

A Kiss from the Grave

by

(Douglas Herle)

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Against black screen: September 1946

MUSIC plays over the sound of KNOCKING.

INT. LOU FORD'S DEN - NIGHT

A closed heavy oak door. Fists POUND against the other side.

Floor to ceiling bookshelves surround the room, except the back wall, where a window invites moonlight inside. Beneath the window is a large oak desk.

LOU FORD, late 60s, big and bald, wearing a silk house coat, sits behind the desk. He holds a cigar in one hand and a fountain pen in the other. He's contemplating.

ON THE DESK: An open notebook, an ink pad, an ashtray, and a revolver. In the top corner a Crosley radio, blasts music.

The POUNDING turns into heavy THUDS. It's not fists any longer. Something with a good weight is ramming the door.

Lou twists the volume knob on the radio. Music plays louder.

Lou leans forward and writes in the notebook. He stops writing, leans back, and puffs on his cigar.

He places the cigar back in the ashtray. He picks up the revolver and presses the nose against his temple.

CU. OPEN NOTEBOOK

A note reading: *Vengeance and Retribution require a long time.* - Charles Dickens

The door CRACKS and falls off the hinges. It CRASHES down. FBI agents rush into the room, screaming: "PUT THE GUN DOWN!"

CUT TO BLACK

A single GUNSHOT. The echo eventually wanes into silence.

(V.O.)

We're told that we make our choices out of free will. I don't know. That maybe true. But most-o-the time the choices we make are predetermined by the person pulling the strings. But you gotta know that even the man behind the curtains can't control everything.

Two small yellow dots of light appear against the black backdrop. The dots advance slowly, becoming bigger, brighter and more defined.

(V.O.)

Once in a while the strings get tangled and chaos ensues.

A moth flutters into the frame.

The lights draw closer. The moth moves towards oncoming lights.

(V.O.)

When that happens, it's only a matter of letting the strings unwind and watching people settle back into their routine. But you need to know how the dance ends. 'Cause if you don't, you're not really pulling the strings, and you can bet someone else will be.

The moth is consumed by the lights.

A car whips by.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Against night Sky: SEPTEMBER 1947

A red *Jaguar Mark IV* speeds down the dark highway.

Headlights cast a dull beam on the asphalt. Hills and a scattering of trees on either side of the road shadow the highway. The moonlight is mostly blocked by the overcast. The sky is dark.

In the distance, a blue light slowly becomes visible. As the Jaguar speeds onward, the light evolves into a neon blue sign that cuts through the darkness, reading: NAVY BLUES.

The sign is attached to a grey shabby building that used to be an airport hangar but is now a bar where soldiers hang out.

INT. NAVY BLUES, BAR - NIGHT

The barroom is clouded with cigarette smoke. The Patrons are mostly soldiers from different sections of US military, who wear their Army, Marine and Navy uniforms.

They're big men with crewcuts, who drink a lot and talk loudly. Women cling to them.

PETER HALLER, non military, mid 50s, leans over a Wurlitzer jukebox. His grey eyes peer intently into the machine. Peter is a big man, but years of hard living have worn him down. Grey hair hides under his worn-out, brown fedora. His brown suit has also seen better days. A cigarette hangs in the corner of his mouth.

Peter slaps the side of the Jukebox.

BRIAN ANDERSON, early 30s, tall and blond, ex-navy, stands behind the bar, wiping the top. He looks up and squints through the smoke to focus on Peter.

BRIAN
Stop smacking the machine.

PETER
How 'bout I smack you, you don't get this thing here fixed?

BRIAN
You know, you come back after a welcomed absence, Peter, and you're still the same dumb bull.

Peter slaps the Wurlitzer again. A record falls into place and skips several times, before settling into a song.

Peter drops into a booth next to the jukebox. He sips his drink and snubs his cigarette into an ashtray.

A handsome MAN in his mid 30s, wearing a grey chalk-striped suit and grey Borsalino hat, walks up to the booth. He stands anxiously. His blue eyes peer down on Peter.

Peter looks up and acknowledges the Man with a nod. The Man places his briefcase on the table and slides into the booth, facing Peter. The Man takes his hat off, wipes away sweat and drops his hat on the table.

PETER
Got any I.D.?

The briefcase pops open.

The Man pulls out a driver's license. He holds it out for Peter. Peter snatches the license, squints at it. Then tilts his head to look at the guy sitting across from him, and once again squints at the driver's license.

PETER

Steven Waldon. Born July third,
nineteen-twelve. Blue eyes, brown
hair.

Peter hands the license back to STEVEN WALDON, who places the
license back in his briefcase.

STEVEN

I uhh, I'm a little nervous. This
isn't normal for me. Hiring a hit-
man. Allow me to be nervous.

Peter sips his drink and drums his fingers on the table.

STEVEN (cont'd)

Not that I'm scared. You come with
a solid reputation.

PETER

(puts a hand to his ear)
So that's what the birds are
chirpin' 'bout, huh?

Steven's smile is met by Peter's cold stare.

STEVEN

I... I scripted what I was going to
say, but now it's scrambled in my
head like a jig-saw puzzle. Did Mr.
Keys tell you anything?

PETER

He gave me a dollar amount.

STEVEN

Mr. Keys gave me your name...

PETER

...Told me you had a job for me, no
details, just a pretty number
attached.

STEVEN

Five grand...

PETER

The number I got was seven large.

STEVEN

Right. Seven grand. Like I said, I
had it scripted, but now that I'm
sitting here, it probably won't
make any sense.

The record in the jukebox skips. Peter shoots a menacing look at Steven.

PETER
What do you want?

STEVEN
I want...
(licks his lips)
See there's some insurance. I got
life insurance.

Peter stops drumming his fingers and sips his drink. He takes a moment to make sure he heard right, then...

PETER
okay.

STEVEN
That's it. In a nutshell.

PETER
What nutshell? What are you talkin'
'bout?

STEVEN
Yeah, okay, you probably want
details.

PETER
I want you to stop babblin' and
start makin' sense.

STEVEN
Where to start...?

PETER
Just start. I'll ask questions to
fill in the blanks.

STEVEN
I need you...

Steven stops. He takes another deep breath. He opens his mouth, but no words come out.

PETER
Let's do this another time.

Steven reaches into his briefcase and pulls out a grainy newspaper photograph. He slides it across the table.

Peter squints down at the picture.

CU. PICTURE

An ambulance and police cars surround a mess of twisted metal and broken glass. An inset picture: Steven is lying on a stretcher with a bandage on his forehead. The caption reads: **Fatal car accident leaves three dead, another in critical condition.**

STEVEN

My wife and child died on impact. I survived. That's how it is. Always... Always one survivor to relive the event, so God has someone to laugh at.

Peter finishes his drink, dumps cigarette butts from the ashtray into his glass and holds it up, signaling for another.

KATE LIEDECKER, the waitress, late 30s, with a Lena Horne hair due, leans back against the bar. She notices Peter holding out his glass and saunters over to the table in high-heels and a black cocktail dress that displays a healthy dose of cleavage.

She grabs the glass out of Peter's hand and looks inside.

KATE

You never fail to make a mess of things.

PETER

Need a couple drinks.

KATE

Has to be cash. Brian won't allow anymore on your tab.

PETER

Never mind. Fetch me another, and somethin' for him.

Kate gives Steven a furtive glance.

PETER (cont'd)

Tell the lady what you want.

Steven Stares up at Kate, who is looking down at the newspaper clipping.

PETER (CONT'D)

(impatient)

What do ya want to drink?

Peter looks up at Kate.

PETER (cont'd)
Just get 'im the same as me.

Kate leaves. Steve's eyes follow Kate as she saunters towards the bar.

PETER (cont'd)
Okay, spill it.

STEVEN
T-boned...

PETER
What?

STEVEN
I -- I ran a light. Another car
slammed into me. T-boned. As I told
you. Died on impact. Or so I was
told, when I awoke in the hospital.

Peter glances down at the newspaper clipping again.

PETER
When'd it happen?

Steven stares at Peter and blinks.

PETER (cont'd)
It ain't a trick question. When did
this here accident happen?

STEVEN
Shortly after the war ended... Do
you think it's easy? 'Cause it's
not. It's not easy talking about
this. I'm trying to forget that I
killed my wife and child. My
daughter and my wife! You're asking
me to slice through this like it
means nothing. I don't want to
remember!

Peter is not buying the indignation, or doesn't care.

PETER
Okay, I've seen this before. Your
wife and child are dead. It's your
fault. You're miserable. You kill
yourself, there's no insurance
payout.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

You're murdered insurance looks into it finds a clean crime and has to pay out. How much and who gets it?

Kate returns and places the drinks on the table. Her eyes fall on the newspaper clipping, again.

KATE

My shift is ending. If you need anything else...

PETER

This'll be our last drink.

KATE

Then I'll let you daisies fight over who pays.

She slaps the bill on the table.

Peter slides the bill over to Steven. Steven takes his wallet out of the briefcase and drops money on the table. Kate snaps up the money and leaves.

Steven sips his drink and grimaces. Peter picks up his glass.

PETER

Think of this drink as your hour glass. Ya don't give me the full outline before I finish, we're through, get me? Now, who gets the payout?

Peter takes another long sip and then lights up a cigarette.

STEVEN

My Mother-in-law. For obvious reasons. But I'll need a little time to arrange everything. Saturday. Is Saturday night good? I want it done Saturday night. In my house, like a robbery. Saturday night.

PETER

How much is the settlement?

STEVEN

Your fee is five grand and not pertinent to that.

Peter sits back and blows smoke. He smiles.

PETER

Seven large and all up front.

STEVEN

Point is, I'm con.. I'm contracting you to do a specific job. I've told you more than you need to know...

PETER

This puzzle is piecin' together with me as the patsy.

Steven sighs. He reaches across the table, grabs the newspaper clipping, and slaps it back in the briefcase. He slams the case shut, puts his hat on, and stands up.

STEVEN

Forget it.

Peter motions Steven back into his seat.

PETER

All right, just listen. You may have me earmarked as a nickle and dime Johnson Brother, but I've survived in this business for twenty-three years. Most of 'em workin' for Lou Ford. They called me his bull. That meant I took people out that Lou wanted taken out. Despite the assigned handle, it was a subtle line-o-work. Now you ain't askin' for no box job here. You're askin' for somethin' that the State of Nevada likes to celebrate by throwin' a gas party. One-o-the many things I've learnt over the years is to never, ever take a job 'til all the pieces fit nice and snug. Right now I don't like the picture. You don't like what I'm askin', you can take it on the heel and toe.

STEVEN

I've told you everything.

Steven stands up again and pops open his briefcase. He takes out a business card and is about to hand it to Peter, but stops. He takes out a gold fountain pen, scratches out the phone number on the card and writes in a new one. He pushes the card across the table.

Steven drops the pen in the case and closes it.

STEVEN
I'll give you till Thursday.

Steven walks away, briefcase in hand.

Peter picks up the business card and fidgets with it.

EXT: NAVY BLUES, PARKINGLOT - NIGHT

Steven walks through the gravel parking lot.

The silhouette of a woman leans against the Jaguar. Smoke lingers around the figure, adding to the mystique.

Steven notices and continues cautiously. Kate steps into the light. The cigarette wedged between her fingers erodes.

KATE
...Boyfriend forgot to pick me up again. Probably dialed some ditz for a quick squeeze. Who knows? I couldn't get him on the ringer, anycase.

STEVEN
What?

KATE
You deaf?

STEVEN
That's my car.

Kate looks at the car behind her and shrugs. She takes a drag and drops her cigarette on the ground, putting it out with a pointy heel.

KATE
Jaguar, huh?

STEVEN
You know cars?

KATE
I know it's a long wait for a taxi at this hour.

Steven closes his eyes and pinches the upper bridge of his nose.

STEVEN
Don't you have someone to call?

KATE

Gimme a break. I already gave you my spiel. Are you gonna give me a ride or not?

Steven steps forward. He bites his bottom lip.

KATE (CONT'D)

...Make it easy for you. There's a motel up the road. It won't be out of your way.

STEVEN

How do you know what's out of my way?

KATE

You live in town, dontcha?

STEVEN

Yeah...

KATE

Then this won't be out of your way.

Kate steps towards the car and tries the passenger door handle.

KATE (CONT'D)

Be a gentleman and get the door.

Steven walks to the passenger side and lets her in.

INT. DODGE COUPE (PARKED) - NIGHT

Peter turns the key. The engine chokes but doesn't turn over. Peter sits back and rolls the window down. He flicks his cigarette out the window, immediately lighting a new one.

Peter tries the car again. More choking. It doesn't start. Peter slams an open palm on the steering wheel. He runs his hands over his face. He tries again... More choking. The engine finally BANGS on and idles with a drumming noise.

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, ROOM 31 - NIGHT

The room is dark. Steve and Kate kiss passionately, while undressing each other. They fall on the bed, continuing to press their lips together. Kate rolls away from Steven and guffaws. Steven grabs Kate and pulls her closer.

A flash of light brightens the room, less than a second. They don't notice.

INT. ROOM 31 - LATER

The room is still dark. Steven and Kate lie in bed.

STEVEN
I never got your name.

KATE
Does it matter?

STEVEN
Maybe not.

Kate reaches over the bedside table and turns the lamp on. She gets out of bed, taking a blanket for cover, and walks over to her purse on a chair across the room.

KATE
Kate. Name's Kate.

She digs out a pack of cigarettes from her purse. A pocket sized edition of *A Tale of Two Cities* falls from her purse. She picks it up, and stuffs it back into her purse. Kate offers an embarrassed smile.

STEVEN
You read Dickens, Kate?

KATE
I used to, for a friend.

She moves back to the bed, with the pack of cigarettes, and offers one to Steven.

STEVEN
It's bad for the lungs.

Kate sits on the edge of the bed and grabs a box of matches from the bedside table. She reads what is written on the box.

KATE
For a good night's rest: Champagne
Inn.

Kate smiles and lights her cigarette. She gets back in bed, mounting Steven.

STEVEN
Cigarettes can sure make a dame
look ugly.

She blows smoke in his face.

Steven pushes her off and backhands her. Kate's head snaps to the side. The cigarette flies from her mouth. She remains cool.

Steven sits on the edge of the bed. He slides his pants on.

STEVEN

You don't have a boyfriend.

KATE

So?

STEVEN

So, you either have a habit of inventing fairy tales to pick up men, or you targeted me.

Kate stands up again and pulls a compact out of her purse. She checks her lip for the damage. It's bleeding. She licks it and smiles.

KATE

I think we both know what's going on.

Steven leans back in the bed, resting on his elbows.

STEVEN

I'd like to see you again, baby.

KATE

Sure got a crummy way of showin' it.

She steps over to the cigarette on the floor. She picks it up and continues smoking.

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, OFFICE - NIGHT

WALTER WIENAL, the motel manager, late 50s, balding with a bad comb-over, sits on a wooden chair behind the front desk. His stomach is about to burst through the buttons on his shirt. He looks perplexed.

Peter enters the office and walks up to the front desk. Ignoring the Manager, he opens the sign-in book and fingers through it.

Walter nearly falls as he struggles to push himself up. He takes a good look at Peter.

WALTER
Somthin' you need, mister?

Peter shoots a hard look at the Manager and continues running his finger down the page, looking for a name. Walter snatches the book away.

PETER
...Lookin' for a woman.

WALTER
I supply the rooms, not the dames.

PETER
A looker. In a black dress.
Colored. Big brown eyes. She
checked in with a bird wearin' a
chalk-striped suit.

WALTER
'Lotta people check in here.

PETER
Which room are they in?

WALTER
No cats like that strolled in here.

PETER
They checked in a couple hours ago.

WALTER
My memory ain't so good. Why don't
ya jog it with some green?

Walter rubs his middle and index fingers against his thumb.

PETER
Ever try that with broken fingers?

WALTER
Boy, ain't this a screwy night.
Look, I don't want no trouble,
mister.

Peter rips the register book from the Manager's pudgy fingers.

PETER
How 'bout you don't gimme any then?

INT. DODGE COUPE (PARKED) - NIGHT

Peter stares intently through the windshield. The reflection of a neon sign shines on his face. Cigarette smoke dances in his car. He waves away the smoke and looks out at...

A seedy looking two story motel with faded and flaking grey paint. A NEON yellow sign reading: CHAMPAGNE INN stands tall above the motel and circles slowly on a pole.

Cars are sporadically parked in stalls throughout the motel lot. One of them is the red Jaguar.

Door #31, on the upper level, opens. Steven steps out. Kate follows, draped in a bed sheet. They kiss. Steven makes his way to the stairs at the end of the motel and walks down.

