it just goes to show, when one door slams shut, another one opens. Here's to ya, uh...

ED

Ed.

and They both knock back the whiskey. Creighton leans back
gives Ed a heavy-lidded stare, a faint smile on his lips,
his hairpiece slightly askew.

Ed stares back.

reaches After a beat, without taking his eyes of Ed, Creighton
up and loosens his tie. An almost imperceptible wink.

Ed stares.

ED

...Was that a pass?

CREIGHTON

(hoarsely)

Maybe.

ED

You're out of line, mister.

Creighton throws up his hands apologetically.

CREIGHTON

No problem!

ED
Way out of line.

CREIGHTON
Right! Strictly business.

ED
Yeah.

CLOSE ON TYPEWRITTEN NOTE

It says:

I KNOW ABOUT YOU AND DORIS CRANE. COOPERATE OR ED CRANE
WILL KNOW. YOUR WIFE WILL KNOW. EVERYONE WILL KNOW.

GATHER

\$10,000 AND AWAIT INSTRUCTIONS.

A hand pulls the note out of a typewriter carriage.

ED (V.O.)
I sent it to Dave the next morning.
And I waited.

BARBERSHOP

crew

We are looking down at the top of an eight-year-old's
cut as clippers buzz its perimeter.

Frank reads a magazine. The youngster reads a comic as Ed
works his head.

ED
Frank.

FRANK
Huh?

ED
This hair.

FRANK
Yeah.

ED
...You ever wonder about it?

FRANK
Whuddya mean?

ED
I don't know... How it keeps on
coming. It just keeps growing.

FRANK
Yeah--lucky for us, huh, pal?

ED
No, I mean it's growing, it's part

of us. And we cut it off. And throw
it away.

FRANK
Come on, Eddie, you're gonna scare
the kid.

Ed shuts off the clippers and give the apron a flap.

ED
OK, bud, you're through.

out The kid hops down, still reading his comic, and ambles
the door. Ed gives Frank a considering stare.

ED
...I'm gonna take his hair and throw
it out in the dirt.

FRANK
What the--

ED
I'm gonna mingle it with common house
dirt.

FRANK
What the hell are you talking about?

Ed turns back to the counter to hang up his clippers.

ED
I don't know. Skip it.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE

It is twilight. Ed lifts the latch on the front gate and,
cigarette in his mouth, heads up the walk.

Music filters out from the house.

INT. ED'S HOUSE

The Ed walks though the living room, hands in his pockets.
music emanates from a radio in the bedroom.

DORIS
Ed?

her A track forward reveals Doris sitting at a vanity, doing
hair. Her dress is half zipped at the back.

DORIS
...Gimme a zip.

Ed walks over behind her.

ED

Where you going?

DORIS

Me? Us! The party at Nirdlinger's--I told you last week, for the Christmas Push.

ED

Yeah, right.

pauses,
We are close on the zipper as Ed's hand takes the tab, the lowers it slightly. Her back blooms through the dark fabric of the dress.

He slides the zipper up, and Doris reaches for a perfume atomizer.

DORIS

Come on, get ready. It's important.

ED

Nah, go ahead. I'm not big on parties.

DORIS

Oh, don't be a grump.

SALES FLOOR

It is festooned with streamers.

Ed leans against a wall, one hand dug into a pocket, the other bringing a cigarette to his lips.

palms
Band music plays and Nirdlinger's employees whirl on the dance floor. Bobby-soxed teenagers Lindy-hop and pass over their knees.

watching,
A thin young man in a sports coat stands next to Ed, his Adam's apple bobbing.

YOUNG MAN

Wild, man!

gazes
He goes out onto the dance floor. Ed, left by himself, across the floor.

worriedly
His view, broken by dancers' crosses, shows Big Dave talking to Doris.

Doris reacts angrily.

consternation.
Big Dave morosely absorbs the angry words from Doris. He glances up toward Ed and notices his gaze with

over.
He gives Doris a jerk of the head, and she too looks

VOICE
You in ladies' wear?

at The young man with the Adam's apple is back, looking out
the floor, snapping his fingers.

ED
...Huh?

YOUNG MAN
Haven't I seen you up in ladies'
wear?

ED
I don't work here. My wife does.

YOUNG MAN
Uh-huh. Some beat, huh?

ED
Yeah.

YOUNG MAN
Check out the rack on that broad in
the angora.

ED
Uh-huh.

in A hand is laid on Ed's shoulder. It is Big Dave; he leans
to murmur:

DAVE
Ed. Can I talk to you?

BIG DAVE'S OFFICE

is Music from the party drifts in only faintly. The office
built into a corner of the sales floor. It is dominated
by a large desk. A large window on the far side affords a
partial view of the floor.

DAVE
Siddown. Siddown...

fumbles Ed sits in a leather chair in front of the desk. Dave
end nervously on top of the desk for a cigar. He trims the
steel of the cigar with a short double-bladed knife with a
grip.

DAVE
...Souveniried it off a Jap in New

Guinea.

drags He hands one cigar to Ed, takes one for himself, then
up a chair to face Ed's.

DAVE
...I guess you're wondering what
Doris was so hot about.

leans The office is dark, the only illumination coming from the
window onto the bright sales floor behind Big Dave. Ed
forward for Dave to light his cigar.

DAVE
...These're Havanas. Romeo and
Juliets. Private stock.

Dave, having lit Ed's cigar, draws nervously on his own.

DAVE
...Ed, I...

ED
What is it, Dave?

hands, Dave breaks down, weeping. He buries his face in his
his the burning cigar in his right hand perilously close to
hair.

DAVE
Ed, I've been weak...

His shoulders heave.

DAVE
...I've, uh... I've, uh... thanks.

Ed has taken Dave's cigar so that he won't burn himself.

DAVE
...I've, uh... Oh, Jesus. I've been
carrying on with a married woman.
Uh, no one you know. And now the, uh--
what is it they say?--the--the--the
chickens are coming home to roost.

Ed awkwardly holds the two burning cigars.

ED
Uh-huh.

DAVE
Hell, I, I'm not proud of it. But,
uh, that's not the worst of it. I
got a note. A blackmail note. You
know, come across or everybody knows.

ED

Uh-huh.

DAVE

Well, you know what that would do to me.

ED

I guess it would be pretty awkward.

DAVE

Awkward?! Ann'd throw me out on my keister! Hell, it's her family's store--*her* store. I serve at the indulgence of the goddamn ownership, Ed.

ED

Uh-huh.

DAVE

I only work here! And the lady's husband would know... Oh, Jesus.

ED

How much to they want, Dave?

DAVE

\$10,000! I don't know what to do, Ed. I don't know what I *can* do. Even though I know who the sonofabitch is.

ED

...You know... who *who* is?

DAVE

The sonofabitch. The blackmailer. It's, uh, it's no one you know. It's a businessman from Sacramento. A goddamn pansy, Ed. He tried to rope me into some crackpot scheme; I heard him out and then told him to go to hell. And the very next day, the very next day, Ed, I get blackmailed for the same amount.

ED

Would he... it sounds pretty obvious.

DAVE

Well, I guess he don't care that it's obvious.

ED

Mm. How, uh... how did he know that--

DAVE

He's staying at the hotel I've gone to with, uh, with the lady in question. Must've seen us.

Ed. Big Dave blows his nose, reaches to take his cigar from

DAVE
...Thanks...

He exhales with a long sigh.

DAVE
...Oh, Jesus.

ED
...Why don't you just pay him, Dave?

DAVE
That's my capitalization on the Annex!
My operation, Ed! Christ almighty.
That's what I was just talking to
Doris about, a way of getting the
money from the store that we could
hide from Ann.

ED
Mm.

DAVE
Embezzling, Ed. From my own goddamn
wife!

He give a tearful chuckle.

DAVE
...Doris, she was pretty hot about
that. God bless her. She doesn't
know I'm telling you this--she's mad
enough already. But Jesus, Ed, you're
the only one I can talk to. I'm, I'm
sorry I... I better get back to the
party.

his He rises and clears his throat as he rubs the tears from
face.

DAVE
...I look all right?

PULLING ED

department; He has left the office to wander through an adjacent room
lit only by spill from the party. It is the music
pianos and spinets are arranged across the floor.

ED (V.O.)
In a way I felt bad for Big Dave. I
knew the ten grand was going to pinch
him where it hurt...

Ed sits on a piano stool next to a standing ashtray. He

takes
cigar.

out a cigarette, lights it off his cigar, stubs out the

ED (V.O.)

...But Doris was two-timing me and I
guess, somewhere, that pinched a
little too.

Someone

His attention is caught by a distant knock of wood.
is raising the key-guard on a piano across the room.

play.

The person can only be seen only obscurely, from three-
quarters behind, through the sales floor's jumble of
haphazardly arranged instruments. The person begins to

and
his

Ed listens. The piece is slow, sweet, almost a lullaby.
The player, unaware that there is an audience, plays on,
Ed listens, eyes narrowed against the smoke curling past
face.

The piece ends.

ED

That was pretty.

The player turns, surprised. It is a young woman.

ED

...Did you make that up?

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, no. That was written by Mr Ludwig
van Beethoven.

Ed nods recognition of the name.

ED

That was quite something.

YOUNG WOMAN

He wrote some beautiful piano sonatas.

ED

That was something. I'm Ed Crane.

YOUNG WOMAN

I know who you are, Mr Crane.

His look shows surprise.

YOUNG WOMAN

...My father used to take me with
him when he got his hair cut. Walter
Abundas?

Ed's head tilts back in acknowledgment.

YOUNG WOMAN
...I'm Rachel Abundas. Everyone calls me Birdy.

ED
Sorry, I just didn't remember.

BIRDY
Oh, that's all right. You can't be expected to remember every skinny girl who comes in with her dad.

Ed give a wry smile.

ED
...You don't like the music out there?

BIRDY
It's OK, I guess. No, I don't really. I'm not big on music, ordinarily.

A woman calls sharply from offscreen:

VOICE
Ed.

He looks.

coat
Silhouetted in the doorway to the party room is Doris, over her arm, purse in hand.

ED'S CAR

Doris and Ed are driving home.

at
Doris draws heavily on a cigarette, looking flintily out the road.

DORIS
...What a knucklehead.

ED
Who?

DORIS
Dave.

ED
How's that?

DORIS
Ahh...

She waves angrily.

DORIS
...Money problems. He's thinking

about canceling the Annex.

ED

So?

DORIS

That means I don't run Nirdlinger's!

ED

Mm.

They ride in silence for a beat. Doris shakes her head.

DORIS

...What a knucklehead.

STREET

As the car roars past and into the distance.

ANOTHER STREET

a
into a
It is day. We are looking from inside a parked car toward
hotel entrance. Big Dave emerges from the hotel, gets
Packard and drives off.

ED (V.O.)

Big Dave did it, though...

Ed, sitting in his car, is watching.

ED (V.O.)

...I sent a note telling him where
to drop the money...

HOTEL HALLWAY

ashtray
Ed emerges from a stairwell and goes to a standing
by the elevator.

ED (V.O.)

...and he did. He came across.

Ed reaches into the trash hole in the ashtray column and
pulls out a Nirdlinger's bag.

He goes back to the stairwell.

