

BILLY

Written by

Richard F. Russell

Wordmstr007@gmail.com  
910-285-3321  
Copyright 2015

FADE IN

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

A wall of books with a baseball bat leaning against the wall.

A recliner with books stacked on both sides.

A small desk piled with magazines. On top, high-powered binoculars.

An unmade bed with rumpled sheets.

At the bureau, looking in the mirror, CHARLEY KLINE, 70, lean, bald, bent from years of toil. Dressed casually but clean. He grabs cologne and splashes on liberally.

BILLY (V.O.)  
Capers always start the same way,  
with a dame.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lower middle class. Plaid upholstery and over-sized TV.

Charley limps in. Stops at the coffee table and removes several books and magazines. Drops load behind a chair.

BILLY (V.O.)  
It was one of those rare days in  
L.A. It was raining.

Charley limps to the couch and examines it. Finds a stain on a cushion and flips the cushion over.

BILLY (V.O.)  
The bullet hole in my couch that a client had tried to patch reminded me that business was lousy.

Charley limps to the door, opens it, and steps aside for MABEL, 50s, obese with flaming red hair and makeup as thick as Jello, trailer trash without the trailer.

BILLY (V.O.)  
Bombshells come in different colors. This one was red with more curves than a Sierra Nevada switchback and a face that launched a thousand sighs.

Grinning, Charley leads Mabel to the couch where they sit. He immediately kisses and paws. One randy old dude.

BILLY (V.O.)  
The unwritten law says that the  
more interested you are, the less  
you show. I played it cool.

Charley and Mabel make out like teenagers. Grabbing, kissing tonguing.

BILLY (V.O.)  
She didn't.

Charley struggles to get Mabel out of her clothes. She tries to strip him. Stiff, old bodies make things difficult.

He bites her blouse, and his false teeth come out. They laugh as he tosses the teeth toward a chair.

BILLY (V.O.)  
When a dame introduces you to a  
roscoe, you got to figure she has  
something besides good times on her  
mind.

Mabel has Charley's shirt off, and he's bared one of her huge breasts.

Then, he stops.

BILLY (V.O.)  
You like to know why a chippy wants  
you dead. This one didn't give me  
a clue.

Charley grabs his chest as AGONY arcs through him. He stands and tries to walk, but this is the big one.

BILLY (V.O.)  
They say you never hear the shot  
that kills you. The noise reminded  
me that I was alive-at least for  
the moment.

Charley collapses to the carpet.

Eyes open.

Dead.

BILLY (V.O.)  
That was her first mistake-shit!

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - DAY

Small bedroom converted to a makeshift office. In one corner a stack of unopened return-mail manuscript envelopes.

On the walls, posters of noir movies and novels, crime fiction from the 40's and 50's.

A long table supports a computer and mounds of manuscripts.

Staring at the screen, fingers poised over keyboard, BILLY KLINE, 30s, balding, pot belly, unshaven, and dressed for failure.

He pushes himself away from the table and stands.

BILLY  
Shit, shit, shit. Come to me,  
baby, come to me.

Backs away, turns around, pulls down pants, and moons computer.

Pulls up his pants and runs out.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Small apartment, small, dated kitchen but cleaner than the office.

Billy grabs a beer out of the fridge, pops open, and drains half in one, long pull.

Into the apartment trudges WENDY, 30s, pretty but worn at the edges and overheated from work and commute. She's looking to improve her lot. Carries a purse and two thick envelopes--returned manuscripts.

WENDY  
(tossing purse)  
Celebrating?

BILLY  
Break.

WENDY  
Something to break from?

BILLY  
Golden Pardue and the Red Macaw.

WENDY  
This is it, right?

BILLY  
It?

She stacks envelopes in his hand.

WENDY  
19 and 20.

BILLY  
Really?

WENDY  
Time for a day job, Sherlock.

BILLY  
Isn't it 19?

Her look is pitiless.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
You can't count The Last Dingus.  
That was a collaboration.

She takes the beer from his hand, whirls, and marches away.

WENDY  
You said 20. That's 20.

BILLY  
But I'm right in the middle.  
Wendy!

She disappears. He rips down his pants and moons.

WENDY (O.S.)  
And keep that ass covered!

He jerks up his pants and flips her the bird.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Billy waltzes into the room. He carries a glass of wine and a bottle of massage oil.

Sound of a SHOWER.

He lays a towel on the bed, closes drapes tight, and lights a candle. Waves candle scent over the bed. Romance a la Billy.

SHOWER stops.

He grabs a perfume bottle off the dresser and spritzes the air.

Wendy emerges from the bathroom. Hidden beneath a towel, she looks pretty good.

WENDY  
Billy-

BILLY  
Wine, oil, and the fingers of a  
stenographer.

WENDY  
It won't work.

He guides her to the bed and helps her lie down.

BILLY  
I've neglected you, and that's not  
right.

WENDY  
You promised to get a job.

BILLY  
And I will. Hush. Sip your wine.

She sips. He pours oil in his hands, letting it warm.

WENDY  
Sex won't change anything.

BILLY  
Shhhh...blank your mind. Enjoy.

He rubs her back with oil, kneading and massaging.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Doesn't that feel awesome? If I  
worked, I doubt I could find time  
for this.

WENDY  
Billy!

BILLY  
Which is why I want to do it  
tonight.

Her look says his ploy is lame.

BILLY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
Caveat emptor.

WENDY  
What?

Phone rings. Billy answers.

BILLY  
Hello. Who wants to know? Oh.  
Yes. Yes. I see. Of course.  
I'll be there tomorrow.

WENDY  
What was that about?

BILLY  
My father.

WENDY  
What about him.

BILLY  
He's dead.

Billy plops on the bed, Wendy's message forgotten.

WENDY  
Is this like your grandmother's  
death last year?

BILLY  
How was I to know that was a ruse?

WENDY  
Both your grandmothers were ALREADY  
dead, remember?

BILLY  
Ever hear of divorce?

WENDY  
Your grandparents never did.

BILLY  
But they should have. And now  
dad's dead.

She wraps up in her towel and slips off the bed.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
I have to go.

She heads for the bathroom.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
He's really dead.

Door SLAMS.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
He might have left me some money.

A smile lights his face as he runs from the room.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Billy, in worn suit, stands beside the casket where Charley clutches a bible to his chest.

Precious few mourners, two old WOMEN, one ancient MAN. They sit together, talking and sipping coffee.

Into the room shuffles ELEANOR JOLY, 60's, bent, dry, a lifetime spent wanting.

She marches straight to the casket and stares. She opens her purse, extracts a nickel, and places it in Charley's lifeless fingers. Squeezing the hand, she closes her eyes as Billy moves alongside.

BILLY  
Thank you for coming. I'm Billy,  
his-

ELEANOR  
(opening eyes)  
Son? Is that right?

BILLY  
And you are...

ELEANOR  
Eleanor Joly. His friend before  
you were born, before she tricked  
him.

BILLY  
Who?

She reaches up and gently touches his cheek.

ELEANOR  
You don't smile like him.

BILLY  
Despite my best efforts.

ELEANOR  
Sense of humor like his.

BILLY  
Quite an inheritance, right?

ELEANOR  
You're smarter than him, aren't  
you?

BILLY  
Smarter?

ELEANOR  
Don't let her trick you.

BILLY  
Who?

She pats his arm and shuffles away. He watches, baffled.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Billy stands alone by the open grave. In the background, a backhoe IDLES.

He picks up a clod of dirt, drops it in the grave, and leaves.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Still in funeral black, Billy sips beer on the plaid couch.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy, sans tie and shoes, a few beers to the good, flips on the light. Grabs the baseball bat from the corner and takes a swing. Goes to the desk and sits. Looks at books.

Pulls one off the desk and reads.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Morning light finds Billy snoring in the recliner, a book on his chest, empty beer cans and baseball bat on the floor.

Cell phone RINGTONE.

Billy startles awake, snorting, looking. RINGTONE continues until Billy manages to claw out of the chair and across the bed. Grabs his phone.

BILLY  
Hello?

He flops on the bed.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Yes, Wendy, yesterday. In a few  
days. I have the house, his stuff.  
Don't worry, I won't bring it home.  
In a few fucking days!

He kills the connection and grabs his head.

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy, clean but casual, sits across from PRATHER JONES, 60,  
bulldog attorney confined in a mud puddle. Old office in an  
old building.

PRATHER  
He left everything to you, but I'm  
afraid it doesn't amount to much.

BILLY  
Such as.

PRATHER  
House and contents. Ten-year-old  
car. A couple thousand in the  
bank.

BILLY  
House free and clear?

PRATHER  
(shaking head)  
Maybe ten K in equity.

BILLY  
He had a lot of books.

Prather shrugs.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Not much for 70 years, is it?

PRATHER  
Your mother and father were my  
clients and my friends. How about  
I take the whole shebang for  
twenty?

BILLY  
Twenty?

PRATHER  
Generous but don't take my word for it. We got a couple realtors who'll appraise the house for you. If it comes to more, good for you. If not, my offer stands for a week. I was always fond of your parents.

BILLY  
And I thought I was a disappointment to my father.

Prather laughs.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Billy uses a long, old, wooden handle screwdriver to pry open a light fixture.

Out the door steps DEBBIE MARTIN, 30s, realtor, girl-next-door pretty and small-town wholesome. Could make a good wife. Carries a clipboard.

Distracted, Billy lets the screwdriver slip, gouging his hand and clattering on the concrete at her feet.

BILLY  
Shit!

DEBBIE  
(retrieving screwdriver)  
Hurt?

Billy grabs a can and pours beer over cut.

BILLY  
Antiseptic.  
(taking screwdriver)  
Thanks.

DEBBIE  
Soap and water might work better.

BILLY  
Real men tempt the fates.

She scribbles a number on a piece of paper, rips it off clipboard, and hands it to Billy

Billy looks at the figure and raises his eyebrows.

DEBBIE  
Sorry it isn't more.

BILLY  
What if I fix it up?

DEBBIE  
You won't get out what you put in.  
The market. But you should fill the  
rat hole in the garage.

BILLY  
Rats?

DEBBIE  
Gone. But fill the hole anyway.

BILLY  
I guess my father decided that if  
he couldn't take it with him, he  
wouldn't leave it behind either.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Billy enters, looks around, and opens the closet. With a jaundiced eye, he rifles Charley's dated wardrobe.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

A huge pile of clothes in his arms, Billy leaves the house, staggers to the trash can, and dumps his load.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Billy enters and looks at the wall of books.

He steps to the highest shelf, plucks a book, glances at the cover, and flips it on the bed.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

A book lands on the tall pile already on the bed.

One shelf cleared, another almost cleared, Billy plucks a book, reads cover, and flips it on bed. Grabs a beer and takes a pull as his fingers seek the next book.

But they don't find a book. Billy pulls out a bound manuscript. Yellowed paper, warped cover.

