

On The Count of Three (working title)

by

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"There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact."

-- Arthur Conan Doyle

FADE IN SOUND

Smooth, relaxing jazz plays.

FADE IN:

ESTABLISHING SHOT

The Manhattan skyline.

EXT. BUILDING -- DAY

The rain falls hard outside the small, two-storey building. With the music and the look of the place, it could be the 1950s - but it isn't. What's the exact year? Who knows...

INT. DUSKY OFFICE -- DAY

The jazz continues to play.

The office is mostly dark. Light finds its way through the tiny openings in the venetian blinds, illuminating parts of the room.

A cigarette rests in an ashtray on a desk, sending smoke towards the ceiling.

A silhouetted figure sits at the desk. He reaches for the cigarette, takes a long inhale, and releases a missile of smoke into the room as he enjoys the sounds produced by the jazz musicians of the past.

AN IMPATIENT KNOCK ON THE DOOR turns the figure towards it. It's too dark to make out his face.

MALE VOICE

(gruff)

Come in.

The door opens.

The light illuminating the room now gifts to us the face of the man at the desk. He's young-ish, 35, handsome, sturdily built but not overly muscular. He's clean shaven and his thick head of hair is neatly combed. He wears a smart shirt and tie. This is EDDIE PAX.

EDDIE

I said come in. So... (beckins with his hand) Come in.

MAN AT DOOR

(impatient, agitated)

It's dark, Mr. Pax. You want a lawsuit on your hands?

(a beat)

I could trip!

Eddie reaches for the lamp on his desk and switches it on.

Now we can see the man at the door. He's a short, balding, middle-aged, spectacle-wearing gentleman. He looks like a loser, and in all probability he is a loser. This is WALTER HIGGENBOTTOM.

The room is now on display: It's small, but not too small. On the walls are framed movie posters, all detective flicks: 'Chinatown,' 'The Big Sleep,' 'Murder, My Sweet,' 'Laura,' 'The Maltese Falcon,' 'The Long Goodbye.'

In one corner of the room behind Pax's desk is a coat rack, on the other is a turntable, which plays the low jazz.

On Pax's mahogany desk is the ashtray, a framed certificate, a picture of an elderly woman in a bijou theatre, holding a microphone -- the picture was taken while she was in the middle of singing.

Higgenbottom enters, paces towards Eddie's desk. He sits, folds a leg over the other and taps a finger against his kneecap impatiently.

EDDIE

(smiling)

Mr. Higgenbottom, what can I do for you?

HIGGENBOTTOM

What can you do for me? I've already told you what you can do for me, Pax. I've paid you to do something for me, but you haven't done it, have you?

EDDIE

We're in the mid-investigation stage, Mr. Higgenbottom.

HIGGENBOTTOM

(exasperated)

There's nothing to investigate, Pax! I know what Dolores is up to - she comes home smelling of the Spaniard's aftershave. She's even started to speak the language, for Chrissakes!

(sits forward)

I need photographs - I need proof. That's what I'm paying you for!

EDDIE

And I'm in the process of delivering those photographs.

HIGGENBOTTOM

(shakes his head)

No... I want my money back.

EDDIE

Wha- Mr. Higgenbottom, let's be reasonably here.

HIGGENBOTTOM

You're a shyster, Pax! You've had two weeks now -- two whole weeks -- to catch her in the act.

EDDIE

I can assure you that I'll have-
Higgenbottom stands up - he means business.

HIGGENBOTTOM

No! No, no, no, no. No! I want my money back, Pax.

EDDIE

Mr. Higgenbottom, you've paid me to provide a service for you.

HIGGENBOTTOM

I paid you to do a simple job, and due to your sheer...
Incompetence... You can't even manage a few lousy photos.

Eddie stands up, makes his way to the turntable and lifts the needle - killing the music.

EDDIE

Listen, Mr. Higgenbottom, I understand your frustration. Let me be honest with you here...

Higgenbottom brings his hands to his hips, doing his best to return to a state of calm.

HIGGENBOTTOM

Well, go on!

EDDIE

My camera's busted.

HIGGENBOTTOM

Your camera's busted?

EDDIE

Yeah. Genuinely.

Higgenbottom clenches his fists into a ball. He's so much shorter and weaker than Eddie that he knows better than to get into a physical altercation, but a threat will suffice: He raises his balled fist to Eddie.

HIGGENBOTTOM

I'll tell you what will be busted,
Pax... You're gonna hear from my
lawyer.

Higgenbottom turns and paces out of Eddie's office, slamming the door shut behind him.

Eddie sighs.

He gets back to the turntable and the jazz returns.

EXT. EDDIE'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

Eddie, holding a paper bag full of groceries, inserts the key into his apartment door. He enters

HIS APARTMENT

It's a studio, and it's a bit of a mess: Clothes are strewn on the bed, unwashed dishes line the sink like people queuing at the welfare. He looks around as if sickened by the sight of the place: I'm here, again.

He closes the door and almost immediately a knock arrives.

Eddie drops the grocery bag onto the kitchen countertop and answers the door.

He opens the door, revealing a dishevelled woman in her 40s: Her hair's an untended hanging basket; her untamed breasts dangle underneath her Prince t-shirt; a cigarette hangs from between her lips. This is CATHY.

EDDIE

Cathy.

CATHY

Yer damn dawg keeps barkin' in the mornin', Eddie - I'm a daysleeper, I need my morning zees.

Eddie takes a moment to think about this.

EDDIE

I don't have a dog, Cathy.

CATHY

(confused)

Oh.

EDDIE

Is that it?

CATHY

No. Jeremy was lookin' for ya. Told me to tell ya that yer rent is passed due.

EDDIE
Jeremy said that?

CATHY
Yeah, and he said he was gonna kick
ya out if ya don't pay 'im pronto.

Cathy breaks into a fit of coughing. She hacks up a thick ball of phlegm and spits it into her hand.

Eddie looks on, disgusted.

CATHY
So how about you and me get that
drink?

Eddie closes the door on Cathy's face.

She bangs on the door.

Eddie opens.

CATHY (CONT'D)
Keep that dog of yers quiet, Eddie.

EDDIE
Sure thing, Cathy.

Eddie closes the door once more.

He looks at the mess that awaits him.

INT. EDDIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Eddie sits at the kitchen table. He's looking at the classifieds in the newspaper. He circles a job: 'Laborers Wanted.'

He downs a bottle of beer.

INT. EDDIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Eddie sits up on his bed, which still has clothes strewn over it. He's illuminated by the glow of the TV. On the bedside locker is a stack of Raymond Chandler novels.

Eddie, looking glum, looks on at the TV.

ON THE TV:

Is the film 'The Big Sleep' starring Humphrey Bogart.

Eddie sighs. He gets up, turns off the TV, grabs his coat and leaves the apartment.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - MOVING -- NIGHT

Eddie drives along a quiet, lonely road.

EXT. PAX FAMILY HOME -- NIGHT

Eddie's car pulls into the driveway of the small, one-story house which is neighbor to countless others like it. The Pax Family home - the place where he grew up. He kills the engine and looks over at the facade of the house.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Eddie sits at the kitchen table. A napkin is tucked into his vest. A knife and fork rest in each hand: he's a big kid ready for a late-night meal.

EDDIE

I didn't think you'd be up this late, Ma.

Eddie's mother, GLORIA -- late 60s, thin, petit, nimble, brisk -- delivers a plate of hot food to the table: spaghetti and meatballs.

GLORIA

Oh, when you get to my age you don't need as much sleep as a growing boy like you does.

She takes a seat next to her son and watches as he tucks into the meal - savouring her son's enjoyment of her cooking.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

I've been practicing for my show.

EDDIE

(chewing)

That's what I like to hear.

GLORIA

Oh, I'm so excited. I'm nervous, but I'm excited.

EDDIE

(chewing)

You'll be great, Ma.

Gloria smiles. Eddie chews for a beat.

EDDIE

Ma, you know how it was my dream to open up the P.I. business?

GLORIA

It was your dream since you were old enough to read. All those detective books, and your father with his Humphrey Bogart movies.

EDDIE

Yeah, well. I think it's time I close the practice.

Gloria places a hand on her son's arm.

GLORIA

But why, sweetie?

EDDIE

It's a busted flush. Business was good, but now, since the crash... I don't know. I think it's time to move on. The money isn't coming in. Pop would tell me to move on.

GLORIA

Sweetie. It was my life dream to sing in front of an audience comprised of more than fifty people, and I'm going to be doing that next week. Some things just take a little time to fall into place.

Gloria stands up.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

It only took sixty-seven years, but here I am.

Eddie thinks about that one for a beat.

EDDIE

I've gotta close the practice.

GLORIA (O.S.)

Things will work out, sweetie. Business will return. Things always work out.

Eddie jabs his fork into the spaghetti and twists a serving onto the fork and puts it into his mouth.

INT. EDDIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Sombre jazz music plays.

As usual, the office is quite dark. Light finds its way through the tiny openings in the venetian blinds, illuminating parts of the room.

Eddie smokes a cigarette as he packs files from his desk drawer into a box: by the looks of it he's decided to proceed with the closing of the business.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

EDDIE

We're closed.

Another knock arrives.

Eddie drops the cardboard box and places the cigarette in the ashtray on his desk.

EDDIE

What?!

The door opens. A shilouetted figure stands, backlit like some kind of angel.

Eddie reaches for the lamp on his desk and switces it on.

Now we can see the man at the door. He's tall, spare, bald: cadaverous. In his sixties. Looks European.

MAN AT DOOR

My name's Bloom.

His accent is difficult to place.

EDDIE

Bloom?

BLOOM

Cor-rect... Bloom.

Eddie holds his hands, showcasing the boxes.

EDDIE

Mr. Bloom. Whatever it is you need, I can't help you.

Eddie gets back to packing.

BLOOM

Oh, but I believe you can.

EDDIE

Yeah, well. You believe incorrectly, wrong - whatever the correct grammar is. I'm no longer in the Private Investigation business.

BLOOM

You came highly recommended to me.

EDDIE

Oh yeah? That some kind of joke?

BLOOM

I'm not one to joke, Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

And I'm not one to waste time -
unless it's with a pretty lady and
a cold beer - so, if you don't
mind...

BLOOM

There's significant monetary
reward.

Eddie ceases packing. He releases a long breath. He concedes defeat. He takes a seat behind his desk.

EDDIE

(holds out his hand)

Okay, so why don't you take a seat?

Bloom doesn't respond. He proceeds to enter the room, revealing from behind him a short, stocky figure. This is his henchman, CLEM, whose age is difficult to determine; his hair is styled in a youthful manner and his skin is oddly smooth, yet there's a certain "oldness" about him.

Clem follows Bloom and closes the door behind him, by which he stands.

Bloom takes in the room's decor, now that it's visible. He sniffs and slowly makes his way towards the desk. In fact, his movements are so fluid that he almost glides. He passes by the movie posters which line the walls'

Maybe Bloom's gliding movement has sent shivers down Pax's spine. Maybe it hasn't. In any case, he notices.

EDDIE

Who's your friend?

BLOOM

(starring at Eddie)

That's Clem.

EDDIE

Clem?

BLOOM

Cor-rect.

Bloom glances at the framed posters on the wall. He then sits and looks at the picture of the elderly woman - Gloria.

Eddie, acknowledging Bloom's stare, offers some information.

EDDIE

My mother.

BLOOM

She sings?

EDDIE
Voice of all the angels combined.

BLOOM
Her own songs?

EDDIE
No... Piaf. She sings Edith Piaf songs. She's got a big show coming up.

BLOOM
(big eyes, perfect enunciation)
Non, Je ne regrette rien.

Eddie nods his head once as he eyeballs Bloom confidently.

EDDIE
What can I do for you, Mr. Bloom?

BLOOM
(looking at the movie posters)
You're a fan of the motion picture?

EDDIE
Movies. Yes, I am.

BLOOM
(smiles)
Humphrey Bogart.

EDDIE
(smiles impatiently)
Bogie.

Bloom crosses his legs and laces his fingers.

EDDIE
Mr. Bloom?

BLOOM
(all serious now)
I'm looking for a man.

Eddie flicks open his notepad and picks up his pen, ready for action.

EDDIE
(forcing enthusiasm)
Well, you've come to the right guy, Mr. Bloom.

BLOOM
Despite your impending... Retirement?

EDDIE

Let's say you just talked me out of it. So, you're looking for a man?

BLOOM

Yes. Yes. My current state of lassitude renders me unable to forage for the irredeemable little cretin myself. And a petit bird informed me that you're... good at what you do: a reliable man.

EDDIE

That I am, Mr. Bloom. And I'm sorry to hear about your current state of -- what was it?

BLOOM

(slowly)

Lassitude.

EDDIE

Mm-hmm.

IN THE NOTEPAD Eddie writes the word 'lassitude.' He underlines it twice.

BLOOM (O.S.)

This man flagrantly deceived me.

EDDIE

Okay... What did this guy do?

BLOOM

He appropriated money which did not belong to him... among other things.

EDDIE

Other things being?

BLOOM

I'm not at liberty to divulge such information.

Eddie flicks his pen against the notepad for a beat.

EDDIE

You know, the way this thing usually works is that you give me all the information you can, which in turn helps me track down our guy.

BLOOM

(raising a dismissive hand)

You needn't know everything.

EDDIE

Okay... Well, what's our bandito's name?

BLOOM

(raising his hands - and his eyebrows)

His name, I do not know... His real name, that is. He identified himself as one Walter Sherman. But that, I believe, is a fake.

Eddie shifts in his seat in an attempt at making himself more comfortable.

EDDIE

Okay... What do you know about this guy? Give me anything.

BLOOM

I can provide you with a face.

Bloom places a hand into his pocket, reveals a Polaroid and slides it across the desk.

BLOOM (O.S.)

I want the man located and I want him brought to me after you've notified me of your success in finding him.

Eddie reaches for the Polaroid, but Bloom traps the photograph under his fingers.

Eddie looks at Bloom.

BLOOM (CONT'D)

This matter is of immense importance to me, Mr. Eddie Pax.

Eddie nods his head.

EDDIE

It's always important.

Bloom lifts his fingers from the photo. Eddie picks it up and looks at the picture of his man.

INT. 'FIRST ON YOUR LEFT' CAFÉ -- DAY

The café is busy. Most of the tables are occupied. It has an upmarket look to it: the furniture seems expensive and well-kept. There's art by local painters lining the walls. Coming into shot is MARY ELIZABETH GERSTLEY -- 26, beautiful, big eyes, respectfully dressed in averagely-priced clothes under her apron -- as she carries a plate of food towards a table, at which is seated an OLD GENTLEMAN. She has an innocence of old about her.

Mary Elizabeth places the food in front of the old gent who nods his head in thanks.

A call arrives from behind the counter.

BEVERLY (O.S.)

Lizzy!

SWISH PAN TO:

THE COUNTER

BEVERLY, a big girl, stands behind the counter holding the receiver of the telephone in her hand.

Mary Elizabeth approaches the counter and takes the call.

MARY ELIZABETH

Hello?

(a beat)

Arty?

(politely)

Sweetie, I told you not to call me at work -- I could get in trouble.

(a beat)

Okay, just relax. It'll be fine. I'll be home soon.

Mary Elizabeth hangs up the phone. She sighs, wearing a worried expression.

BEVERLY (O.S.)

Lizzy!

MARY ELIZABETH

I'm coming, I'm coming.

Mary Elizabeth stands next to Beverly as they check the order line.

BEVERLY

Not that it's any of my business, but that's the third time this week your Arthur has called you at work. Girl, what is up with your man?

MARY ELIZABETH

I don't want to talk about it, Bev.

BEVERLY

(genuine concern)

Everything okay at home?