He gets to his car and looks up. Kate watches from the door. Steven gets in his car. The Jaguar's headlights shine on the grey motel.

Kate steps back inside and closes the door. The Jaguar crawls out of the parking lot and speeds off once it hits the highway, tail lights disappearing into the night.

EXT. CHAMPAGNE INN - NIGHT

Door #31 opens. Kate, now dressed, steps out and struts barefoot down the stairs and across the parking lot to Peter's waiting Dodge.

PETER
...With 'im a while.

KATE
(approaching the car)
Jealous?

Peter flicks his cigarette out the window.

Kate leans up against the Coupe and looks up at the stars.

KATE
It's a nice night.

PETER
Cut the hooey, Kate. Whatcha make
of 'im?

Kate playfully taps her bare heels against the car.

KATE
(to herself)
He ain't innocent.

Peter draws a cigarette and places it in his mouth. Kate moves towards Peter and lights it for him, using the motel's matches. Peter notices her lip.

PETER
He plays rough, huh?

She gives Peter a brave smile.

KATE
I'll add it to the bill. Hazard pay.

PETER
Is he on the level or not?

KATE
(touches her lip)
He's definitely slanted. ...Up to you to discern the angle.

PETER
Not much to move off.
(inhaling/exhaling smoke)
I guess everyone is playin' everyone these days.

KATE
Survival of the fittest, as they say.

PETER
Think I should take this one?

Kate takes the cigarette out of Peter's mouth, and she takes a drag.

KATE
You've been on the nut since you came back, Peter. And now you owe me, and I don't come cheap.

PETER
That's nothin' to broadcast.

Kate places the cigarette back in Peter's mouth and heads back to the motel.

PETER (CONT'D)
Need a ride home?

Kate turns and faces Peter, walking backwards.

KATE

Why, when I can have a good night's rest at the Champagne inn.

The Dodge Coupe COUGHS and stalls. A moment later the car SPUTTERS, but starts. It crawls out of the dusty parking lot.

Kate stands on the motel stairs, watching the Coupe's tail lights move onto the highway.

INT. DODGE COUPE (PARKED) - DAY

PETER'S POV through his windshield.

Steven Waldon is across the street, buying a hotdog from a STREET VENDOR. Steven is speaking animatedly to the Vendor. He takes the hotdog and walks into an office building.

INT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Peter's car is parked on the side of the street. Peter gets out.

He dodges a couple passing cars and makes his way across the street to the Vendor.

VENDOR

Help ya, mista?

PETER

The guy speakin' to ya. ...Walked into the building behind... The suit and tie Joe...?

The Vendor stares densely at Peter

PETER (cont'd)

Good lookin' fella. He was just here!

VENDOR

Mista Waldon?

PETER

Yeah, what do ya know of 'im?

VENDOR

I sell hotdogs mista. Want one?

The Vendor takes out a hotdog.

VENDOR (CONT'D)
Whatchew want on it?

PETER
Never mind the hotdog. I saw him
gabbin' at ya. What did he say?

VENDOR
...Shootin' his mouth off 'bout
some hot tip on Saturday's fight.
...Wanted to lay a bet on it, but
he lost his wallet. Figured he
mighta left it here last time he
bought a dog.

PETER
Did he?

VENDOR
No. You a cop?

PETER
I wasn't here, get me?

VENDOR
Whatever copper.

Peter skirts traffic back to his car. He gets in. His car
chokes and then coughs. It doesn't start.

AGAINST EVENING SKY - A NEON SIGN, READING: STERLING SILVER
CASINO

INT. STERLING'S CASINO, LOBBY - EVENING

An enormous man decked out in a tuxedo with a name tag,
reading *Norris* stands by the door. NORRIS IPSWITCH is in his
early 30s with piercing blue eyes and bright yellow hair,
parted to the side.

Peter pushes through the glass doors. Norris' big hand stops
him.

NORRIS
Sorry about your luck, pal, but
tonight is by invite only.

Peter brushes Norris' hand away and steps back. He lights up
a cigarette.

PETER
I'm here to see Sterling?

NORRIS
Got an appointment?

PETER
Tell 'im Peter Pan is here for his
eight o'clock massage.

NORRIS
This ain't a nightclub, so we don't
harbour comedians. Beat it.

PETER
Never mind. Just tell 'im The Bull
is here.

Norris raises an eyebrow and looks Peter up and down.

NORRIS
The old bull is still chargin', is
he? Just the same, Mr. Keys never
told me about any appointment.

PETER
(blows smoke)
You know, Norris ain't so tough a
name.

NORRIS
You're about to find out.

PETER
Why don't you try fetchin' Sterling
for me, Norris.

NORRIS
...Don't like your attitude.

PETER
There's plenty of people bigger and
tougher 'an you, who've thought the
same thing, Norris.

Norris shoves Peter towards a sofa, where JOE CASPERETTI, a
small tough looking man with a fighters nose, sits.

NORRIS
Take a seat, pal.

Norris disappears into the gambling room. Peter takes a seat
beside Joe. Joe pushes his fedora down to hide a black eye.

PETER
How's the right hook, Jabber?

Joe ignores him.

PETER (cont'd)
Upgrading from palooka to flunky?

JOE
Watch it. I anger easily.

PETER
What happens when ya get angry?
...Jump up and down with steam
comin' outta your ears? Your right
hook couldn't lick an ice cube.

Joe clenches his fist.

VERA KURT, mid 30s short black hair, spunky and cute, a
cocktail waitress, walks past the lobby, looks in and stops.

VERA
Well, if my eyes ain't playin'
tricks... Pete Haller.

Vera struts towards Peter. Peter takes a second to recognize
her.

PETER
'Lo Vera. Long time.

Peter stands up and hugs Vera, it's awkward due to their size
difference.

VERA
Too long, Pete.

PETER
Workin' for Sterling, huh?

VERA
(winks)
It has perks.

PETER
Still takin' care of yourself?

VERA
No one else does. Only now I gotta
kid clingin' to me.

Peter's cigarette nearly falls out of his mouth.

VERA (CONT'D)
He ain't yours.

Peter smiles with relief.

VERA (CONT'D)
You're still a tickle Pete. Why
dontcha gimme a jingle some time to
catch up.

Vera struts away, into the casino.

INT. CASINO, OFFICE - NIGHT

Peter sits on a brown leather sofa, drumming his fingers on
the arm rest.

STERLING (O.S.)
...With the expansion, I'll have
the biggest and most profitable
casino in town. That's what this
evening is about. Special event. A
sponge to soak the white haired
ladies and grey haired men for all
they brought. And then some.

STERLING KEYS, early 50, dressed in a tuxedo. His black hair
is slicked back. He is in the middle of the office, standing
in front of a model casino, admiring it.

STERLING
They don't even mind losing. The
rich just like the idea of
exclusivity.
(snorts)
I just want their money.

Sterling walks over to his desk.

STERLING (cont'd)
Zed Naples thinks his high-rise
hotel and casino will be the cat's
meow in this town. ...Ask me, it's
a cockamamy idea.

Sterling picks up a cat from his chair and sits down behind
his desk, holding the cat on his lap, petting it.

STERLING (cont'd)
Sorry for rambling. You want a
drink?

PETER
I was startin' to think you took me
for a camel.

Sterling leans in and presses the intercom on his desk.

STERLING
(into intercom)
Yeah, couple of...

He looks at Peter.

STERLING (cont'd)
Martinis okay?

Peter nods his approval.

STERLING (cont'd)
(into intercom)
Couple of Vodka martinis. Dry. Real
Dry.

Sterling sits back in his chair. He stares intently at Peter.

STERLING (cont'd)
Okay. What?

PETER
I met up with Steven Waldon.

A slight smile curls Sterling's lips. He continues to pet his cat.

PETER (cont'd)
Haven't figured 'im yet. What's
your slant on the bird?

STERLING
Don't have one.

PETER
Does he owe ya money?

STERLING
No.

PETER
Why'd ya send 'im to me?

The cat jumps off Sterling's lap and crawls under the desk.

STERLING
Steven is a roller here, loses more
than he can afford. Anyway, he said
there was a job that required
discretion.
(MORE)

STERLING (CONT'D)

He never completely divulged, and I allowed him that privacy. The less I know, the better. He asked about you.

PETER

He asked about me?

STERLING

...Said he got your name from the grapevine. It was weak, but I let it slide. Anyway, since Lou... . Well, knowing your financial situation, I told him you could use a client, so I set up the meeting. Before that, I don't think I ever talked to Steven. ...Just took his money.

Sterling takes a cigar out of the humidor on his desk. He sniffs the cigar then puts it back in the humidor.

STERLING (CONT'D)

That, my friend, is the alpha and omega of my relation to that situation.

Peter lights up a cigarette.

PETER

What's the outline on Saturday's tilt?

STERLING

Jabber Joe gets spanked. Drops in the fourth.

PETER

That's why he's out there, lookin' glum.

STERLING

His career is at an end. I'm going to take him on here. Always use a tough guy. You betting on the fight?

PETER

Steven Waldon plans to. He seems to know about the fix.

Sterling says nothing. Peter takes a drag.

PETER (cont'd)

...Little queer that a man with
plans to meet the reaper come
Saturday night would bother placin'
a bet that he couldn't collect on?
And who told 'im 'bout the fix,
you're the only one runnin' that
racket, far as I know.

STERLING

(slightly upset)

I'd have rather not known about
your plans to bump Steven. As far
as him betting, you'd best ask him.
As far as my endeavors with the
fights -- I have employees with
long ears, loose lips, and wagging
tongues.

The office door swings open. Vera swaggers into the room,
carrying two hi-balls on a tray. She hands Peter his drink,
along with a wink. She struts over to Sterling and places his
on his desk.

STERLING

We knock on closed doors in my
casino, honey.

VERA

Y'asked for drinks, dinchya?

Sterling looks at his drink, then at Vera.

STERLING

I asked for vodka martinis...

He picks up his drink and smells it.

STERLING (cont'd)

You come in with a gin and tonic?

VERA

Guess Benny mixed up the order.

STERLING

Damn it, this isn't Lou's joint any
more. Maybe this type of hooley
swings over at Zed Naples' casino,
but critical errors like this don't
swing here.

VERA

Zed pays more.

STERLING
You want a reference.

Vera is on her way out the door, with the door slamming closed behind her. The cat tries to sneak out, but the door closes too quickly.

INT. WALDON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Steven is sitting on the couch, looking over a horse racing form. A Woman, early 30s with long red hair, wearing a red dress with matching red pumps walks past Steven.

WOMAN
I'm going to play bridge.

Steven's eyes never leave the racing form.

STEVEN
For money?

The Woman looks at Steven with contempt.

WOMAN
I'm taking the car, before it's
repossessed.

The comment draws no reaction from Steven. The Woman looks as though she's trying hard not to spit on Steven. She moves to the front entrance and takes a set of keys off a key rack. She exits.

EXT. WALDON HOUSE - NIGHT

The Woman emerges from a lavish two story house surrounded by a picket fence. She walks down the sidewalk, leading to the driveway. She stops at the Jaguar and unlocks the car door. She gets in.

The Jaguar's headlights come on. The car backs out of the driveway and heads off down the street.

Peter's Dodge Coupe follows from a distance.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The Jaguar pulls up in front of a small walk-up apartment building. The Woman steps out of the Jaguar and walks towards the apartment building, disappearing into the vestibule.

Peter's Coupe rolls loudly up the street and stops behind the Jaguar.

Further down the street, behind Peter's Coupe, another car stops. Its headlights die.

Peter steps out, leans up against his car and lights a cigarette.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The Woman in red makes her way up a few flights of stairs. She pushes open a heavy metal door and then heads down a hallway with faded orange carpeting. She knocks on door 4A.

The door squeaks open. A hand reaches out and pulls her inside.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Peter stands under the shelter of the awning. He runs a finger down a dirty glass panel with the tenants names. His finger stops on *Waldon 4A*.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, ROOM 4A - NIGHT

The Woman stands in the middle of a sparsely decorated bachelor's pad. A MAN faces the Woman in red with his back to the camera.

WOMAN

I hate coming here. Whole neighborhood has the stench of poverty.

The Woman scans the room with a look of disgust.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

And couldn't you at least get some furniture?

MAN

...Won't have to slum it here much longer, baby.

The Man's voice is familiar. He steps towards the Woman. Grabs her arms.

MAN

This can be a cold city at night.

WOMAN

Then warm me up, Jeff.

Jeff caresses her shoulders. His hands drop to her arms and then waist and pulls her in closely.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

With a drink.

JEFF

Sure thing, Agatha. Anything you want.

JEFF gently pushes Agatha away and crosses the room to a side table.

Jeff turns to face Agatha. His face is finally seen. He looks exactly like Steven. It's his twin brother.

JEFF

Canadian whiskey okay?

AGATHA

If it'll warm my blood.

JEFF

That's a tall order.

Jeff smiles at Agatha as he picks up a bottle, sniffs inside, then pours a couple drinks. He walks back to Agatha and hands her a glass.

JEFF

D'ya ever figure why Lou laid out this plan for you before he died?

AGATHA

I guess he realized I was as much a victim as he was in the whole mess. Plus he wanted revenge.

JEFF

And he trusted you?

AGATHA

Why not, he trusted me for years to count his money in his casino, that is until your bastard brother decided to run his funny money scheme.

JEFF

And you just went along with it.

Agatha slaps Jeff.

AGATHA

Your a bastard too.

JEFF

I've hated that grifter since we were kids. ...Always finding a way to cheat me. He played that twin bit for guilt every chance he'd get. But killing my family -- that was... Who would forgive that?

There's an awkward silence as they stare at each other. A smile grows on Jeff's face.

JEFF (cont'd)

To Steven.

They cling glasses and slam the drinks back. Jeff takes Agatha's glass. He walks back to the side table and pours a couple more.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Peter stands on the lawn in front of the apartment building, looking up at a fourth floor window. The light is on revealing the silhouettes of a man and woman. They kiss, and their bodies mold into one behind the curtains.

Peter drops his cigarette, turns and heads to his car.

He notices the car up the road. A couple of men watch from inside the car.

Peter takes a couple steps towards the car. The headlights burst on and blind Peter. The car takes off.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Peter moves through a narrow aisle, brushing past books. He accidentally knocks a book on the floor. Peter doesn't stop.

A LIBRARIAN rushes over to pick up the book. She scowls at Peter.

Peter continues towards a closed door, labeled Microfiche.

INT. NAVY BLUES, BAR - NIGHT

Peter sits in a booth, staring down at a news paper clipping.

CU. NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

The same picture as before: twisted metal and broken glass with an ambulance and police cars. The inset picture of Steven on a stretcher. This clipping has the full story of the accident.

Kate slides in the booth, facing Peter.

KATE

What's the news, Peter?

Peter looks up at Kate.

PETER

...Wanna ride home tonight?

KATE

Pay your tab first honey.

Peter sucks back his drink, slides out of the booth and walks up to the bar.

PETER

Fetch me a drink, Navy-boy.

Brian makes his way towards Peter, wiping the bar along the way.

BRIAN

Cash only.

PETER

Put it on my tab. My ship's dockin' as we speak.

Brian pours Peter a drink. Peter downs it, and just as quickly, and he signals for another. Brian pours it. Peter drinks it.

BRIAN

You realize the bull is maimed before he enters the arena.
...Gives the Matador the advantage.
The fair fight is an illusion.

Peter ignores the comment. Brian pours another. Peter sucks it back, quickly.

Peter turns and heads towards the back of the bar. The alcohol has put him a off balance. He uses the pool table to keep from tipping over. He stops next to a pay phone.

He searches through his pocket and pulls out Steven's business card. He reaches into his pockets again and comes out with a couple coins. His thumb pushes them into the slot on the phone. Peter dials with the aptitude of a drunk.

Peter fiddles with the business card between his fingers as he talks.

PETER

(into phone)

Yeah. I'll do it. I want the cash up front. Drop it off at my place, number 10 Brier suites... With instructions.

(Beat)

It was seven large(hiccups).

Peter prongs the phone. He puts the business card in his pocket and heads back to his table. Kate pops around the corner and bumps into him.

She tries to pull away. Peter is digging his fingers into her shoulder. Kate manages to pry them off.

KATE

The women that you leave your fingerprints on, don't end up so well.

Peter stumbles back. He's hurt.

Kate senses the hurt. She reaches out and touches his arm.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, ROOM 4A - NIGHT

Jeff sits on the edge of the bed, staring at the phone on the night table. Agatha sits behind him with her legs wrapped around his waist. She is massaging his shoulders.

