

the nice guys

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"For those complacent optimists who have not yet learned to live, as we do, in the kingdom of despair, that first quick glimpse of failure must always seem like a vision of death itself."

-- Memoir attributed to
S. G. Nechayev (1847-1882)

"You can forget about cataloguing my virtues. I hold them to a minimum so they're easy to keep track of."

-- JIM ROCKFORD from
The Rockford Files (1974-1980)

FADE IN: TV SCREEN - A BUNCH OF DAMN PUPPETS

A Kitty, A Dragon, A Talking Clock... all vying for the attention of the TV HOSTESS -- a pretty thing in pigtailed. Her name? SUZY SHOEMAKER. The Hostess of "Bubble Barn."

WIDER - A CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A FOUR YEAR-OLD BOY watches "Bubble Barn" on TV. Rapt. Hypnotized... The puppets his personal friends.

MR. TALKY-CLOCK

Tick-tock, nine o'clock! Time for bed, dragon-head!

DRAGON

Suzy, why must I have a bedtime?

SUZY SHOEMAKER

Because, silly, the whole world takes turns sleeping. Our mummies know when it's our turn to sleep.

The kid watches, transfixed. And then:

BOY'S MOTHER (o.s.)

Brian! Dinner! Come pick up your toys!

After a beat, the boy stands, eyes never leaving the screen. Starts to move away -- but then stops again... Pause...

BOY'S MOTHER (o.s.)

Brian! Turn off the TV and get in here!

Brian starts to move again. Side-stepping. Slowly. Still transfixed by the television...

BOY'S MOTHER (o.s.)

BRIAN! NOW!

Brian hotfoots it out the door. CAMERA HOLDS on the now empty room. On TV the dragon puppet is singing a lullaby...

Pause. Pause. We HOLD... And then THE WALL EXPLODES-- Just DISINTEGRATES. The whole damn thing. Part of the CEILING going with it, as--

A LATE MODEL CAR

BLASTS into the room, moving impossibly fast. Showering DEBRIS. Trailing trees, brush...

It hurtles across the room. DETONATES obstacles. BLOWS them to splinters. Sweeps the place clean, doing 50, half on its side--

Then, just as promptly, DEPARTS.
Crash--! Sails OUT THE OPPOSITE WALL. Into the night.

Just like that. CAMERA PANS TO FOLLOW -- Peering out the
gaping HOLE, out and down --

Unbelievable. There it is, STILL GOING. Plunging down a
HILLSIDE. Tumbling. Chewing up huge GOUTS of dirt.

WHAM--! It slams to a STOP. A hundred yards down the hill.
Upside down. On fire... Stillness, then. Echoes, fading...

MATCH CUT TO: GRAINY NEWS-CAM FOOTAGE - HELICOPTER

Below, the swath cut by the car. It smolders, surrounded by
emergency vehicles. We HEAR:

NEWSCASTER (o.s.)

... In a statement issued today, Los
Angeles Coroner Edwin Meeks says suicide
is strongly indicated in the death of
Suzy Shoemaker last week. Analysis of the
wreck, seen here, revealed extensive
vehicular damage, but no evidence of
mechanical failure, say police sources.

VIDEO FOOTAGE - ON THE GROUND

The car, now being WINCHED up the hill by thick cables.

NEWSCASTER (o.s.)

Shoemaker, host of the popular cable
show, "Bubble Barn," was perhaps best
known as the daughter of Presidential
hopeful David Shoemaker. This latest
tragedy comes in the wake of a video
scandal -- over which Suzy is said to
have been distraught.

MORE VIDEO FOOTAGE - COARSER, GRAINIER

Suzy's FACE, ecstatic.

NEWSCASTER (o.s.)

This amateur tape, allegedly smuggled out
of Shoemaker's Mulholland home by a
workman, burst onto the internet last
month. It purportedly offers graphic
images of Suzy engaged in sex with an
unidentified male. According to Suzy's
aunt, Lily Shoemaker, Suzy was overcome
with, quote-unquote, "shame and
humiliation."

INT. PASADENA HOME - VIDEO FOOTAGE - DAY

AN OLD WOMAN appears, above a subtitled graphic:
Lily Shoemaker, Victim's Aunt.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

The man... that horrible person who put
that tape out there... he killed my
little Suzy. Killed her... as sure as if
he'd pulled the trigger on a gun.

VIDEO LIBRARY FOOTAGE - THE "BUBBLE" BARN SHOW

SUZY, smiling, surrounded by the cantankerous puppets...

NEWSCASTER (o.s.)

25 year-old Shoemaker, star of the cable
TV's "Bubble Barn" -- She will be dearly
missed...

ONSCREEN: Suzy and her puppets all waving, all calling out
"Bye!" "Be Good!" "See you next time!"

CUT TO BLACK. Pause, then--

INT. GRADE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - CIRCA 1972 - LIGHTS DIMMED

The assembled kids (mean age of, say 7) all sit, eyes forward.

HEALY (v.o.)

When I was a kid, the world was
different. Things were innocent... Well,
maybe not innocent. But pretty harmless.

The kids are watching an ancient EDUCATIONAL FILM--
Subject: ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

ONSCREEN - A young boy holds up a white BEACH TOWEL:

NARRATOR (ON FILM)

Bart has a PLAIN towel.

The word "**adjective!**" appears on screen, DING..! And then
Bart is replaced by a little girl clutching a YELLOW TOWEL:

NARRATOR (ON FILM)

Sarah has a BRIGHT towel.

DING..! Another kid, another towel. This one multi-colored:

NARRATOR (ON FILM)

Jonathan has a GAY towel.

The classroom erupts in LAUGHTER... Apparently this is the funniest thing ever. One kid actually falls out of his seat.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON - PRESENT DAY

Run-down basketball courts. A bunch of sullen gang-bangers high five. The OLDEST ONE talks earnestly with a YOUNG GIRL.

HEALY (v.o.)

Now? Here? In L.A.? Innocent doesn't even enter in to it.

IN A PARKED CAR we reveal a kind-faced MAN, mid-thirties. For the record? JACKSON HEALY. He's watching the older gang-banger.

HEALY (v.o.)

Take this a-hole I'm watching. He's maybe 18, already he's got a system: get 'em while they're too young to know any better.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - THAT NIGHT

A bad house in a worse neighborhood. CAMERA drifts slowly towards a cracked window. As we HEAR people having sex:

18 YEAR-OLD (o.s.)

Come on, baby. Who's the man, baby?

YOUNG GIRL (o.s.)

... You are. You're the man. Oh, yes. You're the man. You! You!

ANOTHER ANGLE

Outside the house, in a CORNER SHADOW next to the window-- We can just make out the form of HEALY.

He stands there, hidden -- looking bored, eating peanuts. He pops them one at a time... Munches. Listening:

YOUNG GIRL (o.s.)

You're the man! You! You're my Bo-budda!

Healy pauses. Frowns: Bo-budda..?

YOUNG GIRL (o.s.)

Bo-budda! Bo-budda! You are! You!

Healy shrugs. Picks through his handful of nuts... Whispers to himself:

HEALY

... Yeah, but is he the man...?

YOUNG GIRL

Oh, yes baby! Yes! You're the man, baby!

Ah, that's better... Healy smiles as he finds a cashew.

HEALY (v.o.)

Love... Grand isn't it..?

(beat)

Me? I was in love once. June Miller.

FLASH CUT TO: A NICE RESTAURANT

HEALY sits across a table from a knockout BLONDE. They stare into each other's eyes. A beat. Healy starts to say something-- The blonde cuts him off:

BLONDE

Jack... I slept with your father.

The guy at the next table does a SPIT TAKE.

BACK TO SCENE

Healy dusts peanut bits off his hands.

HEALY (v.o.)

Marriage is buying a house for someone you hate... Remember that.

ANOTHER ANGLE - SAME HOUSE - LATER

The YOUNG GIRL we saw earlier exits. Gets on her bike. Rides off, alone... HEALY steps from the shadows. Stares after her.

HEALY (v.o.)

Yep, these days the world is an unromantic, vulgar place...

HEALY cracks his neck. Grimaces. Slips on a pair of BRASS KNUCKLES. Starts towards the front of the house--

HEALY (v.o.)

So I adjust.

Healy knocks on the FRONT DOOR. The 18 YEAR-OLD answers it.

HEALY

Are you the man?

18 YEAR-OLD

What..?

Healy slugs him. On the sound of a jaw CRACK!-ing we CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN BAR - HANK'S ALL AMERICAN - RAINY NIGHT

Through the rain-streaked glass we see Healy at a booth. Badly dressed (he's usually badly dressed,) in a SILVER LAMÉ SHIRT. An older man sits across from him.

HEALY (v.o.)

I don't have a job title. I'm not in the yellow pages... But if you've got trouble with someone -- someone's threatening you, someone's messing around with your underage daughter. Whatever--

The older man gives Healy an ENVELOPE. Shakes his hand. Leaves.

HEALY (v.o.)

-- You might ask around for me: Jackson Healy... If the name's familiar, it's probably on account of that business with that guy went nuts at that Denny's last year--

FLASH CUT TO: CHAOTIC IMAGES, RAPID SUCCESSION - ALL M.O.S.

A DENNY'S DINER. Everyone is on the floor. A PSYCHOPATH with a shotgun. SCREAMING. HEALY LEAPS across a counter, collides--! A shotgun BLAST perforates his arm... BLOOD. Movement. Chaos--

BACK TO SCENE - ANGLE ON BARTOP

We see THE LEARNING ANNEX magazine. The cover includes HEALY, with the caption: "Real-Life tough guy JACKSON HEALY can teach you how to protect yourself."

HEALY (v.o.)

I took the guy out and got shot for my trouble... I didn't even get paid for it..

PAN UP TO: SOME DRUNK GUY. Scowling at the magazine.

HEALY (v.o.)

Not to mention the fact that, to this day, some guys just can't leave it alone... They gotta measure dicks.

THE DRUNK casts his gaze across the room at Healy--

Who never even looks up. Sighs. Makes a big show of yawning, stretching. Gets up, heads for the hallway to the restrooms.

REVERSE ANGLE - As he passes CAMERA we see him calmly slipping on that same set of BRASS KNUCKLES. CUT TO:

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - GRAVEL TURNOUT - BREAKING DAWN

A canopy of CITY LIGHTS beneath a purple sky. Dazzling.

TWO CARS are parked up here. Healy's convertible, and a Ford. Healy leans against the Ford.

HEALY (v.o.)

Sometimes I feel okay about myself. Not often. Scotty, my AA sponsor, keeps trying to get me to quit this kind of work.

Inside the Ford is a WOMAN. Her face is in shadow, a cloth HAT pulled low. Intermittent glow of a nervous cigarette. She hands Healy a slip of COW-SHAPED NOTEPAD PAPER:

GIRL

Here's a name. And a description for you. He's been talking to all my friends, asking where I live. I'm scared.

Healy studies the slip of paper. Pockets it. The woman pulls an envelope out of her purse.

GIRL

... You'll take care of him?

HEALY

(taking envelope)
Consider it done.

Healy starts to leave, counting the money in the envelope-- Then stops. Turns back. Leans in the window:

HEALY

... Um, you're short.

GIRL

... I'm... What?

HEALY

You're twenty bucks short.

GIRL

Oh... I'm sorry... Here, ummm...

She fishes through her purse for some cash. Finds a twenty.

GIRL

... Sorry, here...

ANGLE ON MULHOLLAND

The FORD drives off. Taillights, receding. Healy watches it go.

HEALY (v.o.)

I've been thinking about what Scotty said. I could try for an investigators license. Become a detective, you know..? Those guys help people.

(beat)

Maybe then I'd feel good in the morning.

CUT TO BLACK. Then, over this, the sound of an ALARM-CLOCK.

INT. RESIDENTIAL HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

A HAND dangles limply from the edge of a porcelain TUB. WIDEN to reveal a tousled-looking MAN, 40-ish. FULLY DRESSED, immersed in water up to his neck. Dead asleep... Meet HOLLAND MARCH.

Somewhere in the house the ALARM-CLOCK continues to RING. Slowly, March's EYES open. He sits up, sloshing water. Winces. Puts a hand to his throbbing temple. Stops, frowns...

There is something WRITTEN on the palm of his hand. With a permanent marker, in an unmistakably feminine script:

YOU WILL NEVER BE HAPPY

March just stares at it: How the hell did that get there..? A phone starts RINGING now. Adding in with the alarm-clock.

March ignores it, tries to remember how he ended up in the tub with his clothes on. Somewhere an answering machine picks up:

ANSWERING MACHINE (o.s.)

Hi. It's March. Here comes the beep.

The beep comes, as promised. Followed by:

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (HOLLY) (o.s.)

This is your daughter speaking. You promised to take me to the mall today...

March waves a hand at no one in particular.

MARCH

Yeah, yeah...

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (HOLLY) (o.s.)

Also, I'm supposed to remind you that you have a surveillance in less than an hour.

March blinks. A beat, then:

MARCH

Oh, shi--

He's already leaping out of the tub... as we TIME-CUT TO:

BATHROOM - MORNING

March cleaning up. Shaving. He keeps NICKING himself.

MARCH (v.o.)

If I had to guess, I'd say about 80% of my clients are old people... I got a guy, runs security for a local retirement park... He kicks a few cases my way -- slam dunks, most of 'em.

INT. OLD WOMAN'S CONDO - LEISURE WORLD - DAY

March wears a professional smile. Writes in a little notebook while an OLD LADY relates her problem:

OLD LADY

It's my husband. Fred is his name. He's gone missing.

MARCH

(professional concern)

Missing..? I see.

OLD LADY

I'm terribly worried... Fred's just never been gone for this long.

March gives an understanding nod, writes--
Then he notices something out of the corner of his eye:

There is an URN sitting over the fireplace.
He squints at the PLAQUE affixed to it:

FRED MILLER.

A devoted and loving husband.

March frowns.

MARCH

Um... Mrs. Miller... Your husband Fred..?
Exactly how long has he been missing?

OLD LADY

Oh, let's see...
(furrows her brow)
Probably since the funeral.

March nods.

MARCH

I see... I see...

(puts away notebook)

Well, I can start today if you like.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HUSTLER STORE - NIGHT

March slouches in his car, watching through the window as a couple debates which dildo to buy. The man holds up several; the woman shakes her head.

MARCH (v.o.)

Some of the time it's a shit job, sure...

You peep in windows like Santa. You see scumbags all over women like cheap suits... There is, at all times, a cheap suit all over you like a cheap suit.

(beat)

Plus, all the horrible stuff people tell you, it's like being a priest, except you don't get laid as much.

MARCH snaps pictures of the couple. Inside the store, the WOMAN is shaking her head at another selection, obstinate--

MARCH

(to himself)

Honey, you're not gonna find one with a breadmaker in it, just buy the fucking thing.

He snaps another picture.

MARCH (v.o.)

But hey, no worries. I mean, it's not like I deal with real criminals. It's not like I ever see dead bodies...

EXT. BEL AIR SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

SUN, dazzling. March swings his '79 Z-28 Camaro to the curb.

MARCH (v.o.)

And sure, I've been called a con man -- but it takes work to do what I do. You gotta put in the effort... Fact is, sometimes things get pretty tricky. Sometimes you gotta think on your feet.

He parks. Clambers out, looking starched, shaven and hung over. Notices his hand again. YOU WILL NEVER BE HAPPY.

Faded, but still there. He scowls at it.

A BLACK CAT darts out of a nearby bush.
Crosses right in front of March... Out into the street.

Something very weird happens then.
As March watches the cat cross the street--

A CAR APPROACHES.

But it's okay. The car has plenty of time to avoid the cat.
Only it doesn't. Instead it deliberately veers TOWARD THE CAT.

PUSH IN ON MARCH as he watches, horrified. We HEAR the
impact; REFLECTED in March's windshield, something flung..!

MARCH (v.o.)

And sometimes you do see dead bodies.

March runs out into the street. Jumps IN FRONT of the car.
Forces it to swerve..! With a SCREECH, it strikes a curb. Halts.

MARCH

What the hell's the matter with you!?!

Now a WOMAN comes running from an opulent house, wailing
what we assume to be the cat's name (Jiji, if it matters.)

The DRIVER stumbles out. A heavy-set, middle-aged MAN.

MARCH

Are you crazy?! You went right for it!!

DRIVER

Okay, okay, take it easy. I... I'm sorry.
Really, I am. It's just, I've got five g's
on the Supersonics tomorrow night, and--
(motions)
And when I saw a *black cat* crossing right
in front of me... I guess... I guess I
kind of freaked, you know..?

March blinks. Utter disbelief.

TIME CUT - MINUTES LATER

March and the WOMAN head toward her house. He's cradling a
towel-wrapped bundle. Listening as the woman stutters and sobs:

WOMAN

... And I can't tell him Jiji just ran
away, his friend saw the whole thing. Oh,
God, this cat, it's... his whole life...

March pauses at her door, thinking quickly:

MARCH

How long until your son gets home?

EXT. WEST SIDE ANIMAL SHELTER - DAY

MARCH careens up in his Z-28. Leaps out holding a cardboard box.

INT. WEST SIDE ANIMAL SHELTER - SAME

THE COUNTER GIRL is a punkish-looking freak with pierced everything. She emerges from a back room holding a sleek, beautiful, very pissed off BLACK CAT.

COUNTER GIRL

I'm totally not supposed to do this. You sure you're not a psycho?

MARCH

Pretty sure. Here, go pierce something.

He hands over a stack of twenties. She passes him the cat. It yowls and squirms a little.

MARCH

Okay, buster, none of that... Maybe I should show him his buddy in the box.

(beat, looking cat over)

Um, listen, he looks really, um, alive and great and everything, but--

COUNTER GIRL

But what? You want another dead one? Listen, Mr. Psycho--

MARCH

No, look. It's very simple: I want him to look like he got hit by a car and *survived*... Get it?

COUNTER GIRL

So what, then? You gonna break his leg?

MARCH

No, no. But, aw, hell, can we... goop him up or something? You got any hair gel?

COUNTER GIRL

No. My hair naturally sticks straight up like an arrow, sorry... Such a good idea, too, 'cause a speeding car will usually gel an animal--

MARCH

That's very funny. You're very funny.

CUT TO: THE UGLIEST BLACK CAT EVER

It's hair is gooped in odd directions, and it's been rolled in dirt or gravel or both. It looks pissed. Also confused.

EXT. UPPER CLASS SUBURBAN HOME - FRONT PORCH

MARCH grins as he presents the cat to young JOHNNIE, age 9. The kid stands surrounded by several friends.

JOHNNIE

Yeah, it looks like my cat... Mine's dead, though.

March blinks. Not what he was expecting.

MARCH

Oh, well, then... Uh, here's this one. Like a new cat, a replacement--

JOHNNIE

Are you trying to sell me something? My cat's dead, mister.

KID

Plus, his dad gave him \$300 bucks!

JOHNNIE

I gotta go buy something now. Bye.

They head off across the lawn.

March watches them go. Sighs. Stuffs Mr. Ugly Cat back in his box. Starts for his car, as--

MAN

Ho. Excuse me, Mr... March, is it?

He turns in time to see a well-dressed, middle-aged MAN leave the porch and jog forward, hand extended --

MAN

Phil Hazeltine.

There's a \$50 bill in his hand. March waves him off.

MARCH

Forget it. Your money's no good here.

HAZELTINE

Mr. March, please. I truly appreciate what you tried to do for my son.

A PAW is darting in and out of the cardboard carrier. It swats March a good one.

HAZELTINE

Well... Hey, look, I'm having this Mardi Gras party tomorrow night -- would you consider coming? Least I can do.

March reaches his Camaro, opens the door. Tosses the box inside like a piece of luggage. It thuds down inside.

MARCH

Party, wow. Mmmmm. That's tough. I did have plans, but...

He looks thoughtful. CUT TO:

INT. MARCH'S CAR - LATER

He buzzes along, talking on his cel phone.

MARCH

... I'd say we've learned a couple of things. First off, Ma'am, if it IS your niece, she may be going by the name of Alice... And there's a better than even chance she plans to attend a costume party tomorrow night... What's that?
(grins)

No problem, Ma'am, I'm on it. In fact, I just got myself an invitation.

As he turns a corner, the breeze blows a FOLDER on the front seat. It flips open to reveal SURVEILLANCE PHOTOS --

All of the man we just saw. PHIL HAZELTINE.

MARCH (v.o.)

Yep. I'd have to say I'm happy with things as they are... Except for all the stuff I'm not happy about.

(pause)

But it's best not to think about that.

We see March look over at the pet carrier. He strokes it for a second, before realizing that he's petting cardboard. CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD - PANORAMA - LATE AFTERNOON

The waning sun casts a mellow glow.

INT. HEALY'S ONE-ROOM APARTMENT - SAME

Our first glimpse of Jackson Healy's apartment. Small. Spartan.