MARY ELIZABETH

When is everything okay? Most things are okay but never in my life has everything been okay.

BEVERLY

I don't know about you but if Ray called me at work over and over again I'd be kickin' his ass from here to New Orleans.

MARY ELIZABETH

Arty doesn't mean any trouble. He's just... He's going through a bit of a tough time.

Mary Elizabeth picks up a couple of plates.

BEVERLY

Don't let your man become the woman, Lizzy. You've gotta stay on top of that.

MARY ELIZABETH

(beginning to walk,
lacking enthusiasm)

I'll stay on top of it, Bev.

Mary Elizabeth brings the plates of food to their destination.

INT. GLOOMY BAR - BOOTH -- EVENING

EDDIE'S POV

A seasoned prostitute, LORETTA, sits directly in front of Eddie. She's wearing a top that's too small for her bust. She chews gum as she stares ahead, bored. A HAND -- Pax's -- holds up the Polaroid of his man.

She looks at it.

LORETTA

Oh, right. Him. Yeah, I know him.

SWISH PAN TO:

EDDIE

Oh yeah?

SWISH PAN TO:

EDDIE'S POV

Loretta takes another moment to study the picture.

END EDDIE'S POV.

Eddie watches Loretta as she chews her gum. Her mouth is open and she squints at the picture -- her eyes just ain't what they used to be.

EDDIE

Is this one of your clients,
Lottie?

LORETTA

Oh, wait. No. No, he looks like a
guy who comes in here. Sweetheart,
really. A loser, but a sweetheart.
This guy looks like he could be a
loser. But it ain't the same guy.
The one I know has a birthmark on
his throat. You know, like a salmon
patch on babies. Can't miss it.

EDDIE

You're sure, Lottie?

LORETTA

I'm sure, Eddie, baby. It ain't
him, babe.

SWISH PAN TO:

Eddie sitting as he was, holding the Polaroid which is out
of focus in the foreground.

SWISH PAN TO:

EDDIE'S POV

Only now the person sitting opposite him is a rotund,
cap-wearing, bearded man - a teamster named GARY. He
examines the photo.

GARY

Nope. Don't know him.

SWISH PAN TO:

EDDIE'S POV

Another patron. A skinny, frail-looking OLD MAN.

OLD MAN

No! I told you already, damn it.
You don't need to ask me twice.
(a beat)
Now get me my damn drink.

SWISH PAN TO:

EDDIE'S POV

This time it's a couple: A BIKER and HIS OLD LADY, the
latter who can't help but look Eddie up and down -- she
likes what she sees, apparently.

BIKER

Don't know 'im.

HIS OLD LADY

I wish I could help you. I really do.

(a beat)

Maybe I can.

The biker looks at his woman, then back at Eddie. He tilts his head.

BIKER

Yeah, maybe you could.

End Eddie's POV

A beat.

Eddie places the Polaroid into his jacket pocket.

EDDIE

I'll take a rain check. But thanks.

Eddie awkwardly scoots his way out of the booth.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAX FAMILY HOME -- NIGHT

Eddie's car pulls into the driveway of the family home.

Eddie gets out of the car and approaches the front door of the house. He removes his keys and opens the door before closing it behind him.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- LATER

Eddie sits at the kitchen table as his mother serves him a plate of reheated food. She stands next to him as he tucks into his dish.

EDDIE

Thanks, Ma.

GLORIA

(trembling with
enthusiasm)

Oh, I'm just so excited.

EDDIE

And so you should be.

GLORIA

I'm going to need you to drive me to the venue a few times this week.

EDDIE

That's fine, Ma.

GLORIA

I was rehearsing again today. Wendy Shaw's been over every afternoon to play piano as my accompanist, and we've been practising and practising and practising.

EDDIE

That's what I like to hear, Ma.

GLORIA

One week!

EDDIE

(smiles, chewing with an open mouth)

One week.

Eddie looks up at his mother, holding that smile.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

(mouthful)

Your name in lights.

GLORIA

(returning the smile)

On the stage again.

(a beat)

And how's work, sweetie. Have things picked up?

EDDIE

(chewing)

It's better. New job. Some stiff who works at the French Embassy, I think, hired me to find someone. No leads. Takes time. The usual. You know how it works.

GLORIA

I told you - things always work out.

(back to her big night)

You'll be at the show, won't you?

EDDIE

Ma, they'd have to shoot me dead to stop me from being there.

Gloria smiles.

GLORIA

It'll be the biggest audience I've ever sang to.

EDDIE

(chewing)

Not big enough.

Eddie, seemingly swallowing too early, jolts, his cheeks expand, he raises his fist to his chest and he thuds firmly against his sternum, encouraging the food down the esophagus.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Ah!

(repeats as he chews)

Not big enough.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - TV ROOM -- LATER

The room is illuminated by the glow of the television.

ON THE TV:

is THE MALTESE FALCON. HUMPHREY BOGART (playing Samuel Spade) is on screen alongside MARY ASTOR (playing Brigid O'Shaughnessy), whom he grasps by both arms.

SPADE

If all I've said doesn't mean anything to you then forget it and we'll make it just this.

In the room: Eddie lies sprawled on the couch as the scene unfolds. Gloria is sitting in the single-seater sofa, immersed in the movie.

GLORIA

Oh, Mary Astor. I just adored her. You know she said: "There are five stages in the life of an actor: Who's Mary Astor? Get me Mary Astor. Get me a Mary Astor type. Get me a young Mary Astor. Who's Mary Astor?"

Eddie chuckles.

Back to the MOVIE:

SPADE

Don't be too sure I'm as crooked as I'm supposed to be. That sort of reputation might be good business, bringing high-price jobs and making it easier to deal with the enemy. But a lot more money would've been... one more item on your side of the scale.

A tearful Astor:

O'SHAUGHNESSY

If you'd loved me you wouldn't have needed any more on that side.

They kiss.

In the room: Eddie smiles.

INT. THE GERSTLEY APARTMENT -- DAY

Arthur 'Art' Gerstley, 28, 5'10" -- skinny, clumsy, bookish -- leans over the desk in the living room of his small apartment. A knotted rope dangles around his neck as he scribbles away on a piece of paper. A chair rests in the middle of the room under a thick wooden beam.

He continues until he's finished writing the letter. He picks up the freshly scribed note and reads over it, aloud:

ART

Dearest Mary Elizabeth. It's in my darkest hour that I write you this letter. My heart is no longer afloat. It's the heaviest it's ever been. The sun cannot reach the depths to which my heart has plunged...

CUT TO:

INT. THE GERSTLEY APARTMENT -- LATER

In the same room, Mary Elizabeth reads the letter aloud. There's no Art, and there's no rope, but the chair remains in the middle of the room, along with the letter Mary Elizabeth holds in her hand.

MARY ELIZABETH

(slowly reading the letter, upset)

...And there's no oxygen here. Nothing to keep my heart beating. The road has come to an end, my love, and the day has reached its darkest hour. Chekhov said that people do not notice whether it's winter or summer when they're happy. Well, it's been a long, frigid winter for me. I love you with all my heart, Mary Elizabeth. Please forgive me for leaving you in this macabre manner. My daft tongue, my daft pen, my daft dreams... Think of me in your dreams. Think of me when you dance...Think of me... All my love, Art.

Mary Elizabeth swallows a sob. Her mother, PAULINE- 60s, plump, impatient - stands beside her daughter.

PAULINE

Even his suicide note is piss poor!
No wonder the man could never get
published!

MARY ELIZABETH

Momma!

PAULINE

Oh, your father -- God rest his
soul -- your father said he was no
good and, oh, how right he was.

MARY ELIZABETH

Momma, please.

PAULINE

Well, where is he, then?

MARY ELIZABETH

That's what I've been trying to
tell you. He's not here. I don't
know where he is. My poor Arty.

PAULINE

(dismissive)

"Poor Arty". What kind of young man
would take his own life and leave
his young wife? The legacy of a
so-called wirter; a poorly written,
hackneyed suicide letter.

MARY ELIZABETH

Can you not be so critical, please?
Even now, you're so critical. In
these circumstances, you're
critical.

PAULINE

What else can I be? What else can I
be, sweetheart?

Mary Elizabeth places her hands over her face. She isn't
sobbing, but she's upset nonetheless.

Pauline hugs her daughter.

PAULINE

Oh, sweetheart.

MARY ELIZABETH

I know things haven't been great.
We've been going through a tough
period. But nothing to warrent
this. Sure, he'd received over
fifty rejection letters from agents
and publishers, but that's not
unusual for young writers.

Pauline looks at the floor for a beat.

PAULINE
 (absent minded)
 Look at the state of this carpet.
 He could've had the decency to
 clean the place, first.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- LATER

A paddy wagon pulls up in front of the apartment.

INT. THE GERSTLEY APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

A HAND rests on the suicide note.

Mary Elizabeth sits by the desk at which Art wrote his letter, while TWO POLICE OFFICERS, one TALL, one SHORT, stand in the living room next to Pauline.

TALL OFFICER
 So he wrote the letter, and when
 you came home you found it on the
 floor?

MARY ELIZABETH
 (tired)
 Yes.

TALL OFFICER
 And this is definitely his
 hand-writing?

MARY ELIZABETH
 Yes.

SHORT OFFICER
 And you were at work?

MARY ELIZABETH
 Yes.

SHORT OFFICER
 And you work at the 'Fist On Your
 Left' Cafe?

PAULINE
 (impatiently)
 Yes, yes. She's been over all of
 this.

TALL OFFICER
 (to Pauline)
 We need to make sure that all the
 details are consistent, ma'am.
 (to Mary Elizabeth)
 Mrs. Gerstley, you said you don't
 believe your husband took his own
 life...

MARY ELIZABETH
 (standing up, suddenly
 more energetic)
 No, no I don't.

Mary Elizabeth stands next to the chair in the middle of the room. She looks up at the wooden beam above it and places her hand on the chair.

MARY ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 This chair. Why would it be in the middle of the room, under this beam? He thought about it, that's for sure. But I think he had a change of heart.

SHORT OFFICER
 Or he could've thrown himself off a bridge instead?

Mary Elizabeth covers her mouth, appalled. Pauline places her hands on her daughter's shoulders.

Tall officer slaps short officer in the arm.

SHORT OFFICER
 Sorry.
 (smiles apologetically)
 Just a theory, Mrs. Gerstley.

PAULINE
 Well, what are you going to do about this?

TALL OFFICER
 Uh, we can register him as a missing person and appeal for information from the public.
 (smiles amiably)
 And who knows, if it's as you say, he'll probably wind up coming home in a couple of days--

SHORT OFFICER
 (cutting in)
 You'll be surprised how many times that happens. People crack, you know? Pressure gets to them. Modern society. They have dark thoughts, then they get away for a while. That's the remedy they need -- clear their heads.

MARY ELIZABETH
 You think?

TALL OFFICER

(smiles)

Like my partner said: It's happened more times than we care to remember, Mrs. Gerstley. I'm sure he'll turn up sooner or later.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- MOMENTS LATER

The two police officers make their way back to their car.

TALL OFFICER

Yep, he's dead. I suggest we call in the coastguards -- poor sap probably hurled himself into the deep blue.

SHORT OFFICER

Got ya.

INT. THE GERSTLEY APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

Mary Elizabeth is seated at the desk again, her mother gently strokes her daughter's hair.

PAULINE

I'm sure he'll be home soon, sweetheart. And when he returns we can tear him a new one.

In the

HALLWAY

the door of the apartment opposite the Gerstley's opens. A young woman, 28, blonde, beauty spot - a woman who one would think makes every effort to look like Marilyn Monroe - emerges. This is ROXY.

She approaches

THE GERSTLEY APARTMENT

and pops her head inside the door.

ROXY

(thick accent, common)

Mary Elizabeth, honey, what's goin' on? I couldn't help but hear the officers and your cryin'.

Mary Elizabeth turns to Roxy. She doesn't stand up -- it's obvious that the neighbours aren't exactly close. Roxy enters.

MARY ELIZABETH

Oh. Hi, Roxy.

ROXY

Where's your Arthur?

MARY ELIZABETH

Well, that's the problem. He's gone.

ROXY

Gone? Like, 'kaput' gone or 'no-good-husband' gone?

MARY ELIZABETH

I don't know. I think it's the latter.

ROXY

What did the pigs say?

MARY ELIZABETH

They're not pigs, Roxy. They were nice men. They said that Arty will probably show up in a couple of days. They reckon that this type of thing is not uncommon.

ROXY

Yeah, sure. Right.
 (approaches the chair in
 the middle of the room -
 sits in it)
 Listen, I know a guy.

MARY ELIZABETH

A guy?

ROXY

A guy who finds people who don't want to be found.

MARY ELIZABETH

But Arty's just going through something. The police said--

ROXY

The police think your Arthur's dead, M.E. There's no way they're goin' to pay officers to scour the city lookin' for a nobody. They'll either mark him up as a missing person or someone who's swimming with the fishes.

MARY ELIZABETH

But they said--

ROXY

Never mind what they said! If you want to find someone, you don't go
 (MORE)

ROXY (cont'd)
to the police. That's what we have
PIs for.

PAULINE
PIs? Private investigators?

ROXY
Yeah. Listen...

Roxy gets up and approaches Mary Elizabeth. From between her bosom she reveals a business card.

ROXY (CONT'D)
If Arthur don't show up, pay a
visit to this guy. He's a pro.
Great record. I had him look for
Reggie when he went missin' a year
ago, and my chihuahua, Mr. Clint--

We hear A SINGLE BARK from a dog O.S. interrupting Roxy --
apparently it knows when its mother is talking about it.

ROXY (CONT'D)
(calling)
Mommy will be back in a second, Mr.
Clint.
(to Mary Elizabeth)
You know how my Mr. Clint gets.
Anyways, this guy found Reggie
after a couple of days and Mr.
Clint after a week, just when I'd
given up all hope. He's a pro.
Great guy. Good rates, too. \$1000
advance and a hundred bucks a day
after that.

Mary Elizabeth looks at her mother.

MARY ELIZABETH
But, I can't afford that kind of--

PAULINE
Don't worry about the expense,
sweetheart.

Roxy hands the card to Mary Elizabeth, who looks at it.

MARY ELIZABETH
Pax?

ROXY
Yeah, Pax. Latin for 'peace',
right? P.A.X. Pax. Eddie Pax.

Roxy turns to leave. She looks up at the wooden beam as she passes by the chair in the middle of the room.

She stops at the door.

ROXY (CONT'D)

Like I said: give it one or two days. Then, if there's no sign of your Arthur, hit this guy up.

Mary Elizabeth looks at the card in her hand.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING -- EVENING

We are informed by the door sign that beyond this door is the office of 'EDDIE PAX - Private Investigator'.

TITLE:

One or two days later.

A BALLED FIST raps on the door. After a moment, a response:

EDDIE (O.C)

Come in.

The hand opens the door, revealing low jazz playing and Eddie Pax sitting behind his desk. He's wearing the usual outfit: a shirt, tie, slacks and shoes. This time the blinds are open and the office isn't so dark. Eddie looks up at Mary Elizabeth who enters

THE OFFICE

Eddie doesn't blink.

EDDIE

Door.

Mary Elizabeth pardons herself and turns to close the door. She's wearing a pretty, reserved dress.

EDDIE (O.S.)

Please.

Having closed the door, Mary Elizabeth turns and approaches the desk.

EDDIE

Take a seat, please.

Mary Elizabeth, clearly uncomfortable with the idea of hiring a dick, looks at the posters on the walls.

Eddie stands up and takes the needle off the record on the turntable. He notices Mary Elizabeth scanning the room.

EDDIE

You know the movies?

