

Flavor of the Month

screenplay by

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FADE IN:

THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN

in all its glory. Only this isn't the actual sign. It's a painting on a huge wall.

"THE LAND WHERE DREAMS ARE MADE" is written at the bottom. A graffiti artist has written the word "WET" between "WHERE" and "DREAMS". Someone else has also slashed out the word "MADE" and spray-painted "STOLEN" next to it.

Two MEN stand in front of the mural. One of them yells and raises his fist at the graffiti.

A male JOGGER runs past them, his dog follows.

They pass an Italian Restaurant named MARCELLO'S as they run towards the beach.

EXT. BEACH - EARLY MORNING

The jogger runs on the sand. His dog runs out in front and leaves him behind.

The dog stops at the edge of the water and barks at the crashing waves.

JOGGER
What is it, boy?

Something floats in the water. The jogger squints.

It looks like a human body.

EXT. ULTIMATE PICTURES - MORNING

The entrance to a movie studio.

INT. ULTIMATE PICTURES - MORNING

A typical busy morning.

People running around -- actors, actresses, extras, directors barking at the crew -- props and lights being moved -- some early morning sets where filming is taking place and all the rest of the stuff that goes on inside a place like this.

Pure pandemonium.

Above a wall, we see some large billboards of the recent Ultimate Pictures releases: "MURDERS OVER HOLLYWOOD" -- "PURLOINED" -- "MODERN MANIAC" -- and we end up on "TRIPLE TWIST."

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - MORNING

PAUL STEVEN PRICE, early 30s, walks down a hallway.

Different FOLKS greet him as he passes by, some pat him on the back and congratulate him.

He holds a briefcase and walks confidently -- he is a man on a mission.

Some of the secretaries whisper to each other and point. A celebrity.

He passes several movie posters along the wall, smiles when he comes to the poster for "TRIPLE TWIST."

He admires it for just a moment and then keeps going.

At the bottom of the film credits: SCREENPLAY BY PAUL STEVEN PRICE.

INT. RAYMOND O. STREET'S OFFICE - MORNING

A huge gold-plated name plate sits on the front of a desk.

The head of Ultimate Pictures, RAYMOND O. STREET sits behind his desk, reads the latest Variety.

The headline screams: ULTIMATE SCORES ULTIMATE B.O. WITH "TRIPLE TWIST."

The middle-aged millionaire sips his orange juice. His secretary buzzes him.

SECRETARY (O.S.)
(over intercom)
Mr. Street, Mr. Price is here.

STREET
Right on time, I like that. Send
him in.

Street drops the magazine on his desk and walks to the door.

Price enters with his briefcase. Street smiles and gives him a big hug.

STREET
Hello, Paul. How's it going?

PRICE
Fantastic.

Price can barely breathe until Street lets go of him.

STREET

Glad to hear it. No writer's block
in that smart head of yours.

PRICE

I'm lucky. I owe it all to you,
sir.

STREET

Please, none of that sir stuff, we
aren't in the military after all.

No sir, just Ray.

(points to a chair in
front of his desk)

Please, sit down.

Price sits down in the cozy chair. Street walks over to a
table filled with breakfast items.

STREET

Have you had any breakfast? Can I
offer you anything?

PRICE

No thanks, I've already eaten. I
like to pitch with a full stomach.

STREET

What was that old saying? A writer
writes better when he's got an
empty stomach. Pure poop, I think
you write better with a full
stomach. Wilder never starved,
Sturges never starved -- I tell ya
these guys had full stomachs when
they wrote.

Street grabs a couple of bagels.

STREET

You know why the French New Wave
worked? Cause they had all those
delicious French meals. Same with
those Italians. Fellini, DeSica
... how the hell couldn't they make
these wonderful flicks with all
that great food.

He places two pancakes on his plate and covers them with
syrup.

STREET

That's why there weren't that many
good Russian films.

(MORE)

STREET (CONT'D)

You ever taste Russian food? Make
you puke all night.

PRICE

Tarkovsky did pretty well.

STREET

Sure, he probably knew a good
Italian chef.

Price notices he's been reading Variety and picks it up.

Street sees him as he walks to his desk. The studio head
smiles.

STREET

(referring to the
headline)

We owe it all to you, Paul. Some
critics are saying you've written
the greatest first script in
Hollywood history. And who am I to
argue.

Price looks down the page and sees the headline for another
article:

"WRITER FOUND DEAD"

He puts the magazine back on the desk as Street sits down.
Street notices the headline.

STREET

A shame about that writer they
found.

PRICE

Yes, I heard about it this morning.

EXT. BEACH - EARLY MORNING

The jogger's dog barks at the body in the water.

STREET (V.O.)

Did you hear what they're saying
about you? The fastest rise ever.

The body floats away.

INT. RAYMOND O. STREET'S OFFICE

Street is all smiles as he sips his juice.

STREET

Hell, even Archerd's saying it. The fastest rise ever in film history or something like that. You know how they exaggerate in the papers. Anyway, I sound like a broken record. I'm sure you've heard it all. You've got talent, son. That's why you're here. You know, I don't want to jinx you, but, everybody says one word to me about your script: nomination.

PRICE

Oh, I'm not sure about that.

STREET

They say it's got "Oscar" written all over it. I can't wait to see it again. You made that prick of a director the hottest man in town. He couldn't direct shit out of his ass. But you know why he was successful? Because he had a great script to work with. I don't want to sound like I'm a genius or anything, but who was the bastard who green lighted this masterpiece?

PRICE

Oh, you're too kind, sir.

STREET

Forget it, none of that sir stuff. I want an exclusive on all of your ideas. All of 'em -- and I don't care if you get them while you sleep, while you make love, while you're on the can. Doesn't matter where as long as I own them all. In fact, most of my best ideas come when I'm taking a dump.

He picks up the script for "TRIPLE TWIST".

STREET

And I want you to tell me them yourself. I don't want to hear it from one of my zitfaced readers, you know ... hell, I'm lucky they can talk to me in English.

Strokes the script.

STREET

I don't run this studio cause I'm stupid. You are hot, hot, hot. I'm honored that you're here, Paul. When you told me you wanted to direct your next picture, I thought to myself who am I to argue with genius. If you want to direct, so be it, you are going to direct. But it has to be an Ultimate picture.

PRICE

Of course, thank you, sir.

Street pushes his intercom.

STREET

Louise, no calls for the next hour and a half. And I mean, absolutely none!

LOUISE (O.S.)

What if Mrs. Street calls?

STREET

Especially if it's her.

He flips off.

STREET

Okay, let's get to it. I don't want to know anything about the story -- just surprise me like I'm watching it for the first time in the theater. By the way, isn't that chair very comfortable?

PRICE

Yes it is as a matter of fact.

STREET

Of course it is. It cost me enough. It's brand new. And the reason it's brand new is because the last guy who pitched a story in here got carried away.

(MORE)

STREET (CONT'D)

Now, I know you writers like to hop and dance around, but, the jerk, I mean the writer, a guy you would know, but I won't mention his name because he's a good guy, and hell, his pictures make me some money, although not a lot, but enough to please me, anyway ... I've lost my train of thought ... where was I?

PRICE

Don't worry, I'll stay in this chair the whole time.

STREET

Good, because this guy, who shall remain nameless ... the prick ... puts holes in my chair, jumps on my desk and starts kicking and screaming. Then he grabs my blinds, which were new at the time, I made him pay for them, the cheap bastard ... well, anyway, I decided no more pitches. But, with you Paul, I changed my mind. And after all, I'd rather hear a good story than read one of those boring screenplays. You know what I mean, I don't have to tell you. You know, exterior this, interior that, day, night, morning, noon, sounds like a goddamn weather report ... most of them make me throw up.

Points to a poster of "TRIPLE TWIST" on his wall.

STREET

But not yours, don't get the wrong idea. I don't mean you, you're gonna make me millions ... where was I?

PRICE

I won't leave this cozy chair.

STREET

Oh, right, yeah, no worries.

(long pause)

Paul, the lights go down ... I got my popcorn and I'm ready to go.

Okay, dazzle this old fat bastard, go ahead and let me have it --

ACTION!

Street settles in with his orange juice, licks his lips as he probably thinks about all that money he's going to make, as Price begins to pitch his story.

PRICE

We fade from black and start out in the woods. It's the middle of the night. A dark, dark night.

EXT. COUNTRY WOODS - NIGHT

Out in the middle of nowhere. In the distance, a car's headlights in the pitch black night.

PRICE (V.O.)

On a deserted road, we see a car driving up to an old two-story house ...

STREET (V.O.)

(interrupts)
Is it raining?

PRICE (V.O.)

What's that?

INT. STREET'S OFFICE - MORNING

Street sits up in his chair.

STREET

Sorry to interrupt, but is it raining?

PRICE

Raining?

STREET

Well, I don't mean to tell you how to begin a story, I mean you're a very gifted writer, but it seems to me that most good films start in the rain. I mean think of somebody like Kurosawa ... um ... what was the name of that film? Or that Hawks film? Or was it Wyler? I think Coppola had one too. Anyway, I can't think of any of the top of my head but I think you would add dramatic effect if it was raining. You know, it lends this sort of ambience.

(MORE)

STREET (CONT'D)

But, if you're absolutely against
it, then we can forget about it.
You're the writer, my boy.

PRICE

Sure, that's a great suggestion.
Okay, it's a rainy night.

Street settles back in his chair and sips his juice.

EXT. COUNTRY WOODS (RAINING) - NIGHT

We see the same shot as before, only now, it is coming down
in buckets. The car travels along the road.

PRICE (V.O.)

The car drives along the wet
country road towards this two-story
house. This is where the story
begins, in the middle of this
downpour and right in that old
house.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE (RAINING) - NIGHT

Outside the old two-story house, we see an old jalopy in the
garage. The car has no wheels and it looks like it hasn't
been used in twenty years.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

A open suitcase lies on a bed. It is filled with clothes and
some manuscripts.

A man's hand grabs a photograph of a woman. He gently
touches the frame and throws it in the suitcase, tries to
close it but can't because it is extremely full.

FELIX FRANKLIN, 60s, sits on it and after a couple of jumps,
closes it.

A phone RINGS and he answers.

FELIX

Hello ... hello, darling ... would
I be talking to you if he were
here?

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE (RAINING) - NIGHT

The car stops outside the house and a man gets out.

We only see his feet as he walks in the mud. He reaches into
his pocket and makes sure the gun is still there.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Felix hangs up and looks at himself in the dresser mirror.

The commonly-dressed man straightens his bow tie, combs his gray hair and smiles.

FELIX

Nothing like a nice vacation to get those juices flowing again. Now just relax. Everything will be okay. You just have to focus. That's what these vacations are for -- to be able to focus. Breathe in.

(inhales and exhales)

It'll be worth it. You'll see. You are a major talent.

The doorbell RINGS.

He grabs his suitcase and exits. He is out of the room when he realizes he's forgotten something.

He walks back in and picks up his portable typewriter -- an old beat-up Remington which looks like a 1940s model.

FELIX

Can't forget you, my lovely.

He places it in his case.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The doorbell RINGS again.

Felix comes down the stairs and walks to the front door. He puts his belongings down and peeks outside the window.

HIS P.O.V. - THROUGH THE WINDOW

He sees the wet, dark figure standing on his porch.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

He unlocks the three locks on his door and opens up.

Felix sees the dark silhouette of the man.

FELIX

Are you my ride?

BILLY
 Yes ... are you the famous movie
 writer?

FELIX
 (says it with pride)
 Yes, I'm Felix Franklin. How nice
 of you to recognize me.

The man steps forward and into the light.

His name is BILLY BILLS -- he bears a remarkable resemblance
 to Paul Steven Price. The writer sees the gun pointed at
 him.

FELIX
 What are you doing?

Billy hits him on the head and Felix falls to the floor.

BILLY
 (looks down at him)
 A pleasure to meet you, Mr.
 Franklin.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE CARD:

"ALMOST ONE YEAR LATER ..."

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Up on a hill, overlooking the Pacific Ocean, sits a nice
 house. We hear someone typing inside.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

The living room is very clean and neat, as though no one has
 been staying here

We see the kitchen -- two clean, untouched bedrooms and a
 long hallway.

Outside the hallway, there is a locked door. The typing is
 coming from inside.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

We move down a flight of stairs and come to a very nicely
 furnished room.

There is a small refrigerator, a dining table with a
 microwave on it and a bed in the corner of the room.

There is a bathroom next to the bed and a couch with a small cheap black and white television in front.

Over in the corner is a large desk with a coffee maker.

This is where Felix Franklin bangs on the keys of his ancient typewriter.

He stops and looks at the clock. It changes from 7:59 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

He gets up and flips the TV on.

On the television, a talk show begins. An announcer is heard over the cheesy music.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Welcome to "CUT AND PRINT" with your host, syndicated columnist Dick Print.

Canned applause. DICK PRINT, 40s, smiles at the camera.