It looks like a monk lives here.

HEALY enters frame, buttoning a dress shirt. Stops to sprinkle some fish-food into a saltwater aquarium... A daily "tear-off" CALENDAR sits next to the aquarium: **Your word for the day!**

Jackson tears off yesterday's page. Revealing today's word:

Equanimity \e·qua·nim·i·ty\, noun: The quality of being calm and even-tempered; composure.

HEALY

She accepted their problems with grace and he with equanimity.

Healy smiles, pleased with himself. Finishes with his shirt. Grabs his coat, exits the room... SLAM!

In the foreground we see something he forgot--
Something shiny... His BRASS KNUCKLES.

WITH HEALY - DRIVING - LATE AFTERNOON

Healy, on the way somewhere. Cruising up Laurel Canyon. As he nears a construction area--

POV HEALY -- UP AHEAD:

He sees a cute YOUNG GIRL. 13, maybe 14 years old--
Sees her snake beneath a chain-link fence.

Once inside, she stands. Dusts herself off.
Paces off 10 steps across the scorched, barren ground.
5 steps forward... 6 over, 3 back --

Healy, puzzled. This is really very odd behavior.

She SITS, then. Facing north. Takes out a BOOK.
Starts to read aloud. We have no idea why she's doing this.

ANGLE ON HEALY, GOING BY...

His gaze lingers a moment, curious. Then he turns the corner.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DUSK

HEALY pulls up. Checks a COW-SHAPED slip of NOTEPAPER... Gets out, whistling a jaunty tune. Crosses to a 50's-modern house.

He pats his coat pockets as he goes, looking for something:
His brass knuckles... Gone, shit. He shrugs it off... KNOCKS--

VOICE (O.S.)

Just a minute..! Who is it?

HEALY

Messenger service. Holland March home..?

The door opens -- revealing none other than HOLLAND MARCH.
Distracted-looking, shirt half-untucked. Eating an Oreo cookie--

MARCH

Hi.

Healy SLUGS MARCH full in the face.

March drops as though pole-axed.
Healy steps past him. Inside. Shaking his hand in pain...
Shuts the door. Looms over March. Poised like a dancer:

HEALY

Mr. March, we're gonna play a game.

MARCH

This is a mistake, you got the wrong --
OOOFF--!

HEALY

It's called, "Shut up, unless you're me."

MARCH

(gasping)
I... I LOVE that game.

Healy spots March's WALLET on a desk nearby. SLUGS him again
for good measure, then crosses -- begins idly flipping
through the wallet. Stops. Whistles low:

HEALY

You're a private investigator?

MARCH manages to sit up. Props himself against the wall.
Takes air in tight little sips.

MARCH

Look, take... take what you want.
There's \$200 there, it's yours.

HEALY

I told you, I'm a messenger.
(looks around)
Nice digs. You afford this on a p.i.'s
salary?

MARCH

At night I'm a superhero. What's the
message?

JIJI THE CAT has come out to see what's happening.

Healy pats him on the head... Then kneels down next to March--

HEALY

Stop. Looking. For Alice.

MARCH

Fine. Hey. 'Nuff said. Put a fork in me.
I'm done. Don't really put a fork in me.

Healy stands, tosses the wallet back on the desk.

HEALY

That's fine, Mr. March. Alice will be
happy to hear you got the message. Almost
done. Last thing..?

MARCH

You wanna know who hired me to find her.

HEALY

Bingo. Now, we can do this the easy way--

MARCH

Lily Shoemaker.

HEALY

Or we can do this the hard way--

MARCH

My client is Lily Shoemaker, she's an old
lady and she just hired me on Tuesday.

Healy stops, momentarily thrown. March spits blood.

MARCH

Anything else..?

HEALY

You just gave up your client.

MARCH

Well, I made a discretionary revelation--

HEALY

No, you gave her up, just like that. Some
poor old lady hires you and--

(stops, frowns)

Wait a minute. Shoemaker... Shoemaker..?
Like that chick from the kids' show?

MARCH

(nods)

The one who offed herself. The aunt is my
client. There. Happy? Go beat her up.

March supports himself on a coffee table... Stands. Slowly, painfully. Covertly slipping one hand UNDER THE TABLE--

TO THE .9MM VELCRO-ED HERE.

March liberates it in one smooth motion. Spins toward Healy... Only Healy isn't where he was, he's *dropped*, he's on the ground, foot lashing out -- KICKING THE COFFEE TABLE.

-- WHAM! -- the whole damn thing comes up from the ground. SLAMS MARCH in the face. Knocks him back on his ass.

Healy is on him in a flash. Grabs the gun. Pulls the clip out. Ejects the cartridge. Tosses it aside... Says, wearily:

HEALY

I'm sorry you didn't get the message.

MARCH

I get it now. I do. Like, 100 per cent.

Healy grabs March, hauls him up to his feet...

HEALY

That stuff about the Shoemaker lady, was that on the level?

March nods... Healy squints at him:

HEALY

You know what...? I believe you.

Healy spins March around. Wrenches his right arm up behind his back. Pins him against the wall.

HEALY

Listen, when you talk to your doctor, tell him you've got a spiral fracture of the right humerus... Got that?

MARCH

Wait, wait... Jesus, man, STOP.

HEALY

Deep breath.

Healy twists March's arm PAST THE BREAKING POINT -- CRACK! -- March screams as we SLAM-CUT TO:

EXT. MARCH'S HOUSE - DUSK

Healy comes out the front door. A YOUNG GIRL, carrying a grocery bag, is headed the opposite way, swigging a drink--

The same girl he saw in the FENCED-OFF LOT earlier. This, we will come to realize, is March's daughter HOLLY.

HOLLY

Hi. Want a Yoo-Hoo?

HEALY

A Yoo-Hoo..? Man, I haven't had one of those in about 10 years.

HOLLY

Knock yourself out.
(hands him one)
You a friend of my Dad's?

HEALY

Business associate. He's inside...
resting.
(vigorously shaking the bottle)
Didn't I see you crawling around an empty lot a few blocks over..?

HOLLY

... Maybe... I read there sometimes.

Healy nods. Takes a swig of his drink. Smiles.

HEALY

Damn, that's good. Thanks... Well, uh, see you.

The girl waves. Walks to the house. Healy crosses to his car.

ANOTHER ANGLE - WE SEE BUT HE DOESN'T

A late-model CROWN VIC parked by the curb -- Driver older, average-looking. Passenger, a dead ringer for Tom Cruise.

They watch as Healy climbs into his car. Takes another sip of his Yoo-Hoo... then drives off. CUT TO:

A WHOLE DAMN CASE OF YOO-HOO. CLINK!-ING as--

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - NIGHT

Healy lugs it down the sidewalk on Sunset. Pushes through a small crowd of people waiting outside a COMEDY CLUB.

INT. THE COMEDY STORE - SAME

Busy night... A STAND-UP holds forth on the lighted stage.

RONNIE THE STAND-UP

... I never know what movies to rent so I end up just going by the titles... I rented that movie, uh, *Snatch* -- turns out it's about a robbery... I rented *Blow* -- turns out it's about cocaine... I was gonna rent *Julia Robert's Hairy Pussy*, but I didn't want to get burned again...

Drunk people laugh. A cocktail waitress rolls her eyes.

HEALY enters the club. Still carrying the case of Yoo-Hoo. Goes through an UNMARKED DOOR at the back of the room. Heads up a FLIGHT OF STAIRS to another DOOR--

Someone enters the stairwell behind him... Healy looks back-- It's the TOM CRUISE look-alike. Followed by his older buddy.

HEALY

Sorry, this area is private.

TOM ignores this. Steps up onto the landing next to Healy. The older guy closes the door at the base of the steps.

TOM

Wow. You got, like, an apartment up here or something?

HEALY

Guys, I'd love to chat, but I gotta be somewhere.

TOM

That's where you're wrong. You don't gotta be somewhere, pal.

OLDER GUY

You don't gotta be anywhere.

TOM

You gotta be here.

HEALY

What is this, a Zen class?

A BLUR OF SILVER

Flashes through the air.

TOM CRUISE has a STEEL BATON. He SWINGS it hard and fast--

Healy has no time to react. Hands full -- WHAM! --

It catches him on the side of the temple.

And down he goes. Yoo-hoo's SMASHING as we CUT TO:

AN OLD WOMAN'S FACE, DISTRAUGHT

Lily Shoemaker (the old lady we saw in the teaser) fills the frame... Looks like she's about to cry --

INT. PASADENA HOUSE - NIGHT

MARCH walks past camera. His right arm is in a CAST now.

MARCH

Mrs. Shoemaker, let's be reasonable; this is a high profile case, your niece was a TV star. The head medical examiner himself ID'd the body --

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Through dental records. Don't you see? Files can be switched, misplaced --
(beat)

I'm telling you, I SAW her, Mr. March. I didn't imagine it. Last week, I saw my niece *alive*.

(exasperated)

I... I thought you said you *found* her...

MARCH

No, Mrs. Shoemaker, I didn't. I said I was tracking the girl you saw; that doesn't mean it's your niece.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Why won't anyone *believe* me?

MARCH

I'm sure if I produced her she'd bear a strong resemblance, maybe even uncanny...

MRS. SHOEMAKER

I'm telling you, I saw my Suzy. There was no mistake... I have a little more money--

MARCH

That won't be necessary.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Maybe she'll attend this... this party you heard about, and you can--

MARCH

Mrs. Shoemaker, your niece is dead... She killed herself... I never should have taken your money in the first place.

The old woman starts to cry.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Even if it's for nothing... Even if this Alice girl isn't my niece... I don't have anything else, do you understand..? Please, Mr. March -- please -- will you keep looking for her? For me?

March takes a deep breath... Considering.
Then looks the old lady directly in the eye and says:

MARCH

No.

INT. MARCH'S CAR - SAME

March climbs in the passenger side. Slams the door. A pause.
Holly sits in the driver's seat.

MARCH

Holly... Am I a bad person?

Holly picks at her nails, distracted.

HOLLY

... Yeah, pretty much.

MARCH

(nods, then)

Drive. Get me out of here.

Holly puts it in gear.

HOLLY

Did you solve the case, dad?

MARCH

... Sure. Yeah. Case closed.

INT. HEALY'S APARTMENT - SAME

WHAM--! Healy smacking against a wall.
Then crumpling as TOM CRUISE enters frame. Looms over Healy.

In the background Tom's OLDER FRIEND is tossing the place.
Emptying drawers. Throwing stuff... Tom kneels next to Healy:

TOM

Okay, sport, I'm asking you again...
Where is Alice?

Healy makes himself sit up. He looks resigned, weary.
He spots a pack cigarettes amongst the nearby debris.

Grabs it as a wave of LAUGHTER wafts up from the club below...

HEALY

... I told you... I just don't know
anyone named Alice... Sorry...

TOM

So I guess you LIKE pain.

Healy lights a cigarette. Shakes his head.

HEALY

Nobody likes pain.

The older guy stops what he's doing... Pipes in:

OLDER GUY

I know a guy who likes pain.

Tom looks back. Healy glances up, puzzled.

TOM

Right. That's helpful... Thanks, Steve.

TOM turns back to Healy, shaking his head... Then he KICKS
Healy in the chest. No warning -- WHAM! -- Folds him sideways.

A pause. Then, with effort, Healy hauls himself upright again.

TOM

You don't talk, we're gonna have to start
breaking your fingers. You understand.

HEALY

I understand.

The OLDER GUY calls out:

OLDER GUY

Got some kind of hidden cabinet here.

TOM stands, crosses the room. Starts pounding on the cabinet.

HEALY

Um, YOU WANNA BE CAREFUL WITH THAT --

They get the cabinet open. Inside is a heavy canvas BAG.

HEALY

You don't want to open that... That's not
mine. My friend wanted me to hold it for
him... Trust me, don't --

TOM ignores Healy, rips the bag open--

AN EXPLOSION OF BLUE PAINT. Just like one of those charges they hide with stolen bank money. Sprays every which-way-- Turns Tom's face an impossible, shocking BLUE.

At which point, through the floor, comes the BIGGEST BUZZ YET of LAUGHTER... Like a sitcom soundtrack.

HEALY

That's, um... that's not gonna come off.

TOM snarls. Savagely wipes his face on a kitchen towel. Crosses to the AQUARIUM, dips his face, scrubs --

HEALY

Tried to tell you.

Tom stops. His still-blue face dripping wet. Looks at Healy:

TOM

You tried to tell me..?

TOM reaches in the tank, grabs a TROPICAL FISH -- FLINGS it across the room... It SMACKS the wall wetly. Next to Healy.

HEALY

Come on, the fish...? Don't do that.

No dice. Blue-Face Tom just sneers, groping for another fish. Healy appeals to the older guy:

HEALY

Can you please tell this guy to act like a professional?

The older guy glances at his partner. Then shrugs: *Sorry, pal.*

Blue face finally gets a hold of a big yellow-striped number. Tosses it. It lands, squirming, in Healy's lap.

TOM

You're gonna eat that, bastard. Do it!!

HEALY

This isn't gonna help you... Do you get that? This is silly and unprofessional--

TOM

EAT THE GODDAMN THING!! NOW!!

HEALY

No.

Tom takes out an AUTOMATIC. Lets it dangle at his side.

TOM

Stand up.

Healy sighs. Gets to his feet. It's slow going. He's in pain. Stands in the middle of the room... Arms held loosely.

HEALY

Stop and think. Is this why you came here tonight? To make me eat fish? To shoot me?

Healy locks eyes with the kid. Gone is any trace of resignation. Of passivity. He suddenly looks... hard.

HEALY

You could have come in here. Beat up on me. Trashed the place... I wouldn't have cared... It's what I expected.

(shakes his head)

But you didn't do that. Instead you gotta piss me off. Make an enemy. Even if I did know something, there's no way I'd give it up to you. Not now... You blew it, moron.

(pause)

... Plus you look like a Smurf.

TOM RAISES THE GUN AND FIRES.

Healy knew it was coming. He's already in motion..! The bullet goes wide. Past Healy's shoulder... Keeps going--

OUT THE OPEN WINDOW

Hits a WOMAN in the APARTMENT across the street. Just like that. Her half-open window SHATTERS, pop--! Arm wound. She goes down with a YELP. Drops from sight.

The OLDER GUY knocks Tom's gun hand aside.

OLDER GUY

You stupid son of a bitch!

Now there are VOICES from across the way. YELLING. Healy scrambles for the door, bent on escape --

No need... His two VISITORS, outbound.

They pile through the door, cursing. Clatter down the steps. HEALY, in no shape to follow, just stares after them. Helpless.

CUT TO:

A BEAUTIFUL BLUE SKY.

It's the start of another perfect day in the City of Angels. CAMERA PANS DOWN to find:

THE HOLLYWOOD STAR LANES

A 1950's bowling alley in the heart of the city.
(Yes, we know this place has been closed down. We don't care.)

INT. HOLLYWOOD STAR LANES - SAME

A party for Holly in progress. MARCH stands at the counter, surrounded by a pack of howling YOUNG GIRLS, all CALLING out their shoe sizes. He raises a hand:

MARCH

Whoa, whoa, EASY. Christ Jesus, one at a time, huh? THANK you. Amber, size..?

AMBER

You took the Lord's name in vain.

MARCH

No, I didn't, I found it useful... Cindy, you're a six..?

CUT TO: THE OBLIGATORY BOWLING SHOTS

Except every ball goes straight in the gutter, both lanes, one with a 14 year-old still attached. Squeals, giggles..!

INT. BOWLING ALLEY RESTROOM - SAME

MARCH, in a closed stall. On the pot... finishing his business. Arm, clearly bugging him. He fishes out a cigarette, lights up.

He hears the door open. Clopping FOOTSTEPS. Looks down-- ALLIGATOR BOOTS. Outside. A hand TAPS politely:

MARCH

I'm in here.

HEALY (o.s.)

It's me, Mr. March. I intend you no harm. You're safe. Say "yes" if you understand.

OUTSIDE THE STALL

Stands JACKSON HEALY. Calm, posture seemingly casual. Arms held loosely at his side, he waits...

Then, slowly, the stall door swings wide--

MARCH

... Yes.

Reveals MARCH, still on the throne. Holding the door open with his bad hand. The other's got a GUN trained on Healy.

MARCH

I'm ready to fire, say "yes" if you understand.

Healy smiles slightly. Remains stock-still. March, cocky:

MARCH

First off, what the hell are you doing here, and secondly, how stupid do you think I am? Huh..? I got a permit to carry, dumbass, and since your little "visit" yesterday this baby stays right here, right where I can--

As he goes to pat his holster, the STALL DOOR starts to swing closed, he quickly has to BANG it back open. He looks ridiculous. The cigarette falls from his lips, burns his leg. He swears --

HEALY

Need any help?

MARCH

Just stay right there, you mother.

March reaches for his pants, the STALL DOOR swings shut again. He BANGS it open -- he can't hold his gun, and the door, and pull his pants up.

MARCH

... I got this.

HEALY

You mind if I look away or something..?

March shifts. Tentatively rises up... Gives up. Sits again.

MARCH

All right, this is pissing me off... What do you want?

Healy takes a deep breath -- smiles, shrugs:

HEALY

Well, I want to hire you.

That stops March cold. He blinks. Mouth open, like a fish.

MARCH

You're joking, right?

HEALY

Nope.

MARCH

You broke my arm, and now you want to hire me?

HEALY

Yep.

MARCH

... To do what?

HEALY

Well, it's actually sort of embarrassing.

(clears his throat)

I, uh.... need you to find Alice for me.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - SAME

March traversing the vomit-laden red carpet. A hand jammed in his pocket. Covering HEALY, who walks three steps ahead.

MARCH

Move it, loony-toon. Straight ahead.
Toward the phone.

HEALY

You're gonna call the cops on me? What about witnesses?

MARCH

My daughter saw you --

HEALY

You're not gonna involve her in this.
(shakes his head)
You won't. Not if I got you figured.

MARCH

If you had me "figured," jagoff, you'd start running -- and you wouldn't stop 'til all the signs were in Spanish.

HEALY

You mean like, a block from here..?
(glancing back)

March, listen to me; you've got the gun, we're in a public place... Plus, for what it's worth? I'm sorry I hurt you, you seem like a stand-up guy.

(beat)

Have some pie. Hear me out.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - HEALY & MARCH, SEATED - SAME

Healy attacks a slice of pecan pie with gusto.

March watches him eat, sipping water:

MARCH

... So you think these guys want to... hurt this Alice chick?

HEALY

Sure... After they're done killing her.

MARCH

Any way to warn her?

HEALY

She's not returning calls to her service.

MARCH

I don't get it... Why do you care? What's in it for you?

A pause. Healy chews, swallows... Then:

HEALY

... I don't want to have to move.

March looks thoroughly perplexed.

HEALY

Look, it doesn't matter. I'm offering to pay you.

Healy drops a wad of bills on the table.

HEALY

There. Two days in advance. That's \$600. Plus whatever the old lady's giving you--

MARCH

Old lady, fuck you, old lady, you broke my arm, I quit, remember?

HEALY

So call her up, get back on the case. Get paid twice.

March dry-washes his face with his hand. Picks up the money and absently counts it.

MARCH

And what exactly is this buying?

HEALY

Help me find Alice. You were looking for her, right..?

MARCH

Not exactly.

HEALY

Not exactly..?

MARCH

This old woman, Lily Shoemaker. She hired me to find her niece: Suzy Shoemaker--

HEALY

Suzy Shoemaker's dead.

MARCH

Yeah... But her aunt claims she spotted her at 6th and Grand, downtown... After her untimely demise.

HEALY

Bullshit.

MARCH

Tell me about it... But...
(shrugs)

I went down and checked it out anyway... Waiter at a coffee shop nearby put me onto a chick has lunch there, two, maybe three times a week. Matches the description--

HEALY

Wait a minute... Alice? Your client saw Alice. That it?

March makes a "bingo" gesture.

HEALY

So you know where she is.

MARCH

Absolutely not.
(stuffs the money in his pocket)
... But I have a pretty good idea where she's gonna be.

Just then, March's daughter HOLLY appears at the table. She plops down next to March:

HOLLY

... Are you gonna take a turn, or--

She sees Healy and freezes... Blinks...

HOLLY

... You're the guy that beat up my dad.

MARCH

It's okay. He won't hurt me, he only did it for money. He's a nice guy... aren't you, slick?

Healy manages a lame smile. Holly stares at him.

HOLLY

You beat people up... and charge money? Is that true..?

HEALY

Yeah.

HOLLY

Wow. No way... So, um... How much would you charge to beat up my friend Amber?

HEALY

How much you got?

MARCH

Look, enough... Conversation over.
(beat)

Holly, Mr. Healy and I have some important business to discuss here--

HOLLY

Go ahead. I'm not interrupting.
(noticing)

Is that apple pie?!

