

REDWOOD TOMB

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FADE IN

EXT. REDWOOD FOREST ROAD - DEEP NIGHT

TITLES START

MUSIC STARTS:

"Everybody Pays to Play" Mark Knopfler

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7msA3C4jrT8>

PAN a lonely, two-way road, EMPIRE GRADE, through a thick, primitive forest, lit only by the headlights of an ascending 1978 BUICK ELECTRA PARK AVENUE. T Rex would feel right at home here.

Within, four shadowy occupants sway with each curve.

The headlights crest the top of the grade, and the car begins down the decline, tree trunks inches away from the narrow shoulder.

INT. 1978 BUICK - NIGHT

At the wheel is ROYAL WILLIAM COONEY, early forties, muscular, tattooed, good-looking, and brutal. His thick hair brushes the collar of his shirt and his feral eyes scan the road like a leopard seeking prey.

Beside him sits DON MACALISTER, late forties, in a hundred dollar haircut and Hugo Boss shirt. In his lap is a North Face backpack that he cradles like a baby. Don winces at the curves and glances distrustfully at Royal from the corner of his eye.

In the back seat are LAUREN GRAVEN, Don's stylish brunette girlfriend, late twenties, whose spandex pants and macrame bra-top leave little to the imagination. Beside her sits KATHI KENT, Royal's blonde, blue-eyed girlfriend, her blouse tied high above her Daisy Dukes. Her face is innocent, despite her having taken every wrong turn possible by age 19.

Don finally grunts and shifts impatiently.

DON MACALISTER
C'mon, Royal. Pick it out a little,
can't ya?

ROYAL

You don't like my drivin', boss?

Royal throws the car into neutral, takes his hands off the wheel and crosses his bulky, tattooed arms. He removes his black-booted foot from the gas pedal and braces it against the dashboard.

The car surges forward, accelerating toward a stand of young oaks bisected by the road.

DON MACALISTER

Shit, you crazy bastard!

Don lunges for the wheel, but his glancing touch only causes the car to veer and careen, throwing the two women in the back against each other, screaming and shielding their faces.

Royal winks evilly at Don and resumes the wheel with exaggerated cool, throwing the car into second and turning smoothly into the skid as trees flash past.

In seconds, the car is again traveling down the grade. Kathi glares at the back of Royal's neck, fists clenched.

LAUREN

Oh my God!!! What was *that* about?

ROYAL

(to Don, laughing scowl)

Just you open your pie hole once more, Don.

Don glares straight ahead in helpless rage, jaw muscle working. Royal half-turns to the two women in back.

ROYAL (CONT'D)

And that goes for you gals too. I'm the one drivin', you got that?"

As Don's mouth opens to retort, Royal raises his voice.

ROYAL (CONT'D)

And you don't none of you know shit, so shut the fuck up.

Don exhales noisily, long-suffering. Oncoming headlights loom, but the other car pulls over and yields.

ROYAL (CONT'D)

(mutters at the other driver)

Fuck you very much.

Silence.

LAUREN
(uncertainly)
Are we... getting close yet?

DON MACALISTER
We get there when we get there.

Royal gives a short, contemptuous huff.

KATHI
(sweetly to Lauren)
Just be patient, honey.

Lauren turns to her and Kathi pats Lauren's hand, smiling apologetically.

KATHI (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Royal, he gets a little testy.
Don't take it personal though.

Lauren gratefully squeezes Kathi's hand.

KATHI (CONT'D)
(aloud)
This'll all be over in a few
minutes.

Royal whips his head around and glares at her.

KATHI (CONT'D)
(louder)
... And you'll be on your way home.

Royal turns away with an exasperated head shake.

Lauren cups her hands to her temples and tries to look out the window into the night.

Silence again crushes the car like an iron weight.

KATHI (CONT'D)
(craning to see)
I guess it's somewhere around here.

ROYAL
(bridles)
You *guess*?

KATHI
Well I can't see in the dark. I'm
not a *cat*, you know.

ROYAL

Ain't that just peachykeen. My clients here are expecting a quarter million's worth of blow, and you 'guess' the house is 'somewhere around here?'

KATHI

(defiantly)

I done everything just like you told me.

At this, Royal reaches around and smacks her face so hard she gasps.

DON MACALISTER

Now wait just a fucking minute. I think maybe this is where Lauren and I get out.

KATHI

(pointing, through tears)

There it is. The house. Thank God!

A dimly lighted cabin is barely visible through the trees.

ROYAL

You sure? Cuz I got some knuckles for you too.

KATHI

That's the place.

ROYAL

S'more like it.

Royal pulls onto a turnout and stops.

EXT. SANTA CRUZ WOODS - NIGHT

The occupants get out stiffly. Lauren stretches and walks to the edge of the shoulder and Don puts out a hand to catch her before she steps off into a deep, wooded ravine that separates them from the lighted cabin.

DON MACALISTER

How the fuck are we supposed to get over there? Go all the way to the bottom of this ravine and then climb up the other side?

LAUREN

(to Kathi)

I wish I was there right now, with
a drink and some lines.

KATHI

You read my mind!

Kathi and Lauren high-five, giggling.

DON MACALISTER

Seriously, how do we get across?

ROYAL

You don't. Till me and Kathi search
you. Then I show you the bridge.

LAUREN

(to Royal)

Look at me! You can see I'm not
carrying anything. Not even my
purse, just like you said.

Royal scans her closely with grudging appreciation.

DON MACALISTER

There's no way she could fit a
playing card into those pants, let
alone a gun or a wire or anything
else.

LAUREN

Not even underwear.

She and Kathi giggle.

ROYAL

Well them's the rules.

(to Lauren)

Kathi'll search you, okay?

KATHI

It's just a formality, honey.

ROYAL

(to Don)

You wait here. Don't you get no
ideas neither. We don't show up
with this money, we're dead. We
trusted you on this and don't you
bail on us now. We gotta bring you
in one at a time like they said.

Kathi is patting Lauren's body gently with her hands, running them up and down Lauren's curves. The men watch the two admiringly, a little aroused. They make eye contact and grin.

Lauren sidles over to Don and puts her arms around his neck.

DON MACALISTER
(sotto voce to Lauren)
You two'd make an interesting pair.

LAUREN
(flirty)
Oh yeah?

DON MACALISTER
... 'cept I never want to see that
batshit Royal again.

LAUREN
(long-suffering)
I know, baby.

DON MACALISTER
(sotto voce)
This is the last business I ever do
with him.

Don lights a cigarette and watches the moon play hide and seek through scudding clouds; stars prick the dense black sky. Don gives Royal, who is turned away talking to Kathi, a dirty look.

ROYAL
Okay Lauren, you're ready to go.
Kathi, bring her over here, and
I'll get her onto the bridge.

LAUREN
About time!
(looks down)
But I'm scared of heights.

ROYAL
You don't need to worry none.

Lauren and Don lean against a tree to peer across the dark chasm. Royal quietly opens the car trunk and takes out a .45 with a silencer on it. In a single motion he shoots Lauren in the back of the head. Smoothly, he wheels and shoots Don in the chest. As Don staggers, blood erupting from his mouth, Royal shoots him in the forehead.

Kathi turns away, covers her face, suppressing a scream. Royal takes out a powerful flashlight from the trunk.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 (holds out the flashlight
 to Kathi)
 Okay, it's done. Now give 'em the
 signal it's okay to cross over.

Hands shaking, Kathi tries to take the flashlight, drops it.

KATHI
 She was just t...talkin' to me and
 now she's dead.

ROYAL
 Oh for Christ's sake.

He picks up the flashlight and throws a blinking beam across the ravine. Instantly, the signal is repeated from the house. We hear a door slam and female voices chattering as they take a nearly invisible bridge across the ravine.

Royal drags Lauren's body and positions it next to Don's leaning back against the tree. He takes a hacksaw from the trunk and tests the blade.

KATHI
 Oh Gawd.

ROYAL
 Whoops, almost forgot!

He sets down the saw, walks to the front seat of the car and grabs the North Face backpack. When he unzips it, the money nearly bursts out, it's packed so tightly.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 What a gorgeous sight!

He zips and stashes the pack in the trunk as two sleazy, pretty young women, BILLIE and TINA, arrive from crossing the bridge, lugging a large green plastic bag. They drop the bag at Royal's feet.

Kathi approaches the women and flings herself desperately into their arms. They all hug and comfort each other.

TINA
 You did good, Kat. This'll all be
 worth it in the end.

KATHI
 (whispers)
 I'm so scared.

TINA

Don't piss off Royal. Take hold of yourself.

Kathi nods, tries to compose herself.

ROYAL

Is you bitches gonna help me out here? Or do you expect me to do every fuckin' thing?

BILLIE

(unctuous smile)

Don't you have just a little bit of powder for us? We been waiting all night. And we worked so hard.

ROYAL

Yeah, yeah keep your panties on.

Royal takes a little bottle of cocaine from his pocket, snorts, and passes it to the three women who snort it while he addresses the bodies, heaving them around like sides of beef, stripping off the bloody clothes and putting them in the bag. He picks up the hack saw.

ROYAL (CONT'D)

(to the girls)

Did you dig them holes?

Tina and Billie push away dirt and branches hiding two grave-sized holes.

ROYAL (CONT'D)

No way them's big enough. Get to work.

BILLIE

(whines)

But the shovels are back at the cabin.

ROYAL

(as if speaking to a child)

Then get your lazy ass over and bring 'em. Hup! Hup!

Billie takes off running as Royal starts sawing at the heads, but the blade comes loose.

ROYAL (CONT'D)

Don't make 'em like they used to.

He throws the saw into a body bag in the trunk and takes out a vicious-looking machete.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 'Be prepared.' That's the Boy Scout
 oath. Ain't I a Boy Scout?
 (grins, winks)

Sounds of hacking. The women peek and shudder at Royal's handiwork as Billie returns dragging two shovels.

Royal braces himself and pulls out teeth with a scary instrument, throwing them into the bag.

TINA
 Ewwww. Gawd.

ROYAL
 (hacking away)
 Somebody's gotta do the dirty work.
 You gals make them holes bigger.

The women start shoveling at the holes.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 You bring the quicklime?

TINA
 (gestures)
 In the green bag.

ROYAL
 Well get it out. Lay down a good
 thick layer of it and I'm gonna
 throw in the torsos. Then we cover
 them up with more lime. It'll
 dissolve the bodies. No corpse, no
 crime, right?
 (looks at Kathi)
 Right?

Slowly, Kathi nods. Royal tosses gloves at the women.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 Don't get none of that quicklime on
 your hands. It'll take your skin
 off.

Gloved, Kathi opens a bag of the white lime and begins pouring it into the graves. Royal lugs Lauren's headless torso over and heaves it into the grave.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
Get your asses in gear, willya?
County sheriffs patrol this road.

The women open another bag of lime and begin covering Lauren's torso with it.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
Where's the holes for the heads?

Tina points a distance away and Royal checks.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
You coulda dug 'em deeper. And
farther away.

TINA
We did the best we could.

ROYAL
Awright awright.

KATHI
(shudders at Lauren's
head)
She's *looking* at me.

ROYAL
(chuckles)
I assure you, she ain't. Get a holt
o' yourself.

PICK UP SONG AGAIN: "EVERYBODY PAYS TO PLAY"

Slowly PULL BACK AND FADE OUT

CUT TO:

INT. 'SANTA CRUZ' DA'S OFFICE, EARLY 1980S - DAY

CLOSE ON DENNY ANDERS, about 27, raising a cigarette to his mouth; his youth conceals a still unrealized potential for ruthlessness. A couple of secretaries walking past check him out, then smirk at each other.

KEN CHONG, the DA, late thirties, Korean, strides out of his office and stands beside Denny at his desk. Denny quickly crushes the long cigarette.

KEN CHONG
(beckons to the room at
large)
Everybody gather round.

People leave their desks, gather, murmuring.

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)

I'd like to introduce our new assistant DA, Denny Anders. Denny graduated from UCLA Law School, where he was editor of the Law Review, class president and a bunch of other bullshit honors...

(grins mischievously at Denny)

DENNY ANDERS

(grins back)

Don't forgot to tell them I flunked the Bar the first time too.

People titter.

KEN CHONG

(deadpan)

I was getting to that.

General laughter.

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)

Denny will soon realize that people don't have many secrets around here.

(laughter)

Courtesy of our esteemed investigators...

(to Denny)

Whom you *never* ever wanna piss off.

DICK VAN DE BERG and RAY BELGARD approach grinning to shake Denny's hand. Dick: late fifties, thick-muscled, gray-headed and menacing. RAY: fifties, a skinny blond weasel in brown doubleknit, sparse hair in a pompadour. Their guns are prominent. Their measuring gazes convey that they find Denny an unproven, snot-nosed, overpaid upstart.

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)

(turns serious)

Denny, as you're well aware, the tabloids are now calling this town the "Murder Capital of the World," With good reason.

(to the crowd)

This county needs the justice that we deliver, to help it heal. That's our mission. And we all support each other.

VOICE FROM THE CROWD
 ... When we're not busy fucking
 each other over.

The room laughs. Ken chuckles too.

KEN CHONG
 ... And that idealism is courtesy
 of our resident cynic JOHN BOHRER.

BOHRER, tall and rotund, 40, greets Denny with sly amusement.

JOHN BOHRER
 Whenever you need a few illusions
 shattered, come find me.

Ken gestures to an early computer sitting on a desk.

KEN CHONG
 And speaking of shattered... this
 alien machine is a personal
 computer. We're all gonna be using
 them so get used to it. They will
 take your brain hostage, make you
 obsolete, and eventually replace
 you.
 (ripple of laughter)

Ken gestures at a nerdy young woman.

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)
 Marla here works for a new company -
 -- Micro-soft?
 (Smiling, Marla nods)
 It'll never get off the ground. Who
 wants to advertise they're 'soft?'
 (checks his watch)
 Okay, now everybody go kick some
 perp ass.

Ken waggles his fingers goodbye and turns away.

MADELEINE ("MADDY") DREYFUS, late twenties, Jewish, tough,
 cute, whip-smart, steps up to Denny, who is trying to re-
 light his crushed cigarette.

MADELEINE
 I'm Madeleine. Since I'm short and
 female, Ken doesn't notice I'm
 around sometimes. Not that I take
 it personally.

Narrows eyes in mock vengeance. Denny laughs, shakes hands.

DENNY ANDERS
I'd never overlook you.

MADELEINE
(dimpling smile)
When I passed the Bar I got exactly
one job offer: legal secretary.

DENNY ANDERS
Did you take it?

MADELEINE
(grins)
Hell yes. My student loans didn't
care about my job title. Took two
years to claw my way into a
courtroom.

A tall, pretty young secretary approaches carrying a pile of
manila folders.

JENNY
(to Denny)
Speaking of secretaries, Denny, I'm
yours. I'm Jen.

DENNY ANDERS
Hi Jen. I'll try not to make life
too miserable for you.

Jenny plops the folders on Denny's desk.

JENNY
Wish I could say the same to you.

DENNY ANDERS
(surveys pile of folders)
Seriously?

JENNY
(laughs)
Misdemeanors have been piling up.
That gives the public defender
ammunition to get them dismissed.

DENNY ANDERS
And I'm here to prevent that
shocking miscarriage of justice.

JENNY
Right!

JENNY (CONT'D)
Where are you from?

DENNY ANDERS

You've never heard of it. It's a scorched little hamlet in the San Joaquin Valley, population about 900.

Jenny smiles.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)

No sidewalks, no stoplights, one general store, and about six card rooms all of which my dad manages to hit every week.

JENNY

(laughs)

What does your dad do there?

DENNY ANDERS

Besides play lo-ball? He's the postmaster. He's retiring next month. They're moving out here.

JENNY

(grins)

Do you guys have kids yet?

DENNY ANDERS

A little girl, she's almost two.

JENNY

Awww... Well, free babysitting.

DENNY ANDERS

With my family, everything comes at a high price.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA CRUZ MALL CIRCA 1970'S/80'S - DAY

A panorama of Santa Cruz counter-culture: college students, old gray ponytails, tree-huggers, bikers, hippie chicks, gurus. Denny's wife FANCHON, late 20s, pretty, sits at a sidewalk café. Her L.A. style doesn't fit the hippie milieu. She holds a pretty little girl ELLIE on her lap.

ELLIE

(holds out arms)

Daddy!

FANCHON

(rises, kisses Denny)

First day! What's it like?

DENNY ANDERS
 (takes Ellie))
 Like being in a washing machine on
 spin cycle.

They laugh and sit. Ellie fidgets in Denny's lap.