ANOTHER FLOOR

Ed emerges from the stairwell, goes to a door and knocks.
The door swings open.

CREIGHTON

Yeah, good, how are ya, come in...

Ed follows him into the room.

CREIGHTON
...You bring a check?

ED
Cash.

CREIGHTON
Cash?!

He gives Ed a look.

CREIGHTON
...Usually we do this kind of thing
with a bank draft. But cash--that's
fine--it's all the same in the end--
dough's dough, huh?

ED
Sure.

CREIGHTON
I got the paperwork here. Partnership
papers here, they reflect our
agreement: fifty-fifty on the net, I
supply professional services, you
supply the capital. I'll give you a
receipt on the dough there, huh?

ED
Yeah.

CREIGHTON
Pretty straightforward, but I don't
know if you wanna show this stuff to
a lawyer--

ED
It's OK.

CREIGHTON
Yeah, screw 'em, huh? Pay 'em to
tangle it up and then you pay 'em to
untangle it, what's the point?

He perspires as he counts the money.

CREIGHTON
...Just a second here, I'll give you
a receipt on the, uh... Whoa,
Nellie... Oh, by the way, we didn't
talk about this, I, uh, I think I'm
gonna call the place Tolliver's,
after me, you know, I didn't think
you were much interested in, uh--

ED
That'll be fine.

CREIGHTON
Yeah, good. Lemme just, uh...

He wipes his brow, finishes counting.

CREIGHTON
...Yeah, that's it. As per our
discussion.

ED
Uh-huh.

Creighton hands Ed an executed agreement and a receipt.

CREIGHTON
Well, there it is. Writ large in
legal escritura, next step is--

ED
Look, uh... Creighton...

He gives Creighton a level stare, smoke pluming from the
cigarette planted in his mouth.

ED
...You're not gonna screw me on this?

CREIGHTON
Screw you--Jesus! Take it to a
lawyer! No, I insist! This is *dry*
cleaning, this is not some fly-by-
night thing here! I must say, I've
been an entrepreneur for thirteen
years and I've never--

ED
All right.

CREIGHTON
And I've never been asked--Look, you
want the dough back? You know who I
am! You--

ED
OK.

Creighton mops his brow again.

CREIGHTON
So, uh... Tolliver's is OK then?

CAR

sits
Ed drives with the usual cigarette in his mouth. Doris
next to him. Rural scenery slips by in the background.

ED (V.O.)
The next day was Saturday. We were
going to a reception for Doris' cousin
Gina, who'd just married a wop vintner
out near Modesto. Doris didn't much
feel like going, and I didn't either,

but, like she said, we had a
Commitment.

Doris gazes stonily out at the road. At length:

DORIS
...I hate wops.

Ed gives her a brief glance. Doris glares at him.

DORIS
...What's so damn strange about that?

ED
I didn't say a word.

She looks back out at the road.

DORIS
...*You* didn't have to grow up with
'em.

This brings nothing from Ed. Doris shakes her head.

DORIS
...Family. Boy.

BY A BARN

Wops in Sunday clothing greet each other around tables
piled
with food.

A small child runs up to his mother, yanks on her dress
and
screams:

CHILD
He's ridin' Garibaldi! Uncle Frankie's
ridin' Garibaldi!

Surrounded by cheering children, with a jug of wine slung
over his shoulder, Frank is riding an enormous pig. He
slaps
at the pig's ass with a large straw hat.

ED (V.O.)
That was when she started drinking.

Doris is standing by one of the tables, drinking red wine
from a water glass. Ed stands nearby.

A large woman hugs Doris.

WOMAN
How you doin', Doris, you been OK?

DORIS
How're you, Constanza?

WOMAN

Oh, you know, I got my health'. And how you been, uh...

ED

Ed.

WOMAN

Ed. How's a business?

ED

OK.

WOMAN

(to Doris)

He's a barber, right? It's a good trade. So how come you got no kids?

PICNIC TABLE

a A group of kids pulls Frank, laughing, by the hand toward picnic table set out with pies in a row.

VOICES

Uncle Frankie's gotta join! Wait for Frankie!

FRANK

No, come on, kids--I just ate lunch!

VOICES

No, no--Uncle Frankie's gotta join!

An old man stands by with a stopwatch.

OLD MAN

Ready...

He clicks the timer.

OLD MAN

...Go!

the Frank and the line of children plunge their faces into line of blueberry pies.

The other picnickers cheer them on.

ELSEWHERE

Ed and Doris approach the innocent-looking young couple accepting congratulations.

Doris, holding her empty glass, is not a happy drunk:

DORIS

'Congratulations, Gina. It's so goddamn wonderful.

ED

Congratulations, Gina.

DORIS
Life is so goddamn wonderful, you
almost won't believe it.

ED
Honey...

DORIS
It's just a goddamn bowl of cherries,
I'm sure.

Ed tries to lead her away.

ED
Honey...

Doris calls back over her shoulder:

DORIS
Congratulations on your goddamn
cherries!

As Ed and Doris recede we hear her petulant:

DORIS
...Leggo my goddamn elbow.

ELSEWHERE

staggering In a long shot we see Frank at the crest of a hill,
slowly, painfully, toward a tree. In his right hand he
clutches a trophy.

against When he reaches the tree he swings his free hand up
it, leans forward, and vomits.

CAR

Late afternoon, driving home.

snoring Ed drives. Doris sits in the front passenger seat,
lightly. Frank sits in the back seat hugging his trophy
to his chest, eyes closed, murmuring:

FRANK
I never wanna see another blueberry
pie...

Silence.

FRANK
...I never even wanna hear those
words.

Doris moans.

More silence.

FRANK

...Don't says those words, Ed.

EXT. BUNGALOW

is
side
drunk.

It is twilight. Ed's coupe is parked in the driveway. He just rounding the back of the car to open the passenger-side door. He pulls Doris from the car, half asleep, half

INT. BUNGALOW

The door swings open and Ed stumbles in supporting Doris, who has one arm draped around his neck. He helps her into the bedroom and eases her onto the bed.

He sits on the edge of the bed and looks down at her.

She
with

Shadows from branches just outside wave across her face. She is breathing through her open mouth; her face is moist with perspiration.

ED (V.O.)

I'd met Doris blind on a double-date with a loudmouthed buddy of mine who was seeing a friend of hers from work. We went to a movie; Doris had a flask; we killed it. She could put it away. At the end of the night she said she liked it I didn't talk much. A couple weeks later she suggested--

not
the

A harsh jangle from the telephone. Doris moans but does wake; Ed rises and does to the living room and picks up the phone.

ED

Yeah.

VOICE

Ed, it's Big Dave. I gotta talk to you.

ED

What--now?

DAVE

Please, Ed.

ED

But it's...

DAVE
Please, Ed.

Ed sighs.

ED
Your place?

DAVE
I'm at Nirdlinger's. Let yourself
in.

ED
OK.

He hangs up.

He nudges Doris.

ED
...Honey.

She murmurs.

ED
...Honey.

She rolls away and burrows into a pillow.

Ed opens her purse and pokes through it.

NIRDLINGER'S

We are looking over Ed's shoulder as he hesitantly swings
open a door.

It reveals Big Dave's office, quiet and rather dark.

A down-facing banker's lamp on the desk illuminates Big
hands on the desktop.

Dave's

ED
...Dave?

DAVE
Come on in.

Ed enters, sits.

An awkward silence.

ED
...What's the problem, Big Dave?

Another silence.

DAVE
...I'm ruined.

His hands writhe on the desktop.

DAVE
...It ruined me. This money. No annex.
I'm all shot to hell.

ED
So you paid the guy?

Big Dave stares without speaking.

After a long beat:

DAVE
...What kind of man **are** you?

ED
...Huh?

DAVE
What kind of man **are** you?

ED
Big Dave--

DAVE
I'd understand if you'd walked in
here. Socked me in the nose. Whatever.
I deserved it.

ED
I, uh...

DAVE
I'm not proud of what I did. But
you.

No one talks.

Big Dave sighs.

DAVE
...Yeah, I paid up. As you well know.
And then I went and found the pansy.

He looks at Ed.

DAVE
...Got nothin' to say, huh? Yeah,
well, you already know the story. I
didn't, I hadda beat it out of the
pansy. **Your** money.

No response.

DAVE
...What kind of man **are** you?

Big Dave rises.

DAVE
...Well.

He crosses around the desk and adds, sadly:

DAVE
...I'm all shot to hell.

him. Ed starts to rise, but Big Dave is already looming over

Big Dave bear-hugs him and then spins him into a wall.

Ed hits the wall and bounces off, back into Big Dave. Big Dave wallops him in the stomach. Ed doubles over.

DAVE
...What kind of man *are* you?

the Big Dave hurls him against the desk, then slams his face against the desktop. Ed's hands scrabble at the top of

slams desk as Big Dave grabs him by the neck and lifts. He

him face-first into the window between the office and the dark sales floor.

against Ed twists around, the back of his head now pressed the glass. Big Dave's hands lock around his throat.

Big Dave sweats and strains.

A crack shoots up the pane of glass.

Ed's hand sweeps up and plunges something into Big Dave's neck.

to Big Dave grunts and turns away, gurgling. His hands go up his throat.

Ed watches. He is holding Big Dave's cigar trimmer.

Big Dave takes a couple of deliberate steps backward, his head twisted away.

face- He falls back, tripped up by a chair, which spins him down onto the floor.

knees Big Dave crawls away face-down across the floor, on his
knees but with his hands still at his throat. His face and
something awkwardly support his weight as if he were pushing across the floor with his nose.

himself He reaches a corner but still pushes forward, wedging
through in, legs still scraping away as if to push himself the wall. Blood is pooling out from under him.

continues. Big Dave's legs are still working. His gurgling

Ed watches.

His Big Dave's legs start to move furiously. They convulse.
whole body shakes as he goes into shock.

Ed watches.

the Big Dave stops shaking. He remains wedged awkwardly into
corner, face-down. He is still.

The room is very quiet.

Ed looks down at his hands.

He walks across the room, pushes the door open and walks
across the darkened sales floor.

EXT. STORE

Ed walks to his car. He does not look about, is not
particularly furtive. He gets into the car. He starts the
ignition.

EXT. HOUSE

something He pulls up, sits motionless for a beat. Gradually,
through draws his attention; he cocks his head and looks up
the windshield.

A branch creaks and sways in the breeze.

INT. HOUSE

Ed gets into bed next to Doris. He stares at the ceiling.
Wind rustles outside.

the The shadow of a branch on the ceiling nods in time with
wind.

He looks at Doris.

mouth Her face is still lightly sheened with sweat but her
shadows is closed now, her breathing more peaceful. The leafy
play over her face.

ED (V.O.)

...It was only a couple of weeks
after we met that Doris suggested
getting married. I said, Don't you
wanna get to know me more? She said,

Why, does it get better? She looked at me like I was a dope, which I've never really minded from her. And she had a point, I guess. We knew each other as well then as now...

He is gazing at her.

ED (V.O.)
...Anyway, well enough.

Sound and image fade.

BARBERSHOP

The next day.

Ed cuts hair, a cigarette between his lips.

FRANK
Holy-moly, do I got a headache.