PRINT

Good evening. We have an exciting show for you tonight. Our guest is none other than Billy Bills, the great new filmmaker responsible for the upcoming masterpiece, "LOW BUDGET." It's a pleasure to have you here, Billy. May I call you Billy?

INT. CUT AND PRINT SHOW - NIGHT

Billy sits up in his chair.

BILLY

Sure, it's a pleasure to be here, Mr. Print.

PRINT

Please, call me Dick. Now, Billy, before we talk about the film, let's talk about you and where you came from. Your perseverance. You were, as you described yourself, a down-and-out wannabe actor, writer and director struggling for years wanting to make it in showbiz. You never gave up and you're finally here. What was the key?

Billy squirms in his chair and smiles.

BILLY
Well, talent I hope.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix laughs at the remark. He grabs a frozen dinner from inside the refrigerator which is filled with frozen dinners, as though he were stocking up for months.

He sticks it in the microwave and looks back at the television.

TELEVISION

BILLY
Actually, I got lucky. You know, there are a lot of struggling writers out there, good ones ... I just happened to get lucky and get one hell of an agent.

BACK TO CUT AND PRINT SHOW

PRINT
It's been what, seven months from shooting to premiere?

BILLY
I've been extremely lucky. I was just telling Entertainment Tonight that it's been nine months since "LOW BUDGET" was optioned.
(laughs)
Sometimes I feel like this is my baby, like I've just given birth ... yeah, it's been amazing.

PRINT
It has been a hell of a run. Now, you were telling me before that you took several filmmaking courses, right?

BACK TO BASEMENT

Felix watches the show as he takes the TV dinner out of the microwave, almost burns his hands as he does.

BILLY (O.S.)
Oh, yeah, I think I took every screenwriting class in this town. But, you know, I just kept on writing and writing until I perfected my skill.

Felix laughs and grabs a cup of coffee.

TELEVISION

BILLY (O.S.)

You have to be really desperate to be able to get those creative juices flowing. That's the one thing about it -- it's when you're at your most desperate that good things come out. It's a learning process. And believe me, Dick, I was at my most desperate.

BACK TO CUT AND PRINT SHOW

PRINT

You know, Billy, I happen to be an avid script reader. I really love to read 'em. I go through several every week and I must say yours is one hell of a great script.

BILLY

Thank you.

PRINT

And after seeing the film for the first time last night, I can tell you that this is the film of the year. Tell us how you went about writing that story, after all you don't look like a crook to us. Cause it seems so damn authentic. It's like we were right there looking at these crooks up close and personal.

(Print laughs)

You didn't do any time at San Quentin, did you?

Billy laughs, looks up at the blinding lights. He can barely see the audience in the dark.

BILLY

I can honestly say I have never been to prison. Can't say the same for some of my writing friends though.

He raises his arms.

BILLY

I'm just kidding folks, in case they're watching. Actually, Dick, it was a culmination of things I heard about, you know, ideas that came to my head and a story I wanted to tell for a really long time. But really, the reason it seems so real is because it came down to one thing: research.

Print sits up.

PRINT

The ever important research.

BILLY

I've always heard about how important research was to scripts. But I never believed it. Until now. I can honestly tell you that "The Right way is to Research" -- the two R's. It's the most important tool in writing a good screenplay. I went out and interviewed hundreds of ex-cons ...

BACK TO BASEMENT

Felix throws the cup of coffee at the television.

FELIX

I wonder who told you that, you punk!

TELEVISION

PRINT

(thinks)

The two R's ... I've heard that expression before, maybe at a party or something, I seem to recall somebody saying that to me once ...

(gets back to it)

So, you went out and researched crooks. Wouldn't that be dangerous?

BACK TO CUT AND PRINT SHOW

They both laugh.

BILLY

Well, I didn't have to go out and do anything dangerous. I'm like Bogie in "CASABLANCA": "I stick my neck out for nobody."

Print brightens up when he hears this.

PRINT

God, how I love that movie.

INT. BASEMENT (LATER) - NIGHT

Felix finishes dinner and throws it in a large plastic trash bag that is filled with empty dinner boxes. He looks at the clock: 8:26 p.m.

On the TV, Print holds up the cover of PREMIERE magazine.

PRINT

Here is the new Premiere which hit the stands today.

(he reads the cover)

A Buzz in Tinseltown. Hot new writer-director Billy Bills is the talk of Hollywood.

(he looks inside the magazine)

It's a great article.

BACK TO CUT AND PRINT SHOW

Print holds it up to the TV cameras and we see Billy on the cover.

BILLY

I was honored. I hope I don't get jinxed by getting on that cover. Kinda like the Sports Illustrated thing where anybody who is on the cover --

PRINT

I don't think you're gonna have a problem there. Judging by this great first film, you're going nowhere but up. I can honestly say that this is one of the great debuts in film history. In fact, your style of writing seems very familiar to me, can't place why, but it is. It's almost like the perfect template for a script. I guess all those classes helped.

Print turns to the cameras for emphasis.

PRINT

This story about filmmakers involved with these real life gangsters is electrifying -- a great original story.

BILLY

Thank you, Dick.

PRINT

(turns)

I really mean it, Billy. It's one hell of a movie.

BILLY

Thanks.

Print turns back to the camera.

PRINT

Well, that's it for tonight. I want to thank my guest electrifying newcomer Billy Bills -- I love that name. And please, go out and see his movie, "LOW BUDGET."

(looks at notes)

The film's coming out ... in two weeks, all over the country. If you tuned in late ladies and gentlemen -- I've seen it and I can tell you it's going to be the hottest film of the year ... Billy Bills, thank you for being here.

BILLY

It's been my pleasure entirely.

They shake hands.

PRINT

Please, come back anytime.

BILLY

(all smiles)

I'd love to.

PRINT

And as we leave you, ladies and gentlemen, we'll show you another clip of Billy Bill's masterpiece about moviemaking and gangsters.

(MORE)

PRINT (CONT'D)
This is Dick Print signing off in
Hollywood ... good night.

MOVIE CLIP:

EXT. TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

A man sits tied in a chair. He is bound by rope.

We PULL BACK and see he sits in the back of a pickup truck.
A title pops-up on the screen: Frankie the Stool Pigeon.

The truck moves down a mountain road. There are two guys in
the front seat laughing at him. They keep looking back at
him.

DRIVER
This is getting dangerous!

PASSENGER
Yeah, you better hold on or you're
gonna fall right off.

Frankie screams his head off. The two men laugh.

DRIVER
Hey, Frankie! Guess what?

The driver nods to the passenger. The passenger climbs
through to the back of the truck.

PASSENGER
Thanks, you've been very helpful.
We appreciate all you've done for
us.
(grabs the back of the
chair)
But now, we don't need you anymore.

Frankie looks up at him with eyes widening in horror. The
passenger laughs and pushes the chair closer to the end of
the truck.

The passenger is about to push him over the edge.

Suddenly, the PROCESS SHOT projected on the screen behind
them stops. Lights come on.

INT. STUDIO SET

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Cut! Cut! What the hell
happened?!

Frankie screams at the director.

FRANKIE

Ah, Jesus! Can't we get this right? I'm getting tired of doing this over and over!

DIRECTOR

Hey, don't look at me! I can't control this.

The actors jump off the truck and yell at the director and producer. The crew members start running around like chickens with no heads ...

BLACK

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix is asleep. The cheesy music from Print's show wakes him up.

He turns the television off.

FELIX

Crap.

He flips on a radio. Classical music fills the basement.

He sits down and picks up the woman's photograph that he put in his suitcase at his home.

FELIX

We'll be leaving soon, my dear.

Then, he goes back to the typewriter and looks at it.

FELIX

Well, I guess I better do some more work.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Billy puts on his coat. Print enters with his young publicist, a gorgeous young woman named VERA.

PRINT

Thanks for a great show, kid.

BILLY

Thanks for having me.

PRINT

Oh, don't mention it. I think you've got a bright future in this town.

(puts arm around Billy's shoulder)

Listen, if you'd let me, I'd love to read that new script when you're finished. At least, before it goes to the studios and you get in one of those bidding wars.

BILLY

You'll be the first one I give it to.

PRINT

That'd be great, kid. Keep in touch and say hello to that gorgeous agent of yours.

BILLY

Sure thing, Dick.

PRINT

I feel it. I think you're gonna do something memorable in this ugly town. I'll see you at the premiere.

Vera winks at him as she leaves with Print.

EXT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Print walks with Vera.

PRINT

When did she arrive, Vera darling?

VERA

A few minutes ago, she came through the back. Her limo driver is waiting outside.

PRINT

Why don't you tell him he can go. I'll make sure she gets home later.

INT. PRINT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Print walks in and we see a famous young actress, VIVIAN BARNWOOD on a couch. She is crying hysterically.

PRINT
 (locks the door)
 Oh, don't start, Vivian.

Vivian jumps up, drops on her hands and knees.

VIVIAN
 Please, Dick, don't run that story
 tomorrow, please ... I beg you.

PRINT
 (looks down at her)
 Vivian, you stick your hand in the
 cookie jar and Dick Print's there
 to cover it.
 (gestures as if he reads a
 billboard)
 Vivian Barnwood -- caught in the
 act.

VIVIAN
 Please, I'll do anything, anything
 at all. Don't run it, you'll ruin
 me. Sidney'll fire me from his
 picture. It's the best part I've
 had in years, please. Don't you
 have any heart? I need that part.

He lifts her up and sits with her on the couch.

PRINT
 Now, Vivian, you know Dick Print's
 all heart. I'm everybody's friend.
 (he runs his hands down
 her blouse)
 Now what could a big star like you
 have that could make me change my
 mind.

He runs his hand down her leg.

PRINT
 This business makes one very, very
 tense. We need to relax. Take all
 the pressure off is what we need.
 You rub my back and I'll rub yours,
 as they say. We can discuss the
 wonderful films you've made in your
 short but illustrious career. And
 we can discuss the great films to
 come. That is, if you help me out.
 (MORE)

PRINT (CONT'D)

And by helping me out, I'll make sure there will be no story in tomorrow's paper. What do you say, honey?

VIVIAN

What do you want me to do?

He unzips his pants and smiles.

EXT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Inside a security shack, a Security Guard watches a small portable TV. His badge tells us his name is NAT.

He watches John Ford's "THE SEARCHERS." On the television, John Wayne rides up to his brother's house.

Another guard, JAKE, walks in and sees the movie on the TV.

JAKE

Hey, put the Dodger game will ya?

NAT

(points to the movie)
No way. It just started.

JAKE

Come on, they're playing the Giants. You've seen this thing a hundred times.

NAT

Absolutely the best Western ever made.

JAKE

What about "SHANE" or "THE WILD BUNCH"? "RIO BRAVO" was even better.

NAT

Not even close, this is John Ford.

JAKE

I don't care if it's Henry Ford, put the game.

Billy walks past the shack. Jake sees him.

JAKE

Goodnight, Mr. Bills.

Billy ignores him as he walks by.

JAKE

One lousy hit film and they think they own the place.

NAT

Well, if my script was as good as his, I'd be the biggest asshole in this town, too.

Billy gets to his red Porsche.

JAKE

(smiles and flips to the baseball game)

Well, Nathan, then you're ahead of the game cause you already are an asshole.

Billy peels out of the lot.

INT. PORSCHE (MOVING) - NIGHT

With MUSIC blasting from the car stereo, Billy is all smiles. He raises the volume and rocks to the tune.

BILLY

I would like to thank everyone responsible for me winning this Academy Award. And like Clark Gable said when he won for "It Happened One Night", I'd like to say nothing more than ... thank you.

Billy laughs his head off.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

The Porsche turns into the driveway of the beach house. The garage door opens and the car goes in.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix hears something upstairs. He takes the sheet out of the typewriter and puts it inside a folder with a stack of papers. He sticks it in a drawer.

He reaches into another drawer and pulls out a half-finished script. He leaves it on the desk and he throws himself on the bed.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Billy pulls out a key from under a throw rug and opens the basement door.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Billy comes down the stairs. Felix looks at him from the bed, doesn't say a word.

BILLY

(throws a folder on the bed)

They loved your treatment.

FELIX

(picks up folder)

Of course, I wrote it faster than "LOW BUDGET." No matter what they say about writing, I always tell 'em usually you do your best work when you write fast. And, of course, not many can write like me. It's not easy to whip up a treatment this fast.

BILLY

Well, obviously, you don't write fast enough ... they're pushing me to get it done.

Felix sits up on the bed.

FELIX

I've done more than enough for you. I demand you let me go.

Billy walks up to him and grabs the pages.

BILLY

Now don't get excited, old man. You know I can beat you up.

Felix feels the top of his head.

FELIX

You're gonna end up killing me and then you'll really be in trouble. I still have a bump, Billy.

Billy walks up to the desk and looks at the stack of papers. He thumbs through them.

BILLY

Fifty pages! You're not writing fast enough. You just told me you write fast! What the hell's the problem?