DENNY ANDERS
 How's the house coming along?

FANCHON
 I did a crappy job lining the
 shelves, the freezer drips. And
 there's mold in the shower stall.

Denny laughs. A waitress brings water and breadsticks. Denny
 watches Fanchon survey the people passing.

DENNY ANDERS
 They can't ALL be serial killers.

Just then a dead ringer for Charles Manson ambles past,
 complete with forehead swastika. They look at each other and
 laugh

Ellie fidgets, Fanchon takes her.

FANCHON
 She needs her nap.

DENNY ANDERS
 (leans close)
 That gives me an idea. Put her down
 and let's grab a nooner!

FANCHON
 Really? The house is a disaster...

DENNY ANDERS
 I thrive on disaster.

Laughing they rise and walk away. Denny leaves a tip on the
 table.

EXT. BEAUTY SHOTS OF SANTA CRUZ HIGHWAY 17 - DAY

A brilliant blue sky beams down on the legendary curving
 highway, illuminating the wooded hills and luxury homes built
 into the mountainsides.

Denny navigates the road easily in a new BMW. FANCHON sits
 beside him. In the back in a child's car seat sleeps ELLIE.
 The atmosphere is tense.

FANCHON

Why does your father always pick on me when we visit?

DENNY ANDERS

Why? Because he doesn't know any other way to relate to people. Because he's a raving asshole. Because he spent his life in East Bumfuck, California, with a wife who won't stop drinking. Because his only son was lousy at football.

(beat)

Choose your reason.

Fanchon shakes her head.

FANCHON

Can't you stand up to him?

DENNY ANDERS

Wouldn't do any good. Never did, never will.

FANCHON

And by the way, your mom's dainty little teacup was full of whisky.

DENNY ANDERS

(laughs)

Mom's a genius at hiding booze. No matter how we searched the house, she'd be half in the bag by the time we got home from school.

FANCHON

It's a miracle you got out of there unscathed.

DENNY ANDERS

(cynical)

Oh I'm plenty 'scathed.' I was the only guy in my graduating class who went on to college.

FANCHON

Where'd the others go?

DENNY ANDERS

Bakersfield. Vietnam. Prison. Usually in that order.

Fanchon laughs.

EXT. DENNY ANDERS HOME - DAY

They pull into the driveway of a 70s style home with a redwood deck and a view of the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor. They carry in items and Ellie, sleeping.

INT. DENNY ANDERS HOME - DAY

Denny surveys toys, books and baby clothes scattered in the living room. Crumbled cookies in the playpen. Dishes in the sink. His eyes narrow.

FANCHON

Sorry, I didn't have time to straighten up before we left.

DENNY ANDERS

I didn't say a thing.

FANCHON

It's hard keeping a house white-glove clean with a toddler.

Denny, tight-lipped, gathers up baby toys, clothes and diapers. Fanchon continues into the kitchen with Ellie.

INT. ANDERS KITCHEN - DAY

Denny takes out a wine bottle and a corkscrew. Fanchon puts Ellie in her high chair and sets out two wine glasses on the kitchen table. She checks around, then swigs from the bottle.

Denny reenters with a manila folder, sits at the table.

FANCHON

I thought you were leaving work behind this weekend.

DENNY ANDERS

(reading, preoccupied)
Some drug dealer name of Nick Swanson got beat up and robbed of his stash near the Boardwalk. Ken thinks he might narc for us.

She pours the wine.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)

Half our crimes come out of the Boardwalk.

FANCHON

Amusement parks are always kind of sleazy.

DENNY ANDERS

Beach Flats has a kind of penny-ante brutality. People move here to start over... But there's always someone lying in wait to find their weak spot and take 'em down.

FANCHON

Well, crime pays --- your salary.

DENNY ANDERS

Well put!

They clink glasses. Fanchon turns away to make salad. Denny admires her ass as she leans on the counter in her shorts. Holds the salad up to show him.

FANCHON

How gorgeous is this?

DENNY ANDERS

Very.

He gets up and embraces her. She reaches for another bottle.

HOURS LATER

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Fanchon is asleep/passed out, sprawled on the sofa, a bottle on the floor beside her. Denny balances Ellie in his lap as he works on his file. She fusses, and he puts the file down.

DENNY ANDERS

Okay, young lady. Bedtime.

ELLIE

No!

DENNY ANDERS

Mommy's asleep.

ELLIE

No!

DENNY ANDERS

I'll read you Goodnight Moon...

ELLIE
 (considers this)
 Petew Wabbit.

DENNY ANDERS
 You're a tough negotiator. Okay.
 Peter Rabbit.

Laughing, Denny carries Ellie into her bedroom.

LATER

Fanchon is still passed out. Denny enters the

KITCHEN

He surveys the dirty dishes, the high chair a mess of baby food. He starts loading the dishwasher. As he hauls out the garbage pail from under the sink, he discovers THREE HIDDEN EMPTY WINE BOTTLES and an empty pint of scotch.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Denny carefully lines up the bottles on the coffee table.

DENNY ANDERS
 Uh, Fanch...

FANCHON
 Slee-ping...

DENNY ANDERS
 Sure. Just explain these dead soldiers. Then you can go back to sleep.

FANCHON
 What?
 (opens her eyes, sees the bottles)
 Oops. Busted.

DENNY ANDERS
 Hey, you want a drink, take a fucking drink. But don't hide bottles or water the booze or any of that shit. It didn't work for mom, and it won't work for you.

FANCHON
 (sleepy, drunk)
 Don't prosecute me, okay?

DENNY ANDERS
All I want is honesty.

Fanchon turns her head away. Denny ponders.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
Are you really that unhappy here?

She sits up and buries her face in her hands.

FANCHON
It's just... Your life is exciting
and meaningful.

DENNY ANDERS
Oh sure. I get stuck with
shoplifters and weenie waggers.

FANCHON
I'm bored.

DENNY ANDERS
You got that writing gig for the
paper...

FANCHON
Oh yeah, covering the senior
citizens art guild?

DENNY ANDERS
So? It's a start.

FANCHON
Denny, I worked as a secretary to
put you through law school. And the
bar exam. Twice.

DENNY ANDERS
Thanks for reminding me.

FANCHON
Now I want to write my novel.

DENNY ANDERS
By swilling wine and watching
reruns of The Love Boat?
(beat)
Do you ever drink and drive with
Ellie in the car?

FANCHON
Of course not! How could you think
that?

DENNY ANDERS
 Because everybody lies to me.
 Especially alkie and addicts.

FANCHON
 I'd never.

DENNY ANDERS
 Look, I'm not judging you. It's the
 nature of the beast. My boss drives
 drunk. Half the people in the
 office have liquor on their breath.
 Ray piles up county cars, and they
 bury the repair costs in the
 budget. I'm just saying, if I ever
 find out that you drove with Ellie
 after you'd been drinking, we're
 done.

FANCHON
 Oh fuck off!

She turns back to sleep on the couch.

INT. KEN CHONG'S OFFICE - DAY

Denny enters and Ken waves him to a chair.

KEN CHONG
 Nice work on those Points and
 Authorities, Denny. That judge
 isn't easy to impress.

DENNY ANDERS
 Now I take it to trial, right?

KEN CHONG
 Well, John put in a lot of work...

Denny's face sags.

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)
 Anyway, while you're waiting for
 your career to catch fire.... go to
 Beach Flats and talk up that pusher
 Nick Swanson.

Denny nods. Ken hands him the file.

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)
 He's a weasely little grifter but
 now he'll be OUR weasely little
 grifter.

(MORE)

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)

(beat)

Look, Denny, I know you want to move into homicides. And you will. You've got a lot of career ahead. And we have a lot of homicides ahead.

Denny salutes him with the file.

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)

We all did our apprenticeship. How does that Bob Dylan song go?

BACKGROUND BOB DYLAN SONG UP: "You gotta serve somebody"

Denny walks down the hall, troubled, runs into Madeleine. She has a rose in her hair.

MADELEINE

How's it goin'?

DENNY ANDERS

Actually, my life right now is a moderate sized pile of shit.

MADELEINE

If it's any comfort I've got my own pile. Dave broke it off. He even sent me roses.

(gestures at the rose in her hair)

To remind me that I never learn.

DENNY ANDERS

Sorry to hear that.

(beat)

Actually, I'm not. A married cop. You can do better.

MADELEINE

I've got this advanced wrong-man detection system. I can spot them headed toward me from the farthest reaches of the universe.

DENNY ANDERS

Like those telescopes that find distant galaxies?

MADELEINE

(brightens)

Exactly. Hey, let's take an early lunch. I'll show you my sanity secret.

DENNY ANDERS

Lead on!

EXT. SANTA CRUZ BEACH BOARDWALK - DAY

Madeleine slides into a marked no-parking zone.

MADELEINE

Ah, the perks of law enforcement.

As they walk, Denny stops to buy a bag of salt water taffy.

DENNY ANDERS

My wife inhales this stuff.

Denny accompanies Madeleine to the "Big Dipper" roller coaster. They climb aboard. As the car jerks into motion, she leans over to Denny.

MADELEINE

Cheap therapy. The one place
rational, professional adults can
scream in public like lunatics. No
911. No 72-hour hold. No 5150.

CLOSE ON Denny and Madeleine as they are whipped around on the roller coaster, screaming for all they're worth. The car slows to a stop.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

How do you feel now?

DENNY ANDERS

Better. *Much.*

MADELEINE

Wanna go again?

DENNY ANDERS

(grins)
Always.

MONTAGE:

Denny and Madeleine playing bumper cars, eating cotton candy. Walking and talking, laughing. For a quiet moment, they watch the ocean, leaning on the railing, hands together. An intimacy "a l m o s t" starts.

INT. DENNY'S HOME - NIGHT

Denny and Fanchon sleeping. The phone rings. Denny gropes to answer.

DENNY ANDERS

Yeah?

(listening, sits upright)

On my way.

Hangs up the phone, gets out of bed and starts throwing on clothes.

FANCHON

(sleepy)

What happened?

DENNY ANDERS

(excited)

Some guy in Boulder Creek just committed "suicide by cop." They need a DA to document it was a good shoot.

Fanchon looks at the clock: 2:20 a.m.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)

This is the first time Ken's trusted me with a case like this.

FANCHON

Don't wake up Ellie.

She turns over and goes back to sleep.

EXT. BOULDER CREEK WOODS - NIGHT

Denny pulls up amid a blaze of flashing cop car lights and floodlights. An ambulance and a coroner's vehicle parked adjacent. He makes his way through the throng to a cabin. In front is a circle of people around the prone body of a thirtyish man. A large dog is running about in a state of extreme anxiety.

COP #1

(shouts out)

DA's here.

Everybody watches Denny push through to look at the body.

DENNY ANDERS

Somebody want to brief me?

A couple of sheriffs walk up. Denny nods, tightly focused.

TOM MCARDLE

Tom McArdle, I don't think we've met.

DENNY ANDERS

Denny Anders.

They shake hands.

TOM MCARDLE

I'm the one shot the guy. He pointed that at us.
 (gestures to a rifle lying beside the body)
 We tried to get him to put it down.
 (beat)
 Turns out it was empty.
 (shakes head, emotional)

DENNY ANDERS

Suicide.

TOM MCARDLE

We know the guy. Knew him I should say. Name's Ron Ireland. Vietnam vet, left a foot over there. His wife and son live in town. He's been holing out here for the last couple weeks shootin' up on his stash.

DENNY ANDERS

Did he have a record?

TOM MCARDLE

He's been on a downhill slide for a long time. We got him for selling pot to a narc a couple months ago but Bohrer dismissed it.

DENNY ANDERS

Divorced?

TOM MCARDLE

(nods)
 They been off and on. His son's ten years old, comes out here and visits him but the wife said he couldn't see the kid anymore unless he cleaned up. That wasn't gonna happen.

As Denny stands talking, the dog comes up and pushes its muzzle into his hand. Denny pats it and it tries to jump up on him desperately wagging its tail.

DENNY ANDERS
 (rubbing its ears)
 This his dog?

The sheriffs nod.

TOM MCARDLE
 We'll get the humane society out here, pick it up.
 (voice breaks)
 The wife called us tonight; she thought he might have OD'ed cause he wasn't answering his phone. So me and Becker drove out to take a look. He opened his door holding the rifle.

SHERIFF BECKER
 He was drunk. Walking back and forth on the porch, ranting.

TOM MCARDLE
 He suddenly stopped and pointed the gun at Becker here. I shot him. We didn't know it wasn't loaded.

DENNY ANDERS
 How would you?

TOM MCARDLE
 (face contorted)
 Fuckin' shit.

Denny pats his shoulder.

DENNY ANDERS
 You did all you could.

TOM MCARDLE
 Did I?

Tom walks away by himself. The coroner talks to Denny. The dog keeps running around the site, sniffing and howling at his dead master, pawing at Denny.

A car pulls up and a young man gets out. He spots Denny and comes over.

STEVE BENETZ
(extending his hand)
Steve Benetz from the Sentinel.

DENNY ANDERS
(shakes)
How ya doin'?

STEVE BENETZ
Been better. Suicide by cop is what they're saying.

DENNY ANDERS
Looks like. We'll give you a statement tomorrow first thing.

STEVE BENETZ
Thanks. I'm officially covering the crime beat now, so you'll see my ugly mug a lot.

DENNY ANDERS
Congrats.

STEVE BENETZ
I was a cub reporter when all the serial killings started here.

DENNY ANDERS
Baptism under fire.

STEVE BENETZ
The former DA died suddenly of a heart attack, I guess you know all that. Ken was chief assistant, so he moved up to acting DA. And then he ran for office, won in a landslide. First Asian DA in California. Just turned thirty.

DENNY ANDERS
Wow. And then he got all those murders dumped in his lap.

STEVE BENETZ
Unbelievable. We were digging up bodies every week --- at the University, at the beach, out in the woods, you name it. No wonder Ken drinks, huh?
(raises camera, gestures at the body)
Mind if I take a few shots?

Before Denny can answer a sheriff steps up.

SHERIFF #1
Put your camera away, kid.

Steve looks at Denny.

SHERIFF #1 (CONT'D)
His family don't need to see that
on the front page. Nor do we.
(to Steve)
We'll get you a stock photo of the
guy in his uniform tomorrow.

STEVE BENETZ
Sure.

INT. DENNY'S HOME - NIGHT

Denny lets himself quietly in the front door. He drops his clothes and enters the bedroom in shorts and T-shirt, crawls into bed.

FANCHON
Mmmm... how'd it go?

DENNY ANDERS
All bad.

FANCHON
Sorry, baby. Get some sleep. It's
past 5.

DENNY ANDERS
I almost brought a dog home.

FANCHON
All we need.

Denny lies beside her. He stares at the ceiling, eyes wide open. After a few moments he rises and walks into the living room, sits on the sofa and cries, stifling his sobs.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA CRUZ DREAM INN ON THE BEACH - DAY

Royal and Kathi, loaded and laughing, walk off the beach and enter the hotel lobby.

INT. DREAM INN SUITE - DAY

Large 'luxury' suite. In the room are lowlives drinking and snorting. Loud rock music.

LOWLIFE #1
(to Royal)
How was the beach?

ROYAL
Just like every beach: Water. Sand.
Pussy.

Kathi looks jealous.

KATHI
Sorry for cramping your style.

LOWLIFE #1
Sounds like you need a refill.

He brandishes a bottle of very good scotch.

KATHI
Ooohhh. Me for that!

The lowlife pours a shot; they all snort coke. Two women in bikinis or less emerge from another bedroom. Royal grabs one and feels her up.

LOWLIFE #1
(to Kathi)
You guys still going to Hawaii?

KATHI
Royal, we still going to Hawaii?

ROYAL
(mauling the other woman)
Kathi lost the goddamn tickets.

KATHI
Did not!

Royal pulls away from the woman. His mood changes like lightning.

ROYAL
(to Kathi)
You fuckin' had 'em.

KATHI
No baby. You said you'd hold onto them.

ROYAL
 Don't fuckin' tell me what I said.
 Just go find 'em.

KATHI
 Okay.

She starts opening drawers and looking around.

ROYAL
 It don't matter. I'll just buy some
 more at the airport.

Kathi looks under the bed, spots a paper bag and peeks
 inside. She sees the murder weapon with its silencer. She
 quickly withdraws from under the bed.

A knock at the door.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 Who's that?

VOICE OUTSIDE
 Uh, hotel staff. Can you folks turn
 down the music a little.

ROYAL
 Fuck that.

VOICE OUTSIDE
 Sir, other guests are complaining.