Frank is giving a haircut as well.

FRANK
...How you today, Ed?

ED
OK.

FRANK
You don't got a headache?

ED
...Nah.

FRANK
Damn, I got a headache to beat the band.

LATER

tilted Ed sits in his chair, hands folded in his lap, head
back, eyes closed.

talking We hold on Ed as we hear a clipper buzzing and Frank
to someone in his chair.

FRANK
Ya can't pump it. Did ya pump it?
That'll just flood it.

CUSTOMER
Ya gotta pump it. Ya can't just hold
it down. *That'll* flood it.

FRANK
You crazy? You pumped it?

CUSTOMER

Well, ya can't hold it down.

There is the jingle of the door bell. Ed opens his eyes.

Two men in fedoras are entering.

Ed starts to rise.

MAN 1

Ed Crane?

ED

Right.

MAN 1

Come on outside.

ED

Sure.

OUTSIDE

hesitant
icebreaker:

The two men are staring at the sidewalk, smoking,
to speak. One of them finally comes up with an

MAN 2

...So you're a barber, huh?

ED

That's right.

MAN 1

I'm Officer Persky. This is Krebs.

Ed nods toward their car:

ED

...We goin'?

KREBS

Huh? No.

Beat.

PERSKY

...Cigarette?

Ed holds up one hand with its smoking cigarette.

PERSKY

Right. Uh... Pete's got some news
for you.

His partner gives Persky a dirty look.

KREBS

...Look, pal, it's a tough break,
but, uh... well damnit, your wife's

been pinched.

PERSKY
They sent us to tell ya.

ED
Huh?

KREBS
They sent us to tell ya. We pulled
the detail.

ED
My *wife*?

PERSKY
Yeah, uh, they brung her to the county
jail, uh...

KREBS
Homicide.

PERSKY
Well, embezzlement. And homicide. A
guy named David Brewster. He's, uh...
He's the decedent.

ED
I don't understand.

KREBS
He's the dead guy.

Ed stares at him.

PERSKY
...Yeah, it's a tough break.

KREBS
Visiting ends at five. Too late today.
You can see her tomorrow.

PERSKY
Sorry, pal. They sent us to tell ya.

He shakes his head.

PERSKY
...Crap detail.

RESIDENTIAL STREET

lined
goes
up a
hand of greeting.

It is evening. Ed is pulling up to a house on a tree-
street similar to his own. He gets out of his car and
up the walk, and a man sitting on the porch swing holds

MAN

'Lo, Ed.

ED
Hello, Walter.

He steps up on the porch.

clinks
sweat,
The man is holding a tumbler of whiskey and ice that
as the swing moves. His skin glistens with drinker's
and he has the slightly expansive manner of someone who's
put at least a couple away.

WALTER
Have a seat.

Ed glances around but the swing is the only seat. He sits
next to Walter.

ED
Thanks. Thanks for seeing me, at
home.

WALTER
Oh, hell. Drink?

ED
No thanks.

WALTER
Sure you don't need one?

ED
I'm fine.

WALTER
OK. Boy. Jesus!

ED
Yeah. What do I, uh...

WALTER
Well, of course, I, uh, it's out of
my league, criminal stuff. I do, uh,
probate, real estate, title search,
uh... I'd be absolutely worthless,
something like this. Absolutely
worthless.

He belches.

WALTER
'Scuse me, just finished dinner. Um.
Frankly, Doris'd be better off with
the county defender.

ED
He a good man?

WALTER

Bert's OK, sure, he's a good man. I won't kid you though, Ed, nobody around here has any experience with this kind of, er... And I hear they're bringing a prosecutor up from Sacramento. Capital offense. Taking it seriously... Hmm...

ED

So--

WALTER

Taking it seriously.

ED

So, who should I--

The front door opens and someone speaks through the screen:

VOICE

You want any coffee, Dad?

Ed looks around at the voice.

VOICE

Oh, hello, Mr Crane.

She steps out: it is Birdy Abundas.

Ed rises, and they awkwardly shake hands.

ED

Hello, Rachel.

BIRDY

I'm so sorry... I was sorry to hear.

ED

Yeah. Thanks.

WALTER

Coffee, Ed?

ED

I'm fine. Thanks.

WALTER

No thanks, honey.

BIRDY

OK. Nice to see you, Mr Crane.

They watch her go back in.

WALTER

Damnit! She's a good kid.

Ed nods.

A beat.

ED

...So, uh, who should I--

WALTER

Well, there's Lloyd Garroway in San Francisco. Probity--you know, no one ever said anything iffy about Lloyd Garroway. Conservative. Jury might like that. Might like that here.

He takes a sip of his drink.

WALTER

...Probity.

ED

Uh-huh. Is he the best then, for, uh...

WALTER

Well, the best, the money-is-no-object best, for a criminal case, any lawyer would tell you Freddy Riedenschneider. Out of Sacramento. 'Course, I don't know how you're fixed for money.

ED

Uh-huh. He's the, uh...

WALTER

Yeah, the best.

He sniffs.

WALTER

...Yeah, Riedenschneider. Wish I could tell you more. Hell, I wish I could handle it myself. But I'd be absolutely worthless for this kind of thing.

He takes a musing sip.

WALTER

...Criminal matter? Freddy Riedenschneider.

He thinks.

WALTER

...No question about it.

ED AT A TABLE

sides,
is
across

It is a long table with chairs stretching down both one side for prisoners, the other for visitors. The room is empty except for a guard and an elderly woman who sits

younger
is

from a younger woman at the far end of the table. The woman, in a prison smock, is wailing. The elderly woman holding her hand.

printed

Ed sits across from an empty chair, clutching a flower-toiletries kit. There are echoing voices suggesting large spaces outside the room.

He sits and waits.

Approaching footsteps.

The door opens. A large prison matron steps aside to let Doris enter.

Doris looks lost in a prison-issue jumper that is too big for her. Her hair is uncurled and bedraggled. Not only is she not made-up, she has a couple of bruises and a cut on her lip.

As Ed stands, she gives a hollow look around.

ED

Honey... I brought your make-up.

She looks at him.

DORIS

Honey.

ED

How are you?

She shrugs.

DORIS

I don't know what's going on. I--

ED

What happened to you?

She shakes her head.

DORIS

...I don't know what happened to Big Dave. I know some of it. Irregularities in my books, they said. Can I explain it.

ED

You don't have to--

DORIS

I helped him cook the books, Ed. I did do that.

ED

You don't have to tell them anything.

We're getting you a lawyer.

Doris doesn't seem to be listening. She sighs:

DORIS

I know all about that. But I don't know how much to tell them.

ED

Don't tell 'em anything. We're getting you Freddy Riedenschneider.

Doris finally looks at him.

DORIS

Should I... should I tell you why?

ED

You don't have to tell me anything.

Her gaze drifts away again. She notices the sobbing woman.

DORIS

Jesus Christ.

Doris looks around and laughs.

DORIS

...My books used to be perfect. Anyone could open them up, make sense of the whole goddamn store.

ED

Honey...

DORIS

I knew we'd pay for it.

BARBERSHOP

Frank Ed sits in a waiting-customer chair, wearing his smock. paces in front of him. He smacks a fist into his palm.

FRANK

This is what family is for, Ed! This is when ya come together!

ED

Yeah.

FRANK

Close ranks! Goddamnit! Those sons of bitches!

ED

Frank, uh, you know I'll try to contribute, but, uh--Freddy Riedenschneider--

FRANK

I don't care what it costs! This is when ya come together!

ED

That's very generous.

FRANK

The hell with it, Eddie!

BANK

lobby.
Ed and Frank sit waiting on a bench in the high-vaulted lobby. Frank looks uncomfortable in an ill-fitting suit. As they wait, he looks nervously about.

In a hushed voice:

FRANK

They're just people like you and me, Ed. Remember that.

ED

Uh-huh.

FRANK

Just people. They gotta put up the big front so that people will trust them with their money. This is why the big lobby, Ed. But they put their pants on one leg at a time. Just like you and me.

ED

Uh-huh.

FRANK

They too use the toilet, Ed. In spite of appearances. And their money will be secured by the barbershop. A rock. A *rock*, the barbershop. I mean, how long has *this* place been here?

A door opens. A conservatively dressed man of late middle age emerges.

MAN

Mr Raffo?

Frank hops to his feet.

FRANK

Yes, sir.

MAN

Could you come with me please?

FRANK

Sure. Can Ed come too?

The man looks dubiously at Ed.

MAN

Mr...?

ED

Crane. Ed Crane.

MAN

You also have an interest in the securing property?

FRANK

He's a barber.

MAN

Ah.

FRANK

Second chair.

MAN

Not an owner.

FRANK

No, he's family, he's my brother-in-law.

MAN

Ah-hah. It would be best if he waited here.

and
the
He goes to the glass-paned doorway to his office, Frank trailing dejectedly behind. They enter, the door closes, we hear their muffled voices from inside, the sense of words lost.

of
cupped
Ed sits and watches the two men perform their pantomime business: Frank nervously reads documents with one hand to his forehead for concentration; the banker passes successive documents across his desk with a word of explanation for each as Frank signs.

Ed takes out a cigarette and lights it, watching impassively.

ED (V.O.)

The barbershop. Doris and Frank's father had worked thirty years to own it free and clear. Now it got signed over to the bank, and the bank signed some money over to Frank, and Frank signed the money over...

TRACKING POINT OF VIEW

It is midday. We are tracking along the sidewalk toward a

of
is

long cream-colored Packard parked at the curb. A couple
kids have stopped to peer into the car's windows; the car
no doubt the fanciest in town.

ED (V.O.)

...to Freddy Riedenschneider, who
got into town two days later...

that
spells

Ed, coming up the sidewalk, looks up at the storefront: a
restaurant with a large window with a plush red drape
obscures the interior. Gilt lettering on the window
out "DaVinci's".

ED (V.O.)

...and told me to meet him at
DaVinci's for lunch.

TRACKING POINT OF VIEW

whose
menu

Inside the restaurant. We are tracking toward a table
lone occupant sits with his back to us holding open a
as he orders from a facing waitress:

MAN

...not fried, poached. Three of 'em
for two minutes. A strip steak medium
rare, flapjacks, potatoes, tomato
juice, and plenty of hot coffee.

He flips the menu over.

MAN

...Do you have prairie oysters?

WAITRESS

No, sir.

MAN

Then bring me a fruit cocktail while
I wait.

He looks up at Ed.

MAN

...You're Ed Crane?

ED

Yeah--

MAN

Barber, right? I'm Freddy
Riedenschneider. Hungry? They tell
me the chow's OK here. I made some
inquiries.

ED

No thanks, I--

The waitress sets a fruit cocktail in front of Riedenschneider.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

Look, I don't wanna waste your time so I'll eat while we talk. Ya mind? *You* don't mind. So while I'm in town I'll be staying at the Hotel Metropole, the Turandot Suite. Yeah, it's goofy, the suites're named after operas; room's OK though, I poked around. I'm having 'em hold it for me on account of I'll be back and forth. In addition to my retainer, you're paying hotel, living expenses, secretarial, private eye if we need to make inquiries, headshrinker should we go that way. We'll talk about appeals if, as and when. For right now, has she confessed?