He looks, starts to toss it on the bed, and stops. Instead, he opens cover and reads.

BILLY  
Original screenplay. Yeah, right.

Flips the title page and reads.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Sitting at the desk, Billy finishes the last page of the manuscript. Closes it and with shaking hands lays it on the desk.

Staring, he stands and backs up a step, as if the manuscript is poison.

Snatches his beer off the desk, stares a moment, and pours beer over his head as he DANCES like a banshee.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wet with beer, Billy carries the manuscript with both hands. Places it on the coffee table as the doorbell RINGS.

Billy goes to door and rips it open. On the porch--Mabel.

BILLY  
Yes?

MABEL  
I'm Mabel. I was with your father when he...died.

BILLY  
With?

MABEL  
Well, we hadn't really started anything. Not that he couldn't do it. He performed quite well in that department.

BILLY  
Did my father write?

MABEL  
Write?

BILLY

Pen to paper, typewriter, clay  
tablet. I didn't find a computer,  
so I'm guessing he didn't have one.

MABEL

I never saw him write anything but  
a grocery list.

BILLY

Then who?

MABEL

What?

BILLY

Not that it matters. Thanks.

He slams the door in her face.

Billy skips across the room and into the kitchen.

A moment later, he dashes out, fresh beer in hand. He stops  
in front of the coffee table and toasts manuscript.

INT. TURNER'S GARAGE - DAY

A porn flick plays silently on a small tablet computer  
sitting on a shelf below the counter.

Standing at the cash register and stealing peeks at the porn,  
TURNER SCONES, 30s, plump, un-neat, a loser in oily  
coveralls.

Behind him, shelves sparsely filled with filters, oil, fan  
belts, the inventory of a one-man repair place. Off to the  
side, the bays where a single car sits on a lift.

He totals a bill for a female PATRON, a dowdy woman.

TURNER

It's 49.50 for the tune up, 99 for  
the tire, and 60 for the water  
hump.

She stares.

TURNER (CONT'D)

Pump, water pump.

She hands him a credit card that he swipes. Printer spits  
out a receipt that she signs. He hands over her car keys.

TURNER (CONT'D)  
You have any trouble, you bring it  
right back. You got ninety days on  
the h...pump.

He watches her leave as the phone chirps, and he answers.

TURNER (CONT'D)  
Scones. Oh, hey, Billy, how grows  
the inheritance?

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

BILLY/TURNER/INTERCUT

BILLY  
Quick plot problem.

TURNER  
Bump gums when ready.

BILLY  
Character finds a valuable painting  
that no one knows about. Artist  
dead. Character claims as own or  
touts as artist's?

TURNER  
Give a man a painting and he  
profits for a day. Teach him to  
paint, and he eats caviar for the  
rest of his life.

BILLY  
If people believe he can paint.

TURNER  
(watching porn)  
Unless his painting really  
sucks...oh, man.

BILLY  
Long term versus quick fix?

TURNER  
Long, long term. What a dingus.

BILLY  
Hey, gracias.

TURNER  
De naked.

Hangs up and gapes at video.

TURNER (CONT'D)  
How do they do that?

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Billy tips beer and drains it. Leaves the can on the table, grabs manuscript, and heads out door.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Manuscript in hand, Billy bursts in.

BILLY  
WENDY!

No answer.

He grabs a can from the fridge.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
You won't believe what I found.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy strides in.

BILLY  
Remember when I told you my father  
loved to read?

He stops and stares.

Bureau drawers pulled open.

Closet door agape.

Wendy's clothes are gone. She's left.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Shit!

He looks from drawers to closet to bed.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Shit, shit, shit! Fuck it!

Turns and marches out.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Billy slides into chair, slams beer on one side, manuscript on other. Taps a key and the screen comes to life with a big, blinking message.

THE CHIPPI HAS FLOWN THE COOP. ADIOS.

He whirls, jumps from his chair, and stops. With forced deliberateness, he reseats himself.

BILLY  
Screw you, chippy.

Opens the manuscript and types, copying the words.

INT. TURNER'S GARAGE - DAY

Billy stands at the counter, scanning his bill.

TURNER  
You know, you got maybe six months left on that engine.

BILLY  
You had to change the timing belt?

TURNER  
Took me a day to find a used one in your price range, which is just below permanent poverty.

BILLY  
Yeah, well, if I could sell my screenplay.

TURNER  
You need an agent.

BILLY  
What agent is gonna talk to me?

TURNER  
Ever hear of Madeline Gat?

BILLY  
Who hasn't?

TURNER  
I change her oil...so to speak.

INT. TURNER'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Turner behind counter, watching his tablet.

MADELINE GAT, thickish, 50s, sure of her taste in everything. In dark glasses, she signs a credit card receipt.

EXT. TURNER'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Madeline exits. Behind her, Turner holds a flashlight against the glass and blinks it twice.

As Madeline approaches her car, Billy, dressed in fedora, glasses, and trench coat comes from behind and jams a pistol in her back.

BILLY  
Get in. Open your yap, and roscoe will spit lead.

She looks at him as if he's some kind of freak. She slides into the back seat. Billy climbs in front.

INT. MADELINE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Billy turns to Madeline.

MADELINE  
What do you want?

BILLY  
You're Madeline Gat?

She nods.

BILLY (CONTD) (CONT'D)  
The agent?

MADELINE  
What is this about? Do I owe you money?

BILLY  
I want you to read something.

MADELINE  
Oh please.

Billy pulls a manuscript from inside his coat and tosses it on the back seat.

BILLY  
Read it.

MADELINE  
You're a writer?

Billy gestures at the manuscript.

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
You really believe you can threaten  
me?

BILLY  
If you don't like it, I'll walk.

MADELINE  
You say that with a gun in my face.

BILLY  
Look, I'm not violent. The gun  
isn't even real.

He holds the pistol to his head and pulls the trigger.

Click.

MADELINE  
My, a prop. Too bad.  
(pulls an automatic from  
her purse)  
Because this one is real.

Billy's hands pop into the air.

BILLY  
Don't shoot. Maybe it was a dumb  
move, but that script is the best,  
and you're the best, and I'd never  
get close to you any other way.

Madeline studies him a moment.

MADELINE  
I'm going to read ten pages. If I  
don't like it, I'm going to shoot  
you in the knee.

BILLY  
You'll like it. You'll love it.

MADELINE  
Don't move.

Holding the automatic, she opens the manuscript.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

On crutches, Billy limps to the exit as Turner falls in step.

TURNER  
That was the dumbest move you ever  
made.

BILLY  
I didn't see the curb. Besides,  
it's only a sprain.

TURNER  
So, the skirt liked it?

BILLY  
At page ten, she put the heater  
away. At page fifty, she wiped her  
eyes. At fade out, she kissed me.

TURNER  
You kissed that mug?

BILLY  
I'd kiss you if you could sell a  
script.

Turner holds open the door.

TURNER  
Think we can collaborate?

Billy shoots Turner a don't-go-there look.

INT. MADELINE'S OFFICE - DAY

High-rise power office of a power agent. A view to die for.

Billy, his foot in a plastic boot, sits on one side of the perfect desk. Madeline on the other.

Phone RINGTONE.

Madeline answers and never says a word. She listens for a moment and hangs up.

BILLY  
And?

Madeline laughs and presses a button.

Through the door march two ASSISTANTS carrying a bottle of champagne, two flutes, and a box of cigars.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Billy, still in boot, stumbles through front door. Drunk, humming, he falls to the carpet and laughs.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Billy sleeps on the carpet where he landed the night before.

A KNOCK makes no impression.

A second KNOCK stirs him.

A third KNOCK sends him crawling to the door.

BILLY

Coming!

A fourth KNOCK as he opens door.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I'm here, damnit.

On knees, he faces FAITH HUSTON, 30s, black hair and lipstick. Beyond pale, she's more vampire than Bela Lugosi. Carries a large, black leather bag.

FAITH

William Kline?

Billy nods.

FAITH (CONT'D)

I expected someone taller.

BILLY

I'm very tall when I'm lying down.

She sweeps past him.

FAITH

How unoriginal.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Showered and wet but no longer in boot, Billy sips coffee. Faith makes notes on an Ipad.

FAITH

Madeline thinks you need a makeover. If she only knew.

BILLY  
I'm a writer.

FAITH  
You're a product, like condoms or  
toilet paper but not as necessary.  
You're a commodity to be packaged,  
advertised, and sold.

BILLY  
I write.

FAITH  
I know a stylist that can do  
something with your...hair. Unless  
you'd rather shave your head.

BILLY  
If Ghandi could do it, so can I?

FAITH  
You think your script is enough.  
It's not.

BILLY  
Awards, honey.

FAITH  
Oscar, People's choice, Cannes.  
Not enough. Madeline expects to  
sell you for the next twenty years.

Billy stares as if he had never considered a career.

FAITH (CONT'D)  
Rasputin should be able to outfit  
you.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Power lunch in a power booth in a power restaurant.  
Madeline, Billy, and a DIRECTOR, a foppish, little man in  
black Tee and jeans.

Drinks, food, only Billy eats.

BILLY  
So, you want to shoot on location?

MADELINE  
Billy, this is a show-face meeting.  
We're exploring working together.

BILLY  
By eating?

MADELINE  
(to Director)  
His first sale.

Director nods.

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
He does the first rewrite.

Director raises an eyebrow at Billy.

BILLY  
Word jockey, first class.

Madeline rolls her eyes.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Music pulsates. Spotlights sweep and flash over a dance floor packed with beautiful, dancing people. Exclusive and hip.

At the bar, sipping colored drinks, Turner and Billy.

TURNER  
How did you get in here?

BILLY  
You should do something with your hair.

TURNER  
Ever see so many wet skirts?

BILLY  
See that guy over there?

TURNER  
Which one?

BILLY  
The blonde in leather pants.

TURNER  
Director, actor, writer?

BILLY  
Plastic surgeon. Tush man. Can give you a bubble butt from ten South American countries.

TURNER  
Cool.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Billy, in boxers, lies spread eagle on the carpet.

KNOCK

Billy doesn't stir.

KNOCK

Billy rolls to one side.

KNOCK

Billy crawls toward the door.

BILLY  
Hold your water.

KNOCK

Billy reaches the door and fumbles at the knob.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Can't you see I'm hurrying?

He opens door.

FAITH  
(blasting past)  
You're late, Melville.

BILLY  
Late?

FAITH  
Madeline expected you an hour ago.

BILLY  
Isn't this Tuesday?

Faith perches on a chair, her bag on her shoulder.

FAITH  
You're pathetic. Are you really a  
writer?

BILLY  
Did you read the screenplay?

Wendy appears at the door.

WENDY  
Billy?

FAITH  
You probably can't write a tweet.

Wendy enters and sinks to the floor beside Billy.

WENDY  
Are you OK?

FAITH  
He's a fake.