MARY ELIZABETH
 (tentative -- smiles)
 They're detective movies.

EDDIE
 Yes they are, ma'am.

Eddie sits down, makes himself comfortable.

He looks at Mary Elizabeth for a beat. Maybe a little too long.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
 What can I do for you?

MARY ELIZABETH
 (tentatively)
 Well, it's my husband. He's been missing a few days, and the police haven't been much help at all.

Eddie WATCHES Mary Elizabeth intently as she speaks. He's captured by something about her.

Slowly PUSH IN on Eddie.

MARY ELIZABETH (O.S.)
 And it's not like him -- to just disappear like that. I can't even begin to tell you how worried I am. My momma, she thinks he's lousy. But he isn't, he's a good, hard-working man who just needs a break. He--

EDDIE
 Have dinner with me.

Mary Elizabeth is completely taken aback by this request. She's quiet for a long beat.

She almost cracks a smile, that's how disbelieving she is.

MARY ELIZABETH
 What?

Is she flattered? Mr. Eddie Pax is quite handsome, after all.

EDDIE
 Have dinner with me.

MARY ELIZABETH
 (unsure how to respond)
 Mr. Pax, I'm asking you to track down my husband--

EDDIE

And I'm asking you to come to
dinner with me. It's late and I'm
starved.

Mary Elizabeth thinks about this for a moment, not taking
her eyes off of Eddie.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Eddie, dressed as he was back in the office in his shirt,
tie, pants and shoes, is seated by the MAITRE D'.

A young, attentive WAITER stands by.

Mary Elizabeth, already seated, is wearing the same pretty,
classy dress. She appears to be a little reluctant.

EDDIE

(to Mary Elizabeth)

Malbec?

MARY ELIZABETH

Excuse me?

EDDIE

Would you like a glass of wine?

MARY ELIZABETH

Oh, I don't know--

EDDIE

A bottle of your Malbec. The, uh,
The Topilo. Bring two glasses.

WAITER (O.C.)

Certainly, sir.

Eddie looks around the restaurant, taking it all in, turning
his gaze towards Mary Elizabeth.

EDDIE

(exhales)

I love this place.

He smiles at her. It's a movie-star smile. He could be one
of the leads from the films that line the walls of his
office.

EDDIE

So, what's your name?

MARY ELIZABETH

(indignant)

I came to you to ask you for help
regarding my husband.

EDDIE

And I was starved, so I invited you to come have dinner with me. Why did you call to my office so late, anyway?

MARY ELIZABETH

I was working. I'm a working woman. I couldn't afford to call to you any earlier.

EDDIE

Where do you work?

MARY ELIZABETH

'The First On Your Left' café.

EDDIE

All right. That's a great joint.

MARY ELIZABETH

Sure it is.

EDDIE

Look, let's just try and enjoy a meal together, huh? You can talk to me about your husband and his situation and I'll listen attentively, don't worry.

(picks up the menu)

I'm so hungry I could eat a 400lb Samoan. And you look like you could use some nutrients, too, if you don't mind me saying.

Eddie picks up and hands to Mary Elizabeth the menu resting in front of her. She accepts and looks at it.

MARY ELIZABETH

I'm not very hungry.

EDDIE

You should try the butternut squash ravioli. It's... Ah, it's... delectable. That's a good word, huh?

Mary Elizabeth produces a hint of a smile.

MARY ELIZABETH

Well, I do like ravioli.

EDDIE

(encouraging)

So you should get it.

The waiter returns with the bottle of wine. He uncorks the bottle and pours a thimbleful. Eddie samples it and nods, and the waiter proceeds to fill two glasses. First, Mary

Elizabeth's, followed by Eddie's.

Eddie raises a glass.

EDDIE
(smiling)
To a healthy economy.

Mary Elizabeth, unimpressed, doesn't raise her glass.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. That was insensitive of
me.

Mary Elizabeth shakes her head.

MARY ELIZABETH
What am I doing here? Roxy said you
could help me and instead of
listening to my predicament you
make me accompany you to dinner
just so I can talk to you. And then
you start making toasts and--

EDDIE
Hey, I'm sorry.

MARY ELIZABETH
(swallows her anger)
Can you help me or not?

EDDIE
Of course I can help you. Do you
know what I cost?

MARY ELIZABETH
I know you take one thousand up
front. Cash.

EDDIE
That's right.

MARY ELIZABETH
And a hundred dollars a day for the
duration of the case.

Eddie takes a sip of the wine.

EDDIE
Yes and yes.

MARY ELIZABETH
Okay. So are you going to listen to
me?

EDDIE
Are you going to tell me your name?

Mary Elizabeth sighs.

MARY ELIZABETH

Mary Elizabeth. My name's Mary Elizabeth. People in work call me Lizzy, but it's Mary Elizabeth.

EDDIE

Mary Elizabeth.

(a beat)

Why not just one? Why Mary and Elizabeth.

MARY ELIZABETH

My mother's mother was Mary and my father's mother was Elizabeth -- not that it's any of your business. Now, are you going to listen to what I have to tell you? I have your cash right here in an envelope in my bag. I was told that you're a professional, and this is anything but professional conduct.

EDDIE

We're outside of office hours, Mary Elizabeth.

MARY ELIZABETH

I'm a potential client.

EDDIE

And that's fine. But we're having dinner together. Let's enjoy it. Have a conversation. Get to know one another a little.

MARY ELIZABETH

What has getting to know each other got to do with you helping me find my husband?

EDDIE

There are a number of reasons, actually. To begin with, I'm hungry, and it's nice to have the company. Then there's trust. It's important that I trust my clients as much as it's important that they trust me. And then there's the fact that you're a very beautiful woman and my heart skipped a beat the second you walked into my office.

She wasn't expecting the third one.

MARY ELIZABETH

Well, I--

EDDIE

Let's just talk. Eat and talk.
Enjoy the wine. It's the Topilo.
It's the best Malbec there is,
trust me.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT -- LATER

An empty plate rests in front of Mary Elizabeth. Her glass is half filled with wine.

MARY ELIZABETH

Well, ten out of ten for the
ravioli. Wow.

An empty plate sits in front of Eddie, too. He holds his glass, which is almost empty.

EDDIE

Hate to say I told you so.

MARY ELIZABETH

This place is just wonderful. Even
the bathrooms. They're as fancy as
the lobby at the Ritz. Not that
I've ever been to the Ritz.

EDDIE

This is my favourite place to dine
in. The food, the atmosphere -- the
washrooms. If the place was full
I'd eat off the toilet seat if
they'd let me.

Mary Elizabeth takes a sip from the wine glass.

MARY ELIZABETH

And this wine!

EDDIE

It's the best.
(a beat, watches Mary
Elizabeth)
So... Now that the meal is done,
tell me about your husband.

MARY ELIZABETH

(as if reprimanding
herself)
Yes. Of course. Arty.

Eddie sits forward, suddenly becoming more interested.

EDDIE

Arty? That's short for---

MARY ELIZABETH

Arthur.

EDDIE

Okay.

Eddie takes his notepad from his back pocket and a small pencil from his shirt pocket -- ready for action! He begins to scribble away.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

And Arthur, or Arty... What does he do?

MARY ELIZABETH

He's a writer. Well, he's not working at the minute -- he's been so focused on his writing, you know -- he's been submitting his most recent novel to all the publishers and agents and they just don't see the charm in his work. He's really talented, I'm not just saying that because I'm his wife.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

(nods his head)

Sure.

IN THE NOTEPAD Eddie has written the word "Loser." He underlines it twice.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

And how old is Arthur? You look pretty young. Is he older?

MARY ELIZABETH

I'm twenty-six. Arty's twenty-eight.

EDDIE

(scribbling)

Twenty-six. Twenty-eight. Mm-hmm.

(a beat)

And what happened? You said he'd left a suicide note?

MARY ELIZABETH

(nodding)

Yes. Yes, he left a note. But, see, he didn't go through with it. I just know he didn't.

EDDIE

How do you know?

MARY ELIZABETH

Well... For starters, it's Arty. I just don't think he could go through with something like that. And then there's the chair in the middle of the room--

EDDIE

You think he'd planned on hanging himself?

MARY ELIZABETH

Why would a chair be left in the middle of the room under a wooden beam?

EDDIE

Maybe he was fixing something.

MARY ELIZABETH

Not very likely, Mr. Pax. Arty isn't the 'handyman' type.

EDDIE

So maybe he thought about you and how you finding him like that would've stayed with you for the rest of your life. Maybe he simply decided on taking another way out -- one that didn't involve you discovering him.

MARY ELIZABETH

It's just... I don't think so. Arty doesn't like the outdoors. He can barely tolerate crossing the street. If he was going to do it he'd have done it at home.

EDDIE

So, what? You think he's left town?

MARY ELIZABETH

I don't know. That's why I came to you. Roxy said you'd helped her before.

EDDIE

Roxy? Roxy...

MARY ELIZABETH

You helped her with her cat.

EDDIE

Ah, Roxy. Mr. Clint. Yeah, I remember. She looks like Marilyn.

MARY ELIZABETH

Well, she tries to--

EDDIE

So, you want me to find your husband, if, and I apologize for this, but IF he hasn't topped himself in some other way?

Mary Elizabeth sighs.

MARY ELIZABETH

I just want to know that he's safe.

EDDIE

Have you got a picture of Arthur?

MARY ELIZABETH

Oh, no. No, I forgot. I'll bring one to your office tomorrow.

(a beat)

I just hope he's okay, Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

Well, assuming he's around, if anybody's going to find him, it's me.

Eddie offers the same movie-star smile as before. Mary Elizabeth, disconcerted having talked about her husband again -- and probably feeling guilty for having enjoyed a meal with another man in her husband's absence -- takes a long sip of her wine.

INT. EDDIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

A PICTURE OF ART.

Mary Elizabeth sits opposite Eddie as he looks at the photograph he holds in his hand.

MARY ELIZABETH

That's a recent picture, too.

EDDIE

I see.

MARY ELIZABETH

Mr. Pax?

EDDIE

Yes?

MARY ELIZABETH

You'll call me as soon as you have news, right?

EDDIE

Yeah. Yes. Of course.

MARY ELIZABETH

(rising)

Okay, well I've got to get back to work.

Mary Elizabeth makes her way to the door.

MARY ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I hope you'll have news real soon, Mr Pax.

EDDIE

(calling)

Mary Elizabeth!

MARY ELIZABETH

(stops)

Yes, Eddie?

EDDIE

Have dinner with me tomorrow. I can update you on my progress.

MARY ELIZABETH

I don't think that's such a great idea.

EDDIE

Come on. It'll be good for you to get out of the house. Keep yourself busy.

MARY ELIZABETH

It's just, I don't think--

EDDIE

(confidently)

Say 7pm? Same place.

MARY ELIZABETH

(hesitates)

Okay. Okay, then. 7pm it is.

Mary Elizabeth smiles and leaves the office, closing the door behind her.

Eddie sighs and holds up the photo of Art again. He opens the desk drawer and reveals the Polaroid given to him by Bloom. He holds it up next to the photo of Art. Both photos are of the same person.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- EVENING

'La Vie en Rose' by Edith Piaf begins.

Eddie stands in the kitchen waiting for Gloria.

EDDIE
 (calling)
 Come on, Ma.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - MOVING -- EVENING

The song continues to play. Gloria sings along -- though we can't hear her -- as Eddie drives the car. He holds a distant expression on his face.

GLORIA
 (singing along - big
 facial expressions)
 Quand il me prend dans ses bras, Il
 me parle tout bas, Je vois la vie
 en rose.

Eddie flicks on the indicator.

GLORIA
 (big eyes, raises her
 arm, controlling her
 voice)
 Il me dit des mots--

INT. CONCERT HALL - LOBBY -- EVENING

Song ends. Gloria links Eddie's arm as the two of them stroll through the lobby at a brisk pace, the sound of Gloria's shoes prominent.

INT. CONCERT HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Gloria and Eddie stand at the back of the concert hall, looking at the grand stage in front of them.

GLORIA
 Oh, it's spectacular.

EDDIE
 It's quite something, all right.

GLORIA
 To think, after all these years,
 I'll be singing on that stage. A
 dream come through.

EDDIE
 I've never been more proud of you,
 Ma.

Gloria smiles and rubs Eddie's arm. He kisses the top of her head.

INT. EDDIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jazz plays at a low volume as Eddie tackles a crossword puzzle. The blinds are raised and there's plenty of light in the room.

A knock arrives on the office door.

EDDIE

Come in.

The door opens, revealing a WOMAN in her fifties. Her make-up is quite extreme, accentuating the eyes. She's possibly rather beautiful underneath it all. Her hair is tightly pulled back into a bun. In her hand is a cigarette holder, on the tip of that is a lighted cigarette. She closes the door behind her.

WOMAN

(well spoken)

Is it okay to smoke in here?

EDDIE

It sure is.

Eddie slides the ashtray over to the other side of the table as the woman approaches the chair and sits down.

Eddie offers his hand.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Eddie Pax.

WOMAN

(ignoring his hand)

I know who you are. How do you think I found you?

EDDIE

It's a pleasure to meet you too, lady. Now what do I call you?

WOMAN

My name's Francis Loretta Rutherford.

EDDIE

Hey, I know you. You're that famous socialite. The heiress, right?

RUTHERFORD

You may call me Franny.

EDDIE

(smiles)

Like Franny and Zooey.

RUTHERFORD

(dismissive)

I don't care for Salinger.

Eddie's shrugs off the comment.

EDDIE

Well, Ms. Rutherford, I mean,
Franny. What can I do for you?

RUTHERFORD

I'm trying to find someone.

EDDIE

Which lead you to me, of course.

RUTHERFORD

(ignoring him -- with
venom)

Some little bastard.

EDDIE

Okay. Okay. Do you want to tell me
about this little bastard?

Eddie flips open his notepad, picks up his pencil: ready for
action, as always.

RUTHERFORD

It's very complicated.

EDDIE

Try me.

RUTHERFORD

I'd rather not.

EDDIE

Okay, so what can you tell me?

RUTHERFORD

I can tell you his name.

EDDIE

Go on.

RUTHERFORD

Walter. Walter Sherman.

Eddie sits up. He's interested. That name.

RUTHERFORD (O.S.)

I'm lead to believe that the name
is a fake, but I can't be so sure.

EDDIE

Sherman. Okay. And can you tell me
what he looks like, this Walter
Sherman?

Rutherford rummages in her purse before removing a
photograph and handing it to Eddie.

Eddie looks at the PHOTO. Lo and behold, the person in the
picture is Art. Not only that, it's a picture of the

Polaroid of Art.

RUTHERFORD (O.S.)
That's the little dipshit.

EDDIE (O.S.)
Okay.

Eddie runs his hand over his mouth.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
So what did this guy do?

RUTHERFORD
I'd prefer if we didn't get into
the particulars.

EDDIE
And what are we talking here?
Locate? Locate and deliver? Locate
and exterminate?

RUTHERFORD
(sits forward, surprised)
You do that? Extermination?

EDDIE
I'd rather not say, but I'd like to
hear what you'd like me to do with
your friend.

RUTHERFORD
Extermination is appealing, I won't
lie.
(think about it)
No! Not yet, anyway. I want to see
the treacherous mooncalf.
(more deliberating)
Yes. I want to know when you've
found him. And I want you to hold
him for me. I want to visit him
myself.

Eddie scribbles away.

EDDIE
Okay, so leave it with me.

RUTHERFORD
Don't I have to pay you first?

EDDIE
Uh, yeah. Yeah, one K up front.

RUTHERFORD
So I was told.

Rutherford reaches into her purse once again. She pulls an envelope from it and passes it across the desk to Eddie.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D)

It's all there. Hundred dollar bills. Now, it's important that this remains entirely confidential. I can trust you're a professional?