ED

No. Of course not. She didn't do it.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

Good! That helps. Not that she didn't do it, that she didn't confess. Of course, there's ways to deal with a confession, but that's good!--one less thing to think about. Now. Interview. I'm seeing her tomorrow. You should be there. Three o'clock. One more thing: you keep your mouth shut. I get the lay of the land, I tell *you* what to say. No talking out of school. What's out of school? Everything's out of school. I do the talking; you keep your trap shut. I'm an attorney, you're a barber; you don't know anything. Understood?

ED

...OK.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

Good! Any questions give me a ring-- Turandot suite; if I'm out leave a message. You sure you don't want anything? No?

He points a finger at Ed.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

...You're OK, pal. You're OK, she's OK. Everything's gonna be hunky-dory.

The waitress puts down a plate of steak and eggs.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...And the flapjacks, honey.

DRIVING POINT OF VIEW

We are looking at pedestrians on the sidewalk through the windshield of a moving car.

ED (V.O.)
All going about their business. It seemed like I knew a secret--a bigger one even than what had really happened to Big Dave, something none of them knew...

On Ed, driving.

ED (V.O.)
...Like I had made it to the outside, somehow, and they were all still struggling, way down below.

ED IN BED

Arms folded behind his head, staring at the ceiling.

On the ceiling is the moving shadow of a tree limb.

A distant, muffled knock.

Ed turns his head.

FRONT DOOR

Ed opens it as he finishes cinching a bathrobe.

a
her
The woman waiting on the front porch is dressed in black:
black dress and a black veiled hat that is too big for
bird-like frame.

Wind rustles in the trees behind her.

She stares at Ed.

tremulous
ED
Ann.
For the first time, we hear her speak, in a low,
voice:

ANN
Hello, Ed.

ED
Ann. Will you come in?

She shakes her head.

ANN
...No, No, it's very late.

Ed nods.

to After an uncomfortable beat, through which she continues
stare:

ED
...I'm so sorry about your loss.

ANN
Yes. Thank you.

ED
Of course, you know, Doris had nothing
to do with it. Nothing at all.

She lays a black-gloved hand on his arm.

ANN
Oh, I know. Don't worry, Ed. I came
to tell you...

ED
Yes, Ann?

ANN
And you should tell Doris...

She falls silent. The trees behind her rustle.

She gives a wary look back. Then, confidingly, to Ed:

ANN
...You know how Big Dave loved
camping. And the out-of-doors.

Ed is puzzled:

ED
Yes?

ANN
We went camping last summer. In
Eugene, Oregon. *Outside* of Eugene,
Ed.

She gives him a searching look, hoping, it seems, that he
will find this significant.

ED
...Yes?

ANN
At night, there were lights--we both
saw them. We never told anyone,
outside of our official report.

ED

Ann--

ANN

A spacecraft. I saw the creatures. They led Big Dave onto the craft. He never told anyone what they did, outside of his report. Of course he told *me*. No one else.

ED

Ann--

ANN

The government knows. I cannot repeat it to you. But this thing goes deep, Ed. This was not your wife. I goes deep, and involves the government. There is a great deal of fear. You know how certain circles would find it--the knowledge--a threat. They try to limit it, and--

ED

Ann, will you come in, sit down, maybe have a drink?

ANN

Sometimes knowledge is a curse, Ed. After this happened, things changed. Big Dave... he never touched me again.

Ed says nothing.

She touches his arm.

ANN

...Tell Doris not to worry. I know it wasn't her. Perhaps this will bring it out, finally. Perhaps now it will all come out.

She turns and heads down the walk.

Her high-heeled footsteps echo on the walk, then the sidewalk, then are lost in the rustle of leaves.

Ed watches her go: a small black figure, growing smaller.

PRISON MEETING ROOM

It is an unadorned room with a simple wooden table and chairs. One high window lets in a shaft of sunlight.

Ed and Doris sit at the table; Freddy Riedenschneider stands to one side staring up at the high window, hands dug into his pockets.

All three are motionless for a long beat. Finally:

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

...It stinks.

DORIS

But it's true.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

I don't care it's true, it's not true; it stinks. You say he was being blackmailed; by who? You don't know. For having an affair; with who? You don't know. Did anyone else know about it? Probably not; you don't know.

ED

I knew about it. Big Dave told me about it, and the spot he was putting himself in by getting the money.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

Terrific. Your husband backs you up. That's terrific.

He starts pacing.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

...You've gotta give me something to work with. Freddy Riedenschneider is good, but he's not a magician. He can't just wave his little wand in the air and make a plausible defense materialize. Look. Look at what the other side is gonna run at us. They got the company books, prepared by you--*cooked* by you--that's Motive. They got a murder scene *you* had access to. That's Opportunity. They got that little trimmer thing he was stabbed in the throat with--a *dame's* weapon--

ED

It was Big Dave's.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

--don't interrupt me--that's Means. They got a fine upstanding pillar of the business community as a victim, and then they got *you*, a disgruntled number-juggling underling who on the day in question was drunk as a skunk and whose alibi for the time in question is being passed out at home, alone.

ED

I was with her.

Riedenschneider gives him a hard look.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...Like I say, it stinks.

Another long pause.

ED
...I killed him.

Riedenschneider eyes him. Wheels start turning.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
OK, we forget the blackmail. *You*
killed him. How come?

ED
He and Doris... were having an affair.

Doris eyes him. His manner does not reveal anything.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
OK, how did you know?

ED
I... just knew. A husband knows.

Riedenschneider rolls his eyes.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
Will anyone else say they knew?

ED
I don't know. I don't think so.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
How did you get into the store?

ED
I took Doris's keys.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
Will anyone say they saw you there?
On your way there? In there? On your
was back?

ED
...I don't think so.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
Will anyone corroborate and goddamn
part of your story at all?

Ed returns Riedenschneider's stare. Riedenschneider
resumes
pacing.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...Come on, people. You can't help
each other like that. Let's be
realistic now. Let's look at our
options. Well, frankly, I don't *see*

any options.

A nod of the head indicates Doris:

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...I cannot present Story A.

Another nod indicates Ed:

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...I cannot present Story B. I could plead you for a nutcase but you look too composed. I could offer a guilty plea and in return they don't give you the juice, but I don't think you want to spend the rest of your life in Chino and I know you didn't hire Freddy Riedenschneider to hold your hand at a sentencing hearing. Hell, you could've gotten Lloyd Garroway for that. No, we're not giving up yet; you hired Freddy Riedenschneider, it means you're *not* throwing in the towel. I litigate, I don't capitulate. All right, no options, we gotta think. All right, we go back to the blackmail thing. It titillates, it's open ended...

His pacing becomes more animated.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...And it makes *him* the bad guy-- ya dig around, ya never know, something unsavory from his past, he approaches you to help with the money, it's too late, his past comes back to haunt him, who's to say...

He is heading for the door.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...Yeah. OK. Forget the jealous husband thing, that's silly; we're going with the blackmail. I'll be in touch.

The door slams.

HOTEL LOBBY

The camera drifts in toward the reception desk. Ed talks to the clerk behind the desk, but the scene plays silently; we hear only Ed's narration.

ED (V.O.)
Of course, there was *one* person who could confirm Doris's story, or plenty of it: the dry-cleaning

pansy...

The desk clerk is shaking his head.

ED (V.O.)

...But he'd left the hotel, skipped
out on his bill...

HALLWAY

is It is a rooming-house hallway. A stern middle-aged woman
on the hall telephone. This too plays silently under the
narration.

ED (V.O.)

He'd also disappeared from the
residence he gave me...

ED'S LIVING ROOM

and We are drifting in toward Ed, who nods at the telephone
holds. then cradles it. He stares down at the business card he

ED (V.O.)

...owing two month's rent. How could
I have been so stupid. Handing over
\$10,000. For a piece of paper. And
the man gone... like a ghost...

PULLING BACK FROM ED

clasped In a different living room. He sits on a sofa, hands
voice- behind his head, listening. For the first time, as the
over continues, we hear atmosphere from the scene: piano
music.

ED (V.O.)

...disappeared into thin air,
vaporized, like the Nips at Nagasaki.
Gone now. All gone. The money gone.
Big Dave gone. Doris going. How could
I have been so stupid?

nearby The continuing pull-back reveals Walter Abundas on a
chair, also listening as Birdy plays.

eyelids Walter holds a drink in one hand; he is nodding; his
closed, droop. As the piano piece reaches its mournful conclusion
his chin alights on his chest, his eyelids tremble
and he starts lightly to snore.

BARBERSHOP

chairs,

The distinctive buzz of electric hairclippers bangs in at the cut. Ed and Frank stand behind their respective administering haircuts.

do
that
some

The customer in Ed's chair is in white shirtsleeves that not hide rolls of fat. He has a hot towel over his face does not slow his speech, although it does muffle it to extent:

CUSTOMER

She makes this stuff, she calls it gatto, it's got egg in there, it's got sugar, it's got--it's cake, basically, except she calls it gatto. Like if you don't call it cake maybe you won't put on any weight, like I need to eat gatto, you know what I'm saying? This stuff, if I've had a square meal, I've had my steak and potatoes, I can just have another cup of coffee afterward, I won't ask for the desert if it's not there...

His voice turns into a drone under the narration.

ED (V.O.)

Sooner or later everyone needs a haircut...

CUSTOMER

Got the recipe from a magazine, woman's magazine...

ED (V.O.)

We were working for the bank now. We kept cutting the hair, trying to stay afloat, make the payments, tread water, day by day, day by day...

CRANE DOWN

table,
bailiff

Inside a courtroom we boom down toward the defendant's the fat customer's drone turning into the drone of the reading an indictment. Doris stands next to Freddy Riedenschneider.

ED (V.O.)

Most people think someone's accused of a crime, they haul 'em in and bring 'em to trial, but it's not like that, it's not that fast. The wheels of justice turn slow...

BAILIFF

...did willfully and with malice

aforethought take the life of one
David Allen Brewster, a human being...

ED (V.O.)

They have an arraignment, and then
the indictment, and they entertain
motions to dismiss, and postpone,
and change the venue, and alter this
and that and the other. They empanel
a jury, which brings more motions,
and they set a trial date and then
change the date, and then often as
not they'll change it again.

BAILIFF

What say you to these charges?

Our boom down has ended close on Doris. We hear Freddy
Riedenschneider, off:

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

We plead not guilty, your honor.

BARBERSHOP

Booming down toward the fat man.

ED (V.O.)

And through all of it we cut the
hair.

CUSTOMER

I say, Honey, if you're gonna make a
cobbler, make a little bit of cobbler,
don't put a whole pan in front of me
and tell me it's not gonna be any
good when it's cold...

OPERA SINGERS

We are panning photographic portraits of opera singers in
character, wearing the wardrobe of different eras,
armies,
depths
We
room,
a
floating in toward a bed on which Freddy Riedenschneider,
mask over his eyes, slumbers.

ED (V.O.)

...Meanwhile, Freddy Riedenschneider
slept at the Metropole...

RESTAURANT

Tracking in toward Freddy Riedenschneider, who sits
twirling

spaghetti with a fork against a spoon.

ED (V.O.)
...and shoveled it in at DaVinci's.