AGATHA

He's going to do it, isn't he?

Jeff nods and Agatha smiles at him.

JEFF

I'm going to need the retainer tonight, baby.

AGATHA

I got it.

A smile grows on Jeff's face.

JEFF

It isn't that phony stuff you and Steven peddled?

AGATHA

It's real scratch. That's why this'd better work.

JEFF

It'll work, baby. We just have to stick to the script given to us.

Agatha kisses his neck.

AGATHA

Make love to me, Jeff. I'm about to become a widow.

Jeff turns and falls back on the bed, kissing Agatha.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The small room is crammed with a bed and a large work desk. Peter sits on a wood stool in front of the desk.

The desk is crowded but organized. A press for bullet swagging is clamped to the edge of the desk. Casings, jackets, led bullets placed neatly in piles beside a small bucket filled with powder.

Peter lights up a cigarette and begins making bullets.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - MORNING

PETER'S DESK: Six bullets are lined up neatly in a row. A revolver lays next to the bullets.

Peter sleeps, fully clothed, on his bed next to the desk. A KNOCK on the front door startles him out of his sleep.

Peter grips his desk to pull himself up. The desk shakes. A bullet rolls off the desk, hits the hardwood floor and bounces under the bed.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT, ENTRANCE - MORNING

Peter unlocks the door. He opens it and scans the hallway of his apartment building. No one is around.

A past due rent notice is pinned to the outside of his door. He pulls it off, crumples it, and tosses it down the hallway.

Peter's eyes drop to the bulky envelope before his feet. He picks up the envelope and shuts the door.

Peter rips open the envelope. He removes the stack of bills along with a letter. Peter counts the money.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM

A stack of bills sit on his desk. Peter picks up the money, fingers through a few bills, peels them from the stack and pockets them. He stuffs the bulk of the money into a cigar box and closes it.

Peter eases himself onto his knees, and then gets on all fours to crawl under the desk.

On the wall under the desk is an 8" X 12" vent covered with a metal grill.

Peter rips off the grill. He places the cigar box inside, pushing it back an arms length. He pushes the grill back in place, and backs out from under his desk. He stands up and brushes off the dust.

EXT. USED CAR LOT - DAY

JAKE WADE, a salesman in his mid 40s, tall and lanky. His black hair has been slicked back with copious amounts of Brylcreem. He stands on the driver's side of a beaten up 1938 Ford Fordor Sedan.

Peter stands on the other side, looking uninterested.

JACK

On my life, Bogart owned this car.

PETER

Cut the salesman flap, Jack. If I wanted a pre-war jalopy floppin' on me in a jam, I'd keep mine.

JACK

Ahhh, for a job. Then this is your baby!

He slaps the top of the car.

JACK (CONT'D)

She purrs. Smooth ride. All the little perks you wouldn't expect. Plus, she has a lot of good years left in her.

Peter takes out a pack of Viceroy's and shakes a cigarette loose. He grabs it with his teeth. He sparks a match off the car door and lights the cigarette, all the while staring intently at Jack.

Peter blows smoke over the top of the car. It wafts by Jack's face.

JACK

Say, let me snag one of them.

Peter slides the pack of cigarettes across the top of the car. Jack grabs the pack. He takes one out, placing it in his mouth. He looks at Peter for a light.

Peter moves to the other side of the car and lights the cigarette for Jack.

Jack takes a drag.

JACK

You're right. She's a piece of junk. ...Been trying to peddle 'er for weeks. Guy who traded it, used the Bogart line on me. It was a good line.

Peter tilts his head and takes a drag from the cigarette.

PETER

...Kinda boiler you got for me?

JACK

A pretty decent one for the price you mentioned. Need a retreat after the job is done? Let things cool off... I still got connections. Remember...

PETER

A car, Jack.

JACK

Gotcha. I gotta nice Buick. Came in yesterday.

Jack points across the lot to a 1944 Buick Special, blue with white trim.

EXT. TREE-LINED STREET - NIGHT

The Buick drives along the street and stops in front of Steven Waldon's two story house. The house sits in darkness, in the midst of a quiet neighborhood.

INT. BUICK - NIGHT

A revolver sits on the passenger seat. A cigarette erodes in the car's ashtray.

Peter takes out a fist full of bullets from his jacket pocket. He shakes them in his fist the same way a gambler shakes dice, before throwing them on the craps table. Peter picks up his revolver, flips open the chamber and loads. He's missing a bullet.

Peter turns on the car radio.

ANNOUNCER

(over radio)

...I tell ya, I've never seen old Jabber Joe take a beating like this A left from Barker. Oooh that hadda smart. Jabber is against the ropes again. Another right hook. Jabber goes down hard. I've never seen... The referee is raising Barker's arm. He is foregoing the count. He is foregoing the count! Jabber is motionless. This one is over!

OTHER ANOUNCER

(over radio)

An eeeasy dance for Barker tonight, as he KOs Jabber Joe in the second. An absolute disgrace...

Peter smiles, shakes his head, and turns off the radio.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Peter steps out of the car, heading toward the white picket fence. He pushes the gate open and starts up the concrete pathway, leading to the house.

Peter hops up the front steps and looks down at the welcome mat. He bends down, lifts the mat and comes up with a key. He slides the key in the lock, jiggles it and the lock clicks. He opens the door, steps inside quickly and quietly, closing the door behind him.

INT. HOUSE, FRONT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

It's dark. Peter's hand finds a switch on the wall. A light beams down, offering sight. Peter moves straight for the staircase. He stops at the base and looks up the stairs that lead up to a dark hallway.

Peter starts up the stairs.

He reaches the top and heads down the hallway, towards a door at the end. Carpet softens his footsteps. Peter stops at the door. His hand grips the knob, slowly turns.

The door creaks open. Peter steps forward.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Peter's bulky silhouette stands in the doorway.

He pulls out a revolver from his jacket and uses the nose of the gun to flip a switch on the wall.

The room brightens.

Steven wakes up in a rush, rubbing his eyes, trying to focus on the figure standing in his bedroom doorway.

PETER

Steven Waldon, I presume.

(Beat)

You know who I am, Mr. Waldon?

Steve sits up and squints. He's clueless.

PETER (CONT'D)

You lost your wallet.

STEVEN

What?

PETER

I know who took it.

Steven still looks puzzled.

STEVEN

What...? This a shakedown, mister?

Peter moves toward the bed and plops down on the foot-end. He takes a note from his pocket and holds it out for Steven, shaking it impatiently.

STEVEN (cont'd)
What is it?

PETER
An outline to break into your house
and take care of you.

Steven takes the note from Peter's hand. He rubs his eyes
before scanning the content.

STEVEN
You're here to kill me? Who gave
you this note? Who wants me dead?

PETER
Your brother.

STEVEN
Jeff...? Is this a joke?

PETER
A grift.

Peter takes out the newspaper clipping of the car accident.
He hands it to Steven. Steven stares ruminatively at it.

STEVEN
Who are you?

PETER
The tooth fairy. ...You don't give
me the full outline on that
article, I'll knock out your teeth.

Steven looking over the article, becomes sad.

STEVEN
Oh... gee... oh...

PETER
I didn't ask for the alphabet.

Steven sighs and pushes himself up to sit up, resting his
back against the headboard.

STEVEN
My brother and I were born holding
hands, you know. I came out two
seconds before him. We were holding
hands...

PETER
Stop droolin', and get on with it.

STEVEN

Jeff is a war hero. He survived Normandy. Came back to find that I killed his wife and child. He didn't deserve that.

(guffaws)

I can't imagine...

PETER

I said stop droolin' and get on with it.

STEVEN

The story is in this article. I was picking Jeff up from the bus station. His wife and child were with me. We were all excited... I ran a red light on the way, and they died. I killed my brother's family.

Steven tries to wrap his head around the situation.

STEVEN (cont'd)

My brother wants me dead, and he paid you to kill me?

Peter nods. He grabs the letter and article back from Steven and pockets them.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

What's stopping you?

PETER

As I said, it's a grift.

Peter takes out a pack of Viceroys, he holds it out for Steven. Steven rejects the offer with a wave of the hand.

STEVEN

It's not good for the lungs.

Peter lights his cigarette.

PETER

Better than a bullet.

STEVEN

So, what's the grift?

PETER

Your brother had me believe... or tried to have me believe that I was killing him, and that he was you.

STEVEN

Huh?

PETER

How much is your life worth?

Steven takes a moment to think...

STEVEN

Face amount, about one hundred and twenty-five thousand.

PETER

The redhead is the beneficiary?

STEVEN

My Wife. Agatha. Yeah...

PETER

...Followed her a couple nights back. Drove to some shack 'cross town. I didn't figure a cookie like her to flop in a neighborhood like that. When I found another of your clan harboured there. That's when things started to make sense. It was the newspaper article that clamped it together for me.

Steven scratches his head, cracks a smile.

STEVEN

Okay my wife's a tramp. I guess I knew that. She married me when I had money. Because I had money. Now that I... I gamble, yeah. So, they want to clean up on my life insurance...? Grift or not, you were paid to kill me. You still haven't told me what's stopping you.

PETER

Playin' the patsy sticks a little goin' down.

Peter blows smoke at Steven. Then he tilts his head and looks at Steven. Something is off. Steven is too calm.

PETER (CONT'D)

You lay much on the tilt tonight?

Steven doesn't answer.

PETER (cont'd)
Jabber dropped a couple rounds
earlier than...

Steven gives Peter a blank stare.

Peter hears something behind him.

PETER
Oh no...

Just as he turns, a blackjack SLAMS the side of his skull.

Peter falls off the bed and onto his knees. Blood drips down his temple. He fumbles his gun. It is picked up by a woman. Peter's vision is blurred, but he can tell by the red hair that it's Agatha.

Agatha kisses the man on the bed, and then slaps him.

AGATHA
What's with the crack about me
being a tramp? Now grab Steven.

Jeff rubs his cheek and throws a sour look at Agatha. He hops off the bed and moves to the closet. He opens the closet door. Steven is bound and gagged inside. Fear bursts out from his eyes. Jeff drags him out into the middle of the room.

Agatha saps Peter again.

Peter drops to the floor. His eyes close.

FADE TO BLACK

A GUN SHOT.

VOICE
Wake up... come on bub.

FADE IN:

A big hand lightly slaps Peter's face. Peter slowly opens his eyes, coming back in to consciousness.

VOICE
Come on buster. You ain't hurt so
bad.

Peter focuses on the big man kneeling in front of him. It's detective WILMER NEFF, late 30s, husky and tall, about 6'5", yet boyish-looking with red hair, a round face, and a pale complexion.

WILMER

You're gonna need a good shyster to
squirm out of this, bub.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A Forensic detective works the crime scene, kneeling in front of Steven, who is on the floor. Dead. His forehead is pierced with a bullet hole, and dried stream of blood crusted down his face.

A woman's ear-piercing SCREAM.

Agatha stands inside the doorway, stares at Steven's dead body. She rushes forward, but is grabbed and held by...

Detective Lieutenant, LORNE JACOBY, dark haired, tall and thin, mid 40s, wearing a trench coat and fedora.

AGATHA

Oh my God. He's dead! No, oh my
God, no. My Husband!

Agatha looks over at Peter on the floor next to Detective Wilmer Neff.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

It was him, wasn't it? He killed my
husband? Oh God! Why? Why did you
kill my husband? No...

Agatha turns and buries her face into Lieutenant Jacoby's chest, crying.

The Lieutenant smirks and comforts her, putting his hand on the back of Agatha's head, gently caressing her hair. He scowls at Peter.

JACOBY

Justice will be served Ma'am.

(smiles)

You can bet on it. Decorate his
wrists Wilmer.

Detective Neff flops Peter onto his stomach and slaps handcuffs on him.

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Peter is shoved into the cell. Detective Wilmer Neff slams the metal barred door and locks Peter inside.

Wilmer smirks and walks away. Peter yells after him.

PETER

I need a cigarette! I need to make
my phone call!

His plea dies in the cold cement hallway. Peter realizes it and sits down on a cold cement bench. He touches the bump on his head and winces in pain.

INT. PRISON, CONSULTATION ROOM - DAY

The middle of the room is a small pine table and two plastic chairs with chrome legs.

APPLETON CROWSFEET, 35, is a full-blooded Paiute Indian. He has long black hair braided into a ponytail. Strong cheekbones and black eyes showcase his face. He is dressed in a light brown suit with a dark brown tie and is staring at the cement wall. There is something odd about his left leg.

The door opens. Peter is shoved inside. His feet and hands are cuffed. The door closes. Peter shuffles towards the table.

Appleton spins around. His ponytail wags as he turns to face Peter. He steps towards the table, hobbling on a wooden leg.

APPLETON

Ya messed up again bagootsoo...

PETER

It's bull, not buffalo.

APPLETON

Hardly matters.

INT. PRISON, CONSULTATION ROOM - LATER

Peter is sitting at the table, drumming his fingers.

Appleton hobbles back and forth, tugging on his ponytail. He stops pacing...

Appleton suddenly throws his hands in the air.

APPLETON

...A flimflam, I ever heard one.

PETER

Yeah, well You're the mouthpiece,
so move your mouth to get me outta
this mess.

APPLETON

Ya make things difficult, Peter.
...Ever since I met ya. ...Always a
little off the cob.

Appleton shakes his head, sighs and taps his wooden leg on
the cement floor. He tugs on his ponytail.

APPLETON (cont'd)

Okay, so here's what we got, er
don't got, rather... No note from
Jeff askin' to kill his brother?
Taken after ya were clubbed on the
head, eh?

He looks at Peter for acknowledgment. Peter nods.

APPLETON (CONT'D)

Too convenient.

Peter shakes his head.

PETER

A business card. Jeff gave me a
business card. It was Steven's
business card, but Jeff scratched
out the number and wrote in a new
number. That was the number I
called Jeff at.

APPLETON

A business card...?
(tugs on his ponytail)
Okay, eh.

Peter opens his mouth to speak. Appleton raises his hand to
stop him from speaking.

APPLETON (cont'd)

Follow now -- ya were given seven
big ones to kill Steven. We can
investigate where the money came
from...

Appleton looks at him with a little contempt.

APPLETON (cont'd)

Okay. Even so... So we're able to prove Jeff gave ya seven Gs to murder his brother, where does that leave ya? Involved in a murder plot, eh. I doubt that rhubarb will draw much sympathy from any juror.

(shakes his head)

Yah, okay then... We're lookin' into 'er.

INT. PRISON, VISITOR'S ROOM - DAY

Peter sits in front of a long lunchroom table. Kate sits on the other side.

PETER

Gotta cigarette?

Kate shakes her head.

PETER

I need a damn cigarette!

A Prison Guard looks over at Peter. Peter scowls back at him.

KATE

I told you it was a grift, Peter.

Peter starts drumming his fingers on the table.

PETER

Sterling's prints are all over this grift. Now he's denyin' that he set up the meetin' with Jeff and me.

KATE

What do you expect. I warned ya, and ya still walked into the quicksand.

PETER

Yeah, I sure went in leadin' with my chin. They found a bullet in my shack. One I made. Matched with the one pulled outta Steven's head.

Kate shakes her head.

KATE

You're a daisy, Peter. I mean a real knucklehead, one of the biggest, and I've met some dillies.

PETER
I need your help Kate, or it's the
gas chamber...

Kate twists a ring on her finger.

KATE
I'm not sure what I can do.

PETER
(gives Kate soft eyes)
You can corroborate my story. You
know the truth.

KATE
Corroborate...? Wow, Peter, you
really like to leave women
dangling' on a fish hook.

Peter closes his eyes and drops his head.

PETER
It's not like that at all, Kate.
Damn it, I need a cigarette!

The Guard looks over again.

PETER (CONT'D)
(to Guard)
Next time your eyes drift over this
way, they get colored. Got it.

The Guard looks down at his feet.

KATE
Well, you'd better have a good
mouthpiece. 'Cause I'm not so dumb
as to pitch a tent and camp outside
the gas chamber with ya.

PETER
Were you able to hunt down that
business card, Jeff gave me?

Kate shakes her head, no.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

Kate walks down the steps. She stops, pulls out a pack of
cigarettes and lights one, using matches from the Champagne
Inn.

DISSOLVE TO:

A FLAME

A business card pinched between the index of a woman's fingers.

The business card is placed above the flame. It catches fire. The card curls up and burns slowly, turning into ashes. It's dropped into a garbage can.

FADE IN: ON A SPIDERWEB-LIKE DESIGN

Slowly revealing a dreamcatcher. Appleton's face slowly comes into focus behind the dreamcatcher.