She reaches over and grabs March's plate. Starts eating. Bouncing a little in her seat. Happy as a clam. March gives up. Turns to Healy:

MARCH

Now... What were we saying..?

HEALY

You just took my 600 bucks.

MARCH

Oh, yeah... Alice... Look, there's this big industry PR guy, name of Hazeltine. Phil Hazeltine. Alice runs around with him and his party crowd... And it's rumored he fucks -- er, sleeps around on his wife... Sorry, Holly.

HOLLY

(mouth full)
I'm traumatized.

HEALY

So this Hazeltine and Alice, are they..?

HOLLY

(chiming in)

Doing the nappy dug-out?

MARCH

Um, yeah. What she said... So all you gotta do is get into one of these Hazeltine parties, and you'll find Alice.

HEALY

So how do I get an invitation?

March pulls out an envelope. Tosses it on the table.

MARCH

You just bought one. For 600 dollars.

CUT TO:

BEL AIR - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

The L.A. basin, a dazzling scatter of lights below us.

INT. CAR - WITH HEALY & MARCH - DRIVING

MARCH navigates Bel Air Road, past L.A.'s primo real estate. In the passenger seat, HEALY. Dressed poorly. We join them mid-conversation:

HEALY

... There's still something bugging me: If you knew old lady Shoemaker was batty, why'd you take the case in the first place?

MARCH

For the money.

HEALY

Oh...

(beat)

So you never believed that she actually, you know, saw her niece downtown..?

MARCH

Hell no... You kidding? She's a blind old bat. Her glasses are actual coke bottles, the whole things. Paint a moustache on a Volkswagen, she says, "That Omar Sharif sure runs fast."

They pull up before an imposing house, VALETS bustle to and fro. They climb out, March taking the ticket...

Just then a LOUD NOISE comes from the back of the car... A steady POUNDING... The valet, bewildered--

Not so, MARCH. His face settles in a SCOWL. He grits his teeth. Stalks over to the trunk of the car. Heaves it OPEN--

His daughter HOLLY is inside. Deckered out. Clutching a TIARA.

HOLLY

I know you said I couldn't go -- but since I'm here, you might as well take me in with you, right...?

March's expression doesn't flicker. He simply shuts the trunk again. Calmly walks to the valet, hands him the keys:

VALET

(over renewed POUNDING)

Mister... I no can take your car like that. Against the rules.

March sighs, flicks a look to Healy that says, "You see what I put up with..?" Goes back to unlock the trunk... CUT TO:

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - ENTRANCE

A clot of COSTUMED GUESTS. Filing past a BOUNCER. Healy and March approach... Dragging Holly.

HOLLY

... I said I was sorry... Look, I can totally help you and Mr. Healy... I'll ask around for what's her name, Alice--

MARCH

Holly, don't you even think about--

HOLLY

Oh, please! I'm telling you, I could be, like, stealth detective. Nobody pays attention to kids.

BOUNCER

Next...!

MARCH

(looks up)

Hi. Holland March..? Plus two.

The bouncer ticks off a name. Looks over the three of them:

BOUNCER

Sorry, sir. Costumes are an absolute requirement at this event. These two, they're with you?

MARCH

Huh..? Yeah. With me.

The bouncer points to Holly and Healy, in turn:

BOUNCER

Okay. Breakfast At Tiffany's -- and 70's Guy. You can go in.

March blinks, dumbfounded. Even HEALY looks offended -- plucks at his party shirt. Grumbling, March peels off \$40... CUT TO:

INT. PARTY - WITH THE THREE OF THEM

They wander amid the chaos. HOLLY, wide-eyed, whispers:

HOLLY

Dad, there's like, whores here and stuff.

MARCH

Holly, how many times have I told you..? Don't say, "and stuff." Just say, "There are whores here."

HOLLY

Well, there's like, a ton.

MARCH

Yeah. Go make friends. See if you can get me a rate... And remember you're grounded. So act like it.

Holly scampers off. March, shaking his head, watching her go...

HEALY

Nice kid.

MARCH

If you say so.

HEALY

What happened to her mom, anyway?

MARCH

She died... House fire. Burned to death.

HEALY

Oh, Jesus... I'm sorry.

MARCH

Yeah. Happy subject. Let's move on.

(looking around)

Look, we can wrap this thing up by midnight... Alice may not show, but we got Hazeltine. So we just get him to cough up an address... I'll come on like the good guy -- you blind his son, or whatever.

Work your magic and--

(stops noticing)

What are you looking at..?

HEALY

Nothing.

March follows his gaze... To a HOT CHICK. A young hot chick.

MARCH

You were checking out that redhead over there.

HEALY

No I wasn't.

MARCH

Nothing to be ashamed of. She's cute.

HEALY

She's fifteen.

MARCH

Naw... She's seventeen if she's a day. And she's hot.

HEALY

That chick could be your daughter.

MARCH

No, she couldn't... Look, obviously I'm not attracted to my own daughter--

HEALY

Goodie for you. What do you want, a medal?

MARCH

--I'm just saying, youth is attractive. Like, sometimes, when Holly brings home some of her older girlfriends...

HEALY

Okay. Stop right there, sick-o.

(beat)

Let's just find this guy Hazeltine... You check over there, I'll look inside.

He peels off. March watches him vanish into the assembled loons. A passing WAITRESS nearly collides with March--

MARCH

Whoa, incoming..!

He sidesteps, deftly snags a DRINK off her tray. Heads off.

TIME CUT: A HALF HOUR HAS PASSED - PARTY IN FULL SWING

SERIES OF SHOTS:

PEOPLE spilling out of doorways, windows.

The living room's a DANCE FEST, everyone doing the YMCA --

HEALY, FRUSTRATED

Stands, getting jostled, thinking how hard can this be..?
A WHITE RABBIT hurries toward him --

HEALY

Hey, buddy, have you seen the host?

The white rabbit stabs a finger at his watch --
Scurries off without answering. Healy does a slow burn.

He turns to leave... Stops. Squints across the room--

SEES MARCH. In line at the BAR, with everyone else.
Healy crosses and clamps a big mitt on March's shoulder:

MARCH

Take it easy, brother, there's enough for everyone --

(turns)

Oh. Hi.

HEALY

Any luck..?

MARCH

Nope. You?

HEALY

None... Where the hell is this Hazeltine guy? It's his own damn party.

MARCH

That, my friend, is a good question.

The bartender hands March his drink.

HEALY

Less drinking. More looking.

MARCH

What are you, some kind of super-prude?
This is like my third drink.

HEALY

Whatever, I'm gonna check the rest of the house.

Healy stalks off... March watches him go. Downs his drink in one shot. Hands the empty glass back to the bartender.

MARCH

Hit me again, Skipper.

WITH HEALY

As he searches the back of the house. Fewer people back here. He finds an office. Waits for the right moment, tries the door--

INT. HAZELTINE'S OFFICE - SAME

Healy steps into the empty office. Shuts the door, locks it... Then crosses quickly to the desk and starts rifling through it.

As, MEANWHILE--

INT. HAZELTINE'S FRONT ROOM - PARTY IN PROGRESS - SAME

March is busy grinning at nothing in particular.

A girl wearing BUNNY EARS signs his CAST. March grins some at her. Behind him a guy falls out of his chair. March grins more.

BACK IN HAZELTINE'S OFFICE

Healy is about to give up his search when he notices something: There is an ENVELOPE taped to the underside of the desk. Healy pulls it free. Opens it... Inside:

A MEDICAL REPORT

For the patient SUZY SHOEMAKER. The page is covered in an indecipherable doctor's scrawl. But a few words jump out at us:

CONGENITAL HEART ARRHYTHMIA

Healy studies the paper, shaking his head. He's not too sure what it all means, but he pockets it anyway... Exits.

Heads toward the living room. Glancing at the DEN, in passing. Stops--

HOLLY is in here. With the young REDHEAD we saw earlier. And some DORKY LOOKING GUY. They sit on the couch, watching TV.

HEALY enters. Strange NOISES emanate from the television.
He glances over. Does a double take -- they're watching porn.

HOLLY
(looking up)
Hey.

HEALY
... Um, Holly... I'm not so sure you
should be watching this.

The dorky guy waves Healy out of the way:

DORK
What's it to you, idiot..? Move. You're
in my way.

Without even looking, Healy grabs the dork by the hair.
BOUNCES his head off the coffee table -- WHAM! --

HEALY
Look, ass-hat, that girl sitting there is
a minor... Where do you get off showing
her this kind of stuff, anyway?

HOLLY
He's not showing it to me -- it isn't
even his tape!

Healy stops.

HEALY
It isn't?

HOLLY
No... He just wandered in...
(points at redhead)
It's hers.

Healy looks slightly deflated now.

HEALY
Yeah, well... She shouldn't be watching
this kind of stuff either.

REDHEAD
Watching it..? Dude, I'm in it.

Healy blinks. Frowns. Looks over at the screen for a moment.
Takes a good hard look this time...

HEALY
... Oh.

The dorky guy looks like he's about to cry now... Still sitting down, fingering the rapidly forming bruise of his forehead.

Healy clears his throat... Looks over at the dork:

HEALY

Listen, uh... Sorry about that, man...
Your head okay?

The dork doesn't answer. Starts crying instead... Healy nods:

HEALY

... Good.

Healy decides it's time to leave. He exits quickly.

HOLLY watches him go... sits, thinking.
Then, affecting nonchalance, she turns to the REDHEAD:

HOLLY

Oh, by the way, I'm supposed to meet
someone here. Do you by any chance know a
girl named Alice..?

REDHEAD

Hmmm... What's she look like?

HOLLY

Well... sorta like that woman on TV, that
kid's show chick who died--

REDHEAD

The one who just offed herself? That was
rad! She's all, "remember kids,
politeness counts," meanwhile she's like,
doing anal and stuff.

HOLLY

Don't say "and stuff" -- just say, "She's
doing anal."

EXT. OUTSIDE DECK - OVERLOOKING CANYON - NIGHTTIME

March steps outside and draws a deep lungful of night air--

Sees a STRAGGLER out on the deck. Five-nine. Blonde.
He grins drunkenly at her. She waves:

BLONDE

Hey.

MARCH

Hey, yourself. What's your gig, blondie?
What do you do?

BLONDE

I do a little acting.

MARCH

Little acting? Hey! Me too. Do this.

He motions for her to shoot him; finger-gun. She does--

BLONDE

Bang!

March takes it high in the chest. GRUNTS. Staggeres.
Executes a death-pirouette.

Topples over the railing, into the night.

The BLONDE laughs, claps... pause... FROWNS.
Steps to the edge, peers over the railing--
Sees MARCH bounce down the canyon like a rag puppet.

EXT. BOTTOM OF HILL - SAME TIME

MARCH tumbles to a halt like tennis shoes when you stop the
dryer. Sits up, trailing weeds. From above, faintly:

BLONDE (o.s.)

Woooo! That was great!

MARCH takes stock. Miraculously, his cast is intact.
Checks for cuts and scrapes. Pats his jacket--
Aw, no. His gun, GONE. Jarred loose.

Shifts to his knees -- duck-walks in a circle, searching.
Intent, focused -- UNAWARE of a new ARRIVAL. A VOICE says:

VOICE (o.s.)

Is *this* what you're looking for?

March FREEZES. The voice stops him cold.
We've seen this moment before in movies -- so has he.
He raises his hand. Swallows hard. Turns, defeated...

What he doesn't expect is a guy dressed as a HIPPIE.
Offering him a plastic HONEY-BEAR squeeze bottle.

HIPPY GUY

Is this what you're looking for?

The HIPPIE GUY wiggles the bottle provocatively.

MARCH

Is this what I'm... no, it's not. NO!!

HIPPY GUY

You... You're not Adrian?
 (March shakes his head)
 Oh! Um, geez. Sorry!

The hippy guy flushes bright red. Scurries off.
 March blinks. Whatever; GUN. Find the gun...
 He starts pawing the ivy again. Determined.

Bingo. He finds it. Stands up, checking the weapon over.
 Takes a step back--

AND TRIPS OVER SOMEONE.

March "YELPS!" loudly. Stumbles, twisting around--
 HIS GUN GOES OFF, just as he falls on his ass... BLAM! BLAM!

The shots, MUFFLED in all the party noise--
 No one upstairs even seems to have noticed.

March sits in the dirt. Slack-jawed. Blinking.

He just shot someone. In the chest. Twice. That's the bad news.

The good news is the guy was already dead.
 This slowly dawns on March as he stares at the body...
 The STIFF, CHALK WHITE body. Propped against a tree.

Phil Hazeltine's body.

HEALY (o.s.)

Yo! March! What are you doing?

March jumps about a foot. Snaps his head upward--

EXT. OUTSIDE DECK - OVERLOOKING CANYON - SAME

Healy stands, looking down. A guy in an OVERSIZED SNOOPY
 COSTUME leans against the railing nearby.

MARCH (o.s.)

Get... Get down here... Now.

Healy frowns, puzzled -- March doesn't sound so good.
 Holly wanders out onto the deck. Grins at Snoopy:

HOLLY

Hey! What up, dog?

Healy glances back, makes a fast decision... Pulls some
 money out of his pocket:

HEALY

Holly, get yourself a cab. Go home. Now.

HOLLY
No way! I'm helping! You can't tell me--

HEALY
(calling out)
March?

MARCH (o.s.)
WHAT!?

HEALY
Tell Holly to take a cab home.

MARCH (o.s.)
Holly! Go home!

Holly looks pissed... Snatches the money out of Healy's hand.
Turns on her heel and marches off, sullen.

Meanwhile, SNOOPY has taken an interest and wandered over.

HEALY
(noticing)
... Snoopy. Fuck off.

Snoopy fucks off, hotfoots it back inside. The coast now clear--

Healy HOPS THE RAILING. Freefalls -- WHUMP! -- showers dirt as
he slides to a stop next to March.

Who says nothing... Just points. Healy looks down. A beat, then:

HEALY
.... Ooops.

MARCH
I think I'm gonna throw up.

HEALY
This is Hazeltine, I take it..?

MARCH
I can feel it at the back of my throat.

HEALY
Damn. Looks like someone else had some
questions for him.

MARCH
... Yeah... Plus, I shot him.

HEALY
What?!

MARCH

Doesn't matter, he was dead already--

Healy touches the body, it's ice cold.
Glances around. Licks dry lips, says:

HEALY

Anyone see you?

MARCH

Some dude, yeah. He can place me at the scene, anyway. I vote for Plan A: I throw up -- then we move the body.

HEALY

(beat, reluctant)
... Alright, I'm down with that.

MARCH

Great. Hang on.

March bends over and begins executing his plan. CUT TO:

EXT. PARTY - VALET AREA - SAME TIME

Holly stands, twirling her TIARA on one finger. Waiting on a cab.
A HAND taps her on the shoulder. She whirls around, startled...

CATWOMAN

You the one who's been asking about Alice?

Holly does a double take. Standing there is a shapely girl in a CATWOMAN get-up. Regarding her intently. A long beat, then:

HOLLY

... I, uh, may have said something.

CATWOMAN

What do you want with her?

Holly blinks. Not sure how to handle this. Swallows, says:

HOLLY

She's... well, she's my sister, see. I need to warn her. Yeah, see, two guys came around..? They're all, where is she, where is she -- Scared me, kinda.

Catwoman scrutinizes her for a long moment... thinking.

CATWOMAN

You seem like a decent kid...

(nods)

I'll take you to her.

HOLLY
You'll... um, pardon?

CATWOMAN
I'm leaving now, though, so hurry it up.

HOLLY
Oh... Uh, 'kay...

EXT. TREES AND BRUSH - WITH OUR GUYS - SAME

Our guys drag Hazeltine's bullet riddled body through the brush. Healy's got his legs. March has hold of an ugly tie. Both grunting. Sweating. Speaking in harsh whispers:

HEALY
How the hell'd you spot him, that's what I'm wondering. From way up top..?
(dawning realization)
Wait a minute. You didn't... Did you FALL down that hill?

MARCH
Oh, come on... I had three lousy drinks--

HEALY
Sure. That's why you can't walk straight.

MARCH
For Chrissakes, I'm carrying a dead body! I'm sorry I'm not Baryshnikov here--

HEALY
Ha! You can't say "Baryshnikov!" You DID, you fell down here! Didn't you?
(exasperated)
Unbelievable. First you get drunk... Then you take a header off the balcony which, I'm sure, is a keen old-time detective trick--

MARCH
Can we just get him out of sight, please?

March indicates a wooden FENCE, separating properties.

They plod toward it, wheezing with effort.
PARTY NOISE, wafting on the night air.

HEALY
Ready? On three; one... two... THREE.

They heave the corpse over the top. It DROPS from view..!

ANOTHER ANGLE - OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

At the end of the day? It's not their fault, I mean, really, how could they know there was ANOTHER party at the neighbors'? Below the fence, 30 feet straight down?

DEAD HAZELTINE plummets out of the sky and EXPLODES a glass table. Takes out a busboy. 150 people watch, thunderstruck.

BUSBOY

JESUS! MY LEG! Oh my God! My leg!

Healy and March, uncomprehending. They peer over the fence:

MARCH

I think he's still in sight.

They promptly BOOK. Spin and exit frame. As we CUT TO:

EXT. PARTY - STREET OUTSIDE - NIGHT

THE CATWOMAN leads Holly past the valets. To a waiting TOWN CAR. Plush, expensive. Engine idling.

CATWOMAN

Hop in back, sweetie.

Holly regards the car with a mixture of fear and excitement. Excitement wins out. She climbs in, heart thudding.

Then, instead of following, Catwoman SLAMS THE DOOR. Leans in, speaks to the man in the PASSENGER seat:

CATWOMAN

This one says she's Alice's sister.

PASSENGER

Is that a fact?

He cranes his head around for a look -- his face, a scrubbed but no less vivid shade of BLUE... It's evil TOM CRUISE--

TOM

Good times.

The driver: the now-familiar OLDER GUY. At a nod from him, CATWOMAN turns on her heel. Departs.

HOLLY is suddenly starting to rethink this whole exciting adventure thing--

HOLLY

You know what? I'll just catch her later, my boyfriend's gonna wonder where I am.

TOM

(groans)

How typical is that--? You meet a pretty girl, within, like, two seconds she's gotta slip that in the conversation.

OLDER GUY

That's L.A. for ya.

TOM

"Pardon me, miss, did you see a three-headed cocker spaniel run this way--?"

"No, but my boyfriend has three heads, blah blah blah..."

(turns, says softly:)

You don't have a boyfriend, Holly.

She LUNGES for the door. He catches her wrist. CLAMPS. Holly casts desperately about, swallows hard...

HOLLY

There! That's my boyfriend, right there!

She stabs a finger at the road ahead. Tom turns-- She's pointing directly at SNOOPY; walking nearby.

The badguys exchange looks: no go. No one's buying. Holly waves frantically, life on the line -- Pause. Snoopy waves BACK.

God love him, he SEES her.

Promptly changes direction. Toward the car.

OLDER GUY

Aw, balls. Now what?

TOM

Get us out of here. Just go, man.

The driver starts to punch the gas --

Snoopy walks right in front of the car.

A SQUEAL of brakes. The driver slams to a HALT, cursing.

OLDER GUY

Get the hell out of the way!

Paws clasped behind him, the pup does a little JIG, up to the driver-side window. Tries to stick his nose inside--

OLDER GUY

I don't believe it.

(growling)

Buddy, you do not want me getting out of this car, now move your a--AAAAGGGH!!!

What the...? TOM CRUISE, instantly on alert. Spins round--

The older guy; THRASHING. Bumping the horn.
Tom stares dumbly. Darts a hand in his coat...

TOM

Motherfu--!!

SNOOPY hits him with the PEPPER SPRAY.

He recoils, gun forgotten. HISSING in pain, and meanwhile--

HOLLY'S BEING HAULED BODILY

From the car. In shock, uncomprehending...

SNOOPY

GO! I'm right behind you.

Before Holly knows it, she's moving at a dead run.
Zigzagging through the crowded parking lot.
Slamming into cars. Into people. SNOOPY, right behind.

INSIDE THE TOWN CAR - THIRTY YARDS BACK

Blue Tom Cruise is blinking, CURSING. Eyes, slitted.
Streaming RED. He looks up... Squinting out the side window.

Spots them, getting into a tan Chevy NOVA, as--

INT. CHEVY NOVA - WITH HOLLY AND SNOOPY

The SNOOPY HEAD comes off -- lands in the back seat.
HOLLY gets her first good look at her new companion:

A PRETTY GIRL, 25, TOPS. Sweat-slicked hair, long and blonde.
Oh, yeah. One more thing: She looks exactly like Suzy Shoemaker.

She fumbles the key into the ignition.

HOLLY

Um, thanks for saving me and everything--
But... *Who* are you?