WENDY  
(to Faith)  
Have you seen his manuscripts?  
He's been turned down by some high  
class publishers.

Faith rolls her eyes.

From the bedroom emerges a MODEL, balumbas, thoroughbred legs, and a face sculpted to mathematical perfection.

She drops to one knee by Billy.

MODEL  
You were magnificent.

She plants a big, lipstick kiss on his cheek and leaves.

WENDY  
Magnificent?

FAITH  
She does 'magnificent' with a lot  
of guys.

Out of the bedroom comes Turner with a WOMAN on his arm.  
She's no model but she has tits the size of watermelons.

Turner gives Billy a high-five as he passes. Woman smiles  
and thrusts forward those tits.

WENDY  
What was that?

FAITH  
Tweedle dum and tweedle dummer.

WENDY  
Got anything left back there?

BILLY  
I don't remember.

FAITH  
Shower, Hemingway. Madeline's  
waiting.

WENDY  
Madeline?

FAITH  
His agent, missy. Ernest has a  
date with destiny.

Wendy stands and looks down at Billy.

WENDY  
You have an agent?

FAITH  
Yes, Faulkner here has a very good  
agent. What he needs is self-  
control.

WENDY  
Billy?

BILLY  
You better go.

Wendy hesitates.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
You ran out remember?

FAITH  
(to Wendy)  
You're not too bright, you came  
back.

BILLY  
(to Faith)  
Shut up!

WENDY  
You don't...

BILLY  
It's over.

Wendy nods and leaves.

FAITH  
She's better off.

BILLY  
Shut up!

Billy crawls to the bedroom.

FAITH  
Hustle up, Steinbeck. The real deal is waiting.

INT. MADELINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy, the worse for wear and tear, sits opposite Madeline.

MADELINE  
Where is it?

BILLY  
It?

MADELINE  
The next script?

BILLY  
You need another one?

MADELINE  
Faith says your apartment is a manuscript hutch. So, where is the next one?

BILLY  
It's not, it's not quite ready.  
You know, high standards.

MADELINE  
Don't throw me that I've-got-principles crap.

She stands, comes around the desk, and takes Billy's face in her hands.

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
Foolish, foolish boy. What good are you, if you're not a cash cow? Any clever monkey can write one script. I don't represent writers with one script. My writers have two, three, four pieces always in play. If you can't produce, you're on the sidelines. Am I clear?

BILLY  
I'm working with that director.

MADELINE  
(squeezing cheeks)  
No, no, no, no. I want gold.  
Understand?

Her lips move infinitely close to his.

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
I have an assignment.

INT. SMALL THEATER - DAY

Walls covered with huge, artsy photos of naked, ordinary women. A small stage in front of two rows of empty seats, a minimal, austere space.

Billy perches on a tiny, stainless steel stool. He studies the photos, unimpressed.

Into the room sails DIRECTRIX, 30s, buzz haircut, emaciated, severe glasses, body sock says woman, but who can tell? She tosses file folders at Billy.

DIRECTRIX  
Background, outline, synopsis,  
treatment, first draft, notes,  
second draft.

Billy stares at the pile.

DIRECTRIX (CONT'D)  
You must read it all, but here's  
the story in a nutshell-Cyrano.

BILLY  
Cyrano?

DIRECTRIX  
Only Cyrano is really Roberta who's  
writing for Diane who steals words  
in order to bed April.

BILLY  
All women?

DIRECTRIX  
That bothers you?

BILLY  
No, some of my best friends  
are...women.

INT. TURNER'S GARAGE - DAY

Turner behind counter, sneaking peeks at porn video playing underneath as he waits on an obese WOMAN.

TURNER  
That's 29.95 plus sex.

WOMAN  
Sex?

TURNER  
Tax, plus tax.

Woman grins and hands over cash.

WOMAN  
I sorta liked it the other way.

Turner grins as he hands back change.

Woman grabs his hand and holds it while she picks out money. Then, she licks his palm with her huge tongue.

As she waddles out, Turner wipes his palm on his coveralls.

BILLY (O.S.)  
Plus sex?

Billy lays a DVD on the counter.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Is it ready?

TURNER  
(places keys and picks up  
DVD)  
Cyrano de Bourgerac? What the hell  
is that?

BILLY  
Meanage a trois.

TURNER  
Threesome? Man, I got the perfect  
van for that.

BILLY  
Don't go there.

TURNER  
It's hot. Padded, black light,  
heady duty shocks.

BILLY  
I owe my agent a screenplay. Think  
I got time for vice?

TURNER  
Always time for vice, dude.

Billy grabs keys and DVD and leaves.

TURNER (CONT'D)  
If you need a trois, call!

INT. SMALL THEATER - NIGHT

Dark.

Spotlights from each corner slam into a mirror ball,  
shattering into a thousand reflections.

BILLY (V.O.)  
We called her Frail because if you  
said the wrong thing, she shattered  
like glass.

Ball spins, casting rays of light. A WALTZ echoes through  
the room. A small crowd, perhaps 20 people, watch.

From one side comes Directrix, dressed in tuxedo, as  
masculine as sweat.

BILLY (V.O.)  
It was Kitten's job to keep the  
parts glued together.

Directrix grabs a female DANCER in a formal gown and leads  
her onto a small dance floor where they waltz.

BILLY (V.O.)  
The gig was candy until Gee showed  
up.

From the darkness comes a woman dressed in leather pants and  
jacket, GEE. She taps Directrix on the shoulder and cuts in.

The music changes as Gee pulls Dancer tight and grinds in  
front of Directrix.

BILLY (V.O.)  
Any monkey could see trouble  
coming. Shit!

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - NIGHT

Wearing a fedora, Billy, in sweats, sits at his computer.

BILLY  
Worse than shit. Mega-shit.

He stands, turns, and moons the computer before he runs out.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A small TV on the counter plays the Cyrano DVD.

Billy passes, opens fridge, and grabs a beer.

Phone RINGTONE, and he snatches it.

BILLY  
Billy's hell, what in the hell do  
you want?

TURNER  
(on phone)  
Hey, man, I found one of those  
trois girls, and she's willing.  
Want me to bring her over?

BILLY  
No, I'm working.

TURNER  
You don't understand. I sort of  
promised, you know?

BILLY  
I sorta gotta turn out pages, you  
know?

TURNER  
Did I mention she was into trois  
stuff?

BILLY  
NO! NO! NO! That's trois too, got  
it?!

Billy kills the connection, looks around, and runs out.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Door opens. Light flicks on.

Billy, carrying a bag and laptop, enters and looks around.  
Perhaps the muse lives here.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A blank laptop and an empty beer can sit on table.

Kitchen is vacant.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the dark, Billy stands at the window, binoculars to his eyes.

THROUGH BINOCULARS

Across the back yard, alley, back yard, is the lighted window of Mabel's bedroom.

Mabel appears in panties and a bra that barely corrals those knockers. Reaches behind, unsnaps, and bra practically flies off. Grabs a jar off the bureau and applies cream to her breasts

Billy lowers binocs.

BILLY  
Jesus, dad. .

Raises binocs again.

THROUGH BINOCULARS

Swings away from Mabel to next house. Another lighted window.

Into the light comes Debbie, in demure nightgown, brushing her hair. She turns to a mirror and lowers gown exposing her back.

BILLY (V.O.)  
Turn, please turn.

She raises the gown, turns, and looks directly at him.

Billy lowers binocs and backs away from the window. Was he seen?

BILLY (CONTD)  
Market, my ass. This is a prime  
location.

Moves back to window and scans neighborhood.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Laptop and beer on table.

Billy limps in with a paper sack, large foam cup of coffee,  
and binocs around his neck. Sits down, pulls a fast-food  
breakfast from sack.

Spots laptop and closes lid before he eats.

Phone RINGTONE.

Billy stares. He doesn't want to answer-but he does.

BILLY  
Yo!

TURNER  
(on phone)  
Where are you?

BILLY  
Why?

TURNER  
She called.

BILLY  
Who called.

TURNER  
Your agent. She demands to see  
you.

BILLY  
You're in my apartment?

TURNER  
And the vampira stopped by. When I  
said you weren't here, she hissed  
at me. That's how I recognized  
her.

BILLY  
You're in my apartment?

TURNER

She does porn. She was Mistress  
Night in Johnny Cum Lately. Did  
you know you're out of condoms?

BILLY

Get the fuck out of my apartment.

TURNER

I call to warn you, and this is  
your thanks?

BILLY

I'm gonna kick your ass!

TURNER

Next time, I'll squeal. How about  
that? Hey, can those little guys  
swim through plastic wrap?

BILLY

What?

TURNER

I mean, past vasoline too.

BILLY

If you-

Connection goes dead, leaving Billy sputtering.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Stupid sonofabitch!

He bites into breakfast swigs from cup. Oops, too hot, spews  
everything across table.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Billy enters with foam cup and binocs. Passes bookshelves  
and stops.

Turns back to the shelves.

Sets down cup and pulls books from the shelves. Not  
bothering to read titles, he tosses them over his shoulder.

Empties one shelf and starts on the next until he finds  
another manuscript.

Looks at it. Sets it carefully to one side, and tears into the books again.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Binocs but no foam cup, Billy enters with a single manuscript. Sits and opens page.

BILLY  
Original screenplay by yada, yada,  
and Eleanor Creel. Yeah, right.  
Old man, you could have been a bit  
more prolific.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Billy turns the last page and frowns.

BILLY  
Shit! Where is it?

He looks at the heavens.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
DAD!! WHERE'S THE REST OF IT?!

No answer.

He jumps to his feet and spins around, angry as hell.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
MOTHER-DAMNNNNN!

EXT. DEBBIE'S HOUSE - DAY

A Jeep pulls to the curb in front of a cute little house. Debbie climbs out, starts up the walk, and stops.

DEBBIE  
Hello.

Billy sits on her stoop, binocs around his neck.

BILLY  
Hi. Hey, how you doing?

She walks past him.

DEBBIE  
Decide to sell?

BILLY  
No, actually I came to ask a question.

She unlocks her door and stops.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
You know most of the people in town, right?

DEBBIE  
Most.

BILLY  
Know Eleanor Creel?

DEBBIE  
Eleanor Joly?

BILLY  
Creel. C-R-E-E-L

DEBBIE  
I'm afraid not. Never heard of any Creels.

BILLY  
Maybe they moved. Who might know?

DEBBIE  
Mabel and Eleanor Joly have been around as long as anyone. I shop for Eleanor. Want me to ask?

BILLY  
Mabel, the-?  
(cups hands in front of chest)

DEBBIE  
Exactly. By the way, how did you know where I live.

BILLY  
I...

She looks at binocs. He looks down and blushes.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
You, you left a card, remember?

DEBBIE  
Did I?

BILLY  
Gotta go. Thanks.

He waves and limps off.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Billy sits on a wide couch amidst a phalanx of porcelain cats and one real one. Mabel is a cat person. Binocs still around his neck.