ROYAL
 Awright. Happy to oblige.

VOICE OUTSIDE
 Thank you, sir.

Royal mimics the voice.

ROYAL
 'Thank you sir.'

Laughter.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 Alla you clear out. Me and Kathi
 are gonna take a little nap, before
 we party tonight.

The lowlifes pick up their beach gear and depart. Royal is
 too cranked to sleep.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 (to sleazy woman)
 I ever tell you how I got into the
 Mafia?

SLEAZY WOMAN
 I knowed you was something big.

ROYAL
 I'm a man of respect. Which is
 unusual because I'm not Italian.
 But I proved I was a good soldier,
 doin' whatever I was ast.

SLEAZY WOMAN
 Was you a hit man or somethin'?

Royal suddenly flares up.

ROYAL
 That ain't your goddamn business.

SLEAZY WOMAN
 (haughty, high)
 It is if I say it is.

BIG mistake. Royal grabs her by the hair and wrenches her to
 the floor, covering her mouth to muffle her scream of pain.
 He puts his face close up to hers.

ROYAL
 (snarling, crazy)
 You just insulted a man of respect.

Sleazy Woman gasps and struggles.

SLEAZY WOMAN
 Please...please.

ROYAL
 Get on your knees.

SLEAZY WOMAN
 (struggling, terrified)
 Lemme... go!! What'd I do?

ROYAL
Down, bitch.

SLEAZY WOMAN
 (cries)
 Ungh! Please!

ROYAL
 (spits)
 Now lick the floor.

The woman gets down on her knees and licks the floor as Royal bellows with laughter. He grabs her and sticks her face under the sink faucet. He squashes her drenched face against the mirror.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 Look at yourself, you pig.

He hurls her away. She staggers.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 Get the fuck outta here.

Terrified, she runs from the room in her spike heels. Kathi watches with carefully concealed shock.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 Fuckin' sow!

Royal gets a bag of coke from the bathroom drawer and picks up a magazine. He thrusts them both at Kathi.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 Fix up some lines. I need to get my head squared away.

Kathi meekly takes the magazine and bag of coke. She arranges the lines with a credit card, and they snort with rolled money. Royal capers around the room in a frenzy.

ROYAL (CONT'D)
 Fuckin' A. That's righteous shit.

He grabs Kathi and throws her onto the bed. She giggles, but scared.

EXT. BEACH FLATS - DAY

Denny walks down the street; there's something sinister about the place even among the Boardwalk frivolity. People watch him curiously in his business suit. He stops before a house, CHECKS the address, knocks.

Beautiful young AIMEE THIERRY, halfway opens the door, sees Denny in his suit and freezes WIDE-EYED like an antelope. But attraction flashes between them.

AIMEE
 Yes?

DENNY ANDERS
Does Nick Swanson live here?

AIMEE
(uncertain)
I... don't think I can give out
that information.

DENNY ANDERS
Sorry, let me start over.

He takes out his card and extends it.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
I'm with the DA's office, and we're
following up on his assault n'
robbery.

She takes it, glances at it.

AIMEE
I wasn't here when it happened.

DENNY ANDERS
Are you his... girlfriend?

AIMEE
Just a friend. Roommate.

DENNY ANDERS
He be back anytime soon?

Aimee hesitates.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
Look, he's not in trouble or
anything. The people who attacked
him may be robbing others.

AIMEE
Okay, well, he surfs over on West
Cliff Drive, by the lighthouse.

DENNY ANDERS
(sighs)
Well, I tried. Story of my life.

AIMEE
(giggles)
That's a funny thing to say!

DENNY ANDERS
I'm a funny guy. Tell Nick he can
call me or come by the office.

Attracted, they delay separating.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
You from around here?

AIMEE
Minneapolis.

DENNY ANDERS
What brought you to Santa Cruz?

AIMEE
A wrong turn. Uh... romantically speaking. But it was the right turn for my art. The light here is incredible.

DENNY ANDERS
So you're an artist?

AIMEE
(giggles)
Starving artist.

DENNY ANDERS
Comes with the turf. What's so great about the light?

They look out the window.

AIMEE
The way the sun shines off the waves, or breaks through the clouds. I used to work in watercolors but I've switched to oils. They're expensive, though.

DENNY ANDERS
How old are you?

AIMEE
Nineteen. I... dropped out of college.

DENNY ANDERS
Bet your parents didn't like that.

Aimee rolls her eyes.

AIMEE
Did your parents want you to be a lawyer?

DENNY ANDERS

Actually, my dad told me I was a born fuckup and I'd never make it.

AIMEE

How terrible. But you showed him, huh?

DENNY ANDERS

Speaking of showing... why don't you let me see your work?

(shyly pleased, Aimee
hesitates)

I don't mean to put you on the spot.

AIMEE

You really want to see my stuff?

DENNY ANDERS

That would be serendipity. I go looking for crime and instead I find... beauty.

AIMEE

(grins)

C'mon.

She takes his hand and leads him through the house. She has created a bedroom by hanging sheets. Inside are a bed, easels and painting supplies. A rope rack holds her clothes.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Welcome to my 'studio.'

(laughs)

Nick works for surf shops or does construction and stuff. I cook and clean, and he lets me stay.

DENNY ANDERS

Pretty good deal.

AIMEE

Sometimes I work at a snack bar. You know, whatever gets me by.

Denny examines the canvases and boards stacked against the wall. Her art captures the spirit of Beach Flats: personalities; derelicts, shady types, haunted young people.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

You know much about art?

DENNY ANDERS
I know talent when I see it.

AIMEE
(laughs self-consciously)
Really?

DENNY ANDERS
Your work reminds me of Toulouse
Lautrec.

Aimee looks puzzled.

AIMEE
That name is familiar.

DENNY ANDERS
I just paid you a big compliment.

Aimee looks at him hopefully, embarrassed.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
He was a 19th century French
artist. He painted the demi monde --
people living on the fringe.

AIMEE
(hesitates, shy)
I've seen you before. You and a
woman were riding the Big Dipper in
your business suits.

Denny laughs.

DENNY ANDERS
I work with her. She was showing me
her secret for attitude adjustment.

AIMEE
(smiles)
You go out with her?

DENNY ANDERS
No.. I... I'm married.

AIMEE
(amused)
Forbidden fruit, huh?

DENNY ANDERS
Lots of that around.

They are standing a little too close. The sexual tension suddenly grows. But he catches himself, looks away.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
Well, thanks for sharing your art.
Tell Nick I stopped by.

She follows Denny toward the door. They pause at the front door. She puts her hand on his sleeve.

AIMEE
Thanks for the encouragement. It...
means a lot.

STRONG sexual tension. But Denny keeps up appearances. He turns away and opens the door. A sharp ray of sun reflects off the ocean, and they blink.

DENNY ANDERS
The light...

AIMEE
Blinds you.

They kiss suddenly, hungrily. Break apart.

DENNY ANDERS
Oh God, I'm sorry. I didn't mean
for that to happen.

AIMEE
(sly)
I did.

DENNY ANDERS
No, really. I shouldn't have...

AIMEE
It's okay.
(beat)
You keep a tight rein on yourself,
don't you, Mr. DA?

Denny shrugs.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Maybe you need another ride on the
roller coaster.

DENNY ANDERS
I think I'm on it now.

They kiss again, high heat moment, start moving toward the bed, but Denny turns away.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
I... I can't.

AIMEE

You sure?

DENNY ANDERS

Please tell Nick I was here.

Their eyes meet one more time. Denny walks outside and hurries to his car, gets in.

INT. DENNY'S CAR - DAY

Denny sits and gazes out at the street, shell-shocked.

DENNY ANDERS

Jesus fuck Christ.

He pounds the steering wheel, shakes his head and starts the car.

EXT. SANTA CRUZ MALL - DAY

Denny parks and enters the Bookshop Santa Cruz.

INT. BOOKSHOP SANTA CRUZ - DAY

In the busy shop, Denny finds and buys a big coffee table book of Toulouse Lautrec paintings.

EXT. SANTA CRUZ MALL - DAY

Denny opens the trunk of his car and stashes the book under blankets and paraphernalia.

INT. DA'S OFFICE - DAY

As Denny walks in, his secretary Jenny and Madeleine encounter him.

MADELEINE

How was Beach Flats?

DENNY ANDERS

Dangerous.

MADELEINE

(little laugh)

Did you find Nick Swanson?

DENNY ANDERS
He wasn't around. I left my card.

MADELEINE
What took you so long? It was Jen's
birthday. Did you forget?

DENNY ANDERS
Oh God.

MADELEINE
That's okay. There's a ton of cake
left over. And sandwiches...

DENNY ANDERS
(uncomfortable)
Actually, I uh... stopped off at
home for a little... distraction.
(people overhear and grin)

Madeleine laughs.

MADELEINE
A nooner! Awww, you gotta grab some
fun when you can in this world.

DENNY ANDERS
(laughs)
I dunno. I just...

MADELEINE
Like they say, 'never complain,
never explain.'

Denny laughs, returns to his work.

LATER

Madeleine, Jenny and a couple of DAs stop by Denny's desk.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)
(to Denny)
Hey 'Nooner,' we're off to the Jury
Room for drinks. Wanna come?

Denny looks interested.

JOHN BOHRER
Your wife's welcome too.

DENNY ANDERS
Oh, she'll never find a sitter at
such short notice.

MADELEINE
 (mischievous)
 See ya there!

Everybody leaving. Denny hesitates, then dials,

DENNY ANDERS
 (on phone)
 Hey Fanch, I'm gonna be late. That
 suicide by cop. Lotsa paperwork.
 (beat)
 No, don't bother with dinner, I'll
 just grab some fast food.

Denny hangs up.

CUT TO:

INT. DENNY'S HOME - AFTERNOON

Fanchon surveys the counter where she is marinating chicken and chopping vegetables. She looks at the wine glasses set out with white napkins. After a moment she tosses all the food into the garbage. She opens the bottle of wine, sits at the table and pours a full glass.

INT. JURY ROOM BAR - EVENING

Happy hour in full swing. Lots of cops, DA's, public defenders, all mingling. The investigators Dick Van de Berg and Ray Belgard belly up to the bar. Madeleine is drinking shots with cops. Everybody is getting wasted.

The bartender puts a beer in front of Denny with a shot and gestures at the sheriffs Tom McArdle and Becker. Denny waves thanks to them.

MADELEINE
 (introducing the tough-
 looking bartender)
 Tony used to be on the police force
 here.

DENNY
 That right?

Tony wipes the bar, nods. His face tells a million stories.

TONY
 Yeah, I got smart and retired.

MADELEINE

(to Denny)

One of our serial killers was a regular here. He used to hang out and schmooze with the cops. They'd be talking shop about the killings with the guy who committed them!

DENNY ANDERS

Get the fuck outta here.

MADELEINE

Meanwhile he had a couple of his victims' heads in his trunk, right out in the parking lot.

TONY

I served him many times. He was slick. I can see how women trusted him enough to get in the car.

DENNY ANDERS

Who finally clocked him?

TONY

Nobody. Fucker confessed. He was off working on a road crew in Colorado free as a bird. And one day he just called up Ken, told him he'd committed the murders. Said he'd done others.

MADELEINE

So get this. Ken sends out Van de Berg and Robustelli to bring him back here. But for 'some unknown reason'

(laughs)

the airlines wouldn't let a six foot ten inch serial killer on board.

People listen with relish though they have obviously heard the tale many times. Van de Berg ambles up.

DENNY ANDERS

What'd you do?

DICK VAN DE BERG

We rented a car and drove his ass all the way back to California.

DENNY ANDERS

You *drove* him?

DICK VAN DE BERG
Gave him some magazines to keep him
occupied. First, I showed him this.

Dick hauls out a huge, fancy, pearl-handled revolver.

DENNY ANDERS
(gawks)
Holy shit!

DICK VAN DE BERG
(admiring the gun)
Gift from the Mexican government
after my partner got killed in a
shootout down there. That's another
story.
(spins the cylinder))
I told our friend I'd just love to
put one of these hollow points in
his head. He was docile as a lamb
the whole way.

DENNY ANDERS
You're a scary guy, Dick.
(laughter)
Where is he now?

DICK VAN DE BERG
Vacaville. For the criminally
insane. Too crazy to execute, so
there he sits, reading fan mail.

Denny shakes his head, laughing.

MUCH LATER:

Little by little, people are drifting home. The bartender and
Denny are left; Denny is dragging his heels, nursing a drink.
The bartender picks up on this.

BARTENDER
Get you one more?

DENNY ANDERS
Naw, I better get home too.

Denny checks his watch: 11:30. Just then a couple of cops
burst into the bar, excited.

COP #1
What the hell? They told us the
whole DA's office was down here.

DENNY ANDERS
People took off. What's up?

COP #1
A couple of mushroom hunters found
a skull up on Empire Grade. There
might be a body too.

BARTENDER
Here we go again.

COP #1
You wanna come up there, or should
we call Ken?

Denny hesitates.

DENNY ANDERS
Can you gimme a ride? I've had a
few.

COP #1
No prob. C'mon.

EXT. EMPIRE GRADE ROAD MURDER SCENE - NIGHT

When Denny and the cops arrive, there are already a couple of
other cars, searchlights and the coroner. Steve Benetz greets
Denny as he gets out of the cop car.

DENNY ANDERS
How you doin'?

STEVE BENETZ
Deja Vu. Another body, possibly
two.

STEVE BENETZ (CONT'D)
(gesturing to two freaked
out hippies lingering)
Those guys found the skull. At
first they thought it was an
animal, but when they got closer...
Halloween!

The spotlight shines on a grinning skull with a big, jagged
hole in it.

CORONER
(to Denny)
Looks like he took a .44 or .45.
I'm taking this with me.

Gloves on, he places the skull in a container.

CORONER (CONT'D)

(to Denny)

There are more bone fragments nearby. My guess is that there's a body or maybe two. The soil feels mushy.

He walks a few feet away and pushes on the ground with his shoe.

CORONER (CONT'D)

We'll have to wait till first light to start digging.

DENNY ANDERS

Let's secure the scene. Looks like rain.

CORONER

Good call. Funny, the animals don't seem to have done much. Lotta coyotes and mountain lions up here. But there's no sign of animal activity.

People bustle around with canvas and equipment, stretching yellow crime scene tape around the area.

Steve Benetz snaps pictures.

LATER

EXT. DENNY'S HOME - NIGHT

Denny pulls up into the driveway.

INT. DENNY'S CAR - NIGHT

The clock in Denny's car says 4 a.m. Denny stretches wearily. His shoes and the bottoms of his pants are covered with mud and dirt.

EXT. DENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Denny stops at the front door and tries to knock the mud off his shoes. Realizing it's hopeless, he bends and removes the shoes, leaving them beside the welcome mat.

He lets himself in the front door.

INT. DENNY'S HOME - NIGHT

There's a light in the entryway. The rest of the house is dark. Denny walks inside and turns on a low light in the living room. The house is its usual mess, toys and clothes scattered around.

Denny enters the

KITCHEN

He turns on the bright lights. The kitchen is revealed to be a mess too. The remains of a fish stick dinner are on the high chair. Dishes piled in the sink.

As he stands surveying the kitchen. Fanchon walks up behind him. He jumps at her touch.

FANCHON

Sorry, didn't mean to startle you.

DENNY ANDERS

How's Ellie?

FANCHON

Fast asleep. So.... Did you have fun at the Jury Room? Tom Kiely's wife Nancy called me. She said you guys were all at happy hour.

DENNY ANDERS

(uncomfortable)

Yeah, it's a tradition... bonding with the cops, you know.

FANCHON

You could have told me the truth, Denny. You give me that lofty lecture because I hid a couple of dead soldiers under the sink. And then you lie yourself.

DENNY ANDERS

I'm an asshole.

FANCHON

If you'll lie about a trivial thing like happy hour, what *won't* you lie about?

DENNY ANDERS

Sorry, baby.

FANCHON

(crying)

Nancy said people went hot tubbing.
I thought you were with them.

Denny laughs mirthlessly.

DENNY ANDERS

Actually, I was at a murder scene
from midnight on.

FANCHON

A murder scene?

DENNY ANDERS

Some mushroom hunters stumbled on a
skull up on Empire Grade. They
called the cops, who came by the
Jury Room. I was the only DA
available. So I went out to the
scene with them.

FANCHON

You went to happy hour and ended up
at a murder. Serendipity?

Denny laughs.

FANCHON (CONT'D)

You think you'll get to work the
case?