LATERAL TRACK

Among
to
From inside a car. Pedestrians bustle along a sidewalk.
them scurries a weedy little man who has one hand clamped
the crown of his hat to keep it in place in a stiff wind.

ED (V.O.)
He'd brought in a private investigator
from Sacramento...

LATERAL TRACK

crowd
his
obscurings
Moving the opposite way. A different day, but again a
moves along the sidewalk, and among them the little man
scuttles in the opposite direction, hand still raised to
hat, his forearm and the tilt of his head largely
his face.

ED (V.O.)
...to nose around into Big Dave's
past.

PUSHING IN TO ED

Birdy
In the Abundas living room again, again listening to
at the piano, but now the two of them are alone.

ED (V.O.)
I found myself more and more going
over to the Abundas's. It was a
routine we fell into, most every
evening. I even went when Walter was
away on his research trips. He was a
genealogist, had traced back his
side of the family seven generations,
his late wife's, eight. It seemed
like a screwy hobby. But then maybe
all hobbies are. Maybe Walter found
something there, in the old county
courthouses, hospital file rooms,
city archives, property rolls,
registries, something maybe like
what I found listening to Birdy play.
Some kind of escape. Some kind of
peace...

but
The piano music ends in a sustain which begins to fade,
then is snapped by a sharp clang.

PRISON DOOR SWINGS OPEN

room. We are pushing into the high-windowed prison meeting
None of its three occupants is moving.
The tableau consists of Doris staring down at the table;
the private investigator sitting on a straightbacked chair
tipped back against a wall, his arms folded across his chest,
his fedora pushed back on his head, a toothpick clamped
between his teeth; and Freddy Riedenschneider, standing, hands
clasped behind his back, gazing with a distant smile up into the
shaft of light that slants through the high window.
A warder shuts the door behind Ed.
Doris and the private investigator turn to note his
entrance; Riedenschneider does not.
Ed pulls out a chair across from Doris, clasps his hands
on top of hers.

ED

'Lo, honey.

She looks at his hands on top of hers.

A long beat.

Still gazing up into the shaft of light, Freddy
Riedenschneider announces:

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

...They got this guy, in Germany.
Fritz something-or-other. Or is it.
Maybe it's Werner. Anyway, he's got
this theory, you wanna test something,
you know, scientifically--how the
planets go round the sun, what
sunspots are made of, why the water
comes out of the tap--well, you gotta
look at it. But sometimes, you look
at it, your looking *changes* it. Ya
can't know the reality of what
happened, or what *would've* happened
if you hadden a stuck in your goddamn
schnozz. So there *is* no 'what
happened.' Not in any sense that we
can grasp with our puny minds. Because
our minds... out minds get in the
way. Looking at something changes
it. They call it the 'Uncertainty
Principle.' Sure, it sounds screwy,
but even Einstein says the guy's on

to something.

room, His gaze up at the window breaks. He strolls around the still smiling.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...Science. Perception. Reality.
Doubt...

He stops to examine a bur on his fingernail.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...Reasonable doubt. I'm sayin',
sometimes, the more you look, the
less you really know. It's a fact. A
proved fact. In a way, it's the only
fact there is. This heinie even wrote
it out in numbers.

He looks up at the private detective.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...Burns?

its With a slight weight shift, Burns tips his chair so that front legs slap down onto the floor. He fishes a small notebook from an inside pocket.

performance His boredom is profound; his only concession to is to move the toothpick from one side of his mouth to the other where, perhaps, it will less inhibit speech.

BURNS
Subject: David Allen Brewster. Born:
Cincinnati, 1911. Father: insurance
salesman; mother: homemaker. One
year Case Western University on
football scholarship. Flunks out.
1931: retail appliance salesman in
Barnhoff's department store,
Cincinnati. 1933: meets Ann
Nirdlinger, married later that year,
moves here. 1935: arrested on an
assault complaint; complainant, an
organizer for the ILGWU, has a broken
nose, couple of ribs, wife's family
intercedes, some kind of settlement,
charges dropped. 1936: another assault
beef, bar altercation--

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
Yeah, yeah, couple of fistfights. Go
to his service record.

Burns looks at him sourly. He flips a couple of pages.

BURNS

...Inducted March 15, 1942, assigned to fifth fleet US Navy, petty officer first class, serves in clerical capacity in US naval shipyards in San Diego, one fistfight broken up by MPs, no court martial, honorable discharge May 8, 1945. Since then he's been clean.

Riedenschneider nods, smiling.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

...Thank you, Burns, get lost.

hands

Burns pockets his notebook, adjusts his hat, jams his into his pockets, and ambles out of the room.

The slam of the door leaves quiet.

At length:

ED

...So?

Riedenschneider's fixed smile now fades.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

So? *So?!* This could be your dolly's ticket out of the deathhouse, so!

Ed and Doris look at each other.

ED

...I don't get it.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

Look, chum, this is a guy, from what I understand, told everybody he was a war hero, right? Island hopping, practically liberated the Pacific all by himself with a knife in one hand and a gun in the other and twenty yards of Jap guts between his teeth.

ED

Yeah.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

And now it turns out this dope spent the war sitting on his ass in some boatyard in San Diego. You asked for blackmail, let me give you blackmail: Mr Hale-Fellow-Well-Met, about to open his own business here, has been lying to everybody in this town for the last four years, probably including half the people sitting on that jury. Well, it finally caught up with him--these dopes, it always does; someone threatened to spill

it. Somebody knew his dirty little secret, just like your wife says. They called, they demanded money...

He is looking at Doris.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

...Did Big Dave mention that it was something about his war service? I don't know, I wasn't there, *you'll* have to tell *us*. Maybe he specified, maybe he didn't; I'm not putting words in your mouth; the point is that this liar, this cynical manipulator, this man who through his lies sneered and belittled the sacrifice and heroism of all our boys who *did* serve and bleed and puke and die on foreign shores, and who made a fool out of this entire town, turns to *you* to help him out of his jam. Fat-assed sonofabitch!

ED

So... who... who actually--

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

Who? *Who?!* I don't know who! But the point is that if Mr Prosecutor over there had devoted half the time he's spent persecuting *this* woman to even the most cursory investigation of this schmoe's past, then we might *know* who! But we can't *know* what really happened! Because of Fritz, or Werner, or whatever the hell his name is! And because Me Prosecutor is *also* a lazy fat-assed sonofabitch who decided it's easier to victimize your wife! Because it's easier *not* to look! Because the more you look, the less you know! But the beauty of it is, we don't *gotta* know! We just gotta show that, goddamnit, *they* don't know. Reasonable doubt. Science. The atom. *You* explain it to me. Go ahead. Try.

He chuckles as he heads for the door.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

...Yeah, Freddy Riedenschneider sees daylight. We got a real shot at this, folks. Let's not get cocky.

The door shuts behind him.

Doris stares down at the table, as at the head of the scene.

A silent beat; a smile starts to tug at the corners of

her

mouth.

ED

Honey...?

laugh.

The smile twitches, and then stays. Doris starts to

Ed frowns.

ED

...Honey?

subsides

Her laughter builds, almost to hysteria. Finally it

shakes

and, still staring at the tabletop and smiling, she

her head:

DORIS

What a dope.

ABUNDAS LIVING ROOM

moment,

Ed sits listening as Birdy plays. She talks, after a

her eyes on the sheet music:

BIRDY

He was deaf when he wrote this.

ED

Who?

BIRDY

Beethoven. He created it, and yet he never actually heard it. I suppose he heard it all in his head, somehow.

Over her continued playing:

ED (V.O.)

So maybe Riedenschneider could get Doris off. Maybe it would all work out. And I thought--I hoped--that maybe there was a way out for me as well...

A SIGN

1949,

The cardboard sign on an easel says "COME ONE, COME ALL / PETALUMA HIGH SCHOOL TALENT SHOW / WEDNESDAY APRIL 29,

8:00 P.M.

ED (V.O.)

The girl had talent, anyone could see that. And *she* wasn't some fly-by-nighter, she was just a good clean kid...

SCHOOL GYMNASIUM

makeshift A young man holding a saxophone is just leaving the stage to a smattering of applause. Birdy walks out to the baby grand that has been set out center stage.

ED (V.O.)

...If she was going to have a career she'd need a responsible adult looking out for her...

parents, We track up the rows of folding chairs that have been set out on the gym floor for the audience of students and rest many of whom fan themselves with programs. We come to on Ed.

ED (V.O.)

...some kind of... manager. She'd have contracts to look at, be going on tours, playing on the radio maybe. I could help her sort through all of that, without charging her an arm and a leg, just enough to get by...

Birdy begins to play for the quietly attentive audience.

EXT. SCHOOL

warm Ed is among the crowd streaming from the gym into the summer night. He looks around the parking lot.

ED (V.O.)

...I could afford to charge less than the usual manager, not having to put up a big front like a lot of these phonies. And I could be with her, enough to keep myself feeling OK...

A trace of a frown as he spots her leaning against a car, laughing, passing a cigarette back and forth with another student--a boy.

ED (V.O.)

...Why couldn't that work?... Why not?...

boy's Birdy's easy smile remains as Ed approaches, but the adults. drops; he puts on a face more suitable for meeting

BIRDY

Hi, Mr Crane.

ED

Hello, Birdy. I thought that was

very good.

BIRDY

Oh, in there? I messed up a little bit in the scherzo. I guess, if nobody noticed, it's OK. Mr Crane, this is Tony, a friend of mine. Tony, Mr Crane.

ED

Hello, Tony.

TONY

Hello, sir.

Silence. The teens wait for the adult to direct the conversation; Ed has nothing to say. At length, he clears his throat.

ED

...Well, congratulations. I guess I'll be getting home.

TONY

Nice to meet you, sir.

TURANDOT SUITE

the
It is morning. We are tracking past an unmade bed toward
bathroom, where we hear water running.

ED (V.O.)

...Anyway, that's what I was thinking about in the days leading up to the trial. It seemed like once that was over, I'd be ready for a new start. Freddy Riedenschneider was very optimistic. He was busy preparing...

Riedenschneider
water.
We have rounded the open bathroom door to find
hunched over the sink, toothbrush in hand, spitting out
He rises, looks at himself in the mirror, sprinkles some
tonic in his hair.

ED (V.O.)

...And finally it came... the first day of the trial...

Riedenschneider runs his fingers through his hair.

ED (V.O.)

...What Riedenschneider called the Big Show.

He straightens his tie, gives his neck a twist.

COURTROOM

hair.

We are close on the back of Riedenschneider's gleaming
He is sitting at the defense table.

There is a murmur of a crowd that has yet to be called to
order.

FRANK

Where's the judge? How come there's
no judge?

row

Ed and Frank sit next to each other in the first gallery
directly behind Riedenschneider.

FRANK

...Where's the judge, Ed?

Ed shrugs. Frank looks at Riedenschneider's back.

FRANK

...How come the judge doesn't come
out?

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

The judge comes in last. He'll come
in when Doris gets here.

FRANK

So where's Doris? I thought we started
at ten. Hey, Riedenschneider, where's
Doris?

Riedenschneider is curt:

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

She's late.

FRANK

Late? How can she be late?