FELIX

It's not easy to write with a gun pointed at your head.

BILLY

Who says I'm holding a gun to your head?

FELIX

I know you're not holding a gun to my head. It's called a metaphor.

Billy storms up to him.

BILLY

(raises his fist)

Don't put me down again, old man. Or I'll just have to ...

FELIX

(shields his head)

Anyway, how the hell you expect me to have any energy with this shit you're feeding me. I had such an upset stomach this morning. This frozen food is bad for me. I need more protein and less carbs also. I was on the Atkins diet for a while but now you're not helping me.

BILLY

Shut up! You should feel lucky that you're even eating. There are people starving in this world. And that's no metaphor.

FELIX

Frozen food is not good for me. My sphincter is going to --

BILLY

Quit complaining! All you have to do is finish the script. Besides, you need to suffer to be able to write. You remember what genius told me that?

FELIX

What if I refuse again?

BILLY

(grabs the photo of the
woman)

How many times must I tell you. If you don't write I'm going down to see your daughter in San Diego, introduce myself as your biggest fan. They'll find little pieces of her up and down the Pacific.

Felix sits down on his bed and lowers his head -- looks like the feeble old man that he is.

BILLY

Now look, Felix. What do you have to complain about anyway? You've got a nice cozy place here. Hell, I don't know anybody else in California that has a beautiful basement like this. You get to do what you love the most all day. You've told me many times how much you hate the human race, you'd rather be a hermit out in a cave with your typewriter banging away. Well, I've given you that. You're living better here than out in the real world. And you're certainly more comfortable than in some cave ... so what if you're writing these scripts for me.

Felix looks up at him.

FELIX

You call being kidnapped as being better off? Anyway, that cave thing is another metaphor.

BILLY

Felix, you have to realize the truth. You've been a writer, no one even cares that you disappeared off the face of the earth. Think about it, it's been over a year and no one even knows. You're an invisible man.

FELIX
 (sarcastically)
 You sure know how to lift a
 person's spirit.

Billy grabs the papers on the desk.

BILLY
 Come on, even you have to realize
 that it's all about this -- it's
 all about the writing. Look, I
 admit I'm not as talented as you
 are but I do have great ideas. I'm
 just not the surgeon you are.
 That's why you're helping me.

This perks him up.

FELIX
 That's right, they always called
 me. They always knew who to turn
 to.

BILLY
 (buttering him up)
 Absolutely right. The man who
 could come in and fix any script.
 The script doctor par excellence.
 That was you.

FELIX
 They knew how talented I was,
 didn't they?

Billy guides him to the typewriter.

BILLY
 You were, and are the best. Now
 take this story of mine and do some
 of your magic. You're still
 talented.

FELIX
 But, it's eleven o'clock. I need
 my rest.

BILLY
 Oh, come on, Felix. After that
 show tonight, I feel like working a
 bit. Remember, your beautiful
 daughter.

He sits him down at the typewriter. Felix looks at his
 daughter's photo.

FELIX

Your story needs a lot of work.
There's only so much I can do. It
took all my creative juices just to
turn it into that treatment.

BILLY

That's why you've been invited
here. You'll just have to use the
blender and get those juices
flowing again.

Felix just stares at his typewriter. Billy waits and then
explodes.

BILLY

Start writing old man!

He strikes the desk with his fist, causing the daughter's
photo to fall over.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Billy walks down a long hallway towards the office of Talent
Agent Angie Walter.

INT. ANGIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

ANGIE WALTER, 40, grabs a bottle of champagne. She is a
rather attractive woman and still looks younger than she is.
What was once a promising acting career was halted by her
alcoholic binges.

ANGIE

Might as well start celebrating
early.

BILLY

As Laurence Olivier said to Michael
Caine, "This, as they say, is where
the plot thickens."

She hands him a glass filled with the bubbly.

ANGIE

Well, kid, I told you. You stick
with me and you're going to the
top.

She kisses him.

BILLY

As Cagney said in "WHITE HEAT",
"Don't know what I'd do without
you, Ma."

ANGIE

Oh, please, you don't have to
impress me. I'm not that stupid
idiot, Dick Print.

BILLY

Angie, I owe you my life.

They touch champagne glasses.

ANGIE

Actually, you owe me 50%.

They both laugh and drink up.

ANGIE

"SLEUTH" right? Caine and Olivier.

BILLY

(raises glass)

I've always said, you're the
smartest lady I know.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix hammers away at the typewriter, types like a madman,
oblivious to his surroundings.

He HEARS something coming from the TV, looks over and sees a
movie playing on one of the cable channels.

On the TV -- Sigourney Weaver has Ben Kingsley tied up in a
chair in Roman Polanski's "DEATH AND THE MAIDEN." Stuart
Wilson, playing her husband, walks in on them. He reaches
out to Kingsley.

SIGOURNEY WEAVER

Don't touch him!

STUART WILSON

What is this?

SIGOURNEY WEAVER

It's a miracle. He's delivered
himself. Like a fantastic surprise
Christmas present, he's been left
at the door.

Felix changes the channel. We see a theater marquee with the title, LOW BUDGET.

The camera pans down to an entertainment REPORTER who stands in front of a mob of PEOPLE. Billy is with him.

REPORTER

We're here tonight at the premiere of "LOW BUDGET", the most talked about film of the year. Standing with us is the writer-director of the film, Billy Bills. Billy, how does it feel?

BILLY

I'm very, very excited. I've waited for this moment my entire life.

The FANS cheer.

Felix laughs, walks back to his typewriter and resumes his work.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The theater is packed.

Billy sits with Angie. He is riveted on his film.

ACTOR (O.S.)

(in the movie)

In a pig's eye you'll get me to rat on my family. You hear me?

ANOTHER ACTOR (O.S.)

Oh, yeah? In a pig's eye? Well, take that!

The AUDIENCE squirms in their seats. We see several of the audience members including Print who has his hand inside Vera's blouse and the security guard Nat who sits nearby.

Billy smiles and enjoys the moment.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix types away like a madman.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

As the film ends, the audience bursts into applause.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix throws some script pages on top of a pile.

He takes some others, crumples them up and throws them in the bag of left over food.

INT. MOVIE THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

As Billy finishes an interview, Dick Print comes up to him. Print shakes his hand and Vera kisses Billy on the cheek.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix's fingers hit the keys of his typewriter. He is a machine gun in action.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Inside a large house, we see PEOPLE packed in like sardines. Angie dances with about a hundred others.

EXT. POOL SIDE - NIGHT

Billy talks with some actors.

BILLY

No, you missed it. It was in the scene where he gets whacked. I took it from "BREATHLESS" --

ACTOR

-- Stole it --

BILLY

-- Borrowed it. It was Belmondo who said "Killers kill, squealers squeal." He said it to Jean Seberg.

ACTRESS

Do you have a life? Or do you just sit in front of the tube all day?

Behind them, we see Print talk to Vivian Barnwood. Print smiles, Vivian doesn't.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix takes out the last page from the typewriter, places the sheet on the stack.

FELIX
(talks to his daughter's
photograph)
Fade Out. The End. It's all done,
my dear.

He smiles and sticks a new sheet in the typewriter.

FELIX
After one miserable year, I'm
ready.

He types the title page and takes it out of the typewriter.
He hides the script under his bed.

FELIX
(smiles)
You're not ready to be presented
yet. Soon, very soon.

Felix turns on the radio. A Mozart Concerto plays.

Felix smiles, turns off the lamp and throws himself down on
the bed --totally exhausted at the night's frenzy of writing.

The clock reads: 4:15 a.m.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - DAWN

Angie kisses a young actor (BRAD) and tells him to wait for
her.

She then walks over to Billy, who leans on his Porsche, as he
smokes a cigarette.

ANGIE
Congratulations.

She puts her arms around him and they kiss.

BILLY
Thanks, Angie, you're the greatest.

ANGIE
Don't thank me yet.
(she waves for someone to
come over)
You can thank me tomorrow.

ELYSE DANIELLE, a pretty young woman, walks up to them. She
wears a red hot dress that is so tight it looks like it was
painted on.

BILLY

Who is this gorgeous creature?

ANGIE

A present for you. Billy Bills,
I'd like you to meet Elyse
Danielle. Elyse is a model and an
actress. A woman of many virtues.
We call her "Elyse the Artiste."

Elyse strokes Angie's cheek and then wraps herself around
Billy.

ELYSE

Hello, Billy Bills. I'm worth a
lot of 'em. Bills that is.

Billy smiles and is in heaven.

ANGIE

You've finally made it.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix is asleep. He hears Billy open the door and come down
the stairs.

BILLY

Felix, I don't need you anymore.
I've made it. I've finally made
it.

Billy walks up to the bed and chokes Felix.

Felix looks up in horror. Billy's hands get tighter and
tighter. He hits Felix in the face and throws him on the
floor.

Billy pulls out his gun and points it at Felix.

Felix jumps up and grabs his arm. They struggle, swing their
arms and the gun flies up against the wall.

Billy goes after it. As soon as he does, Felix heads up the
stairs.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - DAWN

Felix runs through the house and out the front door.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - DAWN

Felix runs out of the house and heads towards the beach.

EXT. BEACH - DAWN

As the morning sun peeks through, Felix runs on the sand. He falls several times and gasps for air.

He clutches his chest as the pain hits him. He looks back and sees Billy.

BILLY

Come back here old man!

Felix tries to run away but is too tired. He looks out at the waves and decides to run in the water.

He jumps in the cold water and tries to swim, but it is a futile attempt. As Billy gets to the edge of the water he sees Felix go down.

INT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Felix tries to swim but sinks instead. He gives it one last effort and -- the water begins to enter his lungs.

He closes his eyes and sinks deeper into the dark water.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix's eyes snap open in a cold sweat. He rubs his eyes and sits up on the bed.

FELIX

I should write that scene in my movie.

INT. DICK PRINT'S OFFICE - DAY

Print reads a script. Vera walks in and grabs some papers out of a cabinet.

Print looks at her as she bends down.

PRINT

What an ass!

Vera gets up and drops herself on his lap.

VERA

What's next on the menu?
(she looks at the title)
"CASABLANCA." We've done this one before.

PRINT

I know, but that kid brought it up
and I thought it's been a while ...

VERA

You need to be more creative than
that. It has to excite me, you
know.

PRINT

(sticks his face in her
bosom)

No, you have to excite me, baby.
Boys, this is the beginning of a
beautiful friendship.

VERA

(laughs)

You're very sick, my Dick.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix and Billy are stretched out on the couch. Felix smokes
a cigar.

FELIX

Thanks for the burgers, kid. It's
nice to get real food for once,
although these will probably give
me a heart attack.

BILLY

Finish the script and we'll change
the menu. I'll let you research a
new one.

Billy points to a set of Encyclopedias on a shelf.

FELIX

(enjoys his cigar)

You know, kid, those words mean
everything. The two R's speak
volumes.

BILLY

I know, Felix, I know. You've only
told me a hundred times.

FELIX

That's right, because "The Right
way is to Research." Most of you
never listen, you think you can
just write and it'll all fall into
place.

(MORE)

FELIX (CONT'D)

Not true, a writer has to absorb everything, you have to become a sponge. That is when you become a great writer. You have to live in what you write. You have to become the character.

He gets up and paces around the room.

FELIX

You integrate yourself into that world and you become one. Research is the most important thing you can do.

He picks up a script.

FELIX

And, kid, that's the problem with all these old scripts of yours.

BILLY

You know, I don't mean to burst your bubble, but if you're as great as you think you are, then how come you haven't had anything produced?

This sets him off. He gestures with his cigar.

FELIX

Because no one appreciates talent anymore. Movies today are run by a bunch of young punks who wouldn't know a great script from the hole in their heads. If it doesn't go boom, they're not interested. They think if you're over thirty-five then you can't write a script. See, you've proved my point. If I would have taken "LOW BUDGET" to them they would have spit on it. But since you're young, they took it.

BILLY

You're wrong. They did it because it was a hell of a good script.

FELIX

Of course, it was my mine! I wrote it! Don't ever forget that, Billy!

He throws the cigar in the trash.

BILLY

Take it easy, don't get your blood pressure up. I still need you to write my script.

Felix calms down.

FELIX

Kid, I'm glad your film was a success, after all, even though I wrote it, you still had to make the film. Congrats.

BILLY

Thank you, Felix -- for the compliment and, for the script.

FELIX

Speaking of scripts. I want to show you something.

Felix reaches under the mattress and hands him the script.

BILLY

What's this?

FELIX

It's for you.

BILLY

You haven't been working on my story?

FELIX

Your script is not gonna cut it. This one will turn heads. As soon as you give it to them, they'll forget about the treatment you gave them.

Billy opens it.

FELIX

It's all ready for you. I think you're gonna love it ... I want you to have it.

Felix stands over him.

FELIX

I think you should show it to your agent.

A BUZZER interrupts them.

INT. STREET'S OFFICE - MORNING

Street's secretary buzzes him on the intercom.