DENNY ANDERS

In my dreams. This could be a
serial murder. But at least I got
it off to a proper start, covered
all the bases.

FANCHON

Any idea who got killed or who did
it?

DENNY ANDERS

None whatsoever.

Fanchon moves forward to hug Denny but he backs away.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)

Sorry, I've been wading around in
body parts for hours. I don't even
want this shit in our washing
machine. I'll take it to the
cleaners tomorrow.

Fanchon grabs a large black garbage bag from under the sink. Denny takes it to the GARAGE.

He removes his clothes, stuffing them in the body bag. In shorts, he re-enters the house.

INT. DENNY'S HOME - NIGHT

Sounds of shower. Denny steps into the steamy stall.

LATER

Naked, Fanchon enters the shower and wraps her arms around him desperately.

FANCHON
Can I touch you now?

DENNY ANDERS
Anywhere and everywhere.

Fanchon falls to her knees, embracing his legs.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
Oh God, baby, I love you so much.

They make passionate, unabashed love in the shower.

LATER

Fanchon has cleaned the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Denny, in shorts, lies on the sofa. Fanchon cuddles beside him in a silk nightgown.

FANCHON
You want a drink?

DENNY ANDERS
More than I want my next breath of
air.

Fanchon goes to the liquor cabinet and pours two stiff shots of whisky.

FANCHON
(dryly humorous)
Not a drop of water in it, I
promise.

DENNY ANDERS
I'm sorry, Baby.

She cuddles up to him. He kisses her. They begin to make love again.

Just then, the bedside phone rings.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
Shit.

Denny grabs it.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Ken! Yeah, I just walked in about an hour ago.
(beat)
The scene's secured. A couple of deputies are spending the night out there.
(beat)
Glad to help. See you tomorrow.
Er... today.

Denny hangs up. They try to resume lovemaking. But suddenly Ellie's voice comes from the bedroom.

ELLIE
Daddy!!

Sounds of Ellie jumping up and down in her crib.

FANCHON
Go to sleep Ellie. Daddy's tired.

EMILY
Wanna. Come. Out. Wanna Come. Out.

Denny and Fanchon look at each other and shrug on their robes. Fanchon rises to get Ellie. Denny emerges to find Fanchon and Ellie on the sofa. He swigs the rest of his drink and then sits and enfolds them, one under each arm.

INT. DA'S OFFICE - MORNING

Denny arrives early. Willa and Jenny are there to greet him.

JENNY
Coffee?

DENNY ANDERS
Love some.

Jenny produces a big box of donuts.

JENNY

I stopped and got some fuel.

DENNY ANDERS

You were made in heaven!

They laugh. Ken enters with Art not far behind him. Others are beginning to assemble.

KEN CHONG

Okay, here's what we've got. A male skull with a hole made by a .45 slug. The coroner's team has already unearthed more bone fragments, some hair, a shovel, a machete, and a green body bag.

JOHN BOHRER

Have they found the body?

KEN CHONG

They found one female torso and another grave that may contain another torso. No female skull yet. I'm going up there in a few minutes. Denny, you and Art come along.

John looks at Denny significantly.

JOHN BOHRER

(to Denny)

I think you just graduated.

Madeleine gives Denny a skeptical but congratulatory look. Ken continues loading his briefcase and he speaks without looking at Madeleine.

KEN CHONG

Madeleine, you'll be co-counsel on this. So you should come along too.

Madeleine nods carefully trying not to look too joyful.

JOHN BOHRER

(sotto voce to Denny)

Smart move, Ken. She might just be the best lawyer in the office.

(to Denny)

No offense.

DENNY ANDERS

(nods)

None taken.

EXT. MURDER SCENE - DAY

BEGIN MUSICAL DIRGE

CLOSE ON a torso --- legless, armless, covered in a white, clayey substance slowly and carefully being freed from the dirt and lifted by a team in protective gear. Ken, Denny and the others watch.

The smell makes people recoil. Madeleine walks away a few steps, vomits, quickly returns. The site is crawling with law enforcement and coroner's personnel, taking samples, bagging, labeling etc.

Steve Benetz talks with a police officer, taking notes on his reporter's pad. Other reporters and photographers mingle.

KEN CHONG

What the fuck is that white stuff?
It's all over the place?

CORONER

I'm going to hazard a guess that
it's oyster shell lime. They sell
it at every gardening shop.

People turn and look at him.

JOHN BOHRER

Were they trying to grow flowers
around the graves?

MADELEINE

Somebody bought it by mistake. They
wanted *quicklime*, which would have
dissolved these bodies pretty well
by now.

CORONER

(laughs grimly)

Oyster shell lime is actually a
preservative of sorts. It insulates
the tissues from weather and water
and even certain parasites. Not to
mention discouraging predators.

ART MILLER

So they've made it easier for us.

CORONER

Oh yeah. We'll get the samples to
the lab and...

SHERIFF #1

(shouts out)

Another skull!

Everybody quickly reassembles at the second location as
technicians lift out a smaller skull.

CORONER

Female.

CLOSE ON the skull; all watch in the background. The coroner
leans in and gently takes the skull from the tech with his
gloved hands.

CORONER (CONT'D)

(slowly turning and
examining the skull)

Adult female, probably white.
Fairly young. Shot in the back of
the head. The other skull took the
bullet in the forehead. The male
torso had an entry wound in the
chest.

KEN CHONG

How long have they been here?

CORONER

At least a year. We'll analyze the
tissue samples. The lime slowed
decomposition significantly.

KEN CHONG

(asking all)

Anybody go missing lately?

ART MILLER

Nothing springs to mind for me.

KEN CHONG

Me neither. They may be from
outside the area.

ART MILLER

So they were brought here either
living or dead...

KEN CHONG

And dismembered. The murderer or his accomplices disposed of the limbs elsewhere.

STEVE BENETZ

Why would they do that?

KEN CHONG

Frustrate identification. Plus... the killer may have gotten off on hacking up his victims. Showing off what a badass he is.

STEVE BENETZ

So you think this was done by more than one person.

KEN CHONG

More than one person was involved, but I'd guess that the same guy did the shooting and hacking.

(quickly, to Benetz)

Don't print any of this. We don't want to alert the killer to what we think we know.

(examines the bodies)

He probably made sure no personal effects are here.

DENNY ANDERS

But he might have missed or dropped something.

KEN CHONG

The lime can preserve a tattoo. Funny, he went to all that trouble to cut up the bodies, but he left a few teeth in the skulls. He must have been in a hurry or tired. That's a running start for us on dental records.

(to DA's)

Let's check missing persons reports from the last six months. I don't think these victims were locals. Maybe the perp wasn't either.

People nod. Ken's eyes range across the ravine and the bridge to the CABIN, barely visible through the trees.

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)

Let's check out that cabin over there.

(MORE)

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)

It's been a while but they may recall some commotion out here.

(to Sheriff #1)

Lots of pot farmers around, heavily armed. So be cautious.

SHERIFF #1

Yup.

KEN CHONG

Take Joe Binard with you.

They look at the bodies.

SHERIFF #1

Dope? Vengeance?

KEN CHONG

They kind of go together.

They laugh grimly.

DENNY ANDERS

(to Ken)

So you think the victims were maybe killed elsewhere and brought here?

KEN CHONG

(thinking out loud)

I think they came here together, the killer and the victims.

(thinks)

And I think the victims arrived here alive. The perp pulled over in this little turnout here, see? And then he shot and buried them. It all happened right here. The graves may have been dug beforehand. But I have to wonder... why here in this spot? There's a whole forest out there...

Ken looks over at the cabin again.

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)

(to Sheriff #1)

Get a warrant before you visit that cabin.

Turns to the DAs.

KEN CHONG (CONT'D)

I think we're done here for now. See you back at the office.

DENNY ANDERS

(to Ken)

I'll head out to Beach Flats again today and try to wrap up this thing with Nick Swanson.

KEN CHONG

I was gonna suggest that. You'll be busy with this new case.

Denny's face brightens with interest.

DENNY ANDERS

Got it.

EXT. SANTA CRUZ MALL - DAY

Fanchon and NANCY KIELY are sitting at a sidewalk yogurt café with their two little girls.

NANCY

I so admire people who can write. What's your novel about?

FANCHON

Oh I'm... still working out the plot. I was going to set it in L.A. but I might set it here instead.

NANCY

So that's where you grew up? L.A.?

FANCHON

Yes, but I went to college at Berkeley. That's where I met Denny, on a blind date.

NANCY

Really!

FANCHON

He's from this one-horse town in the San Joaquin Valley. His mom once told me Denny was like a moth who had to fly too close to the flame and scorch his wings, you know? He's so buried in his work now. Sometimes when I'm telling him about my day, his eyes kind of glaze over. He denies it, but I know.

NANCY

Oh you don't have anything to worry about. After all, he missed Jen's big birthday bash last week to make mad hot love to you! That says a lot.

Fanchon conceals her puzzlement.

FANCHON

Oh... yeah...

NANCY

People call him "Nooner" now.

FANCHON

(laughs)

I worry about Madeleine. A colleague who's cute, young, and lonely is a wife's worst nightmare.

NANCY

Oh Maddy's been carrying the torch for one of the married public defenders for the last five years.

FANCHON

Five years?

NANCY

He calls her when he gets bored with whoever else he's cheating on his wife with. And then she wails about turning thirty unmarried.

Fanchon listens fascinated.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Tom tells me the less I know the better, I'm such a gossip!

(laughs)

But it's open season there, everybody knows everything.

They laugh, but when Fanchon turns to Ellie, the smile drops quickly from her face.

NANCY (CONT'D)

(daughter Lizzie fusses)

Oh-oh, somebody needs her nap.

They rise and hug.

NANCY (CONT'D)
 Let's do this again soon! I had a
 great time.

Fanchon walks with Ellie down the mall, preoccupied and glum.

EXT. DA'S OFFICE - DAY

NICK SWANSON, about 24, with the sunbleached hair and tanned, peeling skin of a surfer. He enters the outer waiting room of the DA's office, looking out of place and uncomfortable. A black eye is nearly healed, along with other bruises and scabs.

RECEPTIONIST
 May I help you?

NICK SWANSON
 I'm Nick Swanson. Uh, Denny Anders
 left his card at my place.

RECEPTIONIST
 (picks up the phone)
 Denny, Nick Swanson's here.

CUT TO:

INT. DENNY'S OFFICE - DAY

Denny hangs up the phone and turns to Madeleine, sitting in the chair in front of his desk.

DENNY ANDERS
 My snitch just walked in. I can't
 believe it!

MADELEINE
 That saves you another trip to
 Beach Flats. I know it's not your
 favorite hangout.

She rises and leaves. Denny looks pensive.

INT. DA'S OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

Jenny the secretary opens the door and peeks out at Nick, sitting uncomfortably in a chair.

JENNY
 Mr. Swanson? Follow me.

Nick rises.

INT. DA'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick Swanson follows Jenny through the office, sneaking a quick look or two at her ass. He is obviously freaked at the proximity of the DAs, investigators and cops.

Jenny opens the door of Denny's office and shows Nick in.

JENNY
(to Nick)
Can I get you a glass of water?

NICK SWANSON
(shakes head, mouth open)
Huh-uh.

Denny stubs out his cigarette and half rises from behind his desk.

DENNY ANDERS
Nick! Thanks for coming by.

He reaches to shake Nick's hand. Nick takes it, extremely uncomfortable.

NICK SWANSON
I already told the cops everything.

DENNY ANDERS
Right. I've got your file.

Denny opens a manila folder with photographs of Nick after the attack, beaten and bloody.

NICK SWANSON
(gawking)
Jesus, was that me?

Wordlessly, Denny extends the photographs. Nick looks through them.

DENNY ANDERS
We also have the X-rays of your
busted cheekbone and rib fractures.
If you want to see...

NICK SWANSON
I'll pass on that.

DENNY ANDERS

The cops thought you were dead when they first spotted you.

NICK SWANSON

I about was.

DENNY ANDERS

So... two guys attacked you from behind. You never got a look at their faces.

NICK SWANSON

It was dark. I passed this alley and somebody hit the side of my head with a cudgel or somethin'. I couldn't see nothin' but blood.

DENNY ANDERS

How much was your stash worth?

NICK SWANSON

Aw man, if I tell you that you'll have me up on a felony.

DENNY ANDERS

No I won't. It's your attacker we're after, not you.

Nick looks at the floor.

NICK SWANSON

I'm just another pissant trying to get by. I don't want trouble. I just wanna pay the rent, get me some food, do a little surfing.

DENNY ANDERS

Are you from this area?

NICK SWANSON

Grew up in Watsonville. My dad split and my mom's a drunk...

DENNY ANDERS

(laughs)

So's mine.

(beat)

So's my wife.

Nick looks closer at Denny.

NICK SWANSON
(smiles grimly)
No shit, man.

DENNY ANDERS
We're not gonna bust you, Nick.
You're the victim here.

NICK SWANSON
Yeah, but now you'll be all
watchin' my ass.

DENNY ANDERS
You could always get a job.

NICK SWANSON
I work sometimes at a surf shop. It
doesn't pay enough to live on.

DENNY ANDERS
Information has value. You help us
a little, and we help you in
return.

NICK SWANSON
I ain't no snitch.

DENNY ANDERS
Is weed all you deal?

NICK SWANSON
That's it, man. I got offered a job
muling coke but I said no thanks.

DENNY ANDERS
Who offered you that?

NICK SWANSON
Oh this friend of my roommate Aimee
came over and brought some
righteous coke. We was all doing
lines and Kathi starts bragging on
how her boyfriend's in the Mafia
and he's got blow comin' out his
ass.

Denny listens, deeply interested.

NICK SWANSON (CONT'D)
So anyway I left but I could still
hear them talking.
(laughs)
(MORE)

NICK SWANSON (CONT'D)

They sort of forgot I was there and Kathi was telling Aimee about this guy Royal and his big cock. She wanted Aimee to meet him. She could mule coke for him and her financial worries would be over.

Nick is caught up in his story.

DENNY ANDERS

Did Aimee ever meet Royal?

NICK SWANSON

Shit no, man. Like I told you, she never seed him. He's such a bad ass it scared her. Kathi says he's got a buncha guns and shit.

DENNY ANDERS

Where does Royal live?

NICK SWANSON

I dunno. Not around here, I don't think. Oh he lived in Hawaii, in some fancy condo. That's where Kathi met him, but now he's here doin' business. Kathi said if Aimee would mule a little blow for him, Royal would treat her real good. But Aimee said she didn't want to. She mighta done it once maybe, though.

DENNY ANDERS

How old is Kathi?

NICK SWANSON

About 18. She's one hot little ham.

DENNY ANDERS

"Ham?"

Madeleine has quietly entered and is leaning against the wall. She grins.

MADELEINE

Girl. Ham. You know.

Nick checks her out.

NICK SWANSON

Aimee though, she's fine. You've seen her, right?

(MORE)

NICK SWANSON (CONT'D)

She could be a model She had a bad time in Minneapolis.

DENNY ANDERS

What kind of bad time?

NICK SWANSON

Her dad molested her since she was like three years old. And finally she ran away and came out to California when she was thirteen or something. There's a lot she don't like to talk about.

MADELEINE

So Aimee did mule coke for Royal once?

NICK SWANSON

I didn't tell ya guys that, okay? She don't need no trouble.

DENNY ANDERS

Got it.

NICK SWANSON

So... did I give you enough... information?

DENNY ANDERS

You gave us a good start. Stop at Jenny's desk and she'll give you fifty bucks.

NICK SWANSON

(excited)

No shit!

DENNY ANDERS

I know it's hard for you to trust us. But we'll look out for you. I *personally* have your back, okay?

NICK SWANSON

And Aimee's too, right?

DENNY ANDERS

Right.

NICK SWANSON

(laughs a little)

I don't know what the fuck I'm doing here.

(MORE)

NICK SWANSON (CONT'D)

But I can't get the shit kicked outta me and my stash ripped off and not do *something*.

DENNY ANDERS

Right.

INT. DENNY'S HOME - NIGHT

Denny walks in; Fanchon looks up from playing with Ellie.

DENNY ANDERS

How would you like to go to a party tomorrow? Make up for that happy hour you missed.

FANCHON

I'd adore it. Who's throwing it?

DENNY ANDERS

A couple of rich hippies who backed Ken for DA. The husband is some genius who dropped out of Stanford and figured out a way to make computers run faster.

FANCHON

Really?

DENNY ANDERS

The legend is that he was flying on acid and he suddenly had an insight on solving some... binary bottleneck they called it. Information wasn't moving fast enough. Anyway, the insight and the acid made him a zillionaire.