INT. PRISON, CONSULTATION ROOM - DAY

Peter sits at the table. Appleton stands on the other side, tapping his wooden leg on the cement floor and shaking the dreamcatcher, like a tambourine. A file is in his other hand.

APPLETON

On the one hand we have Steven, a degenerate gambler, owed money to every bookie in town.

PETER

Sterling...

Appleton slams the file on the table.

APPLETON

Sterling is clean! Now quiet while I speak, eh. On the other hand, we gotta known hit-man, found at the crime scene with a smokin' gun in hand. And...

Peter picks up the file from the table and skims through it.

APPLETON (cont'd)

We looked into the funds... No withdraws from Jeff's account, Agatha doesn't have a bank account and Steven was teeterin' on bankruptcy.

Peter continues scanning the file. A strange look comes over Peter's face. He notices something.

PETER

Agatha...

Appleton snatches the file from Peter's hand.

APPLETON

Agatha is a widow. That's all the jury'll see.

PETER

Damn it. I'm so stupid. That's why she looked so familiar. She was the one who...

APPLETON

Doesn't matter! Her past doesn't figure into the defense, eh.

Appleton starts pacing. His wooden leg TAPS on the cement floor. Appleton stops suddenly. He pivots on his wooden leg to face Peter.

Appleton starts shaking the dreamcatcher and chanting.

APPLETON (CONT'D)

Mitigate. Mitigate, mitigate, mitigate, mitigate okay, mitigate. We mitigate!

Peter is listening.

APPLETON (cont'd)

Ya went to collect some money from Steven, eh. Ya kick in his door...

PETER

I used a key.

APPLETON

Quiet, eh! None-o-that matters. Dontcha get it yet? We can't use yer story. Shitsake Peter, yer cockamamy tale'll send ya straight to the chamber, as certain as I lost my leg to that darn grenade at Iwo Jima.

Appleton tugs on his ponytail, and then CLAPS his hands loudly, startling Peter.

APPLETON (cont'd)

Wake up! They played ya. Made darn sure all the evidence played against ya. Now. Police report shows the door kicked in.

(MORE)

APPLETON (CONT'D)

Whether the door was kicked in, ya used a key, seeped under the door in a mist, or ya slipped through the key hole like Peter Pan, doesn't matter! Anycase, ya weren't invited. Report says it was kicked in, means somebody kicked it, eh. So we go with the door bein' kicked! Okay. Say ya kicked it in fer intimidation. ...Let 'im know ya meant business. Whatever, eh. Yer real intent was to merely scare Steven into payin' a debt. Fer who...? Somethin' we can work through. So, yer in Steven's house to collect some beans. Only he doesn't have any beans. He panics, pulls out a club and starts swingin' like a Jap droppin' bombs on Pearl Harbour. ...Ends up -- yer noodle takes a crack.

Peter nods, touches the sore spot on his head. It still hurts.

PETER

I was smacked two times.

APPLETON

Yah, yah! Two bumps. And then he moves in fer another to finish ya off, but ya shoot 'im. Blamo! This is our bomb Peter. Self defense, eh. See, the reasonable doubt is in yer intent. Shootin' was simply self defense. ...Think we gotta better chance then we did at Okinawa. This is our bomb, eh.

Appleton takes out a pack of cigarettes and shakes one free. He hands Peter the cigarette. Peter nods his thanks and waits for the light.

Appleton pats Peter on the back. He sparks a match and moves in to light Peter's cigarette.

INT. WALDON HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Agatha wears a red silk robe. She stares out the window. a cigarette dwindles in her hand. Ashes float into a trash can below.

A MAN'S HAND grips Agatha's shoulder from behind. Agatha spins around and falls into Jeff's body.

AGATHA
Are we in the clear?

Jeff pulls her in tighter.

JEFF
A deal was struck, baby.
Manslaughter. Peter Haller will be
doing a dime in the big house...

Agatha pushes herself away.

AGATHA
Ten years! The plan was gas.

JEFF
Script was altered when you sapped
him twice. It was overkill, baby.

Agatha puts out her cigarette in an ashtray on bedside table. She lights up another one. She holds it out for Jeff.

JEFF (cont'd)
It's bad for the lungs.

AGATHA
(calmer, blowing smoke)
He was supposed to choke on gas.
Poor Lou's probably rolling in his
grave. He wanted Peter to suffer
hard.

She steps into Jeff again, massaging his shoulders.

AGATHA (cont'd)
You have a better body than Steven.
His had become soft. I hated making
love to him.

JEFF
(laughing)
You don't make love.

Agatha smiles.

AGATHA
Yeah, we're a perfect pair.

Agatha spins around and saunters over to a Cheval mirror and admires herself. She blows smoke at the mirror.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

The Bank gave notice today.
...Taking the house. All his fancy
suits, the car... He didn't have
two nickels to rub together.
Nothing. He was the master
illusionist -- power to make
everything disappear by gambling it
away. That's why he needed to start
that scam at Lou's casino. I was a
fool for helping him.

JEFF

None of that matters now. 'Cause
we'll have the money soon, baby.

AGATHA

Yeah, well I've earned it. I even
had to cover the last couple months
premiums on Steven's life
insurance. He was worthless.

A smile creeps on her face. She turns and faces Jeff.

AGATHA (cont'd)

Except dead.

Jeff stares blankly at Agatha.

AGATHA (cont'd)

What are you feeling?

JEFF

Only a woman would ask that.

AGATHA

He was your brother.

JEFF

What of it? He was your husband.

AGATHA

I want to know...

JEFF

How I feel...? Bullets flew
everywhere on that French beach.
Men dropped like flies. Any one of
those bullets could have painted
that sand with my blood. There's no
reason for me to have made it. I
was lucky, and you know something,
for a while, I felt like God had
something special planned for me.

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

Then I come home... My brother had killed my wife and daughter. Suddenly, I was falling into a bottomless pit -- like God was laughing at me. And when God laughs at you, you need something to grasp. That was you, baby. You came along with a plan. Maybe not your plan, but a plan. Lou must've hated Peter to hit him like this.

Jeff sits on the bed. He looks up at Agatha.

AGATHA

Let's say Peter had it coming.

JEFF

You want to know how I feel? This was payback for all that crap Steven put me through. It was payback for God laughing at me.

Agatha drops her robe. She stands naked before Jeff.

JEFF (cont'd)

(laughing)

The grieving widow.

Agatha drops on the bed next to Jeff. He leans over and kisses her, long and hard.

INT. HALLWAY, POLICE JAIL - NIGHT

Peter is being escorted by two guards down a dark and seemingly endless hallway. Shadows loom large on the cement walls, as he's led to his jail cell.

INT. INSURANCE OFFICE - DAY

Agatha, in her widow's veil, takes a check from the hand of an INSURANCE AGENT. Agatha looks at the check.

It's for \$125,000.

Even from behind her veil, Agatha can barely conceal a growing smile. She places the cheque in her purse.

AGATHA

I want you to know this doesn't ease the pain.

INSURANCE AGENT
It never does, Mrs. Waldon.

Agatha turns to leave. The Insurance Agent grabs her arm.

INSURANCE AGENT (CONT'D)
I know...

Agatha turns around with a 'busted' look on her face.

INSURANCE AGENT (CONT'D)
I know this is unorthodox, but I'd
like to take you out for a drink.

AGATHA
Oh... I'm sorry. Maybe another
time. I'm -- I'm just not ready
yet.

INSURANCE AGENT
Sorry. It was unorthodox.

Agatha leaves. The Insurance Agent sits down behind his desk
and drops his head.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Agatha exits the insurance office and steps onto the
sidewalk. She lifts the widow's covering from her face,
revealing a big smile.

The Jaguar pulls up in front of the office building. Agatha
steps across the sidewalk and gets in the car.

A black Ford pulls up a couple spaces behind the Jaguar.

INT. JAGUAR (PARKED) - DAY

Agatha settles in. Jeff looks over at her. Agatha smiles.
Jeff smiles. Agatha takes the check out of her purse and
waves it in front of Jeff's face.

AGATHA
We're freeee.

JEFF
We need to deposit it in the
account that I set up.

Agatha caresses the check.

AGATHA
I like the feel of it.

JEFF
Cash feels better, baby.

Agatha leans over and rests her head on his shoulder.

AGATHA
Can I trust you?

JEFF
We're in this together.

He kisses Agatha.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The Jaguar pulls away from the curb. The black Ford pulls away and follows.

INT. AIRPORT, TERMINAL - DAY

Agatha sits on a bench, alone. Luggage for two at her side. Two tickets in her hand.

AIRPORT INTERCOM
Last call for those boarding flight
two-two-three to Sydney, Australia.

People hurry passed Agatha to catch their flights.

Agatha's expression slowly changes from confusion to a controlled rage.

INT. PRISONER TRANSPORT VEHICLE, BACK - NIGHT

Peter sits in the back of the vehicle. His legs and hands are cuffed. A long chain links the feet cuffs and hand cuffs together, restraining mobility. He manages scratches his nose. The chain RATTLES.

INT. PRISONER TRANSPORT VEHICLE, FRONT CAB

Two Guards, YOUNG and OLD, sit in the front of the vehicle. The Old Guard is driving. The Young Guard looks back at Peter through a wire cage.

YOUNG GUARD
Quiet back there.

Peter leans back and shuts his eyes.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

The transport vehicle stops. A MAN, wearing blue coveralls and a hard hat and safety glasses, walks up to the vehicle. It is Detective Wilmer Neff. He's sucking on a lollypop.

The window is rolled down. Old Guard sticks his head out.

OLD GUARD

What's the issue, here?

WILMER

Serious gas leak. Can't wait. Whole neighborhood could blow, we don't deal with it.

OLD GUARD

(pointing with his thumb)

...Got a State prisoner, back there. I wasn't told anything about detours.

WILMER

Follow the fellow ahead.

He points to another man wearing coveralls, a hard hat, and safety glasses. It's Lieutenant Jacoby. He's sitting on a curb, smoking a cigarette.

OLD GUARD

Should he be smoking with a gas leak?

WILMER

Just follow his instructions.

The vehicle moves forward. Jacoby stands up, flings the cigarette to the ground and waves the vehicle over.

INT. TRANSPORT VEHICLE, FRONT CAB - EVENING

OLD GUARD

This just ain't protocol.
Transporting prisoners at night --
Who scheduled this? And now this
guy smoking near a gas leak?

The Young Guard picks up the CB.

YOUNG GUARD
...Should report this.

OLD GUARD
No time to cause a stink.
(Squinting)
What's this now?

The Young Guard clips the CB back in its place.

YOUNG GUARD
He's directing you into the alley.

OLD GUARD
For the love of... this ain't
protocol.

YOUNG GUARD
I don't know what protocol means.

OLD GUARD
It's just lingo.

EXT. CITY STREET

Jacoby is waving the vehicle into a tight alley. Brick buildings on either side.

The vehicle slowly makes its way into the narrow passage.

EXT. ALLEY

The surrounding buildings cut off all light from the main street and entombed the vehicle. Its headlights break through the darkness.

INT. TRANSPORT VEHICLE, FRONT CAB

The Old Guard grips the steering wheel tightly, carefully trying to navigate it through the dark, tight area. He squints.

OLD GUARD
That a dead end?

YOUNG GUARD
Looks to be so.

The van jerks suddenly and the tires POP! The vehicle wobbles. It scrapes against a brick building.

OLD GUARD
Ahhh, Jeez!

The Old Guard hits the breaks. The vehicle comes to a stop.
Tires HISS as they deflate.

OLD GUARD (cont'd)
Get someone on the CB.

The Young Guard picks up the Radio, again.

YOUNG GUARD
(into CB)
This is transport sixteen to Carson
City. We seem to have ourselves a
situation, here. Over.

He listens. There is no response. He shakes the CB and tries
again.

YOUNG GUARD
(into CB)
Hello... Got a situation. Could be
serious. Over...

Still no response.

YOUNG GUARD (cont'd)
Just try and back outta here.

The Old Guard puts the gear into reverse and steps on the
gas. The vehicle moves slowly with the sound of SCRAPING.

The Van Stops. It's caught on something. The Old Guard steps
on the gas. The engine REVS, but the vehicle refuses to move.

OLD GUARD
This can't be happening.

He opens the door and jumps out with his hand on his holster.

PETER (O.S.)
What's goin' on?

YOUNG GUARD
You sit back and button your
yapper. We got ourselves a small
situation here.

EXT. ALLEY

The Old Guard kneels down and feels around under the vehicle.

He grips something. He pulls out a spike belt. He stands up.

A SHADOW sneaks around the transport vehicle.

The Old Guard looks back in the open door. He holds out the spike belt out for the Young Guard to see.

OLD GUARD

Told ya this ain't protocol. Keep trying the CB!

INT. TRANSPORT VEHICLE, FRONT CAB

The Young guard tries it again and get no response.

YOUNG GUARD

Dead air.

He shakes the CB and listens.

YOUNG GUARD (CONT'D)

Not even dead air.

WHAP! The Old Guard falls forward. CLUNK! He slams his head on the step leading into the front cab.

YOUNG GUARD

Holy Mary...

The Young Guard snaps the gun out of his holster, kicks open his door and springs out of the vehicle.

EXT. ALLEY

The Young Guard carefully makes his way to the back of the transport vehicle. He runs a hand along the van to guide him. His other hand holds out his gun, ready to fire.

The Young Guard steps around to the back of the vehicle. He tugs on the doors. They're locked.

He swings around to the driver's side. He can hear his partner groaning somewhere in the darkness.

YOUNG GUARD

Where are you?

OLD GUARD

(barely audible)
...Ground.

Young guard sees a lump on the ground. He hurries over to his partner and kneels down beside him.

YOUNG GUARD
Holy cow. What happened?

The Old Guard is looking up at his partner. His eyes widen...

WHAP!

The Young Guard falls on top of his partner.

Jacoby stands over both of them, holding a blackjack. He leans over and swings it, hits the Young Guard a second time.

The Young Guard is out. The Old Guard's eyes flutter and then close. They are both unconscious.

Jacoby bends down and rips a ring of keys off the Old Guard's belt. He stands up and heads to the back of the vehicle.

The first key doesn't unlock the back doors. The second one doesn't work either. The third key works. The doors swing open.

Peter pounces out, knocking Jacoby to the ground. Jacoby fumbles the blackjack.

Both men struggle on the ground. Peter manages to knee Jacoby in the groin. Peter reaches for the blackjack, but the chain and cuffs restrain his movement.

Wilmer picks up blackjack and knocks Peter on the back of the head. Peter's flat on the pavement.

Jacoby stands up, achingly. He takes the blackjack from his partner. Peter isn't moving.

JACOBY
Hope he isn't dead.

Jacoby nudges peter his foot. There's no movement. He kicks Peter in the ribs.

Peter rolls onto his back and moans.

WILMER
He ain't dead.

FADE OUT:

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Darkness haunts the background.

A spotlight shines on Peter as he lies on an old vinyl couch. His eyes stare up into the light. His shackles have been removed. Jacoby looms over him.

Detective Wilmer Neff appears out of the darkness. He's sucking on a lollypop.

WILMER

After all the hunting, we finally
captured the Bull?

Jacoby tilts his head and looks at Peter, like he's a painting.

JACOBY

I don't know. Almost seems
anticlimactic.

Peter tries sitting up again. He succeeds, shaking off the drowsiness.

Wilmer moves around the couch and stands directly behind Peter.

PETER

(massages his temples)
Ohhh. God.

JACOBY

Not quite.

PETER

Satan. Shoulda known.

WILMER

Bub's a comedian.

Peter turns to see Wilmer standing over him.

JACOBY

We'll be sure to catch your
nightclub act, in the death
chamber.

Wilmer offers a faint smile.

WILMER

It'll be a real gas.

PETER

What do you yo-yos want?

JACOBY

You remember us, don't you, Peter?

PETER

Sure, you're the puppets with tin that danced for Lou, when he pulled your strings.

Wilmer smacks the bump on Peter's head. Peter screams.

JACOBY

That's a nasty bump. You want to keep Detective Neff from playing pat-a-cake on it, you'll need to be nicer. To answer your question, we want back pay.

Peter looks at Jacoby and then turns and eyes Wilmer. Peter shrugs.

JACOBY (cont'd)

See your dalliance with Lou's dame flopped some nice side-hustles, broke a lotta ties and people lost money.

WILMER

(sucking on the lollypop)
Including us.

Wilmer presses a finger hard against the bump on Peter's head. Peter arches his back in pain and SCREAMS.

JACOBY

You thought you could dance with Lou's wife, and tango into the clear? You know, Lou had us hunting for you two. And we were inches from tagging you, when, like a banana, you split.