Street is practicing his putting. He hits the ball and it goes right into the putting machine.

STREET

Now what.

He hits the intercom with his putter.

STREET

What the hell is it?

LOUISE (O.S.)

Mr. Street, I'm sorry to interrupt, but Mrs. Street has called five times already. She says if I don't let her through she's going to fire me.

STREET

Louise, when you get your paycheck every week, who's signature is on the check?

LOUISE (O.S.)

Well, it's yours.

STREET

Yes, exactly. So in other words, you don't have to worry about my wife calling you up and harassing you or threatening to fire you. I call the shots around here. In fact, since I pay you, you should be on my side of the fence. So just tell my wife that I'll call her when I'm done with my very important meeting. And if you want to see my signature on your checks every week, then just listen to what I tell you and DON'T LET ANYBODY BOTHER ME!

(to Price)

Nobody pays attention to me anymore.

LOUISE (O.S.)

Very well, but she's just gonna yell at me again.

STREET

Hell, you're lucky, she yells at me every night.

(to Price)

You married, kid? No? Of course not, why the hell would you be married. You've probably got'em coming out of the walls after you.

PRICE

Not really. I like intelligent women. I've only met one who can stimulate me on that level. She's the only important woman in my life.

STREET

Yeah, I'll bet she stimulates you -- right here.

(grabs himself and laughs)

Okay, where were we? Oh, yes, the script. So what's the story? The kid reads it, right?

PRICE

Felix makes him read the whole thing -- watching him the whole time like a vulture waiting for food.

STREET

By the way, any nudity coming up? You know, we gotta have a little T&A. After all, we gotta sell some tickets.

PRICE

I'll get to it, don't worry.

STREET

(smiles)

Good ... go ahead, my boy, keep going.

PRICE

Well, as I said, Billy finishes the script.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Billy closes the script. He clutches it to his chest as though it were the Bible. Felix lights another cigar.

FELIX

Well?

BILLY

I think it's the best thing I've ever read.

Felix inhales deeply on the cigar.

BILLY

You think anybody'll believe I wrote it?

FELIX

Why wouldn't they?

BILLY

This is nothing like "LOW BUDGET." This is very, very deep. It hits very close to home. Did I inspire it? I mean, am I the kid who kidnaps the devil?

FELIX

No, but you wouldn't believe me anyway. It is very close.

BILLY

He locks him in a room. You can't tell me this isn't about us? He makes him play his music -- I make you write. Felix, you can't lie to me?

FELIX

(laughs)

Then I guess that would make me the devil.

Felix puts his cigar in an ashtray.

BILLY

It's hard for me to believe that I didn't inspire this?

Felix walks to his bed and lies down. He stares up at the ceiling.

FELIX

Kid, when I first started writing in this town, a long time ago ... I was holed up in an office all day with six other writers.

(MORE)

FELIX (CONT'D)

We would sit and polish and re-write existing scripts. Hours and hours of writing and nothing to show for it. I couldn't get them to look at any of my original scripts.

EXT. STUDIO - DAY

Young Felix Franklin walks to his office. He greets the other WRITERS as they enter the writing department.

FELIX (V.O.)

They rejected everything I threw their way. All they wanted was to fix up all their scripts. It didn't take very long for me to lose confidence in my writing. After a short time, I stopped writing original scripts.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Felix takes a bundle of his scripts and he throws them in the trash. He looks at his typewriter.

FELIX (V.O.)

At that time, I had given up. I hadn't found the touch yet.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Felix finishes breakfast. He grabs his briefcase and walks out of his apartment.

FELIX (V.O.)

I lived in this little apartment, sort of like the one Holden had in "SUNSET BLVD".

EXT. PARK - DAY

A barbecue. Felix eats a hamburger.

FELIX (V.O.)

So one weekend, the manager and his wife had a little picnic for all the tenants. That's where I met a guy who had just moved in next door to me. Leopold Barnes.

LEOPOLD BARNES starts talking to him. Leopold is in a wheelchair. He bears a remarkable resemblance to Raymond O. Street.

FELIX (V.O.)

He told me he was a writer, he had written several children's books. Leo was confined to a wheelchair. He lost the use of his legs in the war. Writing was his life. He was a really nice guy.

Leopold wheels himself down a path as he walks with Felix.

FELIX (V.O.)

When he found out I worked at the studio, he was ecstatic. After that day he was constantly asking me questions about the studio. I guess he'd always wanted to be a screenwriter. We became friends.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Felix and Leopold sit at a table. Leopold gestures with his hands -- tells Felix a story.

FELIX (V.O.)

He would tell me about his upcoming stories and I would tell him about the studio. That's all he wanted to hear about -- my adventures in the film world. Little did he know that I stunk, I never told him that I couldn't get anything made. He thought very highly of me.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix sits up. Billy listens as he clutches the script.

FELIX

I would just make up these lies about what films I was working on and what I had written and all this load of bull. I was ashamed of myself. At least he had something published, whereas I didn't have shit.

INT. LEOPOLD'S APARTMENT - DAY

Felix walks into Leopold's apartment.

FELIX (V.O.)

So one day he calls me over and tells me that he finally had the guts to show me something.

(MORE)

FELIX (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Something he'd wanted me to see for
a long time. So he pulls out a
script he wrote.

Felix takes the script and thumbs through a few pages.
Leopold gestures for him to sit on the couch.

FELIX (V.O.)
He says he'd be honored if I read
it for him. He tells me, "It's my
first screenplay". So, of course,
I tell him I'd love to read it.
But he wouldn't let me leave with
it. Says I have to read it right
there, cause he'd never shown it to
anybody and it had never left his
hands.

Felix sits on the couch and opens the script. He begins to
read.

FELIX (V.O.)
So, I sit down and I read his
entire first script.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix pours some booze into two glasses.

FELIX
When I finished, I put it down and
I told him it was very, very good.
For his first try, he had done a
fine job. He was very pleased. He
thanked me and asked me if there
was any way I could maybe show it
around the studio. I told him, I'd
see what I could do.

Felix hands Billy a glass.

FELIX
Then I went out to a bar and got
stinking drunk ... I lied to him.
His script was, quite frankly, the
best script I'd ever read. I was
so jealous, I couldn't believe it.

Felix sits down next to Billy.

FELIX

Here I was struggling to write anything and this children's writer writes the best script I'd ever read. I was so depressed after that. Well, I submitted the script to the studio for him, except for one small detail -- I put my name on it. He would keep asking me about it and I'd tell him it was still going through the channels. It was amazing how he trusted me. I didn't talk to him for about a week after that.

INT. FELIX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Felix stands behind his door.

FELIX (V.O.)

He would come to my door at night and I would pretend I wasn't home. See, after that, I really began to hate him and tried to avoid him.

EXT. FELIX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Leopold waits outside the door. He knocks a couple of times. After getting no answer, he wheels himself back to his apartment.

FELIX (V.O.)

I hoped he would get the hell out of my life. In fact, I was hoping he'd go away, for good.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Billy downs his drink.

FELIX

And then, one day, my prayers came true.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Felix walks down a hospital corridor and enters a room.

FELIX (V.O.)

I didn't see him for a long time. He'd had some kind of complication with his legs. Got cancer or something. They were all set to amputate his legs.

(MORE)

FELIX (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Anyway, he had been in the hospital
for a week when I ran into some
friends and they told me he was in
bad shape. So I went to see him.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Leo is in bed with tubes sticking out of him.

FELIX (V.O.)
He had no family -- absolutely no
one. He was all alone in that
hospital. No one came to see him
but me. All the feelings of hatred
left me when I saw him in that
hospital. I felt so bad about what
I'd done to him. He made me
promise to keep fighting for his
script.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix pours Billy another drink.

FELIX
I promised him I would ... that was
the last I saw of him -- he died
three days later. I vowed I was
going to the studio and finally put
his name on his script. Well,
before I did it, two days after his
funeral, they told me my script had
gotten the green light -- his
script. My very first one ... I
never changed a thing. I kept my
name right on it.

BILLY
What was the movie? I'm sure I may
have seen it.

FELIX
No, you never saw that movie.

BILLY
Why are you telling me all this?

Felix gets up and grabs his cigar from the ashtray. He takes
a long drag.

FELIX
Because you just read his
screenplay.

Billy looks at the script.

FELIX

The studio backed out of the deal three months later. I never showed the script to anyone ever again. Until now.

BILLY

I don't understand, why didn't you just keep it for yourself?

FELIX

I couldn't.

BILLY

Why?

FELIX

That famous five letter word that eats away your guts: guilt ... you know, sometimes I've thought that your kidnapping me was because of what I did to Leopold. It finally came back to haunt me after all these years.

BILLY

And now you want me to have it?

FELIX

It's my punishment. I deserve to have it stolen from me. It was never mine in the first place. I want you to have it, after all, you could never write anything like this.

BILLY

(sarcastically)

You sure know how to lift a person's spirit.

FELIX

Just show it to your agent. I'm sure he'll love it.

EXT. MARIO'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Angie Walter enters a Mexican restaurant.

INT. MARIO'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Angie walks up to Billy, who waits for her at a table pigging out on nacho chips. She greets him and sits down.

The owner, MARIO, comes to the table.

MARIO
(thick accent)
Hello, Angie.

ANGIE
Mario, darling, I'm starving.

MARIO
Oh, then I'll have Pedro bring you
a surprise.

ANGIE
Good, I love surprises.

MARIO
And speaking of surprises, I've
been working on the scene --the
young Spanish stud walks into his
mother's brothel. It is filled
with beautiful women. He sees one
beauty, a woman he has loved all
his life, he walks to her and he
slowly peels off ...

ANGIE
Not now, honey. This isn't the
right time for it. Billy and I
have some important biz to discuss.
Just bring me something, I'm really
starving. We'll sit and talk
later.

Mario smiles and walks away.

Billy pulls out the script from his briefcase and hands it to her.

ANGIE
Is this it?

BILLY
Did you know he'd stolen it?

ANGIE
Nope, he never told me about this
one.

(MORE)

ANGIE (CONT'D)
(she reads the title)
Stupid title.

She hands it back to Billy.

BILLY
You need to read it. I think it's
my next script.
(he holds it lovingly)
I think this one's a gold mine.

She smiles and takes hold of his hand.

ANGIE
Do you realize it's almost been two
years? Aren't you glad I showed up
to your class?

INT. CLASSROOM (ONE AND A HALF YEARS AGO) - NIGHT

Billy sits in a chair in the middle of his screenwriting
class.

The class is filled with STUDENTS. The TEACHER gets up in
front of the class.

TEACHER
Our guest speaker tonight is a
literary agent who's been in the
business for thirteen years. She's
discovered about six writers who
are currently working today and
gotten about ten scripts produced
or in development. Her family's
got a background in film. Her
mother was once one of the Goldwyn
girls. I want you to meet Ms.
Angie Walter.

Angie gets up from a desk and stands in front of the class.

INT. MARIO'S RESTAURANT (PRESENT) - DAY

ANGIE
Do you remember my speech? I saw
you staring at me like I was lunch.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Angie gestures to the class. They stare back like zombies.

ANGIE

In order to make it, you have to ask yourself what you're willing to do. My mother and father were in show business. I learned by watching them -- the sacrifices you're willing to make. Every writer I represent worked their way up the hard way. There are no easy shortcuts. Always ask yourself, "How ambitious am I?"

Billy and Angie lock eyes.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Angie and the Teacher say goodbye to each other in the parking lot of the school. Billy walks up to her.

BILLY

Ms. Walter? I really enjoyed your speech.

ANGIE

Thank you.

BILLY

I was hoping I could talk to you for a moment about that seminar you mentioned in the class.

ANGIE

Sure.

INT. MARIO'S RESTAURANT (PRESENT) - DAY

Billy thumbs through the script.

ANGIE

You remember when you told me you'd be willing to do anything to have a script produced? I remember, as though it were yesterday.

He looks up at her.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Billy and Angie come out of a movie theater. The movie that is playing is Martin Ritt's "THE FRONT."

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Angie and Billy sip coffee. She hands him a photograph of Felix Franklin.

ANGIE

I, I mean we, represented him for about ten years. Actually, my mother was his agent -- I kinda stuck around her and she taught me. He drove us absolutely nuts. The guy was a hermit. He would go away for months and then come back with a finished script. I think he'd go out in a cave somewhere and write. He was famous in the inside circles a long time ago. They called him "The Doctor", cause he could fix any script. Billy, you know I haven't lied to you. Your scripts are all about two or three drafts away. What you need is someone to polish them up ... Felix did something to me a long time ago ... something to us ... I vowed I would get back at him. Maybe we can help each other.

Angie takes a bite of cheese cake. Billy stares at her.

ANGIE

I've got a little proposition for you. Something that could benefit both of us.

INT. VIDEO AND RECORD STORE - NIGHT

Angie walks down a long row of CD's. Billy is on the other side thumbing through some DVD's.