Riedenschneider doesn't answer; Frank turns to Ed.

FRANK

...She's in prison, Ed. None of *us*
are in prison, and yet we're not
late. We're on time, Ed. How can
Doris be late? What, they don't have
wake-up calls?

judge's

The murmur of the crowd subsides as a door behind the
bench opens and the judge hurriedly enters.

down

The gallery rises but the judge quickly waves them back

Riedenschneider

and, rather than seating himself, leans forward over his
desk to give a peremptory beckoning wave to

and the prosecutor.

JUDGE

Counselors.

his
leaning
audible

Riedenschneider, puzzled, approaches the bench, as does counterpart from the other table. The judge, still forward, speaks to them in a low voice that is not from the gallery.

tones.

The crowd has started murmuring again, also in hushed tones. Frank leans in toward Ed.

FRANK

What's going on, Ed? I thought there would be arguments. The bailiff, and so forth...

suddenly

Ed, also puzzled, is watching Riedenschneider, who stiffens. As the judge continues to talk, Riedenschneider looks back over his shoulder at Ed.

FRANK

...Ed, what is this? Is this procedure?

The two lawyers nod at the judge and walk back to their respective tables. The judge now summons a uniformed man standing to one side.

JUDGE

Bailiff.

looks
various

As the judge and the bailiff confer, Riedenschneider looks down at his desk and, for something to do, straightens papers.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

I don't understand... We had a real shot at it... We could have won this thing...

The Bailiff Announces:

BAILIFF

In the matter of the State of California versus Doris Crane, Case Number 87249 assigned to this Superior Court...

As the bailiff drones, Riedenschneider shakes his head.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

...It doesn't make any sense...

BARBERSHOP

Late afternoon sun slants in.

his

The shop, not open for business, is very still. Ed, in courtroom suit, sits in one of the vinyl chairs that line the wall, hunched forward, forearms on his knees.

Frank, also still in his suit, is up in one of the barber chairs, one hand cupped to his forehead, weeping.

ED (V.O.)

She'd hanged herself. I'd brought her a dress to wear to court and she'd used the belt. I didn't understand it either. At first I thought maybe it had something to do with me, that she'd figured out somehow how I fit into it and couldn't stand it, couldn't stand knowing...

BEDROOM

Night. Ed is in bed, staring at the ceiling.

ED (V.O.)

...That wasn't it, I would find out later. For now, everything just seemed ruined...

METROPOLE LOBBY

Behind

Riedenschneider is at the cashier's desk, checking out. Behind him a bellman's cart is piled high with his bags.

ED (V.O.)

...Freddy Riedenschneider went back to Sacramento still shaking his head, saying it was the biggest disappointment of his professional career...

FRANK'S HOUSE

thrown

Day. Frank's kitchen. Frank sits at his kitchen table, staring, in a bathrobe over his pyjamas, unshaven.

ED (V.O.)

...Frankie fell to pieces. I suspect he was drinking; anyway, he stopped coming to work...

BARBERSHOP

Ed, in his smock, works on a customer.

ED (V.O.)

...That left me to keep the place going, or the bank would've taken it.

between As he uses the electric clippers, a cigarette plumes his lips. He squints against the smoke drifting past his eyes.

ED (V.O.)
...*I* was the principal barber now. I hired a new man for the second chair...

Ed's former chair is indeed being manned by a newcomer, a gangly young man who animatedly chats up his customer.

ED (V.O.)
...I'd hired the guy who did the least gabbing when he came in for an interview. But I guess the new man had only kept quiet because he was nervous; once he had the job, he talked from the minute I opened the shop in the morning...

EXT. BARBERSHOP

him gesticulating It is evening. Ed is locking the barbershop as, next to on the sidewalk, the new man continues to chat, to illustrate his store.

ED (V.O.)
...until I locked up at night. For all I know, he talked to himself on the way home.

STREET

Ed walks along the sidewalk.

ED (V.O.)
...When *I* walked home, it seemed like everyone avoided looking at me...

their averted eyes make the crowd a faceless throng. Indeed, none of the passers-by establish eye contact;

ED (V.O.)
...as if I'd caught some disease. This thing with Doris, nobody wanted to talk about it; it was like I was a ghost walking down the street...

HOUSE

As Ed lets himself in.

ED (V.O.)
...And when I got home now, the place
felt empty.

He sits on the couch and, after a beat, takes a cigarette
pack from his pocket and taps out a smoke.

ED (V.O.)
...I sat in the house, but there was
nobody there. I was a ghost; I didn't
see anyone; no one saw me...

BARBERSHOP

Ed is in his smock again, operating the clippers.

ED (V.O.)
...I was the barber.

OUT

FADE

The drone of the clippers has continued over the black. A
voice fades up:

VOICE 1
So two blocks later I look at the
change she gave me and, golly, I'm
two bits short.

VOICE 2
Two bits short.

VOICE 1
So I walk back over to Linton's,
find this gal--big argument; she
doesn't even recall the transaction.

VOICE 2
No recollection.

VOICE 1
Doesn't recall the transaction, no
recollection, so I said, Look, dear...

FADE IN

We are looking at a magazine story. Its headline, over an
illustration of a cresting wave, is: WAVE OF THE FUTURE.

equipment
read:
Underneath are black-and-white photographs of heavy
and racks of clothing on motorized tracks. Subheadlines
NEXT TO GODLINESS - Dry Cleaning Sweeps The Nation - The
Thoroughly Modern Way To Clean.

magazine.
Ed sits in one of the vinyl chairs, staring at Life
The offscreen conversation drones on as the new man works

on

a customer.

NEW MAN
...go ahead, look at the menu, if
you're in before six o'clock it's
the, whatchamacallit, the--

CUSTOMER
Early Bird Special.

NEW MAN
What? Yeah, the Early Riser...

photograph

in

Ed flips the pages of the magazine, and stops on a
of a dark desert landscape with one bright light hovering
the sky. The caption underneath: ROSWELL, NEW MEXICO.

VOICE
Crane?

Ed looks up.

question

momentarily

A man in a black suit and fedora has directed the
at the new man, who looks up from his gabbling,
slackjawed.

ED
...I'm Crane.

MAN
My name is Diedrickson. County medical
examiner.

ED
Yeah?

DIEDRICKSON
Just came for an informal chat...

Diedrickson looks around uncomfortably.

DIEDRICKSON
...Why don't I buy you a drink?

Ed rises from his chair and, as he unbuttons his smock,
addresses the new man, who still gapes.

ED
Dwight, you OK here for a few minutes?

DWIGHT
Whuh--uh, yeah, sure Ed, take your
time.

BAR

It is late afternoon, dusty and empty.

cocking

Ed and Diedrickson sit on adjacent stools, Diedrickson his hat lower to its man-sitting-at-a-bar position.

As the bartender approaches:

DIEDRICKSON

Rye.

ED

Just coffee.

DIEDRICKSON

You sure you don't want something stiffer?

Ed shrugs and shakes his head.

BARTENDER

Coffee it is.

bartop

He leaves. Diedrickson interlaces his fingers on the bartop and stares at them. After a beat:

DIEDRICKSON

...County M. E. does an autopsy on anyone who dies in custody. I don't know if you knew that. It's routine.

at

Ed doesn't answer. Diedrickson, after some more staring at his hands, plows on:

DIEDRICKSON

...Doesn't become a matter of public record unless there's foul play. However. I don't believe I'm *prohibited* from telling you this. I guess I'm not obliged to tell you, either. I don't exactly know. But if *I* were the man, I'd want to be told.

ED

Told what?

DIEDRICKSON

I, uh... thanks.

The bartender has set down the drinks.

his

Diedrickson waits for him to leave. He takes a hit from his glass. Finally:

DIEDRICKSON

...I'm sorry to add to your burden, Crane, but I'd want to know it it

was me. Your wife was pregnant. First trimester.

A pause.

DIEDRICKSON
...Well, there it is.

Another pause.

DIEDRICKSON
...I'm sorry.

He mutters to himself:

DIEDRICKSON
...Hell, I hope I've done the right thing.

ED
My wife and I had not... performed the sex act in many years.

Diedrickson stiffens.

DIEDRICKSON
(murmuring)
...Jesus.
(aloud)
...Well, that's not really my business.

He is hastily digging for money.

DIEDRICKSON
...I'm sorry. Well, there it is.

He leaves a couple of bills on the bar and mumbles as he leaves:

DIEDRICKSON
...Good luck, Crane.

His retreating footsteps echo down the bar.

APARTMENT HALLWAY

It is a dingy hallway lit by bare bulbs. Ed stands in the middle background, knocking on a door.

ED (V.O.)
Doris and I had never really talked much. I don't think that's a bad thing, necessarily. But it was funny: now I wanted to talk--now, with everyone gone. I was alone, with secrets I didn't want and no one to tell them to anyway.

The door opens and Ed is admitted by the unseen tenant.

APARTMENT

It
is overfurnished with heavy, ornate chairs, sideboards,
chests
too big for the space and all going too seed. Surface
areas
are covered with yellowing lacework or exotic brocades;
the
one lamp has a veil thrown over it to further scrim down
its
feeble light.

Our pan brings us onto Ed seated at a small card table
across
from a small elderly woman in a shawl who is the source
of
the murmuring. Her eyes are squeezed shut in
concentration
as she mumbles.

ED (V.O.)

I visited a woman who was supposed to have powers in communicating with those who had passed across, as she called it. She said that people who passed across were picky about who they'd communicate with, not like most people you run into on this side...

The woman opens her eyes and looks at Ed.

WOMAN

Giff me your hant.

Ed places his hand in the center of the table.

ED (V.O.)

...so you needed a guide who they didn't mind talking to, someone with a gift for talking to souls...

Ed looks at the woman's spotted and vein-lined hand as it rests upon his. Her mumbling resumes.

ED (V.O.)

...Well, first she told me that my wife was in a peaceful place, that our souls were still connected by some spiritual bond, that she had never stopped loving me even though she'd done some things she wasn't proud of...

Ed looks up at the old woman.

ED (V.O.)

...She was reading me like a book.

She is stealing a glance at Ed to check his reaction.

ED (V.O.)

...And then she started talking about 'Dolores' this and 'Dolores' that and was there anything I wanted to tell 'Dolores,' and I knew I'd just be telling it to the old bat. And even if somehow Doris could hear, it wouldn't be on account of this so-called medium.

APARTMENT HALLWAY

Ed is leaving.

ED (V.O.)

She was a phony. Just another gabber.

EXT. TENEMENT

Ed emerges from the building.

ED (V.O.)

I was turning into Ann Nirdlinger, Big Dave's wife. I had to turn my back on the old lady, on the veils, on the ghosts, on the dead, before they all sucked me in...

Ed disappears into the night.

ABUNDAS HOUSE

It is night. We are looking through the screen door.

Walter

Abundas sits in yellow lamplight by a small table on the side of the staircase, over which papers are strewn. He

is

murmuring into the telephone as he examines the papers, glasses halfway down his nose, a drink in one hand.

sets

Ed's hand enters to rap on the door. Walter looks up,

the phone down and comes to the door.

WALTER

Ed, how're you holding up?

ED

I'm OK, Walter, thanks.

Walter opens the door to him.

