INT. THE WHITES' CABIN/BASEMENT -- NIGHT

A door CREAKS open, allowing light to cascade down a basement staircase and onto a twenty-something-year-old seemingly dead ROSE MCFADDEN.

Rose has that rare blend of exotica and naivete that instills in the observer hope for her early death so that her physical beauty doesn’t give way to time or gravity.

Her hair is disheveled, as are her legs. Her dress rides higher up her thigh than is lady-like. Garters are exposed. Her eyes are shut.

At the top of the staircase, in ominous silhouette, is a broad-shouldered MAXWELL FICKLE, JR.

EXT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY -- NIGHT

Establishing -- a neon marquis burns over the entrance to the club, a classy, intimidating structure. The sign reads: THE SPICY WHITEBOY; and below, in smaller letters: HOTTER THAN A THREE-PECKERED BILLY GOAT.

A black Pullmann four-door cruises before the club and turns down an adjacent alleyway. At that, we overhear THE GRAND POOBAH’S GRUFF VOICE:

THE GRAND POOBAH (V.O.)
I don’t know how this happened...

The Pullmann turns into a parking garage after an electric garage door raises.

THE GRAND POOBAH (V.O.) (CONT’D)
...I have no explanation...

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/PARKING GARAGE -- CONTINUOUS

The Pullmann parks. Two men exit the car in silhouette: GYPSY JACK, a thug with obvious physical prowess; and RENO, Gypsy Jack’s near dwarf-sized partner.

They approach the parking garage elevator, their faces obscured by darkness. The red “UP” arrow over the elevator glows. The doors open, and they step in.

THE GRAND POOBAH (V.O.)
...I understand...If you would, allow me to ease your mind...
INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/THE ELEVATOR -- CONTINUOUS

The doors open, and Reno and Gypsy Jack exit into...

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/THE BAR -- CONTINUOUS

...a high-class club of sorts, past a stage, red leather booths, low lighting -- everything but people.

    THE GRAND POOBH (V.O.)
    ...Tonight, Reno and Gypsy Jack, they're wearing the long, black overcoats...

Gypsy Jack and Reno file down a corridor toward an office door, their long, black overcoats hanging near the floor.

    THE GRAND POOBH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
    ...That's right -- long and black shows no stains...

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/POOBH'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

THE GRAND POOBH, a behemoth of a man in his early fifties, sits at his desk, holding a phone to his ear. His face is a collection of concentric wrinkles, not unlike a topographical map.

Reno and Gypsy Jack enter; we finally see their faces. Gypsy Jack wears an eye patch and gnaws on a toothpick. He is Shemp from The Three Stooges if Shemp were a "made" man. Reno is equally as unattractive yet clearly lacking in size; however, there remains a visible confidence, which clarifies that he's not a dwarf to be trifled with.

    THE GRAND POOBH
    ...for the meantime, let's continue all other operations.

The Grand Poobah's hand CRASHES the phone on the hook.

    THE GRAND POOBH (CONT'D)
    Well?

    GYPSY JACK
    Nothing.

Poobah straightens a nameplate on his desk. It reads: THE GRAND POOBH.

(CONTINUED)
That phone call was our insurance policy. He is chafed to say the least. And we have nothing, so --

-- so we need to come up with something.

Precisely. And I’ve no regard for how this happened. I only want the situation rectified. Find me Max Fickle.

He’s officially on the to-do list.

Gypsy Jack walks to a wall where a clipboard hangs. He begins writing, presumably the name MAXWELL FICKLE.

Start with the go-between.

ARCHIE WHITE, a sheriff in his early 40s, sits at his desk. Archie is more politician than cop; though this is in contrast to his body -- Archie can handle himself and other men. He’s liberal with his bullet-proof smile, a quality that helps him tread the deep end of the pond.

His office is classic: a floor to ceiling bookcase spans one wall; a window, also floor to ceiling, faces the city’s central park.

Behind Archie’s desk is a montage of plaques, awards, and honors. Archie’s desk is strewn with photos of himself shaking hands and sharing smiles with myriad high-powered officials. Each photo is faced toward the expanse of the office, except for one -- an unframed photo of a young Archie sliding his bride’s ring on her finger.

Archie talks on the phone:

So, can I have you for dinner?

He props his feet up on the desk.

You said that we’re not as romantic as we used to be.
Archie eyes the wedding photo.

    ARCHIE (CONT’D)
    Resisting an officer? I may have
to cuff you.

The bullet-proof smile surfaces.

    ARCHIE (CONT’D)
    Oh, I’m very certain you would.

The intercom on the desk BUZZES. Archie’s secretary, GLADYS, speaks through the loudspeaker.

    GLADYS (O.S.)
    Mr. White?

    ARCHIE
    (into the phone)
    Hold on.
    (speaking to Gladys)
    Yes, Gladys.

    GLADYS (O.S.)
    Your wife is on the line.

    ARCHIE
    I’m on a conference call.

    GLADYS
    Certainly.

    ARCHIE
    (into phone again)
    Alright, where were we?

Another BUZZ comes from the intercom -- Gladys again.

    GLADYS (O.S.)
    Mr. White?

    ARCHIE
    Yes, Gladys.

    GLADYS (O.S.)
    She wants to know if you’ll be
home for dinner.

    ARCHIE
    No.

    GLADYS (O.S.)
    Mr. White, your dinner appointment
was cancelled. I--

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE
-- I'm not available. If you want to have dinner with my wife, feel free.

GLADYS (O.S.)
Yes, sir.

ARCHIE
(into the phone)
You there?...Yeah, well...

The intercom BUZZES once more.

GLADYS (O.S.)
I'm sorry, Mr. White, but --

ARCHIE
-- Christ, Gladys! I thought --

GLADYS (O.S.)
-- You have a delivery.

ARCHIE
Well, sign for it, and I'll grab it later.

A MAN’S VOICE is heard very faintly over the intercom.

MAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
I want to hand it to him personally.

GLADYS (O.S.)
He wants to hand it to you personally.

MAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
It’s important.

GLADYS (O.S.)
He says it’s important.

ARCHIE
(into the phone)
Let me call you back.

Archie hangs up the phone and walks out of the room, then re-enters with a folded piece of paper in his hand.

He unfolds the note. We do not see what’s written. After reading the note, Archie clumsily crumples the paper, and tosses it into the trash. He misses and we see random words on the message: FICKLE...SOLVED.
EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

Establishing -- a two-lane highway stretches across an other-side-of-the-tracks landscape. GEORGIA WHITE’s car is on the shoulder. Directly behind her car is a cop car.

INT. GEORGIA’S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Georgia, a late 30s tobacco brunette, looks miserable as she often does, yet beneath her bitterness is beauty potential. Although it seems that Georgia’s menopause has struck years early, it is obvious that her menopause is about to turn into meno-play.

A CHUBBY PATROLMAN approaches.

GEORGIA
Chop, chop, Speedy. Let’s go.

The cop’s belly fills Georgia’s driver’s side window.

CHUBBY PATROLMAN
You’re kinda heavy on the accelerator there, ma’am.

GEORGIA
You’re calling me heavy? That’s rich.

CHUBBY PATROLMAN
Alright, enough o’ the lip, lady. Out with your papers!

Georgia holds out her ID. The patrolman is perturbed.

CHUBBY PATROLMAN (CONT’D)
I had no idea, Mrs. White.

GEORGIA
Skip it. Anybody could look at your face and know right away that you haven’t a clue.

CHUBBY PATROLMAN
Thank you, Mrs. White. Give your husband my best.

GEORGIA
That won’t be too difficult.

Georgia speeds off.

(CONTINUED)
EXT. BOXING BARN -- NIGHT
Establishing -- a barn on the outskirts of town. A golden light glows from the door and windows. The Pullmann is parked amongst the shadows. Reno approaches the doorway.

INT. BOXING BARN -- CONTINUOUS
Reno stands at the door, looking in. In the center of the barn is a homemade boxing ring. On one wall is a large poster of a boxer: Gerald “The General” Sternwood.

Sitting on a stool in the ring, a gym bag at his feet, THE GENERAL tapes his hands. He is not as young as he is in the poster, but he is still in great shape.

RENO
Terribly lonely out here, General.

He goes wide-eyed as he has been verbally sucker-punched by Reno who still stands in the entry way behind him.

RENO (CONT’D)
Terribly lonely, indeed.

The General instinctively reaches into his gym bag.

THE GENERAL
I like being alone. It’s good company.

Reno strolls in like he owns the place.

RENO
Awful dark, too. Quiet. Middle o’ nowhere. A stage set for murder.

The General spins on the stool and gets the drop on Reno.

THE GENERAL
I’d agree.

The General’s gun zeroes in on Reno’s nose.

RENO
Impressive when he talks tough. Ain’t he, Jack?

(CONTINUED)
CLICK! Gypsy Jack draws back the hammer of his own gun, which is angled on the General -- the third in a menage a trois of gunplay.

GYPSY JACK
Keep your wits, General.

Reno snatches the General’s gun.

RENO
We’ll kill you simply because we have the notion to do so. You go gettin’ all puffed up like you do, it makes us wanna put a bullet in your throat just to see if you pop.

THE GENERAL
What do you want?

Reno and Gypsy Jack flank each side of the General.

GYPSY JACK
You still train with Max Fickle?

THE GENERAL
Stupid question.

A sucker-punch to the General’s breadbasket from Reno.

THE GENERAL (CONT’D)
Ooomphh!

The General goes down to his knees.

THE GENERAL (CONT’D)
I don’t know --

A bitch-slap from Gypsy Jack. The General wipes blood from his mouth.

RENO
A tragedy, General, has befallen our organization. We, too, have the taste of blood in our mouths.

The General holds his hands up in a position that is both submissive and defensive.

THE GENERAL
Alright! I don’t train with Fickle. Not anymore.

Reno extends a hanky to the General.

(CONTINUED)
GYPSY JACK
You have a fallin' out?

THE GENERAL
He’s dead. Or didn’t you hear? The hustlers and thieves and every other spook in town is whispering about how Fickle’s dead and you boys dropped the axe.

RENO
Somebody’s tickling your testicles then, ’cause we never met the sunuvabitch.

GYPSY JACK
We only know the go-between.

THE GENERAL
I don’t care either way. All I’m saying is Fickle’s not dumb. He wouldn’t get between the sheets with the likes of The Grand Poobah just to leave him with blue balls. If you boys don’t know where he’s at, he’s definitely dead. He’s too smart to try to swindle Poobah -- and way too smart to think he’d get away with it.

GYPSY JACK
Like we said, we only know the go-between. And the go-between... well, there’s nothing smart about you, is there, General?

THE GENERAL
Whoa, you boys are skipping over logic here.

GYPSY JACK
Do we look like the kind men who skip?

RENO
Where’s Fickle’s house?

THE GENERAL
Bell Circle Apartments. Downtown. Why?

Gypsy Jack makes for the exit.
RENO
You better hope Fickle’s dead. If he ain’t, you’re a liar.

Reno heads for the exit as well.

RENO (CONT’D)
And we’re gonna come back here and do what it is we do to liars.

THE GENERAL
Then I got nothing to worry about.

EXT. THE WHITE’S HOME -- NIGHT

Establishing -- an uppity home sits before a starry sky. In an upstairs window stands Archie, phone to his ear.

ARCHIE
I need it delivered to my cabin this weekend. Is that possible?

OPERATOR
(from the phone)
For an additional fee, yes.

INT. THE WHITES' HOME/ARCHIE’S STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

Archie still gazes out the window.

ARCHIE
Now, what exactly can I put in it?

OPERATOR
(from the phone)
Well, what do you --

Archie sees Georgia standing at the study door in the window reflection. He covers the phone lickety-split.

GEORGIA
Archie? You coming to bed?

She cocks an eyebrow.

ARCHIE
It’s business, Georgia.

Georgia sulks off; Archie pushes the door shut.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
I’m sorry. My wife is impatient.

(CONTINUED)
OPERATOR
(from the phone)
Not at all. Now, what exactly do you want to incinerate?

Archie ponders, his face a study in evil.

OPERATOR (CONT’D)
(from the phone)
Sir?

ARCHIE
I want to get rid of some nonsense, just some nonsense around the house.

INT. THE WHITES’ HOME/MASTER BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Archie is atop Georgia: his face labored, her’s bored. A dead flower sits in a vase on the night-stand.

GEORGIA
Just...stop! This is pathetic.

They collapse side-by-side, a visible gap between them.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
You know, despite what they say, it doesn’t happen to all men.

Georgia scowls and wrinkles her nose as if she smells something. She sniffs her hands and then sniffs Archie.

GEORGIA
You smell like raspberries.

ARCHIE
Raspberries don’t have a smell.

GEORGIA
Yes, they do.

ARCHIE
No, they do not.

GEORGIA
Fine. Raspberries don’t fucking smell...

Georgia lies back down.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
...but what whatever it is, it smells like raspberries.

Archie rolls on his side, away from Georgia.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
You bastard.

INT. THE WHITES’ HOME/MASTER BEDROOM -- LATER

Georgia sleeps; Archie lies awake and stares at his wife. He slips out of the covers.

INT. THE WHITE’S HOME/MASTER BATHROOM -- LATER

On the mirror, in lipstick, Archie writes: GONE FOR A RIDE. The open bathroom door reveals Georgia mid-slumber.

INT. THE WHITES’ HOME/MASTER BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Archie pulls on a pair of pants. Unbeknownst to Archie, Georgia’s eyes have opened.

INT. THE WHITES’ HOME/THE STAIRS -- CONTINUOUS

Archie descends the stairs. Atop the stairs, looking down, is Georgia. She glares at Archie as he exits.

EXT. FICKLE, SR.’S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Establishing -- a not-so-nice, five-story apartment building. A SILHOUETTED MAN approaches.

INT. FICKLE, SR.’S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Max stands in the doorway and looks into the simple apartment. Walls are dressed with posters of Tom Waits and Robert Johnson.

MAX
Knock, knock!

Max flips on a light. His face appears young -- hints of salt and pepper hair and slit-like eyes not withstanding.

(CONTINUED)
Max saunters into the apartment and looks around. His body moves with a cool, rhythmic swagger, despite the fact that he has not and would not ever dance.

     MAX (CONT’D)
     Dad?

INT. FICKLE, SR.’S APARTMENT/BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Max peeks in.

     MAX
     Hello?

EXT. FICKLE, SR.’S APARTMENT -- LATER

Reno and Gypsy Jack’s black Pullmann pulls to a stop.

INT. FICKLE, SR.’S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Max sits before a game of solitaire that’s laid out on the coffee table. His hands alternate between a half-finished cigarette and the piping-hot contents of an OVER THE HILL AND OFF THE PILL coffee cup.