Eddie counts ten bills before placing the envelope into his desk drawer.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D)

Are you all right, Mr. Pax? You look a little... Absent.

EDDIE

I'm fine, Ms. Rutherford.
Absolutely fine.
(dialogue)
And yes, I'm the consummate professional.

Rutherford stands up and turns to leave.

RUTHERFORD

You can contact me at the number on the back of the photo of the little wretch.

Rutherford opens the door, turning to Eddie before she leaves.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D)

If you find him within one week and deliver him to me, I'll pay you an additional ten thousand.

Eddie doesn't respond at first, then nods his head.

EDDIE

Got it.

As soon as Rutherford closes the door Eddie stands up.

He pulls open the desk drawer. In the drawer is a 9mm pistol and a single key, next to the envelope he just received from Rutherford.

He removes the key and slides the drawer shut.

CUT TO:

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - MOVING -- DAY

The sound of the finale to Johannes Brahms' 'Symphony No. 1' erupts as Eddie drives the car.

CUT TO:

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- DAY

Brahams continues as Eddie paces through the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASEMENT DOOR -- DAY

Eddie stands at the door of the basement. He removes the key from his pocket and unlocks the door.

He enters. Brahams ends.

He descends the stairs as he enters the

BASEMENT

and approaches a door at the end of the room.

He takes a breath before opening the door, revealing a person cuffed to the pipes which line the walls like vines. The person's head is covered by a burlack sack. They twist and turn and groan as they relise the door's just opened.

Eddie REMOVES the burlack sack revealing ART, who's sweaty but not beat up. In his mouth is a homemade gag.

EDDIE

Remember, no screaming or you get a paddling.

Eddie points to a paddle resting against the wall. Art nods his head; he understands.

Eddie removes the gag. Art speaks immediately.

ART

Can't you just tell me what this is about? I've never met you in my life -- I don't know why --

EDDIE

Keep it shut! You want to eat, right?

ART

Yes, please. I'm hungry. I'm so hungry I could eat a 400lb Samoan.

Eddie looks at Art. Didn't he use that one himself the other night at dinner?

EDDIE

Sure you could.

Eddie disappears from shot for a moment and we hear some rummaging, before he returns holding an opened can of beans and a spoon.

EDDIE

Open wide.

Art does as he's told.

Eddie gets on his haunches and begins to spoon the food into Art's mouth.

EDDIE

What have you been up to, huh?

Art swallows his food and -- a la Malcolm McDowell in 'A Clockwork Orange' -- opens his mouth for more.

FLASHBACK

INT. GLOOMY BAR - BOOTH -- EVENING

Roxy sits opposite Eddie, who holds the Polaroid in his hand.

EDDIE

You know this guy, Roxy?

ROXY

It just might be your lucky day, Eddie.

EDDIE

Get outta here.

ROXY

I ain't yankin' your hose, Eddie. He lives across the hall from me. Name's Arthur. He's a writer.

EDDIE

A writer? Like, what kind of writing? Movies?

ROXY

How should I know? I don't talk to him much.

EDDIE

(relaxes)

Okay. Great. Easy job.

(a beat)

You want to earn a few easy bucks?

Roxy sits forward and smiles flirtatiously.

ROXY

Always.

INT. THE GERSTLEY APARTMENT -- DAY

Art leans over his desk in the living room of the small apartment. A knotted rope dangles around his neck as he scribbles away on a piece of paper. A chair rests in the middle of the room under a wooden beam.

He continues until he's finished writing the letter. He picks up the freshly scribed letter and reads over it -- aloud.

ART

Dearest Mary Elizabeth. It's in my darkest hour that I write you this letter. My heart is no longer afloat. It's the heaviest it's ever been. The sun cannot reach the depths to which my heart has plunged. And there's no oxygen here. Nothing to keep my heart beating. The road has come to an end, my love, and the day has reached its darkest hour. Chekhov said that people do not notice whether it's winter or summer when they're happy. Well, it's been a long, frigid winter for me. I love you with all my heart, Mary Elizabeth. Please forgive me for leaving you in this macabre manner. My daft tongue, my daft pen, my daft dreams... Think of me in--

Suddenly, the door to the apartment springs open, revealing Eddie Pax and Roxy.

ART

What the hell? Roxy?

Eddie rushes towards Art and wraps his arms around the much skinnier man. Art squirms a little, but Roxy arrives, pulls the knotted rope from Art's neck, and places a chloroform-covered napkin over Art's mouth and nose, causing him to pass out almost immediately.

END FLASHBACK

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT -- DAY

Eddie places the empty can on the floor, he drops the spoon into it.

Art is seated. Tomato sauce stains his lips.

EDDIE

So listen to me. You've got people looking for you.

ART

I bet I do. You kidnapped me. My wife will be looking for me. The police are searching for me right now, I bet. And my mother, too. She'll be distraught.

EDDIE

I mean other people.

Eddie rests his back against the wall.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Look, I'll level with you, kid. I'm a dick.

ART

Well, I didn't want to be rude, but you are a little difficult to warm to.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

A detective. A private investigator. A PI. I get paid to track people down. Sometimes I'm paid to find people and bring them to the people who've hired me to locate the individual.

ART

Someone paid you to find me?

EDDIE

Yes, they did. Two people, in fact. And I know you must know why more than one person would be looking for you.

ART

I have no idea.

EDDIE

Listen, kid. Here's the thing. I'm actually not a bad guy. I'm a good detective. But ever since the Depression, money hasn't exactly been flowing in the direction of my pockets. People don't have as much money as they did ten years ago. Odd jobs would be given to me by regular, middle-class people. A lot of them being stupid middle-class people. And when stupid people have money they are susceptible to doing stupid things, which, occasionally, results in work for me.

Eddie pauses. He inserts a smoke into his mouth. The zip of lighter, the gasp of a smoker.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

But since the crash, well, people aren't partaking in as many illicit activities, and illicit activities are important in my line of work, as I'm sure you can imagine. Of course there's always going to be immoral and deviant behavior in our society, and this kind of behavior is commonplace among the rich, powerful and the privileged. And sometimes these people do come to me, when they need some shmuck located. Someone who probably knows too much. I tend not to ask. But I don't have to use my imagination to guess what happens to these people who know a little more than they should.

Art watches Eddie as the PI continues.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Arthur. What do you know that has prompted two very wealthy and powerful people to hire me to track you down?

ART

Honestly. Mr-- I'm sorry I didn't get your name.

EDDIE

Cute.

ART

(innocently)

Honestly. I don't know why they'd be looking for me.

Eddie sighs.

EDDIE

Do you think that I could be trying to help you here?

ART

It's hard to believe a man who took me from my home against my own will and is holding me hostage in his basement is trying to help me.

EDDIE

That's just part of what I do. When it comes to finding people.

(a beat)

Like I said: since the crash business hasn't been exactly

(MORE)

EDDIE (cont'd)
 booming. So, if someone has paid me to track someone down, I find that person and keep them a little longer, meaning I get more money.

ART
 Couldn't you just lie? Couldn't you just say you haven't found your guy? How are they going to know the difference?

EDDIE
 It's important that I'm in total control of the situation. I need to have full control, so I need to keep the person here until the time is right to hand them over to my client.

Eddie stands up.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
 Now I've just shared a lot of information with you, Arthur. I hope that you're smart enough to know when someone's trying to cooperate. So how about you tell me why these two cats are looking for you.

ART
 Which two cats?

EDDIE
 Don't play dumb, Arthur.

ART
 I don't know what you're talking about.

Eddie smiles and shakes his head.

EDDIE
 Okay, if you want to play it that way.

Eddie places the gag in Art's mouth -- he doesn't offer much in way of resistance. Eddie then places the burlack sack over Art's head, who calmly accepts this.

Eddie slams the door shut.

CUT TO BLACK

'Padam, Padam' by Edith Piaf begins over black.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- DAY

As before, Eddie stands in the kitchen waiting for Gloria. The song continues to play.

EDDIE
(calling)
Come on, Ma.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - MOVING -- EVENING

The song continues. Gloria sings along as Eddie drives the car, the same distant expression on his face as last time.

GLORIA
(singing along - big
facial expressions)
Padam, padam, padam, Il arrive en
courant derriere moi.

Eddie flicks on the indicator.

GLORIA
(big eyes, raises her
arm, controlling her
voice)
Padam, padam, padam, Il me fait le
coup du souviens-toi--

INT. CONCERT HALL - LOBBY -- EVENING

Like on their last visit, Gloria links Eddie's arm as the two of them stroll through the lobby, only now the sound of the song is prominent.

INT. CONCERT HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The song continues. As before, Gloria and Eddie stand at the back of the concert hall, looking at the grand stage in front of them. Only this time they're accompanied by a SUITED GENTLEMAN (60s) who enthusiastically talks to Gloria about the plans for the night.

The song continues, eventually fading out as we...

CUT TO:

INT. EDDIE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Eddie sits almost in a slumber as he watches the news.

ON THE TV:

Is Francis Loretta Rutherford.

She's at some fancy gathering - a barage of camera flashes assault her features.

REPORTER (V.O.)

...And the lady responsible for the gala, Francis Loretta Rutherford, heir to the Rutherford fortune. Of course her father, Samuel Morgan Rutherford is the owner of major pharmaceutical...

Eddie checks his watch.

EDDIE

Shit.

Eddie springs from the bed and begins to get dressed.

A knock arrives on the door.

EDDIE

(calling as he gets dressed)

Yeah?

CATHY

Eddie, baby. Open the door.

EDDIE

Go away, Cathy.

CATHY

It's Jeremy.

Eddie approaches the door and opens it. His pants are unbuttoned.

CATHY

(noticing the pants)

So ya do want another taste of Cathy, huh?

EDDIE

It was the one time, Cathy. I was drunk. Let it go. What did Jeremy say?

CATHY

Well, he said to tell ya that he got yer money for last month's rent, but that ya owe him for two months.

EDDIE

Christ. Okay. Is that it?

CATHY

Oh, and there was some other guy looking for ya. Small guy, but wide. I saw him knocking at yer door.

EDDIE
Is that right?

CATHY
Yeah. Now how about that drink?

EDDIE
Goodbye, Cathy.

Eddie closes the door on Cathy's face.

CATHY (O.C.)
Shut up that dog of yours, Eddie.

Eddie tries to pull his leg through his pants.

EDDIE
(irritated - while fixing
his pants)
I don't have a god damn dog!

A thud as Eddie falls over.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Eddie, smartly dressed in a navy-blue suit and white shirt -- no tie -- stares at Mary Elizabeth, who's dressed for the occasion in a deep green, velvet dress.

The empty plates on the table suggest that they've recently finished their meal, and an open bottle of wine suggests that they're both indulging.

The atmosphere at the table is relaxed.

EDDIE
Tell me this: did you and your
husband speak regularly?

MARY ELIZABETH
What kind of question is that?
We're married. Of course we did. We
spoke-- we SPEAK all the time.

EDDIE
And when you'd talk, would Arthur
discuss his affairs -- what he'd
get up to?

MARY ELIZABETH
(dismissive)
"What he'd get up to?" Arthur
wouldn't "get up" to much. If
you're asking me did we keep
secrets from each other then the
answer is no, Mr. Pax. Arty and me
shared everything. We're best
friends.

EDDIE

But, as I'm sure you know, everyone has their secrets, and I think--

MARY ELIZABETH

Not everyone.

EDDIE

Mary Elizabeth, we all have things that we keep from those closest to us -- however insignificant those little secrets may seem. You know the line from that song: 'Cut me open, remove my lies. Cut me open, enjoy the surprise.'

MARY ELIZABETH

No, no. Not me. Not me, Mr. Pax. I'm as you see me. There's nothing in the dark in my life.

(gestures to her stomach)

Nothing... Inside that's to be discovered. Arty knew -- Arty knows -- everything there is to know about me.

EDDIE

(smiles)

A veritable goodie two shoes.

MARY ELIZABETH

In case you hadn't noticed, my life isn't exactly an exciting movie. I work at the café, I come home. Me and Arty go on walks. We go away on little trips every now and then, when we can afford to. I visit my momma regularly. Not much glitz and glamour. No "shady" dealings.

EDDIE

But Arthur. He'd have plenty of alone time while you'd be at the café.

MARY ELIZABETH

Arthur's a writer. He'd spend his days working on his novel.

EDDIE

How can you be so sure?

MARY ELIZABETH

(hesitates, as if
offended)

Because I'm sure, Mr. Pax. I know my Arty. He's a writer. He spends his days writing.

EDDIE

(changing the subject)

You know, I think I met you before,
at your place, The First On Your
Left café. It's a pretty little
place---

MARY ELIZABETH

(interrupting)

You're trying to get at something,
Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

Am I?

MARY ELIZABETH

About Arty. What is it that you've
discovered?

EDDIE

I never suggested that I discovered
anything. I'm merely investigating
your husband's daily life. His
routine.

MARY ELIZABETH

Because you think he was up to no
good?

EDDIE

Because your husband is missing,
and he'd been planning on topping
himself.

MARY ELIZABETH

He was depressed over his book.
He'd worked so hard, on so many
novels, and he'd suffered through
rejection letter after rejection
letter. Do you know what that can
do to a man's spirit? To his pride?
To spend years -- years -- working
and working and working and for
what? A letter saying 'Sorry,
sport. Not this time.'

Eddie expells a breath and picks up his glass of wine. Takes
a sip.

EDDIE

What kind of novels did your
husband write, anyway?

MARY ELIZABETH

Oh, he called what he wrote
'speculative fiction.' His most
recent novel was set in 19th
century Russia. His protagonist is

(MORE)

MARY ELIZABETH (cont'd)
 a struggling playwright who has to compete with all the Russian literary heavyweights of the time: Turgenev, Tolstoy, Chekhov (Arty is particularly fond of Chekhov.) It begins with the teenage protagonist encountering an sick Turgenev, who inspires the youngster to be a writer. And then we fast forward ten years, and the writer is putting on plays that aren't well-received, but Chekhov, his friend, reassures him by telling him how *The Seagull* was ridiculed at first. But eventually it all goes south for our writer when he offends Chekhov, and he's shunned by the literati, and finally, the protag challenges Chekhov to a duel -- you know, like his short story? -- And, of course, Chekhov is the victor, and our protagonist dies from a wound inflicted by one of his heroes. It's all very poetic.

EDDIE

Sounds... Boring.

MARY ELIZABETH

(ignoring the comment)

Arty's a great writer. He's really great, he just hasn't had any luck. It's about luck and contacts in this world and Arthur is short on those. But he's not short on talent.

EDDIE

You really believe in him, huh?

MARY ELIZABETH

Of course I do.

(pause)

He's brilliant.

CUT TO:

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT -- DAY

Arthur: still cuffed to the pipes, his head still covered by the burlack sack. He gently and repeatedly knocks his head against the pipes.

CUT TO:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Back to the cafe. Eddie looks at Mary Elizabeth.

EDDIE

Mary Elizabeth. You're a young lady. You're a hopeful person, if you don't mind me saying. I think you believe in people. You believe that people are inherently good.

MARY ELIZABETH

Yes, I do.

EDDIE

And you believe everything that your husband tells you.

MARY ELIZABETH

Arty has no reason to lie to me.

Eddie admires Mary Elizabeth for a beat.

EDDIE

You're a very beautiful woman.

Mary Elizabeth blushes a little.

MARY ELIZABETH

That's very nice of you to say, Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

Stop with the "Mr. Pax." It's Eddie. Please, call me Eddie.

Mary Elizabeth sips some wine.

MARY ELIZABETH

Okay, I'll call you Eddie.

EDDIE

I don't like to see a beautiful, sweet women messed around. My mother's a beautiful, sweet woman.