SNOOPY

You were with Healy, right?

HOLLY

... Yeah. That's right. I'm Holly.

SNOOPY

Great...

(darts a look in the mirror)

... I'm Alice.

The engine catches. She peels out, laying rubber.

BACK WITH TOM

Watching his quarry disappear.

TOM

Go, drive!

OLDER GUY

Shit! I can't see..!

The OLD GUY puts it in gear anyway. Takes off. Tires smoking.

EXT. PARTY - VALET AREA - SAME

Here come March and Healy...

March is trying to look inconspicuous. Healy is just pissed:

HEALY

... I'm serious, take a look around. You see Alice? I don't see Alice. You know what else I don't see? *My 600 bucks.*

MARCH

Shhhh. Keep it down. Here's what I'll do, I'll go home --

HEALY

Fuck home! The guys dogging me just graduated from assault to *murder*, I wanna know what's going on.

MARCH

Goddamnit, keep it down.
(looks around)

Okay, I can give you some more mileage on the 600. There's a guy I know--

Just then A TOWN CAR blows past -- nearly clips Healy. Going so fast he doesn't even notice the BLUE FACED MAN sitting in front.

HEALY

Hey! Watch it, Jerk!

INT. CHEVY NOVA - DRIVING - SAME

HOLLY is thrown to the side as the Nova swerves around a corner.

HOLLY

This is so rad! My dad's gonna shit when he hears I found you!

Alice darts a look in her rear-view mirror:

ALICE

Damnit..!

HEADLIGHTS. Behind them. Catching up fast--
Alice is flooring it... Giving it everything.

She corners again, now... DOING 50 THIS TIME.

The NOVA fishtailing -- shuddering.
Holly goes tumbling again, and--

THE TOWN CAR

Makes the turn with ease... And now it's bearing down. Fast.

Alice, panicked. Sees a sidestreet.
Mind you, now, it ain't a right, it's a HARD right--

No hesitation. She FLINGS them into a skid.
Slews around the bend. Tires squawling..!

Almost makes it.

THE TOWN CAR

Is just too close... With no time to react.
-- WHAM! -- It clips the back of the Nova--

And the two cars LOCK UP.

Start spinning crazy 360's. Locked together. OUT OF CONTROL.
The whole world goes soundless and dreamy.

Holly staring as the scenery flies past in a BLUR.
She looks over in time to see--

-- SLAM! -- The TOWN CAR sheered away. Smashes into a LIGHTPOLE.
One second it's there. The next it's left behind as--

The Nova keeps going. Skidding. Sliding. Executes a lazy
pirouette, 180 degrees. Pitches sideways into a curb -- SMACK!

Promptly dies.

A beat. Another beat. Alice blinks, her senses returning...
And then she snaps into action. Frantically trying to restart
the car... The engine chugging and chuffing--

ALICE

Come on, come on..!

Tosses a glance at Holly... and stops cold--
HOLLY is very still. STARING straight ahead.
Shocked expression. Alice follows her gaze--

THEIR POV -- THE TOWN CAR

20 yards away. Wrecked against a tree. Headlights shining ASKEW. One pointed up, one down. The HOOD, sheared upward. Folded in half. Broken glass in a 30-foot circumference around the car.

The driver is dead. Pulped head-mess vaguely in view.

All this sinks in as the girls look on, aghast...

And then Holly's gaze is abruptly riveted--
Drawn to a solitary LUMP in the roadway. Still twitching. ALIVE.

BLUE TOM CRUISE

Flailing in the middle of the road. Bloody. Aimless.
His leg, twisted at sickening angle...

Alice looks away... Blocking it out. She tries the engine again. It kicks over. Car ROARS to life--

She looks up in time to see Holly EXIT THE CAR.

ALICE

What the hell are you doing?!

Holly glances back:

HOLLY

He's HURT. Just... just hang on!

She starts down the street. Alice calls after her:

ALICE

Are you crazy?! Get back here! Get away from him!

Holly just keeps going. Approaches the downed man--

He's a mess.

Looks like he was ejected through the windshield.
Covered in glass, he wheezes air in raw lungfuls.

Alice is yelling out the window now:

ALICE

Goddamnit! I'm leaving! Get back here!

Just then TOM rolls over, gasping... SEES HOLLY.
She stops, hesitant... Noticing for the first time:

TOM'S GUN RESTS FIVE FEET AWAY.

Holly stares... Is that what he was going for?

She turns to call back to Alice--
Is greeted by a piercing SCREECH OF TIRES as, emphatically

ALICE GOES AWAY

At top speed. Right now she's got anywhere else to be.

BLUE FACE, meanwhile, is staring, detached... Eyes fixed on Holly. Uncomprehending. He reaches out a hand for her.

Holly makes a decision.
Ignores the gun. Steps up next to Tom... Takes his hand:

HOLLY

It's okay... You're gonna be alright...
I'll get help.

Tom swallows... Draws a ragged breath, says:

TOM

Fucked up.... Sorry. Now... now they...
call John Boy... He'll kill you... Sorry.

He lapses, semi-conscious, as Holly looks around the darkened neighborhood.

HOLLY

Hello?? I need help! Somebody GET HELP!

And we start to PULL BACK now, as the sound of LAUGHTER swells on the soundtrack -- followed by APPLAUSE... A voice intones:

LORRAINE NEWMAN (o.s.)

Live, from New York, it's SATURDAY NIGHT!

INT. BARNEY'S BEANERY - NIGHTTIME

A SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE rerun plays on a TV mounted above the bar.

While, at the bar, a LONE MAN sits, hunched over his drink like it's his pet rabbit. We see him from behind.

ANNOUNCER (o.s.)

Ladies and Gentleman... *Michael Sarrazin.*

ON TV, 70's heartthrob actor MICHAEL SARRAZIN bounds onto stage for his monologue -- A DRUNK GIRL at the bar reacts visibly:

DRUNK GIRL

Wow... He's *yummy.*

The LONE MAN, meanwhile, tries to get the bartender's attention:

MAN

Hey, Harv, I was watching the soccer.

DRUNK GIRL

No, wait! I wanna see this Michael
Parradin, he's adorable.

(frowns)

What ever happened to him?

Camera rotates to reveal the LONE MAN as he fishes out a
cigarette, sparks his lighter -- illuminating his face...

One look and we instantly recognize him -- he's an older
version of the man giving the monologue on screen...
He's Michael Sarrazin. 63 years old now. And infinitely weary.

(Note: If Mr. Sarrazin is unavailable, we'll find another
actor of that same era.)

SARRAZIN

... Actually, he died.

DRUNK GIRL

Really? How?

Sarrazin downs the last of his drink. Clinks ice cubes at her:

SARRAZIN

Drank himself to death.

(bartender returns)

This one's empty, Harv... And would you
put the fuckin' soccer back on?

EXT. BARNEY'S BEANERY - NIGHTTIME

HEALY and MARCH clamber out of March's Camaro. March is
holding the MEDICAL REPORT that Healy found at the party:

MARCH

This was sitting in Hazeltine's office?

HEALY

Not sitting -- hidden there.

MARCH

(blinks at the report)

... So... Suzy had a heart condition.
Why's that important?

HEALY

How the hell should I know..? Why don't
you ask your buddy, the genius?

MARCH

I never said he was a genius; I said he was well informed... Plus, he's got a photo-graphic memory. Trust me, he can help.

(beat)

Oh. One more thing: He used to be, like, a movie star. Big time... But try not to mention anything about that -- it's kind of a sore subject.

INT. BARNEY'S BEANERY - BAR AREA - SAME TIME

ON TV, young Sarrazin does sketch comedy with young BILL MURRAY, it's obviously real footage (SNL episode 3-17.) While--

AT THE BAR, old Sarrazin is being accosted by the DRUNK GIRL.

DRUNK GIRL

Well Mr. Parrafin, you know what my goal in life is..? I've decided. It's to make you laugh!

SARRAZIN

Drop dead.

DRUNK GIRL

Hey! Why're you being such a jerk-off?

He looks at her for the first time. Eyes bland, lifeless.

SARRAZIN

First, because you don't know me from Adam, who, come to think of it, you don't know either but would fuck in a heartbeat if you thought he'd been on TV; and second, because as far as I can tell you have basically no redeeming qualities whatsoever -- except for maybe your boobs, which, after my fifth scotch, have assumed a lesser importance... So do us both a favor, quit trying to touch your elbows behind your back; you're just gonna break an arm, and I'll laugh and then you won't have any more goals in life.

DRUNK GIRL

... I don't think I like you anymore.

SARRAZIN

Join the club.

She storms off, nearly colliding with HEALY and MARCH.

MARCH

Still haven't lost the touch, I see.

SARRAZIN

March. To what do I owe the pressure?

Healy frowns at something behind the bar. Points:

HEALY

Hey, is that you on TV?

March looks pained. Sarrazin just sighs.

SARRAZIN

Actually. Yeah.

HEALY

Huh... So what, they just play your stuff here all the time...?

SARRAZIN

No, it's just on... It's a re-run and--

(spins in his chair)

Goddamnit, Harv! Put the God-Damn soccer back on, would ya?!!

March shoots Healy a look as Sarrazin turns back around:

SARRAZIN

What happened to your arm, March?

MARCH

(motions with cast)

He broke it.

(introducing)

Michael Sarrazin, I'd like you to meet my associate--

SARRAZIN

--The redoubtable Mr. Jackson Healy.

Charmed, I'm sure...

Healy, clearly thrown. Sarrazin stubs out his smoke, says:

SARRAZIN

I've been known to read the tabloids, Mr. Healy. Heroic stuff, I gotta say. Did you get, like, free Denny's-burgers for life?

MARCH

(to Healy)

What's he talking about?

HEALY

Nothing.

March starts over again:

MARCH

Look, I'll make this quick, Mike, I got a name for you -- Hazeltine.

SARRAZIN

Yeah? I got one for you: Ovaltine. What's your fucking point?

Pause... March casually picks up Sarrazin's bar tab. The actor appears not to notice... yet he begins to speak:

SARRAZIN

Hazeltine, Philip... PR guy, basically. Did TV stuff for a while. I see him around. Hob-nobbing. Bit of a weasel. He recently moved on up, started handling political campaigns...

(looks up)

This the same case? That chick, the Shoemaker look-alike..?

MARCH

Alice. Her name's Alice, and yeah, Hazeltine was fucking her, apparently.

Hearing this, Sarrazin turns, regards him with a frown--

SARRAZIN

Really..?

(off March's look)

You don't find that a wee bit... I don't know, wanky?

MARCH

What do you mean by wanky?

Sarrazin shrugs elaborately, lights another smoke.

SARRAZIN

Hazeltine... Come on, he works for David Shoemaker. He's running the Shoemaker presidential campaign against Maldonado. You knew that, right?

He swivels toward them; is met with two blank looks.

HEALY

I don't have a TV.

MARCH

I don't vote.

SARRAZIN

Fine. Well, when I say, "wanky," I'm saying, you got Phil Hazeltine, working day-in, day-out to elect David Shoemaker--
(beat)

While simultaneously banging a girl who looks just like Shoemaker's dead kid, how fucking likely is that..?

Healy and March exchange looks.

Just then March's CELL PHONE starts to ring. He gets it:

MARCH

Yo.

INT. UCLA MEDICAL CENTER - THIRD FLOOR - SAME

Holly stands at a payphone. Pale. Blood all over her dress.

HOLLY

... Daddy..?

CUT TO:

INT. UCLA MEDICAL CENTER - ROOM 323 - NIGHT

BLUE TOM CRUISE spitting and hissing:

TOM

... Fuck... You... Fu-ggrck...

Barely managing to strangle out the words. Which makes perfect sense because--

WIDER

MARCH has a hand CLAMPED around his throat. Squeezing. As HEALY looks on from the door to the room, keeping watch.

March slowly takes his hand away. TOM gasping for air.

MARCH

Alright... Now I'm gonna ask you again:
Did you kill Hazeltine?

TOM

Fuck you.

MARCH

Why are you looking for Alice?

TOM

Fuck you.

March sighs. This is going nowhere.
He holds up three fingers:

MARCH

How many fingers am I holding up?

TOM

Fuck you.

MARCH

That's what I thought...
(looks over at Healy)
You wanna ask him something?

Healy glances over from the door. Shrugs:

HEALY

This guy doesn't know anything, he's a
reprobate.

(off March's blank look)

You know: a morally unprincipled or
depraved individual.

(off March's still blank look)

He's a punk.

Ahhh, March finally gets it. Healy shakes his head:

HEALY

Just look at him -- laid up in a hospital
bed, still acting tough... If he worked
for you, would you tell him anything..?

MARCH

Then what the hell are we doing here?

HEALY

(blinks)

I thought you wanted to torture him.

March sighs. Rubs his eyes tiredly.

MARCH

... No, Healy, I do not want to torture
him.

TOM

You are fucking dead... We fucked up...
Now John Boy's coming and you're dead.

MARCH

Yeah, yeah... We heard.

TOM
 But you ain't listening...
 (looks over at Healy)
 He knows where you live, pal.

Healy turns... All of a sudden he looks pissed:

HEALY
 What did you say?

TOM
 That's right, he knows all about you.
 You're next... And he ain't gonna stop
 there.

HEALY
 ... Alright. Enough.

TOM CRUISE
 That pretty little girlie..?

HEALY
 Don't say it, man.

TOM CRUISE
 I'll be sure and tell him to rip her
 apart, too.

March lunges for the bed, blood in his eye--
 HEALY intercedes. Leaps in front of March. BLOCKS him.

HEALY
 Stop it. Stop... You're just gonna hate
 yourself in the morning.
 (glances back at Tom)
 Look, this is stupid. Let's get out of
 here... This guy ain't going nowhere.

March backs off reluctantly. Starts out the door.

TOM
 That's right... Pussies...

Healy shakes his head. Follows March out--

INT. UCLA MEDICAL CENTER - OUTSIDE ROOM 323 - SAME

They start down the hall. Only Healy stops almost immediately:

HEALY
 Shit. Forgot my jacket... You go ahead.

Healy heads back to the room as March keeps walking.
 Rounds the corner--

Holly is sitting on a bench here. Cleaned up a little. Bottle of water in her hand. Staring at nothing.

March sits down next to her. A pause, then:

HOLLY
... I'm sorry.

MARCH
(looks over)
About what?

HOLLY
I lost Alice... I coulda stayed with her,
I know she's important, it's just... I
saw that guy in the road... And...
(bites her lip)
Do you think I did the right thing?

March studies her face for a moment. Then looks away, says:

MARCH
... I know you did.

HOLLY
How?

MARCH
'Cuz it's not what I would have done.

Another pause.

HOLLY
Where's Mr. Healy?

MARCH
Went back for his jacket.

HOLLY
(frowns)
... But--

She looks to her left -- Healy's jacket rests on the corner of the bench. She leans over to grab it, and stops cold--

Because this angle affords her a view of the nurse's station.

SHE SEES BUT MARCH DOESN'T

Two NURSES go sprinting past. Heading down the hall toward Blue-Face's room. A CRASH CART, already there, inbound...

HOLLY leans back, confused--

AS HEALY APPEARS

From waaaay the opposite direction, almost like he DOUBLED BACK. He sees his jacket, smacks his forehead:

HEALY

Ha! THERE it is. I'm like, Mr. Absent-Minded. So... We ready to go?

CUT TO:

EXT. MARCH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Establishing.

INT. HOLLY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Holly is asleep in bed.

JIJI THE CAT is curled up next to her, PURRING.

March sticks his head in the room, checking up. He regards his daughter sadly... Then exits, closing the door again.

As he does, Holly's eyes open--

INT. MARCH'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Healy sits in front of March's COMPUTER. Pecking at the keys. Trying to log on to a site using March's CREDIT CARD.

March comes down the hallway, distracted.

HEALY

(looks back)

How is she?

MARCH

(shrugs)

... I don't know.

Healy looks back at the computer. Clicks the mouse a few times.

HEALY

... Okay... We're getting it.

March crosses into the kitchen. Takes out his GUN and raps the HEEL OF HIS HAND against one of the OAK CABINETS--

A HIDDEN compartment DROPS OPEN. March stashes the gun. Fits it snugly into a velcro holster here. Closes it back up.

MARCH

What are you getting, exactly..?

HEALY

I found a website with the Shoemaker video. I'm downloading it now, so we--

March wonders over... Stabs a finger at the screen:

MARCH

Is that really Britney Spears?

HEALY

What..?

(stares at screen)

Oh... Uh, I guess so...

Healy clicks something on screen.

They both react by cocking their heads to one side.

MARCH

Hard to tell with her mouth like that.

HEALY

Yeah.

The computer beeps at them.

HEALY

Here we go.

Healy hands March his credit card back.

MARCH

Wait... I'm paying for this?

HEALY

Shhhh... Just watch.

ON SCREEN -- THE VIDEO STARTS

Grainy. Third generation.

Transferring it over the internet didn't help the quality any.

There's a girl on a bed. Hard to make out her face.

A guy on top of her, pumping away.

A radio plays in the background.

Not much else goes on -- just about the most un-sexy thing you can imagine. March and Healy watch, squinting...

HEALY

That look like Suzy to you?

MARCH

I don't know... Hard to say. I mean, it could be. You think it's Alice?

HEALY

Can't tell. I never really got that good a look at her in the first place.

They watch in silence.

MARCH

This is stupid. You can't tell shit from this -- how much did it cost me..?

HEALY

Well... A lot... But you get it for a whole year, so--

(stops, noticing)

Wait, did you see that? Just there?

Healy starts futzing around with the media player.

HEALY

Wait. Hold on. I'll back it-- There! See!

ON SCREEN: The guy is standing now. His BUTT pretty much fills the screen.

MARCH

Hmmm... Well... I see some dude's butt.

HEALY

The dots! The... Whatchamacallits... Moles! The moles on his ass!

(points)

There: Bang! Bang! Bang! Three in a row. Like the Belt of Orion!

MARCH

... Um... Is there something you want to tell me?

HEALY

I've seen this guy's ass before. I'm telling you, I saw it tonight. In a porno movie.

MARCH

When did you watch a porno tonight?

HEALY

At the party. That young redhead chick, she was in it... and I swear, my hand to God, so was this guy here.

MARCH

You're out of your mind.

HEALY

(undaunted)

This is supposed to be some home-made deal, isn't it? Smuggled out of her house?

MARCH

Yeah. So?

HEALY

So, don't you think it's weird there's a professional porn actor in it..?

MARCH

I think it's weird that you got, like, a mental catalogue of men's asses, I find THAT weird--

But March is nodding slowly, intrigued despite himself.

MARCH

How sure are you..?

HEALY

Sure.

MARCH

(getting excited)

Son of a bitch. That would mean... I mean, unless Orion's Belt here was Suzy's boyfriend at the time, which I doubt, that would mean--

HEALY

It would mean the video's a fake. Just like that shot of Britney getting her heinie poked.

MARCH

That was fake--?

(plowing ahead)

A phony home video. You'd have to... what would you do, you'd... duplicate her bedroom on a stage, that's no biggie--

HEALY

Sure, no sweat, only take a few guys--

MARCH

Exactly. Then you just need to hire a double--

He freezes, mid-word. They look at each other as the realization sinks in. CUT TO:

HEALY

On March's cell phone. Leaving a message:

HEALY

... So please just call us back, Alice...
Please... Cuz we can help... Please.

He hangs up. Looks over at March:

HEALY

How was that?

MARCH

I think you should have said "please" a
few more times.

Healy shrugs on his jacket.

HEALY

Doesn't matter anyway... She's not gonna
call back.

MARCH

Yeah.

HEALY

That's okay. We've got other leads.

MARCH

We do?

HEALY

David Shoemaker. This has gotta be mixed
up with his campaign, right? Has to be.
Maybe his opponent, what's-his-name--

MARCH

Maldonado.

HEALY

Right. Maybe he made that video.

He heads for the front door. March walks beside him, thinking:

MARCH

Yeah... YEAH. That's perfect. We go to
Shoemaker, tell him what we know about
the video! Good idea, man..!

(nods to himself)

Bet we could get some cash out of him,
too.

Healy stops on the front porch... Blinks.

HEALY
 Uh, yeah... Whatever.
 (beat)
 Goodnight, March.

CUT TO:

INT. HEALY'S CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

Healy headed away from March's house, down Laurel Canyon.
 He spots something out the side window, squints:

BEHIND SOME CONSTRUCTION FENCING

We can just make out the beam of a FLASHLIGHT -- held by a
 small figure sitting in the dirt... Reading from a book.

HEALY
 What the..?

He hits the brakes and we CUT TO:

LITTLE HOLLY MARCH

Sitting Indian style in the middle of the vacant lot -- this is
 exactly how we first met her... Only now it's 3 in the morning.