The phones RINGS on a stand across the room. Max crosses to the stand, grabs the phone, and whips it to his ear.

     MAX
     Hello?

     RENO (O.S.)
     Fickle?

     MAX
     Who’s this?

     RENO (O.S.)
     We’ll be there in ten seconds.

The phone goes DIAL TONE. Max’s eyes shift to a CLOCK on the wall. The second hand ticks away ten full seconds.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!

Max’s eyes shift to the front door.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK! The door vibrates.

Max stands with the phone dangling at his hip.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MAX

Shit.

Max hangs up, creeps to the door, turns the knob, and opens the door to reveal a gun-brandishing Gypsy Jack.

GYPSY JACK
You’re coming for a ride, Fickle?

MAX
Beg your pardon?

Gypsy Jack’s cocks the hammer on his gun.

MAX (CONT’D)
I’ll grab a coat.

GYPSY JACK
Be quick about your bad self.

Max coolly retreats into the apartment, turns a corner, and beelines for a half-open window.

EXT. FICKLE, SR.’S APARTMENT/FIRE ESCAPE -- CONTINUOUS

Max steps out and onto the fire escape. He does not see Reno who is waiting for just such an opportunity.

RENO
Got ants in your pants there, Fickle?

Reno dangles a gun near his hip while his other arm holds a Zippo lighter, which he uses to blaze up the cigarette that hangs between his lips.

RENO (CONT’D)
You look a little nervous.

Max does not see Gypsy Jack who has entered the apartment and is marching toward the fire escape.

MAX
I have a phobia of little men --

CRACK! Gypsy Jack feeds Max a knuckle sandwich. Max goes down, and Gypsy Jack and Reno train their guns on him.

GYPSY JACK
Run from me -- you lost your mind?

(CONTINUED)
RENO
Feel fortunate you didn’t get the head butt. Jack’s got a metal plate in his head -- fucking thing smarts.

GYPSY JACK
You better not bleed on our car.

EXT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY -- NIGHT
The neon marquis burns the night air.

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/POOBAH’S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS
Georgia sits in a chair across from Poobah’s desk.

THE GRAND POOBAH
You know what would happen if Archie knew you were here?

GEORGIA
You’re not listening. Listen. Nothing makes a public official spend money faster than a picture of him-- trousers ‘round the ankles-- walking on three legs.

THE GRAND POOBAH
I agree. But he and I have a long-standing relationship, a very lucrative relationship that I’m not willing to jeopardize.

GEORGIA
‘Balls,’ cried the queen!

She stands from her chair. She makes for the door.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
If I had ‘em, I’d be the king.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Better men than you haven’t walked out of this office after a crack like that.

GEORGIA
I’m not a man.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Sit down, Mrs. White.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORGIA
I’ll stand.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Put your biscuits in the basket!

She sits back down.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
Now, color in the lines,
sweetheart.

GEORGIA
I provide an address. You provide
a middleman to take some pictures.
We go at him before the election.
We get every cookie in the jar.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Not much to that plan but
potatoes. Where’s the beef?

GEORGIA
That’s why I came to you. You have
this business dialed in.

THE GRAND POOBAH
You’re a smart girl, Georgia. A
girl who knows the kinda character
I am, and so on, and so on, and so
on, and --

GEORGIA
-- So?

THE GRAND POOBAH
So what keeps me from pulling this
off and keeping both the proof and
the pudding?

GEORGIA
Well, now that we’ve had this
little talk, I’m a lady who could
expose the truth. Say, to
Archie...

Georgia reaches across Poobah’s desk and pulls a pen from
his inside coat pocket.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
...and that would bring a
devastating end to your long-
standing, lucrative relationship.

(CONTINUED)
THE GRAND POOBAH
Tread lightly, Georgia dear.

Georgia writes an address on a SPICY WHITEBOY cocktail napkin and drops it on Poobah’s desk. The address reads:
1313 COCOON CIRCLE, LITTLE PINOCHE

GEORGIA (O.S.)
Do we have a deal?

INT. THE PULLMANN (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

Max stares through the windshield. Faintly visible in the high-beams is the old barn. Gypsy Jack cuts the lights and rolls to a stop.

MAX
Where are we?

RENO
We’re at the next order of business.

GYPSY JACK
Sit tight, Fickle. This won’t be but a minute.

Max watches Reno and Gypsy Jack exit and stride toward the barn door.

GYPSY JACK (CONT’D)
(to the barn)
General Sternwood! Come on outta there, General.

The General steps from the barn. Words are exchanged. The General pleads his case. Reno points toward the car. Gypsy Jack, Reno, and Sternwood all look in Max’s direction.

The General looks as if someone opened an umbrella up his ass. Max offers up a befuddled, “Who? Me?” kinda face.

Reno and Gypsy Jack unload their guns into the General. Max GASPS.

Reno walks back to the car with Gypsy Jack in tow; the General’s corpse is flung over Jack’s shoulder.

The two hoods reassume their seats in the car, having stashed the General in the back seat next to Max.
INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

JERONIMO JONES, an ancient blues guitarist, sits on a stool near Poobah’s office and walks the fret board. Georgia creeps out of the office, advances down the corridor, and runs smack into Rose McFadden who is indiscreetly dressed in a floor-length overcoat.

ROSE
Yes? Is there something you’d --

GEORGIA
-- I’m sorry. What’s that perfume you’re wearing?

ROSE
It’s called Raspberry.

GEORGIA
It’s nice

ROSE
You think so?

Georgia struts past Rose, continuing down the corridor. Rose continues in the other direction, toward Jeronimo.

JERONIMO JONES
Got something for you, sweet tits.

ROSE
What you got for mama?

JERONIMO JONES
A message. Poobah wants to see you in your dressing room. Says he’ll be in on the hoo-ha.

ROSE
Thanks, Mo.

Rose smiles and then slips into the backstage darkness.

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/DRESSING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Rose enters and drops her overcoat to the ground, revealing a sexy-as-all-hell, blood red dress.

Rose’s eye is caught by a lipstick message on the corner of the mirror: CABIN TONIGHT. Rose smirks.

(Continued)
She begins to pretty herself up, oblivious to a set of HANDS that approach from the corner of the room, fingers slightly bent and aiming for her throat.

The hands belong to Poobah. His intentions are romantic -- not lascivious.

ROSE
Hey, baby.

Rose stands, turns into Poobah’s embrace, then pulls him back toward the vanity mirror. She kisses him, all the while rubbing the lipstick from the mirror.

ROSE (CONT’D)
I love the way you taste.

THE GRAND POOBAH
How do I taste?

ROSE
Like a rich man ought to.

Poobah pulls an envelope from his coat.

ROSE (CONT’D)
What’s that?

THE GRAND POOBAH
It’s the beginning. There’s a lot more to be had in this life. But first, you gotta kill ‘em. That’s what I expect -- bloody murder.

Rose is shaken by this last statement.

ROSE
Of course.

Poobah grabs her by the throat and kisses her tenderly.

THE GRAND POOBAH
I knew you would.

Poobah leaves. Rose opens the envelope to see her likeness as the headlining act on a Spicy Whiteboy advertisement.

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/PARKING GARAGE -- CONTINUOUS

The Pullmann rolls to a stop. The headlights go dark. Reno and Gypsy Jack step out of the car.

(CONTINUED)
RENO
Anytime, Fickle.

Max reluctantly exits. Gypsy Jack heaves the General’s corpse over his shoulder.

The trio of men (plus one dead) move to the elevator. The red “DOWN” arrow glows, the doors open, and they pile in.

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/STORE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

A metal folding chair and a director’s chair sit opposite each other in the middle of the dull room. An antique bathtub resides across the room.

The elevator opens and the trio of men (plus one dead) file out onto the concrete ground, which is soaking wet.

MAX
Why is the floor wet?

RENO
Prevents bloodstains.

Gypsy Jack dumps the General into the bathtub.

RENO (CONT’D)
Have a seat.

Max attempts to sit in the director’s chair.

RENO (CONT’D)
Not that one.

Max sits in the folding chair as Reno lights a cigarette.

MAX
Can I get one of those?

RENO
You know that day in kindergarten when they teach you to share? I missed that day.

The Grand Poobah enters and sits in the director’s chair. He stares at Max; Max stares back.

THE GRAND POOBAH
(to Reno and Gypsy Jack)
Who is this?

Reno and Gypsy Jack are puzzled by the question.

(CONTINUED)
RENO
This is Fickle.

THE GRAND POOBAAH
No, this isn’t Fickle. At least it isn’t our Fickle.
(to Max)
What’s your name, son?

MAX
Maxwell Fickle... Jr.

THE GRAND POOBAAH
Maxwell Fickle, Jr.? Sounds like the name of a faggot sailor.

Max smiles.

THE GRAND POOBAAH (CONT’D)
Does that amuse you?

MAX
Well, it amuses me that you’re familiar with faggot sailors.

Bowser pulls a bell from is pocket and RINGS it. SMACK! -- Gypsy Jack serves a knuckle sandwich to Max’s jaw.

THE GRAND POOBAAH
Maxwell Fickle, Jr. Then your father must be Maxwell Fickle, Sr.? The boxing trainer?

MAX
(rubbing his jaw)
Yeah.

THE GRAND POOBAAH
Where is your father?

MAX
Haven’t seen him. I just got home from the WAR.

Max displays a tattoo of an octopus on his forearm, underscored by the letters: WAR -- an indication of time served amongst thugs.

THE GRAND POOBAAH
Welcome home. Boys, we were fishing for a Fickle, Sr. and we reeled in a Fickle, Jr. Fickle this and Fickle that, eh? Well, it’s neither here nor there.

(MORE)  
(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT'D)
One Fickle’s as good as another.
Forgive me for being the courier of bad news, Jr., but unless you can come up with dear old dad, you have just inherited your father’s debt.

MAX

But --

Max eyes the bell in Poobah’s hand, then eyes Gypsy Jack.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Reno, show Jr. how much he owes.

Reno pulls an index card from his jacket and hands it to Max who goes white-eyed at the amount on the card.

Poobah gestures to Reno with a nod.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
Everybody pays, son. Everybody. So I’ll put things in perspective.

Max watches Reno root through a file cabinet.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
My business has a hell of a lot to do with checks and balances.

MAX
I hate economics.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Well, the manner in which I balance the checks and check the balances is unique, you see, because the funds are not always there to establish equilibrium. Therefore, substitutions must be made. Do you follow?

MAX
Not exactly, no.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Years of trial and error have demonstrated that there is a price that is less than or equal to one human appendage. For you, that means both arms, both legs, and that appendage -- I’m making an assumption here -- that appendage that makes you a Mr. Fickle as opposed to a Mrs. Fickle.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
What about fingers?

The Grand Poobah RINGS the bell again. Gypsy Jack grabs Max’s ears to administer the warned-of HEAD BUTT.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Superfluous! They’re measured in pennies.

MAX
Shit! God damn!

THE GRAND POOBAH
You have ‘til the end of the weekend.

Gypsy Jack stands Max up to leave.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
Oh, one more thing --

Gypsy Jack steers Max’s line of vision to the bathtub. Reno, now donned in a rubber apron and a surgical mask, leans over the bathtub with an electric meat carver. Reno grabs the General’s hair as if it were a set of reins and yanks back to expose the neck.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
You being on parole and all, this probably won’t be necessary, but all the same, don’t get light feet.

BUZZZZZZ! Reno plunges the meat carver into the General’s neck. Angle on Max -- sheer terror!

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/BAR -- CONTINUOUS

The bar maintains a DULL ROAR, HIGH-ROLLERS talking shop here and there. The elevator opens and The Grand Poobah steps out, flanked by Reno and Gypsy Jack.

Gypsy Jack and Reno drift off into the bowels of the bar. Poobah piles into a booth at the rear of the club.

After Poobah sits, a HAND serves him a tumbler full of flaming liquor.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Sobriety.

Poobah blows out the flame and sips.

(CONTINUED)
The lights in the club darken. WHISTLES and HOWLS echo within the club. A small spotlight illuminates the stage where Rose stands at a mic. Jeronimo Jones, sitting next to her on a stool, finger picks a blues intro. Rose raises the mic to her lips.

**ROSE**

“It all comes around. It all comes around. She will breathe again and sic the fox upon the hound. When the sailor goes a’ sailing he’l hear the siren’s sound. I said it all comes around.”

She walks the length of the stage and descends into the audience.

**ROSE (CONT’D)**

“It all comes around. The thief will steal the gold and get a penny on the pound.”

Rose teases the patrons, running her hands along their collars and swinging her caboose into their faces.

**ROSE (CONT’D)**

“The cop will pull the strings and end up in the ground. ‘Cause it all comes around. It all comes around.”

Rose makes her way to the bar. A tumbler slides the length of the bar-top; she catches it with her free hand. A lighter comes out of nowhere and sets the drink ablaze.

**ROSE (CONT’D)**

(approaching climax)

“When the shadows come together the truth will be found. And it all comes around.”

With that, Rose blows out the flame and shoots the drink. The patrons HOOT, HOLLAR, and WHISTLE.

Rose makes her way to Poobah’s table.

**THE GRAND POOHAB**

You murdered, sweetheart. You’re a killer.
INT. YI’S CHINESE -- NIGHT

Max enters a dark restaurant, passing WAITRESSES who look like geishas and move amongst the tables like ghosts.

He makes his way to a table where his middle-aged parole officer, DICK BISHOP, sits. Dick Bishop is the classic cowboy cop whose hair has looks like it’s been overworked by a plastic comb.

Max stands, hovering over the table with a coffee in his hand while Dick Bishop slurps Moo Goo Gai Pan.

MAX
Dick Bishop?

DICK BISHOP
Fickle?

MAX
Max, actually.

DICK BISHOP
Fickle suits you. Now go on and take a seat. I took the liberty of ordering you some green tea.

MAX
Can we make this snappy? I have appointments to make. We can meet for tea some other time.

DICK BISHOP
I say how things are gonna be. Now drink up.

Bishop sips his tea.

DICK BISHOP (CONT’D)
You find work?

MAX
Some good leads.

DICK BISHOP
What happened to the leads I gave you?

MAX
Yeah, those didn’t wash.

(CONTINUED)
That so? I spoke to Martinez; he doesn’t recall speaking with you.

Something came up.

Missing the appointment is not an option, Fickle. You have a civic responsibility to make the appointment. Is that understood?

Well, I set up my own job interview. I know some people.

The idea, Fickle, is to get a job with character -- something dignified. Somehow, I don’t believe your people offer those types of jobs.

You call sucking shit from Porta-Potties dignified?