MARY ELIZABETH

I'm not being messed around Mr.-- Eddie.

EDDIE

(sits forward with intent)

Mary Elizabeth. Your husband's a liar. He's a compulsive liar and he's put you in danger.

MARY ELIZABETH

(incredulous)

That's not true, Eddie. Arty's--

EDDIE

Arty's up to his neck in donkey
shit, Mary Elizabeth. I've
discovered things, things I can't
share with you right now--

MARY ELIZABETH

You will share what you know, Mr.
Pax.

EDDIE

Please, it's Eddie.

MARY ELIZABETH

You will share what you know about
my Arty, Eddie. I'm paying you,
remember.

EDDIE

It's for your own safety that I
keep everything under wraps for
now.

Eddie reaches out and takes Mary Elizabeth's hands in his.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Mary Elizabeth, you've got to
understand. If you got hurt as a
result of my investigation, I
wouldn't be able to live with
myself.

Mary Elizabeth withdraws her hands from Eddie's grasp.

MARY ELIZABETH

I'm paying you to tell me what is
going on with my husband--

EDDIE

Forget him, Mary Elizabeth. Listen
to me. Forget him. He's a loser
writer.

Mary Elizabeth stares open-mouthed; she can't believe what
she's hearing.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

He's involved in something that's
much bigger than he realizes, and
in the process of getting wrapped
up in this maelstrom -- this
imbroglio -- he's put you in direct
danger.

(beginning to lose his
cool)

Listen to me. I can take care of
you.

MARY ELIZABETH

What? Mr. Pax--

EDDIE

(completely loses
control)

I'm in love with you, Mary Elizabeth! I can't stop thinking about you. Ever since you walked into my office -- Goddammit you were like an angel. A devilishly beautiful angel.

MARY ELIZABETH

Mr. Pax--

EDDIE

I dream about you. I dream about you every night, Mary Elizabeth. And when I wake up you're the first thing I think about. You walk with me along the streets, you sit with me in my office... You've infected me with your beauty, Mary Elizabeth. I'm love-sick. I love you. You've got to let me take care of you.

Mary Elizabeth is lost for words.

Eddie realizes he's caused a bit of a scene. He looks at the other diners in close proximity and smiles, embarrassed.

He coughs, sits up and fixes his shirt. Reaches for his glass of wine.

A deafening silence has descended on the table.

Eventually, Mary Elizabeth breaks it.

MARY ELIZABETH

(calmly)

I've paid you to track down my missing husband, Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

Please, call me Eddie.

MARY ELIZABETH

(explodes)

Oh it doesn't matter what I call you!

Mary Elizabeth regains control.

MARY ELIZABETH

I'll call you Mr. Pax if I want to call you Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

You can call me anything you want
to--

MARY ELIZABETH

(interrupting)

What I need you to do is focus on
your job. I need you to focus on
finding my husband.

Eddie's a dog that's been whopped: He didn't expect that his
owner was capable of beating him. Mary Elizabeth, it turned
out, wasn't the easy case which he'd expected to crack
immediately.

EDDIE

You're right.

Mary Elizabeth knocks back her wine and her eyes look around
the room. They've probably both had a little too much wine.
Let's face it, there's no "probably" about it.

MARY ELIZABETH

(motioning to leave)

I think I should go.

Eddie reaches out a reasoning hand.

EDDIE

Listen. I'm sorry. You're right.
This is completely unprofessional
of me.

Mary Elizabeth stands up anyway.

MARY ELIZABETH

If you get any news about my Arty
-- news that you can share -- give
me a call.

Mary Elizabeth takes her purse and turns to leave. She
drunkenly stumbles at first, before regaining her composure
and exiting the restaurant.

Eddie sighs and tosses his napkin on the table.

CUT TO:

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT -- DAY

A hammer.

The person holding the hammer is Eddie. He looks at the door
behind which is Art.

Eddie takes a deep breath, and then quickly approaches the
door and opens it.

Art immediately squirms and groans.

Eddie raises the hammer above his head, about to strike.

More groaning from Art, as if he's trying to reason with Eddie.

Eddie has second thoughts -- he lowers the hammer and tosses it on a shelf. He removes the burlack sack from Art's head.

EDDIE

What are you groaning about?

Art groans some more, wide-eyed.

Eddie removes the gag.

ART

You were going to kill me!

EDDIE

What?

ART

You were going to kill me!

EDDIE

I was not.

ART

Yes, you were!

EDDIE

How could you tell if I was gonna kill you or not?

ART

Try the burlack sack, pyscho!

Eddie reaches down and picks up the sack. He places it over his head and waves his hand in front of his face.

EDDIE

(muffled)

Goddammit.

Eddie removes the burlack sack.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I wasn't going to kill you.

ART

You had a hammer!

EDDIE

I was practising. It's practise, in case I actually have to do it.

ART

In case you have to bash my brains in?

EDDIE

In case I have to bash someone's
brains in.

ART

Sure. Sure. Jesus. Why would you
kill me? Seriously--

Eddie gets on his haunches. He slaps Art across the face.

EDDIE

Now listen to me, asshole. Why are
people looking for you, huh? I've
got two wealthy, highly-respected
individuals looking for your ass.
Two people who don't want to go to
the authorities, who don't want
their own people knowing about
this, and I want to know why.

ART

I don't--

EDDIE

(points his finger)

And don't play dumb, Arthur! This
isn't a game. You need to start
talking or I mean it, I'll start
using that hammer on places that
won't prove fatal.
(a beat)

Talk.

ART

I'll talk when you talk.

Eddie stands up, retrieves hammer. Back to his haunches.

EDDIE

Talk.

ART

Why are you still holding me here?
Who are you?

Eddie sizes up the hammer, aiming it between Art's eyes.

EDDIE

Bloom. Rutherford. Talk.

Eddie holds Art's leg. He places the hammer on Art's
kneecap. Art begins to squirm but it's no good. Eddie raises
the hammer.

EDDIE

(voice raised)

Bloom. Rutherford. Talk!

ART
 (squirming)
 I have pictures!

Eddie persists in holding Art's leg.

EDDIE
 Pictures? What kind of pictures?

ART
 (still frightened --
 frenetic)
 Pictures that could cause a scandal
 and ruin careers and reputations --
 those kind of pictures!

Eddie relaxes, releases Art's leg.

EDDIE
 Pictures. Always incriminating
 pictures.

Art follows suit, releasing a relieved breath.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
 And I told you why you're still
 here. I told you how I work.

ART
 You haven't told me who you are.

EDDIE
 (tired)
 I'm Eddie, Arthur. I'm Eddie.

CUT TO:

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT -- LATER

Two plates rest on the floor. One empty, the other half-full. It's a proper dinner: vegetable, potatoes, beef. Eddie arranges a mix of them on a fork and feeds it into Art's mouth.

EDDIE
 So explain to me how you came into
 possession of these pictures,
 Arthur.

ART
 (chewing)
 It started a few weeks ago...

FLASHBACK

INT. PARTY -- EVENING

Chilled, 40s jazz plays. The BAND playing the music is on a small stage.

A classy party at a classy venue. Suits, suits and fancy dresses galore. Distinguished INDIVIDUALS from different fields engage in conversation -- some animated, some reserved -- and standing at the back, in a smart, tidy get-up, is Art.

PUSH IN on Art.

ART (V.O.)

I was at this party. It was a fundraiser for Senator McGovern. You know McGovern, right?

EDDIE (V.O.)

That piece of crap?

ART (V.O.)

To each his own.

(a beat)

So I'm standing at the back of the room, taking in the scene before me, enjoying the music, when this woman approaches me.

Art turns to find Rutherford standing next to him. She looks at Art, before resting her back against the wall and joining Art in people-watching. She takes a pull of her cigarette, which is on the end of the long holder.

RUTHERFORD

I've never seen you before. And I've seen almost everyone in this city. Everyone worth knowing, that is. And this room is full of them.

ART

I'm a hidden gem.

RUTHERFORD

Is that so?

ART

I defied the odds.

RUTHERFORD

Nothing like a dark horse. You don't come from an affluent family? Of course you don't -- I'd know you if you did.

ART

Well, my family wasn't rolling in it. When I was a kid, my father used to say, 'Walter, you're from a nothing family with awful genes. Do yourself a favor: Learn a trade, find a woman who'll put up with you, and settle for that.'

RUTHERFORD

And what did your father do for a living?

ART

He was a life coach.

RUTHERFORD

(smiling)

I'm sure he was.

ART

My mother, on the otherhand. She gave me the belief. She'd say 'Walter, you're a diamond in the rough. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.'

RUTHERFORD

Shine on you crazy diamond.

ART

(smiling)

That's it, that's it.

RUTHERFORD

So how do you sparkle, then? In which field do you excel?

ART

I'm a writer.

RUTHERFORD

Oh, I love writers.

ART

You love writers?

RUTHERFORD

(emphatically)

I love them.

ART

Most people find us difficult.

RUTHERFORD

Oh, anyone worth their salt is difficult.

Rutherford turns to Art.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D)

I'm difficult.

ART

(flirting)

Incredibly difficult, I'm sure.

RUTHERFORD
(surprised)
You don't know who I am, do you?

ART
I can't say that I do.

RUTHERFORD
I can't say that I believe you.
(a beat - maybe she does
believe him)
Do you know anybody here?

ART
I'm afraid I do not.

Rutherford nods her head, then takes a pull of her
cigarette.

RUTHERFORD
So, Walter, wasn't it?

ART
(nods his head)
Walter. Walter Sherman.

RUTHERFORD
So what do you write, Walter
Sherman?

ART
I write screenplays. I'm just back
from LA. To be honest, it's a
relief to be back in town.

RUTHERFORD
(distaste)
LA, it's so... False.

ART
And hot. Too hot. Every day.
(a beat)
And what do you do Miss... Mrs...?

RUTHERFORD
Ms. Francis Loretta Rutherford. And
I do many things, Walter, darling.

ART
Including...?

RUTHERFORD
Including this.
(shows the room)
Organise fundraisers for the next
President of the United States.

ART
You think McGovern's got a chance?

RUTHERFORD

If you're my friend you have every chance. And I thought you didn't know anyone here?

ART

Well, I assumed you meant everyone other than Senator McGovern. Who doesn't know him? And I think that maybe we should be friends.

Rutherford smiles for a beat.

RUTHERFORD

Play your cards right, Walter.

Rutherford nods at Art and walks away. He looks after her, rapt.

ART (V.O.)

I've gotta say, there was something incredibly alluring about her.

EDDIE (V.O.)

She couldn't smell your bullshit?

ART (V.O.)

I didn't know it at the time. But as it turned out, no she couldn't.

Art watches the busy crowd once again. Eventually he spots Rutherford once more, only now she's conversing with a man with his back to Art.

He turns around and looks in Art's direction. It's Bloom.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Have you ever been to LA?

ART (V.O.)

Only in the movies.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Have you ever sold a screenplay?

ART (V.O.)

I've never even written one.

(a beat)

Anyway, that's when I first saw Bloom. I knew from the way he looked at me that Rutherford had been talking about me.

LATER THAT EVENING AT THE PARTY - HALLWAY

Judging by the distant sound of jazz playing, the party downstairs is still in full swing. Art is walking through the hallway, his shirt unbuttoned, his tie loose. He's swirling his room key in his hand.

ART (V.O.)
I decided I'd get an early night.
But Rutherford had other ideas.

RUTHERFORD (O.C.)
(calling)
O Walter!

Art turns to find Rutherford at the end of the hallway. She gives him a flirtatious wave.

ART
Ms. Rutherford. Isn't the Host
supposed to stay until the death?
Go down with the ship -- that kind
of thing.

RUTHERFORD
(approaching)
The only thing dying tonight is me
-- of boredom. But you...

Rutherford takes Art by the tie. She's had a bit to drink.

RUTHERFORD
You're just a breath of fresh air:
A new life-supporting component of
the air.

Art is a little uncomfortable with Rutherford's forwardness, but goes along with it anyway.

ART
(not as cool as before)
Uh, yeah. Well, that oxygen is so
passé, huh?

Rutherford pulls him in closer. She in his 'fighting and fucking' space -- THAT close.

RUTHERFORD
(serious)
Young Walter. You've an answer for
everything, don't you?

ART
(smiling nervously)
Everything worth answering.

RUTHERFORD
(lustfully, quietly)
Come to bed with me.

What?!

ART
(surprised)
Ms. Rutherford--

Rutherford begins to pull Art by the tie, leading him down the hallway, still facing him.

RUTHERFORD

(interrupting)

I know you want to. You think I wasn't aware of your flirtations downstairs? You think I haven't been drawn to your coitus pheromone?

ART

Coitus phero--?

RUTHERFORD

(interrupting)

I'm obsessed with the younger man, Walter. It's the one true form of vampirism. Spending nights with a younger man is how one feels forever young.

Art motions to speak but Rutherford continues.

RUTHERFORD

All those corpses downstairs. All of them having the same conversation they've been having for years. Year after year after year. All of them as dull as a nativity play.

ART

I'm a married man, Ms. Rutherford.

RUTHERFORD

Aren't we all married?

ART

But I'm happily married.

Believing this to be a joke, or perhaps simply mocking Art, Rutherford guffaws.

ART

Ms. Rutherford...

Rutherford stops walking. She raises her leg and rests her heel against one of the doors of the hotel room.

RUTHERFORD

(à la air-hostess)

We've arrived safely at our destination. I hope you've enjoyed flying with Rutherford Airways... The journey is just beginning.

Rutherford, who manages to unlock the door without turning from Art, twists the handle and kicks the door open with her

heel. She pulls Art into the room. He lets out a barely audible YELP.

The door slams shut.

END FLASHBACK

Back to:

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT -- EVENING

Eddie is seated on the floor, his back against the wall. Opposite him is Art, chained as before, his back unfomfortable against the wall.

EDDIE

(repulsed)

You slept with Francis Loretta
Rutherford?

ART

It was a regrettable indiscretion
on my part.

(looks at cuffs)

If I could hold up my hands, I
would.

EDDIE

What about your wife? You said you
were married.

ART

I am.

EDDIE

Does she know about this?

ART

No.

EDDIE

You're sure?

ART

What do you care? No, she doesn't
know. No one knows.

EDDIE

You shouldn't treat your wife that
way.

ART

Who are you to moralise? You were
about to bludgeon me to to death
with a hammer. You've kept me
locked up here for what I assume
has been days.

EDDIE

I wasn't going to murder you...
 Anyway, what happened with
 Rutherford?

Back to:

FLASHBACK

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Lying in bed, nude under the covers, is Arthur. He's relaxed, spent, but also slightly conflicted about what he's just done.

He looks at Rutherford as she walks across the room towards the door. She's wearing a bathrobe. She's undeniably attractive for a woman of her age, but still -- she's at least thirty years his senior. At least.

She opens the door and says a few quiet words to someone before closing the door and returning to the bed. She sits at the end of the bed and places her hand on Art's leg.

RUTHERFORD

I like you, Walter. You bring out something in me. Vibrancy. Life. I'd like you to share something with me.

ART

What have you got in mind? I'm a big fan of key lime pie.

RUTHERFORD

I meant something a little more personal. However, I suppose you could call this our desert.

Art watches Rutherford as she approaches the chest of drawers near the bed and lights a cigarette before sitting in a chair.

The door to the room opens and Bloom enters holding a briefcase.

Art looks on as Bloom walks straight to the bathroom without addressing either Rutherford or Art. Rutherford pays no attention.

ART

(pointing)
 I know that guy.

RUTHERFORD

You said you didn't know anybody at the party, apart from McGovern.

ART

But that guy's face. I know it.
I've seen him on the TV.