FANCHON

Computers are going to make a lot of people rich, I think.

DENNY ANDERS

Maybe I'm in the wrong business.

FANCHON

Oh lawyers will figure out a way to get their share, count on that

DENNY ANDERS

So this guy and his wife built a solar-powered mansion out in the redwoods.

(MORE)

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)

They want to turn this whole area
into a peace and love empire ---
hugging trees, smoking weed, eating
shrooms, wearing Birkenstocks.
Munching brown rice.

FANCHON

(laughs)
Haight Ashbury in the Redwoods.

DENNY ANDERS

All fueled by the inexhaustible
forces of the sun. And venture
capital.

FANCHON

Omigod, what shall I wear? I look
so LA.

DENNY ANDERS

Go buy yourself some hippie gear.
I'll watch the pup.

LATER

INT. DENNY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Fanchon hangs up the phone as Denny walks in.

FANCHON

I can't get a sitter to save my
life. I wish I'd had a little more
advance notice.

DENNY ANDERS

Did you try mom and dad?

FANCHON

Of course. They just *would* pick
this weekend to go back to the
Valley.

DENNY ANDERS

How about the neighbors?

Fanchon pours herself a glass of wine.

FANCHON

I even asked them. They made up
some excuse. I guess I'll miss the
party. But you go ahead. It's
important for your job.

DENNY ANDERS

No... let's just take Ellie with us. As long as we keep an eye on her. Hippies bring their babies to parties all the time.

ELLIE

Wanna go.

DENNY ANDERS

Will you be on your very best behavior? Promise?

ELLIE

Yes!!!

DENNY ANDERS

And stay close to Mommy and Daddy?

ELLIE

Yes! Pwomise.

Denny and Fanchon look at each other and shrug.

EXT. UPSCALE HOME IN THE REDWOODS - DAY

Denny, Ellie and Fanchon, dressed up, gawk at a millionaire's mansion custom built among the forests. Fanchon is stunning in an exotic, near-transparent dress.

DENNY ANDERS

I feel like I'm in a modern version of The Great Gatsby.

Big crowd of upscale hippie-ish people. The entrepreneur and his wife greet Denny and Fanchon. His wife makes a fuss over Ellie.

ENTREPRENEUR'S WIFE

(to Denny and Fanchon)

Your daughter is a beautiful butterfly. I'm going to have one someday.

FANCHON

Enjoy your freedom. Once you have a baby, life changes.

ENTREPRENEUR'S WIFE

Oh I'm an earth mother at heart. Once I start having kids I won't stop. Did you breast feed?

FANCHON
 (embarrassed)
 Well, I tried. She uh... didn't...

ENTREPRENEUR'S WIFE
 I can't think of anything more
 joyous.

The wife moves on. The entrepreneur surreptitiously hands out joints and pills to guests despite the presence of the DA, Ken Chong and his wife MARILYN CHONG. Ken is drunk already.

BEGIN MONTAGE

People drunk and dancing. Ellie wanders around exploring. A couple of older kids give Ellie some wine.

Fanchon "hippie-dances" with the entrepreneur. Denny is in a corner talking shop with Ken. He watches Ellie from the corner of his eye. But she gets lost in the crowd.

CLOSE ON Ellie's attention caught by an exotic bird in its elaborate cage. She finds a handful of hors d'oeuvres and stands by the cage eating them. She shares some with the bird.

The night wears on --- starlight shines down on the mammoth deck of the mansion, where people socialize, all loaded.

Fanchon and Ken Chong dance and neck. Nancy Kiely dances very close with John Bohrer.

A young hippie chick is on a crying jag and Fanchon "comforts" her, and they hug, then kiss passionately.

Fanchon dances alone, very provocatively for some admiring men. Denny approaches and asks where Ellie is. They find her under the bird cage, asleep. Fanchon picks her up and they leave. Fanchon is drunk and euphoric.

END MONTAGE

FANCHON
 If only I could live like this all
 the time.

Denny puts his arm around her.

FADE OUT

INT. DENNY'S HOME - MORNING

Denny and Fanchon slowly awaken, hung over. It's 11:30 a.m. Fanchon, still in her dress, rises painfully, clutching her head.

FANCHON
God, put me out of my misery.

DENNY ANDERS
Mmph.

Fanchon walks into Ellie's room. Ellie is sleeping in her clothes in her crib. She has wet the bed. Fanchon reaches way back into Ellie's closet, looks quickly over her shoulder, and takes out a bottle of vodka. As Ellie stirs, Fanchon turns away from the crib, opens the bottle and takes a couple of swigs.

FANCHON
(calls out to Ellie over
her shoulder)
Hi sweetheart. Good morning!

Fanchon caps the bottle and replaces it deep in the closet.

FANCHON (CONT'D)
(to Ellie)
Okay, let's start brekky!

Sounds of Denny rising from bed, groans, pisses loudly in the toilet.

DENNY ANDERS (O.C.)
(from the bathroom)
Fanchon, did you know Art's wife is
a stewardess?

FANCHON
(calls out as she dresses
Ellie)
What's that?

DENNY ANDERS
You told that stewardess joke: Did
the passenger want 'TWA coffee or
TWA-T.'

FANCHON
So?

DENNY ANDERS
So you essentially called his wife
a twat.

FANCHON

I told a stupid joke, big deal.
You're just in a crappy mood from
the hangover.

DENNY ANDERS

Well she was offended.

FANCHON

If that joke offended her, then she
is a twat.

DENNY ANDERS

True.

He phone rings. Denny takes it. We hear in the background.

DENNY ANDERS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Seth! Hey, thanks so much for
having us over yesterday... we had
a great...

(beat)

What?

(beat, listens)

Oh no. That's terrible.

(beat)

Why do you think it was Ellie?

FANCHON

(calls out)

What happened?

Fanchon brings Ellie into the kitchen and puts her in the
high chair. Starts getting out breakfast fixings.

DENNY ANDERS (O.C.)

No, she loves animals of all kinds.
She would never...

(beat)

Please let us reimburse you.

(beat)

Right. Well, I understand your
feelings but I.... Thanks for...

Denny enters the kitchen.

FANCHON

What was that about?

DENNY ANDERS

That was yesterday's host with a
distinct deficit of peace and love.

FANCHON
What's his problem?

DENNY ANDERS
(sotto voce)
He says his bird is dead. And he thinks Ellie had... something to do with it. People saw her feeding it.

FANCHON
Oh that's ridiculous.

DENNY ANDERS
Fucking bird was imported --- probably illegally --- from South America. It cost like ten thousand bucks.

FANCHON
So we owe him ten thousand bucks?

DENNY ANDERS
Of course not. He knows damn good and well he could never prove Ellie poisoned his bird.

FANCHON
All she did was watch it. Anybody could have fed it. And how does he even know that's what killed it?

DENNY ANDERS
He says he should have put it away somewhere. But he says we weren't keeping a proper eye on our kid, so for our "own good" he wants us to know that we caused the death of a ...

ELLIE
(calls over)
Can I see the bird?

FANCHON
No, sweetheart. It flew away.

DENNY ANDERS
Weren't you supposed to be watching her?

FANCHON
I was.

DENNY ANDERS

Fuck that. You were all over the place. Dancing like Mata Hari, twining tongues with that hippie chick...

FANCHON

Wait just a damn minute! I did not!

DENNY ANDERS

You got stinking blotto. In fact I think you're still drunk.

FANCHON

And you didn't drink?

DENNY ANDERS

It's lucky Ellie didn't fall into the pool or something.

FANCHON

You're her parent too.

DENNY ANDERS

We should never have brought her.

FANCHON

Well I wouldn't have if I thought...

DENNY ANDERS

Just own it. You neglected her.

FANCHON

Am I on trial here? Don't I have the right to a defense?

DENNY ANDERS

Oh don't pull that...

FANCHON

Why don't you go buy yourself a doubleknit suit and get a crew-cut. Connect with your inner fascist.

DENNY ANDERS

I can smell the booze on your breath from here.

FANCHON

So I had a Bloody Mary on a Sunday morning. Big deal.

DENNY ANDERS

Yeah, minus the tomato juice and the lime and the celery and the salt. Oh and minus the Tabasco sauce. Can't forget that.

Denny leaves and turns on the shower.

LATER

Denny picks up the car keys. Fanchon hears him from the kitchen.

FANCHON

Where are you going?

DENNY ANDERS

There's a sale on Gestapo uniforms downtown. Thought I'd have a look.

He slams out the door. Fanchon looks blank with shock.

ELLIE

Mommy have owie?

FANCHON

Yes, baby.
(sobs)
In my heart.

Fanchon takes Ellie's hand and puts it over the girl's heart.

FANCHON (CONT'D)

I... fell short. As usual.

ELLIE

What?

FANCHON

It means when you try your best to please somebody and you fail.

ELLIE

Why?

FANCHON

(dashes away her tears)
I've got an idea. Let's read a story.

Ellie perks up.

ELLIE

Petew Wabbit?

FANCHON

Enough Peter Rabbit. Let's read a book I loved when I was a kid.

She takes out a book from the shelf called "Black Beauty."

FANCHON (CONT'D)

(opens and reads)

'The first place that I can well remember was a large pleasant meadow with a pond of clear water in it....'

Ellie's eyes grow large with fascination. She puts her hand over her mother's. But after a moment, Fanchon takes Ellie's hand away to pour herself a glass of wine.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA CRUZ BEACH BOARDWALK - DAY

Denny waits in line, alone and self-conscious, to get onto the Big Dipper.

LATER

Denny disembarks, feeling better. He stops and buys a tiny T-shirt. He buys a bag of salt water taffy and a greeting card. He writes to Fanchon: "Apologies. Let this sweeten your day. Love Denny."

As he is about to get into the car, he spots Aimee strolling by herself. Denny hesitates. He opens the trunk and puts the T-shirt in. Then he takes out the Toulouse Lautrec book and grabs the bag of taffy. The greeting card falls out into the street. He doesn't notice.

He approaches Aimee.

DENNY ANDERS

Hey!

Her face lights up when she sees him.

AIMEE

What are you doing here?

DENNY ANDERS

I needed a fix.
(gestures to the roller coaster)

AIMEE
 (laughs, indicates the
 book)
 What's that?

Denny gives her the book. They stroll over to a bench away from the crowd. Aimee takes the book and pages through it. She looks at Denny; her eyes fill with tears.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
 Oh God, they're so beautiful.

DENNY ANDERS
 (intense)
 You're beautiful.

Their lips brush.

AIMEE
 Let's get away from here.

They get into Denny's car and take off.

EXT. REMOTE BEACH - DAY

They park and Denny grabs a blanket from the trunk. Denny and Aimee take the book and the candy and find a cove. They sit looking through the book. Aimee eats a piece of taffy giggles around it. Denny kisses her hungrily.

They make love on the beach.

HOURS LATER

EXT. DENNY'S HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

Denny pulls up and parks. As he gets out, he looks down the block and sees Ellie toddling along the sidewalk, alone. She stoops to pick a flower. Horrified, he chases her down.

DENNY ANDERS
 Ellie! How'd you get outside?

ELLIE
 Hi daddy!

DENNY ANDERS
 Where's mommy?

ELLIE
 Mommy sweeping.

Denny picks up Ellie and heads back to the house.

INT. DENNY'S HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

Denny bursts in to see Fanchon passed out on the sofa. Still in her hippie dress. Breakfast food is out, milk spilled. The Black Beauty book lies half open on the floor.

DENNY ANDERS
(shouts)
Fanchon?!

She stirs. Furious, Denny puts down Ellie and grabs Fanchon by the hair. She screams in pain.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
I found our daughter wandering
alone outside.

Fanchon looks confused and horrified. She is very drunk.

FANCHON
I... put her down for a nap.

DENNY ANDERS
You know she can get out of the
crib. She could have been kidnapped
or hit by a car.

FANCHON
(drunken)
Where the fuck were you all day?

Fanchon flies at Denny. He defends himself but shakes her.

FANCHON (CONT'D)
Let. Me. Go!

Struggle. Denny draws back his fist as Fanchon flails and kicks at him. He looks beyond her to see Ellie watching, eyes wide.

ELLIE
(whispers)
Daddy?

He barely stops himself from slugging Fanchon and throws her away from him. She staggers, her arms red from his hands. Denny sinks onto the sofa. Ellie runs to Fanchon.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Mommy's hurt?

Fanchon runs into Ellie's room, grabs the vodka from her closet and locks herself in the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Fanchon looks at her puffy face in the mirror. She looks at her arm where Denny had grabbed her, then tilts the bottle of vodka to her mouth and swallows.

In the living room, Denny picks up Ellie and hugs her.

DENNY ANDERS
Mommy's not feeling well,
sweetheart. Are you hungry?

Ellie nods.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
Let's get you fed.

He cleans off her high chair and puts her in it. He gets out food for Ellie, who eats eagerly.

ELLIE
Read me?

DENNY ANDERS
I... Sure.

He picks up the Black Beauty book, pulls up a chair, and begins to read aloud while Ellie eats.

QUICK SHOT: Fanchon curled up in a fetal position on the floor.

Denny picks up the phone and dials.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
Madeleine? What are you up to now?
(beat, insincere chuckle)
I... don't mean to intrude on your
Sunday afternoon, but I need some
help here. I'm in a bad way. I...
don't know where to turn. I can't
handle this.

MADELEINE (O.S.)
I'm there.

He hangs up and buries his face in his hands.

LATER

INT. MADELEINE'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Madeleine is driving down Highway 1 to Carmel. Fanchon lolls half conscious in the front seat next to her.

MADELEINE

You're going to be fine. It's the best rehab on the coast.

FANCHON

(mumbles)

Can't do it any more. Denny hates me.

MADELEINE

Of course he doesn't. He loves you. And Ellie loves you. But they need you sober.

FANCHON

I fucked it all up. He's gonna divorce me.

MADELEINE

That's just the booze talking.

FANCHON

Are you having an affair with him?

MADELEINE

I swear on my life I'm not.

FANCHON

My life's not worth shit.

Madeleine pulls up in front of an classy rehab with a sign in front: "Sunnyside: Where Life Begins Anew."

She parks, gets out, and briskly comes around, helping Fanchon out. A nurse and a doctor emerge from the building and bring Fanchon staggering inside.

LATER

INT. FANCHON'S BEDROOM IN REHAB - NIGHT

Fanchon's eyes blink open. She lies on her back staring dully at a picture of Albrecht Durer's praying hands in needlepoint on the wall.

INT. DENNY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Denny's clock goes off. 7:00 a.m.

Beside him on the bedstand is a fifth of bourbon and a glass. Denny goes into the living room, puts the bourbon away and rinses out the glass.

He goes into Ellie's room, where she is sleeping peacefully. He picks up the phone in the living room.

DENNY ANDERS

(on the phone)

Hi Willa? Denny here. Listen, some family issues came up over the weekend, and I need to take the day off to get things squared away. Can you let Ken know I'll be in tomorrow.

(beat)

Thanks. You're a pal.

He dials again.

LATER

Denny is dressed; the house is clean; Denny's parents, PAUL and LILLIAN, walk in.

ELLIE

Gwammy! Gwampa!

Paul reaches down and scoops up Ellie.

PAUL

How's my blue-eyed darlin'?

ELLIE

Mommy has owie.

PAUL

Yeah, but she's gonna get better. Don't you worry.

LILLIAN

My little princess!

Lillian takes Ellie from Paul and walks out of the room, cuddling her.

PAUL

Son, you don't need to tell us nothin'. We're gonna help you out. And your sister's on her way.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

She's gonna stay with us for a while and give grandma a hand with the baby.

DENNY ANDERS

Thanks Dad.

PAUL

I know we've had our set-to's, you and me, like any father and son... but there's nothing we won't do for Ellie. And you.

Lillian returns.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Ma turn!

He takes Ellie, dances around as she giggles.

LILLIAN

(serious)

How are you feeling, Denny?

DENNY ANDERS

Like homemade shit.

LILLIAN

Do you need me to call Fanchon's family?

DENNY ANDERS

Let's leave that to her. The rehab doesn't want family buzzing around.

LILLIAN

I know she and her mom don't get along. That's part of her problem, if you ask me.

DENNY ANDERS

Big part.

LILLIAN

Well we can't fix that. Ellie is what matters right now. And you.

ELLIE

(to Paul)

The bird flew away.

LILLIAN

Sweetheart If you want a bird we'll get you a bird.

Ellie claps her hands with joy.

DENNY ANDERS

Uh... mom, listen, you don't have
to get her a...