WALTER

I'm so damn sorry about your loss. Terrible thing. Just damn terrible.

ED

Yeah.

WALTER
Birdy's in the parlor--I'm on long
distance here.

ED
Sure, Walter. Thanks.

PARLOR

her: Birdy also has papers spread across a table in front of
homework. She looks up at Ed's entrance.

BIRDY
Hello, Mr Crane.

ED
Hello, Birdy.

BIRDY
We haven't seen you since... I'm
terribly sorry.

Ed sits across from her.

ED
Yeah.

BIRDY
We've certainly missed you.

ED
Birdy, I've been doing a lot of
thinking. There are a lot of things
that haven't worked out for me. Life
has dealt me some bum cards...

He is loading a cigarette into his mouth.

ED
...or maybe I just haven't played
'em right, I don't know. But you're--

BIRDY
Pop doesn't like people smoking in
here.

Ed stares. This takes a moment to register.

ED
Oh. Sorry.

Birdy lowers her voice:

BIRDY
Sometimes I have a cigarette in here
when he's away. Never when he's in
the house. He can smell it a mile
off.

Ed is pocketing the cigarette.

ED

Sure... Sure, it's his house.

BIRDY

That's what he keeps telling me.

Ed smiles thinly.

ED

Anyway, uh... my point is you're young. A kid really, your whole life ahead of you. But it's not too soon to start thinking... to start making opportunities for yourself. Before it all washes away.

BIRDY

Well, sure, I guess. Pop says so too. I work pretty hard at school.

ED

That's swell. However, the music, if you want to pursue it, well, the lessons from Mrs Swan, they'll only take you so far. There's this guy in San Francisco, I've made inquiries, everybody says he's the best. Trained lots of people who've gone on to have big concert careers, symphony orchestras, the works. His name is Jacques Carcanogues. I'm not sure I'm pronouncing it right. Anyway, he's a Frenchman.

BIRDY

Boy.

ED

You've got talent, anyone could see that. And he's the best. If he thinks a student has talent, he'll take 'em on for next to nothing. You're a cinch to be accepted, I could cover the cost of the lessons, like I said, it's pretty modest--

BIRDY

Oh, Mr Crane--

ED

I have to do it. I can't stand by and watch more things go down the drain. You're young, you don't understand.

BIRDY

Geez, Mr Crane, I don't know. I hadn't really thought about a career or stuff.

ED

I know you haven't. Look, just go meet him as a favor to me. I talked to this guy. Hope I pronounced his name right. He sounded very busy, but he's not a bad egg; he loosened up a little when I told him how talented you are. He agreed to see you this Saturday. He said maybe you were a diamond in the rough. His words.

BIRDY

Geez, Mr Crane.

ED

Just see him, as a favor to me.

STUDIO WAITING ROOM

leads
a
youngsters
lessons.
bow
cigarette

It is a small square room with straightbacked chairs set against the walls. At the far end of the room a door to a studio from which piano music dully emanates; it is fast and difficult piece of music.

Ed sits waiting. He is the only adult; two or three of different ages sit apparently waiting for their lessons.

Ed looks at one of the waiting boys in a white shirt and tie. He is perhaps eleven. His hair is greased back in a Junior Contour.

Another boy, in a cardigan sweater, sports a Butch.

The piano piece is ending. There is the murmur of voices. Dull footsteps.

The studio door swings open.

A small man in a rumpled black suit smudged with ash is bowing Birdy out the door. He has a goatee and a knotted foulard. His eyes flit over the waiting room and settle on Ed.

CARCANOQUES

...You are ze fahzer?

ED

No. Uh... family friend.

MAN

I am Carcanogues.

He smiles at Birdy.

MAN
...You wait, my dear?

BIRDY
Sure, Mr K.

A jerk of Carcanogues' head bids Ed rise.

STUDIO

Ed enters, uncomfortable. He looks around, taking in the
piano.
high-ceilinged space, which is dominated by a grand

Carcanogues has followed him and now runs water from a
tap.

CARCANOOGUES
I speak to you on ze phone, non? You
have a special interest in music?

ED
Uh-huh.

CARCANOOGUES
Ah yes, a music lover.

ED
Well, I don't pretend to be an expert.

CARCANOOGUES
Ah.

He uncaps a small bottle of pills, shakes two into his
palm,
tosses them back and washes them down.

CARCANOOGUES
...Ah-hah.

He twists a cigarette into a long holder, sticks it in
his
mouth and lights it.

CARCANOOGUES
...Mm.

ED
Well? How'd she do?

This elicits a Gallic frown of consideration.

CARCANOOGUES
Ze girl?... She seems like a very
nice girl. She *plays*, monsieur,
like a very nice girl. Ztinks. Very
nice girl. However, ztinks.

ED
I don't understand.

CARCANOOGUES

Is not so hard to understand. Her playing, very polite.

ED

Did she make mistakes?

Another gallic moue:

CARCANOOGUES

Mistake, no, it says E-flat, she plays E-flat. Ping-ping. Hit the right note, always. Very proper.

ED

I don't understand, no mistakes, she's just a kid--I thought you taught the, uh, the--

CARCANOOGUES

Ah, but that is just what I cannot teach. I cannot teach her to have a soul. Look, monsieur, play the piano, is not about the fingers. *Done* with the fingers, yes. But the music, she is inside. Inside, monsieur...

A two-handed gesture, indicating his heart.

CARCANOOGUES

...The music start here...

He waggles his fingers:

CARCANOOGUES

...come out through here; then, maybe...

His wave takes in the heavens:

CARCANOOGUES

...she can go up there.

ED

Well, look, I don't claim to be an expert--

CARCANOOGUES

Then you listen to me, for I am expert. That girl, she give me a headache. She cannot play. Nice girl. Very clever hands. Nice girl. Someday, I think, maybe, she make a very good typist.

DRIVING

We are driving through the rural countryside of northern California. It is a two-lane road with little traffic.

Sun

strokes the car through the passing trees.

unperturbed, Ed drives, glaring. Birdy, next to him, seems ever cheerful.

BIRDY
...I stank, didn't I?

ED
He didn't say that.

BIRDY
But more or less.

ED
Look, I'm no expert, but--

BIRDY
It doesn't matter, Mr Crane.

ED
I'm sure there's a dozen teachers better than this clown. More qualified. Goddamn phony.

BIRDY
But it doesn't matter. Really, I'm not interested in playing music professionally.

Ed looks at her.

BIRDY
...I'm not certain I'll have a career at all, and if I do, I'll probably be a veterinarian.

ED
...Uh-huh.

BIRDY
I do appreciate the interest you've taken, though.

ED
Ah... it's nothing.

BIRDY
I'm only sorry that I didn't play better for you. I know it would've made you happy. You know what you are?

ED
Huh.

BIRDY
You're an enthusiast.

ED
Huh. Yeah. Maybe...

He loads a cigarette into his mouth.

ED
...I guess I've been all wet.

BIRDY
But I do appreciate it, Mr Crane...

She reaches over to touch his thigh.

BIRDY
...I wanted to make you happy.

ED
Birdy--

BIRDY
It's OK...

She is leaning over his lap.

BIRDY
...I want to do it, Mr Crane.

Ed is shocked:

ED
Birdy!

wanting
He reaches awkwardly, wanting to push her away but not
to be violent.

ED
...No, please.

BIRDY
Please, Mr Crane, it's OK, please--

The blare of an oncoming horn.

Ed looks up, one hand struggling with Birdy, the other on
the wheel.

The oncoming car.

Ed swerves, tires screech into a skid, Birdy screams.

CRASH: the car hits a roadside tree.

BLACK.

ED (V.O.)
Time slows down right before an
accident, and I had time to think
about things. I thought about what
an undertaker had told me once--that
your hair keeps growing, for a while
anyway, after you die...

then

A hubcap is skipping in slow motion along the road and off the road, down an embankment.

ED (V.O.)

...and then it stops. I thought, what keeps it growing? Is it like a plant in soil? What goes out of the soil? The soul? And when does the hair realize that it's gone?

move

We are high, looking down at Ed, who is motionless, head resting on the steering wheel of the stopped car. We boom down toward his, slowly rotating as we move in. As we

we lose focus; Ed becomes more and more blurry.

bright

The blurry shape is now slowly spinning away from us, a revolving disc spinning up into the darkness until it disappears, leaving only black.

FADE IN

Ed sits on the front porch of his bungalow, smoking a cigarette in the late afternoon light.

children

A dog barks next door; a distant screen door slams; are playing somewhere up the street.

Ed looks down at his watch. It is 5:30.

driveway

Something attracts his attention: at the foot of his stands a man in a cream-colored suit and hat. He is a small figure, perfectly still, staring at the gravel driveway.

small

After a beat he lifts up a small clipboard, squints at the house, and jots something down.

the

He finishes writing, screws the lid back onto his pen, is sticking it into a breast pocket when he realizes he is being watched. His manner instantly warms.

and

is

MAN

Hello!

ED

Hello.

The man starts up the walk.

MAN

I notice you still have peastone in your driveway.

Yeah.

MAN

Well, of course, you don't have to rejuvenate that once every couple of years, don't you, when the peastone thins out.

Ed shrugs.

MAN

...Where does it go, huh? Like the odd sock. But you *know* where it goes--you probably pick pieces of it off your lawn all the time, churn it up with your lawn mower, sweep it off the walk here--pain in the neck.

Ed shrugs again.

ED

Doesn't bother me.

MAN

Well, have you ever considered tar Macadam? People think it's just for public works and commercial purposes, roads, parking lots, so forth...

A car pulls into the drive.

MAN

...but we have the technology now to bring it to the homeowner, the individual consumer, at a very reasonable price.

Doris emerges from the car.

MAN

...Mind if I show you the specifications?--Evening, ma'am.

Doris gives him a hard look.

DORIS

What're *you* selling?

The man gives a practiced laugh.

MAN

Well, ma'am, I was just telling your husband here about tar Macadam, for your home driveway here--these are the specs...

Doris takes the brochure he has pulled from a small case.

MAN

...It's the modern way to--

Doris tears the brochure in half and hands it back.

DORIS

Get lost.

Doris The man gazes at her. His smile fades fast and he and
 stare at each other, two hard cases.
 He turns stiffly and stalks off.
up Once his gaze has broken, Doris turns as well. She stalks
front the stairs to the porch and bangs through the screen
 door of the house, letting it slam behind her.

Quiet, early evening.

Ed sits, smoking.

At length he rises and goes in to the house.

INT. BUNGALOW

It is dim, no lights on yet. We hear banging and clomping
from the kitchen.

around Doris emerges with a clinking sound, chasing ice cubes
 a drink with a swizzle stick. Her face is still hard-set.
the With a groan of its old upholstery springs she sits onto
 couch.

ashtray Ed sits as well. He draws on his cigarette, drags an
 closer on the coffee table.

She sips. He puffs.

ED

...Doris--

DORIS

Nah, don't say anything. I'm alright.

The sit. The light is failing. The clink of ice cubes.

FADE

OUT

As In the black we hear machine noise of indistinct origin.
faint, the noise becomes more defined we also hear shouting,
 distant:

VOICE

Are you there? Are you awake?

resolves
in

A blurry white disc is fading up. As it focuses it
into the reflector worn by a white-robed doctor, leaning
close.