RUTHERFORD

I'm sure you're mistaken, Walter,
darling. Mr. B is a friend from out
of town who's visiting for a week.

Rutherford rises and approaches the bathroom door. She gives
it a gentle tap with her knuckles.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D)

Mr. B?

She waits a moment before she opens the door and enters.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D) (O.S.)

Oh, wonderful.

A few seconds later Bloom appears, crawling on all fours,
dressed in a FULL BODY RUBBER DOG SUIT -- only his face is
uncovered. Rutherford holds his leash.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D)

Walter Sherman, this is Mr. B. Mr.
B, say hello to Walter.

Bloom barks. Pants.

Art is dumbstruck.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D)

Walter, would you like to tickle
Mr. B's tummy?

Mr. B rolls onto his back with his "paws" raised in the air.

Art stares, almost terrified.

END FLASHBACK

Back to:

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT -- EVENING

Eddie looks at Art with a skeptical look on his face.

ART

It's true.

EDDIE

It's messed up.

ART

He's what's referred to as a Human
Pup. It's more popular than you'd
imagine.

EDDIE

No shit.

ART

Very popular in Germany.

EDDIE

That doesn't surprise me so much.

ART

You don't believe me?

EDDIE

No, I don't. Why would Rutherford and Bloom let a stranger in on their little freakshow?

ART

The thrill? I don't know. She was drawn to me. Maybe she thought she could trust me. I can't explain her actions.

(takes a breath)

Maybe she was bored. She said it herself, she was so bored. Maybe she needed to shake things up. Bring an outsider in.

EDDIE

What happened after she brought out Bloom?

ART

I feigned illness.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

Art pours water into the toilet bowl as he "heaves", pretending to be sick.

RUTHERFORD (O.S.)

(from the other side of
the door)

Oh, Walter dear. Was it the shrimp?

A bark from Bloom.

RUTHERFORD (O.S.)

(to Bloom)

Oh I know Mr. B, but Walter's not feeling very well.

Art pretends to vomit once again.

END FLASHBACK

Back to

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT -- EVENING

Art and Eddie as they were.

ART

And then I left. But before I did,
Rutherford asked me to stand
against the wall so she could take
a Polaroid of me.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

A FLASH. Art's picture is taken

The Polaroid eases out of the camera. Rutherford whips it
out, shakes it, then looks at it.

RUTHERFORD

(smiling)

Beautiful.

Art smiles disingenuously.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D)

Now listen here, Walter. I like
you. I like you very much. And I
think that that feeling is mutual.
Tonight was...

(quivers in recollection)

Memorable. And I know that, seeing
as I have your picture, and seeing
how you know who I am and what I'm
capable of, I can trust that this
is our little secret. Yes, Walter?

ART

Of course, Ms. Rutherford.

RUTHERFORD

Please, Walter. Call me Franny.

(lights a cigarette)

I'm going to get your details from
the front desk. I'll be in touch.

ART

(smiles nervously)

I look forward to it.

END FLASHBACK.

Back to:

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT -- EVENING

Art and Eddie, as before.

EDDIE

And these pictures. How did you
come into possession of them?

ART

I took them, of course.
Surreptitiously.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

As Rutherford mounts Bloom who srambles around the room on
all fours, Arthur -- amazed by this bizarre unfolding of
events -- removes a subminiature camera from the pocket of
his pants which rest on the bed.

He takes a picture...

SNAP.

And another.

SNAP.

And another.

SNAP.

Rutherford and Bloom are oblivious to this as they giddily
indulge in their drunken roleplaying.

Art returns the subminiature camera to his trouser pocket.

END FLASHBACK

Back to:

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT -- EVENING

Eddie and Art, as they were.

EDDIE

And how did Rutherford learn of the
existence of the photos?

ART

I was sure I knew who Bloom was. I
remember when there was a protest
outside the French embassy a few
months back -- he was interviewed.
I knew it was him. I knew he was
Mr. B. So, considering my current
state of monetary deficiency, I
sent him a package with one of the
photos and demanded two hundred

(MORE)

ART (cont'd)
thousand dollars. If he didn't pay,
I'd release the photos.

EDDIE
Why not a million?

ART
I didn't want to be greedy.

EDDIE
And what about the money?

ART
What money?

EDDIE
Bloom said you'd stolen money.

ART
Well, that's not true. Maybe it was
his way of giving you a reason to
find me.

(a beat)
Anyway, I heard nothing whatsoever.
So I figured that they were just
going to ignore my demands.

EDDIE
But this would be severely damaging
to their reputations.

ART
That's what I thought.

EDDIE
So why didn't you publish the
photos?

ART
I was waiting for further
developments. It was only a couple
weeks ago when I got in touch with
Bloom.

EDDIE
But when I found you you were about
to hang yourself. Why?

ART
Oh, that... That has nothing to do
with the Rutherford/Bloom issue.
Let me explain: It's the writer's
mentality. Every writer regularly
flirts with the idea of topping
themselves. And if they go as far
as making an attempt, they're
waiting for a miracle. By that I
(MORE)

ART (cont'd)
 mean they're waiting for a reason
 not to do it, or some development
 that will interrupt the process,
 and thus may or may not offer them
 some inspiration for their work.

Eddie shakes his head.

EDDIE
 So you hadn't actually planned on
 topping yourself?

ART
 I'd planned on getting as far as
 the hanging part. After that it was
 50/50.
 (smiles sardonically)
 And then you came along.

Eddie looks at his watch.

EDDIE
 (scrambling)
 Shit.

Eddie is about to place the burlack sack over Art's head,
 but he decides against it, tossing it to the floor.

ART
 When are you going to let me go?
 I've told you everything!

EDDIE
 There's something I need to do
 first.

ART
 What do you need to do?

Eddie places the gag into Art's mouth. He doesn't respond
 immediately as he approaches the stairs.

EDDIE
 (climbing the stairs)
 I don't know yet.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- EVENING

Edith Piaf's 'La Foule' begins to play.

Eddie stands in the kitchen -- deep in thought -- smoking as
 he waits for Gloria for a long beat. The song continues to
 play.

EDDIE
 (calling)
 Ma, time to go.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - MOVING -- EVENING

The song continues. Gloria sings along as Eddie drives the car, though as usual we can't hear her over the music. The same distant, away expression on Eddie's face as he drives.

GLORIA

(singing along - big
facial expressions,
rolling the tongue)

Emportés par la foule qui nous
traîne nous entain écrasés l'un
contre l'autre nous ne formons
qu'un seul corps.

Eddie flicks on the indicator.

GLORIA

(big eyes, raises her
arm, controlling her
voice)

Et le flot sans effort nous pousse
echaines l'un et l'autre, et nous
laisse tous deux épanouis enivrés
et heureux.

INT. CONCERT HALL - LOBBY -- EVENING

The song continues. Gloria links Eddie's arm as the two of them stroll through the lobby, the sound of Gloria's shoes prominent.

INT. CONCERT HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The song continues. Eddie stands at the front row as he watches Gloria who's rehearsing on the stage.

Song ends. Eddie lovingly stares at his mother.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRENCH EMBASSY -- DAY

A number of people pass by the building.

INT. FRENCH EMBASSY - BLOOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Bloom is seated behind his desk. A fully-filled bookshelf exists behind him.

The buzzer sounds.

BLOOM

Yes?

FEMALE VOICE

Ms. Rutherford to see you, sir.

BLOOM

You may permit her entrance.

A moment later Rutherford enters. She looks anxious. Almost reluctant to take a seat.

BLOOM (CONT'D)

Please, Franny. Sit down.

Rutherford lifts her cigarette holder which houses an unlit cigarette. She lights the smoke.

BLOOM (CONT'D)

Franny, dear. You're making me nervous.

RUTHERFORD

Me? I'm making you nervous? What about those pictures? The pictures should be making you nervous, not me!

BLOOM

We must remain calm.

RUTHERFORD

Oh pfft to your calm! If this gets out. If it gets out... My father. He may be ninety, but he'll destroy me. He'll cut me out, completely. You don't know him. He starved a whole African village.

BLOOM

We must have faith in the detective.

RUTHERFORD

Pax? Pax! We've heard nothing from him. Pax! A pox!

BLOOM

It would have been best if you left all of this to me.

RUTHERFORD

I can't just wait. If two people are looking for the one person he'll know it's more urgent. I offered him additional payments.

BLOOM

We'll find him. Pax will find him. And we'll end this.

RUTHERFORD

He needs encouraging. He's taking too long.

Bloom exhales.

BLOOM

We can encourage him. There's nothing wrong with a little encouragement.

INT. EDDIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Eddie sits in his chair, smoking. His desk is a mess of papers and cups and newspapers and magazines and fast-food leftovers. He's lost in thought. A knock on the door doesn't stir him.

Another knock does the job.

EDDIE

Yeah?

MARY ELIZABETH (O.S.)

It's Mary Elizabeth. You said you had news.

Eddie scrambles to clear the table. He opens the drawer and guides as much as he can into it, not caring about the mess it'll make in there.

EDDIE

(putting out the cigarette)

Uh, yeah. Come in.

Eddie waves away the cigarette smoke as Mary Elizabeth enters.

He smiles confidently.

EDDIE

It's good to see you.

Mary Elizabeth, still not over their last encounter, sits quietly and simply nods her head.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

You look great.

MARY ELIZABETH

You said you had news regarding Arty's disappearance?

EDDIE

Yes, Mary Elizabeth. It just so happens that I do.

MARY ELIZABETH

(concerned)

Well, what is it. Is Arty okay?

EDDIE

That, I do not know. What I can tell you is: your husband was involved in something. Something unscrupulous that could potentially bring harm to him, and you, Mary Elizabeth.

MARY ELIZABETH

Bring harm to me? What could Arty do that could put us in danger? Arty does very little apart from write, read and attend tap classes every now and then.

EDDIE

Tap?

MARY ELIZABETH

Arty's very good at tap, yes.

Eddie stands up, approaches the turntable, plays with the needle.

EDDIE

Arthur came into possession of something which -- if made public -- could embarrass a lot of people.

MARY ELIZABETH

How do you know this?

EDDIE

I have my sources, Mary Elizabeth. It's what I do.

Mary Elizabeth rises from her seat and stands behind Eddie.

MARY ELIZABETH

(worriedly)

What did he have that was capable of embarrassing people?

Eddie turns to Mary Elizabeth. Yet again, he loses control.

EDDIE

Oh, Mary Elizabeth.

He embraces Mary Elizabeth, holding her by both arms. Mary Elizabeth is unsure how to react to this.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Don't you see he's put you in danger? Don't you see that he's no good? I can protect you, Mary Elizabeth. I can look after you.

Eddie kisses Mary Elizabeth, who squirms.

She wrangles herself away from him.

MARY ELIZABETH

Just stop! Stop! Okay! Just stop it, please! This is completely unprofessional conduct, Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

(heavy breathing)

I'm sorry, Mary Elizabeth. I'm sorry. I'm just hopelessly enamoured of you. I'm -- I'm deeply in love with you.

MARY ELIZABETH

But we barely know each other! And you're supposed to be helping me find my husband, Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

Please, it's Eddie. Please. And who cares if we don't know each other! Isn't love unreasonable? Isn't love beyond our comprehension?

Mary Elizabeth sits down.

MARY ELIZABETH

(sorrowful)

Love is a tornado, Eddie.

EDDIE

(to himself)

It's always the dames.

Mary Elizabeth holds her head in her hands for a beat.

Eddie, assuming that Mary Elizabeth is upset, approaches cautiously.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Mary Elizabeth. I didn't mean to upset you. It's not my intention to make you cry.

MARY ELIZABETH

(clearly crying)

I'm not crying, Eddie! I'm just... frustrated. I just want you to do your job and find my Arty!

EDDIE

You really love him, don't you?

MARY ELIZABETH

(exasperated)

Yes! Yes, Eddie. I love my husband. That's why I married him.

EDDIE

But... He's a weasel.

MARY ELIZABETH

You know nothing about him! How can you say these things? You've called him a loser, a weasel... You don't know the first thing about my Arty.

Eddie returns to his seat behind the desk. He sighs.

EDDIE

I don't like the sound of this guy, Mary Elizabeth, that's all.

(a beat)

What I know is there are people looking for your husband. Powerful people. The sooner we find a way to--

Consecutive thuds arrive on the door to Eddie's office.

Eddie raises a hand, signalling to Mary Elizabeth to keep quiet.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

(answering)

Yeah?

BLOOM (O.S.)

It's Bloom, Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

Mr. Bloom. I'm in the middle of something here.

BLOOM (O.S.)

It's important that we converse promptly, Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

I'm with a client. Come back in an hour and we'll tal-

The door is opened aggressively. Clem stands, broad, filling the doorway with his impressive frame. The same can't be said for his height, of course.

Bloom stands behind him -- a spectre.

BLOOM

Time is of the essence, Mr. Pax.

Clem turns his head in the direction of Bloom.

Bloom looks at him and nods.

Clem approaches the desk.

Mary Elizabeth retreats to the other side of the desk, standing beside Eddie, who places an arm around her.

Clem slides the contents of the desk onto the floor.

The picture of Gloria cracks.

EDDIE (O.S.)

Hey!

Then, Clem moves to the corner of the room and upturns the coat rack. After that, he approaches the turntable.

Eddie makes a grab for Clem.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

You piece of crap--

Clem turns and quickly takes care of Eddie -- introducing his forehead to Eddie's nose. Eddie drops to the floor.

Clem then turns, picks up the turntable and smashes it onto the floor.

Mary Elizabeth rushes to Eddie's side. Eddie -- his nose bloodied -- looks on as Clem proceeds to remove the framed movie posters and smash them onto the floor.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Oh, come on!

Clem reaches for 'The Big Sleep'.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Not Bogie!

Clem looks at Eddie before taking the framed poster: he's going to enjoy this.

Eddie cowers as the crash fills the room.

Done, Clem returns to the door. Bloom approaches Eddie in the same eerie manner as before: almost gliding. Almost.

Bloom stands over Eddie menacingly.

BLOOM

You're not the only eyes in town,
Mr. Pax.

EDDIE

What the hell is that supposed to
mean?

Bloom turns and makes his way towards the door.

BLOOM

I look forward to hearing from you,
Mr. Pax.

Bloom exits. Clem follows behind, closing the door as he leaves.

Eddie looks at Mary Elizabeth, and then looks at the cracked picture of his mother.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - MOVING -- NIGHT

Eddie, now sporting a plaster over his nose, drives. He looks miserable.

In the rearview he notices a car crawling quietly behind him.

EXT. PAX FAMILY HOME -- NIGHT

Eddie's car pulls into the driveway.

Eddie gets out. He looks across the road at the car which has parked next to the curb.

The car pulls out of its parking space and speeds away.

Eddie looks on.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Eddie enters the kitchen.

He sits at the kitchen table. He removes a pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket, removes one and lights it.

Gloria enters. She immediately approaches Eddie.

GLORIA

Sweetie! What happened to your nose?

EDDIE

Oh, nothing, Ma. I fell on a fist.

Gloria fusses.

GLORIA

Let me see.

EDDIE

Ma, leave it. I'm fine.

Gloria slides into a set at the table.

GLORIA

(concerned)

What happened?

EDDIE

Just work related.

GLORIA

Violence in the workplace is not tolerated these days, Eddie. Have you contacted Human Resources?

EDDIE

Ma, I don't have a HR department. I'm self-employed, remember?

GLORIA

I thought HR was who you contacted if you had problems at work.

EDDIE

No, Ma.

(places a hand on
Gloria's)

Are you excited for your show? Only a couple of days to go.

GLORIA

Oh, I can't wait, Eddie. But you. You'll have me worried about you.