Somebody’s gotta suck shit from Porta-Potties. Besides, what’s more dignified? Cleaning the shit from a Porta-Potty and getting paid good money to do it, or getting paid nothing to clean your own ass after it’s been introduced to the morning glory of some animal in the C block? Either way, Fickle, you shall clean shit.

Drained of energy from his rant, Dick Bishop replenishes himself with his food. Max sips his coffee.

What about being a parole officer? You get me a lead into --

Don’t test me, Fickle.

Easy, Dick. I’m just trying to make conversation.
DICK BISHOP
-- Let me make a few things abundantly clear -- you will find a job. Like it or fucking not, you will earn your keep in this society, or you will spend the rest of your days in The WAR. You are not to leave city lines. If you are caught so much as one foot, even one inch, outside of this town, I will see to it that you are on the next fun bus back to where you belong. You are mine for the next thirty months. That’s right, asshole, you’ve got two and a half years of me, and it ain’t gonna get any easier, so learn to fucking live with it. If you don’t like what I have to say, fuck you. If you don’t like what you have to do, fuck you. And if you don’t like me...guess what?

MAX
Fuck me?

DICK BISHOP
Fuck you!

MAX
Do you mean fuck me, or fuck you?

DICK BISHOP
You know good and fucking well what I fucking mean.

Dick Bishop slams a ten on the table and stands to leave. Max grabs Dick Bishop’s arm.

MAX
Wait. I need a favor.

With a look, Dick Bishop makes it clear that Max should remove his hand. Max complies and Dick begins to walk away again.

MAX (CONT’D)
My dad’s missing.

Dick stops one more time.

MAX (CONT’D)
Since I got out, he’s...he’s gone.
I was hoping you’d ask around.

(CONTINUED)
Without uttering a sound, Dick walks out. Max grabs the check -- it’s a little over twelve dollars.

MAX (CONT’D)
    Ah, shit.

Max pulls out a wrinkled five and slams it atop the ten. He grabs the fortune cookie and cracks it open. The fortune reads: DO NOT BE AFRAID OF SUDDEN TERROR, NOR OF TROUBLE FROM THE WICKED WHEN IT COMES.

EXT. THE WHITES’ CABIN -- NIGHT

Establishing -- a medium-sized cabin, classy and tasteful, but very much alone. No neighbors for miles.

INT. THE WHITES’ CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Archie sits on the couch, sipping bourbon in the rustic yet stylistically responsible cabin.

The door SQUEAKS open. Rose leans seductively against the doorjamb, her red dress evident beneath her overcoat. In her hands is the stack of Spicy Whiteboy advertisements.

ARCHIE
    Can I help you?.

ROSE
    Perhaps.

ARCHIE
    That’s a good word. Perhaps.

ROSE
    It rolls off the tongue nicely, doesn’t it?

ARCHIE
    I could think of better things to roll off your tongue. But, perhaps it’ll do.

ROSE
    You have a gift for --

ARCHIE
    -- a gift for words, I know.

ROSE
    I was going to say a gift for manipulation. But why split hairs?

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE
Hmm?

ROSE
What does that mean?

ARCHIE
What?

ROSE
Hmm?

ARCHIE
A public official’s last line of defense. When you can’t think of anything clever to say, just look intense and say hmm.

ROSE
Clever.

ARCHIE
Whaddya got there?

Rose holds up the advertisement.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
You’re gonna knock em’ dead, beautiful girl. Drink?

Archie goes to the mini-bar and refills his glass.

ROSE
Are we celebrating?

Rose advances on Archie, grabbing his belt loops with one hand, the drink with the other.

ARCHIE
I got something to show you.

Archie exits into a side room. Rose takes to scattering her individual head shots across the floor.

ROSE
So, what’s the plan, Stan?

ARCHIE (O.S.)
Business as usual for me.

ROSE
With or without me?

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE (O.S.)
Without. I’ve got a whole mess of nonsense I need to make sense of.

ROSE
Perhaps, afterward, I can surprise you with some nonsense of my own?

Rose snatches a manila envelope from the coffee table. She slides a document out, sneers at it, and slides it underneath the couch. She replaces the document with one of her advertisements and drops it on the coffee table.

ROSE (CONT’D)
By the way, I saw the first lady at The Spicy Whiteboy.

ARCHIE (O.S.)
Tonight? Really?

Rose turns to find Archie standing right behind her.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
That’s...huh...that’s interesting...
(trailing off into)
Mmm...you smell like raspberries.

Archie’s hands wrap around her throat. He lowers himself. Rose’s eyes close in anticipation, but instead...

...SLAM! Then CLICK. Rose opens her eyes and drops her glass. It SHATTERS.

ROSE
Whoa, mama.

Rose gazes at an open briefcase on the floor. It’s contents: money. Archie spins her into a quick tango step. A spin and a dip, then hold...

ROSE (CONT’D)
I’m going to...

ARCHIE
Yeah.

Rose exits to the bedroom.

ROSE (O.S.)
This weekend’s gonna torture me.

Archie moves quickly. He closes up the briefcase, walks over to an ANTIQUE TRUNK, and takes a seat.

(Continued)
ARCHIE
When I finish this monkey business, you’ll be first to know.

He pulls up a set of floorboards near the trunk, stashes the case in the empty space, and replaces the boards.

ROSE (O.S.)
You’re sure you don’t need help.

ARCHIE
You’d die of boredom. I’ll knock this out in the next few days, and we’ll get back to having the most fun we can have without smiling.

ROSE (O.S.)
Fiddlesticks. I smile every time.

Rose appears in a different dress, and she wears it in a way that could give Jesus an erection.

They rush each other and end up on the floor flailing about. Rose’s hands search for a hand-hold; they find the antique trunk, which SHAKES and RATTLES at her grasp.

Above the trunk is a slightly open window covered by white drapes. A cool breeze makes the curtains dance.

EXT. BOWSER MACFADDEN’S PAWN SHOP -- NIGHT
Establishing -- a pawn shop situated amidst a string of seedy shops. Max navigates through the riffraff.

INT. PAWN SHOP -- NIGHT
A typical pawn shop -- lots of guns and guitars. A DORK behind the cash register reads a comic book.

MAX
I’m here to see the albino.

The dork jerks his thumb at a curtain.

INT. PAWN SHOP/HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS
A long hallway is poorly lit by flickering chandeliers.

Max makes his way to a steel door and KNOCKS. A slate BURSTS open in the door to reveal a set of WRINKLY EYES.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

WRINKLY EYES
Password?

MAX
F*** you.

The slate SLAMS shut. The door opens to reveal the BOUNCER who belongs to the wrinkly eyes; he is an elderly dwarf standing on a footstool with a sawed-off shotgun.

WRINKLY EYES
What’s doin’, Max?

Max hedges past the bouncer.

WRINKLY EYES (CONT’D)
Glad you got to see me.

INT. PAWN SHOP/BOWSER’S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Bowser scribbles into a ledger while smoking a hookah. He is albino white, skin creamy and thick. His speech is croak-ish.

MAX (O.S.)
I’m here to see the albino.

Bowser looks up to see Max has entered his office.

BOWSER
Maxwell Fickle! Like a phoenix outta the--

Bowser looks Max over, and, after considering, exclaims:

BOWSER (CONT’D)
-- cheese and crackers, Max. The WAR musta been a bastard -- looks like somebody tried to shove a warm stick a butter up your ass with a hot poker.

MAX
Yeah.

BOWSER
You in the catbird seat?

Max doesn’t answer -- his expression does it for him.
EXT. A CEMETERY -- NIGHT


THE GRAND POOBAH
Sheriff.

ARCHIE
Any word on the missing score?

THE GRAND POOBAH
It’s playing out.

ARCHIE
Don’t get cute. Cut to it.

THE GRAND POOBAH
It’s not the kind of business you really want to know about. Is this all you called for -- to bellyache about the Fickle situation?

ARCHIE
I got a bad case of nonsense. I need a guy to handle it.

THE GRAND POOBAH
What kind of nonsense?

ARCHIE
A nasty kind.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Be more specific?

ARCHIE
Nasty’s as specific as I care to be right now?

THE GRAND POOBAH
How much is attached?

ARCHIE
I’ll pay the piper. But the situation is volatile. If it goes south, and it very well could, I’d need this guy to be expendable.

THE GRAND POOBAH
You need a Patsy?

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE
You got one?

THE GRAND POOBH
Sure, but he’s already into me. If the situation does go south, will you make good?

ARCHIE
How much good?

THE GRAND POOBH
High society.

ARCHIE
I can cover high society. What’s the Pasty’s name?

THE GRAND POOBH
Fickle.

ARCHIE
Beg your pardon?

THE GRAND POOBH
Maxwell Fickle, Jr.

INT. PAWN SHOP/BOWSER’S OFFICE -- AS BEFORE
Max sits across from Bowser who gnaws on the hookah pipe.

MAX
I have to eat an elephant and I only got the weekend to do it.

BOWSER
What kinda mess you in?

Max flashes the index card to Bowser.

BOWSER (CONT’D)
Shit. You’ve been tearing up the pea patch pretty good, haven’t ya?

MAX
Got anything cooking in the books?

BOWSER
I got a lead over here and a fix over there, and more sure things coming out my ass by the minute.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
Anything you can help me out with?

BOWSER
Why should I?

MAX
Because you’re a fine and decent man, and you haven’t forgotten that I used to be a fine and decent man.

BOWSER
Alright, Fickle. Alright. There’s an undercard that’s getting a whole lotta play. A Swede that goes by the name --

The phone RINGS.

BOWSER (CONT’D)
-- Beg your pardon.
     (answering the phone)
    Bowser McFadden... yes...yes...

Bowser’s eyes go big and he peers at Max.

BOWSER (CONT’D)
...well...yeah...I understand....

He hangs up the phone.

MAX
Everything okay?

BOWSER
The Grand Poobah says to go home and wait.

MAX
Are you --

BOWSER
-- There’s nothing I can do, Max.

MAX
Look, I’ve gotta --

BOWSER
-- There’s nothing I can do!

Max leaves. Just before he reaches the door...

(CONTINUED)
I ain’t said a prayer in twenty years. Tonight, I’ll pray for you, Max.

Like you said, nothing you can do.

Max yanks the door shut behind him.

SMASH CUT TO:

BLACK

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK...

INT. FICKLE, SR.’S APARTMENT/CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Max opens the apartment door and stares out into the corridor, presumably at a person. After a once over:

Who are you?

I’m a guy with money.

INT. MAX’S APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

Archie circles around the apartment. Max eyes the potential Godsend.

This is normally where I’d tell you that you have a nice place. But this is a real shit-hole.

I ain’t the kinda man who has time for bullshit.

Glad to hear it. That’s the kinda man I’m looking for. Why don’t you pour a couple of drinks?

Max hesitates, then nods his head.

I’m a Cape Cod man.
Max takes to mixing a pair of Cape Cods.

Max hands the drink to Archie. Archie sips just before conjuring a stack of cash and putting it on the counter.

I’m selling you your life. You have debt. Well, I have money, the kinda money that solves problems -- the kinda problems that begin and end with The Grand Poobah. All you gotta do is a simple job. Whether you do it or don’t do it, it’s getting done. So you should do it.

Max picks up one of the bills and stares at it.

What’s the business? And how much do I get? And talk fast because --

-- Because the weekend is your hourglass, I know.

Archie pulls out a book and sets it on the counter. It’s entitled: “How to Get Rid of a Body.”

You want...what? You want me to kill somebody? You came here to hire...I’ve never murdered anybody. What makes you think --

-- Don’t think murder. Think accident. It’s a simple accident, and you’re simply a liaison.

If I were a liaison, it wouldn’t be an accident.

Whatever you have to tell yourself. Look, I don’t care how you do it.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
I didn’t say I was gonna to do it.

ARCHIE
You haven’t said you’re not gonna do it.

Max sets the bill back on the stack, then pulls a cigarette from a pack and puts it between his lips.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
You own a gun?

Max searches for a lighter; Archie tosses him a matchbook. The matchbook reads: LITTLE PINOCHE REST STOP SALOON AND MOTEL -- WARM BEER AND COLD WOMEN.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
Do you own a gun?

Max pockets the matches and ignores the question.

MAX
Who is it you want killed?

Archie hands Max an envelope. Max slips the picture out. It’s the advertisement of Rose, which was switched out, apparently unbeknownst to Archie. Max slips it back in and sets it on the counter.

MAX (CONT’D)
Your wife?

Archie nods his head.

MAX (CONT’D)
Why don’t you do it?

ARCHIE
Because I have money, enough money to get someone else to do it.

MAX
Why you want her dead?

ARCHIE
Why? Why not? She sings outta tune. She’s more trouble than she’s worth. What do you care?

Archie un-holsters a revolver and sets it by the cash.

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE (CONT’D)

Archie puts the money in Max’s hands.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
A little today. A lot more when you finish.

MAX
I just don’t think --

ARCHIE
-- You don’t have to think. I’ve made it simple. She’ll be alone in a cabin in the middle of nowhere.

Archie pulls out a blue key and sets it next to the gun.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
She’ll be dead this weekend whether or not you’re the man for the job. One weekend. Two days of work as simple or as difficult as you make them. She’ll be the only one around for miles.

Archie taps his fingers on the counter.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
You want the money?

INT. FICKLE, SR.’S APARTMENT -- LATER

Max sits in front of a half-played game of solitaire. Next to the deck of cards is the stack of money.

The phone RINGS. Max stares at it.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

A drab city hospital. People enter and exit like ghosts.

INT. HOSPITAL/LOBBY -- NIGHT

Max strolls to a MAGAZINE VENDOR.
MAX
Pack o’ Marlboros. Box, please.

VENDOR
I don’t sell those here.

MAX
Then gimme Camels.

VENDOR
Sir, this is a hospital. We don’t sell cigarettes.

Max surveys the lobby but sees nothing of interest.

MAX
Okay. Just gimme a paper.

The vendor tosses a newspaper on the counter.

VENDOR
Fifty-four.

MAX
Fifty-four cents? Since when does a paper cost fifty-four cents?

VENDOR
Tax, sir.

MAX
Twenty-nine cents tax?

VENDOR
No, four cents tax. Fifty cents for the paper, four cents for the tax. That equals fifty-four cents.

Max sees a newspaper dispenser on the far side of the lobby.

MAX
Tell ya what, how ‘bout you break this dollar into four quarters.

The vendor grabs the dollar and slaps down four quarters.

MAX (CONT’D)
Mighty kind of you.

Max grabs the quarters, walks to the dispenser, deposits the change, and takes a paper. A front page headline jumps out: UNIDENTIFIED BODY FOUND IN ALBERHILL CREEK

(CONTINUED)
DICK BISHOP (O.S.)