ANGIE

I found out he's gonna go away soon. Going to wherever the hell he goes to write a new script. I can arrange for you to drive him to the airport.

One of the store employees watches a movie behind the counter. It is Lawrence Kasdan's "BODY HEAT." We see Kathleen Turner and William Hurt on the monitor.

TELEVISION

KATHLEEN TURNER

Ned, it scares me to talk about these things.

STORE

Angie grabs a couple of classical CDs.

ANGIE

I've got a beach house. It has a downstairs room, sort of a basement. I built it that way. I never use the place.

Billy moves down the row -- she moves with him on the other side.

WILLIAM HURT (O.S.)

What is it, Matty? Tell me exactly what frightens you.

KATHLEEN TURNER (O.S.)

I'm afraid ... because when I think about it, I wish that he'd die. That's really what I want. It's horrible and ugly and it's what I most want.

ANGIE

He doesn't know about that house. It's up on a remote hill, nobody's ever around.

Billy keeps moving down. She passes a couple of teenagers and keeps with him.

TELEVISION

KATHLEEN TURNER

... Please don't. Talk is dangerous. Sometimes it makes things happen, it makes it real.

STORE

ANGIE

It's perfect. We can make it comfortable for him. He can write all day long.

Billy looks up at her.

BILLY

And after he's done his job. What then?

ANGIE

He'll never be missed.

BILLY

What about his daughter in San Diego?

There is a long pause.

ANGIE

She hasn't spoken to him in years. He doesn't love anybody but himself ... I'm the only member of the family that has any contact with him.

BILLY

(puzzled)

What are you saying?

Another pause.

ANGIE

He's my stepfather. He married my mother when I was nine years old. She was his agent, then after she died, I took over. I left him a year ago. Didn't want anything to do with him. He killed my mother.

BILLY

He what?

ANGIE

I mean, he didn't murder her, but ... my mother died because of him. He made her life a living hell. She put up with it because she loved him. She found out he was cheating on her. When she confronted him, he said he wanted out of the marriage. Two weeks later, she died of a heart attack ... he told me it had nothing to do with me but, I walked out on him and told him I would never forgive him for what he did ... in his world, he only has one daughter, his real daughter in San Diego.

Billy keeps looking for more discs. Angie walks with him. They don't say a word.

ANGIE

I hate him more than anybody else in this world. Just think about it, darling. He can help you and I want to hurt him.

INT. MARIO'S RESTAURANT (PRESENT) - DAY

Billy hands Angie the script.

BILLY

He said my agent would be impressed.

ANGIE

I'll read it tonight.

She puts it in her purse. Dick Print walks up to their table.

PRINT

Hiya kids.

BILLY

Hello, Mr. Print.

PRINT

Please, it's Dick.
(grabs Angie's hand and kisses it)
Angie, you look younger and younger everyday.

ANGIE

Oh, knock it off, Print. There are no cameras here.

PRINT

And that beautiful voice of yours, magnifique.

ANGIE

Knock it off, you prick.

He laughs.

PRINT

And as sassy as ever. Look you two, I don't want to interrupt this conference.

(MORE)

PRINT (CONT'D)

I just wanted to let you know,
Billy, that I'd still love to read
that script. That is, if Ms.
Walter has no objections.

ANGIE

No, I don't mind.

BILLY

Sure, Dick. I'll send it over.

PRINT

Great, I look forward to it. Well,
you two enjoy your lunch. I've got
a very special interview to conduct
with Vivian Barnwood. See ya
later, alligators.

He walks back to his table and we see his secretary, Vera,
sitting with him.

Angie is disgusted as she looks at them. She turns to Billy.

ANGIE

Don't you dare give him any scripts
... Dick Print ... more dick, than
print.

BILLY

Maybe he could help me out, he's a
very important critic. You know
what he did for my movie.

ANGIE

He's the world's biggest kiss ass.
He has to clean the shit off his
lips every night. I'd sooner trust
a rattlesnake.

They see Print and Vera leave.

ANGIE

He makes out like he's everybody's
friend, but underneath beats the
heart of a weasel. He's a phony.
His real name is Richard Zupkick.
Can you believe the shmuck, he
changes it to Dick Print. Cause he
thinks, he's show biz, the prick.
Everybody knows about 'im -- like
his bad hairpiece. It's no secret.
He's a sick scum. He's only
looking out for one person.

(MORE)

ANGIE (CONT'D)

I would never get involved with the big Dick Print.

(she takes a bite)

If I find out you're getting chummy with him, I might even let stepdad kill you.

She smiles.

INT. PRINT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

On Print's television, we see Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart in "CASABLANCA."

Vera, dressed like Bergman, slowly walks up to Print's bed. He gets up and lights a cigarette. He wears a white tuxedo like Bogart.

TELEVISION

Bogart opens his office window as we hear Max Steiner's music. Ingrid Bergman walks up to him.

INGRID BERGMAN

Richard, we loved each other once. If those days meant anything at all to you ...

HUMPHREY BOGART

I wouldn't bring up Paris if I were you, it's poor salesmanship.

INGRID BERGMAN

Please, please, listen to me. If you knew what really happened. If you only knew the truth.

APARTMENT

Vera comes up to Print and strokes his lips.

HUMPHREY BOGART (O.S.)

I wouldn't believe you no matter what you told me, you'd say anything now to get what you want.

Vera slowly opens her blouse. Print feels inside.

TELEVISION

Bogart lights a cigarette. He turns and sees Bergman holding a gun on him.

APARTMENT

Print smiles and looks down at the gun in Vera's hand.

INGRID BERGMAN (O.S.)
All right, I tried to reason with
you. I tried everything. Now, I
want those letters. Get them for
me.

Print unzips his fly. Vera looks down.

HUMPHREY BOGART (O.S.)
I don't have to. I've got them
right here.

INGRID BERGMAN (O.S.)
Put them on the table.

She places her hand in his crotch.

HUMPHREY BOGART (O.S.)
No.

INGRID BERGMAN (O.S.)
For the last time, put them on the
table.

TELEVISION

Bogart walks up to her gun.

HUMPHREY BOGART
If Laszlo and the cause means so
much to you, you won't stop at
anything. All right, I'll make it
easier for you. Go ahead and
shoot, you'll be doing me a favor.

APARTMENT

Print drops his pants. Vera disappears below.

PRINT
God, how I love this film.

INT. BILLY'S PORSCHE - NIGHT

Up on a hill overlooking Hollywood, Billy and Elyse Danielle
are laughing up a storm. Music PLAYS from the car. She
snorts some cocaine and they begin to make love.

INT. ANGIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Angie is in bed reading the script. Her phone RINGS.

ANGIE

Hello ... yes ... well, I haven't finished it yet. So far, I think it's improved ... I'll let you know.

She hangs up and turns to the actor in her bed. It's Brad from the party.

ANGIE

(smiles)

I'd probably enjoy this more if you went downstairs.

Brad smiles, rolls over and sticks his head under the sheets.

EXT. HILL - NIGHT

We see two THUGS come up behind Billy's Porsche. Billy and Elyse are going at it. One of the thugs opens the door and Billy's head hits the car.

BILLY

What the hell?

Thug #1 takes out a knife.

THUG #1

Hey, give me your wallet.

THUG #2

Yeah, we'll cut you man.

Billy gets to his feet. Elyse starts to put her dress back on.

BILLY

(to Elyse)

I told you we never shoulda come here.

ELYSE

Don't give them anything.

THUG #1

Shut up, bitch. We're gonna rape you.

BILLY
 (goes for his wallet)
 It's okay. We don't want no
 trouble.

THUG #2
 (unzips his pants)
 Yeah, we don't want no trouble.
 Bend ov--

Elyse takes a step and kicks him in the groin. Thug #2 goes down screaming. As he falls to his knees, she kicks him in the mouth and he spits out several teeth.

Thug #1 swings at her. She grabs his arm and breaks it. He screams. She elbows him in the gut and he falls to his knees. She kicks him in the face and he falls.

ELYSE
 (finishes putting her
 dress on)
 My father was a blackbelt. Nobody
 fucks with me. You don't want to
 know how many pricks I've killed,
 honey.

Billy just stares at the two thugs with mouth open, can't believe what he just saw.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Dick Print looks for scripts down an aisle. The elderly LIBRARIAN comes around the corner.

LIBRARIAN
 Did you find it?

PRINT
 Well, you've got everything from
 "JANE EYRE" to "CLEOPATRA."

LIBRARIAN
 Oh, it's in here somewhere, let me
 see. I can't believe we don't have
 it.

She looks through some stacks. Rows and rows of scripts.

Vera sits at a table and flirts with Print by opening and closing her legs.

PRINT

(looks at Vera)
I really need it, it's very important.

LIBRARIAN

(pulls it out)
Here it is. Sorry, we had it in the Robert Taylor section. I've got to weed through these. Can't have these kinds of mistakes.

Print is very happy. The librarian walks away, talks to herself as she goes. Vera stands behind him.

VERA

(whispers)
Some day your dick's gonna get you in trouble, Dick.

He turns around and pinches her.

PRINT

(whispers)
You can't get enough, baby. I know you can't get enough of the dick man.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The Porsche zooms in a parking spot outside a book store.

Billy jumps out of the car and opens the door for Elyse. They are both still drunk from the partying last night.

BILLY

Here, you've got to see it.

ELYSE

Oh, Billy boy, you're so damn drunk.

BILLY

Come on, Elyse.

He takes her to the books displayed through the window.

BILLY

(points)
There it is. I wrote that. Look at my name on that cover.

He is pointing to a new copy of "LOW BUDGET" -- which has just come out in book form. He takes her inside the store.

INT. BOOK STORE - DAY

Billy grabs the book and points to his name.

BILLY
(yells)
I wrote this!

The people in the store look up. Some recognize him and they come over to greet him.

As Billy signs some autographs, Elyse falls over a display stand and books come crashing down.

INT. ANGIE'S OFFICE (RECEPTION) - DAY

Billy stumbles into Angie's office with Elyse on his arm.

Angie's new secretary, ELLEN, types away on her computer. The young lady looks up in awe.

BILLY
Hi there. I'm Billy Bills.

ELLEN
(recognizes him)
Yes, I know. It's a pleasure to meet you.

BILLY
Oh, please, honey. Are you the new temp?

ELLEN
Yes.

BILLY
What's your name, precious?

ELLEN
Ellen.

BILLY
Eileen.

ELLEN
Ellen.

BILLY
Ellen, how pretty. Ellen, you're so much better looking than the last hag she had in here.

Ellen laughs.

BILLY

Helen, tell her I've come for the sacred pages. Tell her that a famous writer is standing in her office.

ELLEN

I will but, sir, it's Ellen not Helen.

BILLY

Whatever, honey. Just tell her.

INT. ANGIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Angie gets up from her desk.

ANGIE

You two better not throw up in here.

BILLY

No need to fear, Underdog is here.

Elyse giggles and passes out on the couch. Billy sits down in a chair.

BILLY

Well, Angie baby, what'd you think?

ANGIE

I think you should not drink so much. And the drugs have got to go.

BILLY

No, I mean the script. The script I gave you ... my ...
(laughs)
my script, Angie.

She hands it to him.

ANGIE

It still needs some work. Give it back to him. Tell him it's not ready.

BILLY

I think it's perfect.

ANGIE

Believe me, it still needs some fine tuning. Tell 'im he needs to work on the climax.

BILLY

Really? Work on the climax ... okay, I'll tell dear old stepdad but I don't think he's gonna be too happy. He hates negative criticism. He won't like this at all. Won't like it one bit. How can I tell "The Doctor" that his story needs a doctor.

ANGIE

Just tell him. I know him better than you. He'll understand.

BILLY

Okie dokey.

Billy passes out on the chair. Angie stares at him. She looks disgusted.

INT. PRINT'S OFFICE - DAY

Vera walks inside Print's office. He hands her a script.

PRINT

Can you play Elizabeth Taylor?

VERA

(grabs it)

"A PLACE IN THE SUN" again?

PRINT

This time, it'll be the party scene. In the pool room, when I think about humping you with all those balls on the table. With everyone outside, not knowing that we're screwing. Very dangerous and exciting. We'll use my dining table.

VERA

Well, I guess I'd rather be her than Shelley Winters.

(she grabs his crotch)

You're such a bad, bad person.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Billy hands the script to Felix.

BILLY

He says it's not ready yet.

Felix takes it.

FELIX

Hmmm ... I think your agent should have his head examined.

BILLY

That's what I told 'im. I think it's fine just the way it is.

FELIX

Well, I suppose since it's a gift, I can go ahead and fix it a bit.

BILLY

He says you need to work on the ending ... I'm surprised at the way you're taking this.

FELIX

Well, I want to make it right.

Felix sits down at his typewriter. Billy heads for the stairs. Felix turns to him.

FELIX

Kid?

BILLY

Yes.

FELIX

Let me ask you a question. If you had to rewrite this script, could you do it?

BILLY

I think so.