She's reading out loud to no one:

HOLLY
 ... Keeping my back to Bluepoint Vance.
 At the door I had to step aside to let
 two men come in--

Healy steps into frame behind Holly...
 She stops reading but doesn't look up:

HOLLY
 Hey.

HEALY
 Hey.

Healy glances around. No one else here.

HOLLY
 You've got your foot in the toilet.

HEALY
 ... What?

HOLLY
 (turns)
 Your foot. It's in the toilet.

HEALY

Oh.

Healy takes a couple of steps forward.

HOLLY

You just knocked over the lamp.

HEALY

Right. Sorry... Was this your room?

HOLLY

... No. Mom and Dad's.

Healy nods: Oh.

HOLLY

... Mom loved detective stories.

She closes the book. Takes a deep lungful of night air.

HOLLY

I'm okay, you know... You don't have to worry about me getting home, or anything.

HEALY

I'm not worried.

(nods)

Goodnight.

HOLLY

Goodnight.

Healy turns to leave... Heads back to his car.

HOLLY

Can I ask you something?

Healy stops, looks back:

HEALY

Anything.

HOLLY

... What did you do to that man tonight?

HEALY

What..?

HOLLY

At the hospital... When you went back in the room. What did you do?

HEALY

I... Nothing... I was looking for my jacket.

HOLLY

... Some doctors ran in after you left. You didn't...

(pause)

... Did you kill him?

HEALY

No... Of course not. I -- of course not.

Holly studies him a moment longer...
Finally nods: she believes him.

HOLLY

Okay... That's good...

(little smile)

... I knew you couldn't do something like that... Goodnight, Mr. Healy.

CUT TO:

A CAR DOOR SLAMMING

As Healy gets back into his convertible. Keys the ignition. Catches sight of himself in the rearview mirror:

Notices something he hadn't before... Something troubling. He shakes it off--

Puts the car in gear. Drives away. And we--

CUT TO:

A HUGE CROWD OF CHILDREN

All sizes, all ages. CAMERA PANS UP from them to find:

PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL DAVID SHOEMAKER

He is here to address the assembled students of the ELIZABETH LEARNING CENTER. They listen with rapt attention:

SHOEMAKER

... That means you have an opportunity, right now, to pay attention -- to pay close attention to what those around you are saying...

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE CROWD

Waaaaaaay at the back of the auditorium we pick out March and Healy. Standing in the middle of a large group of reporters.

They're not paying attention. March focused on a newspaper. Healy looking bored.

MARCH

Says here, this guy beats Maldonado in California, he's got a lock on the democratic nomination...

(looks up)

... Could be the next president, man.

HEALY

Yeah..? Big deal.

MARCH

(frowns)

That makes him really rich, right?

CUT TO:

INT. ELIZABETH LEARNING CENTER - HALLWAY - LATER

Speech aftermath. Kids running around, headed back to class. A clot of REPORTERS, campaign security keeping them at bay.

March and Healy in the background. Scoping out the situation:

HEALY

... I don't see how we're gonna get past to talk to this guy... Press only.

March notices a kid emerge from behind the security, headed for the bathroom... Sixth grade, maybe. Innocent looking boy.

MARCH

Hey. Psssst. Kid, over here.

The kid comes over. Looks up at March.

MARCH

How come you get to go back there with the reporters?

KID

My classroom's back there.

March nods. Kneels down, says in a conspiratorial whisper:

MARCH

You, uh, see that table over there?

March points at a makeshift security table just beyond the guards. A stack of PRESS PASSES sitting there.

MARCH

Me and my buddy here... We need a couple of those passes.

The kid looks Healy and March over. Thinks.

KID

How much?

MARCH

How much what..?

KID

Money... How much?

March sighs, fishes in his pocket. Shooting a glance at Healy.

MARCH

Well... I just happen to have a whole FIVE DOLLAR BILL right here... And you can have it all, if you just--

KID

Five bucks..? Forget it, dork.

The kid starts to walk away. March hurriedly waves him back.

MARCH

Hey, hey... Wait... Look, uh, I'll also throw in--

March looks around, then pulls out a pack of LUCKY STRIKES.

MARCH

--an almost entire pack of cigarettes...

(checks the pack)

That's four whole cigarettes... And you can have 'em all... You'll be the coolest kid in school.

(points)

Two passes... Don't let anyone see you.

The kid eyes the cigarettes with open desire. Finally nods... Heads off. Disappearing behind the guards. March stands back up, pleased with himself.

HEALY

What are you doing?

MARCH

What?

HEALY

You can't just give some 12 year old a pack of cigarettes. That's... peccant, man.

A pause. March clearly has no idea what PECCANT means.

MARCH

... Yeah, but it's not even a full pack.

HEALY

That not the point! You gonna start him on a lifelong bad habit--

MARCH

Lifelong -- look, it says right on the side of the package: "These will kill you." If he decides to start smoking, he's an idiot.

HEALY

You smoke.

MARCH

My point exactly.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As they watch the kid creep up to the security table. Nobody paying much attention to him. He reaches out a trembling hand--

And promptly knocks the whole stack of passes to the floor. Jumps back, startled, knocks over a chair -- CLANG! -- trips and falls down in a tangled mess.

MARCH literally slaps his forehead.

A few of the security guards rush over to see what's happening.

March and Healy turn to beat feet--
And just about knock over a BURLY GUY in a dark suit.

BURLY GUY

Whoa... You're Holland March, right?

March blinks.

MARCH

Um... Yeah?

BURLY GUY

Good. Senator Shoemaker would like to speak with you.

INT. ELIZABETH LEARNING CENTER - CLASSROOM - SAME

March and Healy are led into the room by the burly man.

This was makeshift HQ for the Shoemaker camp here on site.

Shoemaker himself kicks back in one of the undersized student desk-chair combos -- giving a radio interview over the phone. We only hear his side of the conversation:

SHOEMAKER

Yes, that's how I feel... These kids are quite literally the future of our country.

(pause)

Well, I can't really comment on that. It's my understanding the police are investigating... I have to go now, but thanks, Steve.

He hangs up. Glances over at one of the staffers:

SHOEMAKER

Hazeltine question at the end there.

She shrugs. He shrugs back. Then glances over at Healy and March.

SHOEMAKER

Ah, Holland March.

He stands. Approaches... MARCH, fairly bewildered until Shoemaker plunks down a copy of LEISURE WORLD LIFE, open to March's corny-looking AD.

SHOEMAKER

My sister told me about you. Did some digging on my own, frankly. Who's this..?

This last aimed at Healy.

MARCH

This is my... associate. Jackson Healy.

SHOEMAKER

Terrific. I'll cut right to the point. I don't know what you're doing here... But my sister told me all about hiring you to find my dead daughter--

MARCH

Oh, yes, that.. Well, sir, you gotta understand--

SHOEMAKER

No I don't... This gentleman here...

(points)

The one you've already met, is a lawyer.
James.

Healy and March exchange glances -- The burly guy?

SHOEMAKER

I assure you, he's top flight... In fact,
he'll be suing you for fraud on my
sister's behalf.

MARCH

Whoa, whoa... Wait, let me just--

SHOEMAKER

What? Explain, lowlife? Why you took
money from some sad old woman--

MARCH

No, see, uh... She, um, hired me to--

HEALY

The tape's a fake.

This stops everyone cold... Shoemaker squints at Healy.

SHOEMAKER

What?

HEALY

The tape of your daughter having sex, is
fake. Someone faked the whole thing.

Shoemaker just stands there. Considering this... then:

SHOEMAKER

James, I need a minute.

BURLY GUY

Sir, we need to be on the road in--

SHOEMAKER

James, please...

James nods... Exits with the one remaining staffer. Now
they're all alone..

SHOEMAKER

You have some kind of proof of this.

MARCH

Yes. We're... in contact with the young girl who is actually in the video.

SHOEMAKER

I see...

(thinking)

And instead of going to the cops with this explosive information, you decided to show up here and shake me down.

MARCH

Shake, no... Nobody's shaking--

SHOEMAKER

Forget it. Forget it. Doesn't matter.

He sighs. Suddenly looking very tired.

SHOEMAKER

Walk with me.

EXT. ELIZABETH LEARNING CENTER - PLAYGROUND - DAY

March, Healy and Shoemaker stroll across the grounds... Kids playing on the jungle gym in the background.

Shoemaker actually cuts an impressive figure in the afternoon sun... He certainly looks the part of Commander-in-Chief.

SHOEMAKER

Phil Hazeltine, guy used to work for me... was shot last night. Killed.

MARCH

Sorry to hear it.

SHOEMAKER

What with that and my daughter's... Well, with what happened to her... Let's just say I woke up today ready to quit.

(beat)

Of course, Suzy would've held me to a higher standard. Lie down, give up? Never. And my son, Danny, what sort of message does it send to him?

Shoemaker turns, speaks directly to both of them:

SHOEMAKER

Here is the truth: I look you in the face, speak with some feeling, confound you with some big words... Chances are you'll vote for me. Why? Because you understand? Because I'm truthful? No. Because I seem to be. Because I looked you in the eye, because, at the end of the day, you like me. Issues? Forget it. People vote for the guy... The regular Joe, the one they'd like to have 'round for dinner. Convince them you're a nice guy, and the voters will follow you anywhere... even somewhere that helps this country.

(beat)

On the other hand, if I come off unlikable..?

They pass a set of bleachers, kids darting back and forth --

SHOEMAKER

... My handlers, they think, if I start yelling about how that tape of my daughter is a fake, how it's all a plot by Maldonado's people... Well, I risk looking crazy... and nobody wants a crazy person over for dinner.

(beat)

But I decided to speak out anyway. To do the right thing, the stupid thing, the ONLY thing...

(beat)

Then, in walk you two yahoos, and I don't know whether it's a blessing or a curse... All I do know is, if I had actual proof... If this Alice girl came forward, cleared Suzy's name--

MARCH

We can get her for you, Sir.

SHOEMAKER

Now, you wouldn't be looking me in the eye and handing me a fib, would you..?

(thinking)

Alright. I want to hire you... This is all on the QT, got it? And I can't pay you much. It'll look like I'm paying you off. Two thousand at most. Talk to James. He'll take care of it.

They arrive at the back parking lot. Vans with Shoemaker paraphernalia stuck all over them. Staffers waiting.

He shakes both of their hands. Gets into a van... Looks back before closing the door.

SHOEMAKER

So you two are what passes for knights in today's world..? Saving the damsel in distress.

March and Healy just stare.

SHOEMAKER

Quite an age we live in, isn't it?

He pulls the door shut... Off they go.

EXT. ELIZABETH LEARNING CENTER - STREET - DAY

March and Healy approach the Camaro, March is actually excited:

MARCH

... Couple thousand bucks. That ain't hay, man.

HEALY

Agreed.

MARCH

You should be happy... We're gonna find your Alice -- and we're doing a good thing to boot.

March stops, stares out at the kids playing nearby:

MARCH

I wish I never had to grow up... God, to be that pure again. To be that innocent--

A NINE YEAR OLD BOY rides past on a bicycle. March waves at him:

MARCH

How's it going, son?

NINE YEAR OLD

Fuck you, Bitch!

He rides off, scowling.

March heaves a sigh. His CELL PHONE RINGS:

MARCH

Hello... Mrs. Shoemaker..? I actually just left a meeting with your broth--

March stops, frowns. Listening...

MARCH

I'm sorry, she called you? And what--
 (pause)
 Mrs. Shoemaker, I'll be right there.

He hangs up. Looks across the roof of the car at Healy:

MARCH

That was old lady Shoemaker... She says a woman named Alice just called her.

EXT. LILY SHOEMAKER'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The Camaro pulls up. Sews to a stop. March and Healy get out.

EXT. SHOEMAKER FRONT PORCH - SAME

They bound up onto the porch. Ring the doorbell. Wait. March scratches at his cast... No answer. They decide to knock--

MARCH

Mrs. Shoemaker..?

KNOCK-KNOCK-CREEEEK... The front door is open. Unlocked. March takes a step back:

MARCH

Shit!

HEALY

What..?

MARCH

What do you mean, what? We get a frantic call from the old lady... We show up, the front door's unlocked -- hanging open. Hmmm, that's odd... She doesn't answer when we call her name.

(shakes his head)

I watch movies, man -- she's dead in there.

HEALY

Christ, you don't know that.

MARCH

Yeah I do. She's been horribly murdered. Brains probably scattered all over the room... I'm not going in.

HEALY

Oh, brother.

Healy swings the door wide, steps across the threshold--

HEALY
Mrs. Shoemaker..?

INT. LILY SHOEMAKER'S HOUSE - FOYER - SAME

Healy enters. March, stepping cautiously behind him, draws his GUN from the waistband of his trousers.

HEALY
Hello..?

Ambient noise: Clock ticking... Air conditioner, throbbing...
They round the corner into the small living room--

LILY SHOEMAKER is propped in a chair in the middle of the room.
Her eyes are closed. She's not moving.

MARCH
Shit. Shit.

They stand, staring for a long moment... Finally, Healy motions:

HEALY
Well, um... Check her for a pulse.

MARCH
What..? No! You do it!

HEALY
She's your client.

March looks rueful. Sighs. Walks over and touches her wrist.
Recoils in horror:

MARCH
She's ice cold...
(swallows)
... I think I'm gonna be sick.

HEALY
I don't get it... Who'd kill her? Why
kill her?

MARCH
I dunno, she knew something, maybe, I...
(beat)
... Excuse me...

March tries to run for the door. Doesn't make it. Healy jumps
out of the way just as March throws up all over the foyer.

HEALY
Good one, Quincy... We're gonna have to
call the cops, you know.

March wipes his mouth on his sleeve. Stands upright.

MARCH

No way! Are you crazy? I say we walk away. Now.

HEALY

March, you're probably the last person she called. Phone records will show that.
(shakes his head)
We gotta call the police. Where's your cell phone..?

MARCH

(points outside)

My car.

Healy exits, walks to the car.

March watches him go as, behind him, WE SEE BUT HE DOESN'T--

MRS. SHOEMAKER calmly sits up.

Hugs herself with a little shiver.

Stands, adjusts her dress, whatever, the point is, she's clearly alive... She was just sleeping--

MARCH

(utterly oblivious)

Hey, Healy. Bring me that pack of gum.

MRS. SHOEMAKER WALKS RIGHT UP BEHIND HIM

Pulling a woolen SHAWL tight around her shoulders.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Mr. March, how nice--

That's as far as she gets... March lets out a strangled "YELP!"
Spins. Jumping back--

HIS GUN GOES OFF

BLAM--! Blows to pieces a Franklin Mint DINNER PLATE on the wall. Fragments rain down. Plaster. Dust.

Mrs. Shoemaker hits the dirt. Yowling. And we CUT TO:

A TEACUP AND SAUCER, JITTERING...

As MRS. SHOEMAKER, hands SHAKING, attempts to sip the tea.

INT. LILY SHOEMAKER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

March, Healy and Shoemaker. All seated at the kitchen table.

A long awkward pause. Shoemaker, sets down the teacup:

MARCH

... I'm really sorry I shot your commemorative dinner plate.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

No. No. It's fine. I'm just a little shaky... Do you like the pastry?

MARCH

Uh, yeah, it's great. You were saying..?

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Oh, yes... Well, I know you said you wouldn't work on this case any more, but then this girl called and said her name was Alice -- and that was the name you told me Suzy was using... So, I just felt I should call... Now, she only wants to talk to my brother -- very cautious... She won't come here... Such a shame too, because, you know, I bought these Sara Lee pastries--

HEALY

They're delicious. Where is she now?

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Well, I think she's been dead for years, they just use her name.

HEALY

No, no -- Alice. Did she give you any way to contact her?

MRS. SHOEMAKER

She gave me a phone number. Said she'll be there tonight...

The old woman stops. Frowns. Looks across at March:

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Does this mean...

(pause)

I never saw Suzy, did I? I saw this girl Alice... Suzy really is dead, isn't she?

The two men don't know what to say
It doesn't matter. She knows. Quiet tears well up in her eyes.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

... I'm sorry... I'll find that number for you.

INT. LILY SHOEMAKER'S HOUSE - FOYER - SAME

March and Healy stand awkwardly at the front door, waiting for Lily to return. Healy shrugs on his jacket--

Finds the MEDICAL REPORT from Hazeltine's office stuffed in his pocket. Glances over it again, frowning...

The old woman returns. Hands March a phone number on a POST-IT.

HEALY

Mrs. Shoemaker -- One more thing: Was Suzy ever seriously ill, as far as you know?

Mrs. Shoemaker frowns at the question.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Well, no... not that I know of. Suzy was always in perfect health.

MARCH

(squints)

She didn't have any medical problems..?

MRS. SHOEMAKER

Well, I suppose we all have something early on, that we grow out of... I had an allergy to pickles--

HEALY

Was Suzy sick when she was a girl..?

MRS. SHOEMAKER

(frowns)

Well, I wouldn't say that. Now, there was a great deal of concern surrounding her birth. As I recall... they had to incubate her, is that the word..? The doctor said she might even be somewhat "slow," oh, what a blow that was to her father..!

MARCH

You don't know the exact nature of her illness?

MRS. SHOEMAKER

I'm afraid not. It was a long time ago.

HEALY

Seems like she turned out okay.

MRS. SHOEMAKER

David was positively obsessed. The money it cost..! A fancy clinic, the best doctors... and sure enough, she turned out perfect. We were all relieved... but David especially.

(beat)

Is that helpful?

MARCH

To tell you the truth, I don't know... Thanks for your time.

EXT. LILY SHOEMAKER'S HOUSE - SAME

Healy and March walk to the car. Healy reads off of Suzy's medical report, shaking his head:

HEALY

All it says here is that Suzy had a heart condition... Makes no sense.

Hands the paper to March, who shrugs:

MARCH

It makes little sense that Jimmy crack corn... but you know, oddly enough..?

HEALY

You don't care?

MARCH

(points to his nose: spot on)
Just find me Alice... That's all I care about.

INT. MICHAEL SARRAZIN'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Sarrazin pads into the kitchen. Apparently, he wears that infinitely weary look wherever he goes.

The phone is ringing. He grabs it:

SARRAZIN

What?

INTERCUT - MARCH DRIVING, ON HIS CELL PHONE

MARCH

Hey, Mikey, how's it going?

SARRAZIN

When are you gonna get your fucking progeny out of my house?

MARCH (o.s.)

That good, huh? She giving you trouble?

Behind Sarrazin Holly enters, all goodness and light.

HOLLY

I think I broke your TV set.

Sarrazin heaves a heavy sigh. Holly starts perusing the fridge.

SARRAZIN

March. When?

MARCH

Soon. Soon... Hey listen, do you think you could get me an address if all I had was the phone number?

SARRAZIN

What do you think?

CUT TO:

A PAYPHONE, AS IT RINGS...!

Once... Twice... Widen to reveal that we are, in fact--

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHTTIME

Garish hotel carpeting, utilitarian wallpaper.

A MAN, MID-THIRTIES, enters frame. Strides right to the phone, no hesitation. Plucks it from the wall, says:

MAN

Hello..?

HEALY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Turn around.

At that self-same moment, a big meaty HAND lands on his shoulder like an errant seagull. He spins --

HEALY

You're not Alice.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL - PATIO - SAME

MARCH taps his cel phone on the table as he waits on a drink. It arrives. He scoops it up, turns--

In time for HEALY to neatly snatch it away and dump it, all in one smooth motion. He's not alone, he's got his new pal.

HEALY
You'll never guess who this is.

MARCH
Alice?

HEALY
Close. It's her pimp.

MARCH
You're kidding. Her *pimp*?

ALICE'S PIMP
Will you stop calling me "her pimp" like I'm not even here? My name's Joe.

HEALY
Shut up, Joe.

MARCH
So what room's she in?

HEALY
He won't say. Memory problem.

MARCH
Something didn't work at my house, my Dad used to kick it a few times.

ALICE'S PIMP
Guys, guys -- hear me out. She's in with some middle-eastern dude, okay? A full-on sheikh, you don't mess with them.

MARCH
What are we, chopped liver?

ALICE'S PIMP
I'm telling you, he's got bodyguards. Probably the kind, had their balls removed, what's that called?

HEALY
Marriage. What's she wearing?

ALICE'S PIMP
I don't know... yellow dress. Oriental shit on it.

MARCH
(turns to Healy)
If it is a sheikh, we're talking the penthouse, right?

HEALY

Sounds right. Let's go.

ALICE'S PIMP

(as they turn)

Okay--! I'll make you a deal. Alice is booked until ten, that's less than an hour. What if you two hang here, have a couple cold ones on me, can you top that?

Healy and March exchange looks. Why not? Joe claps his hands:

ALICE'S PIMP

There. We work it out, see? We're reasonable. Your buddy, that was the problem, he wasn't reasonable --

Red flag. HEALY picks up on it instantly:

HEALY

Say again. Our buddy..?