Fickle.

Max lowers the paper to see Dick Bishop.

DICK BISHOP (CONT'D)

Follow me.

Dick Bishop leads Max toward a SECURITY GUARD who sits at a desk. Dick Bishop flashes his badge.

SECURITY GUARD

Officer Bishop, what can I help you gentlemen with tonight?

DICK BISHOP

We came to visit the ice box.

SECURITY GUARD

Certainly. Let me just...

The guard picks up the phone just as MIKEY, dressed in scrubs, comes out of the corridor.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)

Ahh, Mikey. You mind taking these gentlemen back to the ice box?

MIKEY

Follow me.

The three walk through the doors and into...

INT. HOSPITAL/MORGUE -- CONTINUOUS

...a metallic filing cabinet for the dead.

MAX

A morgue? This is the ice box?

DICK BISHOP

What did you expect?

Dick Bishop hands Mikey a card. Mikey reads it and begins searching the cabinets.

MAX

What am I doing here?

Mikey slides open a drawer, revealing an old, decrepit corpse.

(CONTINUED)
DICK BISHOP
I need you to identify a body.

MAX
Who is it?

DICK BISHOP
I was hoping you could tell me.

Max pussyfoots to the body.

MAX
I’ve never seen this guy before.

DICK BISHOP
Are you sure about that?

MAX
He’s just some old man.

DICK BISHOP
Is he your old man?

Realization on Max’s face as he looks closer.

DICK BISHOP (CONT’D)
I’m sorry, Max. You asked me to find out what I could. Unfortunately, this was it.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- MOMENTS LATER

Max and Dick Bishop stroll out of the automatic doors. Max lights a cigarette with a match.

DICK BISHOP
Bum one?

Max gives him a smoke and the matchbook. Dick Bishop lights up, and then looks at the matchbook.

DICK BISHOP (CONT’D)
Little Pinoche? Any good?

Max shrugs. Dick Bishop gives the matches back.

DICK BISHOP (CONT’D)
I’ll have to check it out. You should steer clear though. It’s awfully close to your boundaries.

MAX
Thanks for the pointer.
EXT. BOWSER MACFADDEN’S PAWN SHOP -- NIGHT

Rose sashays along the sidewalk.

INT. BOWSER MACFADDEN’S PAWN SHOP -- NIGHT

Bowser McFadden cleans a gun behind the counter. Someone enters the shop, triggering a BELL. Bowser looks up. Rose emerges in attire that suggests she is going to or coming from The Spicy Whiteboy.

    BOWSER
    My goodness, look at you.

    ROSE
    Look at me.

    BOWSER
    You goin’ some place?

    ROSE
    Aren’t we always goin’ someplace?

    BOWSER
    What brings you here?

    ROSE
    You buy things, don’t you?

    BOWSER
    If ya got something I want.

    ROSE
    If I had to put my money on it, I’d say I do.

    BOWSER
    Ya wouldn’t be here if ya had any money.

    ROSE
    You see right through me.

Rose reaches into her hand bag.

    BOWSER
    The same story every time. You’re gonna pull out that old watch and try to convince me it has some value to someone other than you.

Rose produces a PEARL-HANDLED KNIFE from her handbag.

(Continued)
BOWSER (CONT’D)
Where’d you get that?

ROSE
I got it. That’s all that matters.

Rose hands it over. Bowser inspects the knife.

BOWSER
If I buy this from ya, how ya gonna protect yourself? Pricks in this iceberg will be following ya home, bustin’ down ya door.

Bowser holds out the knife to give it back to Rose.

ROSE
Why would anyone want to do that?

Bowser looks Rose up and down.

BOWSER
I can think of two reasons.

Rose softly grabs Bowser’s hand and curls it up so he grips the knife with a closed fist. Holding his hand, she forces it down to his side as she moves closer.

ROSE
Is that so?

BOWSER
How much do ya need?

ROSE
How much you got?

BOWSER
Now don’t start that. If I let ya, you’d take me for everything. I’ll give you fifty for it.

ROSE
I need at least two hundred.

BOWSER
I better get a lot more than just that knife if I’m gonna give you two hundred dollars.

ROSE
Haven’t I given you enough already?

(CONTINUED)
BOWSER
You could at least give me a kiss.
I am you father for Christ’s sake.

Rose tentatively kisses him on the cheek. As she pulls away, Bowser grabs the back of her head. He leans, and their lips slowly press together. Before it becomes a full-fledged kiss, Rose pulls away in protest.

ROSE
You gonna give me two hundred dollars or not?

BOWSER
When do I see you again?

ROSE
Maybe never.

BOWSER
That right? Your sugar daddy gonna take care of you? He gonna make you famous?

She starts to leave.

BOWSER (CONT’D)
You’re forgetting your money.

Bowser holds out two one-hundred dollar bills. Reluctantly, she leaves.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

A PIECE OF SHIT -- Max’s piece of shit -- rambles along.

INT. PIECE OF SHIT (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

The headlights of the piece of shit light up a sign on the highway: LITTLE PINOCHE REST STOP SALOON AND MOTEL -- WARM BEER AND COLD WOMEN. Max fishes out the matchbook from his pocket -- the same.

EXT. LITTLE PINOCHE REST STOP SALOON AND MOTEL -- NIGHT

Establishing -- a seedy joint that embodies the bitter flavors of small-town America sits off the highway. There is a gas station, a saloon, and a motel. The whole of the setting longs for a past that never really existed.

Max’s piece of shit exits the highway to the parking lot.
INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/SALOON -- CONTINUOUS

ODD CHARACTERS cuddle up to three fingers of scotch and buckets of beer. COCKTAIL WAITRESSES tiptoe about the patrons.

Max enters and bellies up to the bar. The BARTENDER, a man with barbed-wire whiskers, greets Max.

BARTENDER
Time for your medicine, killer?

Max shifts uneasily.

BARTENDER (CONT’D)
What’ll it be? You look like a Bloody Mary man.

MAX
Cape Cod.

BARTENDER
Close enough.

The bartender mixes and serves. Max takes a healthy swig.

Another DRINKER’S stare lingers on Max. He is SHAMUS RIGBY, a man approaching his twilight years who is more than likely the uncle to a family that no longer allows him at holiday gatherings. Although he is aged and small in stature, a rolling boil can still be sensed beneath his skin. He has a habit of flicking his tongue over his lips to keep them moist.

SHAMUS
(to Max)
How long you been home from the WAR?

MAX
Do we know each other?

SHAMUS
Brothers by experience you might say.

Shamus rolls up his sleeve to reveal an octopus tattoo on his forearm.

SHAMUS (CONT’D)
I, too, have untangled myself from the tentacles of the octopussy.

(CONTINUED)
Max draws his sleeve down so that it covers his tattoo.

SHAMUS (CONT’D)
Neither an axe nor a gun is the right tool for whittling one’s future.

MAX
Sage advice. Does it also apply to the past?

SHAMUS
Is there any difference between the two?

MAX
Sometimes I wonder.

SHAMUS
Wondering’s good. Good to keep an open mind. Take your time though. I’ve seen a man get so impatient with opening his mind that, when it happened, his head exploded. Don’t let that happen to you.

A flick of the tongue from Shamus.

MAX
Another piece of sage advice. You have any advice for a recent veteran of the WAR. I mean, what did you do when you got out?

SHAMUS
Same thing I’m doing now: odd jobs.

MAX
Odd jobs? What’s odd about them?

SHAMUS
You mean, other than the fact I’m doing em’?

MAX
Yeah.

SHAMUS
Odd jobs end you up in places like this, places where people are comin’ or goin’ without knowing where they’ve come from or where they’re goin’ to.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

MAX
Sounds like hell.

Max knocks back his drink and stands from his stool.

SHAMUS
Indeed it is. Do you know where it is you’re goin’ to?

MAX
Yes, sir. Goin’ crazy

Max drops some cash on the bar and makes for the exit.

SHAMUS
Well, then...I’m sure we’ll be seeing more of each other.

EXT. A GAS STATION -- NIGHT

Archie stands at the payphone, phone in hand.

GEORGIA (O.S.)
Hello?

ARCHIE
It’s me. I’m up at the cabin.

GEORGIA (O.S.)
Is that so?

ARCHIE
We need to talk. I want you to come up here.

GEORGIA
I’m not going to --

ARCHIE
-- I know you were at The Spicy Whiteboy.

A long SILENCE between them.

GEORGIA
Who have you been talking to?

ARCHIE
Get up here. We need to discuss this marriage.

He hangs up, an impending look of doom across his face.
EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

Max’s piece of shit flows down a coal-dark highway.

INT. PIECE OF SHIT (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

Max turns down an obscure road that has a NO OUTLET sign. Over it is a smaller sign that reads: COCOON CIRCLE -- PRIVATE ROAD -- NO TRESPASSING.

EXT. COCOON CIRCLE -- CONTINUOUS

Max plays solitaire on the hood of the piece of shit, which is parked on the side of the small road, well-camouflaged by the thick of the forest. The Whites' Cabin is visible from his point of view.

The ACCELERATION of a taxi kicks up dust as it propels toward the cabin. Rose exits the taxi.

INT. PIECE OF SHIT -- CONTINUOUS

Max lets himself in, then opens the console. He grabs the envelope given to him by Archie and studies the picture.

Max looks at himself in the rearview -- his eyes big, scared. Then, an attempt at focus -- a lowering of the brow, a curl of the lip.

MAX
Everything we see is just a shadow cast by that which we do not.

The ACCELERATION of the taxi is heard again. Max watches the taxi tear up dust on its way back to the highway.

He pulls out the revolver from the glove compartment and opens the chamber. Bullet by bullet, he loads the gun.

EXT. COCOON CIRCLE -- CONTINUOUS

Max trudges toward the cabin.

EXT. THE WHITES' CABIN/PORCH -- CONTINUOUS

Max tries to slip the blue key into the lock, but his hand shakes. He uses his other hand to steady the key.

(CONTINUED)
He scowls -- time to get dirty. He turns the key. He turns the knob. And, finally, he pushes the door open.

There, swaying before him, is Rose, a large goblet of wine in her hand. She’s socially lubricated.

ROSE
You’re not Archie. Who are you?

Max’s scowl disintegrates.

MAX
Excuse me?

ROSE
No excuses here. You must be looking for something else. You always find what you’re looking for.

She slurps from her wine.

ROSE (CONT’D)
I believe our shadows dance when we’re not looking.

She cocks an eyebrow.

MAX
I’m a friend of Archie’s.

ROSE
You lie like a rug.

MAX
He gave me a key. Said I could come up for the weekend.

ROSE
Maybe we should call him up. Straighten it out.

Max nods.

ROSE (CONT’D)
Or maybe not. I came up here to surprise Archie. But, instead, I got a little surprise of my own. Would you like a glass of wine?
INT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max steps into the cabin and pulls out his cigarettes. Rose shuts the door.

ROSE
You can't smoke in here...unless you're willing to share.

Max offers; she accepts. He lights up while Rose fills her glass with what's left of a bottle on the table.

ROSE (CONT'D)
I'll have to open another bottle. You like red?

MAX
Uh-huh.

Her back turned to Max, she pulls a bottle from a wine rack and starts the corking process.

Max, cigarette dangling from his lips, quietly pulls his gun from his back pant waist.

ROSE
This wine has the best color. It's deep and rich...like raspberries or roses or maybe even like...like blood.

Max has the gun aimed at Rose's back. He trembles.

ROSE (CONT'D)
(glancing over her shoulder)
I suppose blood isn't the best word to use for describing wine, is it?

Max lowers his gun to his side. Rose cannot see it as a piece of furniture skews her view.

MAX
I wouldn't know.

Rose returns to corking the wine.

ROSE
I could imagine worse words. Once, I heard a man compare a white zinfandel to cat piss.
Max raises his gun again.

ROSE (CONT’D)
I don’t mind that so much. White zin is for assholes who are too afraid to fly by the seat of their pants because they might forget to come home and feed the pooch.

POP goes the cork. The cigarette falls from between Max’s lips and tumbles down his shirt front.

ROSE (CONT’D)
There it is.

Max swats at his shirt with his gun-brandishing hand. He stomps the cigarette out and then lowers the gun as Rose turns around with the bottle and an empty glass. He pockets the gun on the sly.

Rose pours the other glass at the table.

MAX
Something smells like raspberries.

ROSE
It’s me. Let’s toast.

MAX
I always toast to sobriety.

ROSE
We may as well toast to irony. To finding what you’re looking for.

CLINK goes the toast. They gulp.

ROSE (CONT’D)
What are you looking for?

MAX
The easy way out.

ROSE
You wanna know what I’m looking for? Life! I just wanna be alive -- really, really alive. That’s what I want -- to be really alive. And I want a little love too. And a little magic. Life, love, and magic -- doesn’t that sound delicious?

(CONTINUED)
MAX
It sounds like...like we should have toasted to irony.

Rose smacks Max with a kiss, hard and sloppy. They stop.

ROSE
We’re gonna need more wine.

She goes to the table to refill.

MAX
I think I know where you can find what you’re looking for.

ROSE
You know where to find life, love, and magic?

MAX
Mexico.

ROSE
Mexico? What makes you say Mexico?

MAX
This.

Max holds up the Spicy Whiteby advertisement.

ROSE
I don’t speak Spanish, and I’d be damned if I was going to sing the blues in Spanish.

She snatches the picture from Max to admire herself.

MAX
Archie gave me that.

ROSE
Yeah? Daddy’s proud of his baby.

She carelessly places the advertisement face-down on a random piece of furniture.

MAX
Daddy wants you dead.

She LAUGHS. Max stares her into submission, and she realizes he might be serious. He affirms by tossing the “How to Get Rid of a Body” book at her feet.

(CONTINUED)
She reads the cover; then her glass slips from her hand, and SHATTERS on the hardwood, SPLASHING wine everywhere.

MAX (CONT’D)
Archie lent it to me when he hired me to kill you. He also gave me the keys to the cabin, your picture, a little bit of cash, and the promise of a whole lot more money if I --

ROSE
-- I don’t believe you --

MAX
-- He said you sang outta tune and that you were more trouble than you were worth.

ROSE
What are you going to do?

MAX
Well, right now, the plan is to fill you full o’ lead and stick whatever doesn’t drip on the floor into the incinerator.

ROSE
But you don’t even have a gun.

Max whips it out. Rose fumbles back and bumps the table. The bottle topples, spilling wine onto the table and floor. DRIP, DRIP, DRIP...

MAX
This is why I brought up Mexico.

Rose watches the gun in his hand as if it were a rattlesnake about to strike. DRIP, DRIP, DRIP...

MAX (CONT’D)
I came here to kill you, but I don’t think I’m gonna be able to pull this trigger.

