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 roscoc, 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, whirs, and marches away.

WENDY

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 (CONTD) (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 massage 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,
bullfrog 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 CHIPPY 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
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 lowers binocs and backs away from the window. Was he seen?

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?
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)
No one seemed to have your father's gift of words.

Seems I didn't inherit it either.

What?

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.

You found it.

It?

The screenplay.

I don't-

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

I found-

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.

You wrote screenplays?

Come with me.

She stands and shuffles inside. Billy follows.

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—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 sonofabitch!

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 whirs.

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 whirs 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 christsakes, 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 in 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 whirs 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)
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 whirs 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?
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 sooo--

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.