WILMER

We tagged that twist Laura. She cracked like a poorly laid sidewalk.

JACOBY

She made a good foundation for one though. Where were you hiding, Peter?

Peter doesn't answer.

JACOBY (CONT'D)
I suppose it doesn't matter. We
gotcha now.

A familiar voice BARKS out from the surrounding darkness.

VOICE (O.S.)
Enough chit-chat.

A figure emerges almost ghostlike from the darkness. It's Agatha. She's holding a black cat.

PETER
I knew you were trouble.

AGATHA
I'm more trouble than you'll ever
know.

PETER
From what I heard, you were more
trouble than Lou figured too.

Agatha holds the cat in front of her and stares the cat in the face. She smiles at Peter, and then throws the cat at him.

Peter manages to slide over. The cat bounces off the vinyl couch, lands on its legs with its back arched. It HISSES.

Agatha saunters over to Peter and sits on his lap. She lights a cigarette, takes a puff and places it in Peter's mouth.

AGATHA
Lou knew I was given a bum rap. He
knew it was my husband's scheme...
Never mind. You, however, straight
out crossed him. And since he's
dead, you'll need his forgiveness
from me.

Agatha stands up, pinches the cigarette out of Peter's mouth and takes a drag. Wilmer clamps Peter's shoulders with his big hands to keep him still.

PETER
Poor innocent you. I can't believe
I didn't recognize you. A grifter
is always a grifter.

Agatha snubs the cigarette against the back of Peter's hand.

PETER

AHHHH!

Peter uses his saliva to cool the burning sore. He rubs his hand, wincing.

AGATHA

All right boys, explain.
(looks at her watch)
And cut the reminiscing.

JACOBY

You see, Mrs. Waldon here is in a pinch. ...Seems to think you can help her.

Peter looks over at Agatha. He smiles big.

PETER

The sow got tossed in the sty and a couple of hogs come along to flip her over and suck on her teats.

Agatha steps into Peter with a hard SLAP to the face. It stings.

AGATHA

You're not trying, Peter.

JACOBY

The plan all along was to bump Jeff. Only, like an eel, he slipped away.

WILMER

With our prize.

PETER

...You're askin' me to find Jeff and bring you back the bag of berries?

AGATHA

You really think we're asking?

Peter looks at Jacoby and then at Wilmer

PETER

You trust her?

JACOBY

The plan will stick. Agatha wouldn't cross us. We're cops.

Jacoby looks at Agatha and smiles. Agatha looks annoyed. She's going in to hit Peter again. Jacoby holds her back.

PETER

You don't need me. You coppers got resources...

JACOBY

Sure we got resources, Peter. You. We gotta keep clean. IA's got things clamped down tightly at the clubhouse, since Lou... The Feds punted a few coppers. Lotta friends lost their badges.

PETER

Somehow you two yo-yos held on to your tin.

Wilmer smacks Peter on the back of the head, again. Peter winces and holds in a scream. He turns and gives Wilmer a nasty look.

Wilmer shows Peter a his teeth.

JACOBY

Besides, we'll be busy hunting down an escaped convict.

WILMER

You're our bird dog. We spin you, and you point us in the right direction.

PETER

Why would I know where Jeff is?

WILMER

You live in that world of slime. Slither through it, until you bump into the scumbag who took our dough.

PETER

How long is my leash?

JACOBY

We'll leave enough slack for you to work.

WILMER

Get cute and we choke you with that extra slack.

PETER
(to Jacoby)
What's gonna stop you and your
gunsel here from droppin' me
afterwards?

Wilmer takes the lollypop out his mouth and drops it on the floor. He crunches it under his foot. He moves his hand to strike Peter. Jacoby's look holds Wilmer back.

WILMER
Nothing.

PETER
Then why should I squat and lay hen
fruit for you?

WILMER
'Cause we can drop you now, if you
don't.

Wilmer moves around the couch. He stands beside his partner. Peter stares at the unholy trinity in front of him.

PETER
If I'm bringin' you a bag full of
ripe berries. I'll need some of
those to make a pie for myself.

Agatha moves closer to Jacoby and whispers in his ear. He nods. Wilmer's eyes shift to them and then back on Peter.

AGATHA
You're a dip, Peter.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE, PARKINGLOT - MORNING

The sun hasn't peaked. The sky is hazy blue. The air fresh. Peter enjoys taking in deep breaths as he staggers across the parkinglot. He is still getting used to his hands and feet being free.

Peter holds a key in his hand. A single car is parked in the otherwise, empty lot.

Peter recognizes the car. It's the Buick that he bought from Jack. Peter looks at the key in his hand. He closes his palm on it and smiles. He opens the car door, and gets in.

INT. BUICK - MORNING

In the back seat is a grey chalk-stripe suit, a grey Borsalino hat and a couple of twenty dollar bills.

Peter pops open the glove compartment. He pulls out a silver revolver with a black handle. Peter looks puzzled by the gun. He checks for bullets. It's loaded. He's more puzzled.

Peter inserts the key and starts the car. He rubs the burn mark on his hand.

INT. PETER'S OLD APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Peter steps inside his old room. His furniture has been replaced by an army cot and a small night stand. Peter hangs the suit on the door and crosses the room. He flips the cot away from the wall.

Peter drops to his knees, and rips the grill off the vent. He tosses it aside and reaches into the vent. He pulls out his cigar box. He opens it and pulls out the stack of bills. He smiles with relief.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Peter exits the apartment, wearing the grey chalk-stripe suit and Borsalino hat. He looks well put together, despite what he's been through. The cigar box gripped in his hand.

A young man sees him coming out of the apartment.

YOUNG MAN

Hey, buster, that's my shack.

PETER

Who's stopping you from enterin'.

The Young Man watches Peter enter the stairwell.

INT. BUICK (MOVING) - DAY

Peter is driving. Sunlight streams through the trees and glares off the windshield, into his eyes.

Peter watches through his driver's window as he approaches and then passes the bar, Navy-Blues.

Through the rearview mirror, Peter watches the bar shrink as the car puts a distance between himself and the bar.

Peter looks at the cigar box on passenger seat. He sighs and drops his head.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The Buick screeches to a halt in the middle of the highway. It is motionless for a moment. Then it does a wide turn and heads back in the other direction.

INT. NAVY-BLUES, BAR - DAY

Brian is behind the bar. A couple of Marines play Eight-ball, in the back. Kate flirts with them.

Peter enters and makes a beeline for the bar. He sits on a stool.

Brian walks towards Peter. He's angry.

Kate sees Peter. She freezes. Her eyes widen.

BRIAN

Didn't know prisons gave out day
passes along with fancy suits?

PETER

Make without the comments and fetch
me a drink, Navy boy.

BRIAN

Get out of my bar.

Peter takes out a twenty and slams it on the bar.

PETER

One drink.

Brian picks it up and stuffs it in his apron.

PETER

(to Brian)
I want change.

Brian ignores him, turns to make the drink. Kate sidles up to Peter.

KATE

(whispering)
What are you doing here?

She looks at Brian, who stops making the drink. He gives Kate an angry look.

KATE (cont'd)
Brian, were gonna take the office.

Brian brings the drink, drops a napkin in front of Peter and places the drink on top.

BRIAN
Fine with me, sister.

Kate leads the way. Peter grabs his drink and follows her into a room behind the bar.

INT. BAR, OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Kate drops into a chair behind the desk. She drags the trash can from beside the desk with her foot and rests it on top. Peter stands in front of the desk, sipping his drink.

KATE
How'd you get out?

PETER
Couple of Lou's old tin men.

KATE
And you came here?

Peter rubs the cigarette burn on his hand.

KATE (cont'd)
What happened?

PETER
I got careless with a redhead.

KATE
You're a daisy. Swabbie out there'll rat on you, you don't leave.

PETER
I'll leave soon enough. I need ya to tell me 'bout Jeff?

KATE
What about him?

PETER
...Bird flew the coop with the dough. Agatha's none to pleased.

Kate lights up a cigarette. She says nothing.

PETER (cont'd)
I've been given three days to hunt
'im down. I don't find 'im,...

KATE
That's why they sprung you. You're
dopey if you think their playing
straight. Jesus Peter, if you have
any cash, run.

Peter looks into his drink and swirls it around in his glass.

PETER
I've considered it. But I'm bein'
dogged by a couple crooked coppers.
They wouldn't let it lie with me
skippin' out. I also figured
there's a wad a dough that I'm
entitled to. I have an end game.

KATE
Well take your game and shove off.
Whatever you're hunting ain't here.

Kate sucks in nicotine. Smoke leaves through her nose.

PETER
...Have any info on him?

KATE
On Jeff? Why would I?

PETER
You knew the bird.

KATE
Briefly.

PETER
He tell you anythin'...

KATE
Anything what...?

PETER
Little details that'd help me track
'im?

Kate takes another drag and thinks.

KATE
No.

Peter gulps the rest of his drink, and places the glass on the desk. He moves around the desk and leans over Kate. He pinches the cigarette from her mouth, takes a drag, and gives it back.

PETER

I got three days. I'll be at the motel. Anythin' you can remember...

Peter leaves. Kate moves the trash back in to place with her feet. She picks up Peter's glass and moves to the door.

She watches him from the office doorway.

Peter turns to Brian and shows him the burn on his hand.

PETER

How 'bout a bandage?

BRIAN

I ever tell you about bull fighting?

Peter shakes his head.

PETER

Skip it Hemingway.

Peter leaves. Brian faces Kate. He gives her a sour look.

KATE

Clean out your trash.

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, OFFICE - EVENING

Peter pokes his head inside. The office is empty.

Peter steps in with his gun drawn. He crosses to the front desk and peeks over. He moves around the counter and places his gun and hat on the desk. He grabs the phone and dials.

The phone rings. There's a muffled voice on the other end.

PETER

(into phone)

316 Virginia Street. Vera Kurt.

The call is put through. RINGING is heard. Peter opens a drawer and takes out a box of bandages. He takes one out, rips off the package, and carefully lays the bandage over the cigarette burn on his hand.

The RINGING stops. A muffled VOICE.

PETER

'Lo Vera. It's Pete.

(muffled voice, excited)

Never mind. You can catch it on the news. I want to talk to ya. Lunch tomorrow...? Right. The diner on the interstate... Right.

He prongs the phone.

Peter pulls on another drawer. It doesn't open. He yanks harder, still no luck. He looks around the desk, finds a letter opener and tries to pry the drawer open...

SNAP. The letter opener breaks. Peter tosses the letter opener. He yanks on the drawer again. The lock breaks. The drawer flies open. Pictures fly out.

Peter picks them up. They are photos of guests in the motel, having sex in various positions. Peter, smirks and looks in the open drawer. More pictures.

Peter picks them up and shuffles through them. He stops. His eyes widen.

CU. PICTURES: Kate and Jeff on the bed having sex.

FOOTSTEPS. HEAVY BREATHING. Walter, the manager, stands inside entrance. A camera hangs around his neck.

Peter picks up his hat and drops it on his head. He picks up the gun and points it at Walter. Walter's heavy breathing speeds up.

Peter holds out a picture of Kate and Jeff.

PETER

How long you been doin' this?

Walter swallows. He doesn't answer.

PETER

Does it pay well?

WALTER

Depends.

PETER

On what?

WALTER

Who ya snap.

Using his gun, Peter motions the Manager to step in and sit down. Walter follows the instructions.

WALTER

Look, people come here for a good time. I see the angle in that and I play it. It ain't personal.

PETER

You must have a rolodex of enemies.

Peter steps out from behind the counter and stands in front of Walter, keeping the gun pointed at his face.

WALTER

What do you want?

PETER

...The guy in this picture.

Walter grimaces and shakes his head.

WALTER

I ain't seen him since that night.
When you last came in here.

Peter looks at the picture of Kate and Jeff again. He's visibly angry.

PETER

You talked to him that night?

FLASH CUT:

EXT. CHAMPAGNE INN - NIGHT

Walter stands outside the window of room #31. His camera lens is angled between a small opening in the curtains.

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, ROOM 31

Jeff sits on the edge of the bed. He is sliding his pants on.

Kate pulls a compact out of her purse. She checks her lip. It's bleeding. She licks it and smiles.

KATE

I think we both know what's going on.

Steven leans back in the bed, resting on his elbows.

JEFF

I'd like to see you again, baby.

KATE

Sure got a crummy way of showin' it.

Kate steps over to the cigarette on the floor. She picks it up and continues smoking. She walks over to the side of the bed, where Jeff is sitting. She begins massaging his shoulders.

A flash brightens the room. A low THUMP is heard outside the window. Kate shoots a look at the window. Jeff leaps up and darts towards the door, swings it open.

EXT. CHAMPAGNE INN - NIGHT

Jeff steps out. He sees Walter waddle down the stairs at full capacity. Jeff leans over the railing on the second floor and watches Walter disappear around the corner of the motel.

BACK TO:

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, OFFICE - DAY

Peter still has the gun on Walter. Peter places a cigarette in his mouth. He reaches over the front desk and picks up a pack of matches from a basket of matchbooks. The pack of matches reads: *For a good night's rest: Champagne Inn.*

Peter lights his cigarette.

PETER

(inhaling)

He let you get away?

WALTER

Naw. He caught up with me, in the office here. ...Said blackmail was out, but let me keep the pictures. ...Said one good turn deserves another and he might collect on it one day. Anycase, he ain't been back.

PETER

How 'bout the woman?

WALTER

(sadly)

No, she ain't been back.

PETER
She doesn't know 'bout the
pictures?

Walter raises his eyes and smiles but says nothing.

Peter drops the pictures on the counter, except the ones with Kate and Jeff. He looks closely at them, blows smoke, and then pockets the pictures.

PETER (cont'd)
I'm crashin' here.

WALTER
Sure thing.

Peter yanks the phone cord out of the wall. He examines the length.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Hey, why the...

Peter keeps the gun on Walter. Walter stays seated.

PETER
Place your hands together. Behind
the chair.

Walter does as he's told. Peter walks behind the chair and begins tying the Manager's hands.

WALTER
...Ain't no call for this.

PETER
Clamp your jaws. I'm gonna need a
rope or somethin' for your feet.

Sweat rips down Walter's head. Peter lifts the camera from around Walter's neck and rips off the strap to the case. He examines the length.

PETER
Never mind.

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, ROOM 25 - EVENING.

Peter sits on the bed with his cigar box on his lap. He's staring across the room at the vent on upper part of the wall.

Peter opens the box. He places pictures of Kate and Jeff inside and closes the box.

Peter walks to the vent, reaches up and pulls off the grill. He slides the box inside the vent.

INT. ROOM 25 - LATER

Peter sits in bed, back against the headboard. He takes the gun out of his jacket and lays it on the bedside table. He tosses his jacket on a wooden chair across the room. His body slides down the headboard, head landing on a pillow. His eyes close.

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, ROOM 25 - MORNING

Peter wakes up. He slowly takes in the surroundings of the seedy motel room. Light sneaks through a crack in the drapes.

Peter peels himself off the mattress, feeling all the aches and pains in his body. He grips the side table, where the revolver sits, and he pulls himself up.

Peter makes his way to the bathroom. He shuts the door behind him. RUNNING WATER is heard.

The motel room door CREAKS open. Sun light pushes its way inside.

INT. BATHROOM

The shower is running. Condensation steams up the mirror. Water drops form and trickle down the mirror.

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, OFFICE

Walter is still tied to the chair. He has a look of terror in his eyes.

A silver revolver is pointed at his forehead. BANG...

Walter tips over in the chair. Blood pours out of his head and pools on the floor.

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, ROOM 25, BATHROOM

A hand reaches out from behind the shower curtain, grabs a towel off the rack and pulls it into the shower.

The shower curtain swings open. Peter is patting himself dry. The bandage on his hand falls off.

He steps out of the tub, wipes the condensation off the mirror and looks at his blurred reflection and swipes his wet hair back.

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, OFFICE - MORNING

Peter steps in the office. He looks down at the dead Manager.

Peter takes the silver revolver out of his jacket and sniffs the barrel. He knows it's been fired.

He steps past the corpse on the floor, trying to avoid the pool of coagulating blood.

Behind the front desk, he opens the drawer and takes out another bandage. He puts it on.

He lights up a cigarette, lifts his hat, wipes his forehead with his forearm.

SIRENS heard in the distance and they're drawing closer.

INT. BUICK - DAY

Peter is back on the road. The rearview mirror shows the motel getting smaller as the car distances itself. Police cars pull into the motel lot.

INT. DINER - DAY

It's crowded. Truckers wolf down lunch. Business men talk shop, while sipping on coffee and smoking.