He leans away, murmuring:

DOCTOR

He's coming around. Can you talk,
sir? These men have to talk.

one

Ed is lying in a hospital bed. His face is bandaged and
side is grotesquely swollen. The machine noise is life
support.

DOCTOR

...Sir? Are you awake? He's awake.

Two police officers, Persky and Krebs, lean in.

PERSKY

Are you awake?... Is he awake?

KREBS

Crane? We have to tell you, as soon
as you're conscious--is he conscious?

PERSKY

His eyes are open.

KREBS

Uh... you're under arrest.

PERSKY

As soon as the doctor lets us, we
gotta move you. Does he understand
that? We're supposed to tell him.
Are you conscious?

KREBS

You'll go to the prison hospital.

PERSKY

Under arrest for murder.

Ed's speech is thickened by injuries and anesthesia:

ED

Birdy... I didn't mean to--

KREBS

What'd he say?

ED

Birdy...

DOCTOR

Birdy. The girl. No, the girl's OK.

Broken clavicle.

The doctor leans in.

DOCTOR
...That's the collarbone, Crane.
Broken. She's OK though.

KREBS
So he understands? He's under arrest
for murder?

ED
Big Dave.

PERSKY
Huh?

KREBS
What'd he say? Does he understand?

PERSKY
He said OK. Is that what he said?

Krebs raises his voice:

KREBS
You're under arrest for the murder
of Creighton Tolliver! Do you
understand?

The voices are fading away:

PERSKY
...Does he understand?...

FADE

OUT

UNDERWATER

down.
Light glimmers in water. We are drifting down, down,

waving
staring,
We bring in languidly waving arms--the arms of a child,
to keep himself submerged. It is a ten-year-old boy
wide-eyed, at something in front of him. Bubbles
intermittently stream from his open mouth.

ED (V.O.)
The pansy. A kid diving at a waterhole
outside of town had found his car...

at
The reverse shows the car, also submerged, with Creighton
Tolliver inside, also wide-eyed, his hairpiece attached
only one corner, the rest of it waving free.

ED (V.O.)

...They'd winched it out...

TRACKING

We are tracking laterally across a line of faces: seated men. The men rise.

ED (V.O.)

...and found he'd been beaten, just like Big Dave said--beaten to death...

small We arc around a judge entering the chamber through the door behind his raised bench.

ED (V.O.)

...Inside the briefcase were the partnership papers I'd signed...

on The judge seats himself and we resume out lateral track the jury, now reseating itself.

ED (V.O.)

...showing that I'd given him ten grand. For the district attorney...

attorney In response to a prompt from the judge the district rises to read the charge. His voice plays distantly, muted, the words not discernible under the continuing voice-over.

ED (V.O.)

...that made it fall into place: I'd gotten Doris to steal the money, the pansy had gotten wise somehow, and I'd had to kill him to cover my tracks. I was in a spot. I called in Freddy Riedenschneider...

he Riedenschneider rises into frame at the defense table. As listens to the charge:

ED (V.O.)

...and signed the house over to him. He said he didn't ordinarily work that cheap, but he figured he owed me something since the last one hadn't played out...

echoing The drone of the D.A. has ended and Riedenschneider's voice drops into the hole:

RIEDENSCHNEIDER

Not guilty, your honor...

ED (V.O.)

I tried to tell him the whole story,
but Riedenschneider stopped me. He
said the story made his head hurt,
and anyway he didn't see any way of
using it without putting me on the
hot seat for the murder of Big Dave...

he
one
Riedenschneider claps Ed reassuringly on the shoulder as
sits next to him. Ed still wears a cast on one arm and
leg.

ED (V.O.)
...He told me not to worry, though,
said he'd think of something, Freddy
Riedenschneider wouldn't let me down.

JAIL

We are tracking in on Ed, lying on the bunk in his cell.

ED (V.O.)
...They put me on twenty-four-hour
deathwatch...

straightbacked
A reverse track shows a guard on a tilted-back
chair, outside the cell door, staring at Ed.

ED (V.O.)
...so that I couldn't Cheat Justice
like they said my wife had done...

COURTROOM

address
The district attorney is rising again, this time to
the jury.

ED (V.O.)
...But in front of the jury they had
it that Doris was a saint; the whole
plan had been mine, I was a Svengali
who'd forced Doris to join my criminal
enterprise...

The district attorney is pointing at Ed.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
...cynically used his own wife as a
cat's paw in a scheme of diabolical
cunning...

ED (V.O.)
On and on it went, how I'd used Doris
and then let her take the fall. That
stuff smarted because some of it was
close to being true...

The district attorney seats himself. The jury's eyes turn

to
of
seeking

Freddy Riedenschneider, who studies the tabletop in front
him, either digesting the D.A.'s opening statement, or
inspiration for his own.

ED (V.O.)
...And then it was Freddy
Riedenschneider's turn.

Riedenschneider rises, paces, begins to talk.

ED (V.O.)
...I gotta hand it to him, he tossed
a lot of sand in their eyes. He talked
about how I'd lost my place in the
universe...

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...a puny player on the great world's
stage...

ED (V.O.)
...how I was too ordinary to be the
criminal mastermind the D.A. made me
out to be, how there was some greater
scheme at work that the state had
yet to unravel, and he threw in some
of the old truth stuff he hadn't had
a chance to trot out for Doris...

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...who among us is in a position to
say...

ED (V.O.)
...He told them to look at me--look
at me close. That the closer they
looked the less sense it would all
make, that I wasn't the kind of guy
to kill a guy, that I was the barber,
for Christ's sake...

We pan the jury, solemnly listening to Riedenschneider.

ED (V.O.)
...I was just like them, an ordinary
man, guilty of living in a world
that had no place for me, guilty of
wanting to be a dry cleaner, sure,
but not of murder...

foreground

Riedenschneider is striding energetically into the
to point a finger directly at Ed's face.

ED (V.O.)
...He said I *was* Modern Man, and
if they voted to convict me, well,
they'd be practically cinching the

noose around their own necks. He told them to look not at the facts but at the meaning of the facts, and then he said the facts *had* no meaning. It was a pretty good speech, and even had me going...

A tap on the shoulder turns Ed around.

ED (V.O.)
...until Frankie interrupted it.

Frank socks Ed, sending him clattering to the floor.

A bailiff immediately restrains him, but Frank looms over Ed, bellowing through tears:

FRANK
What kind of man *are* you? What kind of man *are* you?

Ed's,
Riedenschneider interposes his body between Frank's and loudly protesting:

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
Move for a mistrial, your honor!
Move for a mistrial! This outrageous display cannot help but prejudice...

the
Ed moves to get up, but Riedenschneider, with a sidelong glance and furtive gesture, motions for him to stay on floor.

RIEDENSCHNEIDER
...and inflame the passions of these twelve fine men and women...

ED (V.O.)
...Well, he got his mistrial, but the well had run dry. There was nothing left to mortgage; Riedenschneider went home and the court appointed Lloyd Garroway...

gentleman
Ed is now standing next to a distinguished older who enters the plea in the new trial:

GARROWAY
Your honor, we plead guilty, with extenuating circumstances.

ED (V.O.)
...who threw me on the mercy of the court. It was my only chance, he said. I guess that meant I never had a chance...

The judge starts droning the sentence:

JUDGE

...a menace to society... a predator on his own wife, his business associates, on an innocent young girl... social contract... line crossed... the offender forfeits the right to his own life... I hereby order that you be taken to a place of confinement...

PRISON HALLWAY

We are tracking down the hall.

ED (V.O.)

He wasn't buying any of that Modern Man stuff, or the uncertainty stuff, or any of the mercy stuff either. No, he was going by the book, and the book said I got the chair...

bunk,
Ed is in the cell at the end of the hall, lying on his hands clasped behind his head.

ED (V.O.)

...so here I am. At first I didn't know how I got here. I knew step by step of course, which is what I've told you, step by step; but I couldn't see any pattern...

LATER

Ed sits at the little table next to his bunk, writing.

ED (V.O.)

...Now that I'm near the end, I'm glad that this men's magazine paid me to tell my story. Writing it has helped me sort it all out. They're paying five cents a word, so you'll pardon me if sometimes I've told you more than you wanted to know...

covers
ESCAPED
Recent issues of the magazine, Gent, and its sister publication Nugget lie on the little desk. Their lurid depict feature stories like I WAS ABDUCTED BY ALIENS and AFTER TEN YEARS OF NORMAL LIFE, I DISCOVER I AM AN LUNATIC.

ED (V.O.)

...But now, all the disconnected things seems to hook up.

his
Ed sets aside the pen, lies down on his bunk, and closes eyes.

ED (V.O.)

...That's the funny thing about going away, knowing the date you're gonna die--and the men's magazine wanted me to tell how that felt...

We hear a pulsing treble hum. Ed opens his eyes.

The door to his cell is open.

He rises and goes through the door.

PRISON HALLWAY

is Ed, alone, walks down the hallway. The pulsing treble hum louder.

ED (V.O.)

...Well, it's like pulling away from the maze. While you're in the maze you go through willy-nilly, turning where you think you have to turn, banging into dead ends, one thing after another...

PRISON YARD

stone Ed emerges into the empty prison yard ringed by high squints walls. A hard spotlight shines down from above. Ed into it.

ED (V.O.)

...But get some distance on it, and all those twists and turns, why, they're the shape of your life. It's hard to explain...

its The spotlight is from a hovering flying saucer. We see of revolving underside and, as it irregularly cants, a bit its top bubble.

the After spinning briefly, it tips and flies away, carrying the tremolo hum with it.

ED (V.O.)

...But seeing it whole gives you some peace.

Ed turns and re-enters the prison.

ED'S CELL

behind Ed is lying on his bunk, eyes closed, hands clasped

his head. A hand enters to shake him awake.

wearing
Three men loom over him: two guards and another man
a surplice and holding a bible.

ED (V.O.)
...The men's magazine also asked
about remorse. Yeah, I guess I'm
sorry about the pain I caused other
people...

PRISON HALLWAY

He is walking the last mile.

ED (V.O.)
...but I don't regret anything. Not
a thing. I used to. I used to regret
being the barber.

A door at the end opens:

An electric chair. Straps open, and waiting:

ED (V.O.)
...I don't know where I'm being taken.

Ed is placed in the chair.

ED (V.O.)
...I don't know what waits for me,
beyond the earth and sky. But I'm
not afraid to go.

A man stoops at his feet. He has a bucket of water and a
straight razor.

patch
He waggles the razor in the water and starts shaving a
of Ed's calf.

ED (V.O.)
...Maybe the things I don't understand
will be clearer there, like when a
fog blows away...

the
Ed watches as the razor makes the trip from his leg to
bucket of water, which begins to spot with small floating
hairs.

ED (V.O.)
...Maybe Doris will be there.

They are strapping him in, connecting the electrodes.

ED (V.O.)
...And maybe there I can tell her...

The men withdraw.

ED (V.O.)
...all those things...

A thin man in a dark suit and fedora stands by the
switch.
As he reaches for the switch, Ed looks up into the light.

ED (V.O.)
...they don't have words for here.