FELIX

Cause when a writer loses his confidence, well ... it's over. Can you honestly tell me you could fix it?

BILLY

Well, maybe not like you ... but I think I could.

Felix nods and sticks paper into his typewriter.

FELIX

That's all I was wondering about. Just curious about how confident you are. I'll let you know when I'm ready.

INT. BEACH HOUSE GARAGE - NIGHT

Billy walks into the garage and gets in his car.

He sits a moment thinking about what Felix just asked him. Felix's voice echoes in his head.

FELIX (V.O.)

Cause when a writer loses his confidence, well ... it's over.

Billy grabs his cellular phone and dials a number.

BILLY

Hi Elyse ... yeah, it's me ... I need you to cheer me up. Can I pick you up?

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Billy sits inside the Tonight Show green room next to a COMEDIAN. Conan O'Brien is in the middle of his monologue on a monitor.

COMEDIAN

How does it feel to be the first guest?

Billy smiles.

COMEDIAN

Cause I go last -- I'm following the talking monkeys. Can you believe that? I get to step out on monkey shit and do my jokes. I'm not a big shot like you.

A STAGE MANAGER enters the room with a clipboard, headset over his ears.

STAGE MANAGER

(points to the comedian)
 You've been switched, you go first.
 (to Billy)
 You, stay here.

BILLY

I don't understand?

The woman opens the door and a swarm of armed SWAT OFFICERS enter the room with weapons pointed at Billy's head.

BILLY

What the hell's going on?

FELIX (O.S.)

That's him!

Felix works his way into the room, fights through elbows.

FELIX

There he is! He's the impostor!
 Go ahead, he's not gonna go on!

BILLY

Felix, PLEASE!

FELIX

Go ahead, shoot!

The officers pull their triggers in unison. BOOM!

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy rolls over in his bed.

BILLY

(dreaming)
 No, Felix, No.

INT. VAULT

A Geraldo Rivera-like REPORTER stares into a camera.

REPORTER

Ladies and gentleman, we are witnessing a historical event of biblical proportions. We are about to blow up the vault. This will be one of the truly great events of this century. What we will find inside that vault will be one of the great finds in the history of mankind.

(MORE)

REPORTER (CONT'D)

We will finally know the absolute truth. Go ahead, Lieutenant.

As we see a mass of people, cameras roll -- pictures are taken -- the Lieutenant hits a button -- KABOOM!

There is dust everywhere.

After the dust settles, the cameras move inside and we see a huge hole.

Inside the vault, Billy holds a shotgun on Felix's head.

Billy looks up as the lights hit his face. The light moves on Felix. The Reporter enters the vault.

REPORTER

There you have it, ladies and gentlemen. The truth is revealed! This man is no writer! He is the world's biggest faker!

The light shines on Billy's face. He takes a step back and sticks the shotgun in his mouth. Everyone SCREAMS.

We hold on the Reporter and Felix. KABOOM! Blood spurts all over them.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy jumps up in bed. He rubs his tired eyes.

He gets up and walks out of his bedroom.

INT. BASEMENT - MORNING

Felix hammers away on the keys. He doesn't care that he's been at it all night -- he has to finish.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

As the typing continues, we are outside Billy's fancy apartment building.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Billy's wall is covered with movie posters: Kubrick's "A CLOCKWORK ORANGE" -- Hawks' "THE BIG SLEEP" -- Kurosawa's "STRAY DOG" and his own: "LOW BUDGET".

Elyse is passed out on his couch. Billy sits in front of his fireplace with a stack of his scripts. We hear several people conversing.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

The conversations are coming from Billy's old screenwriting class. The students sit as they wait for the teacher. The teacher pops his head in the door.

TEACHER
Sorry I'm late.

They greet him.

TEACHER
But there's a very good reason.
I'm going to make it up to you.
Guess who I brought with me?

The teacher walks in and right behind him is Billy Bills.

TEACHER
I want you say hello to the famous
Billy Bills -- who was once sitting
right in this classroom. Right
were you are.

INT. CLASSROOM (LATER) - NIGHT

Billy in front of the class.

BILLY
... you can go to the library,
conduct interviews, read documents
and maybe even travel to wherever
your story will take place --
research is essential. I said that
on Letterman last week.

The students stare at the celebrity.

BILLY
You can never underestimate the
power of good research. It's the
most important thing you could do.

FELIX (O.S.)
Absolutely right.

Billy sees Felix get up from the back of the class.

FELIX
And an ever better way to do it --
is to steal a script.

Felix walks up to the front and joins Billy.

FELIX

(looks at the class)
 Why bother with it, when you can steal one. It's much simpler and saves thousands of trees. Isn't that right, Leo?

LEOPOLD (O.S.)

That's right. Who's worse? A thief who steals or a thief who steals from a thief?

Leopold wheels himself up to the front.

FELIX

We both know that.

Felix turns to the class.

FELIX

This genius that stands before you is nothing more than an impostor. Billy Bills couldn't even write a grocery list.

Felix and Leopold laugh.

Then everyone bursts out LAUGHING. Billy is humiliated in front of the class.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

As the LAUGHTER continues, Billy snaps out of his daydream and watches his scripts burn in the fire. Elyse wakes up on the couch.

ELYSE

(rubs her eyes)
 What time is it?

BILLY

Six.

ELYSE

Jesus! I've been here all night.
 (sees the fire)
 What the hell you doing?

BILLY

I'm getting rid of my life.

ELYSE

That's nice. Did we have sex?

INT. ANGIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Angie sleeps in bed. Her phone RINGS. She picks it up.

ANGIE

Hello ... how's it going? ... good.
Just let me have it today ... okay
... soon.

She hangs up and runs her fingers through Ellen's hair.
Ellen turns around and smiles at her.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - MORNING

Billy drives up to the house. His Porsche enters the garage.

INT. BASEMENT - MORNING

Billy comes down the stairs and sees Felix on his bed staring
up at the ceiling.

Felix points to something on his desk. Billy walks to it and
sees the script next to the typewriter. Felix has the
typewriter cover on his machine.

FELIX

(looking at ceiling)
I'm tired. Dead tired. See that
cover. That means I've had it. I
don't care anymore. I'm not
writing anything for you, ever
again.

BILLY

Why? Didn't you give me this as a
gift?

Felix sits up on the bed.

FELIX

That's why it's over. No more
favors. You should be thankful --
that is the best script you could
ever receive. You could never write
anything as good. You told me
yourself. It's over, I know you
could never write anything ever
again. You've lost the desire. I
can sense it.

Felix gets up, walks to the bathroom.

FELIX

I hope your agent likes it. Tell him this is it. Finito.

BILLY

What about your daughter?

FELIX

(turns around)

Look, kid, I know you're not gonna do anything to her. You don't have the guts for it. If you had guts, I wouldn't be here. I'm only here because you don't have the courage to write on your own ... I don't care anymore -- you can kill me if you like, although, I doubt you could. It's over. Fade out.

He closes the bathroom door. Billy picks up the script, thinks about what Felix just said and goes up the stairs.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - DAY

Billy walks past a poster of "LOW BUDGET." He is greeted by a few people as he walks. He nods at them half-heartedly, his mind is elsewhere.

He passes Vivian Barnwood who grabs his arm.

VIVIAN

Billy, can I talk to you for a second?

BILLY

Can't, Vivian, not now.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

He walks into an office and hands the script to a SECRETARY.

BILLY

Can you make me a quick copy of this?

As she leaves, Billy lowers his head. He is a depressed and tired man.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Billy's red Porsche is doing 65 MPH on the Hollywood freeway. We see the HOLLYWOOD sign in the distance.

INT. BILLY'S PORSCHE (MOVING) - DAY

Billy is on his cell phone.

BILLY

I'll be over there in a while.
I've got to do something first.

INT. ANGIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Angie is on her kitchen phone. Ellen walks behind her in her underwear.

ANGIE

I'm not going to the office today.
Just bring it here.

INT. BILLY'S PORSCHE (MOVING) - DAY

We see the two copies of the script next to him on the seat.

BILLY

Okay, you'll have it in your hands
in about an hour. Angie, your
stepfather says it's over. He's
not gonna do anything anymore for
us. Has the moment finally come?

INT. ANGIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Ellen pats Angie on the head.

ANGIE

Maybe. We'll talk about that when
you get here.

She hangs up and smiles at Ellen.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY

Billy knocks on a door.

Dick Print opens it wearing a leather jacket and a fedora.

PRINT

Whoa! Billy, how are you?

BILLY

May I come in?

PRINT

(hesitates)
Um ... well, I'm kinda busy ...

VERA (O.S.)
Indy! Indiana Jones!

Vera steps around the corner and stops when she sees Billy. She is wearing a white dress that is ripped apart.

VERA
Oh, hi, Billy.

BILLY
Hi, Vera.

Print sees the script in his hand.

PRINT
(smiles)
Is that your script?

BILLY
(hands it to him)
I want you to read it.

PRINT
Thank you.

BILLY
Just do me a favor, don't tell
Angie I gave it to you.

PRINT
Of course not, don't worry about
it. I feel honored. You can trust
me.

BILLY
Sorry to interrupt this ... thanks,
Dick. I'll give you a call in a
couple days, see what you think?

Billy walks away. Print steps out of his apartment.

PRINT
(smiles)
Don't worry, I'll read it today.

INT. ANGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Angie, wearing reading glasses, sits on her love seat reading the script. Billy is opposite her, a glass of whiskey in his hand. He looks like he is about to pass out.

ANGIE
(looks at him)
Did you read this?

BILLY

No.

ANGIE

It's better.

BILLY

I'm sure dear old stepdad will be very pleased to hear it.

INT. PRINT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Print is in bed reading the script. Vera is on top of him, tries to distract him.

PRINT

Vera, please.

VERA

Come on, we didn't finish Indy!

PRINT

Here -- read this.

He grabs a script from a pile next to the bed.

PRINT

See if you get any ideas.

She looks at the title.

VERA

"MY FAIR LADY!" Not another old musical.

PRINT

Honey, don't you want to hump Henry Higgins? It'll be fun. You go in the living room and get some ideas. Let Dickieboy finish this script.

She grabs the script and peeks at the title.

VERA

Is that the only thing you like anymore? Dick, I'm not having fun. If you don't wanna play anymore, I'll have to go elsewhere for entertainment.

PRINT

Come on, honey. Don't be that way.
Just let me finish and I promise
ole Indy'll grab his snake and whip
it all over you.

She laughs and gets up.

VERA

Okay, okay. You just call me when
you're ready. Marion Ravenswood is
gonna go and watch VH1 for a while.
I think they're having a Men At
Work retrospective.

INT. LIVING ROOM (LATER) - DAY

Vera sleeps on the couch as a music video plays on the
television.

Print storms out of the bedroom and flies out the door.
Vera's eyes snap open and she yells out at him.

VERA

Hey, where you going? Get back
here!

(jumps up)
I'm not staying!

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Print searches through screenplays on the shelves.

He grabs a couple, throws them back in. He keeps moving down
the line then ... Bingo! He finds it.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Felix takes a big gulp of whiskey and almost chokes. He
coughs up a storm.

He reaches into a cabinet and pulls out a small medicine
bottle, opens it and spreads the white powder on a spoon.

FELIX

(coughs)
Felix is going to say goodbye.
(imitates Jim Morrison
singing)
This is the end. This is the end,
my friend.

INT. ANGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Angie comes out of her kitchen with a soup bowl.

ANGIE
Are you hungry?

She sees Billy passed out on the chair. The empty bottle of whiskey on the floor. She is disgusted with him.

She lifts his eyelid. Nothing but white. She grabs his face.

ANGIE
Wake up, wake up ... stupid.

She sits down and takes a spoonful of soup. She grabs her phone and dials a number. A phone RINGS.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Billy's phone is ringing. He enters his dark apartment and stumbles over some furniture then grabs the phone.

BILLY
(feeling awful)
Hello.

INT. CUT AND PRINT STUDIO - NIGHT

In the darkness, Print sits on the set of his show.

PRINT
Billy.

We CUT BETWEEN THEM.

BILLY
Who's this?

PRINT
It's Dick.

BILLY
(rubs his eyes)
Oh, hi, Dick.

PRINT
I read your script.

BILLY
What'd you think?

PRINT

I thought it was very, very good.
But, then again, I thought that the
first time I read it.

BILLY

Good, I'm glad to hear it.

PRINT

You're not listening to me. I've
read this script before.

BILLY

You read it twice?

PRINT

Billy, we need to talk. I think
you're not grasping the concept
here. I remember now, the story
you told me on my show, you know,
your two R's bullshit. I know
where you got it from. I think you
may be in a lot of trouble, kid.
Plagiarism is rampant in this town
but what you've done is ridiculous.

BILLY

(not registering)
I don't get it.

PRINT

(lifts script)
I don't want to talk over the
phone. We need to meet.

BILLY

(finally wakes up)
What are you talking about, Dick?