Peter and Vera face each other in a booth in a back corner of the restaurant.

Vera has a crooked smile.

VERA

Glad you called me, Pete.

A tall, lanky WAITRESS, chewing gum, blonde hair fastened up into a bun, steps up to the booth.

WAITRESS

What'll it be? Special?

VERA

Turkey club and a cola, I guess.

The Waitress sighs, faces Peter.

WAITRESS
What's your guess?

PETER
I guess you should fetch me a ham
sandwich with a pickle on the side
and a coffee. Black.

The Waitress leaves.

VERA
Still a charmer.

PETER
I'm being played, and I need a
place to hold up. ...Do some
thinkin'.

VERA
How'd you escape?

PETER
I don't want to make your pretty
little head dizzy. Long story
short, I'm lookin' for Jeff Waldon
and over a hunert large, give or
take.

Vera's eyes widen.

VERA
For real?

PETER
(nodding)
...Ever meet Jeff.

VERA
Steven's brother? He liked dice,
just like his brother. ...Talked a
lot with Sterling, mostly in
private. I never talked to Jeff
though. I knew Steven better.

UNDER THE TABLE

Vera slides her pump off and starts running her foot up
Peter's pant leg.

PETER (O.S.)
What can you tell me about Steven?

VERA (O.S.)

I'd heard he and his wife ran a gyp at the Casino. It blew up before Sterling took over. I never knew Steven back then. He was in heavy with a lotta people. Tell you the truth, I'm sorry he's dead. He tipped well on the occasion that he lucked out in dice. ...Talked how he'd like to take me to some private beach house.

Peter's leg pulls back. Vera's leg advances aggressively.

PETER (O.S.)

Did he say where this beach house was?

VERA (O.S.)

Naw. I doubt he owned one. ...His way of flirtin'.

Vera's foot continues to caress its way up Peter's leg.

ABOVE THE TABLE

Peter lights up a cigarette.

The Waitress returns with the drinks and sandwiches. She places them on the table with attitude and hurries off.

Vera picks up her glass and licks the rim, provocatively.

EXT. MANAGER'S OFFICE, CHAMPAGNE INN - DAY

Wilmer and Jacoby both lean up against the motel. Wilmer sucks on a lollypop. Jacoby plucks off a piece of weatherbeaten paint from the motel.

A couple of PARAMEDICS wheel the Manager's body out of the office, towards an ambulance. One of the Paramedics has a sour look on his face.

WILMER

Hey bub, what's with the overcast?
You're clouding my day.

PARAMEDIC

A man died.

JACOBY

You're in the wrong business.
...Makes you sleep better, I could
tell you he was a wrong gee.

PARAMEDIC

Who made you God Almighty?

Jacoby faces Wilmer. They laugh.

PARAMEDIC (CONT'D)

In your ear, copper.

Wilmer tosses his lollypop. Jacoby picks off another large piece of paint and tosses it.

The Paramedics pull up the stretchers legs and roll the corps in the back of the ambulance.

JACOBY

Come on. Let's go check out the
bull's trough.

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Peter sleeps in bed, snoring. Vera sits up against the headboard, next to Peter. She grabs a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from the side-table and lights one. She looks over at Peter.

Vera slides a hand under the pillow...

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)

Mama, Mama...

...Peter wakes up...

...Vera quickly pulls her hand out from the pillow.

Standing just inside the bedroom entrance is Vera's chubby four year old son, VERN.

VERN

Mama, I want some chocolate.

VERA

Soon, baby.

INT. VERA'S APARTMENT, ENTRANCE - DAY

Peter is about to leave. Vera blocks the door.

PETER
Thanks for the time.

VERA
Where you goin' now?

PETER
End of the Rainbow.

VERA
Is there really over a hundred
grand there?

Peter nods and tries to step past Vera. She shifts to block him.

PETER
I gotta go. Thanks for the time.

Peter bends down to kiss her. Vera has a gun pointed at Peter's stomach. Peter isn't surprised.

VERA
There's a small sum for tippin' the
coppers on you, Pete. Normally I'
go for the sure thing, but I got a
proposition...

PETER
Sellin' tips on fixed fights ain't
payin' the bills?

VERA
Nickle and dime stuff. You, on the
other hand, have over hundred Gs on
the horizon. I could let you go, if
ya promise to chisel out a piece of
that rock for me.

Peter says nothing. He's looking at the gun pointed at him.

VERA (CONT'D)
Come on, Pete. We make a pretty
good team.

PETER
You haven't changed, Vera.

VERA
No one changes, Pete, just their
circumstances.

Vern walks up behind them.

VERN

Mama, I want some chocolate...

Vera tilts her head to look past Peter and face her son. Peter uses this distraction to take the gun away from her. He now has the gun pointed at her. He steps past Vera and opens the door.

PETER

Thanks for the time, Vera.

Peter tucks the gun inside his jacket and slips out the door, into the apartment hallway. Vera scowls.

EXT. VERA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Peter pushes open the front entrance doors and races towards his car, parked on the street.

Vera watches from her window, on the second floor.

A police cruiser appears.

Vera smiles.

Peter stops in his tracks.

A second police cruiser, with flashing lights, approaches from the other end of the street.

The first cruiser stops, blocking Peter's car and his escape. The police car's door opens. The OFFICER steps out with his gun drawn.

Peter takes off on foot, crossing the street.

OFFICER

Stop!

A foot chase ensues. Peter cuts into an alley.

EXT. ALLEY

Peter's legs do their best to out run the younger Officer. The Officer points his gun in Peter's direction. His finger is placed on the trigger, ready to fire.

OFFICER

Stop in the name of the law!

Peter rounds a dumpster and exits the alley.

EXT. MAIN STREET

Peter sprints up the sidewalk, bumping a PEDESTRIAN. Peter stumbles.

PEDESTRIAN
Watch it, buster!

Peter looks back at the pedestrian, but has no time to quarrel. The Officer is hard after him, still ready to fire.

The second police cruiser turns a corner and enters the chase, with sirens BLARING. It pulls up along side Peter and slows to his pace. The cruiser is about to cut in front of Peter...

...Peter grips a street sign, uses it to spin himself, making a hard 90 degree turn onto a side street. The Police cruiser trying to cut him off, SLAMS into the sign.

EXT. SIDE STREET

Peter huffs and puffs his way along the sidewalk. He crosses the street.

The Officer on foot remains in pursuit. BANG! He finally takes a shot.

The bullet grazes Peter's left ear. Peter stumbles. The Officer gains.

OFFICER
Damn it. Stop!

Peter pulls out a gun, spins around and takes a couple wild shots in the Officer's direction. The Officer takes cover behind a parked car.

Sirens BLARE from the second police cruiser or possibly a third.

Peter turns another corner...

EXT. STREET

...Peter SLAMS into a parked police car and tumbles hard onto the pavement. He stays down for a moment, looks around. He's come full circle and is once again in front of Vera's apartment building.

Vera is still watching from her window.

Peter waves to her. She scowls back.

He gets up, bolts to his car, slams the door. Peter's Buick SCRAPES past the police cruiser that was blocking its path. The Buick BURNS RUBBER.

The second police cruiser, with a dent in the front end, barrels down in the Buick's direction. Both cars speed up. A game of chicken ensues.

At the last second Peter's Buick diverts into an alley. The Cruiser tries to follow suit, but fails to make the maneuver.

EXT. ALLEY

The Buick speeds through the narrow passage, slamming into garbage cans along the way.

Both police cruisers are now Ripping, single file, through the alley, trailing the Buick.

INT. BUICK (MOVING)

Peter notices the intersecting street at the end of the alley. He jerks the wheel one way then the other, unsure of which way to turn.

Peter brandishes his silver revolver.

His foot slams on the breaks.

EXT. ALLEY

The Buick stops sharply. The following police cruisers, likewise, come to a SCREECHING halt, one behind the other.

Peter wastes no time. He hops out of his car, uses his door as a shield. He takes pot shots at the cruisers.

The Officer in the front cruiser ducks behind his dash as a bullet pops through his windshield and is embedded in the seat.

The Officer in the tailing cruiser steps out and uses his door as his shield. He shoots back at Peter.

Bullets fly in both directions.

Peter takes aim at a front tire on the leading cruiser. He hits it. It deflates.

Peter shoots the other front tire and it deflates. He takes another shot at the Police Officer behind his door. Peter's gun runs dry. He tosses it in the car and takes out the gun he took from Vera. He decides to save bullets, and he gets back in his car.

The Buick takes off and makes a sharp left out of the alley, leaving a trail of dust in its wake.

EXT. STREET

Peter's car rips down the street, HONKING as it maneuvers through light traffic.

INT. BUICK (MOVING)

Peter grips the steering wheel, tightly, with both hands. He's trying to stop them from shaking.

He looks in the rearview mirror, checking the damage to his left ear. A small amount of blood drips. He sighs heavily.

INT. NAVY BLUES, BAR - DAY

Brian stands behind the bar, cleaning glasses.

Jacoby and Wilmer enter. Jacoby heads towards the bar, Wilmer towards the lone Drinker, who sits solemnly at a table.

Jacoby flashes his badge at Brian.

Brian puts a glass down and walks along the bar, wiping the bar top with a wet cloth as he moves towards Jacoby.

Wilmer grabs the Drinker and leads him to the exit. The Drinker is pushed out the door. Wilmer shuts the door and locks it.

Jacoby watches him with a smile. Wilmer moves to the bar and stands next to Jacoby.

JACOBY

This the trough the bull comes to
nip?

Brian says nothing.

JACOBY (cont'd)

Peter Haller?

Brian gives them resolute silence.

WILMER

Look, bub, we know he was here.

JACOBY

We just want to know what he talked about.

Brian is silent. Jacoby smiles.

JACOBY

How 'bout some Eel juice?

BRIAN

What kind?

JACOBY

Couple shots of corn'll do.

Brian turns, grabs a bottle of bourbon and two shot glasses. He pours the shots and places them in front of the cops.

The two cops down their shots. Jacoby smashes the shot glass on the floor. Wilmer reaches over the bar and grabs Brian by his crisp white shirt. Brian and Wilmer stare at each other intensely.

Wilmer slaps him, backhand, forehand. Brian takes it.

EXT. USED CAR LOT - DAY

A CUSTOMER admires the Ford Fordor. Jack Wade approaches.

JACK

You know, Bogart owned that car.

CUSTOMER

Get outta here.

JACK

No foolin'. I'm not the type to give you the usual salesman flap. I wanna see you drive away happy. That's my bottom line.

Jack notices Peter's Buick bounce into the lot and disappear behind the mechanic's shop.

JACK (cont'd)

Listen, feel free to check out the interior and whatnot. I'll be back.

Jack takes off. The customer opens the car door and sits down inside, imagining himself driving.

EXT. CAR LOT, BEHIND MECHANICS SHOP

The Buick is parked in front of a pile of worn tires. Peter gets out and waits...

INT. MECHANIC'S SHOP

Jack cuts through the shop, bumping a MECHANIC doing a spray job on a Dodge Coupe.

MECHANIC

Darn it Jack! How many times I gotta tell you, this ain't no short cut!

Jack turns and shrugs and continues on his way.

EXT. CAR LOT, BEHIND MECHANIC'S SHOP

Jack pops out of the back door and moves anxiously.

PETER

I need another car. Quick!

JACK

Peter, I... Oh, you just want a car?

Jack leans up against Peter's Buick. He looks inside the car.

JACK

Got a cigarette?

Peter pulls out a pack of Viceroy's and tosses it at Jack. He catches it, takes out a cigarette and pockets the pack.

PETER

Keep 'em.

Jack takes out a pack of matches from the Champagne Inn. He lights the cigarette.

JACK

(smiling)

A car, huh? I don't know Peter. You're on the lam.

PETER

Consider it a small favor.

JACK

Aiding and abetting ain't that small to the coppers. What can you toss in the deal to sweeten it?

PETER

I got nothin'. Just a straight trade.

Jack walks around the car, looking it over. He notices Peter's revolver in the front seat.

JACK

You know, some dame out bid me on this car in a police auction. How'd you get it back?

No answer. Jack slaps the top of the car.

JACK (CONT'D)

...Can't get you much with a trade. Got some fresh scrapes on it and...

Jack rubs his finger over a bullet hole.

JACK (CONT'D)

...Well, among other things.

PETER

I don't got any money, Jack.

JACK

How 'bout the Roscoe in there?

PETER

It's hot. You ought'a keep your mitts off it.

JACK

Too bad. A straight trade, huh?

Peter nods.

JACK (CONT'D)

You're bad business Peter. I'm losing a sale 'cause of this.

Jack bites his fist and turns away. He disappears into the mechanic's shop.

INT. NAVY BLUES, BACK OFFICE - EVENING

Brian slouches in a chair behind a desk, about to pass out. He has taken a severe beating. Wilmer and Jacoby toss up the office...

...Jacoby kicks over the garbage can beside the desk. A half burnt business card falls out.

Jacoby picks it up...

BUSINESS CARD - Only the last name Waldon remains. Part of a phone number remains. It's been scratched out and another number has been written down underneath it.

Jacoby sneers at Brian. He pushes the card in his face.

JACOBY
Explain this bartender.

Brian looks up through swollen eyes. He shrugs.

Wilmer steps around the desk and stands over Brian.

INT. FORD FORDOR (MOVING) - EVENING

Peter drives. Peter rips off the peeling bandage on his hand. He searches his pockets for cigarettes, before realizing he gave them to Jack. Peter curses.

He reaches inside his jacket and pulls out the gun that he took off Vera. He uses one hand to open the chamber and check for bullets. It's loaded.

INT. STERLING'S CASINO, OFFICE - EVENING

Sterling sits behind his desk with a cat on his lap.

Norris Ipswitch stands off to the side, casually filing his nails.

Joe Casperetti sits in a corner chair on the other side. He has a puffy black eye. A fedora partially covers stitches on his forehead.

Peter sits across the office on the leather sofa, drumming his fingers on the armrest.

STERLING
Who greased it so you'd spill out
of the can?

PETER
Couple of Lou's old crooks.

Sterling nods and presses a button on his intercom.

STERLING (cont'd)
(into intercom)
Couple martinis.

He sits back and pets his cat.

PETER
Short of it, as you would have
guessed, I've been sprung to hunt
down Jeff Waldon and the prize he
ran off with.

Sterling shrugs and opens the humidor on his desk. He takes
one out and sniffs it.

STERLING
Cohiba... Want one?

Peter shakes his head.

PETER
Viceroy.

Sterling nods at Norris. Norris puts his nail file in a case
and slips it in his pocket. He leaves the room.

Sterling takes out a cigar clipper from a drawer. He clips it
and picks up a box of matches. He lights his cigar, glancing
furtively at Peter.

STERLING
Jeff was Steven's twin, wasn't he?

PETER
You're a true grifter.

Sterling glances at Joe, who nods back. Peter's about to pull
something out of his jacket.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

STERLING
Come in!

Peter stops. He takes his hand out of his jacket, as a
COCKTAIL WAITRESS enters. She's carrying a couple of
martinis. The Waitress hands one to Peter, walks over the
Sterling and places one on his desk. She leaves.

PETER
Vera not in today?

STERLING
...Late shift.

Sterling takes a sip of his drink and places it on a coaster.

Peter mixes his with his finger and sucks his finger, testing it, before taking a sip.

STERLING
You were saying something about me being a grifter.

PETER
You said you knew nothin' 'bout Steven Waldon.

STERLING
Nothing above what I already told you.

PETER
Well, my brain's havin' a stubborn time believin' ya didn't know 'bout Steven and Agatha's funny money operation in this here casino, when Lou ran it.

STERLING
I don't much care what happened here before I took over, and I don't much care what you believe.

PETER
Your feign is worse than Jabber's hook. You're the reason I stumbled into this mess in the first place.

STERLING
Right.

PETER
What does that mean?

STERLING
Another insult.
(puffs his cigar)
Go on...

PETER
See, I'm on a wild goose chase, tryin' to hunt down Jeff.
(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

He's dead. You killed 'im, or your flunkies did. You didn't expect me to be runnin' 'round scoutin' for the dough, so you've been tryin' to shift the coppers in my direction. You had Vera sic the boys in blue on me. That's clear as Technicolor.

Sterling takes another puff. He rest his head back and blows smoke towards the ceiling.

PETER (CONT'D)

I don't blame Vera. She's just a gal takin' care of herself. A dame with a kid needs to take care of herself. I guess you figured that too. Your play to bump' the bird at the motel usin' my gun was a good play too. Figured to frame me for that one, huh?