He points the gun at her.

MAX (CONT’D)
It’s just not in me to point this at you and --

Max realizes the effect of the gun on Rose.

(CONTINUED)
MAX (CONT’D)
-- It’s okay. I’m not --

She can’t peel her eyes off of the gun. Max pops the chamber and empties the bullets into his hand.

MAX (CONT’D)

Here. Here we go.

He tosses them on the table, and they ROLL chaotically; some even DROP to the ground with a CLINK.

MAX (CONT’D)

Here.

He offers her the gun. She slaps it to the ground, startling herself. She stumbles backward, steps on a stray bullet, and tumbles against a door. The door gives way and she crashes through it.

...THUMPETY-THUMP THUMP THUD CRASH BANG BOOM -- the lumbersome sounds of flesh plunging down the steps of a staircase.

CREAK -- the door swings shut. Max approaches the door.

MAX (CONT’D)

(quietly)
Rose?

(louder)
Rose?

INT. THE WHITES’ CABIN/BASEMENT -- CONTINUOUS (*NOTE -- THIS SCENE BEGINS WITH THE SAME SHOT OF THE FIRST SCENE)

Light cuts through the blackness. Max draws the door open, revealing Rose face down at the foot of the stairs: her hair disheveled, her body lifeless.

Max rushes down the stairs to Rose and rolls her over. A trickle of blood slides out of her mouth. Her lids are shut, her mouth open. Max fingers her lids open, lets go, and they fall shut.

MAX
(whispering)
Rosebud.

Fear inundates Max’s face. His fear becomes LAUGHTER, LOUD CACKLING LAUGHTER, which crescendos into hysteric. He stops. Reality. Laughter becomes grief. He reluctantly puts the snarl back on his face.

(CONTINUED)
Using Rose’s underarms as handlebars, Max drags her up the stairs -- BUMPING and THUMPING her various parts.

INT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max bursts into the cabin through the basement door, sweating like Liberace eating a corndog.

THUNK -- he drops Rose’s body to the ground. He lights another cigarette as he heads for the back door.

EXT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max steps out of the back-door to find the incinerator.

He takes hold of a handle that is attached to the contraption and swings open a small trapdoor. He measures the opening with an improvised meter stick: his hand.

Max SLAMS the door shut. He flicks a switch; the contraption HUMS.

INT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max straddles Rose’s body and applies his improvised meter stick -- not even close.

Max pulls his hands down his face, stretching his skin taught and distorting his eyes. DRIP, DRIP, DRIP...

Max’s looks to the drip-drop of the wine. Beyond the wine bottle, next to the fireplace, is a wooden stump; and in the stump, an axe.

Max wrenches the axe from the stump. The blade is shiny: a virgin. Max looks at his reflection in the blade.

Returning to Rose’s body, Max lines up on her wrist. A few slow practice swings before he whips his hands over his head. His eyes go wicked. He inhales --

BUMP -- a sound near the front door keeps the body whole.

EXT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max peeks through the curtains of the front door. Nothing. He steps out onto the porch.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MAX
(softly to himself)
No more nonsense.

INT. THE WHITEs' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max returns to Rose's body. He raises the axe and...

...the phone RINGS! He looks up. The phone RINGS again. He is frozen. He lowers the axe and walks to the phone.

He places his hand on the phone, but it goes to the ANSWERING MACHINE:

ANSWERING MACHINE
(computerized)
Please leave a message.

BEEP!

GEORGIA (O.S.)
(from the answering machine)
Hello. Are you there? Goddamnit, quit playing games and pick up the phone. Fine. I'll be there in 10.

DIAL TONE.

MAX

Fuck me.

EXT. THE WHITEs' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max is visible through a window -- again, with the axe raised over his head. He swings -- THUNK!

INT. THE WHITEs' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max releases the handle of the axe, which is stuck firmly in the stump.

Max scans the dishevelled cabin: spilled wine, broken glass, stray bullets, tipped chairs, a dead blues singer. He sets out to restore order:

He picks up the glass, big shards and little shards.

He wipes up the wine with paper towels.

He pockets the "How to Get Rid of a Body" book.

(CONTINUED)
He rearranges the table and chairs.

He picks up the stray bullets and the gun.

Then, the body. Max scans the cabin until he comes upon the antique trunk.

ROSE (V.O.)
You always find what you’re looking for.

Max goes to the trunk. There is an old and rusty skeleton key in the keyhole. He turns the key, which is stubborn and takes some elbow grease. The lid POPS open -- empty.

Max lifts Rose into the trunk. It’s a tight fit and he stuffs her limbs into the space as if she were clothes in a suitcase. He SLAMS the trunk closed and notices, on the wall, a gun rack that displays an antique shotgun. Next to the rack is a picture of Chekhov.

MAX
Have we met? I think I know you.

Max makes for the back door.

EXT. THE WHITES’ CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max BURSTS out the back door, turns off the incinerator, and darts out into the woods.

EXT. THE WOODS -- CONTINUOUS

Max cuts and weaves through trees; he high steps through ivy; he hurdles small bushes. Glancing over his shoulder, he -- SPLASH -- falls face first into a small pond.

INT. THE POND -- CONTINUOUS

Max delicately moves underwater like a fetus in the womb.

EXT. POND -- CONTINUOUS

The surface of the pond captures the reflection of the moon. Max’s head crowns through the surface.

EXT. COCOON CIRCLE -- CONTINUOUS

The piece of shit, as before. Max enters.
INT. PIECE OF SHIT -- CONTINUOUS

Max rams the keys into the ignition and cranks the key -- nothing. Again -- nothing. He cranks the key like a masturbating college freshman -- still nothing.

EXT. COCOON CIRCLE -- CONTINUOUS

Max walks swiftly while fumbling with his now-soggy pack of cigarettes; they crumble in his grasp.

In a fit of rage, he stomps on the cigarettes, loses his balance, and falls on his ass.

While Max is on his ass, a car ROARS around the bend and BRAKES just short of vehicular man slaughter.

INT. GEORGIA’S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Georgia strangles the steering wheel. Max erects in the headlights, blocking his face to cut the glare.

EXT. COCOON CIRCLE -- CONTINUOUS

Georgia steps out of her car.

GEORGIA
Jesus, are you alright? What the hell were you --
(second thought)
-- are you the guy?

MAX
Excuse me?

GEORGIA
Were you hired to do an odd job out here? Because if you were, we’re probably not going to need you. Not now.

Max stares blankly; Georgia gets back in the car and ROARS toward the cabin.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/ROOM SEVEN -- NIGHT

A purple haze saturates the drab room. Foil covers the windows, just one of several bizarre features that is characteristic of this homemade dark room.

(CONTINUED)
A MALE FIGURE, in silhouette, drops a piece of paper into a tub and then stirs the paper gently with tongs. An image begins to forge on the paper.

A clothesline hangs above the tubs of development fluid. Several pictures dangle and drip from the line: the first is of Max arriving to the cabin; this is followed by Max and Rose on the porch and so on (each subsequent photo a storyboard of Max’s tryst with Rose).

EXT. LITTLE PINOCHE -- NIGHT

Max trudges toward the saloon, leaving a trail of wet footprints in his wake.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/SALOON -- CONTINUOUS

The USUAL SUSPECTS drink their drinks and wallow in whatever it is they wallow in. Max enters and grabs a stool. The bartender takes notice.

    BARTENDER
    Back again, huh, killer?

Max Flinches.

    BARTENDER (CONT'D)
    We just cracked a bottle of cab, and you look like a red wine kinda man to me. Am I right? Red wine?

    MAX
    You gotta phone?

    BARTENDER
    Payphone. In the back.

Max peels a bill from his wad and SLOSHES it on the bar.

    MAX
    Change?

    BARTENDER
    Yes siree Bob, Bill.

The bartender snatches the bill.

    BARTENDER (CONT'D)
    Why’s it wet?

    MAX
    Prevents bloodstains.

    (CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BARTENDER
Beg your pardon?

MAX
I fell in a puddle.

The bartender POPS open the register.

BARTENDER
Must have been a big damn puddle.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHÉ/SALOON PHONE BOOTH -- CONTINUOUS

Max holds the receiver to his ear in the antique-style phone booth, which is strikingly similar to a coffin.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The master bathroom. Archie stands before the mirror and removes his contacts.

RING! Archie’s hand snatches the phone.

ARCHIE
Hello?

Max, at the phone booth, pushes in on Archie so that the screen is split. This gives the illusion that Max speaks face-to-face with Archie’s reflection.

MAX
The thing is done.

Archie inhales deeply.

MAX (CONT’D)
Hello? You there?

Archie turns on the water and splashes his face.

MAX (CONT’D)
I said the thing is done.

Archie turns off the water.

ARCHIE
I heard you.

MAX
It wasn’t exactly a tea party.

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE
I wouldn’t think it would be.

MAX
Yeah, and your wife’s girlfriend didn’t make it any easier.

ARCHIE
My wife’s girlfriend?

MAX
Some woman with a rusty set o’ pipes left a message on the machine while I was...while I was doing the --

ARCHIE
-- Sure.

MAX
And she said she was on her way over. So let’s just say you’re a lucky sunuvabitch that I’m good under the gun.

ARCHIE
I’d say we’re both lucky.

MAX
Yeah, well, I suppose I’ll be seeing you at the rendezvous.

ARCHIE
I suppose so.

Max hangs up and his phone booth pushes out so that we’re left with Archie and his reflection.

DIAL TONE.

With a burst of frantic excitement, he dials the phone.

RING! Georgia’s hand reaches into frame.

RING! -- Again, we’re in split screen with Archie’s reflection and Georgia at the cabin.

GEORGIA
Hello?

A CRUNCH is audible O.S. and the source of the sound is implied by the cracking image of Archie in the mirror.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
Hello? Hellooooo?

Georgia notices the advertisement that was left behind.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
Is that you? Archie? Is that --

Archie SLAMS the phone down. The split screen pushes out and we’re left with Archie in the cracked mirror.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHIE/SALOON -- MOMENTS LATER

A small puddle of water has accumulated beneath Max’s stool. Max tosses em’ back, unsure if they’re celebratory or simply necessary to busy his idle hands.

SHAMUS (O.S.)
The man who was goin’ crazy.

Max looks up to find Shamus Rigby.

SHAMUS (CONT’D)
Already went crazy and back, huh?

MAX
Mr. Odd Jobs. Yeah, I’m back. When you’re goin’ crazy and finally get where you’re goin’, it’s difficult to find a place where you can take a shit comfortably.

SHAMUS
You strike me as the kinda man who never really gets comfortable.

MAX
I have shallow roots. It’s no secret. Shallow roots make crooked trees, and crooked trees never grow straight.

SHAMUS
Not without an axe.

MAX
I thought you said...didn’t you say neither a gun nor...shit...

SHAMUS
Beg your pardon?

(CONTINUED)
MAX  
(on second thought)  
I have to shit.

SHAMUS  
Well, before you --

Shamus attempts to gesture the word *shit*.

SHAMUS (CONT’D)  
-- my mother never swore. She argued that it lacked style and grace. In all her years, I only heard her say one foul word: she said *shit*. And when that word came out of her mouth -- *shit* -- I could practically smell it.

Max stands from his stool.

MAX  
Well, I’m off to lighten my load.

He stumbles toward the bowels of the bar.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Max pushes a stall open, yanks his pants to his ankles, and PLOPS down on the seat.

He reads the bathroom graffiti. One line catches his eye -- one that has been revised. Initially, the graffiti read: *LIFE IS AN ISSUE OF HARMONY*; but after an addition: *LIFE IS AN ISSUE OF HAR-MONEY*.

The door to the bathroom opens. FOOTSTEPS echo off the tile as they approach Max’s stall -- SILENCE.

MAX  
(hesitant)  
Yeah?

An envelope DROPS on the floor. A BOOT slides the envelope under the stall door. The FOOTSTEPS echo on their way out of the bathroom

Max picks up the envelope. He pulls out a piece of paper: *WE KNOW ABOUT THE BLONDE, ROOM SEVEN -- 10 MINUTES, OR OTHER PEOPLE WILL KNOW TOO.*
EXT. LITTLE PINOCHE/ROOM SEVEN -- NIGHT

Max edges to the door of room seven and eases the door open. A FAMILIAR VOICE greets him:

FAMILIAR VOICE
Close the door behind you.

Reluctantly, Max slips into the homemade photo lab.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/ROOM SEVEN -- CONTINUOUS

As Max steps into the room, Shamus gets the drop from behind, frisking Max until he finds the gun in his pants. Shamus checks the chamber -- empty.

SHAMUS
I want to tell you more about my odd jobs. I take pictures of people. That’s what I do. It isn’t all that odd, actually. Well, sometime it is. Today was definitely odd.

Shamus gestures to the clothesline before taking a seat with his and Max’s gun in hand.

SHAMUS (CONT’D)
She was so pretty, they’ll say. She was so pretty. She sang the blues like she knew it was coming.

Max sees a pack of smokes and a bottle of booze.

SHAMUS (CONT’D)
Be my guest.

Max lights up and pours three fingers into a glass.

MAX
I didn’t do it.

SHAMUS
Maybe not; but you analyze that photograph -- the line, the composition, the foreshadow -- you take all those elements and you set them right next to the girl’s dead body, and suddenly it seems that, yes, maybe you did.

(CONTINUED)
Max’s hand curls into a fist -- shaking, white knuckles. Shamus points his gun at Max.

    SHAMUS (CONT’D)
    Play pretty now.

Max blows smoke at Shamus just before splashing him with booze and flicking the cigarette onto his lap. A small flame ignites. Shamus SCREAMS and slaps at the flame.

Shamus drops both guns. Max secures his gun and kicks Shamus’s under the bed while Shamus extinguishes the flame.

    SHAMUS (CONT’D)
    (breathless)
    No bullets in that gun. You didn’t bother with bullets.

Max pulls back the hammer. The gun is just as frightening to Max as it should be to Shamus.

    SHAMUS (CONT’D)
    Amateur. You really didn’t do it, did you?

Shamus HOWLS. Max pulls a bullet from his pocket and loads it into the chamber. A SPIN and a CLICK, and the revolver is live in Max’s hand.

    MAX
    I want the negatives. All of them.

    SHAMUS
    I would hope so. I wouldn’t --

Max slugs Shamus in the nose; Shamus falls to his knees.

    MAX
    I’ve got one bullet.

    SHAMUS
    (nodding)
    Just one.

    MAX
    That means I can’t just injure you. I’m going to have to kill you if I don’t get all the negatives.

A flick of the tongue from Shamus.
CONTINUED: (2)

SHAMUS
I’d bet if my darlin’ Clementine walked down this street right now -- in this moment -- she’d assume you had the power.