Lillian turns on her authority.

LILLIAN

Dennis, Ellie can have whatever her
heart desires. I've been wanting a
bird for a long time, as a matter
of fact.

PAUL

Yeah! I'll buy me a parrot and
teach it to cuss.

LILLIAN

(laughing)
You will not!

ELLIE

(laughing)
Yes! Yes!

LILLIAN

You're going to come stay with us
for a while. We'll bake some
cookies today, and then I'll teach
you how to beat Grandpa at cards!

Ellie and Paul laugh.

ELLIE

Where's mommy?

LILLIAN

Mommy needs to get better and Daddy
needs to work. Now let's get you
packed.

Lillian and Ellie go into her room.

EXT. DENNY'S HOME - NIGHT

Denny comes driving up to the house alone at the wheel. He
opens the garage door automatically and drives the car
inside. Closes the garage door.

INT. DENNY'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Aimee sits up in the passenger seat.

DENNY ANDERS

It's okay. Nobody saw us come in.
The neighbors are all asleep.

AIMEE

You sure you're okay about this?

DENNY ANDERS

I don't think the word 'okay' is in
my vocabulary anymore.

He leans across the front seat, and they kiss passionately.

They get out and enter the house from the garage.

INT. DENNY'S HOME - NIGHT

Aimee walks tentatively through the house. She sees the book
Black Beauty in the kitchen.

AIMEE

Oh *Black Beauty*! I loved this book
when I was little.

She pages through it. Denny takes it from her and closes it.

DENNY ANDERS

C'mon.

He takes Aimee by the hand and leads her into the

LIVING ROOM

AIMEE

(looks around)
I can feel your wife's spirit here.
She's hurting.

DENNY ANDERS

Don't be surprised if you find some
other 'spirits' hidden around the
place. Fanchon's been miserable
ever since she got here.

AIMEE

And I've been so happy here!

They embrace.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
But how can I be happy in somebody
else's misery?

DENNY ANDERS
Happiness isn't what life's about.

AIMEE
What is it about then?

DENNY ANDERS
Happiness is cruelly brief. So you
grab it when you can and hold on
till it's gone.

AIMEE
You're so bitter.

DENNY ANDERS
I can be sweet too.

He leads Aimee into the bedroom and they fall onto the bed,
making passionate love.

EXT. BEACH FLATS NEIGHBORHOOD - EARLY MORNING

Denny drives down the main street and turns into an alleyway.
Aimee sits up and looks around.

DENNY ANDERS
I'll call you later today. Be
discreet.

AIMEE
You don't have to tell me that.
God, I hate sneaking around.

They kiss; Aimee exits the car and vanishes into the alley.

INT. AIMEE'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Aimee walks in the door and Nick Swanson is in the kitchen
eating a bowl of cereal.

NICK SWANSON
Hey Aimee. Where were you? I got
kinda worried when you didn't show
up last night.

AIMEE
It's okay. I...

NICK SWANSON
Just tell me it's none of my
business.

AIMEE
(smiles)
It's okay, Nick. I just... don't
know what I'm doing right now. But
that's nothing new.

NICK SWANSON
You stayin' safe?

AIMEE
I.. think I am. Are you?

NICK SWANSON
(laughs)
Fuck no. I ain't about safe.

AIMEE
I guess neither of us is.

Aimee pours herself a bowl of cereal and they sit next to
each other.

NICK SWANSON
Hey your friend Kathi came around
last night lookin' for you.

AIMEE
Oh really?

NICK SWANSON
She said she'd stop by today or
somethin'. She was righteously
bummed, though.

AIMEE
Oh no.

NICK SWANSON
Hope she brings some of that good
coke with her...

AIMEE
I don't want to... know any more
about that.

NICK SWANSON
You gonna mule some for her
boyfriend? We could use the cash.
I'd do it but I'm working for the
other side now.

AIMEE

I don't want to. I just... I'm kind of sorry I ever met her. That sounds awful. I mean I love Kathi and all that. But...

NICK SWANSON

Yeah, she's over the edge. Aw, I'll always take care of you.

AIMEE

Thanks, Nick. You goin' surfing?

Nick stands up and throws his cereal bowl in the sink.

NICK SWANSON

What else?

He cheerily departs. Aimee washes his bowl, goes into her room and looks at her latest artwork up on the easel. She begins to touch it up.

EXT. BEACH FLATS STREET - DAY

Kathi weaves her way down the street side of the Big Dipper, looking around nervously. She glances behind her and quickens her pace.

EXT. AIMEE'S HOME - DAY

Kathi arrives and taps on the door.

INT. AIMEE'S HOME - DAY

Aimee opens the front door. Kathi ducks past Aimee and into the house.

AIMEE

Hey Kath, what's up?

Kathi sits on the sofa and rocks back and forth.

KATHI

Is anybody here?

AIMEE

No, Nick just went surfing.

Kathi looks into the bedrooms. She opens a few closet doors.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
What's wrong? You paranoid?

KATHI
I'm in deep shit. I don't know what to do.

AIMEE
Why? What happened?

KATHI
Royal has gone bug fuck nuts. He's having me followed. He says he might kill me. He's threatening to kill all kinds of people.

AIMEE
But why?

KATHI
He's crazy. He says he'll kill my family. And other people too.

AIMEE
He needs to lay off the coke.

KATHI
Fat chance. He's doing lines from morning till night. I just want out. Oh God, I've been so bad.

AIMEE
Me too. God help us both.

Kathi looks at Aimee closely.

KATHI
What do you mean?

AIMEE
N... nothing. It's just, I met this man. He's married and his wife's in rehab. I'm in love with him. I've never felt like this before. And he's... LE.

KATHI
Law enforcement? A cop?

AIMEE
Close enough.

Kathi can't sit still and can't pay attention. She lights a joint and puffs. Aimee shakes her head when Kathi offers it to her.

KATHI

You got any booze? The top of my head's coming off.

AIMEE

I don't know. I'll look around.

Aimee opens a cupboard and takes out a bottle of whisky half full. Kathi drinks deeply.

KATHI

Aimee, I have to tell you something because if I don't I'll die.

AIMEE

Sure, go ahead.

KATHI

I saw Royal kill those two people up on Empire Grade.

AIMEE

What???!!! Royal did that?

KATHI

Shhh!

(looks around)

He chopped off their heads with a machete. And then he cut them up. I saw him do it. Oh God, Aimee I helped him.

AIMEE

Kill them?

Kathi nods.

KATHI

Royal told them this bullshit story to get them to come with us. And I went along in the car.

Aimee gasps.

KATHI (CONT'D)

Please don't hate me. The devil is chasing me.

AIMEE

Oh my God.

KATHI

He shot them right in front of me.
And then me and Tina and Billie
threw their arms and legs into a
dumpster in La Selva Beach. I
helped throw out their arms and
legs. I know I'm going to hell.

AIMEE

Why'd he kill them?

KATHI

Royal told Don these Mafia big
shots were holding a quarter
million's worth of coke in this
cabin. But there wasn't never any
dope. These two cokewhores Tina and
Billie were waiting in the cabin.
They had the graves all dug.

AIMEE

Tina and Billie?

KATHI

He gave them twenty thousand
dollars each. And they bought
this... this lime to dissolve the
bodies. I'm so scared. It said in
the paper they think the murderer
had accomplices. Royal is going to
kill me. Cause I saw him do it.
(cries)

AIMEE

Oh my God.

KATHI

I've been fucking him for almost a
year. I fucked him the night he did
it. I'm in hell right now.

Aimee takes a swig from the bottle.

AIMEE

How'd you even meet him?

KATHI

In Hawaii. He was staying at the
place across from me and my friends
on Kauai. And I dunno,... he was
different back then. He bought me
things. Nice stuff. He said I was
beautiful. Nobody ever treated me
so good before.

(MORE)

KATHI (CONT'D)

He said he was an executioner in the Mafia. What am I gonna do?

AIMEE

You've gotta go to the police. They might give you... what do they call it... immunity. If you testify against Royal.

KATHI

I'll never make it to the trial. Royal knows all kinds of people who would kill me for him. This guy in Minnesota who made the silencer on the gun Royal used. He's in California now. I think he's following me around. I thought I saw him today. Aimee don't tell anybody what I told you.

Aimee shakes her head.

KATHI (CONT'D)

Aimee, I love you. You're a sister to me.

AIMEE

(sighs)

God, I hate secrets.

KATHI

I'll never be clean again. I told Lauren she'd be fine, and then Royal shot her in the head. And I knew he was going to do that and I still told her she'd be fine. Why didn't I tell her to run? She didn't do nothin' to deserve that. Hell is a real place. You're on fire forever.

(cries)

AIMEE

Don't say any more. Please!

They cry together.

CUT TO:

INT. DA'S OFFICE - DAY

Denny is working at his desk. Dick Van de Berg comes in, closes the door, smiling mysteriously.

DENNY ANDERS
Hey Dick, what's up?

Dick throws a strange-looking knife onto Denny's desk.

DICK VAN DE BERG
Ever seen one of these?

Denny gawks at the knife.

DENNY ANDERS
What is it?

DICK VAN DE BERG
S' called a butterfly knife. It's
from the Philippines.

DENNY ANDERS
How does it work?

In one smooth motion, Dick takes the knife, opens it, grabs Denny, yanks him to his feet and jacks him up against the wall with the knife at his throat.

DICK VAN DE BERG
That's how.

Denny is utterly freaked, but trying to get with the joke.

DENNY ANDERS
Uh.. Okay Dick, thanks for the
lesson. Uh...

DICK VAN DE BERG
(serious)
That wasn't the lesson.

DENNY ANDERS
O-kay, you wanna let me down off
the fucking wall and tell me the
lesson?

DICK VAN DE BERG
You wanna know the lesson.

DENNY ANDERS
Fuck yes, tell me the lesson.

DICK VAN DE BERG
The lesson is... watch your ass.

DENNY ANDERS
Wh.. What do you mean?

DICK VAN DE BERG
You know what I mean.

Dick removes the knife from Denny's throat, folds it up, staring at Denny. Shaken, Denny backs off and sits down.

DENNY ANDERS
Look, my life's a fucking mess right now, if that's what you're referring to.

DICK VAN DE BERG
Your wife's been in rehab two weeks. Have you been to see her?

DENNY ANDERS
That's what this is about?! It's not your business. I just haven't been able to get away.

DICK VAN DE BERG
She keepin' you too busy, your little piece on the side?

DENNY ANDERS
Goddamn it, who made you chief of the morality police? Don't you have anything better to do than snoop through my life? Like a double homicide to investigate? Make your fucking point.

DICK VAN DE BERG
My point is, you're in a lot deeper than you know.

Denny stares at his desk.

DICK VAN DE BERG (CONT'D)
You wouldn't be the first guy in this office to go off the rails. But you might be goin' farther off than anybody else has.

DENNY ANDERS
Okay. Take your free advice and your judgment and your fucking butterfly knife --- and by the way that was assault with a deadly weapon --- and leave my fucking office.

The men glare at each other. Dick slowly leaves. The knife remains on Denny's desk. Denny opens and closes it, throws it into a drawer.

INT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

Slow sexy rock ballad UP.

Royal, Kathi, Tina, and Billie are sprawled all over the cabin furniture. A lanky man JIM DAHLEN is with them. Royal puts out some lines and they snort up the coke. All three women sexily dance with Royal and Jim. Royal sits down and puts his arm around Kathi, nuzzling her neck while Billie and Tina dance together with Jim.

ROYAL

Aw baby, I love you so much.

KATHI

I love you too. You're my man.

They kiss long and passionately, Royal groping all over her.

ROYAL

I'm just a little curious. Where was you this morning?

KATHI

Noplace. I just visited my friend Aimee in the Flats. We hadn't seen each other for a really long time.

ROYAL

Aimee who you were going to introduce me to?

KATHI

Oh yeah, you guys'll like each other. Except she's shy, you know?

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Madeleine drives past the crime scene and something catches her eye. She sees Royal's rental car parked up the road and partially concealed by bushes. She gets out and snaps a picture of the tire treads in the dirt. She squats to photograph the license plate, a rental.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - DAY

Everybody is getting stoned. Royal has his arms around Kathi.

KATHI
 (giggles unconvincingly)
 I know you love me.... But Aimee's
 fine.

ROYAL
 So what if I did fuck her? It
 wouldn't mean nothin'.

KATHI
 I know...

Royal strokes Kathi's throat.

ROYAL
 You didn't go and spill nothin' to
 her, did you?

KATHI
 (uncomfortable)
 Oh my God no! She doesn't know
 anything... we just talked girl
 talk.

ROYAL
 What'd you tell her about me?

KATHI
 (giggles nervously)
 Just that you've got a great cock.
 You know, girl talk.

Royal looks at her keenly, but his ego stroked.

KATHI (CONT'D)
 I'm not an idiot, okay? Why would I
 go and tell anything.

ROYAL
 I gotta be sure I can trust you.

KATHI
 Baby, we're all in this together.

ROYAL
 (stretches out on the
 sofa)
 I wanna get back to Hawaii, get a
 nice place.

KATHI

Yeah, on Kauai. We got the money now to get one of those new condos.

ROYAL

We can party in Waikiki for a while. Or get a place on the Big Island.

BILLIE

Can me and Tina come too?

ROYAL

Darlin' I can make all three of you come at the same time.

BILLIE

This cabin gives me the creeps. There's nothin' to do out there.

ROYAL

You sure you got rid of all that shit? The lime, the shovels? The cops are all over this road.

BILLIE

I threw everything away, all in different dumpsters like you said. This place is clean as a whistle.

TINA

Let's go back to the Dream Inn. We don't need to stay out here tonight.

ROYAL

Sure, I'll get me a suite. Let's call some people and we'll party.

TINA

Goodee!
(dances around very sexually)

ROYAL

(affectionately)
C'mere you coke-headed whore. I need some love. Kathi here's givin' me the cold shoulder.

KATHI

I am not!

She laughs unconvincingly but joins in when Billie and Tina begin kissing Royal. Royal looks at Jim meaningfully and Jim rises.

JIM DAHLEN
I'll be getting on, here.

KATHI
Bye Jim.

TINA
How come you gotta go so soon?
We're just getting started.

ROYAL
The man said he's got to leave.
(to Jim)
Stop by here and pick me up after
you're done, okay?

JIM DAHLEN
You got it boss.

Tina pouts. Jim departs.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Jim walks up the road and gets into the rental car that Madeleine has just photographed. He spins away, raising a dust cloud.

EXT. BEACH FLATS - DAY

Aimee is walking down the street carrying a hamburger in a bag and a milkshake. Jim Dahlen in the rental car cruises close behind her and parks. When Aimee reaches the end of the block and turns to go down the street to her home, JIM comes up to her and gets close.

JIM DAHLEN
(humorous, chivalrous)
May I escort you, lovely lady? I
could help carry your burden.

AIMEE
Oh! Uh no, that's okay. I'm almost
home.

JIM DAHLEN
Aw, I couldn't just let you vanish
from my life like that.

He quickly immobilizes her arms and jabs her with a needle. She gasps, drops her package and runs but, within seconds, she staggers. He quickly puts an arm around her to support her hustles to the car and inserts her. They take off. Amid the lively scene, nobody has noticed. The bag of food lies on the ground in Aimee's alley; a dog begins nosing it, lapping at the milkshake.

INT. DA'S OFFICE - DAY

Madeleine enters Denny's office with the photos of the car. Jenny greets her.

MADELEINE

Where's Denny?

JENNY

Uh, he took the day off.

She looks meaningfully at Madeleine.

MADELEINE

Oh. Where's Ken? Where is everybody?

JENNY

Ken's at a DA's luncheon. John got drunk last night and called in sick.

Madeleine puts a copy of the photo on Denny's chair.

MADELEINE

If either of them check in, have them call me ASAP. I think there's something up with this car. I saw it parked near the cabin. I called on the license plate. It's a rental from San Mateo.

JENNY

Got it.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 1 - DAY

Denny grimly drives down the road toward Carmel. His face is a pastiche of emotions --- anxiety, guilt and misery. Beside him on the seat are a bag of salt water taffy and a bouquet.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE REHAB - DAY

Denny drives into the small parking lot, exits his car and walks through the front door.

INT. SUNNYSIDE REHAB - DAY

A soothing, spotless reception room. A nurse in a nearby glassed-in station looks up when he enters.

NURSE

(smiles)

Mr. Anders? Fanchon will be happy to see you.

DENNY ANDERS

Uh... yeah I've uh... been buried in work. I...

NURSE

Let me get her out of creative group.