ALICE'S PIMP

(confused)

The other guy, yeah, come round lookin' for Alice -- he wasn't with you?

HEALY

Describe him. He have a name?

ALICE'S PIMP

No name. Big fucker. Blonde. Like a Nebraska boy, corn-fed, you know?

HEALY

He go upstairs?

ALICE'S PIMP

I don't know where he went, man, he can go straight to Hell for all I care. Rude-ass motherfucker. Jerry, take care of these guys, okay?

(puts two \$20's on the table)

I'm gonna take a leak.

March moves to stop him, but Healy intervenes:

HEALY

He's not going anywhere without Alice.

He chews a toothpick. Speaks without looking at March:

HEALY

Could be our boy... John Boy.

MARCH

You say so.

HEALY

Big, farm-looking motherfucker..?

(beat, shakes his head)

Shit, what am I talking about..? We don't even know what our guy looks like.

MARCH

Yeah, no kidding... We don't even know why they call him John Boy.

Healy nods.

MARCH

Look, all we gotta do is wait here, have a couple... She comes down, we grab her and beat feet.

HEALY

I suppose... Unless he's up there now, murdering her.

MARCH

You heard the man, there are bodyguards--

HEALY

Exactly, so if I was our guy, I'd sit here and wait. Like we're doing.

(looks around)

Except I don't see him. Do you?

They both sit there, pointedly not looking at each other.

MARCH

Not worth getting shot over.

HEALY

You wouldn't think.

He rubs tired eyes. Lets out a long, ragged breath.

HEALY

Alright... Let's go up.

INT. ELEVATOR ALCOVE - HOTEL - SAME

Healy and March grimly approach. JOE comes skidding around the corner, inserts himself between them and the elevator.

ALICE'S PIMP

Whoa, I thought we had an agreement I--
ooff!

Healy's hand doesn't appear to have moved.
Nevertheless, Joe is chalk-white. Clutching his sternum.

Healy grabs the guy by the hair.
Bounces his HEAD off the "UP" button. It lights up.

HEALY

Go away.

He cuts Joe loose as the doors open, *ding--!*

He and March step inside the elevator.
He presses "P". They ascend.

It's a glass elevator, you can see the city outside.
They stare at the elevator doors. They've seen the city.

New Age MUZAK, serene. All of life's rough edges, blunted.

MARCH

(abruptly)
Munich.

HEALY

What?

MARCH

That's it, right? What you call a guy,
had his nuts removed? A Munich?

Healy slips on his brass knuckles. Flexes his hand.

HEALY

Munich is a city in Germany.

MARCH

Oh.
(brightens)
Hitler only had one ball.

HEALY

Yeah, I'd heard that.
(watching the floor indicator)
Okay, here we go.

They face forward. Shoulders squared. Ready for anything.

The elevator glides to a stop, *ding--!*
The doors open. They're both about to exit, when--

LAUGHTER fills the corridor.
Healy frowns, listening.

Wheezing, asthmatic laughter -- the kind, you think you're gonna pass out, the joke's so fucking funny.

HEALY leans out, cautiously... Just in time to see

A SUITED MAN

Stumbling toward him. Weaving, side to side.
Equilibrium, gone. Wheeze... Stumble...

Healy draws a sharp breath:

From the guy's collar, a sad little spritz.
Like a kids' drinking fountain. Bright blood. Arterial.

HIS THROAT'S BEEN CUT.

Guy collides with the wall. Eyes, pleading with Healy...

POUNING FOOTSTEPS, NOW

These from the OTHER direction. MARCH stares, eyes wide--

A SIMILARLY DRESSED MAN

Comes rocketing out of a side corridor.
Spins. Headed their way--

Three loud, sharp REPORTS.
BULLETS rip through his mid-section--!

The window behind him, cracked. Splattered. He SCREAMS and the WHEEZER keeps on wheezing and all is blood and chaos--

HEALY doesn't say a word. Never changes expression.
Leans back into the elevator. Reaches past March--

Pushes the "Lobby" button.
The doors glide shut, erasing the corridor.

OUTSIDE

THE PICTURE WINDOW right next to the elevator CRACKS--
As the gut-shot MAN is HURLED against it.

Muzak plays, soothing. The elevator starts down.

Healy slides the brass knuckles off.
Stashes them in a pocket.

Their visit to the penthouse, 15 seconds in duration.

You know, it was never all that hot of an idea.

MARCH

Feels... like I'm gonna...

HEALY

Don't even think about it.

Ding-! The doors open to admit a smiling Asian FAMILY.

FATHER

'Evening.

HEALY

'Evening.

The LITTLE ASIAN GIRL is staring at Healy's hand.
He glances down -- across his wrist, a bright red SMEAR.

He smiles, takes out a handkerchief. In his eyes, the
beginnings of some really first-rate terror... CUT TO:

HEALY'S CAR

Squealing up out of the parking garage. Onto the street.
Getting the fuck out of there. Fast.

INT. CAR - WITH HEALY AND MARCH - DRIVING - NIGHT

March presses his forehead to the glass.
His face, a study in despair... Abruptly transfigured.

POV MARCH:

We see a WOMAN, barefoot. Long, cheetah strides. Hair flying.
Yellow sarong. Japanese symbols, interwoven.

He sits bolt upright:

MARCH

Fuck me. That's her.

HEALY

Who?

MARCH

Alice. I just saw her!

HEALY

Bullshit.

MARCH

I'm serious. Go back. Goddamnit, GO BACK.

Healy throws a U-turn. The following all happens as they
zoom up, down and around the same two-block radius:

MARCH

Damn. She musta used the fire escape.

HEALY

The fire escape?

(scowls)

Look, are you sure it was Ali--

MARCH

Yes, I'm sure. Yellow dress, buncha Asian shit. HERE, turn here. Punch it.

Healy turns hard. They SWERVE wildly onto a side street...
Alice is nowhere in sight.

MARCH

Fuck! Keep going, we can cut her off!

HEALY

Cut her off where?!

MARCH

Up here! Turn!

They go squealing around another corner.

HEALY

This is wrong. She's gotta be
back that way--

MARCH

No, no. Trust me. Just throw
a louie.... What are you,
mental? I said LEFT

HEALY

You pointed and said "throw a
louie". I'm supposed to know
what that means?

MARCH

Jesus! Then just go right,
up this way.

HEALY

This street up ahead? That
one?

MARCH

Of course, that one! GO, GO.

HEALY

But we're coming from the
opposite direction now--

MARCH

Just turn! TURN NOW DAMNIT!

And so they screech around the corner and immediately plow into
ALICE and fling her across the top of the car.

HEALY & MARCH (together)

OH, FUCK, OH, FUCKING FUCK FUCK!!!

She somersaults into space -- coming off the car.

Describes a lazy arc in mid-air. One arm outflung like a puppet.

BEHIND HER, March's car slews sideways, tires SMOKING.

In a flash, MARCH exits. Rushes to the downed girl.
Looks back at HEALY, behind the wheel--

MARCH

Oh, my God. *You just killed Alice!*

HEALY

I couldn't see--! You were jumping up and down, turn left, turn right --

Healy gets out of the car and runs over:

MARCH

LOOK at this. *Look at what you did.*

HEALY

ME?? ME??

MARCH

Look at her. She's dead! Our ward. Our charge. Our responsibility --

Abruptly, Alice SITS UP.
Gives a petulant little shrug of her shoulders.

MARCH

Wait, she's alive.

Alice stumbles shakily to her feet.. Turns, sloooowly.
Eyes... followed by head... lets out a dopey GIGGLE...

MARCH

Um... We didn't do that to her.

HEALY

She's whacked on something... Probably saved her getting injured.

(to Alice)

We're nice men. We're not gonna hurt you.

She stares back, as if this concept is akin to cold fusion.

ALICE

Nice...men...?

She COLLAPSES. March is there to catch her.

HEALY

Shit. Shit... Get her in the car.

EXT. MICHAEL SARRAZIN'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

SARRAZIN and HOLLY are playing cards, a stack of money on the table. The front door bursts OPEN --

IN COME THE TROOPS

March precedes Healy, who's got Alice in an improvised fireman's carry.

HOLLY

Alice...!

SARRAZIN

Hey-hey, you remembered my birthday! I been wanting one of these.

HEALY, no-nonsense. Points to Holly, says:

HEALY

C'mere, squirt. You're gonna be our matron.

HOLLY

Your what?

HEALY

Never mind. I'm gonna put her in the bedroom -- I want you to get this dress off her, tell me if she's got injuries, need immediate attention... Don't trust what she says, she's flying on some shit or other.

March heads for the phone at the bar.

MARCH

I'll call Shoemaker. Use your phone, Mike?

SARRAZIN

Huh..? Oh, sure. Anything else I can help with? Want me to tie a broom to my ass, sweep up on the way out the door?

March waves his hand, annoyed. Finishes dialing --

MARCH

Hi, is this James..? Holland March here.
Huh..? Yes. That's the number I'm calling from. Listen, we finally found Ali--
Excuse me..? Sure, um... sure. okay.

He hangs up, puzzled, as HEALY re-enters from the bedroom.

MARCH

He's gonna call back.

(notices the card table)

Are you guys playing for money?

INT. BEDROOM - WITH ALICE & HOLLY

Alice is on the bed. Holly peels off the yellow dress, probing clinically for any injuries --

Suddenly Alice GRIPS her, pulls her down.
KISSES her hard, on the mouth. Holly pulls away.
Alice giggles, high as a kite..!

ALICE

Hi, kid... About last night... Didn't mean to just... drive away... Sorry...

HOLLY

I was fine, but thanks, I'll transfer the apology to the major lesbo kiss. Um, do you... Is there, like, somebody I should call..?

ALICE

Nope. Nope. Sister's gone, now I'M the princess!

Alice lets out a high pitched: *WHEEEEEEEEE!* Throws her arms out. knocking her purse to the floor--

A BOTTLE OF PILLS spills out onto the carpet.
Holly glances at the pills... then back at Alice:

HOLLY

Oookayyyy. Did a few drugs, did we?

LIVING ROOM - BACK WITH MARCH ET AL

The phone RINGS..! March scoops it up--

MARCH

March here. Mr. Shoemaker? Sir, we found Alice! She's with me right now, so--

SHOEMAKER (v.o.)

Not important. Forget her... March...
(dissolves into sobbing)

Maldonado's people... They took him, I wasn't here, they came in my house and took him!

MARCH

Easy, sir. Who? Tell me who they took.

SHOEMAKER (v.o.)

My Danny. he's gone, bastards took my son!

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

MARCH drives this time. Zips his Camaro between the stone pillars of a stately, old-style MANOR HOUSE, circa 1920.

INT. SHOEMAKER MANSION - NIGHT

A LARGE METAL SUITCASE is placed on the bar in David Shoemaker's study-slash-lounge. He draws a deep breath, says:

SHOEMAKER

\$500,000 -- packed it myself. From the campaign slush fund.

(shakes his head)

Maldonado knew I was broke...! Knew I'd have to dip into the campaign money. They said if I go to the cops, they'll--

(stops)

Pointless... Why fight? I'll do it, step down. Retire from the race. It's gone too far.

HEALY

First things first, sir. You gotta make it through tonight.

SHOEMAKER

(snapping out of it)

Right. Of course. Now -- I won't have the money on me, that's where you come in...

MARCH

You'll say the money's nearby.

SHOEMAKER

When I'm satisfied that Danny is safe... I'll take them to you. You'll be holding the bank. That is, if you agree.

He indicates the heavy metal case.

SHOEMAKER

James wanted to do this... but James, well... he's a lawyer.

(licks dry lips)

I won't lie, I've had both of you checked out. I know you can handle yourselves. The question is... can I count on you?

Pause... Healy picks up the suitcase.

HEALY

Just tell us where to go.

INT. MARCH'S 1979 CAMARO - DRIVING - NIGHT

March Driving. Healy in the passenger seat. Eyes closed, resting... The metal suitcase sits on the backseat.

MARCH

(shakes his head)

Shit, if someone took Holly like that--?

HEALY

His kid's gonna be fine... We'll get him back.

March nods. A pause.

MARCH

I hate to say it -- but I hope he doesn't quit the race... It'd be nice to know there's at least one good one out there.

HEALY

... Yeah, it would.

March rubs his eyes. Tired.
Stares out at the endless road ahead.

After a moment March's eyelids start to droop. He shakes it off.

MARCH

Man, I'm getting kinda tired here...
(glances over)
... Healy?

Healy is already asleep.

MARCH

Terrific...

He stares back out the windshield... But after a moment his eyelids grow heavy. His eyes shut for a second--

He snaps them back open:

MARCH

Shit. Hey, Healy? Wake up!

Healy mumbles something. Looks over:

MARCH

Sorry, I'm falling asleep here, man.
You're gonna have to drive.

HEALY

Alright. Pull over at the next turn off.

March nods.

MARCH

Okay, cool...

(beat)

Listen, you worried at all -- I mean about making this drop?

HEALY

Me? Nah... Wanna know why?

He pulls up his pants leg revealing a GLOCK 26 AUTOMATIC in an ankle holster.

HEALY

'Cuz I got this baby right here... Never leaves me. Ever.

MARCH

Cute... Let's just hope you don't have to use it.

(noticing)

I'll pull off here.

HEALY

You know what? You don't need to pull off... The car can drive itself.

MARCH

(confused)

What are you talking about..?

HEALY

Just let go of the wheel, man.

March considers for a second...

Then tentatively lets go of the wheel--

And sure enough, as they approach a bend in the road, the car turns all by itself... March looks delighted:

MARCH

Hey, I didn't know it could do that!

HEALY

Sure. All cars can drive themselves.

MARCH

Wow, how come I never knew that?

HEALY
I dunno... But it also WHAT THE FUCK ARE
YOU DOING?! JESUS! WAKE UP! WAKE UP!

MARCH'S EYES SNAP OPEN

He fell asleep at the wheel. He's been dreaming.
Healy is YELLING at him:

HEALY
LOOK OUT GODDAMNIT! LOOK OUT!

March whips his head around--
They're headed right for a CONCRETE OVERPASS SUPPORT.

HE SLAMS ON THE BRAKES.

Too late -- WHAM! --
THEY SMASH INTO THE SUPPORT HEAD ON.

March and Healy jolted against their seatbelts as the car comes
to an immediate stop. The front end STOVED IN.

THE METAL SUITCASE launched out of the back seat.
SHATTERS the front windshield. Keeps going -- SMACK! --
IMPACTS against the concrete support. Breaking open.

Showering SHREDDED NEWSPAPER everywhere.

March and Healy stare out the broken windshield.
In shock. Silent. Stunned.

The newspaper rains down all over the car.

There is no money in the suitcase.
It takes awhile for all this to process. March blinks:

MARCH
You okay?

HEALY
... The suitcase.

MARCH
(swallows)
I know.

HEALY
There's no money.

MARCH
I know.

A long pause.

HEALY

Maybe someone... Messed with it... I mean, uh--

MARCH

Shoemaker packed the money himself. He said so.

(beat)

He totally fucked us.

HEALY

Yeah...

(frowns)

Doesn't... make sense, I mean, why? What good's it do to... send us off on a... a thing, a--

MARCH

--a wild goose chase.

HEALY

Wild goose chase, exactly. Take us out of the city...

MARCH

Three, four hours... When we could be back dealing with Alice and--

March stops cold. The same exact second as Healy. Fear swims in their eyes. They exchange a look--

MARCH

Motherf--!

March keys the ignition. The engine catches -- sounds like shit but at least it runs... Slams it into reverse --

PULLS FREE of the concrete support.

BLASTS backwards--! Throws a smoking 180, as we CUT TO:

EXT. MIKE SARRAZIN'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A deserted section of Mulholland drive.

March's CAMARO comes speeding up a twisty road.

INSIDE

March looks freaked out. Taking the turns a little too fast. Healy is stone-faced. Tone, matter of fact as he says:

HEALY

Kill the lights.

March does. Healy reaches up and unscrews the interior light.

HEALY
Keep driving. Pass the house--

MARCH
Don't you think we should--

HEALY
I know what I'm doing. Don't ask how --
just trust me. I jump out, you don't even
slow down. Park at the top of the hill...
Out of sight.
(looks over)
When you come down, use the hillside --
don't walk on the street. Meet me at the
side of the house. You got it?

MARCH
Yeah, yeah, but--

HEALY
Good.

He opens his door -- rolls out of the moving car.
Just like that. Hits the ground on his shoulder. Tumbling.

March shoots a glance in his rearview -- no sign of Healy.

AT THE TOP OF THE HILL, OVERLOOKING SARRAZIN'S

March pulls the car around at a turnout. Kicking up dust.
Kills the engine. Draws his gun. Gets out hastily--

So hastily, in fact, that he totally fails to notice the
DARK FIGURE hiding in the bushes nearby... Doesn't notice
when the figure moves into position directly behind him.

Doesn't notice until the figure actually says something:

DARK FIGURE
Hey!

March spins--
Just in time to meet the BUTT OF AN ASSAULT RIFLE.

-- WHAM! -- The blow sends him sprawling.
His gun skittering away on the gravel.

The figure approaches March... This guy's cut from the same
cloth as our friends Blue Face and Older Guy.

DARK FIGURE
Now, now... Who the hell are you?

March spits blood. Groggy. Looks up at his attacker.

MARCH

Look, buddy, I... I don't want to fight.

The figure smiles down at March.

DARK FIGURE

Good. Makes it better that way.

He slugs March. HARD. Snapping his head back as we CUT TO:

EXT. SARRAZIN'S HOUSE - THAT EXACT MOMENT

Healy approaches the side porch.
Shoots a look inside. Frowns. Something not right in there.

He only got a quick glimpse. But Holly is there--
So is Sarrazin -- carrying a bowl of popcorn.
And Holly's smiling... We hear her LAUGH. Tinkling, happy.

Healy opens the kitchen door. Slips inside.

INT. SARRAZIN'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Holly is watching an old Sarrazin movie on the VCR. More accurately, she's watching one moment, over and over.

It's a bit where Sarrazin's playing a tough guy.
Leaping into a room somewhere, gun drawn:

SARRAZIN ON TV

Freeze, asshole!

Holly giggles. Hits rewind again.

HOLLY

You're soooooooo cool!

SARRAZIN

Christ, Holly, would you knock it off...
(looks up, noticing Healy enter)
...Oh, Hey... Thanks for knocking and
entering like a normal human.

Healy ignores him. Checking the room out... Basically they're not under attack from anyone. Healy picks up on this:

HEALY

So, you're not under attack from anyone?

HOLLY

No, we're watching Mike on TV!

SARRAZIN ON TV

Freeze, asshole!

SARRAZIN

Yeah. It's a fucking blast. Where's March?

CUT TO:

MARCH

Crawling on the ground. Covered in dust. Blood. He looks like... Well, like someone just kicked the shit out of him.

We can see his attacker in the background... Retrieving March's gun. He glances back:

DARK FIGURE

Hey... Where ya going, buddy?

March makes for his car. Scrambling blindly. Reaching for the door handle.

His attacker raises his RIFLE, speaks into a walkie-talkie:

DARK FIGURE

Okay, John Boy, we got company -- time to get this show on the road.

March pulls open the car door, just as the guy FIRES, BAM--!

PUNCHES A HOLE in the door -- INCHES from March's head. March ignores the shot. Pulling himself inside, as

LIVING ROOM - WITH HEALY

He hears the shot. No hesitation, he looks over at Sarrazin:

HEALY

We're in trouble.

BACK WITH MARCH

Halfway in the car. Fumbling. Desperate. He reaches below the steering column. Hits a switch.

A PANEL DROPS OPEN, hidden in the dash-- Taped to the panel: A BERETTA. 9 MM. LOADED. READY. March snags the gun. Drops to the ground. Rolls over.

The dark figure lining up a second shot...

March FIRES -- BLAM --! Hits him square in the chest. Drops him. One shot. He topples over. Lands in the dirt and stops moving forever.

March lets out a breath. Stares, in shock. Face pale.

MARCH

Told you I didn't want to fight, asshole.

CUT TO:

INT. SARRAZIN'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Healy is in motion--

HEALY

Get to the back of the house! Now! N--

Too late. Even as he says the words --

THE WALL BEHIND HIM ERUPTS

Floor to ceiling GLASS... it blows INWARD.
Collapsing in big jagged SHEETS --

Healy DIVES--! Grabs Holly. They both hit the deck.
Too stunned to speak. Huddled, helpless --

As the whole front of the house is RAKED by high-caliber
MACHINE GUN FIRE. Holy shit.

Sarrazin's across the room... Healy calls over to him:

HEALY

Get to Alice! Keep her on the floor!