Peter pulls out the silver revolver used to kill the manager. He dangles it for Sterling to see. Sterling's facial expression doesn't change.

Joe sits up, waiting for a signal from Sterling. Sterling pets his cat. He smiles at Joe, who has his eyes on Peter.

STERLING

(puffs cigar)

Get to where this makes sense or get out.

PETER

Well, let me replay everythin' for ya.

Sterling shrugs and sighs...

PETER (cont'd)

Since Steven Waldon's scam dried up, he ran outta money to lose and he ran up a big debt in your casino. So, you and his brother, Jeff, made out a plan to have 'im re-pay you. Kill Steven for insurance and split the swag. Probably more than Steven owed, but what the hell, you have big expansion plans. When all was done, you hated the idea of sharin' the loot, so you bumped Jeff and took the whole prize.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

This picture snapped after Vera told me that you had private meetings with Jeff.

Peter stops. He sips his drink, waiting for a reaction from Sterling. He gets nothing but a blank stare and cigar smoke.

PETER (CONT'D)

Now, you figured the patsy would be doin' a dime in the big house. But here I am, and I want a cut-o-the-prize.

Sterling rest his cigar down in an ashtray and laughs.

STERLING

Wow. You're so wet you're drowning. You know why I never put you on my payroll after Lou died?

Peter shakes his head.

STERLING (cont'd)

It's because you so stupid.

Joe spits out a laugh.

STERLING (cont'd)

First off, Vera is a dizzy gal, and if you believe anything that spills out of her yapper, then you're just as dizzy. Secondly, I'm through listening to your insults and ideas about me. I've been nothing but straight with you.

PETER

Yeah, straight as a corkscrew.

Peter sucks his drink back, picks up the silver revolver and stands up. Joe stands up.

STERLING

I'm through dodging your accusations like a prize fighter. You're nothing. Got it? A dumb gun for hire. A cheap street thug. You don't live on Lou's muscle anymore. He's dead, and I heard you played no small part in that drama.

Peter back steps towards the office door, the revolver in one hand, and the drinking glass in the other.

PETER

Another two bit speech from Sterling Keys. Now, I need you to think about this. I'm not the only one who is lookin' for the swag. Cut me in, and I'll make sure no one else comes knockin'.

The door opens behind Peter. Norris enters, grabs Peter from behind and shakes the gun out of Peter's hand. It falls to the floor. Peter manages to get free and he smashes his glass over Norris's face. Norris goes down. Joe jumps in swinging.

His fists connect with Peter's face. Peter stumbles back. Joe swings again, missing. Peter manages to grab Joe's arms. They struggle. Peter knees Joe in the groin. Joe goes down.

Sterling steps in and picks up the silver revolver. He points it at Peter. Peter freezes, and then smiles, inching towards Sterling. Peter's hand reaches inside his jacket...

The cat watches from under the desk.

...Joe bounces up. He steps into Peter with a punch, connecting with his jaw.

Peter's head snaps to the side.

Norris gets up, face bleeding. He walks around Peter and grabs him from behind, allowing Joe to punch Peter in the stomach.

Peter goes down, winded. Joe kicks Peter in the face. A CRACK is heard. Blood flies.

STERLING

Enough. Take him out back.

Sterling pushes open a door behind his desk, leading to the back of the casino. Peter is dragged out the door by Norris and Joe.

EXT. BACK OF CASINO - NIGHT

It's dark, except for the beam of light shooting over the casino from the tall neon sign, circling atop the pole in the front lot.

Norris and Joe drag Peter out of the casino. They drop him on the gravel landing, where trucks make deliveries and pickups.

Peter struggles to his knees. The two goons work on him with kicks. Peter crashes back down.

Sterling, with the revolver on Peter, signals for his guys to stop. They do.

Sterling takes out a handkerchief and hands it to Norris. Norris uses it to dab the cut on his face.

NORRIS
Bloody cheap shot.

STERLING
I have enough worries with Zed
Naples stealing my business. I
don't need you...

Peter manages to get to his knees again, bleeding and beaten. His nose is twisted out of shape.

PETER
You think I'm the only one who'll
figure out where the money went?

He points the silver revolver at Peter.

Sterling is about to pull the trigger. Peter smiles and raises his hand.

PETER (cont'd)
Can I have my Viceroy?

Sterling nods to Norris. Norris steps forward with a cigarette and places it in Peter's mouth and lights it. Norris steps back. Sterling steps towards Peter. Peter's hand sneaks inside his Jacket...

STERLING
Enjoy your last cigarette.

THUMP! THUMP! Norris and Joe drop to the ground like dead flies. Jacoby and Wilmer emerge from the darkness. Wilmer holds a blackjack.

Sterling jumps back, pointing the gun at the two men. Jacoby flashes his badge and draws his gun.

WILMER
Unless you're Flash Gordon, I'd
drop the gun and step away from the
comedian.

PETER
(puffing is cigarette)
I told you others would come for
the money.

WILMER

Quiet.

STERLING

I -- I don't have the money.

JACOBY

We'll find out what you have and don't have.

Sterling, unsure what is happening, waves his gun between Peter and the two men.

WILMER

You're not going to make it, slick.
Drop the rod.

Sterling presses the trigger. Click. Click. Click.

Jacoby and Wilmer step forward. Sterling steps back. He drops the revolver and raises his hands. Jacoby quickly picks up the dropped gun...

...Wilmer strikes like a snake, cracking Sterling's head with the blackjack. His body goes limp and drops to the ground.

Peter stands up, wincing in pain. His cigarette falls out of his mouth, onto the gravel.

PETER

(dusting himself off)
...Forgot to tell 'im there were no more bullets.

Peter walks over to Norris, who's moaning on the ground. Peter kneels beside him and takes out the pack of cigarettes from his jacket. Peter stands up. He kicks Norris.

Norris rolls over, moaning. Peter pulls out the gun that he took off Vera. He points it at Norris.

PETER

I told you before, Norris ain't a tough name.

Jacoby nods to Wilmer. Wilmer smacks Peter on the back of the head. Peter drops.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Peter sits on the vinyl couch. He's weak and more than a little weary from the beating he took.

Jacoby and Agatha stand in front of him. Jacoby has Vera's gun on Peter. Agatha draws smoke into her lungs from her cigarette. She releases the smoke in Peter's face.

PETER

I could use my own cigarette.

Agatha steps forward, gives him the one she was smoking.

Peter takes a drag while Agatha stares him down.

PETER

When did Lou find out 'bout that counterfeitin' scam you and Steven ran outta his casino?

AGATHA

We weren't the ones who squealed. And I did what I did for money. You betrayed Lou for the sickest reason of all. Love. Then you left your squeeze to dangle over the heat when the flames started singeing your toes. And like I told you, Lou forgave me. That's why he planned this score for me. Steven dead and you were supposed to fry as payback for your betrayal. It was a perfect plan from beyond.

PETER

Only there was a leak in the plan and you ended up dry.

Agatha steps forward and slaps Peter. It stings.

Agatha looks back at Jacoby. Jacoby takes out the silver revolver with the black handle. He hands it to Agatha. Agatha points the gun at Peter. Peter stares down the barrel, hoping there's still no bullets in it.

JACOBY

Hold off for now. He still has purpose.

Agatha smiles and holds the gun at her side.

Jacoby carefully takes the gun back and drops the revolver in his jacket pocket. He pulls a half burnt business card from another pocket. He hands it to Peter.

The card partially disintegrates in his hand. He looks at it says nothing. He tosses the card. It drifts onto the floor.

Peter shrugs.

JACOBY

We found it at the bar. The bartender knew nothing of it. I liked the bird. He knew how to keep his beak clamped. Even under heat. Wilmer did get him to cough out the name Kate Liedecker. Some skirt who works there that you're stuck on. You'd be surprised what rolls out of a man's mouth, when you play ping-pong with his head. He passed out before we could get how Kate figured into this, but something tells me you know.

A door opens at the far end of the warehouse. Moonlight enters along with the silhouette of a large man. The door is shut and the apparition is swallowed up by darkness.

FOOTSTEPS draw closer. Wilmer appears into sight. He's working on a lollypop. He moves to Jacoby's side and whispers in his ear. Jacoby nods and smiles.

JACOBY (cont'd)

Your friend Sterling is clean. That leaves your colored friend Kate.

Wilmer steps towards Peter. Wilmer takes his lollypop out of his mouth and looks at it.

WILMER

These suckers used to last longer. Now they're like your friend, Mr. Keys. A little lickin' and there's nothing left.

PETER

He's not my friend.

AGATHA

But Kate Liedecker is. If we find that she and Jeff have the dough...

Jacoby snaps his fingers...

JACOBY

I remember bustin' a share crop with that name for tricks. We got her to fall under Lou's protection. Ho! Wait till Wilmer here gets his mitts on that frail.

(MORE)

JACOBY (CONT'D)

He'll find out exactly what she knows about our money.

He looks at Wilmer and nods. Wilmer hits Peter.

JACOBY (cont'd)

Or you can save time and pain on the dame and tell us how the waitress figures into this?

Peter looks at them. Wilmer is preparing to bring the fist down on him.

JACOBY (cont'd)

You only have one day left to help us bring home the prize. ...Shouldn't waste it in a dark warehouse, having your face inflated by Wilmer's fists.

Peter says nothing. Wilmer hits him again. Peter gets knocked off the couch. He's on his knees his head is down. Blood drips from his face onto the floor.

JACOBY (cont'd)

Sooner or later everyone breaks. And for what, Peter? An old share crop who played you like a cheap piano? You're an escaped convict who now has another murder taped to your back. To the state that's definitely more than enough to strap you in a nice wooden chair. We know what went down at the motel. We know you were there.

Jacoby nods to Wilmer. Wilmer helps Peter back on the couch.

Agatha whispers something into Jacoby's ear. Jacoby looks at his watch.

AGATHA

One more day, Peter. One day to bring us the waitress.

PETER

What makes you think she hasn't skipped with the money.

AGATHA

That's why we have you to find her.

Agatha takes out a cigarette. Jacoby takes out a box of matches and lights her cigarette. The same box from the Champagne Inn. Peter notices.

INT. CAR LOT, OFFICE - DAY

Peter leans back in a chair with his feet resting up on the desk in front of him. He's holding a tissue on his face to stop a cut from bleeding.

The office door opens. Jack steps inside. He notices Peter's bruised and cut face. Jack grimaces.

JACK
You ought'a stop foolin' with
married dames.

Jack takes a seat on the other side of the desk, facing Peter.

JACK (cont'd)
So this is what it's like on this
side. And I thought the pressure
was tough on the other side.

He smiles at Peter. Peter dabs a cut on his cheek with a bloody tissue. He tosses the tissue onto the floor.

JACK (CONT'D)
I have a trash can? Let me guess,
angry 'cause the car broke down? I
gave no guarantee with that car.

PETER
You caved too easily last time we
jawed. You wanted to get rid-o-me.

JACK
I gave no guarantees.

PETER
Where's Kate?

JACK
(searching his pockets)
...Got a cigarette?

Peter slides his feet off the desk, takes his pack out and slides it across the desk to Jack. Jack takes one out and pockets the cigarettes.

JACK
Got a light? No. Never mind.

Jack pulls out a box of matches from the Champagne Inn. He lights his cigarette.

Peter stands up and steps around the desk to stand over Jack.

PETER

See, I know Kate was here. I know you helped her skip. Where is she, some beach house? You set 'er up with wheels?

JACK

I don't know what you're talkin' about. But, if I did know where Kate was, that'd be confidential, and you ain't got the kind of dough to buy confidential information. And to come full circle, I don't know what you're talkin' about.

He grabs Jack's wrist. Peter twists Jack's hand around to reveal the matches in his palm.

JACK (CONT'D)

What the...

PETER

I noticed them last time I was here. Ya took these matches off Kate when you bummed a cigarette off her.

Peter lets go and Jack rubs his wrist.

JACK

What?

PETER

You're gonna tell me where she is.

JACK

Don't try and strong arm me. You're not Lou's bull no more...

Peter slams Jack's head against the desk. He kicks Jack out of his chair. Jack hits the floor hard and curls up for protection.

Peter kneels beside Jack. Jack swings up at Peter's broken nose. Peter avoids being hit. He grabs Jack's wrists and squeezes them.

PETER

I've been roughed up and I ain't in a happy mood. I don't need a reason to kill you. Bein' full of it is more 'an enough reason. Tell me where Kate is.

Peter tightens his grip on Jack's wrists. He twists...

PETER (CONT'D)

That burnin' in your wrists are nerves shoutin' in pain. Your veins are being twisted. Tell me what I want to know or there'll be permanent damage.

JACK

(in pain)
I don't know.

PETER

Wrong answer!

Peter twists more. Jack screams.

JACK

Hold it! Hold... You're barkin' up the wrong tree. I got those matches from the motel. ...Go with girls. ...Got an arrangement with the manager.

Peter realizes that Jack is telling him the truth. He lets go of Jack's wrist and steps back. Jack looks at his red wrists.

Jack slowly gets to his feet. Peter drops into a chair and slumps.

PETER

Sorry.

Jack is surprised by Peter's genuine apology.

JACK

Ya dumb Bull.

Jack punches Peter in the jaw. It's a feeble shot. Peter's head rolls with the punch.

JACK (cont'd)

To think I helped ya out when the G-man couldn't protect you. Lou was trackin' you, and I had you hid safely on the Indian reserve.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Lou's guys came askin', but I never wilted. And now this... Ought'a be ashamed.

PETER

I'm desperate, Jack.

JACK

Yeah, well that don't excuse anything.

(rubs his sore shoulder)

You talkin' about that prostitute, Kate Liedecker? She was actually takin' a cut from the motel manager. She'd bring guys there and set them up.

Peter scowls.

JACK (CONT'D)

A nasty gal. Anyway, I ain't seen her since the war ended. I'd heard she became chummy with a soldier.

PETER

Which one?

JACK

Navy fella. ...Runs a bar a few miles outta town.

He looks down at Peter. Peter rises from his chair.

PETER

Keep the cigarettes.

Peter leaves.

INT. CORNER STORE - NIGHT

The CLERK stands behind the counter, watching...

...Vera's son Vern in the candy aisle. He's tearing the wrapper off of a chocolate bar. He tastes the bar and puts it back. He does the same with another.

CLERK

Hey son, what do you think you're doing there?

Vern stares blankly at the Clerk. He opens another bar, tastes it and puts it back. He picks up another...

The Clerk makes a motion to step out from behind the counter. Vern drops a chocolate bar and is ready to run...

Peter enters the store. He stops at the till. The Clerk tends to him.

Vern takes this opportunity to open and sample another bar.

PETER
Pack of Viceroys.

The Clerk eyes Vern, while he grabs the pack of cigarettes from the shelf behind him and hands it to Peter.

Peter throws the money down, pockets the change, takes his purchase and leaves.

Vern rips open another bar and tastes it.

CLERK
Why you fat little...

Vera steps out of the washroom. Vern runs into her arms. Chocolate is smeared around his mouth.

CLERK
Tell your fat little kid that the chocolate isn't there for a taste test.

VERA
Keep waggin' your foul tongue and you won't get paid for your loss, mister.

EXT. CORNER STORE - NIGHT

Peter leans against his car with a cigarette in his mouth. He takes out matches from the Champagne Inn and lights up. He fiddles with the pack of matches, laughs to himself.

Vera and Vern exit the store. Vera pushes Vern into a car. Vern notices Peter.

VERN
Mama...

Vera SLAMS the car door shut.

Vera walks around her car and gets in. The car takes off. Vern watches Peter through the rear window.

Peter pays no attention. He's contemplating and smoking.

INT. FORD FORDOR (MOVING) - NIGHT

A cigarette burns in the car ashtray. Peter looks beat. His face is bruised. His eyes are swollen. He adjusts the rearview mirror, looks behind...

Headlights follow, keeping a distance.

EXT. NAVY BLUES, BAR - NIGHT

The only car in the parking lot is Peter's Ford Fordor.

Peter walks slowly towards the entrance. A closed sign hangs on the doors.

Peter pushes on the doors. They swing open. Moonlight pounces into the bar. Peter follows the moonlight inside.

INT. NAVY BLUES, BAR - CONTINUOUS

Peter passes empty tables. He runs his hand along the bar until...

He comes across a gun. Peter stops. He looks at it, without touching it. He leans over the bar and sniffs the gun barrel.

Peter moves around the bar and stops before a closed door. He puts his ear against the door. He hears nothing.

Peter uses the sleeve on his jacket to grip the doorknob. He twists. The door glides open.

INT. BAR, OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Brian is propped in a chair behind a large desk. He's been roughed up. A fresh bullet hole pierces his forehead. A trail of dry blood runs down his face.