The nurse leaves Denny standing alone. Ill at ease, he looks over the bulletin board and a table with pamphlets: "A Family Matter" and "Who Am I? Asks the Alcoholic," etc. Little homilies and inspirational drawings on the walls. A corkboard with cheery photos from grateful graduates.

Behind the returning nurse, Fanchon emerges into Denny's POV. She wears a simple shift and not much makeup. She avoids eye contact with Denny.

DENNY ANDERS

Hi Frenchie.

FANCHON

Hi.

They hug but awkward.

DENNY ANDERS

I've been...

FANCHON

How's Ellie?

DENNY ANDERS

Doing fine. I just talked to Mom
and Dad.

FANCHON

Are they using her car seat?

DENNY ANDERS

(shrugs)

I dunno. Probably not. Can we...
talk about that later.

Denny follows Fanchon down a carpeted hallway. A couple of people pass them and greet Fanchon warmly. Stare holes in Denny.

INT. FANCHON'S REHAB BEDROOM - DAY

A comfortable upscale bedroom. On the dresser are three clay figurines: a man, a woman and a child. Denny's attention is arrested.

DENNY ANDERS

What are these?

FANCHON

They had us sculpt our families in
clay.

DENNY ANDERS

Why?

FANCHON

Maybe so that we would remember who
we... used to be.

DENNY ANDERS

Who we still are.

FANCHON

Why are you here?

DENNY ANDERS

For God's sake, you're my wife.

FANCHON

Uh huh.

DENNY ANDERS

We've never been apart for this
long. Don't you miss me at all?

FANCHON

I did at first. Then I had to adjust my expectations downward a little. The group helped with that. I had to accept...

DENNY ANDERS

Accept what?

FANCHON

As they say, accept the things I cannot change. I don't know much at this point besides that I'm an alcoholic. That's a lot though.

DENNY ANDERS

Mom has never accepted it. Dad wants to bring her in here too.

Fanchon bursts out laughing.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)

When we moved up here I thought I had the world by the balls. Life was going to be just one big shining victory after another. Instead I find out I'm as big an asshole as my dad. If not bigger.

FANCHON

Denny, I'd comfort you if I could, but as they say, I've got troubles of my own. I just...

Denny looks keenly at her.

FANCHON (CONT'D)

... don't want to pass them on to Ellie. When I think about her it's like pressing on a bruise. It hurts so much.

Fanchon's hands goes to her arm, still showing a little bluish bruise. She cries. Denny moves forward awkwardly to comfort her. She cries in his arms, but pulls away.

FANCHON (CONT'D)

Can you bring Ellie down?

DENNY ANDERS

I don't like her to see you in a place like this.

FANCHON
 (looks around)
 Like what? Is this some dungeon of
 depravity?

DENNY ANDERS
 It's not that...

FANCHON
 She needs her mother. Faults, flaws
 and all. And I need her.

DENNY ANDERS
 She's doing fine with my parents.
 Anyway, you'll be out of here
 before long.

FANCHON
 And what then?

DENNY ANDERS
 I... don't know.

FANCHON
 (sighs)
 Well, I'm powerless, like they tell
 me. Just... please consider it,
 okay?

Denny nods. He turns to embrace her, but she waves him away.

FANCHON (CONT'D)
 Just go, Denny. Thanks for
 visiting. But... I can feel
 something's not right. I don't know
 you anymore. All I know is I'll
 feel better right now when
 you're... someplace else.

DENNY ANDERS
 I'll call you.

Denny turns away and leaves, closing the door. Fanchon turns
 to the clay figurines and lays the male figure FACE DOWN.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Not a sound. FOLLOW a path to the cabin through the dark
 woods; redwood fronds and oak leaves tremble in a slight
 breeze as if brushed by a guilty spirit. A candle or other
 dim light glows in the window.

INT. CABIN BASEMENT - NIGHT

A crawl space under the cabin: dark, cramped dirt tunnel, a dungeon. Aimee's eyes pop open. She is tied up, her mouth taped. She has urinated on herself. She squirms and shifts around in terror but can barely move in this grave. She hears voices and tries to cry out.

SCREEN GOES BLACK

EXT. CABIN - MORNING

Sheriff Joe Binard and two others knock on the cabin door.

JOE BINARD
Sheriff's office. Open up.

Billie, in a "baby doll" nightgown, opens the door, yawning.

BILLIE
What's going on?

JOE BINARD
Ma'am, we're investigating a murder
that took place not far from here.

BILLIE
Oh yeah, I heard about that.

JOE BINARD
It happened right across the
ravine. You can almost see it.
(squints at the bridge)
How long have you girls lived here?

BILLIE
A couple of months I guess.

JOE BINARD
Who lived here before you?

BILLIE
Some old guy, a squatter. Anyway,
he left and the place was
abandoned, so Tina and me moved in.
We've been fixing it up. We want to
enroll at the University next
semester.

JOE BINARD
Uh-huh. Who do you pay rent to?

BILLIE

Uh... we haven't paid any yet.
Nobody's asked us to. So I guess
we're kind of squatters too.

JOE BINARD

That's okay, we can find out who
owns this land.

BILLIE

(giggles)
Don't tell 'em we're living here,
okay?

JOE BINARD

It doesn't work like that,
sweetheart.

Despite his efforts to conceal it, Joe is taken by the
flirtatious girl. Tina emerges in a bathrobe. The sheriffs
outdoors poke around the property and try to peek past them
into the house.

JOE BINARD (CONT'D)

Do you mind if we come in and take
a look around?

BILLIE

I... I'd rather you didn't.

JOE BINARD

We've got a warrant Ma'am. But
we're not looking for drugs. We
don't care what you girls get up to
in your own home, okay?

BILLIE

O... kay.

Billie swings open the door. The men walk past her.

JOE BINARD

Do you notice anything out of the
ordinary going on around here? Any
activities that made you feel
unsafe? Strangers hanging out?

BILLIE

(giggles)
We're pretty strange.

TINA

Shut up, Billie.

BILLIE
(to Joe Binard)
Did you ever hear of celestial
divination?

JOE BINARD
Nope, can't say I have.

BILLIE
Certain people can look at the
stars and predict when evil will
befall.

JOE BINARD
(winks)
Yeah? I can look at certain people
and make the same guess.

BILLIE
It's Saturn, Jupiter and Mars that
have the most power.

JOE BINARD
(looking around)
Zat so?

BILLIE
An avatar is expected to be born in
the year 2000. His force will
strengthen on given days and he'll
wield good or evil like a sabre.

JOE BINARD
An avatar, eh?

BILLIE
In the Apocalypse of Abraham, the
Angel Gabriel appears as a child.
He grows to his full power in
seconds.

JOE BINARD
Maybe you gals oughta back off them
psychedelics.

The cops are nosing around the house. One sheriff finds a
bundle of coke and surreptitiously slips it into his pocket.

FLASH CUT TO:

Aimee under the house, on her back, trying to bang her feet and head against the earthen ceiling and walls. Trying to shriek.

CUT TO:

Inside the cabin, the sheriffs are pounding around, oblivious, opening drawers and cabinets.

BILLIE
 (giggling)
 You guys can stop looking for our underwear. We don't wear any.

TINA
 (to Billie sotto voce)
 Gotta let Royal know they came by.

BILLIE
 Just maintain. They can't pin anything on us.

TINA
 Right.
 (louder)
 You guys done snooping yet?

JOE BINARD
 We'll tell you when we're done.

TINA
 We didn't have anything to do with your murder.

Billie stomps on her foot.

JOE BINARD
 (sarcastic)
 Thanks. We'll make a note of that.

The sheriffs leave.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABIN CRAWLSPACE - NIGHT

Tina paws aside some thick foliage, exposes a half-door and opens it.

INT. CABIN CRAWLSPACE - NIGHT

Tina pokes her face inside.

TINA
Hey.... You okay?

Aimee's face is swollen and her eyes are wild with terror.

TINA (CONT'D)
Look, this is just for a while,
okay? Royal is gonna let you out
pretty soon. The cops was here and
they didn't find nothin'. So he can
let you go.

She fumbles with a bottle of water.

TINA (CONT'D)
I brung you some water. I'm gonna
take the tape off, okay? But if you
scream I'll pour the water out on
the ground.

Aimee nods. Tina rips the duct tape from Aimee's mouth. Aimee looks at her in disbelief.

AIMEE
Where.. Where am I?

TINA
Look, you just gotta be patient,
okay? Here.

She extends the bottle of water, and Aimee drinks desperately.

TINA (CONT'D)
Hey like, I'm really sorry about
all this. Royal says Kathi told you
a bunch of shit that's not even
true.

AIMEE
Is he going to kill me?

TINA
You never know what Royal's gonna
do. But if you play along he won't
hurt you. I mean, he likes to talk
big, you know? You're real pretty,
I think he'll like you.

Aimee shakes her head.

AIMEE
I won't tell anybody. I'll do
whatever he wants...

TINA

I know. It' hard. I gotta put the tape back now, okay?

AIMEE

What about food?

TINA

I'll... bring you something later.

AIMEE

Please let me out. You'll never see me again. I won't say a word.

TINA

I can't do that. He'd kill me.

Aimee turns her head in a feeble effort to avoid the tape but Tina replaces it.

Stooped over, Tina leaves and locks the door.

INT. DA'S OFFICE - DAY

Madeleine takes the picture of the car from Denny's empty chair and goes to Dick Van Den Berg's office.

MADELEINE

Denny's not coming in?

DICK VAN DE BERG

No, he's visiting his wife.

MADELEINE

I just took these pictures of a rental car that was parked near the cabin. The agency is in San Mateo..

Van den Berg takes the pictures and studies them.

VAN DEN BERG

(grins)

You're gonna have my job if I'm not careful. Let's pay a call on that cabin. You with me?

MADELEINE

Wouldn't miss it.

INT. DREAM INN SUITE - NIGHT

Royal, ERIC, DON, JIM, and other lowlives are hanging out, some watching sports on TV. A couple of sleazebag women slouch around. Royal sits by himself playing with a gun, looking grim.

Tina and Billie walk in. Royal brightens.

ROYAL
Where y'all been?

BILLIE
You won't believe this. Sheriffs got a warrant and tore the cabin apart.

ROYAL
(alarmed)
No shit?

BILLIE
(sotto voce)
They didn't find the girl. We left her where you guys put her.

TINA
I gave her some water.

ROYAL
Did I tell you to touch her?

TINA
No, but.. I mean, I just gave her some water, okay?

ROYAL
In the future don't do nothin' but exactly what I tell you. You need to follow my instructions or we're all fucked.

TINA
They didn't find nothin'. We did just like you told us.

ROYAL
(sotto voce)
Okay. Good work. They won't be back if they didn't find nothin'.
(aloud)
Who wants some shit?

TINA AND BILLIE

Me! Me!

Royal gets out his coke and sets up some lines.

TINA

Where's Kath?

ROYAL

Out getting Chinese food.

TINA

God, I'm starving!

Royal looks at his watch.

ROYAL

(to Tina)

Then you go get the fucking food.

He flips her a hundred dollars. Tina takes off.

INT. DREAM INN - EVENING

Royal calls aside Jim Dahlen.

JIM DAHLEN

Yeah boss?

ROYAL

We gotta get rid of the bitch at the cabin. She'll talk her head off. She saw Billie and Tina and you. She's gotta go.

JIM DAHLEN

Shit. You want her put down now?

ROYAL

The sooner the better. Go take care of her and then come back.

JIM DAHLEN

Aw man. I ain't ate a bite all day.

Royal takes out a bindle.

ROYAL

Here. Best speedball in the country. Take care of her now and the food'll be here by the time you get back.

Royal gives Jim Dahlen a bindle. Jim looks admiringly at it, clutches it and salutes Royal.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABIN - TWILIGHT

Jim Dahlen drives up to the cabin. In the fading light, he prowls around and finally locates the crawl space. He fumbles with the keys, unlocks and opens the door.

Aimee rouses and tries weakly to crawl away but Jim follows her, stooping in the crawl space.

JIM DAHLEN

Pretty little thing, you. It's too bad what I gotta do, but orders is orders.

Aimee begins to cry.

JIM DAHLEN (CONT'D)

Awww, don't make it hard. Let's not make this any worse than it's got to be. I ain't gonna rape you or nothin'. I'm not that kind of guy.

He squats beside her.

JIM DAHLEN (CONT'D)

If things was different, I'd like to take you out, get to know you. I would. I don't like doin' this believe me.

Aimee's eyes bulge with pure terror as he moves forward and covers her body as he STRANGLES HER.

He sits back and shakes his head. Sitting next to her body, he opens the bindle of speedball and gets out his kit. He ties up his arm, prepares the shot and shoots up, grunting with pleasure. His eyes roll back in his head. He shakes his head in ecstasy as the drug takes effect, nods off.

MOMENTS LATER

He comes to and looks at Aimee's dead body, eyes staring. He stuffs his kit away in his jacket pocket. Lurches to his feet and crawls out of the space. Fumbling with the keys, he locks the door and walks away unsteadily. He gets into the car and starts it up.

FOLLOW Dahlen's car onto Empire Grade Road and into the distance.

MOMENTS LATER

Madeleine and Van den Berg arrive at the cabin in a county car, just missing Dahlen.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Van den Berg kicks open the door of the cabin and they walk through, opening drawers, knocking on walls etc. They find nothing.

MADELEINE

This cabin has got to be part of the murder. Those sleazy little hams are accomplices, I just know it.

Van den Berg shakes his head.

VAN DEN BERG

I'd like a couple minutes with either one of them. I'd get her to spill everything she knows.

MADELEINE

Right behind you.

They get back into the county car and drive off.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS HOME - DAY

Kathi, extremely agitated, knocks at the door. Kathi's sister SANDRA, about ten years older, opens it. Sandra has a baby on her hip. Her middle-class respectability contrast with Kathi's feverish, coked-out appearance.

SANDRA

Kathi! Wh... what are you doing here? I mean, I'm glad to see you but it's been so long.

KATHI

Sandie, you gotta help me. I'm in deep shit.

SANDRA
 (humorous, skeptical sigh)
 What else is new?

Kathi bursts into tears.

KATHI
 I've got nowhere to turn. I've been
 bad. God, I'm in so much trouble.

SANDRA
 (long-suffering)
 Well, come on in.

KATHI
 Is... is Kyle home?

SANDRA
 Yeah, for once he's back from the
 office before ten o'clock at night.
 (calls out)
 Kyle? Kathi's here.

A fortyish man, straight-looking, comes to the entranceway
 drying his hands. He is carefully neutral at the sight of
 Kathi.

KYLE
 Hi Kathi, how's things?

KATHI
 Listen, I didn't come here to mess
 up your lives.

KYLE
 What's going on?

KATHI
 You're still a probation officer,
 right?

KYLE
 Mr. Law & Order.
 (grins)

KATHI
 I... I
 (sobbing)
 I know who killed those people. Up
 on Empire Grade.

Kyle is instantly all ears. He gets closer, keenly looking
 into her eyes.

KYLE
Are you mixed up in that?

Kathi nods.

KATHI
I've sinned so bad. I gotta come
clean. He's gonna kill me, Royal.

KYLE
(to Kathi)
Come on inside.
(to Sandra)
Bring me the phone.

Kathi walks into the house, Sandra, still holding the baby on her hip, brings a phone with a long cord and sets it on the coffee table in the living room.

KATHI
Wh... who are you calling?

KYLE
The FBI.

KATHI
(breaks down sobbing)
Oh no! Just listen to me, okay?

KYLE
Look, if you want a chance to save
yourself, you've gotta tell
everything you know.
(beat)
That's why you came here, isn't it?
Because you wanted to do the right
thing? Unburden yourself?

KATHI
(awash in self-pity)
I w..ant to do the right thing.

Sandra produces a kleenex. We see Kyle talking inaudibly, walking around with the phone to his ear.

At the coffee table, Kathi, trembling, fumbles in her purse for a pack of cigarettes, shakes one out and tries to light it. Sandra puts a hand on her, points to the baby and shakes her head. Pained, Kathi puts away the pack. She fidgets, almost rises, then sits back down again. She watches Kyle with deep fear and glum resignation.

SANDRA
 You want something to eat? Or
 drink?

Kathi shakes her head.

KATHI
 I haven't eaten today. Or yesterday
 either. Royal thinks I'm getting
 Chinese takeout. This is the first
 time I've been able to get away
 from him. So I came here. I didn't
 know where else to go.

Sandra shakes her head.

KATHI (CONT'D)
 Am I gonna get arrested now?