It's a fucking combat zone. HUNDREDS OF ROUNDS rip through the
living room. NOISE, deafening, as

THE HOUSE

Erupts in spits and spats. A STORM of debris. Wine glasses,
detonating one by one, as if on cue, while --

BACK HALLWAY - WITH SARRAZIN

Crouched low, the actor arrives at a bedroom. Opens the door --

SARRAZIN

Oh, Jesus Christ...

THE WINDOW IS OPEN --

ALICE is gone.

Sarrazin moves to the window, peers out...

A 20-FOOT DROP, TO THE HILLSIDE

And there's ALICE. Crawling, injured. Meanwhile --

LIVING ROOM - WITH HEALY & HOLLY

They huddle, pinned down behind the bar.
Then, over the GUNFIRE, they hear:

SARRAZIN (o.s.)
Healy! She went out the window!

HEALY
WHAT?!

SARRAZIN (o.s.)
Alice went out the window! I'm gonna get her!

HEALY
No, wait! Mike!

EXT. SARRAZIN'S HOUSE - BACK WITH MARCH

March is running full-out DOWN THE STREET. Carrying the RIFLE from his attacker. Up ahead, just coming into view:

What looks like a MILITARY ASSAULT on Sarrazin's house.
An incredible BARRAGE OF FIRE coming from the hillside above --

March points his barrel in that general direction.
Squeezes off two shots -- BAM!BAM! --

The machinegun fire stops. Just like that.
Pause... Pause... March stares up at the darkness.

Maybe he got in a lucky shot--?

Then, suddenly, a fresh volley of GUNFIRE opens up.

Now it's aimed at MARCH.

MARCH
Shit!

He dives for cover. Flips over a low STONE WALL, as

BACK INSIDE - WITH HEALY

Sensing the reprieve, Healy instantly takes advantage.
Grabs Holly, races headlong into the KITCHEN --

EXT. HILLSIDE - BACK OF HOUSE - WITH ALICE

The raw echo of GUNFIRE carries on the night air.

Alice is scrabbling to get the hell out of there, when
behind her, quite suddenly --

MIKE SARRAZIN drops into frame -- WHOMP! --
Hits and rolls like a paratrooper. Slides to a dusty stop.

ALICE looks back, still crawling.

ALICE
Please, don't kill me..!

Sarrazin rolls his eyes. Hauls her to her feet --

SARRAZIN
Shhh. Nobody wants to kill you.
(to himself)
Actually, that's not quite true, but...

EXT. STONE WALL - MARCH, TAKING COVER

He's under a shitload of fire now.
Rock dust, BLASTED UP in a choking CLOUD.
His protective wall, CHEWED by artillery...

Dammit, where's it coming from--? He strains to see...

Steals a look at the HILLSIDE. Tries to get a fix on the
gunner. In doing so, he SPOTS something--

There, in a neighbor's back yard. Might be his only chance.
Deep breath, then--

He ROLLS OUT FROM BEHIND COVER. Aims the rifle.
It's been awhile since he was proficient with an AR-15.
Before he drank, to be honest...

He sights in on a GAS BARBECUE. Fires, BLAM--!

Blows the PROPANE TANK.

Trust us, these things aren't finicky, any high caliber slug
will do the trick.

A sudden WHOOSH--! Fire arcs thirty feet INTO THE SKY.
SEARS the eyeball, turns night into DAY --
Illuminates, for a split second

THE DARK SILHOUETTE

Of the source, the hidden GUNNER. March targets him and
starts pulling the trigger -- BLAM!BLAM!BLAM! --

The man reacts. DIVING for cover, meanwhile --

EXT. HOUSE - WITH HEALY & HOLLY

They're outside the kitchen door now.

Moving quickly along the side of the house. They hear the gunfire cease. Huddle in the shadows, just this side of the front yard. Listening.

FOOTSTEPS, approaching. Healy braces. Timing it just right. SPRINGS...! Almost takes off MARCH'S HEAD --

MARCH

Hey! Hey! It's me.

Healy pulls back just in time...
Holly runs out, practically jumps on her father.

SIRENS can be heard now in the distance.

HEALY

What happened..?

MARCH

I think John Boy happened.

EXT. HILLSIDE - WITH SARRAZIN AND ALICE

Sarrazin is helping Alice make it down the hillside --
SIRENS getting louder.

He catches sight of something through the trees.
A CAR. Parked on the road. Police flasher on the roof.

SARRAZIN

(lets out a breath)
Thank the Lord.
(to Alice)
Hang on.

ANGLE ON ROAD

SARRAZIN comes huffing up the side of the hill.
Runs over to the car--

SARRAZIN

Hey! Hello?!

There's no one in the car. Sarrazin frowns. Walks around back --
The trunk is OPEN back here. Inside:

A MOLDED BLACK SUITCASE

The kind used to carry dis-assembled assault weapons.
Sarrazin blinks at it. Hears something behind him --

Someone approaching on the gravel.

And suddenly Sarrazin's face is transformed.

He suddenly looks just like anyone out for a night stroll.

He turns to greet the silhouetted figure with a smile.

BEHIND HIS BACK, he starts wagging his hand, urgently.
Waving off ALICE, letting her know it's not right.

SARRAZIN

Officer, hey... I guess someone else
called about all this racket, huh?

ALICE WATCHES FROM COVER

Seeing Mike's frantic signals, she gets the drift.
Turns, runs the other way and consequently

MISSES MIKE'S PERFORMANCE

As an easygoing neighbor. Completely casual, now.

SARRAZIN

You know, my wife swears it's gunfire...
I told her it was probably just some
asshole firing up their new motorboat or
something.

(beat)

Hey, can I lodge a noise complaint with
you..? I swear this shit's been going on
for weeks.

The man stands for a moment, staring at Sarrazin. Finally says:

COP

That was good... You're a good actor.

Sarrazin sighs, nods.... You can see it, he knows he's not
gonna walk away from this... He smiles, says:

SARRAZIN

Yeah..? Glad someone noticed.

The man raises his ASSAULT RIFLE --

EXT. CANYON-SIDE NIGHT

Alice is running away. Escaping down the hillside.
Behind her a single SHOT rings out on the chill night air.

CUT TO:

INT. MARCH'S CAR - DRIVING - SAME

SLEWING ROUND. Facing AWAY from the approaching sirens.

HEALY powers the engine up through the gears. Holly & March beside him. Suddenly, Healy's breath catches. He quickly says:

HEALY
Holly, look over to your right.
(off her look)
I need you to do it. Now.

She complies. March has no such instruction. Looks LEFT-- Sees his good friend, MICHAEL SARRAZIN, lifeless in the road. Stares. Uncomprehending.

MARCH
Wait... Wait, we... we gotta stop--!

He trails off. Face slack.

HOLLY
What is it? What's wrong? *Tell me!!*

Healy just keeps driving. Eyes front. DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAWN

The sky just beginning to lighten. March's car has had it -- parked on the street, steam pouring out from under the hood.

MEANWHILE, ACROSS THE STREET - IN A DESERTED ALLEY

HEALY is stealing a car, a beat-up Ford.

HOLLY, forlorn, sits in the back seat while Healy works on the ignition... He tries to keep her mind off of last night:

HEALY
... And, since it's an older model car -- there won't be a...?

HOLLY
Um, I don't know... What did you call it... A sidebar? No ignition lock?

HEALY
That's right. So now I can ram the snowdriver right into the ignition -- And turn it like a key. See?

The car starts up. Healy smiles -- gets back a tentative one from her. MARCH gets in. Tosses his jacket in back. Healy kills the engine. Waits... A beat, then:

MARCH
My lawyer says we gotta turn ourselves in. Otherwise, we'll be wanted as accessories.

No one responds. March lights a cigarette, exhales...

MARCH

This news is all over this. The latest?
Mike's death was "drug related."

This news hits Holly like a salvo:

HOLLY

What? They... they can't say that, it's a
LIE! Dad, we gotta tell them about
Shoemaker! It's the truth, they...they
gotta believe us.

MARCH

No, they don't, honey, and they won't...
It'll be our word against his...

(beat)

... and he's an important man.

HOLLY

That doesn't matter!

HEALY

Yeah, it does, Holly. It matters.

It's killing March that he can't fix it, make her happy...

MARCH

Sorry, kiddo. I wish you never had to learn
this stuff; life... it's not what you hope
for, sometimes... it just isn't--

HOLLY

Fair? You're saying life isn't fair? Hey,
thanks for the tip... But you know, Dad,
I think I already got that memo.

(kicks the seat, frustrated)

We can't just give up.

Healy gives March a look: "*Is there anything we can do?*"
March just gives a single shake of his head: "*Nothing.*"

HEALY

... Holly... Maybe your Dad's right...
Maybe it's time to cut our losses.

HOLLY

What about Mike...?

Silence again. She looks like she's about to cry.

Healy and March just stare at the dashboard of the stolen
car. Nobody says anything for a long moment...

Finally, Healy starts the car again.

HEALY
... Downtown station?

March nods. Healy pulls away from the curb--

HOLLY
STOP!

He slams on the brakes -- looking back at Holly.

She's holding SUZY'S MEDICAL REPORT -- the one Healy took away from Hazeltine's house -- it fell from March's coat when he tossed it in back.

HOLLY
What is this..?

HEALY
That's a medical... thing. A report.

HOLLY
No. No. I mean this *here*.
(points to the page)
This drug -- Quinidine..?

March looks back now, too.

MARCH
It's for Suzy's arrhythmia or whatever...
Her heart condition. What about it?

HOLLY
Is this... um, how common is this drug?

MARCH
Holly, you wanna say something, say it.

HOLLY
(clears her throat)
It's probably nothing, but... Alice takes
this same drug.

HEALY
What?

HOLLY
I saw a bottle of it in her purse. A
bottle of Quinidine pills... When I saw
them, I thought, okay, some thrill pills,
but--

Healy, intrigued despite himself:

HEALY

Seriously? Wait, say this again. How sure are you? Was Alice's name on the bottle?

HOLLY

Yeah, it was. I'm telling you, it's the same! Alice takes this same drug!

March is frowning:

MARCH

So, what, you're saying they both have *arrhythmia*?

HEALY

Why else would you carry around Quinidine?

March notices their eager looks.
Holds up both hands, forestalls them:

MARCH

Uh-uh. No way. I see where you're headed with this -- and we ain't going there, people. Suzy Shoemaker is *dead*.

HOLLY

But if Alice looks the same, has the same heart disorder, takes the same medication--

March shakes his head:

MARCH

I was at the coroner's. I saw the skull, the teeth -- she's dead... Trust me.

Oh, well, there went that idea... Holly, though, continues to frown furiously; simply won't let it go--

HOLLY

Maybe there's something we're just missing here--

MARCH

We're missing a chance to come away with probation, now let's get outta he--

HOLLY

(ignoring him)
Identical look-alikes... identical heart condition...

(blinks)

Oh, shit... Identical twins.

Everything stops -- for a moment nothing is said, and everyone looks slightly befuddled.

HOLLY

I'm so stupid. She *told* me, said it right to me and I didn't listen--!

MARCH

Listen, listen to what?

HOLLY

To Alice. She told me she had a sister, but I thought she was, you know, just on crack or something.

March wears a very pained expression. He sighs...

MARCH

Look, maybe... Okay, Fine. Say they're twins. I mean, hell, they look enough alike.

(beat)

But then why on EARTH would David Shoemaker, Man of the Year--

HEALY

Why raise one twin from birth, and ditch the other? Yeah, good question.

HOLLY shakes her head.

HOLLY

Well, maybe... Maybe he...

Nope. She has to admit it. It makes no sense.

MARCH

No. Sorry... If you're the father of two perfect little angels... You don't just, you know, give one up and--

March stops cold, mid-sentence. He's just realized something.

MARCH

The old lady, didn't she say that something was wrong with Suzy when she was born--

HEALY

Yeah... Suzy was slow -- then she went away to some clinic and got better.

All at once March solves it:

MARCH

There was no "clinic."

(looks over)

The son of a bitch bought a baby.

Nobody says anything.

MARCH

(dawning realization)

His own kid didn't meet the specs, was gonna be slow, retarded -- so he bought a new one.

(shakes his head)

The "clinic" was the black market.

Holly gets it now, too:

HOLLY

Absolutely, he switched babies! Like in that George C. Scott movie? You know, um, what's it called--?

Healy is still a step behind:

HEALY

The Flim-Flam man?

HOLLY

No, no... The one with the old house, the dead kid's ghost--

MARCH

Dr. Strangelove?

HOLLY

NO! Forget it. It doesn't matter. The point is, he switched babies, and you know something else? I'll bet he never even KNEW about Alice. God, he must be scared shitless.

(beat)

She's living DNA proof that he bailed on his own child.

Another silence in the car.

HOLLY

Alice can bring him down.

MARCH

We gotta find her.

CUT TO:

A TELEPHONE RINGING.

A girl steps into frame. It's the YOUNG REDHEAD from Phil Hazeltine's Party. She picks up the phone:

REDHEAD

Pussy-you-love. How can I help you?

INTERCUT - MARCH AT A PAYPHONE

His broken arm propped against the wall -- written on his CAST, the names and numbers of "friends" he met at Hazeltine's party. Next to one particular number it reads: *HOT REDHEAD.*

MARCH

Um, hi... This is Holland March.

REDHEAD

Who?

MARCH

We meet at a party the other night... I was that older, uh, distinguished looking gentleman. The sort of ruggedly handsome one. You remember?

REDHEAD

No.

MARCH

Hmmmm... Well, I also have a daughter, Holly, who you--

REDHEAD

Oh, yeah... I remember her.

MARCH

Great. So listen, I'm calling about a guy you know... Made a video with a lady friend of mine--

REDHEAD

Which guy?

MARCH

Well...

(deep breath)

He's got a bunch of moles on his ass...

CUT TO:

EXT.MARRIOTT HOTEL - CALABASAS - AFTERNOON

The hotel overlooks a sprawling AMUSEMENT PARK.

Under the Marriott banner, in fact, we read:

WELCOME ROLLERCOASTER ENTHUSIASTS CLUB
Get REC-ed! - TRAMS TIL 12 MIDNITE.

Healy, Holly and March come walking out of a massive PARKING STRUCTURE... We catch them mid-conversation:

MARCH

... That's all she said, Butt Guy had some club, or whatever, it was meeting here --

HOLLY

I still can't believe you hit on that girl.

MARCH

We need his room number, and a key -- What's that in bribes? Thirty?

HEALY

More like fifty, I'd say.

INT. MARRIOTT LOBBY - SAME

They walk through the main entrance into the LOBBY.

(NOTE: whenever we see background players, they're talking "coasters." From our perspective, all extras will be making bizarre hand motions, strange sounds. It'll look like Kabuki, and, more importantly, will never be remarked upon.)

HOLLY

She's my age.

MARCH

That's crap. She's a full 4 years older; hell, there's places in Africa where they get married at... at 8 years old.

HOLLY

But they marry other 8 year-olds.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR -- LATE AFTERNOON

Healy and March approach the stucco niche housing Butt Guy's door. Healy taps twice, sharply:

HEALY

Housekeeping.

Pause. No answer. Down the hall, HOLLY gives them an all-clear. Healy uses the "borrowed" pass key. *Click--!* The lock yields.

March and Healy enter.

INT. BUTT GUY'S HOTEL ROOM - SAME

DARK inside, blackout curtains drawn. Healy pulls the curtains. *Whoosh..!* At a stroke, the room floods with late afternoon SUN. The two men, blinking, disoriented--

Healy sees her first. The WOMAN in the corner, holding a gun. Without missing a beat, says:

HEALY

Hi, Alice... Happy to see us?

Alice closes the HOTEL DOOR without looking, actually slams it in Holly's FACE, locks her out--

ALICE

Okay, I have the worst cramps right now, and I swear to God, I'll shoot the first one of you assholes that says boo.

She looks manic. Hair lank, stringy. Thin sheen of sweat on her forehead... Gun hand, trembling.

ALICE

What are you doing here? Huh? I'm asking you a *fucking question*.

MARCH

Alice, come on, now, let's all take a step back, okay..?

(swallows hard)

Actually, we were looking for the Butt Guy. We heard this was his room.

ALICE

Who the hell is the Butt Guy?

MARCH

In the video, the guy nailing you..? The one with the moles on his ass?

ALICE

Oh. Willy, yeah. Fuck Willy. Cheap bastard.

MARCH

Um, is he here by any chance..?

ALICE

NO QUESTIONS!

(waggles the gun)

Guns, on the ground. Kick 'em over here.

They comply. Alice watches, strung-out. Jittery.

ALICE

Willie... went to the bank. And as soon as he gets back here and gives me my cut, I'm gone.

Belligerent. As if she's challenging them to stop her.

HEALY

Your cut..? You're talking about the tape that started this whole mess?

ALICE

On the internet, it gets 20 million hits a day. Willy sold it for a lousy *twenty grand*. You believe that??

MARCH

I'm out \$39.95, plus I get porn e-mail all day, thanks to genius here.

Alice says nothing for a long moment... Making a decision. Then she raises her gun -- COCKS IT:

ALICE

I... I'm sorry. See, I just can't let you live. You follow me, and Shoemaker follows you, it's like a chain, see? I have to break it.

MARCH

Okay, wait, uh...

ALICE

(manic fervor)

If you're dead, maybe he'll be satisfied. I'll go far away... It'll be like this never happened.

Abruptly, there is a sharp KNOCKING at the door. A poorly disguised VOICE calls:

HOLLY (o.s.)

Housekeeping..?

Alice frowns. Her attention drawn to the door, briefly--

And that's enough time for MARCH to MAKE HIS MOVE.

He drops to the FLOOR. Darts out an arm-- Grabs the CUFF OF HEALY'S PANTS. Frantic. Searching.

Healy frowns down at him... Alice, too... Gun still leveled, as March determinedly goes for Healy's OTHER leg--

ALICE

Is he... what's wrong with him?

HEALY

Not sure.

(to March)

Um... March? What the fuck are you doing?
Just curious.

March sits up, a trifle breathless--

MARCH

Shit. I was going for the gun... I guess you musta moved it...

HEALY

What gun?

MARCH

The one you showed me, the Glock. Your ankle gun.

HEALY

Who told you I had an ankle gun?

MARCH

You did. You showed me, remember?
(floundering)

You know, on the -- the road. Last night, right before we hit that, um... abutment.
(frowns)

Hang on. Did I... *dream* that..?

HEALY

Are you serious? Are you fucking serious?

MARCH

No, no, wait--

HEALY

You DREAMT IT, you moron... There's no ankle holster. Wow. WOW. This takes the prize--

ALICE

SHUT UP, BOTH OF YOU!

They subside, grumbling. March climbs to his feet. Alice unlocks the door:

ALICE

Holly..? You can come in.

MARCH

Holly, stay *right there*. Alice has a gun.

Holly of course enters, shuts the door behind her.

MARCH

Why do I bother..?

Alice motions with the gun.

Holly steps over next to Healy and her father.

MARCH

(deep breath)

Alice, listen... You're never gonna be safe until you stop David Shoemaker... If you run, he'll find you--

(beat)

Stay. And bring the son of a bitch down.

You are living proof that the man committed a crime... Don't be afraid...

We're offering you *hope*.

Alice suddenly looks tired...

ALICE

Hope..? You're joking, right? My life is a fucking nightmare. I get used by scumbags. Kicked around... Then with this tape...

(shakes her head)

Princess Suzy comes down out of her ivory tower... She saw the tape and *found* me... I freaked. We didn't look, you know, a little alike, we were fucking THE SAME, right? Sisters.... For a second, it was like she'd been holding my dream, for safekeeping. For when I'd appear. I was a princess and I didn't know it.

(starts to cry)

A week later, she was dead, and people were after me, I... I just can't... I can't HANDLE it...

The girl, wracked with sobs, now... A pause. Then Holly speaks:

HOLLY

... Alice... I know it seems unfair. But you can't give up now... You have to--

Healy puts a hand on Holly's shoulder, stopping her.

HEALY

No, Holly, she's right... She's been through too much already.

(to Alice)

You deserve whatever you can get out of this mess... Run if you have to. We won't stop you, we won't look for you... I promise.

Alice meets Healy's gaze. Swipes at her runny nose. Smiles, a brief flicker--

ALICE

Thanks.

She turns, heads for the bathroom.

Healy grabs a WINE BOTTLE off the bar-- WHACKS Alice on the head.

CLOCKS her with it, THUNK--!

She goes slack instantly, CRUMPLES to the floor. Healy points:

HEALY

Get the gun.

March complies... Doesn't miss a beat.

Healy grabs Alice by the shoulders. Holly hoists her legs.

HEALY

Let's get her to the car... Take the back stairs.

MARCH

Right.

So intent are they on the task at hand, they almost miss

THE SOUND OF THE KEY

Rattling in the lock. MARCH spins, panicked--

MARCH

(harsh whisper)

Shit! Hide!