Across from him, in a lounger, wearing clothes three sizes too small, Mabel slurps ice tea and thrusts out those monster ta-tas.

MABEL  
You said Creel?

Billy nods, trying not to touch the cat that circles him.

MABEL (CONT'D)  
I don't recall any Creels. And I would know. I've lived here all my life.

BILLY  
How about Eleanor? Know any Eleanors?

MABEL  
Eleanor Joly of course. And Eleanor Potsdam on Third Street. Eleanor Zimber, but she died ten years ago. And Eleanor Connor moved away after high school.

BILLY  
Maiden names?

The cat moves closer, trying to rub against Billy who scrunches to avoid contact.

MABEL  
Needs-it likes you.

BILLY  
Needs-it?

MABEL  
That's a good sign. She only likes well-equipped men, if you know what I mean.

BILLY  
She can tell?

Mabel stares at his crotch and leans forward so he can look down her considerable cleavage.

MABEL  
Oh yes, females can always tell.

BILLY  
(standing)  
Is there anyone else who might have known Eleanor Creel?

MABEL  
Why don't you stay? I might remember with some prodding.

BILLY  
I need to get going.

MABEL  
Your father used them too.

BILLY  
Them?

She points to binocs.

MABEL  
From his bedroom window.

She wiggles her chest, her meaning clear.

Billy blushes.

BILLY  
Birds, I was looking at birds.

MABEL  
Birds?

BILLY  
A...a tit-mouse.

MABEL  
Like father, like son.

Billy flees as Mabel laughs.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Front desk of a small library, guarded by the LIBRARIAN, a woman as dry and brittle as the books she guards.

Billy leans on the counter

BILLY  
Perhaps you can help me.

Librarian glares through trifocals.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
I'm trying to locate a family that might have lived here at one time, the Creels. Have any old phone books or city rosters or something.

LIBRARIAN  
No Creels ever lived here.

BILLY  
I'm starting to believe that, but I'd like to research it if I could.

LIBRARIAN  
We don't keep research material here. You'll have to go to the county seat for that, the main library. We're a branch.

BILLY  
County seat?

LIBRARIAN  
County seat.

BILLY  
They would have it?

LIBRARIAN  
They don't tell me anything. They don't even send me books unless I beg, not even for requests.

BILLY  
They might have a census?

LIBRARIAN  
I'd call if I were you.

BILLY  
(backing away)  
Sure, I'll do that.

LIBRARIAN  
Or you could talk to Kenneth  
Munson.

BILLY  
Munson?

LIBRARIAN  
Town historian. But don't get your  
hopes up. He has yet to include my  
father in his list of town  
notables.

BILLY  
An oversight, I'm sure.

LIBRARIAN  
Malicious oversight. He hates-

Billy waves and is gone.

EXT. MUSEUM - DAY

The storefront might have been a barber shop or salon, but  
now it's the town historical museum.

Through the windows, Billy sees photos and paraphernalia from  
past generations.

INT. MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

Billy wanders past glass cases of photos, menus from  
restaurants, school yearbooks, letters, Bibles, diaries, the  
stuff of small town history. Not much but all there is.

KENNETH (O.S.)  
Fascinating, isn't it?

Standing behind a counter, KENNETH MUNSON, 70s, bespectacled,  
thin, wispy haired.

KENNETH (CONT'D)  
I like to think a town never dies  
but lives on in what it leaves  
behind.

BILLY  
This town?

KENNETH  
(pulling out an antique  
silver cigar case)  
(MORE)

KENNETH (CONT'D)

Take this for instance. Belonged to Bearl Price, the millionaire who owned the glass works.

(hands case to Billy)

Bearl was murdered in his bed one night, and Liam O'Grady might have got away with it if he hadn't stolen that case. When it was discovered in Liam's dresser, the jury found him guilty. Liam did a long drop on a short rope.

BILLY

(handing back case)

Fascinating. The librarian said you might help.

KENNETH

She couldn't eh? I always said she was as worthless as tits on a boar. She and her whole damn family.

BILLY

Yes, well, I'm trying to locate someone who once lived here.

KENNETH

Toted mail for forty years. If anyone can help, it'll be me.

BILLY

Eleanor Creel.

Kenneth screws up his face in concentration.

KENNETH

We had a Croll for a while. Sure it couldn't be the Crolls? They lived on the pike and were as worthless as--

BILLY

No, Creel.

Kenneth replaces cigar case and walks to a file box of 3x5 cards.

KENNETH

Let me check my references.

(thumbs through cards)

We've had a few Eleanors, but no Creels. Crain, maybe?

BILLY  
I'm certain it's Creel.

KENNETH  
Nope, no Creels. Sorry.

BILLY  
Thanks anyway.

KENNETH  
Eleanor Joly has been around a long time. Talked to her? Maybe the Creel family just passed through.

BILLY  
Thanks.

Kenneth stands and waves a small box.

KENNETH  
We don't charge, but we do accept donations.

Billy fishes out a dollar and tosses it into the box.

KENNETH (CONT'D)  
Thanks, and if you find out anything, let me know. I like to keep my records up to date.

Billy gone, Kenneth removes dollar and pockets it.

EXT. ELEANOR JOLY'S HOUSE - PORCH - EVENING

Billy holds a beer. Eleanor sips tea in he rocking chair. Below them in the valley lies the town.

ELEANOR  
I always thought he would marry me. But your mother got pregnant, and your father did the right thing. Then, one day, he came home and found her crying. She told him it was a 'miscarriage.' But it was too late for us. He wouldn't divorce her.

BILLY  
You never married?

ELEANOR  
Came close a couple of times, but it didn't work out.  
(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)  
No one seemed to have your father's  
gift of words.

BILLY  
Seems I didn't inherit it either.

ELEANOR  
What?

BILLY  
I'm trying to track down an old  
acquaintance of my father's. Did  
he ever mention Eleanor Creel?

She looks as if the gears in her head mesh, and she smiles.

ELEANOR  
You found it.

BILLY  
It?

ELEANOR  
The screenplay.

BILLY  
I don't-

ELEANOR  
He used his real name, and so did  
I. I didn't start out as a Joly.

BILLY  
I found-

ELEANOR  
I was born a Creel but changed my  
name when I came to live with my  
aunt and uncle. In those days, you  
did that.

BILLY  
You wrote screenplays?

ELEANOR  
Come with me.

She stands and shuffles inside. Billy follows.

INT. ELEANOR JOLY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - EVENING

A frilly room, canopy bed, vintage furniture, a cedar chest  
at the foot of the bed.

Eleanor enters, followed by Billy. She sinks to her knees in front of the chest. Takes a key from around her neck, unlocks the chest, and opens it.

Takes out a manuscript and hands it to Billy.

ELEANOR

This was our first and still my favorite.

(another manuscript)

Number two. We poured our souls into it.

(another manuscript)

Our last. We were really cooking.  
Then your mother-

BILLY

Got pregnant.

Billy looks at manuscripts.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Why didn't you sell these?

ELEANOR

They weren't mine. They were ours.  
Besides, what good would it do to sell one and not be able to team up for the next?

Billy looks into the chest and spots 20 more scripts.

BILLY

What are those?

ELEANOR

I kept writing. I hoped your father might be free one day.

BILLY

But he never-

ELEANOR

By the time your mother died, it was too late. He no longer had the itch.

She holds out her hands for the manuscripts. For a moment, Billy doesn't give them up.

Then, he does.

BILLY

What are you going to do with them?

ELEANOR  
Nothing.

BILLY  
Nothing?

She relocks cedar chest.

ELEANOR  
I suppose the historical society  
will store them. They get my  
papers once I'm gone.

BILLY  
No heirs?

She shakes her head as Billy helps her to her feet.

ELEANOR  
You know, back then, I was having  
sex with your father twice as much  
as your mother. I never took. If  
I had, I suppose you'd be calling  
me 'mom'.

BILLY  
The nickel you put in the casket,  
why?

ELEANOR  
It was a private joke. A penny for  
your thoughts. He always said he  
had a nickel's worth.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Billy types madly on his laptop, empty, crushed beer cans on  
either side.

BILLY  
Shin bone's connected to the thigh  
bone. Thigh bone's connected to  
hip bone. Hip bone's...I'm  
hip...not hip...shit!

Shoves laptop across table and knocks over the chair.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Shit, pure crapola.

Grabs a fresh beer out of fridge and walks outside.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT

Billy pops beer and looks up the hill toward Eleanor Joly's brightly lit house.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - STOOP - MORNING

Billy sips coffee on the front step. A Cadillac pulls to the curb. Prather climbs out and heads up the walk.

PRATHER  
Good morning.

BILLY  
What's so good about it?

PRATHER  
(chuckling)  
Hadn't heard back, so I thought I'd drop by. Still looking to sell?

BILLY  
Not at the moment.

PRATHER  
I might scare up an extra thousand if you're inclined.

BILLY  
You knew my parents?

PRATHER  
I admired your father. Your mother was my secretary before you were born.

BILLY  
Were they happy?

PRATHER  
Couples that stay together learn to make accommodations. Your folks accommodated each other.

BILLY  
I thought so.

Debbie pulls in behind Prather and climbs out.

DEBBIE  
Good morning.

BILLY  
Hi.

PRATHER  
I've got to get along.  
(to Billy)  
Maybe two. Think about it.

Prather passes Debbie, gets into his car, and drives off.

DEBBIE  
Two what?

BILLY  
If you had a chance at the big  
casino, would you risk it?

DEBBIE  
I sold bonds in New York for three  
years. Two ulcers later, I moved  
back here. You can have the big  
casino.

BILLY  
Prather good for his word?

DEBBIE  
Generally. Of course, if you're a  
woman you can work it out in trade-  
or so the rumor goes.

BILLY  
Trade?

DEBBIE  
An eye and an appetite.

BILLY  
Luckily, I'm ugly and stupid.

DEBBIE  
Not so ugly.

He laughs, and she laughs with him.

BILLY  
Want to have dinner sometime?

DEBBIE  
Are you going to hire me to sell  
your house?

BILLY  
Not right away.

DEBBIE  
Good, because I never date clients.  
Did you find Eleanor Creel?

BILLY  
Funny thing about that.

Her phone CHIRPS, and she glances at it. She heads for her car.

DEBBIE  
Call me. I'm in the book. You can use the binoculars to check if I'm home.

She laughs as she climbs into her car.

BILLY  
I'll do that. I'll do that.

Phone RINGTONE, and he answers.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Hello.

FAITH  
(on phone)  
OK, Dickens, where the fuck are you?

BILLY  
Faith, how nice to hear from the undead.

FAITH  
Is that charm? No, I don't think so. Madeline is looking for you. Seems you owe her some forgettable prose.

BILLY  
Tell Madeline it's almost finished.

FAITH  
Tolstoy, you lie with the best of them. I want to be there when she fires your ass.