A faint sound of SIRENS in the distance.

Floorboards CREAK from the barroom.

Peter tilts his head to look out the open office door. No one is in view.

INT. BARROOM

Vera creeps her way up to the bar. She sees the gun and snatches it.

VERN (O.S.)

Mama!

Vera spins around, furious. Eyes burning. She waves her son away with the gun. He turns and hurries out of the bar. Vera is enraged.

INT. BAR, OFFICE

Peter moves around the desk. He's about to push through the rear exit...

He stops and pulls a twenty dollar bill out of his pocket...

SIRENS continually grow louder.

INT. BARROOM

Vera moves around the bar and pokes her head inside the open office door. She steps inside, just as the back door clicks shut.

INT. BAR, OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Vera moves around the desk and bumps Brian. He drops heavily to the floor. Vera's hand reaches to push open the back door when she spots a twenty dollar bill sticking out of the desk drawer. She stops.

Vera yanks on the bill, ripping a piece. It tears free from the drawer. She pulls on the drawer. It's locked. Vera tries another drawer. It opens. She rummages through, looking...

SIRENS blare outside the bar.

Vera steps back and aims the gun at the locked drawer. Vera SHOOTs. The blast shatters the wood. The desk jumps back. Vera yanks the drawer open to see nothing inside.

SIRENS come to a full stop. Several car doors open and close, simultaneously.

FOOTSTEPS race through the bar. Vera goes for the rear exit. It's too late. Police Officers are already pointing guns...

She spots Vern in the back of a police cruiser, eating chocolate. Vera drops the gun and raises her hands. Her face burns with rage.

INT. CHAMPAGNE INN, ROOM 25 - NIGHT

Peter rips the grill off from the vent on the wall. He takes out his cigar box. He shakes it. Something isn't right. He opens the box. The money is gone. The pictures are gone.

A single note is inside. Peter takes it out. He sighs.

CU. Note - *Meet me at Lou's. It's time to end this.*

EXT. LOU'S MANSION - NIGHT

Peter's car pulls up in front of wrought iron gates. The Buick backs up and parks along the street beside a six foot hedge that runs along the property line.

Peter gets out. He walks up to the gate, looking through the iron bars, up at a mansion in the distance.

Peter pushes the gate open. He walks up the long winding driveway, leading to the house.

Peter stops at the red Jaguar, smiles. He looks up at a lit window on the second floor, where a woman's figure stands, watching.

INT. LOU'S DEN - NIGHT

The office door is missing. The hinges have been broken off. All the bookshelves are empty. Kate stands behind the large oak desk, staring out the window, a cigarette in one hand and a gun in the other. Moonlight beams through the window, casting a large looming shadow of her across the room.

ON THE DESK: a briefcase and an ashtray filled with cigarette butts.

FOOTSTEPS are heard pattering up stairs.

Peter appears in the open doorway. He looks at the broken hinges then rests his shoulder against the frame.

Kate continues to absorb the moonlight, staring into the night.

KATE

'Lo Peter.

PETER

I never saw you as a dame with a dollar sign in place of her heart.

Kate turns and gives him a funny look.

KATE

I was a prostitute, Peter.

Peter steps inside the room.

Kate keeps her gun pointed at Peter.

KATE (cont'd)

Don't get cute, Peter. I ain't afraid of using this.

PETER

I know, I ran across Brian.

Kate smiles...

KATE

The daisy squealed, and then had the nerve to yell at me about being roughed up a bit.

Peter drops into a brown leather chair, in the corner.

Kate's eyes focus on the briefcase, on the desk.

KATE (cont'd)

Did you call them?

Peter shakes his head, 'no'. He starts drumming his fingers on the arm rest.

PETER

They've been doggin' me. ...Should come barkin' through that door any minute.

Kate looks at the dwindling cigarette in her hand. She crushes the butt into the already overflowing ashtray, on the desk.

PETER (cont'd)

Where's Jeff?

KATE

Pushing up daisies. He hit me, remember.

PETER

Jaguar's outside.

KATE

It doesn't handle all that well,
but it's got a certain style...

PETER

Like a lot of things these days,
all style, no substance.

KATE

There's substance. You've just been
lookin' in the wrong places.

Kate sits down behind the oak desk.

PETER

Okay, you keep your prize and
suppose I just take my money and
split. You've no right to hold it.
Can't mean much to you at this
point.

Kate opens the drawer on the desk. Inside is Peter's money,
the pictures, and another gun.

KATE

Suppose you do. Minus what you owe
me.

Kate takes out a stack of money. She peels off a few bills
and pushes Peter's money to the edge of the desk.

PETER

You kiddin'? You were playin' me.

KATE

I still gotta fat lip out of it.

Peter shrugs and stops drumming his fingers. He's about to
stand up. Kate shakes her head and waves the gun, telling
Peter to stay put. Peter settles back in the chair and drums
his fingers.

KATE (cont'd)

A few grand wouldn't get you far.

PETER

Then suppose you and I leave
together with the big prize?

KATE

You really are skirt dizzy.

PETER

Not for a tramp. Not any more. I
heard you liked having your
pictures taken at the motel to scam
poor gees.

KATE

(smiling)

I'm a business woman Peter.

Kate opens the drawer again and takes out the pictures. She
shuffles through them, smiles, and tosses them in the trash
next to the desk.

Kate closes the desk drawer and shrugs.

PETER

Let me take my dough and scam.

KATE

You tried using me, Peter, like all
men try. Only, it's me who does the
using.

The house door OPENS and CLOSES. VOICES and RUSTLING are
heard, and then several FOOTSTEPS racing up a set of stairs.
The noise draws closer. Shadows appear on the wall outside
the office.

Peter stops drumming his fingers. Kate moves the gun from
Peter to the door...

KATE

(calmly)

Come in.

A gun barrel pokes through the doorway, followed by a big
hand gripping a gun, followed by an outstretched arm,
followed by Wilmer, followed by Jacoby. Entering behind
Jacoby is Agatha.

Kate is pointing the gun in their direction.

WILMER

Drop the rod, or get kissed by led.

Kate places the gun on the desk and puts her arms up. Wilmer
steps forward to pick the gun up when...

...Jacoby pushes past him and scans the room. His eyes move
from Peter to Kate. Kate drops her arms and lights another
cigarette. The gun remains on the desk.

JACOBY
Where's our money?

Kate blows smoke at Jacoby and motions towards the briefcase. Jacoby smiles. He nods to Wilmer. Wilmer is about to step forward and grab it...

Agatha pushes her way passed the cops. She confronts Kate.

AGATHA
Where's Jeff?

Kate shrugs.

AGATHA (cont'd)
Dead?

KATE
He hit me. What do you think?

AGATHA
I think I wanted to shoot him. And
I want the key to the Jaguar. It
was my husband's. You have no
claim...

Kate takes out the key from her purse and drops it on the briefcase.

Agatha reaches out to take the key. A cuff is slapped on her outstretched wrist. She turns to face Wilmer, who rings another cuff around her free wrist. He shoves Agatha towards Jacoby.

Jacoby restrains her.

JACOBY
You're under arrest for the murder
of Walter Weinal.

AGATHA
Who?

JACOBY
The motel manager.

AGATHA
I never heard of... What motel?
(laughs)
Don't be prop...

She looks at Jacoby and then at Wilmer. Their faces are stone.

AGATHA (cont'd)
Say, what is this?

JACOBY
We followed you to the airport. You
were gonna take flight with Jeff,
and leave us high and dry. Our luck
Jeff crossed you for this harpy.

Peter laughs. Wilmer points his gun at Peter.

WILMER
Somethin' funny.

Jacoby takes out the silver revolver and dangles it in front
of Agatha.

JACOBY
(to Agatha)
You're fingerprints are on the gun,
honey. You're gonna take the rap.
The gee was a blackmailer who had
the pictures of you. Get it...

AGATHA
What pictures?

JACOBY
Naughty pictures. We can prove he
liked to take those type of
pictures. ...Don't need yours...

KATE
Use mine.

Kate kicks the garbage forward. It falls over. Her pictures
spill out.

WILMER
Quiet harpy.

AGATHA
It's a bum rap. I'll talk. I'll
spill everything.

JACOBY
Wag your tongue and you'll stay
doped up in the booby hatch for the
rest of your life. Play it our way,
you'll only get a dime in the can.

Agatha looks down at the floor. She says nothing. Her eyes
say everything.

Wilmer steps towards the desk and swipes the key for the Jaguar. He pockets it and then picks up the briefcase, testing the weight.

WILMER

There ain't one hundred and twenty-five grand in here.

Jacoby looks at Kate. Wilmer steps menacingly towards Kate.

JACOBY

Talk before Wilmer paints your eyes with his fists.

KATE

Open the case.

Wilmer places the briefcase back on the desk.

WILMER

Open it yourself, twist.

Kate flips the two locks and the case pops open.

Wilmer pulls out a stack of envelopes. They're all labeled: Agatha, Jacoby, Wilmer, Peter.

Wilmer hands them out accordingly. Everyone opens the envelopes.

(V.O.)

It was payback. I wanted them all to know I was still pulling the strings.

Agatha takes out a piece of paper with the FBI insignia stamped on it. It's a signed confession from Agatha ratting Lou out over a counterfeiting scheme.

(V.O.)

When the FBI busted up the counterfeiting scam, Steven and Agatha saved their own skin from the boiling oil by twisting it all back to Me, bringing the G-men down heavily on all my enterprises. I was busted over a racket I knew nothing about.

Jacoby and Wilmer pull out a similar looking piece of paper. It's a witness testimony to Lou's criminal enterprises.

(V.O.)

...The Feds even started pinching buttons for their involvement in My rackets. The whole department shook. Lieutenant Lorne Jacoby and Detective Wilmer Neff saw the writing, so they went on the offensive and pitched a beef against me, ratting me out, along with several coppers on my payroll. They forgot to mention how they danced for me. No one pressed it. They kept their tin.

Peter takes out the contents of his envelope. Photographs of Peter and Lou's wife, Laura, in the midst of their passion. They are in one of the rooms from the Champagne Inn.

(V.O.)

See, I own the Champagne Inn. The manager who snapped Laura and Peter together recognized my wife, and out of fear or loyalty, he snitched.

Peter pulls out another piece of paper from the envelope. It too has the FBI insignia on it. It's another signed confession.

(V.O.)

Laura got wise to me knowing about her infidelity and went to the Feds for protection. Her confession had Peter's name all over it. They both sang about a counterfeiting operation being run out of my casino. They should'a known, I had G-men on my roster too. A master has strings on all the players. You have to know how the dance ends.

Peter starts laughing.

Agatha's face is red.

AGATHA

Enough games!

Agatha yanks free from Jacoby's grip. Hands cuffed, she reaches across the desk for the gun. Kate grabs it first and fires.

Agatha stands still for a moment. She has a look of disbelief. Blood pours out of her stomach. She falls.

JACOBY
(to Wilmer)
Didn't cuff her good enough, Wil.

Wilmer's pale face turns red to match his hair color.

JACOBY (cont'd)
Take the rod away from Ma Barker.

Wilmer keeps his pistol pointed at Kate. He holds out his free hand. Kate drops the gun into it without resistance. Wilmer turns to hand the gun to Jacoby.

Kate quietly opens the desk drawer. Her hand sneaks inside and grips the gun inside.

Jacoby looks down at Agatha and the pool of blood forming around her.

JACOBY (cont'd)
She was right. Enough Games, harpy.
Tell us where the dough is before
Wilmer twists off your cheap head.

Kate quickly pulls out the gun.

Two gun shots go off simultaneously.

Jacoby falls forward. Wilmer stands silently for a moment. Blood drips down from his forehead. Wilmer drops like a bag of cement.

Kate stands up with her smoking gun and looks down at the dead cops on the ground.

Standing in the doorway is Lou Ford with a smoking gun. Lou moves the barrel of his gun towards Peter.

LOU
(looking at Kate)
The dance is nearly over. I gotta
say you're a great partner to tango
with.

Lou watches Kate move around the desk. She gets on her knees, collects the guns and digs out the Jaguar key from Wilmer's pocket. She stands up and smiles at Lou.

Lou moves his attention back to Peter. Peter is shocked and speechless.

LOU

Poor Peter, all confused. You know,
Of all people, I thought you were
loyal.

Peter squirms in his seat. Lou motions for Peter to stand up.
Peter follows the gun's instructions. He's on his feet.

KATE

Well Peter, this is what
bullfighters refer to as the moment
of truth.

PETER

This isn't what it seems...

LOU

You betrayed Me! And when things
heated up, you split on my wife,
leavin' her to take the fall. And
fall she did.

Peter's whole body slumps.

PETER

I didn't cross you Lou. Not like
you tell it. And I didn't betray
Laura. You got that part backwards.
It's true, I was with 'er. She came
to cry on my shoulder 'bout a twist
you fell for. Yeah, I let Laura use
my shoulder as a tear stopper. I
knew they were crocodile tears. But
just the same, I let those tears
turn into more. I shoulda stopped
the whole thing, but it's dangerous
to stop' a dame who figures she's
been wronged...

Peter looks sorrowful. Lou as he moves around the dead
detectives to stand beside Kate. He pecks her on the cheek.

PETER (cont'd)

Laura had it in for you bad. And
When she'd heard 'bout some racket
bein' played out of your casino,
she cooked up a crooked scheme to
call in the G-man. She planned to
take over your rackets. It was her
brainchild, not mine. I told her it
was harebrained, and I thought it
was left at that. I didn't call the
law. I didn't even know Laura had
called 'em.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

I found out after the G-men showed up at my door, offerin' immunity, if I testified against you for some funny money racket. I didn't want any part of it, but it was too late, Laura had already brought me in. Yeah, I skipped on Laura. She was half mad. Sure, I felt bad for messin' 'round with your moll, Lou, but I never went after her. She came after me. And you know why? So I could play the fool. I'm a sucker for dames. I got a bum rap.

Peter looks down at Agatha.

PETER (cont'd)

Funny, that's what Agatha said she got. Maybe she did too.

Peter looks back at Kate. He's now consigned to his fate. Lou is lowering his gun, he pushes Kate's hand to lower her gun too.

PETER (cont'd)

I'm a patsy. I'm good at playin' that part. So, go ahead and shoot.

LOU

Peter, you were always a mushy meatball when it came to the dames.

Lou moves to stand directly between Peter and Kate. Kate raises the gun on Lou's back, unbeknownst to Lou.

LOU (CONT'D)

I'll give you the same chance I had. Who knows, maybe you can dance your way free like I did.

BANG! A gun goes off. Peter drops. He's been shot in the leg. He's bleeding and putting pressure on the wound.

Lou turns to face Kate, smiling. When he sees the gun pointed at him, his smile fades. Kate shoots him in the gut. His face is one of pity and confusion.

KATE

Sorry Lou. But I am a prostitute. I screw people for money. I'm not sure why people don't understand that.

Kate shoots Lou again. He drops quietly.

Kate steps around Lou and Peter on the floor. She looks down and smiles with satisfaction.

PETER
One thing I don't get, Kate.

Kate turns to Peter.

PETER (cont'd)
What made you so special to Lou?

KATE
I'd read Dickens to him.
(she looks down at Lou)
He liked that.

She kneels between them and kisses Lou on his bald head and then Peter on the lips.

KATE
It's a far far better thing that I
do, than I have ever done.

A smile breaks through the pain on Peter's face.

EXT. LOU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kate exits Lou's house and crosses over to the driveway where the Jaguar waits. She opens the trunk.

Inside the trunk is luggage. Kate snaps it open, revealing an enormous amount of cash. Kate smiles. She closes the bag and slams the trunk. Kate gets in the car.

The Jaguar's engine revs. The car crawls down the driveway towards the gates. The gates open on their own, and the Jaguar passes through...

INT. PRISON CELL

Peter sits on a bench. Next to him is a Priest, holding a Bible.

PETER
I guess you can slap a prayer on
me, you think it'll help me some.
Somethin' tells me where ever I'm
headin' someone'll still be pullin'
the strings. Somebody always is.
And it ain't never who you think.

The Priest makes the sign of the cross with the Bible in his right hand. He rests his left hand on Peter's shoulder.

PRIEST

It's a far far better rest that you
go than you have ever known.

The cell door swings open. A shadow looms over Peter and the Priest.

Peter gives the priest a solemn look, a look we've never seen before. He's scared. The Priest's hand drops from Peter's shoulder.

MAN (o.s.)

It's time.

The priest stands up. Peter looks up at the man standing in the cell entrance. Peter stands up.

THE END