Healy and Holly look around frantically for a hiding place... At the last second they DROP DOWN BEHIND THE COUCH as--

THE DOOR OPENS

And Willy Johnson, aka BUTT GUY, enters -- Stops dead:

MARCH

(big smile)

I know what you're saying, you're saying to yourself, "That's not Alice!"

BUTT GUY

Who the hell are you..?

March approaches the guy, all smiles.

MARCH

(winging it)

Well, I'm Alice's negotiator. Alice... went to her car. So, uh...

(said loudly)

So we need to go down and meet her in the bar... In the lobby. Okay..? Here we go.

TIME CUT - INT. LOBBY BAR - MINUTES LATER

MARCH, oozing charm, ushers Butt Guy to the BAR. Plops him down. Arm around the guy, smiling expansively...

MARCH

... No, no, no.... She trusts you, Willy, it's just... Well, it's a lot of money. SO. We hang here, at the bar, and she'll find us.

Willy looks kind of uneasy.

WILLY

... I gotta make a call... Right over there... Okay?

MARCH

Sure. Sure. Knock yourself out.

Willy heads over to a bank of phones while March watches him... Leaning back against the bar.

A beat... Then a hand TAPS him on the shoulder:

BARTENDER

Sir? Anything for you..?

March turns... Stares at all those bottles behind the bar. Smiles.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - WITH HEALY AND HOLLY - SAME

HOLLY and HEALY schlep Alice through the parking structure, moving at a good clip; just one problem--

HEALY

Please, try to remember. That's why they paint those little animals, so you can--

HOLLY

It was a BUNNY. A yellow bunny, I think.

HEALY

You *think*...! Wait... is that a bunny?

HOLLY

If bunnies have pouches with other bunnies in them, yes. Otherwise, it's a kangaroo. And it's green.

HEALY

Oh, great... Now we're on Kangaroo level? You're telling me we're on the wrong level?! Christ!

INT. LOBBY - PAY PHONE ALCOVE - SAME

BUTT GUY's on the phone, speaking softly, urgently:

BUTT GUY

You need to get here! Now! How close...? Good. Hurry it up.

PARKING STRUCTURE - WITH HEALY AND HOLLY

Alice is awake. This is evidenced by her frequent screaming.

ALICE

Let me go. Bastards! Fucking BASTARDS!

HEALY

We're giving you hope, shut the fuck up.
(to Holly)
Any luck?

HOLLY

Goddamn Giraffes everywhere, I don't know... Next one over, maybe.

A COUPLE walks by, staring. ALICE hollers:

ALICE

HEY! Over here. I'm being kidnapped! Call somebody, HELP! Hurry!

Holly throws an impromptu fit--

HOLLY

Mom, you *promised*. You said YOU'D TAKE
THE MEDS!

She starts to cry. The couple scurries away...
Healy suddenly perks up.

HEALY

Hey! Bunny! Right here! That's us, right?

Healy struggles with the car door. Pops the TRUNK one-handed.
Alice's yelling, muted as they SLAM THE LID on her.

HEALY

Let's move.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - BATHROOMS - SAME

MARCH comes walking out of the bathroom door--

COLLIDES WITH JAMES

David Shoemaker's right hand man. Flanked by a few SUITED GUYS.

March walks HEAD-ON into the guy. Looks up, a big lop-sided
GRIN on face. Doesn't seem any too frightened--

MARCH

James..? HEY! How you doin', man???

(leans in)

Dude -- this last day has been fucked up.

You think I'm kiddin'? I'm not kiddin'.

Hmmm... several possibilities. Either March a) feels a sudden
kinship with James; b) March is insane; or the frontrunner:
c) March is fucked up.

The SUITED GUYS advance, flanking him. Cutting off escape.
James behaves like they're having a friendly chat.

MARCH

James, man, um, why're you here..?

JAMES

Well, my good friend Willy called me--

MARCH

(grinning at the name)

... Willy... Willy...

JAMES

He said you might be here... Along with
Alice... Listen, why don't you come
upstairs and have a drink with us--

MARCH

James, that's, you know, mighty white of you. Yessir. But, I gotta go pay my tab... And, I should get back to my new friends over at the bar there--

A gun is pressed into his spine. James smiles--

JAMES

We're your new friends.

FRONT ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

HEALY and HOLLY enter, scanning the lobby... Nothing. Loads of coaster geeks, not much March.

Healy turns, an off-hand glance at the ELEVATORS -- Sees JAMES shoving March inside--

March looking kind of unsteady on his feet.

HEALY

Hey!!

BOLTS toward the closing doors -- Too late.

HEALY

Shit!! You see that..? What'd they do to him?

Holly, strangely not alarmed--

HOLLY

Nothing...

(off Healy's look)

He's drunk.

He scans the lighted numerals... sees them stop at EIGHT.

Then, beside him, *ding*..! Another elevator.

The doors open -- he lunges inside, dragging Holly.

A WORKMAN flinches at the sudden onrush.

HOLLY

(to Healy)

Relax... He's just, whatever, getting another drink, isn't there a bar on the roof?

HEALY

Holly, listen to me, the guy he's with, that was Shoemaker's right hand, he's here. Understand?

That shuts her up. Healy smiles at the coveralled guy, a we're-just-funning-around smile. The workman smiles back, an I'm-not-really-eavesdropping smile. *Ding..!* Eighth floor.

Healy, anxious, waiting for the doors to slide open -- Then, all at once, he frowns... Something's wrong.

POV HEALY:

As the WORKMAN guy sneezes, reaches for a Kleenex, his face falls within the cone of light--

REVEALS A HUMONGOUS MOLE

It might as well be the actual animal, it's that big. Things go *click* for Healy -- we get it, a second later--

The guy next to us is JOHN BOY.

Healy knows this, the same way he knows John Boy's not reaching for a Kleenex, and he's waiting when the KNIFE comes out. The elevator doors OPEN --

HEALY

Run!! Now, Holly! RUN!!

The distraction nearly costs him an eye. He shifts his footing, SLAMS John Boy against the wall, as

HOLLY RUNS

Stumbling, terrified-- Hasn't gone ten feet before looking BACK, to see

HEALY AND JOHN BOY

Framed in the open elevator. FIGHTING. THRASHING WILDLY. The doors slide gently shut--

Eclipsing them. Deadly danger becomes boring hallway. Just like that. Soft muzak plays...

A beat. And then Holly turns to run-- Slams full-bore into a some dude's trousered LEGS.

HOLLY

Sorry--!

SUITED MAN

No problem, angel.

One of James's KILLERS helps her to her feet, as we CUT TO:

EXT. MARRIOTT ROOF - OPEN-AIR BAR - TWILIGHT

The ROOFTOP affair Holly mentioned.
Overlooking both hotel grounds and nearby AMUSEMENT PARK.

Ding..! The ELEVATOR DOORS open -- TWO MEN come spilling out.
Locked in a death struggle, as, one flight below--

INT. BUTT GUY'S HOTEL ROOM - SAME

MARCH is dealt a savage KICK to the ribs.
Reels drunkenly. Rolls over like a whipped pup.

JAMES

Mr. March, try to concentrate. I know
you've had a few, but try. Where's Alice?

MARCH

Aw, man... Look, if I *knew*... I'd have
fuckin' told you, chief...

JAMES

Break his nose.

One of the SUITS complies.
SMACK--! March sputters, cries out.
Rolls to his feet, streaming blood. Stammering.

Suddenly, the door to the hallway is flung open. James turns:

JAMES

Where's John Boy?

SUITED MAN

(shrugs)
Dunno. But looky, looky. I caught a fish.

He slings HOLLY inside. She stumbles, catches her balance--

HOLLY

Daddy..!

MARCH

Shhh... Iss okay... I'm okay, baby.

She hugs him. Arms thrown round his neck.
Opens her eyes, SCREAMS--

BUTT GUY is seated in the corner, a bullet in his head.

EXT. MARRIOTT ROOF-TOP - WITH HEALY AND JOHN BOY

PANDEMONIUM, as roller coaster geeks scurry every which way.
Scrambling for cover. DINNER PLATES flying as--

JOHN BOY AND HEALY

Crash through tables and furniture. Locked in combat.

Healy SLAMS JOHN BOY DOWN on top of a GLASS BAR.
Attempts a follow with a KICK TO THE HEAD -- OVERBALANCES...

John Boy sees his chance.
Grabs Healy by the LEG and FLIPS HIM.

Sends him sailing--! SLAMMING INTO A GUARD RAIL.

And John Boy is on his feet that quick...
A JUMP KICK hits Healy high in the CHEST -- WHAM! --

HEALY LEAVES THE ROOF

SUMMERSAULTS backwards over the railing--!
Out into the night. Arms flailing and -- CLANG! --

Healy grabs on to the top rung of the railing.
Holding on for dear life.

John Boy spits blood. Stands to finish the job and--

INT. BUTT GUY'S HOTEL ROOM - WITH MARCH

JAMES looms over the fallen March.
A SUIT hangs onto Holly in the background.

JAMES

Last chance, pal. We're gonna have to
start breaking your daughter's fingers.

March, bleeding. Climbs to his feet.

MARCH

I'm sorry, Holly, I... Just... remember
me different, okay..? Forget this part.
Please?

Holly nods, crying openly. This is goodbye, she gets it.

March looks like he's about to cry.
Leans over... Supporting himself on a dining room chair.

HIS FACE. Slack. Drunken. Miserable...
And then, OUT OF NOWHERE, it transforms--

If you blinked, you missed it.

Suddenly he ain't drunk.
Suddenly he looks hard. And grim... And FURIOUS.

MARCH
 (completely sober voice)
 HOLLY, DUCK!

Holly hits the floor as--

MARCH SPINS, SLINGS THE CHAIR ACROSS THE ROOM--!

The SUIT holding Holly doesn't react quick enough. THE CHAIR SMASHING into his face, SPLINTERING..! Cracking his skull --

And March is still in motion.

The other SUIT stands gaping.

MARCH continues the spin -- knife-edged HAND outstretched.

With his good arm, CHOPS viciously at the guy's NECK.

Once. Twice. Crushes the trachea, COLLAPSES it.

The man stumbles in circles. Choking, dying.

March drops to the floor. Comes up holding this guy's GUN.

These events unfold with a sort of heightened crystal CLARITY. Comprise less than five seconds, real time.

JAMES, MEANWHILE

Grabs HOLLY. Desperate. Puts a KNIFE to her throat, says:

JAMES
 All right, drop--

March FIRES, BLAM--! From the floor, no hesitation. Blows James BACK... Holly's free, James is bleeding, just that quick--

The shortest hostage crisis in history.

March stands. He looks like Death personified. He approaches the stumbling James...

EXT. ROOFTOP - WITH HEALY AND JOHN BOY

John Boy appears at the roof's edge... Stares down at the dangling Healy.

JOHN BOY
 Nothing personal.

HEALY is in deep shit, when--

BELOW AND BEHIND HIM -- AN EXPLOSION OF GLASS

Erupts from the building as--
 JAMES goes flying out the window.

Head first. Out into the nighttime SKY.

HEALY USES THE DISTRACTION

Darts out a hand..! Grabs John Boy.
Braces himself and HEAVES THE MAN OFF THE BUILDING.

No warning, no preamble.
Tumbles the fucker out into OPEN AIR.

Just like that. Only one problem.
John Boy grabs Healy's arm as he goes --

Rips HEALY from his purchase... Pulls him off the railing --

And they both start to PLUMMET. Freefall. Ten stories.

INT. BUTT GUY'S HOTEL ROOM - THAT EXACT MOMENT

Holly, head half buried in March's side, trying not to watch
as James falls--

THEN TWO MORE PEOPLE STREAK PAST THE WINDOW.

Holly YELPS--!

And there they go. James... Healy and John Boy.
Tumbling past frame... Getting smaller and smaller...

GROUND LEVEL - THAT MOMENT

The bodies hit--!

JAMES SLAMS INTO THE CEMENT AT POOLSIDE.
FLATTENS a chaise lounge. Sends CHAIRS scattering...

One second later--

HEALY AND JOHN BOY hit the static waters of the POOL, and
send up a gargantuan SPUME of water.

INT. BUTT GUY'S HOTEL ROOM - THAT EXACT MOMENT

Holly is already in motion.
BOLTS out of the room, her Dad chasing behind her--

MARCH

Holly! Wait!

And we track WITH HER.

Down the hall and into the stairwell. March falling behind
as we plunge down flight after flight of stairs, then--

TWILIGHT SKY

As Holly bursts outside, sprinting--

NO ONE'S IN THE POOL

A handful of witnesses. Someone in hysterics over James's body.

Holly follows a WATER trail. Past upturned furniture, broken umbrellas. Running, head throbbing--

EXT. PARKING LOT/HILLSIDE - SAME

She turns the corner and there they are.
A mountain of a man, in coveralls, lies flat to the pavement.

Then there's HEALY, who's got him in a headlock.
Meaty forearm, encircling the guy's big bull neck--

He's CHOKING him to death.

HEALY

Holly, get back! Go away!

Holly remains. Panting. Fixed on Healy:

HOLLY

... Stop... Healy... What are you doing?

HEALY

Goddamnit, Holly! Get out of here!

HOLLY

No! I'm not gonna let you... kill that man.

HEALY

(flustered)

Holly, you don't understand... You'll never, EVER be safe! Shoemaker's never gonna stop, he'll send someone else.

HOLLY

So? Then why kill *this* one?

HEALY

Holly... He... he'd do this to me. It's expected. It's the way it's done.

March, huffing and wheezing, stops next to Holly:

MARCH

... Sweetie... We gotta move, Okay..?
Come here.

HOLLY
Healy wants to kill this man.

MARCH
Holly! Let's go!

She shakes her dad off... then turns disconcerting GREEN eyes on Healy. A direct, 500-watt gaze:

HOLLY
What about the blue-faced guy? You didn't kill him.

Healy's caught off-guard. Suddenly aware of the lie he told.

HEALY
That... that was different --

HOLLY
How? How was it different?

MARCH
Um, guys, can we talk about it in the car..? Please..?

HOLLY won't let up:

HOLLY
How was it different? He worked for Shoemaker, he tried to kill ME... but you didn't kill him.

Healy, head reeling, this isn't how it's supposed to go--

HOLLY
Mr. Healy, if you kill this man, I'll never speak to you again.

Healy looks to March for help, finds only desperation...

Sighs... cautiously disengages himself from John Boy. As he rolls to one knee, we see that he's HURT. Bleeding.

MARCH
Can you put him out? 'Til the cops show?

Healy nods. Looms over the fallen John Boy:

HEALY
Congratulations... You owe your life to a kid who'll be fifteen on Tuesday.

John boy turns. Locks eyes with Holly:

JOHN BOY
I won't forget.

HEALY
(raises his arm--)
Goodnight, John Boy.

On the blow to the NECK we CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET - DOWNTOWN - DAY

Another perfect day in the city we all love.
CAMERA PANS DOWN from an impossible BLUE SKY...

To a political rally. SIGNS and BANNERS everywhere:
"Shoemaker for President!" "Shoemaker a 'Shoe'-in!"

THE MAN HIMSELF

Pushes through the crowd, beaming.
Handshakes, shoulder-pats as he moves toward the stage --

Quite suddenly, a young girl appears in his path.
He bends down with a grin:

SHOEMAKER
Hello there, little girl. Are your
parents going to vote for me..?

HOLLY MARCH smiles at him. Leans in to whisper in his ear...
Intimately close... Slips something in the politician's
POCKET and utters just two words:

HOLLY
You're fucked.

Shoemaker RECOILS.
Holly smiles at him again. Turns, moves off --
Within seconds, she's lost to sight.

The crowd surges, pushing their candidate onward. He feels in
his pocket... clasps something. Fishes it out:

A TINY BLACK CYLINDER

The kind used to store a roll of film. Shoemaker blinks at it.
Pops the lid, reaches inside -- withdraws STRIP OF FOUR PHOTOS.

The kind you get for a buck at any photo booth:

SUZY AND ALICE.

Taken recently. Happy. Smiling.
A memento of their brief reunion.

Shoemaker just stares at the pictures.
Crowds pushing all around him. Calling his name...

All of a sudden he looks very lost.

CUT TO:

TV IMAGE - FUZZY, WITH SCAN LINES

We're watching an interview.

ALICE speaking to an off-camera newsman:

NEWSMAN (o.s.)

... So, prior to meeting you, Suzy Shoemaker had no inkling that her family lineage lay elsewhere?

ALICE

How could she? I mean, what's Shoemaker gonna say, that he's a criminal, her life's based on a lie?

CAMERAS PULLS BACK, NOW

Widening to reveal the TV, bolted to a wall...

On screen, we see ALICE'S FACE vanish--
Replaced by a slick-looking news anchor, in studio:

NEWS ANCHOR

That story took us by surprise, seven days ago. Tonight, an even *bigger* surprise; the unprecedented outpouring of support for David Shoemaker... It may be too early to call, with only 60 percent of the precincts reporting -- but indicators depict a Shoemaker victory in California... And with it, the subsequent nomination for President.

Now SHOEMAKER is on screen. Behind him, children play.

SHOEMAKER

I am deeply moved that the public has seen fit to reject those who, in the eleventh hour, would summon deceit and sabotage as their allies.

We've widened to reveal a dimly lit BARTOP.

MARCH is folded across it like a man clutching a life raft. With intense concentration, he's writes on his hand with a BLACK PEN:

YOU WILL NEVER BE HAPPY

March writes in a delicate, almost feminine scrawl...
The bartender looks up -- as HEALY enters. Crosses to the bar.
Stops next to March, who turns, bleary-eyed:

MARCH

... It's you.

HEALY

Holly told me where you'd be.

MARCH

Ah... Guess you're here to tell me what
an asshole I am for having a little
drink, huh?

Healy takes the seat next to March.

HEALY

Not today I'm not.

He signals the bartender.

HEALY

Scotch, please.

March regards his friend with drunken incredulity...
The bartender sets a drink in front of Healy.

HEALY

(raises the glass)

To the next four years.

A beat... Then March raises his own glass.
Healy knocks his drink back. Feels the burn down his gullet.

CUT TO BLACK.

Hold a beat. Then, from the surrounding dark -- CROWD noise.
Soft at first... Loud... Louder... CRESCENDO as we FADE IN:

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - MAIN BALLROOM - NIGHT

The crowds are PACKED into the beautiful Ambassador Hotel.
(Yes, we know this place has been closed down. We don't care.)

ON STAGE

David Shoemaker bounds into view to THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE. He
soaks up all the adulation for a moment. Quiets the audience:

SHOEMAKER

I think we know enough to say with some
certainty that California tonight has
made David Shoemaker the comeback kid!

ROARS OF APPROVAL greet this. People jumping up and down, hooting -- you've seen these fucking things, right?

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BALLROOM

March and Healy stand. Getting jostled.
Glaring up at the stage with disgust.

SHOEMAKER

The truth is unassailable. People know in their hearts when they're *hearing* truth. Tonight I'm hearing it in the outpouring of faith and support from you people... People to whom, one day soon, I will pledge all my heart and all my spirit.

The assembled masses go nuts. They just love this guy. Healy can't take it anymore:

HEALY

Let's get the fuck out of here.

March stares a moment longer. Radiating hate... Finally nods. The two men turn... Start making their way out...

In the background, framed between the two of them, an OUT OF FOCUS SHOEMAKER continues on his tirade--

And then suddenly there's a loud, sharp -- BAM! --

And David Shoemaker's head explodes.

It all plays in the background. Out of focus. But we know instantly what's happened -- he's been shot.

CHAOS and fucking BEDLAM.

All the CHEERING turns to SCREAMING in an instant..

Healy and March stop dead in their tracks. Turning around, trying to make sense of what the fuck just happened.

Shoemaker slumped on the floor. Dead.

And people are pointing now. SCREAMING and YELLING and pointing up at a balcony near the back of the room.

March and Healy spin simultaneously. Crowds SURGING around them.

SECRET SERVICE

Materializes out of nowhere.

SIX GUYS in suits -- they go barreling up the stairs. Behind them, more men. A swirl of confusion.

~~ST~~
Healy is the first one to notice it.

A SECURITY GUARD

At the base of a staircase back here. Pointing up the stairs--

Otherwise, not doing much of anything.
Backing away... Unnoticed in the pandemonium.
He lowers his arm, turning--

LOCKS EYES WITH MARCH AND HEALY

It's John Boy.

Features partially hidden under the guard's visor and dark glasses... Just the SINGLE MOLE as a dead giveaway.

Time stands still.

All the people around him moving in hyper-real slow motion--
As John Boy gives the two men the briefest of nods.

Then we're back to full speed as he turns...
And disappears into the crowd.

March and Healy stare, dumbfounded. A pause...
People running every which way. Passing through frame.

March and Healy just continue to stare.

HEALY

... I'll be a son of a--

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END