Max shoves the barrel into Shamus’s nose.

SHAMUS (CONT’D)
What you should realize, sir --

Shamus stands.

SHAMUS (CONT’D)
-- is that there has been no shift of power here.

MAX
A loaded gun is pretty steep in favor.

SHAMUS
Burn me down with that bullet and my other half will see to it that the negatives go straight into the hands of your parole officer.

MAX
You have a partner?

SHAMUS
You don’t really believe I just stumbled upon that cabin?

MAX
Even with those pictures, it’d take a helluva lawyer to prove guilt. There isn’t one drop of blood in that cabin. Not one drop.

SHAMUS
You don’t strike me as one who would receive mercy if he threw himself on the floor of the court.

Max lowers the gun.

MAX
What do you want?

Shamus looks at the gun. Max hands it over.

SHAMUS
I want harmony.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
How much does harmony go for these
days?

Max pulls out his wet wad of cash.

SHAMUS
It's a sizable down payment. I
respect your integrity.

--- You're not asking the right
question. The question you should
be asking is: How long do you
have? And the answer is: until
tomorrow night.

INT. THE WHITES' CABIN/BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Georgia opens a closet door, exposing a mirror, where she
examines herself. She's plain; she slouches; her hair is
tied back sloppily; she attempts a smile -- it's phony
and she knows it. She pins the advertisement of Rose next
to the mirror.

She switches tactics -- tries to seduce her own
reflection, but can't even sell herself on herself.

She SLAMS the closet door. It hits the doorjamb and flies
back open -- the mirror CRACKS. Georgia glares at her
cracked reflection.

She rushes into the closet and tears into the wardrobe.
She holds a black dress up to her frame. In the cracked
mirror, Georgia's reflection offers a glimmer of hope.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGIA (O.S.)
Mama’s gonna get ya.

EXT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY -- NIGHT

Archie walks into The Spicy Whiteboy in a long overcoat, a fedora, and sunglasses.

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/POOBAH’S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Bowser examines the pieces on a chessboard. Reno enters.

RENO
The sheriff is here.

THE GRAND POOBAH
White?

RENO
He’s pissed off.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Send him in.

Reno exits; after a beat, Archie thrusts into the office.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
Sheriff, I would think you too beholden to your public image to be seen lurking in the bowels of The Spicy Whiteboy.

ARCHIE
What was my wife was doing here?

THE GRAND POOBAH
How’s that?

ARCHIE
My wife was here. I want you to explain to me why she was here.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Why she was here is not the question you should be asking, White. The question you should be asking is why you don’t know why your wife was here.

Poobah slides the queen across the board.

(CONTINUED)
THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
Do you even know where your wife is right now?

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/SALOON -- NIGHT
Max RATTLES ice in his glass, oblivious to the SEXY MAMA that enters the saloon and surveys the prospects.
The sexy mama bellies up to the bar along side Max.

SEXY MAMA
Somebody must have licked all the red off your lollipop.

Here we realize that the sexy mama is a madeover Georgia.

GEORGIA
I’m Georgia.

MAX
Georgia, huh? Do you have a cigarette, Georgia?

She fetches a single cigarette and holds it out to Max. He grabs for it, but she pulls it out of his reach.

GEORGIA
I don’t give up the goods to men without names.

MAX
I’m Max.

She surrenders the cigarette. Max lights up.

GEORGIA
Well, Max, could I talk you into buying me a drink?

Georgia flags down the bartender with a wave of the hand.

MAX
No, you can’t. Not tonight anyhow.

GEORGIA
What makes tonight different from any other night? Or yesterday for that matter?

MAX
Yesterday I could have bought you a drink --

(CONTINUED)
Max sucks an ice cube into his mouth.

MAX (CONT’D)
-- but today, right now...I’m not
sure how I’m going to pay for the
drink that used to be in this
glass.

The bartender approaches.

BARTENDER
Time for your medicine?

GEORGIA
I’ll have a TNT. Pair o’ olives.
Pair o’ onions. Another one of the
same for Max, here.

She extends a fifty dollar bill.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
Make sure all his drinks -- past,
present, and future -- go on my
tab.

BARTENDER
You’re the doctor.

The bartender retreats to mix the medicine.

GEORGIA
I think I might like to have you
in my back pocket.

Max gives Georgia a good once-over.

MAX
That dress doesn’t look like it
has any pockets.

GEORGIA
You’ll have to keep me company to
find out.

MAX
Why would you want my company?

GEORGIA
Because you look like you’ve been
up all night doing something very
bad, or, perhaps, planning on
doing something very bad. And I
find that terribly interesting.
INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/POOBAH’S OFFICE -- NIGHT

As before with Archie and Poobah.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Sheriff, your wife is a firecracker. She had this idea -- a good idea -- that involved you, another woman, and blackmail. In so many words, I told her that it was the kinda idea that could end her up in the morgue, and then I sent her on her way. I did, however, follow up on the idea to show you that you’ve been looking at yourself in the fun house mirror. Your perception is off. You’re vision is distorted because your head is too far up some girl’s ass. Hey, I sympathize. Up a girl’s ass is a nice place to be; it’s just not exactly lucrative.

Reno enters with a sealed manila envelope in his hand.

BOWSER
Is that it?

Reno nods.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Give it to him.

Reno extends the envelope to Archie.

ARCHIE
What’s this?

THE GRAND POOBAH
That’s the follow-up.

Poobah lends Archie a brass letter opener. Archie opens the envelope, slips a picture out, and examines it.

Poobah can tell by the look on Archie’s face that the follow-up caused the desired effect. Poobah nods to Reno and who peeks out the office door where Gypsy Jack waits.

RENO
Pay the photographer.

Gypsy Jack sets off.
INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/POOBAH’S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

The picture is one of Max speaking with Rose on the porch of the cabin. Archie, quick to realize the potentially detrimental gravity of the situation should Poobah see the picture, attempts to make haste:

ARCHIE
You were right to do this. I’ve been careless, and you were right to do this.

Archie slips the picture in the envelope and hands it to Reno.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
I’ll take care of it.

THE GRAND POOBAH
I think that is a wise move.

ARCHIE
We’ll be in touch.

Archie makes for the door.

THE GRAND POOBAH
Oh, how is the Patsy working out?

ARCHIE
Couldn’t say. He’s still at it.

Archie exits.

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/PARKING GARAGE -- CONTINUOUS

The elevator opens, and Gypsy Jack charges out. He walks to a parked CADILLAC with jet-black tinted windows.

INT. CADILLAC -- CONTINUOUS

The window lowers. Gypsy Jack extends a stack of money. The HAND of the PHOTOGRAPHER reaches out to accept.

GYPSY JACK
The Grand Poobah appreciates your work and your discretion. You’re our man if we need more pictures.
EXT. CADILLAC -- CONTINUOUS

From Gypsy Jack’s point of view, the photographer is visible: a smooth, clean-cut young man -- the very antithesis of Shamus Rigby.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Cheers.

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/POOBAH’S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Poobah sits at his desk. Reno holds the manila envelope.

RENO
Do you want these in the vault, or should we get rid of them?

THE GRAND POOBAH
Keep’em in the vault. It’s the best insurance policy we’ve ever bought.

Reno moves to the door.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
Let’s have a look at em’ though.
I’m curious to see if the sheriff’s taste has improved any on his wife.

Reno hands Poobah the pictures. Poobah examines.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
Well, jump up my ass and eat a big bag o’ hell.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/SALOON -- NIGHT

Max and Georgia have moved to a booth. They have fresh cocktails, and Georgia has inched herself close to Max.

GEORGIA
So?

MAX
So what?

GEORGIA
(whispering)
So are you going to divulge your secret?

(CONTINUED)
MAX
Why is it that I’ll believe almost anything when it’s whispered?

GEORGIA
What do you mean?

MAX
You just whispered a question. You said, ‘Are you going to divulge your secret?’ And you’ve convinced me that I have a secret.

GEORGIA
Well, you do have a secret. You know, the secret of your very bad behavior.

Georgia sucks an olive off of its pick.

MAX
Ohhhhhhh.

GEORGIA
Ohhhhhhh. Come on. Out with it.

MAX
I’m not telling any secrets until you do.

GEORGIA
You think I have a secret?

MAX
I’m sure you have many secrets.

GEORGIA
Bullshit.

MAX
I can’t think of anybody that could walk through the doors of the Little Pinoche Rest Stop and Saloon with a clear conscience.

GEORGIA
Well, I’ll give you that one.

Georgia reaches down and strokes the inside of Max’s leg.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
Added to that, you’re so damn near close to sitting on my lap that someone could mistake you for a cherry on a sundae.

GEORGIA
And that’s secretive?

MAX
Well, it wouldn’t be if you weren’t wearing a wedding ring.

GEORGIA
It’s beautiful, isn’t it?

Georgia holds her hand out for Max to examine the ring. The SOUND OF A COWBELL jump-starts Max and Georgia.

BARTENDER
The witch’s hour and all’s well!

GEORGIA
The moment of truth.

MAX
(suddenly)
It’s been a pleasure. Thanks for the drinks. Thanks for the smokes. Thanks for the company.

Max moves out of the booth; Georgia stops him.

GEORGIA
I want you to take me home.

She asks him again with her eyes.

MAX
That’s very tempting, but I have to --

GEORGIA
-- I’ll pay you.

MAX
Thanks, but I’m already in your back pocket for my drinking habit.

Max turns to leave.

GEORGIA
I’m ready to tell you a secret.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (3)

She beckons him with her finger. He leans toward her.

    GEORGIA (CONT’D)
    (whispering)
    This dress doesn’t have pockets.

    MAX
    What about your other secret?

Georgia cocks an eyebrow.

    MAX (CONT’D)
    Your wedding ring?

    GEORGIA
    That’s why I’m going to offer to pay you. My husband’s cheating on me, and I want to return the favor.

Max reluctantly sits back down.

    MAX
    How much?

EXT. PAWN SHOP -- NIGHT

Reno and Gypsy Jack march into the shop.

INT. PAWN SHOP/HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Reno and Gypsy Jack knock on the steel door. Reno KNOCKS. The slate BURSTS open -- WRINKLY EYES right on cue.

    WRINKLY EYES
    Password?

    GYPSY JACK
    We’re with the Grand Poobah.

The slate SLAMS shut. The door opens with gusto. Wrinkly eyes stands on his stool in awe.

    RENO
    Bowser?

Wrinkly eyes shoots his thumb over his shoulder. Reno and Gypsy Jack proceed.
INT. PAWN SHOP/BOWSER’S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Bowser, gnawing on his hookah, looks up to see Reno and Gypsy Jack file into his office.

BOWSER
You’re the Poobah’s boys, right?

Gypsy Jack reaches into his coat pocket.

BOWSER (CONT’D)
Wait! Wait! Wait!

Gypsy Jack’s hand freezes inside of his coat.

BOWSER (CONT’D)
Look, I didn’t mean to shit in your oatmeal. The guy comes here, he asks for help, I get Poobah’s call, and so I send him packin’. That’s all that --

GYPSY JACK
-- Simmer down, McFadden. Nobody’s here to bust ya up.

Gypsy Jack pulls out an envelope and hands it to Reno.

BOWSER
That an invitation to a tea party?

RENO
You still got Shamus Rigby on a leash?

BOWSER
Occasionally, I do.

RENO
Is now one of those occasions?

BOWSER
Maybe.

GYPSY JACK
We don’t understand maybe, McFadden. We prefer certitude. Do you understand certitude?

BOWSER
Yeah, I understand.

(CONTINUED)
GYPSY JACK
So?

BOWSER
Yeah, Shamus Rigby’s on the clock.

RENO
What do you have Rigby doing?

BOWSER
Odd jobs.

Gypsy Jack and Reno exchange a look of impatience.

RENO
Look here, Bowser. Our tempers are as short as the hair on our balls. Start spilling your guts, or we’re gonna start spilling ‘em for you.

BOWSER
Alright...alright.

Gypsy Jack slaps Bowser on the neck.

GYPSY JACK
Atta boy.

BOWSER
Shamus is doing sleuth work, taking snapshots.

RENO
Where at?

BOWSER
Out there near Little Pinoche.

GYPSY JACK
He still out there?

BOWSER
I suppose. I haven’t heard from him. Why the curiosity about Shamus Rigby? He’s a twenty-five cent shit bird.

RENO
What do you know about Archie White?

BOWSER
Shit! Is that what this is about? Archie White?

(MORE)
CONTINUED: (2)

BOWSER (CONT'D)
I know he’s a sheriff, and I know he can’t keep his wife happy. Archie White is the reason Shamus Rigby is out at Little Pinoche. The old battle-axe wants pictures of him giving the business to some jezebel.

RENO
That’s it?

Reno draws the left side of his coat back to reveal his shoulder holster, the gun glistening therein.

RENO (CONT’D)
Think real hard before you answer. That’s all you know?

Bowser’s mouth falls open. He stops himself, starts again, then stops himself once more until finally:

BOWSER
That’s it. That’s all I know.

Reno lets his jacket fall back over the holster.

GYPSY JACK
So the sheriff’s got himself somethin’ on the side?

BOWSER
Yeah, and I hear this hussy is a saucebox if you know what I mean -- a real saucebox.

GYPSY JACK
You hear that, Reno? A saucebox. How do you like that?

RENO
I like it fine. It’s accurate.

Reno hands a picture from the envelope to Bowser.

GYPSY JACK
So long, McFadden.

Reno and Gypsy Jack show themselves out.

Bowser examines the photo. His eyes bulge the size of billiard balls; his nostrils flap like a pair of condors.

BOWSER
Rose?
INT. GEORGIA’S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Georgia drives and Max sits shotgun with the window down. The ROAR of highway wind is ominous.

GEORGIA
I’ve never done anything like this before.

MAX
I didn’t think you had.

A pair of headlights whiz by in the opposite direction.

GEORGIA
What if --

MAX
-- What?

GEORGIA
Never mind. It’s completely mad.

MAX
We’re past madness, sweetheart.

GEORGIA
What if tonight wasn’t tonight? What if it was some other moment -- and you were you, and I was just a girl in a pretty dress with no pockets and no money? What then?

Max looks at her as she turns onto a dark road. In passing, Max sees the sign for Cocoon Circle.

EXT. THE WHITES’ CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Georgia’s car parks in front of the cabin.

INT. GEORGIA’S CAR (PARKED) -- CONTINUOUS

Georgia cuts the ignition. Max is half-paralyzed, and Georgia takes notice.

GEORGIA
Jesus-God, you’re pale as porcelain.

MAX
Your husband’s name is Archie.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORGIA
(hesitantly)
What did you say?