PRINT

I'm talking about Dick Print
catching the great Billy Bills with
his hand in the cookie jar. I can
just see the headlines tomorrow
after I write my story.

INT. ANGIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Angie paces in her office. Billy sits on her couch, drinks
out of a bottle.

ANGIE

How could you do this?

BILLY

I just wanted to get his opinion --
he's got contacts. I figured it
was a good idea.

ANGIE

Good idea?

She grabs the Jim Beam bottle.

ANGIE

Is this the only thing you care
about now?

BILLY

(rubs his head)
I'm sorry, I'm so damn tired.

ANGIE

What are we gonna do about this?

BILLY

I don't know.

ANGIE

Come up with something, you're the
fucking writer!

BILLY

(lowers his head in
disgust)
I'm no writer.

A knock at the door.

Angie opens it to reveal Dick Print, all smiles. The
rattlesnake enters.

INT. ANGIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Print throws the script on Angie's desk.

PRINT

"DEAL ME IN", an interesting story
about a young card shark who
captures a lucky gambler who
happens to be the devil. He locks
him in a room and he forces him to
make him the best gambler in
Mississippi. Kinda like "THE
CINCINNATI KID" meets Faust. It
was very interesting. The two men
kind of melt minds and the kid
absorbs everything from the devil.

(MORE)

PRINT (CONT'D)

It was written ten years ago by a writer named Felix Franklin. He was mostly known for punching up scripts.

(throws Billy's script on the desk)

"THE MUSIC PIT" by Billy Bills. An interesting story about a young musician who captures the devil and makes him become the new Mozart. The kid absorbs everything from the devil and they switch personalities. It took about forty pages before it hit me.

He stands over Billy.

PRINT

I believe that the Hollywood Reporter and Variety would have a field day, my boy. This would be the biggest news to hit this town since Arbuckle crushed that little girl with his fat ass. But, you know, Dick Print is a bit puzzled. I don't understand why you would choose to steal from this old writer Franklin. I looked him up. No one has seen him for ages. He lives out in the middle of nowhere. Doesn't have any neighbors, nobody's seen him for a long time. No police reports, no reports of death, nothing. Just vanished from thin air. Is any of this registering? His last agent in fact is sitting right here with us. Now, isn't that convenient. What'd you do, Angie, just hand Billy his scripts. It's a real mystery. What happened to this Franklin character? Unless of course, there's a good reason why he disappeared.

They are silent for a moment. Print sits down on Angie's desk and puts his feet up.

He thumbs through the scripts. Angie walks to her window, still holding Billy's bottle. She takes a drink.

ANGIE

(looking outside)

How much?

Print smiles. He gets up and puts his arms on Angie's shoulders.

PRINT

You sure like to get right to the point, I like that in a woman.

She looks over her shoulder. He removes his hand.

ANGIE

What the hell do you want?

He smiles.

PRINT

You give me a share of "LOW BUDGET" and this little discovery of mine will go away unnoticed. We both know how much my reviews helped the box office. I had two shows on your movie. If it wasn't for me, it could have very well gone unnoticed.

ANGIE

You didn't do shit. The film stood on its own.

PRINT

Let's not argue. If you want this story to be printed in every paper tomorrow morning --you'll do as I say. Oh, and one other thing. I want five hundred thousand in cash.

ANGIE

(laughs)
Are you nuts?

PRINT

Actually I'm not -- I have total control of my faculties ... why don't we ask the writer here? He seems to be very quiet.

They both look at him. Billy is on the couch with his head in his hands.

PRINT

Maybe, he'd like to tell us how he's gonna feel when he sees his name all over the headlines tomorrow. For all the wrong reasons.

BILLY

You're right. I'm a phony. It's over. The charade is over.

Angie grabs Print, he turns around.

ANGIE

Listen, Zupkick ...

PRINT

Oh, Angie, you've stabbed me, please don't say that name.

He turns back to Billy.

PRINT

Now, Billy, don't be hasty. I didn't say you had to end anything. I just want a little piece of the action. We can help each other out. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

(turns to Angie)

Actually, I'd rather have you scratch, if you don't mind.

ANGIE

I wouldn't touch you if my life depended on it, you degenerate scrotum.

PRINT

I love it when you talk dirty.

(to Billy)

I don't care if you want to go on steal -- I should say, improving your scripts. Hell, everybody in this town does it. All I want is a little piece for old lovable Dick Print.

Angie turns around and takes a shot from the bottle.

ANGIE

And what if we refuse? What if something were to happen to the famous Dick Print?

PRINT

Why, Angie, is that a threat? Go look out the window. Go ahead.

HER P.O.V. - THROUGH WINDOW

Angie peeks out and sees Nat, the Security Guard from Print's show. He smokes a cigarette as he leans on Print's car.

PRINT (O.S.)

That's Nathan Holmes, he's one of the security guards from my show. Ex-UCLA line backer. I've just hired him as my personal bodyguard. In fact, he's a hell of a good screenwriter.

Nat throws the cigarette away and waves to her.

PRINT (O.S.)

You should read some of his stuff. If Nat doesn't see me come out of here in twenty minutes -- he's going straight to the Times. I do have connections, you know.

OFFICE

Print goes to the desk and picks up the scripts.

PRINT

Now let's not lose our heads. We can be partners. No harm done. After all, I think Billy here is still talented. He still made one hell of a movie. So you kids have a good night and sleep it over. I'm sure you'll come to a mutual understanding. Don't forget, Dick'll be waiting for his gift.

(strokes Angie's chin)

We can start our mutual understanding tomorrow.

He laughs and walks out.

BILLY

Angie, what are we going to do?

ANGIE

(stares out her window)

Why don't you just go home, get drunk like you usually do and I'll take care of it. Like I always do.

Through the window, she sees Print walk up to Nat and they get in the car.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Print is thumbing through some scripts. We see Nat conversing with the Librarian in the back. Print picks out a couple of scripts and smiles.

A gentle hand comes into the FRAME and takes out a script.

Print turns and we see Elyse smiling at him.

ELYSE

Hi, darling.

PRINT

Elyse baby. Isn't this kinda early for you?

Elyse starts thumbing through some of the scripts.

ELYSE

I always come here in the morning. You know, like everybody else, I want to write movies. This place gives me some great ideas.

Print laughs at the thought.

ELYSE

Really, I do. See this.

She shows him what she picked out. Print laughs as he sees the script for Hitchcock's "PSYCHO".

PRINT

Really, now. You like this? I'd never think this was your type of film? I thought, maybe something more like "KLUTE" or "FATAL ATTRACTION".

He laughs as Elyse begins her seduction.

ELYSE

Oh, honey, if you only knew. You cannot believe what the shower scene does to me. Every time I see it, I get so hot. I put on this old wig and robe like Mother. I slowly walk into my bathroom -- turn the shower on and then I slowly take my clothes off making sure that I touch every part of my goosepimpley naked body.

Print is riveted. Elyse moves a little closer.

ELYSE

Then, I take some bath oil and I
rub myself all over. Like this.

She guides her hand along her figure. Print watches her. He starts looking like a lion waiting for a meal.

She rubs herself up against him. She touches her breasts.

ELYSE

I especially like to rub right here
... meanwhile, I'm screaming
"Mother! Mother!" like old Norman.
Then I'm covered from head to toe
with this oil. Oh, baby, it feels
so sexy. Then, I slowly open up my
shower curtain and I step into the
hot water. The water runs all over
my hot, naked body. As the oil
washes off me and down the drain, I
get even hotter. I feel so good.
Then I touch myself here ...

(Print looks down at her
hand)

... and I erupt like a raging
volcano ... I do this every single
night.

For once, Print is speechless. A drop of sweat trickles down his forehead. Elyse looks at the script and stops her seduction.

ELYSE

(matter of factly)

You know, Dick. I didn't take a
shower yesterday. I feel really,
really dirty. I could use one.

PRINT

I have a shower at my place.

ELYSE

Well, handsome, why don't you
invite me over.

PRINT

You want to come over?

ELYSE

I'd love to.

INT. PRINT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nat Holmes reads an entertainment magazine in Print's living room.

The magazine's headline: "LOW BUDGET IS HIGH GROSS. THE FILM NEARS THE \$100 MILLION MARK."

PRINT

I don't want to be disturbed.

Nat smiles as Print enters his bathroom.

NAT

(to himself)

I don't know how this ugly bastard gets the best pussy in town. I'm definitely living the wrong life.

EXT. TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

We are looking at the same scene from "LOW BUDGET."

Only this time we see Billy tied up in the back of the truck. The two guys in the front seat laugh at him.

We notice that it is the same driver from the movie. The passenger, however, is Felix.

Felix climbs through to the back.

FELIX

How does it feel to be on the other side, Billy?

Billy looks up at him.

BILLY

Please, Felix. Don't do it.

FELIX

Now you know what it feels like to be tied up. What it feels like to be a prisoner.

Felix grabs the back and pushes the chair closer to the end of the truck. Billy's eyes widen in horror.

Felix pushes him off the truck. Billy goes flying and smashes into the ground.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Billy is covered in sweat as he dreams.

BILLY
(dreaming)
No, Felix ... no ...

He rolls over in his bed. There are empty whiskey bottles all over him.

Angie walks in and opens the curtains. The dark room is suddenly illuminated with light.

ANGIE
Get up.

Billy jumps up.

ANGIE
Jesus, you look like shit.

BILLY
I feel like shit. I keep having the same nightmares of dear, old stepdad.

ANGIE
I want you to come with me.

BILLY
I'm not kidding. I really feel bad.

ANGIE
(smiles)
Everything's gonna be okay.

BILLY
(suddenly remembers)
What about Print?

ANGIE
You probably haven't heard, you've been here for two days.

BILLY
What? That can't be.

She throws a newspaper on the bed. He looks at the headline:

"TV CRITIC MURDERED ... Film critic Dick Print and Nat Holmes, a security guard from his TV show, were found brutally murdered in Print's apartment ..."

INT. PRINT'S SHOWER - DAY

Print stands in his shower holding a bottle of bath oil. Elyse stands in front of him wearing the Mother garb. Print smiles. She starts to undress. He waits with anticipation.

She smiles and kisses him, places her arms around him.

He starts licking her neck and then lowers himself down to her breasts.

She grabs him around the neck and SNAP.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nat reads the magazine. He puts it down when he sees naked Elyse standing in front of him.

She smiles and moves to him.

ELYSE
Your boss is asleep.

She puts her arms around Nat and kisses him.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Billy finishes reading the paper.

BILLY
Did you do this?

ANGIE
Billy, are you crazy? How could I do such a thing? Please, they were both stabbed fifty times. How could you think that?

INT. PRINT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Elyse Danielle wraps a bloody knife with the entertainment magazine that Nat was reading.

She sticks it inside a kitchen bag. She admires her handy work.

Nat is next to the couch with stab wounds. He lies in a pool of his own blood.

The apartment is a mess, made to look like ten men did this.

She looks down the hall and we see Print's blood-soaked body coming out of his bathroom.

She blows Print a kiss. Print tries to say something but collapses instead.

He tries to crawl over to her, leaving a trail of blood.

He's dead.

She steps around Nat and walks out.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Angie helps Billy to his feet.

ANGIE

Let's go.

BILLY

Where?

She kisses his cheek.

ANGIE

Everything's okay.

INT. BILLY'S PORSCHE (MOVING) - MORNING

Angie is behind the wheel. She looks over at Billy, who sleeps with his head up against the car door.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - MORNING

The Porsche drives up to the house.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - MORNING

Angie takes Billy to the couch and he collapses.

BILLY

What the hell's wrong with me? I have no strength.

ANGIE

Well, you drink like a fish for one.

She sits down opposite him. He stares at her.

She smiles. He looks around the house and it hits him.

BILLY

Shit! Were in the beach house!
Angie, be careful, he'll hear you.

Billy tries to get up but falls back. He has no strength.

A hand enters the FRAME and shows him a bottle of water. Billy takes it and takes a big gulp.

He looks up and sees Felix with a fatherly smile.

FELIX
Hello my boy.

Billy cannot believe his eyes.

BILLY
What's going on here?

Felix holds Angie's hand. He looks twenty years younger, rejuvenated, nothing like the old man that we've seen before.

FELIX
Billy, if I taught you one thing
it's the importance of what?

Billy takes another drink, tries to regain his senses.

FELIX
Remember what I told you? You have
to immerse yourself if you're going
to write a script. You have to
become the character. You have to
meld with the story. I needed a
subject for a story I had been
writing for a long time. I needed
a guinea pig and my beautiful
daughter supplied me with one.

Billy looks sick.

FELIX
I needed somebody who was as
corrupt as I was. We had to find
somebody who was willing to kidnap
me. Somebody who would be able to
fuel my story. See, I wrote that
movie a long time ago. But
something was missing. It needed
something, a spark. And there was
only one way to do it. I had to
live it.

Felix gets up and begins to pace around Billy.