SANDRA
 Kathi, I honestly don't know. But
 I'll try to... take care of you.
 You're still my sister.

KATHI
 (reaches out to the baby)
 Jordan! How's my little *man*?

The baby gurgles. Sandra draws him away a little.

KATHI (CONT'D)
 For God's sake, I'm not carrying
 the *plague*.
 (cries, head in hands)

Kyle walks back into the room.

KYLE
 (to Kathi)
 Kathi, you're gonna need a lawyer.
 I think for now the Public
 Defender's your best bet.

KATHI
 Am I under arrest?

KYLE
 Let's just wait.

Panicked, Kathi half rises.

KYLE (CONT'D)
 Don't.

Kathi sinks back down.

KATHI
Royal is... crazy. I don't want to
get you guys in his sights.

KYLE
You know where he is right now,
though?

KATHI
(nods)
He's at the Dream Inn. Everybody's
too coked out to leave the room.

KYLE
(ironic laugh)
So you were the one in the best
shape?

KATHI
Yeah.

KYLE
What name is he registered under?

KATHI
Um... Darren B.. Borland.

Kyle speaks into the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. AIMEE'S HOME - NIGHT

Denny is talking with Nick Swanson in the living room.

NICK SWANSON
I haven't seen her since day before
yesterday.

Denny is trying to hang onto his professional demeanor.

DENNY ANDERS
Has she ever been gone this long
before?

NICK SWANSON
It's not like her to be gone all
day and night too without letting
me know. I know she's been seeing
some guy hot n' heavy.

DENNY ANDERS

You know his name?

NICK SWANSON

No, man. She's been all secretive like about him. She keeps herself private, you know? Except I know he gave her that book.

Nick points to the Toulouse Lautrec book, open on her bed. He peeks at the cover, which is upside down from his perspective.

NICK SWANSON (CONT'D)

Too-loose Law-trec. This French artist painted hookers n'stuff a hundred years ago. She wants to paint like he did.

(pauses)

She sits and stares at it for hours.

(snickers affectionately)

I give her a hard time about it.

DENNY ANDERS

So... she never talked to you about... the guy who gave it to her.

NICK SWANSON

No. She did talk about that chick Kathi and her boyfriend Royal. Aimee said her and me should steer way clear even though he has a lotta geetis.

DENNY ANDERS

What did you tell her?

NICK SWANSON

(a little laugh)

I said 'no shit Sherlock we gotta stay clear.'

DENNY ANDERS

You think she might have gotten mixed up with Royal after all?

NICK SWANSON

Don't think so. But Kathi sure wanted her to meet Royal. She kept harping on that.

Denny's jaw muscle tightens.

NICK SWANSON (CONT'D)
 I ain't telling you how to do your
 job or nothin' but if Aimee doesn't
 show up real soon I'd go look up
 Kathi.

Denny nods.

DENNY ANDERS
 Where would I find her? Got any
 ideas?

NICK SWANSON
 She and Royal are all over town
 throwing money and coke around.
 They hang out at the Dream Inn
 sometimes. She told Aimee they were
 gonna take off for Hawaii.

DENNY ANDERS
 When?

NICK SWANSON
 Soon.
 (Nick looks worried)
 Man, I never told you none of this,
 okay? I don't want this Royal
 thinking I put the law onto him or
 nothin'. This is confidential,
 right?

DENNY ANDERS
 (distracted)
 Of course.

NICK SWANSON
 I'm about havin' a nervous
 breakdown. I wish Aimee'd get back.
 (beat)
 You wouldn't got like... a twenty
 on you?

Denny fumbles for his wallet and pulls out a twenty.

NICK SWANSON (CONT'D)
 Thanks man. I gotta book. Find
 Aimee, okay? I shouldn't tell you
 this but I... fuckin' love her. I
 never made a move on her 'cause I
 wanted her to feel... safe here.
 But just having her around is the
 only good thing in my fucked-up
 life. That and surfing. I always
 hoped one night she and me would...

(MORE)

NICK SWANSON (CONT'D)
 you know. In my dreams.
 (laughs bitterly)
 She could do better. She's gonna be
 a famous artist I bet.

Denny rises and walks toward the door, and they exit together.

EXT. DENNY'S HOME - NIGHT

Denny pulls up and stops in the driveway. He gets out, and a nosy middle-aged neighbor RAYANN instantly descends on him, carrying a dish.

RAYANN
 Hi there, Denny. Listen, I know
 it's late. But Phil and I had
 salmon for dinner, and we happened
 to have a big filet left over. I
 may be a nosy old bat, but I'm not
 a half bad cook. I've been watching
 for you. You guys work so late!

Denny has to play along.

DENNY ANDERS
 (taking the dish)
 That's nice of you, RayAnn.

RAYANN
 I just wanted to tell you...
 although it's none of my business I
 know. But young couples sometimes
 hit a rough spot in the road...
 Phil and I sure had our share. I
 know you're lonely over here with
 the baby at your parents'. Anytime
 you need something, just a
 listening ear, you got one here.

She pulls on her fleshy ear.

DENNY ANDERS
 Thanks RayAnn.

RAYANN
 And don't worry about bringing the
 dish back. I'll drop over and get
 it. You just put some dinner into
 you, okay?

DENNY ANDERS
 Okay.

INT. DENNY'S HOME - NIGHT

Denny enters and puts the dish on the counter. He paces desperately, goes to the liquor cabinet and pours a stiff shot of bourbon.

The phone rings. He grabs it.

MADELEINE (O.C.)
Empire Grade just blew wide open.
Get your ass down here.

DENNY ANDERS
Wha...

MADELEINE (O.C.)
Where the hell have you been? I've been calling all night. We're takin' Royal down. His accomplice Kathi Kent is singing her head off to the FBI as I speak. And we got a SWAT team from Santa Clara staging right now outside the Dream Inn. Get down here and bring your gun. We're going in. I'll meet you in front of the Jury room. I'll be in the front parking lot and we'll go in together.

DENNY ANDERS
I'm there. I'm there!

Denny goes into his bedroom and takes a .38 Out of the dresser drawer. Checks it. He puts on a holster and puts a suit coat over it.

FLASH CUT: Nosy neighbor RayAnn looking out from her blinds as Denny's car tears out of the driveway.

EXT - SANTA CRUZ OCEAN AVENUE - DAY

Jim Dahlen, loaded, is driving the rental car that Madeleine photographed. Making a turn toward the Dream Inn, he sees cop cars.

JIM DAHLEN
Fuck me.

He carefully eases his way out of the traffic into the JURY ROOM PARKING LOT, which is nearly empty.

Madeleine pulls in and instantly recognizes the car. Dahlen is passed out at the wheel. Madeleine gets out her gun and just watches Dahlen, simultaneously watching for Denny's car.

Denny comes wheeling up. Madeleine signals him frantically and he gets out.

MADELEINE

That car was parked at the cabin.
That fucker is one of them. I'm
positive.

They walk over. Dahlen is slumped over the steering wheel.

DENNY ANDERS

Dumb fuck. Flew right into our net.
Let's take him down. He's passed
out.

Denny opens the car door and Dahlen falls out. Madeleine cuffs him before he knows what's happening. He struggles.

Madeleine gets on the car radio and signals for the cops. Denny watches Dahlen, whose head keeps dropping to his chest.

MOMENTS LATER

A cop car pulls up and throws Dahlen into the back seat.

EXT. DREAM INN - NIGHT

Special security precautions: Police cars drawn up nose to tail forming a circle around three-quarters of the parking lot. SWAT team in full regalia lurking in a small area concealed by the veranda of the hotel.

CLOSE ON the line of cars, police teams of two.

KEN CHONG opens the door of his county car and confers for a moment with Dick Van de Berg, who is standing casually near the second row of guest parking. A couple of other investigators join them. Dick nods at the cops and walks into the hotel. He is wearing body armor and his pearl handled revolver bulges from his waistband. Denny appears, also in body armor.

DENNY ANDERS

(gestures at Madeleine)
We're going in with the team.

Dick gives Denny a skeptical look.

DENNY ANDERS (CONT'D)
 (gestures to his service
 revolver)
 I'm qualified, don't worry.

DICK VAN DE BERG
 I've seen your scores. They ain't
 nothin; like hers
 (gestures to Madeleine)
 But they're good.

Madeleine grins.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRANCE LOBBY DREAM INN - NIGHT

The lobby is well lit, with several patrons enjoying drinks at the bar or lounging on sofas and chairs in little chat groups. The police begin moving people outside.

Dick strides past them and takes the flight of stairs two at a time gracefully, despite his bulk.

At the first landing, he is joined by a couple of jacketed FBI agents. Madeleine and Denny follow the group smoothly and quickly up the rest of the stairs to the SECOND FLOOR and into the hallway. At the opposite door to the hallway is another team.

The noise emanating from Room 212 assaults the ears with a sexy rock rhythm, males bellowing and whooping, intercut with female screams and laughter. Glass shatters, more whoops.

Guns out, the police pause at the door. Dick knocks. Loud.

MALE VOICE
 We ain't turning it down any more,
 motherfucker.

Dick nods at the SWAT team, who nod back. Dick reaches out gently and turns the knob. Law Enforcement explodes through the door and fans out into the suite, guns aimed as the room's inhabitants stand gawking in shock.

Royal is getting a blow job from a nude woman, which ceases immediately as she screams and clambers off the bed.

The music continues playing.

DICK VAN DE BERG
 Hands up or die, your choice.

The women elevate their hands and stare. The men are quickly taken down.

It's not even a contest. Royal, naked and stoned out of his skull, almost reaches under the bed for the murder weapons, but somebody follows his hand and picks it up.

A cop throws a blanket over Royal's groin.

A stoned and handcuffed sleazebag gets indignant.

SLEAZEBAG #1

I don't see no warrant,
motherfucker.

He chafes his hands under the cuffs.

COP #1

Crime in progress, motherfucker.

He indicates the room, where all kinds of drug paraphernalia lie around.

Royal, stunned and dazed, stares at the cops.

ROYAL

You gonna let a man put his pants
on?

COP #1

I don't see no man here. I see a
limp dick headed for death row.

Royal lets the cops walk him to the door. Ken Chong, Art Miller and Madeleine enter the suite, all business.

She laughs as Royal struggles into a pair of trunks and is led off camera.

MADELEINE

Oh Jesus, I didn't think I was
going to get an anatomy lesson
here.

KEN CHONG

You wanna dress him?

INT. LOBBY OF DREAM INN - NIGHT

The place, cleared of guests, is awash in law enforcement and press, smoking, chatting. CBS and NBC cameras are rolling.

Denny, standing by himself smoking, waves distractedly to a couple of the cops he knows.

Van de Berg turns and looks meaningfully at Denny with a brief nod.

DENNY ANDERS
Any word on the missing girl,
Aimee?

Van de Berg looks very grim. Shakes his head. Lights a cigarette.

DICK VAN DE BERG
I suggest you start getting your
shit together. She could be buried
anywhere up there is my bet.

The reporter, STEVE BENETZ stops by Denny to chat.

STEVE BENETZ
Kathi Kent gave it all up?

DENNY ANDERS
Like an overflowing toilet.

STEVE BENETZ
Word is that Ken is making you and
Madeleine co-counsel.

Denny looks shocked.

DENNY ANDERS
You're shitting me.

STEVE BENETZ
No. Madeleine told me. It's going
to be a bifurcated trial. There are
a couple of accomplices who helped
bury the corpses and are just dying
to sing on him. They're saying he
made them his slaves and threatened
their lives and their families if
they didn't help him.

DENNY ANDERS
Of course he did.

STEVE BENETZ
Word is, he gave them twenty
thousand bucks each for digging
those holes. Best paid gravediggers
in history.

Steve laughs; Denny makes an approximation of a laugh.

STEVE BENETZ (CONT'D)

Anyway Ken says he needs you on the prosecution team. So congrats on graduating to homicides big time.

DENNY ANDERS

Jesus.

He lights another cigarette as Ken signals to him and jog trots over to the DAs. Madeleine reaches out to high-five him.

TIME PASSES

INT. DENNY'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Denny sits on the sofa with Ellie at his feet playing with a puzzle. Fanchon, looking healthy and drinking a coke, is perched on the arm of the sofa.

TELEVISION NEWSCASTER

... and there is yet more sad news coming in, in the wake of the Royal Cooney double murder conviction.

Today, the body of Aimee Thierry, nineteen, a sometime artist living near the Beach Boardwalk was found by a corpse sniffing dog. She was bound and strangled in a crawl space about twenty yards from an abandoned cabin on the Empire Grade.

The cabin had been used by Cooney's accomplices in the murder of local drug dealer Don McAllister and his girlfriend Lauren Graven.

Kathi Kent, whose testimony was pivotal in the case, said that the victim, Aimee Thierry, had been a friend but that she had no knowledge whatsoever of Thierry's abduction. She did say that it was a "sure bet" that Cooney and his accomplices had something to do with her murder, though.

FANCHON

God, this case keeps getting worse.
I read that poor girl Aimee left
the midwest to lead the Santa Cruz
life and be an artist.

Fanchon puts her chin in her hands. Denny flicks the remote onto another channel. He takes out a cigarette but Fanchon catches his eye and teasingly shakes her finger, pointing to Ellie. Denny puts away the cigarette.

FANCHON (CONT'D)

Hey, I ran into John Bohrer on the mall. He said the whole town's talking about your final argument.

DENNY ANDERS

Oh yeah?

FANCHON

He says your career is on fire. You got lucky.

DENNY ANDERS

Lucky?

FANCHON

You'll probably get to handle the appeal too. John says he's jealous.

Denny shrugs. Fanchon puts her arm around him.

FANCHON (CONT'D)

You're awfully quiet tonight.

DENNY ANDERS

Tired.

FANCHON

Oh Denny, things are going to be so good from now on. I can just feel it. There's been... what do they call it, a sea change. In me. And in you too.

DENNY ANDERS

Think so?

FANCHON

Know so. Sometimes people have to learn the hard way how fortunate they are. But now I understand. I'm so grateful for all we have.

She hugs him and stands up in profile, patting her stomach.

FANCHON (CONT'D)
Think I'm showing yet?

Denny smiles dutifully and nods. Ellie rises from her puzzle.

ELLIE
Daddy big kiss!

Denny picks her up and puts her on his knee. Her plump arms go around his neck and Denny nuzzles her head. Fanchon puts her arms around them both. They are a picture of a happy young family.

CUT TO:

EXT. STEAMER LANE SURF BEACH - EARLY MORNING

BEAUTY SHOT of the waves, calm under A CLOUDLESS BLUE sky.

HOLD on the surf. The sun slants across the azure water, giving a sharp light.

A LONE YOUNG MAN strides across the beach from a distance carrying a colorful surfboard on his hip.

GETTING CLOSER we see it's Nick Swanson.

CLOSE on Nick's face. His eyes take in the rocky cliffs, and below, the breaking waves on the sandy shoreline.

Nick climbs down the path onto the beach and looks up and down the shore. A few surfers are already catching waves farther south but nobody is close by. The surf belongs to him. Nick kicks off his shoes and pants and stands in COLORFUL, BAGGY TRUNKS. His body is tanned, slender and muscular as he hoists the board into the water and PADDLES OUT. He crosses the wavebreak effortlessly and continues beyond.

The SUN SHINES ON HIS WET BODY AS HE PADDLES. Little wavelets lap gently at the board.

CLOSE ON NICK'S TANNED FACE, CALM AND SERENE in the morning sun. He notices a decent sized set starting, and his body tenses out of habit, but he lets the wave roll under him. He gets on his knees and paddles out a little farther. Sits up on the board, legs spread, dangling in the water.

He opens the velcro pocket of his trunks and removes a small pill bottle.

Without hesitation, he pops it open and shakes its contents into his mouth, throwing back his head to swallow. He tosses the pill bottle into the sea. From his other pocket, he takes a pint of liquor.

He opens the bottle, smoothly swallowing until it is empty. Then he lets go of the bottle, which bobs and drifts away. Nick lies back on the board, his head resting on his forearms and watches the rising sun.

CUT AWAY to the parking lot as other surfers arrive, some on foot, some in cars.

THE CLEAR SKY GROWS A LITTLE BRIGHTER

Distant laughter from the parking lot.

CUT BACK and HOLD on the surfboard, empty now, gently floating and bobbing in the sunlight.

MUSIC UP "Sweet Old World" Emmylou Harris and Neil Young

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEvWLYFFnxM>

As the song plays, slowly PULL BACK. The empty surfboard gets smaller, finally disappearing in the blue Pacific.

CREDITS ROLL