MAX
Your husband paid me to kill you.
Archie paid me to kill you.

Georgia considers it thoughtfully, coolly.

GEORGIA
Well, what are you gonna do?

CUT TO:

BLACK

GEORGIA (V.O.)
No! No! Don’t...Oh, God...
No...Don’t...Please...Please...

INT. THE WHITES’ CABIN/ BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Max’s face is sour, snarling and sweaty.

GEORGIA (O.S.)
...No...No!...Don’t!...Don’t stop!

Max and Georgia violently make love as if it were the first and last time.

INT. THE WHITES’ CABIN/ BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Georgia and Max lie in bed, side-by-side.

MAX
Wow. That was...God, that was --

Georgia lights a cigarette.

GEORGIA
-- a near death experience.

Max sits on the edge of the bed and pulls his pants on.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
I don’t think Archie had this in mind when he hired you to kill me.

Georgia slips her ring off and puts it on the night stand. Max picks up the ring.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
I don’t think anyone had this in mind.

Georgia smiles knowingly, then slips into a robe.

MAX (CONT’D)
You should hock this ring -- it’d fetch a pretty penny.

GEORGIA
Knock yourself out. It’s nothing to me anymore.

Max looks at Georgia, then pockets the ring.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
Ya know, there’s a full moon tonight?

INT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS
The from doorknob twists, and the door inches open.

GEORGIA (O.S.)
Brings out the weirdos.

Bowser tiptoes into the cabin. There is blood spattered on his hands, face, and shirt.

GEORGIA (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Brings out things that go bump in the night.

He notices high heels, a dress, and a bra strewn about in a path toward the bedroom.

GEORGIA (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Things like you and me.

Bowser sees the antique shotgun. He cracks open the barrel to check for shells -- check. But then something catches his attention. He sniffs the air suspiciously. Bowser rushes the bedroom door.

INT. THE WHITES' CABIN/BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS
Georgia and Max fling themselves back against the headboard.

MAX
Bowser?

(CONTINUED)
Bowser shoves the shotgun into Max’s mouth, turning Max’s would-be pleas into a series of MMPHHS and UMMPHS.

GEORGIA
For the love of --

BOWSER
-- Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up, I said! Shut up!

Bowser COCKS the shotgun.

BOWSER (CONT’D)
Was it the Poobah? He put you up to it? He let you out of the catbird seat if you --

Max closes his eyes.

BOWSER (CONT’D)
-- open your eyes. God damn you, open your eyes!

Max opens his eyes.

BOWSER (CONT’D)
I want you to know that I prayed for you. I got on my knees and prayed for you, God damn it! I begged God almighty to spare your soul, you filthy bastard.

Max, shotgun barrel still in mouth, responds:

MAX
UMMPHHS NNOFPH VHA MMPPHEEN --

BOWSER
You go to hell.

Bowser pulls the trigger.

CLICK -- nothing. Again, CLICK -- nothing.

Bowser yanks the barrel from Max’s mouth and swings for Max’s head. Max ducks and wrestles Bowser to the floor.

Georgia spectates, practically catatonic, watching Bowser and Max trade sloppy punches, fighting for the shotgun.

They make a mess of the room, tearing into the closet just before thrusting into the hall. The closet door swings open.

(CONTINUED)
Georgia sees the advertisement of Rose and her face goes sour. GRUNTS and BUMPS from Archie and Max are heard O.S.

GEORGIA

Ahhhhhhhh!

Georgia charges out of the bedroom -- down the hall to the living room -- and leaps wildly onto Bowser’s back, causing Max to fall on his ass and relent the shotgun to Bowser.

Georgia chokes Bowser and gouges his eyes. Bowser sees flashes of Max scurrying about the hardwood. He swings the shotgun at Max by the barrel as if it were a bat.

He misses once -- strike one.

Again -- strike two.

Again -- clipping Max’s shoulder: a foul ball.

Georgia’s feet flail about like a tetherball. A thunderous pivot and Georgia falls to the ground -- THUD! Bowser swings again, this time as if chopping wood. He connects -- not with Max -- but with the hardwood.

KA-BOOM! The shotgun finally discharges into Bowser’s belly, launching him across the room, near the trunk.

Max surveys the situation, then rushes to Bowser’s dead body. He notices a blood-soaked picture -- partly blown away -- peeking out of Bowser’s jacket. Max slip the picture out -- it’s one of Shamus Rigby’s.

Georgia picks herself up.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)

What happened?

Max discreetly slips the picture back into the jacket.

MAX

Nothing happened, except for everything.

GEORGIA

Is he dead?

MAX

Does Howdy Doody got wooden balls?

The blood of Bowser’s body flows across the hardwood into an amoeba-like shape, reaching the spot in the hardwood where Archie had pulled up the floorboards. The blood drains and seeps through the cracks.

(CONTINUED)
Max and Georgia pull up the floorboards and hit pay-dirt.

MAX (CONT’D)
We just cut a fat hog in the ass.

INT. GEORGIA’S CAR (MOVING) -- NIGHT

Georgia drives down a dark road with Max in the passenger’s seat. Their demeanor is decidedly different. Whereas Georgia sports a cool grin, Max is laggard. She breaks the SILENCE, bursting into LAUGHTER.

MAX
Something funny?

She pauses to look at Max, but falls back into HYSTERICS.

MAX (CONT’D)
I’m glad you see humor in this.

GEORGIA
Lighten up. It’s not so bad.

MAX
I just cleaned up a gallon of blood with T-shirts and socks. Fucking socks!

GEORGIA
The paper towels were gone.

MAX
-- Not to mention that this was a man that I didn’t care to see die and then buried in Godforsaken Little Pinoche.

GEORGIA
What would you have us do? Leave his body rotting in the house. He was gonna kill you, Max. Would you rather have cleaned his blood, or had him clean yours? Because that’s what it came down to.

MAX
I don’t know.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGIA
Bullshit. You know damn well. A couple hours ago you couldn’t afford the whiskey running down your throat and hadn’t seen any action since shower time in the WAR. Now look at you. You went and got yourself loved up. And by the sound of it, pretty good, too. And if you’ve already forgotten, there’s a suitcase full of dreams back there with our names written all over it. Enjoy it. This is as good as it gets for you.

MAX
Don’t talk to me. I don’t want to hear you right now.

Georgia LAUGHS.

MAX (CONT’D)
Quit your cackling!

With the look of ‘fine, fuck you’ written all over her face, Georgia focuses on the road. She throws on the blinker. Her destination: The Little Pinoche

MAX (CONT’D)
What’re you doing?

GEORGIA
That didn’t last long.

MAX
Why are you stopping?

GEORGIA
I’m not sitting in silence forever. I’m dropping you off. I’m sure there’s some drunk sap here who’d love to join me.

MAX
The hell you are. Keep moving.

GEORGIA
Max, take off your sissy-britches and calm down. We need gas.

Max glances at the fuel-meter. It’s on E.
EXT. LITTLE PINOCHE/GAS PUMPS -- CONTINUOUS

Georgia pulls into the bay and shuts off the car. She throws the keys to Max.

GEORGIA
Fill it up! I’m going to powder my nose.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/SALOON -- MOMENTS LATER

Reno and Gypsy Jack waiting for the bartender.

BARTENDER
Get you boys something?

GYPSY JACK
Some answers, we hope.

BARTENDER
I got the answer to any question you can ask sitting right up there on the shelf. What’s your prescription?

RENO
Maybe you misunderstood.

BARTENDER
I understand fine. But if it’s answers you’re looking for, you’ve come to the wrong place. I’ve seen a lot of men come through here, all of them with questions, but I have yet to see a man walk out of here with the answer he was looking for. I offer them an interim solution -- and that’s what I’m offering you.

GYPSY JACK
We’re not here to drink --

Gypsy Jack leans on the bar, letting his jacket fall open to reveal a holstered gun. The bartender goes rigid.

GYPSY JACK (CONT’D)
-- We’re gonna ask you a question. You’re gonna answer politely. We’ll continue on in this fashion until I get the information I want. How does that sound to you?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BARTENDER
Fine. Sounds fine.

A MAN, only partially visible from behind, looks in the direction of the two thugs.

RENO
Something we can help you with?

The man turns away.

Georgia enters the bar and passes by this scene on the way to the bathroom.

EXT. LITTLE PINOCHIE/GAS PUMPS -- MOMENTS LATER

Max pumps the gas.

MAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
Nice car. What year is it?

Max doesn’t acknowledge the voice. The voice gets closer.

MAN’S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT’D)
It’s a ’76, ain’t it? Funny thing is, I have one just like it. Now what are the chances of that?

MAX
Yeah, sounds like a real --

Max turns and sees that the man is Archie.

ARCHIE
Goin’ somewhere, Fickle?

MAX
Uhh, well, just getting ready to, you could say.

ARCHIE
You weren’t going to wait for me?

MAX
Of course I was. You ever know a man to walk away from that kind of money?

ARCHIE
I’ve seen men do many a strange thing. Especially in desperate situations.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
The only thing I’m desperate for is that money.

ARCHIE
Do you want it now?

MAX
Yeah, sure. That would be good.

ARCHIE
Okay, well maybe we shouldn’t do it out in the open, you know. Might look suspicious.

Archie gets in the car.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
C’mon.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/SALOON -- MOMENTS LATER

At the bar, as before.

GYPSY JACK
I’m looking for a man named Shamus. You know him?

BARTENDER
Can’t say that I do.

RENO
He’s a weasly cuss -- kinda guy that would steal the clothes off his dead father’s back.

BARTENDER
With all due respect gentlemen, look around.

GYPSY JACK
Well, maybe you’ll recognize this.

Gypsy Jack reaches into his jacket. The bartender jumps back, knocking a beer bottle to the ground.

The SHATTER captures everyone’s attention, including Georgia who walks directly behind Reno and Gypsy Jack.

Georgia recognizes the thugs and retreats to a table to avoid confrontation. Neither Reno nor Gypsy Jack see her.

(CONTINUED)
GYPSY JACK (CONT’D)
Keep your cool, slick. I’m not gonna hurt ya.

RENO
Not yet anyway.

Gypsy Jack sets a photo of Shamus Rigby on the bar.

GYPSY JACK
Let me introduce you to Shamus Rigby. Now what’s your story?

The bartender scrutinizes the picture.

INT. GEORGIA’S CAR -- CONTINUOUS
Archie and Max sit in park at the pumps.

ARCHIE
Do you think I’m fucking stupid Fickle?

MAX
No, not at all. I think you’re very bright.

ARCHIE
Shut up, asshole. I don’t think you’re a genius, but I know you’re not as dumb as you’re playing.

MAX
Okay, I’ll --

ARCHIE
-- Shut up. Why are you driving this car? This is my wife’s car.

MAX
She’s dead. I didn’t think she’d mind if I took it for a spin.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/SALOON -- CONTINUOUS
At the bar, as before.

BARTENDER
Yeah, I’ve seen this guy.

GYPSY JACK
Bingo.

(CONTINUED)
RENO
Where do we find him?

BARTENDER
I can’t be certain, of course, but
I can tell you that the first
place I’d look is room seven.

The man to the right of Gypsy Jack steals a glance at the
photo. Gypsy Jack spots him peeking.

GYPSY JACK
Got something to say, buddy boy?

The man turns away again.

GYPSY JACK (CONT’D)
Mind your fucking Ps & Qs.

Gypsy Jack pockets the picture.

GYPSY JACK (CONT’D)
Room seven?

BARTENDER
Yes, sir.

Reno pulls out a wad of cash a places a five on the bar.

RENO
For the beer.

Georgia coyly exits the bathroom just as Reno and Gypsy
Jack are leaving. She continues on, keeping her distance.

INT. GEORGIA’S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Max and Archie sit parked at the pumps-- as before.

ARCHIE
If my wife’s dead, Fickle, like
you say she is, then how’d she
manage to answer the phone when I
called?

Max anxiously peeks toward the saloon. At this moment,
the gas pump POPS and startles Max.

MAX
Let me take care of that.

Max opens the door and jumps out.

(_CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ARCHIE
Whoa, asshole!

Archie hops out in a rush, thinking Max is trying to run.

EXT. LITTLE PINOCHE/GAS PUMPS -- CONTINUOUS

Max grabs the pump as Archie rounds the back of the car.

MAX
It’s done pumping. That’s all.

Max holsters the gas pump.

MAX (CONT’D)
Okay, done. We can go.

ARCHIE
Where is it you want to go? You’re going to sit right there and explain to me what exactly went down at the cabin.

MAX
I’ll show it to you.

ARCHIE
Show me what?

MAX
The body.

ARCHIE
There’s not supposed to be a body, Fickle. The body was supposed --

MAX
-- It didn’t work. I mean, it did, but I couldn’t use it. Let’s go back to the cabin. I’ll show you.

Max opens the driver’s side door. Archie hesitates before getting in on the passenger side.

As Max ducks into the car, Georgia exits the saloon and watches as Max and Archie drive off.

EXT. LITTLE PINOCHE/ROOM SEVEN -- NIGHT

Gypsy Jack KNOCKS. The door -- having been not pulled shut -- swings open slightly.

(CONTINUED)
RENO

Shamus Rigby?

Gypsy Jack nudges the door completely open. A pair of legs on the floor stick out from behind the bed. There is blood smeared on the wall above the legs.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/ROOM SEVEN -- CONTINUOUS

Reno and Gypsy Jack pull the door shut behind them. The pair of legs belong to Shamus Rigby who has a knife stuck in his back -- a pearl-handled knife. Gypsy Jack studies the pictures on the clothesline. He pulls one off that depicts Max, the axe, and Rose's body.

GYPSY JACK

Damn.

He hands the picture to Reno.

RENO

We better get to that cabin and see what we can see. You wanna grab those pictures?

Gypsy Jack pulls the pictures off the clothesline. Reno scans the room. Something catches his attention.

RENO (CONT'D)

He’s still alive.

Shamus’s left-hand fingers stroke the carpet, his eyes twitch, his lips tremble.

RENO (CONT'D)

Helluva thing -- to just fizzle out like that.

Reno makes for the door. Gypsy Jack does not follow.

RENO (CONT’D)

What are you doing?

GYPSY JACK

We can’t just leave him like this?

RENO

A guy with a knife sticking out his back must have had it coming.

Reno leaves. Gypsy Jack raises his gun -- BLAMMO!
INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/SALOON -- MOMENTS LATER

Georgia has a seat at the bar. The bartender cleans up the mess from the spilled beer. The man previously sitting next to Gypsy Jack is still at the bar.

    BARTENDER
    T&T?
    GEORGIA
    Extra olives.

Georgia turns to the man sitting next to her.