BILLY  
Tomorrow. Day after at the latest. Tell her. And I want you there to kiss my ass when I deliver.

FAITH  
I would but it looks too much like  
your face.

BILLY  
You lousy-

Connection goes dead, leaving Billy fuming.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Payback is coming, chippy. Oh boy,  
is it coming.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Black pants, shirt, cap, and gloves, Billy shoves the big screwdriver, hammer, pry-bar, and pliers into a black canvas bag. A cliché of a thief.

INT. WENDY'S CAR - NIGHT

Wendy pulls to the curb in front of Charley's house.

GPS VOICE  
You have arrived at your  
destination. Route guidance ended.

She kills the lights. As she sits, Billy's car slips out of the drive and up the street.

EXT. ELEANOR JOLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Darkness envelops house inside and out.

Through the night sidles Billy, carrying bag. Scared, a novice, he gets to a window and tries to raise it.

Locked.

Pulls masking tape from his bag and runs three vertical strips down a pane. Adds three horizontal strips, making a grid.

Takes out hammer and smashes glass. While the glass breaks it doesn't fall out, held in place by the tape.

He hunkers down, waiting for a light or sound.

Nothing.

With care, Billy removes broken pane. Reaches in and unlocks window.

Window SCREES as he raises it, but not too loud. Panting, he waits for a light.

Nothing.

INT. ELEANOR JOLY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy crawls through the window into the living room. Pulls a penlight from his pocket and looks around.

Careful, shining light, he slinks off.

INT. ELEANOR JOLY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy appears at the door.

He flashes the light across the bed, Eleanor's sleeping form.

Killing light, he sinks to his knees and crawls to the cedar chest. He takes out a screwdriver and tries to jimmy the lock.

Screwdriver slips and gouges wood.

He freezes as Eleanor's breathing pauses for a moment.

Safe, he jimmies the lock again.

ELEANOR  
FREEZE!

Eleanor sits up, a revolver in her hands.

Billy crawls for the door.

She FIRES, the REPORT deafening.

Billy yelps and runs for it, a fast limp.

She FIRES again as she climbs out of bed.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)  
Freeze, you sonofabith!

INT. ELEANOR JOLY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy limps for his life, but without a light, he's lost. He crashes into an ottoman and sprawls across the floor.

BILLY  
Shit!

He crawls as Eleanor rounds the corner and FIRES.

Billy SCREAMS but is unhurt. Still holding the screwdriver he crawls faster.

Eleanor shuffles as fast as possible. FIRES one more time before she trips on the ottoman.

As she falls, Billy rolls on his back, holding screwdriver.

Eleanor falls atop Billy, impaling herself on the screwdriver.

Nothing happens for a moment.

Billy rolls her off. She looks dead in the faint light.

Then, her hand moves, the pistol jams against Billy's head. Before she can pull the trigger, she sighs and dies.

Shaking, Billy grabs her hand, takes the pistol, and lets her hand fall.

Yep, dead.

He touches the screwdriver in her chest and pulls back his hand. Christ, what has he done?

He scrambles away but stops. Reaches slowly and grabs the key around her neck. A jerk and the chain breaks. Key in hand, he hustles away.

INT. ELEANOR JOLY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy moves to the chest. Unlocks, opens, and stuffs manuscripts into the bag along with Eleanor's revolver. Flashing his flashlight, he checks to make sure he has all the manuscripts.

He looks once around the room and leaves.

INT. ELEANOR JOLY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Billy heads for the window but stops. Eleanor's body lies in his path.

He changes direction, unlocks the front door, and leaves.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - NIGHT

Billy drives, bag of manuscripts on seat next to him. He touches the bag and shakes.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Billy enters carrying bag of manuscripts.

WENDY (O.S.)  
About time.

He whirls.

Wendy sits in a chair.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Where have you been?

BILLY  
What the hell are you doing here?

WENDY  
I'm your girlfriend, remember. At least, I was, and I want to be again, I think.

BILLY  
Turner told you, didn't he? That bastard.

WENDY  
Look, I know I said some harsh things, but we had it once, didn't we?

BILLY  
You didn't tell anyone you were coming here, did you?

WENDY  
I'd like to give us another chance.

BILLY  
This isn't a good time.

WENDY  
We owe it to ourselves.

BILLY  
I'm very busy.

WENDY  
We had it.

BILLY  
You-

WENDY  
We-

He glares at her.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
What's in the bag?

BILLY  
Laundry.

WENDY  
You're doing laundry in the middle  
of the night.

BILLY  
No competition for dryers.

WENDY  
There's no washer and dryer here?

BILLY  
They...out of detergent. Look,  
hey, why don't you get us a beer  
while I take care of this?

He moves toward her, all grins, and pulls her out of the chair.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
We'll relax and talk, really talk.

WENDY  
You want to talk?

BILLY  
We owe it to ourselves, right?

She kisses his cheek.

WENDY  
Writers are so unpredictable.

BILLY  
You can say that again.

She skips toward the kitchen.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
See if you can find some chips. I  
think there's a bag somewhere.

She disappears into kitchen, and he hustles out.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy looks around before he stuffs the bag under the bed.  
He backs to the door and looks.

Nope, bag doesn't show.

Satisfied he turns smack into Wendy.

BILLY  
Oh, hey, there you are.

She hands him a beer.

WENDY  
I couldn't find any chips.

BILLY  
I probably ate them.

He grabs her arm and leads her away from the bedroom.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Let's sit out under the stars.

WENDY  
Under the stars? You hate the  
outdoors.

BILLY  
You make me want to try new things.

WENDY  
(giggling)  
I have some new things in mind.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Wendy wakes, reaches out, and finds the bed empty. Half-naked, she slips out and grabs clothes.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Billy transcribes a manuscript onto his laptop, typing quickly. Wendy appears and kisses his neck

WENDY  
Good morning.

BILLY  
Morning.

WENDY  
Whatcha doing?

BILLY  
Copying one of my old scripts.

She reaches for the manuscript, and he grabs her hand.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
I'm busy here, really busy. This  
is due today. How about running  
out and finding us some breakfast.

She wraps her arms around him and hugs.

WENDY  
You were magical last night.

BILLY  
You weren't so bad yourself.

WENDY  
Did you use those moves on Miss  
Magnificent?

BILLY  
(kissing her hand)  
Make mine some kind of egg  
sandwich, OK?

He shoos her out.

WENDY  
I'll be right back.

BILLY  
I can't wait.

He types.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Wendy bounces down walk, past Debbie who stands beside her Jeep.

DEBBIE  
Billy inside?

WENDY  
He's busy. Who are you?

DEBBIE  
A realtor. Think he wants to sell?

WENDY  
I don't think so. He's got his hands full.

DEBBIE  
I can see that.

Wendy offers a fake smile and heads for her car. Debbie slides into her Jeep.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Wendy, toting sacks, enters. She's met by Billy on his way out.

WENDY  
Where are you going?

BILLY  
(waving laptop)  
I have to print and deliver.

WENDY  
Breakfast.

Billy whirls and comes back. Grabs the sack, fishes out his sandwich, and pecks her lips.

BILLY  
Thanks.

WENDY  
When will you be back?

BILLY  
Later.

She pouts and watches him go.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - DAY

Billy bursts in, slides into his chair, and fires up his laptop. As he starts his word processor, Turner, in boxers and disheveled hair, enters.

TURNER  
You could give a guy a little  
notice you know.

BILLY  
This is my apartment, remember?

A MODEL wrapped in a sheet appears in the door.

MODEL  
Who is it, Billy?

BILLY  
What?

TURNER  
A friend of mine. Go back to bed.  
I'll be right there.

Model disappears.

BILLY  
Billy?

TURNER  
She reads the trades. Your agent  
gets your name out there.

BILLY  
Do me a favor and get your bogus  
asses out of here.

TURNER  
Don't be that way. I promised her  
a role in my, your next screenplay.

BILLY  
If she sleeps with me, you?

TURNER  
Quid pro boner.

Billy prints the manuscript.

BILLY  
I'm going to shower and change. If  
that cramps your boner, sorry.

Billy rises and heads for bedroom.

TURNER  
Can't you wait an hour?

BILLY  
NO.

TURNER  
You wanna try that trois thing?

BILLY  
NO!

INT. FAITH'S OFFICE - DAY

Faith's office is entirely black with the only light provided by a desk lamp and computer. In this murky atmosphere Faith reads a manuscript.

Billy appears at the door.

BILLY  
Sunlight burn your skin?

FAITH  
Well, well, Melville, harpoon the big, white script?

BILLY  
Your boss is enjoying it now.

FAITH  
In all the years I've worked for her, she's liked a second script exactly once. I don't like your odds, Herman.

BILLY  
Call me Santiago.

FAITH  
That was the Old Man and the Sea, moron.

Before Billy can answer, Madeline appears.

MADELINE  
Naughty, naughty, naughty boy. Why didn't you tell me you were saving your best work?

Billy gives the surprised Faith an eat-shit-and-die look.

EXT. ELEANOR JOLY'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Debbie, with a sack of groceries, knocks on the door.

No answer.

Knocks again.

DEBBIE  
Eleanor?!

Tries door and finds it unlocked. Enters.

INT. ELEANOR JOLY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS  
Debbie starts across room.

DEBBIE  
Eleanor?!

Stopped by a BUZZING

She turns, moves a few steps, and sees  
Eleanor, screwdriver in chest, gaping at a cloud of flies.  
Debbie SCREAMS!

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Wendy cuts carrots. The knife slips.

WENDY  
Crap.

She holds up a finger with a small cut, blood.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Holding finger, Wendy charges in. She pulls open medicine cabinet and spots a box of band-aids behind several packages of condoms and a roll of tape. Grabs band-aids, knocking over condoms and tape.

Tape bounces on floor and rolls into bedroom.

Wendy pulls out a band-aid and applies it to her cut.  
Finished, she grabs condoms and stuffs them in the cabinet.

WENDY (CONTD)  
Dad's? Sure.

She whirls and looks around for the tape.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wendy looks around, gets on floor and looks under bed.

Tape rests against Billy's black bag.

Wendy reaches under bed for the tape. She grabs the bag.

WENDY

You left your laundry in the bag?  
Damnit, Billy!

She hauls the bag from under the bed.

INT. MADELINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Madeline behind her desk. Faith and Billy in front.

MADELINE

I'll have studio notes by tomorrow.

BILLY

I'm going to my father's house.  
Email them.

MADELINE

There are some DVDs I want you to  
watch.

BILLY

Can't Faith run them out?

Faith hisses.

MADELINE

She'd love to.

Billy stands and pats Faith's shoulder.

BILLY

The house is easy to find—even in  
daylight.

Laughing, Billy leaves.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Billy leaves his car and starts up the walk.

Leaving the house is Debbie, and she's a bit of a mess.

BILLY

Hey.

DEBBIE

Hey.

She passes.

BILLY

Debbie?