EDDIE

Don't be worried about me, Ma. I'm big and bold enough to take care of myself.

GLORIA

Your father taught you well.

EDDIE

He sure did.

GLORIA

Oh, how I miss him, Eddie.

Eddie rubs his mother's hand some more.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Some mornings I reach out for him, expecting him to be there.

A beat.

EDDIE

You've still got me, Ma.

GLORIA

(forces a smile)

I know. Oh, where would I be without you?

EDDIE

Well, I'd be nowhere without you, Ma.

Eddie takes a pull of his cigarette.

INT. 'FIRST ON YOUR LEFT' CAFÉ -- DAY

Mary Elizabeth takes an order from a CUSTOMER. The café is as busy as ever, and Mary Elizabeth returns to the cash register in order to take a breather.

Beverly stands behind the register, popping gum as she looks after a cash-lift.

BEVERLY (O.S.)

One of these days we'll wake up and be millionaires, Lizzy.

MARY ELIZABETH

A couple of weeks in Cancoon would do me.

Mary Elizabeth takes two plates of freshly cooked food in from the counter. As she turns, she notices something across the street, through the window.

OUTSIDE

Eddie carries a toddler, and holds the hand of another as a WOMAN (30s) kisses him on the lips and leaves him with the kids.

Mary Elizabeth watches Eddie for a beat as he walks along the pavement with the two kids.

CUT TO:

INT. EDDIE'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Eddie is attempting to fix 'The Big Sleep' on the wall; it survived with just a large crack in the glass the length of the frame. Otherwise, the office is still a mess.

A knock on the door arrives.

Eddie makes his way behind his desk, pulls open the drawer and retrieves his 9mm.

EDDIE

(calling)

Yeah. Who is it?

MARY ELIZABETH (O.S.)

It's me, Eddie. Mary Elizabeth.

Eddie approaches the door, pistol in hand. He unlocks the door and opens it, allowing Mary Elizabeth in, who immediately notices the gun.

MARY ELIZABETH

Please, Eddie. Put the gun away.

Eddie makes his way to the desk.

EDDIE
 (walking)
 How can I tell they won't call
 again, huh?

Eddie places the pistol into the drawer.

He walks towards Mary Elizabeth...

EDDIE
 What's troubling you?

...who delivers a thunderous slap to his face.

EDDIE
 (rubbing his cheek)
 What was that for?

MARY ELIZABETH
 (wide-eyed)
 You're married?

Another slap.

MARY ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 With kids!?

EDDIE
 Whoa! Whoa!

Eddie grabs Mary Elizabeth by the wrists, but she wriggles her way free of his grasps.

Now there's a bit of distance between them.

MARY ELIZABETH
 You're married, and you make passes
 at me? You tell me you love me? You
 kiss me? And you have two young
 kids.

EDDIE
 Hold on a second, hold on!

Mary Elizabeth waits for an explanaton.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
 I'm not married!

MARY ELIZABETH
 (swallows her anger,
 confused)
 You're not?

EDDIE
 (indignant)
 No!

MARY ELIZABETH
You're not married?

EDDIE
No!
(slowly paces the room)
I'm engaged to be married.

Mary Elizabeth flails her arms into the air.

EDDIE
I'm sorry, Mary Elizabeth. And it's complicated - we're living in separate homes.

MARY ELIZABETH
Don't apologise to me. Apologise to your fiancée. To your kids.

EDDIE
Look, it's not like I cheated on her.

MARY ELIZABETH
Only for my resistance. Only for me saying no!

EDDIE
You resisted?

MARY ELIZABETH
What?

EDDIE
You said you resisted.

MARY ELIZABETH
No... No, I didn't say that... I didn't mean... That.

Eddie approaches Mary Elizabeth.

EDDIE
Mary Elizabeth. Do you have feelings for me?

Mary Elizabeth walks away.

MARY ELIZABETH
Oh, I don't know. No! Yes... What does it matter? I came to you to help find my husband. That's all. That's all I ever wanted from you - to find my Arty!

EDDIE
But if you have feelings for me--

MARY ELIZABETH

(raises her hand)

No! No. Now I just realized that you're a family man. A family man, Eddie. Now tell me, now. Give me a good reason why I shouldn't find your future wife and tell her that you've been... Drooling over another woman. Drooling over me.

EDDIE

The heart desires what it desires, Mary Elizabeth. I can't control by whom I'm bewitched.

MARY ELIZABETH

Self control, Eddie. You're due to be wed -- I'm married, I know what self-control is. I know what loyalty is.

EDDIE

Listen, I'm sorry. Okay? I'm sorry I fell for you. I'm sorry I wanted to look out for you.

Mary Elizabeth sits down on the 'client' side of the desk.

MARY ELIZABETH

(dejected)

Tell me why I shouldn't tell her, Eddie.

Eddie sighs. He finds his way to his chair behind the desk. He falls into it, exhausted.

He takes in the warzone that is his office.

EDDIE

Look at the state of this place.

(a beat)

I haven't handled this well at all.

(a beat)

Mary Elizabeth, I want to make this up to you. I'm going to do this right.

Eddie stands up again.

MARY ELIZABETH

I don't want another dinner date.

EDDIE

I'm going to take you to your husband.

Mary Elizabeth stands up.

MARY ELIZABETH
You've found Arty?

EDDIE
(sincere)
I've found your husband, Mary
Elizabeth.

Mary Elizabeth covers her mouth with her hand. She looks like she might burst into tears.

She embraces Eddie, giving him an air-squeezing hug.

Eddie hugs Mary Elizabeth in a different way - passionately. He takes in her smell. She doesn't notice this.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAX FAMILY HOME -- NIGHT

The car pulls into the drive.

Eddie gets out, and as he's about to make his way to the passenger side to open the door for Mary Elizabeth, she beats him to it and exits the car.

Eddie turns and surveys the street, ensuring there's nobody parked up like last time.

They approach the front door.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- EVENING

Eddie sits Mary Elizabeth at the kitchen table.

He gets on his haunches.

EDDIE
Now I'm going to need you to wait
here a minute, okay?

Mary Elizabeth nods her head.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
(rising)
Okay.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT DOOR -- EVENING

Eddie removes the key from his pocket and inserts it into the lock.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - BASMENT -- EVENING

Eddie stands by the door behind which is Art.

He takes a breath and opens it.

Art is sleeping - his hands still cuffed to the pipes.

Eddie kicks the sole of Art's shoe.

EDDIE

Hey.

Another kick.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Hey.

Now Art stirs. Eddie removes the gag from Art's mouth.

Art looks up at Eddie, looks around the room, then looks at Eddie again.

ART

I was dreaming I was at the Pulitzer luncheon. I was conversing with Eudora Welty and she was delightful. You bastard!

EDDIE

Keep it down, jackass.

Eddie gets onto his haunches.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Now listen to me. Your wife is upstairs.

Art wriggles and pulls at his cuffs, kicking his legs at Eddie.

ART

What have you done with her, you psycho!

EDDIE

Relax. Keep it down!
(Art wriggling
pathetically)
Listen... Listen!

Art calms.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I'm going to help you. I'm going to help you get out of town and away from Bloom and Rutherford. They'll kill you, I truly believe that they'll kill you.

(a beat)

Now here's the deal: I found you at some dingy bar on the outskirts of town last night. You were a drunken mess. I took you here and you slept in the basement until this morning. I then told you that I was going to

(MORE)

EDDIE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
bring Mary Elizabeth here to you.
You got it?

Art nods his head.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Otherwise your wife will hear about
your... indiscretion with
Rutherford... You sicko.

Eddie approaches one of the shelves in the basement. Fingers
a glass jar and removes the keys to the cuffs.

He uncuffs Art.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Remember: I'm going to help you. No
bullshit.

Art nods his head once again.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- EVENING

Art emerges. Mary Elizabeth leaps from her chair and
embraces Art. He returns the hug lethargically.

MARY ELIZABETH
Oh Arty!

Mary Elizabeth whimpers.

MARY ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I was so worried. I thought you
were gone.

Mary Elizabeth then changes her tone. She releases Art from
her hug and proceeds to beat him with her purse.

MARY ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Now why would you think about
killing yourself and leaving me
like that?
(synchronizing her words
with each strike)
Why. Would. You. Do. That. To. Me.

Eddie breaks it up.

EDDIE
Hey, hey, hey. Come on! Enough.
Enough!

He wrestles Mary Elizabeth away from Art.

MARY ELIZABETH
And what do you have that could put
us in danger, Arty?

EDDIE
We'll talk about that later.

Mary Elizabeth motions to speak, but Eddie cuts her off.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
(to Mary Elizabeth)
Sit.

Mary Elizabeth sits at the kitchen table.

Eddie turns his attention to Art, points at a chair.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
(to Art)
Sit.

Art does as he's told. Eddie takes a seat himself.

MARY ELIZABETH
(to Art)
You stink, by the way. It's putrid.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Listen. Now my Ma's due back from
bridge in about fifteen minutes'
time. When she gets here we're
going to eat, cause I'm starved.
And then we're going to decide what
we're gonna do.

No response.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Okay?

ART/MARY ELIZABETH
Okay.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- EVENING

Gloria sits at the table, smiling.

GLORIA
It's so nice to have guests over.

Eddie, Art and Marybeth are seated around the table with
Gloria.

EDDIE
(smiling)
It is, huh?

GLORIA
Eddie never brings friends over. So
nice.

Mary Elizabeth smiles.

MARY ELIZABETH

Your son's quite the cook, Mrs.
Pax.

GLORIA

Eddie knows how to treat a woman.
His Theresa is a lucky girl. And
her kids.

MARY ELIZABETH

(to Eddie)

They're not your kids?

EDDIE

I look after them now. So I
consider them my kids.

(directly to Mary
Elizabeth)

No relationship is without its
complications.

GLORIA

Has Eddie told you both about my
show?

MARY ELIZABETH

No, he hasn't.

EDDIE

It's been a busy week, Ma.

GLORIA

Oh, it has been. We've been to the
concert hall three times. I'll be
performing in front of over three
hundred people.

(places her hand on
Eddie's)

And my boy will have a seat: front
row, centre.

EDDIE

Like I said, Ma. They'd have to
shoot me dead to keep me from being
there.

Gloria smiles.

GLORIA

(to Eddie)

Now remember, Wendy and Larry Shaw
will be picking me up tomorrow at
6pm sharp. The show starts at 7.30.

EDDIE

How could I forget?

GLORIA

You need to be there early.

EDDIE
 (chewing)
 I know, Ma.

GLORIA
 And will your friends be attending?

MARY ELIZABETH
 Oh, no. We won't be there, I'm
 afraid. But I wish you the best of
 luck with the show.

GLORIA
 Thank you, dear.
 (to Art)
 You're awful quiet, Arthur. Are you
 okay?

ART
 (forces a smile)
 I'm fine, Mrs. Pax.

EDDIE
 He's fine, Ma.

GLORIA
 You two are married?

Mary Elizabeth reaches out a hand across the table and rests
 in on Art's.

MARY ELIZABETH
 Yes we are, Mrs. Pax.

GLORIA
 You make every day count, okay?
 You'll have your ups and downs, but
 you make the days count.

Art and Mary Elizabeth both smile, this time the smiles are
 genuine. Art places his other hand on top of Mary
 Elizabeth's.

Eddie looks at the pair.

INT. PAX FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Mary Elizabeth and Art are washing the dishes: Mary
 Elizabeth washes, Art dries.

MARY ELIZABETH
 (arguing in a low voice)
 I just cannot believe you'd
 consider taking your life, Arty.

ART
 It's not that simple.

MARY ELIZABETH
You left a suicide note!

ART
Things haven't been so good.

Mary Elizabeth stops washing. She takes a towel and dries her hands.

She places a hand on Art's head.

MARY ELIZABETH
(suddenly sympathetic)
I love you, Art. If you need to talk to someone that can be arranged. It just angers me to think you'd end it all without at least trying to fix things first. Without thinking of me.

ART
Of course I was thinking of you. I think about you all the time. I'm just this pathetic loser who says he's a writer when he's never been published and he never will be in a million years. I want you to be proud of me, Mary. And when I'm not succeeding, how could you be proud of me?

MARY ELIZABETH
I'll always be proud of you, Arty. You've pursued your dream. You work so hard at it. And you make me happy by simply being you. That's all I care about.

EDDIE (O.S.)
(calling)
Goodnight, Ma.

The sound of Eddie descending the stairs interrupts the couple's conversation.

Mary Elizabeth gets back to washing, Art to drying.

Eddie enters and sits at the table. He takes a cigarette from the pack in his shirt pocket and lights it.

EDDIE
(exhaling)
Okay.
(a beat)
So here's the plan.

Mary Elizabeth and Art turn to face Eddie.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Mary Elizabeth, Arthur came into possession of photos which, if made public, would put two well-known individuals in an embarrassing and compromising situation.

(looks at Art)

I'll let Arthur explain to you how he came to possess these photographs.

Mary Elizabeth looks at Art.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

These people are dangerous. And my opinion is that you two should get out of town for a while. Maybe a few months. Maybe for good.

MARY ELIZABETH

What if Art just gives them the photos? Maybe they'll forgive and forget.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

My assumption is that for peace of mind they'd prefer to simply eliminate Arthur. How could they be sure he doesn't have copies?

(stands up)

So... I'm going to drive the two of you out of town tomorrow. Not too late; I've to be back for Ma's show. You two can sleep here tonight, and we can get going tomorrow -- after lunch.

Mary Elizabeth and Art look at each other.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Okay?

They both nod.

Eddie looks at Mary Elizabeth.

EXT. PAX FAMILY HOME -- DAY

TITLE:

Tomorrow -- after lunch.

Eddie opens the front door. It's a sunny day.

He makes sure the coast is clear before he signals for Mary Elizabeth and Art to leave the house.

The three of them approach the car. Eddie opens it and all three of them get in.

The car reverses out of the driveway.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - MOVING -- DAY

Eddie drives. Mary Elizabeth and Art sit in the back seat together.

EDDIE

So, we're going to stop off at my place first, and then your place after that. You two grab whatever you need. Nothing major -- just essentials, okay? The sooner you're out of town, the better.

ART/MARY ELIZABETH

Okay.

EDDIE

Okay. After that we're going to swing by my office. And after that we'll hit the road to Greenwich. Once we're there you two can catch a bus to wherever. I don't even wanna know where you're going, so don't tell me.

EXT. EDDIE'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

Eddie's car pulls up.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR -- DAY

Eddie turns to Mary Elizabeth and Art.

EDDIE

Wait here. Don't move. I'll be back in two.

Mary Elizabeth and Art nod 'yes.'

Eddie gets out of the car.

INT. EDDIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Eddie is getting changed into a suit - he's prepping for Gloria's performance in case it's a close call.

He finishes up. Grabs his suit jacket, puts it on.

He opens the door to leave. Cathy is standing behind it.

EDDIE

Jesus!

CATHY

Hey, Eddie.

EDDIE
What is it, Cathy?

CATHY
Listen, I've been thinkin'. I know
ya said it was a one time thing,
but hear me out-

EDDIE
Cathy, I've got to go. Tell me
another time.

Eddie leaves the apartment and enters the

HALLWAY

joining Cathy there as he locks his apartment door.

CATHY
Where are you going?

EDDIE (O.S.)
(calling)
To my office.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR -- DAY

The door opens. Eddie gets in.

Mary Elizabeth and Art sit behind him in the back seat.

EDDIE
Okay. One down, two to go.

Eddie starts the ignition.

INT. THE GERSTLEY APARTMENT -- DAY

Art and Mary Elizabeth hurriedly pack a couple of small
vintage suitcases.

Eddie stands by the apartment door.

EDDIE
(checks his watch)
Okay people, let's get a move on.