    GEORGIA (CONT'D)
    So, what about you?

The man turns toward Georgia; it is Dick Bishop.

    DICK BISHOP
    No story.

    GEORGIA
    A man drinking by himself in a bar in the middle of nowhere doesn’t have a story? I wasn’t born yesterday, you know.

Dick Bishop looks Georgia up and down.

    DICK BISHOP
    You’re not fooling anyone.

The bartender sets Georgia’s drink on the counter. Without pause, she gulps the entire thing, pulls out a ten from her purse, and sets it down on the bar.

    GEORGIA
    Keep the change.

Georgia gets up to leave.

    DICK BISHOP
    I shouldn’t have said that.
    Please, sit.
         (to the bartender)
    Can we get another one of these over here? On me.

Dick Bishop motions for Georgia to sit.

    DICK BISHOP (CONT’D)
    Please.
INT. THE INCINERATOR -- NIGHT
The small hatch opens and Archie peeks in.

MAX (O.S.)
Now you understand why this wasn’t much of an option?

EXT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS
Near the incinerator. Archie eyeballs Max.

ARCHIE
There’s an axe in the cabin. Have you no initiative?

MAX
You want me to show you where I buried her?

EXT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS
Near a woodpile. Archie and Max stand at the foot of the freshly-dug grave. Max conjures Georgia’s wedding ring from his pocket and gives it to Archie.

MAX
You want me to dig her up? Let you see the body?

ARCHIE
No. Let’s get you your money.

INT. LITTLE PINOCHE/SALOON -- CONTINUOUS
Georgia and Dick Bishop at the bar, as before.

GEORGIA
Not the best conversationalist, are you?

DICK BISHOP
Just not always in the mood.

GEORGIA
Then why did I sit back down?

DICK BISHOP
So, I could buy you a drink.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGIA
That’s original. A man that wants to buy drinks but doesn’t want to talk? What’s next? You gonna ask me if I need a ride home?

DICK BISHOP
My mom taught me better than that.

GEORGIA
You’re a man. It’s in your blood. Nothing momma says changes that.

DICK BISHOP
What do you know about a man’s blood?

GEORGIA
I’ve known many men.

DICK BISHOP
I suppose you have.

GEORGIA
What’s that supposed to mean?

DICK BISHOP
Not many women would come to a place like this all by themselves, in the wee hours of the night. What makes you special?

GEORGIA
What makes anyone special? Everything and nothing, I suppose.

The bartender drops the check on the bar.

BARTENDER
Closing up shop soon.

DICK BISHOP
I never got your name.

GEORGIA
You probably never will.

Dick Bishop stands, reaches into his pocket for some cash, and leaves it on the bar.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
So soon?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

DICK BISHOP
You heard the man.

GEORGIA
And your name?

DICK BISHOP
Dick Bishop.

GEORGIA
Dick. Short for Richard?

DICK BISHOP
Believe me, there’s nothing short about it. You enjoy the rest of your night.

GEORGIA
You gonna offer me that ride?

DICK BISHOP
You think you can trust me?

GEORGIA
I don’t trust anyone. Especially you.

Georgia knocks back her drink and SLAMS it on the bar.

GEORGIA (CONT’D)
Let’s go.

INT. THE WHITES’ CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Archie removes the floorboards, pulls out the briefcase, and pops the lock.

ARCHIE
I would like you to tell me one more thing before I give you the money. I want you to tell me...

Archie raises the lid of the case to hide the fact that he is reaching for a gun that is tucked in his waistband.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
...about Rose. What was she --

-- Archie stares into the case: sheer befuddlement.

MAX
Who’s Rose?

(CONTINUED)
Continued:

Archie peeks over the lid at Max.

Archie

where is it?

Max

Where’s what?

Archie aims his gun at Max, then shifts his aim to the side of Max’s head. BLAMMO! -- the door window SHATTERS.

Archie

That was your first and last warning --

Unseen Entity (O.S.)

Ahhhhhh!!!

An Unseen Entity beyond the door THUMPS on the porch. A gentle breeze blows the curtain that covers the door window. Whispers are heard beyond the door.

Archie

Open it. Open it!

Max opens the CREAKING door. Nobody is there, but blood trails around the corner and into the darkness.

EXT. THE WHITES’ CABIN/PORCH -- CONTINUOUS

Archie follows the blood. He peeks around the corner and raises his gun at the Unseen Entity.

A Mysterious Gunman raises his steel at Archie’s back from the other side. The gunman circles round Archie, swiping Archie’s gun, revealing himself to be Gypsy Jack.

Gypsy Jack

It’s easy to see how you made the headlines, Sheriff. Why don’t we go talk about it?

Gypsy Jack escorts Archie into the woods. Reno appears from around the corner, one hand on a gun, the other pressed against a bloodied ear.

Reno

Inside, Fickle!
INT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max walks in, followed by Reno who rips the curtain off the door and applies it to his ear.

MAX
Does that hurt?

BLAMMO! A SHOT echoes; a flash of light sparks in a window. Max flinches. A SCREAM is heard, followed by two more SHOTS, each accompanied by a flash in the window.

RENO
You scare easily for a guy so handy with an axe.

FOOTSTEPS approach. Reno turns toward the front door.

RENO (CONT'D)
You got those pictures, Jack?

Archie emerges in Gypsy Jack’s coat and eye patch.

BLAMMO! -- Archie FIRES and hits Reno in his other ear.

RENO (CONT'D)
AHHHHHHH!!!!

BLAMMO! -- Archie fires again and hits Reno in the chest. Reno drops dead. Archie turns the gun on Max.

MAX
The money’s in the car.

EXT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Archie follows Max to Georgia’s car. Max opens the trunk, fishes out a floral print suitcase, and SLAMS the trunk.

INT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Max kneels and opens the suitcase, exposing the stacks of money laid across Georgia’s bras and undies.

ARCHIE
Put the money in the briefcase.

Max obeys.
EXT. COCOON CIRCLE -- CONTINUOUS
Dick Bishop’s car rolls to a stop at a healthy distance.

INT. DICK BISHOP’S CAR -- CONTINUOUS
The open cabin door is visible from their POV.

    DICK BISHOP
    You make a habit of leaving the
door open when you leave?

    GEORGIA
    No.

She exits the car, closes the door, and moves forward.
Dick Bishop reaches into the glove compartment.

INT. THE WHITES’ CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

    MAX
    I was going to bring the money
back to you. I knew it was yours.

    ARCHIE
    Of course it’s mine. This is my
cabin. Who’s else could it be?

    MAX
    Just don’t --

    ARCHIE
    -- You’re in no position to tell
me what to do.

Max puts the last stack of cash in the suitcase.

    ARCHIE (CONT’D)
    Stand up.

Max stands.

    ARCHIE (CONT’D)
    They say a man feels death
approach moments before it
strikes. Is it true, Max?

Archie pulls back the hammer on his gun.

    MAX
    Dick?

(CONTINUED)
Archie turns his head to see Dick Bishop behind him -- standing on the porch -- a gun aimed at his back.

DICK BISHOP
You know the drill. Drop the gun.

ARCHIE
I’m an officer of the law. Identify yourself.

DICK BISHOP
Officer Dick Bishop.

ARCHIE
Dick, I’m gonna turn around. Don’t fucking shoot me, alright?

Archie turns slowly. He keeps his aim pointed at Max as long as possible before he turns his aim on Dick Bishop.

DICK BISHOP
Sheriff White? What’s going on here?

Georgia moves to Dick Bishop’s side. Archie casts an evil eye in Max’s direction.

ARCHIE
I should ask you the same thing. What are you doing with my wife?

DICK BISHOP
Wife?

GEORGIA
Hello Boys. Don’t look so surprised honey.

ARCHIE
Dick, put down the gun.

DICK BISHOP
I can’t do that, sir. Tell me what’s going on.

ARCHIE
This man behind me --

DICK BISHOP
-- Fickle.

ARCHIE
He a friend of yours?

(CONTINUED)
DICK BISHOP
I’m his P.O.

GEORGIA
You’re a parole officer?

ARCHIE
Looks like you need to keep a better leash on your guys, Dick. Max has been up to some naughty stuff tonight.

GEORGIA
That’s right. He fucked me.

MAX
No, I didn’t! No, I didn’t!

Archie casts a second evil eye Max’s way.

MAX (CONT’D)
She’s lying. I swear.

ARCHIE
Max is a murderer, Dick. He killed a friend of mine. I was just about to cuff him and take him in.

GEORGIA
He’s a liar. He’s lying. You bastard liar!

ARCHIE
Georgia, you’ve had too much to drink.
(to Dick)
C’mon, Dick, put down the gun.

GEORGIA
He tried to have me killed.

ARCHIE
Georgia, please!

GEORGIA
Tell him Max. Tell him you were gonna kill me.

MAX
I don’t know what she’s talking about. I didn’t kill anyone.

(Continued)
ARCHIE
Don’t listen to her, Dick. She’s drunk. Let’s do the right thing.

Dick Bishop surveys the situation, taking in each side.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
Here, let me prove it to you. There’s a grave out back. There’s a young lady buried in there.

DICK BISHOP
Max? What did you do?

MAX
Nothing. So help me, God. There’s nobody in the grave! There is no grave!

ARCHIE
You see? He’s a crook. You see this all the time, dontcha, Dick? Let’s put our guns down together.

Archie lowers his gun. Dick Bishop follows his lead. Soon both men have their guns by their sides.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
Wow. That was hairy. Good man, Dick. You got cuffs?

Dick Bishop holsters his gun and reaches for his cuffs. Archie raises his gun and squeezes the trigger; a bullet RIPS into Dick Bishop’s head. Dick falls dead into Georgia who stumbles backward onto the porch. Archie aims his gun at Max.

ARCHIE (CONT’D)
Now, where were we?

Just as he is about to fire, he pauses to sniff the air. Georgia bursts up with Dick Bishop’s gun.

GEORGIA
Raspberries!

Georgia squeezes the trigger and TAGS Archie in the shooting arm. His gun falls to the ground.

Another squeeze -- a bullet TEARS into Archie’s chest.

Georgia rushes him from the porch, squeezes again, and BLASTS him directly in the forehead. He falls to the hardwood. Georgia UNLOADS all of the bullets into Archie.
EXT. THE WHITES' CABIN/PORCH -- CONTINUOUS

Max watches Georgia in disbelief until a faint RATTLING catches his attention. Georgia hears it, too. She lowers the gun and walks...

INT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

...to Max who investigates. They inch toward the antique trunk -- the source of the RATTLING.

The RATTLING turns to BUMPS as the lid wobbles up and down. Red fingernails curl from the opening. The lid raises; Rose sits up, disheveled and half-dead.

MAX
(whispering)
She’s alive.

Rose slowly stands.

MAX (CONT’D)
She’s alive.

Georgia’s rage builds with Max’s laughter. She aims the gun from her hip and pulls the trigger: CLICK -- nothing.

MAX (CONT’D)
(laughing)
She’s alive. Dear, God -- she’s really alive!

Georgia plucks the axe from the stump and charges Rose. Max’s laughter fades as he watches Georgia raise the axe.

Max throws his forearm in front of the axe handle and blocks the would-be decapitation -- by a fraction of an inch. Georgia stares daggers at Max.

MAX (CONT’D)
No. She already died once today. I don’t think I can watch her die again. Or anyone else for that matter. It’s just not me. Besides we’re all out of clean socks.

Max eases the axe from Georgia’s vice grip.

MAX (CONT’D)
Good girl.

Georgia spits at Max, then SLAPS the shit out of Rose.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGIA
Kiss your suitcase full of dreams
goodbye, you bastard.

Georgia grabs the floral-print suitcase and blows.

EXT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Georgia piles into her car, FIRES UP the engine, and
TEARS down the road toward the highway.

INT. THE WHITES' CABIN -- CONTINUOUS

Rose rubs her face, still dazed by Rose’s slap.

MAX
You okay?

Max fishes a pack of smokes from Reno’s pockets.

APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS echo from the porch. Max grabs
Archie’s gun and tucks himself behind the door. He
motions to Rose to keep quiet.

Gypsy Jack, sans an eye patch and overcoat, enters.

GYPSY JACK
Rose?

ROSE
What happened to your head?

GYPSY JACK
I got shot.

ROSE
Does it hurt?

GYPSY JACK
Yes.

ROSE
But you’re alive?

GYPSY JACK
Never mind. What about --

Max shoves his gun into the side of Gypsy Jack’s head.

MAX
Easy, Jack.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GYPSY JACK
Fickle? If you intend on killin’ me, I’d aim that thing some place else. Otherwise you’re just gonna aggravate me.

Max reassumes his aim at Gypsy Jack’s back.

MAX
I could kill you, Gypsy Jack. Put a bullet right in your kidney.

Max picks up the briefcase. He holds the gun at his side.

MAX (CONT’D)
Just take me to the Poobah.

INT. THE PULLMANN (MOVING) -- NIGHT
Gypsy Jack drives, the bullet hole in his head ever present; Rose, looking half-dead, sits shotgun; Max sits behind Rose, a look of relief on his face as he stares at the corpse of Reno who sits beside him.

EXT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY -- NIGHT
The marquis on the club burns bright.

INT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY/POOBAH’S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS
Poobah sits at his desk; Max sits across from him; a briefcase-sized stack of money sits between them. Gypsy Jack stands behind Poobah, his head wrapped in gauze.

Poobah inserts a stack of bills into an electric money counter. The bills SHUFFLE through the machine.

MAX
So, we’re square?

THE GRAND POOBAH
Not quite.

Poobah gestures to Gypsy Jack. Jack hands him a newspaper.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
You know what this is?

Poobah puts the paper on his desk.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
Yeah, it’s fifty-four cents.

THE GRAND POOBAH
You haven’t read the paper today?

Max shakes his head.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
Well, I did read the paper. And I was sorry to hear about your father.

Poobah lays the newspaper on the desk. A circled headline reads: ALBERHILL CREEK BODY IDENTIFIED AS BOXING TRAINER: AUTHORITIES SUSPECT FOUL PLAY.

THE GRAND POOBAH (CONT’D)
His cut was one-third. You’re his next-of-kin, so it seems to me that a-third of this is yours. Does that sound right to you?

Poobah tosses a white paper bag on the desk in front of Max. Max opens it and glances inside. He closes the bag and gives Poobah a nod of acceptance.

EXT. THE SPICY WHITEBOY -- SUNRISE

Max exits the club, a doggie-bag in hand. The doggie-bag has The Spicy Whiteboy insignia on it, complete with the slogan: HOTTER THAN A THREE-PECKERED BILLY GOAT.

Max struts down the sidewalk as the sun crowns on the horizon.

FADE OUT.