She waves and continues to her Jeep.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Billy finds Wendy sipping a beer.

BILLY

I just passed the realtor. You two  
fight?

WENDY

Sit down, Billy.

Billy grabs a beer from the fridge and sits.

BILLY

She wants to sell the house.

WENDY

(shows finger)

I cut my finger today.

BILLY

I've done worse shaving.

WENDY

I had to get a band-aid from your  
bathroom, and the tape rolled under  
the bed.

A bit of fear plays at Billy's eyes. She stands and walks to  
the counter.

WENDY (CONT'D)

She stopped to tell you the news.  
Eleanor Joly was murdered.

BILLY

Who?

Wendy grabs a manuscript off the counter and tosses it on the  
table.

WENDY  
The author of that, I believe.

Billy looks at manuscript and drinks beer.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Seems there are a bunch of those  
under your bed--along with this.

Tosses revolver on the table where it bounces before Billy  
snags it.

BILLY  
Jesus, Wendy!

WENDY  
Talk

BILLY  
I can explain.

WENDY  
I'm listening.

BILLY  
She, Eleanor came to my father's  
funeral. When I said I wrote  
screenplays, she said she did too.  
In fact, she used to collaborate  
with dad. She asked me to read her  
work, and I couldn't say no, could  
I? I mean, she knew dad.

WENDY  
You brought them home last night.

BILLY  
They'd been in my trunk for a week.  
For christakes, you don't think I  
had anything to do with her death,  
do you?

She studies him.

WENDY  
And the gun?

BILLY  
Dad's. I put it in the car rather  
than leave it lying around.

WENDY  
Where were you last night, and  
don't mention laundry. There are  
two boxes of detergent. I checked.

Panic sweats Billy's face.

BILLY  
On a date.

WENDY  
Date? Who with?

BILLY  
You don't know her.

WENDY  
Where did you go?

BILLY  
What difference does it make? I  
was out and I didn't want you to  
know. So I made up the laundry  
thing.

She looks at him and a tear forms in her eye.

WENDY  
Did you have sex?

BILLY  
Wendy!

WENDY  
Oh, you did. You crummy bastard.  
Then, you came back and had me.  
BASTARD!

She hurls her half-full beer which sprays Billy runs out.

Billy wipes beer off his face and with a shaky hand raises  
his can to take a long hit. He escaped.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

Billy knocks on the locked bedroom door.

BILLY  
Wendy?

WENDY (O.S.)  
Go away.

BILLY  
I'm sorry.

WENDY (O.S.)  
GO AWAY!

He turns away.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - STOOP - NIGHT

Billy sips beer and looks up at the starry sky.

BILLY  
What did I do, dad? What did I do?

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Billy types away, transcribing another manuscript. Wendy enters in jogging togs.

WENDY  
It was the realtor, wasn't it?

BILLY  
What?

WENDY  
Your date the other night. She was the one. That's why she stopped, to tell you how great you were?

He looks up, frazzled.

BILLY  
Yeah, yeah, hey, I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

WENDY  
Transcribing?

BILLY  
Yes.

WENDY  
I thought you said they weren't any good.

BILLY  
I...I'm saving them on disk, the ones dad worked on. You better get going. How many miles?

WENDY  
I forgive you.

Panic again for Billy

BILLY  
What?

WENDY  
For the realtor. I forgive you.  
(kisses his cheek)  
I'll be back.

BILLY  
Yeah, yes.

She jogs out back door, leaving Billy sweating. He returns to typing.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Billy types. A long, red nail flicks his ear.

BILLY  
Don't.

Finger flicks again.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
I'm working here.

Finger flicks again.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
(turning)  
Goddamnit! I'm trying to-

Mabel stands behind him, all smile and tits.

MABEL  
You're so cute when you're angry,  
like your father, may he rest--

BILLY  
I, oh, Mabel, look I don't mean to  
be rude, but I've got a ton of  
work. Is this important?

MABEL  
I remembered Eleanor Creel.

Billy lowers lid on his laptop as Mabel rounds table.

MABEL (CONT'D)  
Your father mentioned her once. He  
had a thing for her I think. But  
then, maybe you do too.

BILLY  
I didn't find her.

Mabel touches a manuscript.

MABEL  
No? That's too bad because she's  
dead now.

BILLY  
(closes manuscript)  
I'm sorry to hear that.

MABEL  
What you did to your girlfriend in  
the yard the other night really  
turned me on.

BILLY  
What?

MABEL  
Your father and me, well, we both  
had binoculars. Get the picture?

Billy gets the picture all too well.

MABEL (CONT'D)  
So, I was wondering why you were  
dressed in black when you came home  
with that bag. Did you see  
Eleanor? May she rest in peace.

BILLY  
That's crazy. I was doing laundry.

MABEL  
Honey, if I tell the sheriff that  
Joly was really Creel and that you  
were searching for her all over  
town, you think that laundry story  
is gonna wash?

She laughs at her pun while Billy racks his brain for a lie.

BILLY  
You think I killed her?

MABEL  
She was never a friend of mine, so  
I don't care.

BILLY  
Then, what?

She leans across table to let him see those ta-ta's.

MABEL  
I have needs, and quite frankly,  
since your father died I've been  
lonely. Why don't you come over in  
an hour and help me get unlonely.

She reaches out, grabs his hand, and puts it on her chest.

MABEL (CONT'D)  
My bosom buddies need attention.

Billy jerks back his hand. She laughs as she walks out.

Billy leaps to his feet, rips open a drawer, and takes out the revolver.

Turns after Mabel but doesn't move. Instead, drops the revolver back in the drawer.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Billy enters and opens the medicine cabinet. Rummages through pill bottles. Grabs a bottle of sleeping pills.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Billy rips into room and looks around for something, anything. Runs to bureau, picks up binocs, and looks out window.

THROUGH BINOCS

Mabel, binocs to eyes, looks back at Billy. She licks her lips.

Billy drops binocs and shudders.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Billy rushes into the garage and looks around. Rummages through shelves. Finds a packet of rat poison. Studies it a moment before he pockets it.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Billy leaves by back door. Jumps low fence into alley and heads for Mabel's.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Mabel, in tank top and shorts, answers door.

MABEL  
Come in, handsome.

Billy enters, and his deer-in-the-headlights look says everything.

She grabs his ass as he passes, and he jumps.

BILLY  
Stop that.

MABEL  
Get used to it.

She heads out.

MABEL (CONT'D)  
You'll find vodka and tonic under the sink. Mix us a batch and bring it to the bedroom. You know where it is.

Billy starts to pull down his pants to moon her but thinks better of it.

He retrieves vodka, tonic, and a plastic pitcher as the cat jumps on the counter. Dumps in vodka, tonic, and fills cat dish with vodka. Cat laps like a lush.

BILLY  
I can't drink fast enough either.

Pulls out the packet of rat poison. Stares at the packet.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Porcelain, wood, glass cats everywhere. Mabel lies on a plastic sheet. Coats her lips with lipstick.

Billy enters with pitcher and glasses already filled. Hands one to Mabel and sets down pitcher.

MABEL  
Come sit by me, sugar.

Billy finds a chair.

BILLY  
I'll park here. Let's drink for a bit.

MABEL  
Liquid courage?  
(laughs)  
I promise to hurt you.

Billy wants to die.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Wendy enters, hot and sweaty. Goes to fridge and grabs a bottle of water. Gulping, she heads out.

WENDY  
BILLY?

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wendy enters, puzzled. Spots binocs by the window. Picks them up and looks out.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Mabel sips drink and licks her lips.

MABEL  
Come here, baby. Show Mabel if you're built like your old man.

She reaches for him.

Billy raises a finger and shakes his head. Stands and starts to strip. Slowly, like a dancer, he unbuttons his shirt while Mabel Hoots.

Shirt flies across room.

Shoes kick off.

Pants unsnap, unzip, wiggle down.

Mabel's face sours.

MABEL (CONT'D)  
I...I don't feel so good.

Billy watches Mabel struggle out of bed. She takes one step and collapses.

Door pops open, and Wendy barges in.

WENDY  
You sonofabitch!

She looks from Mabel to Billy.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
What the hell. What did you do?

BILLY  
Sleeping pills.

WENDY  
Sleeping...wanna tell me why?

BILLY  
It's a long...did you know that my father...dated Mabel?

She steps over the orca Mabel and sits on the bed.

WENDY  
Spill it, lover boy.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - 5 MINUTES LATER

Billy is dressed. Wendy sits on the bed.

WENDY  
She knows you stole a screenplay and is blackmailing you for sex?

BILLY  
What was I to do?

WENDY  
You might try not stealing.

BILLY  
I already spent the money.

Wendy stands and paces, stepping over Mabel with each pass.

WENDY  
It's for sure it isn't gonna end with sex.

BILLY  
I'm not good enough?

She shoots him a don't-go-there look.

WENDY  
I don't see a way out but to kill  
her.

BILLY  
What?!

WENDY  
No matter how much you give her,  
she won't stop.

BILLY  
Can't we just scare her?

WENDY  
Run a bath. Fill the tub.

BILLY  
You wanna take a bath?

She's on her way out.

WENDY  
Haven't you watched any movies?

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Tub is almost full, Billy watching.

BILLY  
(to himself)  
Haven't you ever watched a movie?  
Like she knows what a roscoe is.

WENDY  
What?

He whirls and finds Wendy in the doorway with a hair dryer.

BILLY  
You gonna dry her to death?

She places dryer on the sink.

WENDY  
Let's get her.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wendy and Billy enter and look at Mabel.

BILLY  
We can't carry her.

WENDY  
Grab the sheet.

They grab the sheet and put it on the floor. Together, they roll Mabel onto the sheet. Then, they drag the sheet and Mabel out of the room.

BILLY  
I'm gonna get a hernia.

WENDY  
Shut up and pull. If we're caught...

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Panting, Wendy and Billy manage to drag Mabel into the room.

WENDY  
OK, let's put her in.

BILLY  
In clothes?

Wendy frowns a moment.

WENDY  
It goes like this. She was drying her hair, slipped, fell into the tub, and fried.

BILLY  
That's gonna fly?

WENDY  
Have you--

BILLY  
Yeah, I've seen movies.

WENDY  
Let's put her in.

BILLY  
Got a crane?

WENDY  
Grab under her arms. I'll help.

Billy wraps his arms under Mabel's arms and breasts.  
Grunting, with Wendy helping, he raises Mabel.

But he can't hold her.

Off balance, he stumbles backward and falls into the tub,  
splashing water everywhere.

Beneath Mabel, under water, Billy can't move. He tries to  
push her off, but she's too heavy.

Wendy realizes Billy is pinned. She grabs Mabel's arm and  
pulls. Her shoes slip on wet sheet, and she falls on her  
butt.

Pinned, Billy panics. He screams for Wendy, but his voice is  
drowned by water.