ART (O.S.)
(calling)
Honey, do you know where my
retainer is?

MARY ELIZABETH (O.S.)
(calling)
It should be in the drawer by the
bed. Did you try the drawer by the
bed?

EDDIE

Let's go!

INT. EDDIE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY -- DAY

A door.

A balled fist knocks on it.

The door opens, revealing Cathy.

CATHY

Hey, don't I know you?

Clem smiles at Cathy.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Eddie and Art stand by as Mary Elizabeth locks the door to the apartment.

EDDIE

Come on.

MARY ELIZABETH

Okay!

As the three of them begin to walk, the apartment door opposite the Gerstley's opens, and Roxy emerges.

ART

Roxy! She-

Eddie steps in front of Art.

EDDIE

Never mind that.

ROXY

What's goin' on, Eddie?

EDDIE

The case got a little complicated, Rox. I'm getting these two out of town.

ROXY

Oh. Well... good luck M.E. It's been nice being your neighbor.

EDDIE

(to Mary Elizabeth and
Art)

Let's get going.

As the other two push ahead, Eddie stops, takes Roxy by the arms and kisses her passionately.

MARY ELIZABETH

Mr. Pax!

Eddie withdraws from the embrace.

MARY ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

You're due to be married--

EDDIE

(impatiently)

It's complicated, Mary Elizabeth!

Eddie gets moving, encouraging the other two. The three of them leave.

ROXY

(calling, emotional)

Goodbye, Eddie!

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - PARKED -- DAY

The car is parked down an alley. Eddie turns off the ignition.

EDDIE

Okay, you two wait here. I'll be two minutes.

Eddie gets out. The door shuts.

INT. EDDIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

The door opens. Eddie enters, alone.

He takes in the mess again -- he'd almost forgotten that it had happened.

He makes his way behind the desk.

He opens the drawer, revealing the mess he'd left in it: magazines, fast food boxes... He shuffles around and retrieves his 9mm.

He positions the pistol behind his back, between his pants.

He looks around and walks towards the door, stepping over broken glass in the process. As he's about to leave he stops and stands in front of the framed poster: 'The Big Sleep'. He looks at Humphrey Bogart.

EDDIE

(earnestly)

Bogie, I don't know if you can hear me. I don't know if I believe in all of that, but if it's real... If you're up there with Ol' Blue Eyes and Chet and the other Blue Eyes -- Newman -- and you're relaxing, I'd

(MORE)

EDDIE (cont'd)

like you to take a minute and hear me out. It's because of you that I'm a P.I. There were others, but mainly you. I watched all those dick movies as a kid, and I fell in love. This is my calling. And sure, I'm dishonorable at times, but times are hard: a man's got to make a living. And as for the other women... Well, like you said: "she tried to sit in my lap while I was standing up."

(a beat)

Anyway, I know you'd understand all of that. And right now, I want to ask you for guidance. I want you to help me out on this one, Bogie. I think I know what these people are capable of, and I think they're gonna come after me when I get those two lovebirds out of town.

(takes a moment)

Just ride up front with me, Bogie.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - PARKED -- DAY

The driver's door opens. Eddie gets in.

EDDIE

Okay, we're good to go. Let's get you two--

As Eddie turns he sees Clem sitting next to both Art and Mary Elizabeth. Clem holds a pistol on them.

Eddie looks down the end of the lane to see Cathy standing on the pavement - She must have lead Clem to them.

EDDIE

Cathy?

CATHY

(calling)

I'm sorry, Eddie. He threatened to shoot your dog!

Like a rabid dog, Clem shows his teeth. He motions with his head for Eddie to do something, but Eddie's slow on the uptake. Or is he playing dumb?

EDDIE (CONT'D)

What?

Clem motions again, looking menacing.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I'm at a loss here. What do you want me to do?

Clem cocks the gun, points it at Mary Elizabeth's head. He motions once again.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Okay.

(now he gets it)

Okay.

Eddie begins to drive.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - MOVING -- DAY

Eddie drives. Mary Elizabeth and Art cower in the back seat as Clem holds his gun on them.

EDDIE

(to Clem)

So, you wanna help me out here?

Clem doesn't acknowledge Eddie's question.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Where are we going?

Still nothing.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Hey, Mr. Introverted.

Clem raises his pistol. He motions with it to the right.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

You want me to turn right?

Clem nods.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Here?

Clem motions again, more urgently.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Where?

Clem rolls his eyes, then, finally speaks:

CLEM

(surprisingly effeminate
mannerisms, high-pitched
voice)

You missed it! Right! Turn right. I
said turn right and you missed the
turn. Go back. Back!

This is not how they expected Clem to sound. Eddie has to restrain a laugh from escaping him as he proceeds to turn the car around.

Mary Elizabeth and Arthur look at each other.

EXT. WAREHOUSE GROUNDS -- DAY

The car pulls up outside an old warehouse. The area is very quiet -- not a soul in sight. The warehouse has seen better days.

The four of them exit the car.

Clem points the gun at Eddie.

CLEM
(effeminately)
Lift your shirt.

EDDIE
Hey, that's not my kind of thing.

Clem motions with his pistol.

CLEM
Up. Up!

Eddie lifts his shirt.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Turn.

Eddie does as he's told, revealing the pistol wedged between his pants and sacrum.

Clem approaches and removes the pistol from Eddie's waist, and places his behind his back in a similar position.

He points his own gun at the three.

CLEM
Inside.

All four of them proceed to enter the

INT. WAREHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Whatever way the windows are draped or stained, it creates a beautifully rusted look to the warehouse: an autumn day indoors.

Bloom and Rutherford sit at an antique cricket table. The chairs they sit in are fancy, too.

They are playing a game of cards. Bloom sips from a china cup.

Eddie, Art, and Mary Elizabeth are ushered into the warehouse by Clem.

Bloom places the cup on the table and checks his wristwatch.

BLOOM

I was expecting Clem to round you up earlier...

(standing)

I suppose, as they say: Anyone who arrives early isn't worth the wait.

Bloom returns to his chair. Rutherford stares, reticent.

BLOOM (CONT'D)

I must say, Mr. Pax. I'm immensely disappointed. I thought I had hired a professional.

EDDIE

And I thought men didn't dress as dogs.

Clem looks at Bloom, confused. He mustn't know about Bloom's canine hobby.

Rutherford remains silent as she looks on.

BLOOM

(flustered)

I've no idea what you're talking about. Now--

(stands)

This is going to be simple. Mr Sherman -- Mr. Sherman, what is your actual name? Please.

Mary Elizabeth looks at Art.

MARY ELIZABETH

Sherman?

BLOOM

Oh, doesn't she know?

ART

It's a long story, honey.

BLOOM

Your name, please.

ART

Arthur. My name's Arthur.

BLOOM

Arthur what?

ART

Arthur Gerstley.

BLOOM

What a hideous name.

Bloom removes a pair of leather gloves from his back pocket. He places them on his hands.

BLOOM (CONT'D)
Now that I finally know your real name, I can proceed to stangle you to death.

Clem approaches Art from behind and kicks the back of his knees so that Art falls to to floor.

MARY ELIZABETH
Arty!

Clem raises his gun to Mary Elizabeth. Eddie places a hand on each of Mary Elizabeth's shoulders.

Bloom approaches Art -- hands at the ready.

Suddenly, Rutherford stands up, opens her purse and removes a derringer .41 short. She points it at Bloom. Cocking it.

Bloom turns to her.

BLOOM (CONT'D)
(wide-eyed)
What in the name of Marie Antoinette are you doing, Franny?

RUTHERFORD
(dishevelled)
I love him, Mr. B.

BLOOM
(incredulous)
You what?

MARY ELIZABETH
(talking over Bloom)
You love him?

ART
(at the same time as Bloom and Mary Elizabeth)
What?

EDDIE
(at the same time as the others)
Get outta here.

Clem, confused, raises his gun and points it at Rutherford.

RUTHERFORD
I don't know what you did, Walter. Athur, whatever your name is... It doesn't matter. You bewitched me.

MARY ELIZABETH

What is she talking about, Arty?

RUTHERFORD

(emotionally - to Bloom)

I can't let you kill him, Mr. B.

BLOOM

But the photos. The man tried to
blackmail us. He tried to destroy
the two of us, Franny!

RUTHERFORD

(repeating, almost
teary-eyed)

But I love him.

Bloom's indignant.

Eddie, sensing an opportunity, watches Clem, whose gun is
pointed at Rutherford.

He rushes for Clem, grabbing the gun from behind Clem's
back. Now Eddie holds his pistol on Clem, who holds his on
Rutherford, who holds hers on Bloom.

BLOOM

Everybody, relax!

Bloom turns to Rutherford.

BLOOM (CONT'D)

Franny. Have you lost your mind?

EDDIE

(gun raised)

Love is a tornado.

Eddie looks at Mary Elizabeth, who returns the look.

Bloom becomes wide-eyed.

BLOOM

He's not getting away with this.

RUTHERFORD

Mr. B!

Bloom turns to Art, who's still lying on the ground. He
proceeds to wrap his gloved hands around Art's neck.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D)

Mr. B!

Bloom continues to strangle Art, his thumbs pressed firmly
against Arthur's trachea. Art struggles, red-faced. Bloom is
intent on killing him -- madness in his eyes.

Eddie holds the pistol on Clem, Clem holds his gun on Rutherford. Rutherford still points hers at Bloom.

RUTHERFORD (CONT'D)

Let him go!

BLOOM

(psychotically, quietly)

You'll have to kill me, Franny.

Rutherford aims.

She Fires. Bang!

Clem fires. Eddie fires. Bang! Bang!

Bloom goes down.

Clem goes down.

Rutherford, wounded at the hip, places a hand over the blood oozing from the wound. As she falls, the derrigner goes off.

BANG!

Mary Elizabeth turns to Eddie who's holding his midriff.

MARY ELIZABETH

Eddie!

Mary Elizabeth helps him.

EDDIE

I'm okay. I'm okay.

(points)

Grab the gun.

Mary Elizabeth picks up Clem's gun. Clem lies motionless on the ground. Eddie kicks his foot -- nothing.

Eddie then checks Bloom. He's gone -- wide-eyed terror.

Eddie gingerly makes his way towards Rutherford who's sprawled on the floor. He holds his hand over his wound. Blood is becoming visible through his white shirt.

He stands over Rutherford. There's still a little bit of life in her:

RUTHERFORD

(struggling to get the words out)

The heart.

(a beat)

It's all... in the heart.

She dies.

Eddie turns, looks at Mary Elizabeth who's helping Art up off the ground.

MARY ELIZABETH

What was she talking about, Arty?
Why did she love you?

ART

It's a long story, honey. I'll explain later.

EDDIE

(interrupting)

Let's get you two out of here.

Mary Elizabeth.

MARY ELIZABETH

We need to get you to a hospital.

EDDIE

It's okay. I'm okay. It's a superficial wound. It's only a flesh wound. I'm fine.

(looks around)

Don't leave a trace of yourself here. It's best that we stick to the plan. Get you two out of town until this dies down.

MARY ELIZABETH

And what about you?

EDDIE

(composes himself)

I've got a show to catch.

The three of them turn to leave.

Clem, Bloom and Rutherford lie in their own blood.

The intro to 'Non, je ne regrette rien' by Edith Piaf begins to play.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCERT HALL -- EVENING

The intro continues. Gloria looks out from behind the curtain.

The hall is filling up. A seat in the front row -- Eddie's seat -- remains empty.

CUT TO:

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - PARKED -- DAY

The extended intro to the song continues. Mary Elizabeth and Art get out of the car.

OUTSIDE

They take their suitcases towards the bus terminal. Mary Elizabeth waves at Eddie.

INSIDE

He raises a hand and watches the two of them, then turns the steering wheel and begins to drive.

INT. CONCERT HALL -- EVENING

The extended intro to the song continues. The vast audience. Applause is seen, but not heard.

On the

STAGE

Gloria emerges. She looks stunning.

INT. BUS - MOVING -- EVENING

The sun is going down. Art rests his hands on Mary Elizabeth's shoulder. Mary Elizabeth kisses his head. She then looks ahead, a worried expression on her face.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - MOVING -- EVENING

The extended intro to the song continues.

Eddie looks at his watch. He reaches a hand down to his wound.

He accelerates hard.

INT. CONCERT HALL - STAGE -- EVENING

The intro still plays, and then, finally, Gloria begins to sing the song.

GLORIA

(big facial expressions -
powerful voice)

Non, rien de rien. Non, je ne
regrette rien. Ni le bien, qu'on
m'a fait, ni le mal, Tout ca m'est
bien égal.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - MOVING -- EVENING

Eddie drives. He's sweating -- doesn't look so good.

GLORIA (V.O.)
 Non, rien de rien. Non, je ne
 regrette rien.

INT. CONCERT HALL - STAGE -- EVENING

Gloria continues to sing exceptionally.

GLORIA
 (big eyes, raises her
 arm, controlling her
 voice)
 C'est payé, balayé, oublié, je me
 fous du passé.

EXT. CONCERT HALL - EVENING

Eddie abandons the car, which has been parked erratically on
 the curb. He fixes a blazer over his bloodied shirt.

GLORIA (V.O.)
 Avec mes souvenirs. J'ai allumé le
 feu.

INT. CONCERT HALL - LOBBY -- EVENING

Eddie paces through the lobby, walking uncomfortably.

GLORIA (V.O.)
 Mes chagrins, mes plaisirs. Je n'ai
 plus besoin d'eux.

INT. CONCERT HALL - STAGE -- EVENING

Gloria continues to sing. She notices the empty seat: front
 row, centre... But she doesn't flinch.

GLORIA
 Balayé les amours. Aven leurs
 trémolos. Balayés pour toujours. Je
 reparts a zéro.

Eddie suddenly emerges from the lobby and makes his way down
 the aisle and to his seat. Audience members look on with
 disapproving stares.

Noticing this, Gloria smiles as she continues to sing
 brilliantly.

GLORIA (CONT'D)
 Non, rien de rien. Non, je ne
 regrette rien.

Eddie takes his seat. He looks on: sweaty, pallid, proud.

GLORIA (CONT'D) (V.O.)
 Ni le bien, qu'on m'a fait. Ni le
 mai, tout ca m'est bien égal.

Back to the stage.

Gloria brings it home emphatically.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Non, rien de rien. Non, je ne
regrette rien. Car ma vie, car mes
joies. Aujourd'hui, ca commence
avec toi.

The audience rises.

Gloria raises her arms. She smiles brilliantly as she
finishes the song.

Eddie remains in his seat as the audience around him rises
to give his mother a standing ovation. Through the blazer
can be his blood-soaked shirt.

GLORIA smiles, blows kisses to the audience.

The audience's applause is deafening.

EDDIE produces a wide, proud smile. The smile begins to
fade.

The applause and cheering continues.

Eddie's mouth opens.

CUT TO BLACK

'LA FOULE' BY EDITH PIAF BEGINS TO PLAY OVER THE END CREDITS

During the end credits, we see pictures of Art at the launch
of his new book. He's finally been published! The book is
called: "The Rutherford Affair"

AN INTERVIEW:

'La Foule' continues to play at a lower volume as Art is
being interviewed.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

After having novel after novel
rejected, you've stated that this
is the first time you've written a
thriller.

ART

It's a new genre to me, yes. But it
felt right.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

And what was the inspiration for
this book which has been referred
(MORE)

INTERVIEWER (O.S.) (cont'd)
to as 'the thriller of the century
so far'.

ART
Oh, you know... Life, love... Love
is a torando.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Plenty of blood, sweat and tears?

ART
You can say that again.

RETURN TO THE END CREDITS AS 'LA FOULE' CONTINUES.

THE END