FELIX
As I told you many times, one has
to suffer to be an artist. A good
lifestyle doesn't count.
(MORE)

FELIX (CONT'D)

A nice house, a good job, a nice family ... none of that is any good to a creative person. You think Tolstoy or Shakespeare went to Beverly Hills to get inspired? Of course not. You have to be scraping the dirt and live in agony in order to be creative.

Billy rubs his head.

FELIX

You provided this for me, my boy. We all live in a shell somehow. You gave me my shell. Holed up like a rat -- the ultimate inspiration. I want to thank you.

Billy tries to stand up but can't.

BILLY

This is wrong.

Felix smiles.

We now begin to see a series of scenes we've seen before:

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

From the beginning, Felix tries to close the suitcase.

He jumps a couple of times and finally closes it.

His phone rings and he answers just as before.

FELIX

Hello.

INT. ANGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Angie sits in her living room.

ANGIE

It's me, dad.

WE INTERCUT BETWEEN THEM

FELIX

Hello, darling

ANGIE

Is he there yet?

FELIX
*Would I be talking to you if he
 were here?*

ANGIE (V.O.)
*It didn't take a long time to
 persuade you.*

INT. BEACH HOUSE - MORNING

Back to Scene:

ANGIE
See, dad, I can still act.

FELIX
*Of course you can, darling. I
 never said you couldn't, you're a
 hell of an actress.*

Billy rubs his head.

We cut to a previous scene:

INT. ANGIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Angie is in bed reading the script. Her phone RINGS.

ANGIE
Hello

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix is in bed on his cell phone.

FELIX
Are you reading it?

WE INTERCUT BETWEEN THEM

ANGIE
Yes

FELIX
What do you think?

ANGIE
*Well, I haven't finished it yet.
 So far, I think it's improved.*

FELIX
Call me when you've finished.

ANGIE
I'll let you know.

She hangs up and turns to the actor in her bed. It's Brad from the party.

ANGIE
(smiles)
I'd probably enjoy this more if you went downstairs.

Brad smiles, rolls over and sticks his head under the sheets.

BILLY (V.O.)
Shut up! I want you both to shut up!

ANGIE (V.O.)
Don't be angry.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Back to Scene:

FELIX
Yes, relax my boy.

BILLY
(rubs his head)
You planned all this? But what about my movie? You let me get famous.

Felix kneels down in front of him.

FELIX
That was just part of the experience. If you were a failure, then it didn't matter. I would still have enough to base my screenplay on.

Felix looks into his eyes.

FELIX
It's just that my screenplay was so brilliant that, of course, you had to succeed.

BILLY
I don't understand? Then why did you have it out there for Print to see? Why take that risk?

ANGIE

That was your stupid mistake. You were the one who gave it to him.

BILLY

What about your daughter in San Diego?

FELIX

That wasn't a picture of my daughter ... that was Angie's mother. My beautiful Amanda.
 (he holds his daughter)
 Angie was our only daughter. You've always had a listening problem, Billy. You talk when you should listen instead.

BILLY

What about Barnes?

FELIX

What about him? Did he ever exist? If you can't come up with material that quickly, you are not a writer.
 (smiles)
 Then I'd be like you.

Billy tries to get up again. He falls back down and the bottle flies out of his hand.

BILLY

I don't know about all this. It can't be right. This can't be happening. I feel like shit or else, you'd both be suffering right now.

FELIX

(changes his tone)
 You know what suffering is? Suffering is having your wife raped.

Felix stares into Billy's eyes as if he were talking about him.

FELIX

I once took a writer in like you. I gave him a place to stay for a while and you know how he repaid me? By raping my beautiful wife.

Felix's eyes swell up with tears.

FELIX

I walked in on him. After all the help I gave him ... I made him beg for his life. I bashed his brains in with my typewriter. It was so perfect. So Shakespearean. A writer gets killed by a typewriter. My beauty was never the same after that.

ANGIE

Please, dad, don't do this to yourself.

FELIX

I loved her so much ...

Felix regains his composure. He pats Angie's hand and smiles at her.

He picks up the bottle and gently places it on the coffee table.

BILLY

This can't be happening.

We cut to a previous scene:

INT. ANGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Angie comes out of her kitchen with a soup bowl.

ANGIE

Are you hungry?

She sees Billy passed out on the chair. The empty bottle of whiskey on the floor. She is disgusted with him.

She lifts his eyelid. Nothing but white. She grabs his face.

ANGIE

Wake up, wake up ... stupid.

She sits down and takes a spoonful of soup. She grabs her phone and dials a number. A phone RINGS.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Felix answers his cell phone.

FELIX

Hello, honey.

INT. ANGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Angie on the phone, stares at Billy.

ANGIE

I think it's time we start with his special diet.

FELIX (V.O.)

Billy, your stomach must be burning right about now.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Back to scene:

Felix stand in front of Billy.

FELIX (V.O.)

Everyone knows that Billy Bills has a drinking problem.

ANGIE

He let fame go to his head too quickly.

FELIX

(sits down next to him)

Your throat should be swelling right about now. It's starting to obstruct your breathing. Your lips are starting to turn pink. If you could only see yourself.

Billy tries to talk.

FELIX

You feel a bit nauseous. Your arms and legs will begin to feel numb. It'll be all over soon.

Angie gets up and stands next to her father.

ANGIE

It'll be a tragic death, Billy Bills found dead. You'll be famous. We'll be famous again. We'll do the talk show circuit. Writer kidnapped by crazed fan. We'll write a novel which, of course, we'll adapt into a screenplay. Maybe TV?

Felix turns to his daughter.

FELIX

No, honey, no TV. I don't do TV movies. It'll be a theatrical motion picture.

BILLY

This is not happening. This cannot be happy ... cannot ...

Billy gasps for air and drops on the ground.

His hand hits the table and the bottle flies off. He can't breathe.

FELIX

Thank you, Billy. Thank you for reviving my career. Don't worry, I'll make you even more famous -- everyone will always know the name of Billy Bills and, of course, Felix Franklin.

Billy struggles ... his arms and legs go numb and ... he takes his last breath and dies.

FELIX

Well, darling, our job is complete.

Felix and Angie look at each other with an understanding -- as they stand over the dead body of Billy Bills.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - MORNING

The beach house looks very peaceful and quiet. All we HEAR are the sounds of the OCEAN waves.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. RAYMOND O. STREET'S OFFICE - MORNING

Price is still sitting in the cozy chair. Street lays on his couch looking up at the ceiling.

He doesn't say much for a few moments. Then he sits up and starts pacing the room.

STREET

I'm trying to get the clear picture ... so, what happens after that? Does Felix get famous? I like it, Paul. But I think there's got to be more.

(MORE)

STREET (CONT'D)

It's good, kid, don't get me wrong.
But I want more, more, more. How
about a little more nudity? Got to
have that. Maybe the Elyse part.
We've got to punch up the sex
angle. How does it turn out, kid?

Street sits down behind his desk.

PRICE

Well, actually, I've already
written this script.

Price grabs his briefcase and takes out a script. He hands
it to Street.

STREET

Paul, you tricky little devil. So
you're pitching me a story you
already wrote.

Street opens it to the title page:

CLOSE UP - TITLE PAGE

"FLAVOR OF THE MONTH"

A screenplay by PAUL S. PRICE

Street thumbs through it.

PRICE

All your questions will be
answered? Trust me, it's all
there. I know you don't read 'em,
so just have your readers tell you
how it turned out.

STREET

Oh, no way. I'll read this one
myself. I've got to know what
happened, kid. It's damn good, did
I say that?

PRICE

I think you'll be pleased.

Street doesn't want to make his new phenom mad.

STREET

(looks at script)
I think we just may have our next
collaboration, Paul.

(MORE)

STREET (CONT'D)

Maybe a little more skin, but other than that, I really like it, I really really like it -- shit, listen to me. I sound like Sally Field.

He gets up with the script and puts his arm around Price.

STREET

You want to grab some lunch?

PRICE

No thanks, sir. I've got a luncheon appointment.

STREET

(worried)

You're not gonna go to another studio, are you? I mean, we'll sign the contract today. Don't even think about it. I love it. I want you to please tell me you're not gonna shop it around. I want everything you come up in that little brilliant head of yours to be mine, mine.

PRICE

Mr. Street, please, I wrote this for you.

STREET

(relaxes)

Kid, you had me worried there for a second.

They walk to the door.

STREET

I'm gonna go finish this over lunch and then come back and we'll strike up a contract.

PRICE

Aren't you gonna wait to see if you like it?

STREET

I love it, Paul, you just told me the whole story, don't worry. I love it, I love it, didn't I say that? Sometimes I ramble on and don't get to the point -- I loved it!

(MORE)

STREET (CONT'D)

Maybe we can punch it up a bit, but I know you can do it. You know why? Cause you're talented, talented ... I can see Hoffman playing Felix, maybe I can get Cruise for Billy or maybe, Travolta. It's gonna be big, I can smell a winner from here to the ocean.

He extends his hand.

STREET

Congratulations, Paul. I think you've written another Ultimate Pictures hit.

They shake hands.

PRICE

Thank you, Mr. Street.

STREET

Please, it's Ray, Ray.

PRICE

Thank you, Ray. I appreciate everything you've done for me.

Street opens the door.

STREET

Please, Paul. We're lucky to have you, I should kiss the ground you walk on. Say, have you ever met my daughter?

EXT. STREET - LUNCH TIME

We see the mural with the drawing of the Hollywood sign (from the beginning of the film).

A PAINTER is re-painting the graffiti artist's mess. The angry man from the opening gestures for him to also get the word "STOLEN" out.

Paul Price walks past him and heads for the Italian restaurant.

INT. MARCELLO'S RESTAURANT - LUNCH TIME

The place is packed with hungry people. There are power lunches going on everywhere.

Over in a corner, we see a man and a woman sitting at one of the tables, deep in conversation.

The woman's name is ANDREA WALLACE. She bears a striking resemblance to Angie Walter.

The man is MARCELLO, the restaurant's owner. He bears a striking resemblance to Mario, the Spanish restaurant owner from Price's story.

MARCELLO

(thick accent)

-- so here's where I left off, the young Italian stud walks into his mother's whorehouse. Only it isn't just a whorehouse -- it's an Italian whorehouse, which means that you not only get sex, but you also get a fantastic meal.

ANDREA

Marcello, honey, how many times must you tell me this story? If you want to write a script, dear, you've got to get past page two.

MARCELLO

Oh, come on, Andrea. I'm working on it, I'm working on it.

PRICE (O.S.)

What are you working on?

Price stands behind Andrea.

MARCELLO

(gets up)

Hello, Mr. Paul, how are you? I was just ...

PRICE

I know ... the young Italian walks into his mother's brothel, only since it's in Italy ...

Andrea and Price say it together.

PRICE/ANDREA

(using Italian accents)

... you not only get laid but you get a fantastic meal.

They laugh. Marcello takes out the chair and Price sits down.

MARCELLO

I love you two kids, I really do ... today, I'm bringing you a big plate of Mama's lasagna. A big plate for my two famous friends, Andrea Wallace and Paul Price. I love you two kids.

PRICE

Good, cause I'm starving. Thank you, you Italian bastard.

MARCELLO

You're welcome, you Americano piece of shit.

ANDREA

Shit.

MARCELLO

Shit ... thank you, I'll be back with your delicious food.

They smile, don't speak for a moment.

Price places the napkin on his lap.

ANDREA

Well, you gonna tell me or do I read it in the paper?

He smiles.

ANDREA

Did he bite?

Price grabs a piece of garlic bread.

PRICE

What was the name of that Jerry Lewis film, -- "HOOK, LINE AND SINKER."

(he nods)

He bit, Andrea, baby ... he bit real hard.

They look at each other with an understanding.

INT. RAYMOND O. STREET'S OFFICE - LUNCH TIME

We are inside Street's empty office.

On top of his desk, right behind his gold name plate, is the Variety magazine that he was reading earlier.

We see the headline: ULTIMATE SCORES ULTIMATE B.O. WITH
"TRIPLE TWIST."

We MOVE down the page. There is the article at the bottom,
the one that interested Price earlier:

"WRITER FOUND DEAD"

FRANKLIN WILLS, 64, of Hollywood, a former screenwriter for several studios, was found floating in the water near a pier in Malibu last Thursday. It appears he died of an apparent heart attack. Mr. Wills, who never had a film credit, was, however, a prominent script doctor. He was known as "Dr. Punch" for his ability to punch up scripts. He worked on several famous films during the 50's and 60's including ...
(Continued on page 16).

CLOSE UP -- BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH

It is a young Franklin Wills. He bears a striking resemblance to Felix Franklin.

EXT. BEACH - EARLY MORNING

We are back on the beach from the beginning of the film.

Police cars everywhere. A COP takes a statement from the jogger. There are INVESTIGATORS on the beach.

His dog barks at the dead body being lifted out of the water and into a coast guard boat.

We MOVE in on the face of Franklin Wills(Felix Franklin?).

They place him inside a body bag and zip him up.

FADE OUT

THE END