Wendy scrambles to her knees, grabs Mabel, and tugs. No use.  
Mabel is a tank. Wendy slips.

Panic drives Billy, but not even panic can move Mabel.

Wendy, frantic, gives up and searches for the drain plug.

Billy's fight weakens. This is one hell of a way to die.

With a WHOOSH, the drain opens. Water rushes out.

Water sucks Billy's shirt into the drain, plugging it.

Wendy watches water lower, but it stops.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
What?! NO!

She reaches into water, searching for drain.

Billy is out. Wendy's hand snakes past and finds the plugged  
drain. She manages to pull out the shirt and allow the water  
to drain.

Wendy watches the water level drop.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Come on, come on.

As the water drops below Billy's nose and mouth, he sputters,  
spits water, and coughs.

Wendy hears Billy.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Billy, are you OK?

BILLY  
(sputtering)  
Get me out of here.

WENDY  
Hold on.

BILLY  
Like I'm going somewhere?

Wendy rises and slips.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM 10 MINUTES LATER

Wendy has tied a rope around Mabel's chest and looped it around overhead light.

WENDY  
Ready?

BILLY  
Do it.

She braces one foot on the tub and pulls, raising Mabel.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
That's it, pull.

As Mabel rises, Billy tries to wiggle free.

Overhead, the light fixture begins to pull loose from the ceiling.

Wendy strains to raise Mabel who slowly rises.

Ceiling CRACKS. They don't have much time.

WENDY  
Get out!

Billy strains. He manages to slip over the side as the fixture pulls free.

Mabel and fixture crash into the tub.

Wendy falls on her ass.

Soaked, Billy stands and looks at the mess. Mabel, fixture, rope, plaster.

Wendy stands, rubbing her butt.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Are you OK?

BILLY  
I think she cracked a rib.

WENDY  
Better than your skull.

BILLY  
We better clean this up.

WENDY  
No, leave it.

She kneels, replugs the drain, and starts to run water.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
They'll think she was doing  
something weird, and the fixture  
pulled loose. Oops.

BILLY  
They're that stupid?

WENDY  
Think they could guess the truth?

Water rises in the tub. Wendy stands. Behind her, Mabel GROANS.

BILLY  
Jesus.

Wendy moves to the light switch as Mabel, groggy, tries to climb out.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Throw it! Throw it!

Wendy flips switch.

Nothing.

WENDY  
It's not working!

Mabel grows more awake by the second.

Billy hurls himself on top Mabel, holding her in the water.

BILLY  
Do something!

Mabel struggles. Billy holds her down, but as soon as she finds traction, he's history.

Wendy grabs the hair dryer, plugs it in, and turns it on.

WENDY  
Clear!

Billy glances at her and rolls away as Wendy tosses dryer in the tub.

SPARKS, FLASH, Mabel jerks as shock kills her before the circuit overloads. She slumps in the water.

Billy and Wendy stare.

Wendy turns off the water.

For a moment, nothing. Murder hovers in the air.

Wendy grabs a towel and begins wiping surfaces.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Glasses and pitcher. Whatever you touched in the kitchen.

BILLY  
You said they'd call it an accident.

WENDY  
In case, stupid.

Wendy pulls dryer from tub as Billy leaves.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Billy puts the glasses and pitcher in the sink and looks down. On the floor, the drunk cat snores.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Limping, Billy and Wendy climb over the low fence and approach the house. Wendy breaks off.

WENDY  
I have some ace bandages in my car.

BILLY  
Help me breathe?

WENDY  
Keep you from laughing.

BILLY  
Ow.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Billy enters, takes a step, and stops. At the table, reading a manuscript, Faith.

FAITH  
Hello, Shakespeare.

BILLY  
Faith, what're you doing here?

FAITH  
Delivering notes and DVDs, but I think I should be talking to someone else-like the real author!

BILLY  
What?

FAITH  
Some people think Shakespeare stole his shit too. But he was smart enough to hide the evidence.

BILLY  
You've got it wrong. I-

FAITH  
Save it. I think you know what will happen when I tell Madeline.

BILLY  
Give me a chance.

She rises and steps forward to stand very close.

FAITH  
You know, I envied you. I thought you had achieved what I had sold my soul for. I mean, I couldn't believe you made it and I didn't. I envied you. And I hated myself for it.

She whirls and stops.

In front of her, Wendy, and Wendy has the baseball bat.

One swing, and Faith takes it in the head.

BAM

Faith hits the floor.

BILLY  
Jesus, what did you do?

WENDY  
She was going to tell.

Billy falls to his knees by Faith and feels for a pulse.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Is she?

BILLY  
No, she's alive.

Billy groans as he lifts Faith and carries her out.

WENDY  
Where are you going?

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy lays Faith on the bed. Wendy comes right behind.

WENDY  
She's a liability.

BILLY  
Your meaning?

WENDY  
She joins Mabel in the great  
unknown.

BILLY  
I don't-

WENDY  
But it can't be here. Another  
death in this town, and FBI  
profilers will show up.

BILLY  
I don't think you-

WENDY  
You have to take her back to LA,  
and make it look like an accident  
or something.

BILLY  
Accident?

WENDY  
Here's what you do.

INT. FAITH'S CAR - NIGHT

Billy drives. Next to him, out cold and bound, Faith.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Billy runs around Faith's car, opens door, and looks around before he pulls her out. She's unconscious, so he carries her to the elevator which he has propped open with a shoe.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Billy props Faith in a corner, grabs his shoe and slips it on. Punches floor and rubs his back.

Halfway up, elevator stops.

BILLY  
Shit.

He turns to Faith, wraps his arms around her and kisses her.

Into the elevator step a drunk Turner and a MODEL. Turner punches a button and stares at Billy.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Oh, baby, that feels so good.  
Right there, right there.

TURNER  
Billy?

Billy looks over his shoulder.

BILLY  
Turner?

TURNER  
Is that Faith?

BILLY  
Mistress Night. Oh, baby don't stop.

Billy pretends Faith is all over him.

Model grabs Turner, flings him into the corner opposite Billy and kisses him, grinding on him.

TURNER  
Oh, baby, don't stop.

MODEL  
Right there, right there.

Billy glances over as these two go at it, groping each other.

Elevator stops. Doors open. Turner and Model stagger off. She jumps up and locks her legs around him and they lunge away.

Doors close.

BILLY  
They can't wait five minutes?

INT. FAITH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Door opens and Billy enters, hauling Faith. Kicks door shut and looks around.

Spots balcony.

Carries her across, opens door, and carries her onto

EXT. FAITH'S APARTMENT - BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Billy sets Faith in a chair and unties her. He carries her to railing and looks down-20 stories.

All he has to do is drop her.

But he can't.

He turns, places her in the chair, and reenters the apartment.

INT. FAITH'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Billy paces.

BILLY  
You can't just toss her off the balcony.  
(beat)  
Don't be a sap. She knows you stole the screenplays.  
(beat)  
It's murder, conroy, the big one, the last hurrah.  
(beat)  
Gonna dump the A-list life for a skirt? What a chump.

In the background, Faith rises from the chair. Woozy, wobbly, barely able to stand.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
You get caught, and they give you San Quentin laughing gas.

Faith tries for the door, misses, and bounces off the wall.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Go back to crappy mysteries and day old pizza?

Faith tries once more for the door, misses, and plunges over railing.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Yeah, well, it beats slammer grub and screws turning their backs when someone decides you look too good to pass up.

He turns to the balcony and realizes it's empty.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Faith?

EXT. FAITH'S APARTMENT - BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Billy bursts out, looks around, goes to railing and looks down.

BILLY  
Shit. Shit, shit, shit!

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Billy snores. Into the room charges Madeline.

MADELINE  
(poking Billy)  
Wake up, wake up.

BILLY  
Hey, what, easy there.

MADELINE  
Wake up. We need to talk.

BILLY  
I am awake. How did you get in  
here?

MADELINE  
The door was unlocked.

BILLY  
Unlocked?

MADELINE  
(poking)  
Did Faith talk to you?

BILLY  
Faith? Stop poking.

MADELINE  
DVDs, notes, she had notes for you.

BILLY  
I got them.

MADELINE  
Great. Did she mention when I need  
your comments?

BILLY  
Comments?

MADELINE  
On the notes. Tell me she  
explained before she jumped.

BILLY  
Jumped?

MADELINE  
You have been asleep. Jumped or  
fell or was pushed. Splat. I need  
your comments tomorrow.

BILLY  
Tomorrow?

MADELINE  
She was the best assistant I've  
ever had.

Madeline heads for the door.

MADELINE (CONT'D)  
It has to be tomorrow because the  
funeral is the day after. God, I  
hate breaking in assistants.

She's gone, leaving Billy gaping.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

A beater pickup pulls to the curb, and Billy jumps out.  
Hands over some bills and waves.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Billy barges in.

BILLY  
Wendy! Wendy, goddamnit, I need  
you!

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Wendy sits at the table.

Billy bursts in.

BILLY  
Wendy! I-

WENDY  
Billy, I'd like you to meet Sheriff  
Dodds.

Billy stops and reaches across the table to shake hands with  
SHERIFF DODDS, 50s, paunchy, with a patch over one eye.

The table is bare, no laptop, no manuscripts.

BILLY  
Sheriff, what, what are you-

DODDS  
Don't know if you heard but Mabel  
Anderson died yesterday.  
(MORE)

DODDS (CONT'D)  
I think it was kinky sex, but I  
wanted to check with the neighbors.

WENDY  
Did you notice anything odd  
yesterday? I told the Sheriff I  
didn't see anything.

BILLY  
Odd? No, no, not one odd thing.

DODDS  
You knew Mabel and your father had-

BILLY  
A thing, yeah, I knew.

Dodds stands and grabs his hat.

DODDS  
If you see anything, let me know.

BILLY  
Sure, absolutely, 911, and all  
that.

Dodds shoots Billy a look and leaves.

Billy casually pulls a beer from fridge while he lets Dodds clear.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Where are they?

WENDY  
What?

BILLY  
The notes, the ones Faith brought  
yesterday.

WENDY  
Notes?

BILLY  
Notes, damn notes, she had to leave  
them with the DVDs.

WENDY  
I put everything in the bedroom.

Billy rips out for

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy rushes in, spots computer and scripts on the desk, and begins rifling.

Wendy appears in doorway.

WENDY  
She made the papers.

BILLY  
Who?

WENDY  
Faith. Not the front page but in  
the middle.

BILLY  
And?

WENDY  
Suicide.

Billy sorts through the stack a second time.

BILLY  
They're not here.

WENDY  
They have to be. That's  
everything.

BILLY  
Shit! They're due tomorrow!

WENDY  
Maybe she didn't have them.

BILLY  
You don't know Faith. Bag, did she  
have her bag with her?

WENDY  
How would I know?

He rushes past.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Can't you say you lost them?

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy rushes in and looks around.

BILLY  
Shit!

Walks over and pulls Faith's bag from next to the couch.  
Wendy appears as Billy rifles the bag.

WENDY  
What's in there?

BILLY  
Checkbook.  
(tosses to Wendy)  
DVD.  
(tosses to Wendy)  
Notes.

WENDY  
(reading DVD)  
Mistress Night in Eat, Drink, and  
Lay Mary?

BILLY  
She was a porn star.

WENDY  
You're supposed to watch--

BILLY  
(holding up 2 DVDs)  
These.

WENDY  
(looking at checkbook)  
Not much for a star.

BILLY  
What are we going to do with this  
stuff?

WENDY  
Fill the bag with bricks and drop  
it in the river.

BILLY  
Shouldn't we try to put it back in  
her apartment?

She gives him a don't-be-stupid look.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
You'll have to dump it. Notes are  
due tomorrow.

Billy takes notes and DVDs and heads for the door.

WENDY  
Where are you going?

BILLY  
Some place quiet.

He's gone.

She looks at video, walks over, and loads into player.

WENDY  
Let's see what you got, Mistress.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - DAY

Billy looks up from his computer, consults notes, and types.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Turner waltzes into the room, as big as life.

Spots video.

TURNER  
Eat, Drink, and Lay Mary.

WENDY (O.S.)  
What're you doing here?

He whirls to find her in a robe, standing in the doorway.

TURNER  
Where's Shakespuke?

WENDY  
Gone, why?

TURNER  
Coming back?

WENDY  
Maybe, why?

TURNER  
(pointing at TV)  
Did you know she tried to fly last  
night?

WENDY  
Mistress Night?

TURNER  
Splat. And guess what, I ran into her and Shakes-Billy in the elevator. Five minutes later, she's testing Newton's theory of sideways.

WENDY  
Your point?

TURNER  
I run a lame ass repair shop. He's pitching bullseyes. I'd like to upgrade.

WENDY  
We need to talk. Does porn turn you on like it does me?

Turner's face brightens.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - NIGHT

In boxers and fedora, chest wrapped in bandages, Billy types madly on his keyboard.

Stops. Climbs out of his chair. Runs around it three times and sits.

INT. TURNER'S PICKUP - NIGHT

Wendy and Turner locked in a hot kiss. His hands roam her breasts.

They break.

Ahead stretches a moonlit lake.

TURNER  
I know I shouldn't do this to Billy, but I'm soooo--

WENDY  
What did we come here to do?

TURNER  
Dump the bag.

WENDY  
Precisely.

He grabs the bag and climbs out. She watches as he goes to the edge and flings the bag into the water. He hustles back and climbs in.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Isn't the lake beautiful?

He looks ahead.

She places Eleanor's revolver against his temple and FIRES.

Turner slumps to the side, a bloody hole in his head.

She grabs his hand, places the revolver in it, and aims out the window, FIRING a second time. Then, she lets the revolver fall from his hand.

INT. MADELINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy paces in front of the desk as Madeline reads.

MADELINE  
Not bad, not bad.

BILLY  
You think?

MADELINE  
Not bad. They're AWFUL. They're DRECK! You wrote this pile of, of, don't make me say it.

BILLY  
I was on a deadline.

She throws pages at him.

MADELINE  
You don't get it. That isn't your work, it's my reputation. I send that over, and the real players stop calling. I'm just another hack pounding the pavement. And I guarantee that you will not be the reason they stop calling me. Do you understand?

BILLY  
(backing out)  
I'll do them again.

MADELINE  
Damn right you will. And BETTER!

BILLY  
By tomorrow.

MADELINE  
Or don't darken my door!

He's gone, and she smiles.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Billy sits on the couch.

BILLY  
Turner?

WENDY  
He saw you with the Mistress.

BILLY  
Yeah, but-

WENDY  
He wanted money.

BILLY  
So you-

WENDY  
It's a tiger on a leash. Cut the  
leash and you get eaten.

BILLY  
But-

She moves and kneels in front of him, taking his hands.

WENDY  
The sheriff stopped by. Turner  
took the hit for Eleanor. It's  
over.

Billy looks at her, and somehow, his face says it's far from  
over.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Billy works on the notes, fingers hunting and pecking the  
keyboard. This is going slowly.

Wendy enters with a bag of groceries. He pops up.

BILLY  
Need help?

WENDY  
Go back to work.

He grabs a six-pack from the fridge.

BILLY  
Time to stoke the muse.

She watches him leave before she stoops to read the laptop.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - STOOP - EVENING

Billy sips a beer and watches dusk turn into night.

Prather's gas guzzler pulls to the curb, and he climbs out.

PRATHER  
Just the person I'm looking for.

BILLY  
I'm not going to sell.

PRATHER  
Damn right, you're not.

Prather sits beside Billy who hands over the half consumed six-pack. Prather grabs one and pops it.

PRATHER (CONT'D)  
Thanks.

BILLY  
Beautiful evening, isn't it?

PRATHER  
Any evening I see is beautiful.

BILLY  
You didn't come to sip beer and talk sunsets.

Prather takes an envelope from his pocket and hands it to Billy.

PRATHER  
That came in the mail.

Billy opens and scans.

BILLY  
I didn't-

PRATHER  
I find it curious that Eleanor Joly  
nee Creel would leave everything  
she owned to a man she never met.  
You didn't meet, right?

BILLY  
I can't-

PRATHER  
Son, if I were you, I'd shut up and  
listen.

Billy sips beer.

PRATHER (CONT'D)  
You gotta remember your mother  
worked for me, so I know something  
about Eleanor and your parents. In  
fact, your mom's getting pregnant  
was my idea.

BILLY  
You what?!

PRATHER  
Your dad did the right thing, like  
I said he would.

BILLY  
But she wasn't really pregnant.

PRATHER  
The law has taught me one big  
thing. Whatever a thing seems to  
be, it is.

BILLY  
But-

PRATHER  
Right now, it seems that the owner  
of a third-rate repair shop  
murdered Eleanor. Therefore, he  
did.

Billy drains his beer and grabs another with shaking hands.

PRATHER (CONT'D)  
If I act on that letter, something  
else may seem to be. I don't think  
you want that.

Prather drains his beer and pats Billy's arm.

PRATHER (CONT'D)  
You have the original. There are  
no copies. What you do with it is  
up to you.

Prather stands and heads for his car.

BILLY  
Wait.

Prather turns.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Why are you doing this?

PRATHER  
If Eleanor dies intestate, the  
judge will appoint me trustee.  
When I sell the place, I'll collect  
my fees. Hell, I might even buy  
it.

BILLY  
No, why are you doing this for me?

PRATHER  
Your father shot blanks all his  
life. Your mother wanted a baby.  
Who do you think made that happen?

BILLY  
You...you're my-

PRATHER  
I'll be your attorney if you want.  
What seems to be, is.

Prather slides into his car and pulls away.

Billy stares at the letter. Behind, in the doorway, watching  
Prather leave--Wendy.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Wendy slices vegetables on a chopping block. Billy stirs the  
sauce. Spaghetti boils in a pan.

WENDY  
He knows.

BILLY  
I destroyed the letter.

WENDY  
And you believe he didn't keep a copy to cover his ass?

BILLY  
He won't tell.

WENDY  
Bullshit! As soon as you make a dime, he'll knock on the door with his hand out.

BILLY  
I don't believe that.

WENDY  
He'll always be out there. Can you live with that? Can you live waiting for the police to knock?

Before Billy can answer, a KNOCK on the back door. They look at each other.

BILLY  
Come in!

In steps Debbie.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Oh, hi, Debbie, this is Wendy.

DEBBIE  
We've met. Got a minute?

BILLY  
Sure.

Debbie gives a look that Wendy fields like a shortstop.

WENDY  
I'll leave you two alone.

Wendy strides out, pausing to kiss Billy's cheek.

DEBBIE  
I...I had the words all picked out.

BILLY  
Can I help?

DEBBIE  
No, I don't...it's the screwdriver.

BILLY  
Screwdriver?

DEBBIE  
I found Eleanor and the, the flies.  
I keep seeing her lying there with  
the flies.

Billy stirs the sauce faster.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)  
The screwdriver seemed familiar,  
but I couldn't...then it came to  
me. That day on the porch.

BILLY  
I imagine one screwdriver looks  
like another.

DEBBIE  
You were working on...I picked it  
up.

BILLY  
I don't know where you're headed.

DEBBIE  
I'd like to know if you still have-

BILLY  
I don't know if I can find-

DEBBIE  
Because if you don't-

BILLY  
Proves nothing. Anyone-

DEBBIE  
It's been haunting me.

BILLY  
I, I thought that guy, Turner, he  
had her revolver.

DEBBIE  
Revolver? Did the paper say it was  
a revolver?

Billy stares. He knows he's just turned the key in the cell lock.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)  
You see my problem, don't you? I  
mean, the screwdriver?

Wendy charges through the back door, baseball bat in slugging position.

BILLY  
NO!

DEBBIE  
What?

As Wendy swings, Billy grabs Debbie and jerks her forward.

Bat misses-barely.

Billy steps forward, but Wendy is undeterred. The backswing catches Billy in the side. He BELLOWS as he falls to the side.

Wendy starts for Debbie.

Debbie grabs the pan and throws the boiling water and spaghetti on Wendy who HOWLS with pain. Stopped for the moment, drenched in noodles, murderous rage fills her face.

She lunges for Debbie, but her sneakers slip on the noodle-covered floor.

She falls, slamming her head into the stove. By the time she hits the floor, she's dead.

Blood pools around her head.

Debbie stares in horror.

Billy scrambles to Wendy and feels for a pulse.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)  
Is she?

BILLY  
Go.

DEBBIE  
Is-

BILLY  
Get out of here!

DEBBIE  
But-

Billy jumps to his feet, grabs Debbie's elbow, and pushes her out of the kitchen.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Billy pushes Debbie out the front door and toward the sidewalk.

DEBBIE  
I can't leave.

BILLY  
Go home. I'll take care of this.

Debbie backs away, unsure.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
It'll be OK. I promise.

She turns and hurries off.

INT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Billy enters and looks around at the mess, the blood. Grabs phone and dials.

BILLY  
Hello, there's...there's been an accident.

EXT. CHARLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Dodds leads a handcuffed Billy out of the house.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Billy sits at a table with Prather. He and Prather rise and face the JUDGE.

BILLY (V.O.)  
The chippy was dead, and I was the last one with her, so the DA closed one eye, held his nose, and put me in front of the judge.

Judge mouths something and hits his gavel. Case closed.

BILLY (V.O.)  
Justice is a human frailty. The  
law of the jungle doesn't recognize  
justice.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

In prison jumpsuit, Billy writes on a legal pad.

BILLY (V.O.)  
So, I was in stir when Knuckles  
Prather was found in his bunk with  
his throat gaping like a strip  
mine. The warden sent for me. I  
was the only shamus behind bars.

FADE OUT.